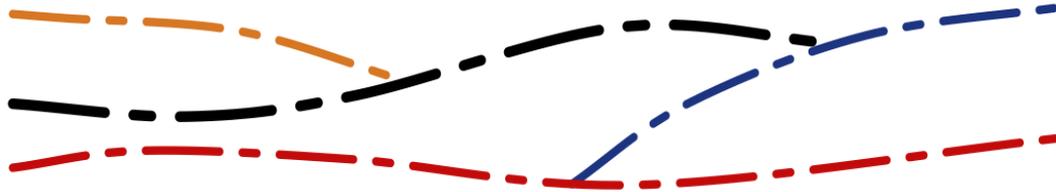


# EUBORDERSCAPES



## Working Paper 16

### From “between” to Europe: Remapping Finland in the post-Cold War Europe

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## Abstract

East and West have traditionally played a significant role in Finnish national narratives and identity politics. The border and a constructed imagination of Finland as an East-West borderland have been functional elements of nation-building and through the decades have been rooted in national narratives and self-descriptions. (Harle and Moisio 2000; Browning 2008). The East and West have both actively used for constructing, defining and shaping Finnish identity and place among other European nations. The 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building was much about making a distinction to both former mother country Sweden and Russian Empire, like a famous phrase “We are not Swedes anymore, Russians we won’t become, so let us be Finns”<sup>1</sup> describes. Finnishness has been much being *on the border* between Eastern and Western cultural and political spheres which has shaped national narratives and collective memories. (Browning 2008; Browning and Lehti 2007). Vilho Harle and Sami Moisio (2000, 57–64) argues how national identity policy project has been constructed by very clearly defined distinction between Finnishness and Russianness, but various connections with (Western) Europeaness and especially Nordic countries need to be notified as well. If Russia has been, especially since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most significant “negative Other”, conceptual affiliation with Europe and Nordic has played an important role as a reference or target “group”. This article argues that there have been multiple territorial imaginations through which Finland has been (re)-mapped and defined also during the so-called post-Cold War period. Many of these distinctions and affiliations can be seen by analyzing competing discourses of the Finnish-Russian border and territorial imaginations that have been produced in border-related debates.

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<sup>1</sup> A famous syllogism of 19th century nation-building, cited in Engman 2009, 193.

## From “between” to Europe: Remapping Finland in the post-Cold War Europe

### Introduction

East and West have traditionally played a significant role in Finnish national narratives and identity politics. The current territory of Finland was a battlefield of Swedish and Russian empires until 1809 when the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland was established. The Finnish-Russian border was lastly relocated in 1944 after the Continuation War and territorial transfers to the Soviet Union, mainly Karelian territories and the Pechanga Region, were defined in the Treaty of Paris in 1947. A history embroidered with several wars and territorial shifts has been actively used for nation-building in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Finland and thereafter. The border and a constructed imagination of Finland as an East-West borderland have been functional elements of nation-buildings and through the decades have been rooted in national narratives and self-descriptions. (Harle and Moisio 2000; Browning 2008). The East and West have both actively used for constructing, defining and shaping Finnish identity and place among other European nations. The 19<sup>th</sup> century nation-building was much about making a distinction to both former mother country Sweden and Russian Empire, like a famous phrase “We are not Swedes anymore, Russians we won’t become, so let us be Finns”<sup>2</sup> describes. Finnishness has been much being *on the border* between Eastern and Western cultural and political spheres which has shaped national narratives and collective memories. (Browning 2008; Browning and Lehti 2007). Vilho Harle and Sami Moisio (2000, 57–64) argues how national identity policy project has been constructed by very clearly defined distinction between Finnishness and Russianness, but various connections with (Western) Europeaness and especially Nordic countries need to be notified as well. If Russia has been, especially since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most significant “negative Other”, conceptual affiliation with Europe and Nordic has played an important role as a reference or target “group”. This article argues that there have been multiple territorial imaginations through which Finland has been (re)-mapped and defined also during the so-called post-Cold War period. Many of these distinctions and affiliations can be seen by analyzing competing discourses of the Finnish-Russian border and territorial imaginations that have been produced in border-related debates.

### Borders and bordering in the post-Cold War Europe

As a political concept ‘border’ has become multilayered and diverged during the past decades of enlarged border studies. The end of the Cold War juxtaposition in the turn of 1990s opened a floor for even broader and multiple debate on ontology, significance and future of state borders in a ‘new Europe’. The idea of a ‘borderless world’ was popular and much reflected during the 1990s, and both globalization and optimism raised by the end of East-West diverge catalyzed theoretical and political discourses of diminishing nation-states and territorial borders in Europe. Political integration within the European Union fed cosmopolitanism and optimism among

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<sup>2</sup> A famous syllogism of 19th century nation-building, cited in Engman 2009, 193.

Europeans that old political boundaries between nation-states could be transcended and even diminished in the future. In parallel, however, the European Union was developed towards integrated community having free movement within but even strongly controlled and guarded external borders. (Calhoun 2007; Newman 2006) Difficulties to create a common foreign and security policy for the union indicates how the member states have been disinclined to renounce their territorial and static sovereignty. Nation-states as key units of a global policy and international relations have not lost their significance, and like economic and political crisis in the EU have shown, populist nationalism and demands of stronger, nationally controlled and fenced state borders have raised during the last years. (Borg 2015, 1–7; Cooper 2015, 447–449; Kinnvall 2015).

Questions of European borders, where ‘Europe’ ends and what does it actually includes - which regions, territories and people are counted as Europeans, where European borders goes have been much reflected among scientists and policymakers. Particularly European integration has catalyzed various analysis, remarks, criticism and visions concerning what Europe is and means. (Borg 2015; Wiesner&Schmidt-Klein 2014). Moreover, a relation between ‘Europe’ and the European Union has become critically evaluated and conceptual distinction has been made, despite in many cases equals sign has been too carelessly drawn between them. Recent critical study of ‘Europeanization’ as a political discourse and a concept of analysis has much evaluated this relationship. The EU-Europe, or EUrope, forms, however, an important political and also spatial imagination that both goes beyond very traditional geographic and territorial definition of Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, the European Union has enlarged from the Western European community to continent-wide political union with ambitious aims to become a global power as *European* Union instead of community of *nation-states*. Enlargements since 1995 when Cold War neutrals Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in to accession of Croatia in 2013 have changed a nature of the union but also raised questions of European borders, not the least a very controversial and still ongoing on-off-process with Turkey. Wider Europe initiative and European Neighbourhood Policy launched in 2003-2004, like European Security Strategy and attempts to create a common foreign and security policy deal much with bordering the Union, and defining spatial imaginaries within and beyond ‘Europe’.

This article argues that “the post-Cold War” is not an epochal or clear-cut period in terms of state borders and bordering that can be divided periods of cosmopolitanism, re-securitization and reappraise of geopolitics. Nevertheless, the New York terror attacks in September 2001 radically changed an idea and practice of state bordering, and as anti-terror policy multiple surveillance and control systems have been introduced in state borders. The post-9/11 securitization has gone beyond territorial state borders to airports, harbours and other nodes of traffic, which has enlarged a concept of security border and also much transformed legal and political systems of border control. By looking exact counts, like number of border walls and fences there is a clear difference between the 1990s and 2000s, but then securitization and fortification of state borders is not a new phenomenon. State borders as demarcation lines of territorial integrity and

sovereignty, like definer of national identity have not disappeared but transmuted also during the ‘post-Cold War’ period. Through a prism of the Finnish-Russian border this article evaluates what kind of spatial imaginations of nation-state and supranationalities, like ‘Europe’, ‘West’ and ‘East’ have been produced and (re)conceptualized in Finnish political debates during the last two decades.

## **Methodology and sources**

### **From Nordic nexus to the core Europe (1990-1995)**

After the Second World War the Finnish ontological existence and identity were re-constructed. Territorial losses were a heavy strike for many Finns, not least for those over 400 000 evacuees who were resettled around Finland after the war. Politically Finland remained on the edge after the truce with Soviet Union was signed in summer 1944 and last German troops were driven away from Lapland. Finnish political life was much restricted and controlled by the Allied Control Commission that was mainly consistent Soviet officers, and a period from 1944 until the departure of the Commission in 1948 is often called “Years of Danger” meaning how unstable and unpredictable Finland’s domestic situation was. Despite of avoiding Soviet occupation, a risk of communist coup d’état was present during those years like happened in occupied Central European states. The Post- War reappraisal, like Browning (2008) calls a shift of Finnish foreign policy narration after the war, based on re-interpretation of the inter-war policy fundamentals with anti-Russian, even Russophobic elements. (pp. 172–183) The inter-war emotional naivety and misunderstanding of great power politics were seen even as reasons for the war, and in the new post-WWII context small state realism and pragmatism became fundamentals of foreign policy. (Browning 2008, Nevakivi 1995, 225–242) Neutral policy in which Finland had started to lean on in the mid-1930s became the post-Cold War foreign and security policy doctrine and developed further as a dogma that restricted Finnish public debates during the Cold War period. Furthermore, neutrality became a part of national narrative and identity which defined Finland’s place in the Cold War Europe. Historical idea of Finland on the East-West borderland fitted well with neutrality addressed as pragmatic *Realpolitik* and the only change to survive on the world of great power rivalry.

Through the Cold War Finland belonged to group of neutral states that aimed to balance between the Blocs. Neutrality was not only balancing *on the borderline* but also a window to the Western Europe through Nordic nexus. Finland had already during the 1930s enforced political connections with Scandinavian countries though neutrality and diverging from the Baltic States and their aims to form a common border state policy in relation to Soviet Union. The inter-war ‘Scandinavianism’ was much about foreign and security policy hopes of regional defense alliance

which, however, never resulted in practice. Through the Cold War *Nordicity* distinction was made to the Eastern European states and the Baltic republics under Soviet occupation, whereas political, cultural and societal togetherness with the Western Europe was aimed to enforce. The Nordic nexus, promoted as a historical and natural interface, was also made for underlining Finland's uniqueness and specialness among other Cold War neutrals. Thus, *Nordicity* also diverged Finland from the 'West' and combined with a marginality and 'neutrality' it was represented as a possibility to escape the East-West conflict. (Browning 2008, 194–197; Wæver 1992, 79) *Nordicity*, and as a broader Nordic model mainly associated with a social welfare state represented a middle path between US-led capitalist world and Socialist system, but also progress, peacefulness and solidarity. In Finland a Nordic 'exceptionalism' cohered well with neutrality policy and were used for defining and arguing new national mission as a bridge-builder between the East and the West as a state that had functional and good relations with both Soviet Union and capitalist western states. (Browning 2008, 200)

The end of the Cold War was characterized as an identity crisis of Nordic countries by Ole Wæver (1992). He asked what will be the future of 'Nordic model' in a new Europe, or will there even be room for the Middle Way represented by social welfare states. (pp. ??) The turn of the 1990s certainly was an identity crisis in Finland because it was not only neighbourhood policy with Soviet Union that was needed to be reformed but also more ontologically national narrative of 'Finlandness' became under public scrutiny. It was not just a foreign and security policy but also past policies, especially Soviet-relations which have been debated, reflected and reviewed since then. Mikko Majander (1999) describes that Finns are "constantly asking the question whether they went too far in appeasing the Soviet Union and 'understanding' the Soviet system and communism." (p. 88) European integration process and Finland's possible accession to the European Community was one of key themes of the early 1990s which illustrates how re-assessment of the Cold War policy was made in political debate, and how various competing spatial imaginaries were produced to define Finland's place in a new Europe.

### *Europe and European Community*

National narrative of the post-Cold War Finland is often presented as a progressive, linear story from the Soviet shadow to the core of (Western) Europe. A way to the EU is seen as a straightforward, in evident path which just enforced Finland's historical and natural belonging to the Western cultural and political sphere. However, like critical studies have shown, a narrative of westernized and Europeanized Finland is oversimplified leaving out competing discourses and counter-narratives presented already by contemporary people. (Railo 2010) 'Europeanization' as a political discourse and activity during the first half of the 1990s was indeed significant, and finally successful from the point of view those who favoured the EU-membership. 'Europeanization', understood here as a re-mapping Finland from the Soviet borderland among 'Western European' nations, influenced much on self-perceptions on Finland and spatial imaginaries in the Cold War Europe. 'Europe' was a contested key concept that was much politicized during the early 1990s and was used both arguing for and against the EC-membership by creating diverging spatial imaginations.

Already in early 1990, just couple of months after the breakdown of the Berlin Wall quite lively debate on the European integration began in *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS). Many of HS-reporters, foreign policy experts, researchers and other intellectuals promoted the membership whereas political elite was much more composed and wary. During years 1990 and 1991 when the Cold War stagnation was liberating but a future of Soviet Union was still uncertain and blurry, political elite aimed to observe political trajectories patiently, whereas keen EC-advocates hustled them into making rapid decisions for applying full membership in the European Community. Apart from competing views on the EC-membership, discussants created different spatial imaginaries on 'Europe' and mapped Finland differently in relation to other actors of the international relations. A Cold War tradition of *Realpolitik* and pragmatism was evidently seen in argumentation of political elite. They reflected the EC more as a technical questions while EC-advocates considered the integration more as an identity political choice. The debate also reflected a shift in Finnish political culture, especially how foreign and security affairs are able to discuss publicly.

Historical move was a key determinant for EC-advocates while they defined the concept. 'Europe' represented progression, development, rapid change and future-orientation in which Finland should be part of:

*“Entire Europe is historically on the move. Twelve Western European states are forming their own confederation, the European Community. --- Finland cannot opt out of these changes. Not now when Eastern Europe is changing drastically.”<sup>3</sup>*

'Europe' was changing as a political community, it was characterized as a train chugging on very rapidly, and a concern of EU-advocates was that Finland will be left to the platform with former Socialist countries if rapid political decisions won't be made. Europe and a political integration within the European Community were identified as equals, according the advocates of the EC-membership Finland would have been bordered out from Europe as non-EC-state. 'Europe' was bordered on the one hand to its 'surrounding', collapsing Soviet Union and the Socialist Bloc which both represented stagnation, chaos and uncertainty. Finland, as a historical East-West borderland, was doomed to make a fundamental decision whether to become European or maintain stuck on the 'grey zone', periphery and marginal. Finland's political and economic integration arrangements, like a membership of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or ongoing negotiations on accession to the European Economic Area (EEA) were not enough. Only the full membership of the European Community mattered because it was proposed to be the core of new Europe.

First years of the 1990s were seen as a discursive period, shifting era from the old, Cold War stagnation to a new Europe, period and interstate order which was unclear, but mainly seen as more positive and optimist manner than the past decades. EC-advocates bordered the EC from its surroundings by emphasizing progression. Interestingly it was not so much about territorial,

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<sup>3</sup> Kristiina Ritvos, HS 13.3.1990 "Eurooppaan on mentävä".

cultural, political or historical borders of Europe but temporal bounding. The EC represented new, open, modern and progressive idea of the post-Cold War order, and by conceptualizing the EC, these discussants made a distinction to the past, period of the Cold War that was no characterized as a dusty, rigid and stagnated period. Thus, the European Community as a political imaginary represented not only a new spatial Europe or political integration but also forthcoming future with more open and dynamic relations between European states. As a Cold War neutral and non-EC-state, Finland was therefore not ‘completely European’ unless it would be join in the EC. Spatial imagination of EC-Europe was then used not only to re-conceptualize ‘Europe’ or argue for the membership but also to re-interpret Cold War history and Finnish national narrative. Cold War Finland was not presented as a successful story as a neutral neighbouring state of Soviet Union but rather as a stagnated, isolated and peripheral state. Sakari Määttänen even argued that because of very restrictive attitudes of political elite towards the EC-membership Finland looked like a people’s democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Temporal dimension of ‘Europe’ and attempts to re-formulate Finland’s political position and re-narrate Cold War national narrative represented political shift in Finland in the early 1990s. Power of political elite was based on good Soviet-relations and kind of ‘statesmanship’ to balance with Soviet Union in the polarized Cold War world, and EC-advocates openly questioned fundamentals of Finnish ‘statesmanship’. They turned the narrative around, presented good bilateral relations in a negative light, as an example how Finland had been under Soviet suppression and how Finnish political elite had conformed to the situation. They used ‘Europe’ as a political tool for re-mapping Finland from a group of neutral states to among ‘truly’ European states, as *Western European* states. As a counter-concept for ‘Europe’ was used both explicitly and implicitly notions of East, Russia and Soviet Union. Behind the Finnish-Soviet border was a chaotic, disordered and unstable state with difficult internal problems. Messines of Soviet Union contrasted with organized and developing Europe, and as EC-advocates argued, Finland need to make a clear distinction with that kind of unwanted influence. However, Soviet Union was not isolated or de-bordered outside Europe, but optimism that they could become Europeans, or return to Europe was much presented. Soviet Union/Russia was not only a counter-concept but also liberating from under the yoke of communism and potentially heading to Europe as their ‘target concept’.<sup>5</sup>

### *Alternative Spatial Imaginations*

Despite of strong Europeanising-discourse represented in Finland early 1990s, there was alternative spatial imaginations and discourses of mapping Finland in changing international order. The main ‘counter discourse’ was constructed around neutrality. Prime Minister Holkeri was one of the most prominent advocate of neutrality as a foreign and security policy doctrine also in a new Europe. His famous conclusion was that a reconciliation of neutrality and the EC-membership was like squaring of a circle; a mission impossible. He also blamed EC-advocates for

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<sup>4</sup> Sakari Määttänen, HS 3.3.1990 ”Kansakunnan kellonsoittajat”.

<sup>5</sup> Sakari Määttänen, HS 22.6.1990 “Onko Jyväskylä Eurooppaa?”; Sakari Määttänen, HS 9.7.1990 ”Uutta Hansaa tarvitaan”; Martti Valkonen, HS 3.8.1990 ”Ydinaseita Viipuriin?”.

overstating negative impacts of non-accession and noted “Europe is not running away even though some fear so”<sup>6</sup>. According Holkeri Finland need to secure its vital national interests first, and they were culminated in neutrality and good Soviet-relations whereas the European Community was a secondary question, an instrument of foreign policy but useful only as subordinated to bilateral foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> Neutrality in parallel with the Finno-Soviet Treaty and bilateral Soviet-policy formed a cornerstone of Finnish foreign and security policy but also a spatial imagination that determined Finland’s place in European political space. In the Cold War order neutrals had formed a separate bloc between East and West, and they were broadly conceptualized as mediators and balancing states who therefore had been an important role in the international order. Dissolving the Bloc-based system opened a question whether there will be space and role for neutrals in the new, post-Cold War Europe. Holkeri and other ‘traditionalists’ envisaged the neutrals will be needed also in the new order. Their spatial imaginary was much state-centric and emphasized a primary nature of national interests. ‘Europe’ and the political integration were instruments which might be useful for strengthening vital national interests, but not necessary or preconditioned. Thus, Europe as a political concept remained merely abstract and remote, and Finland as the core unit was mapped among other neutral states and defined through Cold War imaginary of East-West polarization. As the Soviet borderland Finland had specific national interests, i.e. balancing and stabilizing the border, which had and will be pragmatically managed without the EC like they have been.

Neutrality policy can be seen as vital determinant for Finnishness in the argumentation of traditionalists, and certainly it was more than *Realpolitik*. Neutrality played a key role in a Cold War national narrative and construction of an ontological security but also Finnish identity. Bridge-building as a national mission was based on neutrality and being between the blocs, and the membership of the European Community was seen as a threat for this role. While using Skinner’s notion, political elite mainly represented *apologists*, those who defended political status quo and argued for maintenance of existing policies. They applied on continuation of foreign and security policy which their political power was based on. Through the Cold War years Finnish statesmanship was based on skills to deal with Soviet Union and produce ontological security for Finland. ‘Europeanization’ seen as deepening integration was seen a challenge, even a threat for that ontological security, namely for stability of Finnish-Soviet relations. As spatial imaginary the European Community was still seen as a group of “Western” states, opposing both Soviet interests as a socialist superpower but also Finnish interests as a neutral Nordic state. Comparing to EC-advocates imaginations, traditionalists conceptualized a security order based on bounded Europe with competing power centers and stabilizing neutrals. EC-advocates, instead, envisaged integrated Europe where boundaries were based on economic development and social differences. As they noted, Finland need to join in the EC *before* the Central and Eastern European states which were defined as a totally wrong reference group. Integrating, even unifying Europe was still bounded and divided not ideologically but socio-economically.

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<sup>6</sup> Unto Hämäläinen, HS 28.11.1990 ”Holkeri jarruttaa Eurooppa intoa”.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

### **Diverging Europe: A gatekeeper or bridge-builder? (2004-2008)**

The second analyzed 'peak' of discussion represents a shifting era of bordering in Europe. To begin with the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004 that remarkably transmuted European political map European integration crossed the post-Socialist borders and pushed economic and political boundaries beyond. At the same time with proceeding integration and 'Europeanization' of borders understood as adoption of common EU regulation and policy among the member states, the borders were securitized and enforced as barriers and walls. There were overlapping and also contradiction trajectories which both strengthened and smoothed borders away. (Cooper 2015, 452–455; Scott 2011, 135–138; Kolossov&Scott 2013) European Neighbourhood Policy and Wider Europe -initiative were the EU's serious attempts to reformulate also territorial state borders not only within but also surrounding the union. The EU's aim was to avoid to draw dividing lines and walls between people and states, and instead to develop 'ring of friends' around the union. This de-politicizing concept defined the borders as bridges and resources, encounter spots which could integrate border regions within the EU. However, EU's security strategy developed stricter and more functional control systems in the external borders, the 'pillar of security' conceptualized the border as a barrier, place of control and protection. (Browning&Joenniemi 2005; Kolossov 2011, 187) While 'traditional' military threats were diminishing from Europe, the security meant primary 'soft' threats like human trafficking, organized crime and illegal trade. The Finnish-Russian border as the longest external EU border represented both bordering processes. (Laine&Tervonen 2015, 71)

Eastward enlargement challenged the EU ontologically and stressed EU-Russian cooperation in multiple ways. The enlargement of the EU vis-à-vis the NATO-accession of the Baltic States stressed much political stability developed little by little between former Cold War rivalries. Russia itself was also transmuting under the presidency of Vladimir Putin and there was, again, lot of uncertainty over Russia's future paths.(Forsberg&Herd 2015; Haukkala 2010; 2016) In Finland these themes were debated in the early 2000s and in *Helsingin Sanomat* one of key topics was reflecting Finland's forthcoming role as the member of the enlarged union. Since the accession in 1995 Finland had striven to an inner circle of the union, to be an active and loyal member state. Cabinets of Paavo Lipponen also aimed to resource its position on the Russian neighbourhood as the only EU-Russian border state. Northern Dimension was one of Finland's policy achievements during the first years as the EU-member. The enlargement challenged this role and EU-Finland's self-perception which can be seen in political discussions. Also challenges and disagreements between the United States and European countries about military operation in Iraq had its impact on Finnish debate, and a question raised by Jürgen Habermas (2006) if the West is dividing was reflected also in national level. If Europe was generally seen as a homogenous, and unifying concept in the early 1990s, it was much more divided and contested already in the first half of 2000s. Relation between supranational and intergovernmental policy had remained strained, and a 'national look' was characteristic for Finnish-Russian affairs. Furthermore, security issues were on the agenda during the analysed period and question if Finland should join the alliance with the Baltic States was reflected.

*In Europe or on the borderland?*

Europe had been a Koselleckian ‘target concept’ for many of EC/EU-advocates in the 1990s but a honeymoon seemed to remain relatively short. Less than ten years after Finland’s accession to the union various contradictions were raised on the agenda. One of ‘unsolved’ issues for discussants of the early Millennium was how to make in parallel intergovernmental Finnish-Russian policy and to follow EU’s main discourse in Russian affairs. EU-centric foreign policy, much favoured by Paavo Lipponen’s cabinets, did not have a completely trust among politicians, citizens and foreign policy experts. Stressed relations in the aftermath of the NATO expansion propelled many to ask if ‘traditional intergovernmentality’ could be better way to deal with Russian after all. (Rytövuori-Apunen 2003; 2007) In foreign policy debates various spatial imaginaries were constructed and re-conceptualized, and it was not only basics of new Russian-policy but more fundamentally a geopolitical space of Finland which became under scrutiny. Former ambassador and reputable foreign policy expert Max Jakobson, who was deeply concerned on re-division of Europe, described Finland’s unique position in Europe by arguing “Finland has a kind of unique position that we belong to the western members through a ten-year membership, but then we are geopolitically part of the east.”<sup>8</sup> Geopolitical division in Europe was not totally diminished despite of the end of the Cold War, but rather traditional and distinctive imaginations were still produced in everyday political discourse. A place *on the border* was a specific concern from security political point of view. When the Baltic States joined in the NATO Finland became the only non-aligned Russian borderland in the North-East Europe. “Russia [was], in a manner of speaking, pushed back”<sup>9</sup> and even isolated from “the West” by strengthening NATO-boundaries in Europe.

NATO was often presented as a spatial concept by actors who supported Finland’s rapid accession to the alliance. As the European Union in the early 1990s was NATO the ‘target concept’ of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Former Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Gustav Hägglund predicted that NATO and EU will merge, and the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy will then form a European pillar of NATO’s defense system.<sup>10</sup> His view illustrates well how NATO was primarily defined as a community of nation states, not as a military alliance like in the Cold War period. NATO, like the EU represented Western political space where Finland should have been fully belonged to. However, like Alexander Stubb, running for MEP on that time, argued Finland “did not have any reference group or allies” and that kind of “isolation and insecurity start to erode our credibility in the EU alike”<sup>11</sup>. As Stubb wrote, membership in the EU, or in NATO was not a question if it was economically or socially beneficial but to belong to same group with proper countries; Western and European countries. It was not a coincidence that identity political debate was arise in time of the enlargements. Accession of the former Socialist states, specifically Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as Russian-border states, was seen as a threat for Finland’s role in the post-enlargement EU. The editorial of HS stated few days after the

<sup>8</sup> Max Jakobson, HS 28.2.2004 “Suomella tärkeä rooli EU:ssa”.

<sup>9</sup> Heikki Aittokoski, HS 14.4.2004 “Itämeri, Idän meri”

<sup>10</sup> Jouni Mölsä, HS 9.4.2004 “Hägglund arvioi EU:n ja Naton sulautuvan yhteen Euroopassa”

<sup>11</sup> Alexander Stubb, HS LtE 4.5.2004 “Eristyneisyys syö uskottavuuttamme”

First of May that “Finland’s window of opportunity in the EU was closing”<sup>12</sup> because new member states channeled their vital interest into Western Europe and Trans-Atlantic cooperation instead of Nordic countries. Therefore the editorial was afraid that “Finland as the northernmost small state [of the EU] will be easily left apart from its southern neighbours”<sup>13</sup>. The main concern was that Europeanisation and Westernisation of Finland, re-locating the state from grey zone to the core Europe, would run into the sand in the post-enlarged EU. The editorial stated very clearly that one of the main problem was that “unlike the great majority of the EU member states, Finland is not a member of NATO”<sup>14</sup>. Europe was presented as a segregating political space where the EU and NATO formed the new core, and the states belonging only to one of these organizations formed smaller sub-spaces around the core. Furthermore, there was states like Russia, Ukraine and Turkey who were on the edge of Europe without a hope to “be Europeanized” rapidly in the forthcoming future. Implicitly states surrounding the core were then in danger to be captured to sphere of these non-European countries. Instead of promoting security political or economic threats of this segregation, authors were concerned on level of Europeaness of Finland.

Another major issue for catalyzing debate on NATO was the tenth anniversary of Peace of Partnership agreement between NATO and Finland.<sup>15</sup> NATO was changing internally after the enlargement in 2004, and one of the major question was a future role of partnership countries, for example to integrate all military exercises within the NATO and to renounce separate manoeuvres for partnership states.<sup>16</sup> This was a tricky question for Finnish political leadership because a certain distance to NATO had been maintained during the partnership. In September 2004 was also released a parliamentary report on security and defense policy which accelerated debate. In the report a military non-alignment was confirmed as one of the corner stones of Finnish security policy, which meant that Finland was not planning to apply the membership in forthcoming years.<sup>17</sup> Well-known advocate of NATO columnist Olli Kivinen criticized report as outdated and blind to changes on Finnish neighbourhood. He wondered why the report did not reflect de-democratization of Russia under Vladimir Putin’s reign. He blamed that politicians had been too optimist and argued that “it is still too difficult to discuss Russian-relations openly, and a desire to see Russian affairs in too positive light is deeply rooted in a national subconscious”.<sup>18</sup>

History was, definitively, a significant part of Finland’s relation with NATO and Russia. Kivinen’s argument was that like in the early 1990s, currently a traumatic Russian-relations and a tradition of Finlandization prevent Finnish political elite to see, or to admit how alarming political development in Russia was. Debate was deeply polarized to dispute over Finnish-Russian relations instead of debating NATO’s transformation or broader context of security policy in the neighbourhood. NATO was conceptualized as predictable and stabilizing factor, representing

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<sup>12</sup> Editorial, HS 5.5.2004 “Suomen etsikko aika on ohi Euroopan unionissa”

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Factbox, HS 28.5.2004 “Rauhankumppanuus täyttää 10 vuotta”

<sup>16</sup> Laura Pekonen, HS 28.5.2004 “Nato luopunee rauhankumppanien erillisistä harjoituksista lähivuosina”

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.defmin.fi/julkaisut\\_ja\\_asiakirjat/suomen\\_turvallisuus-ja\\_puolustuspoliittiset\\_selonteot\\_selonteko\\_2004](http://www.defmin.fi/julkaisut_ja_asiakirjat/suomen_turvallisuus-ja_puolustuspoliittiset_selonteot_selonteko_2004)

<sup>18</sup> Olli Kivinen, HS 28.9.2004 “Vanhana syntynyt”

Western values, whereas Russia was seen unpredictable, undemocratic, expansive and unknown neighbouring state. Attributes were rather similar than those associated with the EC/EU in the early 1990s. The political and societal boundary between the West and Russia still existed, and it was actively reproduced for arguing for NATO membership. Similarly, boundary was drawn by the loudest opponents of the membership, mainly leftist and centrist politicians or regular citizens in *Helsingin Sanomat*, who usually defined NATO as imperialist, pro-American and warlike community. According them, the membership would have been an unnecessary provocation against Russia and possibly would have pushed Finland to military operations all around the world. The distinction between NATO and Russia was quite similar to Cold War juxtaposition between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and diverged from political rapprochement that had proceeded in the post-Cold War years. Marginality was also highlighted by the opponents who defined Finland's place and role in European security order as a non-aligned peripheral state. The highest aim of foreign and security policy was to maintain outside of super power conflict – NATO and Russia in this context – and to materialize marginality as a political resource to act as bridge builder and a solver in international conflicts.

#### *Old and New Europe - New divisions in the enlarged EU?*

The enlargement of the EU gave raise to debate on how to define and border the 'new' union. While in the early 1990s the EU was often presented as a modern, tempting and dynamic community, an imagination was much more fragmented in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of distinctive issues was a war against terrorism and especially US-led operation in Iraq which was launched without a mandate of the United Nations. The operation was difficult issue for European allies of the United States, and leading EU-powers Germany and France resisted the operation, whereas new NATO-members - and also EU-members since May 2004 - stood by the United States. Donald Rumsfeld, US Minister of Defense referred that Europe was divided to Old and New Europe, and it was the old Franco-German Europe who scrutinized a Trans-Atlantic cooperation, whereas New European states from Central and Eastern part of the continent understood significance of the cooperation.<sup>19</sup> Rumsfeld's conceptual division was cited and re-used in Finnish political debates as well, not as referred to security policy in the first place but to define boundaries between Old EU-member states and newcomers. There had been socio-economic boundary between Western and Eastern Europe already in the early 1990s, Socialist states were categorized as "second-class" Europeans who need to catch up the western capitalist states economically. These boundaries were reproduced on the threshold of the EU-enlargement. Kristiina Markkanen stated very clearly in her article in April 2004 that "Europe becomes poorer in the First of May"<sup>20</sup> and predicted how a "gap of standard of living" will cause tensions within the union. Markkanen continued that "on the brink of that gap two different types of society encounters, a European welfare state and East European, 'American' model". She characterized

<sup>19</sup> Mark Baker, Radio Free Europe, 24.1.2003; <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1102012.html>. Read: 5.4.2016.

<sup>20</sup> Kristiina Markkanen, HS 10.4.2004 "Elintasokuilu luo jännitteitä suur-EU:ssa".

the new enlarging EU with a negative connotation and defined all newcomers, not just states but also “new EU-citizens” as poor and ineffective to collect and pay taxes. The European Union’s future in a post-enlargement era was presented as problematic, shattered and uncertain; the newcomers were threatening good, old Europeans like the Finns with their low level of labour costs and ineffective tax systems.

New Europeans were not European enough, not if economic indicators were used. Finland was without any criticism counted as the Old European, a loyal member of the union who had always belong to Europe. Koselleckian ‘target concept’ was achieved and in political discourse Finland’s position was a crystal clear. Therefore Finland, like other European welfare states, had a right to defense itself against newcomers’ negative impact on European common economy region. “Polish plumbers” and Estonian construction workers were often cited examples of newcomers who will come to Finland to work with lower wages. In mid-April, just couple weeks before the enlargement, the parliament debated on a bill that would have restricted free movement of new EU-citizens and their possibilities to work in Finland.<sup>21</sup> The enlargement were seen either an opportunity or a threat for Finnish welfare society and labour markets. Many social democratic and leftist politicians criticized those who opposed any restrictions of free movement, “borders open like the sky is the limit” as the leftist MP Markus Mustajärvi formed.<sup>22</sup> Market liberal MPs, mainly representatives of the Coalition Party, wondered why so much groundless troubles were stirred up. Whoever, a ravine between new and old member states were not questioned, but it was taken as a given precondition and reflect as a challenge or threat more than an opportunity. Socio-economic boundary was made primarily between the former Socialist states and the “old” Europe, including Finland, Sweden and Austria who joined only nine years earlier in the union.

Other kind of voices can be found, even ‘Europhonian’ ones with high expectations and optimism on de-bordering Europe within the enlarged union. HS’s columnist, notable EU-advocate Olli Kivinen described the First of May 2004 as the “historical turn” as as “a significant landmark in the ending of European dichotomy”<sup>23</sup> because “a group of countries from the western European cultural sphere will be join in the group they really belong”<sup>24</sup>. He interpreted the enlargement as a final point of the Cold War, a day when Soviet space finally dissolved and European internal cultural and political boundaries were ripping down. He was not, however, naïve and uncritical but pondered possible future scenarios of European integration. Moderate but clearly pro-EU texts did not dominate in HS as much as in early 1990s which illustrates how the union was conceptualized as a ‘target concept’ of Finnish society, and a mission to Europeanize Finland was achieved. New identity political mission for some writers seemed to be NATO-membership interpreted as a ‘Westernization’ of Finland. Europe was, despite of less optimism and hope, still important notion for defining Finland’s position on the world order.

Socio-economic ravine between old and new members was one kind of border inside Europe, but there were also problematic question of external borders in Turkey and Russia. Also there were debate on external EU(rope) borders generally, because terrorism, organized crime and

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<sup>21</sup> PTK 42/2004, 7–31.

<sup>22</sup> PTK 42/2004, Markus Mustajärvi, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Olli Kivinen, HS 27.4.2004 “EU-juna puuskuttaa”

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

illegal migration were seen common external challenges for the EU. From Finland's point of view it was, however, Russia which were mostly interested in. Spatial imaginary of common European space where Finland was as Russian borderland in a particular position, and within the union aimed to materialize the location for political capital, was challenged after the enlargements of the EU and NATO. Finland was not anymore a unique case - only EU-state sharing border with Russia. Moreover a military non-alignment appeared differently when the NATO's enlargements clearly re-defined geopolitical stability in the Baltic Sea region. Context of Finnish-Russian bilateral policy changed dramatically which, according many discussants should have been resulted in reappraisal of foreign and security policy in Finland alike. During years 2004 and 2005 a debate on these affairs, particularly Russian-policy intensified. Erkki Pennanen wrote in May 2004 a column titled as *Finland's Russian-policy* and argued that "a special position" among the EU-states was gone there "would be a good time to evaluate critically our Russian-policy and future's strategy"<sup>25</sup>. He criticized Finland had acted too rarely as bridge-builder between the EU and Russia, but constructing common and coherent EU's Russian-policy instead.

This kind of critique was not unusual at that time, and the enlargement catalyzed uncertainty over Finland's new position on the EU-Russia nexus and re-positioning was demanded either actively to be initiative within the EU for developing common foreign and security policy, or to focus more on bilateral relations based on mutual respect between neighbouring states. (Rytövuori-Apunen 2003, 200/) Furthermore the NATO's enlargement also catalyzed debate and Finland's post-Cold War position as a non-aligned state was anything but unproblematic according many experts. Fundaments of the non-alignment policy were doubted, like former ambassador Leif Blomqvist done in his column by stating Finland was not "sharing the burden of regional security"<sup>26</sup> whereas the Baltic States' accession to the alliance strengthened stability and "erase grey zones from the Northern Europe". He was very concern how Sweden's defense reform and a decision to close down a regional defense system will impact on Finland's security. His vision mirrored traditional geopolitical thinking: "Sweden is able to do the reform only because of weakening of external threat (Russia) and strengthening of buffer (Finland)"<sup>27</sup>. Finland, relying on regional defense and compulsory military service, was secured but geopolitical shifts on the neighbourhood made undermined effectiveness of these fundaments. Therefore, like Blomqvist argued, Finland should have applied NATO's membership and show an example to Sweden to follow. So a clear distinction was made between Russia and the West, using Cold War's spatial imaginations as a ground for demanded reappraisal of foreign and security policy. Blomqvist's comments represents typical argumentation used for advocating Finland's accession to NATO which was used by constructing territorial imagination of Russia as a geopolitical 'X-factor' in the Baltic Sea Region, and NATO as the western alliance bringing stability, security and predictability to the region.

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<sup>25</sup> Erkki Pennanen, HS 27.5.2004 "Suomen Venäjän-politiikka"

<sup>26</sup> Leif Blomqvist, HS 29.5.2004 "Liittoutumattomuuden perusteet horjuvat"

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

### **Back to the Eastern frontline? (2013-2014)**

The post-Cold War order and European security order have been seriously challenged since 2014 when Russia annexed Crimean peninsula. The Ukrainian Crisis, defined here as a multilayered conflict including military confrontation and battles between Ukrainian and Russian forces, political turbulence in Ukraine and more broadly in the international relations, has had multiple impact on bordering in Europe. The Crisis has also opened a floor for debate on return or birth of a new Cold War between the West and Russia. Certainly the crisis has indicated that shared understanding of principles of European security have diverged between Russia and the EU. Fights in East Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea surprised European politicians and citizens, but roots of the crisis are much deeper than in Euromaidan or the Association Agreement proposed to be signed between Ukraine and the EU. (Biscop 2016, Haukkala 2015; 2016) The Crisis can be seen more as a culmination point of longer disagreement and worsening relations between Russia and the union or as a one phase of ongoing turbulence in the EU's neighbourhood. (Biscop 2016, 1–2; Haukkala 2015, 9) Whether the fundamental reasons behind the birth of the crisis are, it has undoubtedly challenged key principles of the European security order - territorial sovereignty and integrity of state borders defined by states in the aftermath of the Cold War. Furthermore, the Crisis shows how contested and disputed territorial borders and integrity of states in the post-Soviet space still, 25 years after the dissolution of Soviet Union, is. An influence goes beyond post-Soviet space, and as sanctions and counter-sanctions propels, cooperation and political dialogue between Russia and the EU is in the deepest crisis ever.

In Finland the Crisis has raised a broad, intensive and ongoing debate on cornerstones of foreign and security policy, and once again, a question of what is Finland's place in Europe. As this article has pointed out, the Finnish-Russian border has played a significant role in the post-Cold War (re)-formulation of national narratives and self-perceptions. The Ukrainian Crisis has been a context for re-defining Finland's place and also for (re)-constructing spatial imaginaries or re-conceptualizing existing ones. (Jouhki 2015) As witnessed during the previous waves of politicization, themes like NATO and non-alignment, Russian relations and policy like the EU-policy were themes broadly discussed.

#### *(Re)-unified West and a clash of civilizations?*

After the Crimean annexation the most dominant explanation for the Ukrainian Crisis and its impact on the EU-Russian and US-Russian relations has been the West-Russia conflict. The Crisis and its wide effect on international relations have been conceptualized as a broader Cold War -like conflict culminated to struggle over geopolitical spheres of interest in Ukraine - a European-Russian borderland. *HS*-journalist Suvi Turtiainen argued in her column that people “in Kiev are dying for Europe”<sup>28</sup> and proving “they really belong to the European community”<sup>29</sup>. Since the very beginning of the Crisis, at that time witnessed as public demonstrations in Maidan

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<sup>28</sup> Suvi Turtiainen, *HS* 24.1.2014 “Kiovassa kuolla Euroopan puolesta”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Square and increasing pressure toward President Viktor Yanukovich, similar rhetoric and definition for the crisis was agreed widely in political debates. HS-editorial reminded that Ukraine located “on the very central place of Europe”<sup>30</sup> and hence the crisis was very much “a European problem”<sup>31</sup>. When the Crisis escalated into military conflict in Crimea in the turn of March, it was stated hoe “a danger of a new Cold War is hanging over Europe”<sup>32</sup>. This context was taken much as a granted after that, and Ukraine was seen even as a Mackinderian *Heartland* between Europe and Russia/Eurasia, as a battlefield of political supremacy on European region.<sup>33</sup> European political map was re-drawn on the basis of Cold War -like boundaries to the West and the East, represented namely by Russia. Finland was anchored to the west in political discourse through values and politics, as President Sauli Niinistö stated “we represent the West and the Western values” in an unpredictable times of the international politics. Niinistö also portrayed that a ravine has torn between Russia and the West which enforced dramatic of his statement.<sup>34</sup>

Niinistö’s statement was much to do with re-bordering in political language based on vision that two value-based communities representing different ideas of IR conflicted in Ukraine. Europe, associated with the European Union represented a broader *West* together with the United States. The West represented an idea of the post-Cold War order based on mutual agreement of the principles regarding territorial sovereignty and integrity of state borders which were assaulted by Russia. Economic integration and democratization were believed to go hand-by-hand, and signals of de-democratization in Russia under Vladimir Putin’s presidency were not noted in Finland, as it was criticized. As the West was interpreted to represent democracy, freedom of speech, respect of territorial integrity and equality, Russia was now portrayed as a full counterpoint. It was undemocratic, authoritarian, imperialist and sighting for its past as a Soviet superpower. Much cited anecdote of Putin to define the collapse of Soviet Union as the biggest geopolitical catastrophe in Europe was referred and used for exemplifying how Russian political elite was not willing to share ‘European values’ which were naturally shared by Finns, for instance. Europe as a political space and imaginary was bordered primarily through that kind of political and value-based attributes, and also presented as a temporal concept through Cold War - post-Cold War - dichotomy. Despite of its colonial, imperialist or fascist past, Europe was fully transformed to ambassador of new and modern idea of IR, which was challenged by Russian dusty, geopolitical eagerness to become old-school super power. Through a spatial prism, the Crisis was then defined an epochal turn from post-Cold War to new Cold War or new normal of unpredictability.

*Finland - on the edge or in the West?*

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<sup>30</sup> HS Editorial 28.1.2014 “Ukraina huojuttaa keskistä Eurooppaa”

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Tanja Vasama, HS 4.3.2014 “EU on Ukrainan suhteen voimaton”

<sup>33</sup> Mackinder, Halford J. (1904): “The Geographical Pivot of History”, *Geographical Journal*, 23:4.

<sup>34</sup> Speech by President Sauli Niinistö at the ambassador seminar on 26 August 2014.

<http://www.presidentti.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=311280&nodeid=44810&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI>

The Crisis and a political deadlock between the EU and Russia were later defined as a new normal of IR, and there was a lot discussion how Finland should re-map itself in that new normal and what kind of consequences the deadlock would have to security policy, trade or business. These themes were discussed not only as “instrumental” policy issues, but debates went beyond to reflect ontological security and national self-perceptions of Finland. Much of this ontological re-mapping was made through spatial imaginaries presented in previous chapter and two main discourses can be identified. First emphasized Finland’s place *in the West* through the EU-membership and historical-cultural ties with the western community. Secondly, Finland was located *between* the West and Russia, on particular position with Western roots and connectivity but it’s unique position both in the West and the East. These discourses were also blurred and mixed, as will be shown later, and for instance re-appraise of underlining Nordicity as a part of policy and identity mixed elements from both discourses. It is also noteworthy that Finland’s Westernity was rarely refuted or questioned, but how the West itself was interpreted and used as a political argument varied. (Jouhki 2015) Foreign and security policy issues were the most common themes in which re-bordering and re-mapping of Finland took place, but also energy and economic questions were reflected.

Former diplomat and civil servant Jaakko Itoniemi reflected possible consequences, benefits and harms of Finland’s and Sweden’s NATO-membership in his letter-to-editor in November 2014. He argued that many politicians had reservation about alignment because of Cold War when that policy was the best option available. Itoniemi underlined that entire context of Finnish foreign and security policy was changed but views on NATO and non-alignment had stuck on past.<sup>35</sup> His column was catalyzed by former ambassadors from Finland and Sweden, René Nyberg and Mats Bergquist who argued in their column that “Finland and Sweden should stay outside NATO”<sup>36</sup>. They all shared their anxiety over stressed international relations because of Russia’s acts in Ukraine but disagreed with conclusions Nordic countries should have done. Both columns, however, importantly portray how Finland and Sweden were covered almost as a non-aligned entity; as special cases among other states in the Baltic region who had joined in NATO. Nyberg and Berquist emphasized how Finland and Sweden formed their own security political space in the Baltic region with capacity and ability to act as consolidators by leaning on their “strategic main doctrine that is 200-years-old in Sweden, and firmly anchored also in Finland”<sup>37</sup>. They were not alone with their arguments, and during the year 2014 Finnish-Swedish nexus was re-constructed for defining Finland’s place. There was similar connotations and discussion on special relationship between neighbouring states like was in the early 1990s, and unlike then now Finnish politicians wanted to be sure that states will do common decision regarding NATO. In public debate a worry what if Sweden will join without consulting Finland was stressed.

In the Westernity discourse, Finnish-Swedish nexus was not considered as a sufficient guarantee for Finland’s belonging to the West but it was actively used for promoting NATO-membership. It was often reminded that if Sweden did an independent decision to join in, NATO’s border

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<sup>35</sup> Jaakko Itoniemi, HS 26.11.2014 “Suomen Nato-jäsenyyteen liittyy hyötyjä ja haittoja”

<sup>36</sup> Mats Berquist and René Nyberg, HS 22.11.2014 “Suomen ja Ruotsin on syytä pysyä nyt Naton ulkopuolella

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

would be drawn on Finnish border but to western, not eastern one.<sup>38</sup> Non-alignment was presented as being on the grey zone, vulnerable for Russian influence and pressure. Foreign policy reporter Kari Huhta was afraid of possible plans among NATO-states to “offer Finland to Russia as a security political grey zone [which could] fit to Russia but would be very unpleasant for Finland”<sup>39</sup>, and therefore the membership would secure Finland’s position on the ‘right’ side of the NATO’s borders. Swedish military officers Carl Bergqvist and Mike Winnerstig went beyond and pointed out how Finland and Sweden won’t be allowed themselves to be mapped on a same group with Ukraine, Armenia or Georgia - states which all had ended up under Russian influence because of their non-alignment and geostrategic location.<sup>40</sup> Finland’s position was even more fragile than Sweden’s because Finland was not just on the grey zone but Russia’s neighbouring state not aligned with the western powers.<sup>41</sup> Non-alignment was here interpreted as a de-securitizing policy which made Finnish territory and nation “to be left once again to the Russian sphere of interest”<sup>42</sup> Solution for avoiding all potential risks was to join in NATO as soon as possible. However, an argumentation and rhetorical strategies of these authors was not based only on security political and strategic matters but on strong identity political and ontological choice to move from grey zone to the West. As the European Union was proposed in the early 1990s, and NATO already during the eastward enlargement in 2004, the membership in the alliance was portrayed as a firm connectivity with the western values.<sup>43</sup> Thus, NATO was identified with the West and presented not as a military organization but as a value-based community and a portrayal of political, cultural and social *West*.

Discourse that emphasized Finland’s location *on the border* or *between* hostile political communities was constructed on the basis of historical experiences, long-term economic cooperation and post-WWII tradition of foreign policy. The discourse was not homogenous but included various interpretations of Finnish-Russian relations, also competing spatial imaginaries of Finland, Europe, Russia and West like diverging conceptualization of what “being on the border” actually meant for Finnish nation and state. Pekka Mykkänen’s column contributed theme and reflected how Finns had not been able to decide whether to join in NATO or not. He described this majority as “an association of people sitting on the fence” without consensus to which side they should jump.<sup>44</sup> Mykkänen referred a metaphor used by President Niinistö in his speech for ambassadors in August 2013. Niinistö contemplated interpretations of Finnish-NATO-relations by saying that “it is often regarded as sitting on the fence. Some propose we should rapidly cross the fence whereas according some others we should not have ever climb on that fence”<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Osmo Jalovaara, HS LtE 25.3.2014 “Mitä sitten, kun Ruotsi liittyy Natoon?”

<sup>39</sup> Kari Huhta, HS Column 4.6.2014 “Natosta ja Venäjältä ei selviä kirjoittamatta ‘toisaalta’”

<sup>40</sup> Carl Bergqvist and Mike Winnerstig, HS LtE 29.11.2014 “Naton jäseneksi pyrittävä mahdollisimman pian”,

<sup>41</sup> Kari Silvennoinen, HS LtE 4.3.2014 “Suomen Nato-jäsenyydellä on kiire”; Matti Patana, HS LtE 21.3.2014 “Seuraava uhri voi olla toinen naapurimaa”; Erkki Laitinen, HS LtE 23.3.2014 “Suomi ei voi olla sotilaallinen tyhjiö”

<sup>42</sup> Tapani Salonen, HS LtE 11.11.2014 “Puolustusratkaisu ei voi olla ajopuu”

<sup>43</sup> Jukka Maja, HS LtE 4.3.2014 “Minua pelottaa elää Venäjän naapurina”; Ole Norrback, HS LtE 24.3.2014 “Nato-jäsenyydestä on keskusteltava juuri nyt”; Ari Pesonen, HS LtE 24.11.2014 “Suomen ulkopoliitikkaa pitää päivittää”

<sup>44</sup> Pekka Mykkänen, HS Column 21.9.2014 “Suomi tarvitsee kunnan Nato-vaalit”

<sup>45</sup> Sauli Niinistön puhe suurlähettiläskokouksessa 27.8.2013

<http://www.tpk.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=282407&culture=fi-FI>

Niinistö himself stated that “it is rather comfortable to stay on the fence”<sup>46</sup> and argued how Finland’s benefits were secured on best from that current position *between* West and Russia. Metaphor can be easily attached to a key idea of Finnish Cold War policy as a bridge-builder between the Communist East and the Capitalist West; acting more like a doctor than a judge like President Urho Kekkonen once phrased it. (Browning 2008, 194–202) Policy goes even further back to history, because already in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century so called *Anjalan liitto*, a group of Finnish-born officers preferred more closely cooperation with Russian for maximizing national benefits and during the period of autonomy there was a constant disagreement between appeasement and legality policies.

Whether Niinistö himself referred Kekkonen’s doctrine or not, many other did. It was often cross-border trade that was used a reason for acting as a doctor, but also traditional security and national identity offered by appeasement policy.<sup>47</sup> Professor of Russian Studies, Timo Vihavainen opposed NATO by arguing that the membership would not change only Finland’s role and basics of security policy but national identity and heritage.<sup>48</sup> According to an editorial of HS published in December, three months before the annexation of Crimea it was called “a core of Finnish statesmanship”<sup>49</sup>. Regardless of how it was called, these statements confirmed Finland’s Cold War-like role on *between* or *marginal* aiming to maintain outside of super power conflicts and turbulence of international relations. NATO-membership was considered as a provocation against Russia, or at least unnecessary maneuver to deviate from national tradition. Another important theme for reflecting bilateral relations was trade and business with Russia. There was lot of historical embedding related to Finnish-Soviet bilateral trade which has gained an important role in national narration and self-perception. Functional economic relations have time to time presented as a proof for Finland’s success story as a small neighbouring state of the Eastern superpower. As Risto Kalske wrote “Finland has a historical proof of how to manage with Russia successfully --- for benefitting Finnish industry”<sup>50</sup>. Sanctions imposed by the EU and United States, and especially Russian counter sanctions harmed Finnish companies and their businesses in Russia which offered a susceptible space to speculations to favor bilateralism instead of intergovernmental policy within the EU. These discussants did not disagree with a general view of Russia as the most important geopolitical factor on Finland’s position but they advertised its benefits and possibilities. Economic connections were aimed to de-politicize, to present as separate from wider EU-Russian relations which were highly stressed, but on the same time they were seen incompatible with NATO membership. This illustrates how European political space was divided and because the common view on the Ukrainian Crisis was that terms between these political entities were frozen, as it had been during the Cold War, Finland should act like on that time. Different border disputes, stressed relations and other difficulties between the former Soviet republics and Russia were seen only as consequences of NATO, not in a wider context of post-Soviet troubles.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Pekka Tuominen, HS LtE 4.3.2014 “Krimin miehistyksestä on Venäjälle suurta haittaa”; Risto Kalske, HS LtE 11.8.2014 “Venäjän-kauppa on turvattava kriisioloissakin”

<sup>48</sup> Timo Vihavainen, HS LtE 29.11.2014 “Nato-jäsenyys muuttaisi Suomen roolia”

<sup>49</sup> HS Editorial 24.12.2013 “Niinistö näkee Venäjällä tummia sävyjä mutta ymmärtää”

<sup>50</sup> Risto Kalske, HS LtE 11.8.2014 “Venäjän-kauppa on turvattava kriisioloissakin”

The array was turned upside down by authors advocating NATO membership, or by those who favoured open and flourishing debate on the topic. They considered the border primarily as a geopolitical risk factor, and Finland was mapped to the same borderland space with other Russian neighbours from the north to the south. In this context Finland's non-alignment policy appeared in completely different way. It was a risk to be subjugated by Russia, like it was happened in Georgia and Ukraine. Lot of concern over a future of the Baltic States were presented but because of their tight and full commitment with the West (NATO) they had less reason to worry than Finland. A link between Finland and Ukraine was even firmed with a historical reasoning that both had been part of Russian Empire; and a question what if Russia had a mission to restore its empirical borders once again was raised up. In this logic Finland was "a non-aligned Russian border state"<sup>51</sup>, not "a mediator -- between Russia and the West"<sup>52</sup> and therefore open to Russian pressure. Russia was described as an aggressive and expansive state that aimed to conquer or pressurize its neighbours and to threaten not only their sovereignty but also Western values.<sup>53</sup> A political boundary, which had maintained between Russia and NATO still after the Second World War, was strengthened through political discourse. If NATO was in past years seen more as a partner or at least potential companion, in 2014 a distinction and even hostility between them was clearly visible. NATO was bordered with Russia both as a community producing "hard" security for its members and also as a value-based, even civilizational space. Defining NATO as a space cemented Cold War -like imaginary and parallels often and very trouble-freely used in political language. Spatial imaginaries sharpened distinction and put states, especially non-aligned ones, to choice either between the West - survival, future and progression - or the East's non-democracy and devastation.

## Reflections and conclusions

Colin Gray (1988) has stated that "The political behavior of a country is the reflection of that country's history; and that country's history is in great part the product of its geographical setting" (p.) While analyzing spatial imaginaries produced in border discourses during the post-Cold War decades, it can be said geography and history matter a lot. There has been several competing and contested imaginaries which have been used as political arguments and rhetorical strategies, but also lot of similarities and parallels between the imaginaries. Two conjunctive issues have been geography and history, or a shared experience of history to be more precise. In times of political crisis or shifting periods, the Finnish-Russian border has been extremely politicized, notwithstanding if the actual crisis has anything to do with the border. Furthermore, the border has been a prism to construct European political space and to define Finland's place on it. Key concepts *Europe*, *West*, *East*, *the European Union* and *Russia* have all been geographical by nature and despite of multiple aims to define them, the concepts have represented traditional geopolitical thinking of political space shared by competing nation states. Concepts have not

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<sup>51</sup> Kari Silvennoinen, HS LtE 4.3.2014 "Suomen Nato-jäsenyydellä on kiire"

<sup>52</sup> Kalle Finnilä, HS LtE 25.3.2014 "Suomi voisi toimia välittäjänä Naton jäsenenäkin"

<sup>53</sup> Jukka Seppinen, HS LtE 4.9.2014 "Uhkaako Venäjä Itämeren aluetta?"

been *supranational*, as the nation state has maintained the key unit to organize and interpret international relations. Supranational concepts have not been beyond the borders of nation states but broader frameworks and spatial imaginaries in which the nation state, its borders and identities have been framed.

The first shifting period, *Mini-Sattelzeit* in the early years of 1990s represents a transformative time when the Cold War imaginary as a *status quo* was challenged by Europeanisation discourse propagating Finland's rapid accession to the European Community / European Union. As Sami Moisio (2003) has pointed out, geopolitical rhetoric played a central role in the EU debate and was used by both those who favoured the membership and by those who defended continuity of Finland's long-lasting neutrality policy. The main disagreement over Finland's place was not about being *on the borderland* but how that position should have been interpreted. 'Europeanizers' argued that the accession to the EC/EU was the only way to move Finland from the grey zone, blurred intra-bloc space to the West where Finland naturally had belonged for a long.

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