

Small but Smart? How the Balt(ic)s Are Contributing to the European Whole

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Baltic Region in the EU

The notion of the Baltic Region has a double meaning. On the one hand, it refers to three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) gaining their membership in European Union in 2004, but on the other hand, it refers to the whole Baltic Sea Area (including also Finland, Sweden, Denmark and parts of Germany, Poland and Russia). These two Baltic regions are often overlapping and their logic is often but not necessary congruent. In this chapter the role of both Baltic regions in the recent EU development are examined but emphasis would be on the first.

In the European North, something that can be called as “the regionalist revolt” took place in the 1990s (Joenniemi 2003, 226). Then Northern Europe represented a true experimental area of regionalisation in whole European framework and a prime example of Europe of regions. The Baltic Sea based cooperation (i.e. the Council of Baltic Sea States) opened up intensive regionalisation and networking in the beginning of the 1990s across the old Iron Curtain. Even if the whole process was then initiated by Scandinavians and Northern Germans it was the re-emergence of three small Baltic States which set dynamism of regionalisation; it created option and necessity to regionalisation. At that time Baltic based regionalisation was seen necessary to counterbalance Central and Western European regionalisation and thus prevent marginalisation of Northern Europe (Lehti 2003). Regionalisation was not then integrated to the European Union but was built more or less as a parallel system. Nordic enlargement in 1995, when Finland and Sweden received the EU membership, already brought the EU into more central position but finally a decade later Baltic States’ membership in the EU transformed the Baltic Sea almost as an inland sea of EU with small but important Russian enclaves of Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg. Since enlargements the Baltic Sea area cooperation is not anymore possible to develop as parallel system because the EU “has become a northern European power” that sets framework for regional cooperation (Aalto 2006, 1).

Since 2004 integration of the Baltic Sea region into the EU based system has been the major challenge. Is there emerging a Baltic Sea Area group in the EU contrasting itself to the Mediterranean group? Or do diverse interests and identities among Baltic Sea States hinder the emergence of new regional grouping? At the moment, the EU is shaping its strategy for the Baltic Sea Area but the major question is, do Baltic Sea Area countries have their own EU policy. Nonetheless, Russian position in Baltic Area cooperation constitutes major challenge and problem. How it is possible to engage Russia in to Baltic Sea Area based cooperation that is shaped within

the EU framework and vice versa how it is possible to avoid exclusion of Russia from Baltic cooperation?

The EU membership was for three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – a fulfillment of long-term dreams. It was seen to seal their belonging to the West and thus being a proof of successful escape from Russian sphere, easternness. Further, membership symbolized ultimate transformation from abnormality representing Soviet past to state of normality (Stukuls Eglits 2002, 8-10). The route from one union to another, from a Soviet republic to a EU country, took only just over a decade and it is obvious that if other former Soviet republics would never follow the Baltic path it would be happened somewhere in distant future. The Baltic story of returning to Europe is thus indisputable success story but simultaneously than new membership represented fulfillment of a decade long political struggle it marks also an end of dominating driving force and dynamism in Baltic foreign policies. The answers to political goals are no longer as simple and obvious as they were in the ‘heroic age’ of struggle towards the West (Goble 2005, 19-20). Thus it is rather natural that fulfillment has been followed skepticism but also challenge towards the “old Europe”. Europe and West are not anymore seen only through idealized glasses but major question has become how it is possible to contribute to Europe and then what would be ideal Europe from Baltic perspective.

The EU membership can be regarded as pointing the end of a decade long transition period and beginning of normal statehood. Still the myth of backward Eastern Europe has not vanished in minds of western Europeans. The old Iron Curtain has been replaced by the Silk Curtain and as Merje Kuus (2004, 484) argues even after eastern enlargement division between European ”Europe” and not-yet-fully European ”Eastern Europe” is still there. Many in the western part of Europe are still looking new members as poor and backward cousins who should follow the same path to modernity as they have done and challenge of “East Europeans” comes always as surprise and is regarded as ingratitude attitude and mark of immaturity.

Membership of the tiny Baltic States (and other new eastern European countries) has already drastically changed the EU if following the logic of Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford. According to them (2005, 49) “enlargement is not just about getting bigger but is about transformation”. Thus, new member-states including small Baltic States reshaped the EU despite many in western Europe comprehend enlargement as assimilation or integration of former “eastern lands” into sphere of “western civilization”. Still, bringing countries with different historical trajectories together have a deeper influence. Following Delanty’s and Rumford’s logic: Europe “is no longer based on a

singular, western modernity, but multiple modernities” and Europe is becoming more poly-centric, with more than one centre and also more than one historical origin. but even if that is case the old members acted and believed that enlargement was merely process of assimilation to western European standards than a real change. Therefore I would argue that tension between emergence of new poly-centric Europe with different historical memories would constitute major challenge and dynamism for shaping the future EU.

Looking from the Baltic States’ perspective major challenge within the EU obviously is their marginality and thus how they can have their voice to be heard. Among member-states the Baltic States are among the smallest. Their population, 7 million inhabitants altogether, consisted only 1,4 % of whole European population. If regarding their economic their share is even smaller – only 0,6 of EU’s gross GDP. Further they located just on the northeastern border of the EU faraway from traditional power centres. Are thus new members doomed to be just peripheral, invisible, powerless and small? How could they influence on the EU’s development and do their opinions and policies matter? I would outline following Christopher Browning’s (2006) formulation that question is not only how small can be salient but merely how it can be smart.

Small, Salient and Smart

Too often small states are seen just as objects of international politics, lack of constitutive voice and capacity to shape broader European developments. I would still argue that small and marginal, like the Baltic States, could influence on the EU but capability and forms of influencing are different than that of big powers. For that purpose it is necessary to analyze the notions of small state and marginality. Following Browning’s (2006) formulation being understood as marginal, peripheral or remote should not be equated with a lack of subjectivity or capacity to influence. Margins have some ability to bite back. It is obvious not all small states are locating on margins and that not all margins are consisting just small states. But in the case of three Baltic States these two phenomena are clearly congruent and thus set limits to their influence within the EU.

Traditional Realist and Neorealist reading comprehends smallness equivalent to lack of power and equivalent smallness with weakness. Liberal institutionalists have instead emphasized that in security communities like the EU realist power political game does not hold because of existence of “a dense network of norms of acceptable behaviour”. Thus, small states are seen as strong supporter of international institutions which offer for them opportunities to manoeuvre and influence.

Cognitivist approach to small-state-hood has emphasized “how defining small states is as much about (self)-perception as absolute or relative definitions”. Constructivist reading instead points that smallness can be retold alternative as a resource of innovative power and emphasizing their peace-loving and altruistic policy. What is important is power of signifying and naming and thus capability to shape conceptualization of Europe. (Browning 2006, 670-4. See also Browning & Joenniemi 2004, 700.)

Liberal institutionalist interpretation of the EU’s role have seemingly predominates Balts’ self-perception. For example Ambassador Margus Laidre declares that: “For small countries it is crucial to be visible in the ever changing world” and continues that the EU “gives a place in the sun to Europe’s smaller and middle-sized nations.”¹ In international arena small and marginal state could be either invisible as they rather often are or salient if they manage successfully play diplomatic game. But does visible position automatically guarantee power? I would argue instead of being small and invisible small states have to be smart but being smart is not necessary requiring of being salient. Smartness is ability to use uncertain position on the edge and ability to influence of discourses and conceptualizations. Presumption of liberal institutionalism that existence of security communities offers opportunities to small states to influence can be taken then as starting point but that does not yet express how to act smartly. Further, it is necessary to recognize also cognitivist emphasis on self-perception because smallness is relative. Nevertheless, it is not only question of being small but I would argue that far more important is how to cope with smallness and marginality. Thus I would further argue that being smart is associated with identity-politics. That is how Europe is written into national identity and how it is possible to cope with marginality.

Core-periphery relationship is not just question of power but it is also an identity issue. As Ole Wæver (2002) emphasised an analysis of domestic discourses on “we” concept like state, nation, ‘people’ and Europe can explain foreign policies. The meaning of statehood or nationhood is contingent and it is crucial to ask how the different state/nations in different ways have ‘Europe’ integrated into their we’s. Thus, among those nations regarding themselves as small and marginal Europe is depicted differently and then obviously expectations and interests towards European Union are different.

Baltic nationalism could be categorized various ways (ethnic nationalism, peripheral nationalism, separatist nationalism, non-dominant ethnic group) according to which theory is adapted but what is common to all them is omnipresent need to convince and assure oneself of one’s right to exist.

Search for self-esteem, subjectivity and acceptance are dominating political discourse of small state. Can national dignity then be achieved through positive narration of marginality? According to longer perspective there are available two alternative policies. First escape from marginality towards centre and call for recognition of the centre. Or, then escape to marginality for finding uniqueness and use marginality as a source of strong self-esteem. (Browning & Lehti 2007) Visibility and goals of influencing are different in each case. The first based on approval of existing policies, avoiding of controversies and tactic of being present there where decisions are made. In second case goals are contradicted with the centre and open or hidden challenge is given. The margin is then often declaring to be home of reforms and necessary change. Combination of both identity-political tactics is as well possible.

If we are concentrating instead of visibility to smartness the core – margin relations should be replaced by triangle between the core (the Brussels in this case), margin (the Baltic States) and the what is outside (Russia and other post-Soviet countries). As Noel Parker (2006) emphasizes the power of margins lies on their uncertain position on the edge and, thus, capability to manoeuvre between the core and the outside. Margins are connected beyond the boundary and that offers for them various way to manoeuvre and influence. Margin could adopt a role of a medium of communication and negotiation between the EU and outside. They could pretend to adopt from identity of the centre but this could contrary limit their influence and lead to further marginalization. They could play one centre off against other. They could further offer an alternative to a dominant centre but not aiming to replace the centre. Finally they could provide order in the unknown beyond the centres's sphere. Thus, to be smart is connected self-esteem and thus it is identity-political issue. Taking Europe as granted or having one's own vision of European development based on different identity-political standings and they contribute different kind of policies.

The membership in western organisations was for over decade a driving force of the Baltic foreign and identity politics. They aimed in all possible ways to convince their belonging to the West. This desperate escaping from "easterness" based on clear escape from marginality politics in which models and guidance coming from the Brussels was accepted without any doubts. The Baltic States has been regarded during their membership negotiation and after by many as quick-learners and model pupil in their relations to the EU. According to Kuus (2007, 104-113) this however thus not necessary mean that the Balts unconditionally tried to imitate western Europeans but merely that they rather quickly learned what west Europeans wanted to hear and how they were expected to behave. In case of small, un-known countries like the Baltic States often a few diplomats or

politicians or artists represent the whole nation to foreign observers and thus beyond this image of “goody-goody Estonians” (or Latvians or Lithuanians) gradual strengthening of Euro-scepticism but also challenge for “old Europeans” remained a long unknown.

However, an obvious identity-political shift from “escape from marginality” to “escape to marginality” has taken place in the Baltic identity-politics since gaining membership. Baltic politicians have for some years already reminded the domestic and foreign public about the growth rates of their economy and have depicted themselves as quick learners of market economics. Recently, it has even been added that the Balts are more efficient and more successful in their realization reforms than the old established states and that they therefore really do have something to teach other Europeans. As Kristina Ojuland, the Estonian foreign minister, declared in a speech in the EU heartland of Brussels in October 2002, ‘Estonia has on the basis of its reforms and progress acquired enough self-confidence to be able to address with an innovatory spirit also the matter of reforming the European Union’.²

The Balts and, in particular, Estonians have found strong self-esteem based on their economic success story. Economic miracle constitutes currently a source of national pride that needs to be secured so that national sovereignty can survive and flourish. It has contrasted them with certain countries and brought them closer to others. In particular, the Nordic countries have accused the Balts of being stowaways in the EU, while the joint article of the Estonian premier Parts and the British premier Blair calling for autonomy of taxation express a new linkage in Europe.³ And obviously neo-liberal policies keep the Balts ideologically close to the American model.

The Balts are no longer, it seems, emulating ‘western’ Europeans as they were some years ago but now they are arguing that in certain key ‘progressive’ sectors they are actually ahead of many western states and will soon overtake the rest. In the words of Ojuland, the Balts see themselves as the ‘Tigers of Europe’ a term which refers to the Asian examples of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore and, more recently, the EU’s own ‘Celtic Tiger’, Ireland. Following Ojuland’s formulation, they may be tiny but nonetheless ‘Tiny Tigers will always be Tigers’.⁴

The Balts are claiming to be forerunners in comparison to the ‘old Europe’ of France and Germany that is presented as the uncompromising and stagnating part of the continent on whom the blame for the shrinking role of the EU in the global markets. According to neo-liberal theories, growth rates,

competitiveness and the flexibility to react to changes in global markets before they even happen are the main tools for the EU to survive. To learn, the EU truly needs a 'new' Europe according to Estonian economist (Varbalane 2005). Just recently economic stagnation may have had some effects that would shake their self-confidence.

It looks, however, that "tiny tigerhood" has had no major expressions in the Balts' EU policy so far. It has remained more or less as a narration to challenge the old Europe, broke the model pupil role and narrate their nation among forerunners of Europe shapers. It has represented highly important identity-political shift from which is possible to contribute with unique voice and challenge existing policies. So far the best expression has been found in common resistance of deepening integration into social issues and taxation which has been seen as threat to economic miracle. Another manifestation was seen during early years of the Iraq War. When Europe was split to pro-American and anti-American the Balts did not hesitate to declare their loyalty to the US. They would still accept the US leadership of western world (Lehti 2007). However, the strong support for Washington is intertwined with their troubled relationship with Russia. As Bugajski and Teleki (2005, 100) notice "For the Baltic countries, in particular, if Russia continues to act assertively under President Vladimir Putin's authoritarianism while the EU's security and foreign policy is perceived to be lacking muscle, it seems implausible that pro-Washington positions will weaken in Tallinn, Riga, or Vilnius." I would argue that the Baltic States has remained entangled to Russia and thus security political interests overrun EU communality. Because of dominance of security politics the Baltic States have also remained in their EU policy more or less one-issue-countries and their activity is associated to Russian question.

Location on the EU – Russia border is position for the Balts that very much defines and determines limits and possibilities to influence on the whole EU. Living on the border gives potential power to the Baltic States. Delanty & Rumford (2005, 131-4) remind that borders create new space - a borderland. A borderland is a place where local, regional, national and international come together. It also extends to both sides of the EU border. Existence of the borderland signifies the fragmentation of spatial units previous thought robust. Thus, borders just not just divide but could also unify. But the shape and significance of borderland depends on geostrategic models of constructing the EU's external border or frontier.

Four geostrategic models introduced by Walters (2004) to organize the space of the border between EU-Europe and the outsider offers useful tools to study position of countries on the border and their

possibilities for own maneuvers. Walters presupposes that the EU's rule and norm setting power exceeds its nominal outside boundary of the EU and he is studying how the EU's power is approaching those on the outside. The first model he calls as *networked (non)border* that is associated with 'borderless world' and 'free movement of people, goods and services'. Various networks, communication and interaction crossing the border are creating bonds and ties that make the border invisible. This corresponds well with 1990s vision of Europe of Olympic Rings that is often called as neomedieval Europe that signify opposite to modern Westphalian model of organizing political space. The second geostrategy is called *march*, in which a certain buffer zone is created and preserved between two entities. In the early phase before the EU's eastern enlargement this was at least partly one dimension from Brussels point of view. The third geostrategy is *colonial frontier*, in which the frontier is a place of dynamic interaction and assimilation but based on an asymmetric relationship in which the dominant power "assumes a right to define what is appropriate and just". Colonial frontier is treated as the space of expansion when the fourth category, *limes*, is constituting a more permanent edge, fringe or limit that is crossing the frontier separating two entities. It is based on asymmetric relations but hegemonic power does not aim to expand but rather set limits to expansion but for that purpose stretching a certain regulation on the other side of the border.

The Europe of concentric circles and the Europe of Olympic rings have represented two alternative models of future development. The latter represents a regionalized future in which several sub-centres are emerging. The latter is often associated with an imperial metaphor of Europe which based existence of the core and concentric circles rounding it. This Europe lacks clearly defined outside borders but instead creates kind of colonial frontier. Limes instead approaches traditional Westphalian model with strictly defined borders. The era of eastern enlargement based very much on colonial frontier model in which the EU rules were extended over the EU border before sealing the membership. After 2004 enlargement the EU has introduced new rules to arrange its external relationships and newly established European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) comes close to this idea of *limes* (Browning & Joenniemi 2007. See also Browning 2005.).

After the 2004 enlargement former flexible attitude towards cooperation with the EU neighbours has changed to be stricter and more uniform that has not allowed similar regional departures than previous. Now the EU aims at a more standardised and unambiguous policy towards all the close neighbours,⁵ which obviously limits regional freedom to depict alternative policies within and across the EU's external border. The driving force behind reforms is needed to control and prevent

further enlargement and instead set final borders for the EU. For this purpose it is important to restrain hopes in several Eastern European countries like the Ukraine or Moldova regarding their expectation of achieving membership in the near future. Instead Brussels would like to see the emergence of a “ring of friends” around its external borders that are bound to the EU but are not in the waiting room for full membership. Thus, the main function of ENP is to determine who remains permanently outside the EU and how relations with close outsiders will be organised.

Changes in the EU’s geostrategies set frames for building of border-areas but still as influential is the perception of those nations living on the border. Borderland is possible to emerge also in principle across very regulated border like that of the Schengen border but beside the regulation of the core the borderland based on policy of those living on the border. Further, it is possible to challenge existing geosrategy through one’s own active policy. That is why the Balts’ vision of their position on the border and shape of the border are determining their activity.

In the Balts’ geopolitical visions, there has been no place for Europe in between the EU and Russia, a grey zone on the border area, but options were only to remain on the Russian sphere or to be accepted as a full member in the western political institutions. Russia was securitized Baltic rhetoric in very beginning and seen as a main threat for Baltic sovereignty and thus the only remaining option was desperately to seek recognition for one’s own Europeaness and westerness from western powers. Estonian foreign minister Jüri Luik mapped Estonian in 1994 to be locating between the Devil and the deep Blue Sea (Smith 2003). And it was this Baltic Sea that seen as a major route to Europe and the West. Over a decade latter and after receiving membership in the EU and NATO the same logic can be still recognized from Balts’ geopolitical rhetoric. The nucleus of the post-Cold War Estonian national drama is formed by the civilizational narrative, defining what the Baltic States are and what it aren’t. By emphasising country’s fundamental differences from Russia, they are placed on the Western side of the civilizational fault line. “Through the reification of differences, the civilizational narrative generates the notion that Estonia is fundamentally insecure because it is located on a putative civilizational boundary” as Merje Kuus (2007, 55) reminds. This omnipresent feeling of insecurity is not necessarily linked to Russian state or military threat posed by it but instead “is framed in terms of Russian identity and culture-Russianness as such.” (Ibid, 56) Russianness is presented as essentially alien to the West.

Although in an apparently more secure position brought by the EU and NATO memberships, the primary interests of the foreign policy of new member states, as Ilves (2005, 197) argues, still lie in

the East. As Mälksoo (2006, 282-6) points out, the Balts after becoming EU member-states have emphatically tried to influence the formulations of the EU's Russian policy and in particular introduced more sceptical views towards Russia. The potential results of this policy were seen at EU-Russia Summit in November 2006 in Helsinki in which Polish resistance prevented the opening of negotiations for a new EU-Russia partnership. Another excellent recent example how the Balts' have power to influence to the EU's Russian policy is Lithuanian active campaign to introduce their own strict criteria to EU-Russia partnership negotiation during spring 2008. Deadlock was finally solved by introducing Lithuanian provisions into the EU mandate. These criteria include three issues: the Druzhba pipeline, Medininkai massacre and frozen conflicts of Georgia and Moldova.⁶ The Druzhba (literally friendship) pipeline is the world's longest oil pipeline, it carries oil from southeast Russia to points in Ukraine, Hungary, Poland, and Germany. The pipeline has had a branch supplying Lithuanian Mazeikiiai Oil but but the supply of cure was suspended in July 2006 after selling company to Poles and Lithuanians claim reasons being political. So-called Medininkai massacre took place in 1991 when Soviet OMON (Special Purpose Police Squad) attacked to the Lithuanian custom post and seven officers were killed. Lithuania is claiming that Russia is hiding criminals and those who were responsible for murders need to be brought to court at Lithuania. Georgian conflict happened to transform just couple month later from frozen to hot. It is obvious that all these issues are highly delicate and sensitive and it is not expected any willingness from Russian side to compromise. Thus, in practice, including these issues to the EU's agenda gives to Lithuania right to use veto in case of Russian – EU partnership negotiation.

Vice versa Russia has tried its best to minimize Baltic role by trying to marginalize them for European big powers. Moscow has try to present the Balts as belonging “false Europe” that is accused of being not only ultra-nationalistic and xenophobic but also hostile and Russophobic (Joenniemi 2005: 236-7). The juxtaposing of the ‘true’ and ‘false’ Europe has a long tradition in Russian discourse on Europe as Morozov (2003: 219-220) argues, but it was only in the late 1990s that the Baltic states gained a leading role as ‘false Europeans’. According to this discourse Russia stands beside other European great powers in defending European values against barbarism that have different faces in different times. The Russian role in victory over Napoleon or Hitler is emphasized as well the Holy Alliance of the 19th century. In Putin's Russia among all others the victory over Nazism is currently cherished as the constitutive story defining the Russian position in Europe. Some kind of culmination of this was the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Victory Day in Moscow in spring 2005 which gathered leaders of the leading great powers to Moscow but within which Estonian and Lithuanian presidents refused to participate. Over this issue the unity of the

Baltic front broke down when the Latvian president Vaira Vike-Freiberga accepted the invitation. The problem in participating for the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians was that the same victory that marked the end of Nazis represents for them the beginning of the Soviet occupation and Stalin's terror. The Russians do not recognize any burden carried by what they regard as their greatest victory and instead the Baltics have been accused of forgetting their collaboration with the Nazi occupiers. The Kremlin instead has insisted that the Baltic states were not occupied but it was a question of annexation or even legal integration.⁷ This interpretation challenges the Balts' constitutive story of sovereignty.

Russian rhetoric describing the Balts as 'false' Europeans not appreciating 'true' European traditions is cherishing the notion of the Europe of classical great powers. Thus, it is as much argumentation targeted at Berlin, Paris and London as at the domestic public, marginalizing the location of the Baltic states in-between traditional great powers and thus diminishing their presumably negative influence on the EU's Russian policy. This rhetoric is also diminishing the EU's role as subject but tried to divide Europe, still in a traditional way, into small and big powers, a logic that is more familiar to Russia.

Another target of Russian criticism has been the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and Latvia. The so-called question of compatriots in the former Soviet republics popped up already in the early 1990s. From the perspective of Moscow, Russia still has legal responsibility to look after the interests of all Russians within the former Soviet Union and the Baltic-Russians were then a common target that received considerable publicity among the domestic public but also in the West, even if the legal position of Russian-speakers in the Central Asian republics was obviously worse. The Baltic states have been presented as immature small states oppressing their minorities and thus contravening true European values. Moscow's support has remained however more or less verbal and rhetorical, but this rhetoric complemented with the reception of the Russian media among Baltic-Russians has kept a kind of post-Soviet space alive and well beyond the EU-Russian border (Smith 2002: 158-163).

Baltic – Russian relationships are far from normal and issues are easily escalating if they are touching in one way or other Soviet legacy. The importance that is given to references and correct formulations of the past clearly indicates how the dispute over the Soviet legacy still dominates self-identification in the Baltic States. It is easy to agree with Mouritzen (2006) that past geopolitics dominates and has set a barrier for new changes in the Baltics.

Good example of the dominance of past politics and how disputes easily escalated are the events at Tallinn culminating at the night of 26-27 April 2007 to the removal of the so-called Bronze Soldier, the old Soviet era war memorial previously known as the monument for Liberators of Tallinn. Bronze Soldier was a visual symbol of the Russian/Soviet interpretation of the WWII, which during the 1990s became increasingly incompatible with the Estonian narrative of Soviet era as an occupation. Removal triggered violent riots in the streets of Tallinn participating mainly youths belonging to Russian-speaking minority which was followed diplomatic conflict between Estonia and Russia. The removal of the Bronze Soldier was very much a security policy issue as it symbolizes, or was said to symbolize, something sacred and fundamental to all groups concerned. As challenging the dominant interpretations of the past was presented as a threat and the neighbour as an enemy, the Bronze Soldier became securitized. (Lehti, Jokisipilä & Jutila 2008).

It can be argued that in the Baltic case securitized national narrations dominate their foreign policy. They are primarily seeking for some kind of reconciliation and recognition for their sufferings from Russia but also from Europe. However this policy may lead to their further marginalization because their way of commemorating the Second World War clearly differs from European standard. For a long time the EU was depicted as a peace project against Europe's own evil past that mainly refers to horrors of the Second World War and in particular to the Holocaust. The Holocaust discourse is emphasizing collective mourning and it is not pointing aggressor and victim or searching for sole interpretation as Russian and Baltic heroic narrations of the war. Recently it has been argued that Europe is not anymore necessarily to define itself against its own past but the EU has begun to define itself in spatial terms by new forms of policies like ENP. Baltic reading of WWII differs from western European collective memory and it is merely just a mirror to Soviet/Russian one. Recent Baltic-Russian conflicts show how both are still linked to something that can be called as the post Soviet space but the existence of that is unconscious effect.

There exists a borderland but that is a borderland by denial that is why it is not in control. Basic dilemma is that the Balts are contributing for building up border that gives less power to actors on boundaries because instead they want stricter control of the Brussels but simultaneously they are bound to "post-Soviet space". Even if they are lacking smart power to shape Russian agenda, the Balts' emphasis on Russian question gives at least power to torpedo amity between EU-Russia. They have obvious power for veto but not so much set positive contest. Borderland by denial is also

highly sensitive for escalation of minor dispute as serious one and all these conflicts on the borderland would have serious effects to the whole EU.

The presence of the Soviet legacy can also be noticed in the increasing expressions of solidarity with other post-Soviet republics and in particular with the Ukraine and Georgia (Ilves 2005, 201). As was articulated by the Estonian foreign minister, Urmas Paet, concerning his country's interests in June 2005, "The European Union itself must be prepared for accepting new members. The membership perspective is a strong motivation for countries in the process of carrying out market economy and democratic reforms. This, in turn, promotes the spreading and deepening of stability and security in Europe."⁸ In November 2006 the presidents of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland gave a joint communiqué in which they express support for Georgia and call for a stronger eastern dimension of the EU.⁹ Estonian president Ilves has accused the 'old Europe' of being arrogant towards the countries in the east and that "we have a responsibility to defend and help those who today risk their lives in the name of democracy and freedom". European interests lie in the East and closing the EU is not the solution. Ilves depicts the division within Europe between the old and new members and accused the first of being selfish and patronizing towards the new members who seemingly have the moral backbone to give direction to Europe and constitute a true Europe.¹⁰ Their perspective brings them closer to the US, which is also speaking for a 'wider Europe' that extends beyond the borders of the EU. Encouraged by Washington the Baltic governments have also actively also adopted missionary aims by for example educating young Georgian and Ukrainian diplomats and officers (Lehti 2007).¹¹ In other words, they have shown their 'eastern' neighbour how to behave and act 'western', which is a prerequisite for acceptance to the EU and NATO.

Interestingly in their public statements Baltic politicians gave their full support to ENP but simultaneously they continue that according to them it is a step for full membership in the EU.¹² When remembered that original aim of ENP is to set closure for enlargement it can be argued that Balts' way of talking about ENP is redefining whole policy and challenging western European interpretation. When ENP accompanied with the Schengen border are seen to build following Walters' categorization permanent limes the Balts are still constructing colonial frontier towards other post-Soviet states through their active cooperation, expression of solidarity but in particular keeping further enlargement on table. There exists borderland with the Baltic and former Soviet republics that based on shared collective memories but also joint security political views. It is

strengthened in recent years through different kind of cooperation as well as joint communiqués and expression of solidarity.

All in all, it is not possible to measure influence of the Baltic policy to the EU but more important than that is to outline in what direction the Balts want develop the EU. What is their vision of Europe? It looks that the Balts' conceptualisation of Europe has three major pillars. First lies in neo-liberal economy and emphasises strengthening of competitiveness of European economy. Deepening of integration and thus increasing of regulations to social issues and taxation are seen clear threat leading Europe into stagnation. Another pillar stands strongly on traditional security politics. Russia is seen as the Other against which Europe has to stand unanimously. Language of power is only that Russia understood so Europe has to show its muscles and when that is why the EU needs also the US. Third pillar underlines moral commitment to continue enlargement in particular towards east.

Baltic Group in Coming

In second part of this chapter I am analysing possibility of emergence of the Baltic group within the EU. So far this group has not been very coherent or intensive. That is why it is more in order to talk about Baltic group in coming. However, one solution for winning visibility would be grounding on Baltic group but a question is to which Baltic group. At least three different Baltic groups can be recognised: the one among the three Baltic States, the one between three Baltic states and five Nordic states and finally the one including all Baltic Sea area countries. All of them have their own history and recent development. They all have relevance for the EU, too, but all of them are so far rather loose groupings.

Several questions and doubts concern the future of Baltic grouping. Are three Baltic States ready for accepting their 'balticness' that they tried to deny for so long and stand now as uniform group? What about Nordic and Baltic cooperation that has its roots in 1990s; Are interests of reluctant Europeans as Scandinavians are described and model pupils of Europeanization as the Balts are presented too far from each others? What about the whole Baltic Sea Area? Do Poland and Germany want time to time also look for North? And then Russia? Russia is not a EU-country and will not become but it is Baltic Sea country and here the borders of two European Empires, Russian and the EU, are meeting and crossing. For the Baltic States as far as to the whole region it is highly important how the EU-Russia border is shaped and managed. The Baltic region is the border area

par excellence and in that position lies part of its importance to the EU and its power to shape the EU.

Even if outsiders have used to label Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as a core *Baltic* the notion is far from being unproblematic. The term as we know it today was introduced after the First World War when these states first gained their independence from the ruins of the Russian Empire. Then it often covered Finland and even Poland in particular when used by outsiders as a descriptive term. The Finns and the Poles never themselves felt comfortable with the term but for the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians it became a source of their regional identity referring to smallness, marginality and location in between two great powers – Germany and Russia. Beside this rather determinist reading in its early phase, the term was seen also as a synonym to democratic states and the political programme seeking unity around the Baltic Sea area (see Lehti 1999). The annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the Soviet Union in 1940, finally clinched in 1944, reserved the term only to new Soviet Republics soon almost forgotten in the West.

The Baltic States returned to wider consciousness only in the late 1980s as result of their ‘signing revolution’. The Baltic solidarity was then strong and joint demonstrations, in particular, the human chain from Tallinn to Vilnius in the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty expressed a feeling of common interests and shared position. Joint institutions of the Baltic Council and the Baltic Assembly were created immediately after regaining independence among the Baltic parliaments and governments, but soon solidarity started to fade away and by the late 1990s the notion of the Baltic had changed to be something that was rarely used in public and even representing something shameful. Estonian foreign minister Ilves expressed the most striking argument when he denied altogether Estonian belonging to the Baltic group: “I think it is time to do away with poorly fitting, externally imposed categories. It is time that we recognize that we are dealing with three very different countries in the Baltic area, with completely different affinities. There is no Baltic identity with a common culture, language group, religious tradition.”¹³

Since the early years of the 1990s the omnipresent programme of all three was a ‘return to Europe or the West’ and the Baltic label was seen as a reminder of Soviet times, easternness from which they desperately wanted to escape. “What the three Baltic States have in common almost completely derives from shared unhappy experiences imposed upon us from outside: occupations, deportations, annexation, sovietization, collectivization, russification” is how Ilves expressed the basis of

common Baltic heritage.¹⁴ The usage of the Baltic-label was then seen to express a continuation of 'easternisation' by signifying those post-Soviet countries in transition while the Balts desperately tried to distant themselves from the Soviet legacy and envisage the dividing-line of civilizations on the Baltic-Russian border.

The 2004 has changed completely previous constellation and dynamism of the region. From the Balts perspective previous strive membership has been replaced efforts to cope within day-today EU politics. Significance of the Baltic region is broadly recognised in recent years and the notion of the Baltic is not anymore regarded only something shameful among three Baltic States but it has been seen as potential resource. Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet has concluded for his part that there is a new momentum for the Baltic group after the fulfilment of the EU and NATO memberships. There are, in his view, again common interests to be shared by all three Baltic states within a common framework.¹⁵ The Baltic label is now seen to be a flexible signifier that has complementary relations with other labels. It does deduct from the value of the others but rather adds something valuable to the overall constellation. During past few years three Baltic States have boosted their mutual cooperation. The important turn has been transformation of the image of past cooperation from failure to positive.¹⁶ In 2005 old political structures of mutual cooperation were renewed. The status of the Baltic Council of Ministers has been amended and beside yearly foreign minister meetings, five committees of senior officials are preparing questions raised at the trilateral, regional and European level. The Baltic Council of Ministers has changed as a major brand included to opening page of Baltic foreign ministries.¹⁷

So far major common interests within the EU have been seen lying on energy security referring to mainly to reliability of energy production and supply and at least from Estonian perspective "cooperation in the fight against cyber crime".¹⁸ Also energy issues are closely linked to Russia and thus highly securitised. Perhaps the most crucial single issue concerns resistance of Nord Stream gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea connecting Russia Germany but bypassing the Baltic States (Nielsen 2007, 123-4). The heads of the Baltic States are also at moment more willing to give joint political statements and communiqués. That was case already in the eve of the Iraq war and common statement was just recently expressed for example for supporting Georgia in its conflict with Russia.¹⁹

For the Baltic States cooperation with Nordic countries have been for long important option. In early phase, in particular Estonians used to describe their country as Nordic. Some kind of

culmination of nordicization of Estonia took place during Toomas Hendrik Ilves' period as foreign minister. He then denied that Estonia is a Baltic country but instead has changed to be just another 'boring Nordic country'. Nevertheless, what was meant as Nordic in Estonia and in old Norden differs in a rather drastic way. Since the Second World War Nordic has been seen to be characterized by the idea of the welfare-state, peacefulness and the dominance of social democracy enriched with a feeling of certain global moral consciousness. These features have been strange for the Balts whose 'economic miracle' has been based on neo-liberal economic policy and rather low attachment to the public sector. Thus, what in practice Estonians did by labelling themselves as Nordic was redefined what Nordic could be.²⁰

Norden has, however, remained resilient and even if Norden has opened up eastwards the Nordic core has remained exclusive (Smith 2003b, 62). From the Nordic perspective for example Estonia has not changed to be Nordic even though it may be approached as Nordic and has become a close partner; it is still a Baltic partner. After the EU membership the Balts' view on cooperation has approached similar tones. They are not anymore wanting to become Nordic but Nordic and Baltic are presented to have "different histories of our societies" and differences in economic development but at the same time closeness and "common political and cultural traits" indicated that they may have common interests in the EU.²¹ Originally so called five plus three, Nordic plus Baltic, cooperation was already at 2000 renamed as NB8. There is regular forms of meetings and discussing in higher political level. After the Baltic States' EU membership Nordic and Baltic ministers have held their mutual meeting before European Council. However, the contents of meetings have been informative and it has not generated strong and consistent group. As Latvian foreign minister Maris Riekstins emphasizes: "success of today's Europe lies within its regions but Nordic is not anymore seen as only partner."²² Baltic and Nordic interests still differ in many issues and in particular in security politics. That lack of common ground has recently contributed statements like the one from Estonian foreign minister Paet who calls for closer cooperation with Visegrad group and Benelux in the EU.²³ Thus, the EU is seen more and more as platform competing and allying regions. In this game the image of the Baltic group has strengthened but question concerns with whom it should cooperate. Obviously in the Baltic thinking regional groups of small and marginal should look after their interests against established European big powers.

The broader Baltic Sea area is also slowly returning to political agenda after 2004. Origin of the Baltic Sea cooperation dated back to early 1990s which followed intensive and innovative period of regional cooperation. In the early 1990s, at the same time as the Balts felt uncomfortable with the

Baltic label, the western Baltics – Swedes, Danes and northern Germans – find their balticness but in a very different form than on the other side the Baltic Sea. The western Baltic understanding concentrates on focussing on the whole Baltic Sea area and simultaneously maps traces of common Baltic history and constructs brave visions of the future region. Origins of this new reading Baltic traced back to late 1980s when first signs of collapse of the eastern bloc emerged. Then, the idea of the new Hansa was launched from Schleswig-Holstein with the vision of a common future based on the common heritage of the medieval Hanseatic League. Later in the early 1990s the Swedes, Danes and even the Finns narrated their national past beyond existing state-borders and re-founded and re-interpreted Swedish or Danish Baltic presence in the past centuries on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea. These themes had been silenced for a long time. For example, Swedish public memory had valued the Swedish great power era as an unnatural phase of Swedish history. The new national imagination exceeds beyond state borders and in particular the old Iron-Curtain, finding similarities and common heritage within the Baltic states. The Baltic became a new identity coordinate among the western Baltic nations representing an answer to the post-Cold War challenge. (Lehti 2003: 14-18, 31-32)

The need to depict a new order and to redefine one's own location in Europe was strong in Nordic states after the end of the Cold War. The changes in the East, namely the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Communist rule, but also in the West, or more precisely south of the Norden such as deepening integration and the rise of regions, worried the Nordic states and the changing international order cried out for new answers. The Baltic Sea area was the answer to both worries. Recognising a shared past with the eastern Baltic lands also includes an idea of moral responsibility which gained its expression from time to time as patronizing policies towards the Balts. The image of the Baltic Sea area introduced a counter-vision to central and western European based growth regions. The Baltic Sea area was presented as a future region which is becoming one of Europe's leading regions and thus it was a programme to prevent marginalisation and simultaneously to patronize the eastern Baltic nations and help them to move from post-Soviet anarchy to Nordic order. But it was also a new kind of identity coordinate included in national identities and a vision of a new kind of international order based on regionalism and blurred borders (Lehti 2003: 21-34).

Seemingly in the eastern and western shores of the Sea there was a lack of common understanding as to what the Baltic means. For some it referred to the Soviet legacy shared by three Baltic states while to others it represents a new brave vision and reinterpretation of the past and response to a

world in change. It is easy to recognize fundamental differences in understanding. Sovereignty and borders were dominating principles for the Balts rebuilding their nation-states when the Swedes, Danes, Finns and Germans were looking for new models of international organisation beyond the existing sovereign states and their visions based on fuzzy borders mixing the old exclusive divisions. This contradictory understanding is described as being between modern and post-modern (Waever 1997: 315). Nonetheless, the Nordic people were not totally post- or late-modern, nor the Balts entirely modern, but what is obvious is that regionalism allured the Nordics while it remained strange for the Balts still recovering their state sovereignty. The result of this divergent emphasis was a lost opportunity to find a common understanding for the Baltic label and for the possibility to create a shared Baltic identity. In the late 1990s the moment has already gone when the Baltic Sea area started to lose its political importance as a future-region for the Nordic people and what was left was more or less a scene of regional cooperation based on shared interests and certain limited elements of the past (Lehti 2003b; Aalto 2004).

After 2004, the Baltic Sea changed to be an inland sea of the EU with Russian enclaves. There are not anymore those who patronize and those who are patronized but all countries have equal position in the EU. In recent years it is possible to recognise clear signs that visionary thinking is returning to depict the Baltic Sea Area and that the interest of the Balts has awakened. BSA has turned to be again politically attractive as Latvian Foreign Minister Artis Pabriks' eloquent description of the Baltic Area in December 2007 shows:

“Finally, I return to one of our common goals - *regional identity of the Baltic Sea region*, which should be recognized, strengthened and used for our own common good. We don't look alike, we don't speak one language, we don't live in one country and we don't have a joint team in world ice hockey championship. But we share the Baltic Sea, a common history, values and spirit of dynamism, skillfulness and creativity. However, what is more important - *we share the same dreams about our region's future: to be competitive, stable, advanced and always a developing region.*”²⁴

Pabriks was adapting the notion of Baltic to Baltic Tiger narration about dynamic, innovative and competitive region.

Innovative energy of the early 1990s Baltic cooperation contributed foundation of several Baltic Sea area based organisation and networks. Among all others the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) founded at 1992 by initiative of German and Danish foreign ministers has remained a prime symbol of institutionalised Baltic space. However, function and motivation of that organisation has remained a long blurred. Even if the EU Commission has been a member of the CBSS it has not fit

well to the new EU-led Northern Europe. That is mainly because it was created far before EU's Nordic and Eastern enlargements and it merely constitutes a parallel system integrated part of EU.

The recently revived Baltic Sea area is now attached to the EU and its institutions. The most recent turn has been so-called EU's Strategy for Baltic Sea Area that is under construction and would be accepted at summer 2009 during Swedish chairmanship according current schedule. Origins of the recent initiative can be dated back to discussions and lobbying done by euro-parliamentarians and Swedish government. So-called Baltic Strategy Working Group of seven members of European Parliament (three of them were Finns, one German, one Estonian, one Latvian and one British representing different political groupings) gave to President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso memorandum on Europe's strategy for the Baltic Sea Area according to which goal would to combine the EU institutions and existing Baltic Sea organizations for developing more secure, stable and competitive region. Beside more traditional economics, culture and education and security questions environmental issues were highly prioritized.²⁵ Another major advocate has been the Swedish government who has sought for the major programme for crowning its chairmanship. For example Swedish Minister for EU Affairs Cecilia Malmström declares in her speech at December 2007 that "the Baltic area should be Europe's strongest area of growth, and that we should use all opportunities to strengthen the cooperation." The goal would be "deeper integration and creating a more sustainable region".²⁶

Beside above mentioned statements it is so far too early to argue anything about its contest and significance. Even if environmental issues have great role in strategy under construction it would have also other dimensions. One thing is sure that the strategy has generated new kind of activity and dynamism around the Baltic Sea Area that has been stagnating since late 1990s. New Strategy would bring the BSA in political spotlight again but so far it has reminded to merely the EU's strategy for BSA than Baltic Sea countries' joint strategy for the EU. However, new grouping emerging and at moment Swedish-Finnish-Estonian axis has said to be active in planning. Latvian government has also flagged for name of balticness. Major question would be role of Russia in strategy which is going to be internal strategy and thus excluding Russia. Northern Dimension is reserved at moment for external relations and its recent framework agreement from 2006 was mutually signed by the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland. However how these two, Strategy for BSA and ND, would be fit together remains still mystery. [MORE INFO NEEDED]

Conclusion

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