

The Construction of Europe in the Northern Dimension

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Introduction¹

This article focuses on the construction of Europe at the turn of the millennium. Unlike most approaches to this issue that tend to focus analysis on debate in Brussels, the most powerful member states, or on the various IGCs, this paper looks at this question through the lens of the discourses surrounding a regional initiative. The initiative in question is that of the Northern Dimension with the argument being that it is on the EU's borders and in the regional peripheries that the debates constructing the EU can be most clearly identified. In this respect the article contributes to a growing constructivist/poststructuralist literature that places boundary producing practices at the heart of the constitution of subjectivity.

The choice of the Northern Dimension is deliberately provocative as the initiative can be seen to challenge the organisation and construction of the EU and Europe in a variety of ways, as will become clear. Calling for greater synergies across the EU institutions and emphasising the need for dialogue and partnership with multiple regional actors, such as EU member states (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany), applicant states (the Baltic States, Poland), non-applicants (Russia, Norway), regional organisations (CBSS, BEAC, AC), and numerous sub-regional actors, the Northern Dimension has posed significant challenges to the EU. The article argues that the Northern Dimension raises significant questions about the constitution and meaning attached to the EU's borders, which in turn problematises questions of EU governance throughout the Union (not just in the European north). The normative aspect to the paper is to point out that these questions, however, have received little (if any) consideration within the EU. This is worrying because what is at stake in initiatives such as the Northern Dimension is not simply the future constitution of the EU and EU governance, but also the framing of the EU's future relations with its neighbours and the constitution of Europe more generally. This argument is highlighted by drawing out a series of discourses surrounding the Northern Dimension that entail varying logics for the future development of EU governance, territoriality and subjectivity. Raising these issues, it is hoped, may contribute to a debate that enables decision-makers to think more carefully

¹ I would like to thank Pertti Joenniemi and Nicola Catellani for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

regarding the premises upon which their actions rest and to understand the consequences that such discursive premises entail.

Firstly, the paper elaborates on a series of innovative arguments that note that whilst the Northern Dimension has been frequently championed for its emphasis on breaking down borders, particularly in regard to Russia, it can also be understood as opening up the EU to considerable processes of de-centralisation. In this respect the Northern Dimension is championed precisely for its ability to reconstitute EU governance, a move that is seen as inherently democratising, but also one that presages a new type of politics that transcends the traditional self-other divisions between East and West of the Cold War. This is a radically different vision of Europe to that which most people currently subscribe and is one which can be pejoratively labelled as part of a postmodern vision for Europe's and the EU's future development.

Secondly, and in contrast, the paper then highlights the fact that despite this rhetoric of breaking borders another discourse is clearly identifiable surrounding the Northern Dimension that threatens to leave the European north and the EU trapped in traditional modernist understandings of subjectivity, borders and political space. Central to this is EU rhetoric and practices that focus on constructing the EU into a coherent and unified international actor. When filtered through these discourses the Northern Dimension can be seen to assume a different quality and become representative of a more traditional construction of Europe in which borders are understood as exclusionary.

The paper notes that it is these modern discourses and practices that are currently dominating, the consequences and implications of which are generally unacknowledged. In this respect it is important to understand that the different discourses regarding the Northern Dimension are not neutral, but have explicit political effects by framing the types of questions that become raised and in turn framing the possibilities of future action and development. On the face of it, the predominance of modernist discourse seems to imply the constitution of the EU in Westphalian form, a metaphor that indicates the continued division of Europe into strictly defined territorial units with the EU constituted as a kind of superstate. However, through an analysis of EU-Russian relations in the

European north the paper will argue that a more relevant metaphor to understand current practices is that of an Empire Europe, within which power is located at various imperial centres, but the borders of which are becoming increasingly fuzzy and illdefined.

The paper concludes with a discussion emphasising that these various discourses surrounding the Northern Dimension and their implications for the future constitution of Europe should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Despite certain EU attempts to assert a dominating role in the region-building processes occurring in the European north, the fact that regional actors have emerged claiming their own subjectivity *de facto* means that the future shape of Europe and the EU remains up for negotiation and is a process in which voices at the periphery are playing a significant role. Whilst the EU is currently in the process of constituting itself as a prominent international actor, what this paper problematises is quite what kind of actor that will be and how its borders will be defined in relation to others. Moreover, with the voices at the periphery becoming increasingly vocal there is also a clear question of the extent to which many people desire the EU to develop into a central actor at all.

Towards Regionality: De-Centralising the EU

First, it is important to say something about the Northern Dimension Initiative, the origins of which lie in debate within Finland in the early-1990s concerning Finland's and Sweden's future membership of the EU in 1995. In this initial phase the Northern Dimension concept was used to refer to the *de facto* situation that with Finnish and Swedish membership the EU would acquire a more northerly perspective and a new series of issues and problems. In particular the concept was used as an accession bargaining tool to secure protection for the countries' agricultural communities that, it was argued, had to contend with the serious disadvantage of an arctic climate. With accession to the EU rhetoric on the Northern Dimension became less frequent, until in September 1997, when the concept was re-introduced to the European audience by the Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen. This time the Northern Dimension was presented in a new guise, as a framework for cooperative projects of an environmental, economic, social, cultural and political nature, with the aim to stabilise the north of Europe by integrating the Baltic

States and Russia into the Western democratic community. Drawing on the principles of liberal democratic peace theory² the Northern Dimension has been presented as an alternative way to tackle the security problems of the Baltic Sea Region. Rather than relying on traditional military strategies the Northern Dimension argues security will be better provided by integrating Russia and the Baltic States into European security structures and international norms of acceptable behaviour. As Archer puts it, through promoting welfare it is assumed warfare will be prevented.³ Eventually the Northern Dimension reached the EU agenda and at the Feira summit of the European Council in June 2000 it became focused into an EU action plan.⁴

Those with positive views of the Northern Dimension have championed the initiative as a chance to overcome the previous dividing lines of the East-West conflict of the Cold War, and this is certainly how the initiative has been presented. Such notions have been captured well in the redesignation of the old East-West border, and in particular the Finnish-Russian border, as a *frontier*. As Parker notes, the metaphor of the frontier is not neutral, but is motivational, issuing a call for action to engage with whatever exists across the boundary.⁵ This emotive rhetoric has been utilised by academics and policy-makers alike. For example, in 1999 Finland's Secretary of State, Jukka Valtasaari, proclaimed that the Finnish-Russian border had become "an innovative meeting place - a frontier - instead of the dividing line that it used

² Tapani Vaahtoranta and Tuomas Forsberg (1998) 'Finland's Three Security Strategies', in Mathias Jopp and Sven Arnsward (eds) *The European Union and the Baltic States: Visions, Interests and Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.206

³ Clive Archer (2001) 'The Northern Dimension as a soft-Soft Option for the Baltic States' Security', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) pp.202-203

⁴ Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00. For more detailed expositions of the emergence of the concept of the Northern Dimension and its evolution onto the EU agenda, see Lassi Heininen (2001) 'Ideas and Outcomes: Finding a Concrete Form for the Northern Dimension Initiative', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik); Hiski Haukkala (1999) 'Introduction', in Hiski Haukkala (ed) *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension* (Jean Monnet Unit, University of Turku)

⁵ Noel Parker (2000) 'Integrated Europe and its 'Margins': Action and Reaction', in Noel Parker and Bill Armstrong (eds) *Margins in European Integration* (Macmillan Press Ltd) p.7

to be".⁶ On the academic front, Sergei Medvedev has declared the "North as the Last Frontier", a largely blank space that blurs the East-West divide and that consequently provides space for new stories and inscriptions of European identity that emphasise commonality and cooperation, not difference.⁷ In this respect the northern frontier is presented as an opportunity for adventure to explore, and in the same process constitute, a new type of regional politics. At times this has been made quite explicit, particularly in the case of Finland where the Northern Dimension has been tied to notions of the Finns as innovators and pioneers in the new regional cooperation, an image that draws on a longer historical narrative of the Finns as a courageous pioneer nation.⁸ More generally notions of adventure and exploration have been aroused through the emotive call to turn the Baltic Sea Region into a modern day neo-liberal version of the medieval Hanseatic trade regime of the 13-16th centuries.

Importantly, such visions appeal within the EU as they play upon the historical foundations of the Union as an organisation imbued with a civilising mission to extend peace throughout Europe. This 'peace mission', premised in notions of Western democratic peace theory, has been a central justification of the enlargement process of the EU, but also provides a rationale for the further

⁶ Jukka Valtasaari, Secretary of State, Address at the Parliamentary Evening of the State Representation of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania in the German Reichstag, Berlin, 14 September 1999. Available at <http://virtual.finland.fi/news/>

⁷ Sergei Medvedev (2001) 'North and the Politics of Emptiness', Paper presented in the workshop, 'Identity Politics, Security and the Making of the Geopolitical Order in the Baltic Region', in Kuusamo, Finland, 14.6-17.6.2001; Sergei Medvedev (1998) 'Tertium datur est: North as the Third', *OSCE Review. Special Issue on the Northern Dimension* (Vol.6, No.2) p.8. For similar arguments see Pertti Joenniemi (2000) 'Changing Politics along Finland's Borders: From Norden to the Northern Dimension', in Pirkkoliisa Ahponen and Pirjo Jukarainen (eds) *Tearing Down the Curtain, Opening the Gates: Northern Boundaries in Change* (SoPhi: University of Jyväskylä) p.128

⁸ For example see the following article by Finland's then Minister for Europe, Ole Norrback (1998) 'Small States and European Security', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* (Vol.9). A similar discourse of adventurism was also used in the early 1990s when the Norwegians set about gaining support for the construction of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. See Ola Tunander (1994) 'Inventing the Barents Region: Overcoming the East-West Divide in the North', in Olav Schram Stokke and Ola Tunander (eds) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe* (London: Sage Publications) pp.31,39. For a short overview of this theme see, Christopher S. Browning (2001) *The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, Working Papers, 6) pp.14-15

dissemination of the values enshrined in the *acquis communautaire* across the EU's external border to the Baltic States and to Russia. As Antola notes, "This role of the EU is very much at the heart of the Northern Dimension".⁹ For many policy makers, and not least the EU, this is about as far as reflection on the Northern Dimension gets. For example, speaking in terms of EU policy to Russia more generally, the External Affairs Commissioner, Christopher Patten, has argued that it is not surprising that the EU attempts to project its values externally in the cause of breaking down borders and building cooperative regimes.¹⁰ Importantly, though, what such thinking misses is that regional cooperation in the Northern Dimension is not simply about exporting European values and Europeanness across the boundary, but is actually a process in which the boundary is given new meaning and Europe and the EU in turn are re-invented. Indeed, through the Northern Dimension the focus to some extent even moves beyond a concern with linear borders to the construction of a border region, an intermediary space in the north between (EU) Europe and Russia.¹¹

As the more perceptive have noted, the Northern Dimension's explicit aim of engaging with Russia in regional and local forums has the effect of blurring clear distinctions between the inside and the outside of the Union, which consequently affects how we answer questions regarding the subjectivity and nature of the EU and Europe.¹² To repeat something of a growing dogma within social science literature, the discursive construction of boundaries is usually a central element in constituting identity. As Paasi reminds us, boundaries are not simply lines on the ground, but are also "manifestations of social practice and discourse".¹³ Boundary

⁹ Esko Antola (1999) 'The Presence of the European Union in the North', in Hiski Haukkala (ed) *Dynamic Aspects of the Northern Dimension* (Jean Monnet Unit: University of Turku) p.126. For a more extensive analysis of the link between region building in the European north and Western/EU civilising discourse, see Christopher S. Browning, *The Region-Building Approach Revisited*.

¹⁰ Christopher Patten (2001) 'The EU and Russia', *International Affairs (Moscow)* (Vol.47, No.2) p.59

¹¹ Pertti Joenniemi (forthcoming) 'North Goes Europe: Restoring Meaning or Playing with Emptiness?'

¹² Teemu Palosaari (2001) 'Comment: Northern Dimension as a Tool for Building Grey Zones between Membership and Non-membership', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.209

¹³ Anssi Paasi (1998) 'Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in a World of Flows', *Geopolitics* (Vol.3, No.2) p.75

discourses carry symbols of meaning that differentiate social groups from each other, establishing one group's identity in reference (and sometimes complete negation) to the presumed nature and identity of those on the other side of the boundary. With identity understood as a boundary producing practice differentiating the self from others the way in which difference is narrated, and the boundary between self and otherness constructed, in turn affects the character of relations that become possible across the boundary.¹⁴

For example, during the Cold War when both East and West were widely constructed in antithesis to each other the border between the two became conceptualised as impermeable, as an Iron Curtain, with East-West contacts consequently being highly regulated and limited. With the end of the Cold War, identity narratives differentiating the East from the West and vice versa meliorated, opening space for more active and cooperative relations. For its part, at its most visionary the Northern Dimension does not simply call for a further melioration of the East-West boundary, but its total eradication in favour of a 'northern' regional signifier encompassing all. The implications of such rhetoric behind the Northern Dimension are very significant. If the borders between inside and outside are blurring, then so too is a European identity traditionally centred on a clearly bounded EU with a defined decision-making centre. If the Northern Dimension aims at Russia's inclusion in European norms and structures through promoting ever-increasing levels of cross-border cooperation then patterns of EU/European subjectivity and governance tomorrow will not be anything like those of yesterday or today.

Although the ultimate consequences of this view of the Northern Dimension remain to be seen, as this is currently a policy still in its infancy, at least two points are worth mentioning to highlight the case. Firstly, if the goal really is the breaking of previous dividing lines, then the implication behind the Northern Dimension is that the EU is going to have to find a way to accommodate the views of outsiders such as Russia and its regions in EU decision-making in regard to the European north.¹⁵ The pressures for this are already

¹⁴ Anssi Paasi, 'Boundaries as Social Processes', pp.80-81

¹⁵ Hiski Haukkala (2001) *Two Reluctant Regionalizers? The European Union and Russia in Europe's North* (Helsinki: UPI Working Papers, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, No.32) p.18

visible. Most particularly this can be seen in Russian calls for a greater input in EU approaches to the Kaliningrad question, as exemplified by their proposal to turn this Russian exclave into a 'pilot region' for EU-Russian relations.¹⁶ Secondly, it is important to note that the Northern Dimension is actually an instance where the margins of Europe have asserted themselves in order to set the agenda of European integration. As both Parker and Hartnell argue, although EU integration has tended to be understood as an affair dominated by the central big states and the Commission, the margins of Europe are also able to play a dynamic role in constituting Europe by pushing new issues onto the agenda and in the process reconfiguring the edge.¹⁷ As Joenniemi has argued, one way of understanding the emergence of the Northern Dimension is to see it precisely as an instance where a peripheral actor (Finland) has sought to capitalise on its marginality by orienting the EU to its concerns. This is seen as an inherently democratising move, de-centralising power in the EU and showing people in the north that Europe is 'here' and not just 'there' (in Brussels, Frankfurt etc).¹⁸ Importantly, such de-centralisation has also gone beyond the nation-state as local actors have also begun to engage extensively in cross-border cooperation, a development that is giving traditionally exclusive state borders quite new meaning as they become more porous, but which in the case of borders such as that between Finland and Russia, also contributes to dissolving the EU's external border. Perhaps most emblematic of the role of local actors in such agenda setting in the European north is the existence of a Regional Council that provides a forum for non-state regional and local actors to exercise subjectivity in the context of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.¹⁹ Also notable is

¹⁶ On Kaliningrad in EU-Russian relations see, Lyndelle D. Fairlie (2000) 'Will the EU Use the Northern Dimension to Solve Its Kaliningrad Dilemma?', *Northern Dimensions* (Finnish Institute of International Affairs Yearbook); Pertti Joenniemi, Stephen Dewar and Lyndelle D. Fairlie (2000) *The Kaliningrad Puzzle - A Russian Region within the European Union* (The Baltic Institute of Sweden and the Åland Islands Peace Institute)

¹⁷ Noel Parker, 'Integrated Europe and its 'Margins'', pp.7-8; Helen E. Hartnell (2000) 'European Integration through the Kaleidoscope: the View from the Central and East European Margins', in Noel Parker and Bill Armstrong (eds) *Margins in European Integration* (Macmillan Press Ltd) pp.29-30, 49

¹⁸ Pertti Joenniemi, 'Changing Politics along Finland's Borders', pp.128-129; Pertti Joenniemi (2000) 'At Home with Northernness: Finland, Russia and the Northern Dimension', *North* (Vol.11, No.1) p.20

¹⁹ Pertti Joenniemi (1994) 'Region-Building as Europe-Building', in Olav Schram Stokke and Ola Tunander (eds) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe* (London: Sage Publications) p.216

the proliferation since the end of the Cold War of new crossing points along the Finnish-Russian border, in direct response to the concerns and wishes of the local communities in the frontier regions.

When projected into an idealised future vision this aspect of the Northern Dimension is seen to offer the potential to reconstitute Europe away from centralism towards a new 'postmodern' regionality in which governance and the figure of Europe become altogether more flexible. Although this is a development yet to be fully realised, Medvedev makes the point well, arguing that in northern Europe one can identify "a sort of 'future territory'... an experiment in post-modern territoriality" where the formerly clear territorial picture of the EU is no longer identifiable as a fixed single space, but is better represented by a series of overlapping transparencies.²⁰ Elsewhere, this vision has been seen as presaging the emergence of a *Europe of Olympic Rings*, the notion of variable interlocking rings, each representing various regional formations in Europe, emphasising a move away from a hierarchically ordered Europe centred on Brussels to a more equitable one where governance, authority and decision-making is dispersed and brought closer to the people.²¹ Importantly, the regionality envisaged here is not the same as that of the 'Europe of Regions', a concept that became prevalent during the early 1990s, and which envisages the replacement of the modern state system as the basic organising principal of politics with a patchwork of territorially demarcated sub-state entities. As Joenniemi puts it:

Whereas the 'Europe of regions' concept also seems to accept that politics will continue to consist of processes within and between clearly bounded, territorially defined entities, though on a smaller scale than that of the state, the 'Europe of regionalities' idea raises a somewhat different image: of binary, territorial divisions being replaced by a multitude of regulatory spaces which are horizontally and vertically overlapping.²²

In short, when viewed in this way the Northern Dimension implies giving both those on the periphery, and those across the border, a constitutive voice in the construction of Europe and Europeanness - or at the very least giving them a chance to contribute to the

²⁰ Sergei Medvedev, 'Tertium datur est', p.8

²¹ Pertti Joenniemi, 'Changing Politics along Finland's Borders ', pp.129-131; Sergei Medvedev (2000) *Russia's Futures: Implications for the EU, the North and the Baltic Region* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.100

²² Pertti Joenniemi, 'North Goes Europe'

European debate. Importantly, although EU documents can give the impression that all that is involved in the Northern Dimension is the export of European values across the border, the fact that local and regional (state and non-state) actors in the European north clearly see the Northern Dimension as a vehicle to enhance their own interests, has meant a *de facto* process in which the decentralisation of EU governance has become valued as a goal for many. In this process EU borders are not simply blurring, but our traditional understandings of EU and European subjectivity and governance are in transformation. In this process, from being *the* hierarchical central actor of Europe, the EU is re-conceptualised in the European north as simply one actor amongst others, each connected through various networks and regional forums.

The EU as a Modern Subject

This postmodern reading of the impact of the Northern Dimension on EU governance, subjectivity and territoriality is, however, not the only interpretation available. Indeed, despite the rhetoric of breaking borders it is arguable that the postmodern promise has been largely marginalised by the dominance of another discourse surrounding the Northern Dimension that threatens to leave the European north and the EU trapped in traditional modernist understandings of subjectivity, borders and political space. This discourse envisages the development of the EU into an increasingly unified global actor, with its own government and ministers, which participates at the negotiating tables of the world's major forums. At a visual level this desire is apparent in the quest to give the EU a unified political subjectivity in external affairs through the CFSP, a unified economic subjectivity through Economic and Monetary Union, and a unified military subjectivity through the creation of a European Security and Defence Policy. In short, this is the construction of the EU as a very traditional actor, to a certain extent akin to Westphalian nation-states. In trying to constitute itself as a global actor, it will be argued that the EU is increasingly buying into a traditional modern discourse that sees the world and political space as clearly divided between exclusive political units. This will be highlighted in two ways. In the following section it will be shown how, in many respects, the inventive aspects of the Northern Dimension that promote a move to decentralisation and regionality, to a certain extent have been hijacked and subsumed within a more traditional modern

discourse. Firstly, however, this section provides a context to what follows by highlighting how discourses promoting the development of the EU into a unified global actor have a significant historical and theoretical heritage. This can be seen in at least four closely related points.

In the first instance, it is important to take account of the dominant modern philosophical understanding of subjectivity that underlies most theoretical approaches to international relations. As Williams argues, prevalent theoretical understandings of international politics are founded on the *a priori* claim of contractarian philosophers like Hobbes and Rousseau "of the individual as an autonomous rational actor confronted by an environment filled with other like actors".²³ In contractarian philosophy, in the pre-social state-of-nature these others are classically understood to be a source of insecurity, a security dilemma that can only be overcome through agreeing to a social contract establishing the sovereign state as the authority with the responsibility to enforce the contractual obligations of its members. As Williams notes, one consequence of this has been "the modern tendency to view the state as the limit of political life, and of [seeing] all visions of [world] order as following upon this basic principle".²⁴ Typically, therefore, international relations theory operates with a limited understanding that restricts the world of international politics to the realm of unified sovereign states, with state units depicted as interacting with each other on the basis of purely strategic (contractual) considerations. However, as Williams indicates, the problem with this narrow definition of international politics is that it "risks both replicating modernist structures of violence, and obstructs the emergence of new conceptions of political order".²⁵ Put another way, in confining international politics to the world of states - an assumption that notably is institutionalised in organisations such as the United Nations and the WTO - for the EU to have a voice in international affairs the conclusion is easily drawn that it too must assume the characteristics of modern statehood. I.e., with international politics understood as a realm of clearly identifiable sovereign territorial actors, in dominant accounts of international

²³ Michael C. Williams (2000) 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the New World Order', in Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin (eds) *The New World Order; Contrasting Theories* (Macmillan Press Ltd) p.90

²⁴ Michael C. Williams, 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the New World Order', p.90

²⁵ Michael C. Williams, 'Modernity, Postmodernity and the New World Order', p.91

relations theory there is a clear normative pressure for the EU also to constitute itself in like terms. In this respect, it is useful to note the comment of Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of neorealist IR theory, that for the EU ever to amount to much in the 'international structure' it would have to take on the form of a unified state.²⁶ Somewhat presciently, with its policies of CFSP, EMU, ESDP and the Schengen border regime, the EU is, at least to some extent, putting Waltz's prediction into practice.

Secondly, and of particular importance, these assumptions can clearly be seen in the *functionalist unitarism* that constitutes the philosophical heart of the EU and EU integration studies. As Parker argues, underlying the functionalist approaches to European integration that have dominated the agenda ever since 1957, is an implicit presumption that Europe is (or at least should be) a cultural, economic and political unity. If Europe is becoming increasingly unified and developing into a coherent international actor with defined borders, from a functionalist unitarist perspective this is not surprising, but is precisely what we should expect. As Parker notes, the common sense view of functionalism is that Europe's common political or governmental problems necessarily entail common solutions, which in turn will necessarily support the further process of European integration, which ultimately will lead to a unified European government akin to a nation-state.²⁷ Whilst the logic of such argumentation is clearly problematic - after all, common problems do not necessarily entail common solutions and the emergence of a unity of identity and governance - the important point is that to the extent notions of functionalist unitarism constitute the philosophical background of discussion in the EU, then the construction of the Union into a unified global actor remains the implicit goal.

Thirdly, Wæver has added another dimension to the presumed logic of functionalist unitarism through an analysis showing how the continuing extension of European integration has become widely understood as essential to the very survival of the EU and European security. In this respect, it is important to remember the origins of the EU as lying in a peace project to overcome the divisions that led to the Second World War, and that notably retain

²⁶ Waltz cited in John Gerard Ruggie (1993) 'Territoriality and beyond: problematizing modernity in international relations', *International Organization* (Vol.47, No.1) p.140

²⁷ Noel Parker, 'Integrated Europe and its 'Margins'', p.18

centrality today. As French President, Jacques Chirac, recently put it, "The purpose of the European Union is to establish lasting peace on our continent. This is its task. It will take up this task gradually, but irreversibly".²⁸ As Wæver notes, on this understanding further integration is understood as a continuing and unquestionable process of security policy. To this extent the development of the EU into a unified actor with its own security and defence identity has become *securitised*, meaning that it has been put beyond rational political discussion. As Wæver puts it, "By adding the security argument, integration gains urgency, because its alternative is 'fragmentation', a self-propelling process that by definition will destroy 'Europe' as a process".²⁹

The fear that if the integration process stops moving forward Europe will fragment, and possibly even 'Balkanise', is endemic in the rhetoric of many European leaders. For example, on 15 October 2001 a letter, touting itself as a "wake-up call for Europe" and whose signatories included a series of former leaders of various member states (Helmut Kohl and Helmut Schmidt, Germany - Felipe Gonzalez, Spain - Mario Soares and Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, Portugal - Giuliano Amato, Italy - Jean-Luc Dehaene, Belgium) and three former presidents of the European Commission (Jacques Delors, Jacques Santer, Roy Jenkins), was delivered to the leadership of the EU. As the letter put it, with further enlargement and without a concomitant reform of the EU institutions to allow for more majority voting, Europe is in 'danger' of coming to a 'halt'. The letter warned the EU is already "losing momentum and is suffering from a loss of identity" stemming from the inability of the member states to agree on the objectives of integration through EMU and defence cooperation. Most vividly, such open debate and disagreements were not understood as a sign of democratic health, but as "a contagious process that can lead to a more general paralysis".³⁰ In this respect, the Union has been infused with a logic in which continued integration and the development of the EU into an ever more coherent international actor has become considered a political necessity to maintain

²⁸ Jacques Chirac (2001) 'The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union', *Defence Europe* (Les Dossiers de L'Abécédaire parlementaire, No.8, 2nd trimestre) p.20

²⁹ Ole Wæver (1996) 'European Security Identities', *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Vol.34, No.1) p.123. Also see pp.121-125

³⁰ Quoted in 'EU Losing Momentum, Senior Leaders Warn', *International Herald Tribune* 16.10.2001

peace and security in Europe. As Wæver indicates, essentially what this discourse does is create a frame in which 'Europe' (and being European) equates with support for a process of greater political, economic and military integration. With security and stability seen to lie in enhancing the coherence and actorness of the Union, fragmentation and de-centralisation, in contrast, are seen as inherently threatening, an alternative vision of Europe to be avoided, not embraced.³¹

Finally, this argument is supported by Larsen in an analysis of the development of the EU since the end of the Cold War. In particular, Larsen has highlighted how the EU has constructed a post-Cold War discourse that contends that in order to cope with post-Cold War challenges (regional political instability, immigration, ecological imbalances, globalisation) the EU needs to develop into an international actor with a defined role and ability for political action.³² To quote an EU report of 1995:

The EU must assume increased responsibilities in this new context and face the new challenges confronting it. This requires the Union to give itself the means appropriate to more effective and co-ordinated external action.³³

There appears to be at least two sets of reasoning underlying such calls. Firstly, it is interesting to note how the collapse of the Soviet Union is seen to have given the EU *responsibilities* in ordering the new situation and providing for stability and security. On the one hand, this understanding clearly draws on notions of the EU as imbued with a civilising peace mission, a notion that was re-invigorated in the early 1990s as the Soviet empire disintegrated into a series of new nation-states in desperate need of assistance. On the other hand, understood as having *responsibilities*, Larsen notes the EU has constructed a discourse in which it is increasingly *obliged* to act. From being a largely *economic* power,

³¹ Ole Wæver, 'European Security Identities', p.128. Or as Jacques Chirac has put it: "It [integration and developing a strong international role for the EU] will happen because Europe is happening, and if it does not happen, the very life force of our continent will ebb away". Jacques Chirac, 'The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union', p.21

³² Henrik Larsen (2000) 'The Discourse on the EU's Role in the World', in Birthe Hansen and Bertel Heurlin (eds) *The New World Order: Contrasting Theories* (Macmillan Press Ltd) pp.222-223

³³ Reflection Group's Report, Brussels, 5 December 1995, quoted in Henrik Larsen, 'The Discourse on the EU's Role in the World', p.223

since the end of the Cold War the emphasis has thus been on becoming a *political* power able to assume its responsibilities.³⁴ More recently, of course, through the ESDP the EU is further extending its subjectivity into that most quintessential of areas characteristic of traditional statehood, the military arena, with the creation of the Eurocorps forces.

Secondly, this desire to develop into a more coherent actor able to project itself onto the international stage also seems to be driven by the more traditional interest-based concerns of power politics. In particular, this development appears to be a response to the classic criticism that the EU lags far 'behind' traditional geopolitical actors like the US and Russia. Whilst being an economic giant, politically the EU is lamented as being a dwarf and a soft touch incapable of dealing with the 'hard realities' of world politics.³⁵ Illustrative of such traditional interest-based thinking, that assumes outsiders to be potentially threatening, is the comment by Jukka Valtasaari, that the development of the EU into a coherent unified entity is essential "if we want Europe as a political actor to be taken into account and not taken for a ride".³⁶ When drawing on such conflictual interest-based notions the post-Cold War EU is drawn into a modern discourse that promotes its future development in terms of the achievement of traditional geopolitical subjectivity and in turn marginalises contending discourses of decentralisation. In this world the EU is defined as a geopolitical subject with clear sovereign borders of territory and governance differentiating the inside from the outside. In this respect, the further integration of the EU into a state-like actor is securitised for the reason that without this it is feared Europe will be open to easy exploitation by others. Notably, the discourse of the Commission is replete with prognoses of an emerging multipolar world order in which each regional pole will need to be strong (politically,

³⁴ Henrik Larsen, 'The Discourse on the EU's Role in the World', p.224

³⁵ Pami Aalto (2002 Forthcoming) 'A European Geopolitical Subject in the Making? EU, Russia and the Kaliningrad Question', *Geopolitics*; Hanna Ojanen (2001) 'Conclusions: Northern Dimension - Fuel for the EU's External Relations?', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.223

³⁶ Jukka Valtasaari, Secretary of State, 'Finland and the EU Presidency: an Agenda for the New Millennium', Remarks at the Nordic Policy Studies Centre, London School of Economic and Social Sciences, 04.05.1999. Available at <http://virtual.finland.fi/news/>

economically, militarily) if it is to be effective in the global competition over resources and interests.³⁷

Clearly, the four points raised in this section are closely intertwined. The central point, however, is that for different reasons each of these discourses has the effect of leaving the EU stuck in what John Agnew has termed the *Territorial Trap*, the preoccupation with thinking that the world is necessarily made up of a patchwork of territorially sovereign political units.³⁸ As Paasi notes, in this quintessentially modern discourse boundaries between self and otherness are given highly positive connotations as central to maintaining internal security and unity.³⁹ Ironically, therefore, although the EU's policy of breaking down *internal* borders has been seen as evidence that the EU is a postmodern entity *par excellence*,⁴⁰ the EU is in turn highly protective of its *external* borders. This is because, when understanding is stuck in a modern discourse, the EU needs a clear boundary between inside and outside so that it can construct itself as an integrated modern subject.⁴¹

The Modern Subject and the Northern Dimension

Given this context of wider historical and theoretical discourse on the nature of Europe and the EU project, the postmodern visions of the Northern Dimension, that not only call for de-centralisation of governance within the Union, but also the gradual erasure of the EU's external border, are highly problematic for the EU. As we have seen, the evolution of the EU into an increasingly coherent international actor has been securitised in EU discourse as a purely positive development. Indeed, in this discourse 'Europe' remains something still to be fully achieved, an ordered modernist utopia characterised by political, cultural and social unity. Consequently, proposals such as the Northern Dimension, that call

³⁷ Henrik Larson, 'The Discourse on the EU's Role in the World', p.224

³⁸ John Agnew (1998) *Geopolitics: Re-Envisioning World Politics* (London: Routledge) p.51

³⁹ Anssi Paasi (Forthcoming) 'Space, Boundaries and the Social Construction of Territorial Identities', in S. Chaturvedi (ed.) *Geopolitics, Identities and Sustainability* (New Dehli: Manohar Publishers)

⁴⁰ Or as Ruggie puts it, the EU may well "constitute the first 'multiperspectival polity' to emerge since the advent of the modern era". John Gerard Ruggie, 'Territoriality and beyond', p. 172

⁴¹ Pami Aalto, 'A European Geopolitical Subject in the Making?'

for de-centralisation and regionality across the EU's borders and with multiple regional actors, may in fact be understood as threatening when seen through the lens of modern discourse. As Wæver characterises it, the securitised discourse of integration has taken on an existential quality "because integration/fragmentation is not a question of *how* Europe will be, but *whether* Europe will be" (emphasis added).⁴² Joenniemi has put this slightly differently, noting that from the perspective of the centre the EU's external borders should not be blurred or the authority of the core challenged. Rather than welcoming input from the peripheries, the 'noise' coming from the north is understood as disrupting the construction of a common European space. As Joenniemi argues, from the perspective of the core, power and influence should flow in one direction, from the core outwards. Consequently "It is for the core, and the core only, to decide upon representational frames and to tackle issues pertaining to Europe's overall figure".⁴³

In this section it will be argued that the EU did initially see the Northern Dimension as threatening for precisely these reasons and has consequently adopted a rather guarded approach towards it. This will be highlighted by showing how the EU has appeared keen to purge the postmodern de-centralising notions from the initiative. In contrast, it will be shown that the EU has actually done a rather good job of turning the Northern Dimension into an initiative that actually supports the development of the actor status of the Union. In consequence, the focus of the Northern Dimension has shifted from what the EU can do for the European north, to what the Northern Dimension can do for the EU.

In the first instance, the EU's lack of enthusiasm for the visionary elements of the Northern Dimension is apparent in the fact that the original Finnish initiative of 1997 is much more ambitious than the subsequent EU Action Plan of 2000. As Heininen notes, whilst the Finnish initiative advocated the creation of a distinct EU policy

⁴² Ole Wæver, 'European Security Identities', p.128

⁴³ Pertti Joenniemi, 'North Goes Europe'. As Parker has noted, this tension between the desire of the core to control the margins and the ability of the margins to put a spanner in the works, has more general application. Interestingly, Parker has looked into the etymology of the concept of the margin, which he notes "is related to the old word 'marches', those edges that were difficult to penetrate and from whence various shadowy dangers threatened a feudal order". Noel Parker, 'Integrated Europe and its 'Margins'', p.7

towards the north, the Action Plan consigns it to a role of co-ordinating existing programmes.⁴⁴ Thus, whilst Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, presented the initiative as a new aspect of EU foreign policy, the ultimate goal of which was the creation of regional peace and prosperity,⁴⁵ the Action Plan ostensibly reduces it to a bureaucratic instrument. As the Commission puts it, the Northern Dimension is not to be understood as a new regional initiative, but should rather be seen as simply an additional element to existing instruments and frameworks of EU-Russian relations, such as the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the pre-accession Europe Agreements made with the Baltic States and Poland. In the Commission's first communication on the Northern Dimension in 1998 the tying of the Northern Dimension to existing frameworks and instruments is stressed multiple times and adds to an impression that the Commission was unsettled and confused by the initiative and sought to play down its significance.⁴⁶ Indeed, in Moisio's opinion, what all this indicates is the Commission's desire to control new developments and to prevent the formation of a new spatial framework in the European north, and in particular to prevent the emergence of a new regionality that would hinder the development of the EU into a modern state-type actor.⁴⁷

At the same time, of course, the EU did not reject the Northern Dimension out of hand and the initiative has made steady, if unexceptional, progress onto the EU agenda. To explain this it is necessary to understand that the one thing that does seem to have resonated with the EU is precisely the initiative's promotion of greater coherence within the Union. Indeed, the most championed

⁴⁴ Lassi Heininen, 'Ideas and Outcomes', pp.37-38

⁴⁵ Paavo Lipponen, 'The European Union Needs a Policy for the Northern Dimension', speech presented at the 'Barents Region Today' conference, Rovaniemi, Finland. 15.09.1997. Available at <http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/index.htm>

⁴⁶ Commission of the European Communities, *A Northern Dimension for the Policies of the Union*, Brussels, 25.11.1998 COM (1998) 589 Final

⁴⁷ Sami Moisio (2002 Forthcoming) 'Back to Baltoscandia? European Union and geo-conceptual remaking of the European north', *Geopolitics*. In contrast to the Commission's attitude to the Northern Dimension it is interesting to note the report of the European Parliament on the initiative of May 1999. Particularly notable is that, unlike the Commission, the European Parliament actually stressed the Northern Dimension should have a regional role, especially in enhancing cross-border cooperation along the lines of the Euregio model in Central Europe. Notably, the Committee of the European Parliament was chaired by a Finn and Finnish MEPs played a central role in its work. Hiski Haukkala, 'Introduction', p.14; Lassi Heininen, 'Ideas and Outcomes', p.46

aspect of the Northern Dimension in EU discourse (the 'added value' in EU jargon) is that it is seen to promote greater *synergies* and *efficiency* by calling for greater co-ordination between the various directorates and policy instruments of the EU - all of which clearly sees the Northern Dimension as a way to improve the actorness of the Union.⁴⁸ In fact, Ojanen points out that the Finnish government actively used the EU desire for greater coherence in external affairs as a central strategy in trying to sell the initiative in the first place.⁴⁹ As Paavo Lipponen put it in the Northern Dimension's inaugural speech: "Developing the Northern Dimension, with its wide scope and implications, is an important line of action in making the Union a more effective global actor".⁵⁰ Particularly indicative of the way the EU has tended to view the Northern Dimension, however, was its statement in the conclusions to the Cologne European Council of June 1999, that the Northern Dimension is "a suitable basis for raising the European Union's profile in the region".⁵¹ Thus, the Northern Dimension becomes valued because it enhances EU actorness and its profile and power in the European north. In this respect, the question of what the north might gain from this becomes secondary. Put another way, the development of a coherent and powerful EU actor has become an end in itself to which regional questions have been partially subordinated.

Also indicative of this is the EU's attitude to other actors in the European north. As Catellani notes, the EU's initial rhetoric on the Northern Dimension talked in terms of creating a partnership with existing regional organisations like the Council of Baltic Sea States and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and envisaged these organisations having "a *specific role* as instruments *identifying* and

⁴⁸ In particular, 'synergy' appears to have become a buzzword of Northern Dimension discourse. For example, an article on the Northern Dimension by External Affairs Commissioner, Chris Patten, and the Swedish Foreign Minister, Anna Lindh, in the *Financial Times* managed to sneak it in 4 times. Chris Patten and Anna Lindh, 'The Northern Dimension of EU Foreign Policy: From Words to Action', *Financial Times* 20.12.2000

⁴⁹ Hanna Ojanen, 'Conclusions', p.219

⁵⁰ Paavo Lipponen, 'The European Union Needs a Policy for the Northern Dimension', speech presented at the 'Barents Region Today' conference, Rovaniemi, Finland. 15.09.1997. Available at <http://www.vn.fi/vn/english/index.htm>

⁵¹ Presidency Conclusions, Cologne European Council, 03-04 June 1999, Cologne (04-06-1999) - Document 150/99 (Presse 0)

implementing Northern Dimension priorities" (emphases added).⁵² Such rhetoric anticipates the EU, the CBSS and BEAC operating in equal partnership, establishing a framework for greater co-ordination between the various regional actors, where all the actors are given a voice in establishing priorities.⁵³ However, with the EU Action Plan on the Northern Dimension the role assigned to regional actors has been significantly downgraded. In the Action Plan the CBSS, BEAC and the Arctic Council (AC) are clearly reduced to subordinate actors, with the rhetoric of the Action Plan stating that these bodies "*may* assume a significant role in consultation with the Council of the EU in identifying common interests of the Northern Dimension Region", whilst other bodies like the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Baltic Council of Ministers and the Barents Regional Council "*may* also be consulted" (emphases added).⁵⁴ As Catellani puts it, in this the EU Council and the Commission "have claimed for themselves the role of sole decision-maker when it comes to implementing the Action Plan".⁵⁵ As such, in the Action Plan the Northern Dimension has become an initiative that may be imposed top-down on the European north, with the inclusion of regional voices dependent on the magnanimity of the EU Council and the Commission.

Importantly, however, the division of labour between the EU and the regional organisations is not simply a question of decision-making and implementation,⁵⁶ but is actually more broadly about the construction of Europe and the EU. In this respect, giving the

⁵² Foreign Ministers' Conference on the Northern Dimension, Helsinki, 11-12 November 1999, Conclusions of the Chair, p.5; Nicola Catellani (2001) 'The Multilevel Implementation of the Northern Dimension', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.58

⁵³ This is even clearer in a 1996 Commission Communication on the Baltic Sea Region, where the EU even seems prepared to take a back seat to the CBSS, limiting itself to supporting measures developed by the CBSS. In this document the EU is very much only one player amongst others, and is certainly not considered to be the most important player. Commission of the European Communities, 'Baltic Sea Region Initiative', Brussels, 10.04.1996, SEC (96) 608 Final. Available at <http://www.baltinfo.org/Docs/eu/communi.htm>

⁵⁴ Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00, p.7

⁵⁵ Nicola Catellani, 'The Multilevel Implementation of the Northern Dimension', pp.65-66

⁵⁶ Hanna Ojanen (2000) 'The EU and Its 'Northern Dimension': An Actor in Search of a Policy, or a Policy in Search of an Actor?', *European Foreign Affairs Review* (No.5) p.374

regional organisations an equal role would significantly pluralise EU governance in the European north. However, with the Northern Dimension generally valued by the Commission as an instrument that could enhance the EU's coherence and actorness, such an interpretation of the initiative would have opposite effects. To quote Ojanen, in this rather traditional power politics frame, the Northern Dimension may be understood as making "the Union's neighbours stronger, something that could be perceived as undermining the EU's authority by both non-EU countries and other organisations".⁵⁷ Thus, when interpreted within the frame of modern discourse, giving a constitutive voice to the other organisations is not seen as a positive development, but is one that is detrimental to the construction of EU subjectivity.

This hierarchical approach to regional questions has been further emphasised by the Northern Dimension's subordination to two other EU policy instruments for dealing with EU-Russian relations. These are the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA - which came into force in 1997) and the Common Strategy on Russia (CSR - 1999), both of which have served as attempts to create a unified EU strategy towards Russia and to enhance the coherence of the CFSP.⁵⁸ The effect of this subordination appears to be two-fold. Firstly, as Joenniemi notes, the CSR and PCA undermine the emergence of a new regionality, as both these policies treat Russia as a homogeneous whole.⁵⁹ This is to say, these policy frameworks only envisage dealing with Russia *bilaterally* through Brussels-Moscow negotiations, and thereby implying the EU to be a unified actor with centralised decision-making akin to a modern nation-state. With EU-Russian relations in the PCA and CSR conducted through high-level consultations, summits and regular committees, an institutional framework has been established of mutual recognition that re-enforces each other's geopolitical subjectivity in modern terms.⁶⁰ Moreover, with the formulation of the CSR, EU-Russian relations have been re-

⁵⁷ Hanna Ojanen, 'Conclusions', p.233

⁵⁸ On the CSR see Hiski Haukkala and Sergei Medvedev (eds) (2001) *The EU Common Strategy on Russia: Learning the Grammar of the CFSP* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik)

⁵⁹ Pertti Joenniemi 2000) 'Kaliningrad, Borders and the Figure of Europe', in James Baxendale, Stephen Dewar and David Gowan (eds) *The EU and Kaliningrad: Kaliningrad and the Impact of EU Enlargement* (Federal Trust) pp.164-165

⁶⁰ Pami Aalto, 'A European Geopolitical Subject in the Making?'

conceptualised as a 'strategic partnership',⁶¹ a metaphor that not only implies the existence of two distinct actors, but also presupposes the relations between these actors to be premised on shared (rational, strategic) interests, as opposed to shared identities. This leads to the second point, that in the 'strategic partnership' of the PCA and CSR Russia remains treated as an outsider, as not us, a point further inscribed by the sharp boundaries of selfhood envisaged by the Schengen border regime.⁶² Russia's exclusion from the EU 'us' has been particularly highlighted by Javier Solana, the EU's Mr CFSP, who, when speaking about the EU's Common Strategies, has argued they should not be published in order to prevent others (outsiders) from influencing them.⁶³ All this, of course, flies in the face of the visionary rhetoric of the Northern Dimension that sees it as breaking down borders (especially between East and West), as de-centralising governance, and not least as giving an equal voice to non-EU members in the formulation of Northern Dimension priorities.⁶⁴ In short, subsumed within the PCA and CSR, the localised and regionalising aspects of the Northern Dimension, that have been a source of optimism for many, are severely marginalised as the EU has sought to assert itself as an international actor on the world stage.

Moreover, these 'modern' discursive practices are having real effects. This has been illustrated particularly effectively by Tarja Cronberg, formerly the Executive Director of the Regional Council of North Karelia in Finland, and whose job involved extending and developing cooperation across the Finnish-Russian border as a part of the EU's EuregioKarelia under the Northern Dimension. At a rhetorical level such cooperation is championed by the EU, and

⁶¹ *Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia*, 4 June 1999, (1999/414/CFSP)

⁶² Igor Leshukov (2001) 'Can the Northern Dimension Break the Vicious Circle of Russia-EU Relations?', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.135; On the problems of the Schengen regime see, Heather Grabbe (2000) 'The sharp edges of Europe: extending Schengen eastwards', *International Affairs* (Vol.76, No.3)

⁶³ Hanna Ojanen, 'Conclusions', p.226

⁶⁴ For example, even as late as May 2001 Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja contended, "The Northern Dimension provides the non-member partner countries a forum for discussion and, through dialogue, an opportunity to influence EU policy". Erkki Tuomioja, Foreign Minister, 'The Northern Dimension as a Continuing Process', Address at a seminar 'Sweden at the wheel' organised by the Finnish Committee for European Security, Helsinki, 9 May 2001. Available at <http://formin.finland.fi>

the Action Plan calls for the extension of the Euregios in order to build transborder local contacts.⁶⁵ However, in Cronberg's experience such rhetoric is empty and in practice Russian otherness is only re-enforced in the Euregio process. Crucial, she notes, is the fact that funds for the Finnish side of a project come from the Interreg-programme, which allows for regionalised decision-making. In contrast, funds for the Russian side of projects rely on Tacis funding, for which there are no regionalised decision-making structures. Instead, Tacis funds are administered directly from Brussels and Moscow. The result is that local Russian partners are marginalised and have little influence on outcomes.

The goal may be [a] Europe of equals without dividing lines, but there is a great bureaucratic divide, which in effect counteracts the official goals and declarations. The concrete message to the Russians, even if living on the Finnish-Russian border, is one of otherness, not one of partnership.⁶⁶

Although Cronberg points to a number of possible explanations for this state of affairs - including bureaucratic ignorance in Brussels of the situation on the ground, Brussels' fear that funds will be mismanaged by the Russians, or that it is Moscow's fault as the Russian government does not want to devolve decision-making in Russia - from her experience the real reason "is there in reality is no desire to use the funds in a way, which would benefit the border areas in the most effective manner. Partnership is to be maintained only on the rhetorical level".⁶⁷ Notably, high officials in the Russian government have increasingly come to share Cronberg's view. For example, in October 2001 Deputy Prime Minister, Victor Khristenko, criticised the Northern Dimension precisely because the EU gives the proposals of the Russians little

⁶⁵ Council of the European Union, *Action Plan for the Northern Dimension with external and cross-border policies of the European Union 2000-2003*, Brussels, 14 June 2000, 9401/00, p.34

⁶⁶ Tarja Cronberg, 'Europe Making in Action: Euregio Karelia and the Construction of EU-Russian Partnership', presented at the Think Tank Seminar on the Northern Dimension and the Future of Barents Euro-Arctic Cooperation, Kiruna Sweden, 14-17 June 2001

⁶⁷ Tarja Cronberg, 'Europe Making in Action'. Notably, in 2001 the Commission did publish a paper concerned with making the Tacis and Interreg programmes more compatible. The focus of this paper is on creating compatibility between the funds and overcoming the problem of the different time frames the programmes utilise (i.e., Interreg funds can be granted for multi-annual programmes whilst Tacis funds only operate annually). However, it is notable that the paper does not address Cronberg's concern of the exclusion of Russia's regional actors from the process. European Commission (2001) *A Guide to Bringing INTERREG and Tacis Funding Together*

consideration.⁶⁸ Also illustrative, however, are Russian proposals to invigorate the CBSS. As Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, has stated, "the Council should build up its authority not merely as a co-ordinator, but *also as a source* of co-operation initiatives in the region" (emphasis added).⁶⁹ In short, it appears that developing the CBSS into a policy-framing actor, rather than simply an instrument of implementation, is seen as a way to give Russia the voice in policy formation and agenda setting in the Baltic Sea Region that is currently denied to it in the EU's Northern Dimension.

Finally, the Northern Dimension's co-option into an EU discourse that aims at enhancing the actorness and coherence of the Union has been facilitated in two further respects. Firstly, the very categorisation of the Northern Dimension as a part of the EU's external affairs has been particularly significant. As Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes note, categorisation is not passive, but is actually productive of the structure of social reality.⁷⁰ This is to say that, assigning the Northern Dimension to *foreign policy* entails a certain conception of world politics and European subjectivity that has vital consequences. Not least, characterised as foreign policy, elements of the regionality originally espoused in the Northern Dimension are sidelined as Russia is *de facto* excluded as the other. Having been institutionalised as foreign policy and as directed at Russia the Northern Dimension is no longer about eradicating dividing lines, but actually about re-inscribing and managing them, a point that will become clearer in the following section.⁷¹ Secondly, it is also important to note that the evolution of the EU into a unitary foreign policy actor is also promoted by the expectations of other international actors that the EU should

⁶⁸ *Helsingin Sanomat International Edition* 23.10.2001. <http://www.helsinki-hs.net>

⁶⁹ Igor S. Ivanov, Foreign Affairs Minister of the Russian Federation, 'Baltic Sea Cooperation: Establishing a New Type of Relationship in Northern Europe', published in Baltinfo, Official CBSS Newsletter, No.40 September 2001. Available at <http://www.baltinfo.org>

⁷⁰ Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes (1997) 'Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations* (Vol.3, No.2) pp.218-219

⁷¹ This point is a clear elaboration of the constructivist claim that 'foreign policy' is necessarily a boundary producing practice differentiating the self from others. For example, see Roxanne Lynn Doty (1993) 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol.37); David Campbell (1992) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

acquire a distinct foreign policy identity.⁷² Perhaps slightly ironic given Russian criticisms of the Northern Dimension, Aalto notes Russia in particular has sought to raise the actorness and profile of the EU, seeing such support as a way to reduce the relative power of the US and thereby promoting the emergence of the multipolar world order that is central to Russian foreign policy goals.⁷³

The Northern Dimension, Russia and the EU Empire

Given the dominance of modern discourse calling for the development of the EU into an international actor and the Northern Dimension's gradual co-option into this discourse, at first sight it appears that the Northern Dimension has become part of a process reconstructing Europe in Westphalian form. On this reading, the regionality of a Europe of Olympic Rings of postmodern visions has been superseded by a modern Westphalian metaphor that indicates the continued division of European political space into clearly delineated sovereign territorial units, and in which the EU is a kind of super-state in the making. Arguably, however, such a conclusion is misplaced. In this section it will be argued that current developments are better described by the metaphor of an emerging EU Empire.⁷⁴ Central to the notion of Empire are two important points that will be drawn out through a closer look at EU-Russian relations in the European north. On the one hand, contra postmodern visions of the Olympic Rings, the Empire notion maintains the preservation of borders between self and others to be crucial in constructing and protecting subjectivity. On the other hand, however, and contra the modern Westphalian metaphor, the Empire notion also illustrates the fact that borders are not as clearly defined as before and that the centre's control of the periphery has been undermined, resulting in a certain de-centralisation of power and governance.

⁷² Roy H. Ginsberg (1999) 'Conceptualizing the European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectations Gap', *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Vol.37, No.3) pp.435, 437

⁷³ Pami Aalto, 'A European Geopolitical Subject in the Making?'

⁷⁴ This draws on the arguments of Ole Wæver (1997) 'Imperial Metaphors: Emerging European Analogies to Pre-Nation-State Imperial Systems', in Ola Tunander, Pavel Baev and Victoria Ingrid Einagel (eds) *Geopolitics in Post-Wall Europe: Security, Territory and Identity* (London: Sage Publications); Jan Zielonka (2001) 'How New Enlarged Borders will Reshape the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Vol.39, No.3)

Central is to understand that the EU clearly sees itself to have two very important interests in regard to Russia. Firstly, with Finland's membership of the Union the EU is seen to have acquired an external border that is viewed as entailing a number of potential and serious security issues that are understood to threaten the whole Union.⁷⁵ These are listed as ranging from environmental pollution and nuclear safety to the spread of disease, immigration, and organised crime. These concerns occupy a considerable portion of EU comment on the Northern Dimension, particularly in respect of the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.⁷⁶ In this respect, the Northern Dimension is explicitly understood as an alternative security policy designed to combat these threats in cooperation with Russia. However, whilst cooperation implies opening the border somewhat, understood as threatening the Northern Dimension very much remains a border strategy. On the one hand, what emerges is a very traditional discourse in which Russia is once more understood as a constituting other of Europe. This is to say, in the Northern Dimension Russia is presented as a potential site of contamination, disorder and chaos, in contrast to EU rationality, order and cosmos. This is no better illustrated than in Swedish Prime Minister, Goran Persson's, comment on Kaliningrad as a site of pollution, diseases like HIV and tuberculosis, and nuclear waste. In short, "Almost every problem you can find you have there".⁷⁷ In quite typical fashion the EU self is reified with threats seen to reside on the fringes and threatening to undermine internal unity.⁷⁸ Whilst internally we have seen the process of integration and debordering is viewed highly positively, as producing a Deutschian-esque security community, external borders need to be preserved to pre-empt contamination from external threats. On the other hand, however, the fear of the instability that is understood as resident in Russia's north-west has also become a motivation for the EU to become engaged in these

⁷⁵ Sami Moisio, 'Back to Baltoscandia?'

⁷⁶ For example see Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council, *The EU and Kaliningrad*, Brussels, 17.01.2001, COM (2001) 26 Final

⁷⁷ Quoted in Marcin Grajewski, 'Russian Enclave a Crossroads before EU Expansion', *Reuters* 15 January 2001. Available at <http://virtual.finland.fi/reuters/>. The construction of (Western) Europe in opposition to a negatively depicted Russia/East has a significant history in European thought. E.g., Heikki Mikkeli (1998) *Europe as an Idea and an Identity* (Palgrave) especially chapter 8; Iver B. Neumann, (1999) *Uses of the other: "the East" in European identity formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

⁷⁸ For a theoretical elaboration of this point see David Campbell, *Writing Security*

regions, to counteract these problems in the name of EU security, and in the process to control and order Russian, political, social and environmental space. As such, although the boundary between 'us' and 'them' is to be preserved, the boundary is transformed and extended into something of a zone as the EU attempts to extend its influence beyond its official borders.

Notably, this approach is supported by the other principal interest the EU has identified in Russia's north-west, the need to secure access to the abundant natural resources of the region. Indeed, when reading EU documents, speeches and articles on the Northern Dimension it is easy to get the impression that all the EU is really interested in is opening up resource-rich northern Russia for exploitation by European capital. For example, at a conference on the Northern Dimension in May 2000, Jan-Peter Paul, the head of DG-10 at the European Commission, completely ignored the Northern Dimension as a policy designed to promote regionality and to democratise EU governance and instead declared that:

The Northern Dimension should be seen in the context of the strategic importance of Russia for the energy sector of the European Union. The resources of north-western Russia including gas, oil, coal, forest and minerals are vast and can hopefully be harnessed for European use as well.⁷⁹

In this light it is instructive that EU reports on the Northern Dimension subsequently devote significant attention to emphasising the importance of the implementation of a liberal democratic market economy in Russia and the extension and improvement of transport networks. One begins to wonder whether this is for the benefit of the regional peoples, or more for the economic benefit of the EU. However, it is here that the link to the first point becomes clear. Although the EU wishes to retain its external border, it also has an interest in the development of Russian economic space. Notably the EU presents continued access as a security prerogative (especially when it comes to energy resources), which ultimately requires the preservation of

⁷⁹ Jan-Peter Paul (2000) Text of speech delivered in Copenhagen on 17-18 May 2000 in *Conference on The Northern Dimension and Kaliningrad: European and Regional Integration* (Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) p.58. Likewise, one can note the 1998 report of the Commission which stressed that "The strategic importance of the North's natural resources is foremost to both the region and the Community". Commission of the European Communities, *A Northern Dimension for the Policies of the Union*, 25.11.1998 COM (1998) 589 Final

stable and cooperative relations with Russia. However, understood as a security issue the EU has constructed a discourse that also rationalises active participation in north-western Russia to foster the development of Western structures there, in order to combat the assumed endemic instability. Combined, therefore, what these two points illustrate is that the EU is using the Northern Dimension, not to overcome the border between 'us' and 'them', but to provide an opportunity for the EU to engage in ordering Russian space.

The wider point, however, is that these issues have consequences for the construction of European political space and European identity that are quite distinct from those of a Westphalian or Olympic Rings/regionalism understanding. To utilise the rhetoric of Christiansen et al., what emerges in these debates is an EU Empire the borders of which are becoming increasingly fuzzy, even if they are not being completely transcended. Whilst EU and European subjectivity and power remain focused in the EU centre, on the periphery the interfaces between the inside and outside of the polity are becoming blurred.⁸⁰ To enlarge on a point made by Wæver, whilst "Nation-states, at least in principle, have a 'constant energy' across their territory", in empires energy is not constrained by the border and may either fade out towards the periphery or ooze out across the border into foreign fields, as is largely the case of the EU in the European north.⁸¹

In one respect the empire metaphor highlights how the EU has become focused on the concerns of its centre. This is particularly clear in the Northern Dimension where its re-orientation to questions of EU 'security' and 'actorness' indicate how the initiative's original concerns with establishing a new regional/European politics focused on the needs of the peripheries, has been marginalised to the concern of preserving and enhancing the identity and welfare of a unified EU subject. This is to say that an emergent hierarchy is identifiable in EU discourse in which the concerns and needs of the periphery are subsumed to the ambitions of Brussels. At the same time, through the Northern Dimension the EU is exerting its power of governance beyond its external border to Russia's north-west in order to provide for

⁸⁰ Thomas Christiansen, Fabio Petito and Ben Tonra (2000) 'Fuzzy Politics Around Fuzzy Borders: The European Union's 'Near Abroad'', *Cooperation and Conflict* (Vol.35, No.4) p.393

⁸¹ Ole Wæver, 'Imperial Metaphors', p.78

security and access to vital Russian resources. In this process, through holding out rewards for the instigation of Western norms based on the asymmetric dependence of Russia's north-west on the EU, Russia's north-west periphery has been partially drawn into the realm of EU governance, whilst the EU itself is left free of responsibility for developments there.⁸² In another respect, however, the empire metaphor points to the fact that EU governance in the European north is not total and that space exists in the periphery for independent subjectivity, even if this is heavily constricted by the concerns of the centre and the centre's desire to maintain a border, however porous, between 'us' and 'them'.

Conclusion

To summarise, this paper has focused on the consequences of discourses surrounding the regional initiative of the Northern Dimension for the construction of European political space and identity. It has been argued that two principal discourses can be identified that entail quite diverse implications for the future of European subjectivity. Firstly, it was noted how the Northern Dimension has been seen by many as a highly innovative policy presaging a revolution in European governance with the democratisation of decision-making through de-centralisation to multiple regional actors. In this neo-medieval Europe of Olympic Rings the figure of Europe is dramatically reconstituted with the erasure of the reified East-West border. In this postmodern vision, 'Europe' is understood as open to diversity and becomes a fluid configuration in which governance occurs through multiple processes of networking involving local and regional actors, states, as well as the EU. However, in this discourse the EU becomes simply one actor amongst many and is certainly not necessarily understood as the most privileged actor.

In contrast, however, a second and more dominant discourse was also identified that has largely co-opted the Northern Dimension into more modern understandings. In this discourse the EU is understood as the referent object to the marginalisation of the concerns of the periphery. Central to modern understandings is the desire for order and uniformity, for clear distinctions between inside and outside, and a consequent understanding of political space as necessarily divided between clearly delineated sovereign

⁸² This draws on Ole Wæver, 'Imperial Metaphors', pp.69-71, 81

territorial spaces. This is the world of Westphalian nation-states and it has been shown how much EU rhetoric on the Northern Dimension aims to utilise the initiative in the construction of a unified international actor, a modern subject with eternal essence.⁸³

However, although modern Westphalian discourses appear to be dominant, it was argued that in actual fact the construction of Europe in the Northern Dimension is currently better described by the metaphor of Empire Europe, the notion of Empire pointing to two particular aspects of the Northern Dimension. Firstly, the metaphor highlights how, whilst preserving borders between the EU self and others is re-inscribed in the EU's utilisation of the initiative, the Northern Dimension is also a way to open the border, enabling the EU to project its influence into its near abroad in very neo-colonial terms. Secondly, the metaphor also enables us to see how in the EU politics is largely understood in terms of the concerns of the centre to the marginalisation of the periphery.

In conclusion, however, it is important to point out that the construction of Europe in Empire form in the Northern Dimension is not inevitable. In this respect it is necessary to stress that this is a political process and consequently the metaphors of Olympic Rings, Westphalia and Empire are not mutually exclusive - elements of each are clearly identifiable in current discourse. Saying this, though, certain predictions regarding the future configuration of Europe in the European north are possible. In the first instance, it appears that the emergence of a Westphalian super-state is unlikely, at least in the short term. Central here is the fact that even if the Northern Dimension has largely become co-opted and imbued with modernist EU discourse, what the Northern Dimension experience does illustrate is the extent to which regional actors have emerged claiming their own subjectivity. *De facto*, therefore, the future shape of Europe and the EU remains open for negotiation and is a process in which voices at the periphery are playing a crucial role. With the EU's extension into the peripheral north the peripheries have become hard for the EU to ignore. As both Hartnell and Parker note, the EU no longer has full control over the agenda of European integration.⁸⁴ Since the

⁸³ Pertti Joenniemi, 'North Goes Europe',

⁸⁴ Helen Hartnell, 'European Integration through the Kaleidoscope', p.49; Noel Parker, 'Integrated Europe and its 'Margins'', pp.8-9

end of the Cold War localities, regional organisations and states in the European north have got used to interacting with each other across borders, including across the EU's external border with Russia, whether they will tolerate being continually thwarted by the modernist concerns of Brussels (and Moscow) is open to debate. Instructive, however, is that there are clear signs of frustration in the European north at the European Union's perceived increasing reluctance to engage in the multilevel implementation of the Northern Dimension and to foster greater levels of cross-border cooperation and de-centralisation.⁸⁵ This is evident at at least three levels. Firstly, we have already seen in Cronberg's critique of the EU's approach to Northern Dimension funding and decision-making how local sub-national actors have become disaffected with the EU. Secondly, and at the other end of the scale, elements of a recent joint report of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers can be read as indicating that these regional bodies envisage themselves as competitors to the EU in directing the implementation and goals of the Northern Dimension.⁸⁶ Thirdly, it is also questionable whether the northern European states are prepared to let the EU dominate the Northern Dimension agenda. In contrast to the EU, it is notable that Finland, Sweden and Norway have been rather supportive of giving regional actors an active role in identifying and implementing Northern Dimension priorities.⁸⁷ In particular, Novack has argued that Sweden has been especially keen to limit the EU's role in northern European region-building, a point emphasised by the decision *not* to make the Northern Dimension a centre-piece of Sweden's EU presidency in the first half of 2001.⁸⁸ Such developments are crucially

⁸⁵ Hiski Haukkala (2001) 'Comment: National Interests *versus* Solidarity Towards Common Policies', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.111

⁸⁶ For example, the report argues that "the Nordic region should act proactively and visibly in establishing and developing the EU Action Plan for the Northern Dimension". *New Nordic Agenda - follow-up to the report from the Panel of Wise Men* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2001)

⁸⁷ Nicola Catellani, 'The Multilevel Implementation of the Northern Dimension', p.66

⁸⁸ Jennifer Novack (2001) 'The Northern Dimension in Sweden's EU Policies: From Baltic Supremacy to European Unity?', in Hanna Ojanen (ed) *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?* (Kauhava: Ulkopoliittinen instituutti and Institut für Europäische Politik) p.99. Also notable is that the Swedish Presidency's preparatory paper for the second foreign ministers' conference on the Northern Dimension explicitly sought to raise the position of other actors in the Baltic Sea Region. Swedish Presidency, Introductory Paper for the Second Foreign Ministers' Conference on the Northern Dimension, Luxembourg, 9 April 2001. Available at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/north_dim/conf/formin2/introd.htm

important because the EU's capacity to act is largely dependent on the member states' willingness to let it do so.⁸⁹

However, what all this highlights is that despite its Westphalian aspirations the Northern Dimension is not likely to support the EU's development in traditional state form. Consequently, it rather appears that the future configuration of Europe will lie somewhere in the debate between an Empire Europe and Europe of Olympic Rings. Importantly, these two models do not necessarily exist in anti-thesis to each other. This is because, to the extent that an empire model of the EU emerges, a certain freedom of action for the Union's peripheries is also envisaged. At the same time, however, an undeniable tension between the models is clearly apparent. Like the Westphalia metaphor, the metaphor of an EU Empire understands sovereignty over territory and governance to be centred at a single decision-making pole. In contrast, the regionality of the Olympic Rings calls for the de-centralisation of decision-making to multiple regional and local bodies and networks. This is not so much a dispersal of sovereignty as the conduct of politics outside of sovereign governance.⁹⁰ In short, although the empire model opens space for regionality, as regionality is strengthened and regional actors claim and build distinct subjectivities, the ability of the Empire centre to project its power and preferences into the periphery is likely to decrease. It is precisely this tension that is evident in centre-periphery relations in the European north.

To make a final point, what this paper has hoped to show is that these developments and possible trajectories for the construction of Europe and the EU are not the result of impersonal structural forces, but derive from political processes and choices that are therefore crucial to understand. The Northern Dimension is an interesting example because of the way the initiative, originally championed for its democratising and de-centralising aspirations, has been co-opted, to some extent unconsciously, into a traditional modern discourse aimed at constructing the EU into an archetypal unified international actor. By highlighting some of the implications of this move the paper has sought to open space to a more

⁸⁹ Pami Aalto, 'A European Geopolitical Subject in the Making?'

⁹⁰ Ole Wæver (1997) 'The Baltic Sea: A Region after Post-Modernity', in Pertti Joenniemi (ed) *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality: The Restructuring of Political Space Around the Baltic Rim* (NordREFO) pp.301-303, 312

general questioning of the EU's *raison d'être*. The point is that this is not a question between Europhiles and Eurosceptics. Rather, the paper has questioned whether the EU/Europe that is emerging is actually the one we want, whilst at the same time calling for reflection on just whom we understand this we to be.

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