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PROCESS OF BORDER-MAKING AND BORDER-BREAKING: THE CASE OF KALININGRAD

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1. Introduction: EU-Russia Borders in a Comparative Perspective

Due to the Union's enlargement of the mid-1990s, the European Union and Russia gained with the Finnish EU-membership a common border. They became neighbors in a rather concrete sense, and overall, the experiences have in that context been basically positive. The border is not a contested one (on the level of official policies) and it has also functioned by and large smoothly as to the rules of passage, visa and customs regulations as well as the degree of openness. However, this is not to say that questions as to borders and bordering stand out as wholly unproblematic in the sphere of the Russia-EU relationship. In fact, they do not.

There are some questions regarding border-drawing still on the agenda, although the underpinning reasons tend to be political in nature rather than relate directly to borders as such and there are disputes that have their background in past history and feelings of wrongdoing, but above all the remaining issues pertain to the broader conceptual departures that the parties apply in designing and implementing their border policies. As to border-drawing, Estonia and Latvia initially regarded the borders suggested in the early 1990s as illegal. They wanted to go back to the borders of the inter-war period whereas Russia, for its part, opted for the then existing borders, among other reasons because the population in the contested areas was almost without exception Russian-speaking. Later both Estonia (1996) and Latvia (1997) dropped their demands of restitution. This they did due to a lack of international support and the fact that both NATO and the EU departed from that applicant countries should refrain from having open border disputes or unsettled territorial problems. With the increased meeting of minds between the parties concerned, the existing borders were demarcated and stricter border controls were introduced. Moreover, both Estonia and Latvia engaged themselves in negotiations and subsequently agreements with Russia were drafted, albeit not formally signed by the Russian side. Hence a kind of *modus vivendi* prevails and the borders are in practice functioning normally despite of that Russia still keeps back a formal recognition with reference to citizenship issues both in Estonia and Latvia.¹

Lithuania's case is somewhat different though. It has a character of its own in the sense that nationalist groups maintained at the beginning of the 1990s that the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 only gave Russia the Kaliningrad region for fifty years and that the decision had not been confirmed by international agreements. In response, some Russian voices argued that Lithuania should give up some areas such as Klaipeda (Memel) as the take-over had not been fully legal. The Lithuanian governments have, as such, recognized all the present borders with Russia, and over time the contestation of the existing borders has practically disappeared also in the case of Lithuania. What remains in official terms in the Lithuania-Russia case is the Russian Duma refusing to ratify a border treaty that pertains mainly to an economic zone in the Baltic Sea, one signed by the Presidents of both the countries in 1997. The Lithuanian Seimas ratified it in 1999.

Out of the various border-related issues, Kaliningrad has been met with much more interest and scrutiny than any other case in Europe's North. The amount of studies devoted to what has been commonly termed the 'Kaliningrad Puzzle' is indeed considerable. Yet there is little agreement concerning the essence of the issue. For some the various military-strategic aspects are of prime importance (although this type of framing has radically declined over time)², some focus on the legitimacy of the Russian rule in Kaliningrad and the related moral issues rooted in history³ while most writing deals with Kaliningrad's position in-between Russia and the EU, and the various issues that pertain to borders, political stability as well as various economic and social questions that flow from such a stance of an exclave/enclave. The problem has quite often been depicted as one of Kaliningrad having enjoyed relatively open borders since

¹ As to the background of the various border disputes at the edge of the former Soviet Union, see Forsberg, 1995.

² See for example Krickus, 2002 (particularly pages 57-73), Donnelly, 2000; Lachowski, 1998; Pedersen, 1998; Trynkov, 1998 and Alafusoff, 2001.

³ Among others, Janušiauskas, 2003, Krickus, 2002 (particularly pages 17-37) and Wellmann, 2003.

the demise of the Soviet Union. It has done so particularly in relation to Lithuania and Poland but has more recently been faced, with the Union's enlargement, with more strict bordering as the new members states have been expected to implement the so-called 'Schengen system' of tighter controls at the EU's external borders, along with the Union's common visa regime.⁴ Yet, in a broader perspective, the issues at stake pertain to forms of boundedness and in this context both the *spatialization* and *temporalization* of Kaliningrad with Russia but now also the EU as crucial constitutive actors.

This paper sets out to review the way Kaliningrad has been framed and approached in both (EU)-European and Russian scholarly works as well as some of the more policy-related interventions. Particular attention is devoted to the more recent disputes between Russia and the EU as to visa and border control regimes and the underlying concepts of boundedness. The question posed pertains, in some of its aspects, to the similarities as well as dissimilarities to be found in comparing such works. To what extent does the framing of the issue and the logics applied overlap or differ from each other? Is there a common scholarly space to be identified or do the contributions remain largely apart from each other? In that context the paper also seeks to explore how the question of Kaliningrad has been problematised and what allowed for a de-problematisation in the context of the Union's enlargement and the various border logics meeting each other in a rather concrete fashion. In addition to dealing with interventions that reflect approaches closer to the EU or the Russian way of thinking, the paper also aims at addressing the state of affairs as to the 'Kaliningrad Puzzle' once there has been a certain meeting of minds in the case of the transit issue. Finally, we set forth to comment on departures required and research needed in view of those aspects of the 'puzzle' that still remain to be tackled.

2. Kaliningrad as a Case In-Between: European Responses

Kaliningrad has over time developed into a rather important issue on the EU-Russian agenda, far more important than its position as a relative small Russian region would in general lead one to assume. As noted by Paul Holtom: "...the level of attention that Kaliningrad has received in Moscow and Brussels, not to mention numerous European capitals, suggests that this territory plays a role in international affairs beyond its size and economic potential".⁵ Once the emergence as a conflictual issue took place, a number of writings particularly on the side of the European Union have aimed at informing about the case.⁶ This has been an important endeavor as such because Kaliningrad had for a long time belonged to the relatively unknown backwoods of the European configuration in being strictly isolated by the East-West divide. Amos Elon, for one, talked about the Kaliningrad as a "nowhere city"⁷, this implying that the region has had, to start with a relatively unbounded position on the European mental maps of space and time.

But why should Kaliningrad matter? Why should the European Union be concerned? Obviously, in blurring various geographic as well as conceptual categories it stands out as a perplexing case both empirically as well as in a wider theoretical perspective. We would like to draw attention to at least two features that call for tackling the case of Kaliningrad in a particular manner.

First, unlike in most cases of border disputes usually debated (Israel – Palestine, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, the Balkans, etc.)⁸, the EU is neither a mediator nor a perturbator in regard to the contested issues, but rather entangled due to the logics at play. Prior to the EU's eastward

⁴ See in particular Batt, 2003.

⁵ See Holtom, 2004 (forthcoming).

⁶ Especially the book edited by James Baxendale, Stephen Dewar and David Gowan (2000) belong to this category. Among the first works along these lines, one may mention the book edited by Pertti Joenniemi and Jan Prawitz, 1998.

⁷ See Amos Elon, 1993.

⁸ See Diez, Stetter and Albert, 2004.

enlargement, Russia's relations with both Lithuania and Poland were by and large 'normal' in their functioning and Kaliningrad did not stand out as a particularly problematic issue. The blurring of boundaries both in a factual and conceptual sense basically occurred with Lithuania and Poland gaining the position of accession countries.

Secondly, the "Kaliningrad Puzzle" does not pertain, as such, to the delineation of borders. It is, instead, about the border regime, i.e. issues related to of border crossing as well as the institutional and functional foundations of borders, including a broad range of soft security challenges in the field of environmental risks, poaching and corruption, human rights, etc. In short, the case of Kaliningrad stands out as one opening up a variety of problematiques very much consonant with themes such as globalization and regionalization.

A view along these lines has been put forward by Judy Batt as she claims that the EU has defined itself anew, since 1989, as a political power with responsibilities for the stability and prosperity of the whole Europe. She asserts that the Union's capacity to realize this ambition depends not only on where its external borders lie, but on how they are managed. Enlargement to the countries of central and eastern Europe is one major prong of the EU's strategy, but some countries (such as Russia) will also remain outside. Yet the implementation of the Schengen *acquis* (border control and visa regime) by new Member States will have a major – but uncertain – impact on regions on either side of the EU's new external border. This, Batt argues, has potential knock-on effects for centre-periphery relations in 'outsider' states, and on their relations with their neighbors once these become EU members and all of these issues are highlighted by the special case of the Kaliningrad Oblast (KO).⁹ The Schengen *acquis communautaire* have become an obligatory condition of membership with the passage of the Amsterdam Treaty, and it was made clear to all candidates that no opt-outs would be allowed (as to the applicant countries) by the existing Member States. Stated shortly: EU's enlargement presented the prospects of isolation not only from the neighboring states, but from the Russian Federation itself, and this might develop, she asserts, into a major bone of contention between the EU and its largest neighbor, the Russian Federation. In general Batt contributes, along a number of other colleagues, to a problematisation as to the interpretation of the prevailing situation by providing a reading of borders, territorial boundedness and political space that might facilitate the finding of less contentious solutions.

James Baxendale and Stephen Dewar stated that the underlying cause consists of Kaliningrad standing out as rather different from the rest of Russia due to its nature as a case in-between: "Its situation is made more acute by its exclave status". Being geographically cut off from the rest of Russia and being both-and, a 'little Russia' increasingly inside the EU, it becomes a problem also for the Union itself. The authors do not aim at juxtaposing a 'warrior' and a 'merchant' scenario along the more functionalist lines of some other Kaliningrad-related writings¹⁰ but they rather stress that the EU's enlargement, with Lithuanian and Polish membership, should not further aggravate the situation of the region, i.e. certain *boundlessness* should be allowed to prevail.

There has been agreement, against this background, among various authors that the issues at stake are rather thorny and if unsolved, the KO could become a source of regional instability. Although the issues of transit have been very much on the forefront, the problem nonetheless stems more generally from Kaliningrad turning, with the Union's enlargement, into an overlapping entity that blurs a variety of geographic and conceptual boundaries. Two somewhat different understandings of political space are brought into contact with each other: the EU has emphasized options for the 'opening up' of economically depressed regions in the light of the prospects of enlargement, whereas Russia – and the Kaliningraders themselves – fear that the consequences might boil down to impoverishment and marginalization. The question then reads whether these understandings match to the degree that the Union and Russia are able, by joint efforts, to develop a *regional dimension* of their policies, allowing perhaps the standard

⁹ See Batt, 2003, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰ Cf. Wellmann, 1995.

territorial logic to fade into the background and instead provide space for *a network logic* that resonates simultaneously with the global, national, regional and local approaches?¹¹ More broadly, the challenge is read as being one related more to post-modernity than modernity in a traditional, well-entrenched manner.

In the sphere of politics, it has usually been Russia that has been actively raising the awareness of European institutions about the peculiar situation of Kaliningrad and the EU has then responded in a variety of ways. However, the pattern has been different in the scholarly world. Most of the research endeavoring at informing about the issues involved, framing them and proposing solutions has its background in institutions located in different EU-countries.¹² One of the first studies focusing particularly on Kaliningrad's borders and the transit issue is part of the same pattern.¹³ It may also be observed that a number of the more conceptual works that have considerably impacted the way Kaliningrad has been framed and discussed in the context of EU's enlargement have a Union-related background.¹⁴

Several scholarly works pay attention to a certain discrepancy in the internal and external policies of the EU. On the one hand the EU has declared its desire to promote the elimination of barriers and dividing lines in Europe, and to aspire in general for increased openness, but on the other hand there are also concerns about a secure Union, one that protects the EU citizens from a variety from external dangers such as illegal immigration, drug trafficking or terrorism. These latter aspirations call for a clear distinction between the inside and an outside of the Union. In other words, the two aims conflict with each other. The aspiration to do away with 'walls' is there in order to promote good relations with the neighboring countries and to assure, among other things, that enlargement also has beneficial effects for various economically depressed regions such as Kaliningrad, a region being semi-integrated into the EU. However, preserving external security through opening up EU's external borders is seen to undermine the Union's internal societal security, while maintaining a strict border regime in the interest of internal security is, in turn, seen to undermine external security.¹⁵

There has been broad agreement in the various studies on Kaliningrad that Poland's and in particular Lithuania's decision to join the EU – in addition to providing new perspectives – complicates the region's position. As to solutions, various proposals have been aired, some of them basically in line with the Union's *acquis*¹⁶ and some suggesting that the EU has to alter its policies to a considerable degree. Particularly Lyndelle Fairlie belongs to this latter category of scholars in suggesting that the answer to the problem of transit consists of amending the Treaty of Amsterdam. This would allow the EU to deal flexibly with the transit and human rights issues at hand, she argues.¹⁷ Paul Holtom, in turn, regarded this as “a somewhat controversial solution” in assisting Russia to maintain influence over the future states in the post-Soviet space (i.e. Russia should be positioned as an outsider). He also pointed out that although the transit issue pertained, in some of its aspects to Russians traveling (by rail or car) from one part of the country to another, this actually took place in the case of Kaliningrad not simply by moving across Russian land but also entailed entering the territory of another country.¹⁸ The implications of Russia's discontinuity in spatial terms is hence to be viewed, in the last instance, in the light of the traditional Westphalian territorial logic as reflected in the Schengen *acquis*.

Yet, the crux of the issue is, in a more change-oriented perspective, not just one of achieving a satisfactory solution with Russia as to borders and border-management. It is also an internal one pertaining to the EU itself and the essence of the Union as reflected in its

¹¹ An approach along these lines has been staked out by Rainer-Elk Anders, 2003.

¹² For example Dönhoff, 1993; Joenniemi and Prawitz, 1998; Müller-Hermann, 1994; and Wellmann, 1996 belong to this category of contributions.

¹³ See Fairlie and Sergounin, 2001.

¹⁴ Particularly Grabbe, 2000 as well as Zielonka, 2000 belong to the landmarks in this field of studies.

¹⁵ On this paradox, see particularly Browning, 2003.

¹⁶ See for example Huisman, 2002 and Joenniemi et.al., 2000.

¹⁷ See Fairlie, 2003.

¹⁸ On this observation, see Holtom, 2004.

boundedness. The question at stake – in this reading – is not merely one of restoring a balance between positive cross-border cooperation and protection against risks, such as spreading of crime, diseases and environmental problems. As borders are sites that have constitutive effects, the solution has unavoidably broader consequences. It pertains rather profoundly to the figure of the EU, the nature of the EU-Russia relationship as well as the future of the overall European configuration. Is there an aspiration towards well bordered spaces with a rather homogenous essence or, instead, tolerance of heterogeneity with ‘fuzzy’ borders and overlapping cases that are both ‘in’ and ‘out’ such as Kaliningrad? And more particularly, is Russia to be regarded as a total outsider in regard to the Union or rather seen as a ‘close outsider’ with a legitimate voice concerning some of the constitutive aspects of the EU itself?

From this latter perspective, the Kaliningrad issue is far from one pertaining to the various technical solutions required in order to achieve an acceptable balance between the Union’s external and internal needs. There are also games of recognition at play. To what extent does Russia accept that Kaliningrad as a ‘little Russia’ and one increasingly located inside the EU is also impacted by the EU and are the Union’s rules and regulations seen as fair and legitimate? Among other things, as remarked by Pami Aalto: the EU’s ability to extend its order is conditioned by what sort of recognition the Russians situated on the Union’s outermost circle and Russia as a hole assign to the EU’s order project. And visa versa, is the EU prepared to accept a view of Russia as a partial insider (due to Kaliningrad’s position as an enclave) and therefore equipped with a legitimate voice at least in some matters that pertain to what is seen as the internal sphere of the Union? The acceptance of the other as an internal Other (rather than an entity strictly on the outside and therefore void of any subjectivity in matters pertaining to the organization of one’s internal sphere) appears to be a precondition for the parties to be able to enter into a dialogue (rather than just a negotiation) on a European order in which regionalization stands out as a core constitutive departure.¹⁹

3. Russia's Kaliningrad Discourse: Identities and Power

The Russian discourse initially reflected a kind of restorationism, although over time the preparedness to open up both in terms of time and space appears to have increased. The interventions have often been tied around two main concepts: identity and power. Of course, there is no strict delineation between them but yet a distinction between identity and power seems to constitute a helpful analytical tool for understanding the discursive dimensions of the KO issue and reviewing its dynamics through different contrasting speech acts.

As to identity, the discourse is largely framed by politically loaded ideas like control over territorial integrity and the “othering” of Europe which is presented as a force preventing Russia from exercising its sovereign rights over the Kaliningrad region. Boundaries are to prevail both as to space and time. The main ideological concepts figuring in this type of discourse consist of ‘dignity’, ‘respect’, ‘pride’, ‘honor’ and ‘principles’.

It appears that quite often the raising of identity-related issues leads to over-generalization of technicalities. This can be explained by at least three factors. The first one relates to an inability of effectively tackling the low-profile, non-political issues of everyday life. The second explanation may, in turn, be found in the sense of exclusion which derives from diffidence in Russia’s potential to become a full-fledged part of integration in the Baltic area.²⁰ The third way of explaining the attractiveness of identity narrative consists of that it is helpful in finding scapegoats. Thus, in view of Valerii Ustiugov, the former deputy head of International Relations Committee of the Federation Council, the bulk of responsibility for the KO’s

¹⁹ For a discussion along these lines, see Aalto, 2004; Joenniemi, 2000.

²⁰ E.g. Minaeva, O., 2002.

development has to be shouldered on the EU²¹, this reading certainly contributing to binary thinking of either-or and self-other.

Many voices in Russia deliberately place the KO question in a rather emotional context, utilizing the rethorics and pathos of wounded nationalism. The Russian exclave is then described as being encircled by unfriendly neighbors; therefore, what matters is restoring the subordination of Kaliningrad to the federal center, and demonstrating the firmness of Russia's stand. Many groupings within the academic elites and beyond have repeatedly insisted on linking the whole set of KO-related issues with the treatment of Russian minorities in the three Baltic republics.²²

Pursuing the issue in terms of clashing identities then leads to assume that Russia's western neighbors deliberately complicate the issue. Along the lines of this logic, the EU is taken to use the KO to exert stronger pressure on Russia in order to weaken the Moscow-Kaliningrad links.²³ Yosif Diskin, the co-chairman of the Council on National Strategy, has called Kaliningrad "a strategic merchandise of the EU", thus in fact accusing the EU of artificially creating a negotiation terrain conducive to a gaining of concessions from Russia in other spheres.²⁴ Maxim Dianov, director of Moscow-based Institute of Regional Problems, deems that Lithuania and Poland are inimical to the development of Kaliningrad's economy and transport infrastructure.²⁵

The pre-eminence of the identity-related discourse extends the spectrum of actors involved in conflict. In particular, the role of mass media is of special salience for (re)framing and mobilizing the public opinion, offering "easy explanations" for mass consumption. Typical for this line of argumentation is the over-emphasis on emotional arguments (like the human rights violations that arguably will flow from higher airplane travel tariffs as compared to those applied in the case of railway tickets). Even in moderate Russian newspapers one can come across an either-or type of framing of the issues at stake like: "Germany did not resign itself to the lost of Eastern Prussia"²⁶, or that "Finland wishes to use KO's wicket-gate to get access to the energy resources of Russia's North West".²⁷ "Inaccessible Lithuania"²⁸, "Vilnius dictates the rules to Russians"²⁹, "Who Has Cheated the Residents of the Exclave?"³⁰ - media headings along these lines covering the KO developments through an identity-related lens have proliferated during recent years.

It is, as such, hardly surprising that the federal opinion-makers resort to discursive strategies of "othering" Europe, although it is more unexpected that also in the Kaliningrad region itself one may come across many supporters of this approach. For example, one of the KO commentators has compared the process of NATO's enlargement with Germany's "Drang nah Osten"³¹, i.e. framing it in terms of a strategic zero-sum contest between inherently hostile countries in a strict either-or manner. Within the region, some political forces issued in February 2003 an open letter in which they protested against the ratification of the border treaty between Russia and Lithuania, speculating that it would incite Lithuania to join NATO and subsequently allow for a blackmailing of Russia.³² Local newspapers covering the first days of border crossing after the introduction of facilitated travel documents in July 2003, resorted widely to technique of "othering" in speaking about an "emaciated lady" from the Russian side and contrasting her

²¹ <http://www.strana.ru/print/151054.html>

²² See, Ivanov, Kolerov and Pavlovskii, 2003.

²³ Vladimirov, 2003.

²⁴ ES razvodit Rossii v tiomnuyu (The EU is Cheating on Russia), at <http://www.apn.ru/lenta/2002/7/25/19933>

²⁵ <http://www.politcom.ru/print.php?fname>

²⁶ See, Riabushev, A.; Sergievskii, S., 2002.

²⁷ http://www.itogi.ru/Paper2002.nsf?Article/Itogi_2002_05_13_11_2219.html

²⁸ *Novaya gazeta*, N 7 (840), January 30 – February 2, 2003, p. 4.

²⁹ *Izvestia*, February 12, 2003, p. 5.

³⁰ *Novye Izvestia*, February 15, 2003, p. 2.

³¹ Chernomorskii, P. Ni transit, ni vizy kaliningradskuyu problemu ne reshat, (Neither transit nor visas bring the solution to Kaliningrad), <http://www.globalrus.ru/index.html?section=review&id=57235>

³² *Baltiiskaya gazeta*, N 6 (74), 20.02.2003, p. 4.

with the Lithuanian frontier guards described as having “wolf-like looks” (who in turn pale in comparison with their Belorussian colleagues who were depicted as being “helpful” and “cordial”).³³ A different story pertaining to border-crossing tends to contain plenty of phrases that play on the identity factor by talking for example about “scared Russian passengers” versus “wicked customer officers” from Lithuania, a “nervous atmosphere” at the border checks, etc.³⁴

Moreover, the “othering” of Europe in the Kaliningrad-related discourse is accompanied by a distancing from Moscow which is perceived as another core of strength, a sort of “Eastern Brussels”. Local opinion makers frequently accuse the federal center for neglecting the Oblast’s interests and in even being more eager to cooperate with the Baltic countries.³⁵ Moscow is verbally treated as encroacher on KO’s privileges³⁶, as a “huge monster that pumps out the local money”³⁷, as a source of troubles and injustices, and so forth. This latter theme has existed to some extent in the more scholarly literature as well.³⁸

To sum up, the accentuation of identity in a form or another paves the way for securitization. This is so as identity discourses purport border-related conflicts such as that of Kaliningrad in terms of two far-away centers (Moscow and Brussels) competing with each other, both of them seen as almost equally remote from and indifferent to the region’s indigenous needs. Kaliningrad is thus represented as a victimized entity whose interests are neglected and disregarded.

It then appears that the discourses pertaining to power politics may be seen as resulting from a sharpening of identity issue. The power policy-related arguments tend to lean, it seems, on core modern concepts such as those of military strength, influence, vulnerability and borders.

Those adhering to power-related arguments tend to frame the issues at stake by the usage of a wider geopolitical context. Russian policies in Kaliningrad appear, against this background, to be heavily influenced by a “defense-oriented thinking” of the upper echelons of the military elite. This grouping gives priority to the accessibility of various routes for the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet along rather classical geopolitical lines. Leonid Ivashov, Vice President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, has expressed this philosophy by suggesting a “holding out to the last” in the case of Kaliningrad. The rationale for that kind of approach consists of Moscow being depicted as being worried about losing its leverage on the region. Some proponents of the power political arguments wish to enable a greater involvement of Belarus in issues pertaining to the KO.³⁹

However, also in the sphere of the power politically informed discourse there is a plurality of voices. The messages emanating with the military circles are based on traditional understanding of hard security. Russian military analysts thus made public their opposition to NATO's presence in the Baltic Sea area⁴⁰.

The former presidential representative in the North-West Federal District, Viktor Cherkesov, himself with a background in the security services, has stood out as yet another Russian voice waging a power political discourse. Cherkesov has been reported as arguing that order and justice in Russia have always been associated with “hard authoritarian power assisted by the army and other power institutions”⁴¹. The Oblast’s Governor Admiral Vladimir Jegorov, a high-ranking military officer by his background, has also placed special emphasis on issues of security and geopolitics. Jegorov has claimed that the international dynamics around Kaliningrad raises more anxieties than hopes and future perspectives.⁴² The international subjectivity of

³³ *Kaliningradskaya Pravda*, N 135 (15798), July 5, 2003, p. 5.

³⁴ *Kaliningradskaya Pravda*, N 213 (15616), October 23, 2002, p. 6.

³⁵ *Baltiiskaya gazeta*, February 20, 2003, p. 2.

³⁶ *Mayak Baltiki*, N 36 (36), 2003, p. 10.

³⁷ *Mayak Baltiki*, N 6 (51), 2003, p. 4.

³⁸ On this, see Abramov and Kuzin, 2003.

³⁹ See Kazin, 2002.

⁴⁰ See Tsykalo, Aliaev and Chiornii, 2003.

⁴¹ <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher09.02.2001>.

⁴² <http://gov.kaliningrad.ru/news.php3uid=0904200101>.

Kaliningrad has under his governorship been significantly inhibited due to sympathies vis-à-vis a nationalistic discourse.

Similarly, a significant portion of the Russian expert community approaches the KO problems from the power political angle as well. One group of analysts, leaning on a pro-Kremlin worldview, emphasizes the geopolitical situation. Thus Valerii Khomiakov, director of the Agency for Applied and Regional Policies, argues that it is above all Germany that lurks behind the various discussions that tend to problematise the of Kaliningrad-Moscow relations⁴³. Svetlana Lurie advocates that Kaliningrad has to be returned to a Russian military outpost instead of having it to shoulder what in her reading stands out as a doubtful role of becoming a “window to Europe”.⁴⁴

In response to what has been conceived as unfriendly gestures originating from the West, Russia – in view of Fiodor Burlatskii, Vice President of the Association for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation⁴⁵, and Yurii Borko, head of the Center for the Study of European Integration at the Institute of Europe in Moscow - must remain tough as to Kaliningrad’s security.⁴⁶ Solomon Ginzburg, director of the “Regional Strategy” Foundation in Kaliningrad, also stated that the regional situation should be perceived and tackled using a geopolitical angle. In his view this is so because the EU dictates that the Union’s standards should also be applied in adjacent areas.⁴⁷ In a very indicative manner, Gleb Pavlovskii, head of the Foundation for Effective Politics, actually used the word “sovereignty” 17 times in a two-page interview in the aftermath of the EU-Russia meeting in Svetlogorsk in May 2002.⁴⁸ He also managed to insert all the basic power-related assumptions into his short intervention. There was hence an allusion to “domino theories” (i.e., he contended that granting a special administrative status for Kaliningrad would provoke a chain reaction in other potentially troublesome parts of Russia); there was the accusation that the local authorities are becoming too self-interested (presumably at the expense of federal interests); and he explicitly admitted that there is rampant corruption to be tackled in the Russian Baltic enclave (e.g., he predicts that as soon as a form of “Kaliningrad citizenship” is introduced, it will be widely sold to outsiders).

The media discourse also adds to the search for power-related solutions. A quote from one of largest federal newspapers is rather indicative of this tendency: “Since the destiny of the KO is the sole concern of Russia, we are supposed to do there whatever we wish. For example, we could try to decrease expenses for border protection. Poles and Lithuanians in this case will have to start additional mobilization to fend off against representatives of those peoples whose rights they prefer to defend from a distance (allusion to the Chechenians, that is) ... Having a naval base in Kaliningrad is also not so bad... You say something about ecology? Sorry, we are short of funds – all money has gone to providing air transportation”.⁴⁹ No less eloquent is the proposal to build a new nuclear plant closer to KO’s borders with Poland and Lithuania”.⁵⁰

4: Features of De-Securitization: Coping with the Technical Issues

Despite the predominance of identity- and power-driven discourses, there are some signs of an emergence of de-securitization starting with the comprehension that a further inclusion of the KO into the Baltic “web of inter-dependency” is imperative. Such inclusion might come about as a result of an application of a standard setting of practices that pertain to a variety of public policy spheres such as the domestic rules of business regulation, endeavors of

⁴³ <http://tema.ntv.ru/interview/16feb2001/244.html>

⁴⁴ Lurie, 2003.

⁴⁵ <http://www.strana.ru/print/145843.html>

⁴⁶ <http://www.strana.ru/print/141456.html>

⁴⁷ <http://gov.kaliningrad.ru/pintro.php3>

⁴⁸ <http://www.strana.ru/print/137124.html>

⁴⁹ Bruni, Lev. Kaliningradskie kozyni (Kaliningrad Assets), at <http://www.vesti.ru/printed/1022753640.html>

⁵⁰ Mikhailov, S., Uglanov, A. 2002.

environmental protection and the implementation of various safety standards. In terms of dropping the security argument from the discourse, it is rewarding to play by the rules, from the easiest ones (like providing the KO residents with valid passports for international travel) to the institutionally most advanced ones (re-admission treaties, ecological standards, eradication of corruption and trans-border crime, etc.).

In particular, the importance of Russia's participation in the Union's Northern Dimension Initiative is frequently mentioned as a factor stimulating Kaliningrad's adaptation to the European standards and practices.⁵¹ Russia is incited to perceive the Northern Dimension as an opportunity to join a "democratic space" defined along the lines of human rights, protection of minorities and the creation of a sound environment. The Northern Dimension philosophy implies that the region is not only geographic in essence, but stands out as a mental and cultural unit as well, and all the participants are expected to impose their meanings on emerging regional constellation. The great advantage, if seen from the perspective of Kaliningrad, is that the Baltic and Nordic region-building projects are not predefined by somebody in Western Europe or elsewhere, thus leaving room for individual initiatives. Hence, there is an ample room for what is often called "imagination", or creativity in approaching the whole spectrum of Kaliningrad-related matters. This again emphasizes the importance of expert communities that focus their intellectual capital on regional issues.

More specifically, the KO-related discourse has partly been de-securitized by measures such as placing the issue of EU-Russia visa-free travel on the policy agenda. The most important point in this context consisted of the understanding that a higher order impact is feasible, and that Russia may gain a better deal by the usage of its working relations with individual EU countries if one is to place this issue on the negotiating table. Likewise, a gradual improvement in the Russian-Polish and the Russian-Lithuanian relations has been conducive to a decline of security-related concerns. It seems, in this context, that Moscow has received sufficient confirmation indicating that no actor in the Baltic area is really interested in the appearance of Kaliningrad as a 'fourth Baltic republic'. Worries related to the regional constellation have also been alleviated by the promotion of a joint agenda on counter-terrorism, environmental issues as well as various anti-corruption programs and the fighting against transmittable diseases. The various studies of St.Petersburg-based «Strategia» Center for Research in Humanities & Political Science led by Alexander Sungurov and Mikhail Gorny, have been particularly helpful in re-conceptualizing soft security as a public policy phenomenon that necessitates a deeper involvement of the institutions pertaining to civil society⁵².

The dropping of the 'hard' security arguments has been further supported by a number of assumptions that it is erroneous to depict the Oblast in terms of an encircled territory. Russia should rather, the argument goes, concentrate its efforts on upgrading the ferry and aircraft communications between Kaliningrad and mainland Russia.⁵³ This view has been advanced, among others, by Konstantin Voronov, an expert at the Center for European Studies at the Institute for World Economy and International Relations, and Viacheslav Nikonov, President of the "Politika" Foundation. Furthermore, the conviction has grown that Russia faces *technical* rather than explicitly *political* problems in KO, and that the roots of the issue lay – if seen from this perspective – in the first place with Russia itself.

A more self-critical stance has also grown forth in the sense that there is an increasing recognition that a main bulk of the troubles with Kaliningrad pertain to the spread of a "shadow economy". In a similar vein, it has been recognized that mismanagement looms large. For example, the Ministry of Railroads has been lambasted because of its argued inability to properly organize the transit (in terms of communication) after introducing of the facilitated travel

⁵¹ Joenniemi and Sergounin, 2003.

⁵² www.strategy-spb.ru

⁵³ <http://www.strana.ru/print/147346.html>

documents in 2003.⁵⁴ Some observers have turned their eyes on the perceived ineffectiveness of the local passport departments as well paid attention to the improper actions of the military commanders who preclude the officers from getting the papers for Russian citizenship in time (needed for transit according to the newly agreed rules).⁵⁵ The central government is instructed to take charge of providing the residents of the Oblast with international passports (instead of the now obsolete Soviet ones).

It has also been increasingly recognized in the expert-oriented discourse that Russia has to have some understanding in regard to the difficulties that the EU is facing in granting exceptions to the Schengen *acquis*. For example, Irina Kobrinskaia, director of the Foundation for Prospective Studies and Initiatives in Moscow, points out that the EU has no obligation as such to help overcome economic problems intrinsic to Kaliningrad.⁵⁶ It has also been conceded that before raising the issue of visa-free travel, the federal authorities should themselves be prepared to sign a re-admission treaty with the EU, thus taking full responsibility for accepting back to Russia thousands of illegal migrants from Asian countries and tightening border controls vis-à-vis the CIS countries. Signing such a document has been recognized as a tall order but yet necessary for progress to be made.

In the process of re-framing what the Kaliningrad issue is basically about, it has also been argued that Kaliningrad's future does not pertain, in the first instance, to new border crossing arrangements. It is at least equally important, it has been claimed, that Russia itself appears to lack the required resources for drastically upgrading the region's links to the motherland.

On the economic side the low level competitiveness as to the local commodities has been identified as one impeding factor. Kaliningrad does thus not stand, argues Natalia Smorodinskaia, head of the Center for Growth Poles Analysis at the Russian Institute of Economics, out as being doomed to affluence once the various more political obstacles for smooth co-operation and exchange have been removed.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, a number of issues pertaining to the domestic rather than the international setting have been raised. It has been argued that what has exacerbated the position of Kaliningrad consists above all by the federal center's lack of attention to the regional actors and their disinterest in solving the plethora of issues that pertain to the enclave/exclave.⁵⁸ Maxim Dianov, director of the Institute of Regional Issues in Moscow, has called on the Kaliningrad elite to be more active in lobbying the federal center on behalf of their regional interests, although the inadequacy of Kaliningrad's local administration has been a target for criticism as well.⁵⁹

An outstanding sign of an increased tendency to draw on other argument than those related to security consists of the approaches applied to the Kaliningrad issue in the work of a group of "young Kaliningrad experts". This group consists of analysts from the East-West Institute and the Agency for Regional Development. They argue that it is above all the small and medium-size businesses and information services that might lay the foundation for Kaliningrad's reorientation to the European markets.⁶⁰ This kind of framing appears to be in tune with broader discourses as, for example, within Kaliningrad's political elite there are signs to be traced of a growing understanding that long-term strategic planning is imperative for regional survival.⁶¹ The local expert community, therefore, may be on its way of becoming an important pressure group highlighting that the argued principal failure of the Jegorov administration resides basically in a lack of fresh ideas, a harboring of limited analytical capabilities and the low

⁵⁴ *Vremia novostei*, N 119, July 3, 2003, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *Mayak Baltiki*, N 6 (51), 2003, p. 6.

⁵⁶ See Kobrinskaia 2002.

⁵⁷ See the contribution by Smorodinskaia, Natalia. *Baltiiskaya zagvozdka* (The Baltic Unease), at <http://www.expert.ru/sever/current/tema.shtml>

⁵⁸ <http://www.apn.ru/diagnostics/>, July 11, 2002

⁵⁹ *Russkii kurier*, N 137, November 1, 2003, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Krom, Elena. *V poiskakh mysley* (In search for thoughts), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=176>

⁶¹ <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=386>

coherence between all subjects of policy planning (governmental bodies, think-tanks, non-profit organizations and business associations).⁶² On a more general level attention has been paid to the constraining character of the existing regional division in Russia. The Strategic Design Centre of the North-West Federation, for example, while suggesting a number of improvements both conceptually and administratively, talks about the management system of the previous epoch as being outdated, inefficient, and inadequately responding to various challenges which Russia is currently facing. Deliberately opposing any restorationist approach, the Centre aims at staking out a new course premised on active and innovative approaches with the Oblast not being approached as a special case but instead treated in a broader macro-regional context. Kaliningrad is in this perspective seen as being of paramount importance “for Russia to establish its independent stance within the framework of international integration”. Rather than comprehending the Oblast as a bastion of Russian statehood in an unfriendly environment, it is being depicted as a platform for developing new modalities of relations with the enlarged EU. What is at stake, it seems, is rather maintaining Russia’s political subjectivity as such in the situation when the region risks becoming the passive object of EU’s policies. Instead of a ‘subject-object’ constellation, the Centre calls for an encounter between two subjectivities that meet each other in a dialogue, and tries to stake out the requirements for such an encounter to become possible in the Russian context.⁶³

The more critical as well as innovative voices do not appear to operate in isolation – as is already exemplified by the work of the Strategic Design Centre - but seem to have at least some impact on the policies pursued. For example, John Mroz, President of the East-West Institute, has confirmed that in 2001 Governor Jegorov contacted the international think-tank that Mroz is running and proposed a study on budget transparency in relation to Kaliningrad Oblast to be prepared.⁶⁴ Scholars were thus engaged in a locally crucial process.

The strategies of de-securitizing are equally visible in some publications originating with some of the Russian think-tanks. Thus, the Council on Foreign & Defense Policy (SVOP) has issued a number of prescriptions indicating the departure from a solely power-centric platform to a more issue-oriented one. It is thought, along these lines, that apart from the central state, other actors - such as business institutions (LUKOil), the media, and the regional administrations - might also play a role in cross-border relations.⁶⁵ In thinking about the future of the Oblast, the experience of Euroregions (especially “Neman” and “Saule”) should be taken into account and given some prominence.

One of the core issues widely debated among Russian scholars consists of the meaning provided to the concept of a ‘pilot’ region. Such a format may be read as a testing ground for innovations, the concept referring to a sort of innovative leadership. However, the most common usage of the ‘pilot’ metaphor pertains to the perspective of disseminating the “success story” experience. In the case of KO, this reading calls for an important specification as there exists at least three different understandings in regard to who has to be interested in taking advantage of the ‘pilot’ experience.

Firstly, the main consumers or targets of the pilot experience are to be the other regions of Russia. In this reading, the whole idea of “pilotness” means projecting the positive aspects of the Oblast’s achievements onto other Russian territories. Still, the problem here is that the deeply rooted understanding of Kaliningrad as standing out as a highly unique case due to its geographic isolation from mainland Russia and being encircled by the EU may conceptually clash with the expectations that the Kaliningrad experience is repeatable elsewhere.

⁶² <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=161>

⁶³ See, *Doctrine of the Development of the Northwest of Russia*, St. Petersburg, ‘Severo-Zapad’. English translation available at: <http://www.Rusrev.org>. See also Prozorov, 2004, pp. 10-12.

⁶⁴ Strategic Design Center web site, at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=280>

⁶⁵ See *Rossia i Pribaltika* (Russia and the Baltic States). Edited by by S.Yurgens and S.Karaganov, at <http://www.svop.ru/yuka/784.shtml>

The second aspect of the pilot idea points to the Russian government as the main beneficiary of the innovations brought about by such a standing.⁶⁶ This reading anticipates that the reforms implemented in the case of Kaliningrad will turn more advanced and become more far-reaching than elsewhere in Russia.⁶⁷ In particular, the so called “Shuvalov group” of experts attached to the presidential administration has included KO on its top list of five most urgent national priorities. The group has drafted specific recommendations to be implemented to get Kaliningrad going. These consist of a new version of the Special Economic Zone, simplified customs regulations, special emphasis on science and research development and upgrading of other spheres within the Oblast.⁶⁸

The third – and the most adequate - reading consist of the idea that the KO might turn into a pilot region in a trans-national sense due to the region’s advanced integration with the European neighbors and its speedy adaptation to the EU standards. This logic implies that although Russia as a whole does not feel ready to behave as a country part of the Baltic region, some of its territories might nonetheless become transformed into “Baltic regions”. Kaliningrad may obviously constitute a relevant case in this regard⁶⁹ as its future model may in any case be described as resonating with “European laws applied on Russian territory”. This approach is very much in tune with the «end of Eurasia» concept advanced by Dmitry Trenin saying that «Russia-Eurasia is over», and the «unified Europe is a natural place for Russia's own integration as a European country in an appropriate form».⁷⁰

In sum, the issue-related scholarly discourse on Kaliningrad reflects a broad variety of views. They are more often than not apart from each other. Most of the authors that have tackled the issue call for explicitly liberal, market-oriented solutions entailing among other things drastic limitations to bureaucratic interference in business operations, recommendation pertaining to a decreasing the sphere where licenses are required and call more generally for a weakening of the various administrative barriers impinging on the local economy.⁷¹ Kaliningrad as a theme appears in this sense to stimulate a much needed discourse on the need to reduce the amount of bureaucracy with such a debate having considerable implications for the state of affairs in Russia more generally.

5. Concluding Remarks

The EU-European and the Russian discourses on the “Kaliningrad Puzzle” – including those pertaining to a scholarly exchange of views – remain largely apart from each other, although there is some overlap as well. This pertains both to the way of conducting research as there has been a number of joint projects as well as publications inviting for an exchange of views. In other words, there exists a shared scholarly and conceptual space, and the issue of Kaliningrad has to some extent functioned as a meeting-point inviting for an exchange of views.

«The pilot region» concept, for example, has to be viewed as a part of this common space of ideas in which new approaches to the regional planning gain increased prominence. In particular, there has been quite a number of attempts to address the KO issue in the so called ‘project language’, standing out as one of most powerful elements of de-securitization strategy. The ‘project language’ conceived in a business programming milieu and then transferred to the political domain constitutes a tool for bridging the gap between the Russian (that is highly politicized) discourse on KO and the European one, with the latter being far more technical as to its background.

⁶⁶ The KO as a possible pilot region within the context of EU – Russia relations in the 21st century. Parliamentary Hearings, Kaliningrad, February 16, 2001, p. 4.

⁶⁷ See Fiodorov, 2001.

⁶⁸ President Putin's web site, at www.vvp.ru/docs/group/kaliningrad/3905.html

⁶⁹ See Morozov, 2003.

⁷⁰ See Trenin, 2001.

⁷¹ See Kuznetsova & Mau , 2002.

Issues pertaining to boundedness have in general been high on the agenda in both camps, albeit the orientation and dynamics appear to some extent differ from each other. Initially many of the Russian voices argued for a preservation of the various spatial as well as temporal boundaries whereas the EU-oriented debate seemed to be more inclined to open up and search for fluid solutions. The various views on Kaliningrad as a space 'in-between' or even a 'third space' did not strike a cord, and concepts such as 'networking' have not to any larger degree found their way into the lexicon of joint and shared vocabularies. However, at the same time it has been apparent that many of the Russian voices have drawn on discourses pertaining to departures such as 'Europe whole and free' or doing away with walls in the post-Cold War Europe. They have, at least on a technical level (albeit usually not on the conceptual one) appealed for the preservation of openness and opted for inclusive solutions rather than closure and strict moves of bordering. These stances have over time also been increasingly backed up by theoretical departures as well as conceptual innovations as indicated for example by the work of Strategic Designs Centre of the North-West Federal District or the endeavor of functionalist differentiation often embedded in the idea of Kaliningrad as a 'pilot' region. As to the temporal aspects of Kaliningrad, there appears to be an increasing preparedness to consider various departures that reach beyond the post-World War decades of Soviet and Russian rule. This goes for research pertaining to history of the region, the public and identity-related discourse as well as the more official policies in the sense that it is at least tolerated that Kaliningrad/Königsberg celebrates its 750th anniversary in the year 2006. This implies that Kaliningrad is on its way of becoming less strictly bounded, and in some sense detemporalised, in terms of its location in time being related to Russian, Prussian, Lithuanian as well as Polish history.

It appears less likely, against this background, that Kaliningrad remains a major bone of contention between the EU and Russia and that the issue of bordering brings about severe conflicts. The contest over the transit issue, with the 'Facilitated Travel Document' as at least a temporary solution, appears to indicate that negotiations may yield results even in contentious cases. Yet it has to be remarked that the larger issues linked to the question of boundaries are far from settled. They do not only have to do with boundaries in the context of the EU-Russia relationship but have intra-EU as well as intra-Russian qualities as well. This is so as Kaliningrad remains a case in-between, one that blurs a number of established borders both in terms of political practice as well as conceptually.

This implies that also the more scholarly dialogue on Kaliningrad has to be continued and brought further. There is still a host of misunderstandings and discrepancies to sort out. For example, some Russian experts tend to equate the concept of 'soft security' with domestic security, and 'soft power' with economic strength⁷². Discursive differences sometimes reveal deeply rooted complexes typical for the Russian way of seeing the world in terms of time and space. One of striking examples consists of the widely circulating expression 'EU enlargement at the expense of the countries of the Baltic region'⁷³, containing a strong allusion to various alleged disadvantages that Russia may face and is asked to put up with, as well as comprehensions pertaining to the assumed expansionist nature of the whole process of enlargement. Once enlargement is conceived in zero-sum terms, it obviously becomes hard to discuss any innovative and creative solutions premised on less bounded perceptions of political space pertaining both to time and space. Yet, on balance, it may also be observed that on the EU-side a variety of modernist, that is strictly bounded departures appear to be increasingly in vogue. As the transit issue was solved on a temporary basis, to be reviewed in 2005, it may be that even this achievement is still open to question and calls for further study.

⁷² See Potiomkina, 2001.

⁷³ See Bukharin, 2001.

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