

# IDEAS, IMAGES, AND THEIR PRODUCERS: THE CASE OF REGION-MAKING IN RUSSIA'S NORTH WEST FEDERAL DISTRICT

**Andrey S. Makarychev,  
Professor, Department of International Relations,  
Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University<sup>1</sup>**

## **Introduction**

In May 2000, as a result of President Putin's administrative reform, a new territorial entity was created on Europe's eastern borders – the North West Federal District (NWFD). This new territorial unit, which eventually is supposed to join the family of Baltic / Nordic sub-national actors, is worth study for several reasons.

*First*, the territory of the NWFD historically was the meeting place of different trans-national experiences. For example, Ingermanland was a territorial intersection of different cultures (Russian, Izhor, etc.) and religions (Orthodoxy and Lutheranism)<sup>2</sup>.

*Second*, the NWFD is located at the intersection of three still unfinished processes: EU-building, nation-building in the three Baltic republics, and region-building at the level of the subjects of the Russian Federation. The district is also within a sphere of pronounced attention of one major non-European actor - the United States.

*Third*, there is a strong feeling amongst analysts that «the geo-economic balance of Russia is shifting to Europe, and in particular towards the Northwest»<sup>3</sup>. The question is not just whether Russia's

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my thanks for the support of COPRI and the International Policy Fellows Program of the Open Society Institute (Budapest) which made possible the writing of this paper. My special thanks to Pertti Joenniemi and Christopher Browning for thoughtful and immensely valuable comments on an earlier version of this text.

<sup>2</sup> Chistiakov, Anton. The Ethno-Cultural Situation in Ingermanland at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in: Russia and the Baltic States: Political Relations, National Identity and Social Thought in XVIII-XX Centuries. Samara, 2001. pp. 263-267.

<sup>3</sup> Blomberg, Jaakko. The EU's Role in Northern Europe. In: The Baltic Sea Region. Building an Inclusive System of Security and Cooperation. The Third Annual Stockholm Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation. The Embassy of the United States of

North West is a part of Europe, but what kind of encounter with Europe Russia is looking for, and what kind of Europe Russia wants to contribute to. The NWFD is becoming increasingly important for Moscow because here Russia is presented with a number of challenges. Some of these challenges relate to «hard security» concerns (such as Russia-EU and Russia-NATO relations), while others are of a more post-modernist nature (trans-border cooperation, the changing meaning of territorial arrangements, etc.).

*Fourth*, the provinces of the NWFD enjoy preferential treatment from most Western countries. For example, the Swedish Institute, the Eurasia Foundation, the Nordic Council and many other foreign foundations and international grant-making institutions run programs with a clear focus on Russia's North-West territories<sup>4</sup>.

Yet the region-building process in the NWFD is still waiting to be tackled analytically. My paper is based on a combination of cognitivist/constructivist and institutionalist approaches to regionalism that by and large reflect two major analytical platforms that have emerged in Russian regional studies. One group of authors, who stick to a cognitivist/constructivist paradigm, equate region-building with the «imagining of a new region»<sup>5</sup>. Ideas, in this interpretation, form «regimes of signification»<sup>6</sup> which are based upon remembering and forgetting as social institutions that justify the dominating memories<sup>7</sup>. Other – and more traditional - scholars focus their attention on institutional factors, including existing policy making bodies, organizations and programs that shape the state of regional affairs, etc.

The gap between these two approaches could be bridged by introducing the concept of «learning regions» – the type of territorial actors in which cognitive capital becomes embodied in institutionalist frameworks and settings. The concept presumes that in the absence of

---

America, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. November 19, 1988. p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.eurasia.msk.ru/programs/programs\\_list/nw\\_russia.htm](http://www.eurasia.msk.ru/programs/programs_list/nw_russia.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Cronberg, Tarja. Euroregio Karelia. In Search for a Relevant Space for Action. Paper presented at COPRI Seminar, May 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Lash, Scott. Discourse or Figure? Postmodernism as a 'Regime of Signification' // *Theory. Culture. Society*. Vol. 5, N 2-3, June 1988. P.311.

<sup>7</sup> Shotter, John. The Social Construction of Remembering and Forgetting. In: *Collective Remembering*. Edited by David Middleton and Derek Edwards. SAGE Publications: London, Newbury Park and New Delhi, 1990. Pp. 120-131.

ideas some institutions simply may not be formed at all. By the same token, through the intervention of institutions the impact of ideas can be reinforced<sup>8</sup>.

Another useful vision is presented in Emmanuel Adler's theory of «cognitive regions», whose borders are determined not only by geography but also by shared understandings and intellectual practices<sup>9</sup>. The shape of «cognitive regions» is not imposed by someone's will, but appears as a result of «voluntaristic» and interactionist practices<sup>10</sup>.

Both approaches – «learning regions» and «cognitive regions» - in one way or another focus on the relationship between power and knowledge<sup>11</sup>. They seek to show that institutions are based on products of human consciousness that tend to take the form of collective understandings of reality. Both believe that the ability to generate ideas is a subtle, yet most effective, form of power. In this sense, the idea of the «pilot region», which is currently applied to the Kaliningrad oblast, correlates well with both concepts mentioned above.

However, constructivist approaches are often criticized for being insufficiently able to prove their theoretical claim of the principal influence of ideas upon institutions and the policymaking process<sup>12</sup>. In this respect, it is notable that there is a long Russian tradition of treating intellectuals as pure theorists who are prone to view society simply as an experimental ground for testing their ideas<sup>13</sup>. In a similar way, in the West it has been said that «much of today's scholarship is either irrelevant or inaccessible to policymakers... Academicians often

---

<sup>8</sup> Hasenclever, Andreas; Mayer, Peter; Rittberger, Volker. *Theories of International Regimes*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. P. 144.

<sup>9</sup> Adler, Emanuel; Barnett, Michael. *Security Communities in Theoretical Perspectives*, in: *Security Communities*. Edited by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett. Cambridge University Press, 1998. P.44.

<sup>10</sup> Palan, Ronen. *A World of their Making: an Evaluation of the Constructivist Critique in International Relations* // *Review of International Studies*. N 26, 2000. P.587.

<sup>11</sup> Price, Richard and Reus-Smith, Christian. *Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism* // *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 4 (3), 1998. P. 269.

<sup>12</sup> Milliken, Jennifer. *The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods* // *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 5(2), 1999. P.227.

<sup>13</sup> «Intelligentsia i vlast» (Intellectuals and Power), at <http://www.politstudies.ru/fulltext/1992/3/12.htm>

appear caught up in an elite culture in which labels, categories, and even the humor have meaning for 'members only'. Their writings are filled with references to other scholars' writings; they speak to each other rather than to a wider public... Much of what is produced is intended to gain the kind of academic identification with a theory or equation that will lead to professional advancement. Little evidence exists of a direct effort to influence public policy through scholarly writing»<sup>14</sup>.

My task in this paper is to show that there is a sphere at the intersection of Russia's domestic and trans-national politics where the translation of intellectual products into policies does take place. This sphere comprises a number of region-building projects, all encompassing, in one way or another, Russia's North West territories. However, whilst ideas can inspire innovations they also require special kinds of «cognitive actors», whose role is to select the most viable pieces of thought and then «market» them<sup>15</sup>.

My intention is to show the ways in which the widely spread concepts of knowledge management, epistemic communities, forward thinking and intellectual capital are projected onto Russia's North West. It is my assumption that knowledge agents (or cognitive actors) possess what could be called «soft authority», which is indispensable for the region-building process. The trans-national diffusion of information, ideas, interpretations, and experiences is also an important part of a region's way of dealing with the outside world. It will be seen that the cognitive actors to be analyzed in this paper contribute to the instrumentalization of knowledge, i.e. the construction of legitimacy of policy judgements<sup>16</sup>.

Within the framework of my analysis, a useful distinction must be made between two types of ideas - cognitive and normative. To some extent, cognitive and normative ideas compliment each other and

---

<sup>14</sup> Newsom, David. Foreign Policy and Academia // *Foreign Policy*. N 101, Winter 1995-96. Pp. 62-63.

<sup>15</sup> Laffey, Mark and Weldes, Jutta. Beyond Belief. Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations // *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 3, N 2, June 1997. Pp. 193-238.

<sup>16</sup> Stone, Diane. Think Global, Act Local or Think Local, Act Global? Knowledge Production in the Global Agora. Paper prepared for »Reshaping Globalization: Multilateral Dialogues and New Policy Initiatives«, Central European University Conference. Budapest, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Pp.2-14.

share some common denominators – for example, both stipulate the rationalist usage of discourse, exert influence through communication, provide constraints on policy actions, are built upon a reached consensus within a given domain, and reflect some prior social conditioning<sup>17</sup>. Yet they can also conflict with each other. Cognitive ideas are embodied in concepts, programs, strategies, and policy prescriptions that help decision makers chart a specific course of policy action. Normative ideas, in contrast, are images, symbols and metaphors that tend to produce a certain type of imagination and help public authorities legitimize their policy interests<sup>18</sup>. Normative ideas are products of human interpretation, not of expert analysis. If cognitive ideas, as a rule, are policy elite-oriented, then normative ideas are much more open to the general public and represent a kind of «dream world», a «world of illusion» to be identified with<sup>19</sup>.

## **1. MEETING THE NEW NEIGHBOUR: THE NORTH WEST FEDERAL DISTRICT ON EUROPE'S DOORSTEP**

The purpose of the new territorial division of Russia into federal districts has been greatly contested. One way of thinking is well described by Irina Busygina, who argues that the idea of the federal districts extends far beyond a pure technological rationalization aimed at increasing the effectiveness of Russia's territorial management. «Federal districts are probably too large in scale to produce within their borders one definitive regional identity, but at least they present a better framework for such attempts than the huge national one»<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> Haas, Peter. Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination, in: Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination. Edited by Peter M. Haas. University of South California Press, 1992. Pp. 23-25.

<sup>18</sup> Arnum, Hans. Ideas and Institutions in the European Union. The Case of Social Regulation and Its Complex Decision-Making. Copenhagen Political Studies Press, CORE. Copenhagen, 1999. Pp. 68-75.

<sup>19</sup> Kertzer, David. Ritual, Politics, and Power. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988. P.5.

<sup>20</sup> Busygina, Irina. Russia's Regions in Search of Identity // *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. Slavic Research Center, University of Hokkaido, Sapporo, 2002. P. 302.

Nikolai Petrov has a different view. He has forecast that Putin's territorial reform of 2000 «may eventually lead to the disappearance of Russian federalism», since democracy and regionalism are not among major principles the Russian President adheres to<sup>21</sup>. Petrov believes that Putin's territorial reform is designed to introduce a semi-military system into Russia. This implies a reduction in public control over the authorities, a return to the old system of appointments, and an almost total severing of connections between the emerging civil society and the state, and an end to all elements of federalism in Russia<sup>22</sup>.

Offering a third perspective, Graeme Herd argues that Russia might go through a period of «soft, controlled disintegration»<sup>23</sup>. Should this scenario come true, federal districts might well be treated as nodal points of the country's confederalization.

Through the prism of these highly contradictory appraisals, how are we to view the NWFD? The political contexts of region-building in this federal district are controversial. On the one hand, some of the provinces of the NWFD are considered to be »hotbeds« of Russia's liberal/reformist forces<sup>24</sup>. No Communist governor has yet been elected in the provinces forming the NWFD. Historically, most of the North West provinces have had more or less strong democratic credentials. Not only did serfdom fail to become fully established in this part of the Russian empire, but long before the 1917 revolution public educational institutions were founded here, whilst the Soviet regime also met strong resistance from the local population<sup>25</sup>.

On the other hand, in some of the subjects of the federation (Murmansk and Pskov oblasts) nationalist voting is very strong. Similarly, today's political milieu in most of the regions of the NWFD hardly seems to be consonant with democratic expectations. For

---

<sup>21</sup> Petrov, Nikolai. Politization versus Democratization: 20 Months of Putin's »Federal« Reform. PONARS Policy Memo No. 241. Washington, D.C.: January 25, 2002. P.2.

<sup>22</sup> Petrov, Nikolai. Seven Faces of Putin's Russia: Federal Districts as the New Level of State-Territorial Composition // *Security Dialogue*. Volume 33, N 1, March 2002. P. 86-88.

<sup>23</sup> Herd, Graeme. Russia: Systemic Transformation or Federal Collapse? // *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 36, N 3, May 1999. P. 260.

<sup>24</sup> Zubarevich, Natalia; Petrov, Nikolai; Titkov, Alexei. Federal'nie okruga-2000 (Federal Districts in 2000). In: *Regiony Rossii v 1999 godu* (Russia's Regions in 1999). Edited by Nikolai Petrov. Moscow Carnegie Center, 2001. Pp. 177,180.

<sup>25</sup> Borisov, Sergei and Yushkova, Yulia. Vybory v respublike Komi: byla li sensatsia (Election in Komi: Was There a Sensation?), at <http://www.carnegie.ru/russian/Projects/Reports/Regions/sem01sep.htm>

example, the subjects of the federation are economically heavily dependent on the good will of the federal authorities, the institutions of civil society are immature, the parties are weak, political participation is limited and irregular, the civic culture of the population is low, the public's confidence in elected authorities is falling, and the demand for social and political patronage is high<sup>26</sup>. Local observers describe the political perspectives of the regions as »uncertain»<sup>27</sup>. Boris Nemtsov, the leader of the Right-Wing Forces Union, has compared Karelia with Northern Korea in terms of the state of political freedoms<sup>28</sup>. Corruption is also an issue. For example, the mayor of Petrozavodsk, the Karelian capital, is presently on trial for financial mismanagement<sup>29</sup>.

Moreover, it is not only that the NWF's constituent units are very different in terms of their political perspectives, interpretations of the nature of economic matters are also very dissimilar. The table below, for example, has two columns. The first column replicates the hierarchical ordering of regions in terms of investment attractiveness offered by the authoritative «Expert» magazine<sup>30</sup>. The second column presents the regions according to indicators proposed by the Center for Strategic Research «North – West»<sup>31</sup>. It is easy to understand that these two ratings based on expert assessments substantially diverge from each other:

<b><i>Investment potential assessment</i></b>	<b><i>Complex economic rating</i></b>
St.Petersburg	Kaliningrad oblast
Leningrad oblast	Arkhangel'sk oblast and Nenets autonomous okrug
Murmansk oblast	Komi Republic
Vologda oblast	St.Petersburg
Kaliningrad oblast	Murmansk oblast

<sup>26</sup> Barandova, T.L. Regional'nie elektoral'nie kampanii v Arkhangel'skoi oblasti (Regional Electoral Campaigning in Arkhangelsk oblast, 2000-2001). Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Kovaliov, Viktor. Posle sil'noi ruki (In the Aftermath of the Strong Hand), at <http://www.expert.ru/sever/current/polit.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.nemtsov.ru/media/news/id/434652.html>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/130642.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.expert.ru>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru>

Komi Republic	Vologda oblast
Arkhangel'sk oblast	Karelia
Karelia	Leningrad oblast
Novgorod oblast	Pskov oblast
Pskov oblast	Novgorod oblast
Nenets autonomous okrug	

Yet perhaps more important is that the NWFD represents a multi-layered space organized on the basis of several overlapping and intermingled jurisdictions. What we see here are:

- bilateral cooperative links. Some of the North-West territories are eager to foster mutual horizontal cooperation. For example, in April 2002 the governors of the Leningrad and Kaliningrad oblasts signed an agreement on cooperation in trade, commercial, and other spheres. Both provinces are interested in specific transport projects – such as building a highway from Ust'-Luga to Baltiisk.
- inter-regional multilateral agreements. To a significant extent, the NWFD region building project is based on the legacy of the 1990s. It has included almost all the regions that compose the «North West» Association of Economic Interaction (except for Kirov oblast which became part of the Volga Federal District), which has been in operation for about a decade. Yet the «North West» Association (and the NWFD as well) is usually said to be an economically loose body of individual subjects of the federation, with each one pursuing its own economic strategies. Consequently, the effectiveness of inter-regional cooperation in the North West in the 1990s was rather low. As one of its officials has noted, only 5% of decisions taken together by the governors actually get implemented<sup>32</sup>.
- Moscow-centric arrangements. For example, Moscow tycoons control most of the metallurgical companies in Murmansk oblast. Similarly, the military sites of Severodvinsk and

---

<sup>32</sup> Duka, Alexander. Institut polnomochnogo predstavitelia prezidenta RF v Severo-Zapadnom federal'nom okruge (The institution of presidential representative in NWFD). Paper presented at Boldino Congress of Regional Studies, September 2001, at <http://www.iews.org>



Plesetsk in Arkhangelsk oblast are administered, not by regional officials, but by the federal center authorities;

- Baltic, Barents, Arctic cooperation. This will be discussed in more detail in section 4;
- Euroregions and other forms of cross-border interaction.

All this makes managing the district an extremely difficult task. The official structures of the NWFD seem to be rather weak and sometimes ill-designed. For example, it took about two months to select the official in charge of Kaliningrad oblast. Moreover, Andrey Stepanov, who finally got this post, was characterized as having poor experience in local affairs<sup>33</sup>. Likewise, in January 2002 President Putin appointed Mikhail Motsak, who was discharged from the Navy because of «gross mismanagement of the Kursk submarine operation», as deputy presidential representative in the NWFD<sup>34</sup>.

Analysts also note that the NWFD administration - which is led by the former high-ranking security general, Viktor V. Cherkesov – shows insufficient transparency. At least three of Cherkesov's closest associates are from the security services as well. »Izvestia» newspaper has called Cherkesov one of most enigmatic persons surrounding the President<sup>35</sup>. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that in 2001 the well reputed «Commerzant-Vlast'» journal ranked Cherkesov only fourth among all seven presidential envoys in the districts, in terms of political success, intensity of changing regions' legislation, and media coverage.

Cherkesov's personal profile is rather controversial. For instance, he has been reported as arguing that Russian voters have lost confidence in «classical» democracy, because it has failed to provide stability and progress for the country. In his view, order and justice in Russia have always been associated with «hard authoritarian power assisted by the army and other power institutions»<sup>36</sup>. Moreover, Cherkesov assumes that «all over the world the military and law-enforcement structures are the safeguards and warrants of

---

<sup>33</sup> Abramov, Vladimir. Kaliningradsкая oblast // *Konstitutsionnoe pravo: vostochnoevropeiskoe obozrenie*, N 4 (37), 2001. P.166.

<sup>34</sup> *Kommersant*, January 25, 2002. P.2.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.izvestia.ru/print/?id=18020>

<sup>36</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher09.02.2001>

democracy». Reforms in Russia, in his logic, ought to be implemented only on the basis of security services support<sup>37</sup>.

Being clearly state-centric, Cherkesov has explicitly denied that the regions have a right to deal with security issues<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, in accordance with geopolitical logic, he ranks issues pertaining to «Russian minorities» at the very top of Russia's interests in the Baltic Sea area<sup>39</sup>.

Some of Cherkesov's public pronouncements seem to be rather inconsistent. For example, in answering a question about the relevance of his job to regional development, he mentioned that under his pressure the local authorities have changed the timetable of local trains<sup>40</sup>. This almost anecdotal reference leaves the impression of a general lack of ideas or sense of mission in Cherkesov's administration. In fact, he himself has confessed that he feels uncomfortable as to the current uncertainty pertaining to his duties, particularly in view of the fact that the functions of presidential envoys are not constitutionally fixed<sup>41</sup>. Some contradictions in his comprehension of the NWFD's problems are also apparent. For example, having indicated that the basic problem of the district is its unevenness of *socio-economic* development<sup>42</sup>, he admitted soon after that his major goal is «participation in the *political* process»<sup>43</sup>.

Another problem is that the administrative bodies of the NWFD are weakly institutionalized. The head of the federal district lacks his own resources to influence political developments in the constituent subjects of the federation. In Peter Rutland's opinion, some of Cherkesov's projects could have been inspired by regional tycoons, a fact which also might put under question the state of institutionalization of the apparatus of the presidential envoy<sup>44</sup>. This opinion might possibly be confirmed by information, widely circulated in the media, that Cherkesov, in alliance with the Vologda governor, was involved in

---

<sup>37</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher09.02.2001>

<sup>38</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher21.03.2001/getindex>

<sup>39</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher12.10.2000/getindex>

<sup>40</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher09.02.2001>

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

<sup>42</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher09.02.2001>

<sup>43</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher12.10.2000/getindex>

<sup>44</sup> Rutland, Peter. Statement at the Conference on Regional Studies, Boldino, September 2001, at [www.iewws.org](http://www.iewws.org)

protecting local markets from competition and from the expansion of businesses coming from other regions<sup>45</sup>.

A problem of equally important scale is that relations between the district and regional authorities are predetermined by personal sympathies, and are case-dependent. Thus, in analyzing the state of political cohesion within the district, observers pay principal attention to the fact that Cherkesov has managed to establish good relations with the governors of Arkhangel'sk and Vologda oblasts, and is in conflict with the authorities of St.Petersburg, Novgorod oblast, Komi and Nenets okrug. Cherkesov's relations with the authorities of St.Petersburg, the strongest actor in the district and a challenger of the district-building project, are especially tense.

These deficiencies and shortcomings show that Cherkesov, having no significant experience in either regionalism or public politics, badly needs expertise and analytical resources. Notably, although at the beginning he was himself rather skeptical of long-term planning<sup>46</sup>, subsequently he has nevertheless become more positive about mobilizing intellectual capital for the sake of region-building.

## **2. REGION-BUILDING: DISCOURSIIVE SCENARIOS**

Having noted that the NWFD is a region-in-the-making, we should also take a look at the intellectual foundations that frame the new «horizons of meaning» and new perspectives<sup>47</sup>. The demand for ideas becomes particularly acute in situations of multiple uncertainties, which is obviously the case of the NWFD.

Several particularly important cognitive actors can be identified who are and have contributed to the intellectual spaces of the NWFD. For each, the demand for innovative ideas can be seen as having presented a golden opportunity to enter the policy area. The texts that they have produced have become »social spaces» in which two fundamental processes occur: cognition and political interaction (even tensions) between those involved. Importantly, any analysis of the texts should not be isolated from an analysis of the institutional practices

---

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.grani.ru/polpred/articles/year\\_results/print.html](http://www.grani.ru/polpred/articles/year_results/print.html)

<sup>46</sup> <http://okrug.metod.ru/books/ppp/Arhiv/Interv/Cher21.03.2001/getindex>

<sup>47</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. The New Saint Petersburg: a Case of Border-Making or Border Breaking? COPRI Working Paper, 2002, at <http://www.copri.dk>

within which those texts are embedded. Thus, texts are a form of social and political practice; meaning they are associated with particular policy areas and institutions<sup>48</sup>.

In «learning regions» institutions promote the diffusion of meanings, and play an active role in the selection of either normative or epistemic/cognitive understandings. Since the NWFD is a type of emerging region with a supposedly strong »learning» and/or »cognitive» background, it leaves much space for intellectual debates which are basically more about ideas and concepts than about images and metaphors.

### **2.1. Council on Foreign & Defense Policy (SVOP)**

It might have been thought that Cherkesov and other district officials would have turned to the Moscow-based think tanks for badly needed expertise. Yet, unfortunately, most of the major federal-level policy research institutions have neglected to systematically address the issues that are of prime interest for Russia's North West. Perhaps the only exception is the Council on Foreign & Defense Policy (Russian acronym SVOP, also known as »Karaganov's Institute»), which is an example of an establishment-driven think tank. The aims of the SVOP are not only to provide political analyses, but also to facilitate contacts between the non-governmental elites of Russia and those of Western countries.

The SVOP has issued a number of reports dealing with Russia's interests in the Baltic Sea and Europe's North. Its initial ideas in the early 1990s reflected a certain state-centrism and were based on traditional geopolitical logic. Some of the major positions and conclusions of these reports can be summarised as follows:

- The dreams about an emergent «common Baltic house» did not come to fruition. This was because of highly complicated relations between all three post-Soviet Baltic states and their poor (in comparison to what could have been expected at the beginning of the 1990s) economic performance;
- Russia has to differentiate between two types of Baltic Sea region countries. On the one hand, Finland and Sweden are not

---

<sup>48</sup> Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*. Longman, London and New York, 1995. Pp. 6-9.

only non-NATO countries, but also are more sensitive to Russian interests than other countries in the region. On the other hand, Denmark and Norway have to be treated as advocates of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian membership in NATO<sup>49</sup>.

- The admission of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to NATO should be seen as a direct threat to Russian security, and possibly even as preparation for an eventual encroachment on Russian interests;
- The Northern Dimension initiative is too uncertain and lacks solid financial mechanisms<sup>50</sup>; the Russian strategy should be to deal directly with the EU on security and economic issues;
- Russia also has to share some responsibilities with the United States for the future security and developmental arrangements in the region;
- Russia has to further raise worldwide the issue of Russian minorities in the Baltic States, putting it higher in priority than issues of trans-border cooperation;
- Moscow-backed Belarus has to be accepted as an important player in the Baltic area.

The SVOP's attitudes to the problems of the Baltic are controversial and perhaps even sometimes contradictory. For example, whilst it recognizes that Russia lacks a clear immigration policy and in fact has nothing to offer its compatriots abroad, it simultaneously advises that the position of Russian expatriots should be emphasized internationally. Similarly, although the Council talks of the «crisis of Baltic cooperation», at the same time it also thinks that the existing structures should not be altered. Further, and in a way typical to pro-Kremlin experts, the Council is tired of the «illegal transportation of arms from Baltic countries to Russia», yet leaves aside the trans-border smuggling and contraband from Russia to the West. It is also quite indicative that the Council pays only cursory attention to cross-border linkages, in fact ignoring their potential<sup>51</sup>.

---

<sup>49</sup> Interesy Rossii na Severe Evropy: v chiom oni? (Russia's Interests in the North of Europe: What Are They), at <http://www.svop.ru/yuka/1087.shtml>

<sup>50</sup> Evropeiskaya integratsia i ekonomicheskie otnoshenia Rossii, Baltii i Belarusi (European Integration and Economic Relations Between Russia, the Baltic States and Belarus), at <http://www.svop.ru/yuka/1095.shtml>

<sup>51</sup> Rossia i Pribaltika – 2 (Russia and the Baltic States – 2). Edited by S.Yurgens and S.Karaganov, at <http://www.svop.ru/doklad8.htm>

The SVOP's attitudes to the expansion of the EU are also misleading. On the one hand, this think tank is positive about EU enlargement, and even assumes that it is in Russia's interests to foster economic reforms in the three post-Soviet Baltic states in order to assist them in their application for EU membership. On the other hand, it argues that EU policies in the Baltic accession countries have led to a deterioration in their economic relations with Russia.

No less consistent are the SVOP's attitudes towards NATO. On the one hand, it treats NATO enlargement as a clear security threat for Russia. On the other hand, however, the SVOP admits that some of the regions of the NWFD might actually benefit from NATO enlargement. In particular, Leningrad and Murmansk oblasts may well become plausible alternative transport routes for Russian cargo that will no longer be transported through the Baltic States.

Meanwhile, in its later studies, the SVOP has started shifting from hard security concerns to issues of trade and commerce. As a result, a number of prescriptions advocated by the SVOP indicate that it has begun to depart from a solely state-centric platform to a more multi-actor and polycentric one. Thus:

- apart from the central state, other actors – such as the military, business institutions (LUKOil), the media, and the regional administrations - might also play a role in cross-border relations<sup>52</sup>;
- the institutions of »Euroregions» (especially »Neman» and »Saule») should be taken into closer account;
- regarding the Kaliningrad issue, Russia needs to take advantage of the oblast's location, and avoid its further militarization. Changing the administrative status of Kaliningrad oblast (including possible associate EU membership) is not completely ruled out. Also important is that the EU, in the SVOP's reading, has a legitimate voice in resolving the Kaliningrad »puzzle».
- finally, there might be some sense in expanding the »club» of Russian sub-national actors that deal directly with Nordic issues. In particular, the Nenets and Yamalo-Nenets okrugs, as well as Taimyr, might be thought of in this regard.

---

<sup>52</sup> *Rossia i Pribaltika (Russia and the Baltic States)*. Edited by S.Yurgens and S.Karaganov, at <http://www.svop.ru/yuka/784.shtml>

There are only a few points in the SVOP's analysis that have direct relevance to the NWFD. One is the aggregation of the sea facilities of St.Petersburg, Leningrad and Kaliningrad oblasts under the auspices of Cherkesov's administration<sup>53</sup>. Another is lobbying for separate state budget financing of Russian provinces that border Northern European countries.

## **2.2. St. Petersburg Economic Forum**

This is another potential source of expertise in sub-national policies, yet its importance for the specific needs of the NWFD is rather limited. First, in organizational terms, the Forum is not a permanently operating institution – it is rather a meeting place for different experts and top level policy makers. It is therefore practically oriented and sometimes lacks theoretical visions. Forum recommendations are formulated in an establishment-like manner, and adopt a distinctly bureaucratic language, the aim being to »approve (something)«, »address« (to somebody), solicit, etc.

Second, the federal districts are rarely mentioned in Forum documents. Advice is rather directed to the subjects of the federation. This is not very surprising, since the Forum basically reflects the aspirations and worldviews of the regional elites that are not very happy with some of Putin's policies – including the »centralization of finances in the federal budget«, which is strongly criticized in one of the Forum's papers<sup>54</sup>. In particular, the Forum gives implicit preference to the inter-regional association of economic interactions »North West«, as opposed to the federal district<sup>55</sup>.

Third, another clearly discernable focus of the Forum discourse is trans-border cooperation with CIS countries<sup>56</sup>. The articulation of this priority is a clear outcome of the lobbying of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has called for the enhancement of contacts between

---

<sup>53</sup> Baltia – transevropeskii koridor v XXI vek (The Baltic Area as Trans-European Corridor to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century), at <http://www.svop.ru/yuka/1073.shtml>

<sup>54</sup> Fininsovoe regulirovanie territorialnogo razvitiia (Financial regulation of the territorial development), at <http://www.economforum.iacis.ru>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.economforum.iacis.ru/rus/archives/rt-14.html>

<sup>56</sup> Mezhr regional'noe i prigranichnoe sotrudnichestvo – opyt i perspektivy (Interregional and transborder cooperation: experience and perspectives), at <http://www.economforum.iacis.ru/rus/archives/rt-2.html>

Russian sub-national units and the »Near Abroad«. For the NWFD, however, cooperation with the CIS seems to be of less importance than relations with the Baltic and Scandinavian countries.

### **2.3. Expert Council on Economic Development and Investments**

Taking into account the deficit of federal-level analytical resources with clear relevance for the NWFD, it was quite natural for Cherkesov to create a new institution for strategic planning to deal directly with district-level issues. The Council (ECEDI) was created to provide the office of the presidential representative with in-house expertise on the most pressing developmental issues. The ECEDI stays in close touch with most important administrative structures in the district, and first of all with the Coordination Council of the Inter-regional Association of Economic Interaction «North-West».

«The Strategy of NWFD Development» is the most important document of the ECEDI. There are several points of the Strategy that are quite revealing:

- first, like SVOP documents, it is clearly state-centric. It overtly demonstrates its topical consonance with the presidential directives and federal targeted programs designed for Russia's North West. «Strengthening national security, power vertical and Russia's territorial integrity» is the most important marker of modernist securitizing discourse used by its authors<sup>57</sup>. The document assumes that federal interests are of prior importance to those of the members of the federation. In this interpretation, Moscow sets up strategic landmarks that are mandatory for all constituent units. Turning to the resources available for investment activities, the Strategy gives much credit to the government and the Federal Assembly, and ignores non-governmental economic, financial and industrial actors;
- second, the Strategy is ostensibly socially oriented. It aims at achieving, by 2015, a certain level of well-being, social standards and human capital development. In particular, the document says that the average salary should rise to USD 500 per month, and life expectancy to 70 years.

---

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.prometa.ru/csi/forum1.htm>



- third, the text of the Strategy repeatedly mentions the «subjects of the federation» as its main analytical unit, thereby surprisingly leaving aside the district. The only reference to district-level policies are purely administrative. For example, it is argued that a State Council of the NWFD should be created, and empowered to distribute state subsidies to the district;
- fourth, the Strategy pays scant attention to the opportunities of trans-border relations. It is, therefore, more inward- rather than outward-oriented.

From the very beginning the Strategy became a part of policy debates. Sub-national leaders repeatedly attacked it and from various angles. For example, Valerii Serdiukov, the governor of Leningrad oblast, declared it resembled «Soviet-style state planning» and is not in tune with market imperatives. In contrast, Yurii Evdokimov, the Murmansk governor, criticized the document for excessive optimism<sup>58</sup>. Anatolii Efremov, the chief executive of Arkhangel'sk oblast, has suggested that the Strategy has to be better tied to the plans of the subjects of the federation. Meanwhile, Evgenii Mikhailov, the governor of Pskov oblast, expressed his reservations, since his region is «looking for even more dependency from the federal authorities»<sup>59</sup>.

#### **2.4. Center for Strategic Research «North – West» (CSR-NW)**

The CSR-NW was established by its Moscow-based «big brother», also named the Center for Strategic Research and patronized by German Gref, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The purpose of the CSR-NW was to serve as an expert unit for the administration of the presidential representative, who is inexperienced in regional issues. The initial ambitions of this institution were rather far-reaching – indeed, at one point it pledged to rediscover the «national idea» in this part of the country<sup>60</sup>.

CSR-NW works in close contact with a (limited) number of local public policy research institutions such as the Regional Foundation for Scientific and Technical Development<sup>61</sup>, the International Management School «Leti-Lovanium» and some others. In this sense, this is a

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.rosbalt.ru/text.php?cn=43601>

<sup>59</sup> *Chas pik*, N 15 (221), April 10-16, 2002. P.5.

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.csr.ru/csr-northwest/16.11.2000-izv.html>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=256>

networking institution with a scope of analysis not limited to the NWFD's boundaries<sup>62</sup>. Notably, it tries to position itself as a «Russian RAND Corporation», orienting towards the model of a think tank which is mostly state-funded, but also able to maintain its relative independence<sup>63</sup>.

The most important intellectual product of the CSR-NW is the «Doctrine of Russia's North West Development». Presently only a few analysts have commented on its role in region building and it is unfortunate that some of these comments have been irrelevant and misleading. For example, two Russian authors have argued that the Doctrine sticks to a «classical neorealist approach» and «zero-sum-game» theory, which is not wholly true<sup>64</sup>.

Conceptually, the CSR-NW Doctrine is based on a set of assumptions that were initially espoused in a report entitled «On the Doorstep of Russia's New Regionalization», that was prepared by the Volga Federal District Center for Strategic Studies. In fact, both think tanks treat each of the federal districts as the «assembly terrain» which might eventually constitute the new centers of economic modernization in Russia<sup>65</sup>.

Here are the most important assumptions of the Doctrine that make it very distinct from the previously discussed Strategy:

- the Doctrine is, from the outset, outward-oriented. It posits that one of the main features of globalization consists of «the erosion of administrative borders» that makes state-centric approaches obsolete;
- the Doctrine says that the NWFD neighbourhood with Western Europe is an important source of inspiration and innovation for adjacent parts of Russia;
- the Doctrine gives priority to non-administrative tools of region-building. It says that the confines of Russia's North West are still being shaped, and this process is far from being over. The

---

<sup>62</sup> Schedrovitskii, Piotr. Psykhoanaliz dlia regionov (Psychoanalysis for regions), at <http://www.shkp.ru>

<sup>63</sup> Fursenko, Andrey. Platiť dolzhno gosudarstvo, kak v Amerike (This is the State Which Has to Pay, as in USA), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=155>

<sup>64</sup> Khudoley, Konstantin, and Tkachenko, Stanislav. The Russian Debate on the Role of St.Petersburg. In: Saint Petersburg: Russian, European and Beyond. St.Petersburg State University Publishers, 2001. P.64.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/strategy.php>

Doctrine presumes that «the boundaries of the North West will be drawn where we deem it proper, or, should be keep low profile, where others will draw them for us».

- The Doctrine is of a non-technical character. It posits that territorially and administratively fixed resources yield to mobile and flexible ones that are driven by the spirit of innovation and what is called humanitarian communications (human-capital-based and knowledge-driven<sup>66</sup>);

The CSR-NW contends that the NWFD is ready to start implementing the new concept of spatial development. This would include the redistribution of labour resources, migration management, zoning, etc<sup>67</sup>. Experts working on the NWFD Doctrine blueprint offer a number of priorities for this district. These are, the mega-project «Kaliningrad»; the new management of Russia's North; energy supply and energy preservation; the building of an infrastructure for economic innovation; reforming the wood processing industry; and, developing cultural capital and investing in human resources<sup>68</sup>. Taken together, the projects of the CSR-NW are a voice of post-modernism in Russian regional strategic planning. What is remarkable is that this voice comes out of political milieu centered around the administrative structures of the Cherkasov administration and the Gref Ministry.

However, as in the case of the above mentioned Strategy, the practical implementation of the CSR-NW Doctrine, again, has been inhibited by tacit resistance from most of the authorities of the subjects of the federation. Thus, the initial blueprint of the Doctrine was criticized in the regional media for a lack of precision and excessive theorizing<sup>69</sup>. Regional expert communities also complained that there were no public debates on the CSR-NW's activities whatsoever.

In response Alexei Tupitsin, a CSR-NW expert, has argued that this criticism reflects a lack of long-term strategic thinking among the regional political elites. In his view, none of the NWFD's constituent territories has been able to form a core policy-making group able to pursue effective regional policies. Likewise, none of the North West

---

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?code=9&item=stgram>

<sup>67</sup> *Chas pik*, N 15 (221), April 10-16, 2002. P.5.

<sup>68</sup> *Russian Regional Report* (Russian edition), N 12, 2001

<sup>69</sup> Ageev, Sergei. *Strategia bezdeistvia* (Strategy of inaction), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=359>

territories is taking full advantage of trans-national networks like the Barents or Baltic regional projects. Furthermore, none of the regional leaders is seriously prepared to invest in human capital, education, tourism and other related sectors<sup>70</sup>.

Of course, the CSR-NW was not the first institution to raise the issue of strategic planning in Russia's North West. In Vologda oblast and Karelia, for example, initial attempts to start drafting a regional strategy were undertaken in 1998<sup>71</sup>, in Murmansk oblast – in 2000<sup>72</sup>. Karelia is, by the way, the only region in which the local constitution requires the chief executive to develop a regional strategy. The problem, however, was that these regional strategies were basically designed for the purposes of regional executive authorities. Therefore, there is little room in them for big business or NGOs, or for region-to-region cooperation.

\*\*\*

Thus, we see that the two cognitive actors of the NWFD discussed in 2.3 and 2.4 not only inform but also alert political elites. The situation of uncertainty, however, has produced a demand for alternative sources of advice. Importantly, there is some competition between the institutions discussed, and it seems that so far neither of them has a monopoly on policy planning in the district. In order to influence the political agenda, think tanks have to become »policy entrepreneurs» and find their niches in the policy milieu. Giving priority to cognitive practices, the think tanks are, nonetheless, also embedded in normative approaches, since some of their arguments take a normative form (i.e., what is Russia, and how does the NWFD fit into this). The major challenge they face is perhaps the politicization of knowledge,<sup>73</sup> since both are eager to gain political influence in the district.

There are some important institutional differences between the two institutions discussed above. The Expert Council seems to favour a »committed think tank» model, with a clear focus on providing

---

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=298>

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=395>

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=392>

<sup>73</sup> Stone, Diane and Garnett, Mark. Think tanks, policy advice and governance, in: Think tanks across nations. A comparative approach. Edited by Diane Stone and Mark Garnett. Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 1998. Pp.2-16.

expertise to the presidential representative in the NWFD. The CSR-NW, for its part, gravitates more towards a »forum think tank« model<sup>74</sup>, with a more accentuated public relations strategy, and the perspective task of negotiating its implementation terms with the governors – still the key decision makers in the bulk of regional policy issues. The CSR-NW aims to replicate its proposals in the constituent parts of the NWFD. So far, however, its success has been modest. Another important difference between the two think tanks is that the CSR-NW – unlike its counterpart - is reluctant to limit its sphere of interest to the NWFD, and instead tries to project its activities beyond the administrative borders<sup>75</sup>.

### 3. SUB-DISTRICT DISCOURSE PRACTICES

As I have suggested, political institutions are to large degree constructed in and through discourses that might help achieve specific political aims – be it through coercion, legitimization or something else<sup>76</sup>. However, ideas can also be regarded as «symbolic technologies» of region building, which, for example, is easily seen in the case of Kaliningrad oblast. Here the constructivist metaphors of Kaliningrad as, «The meeting place» of Russia and Europe, Russia's «cradle of internationalization», a «free customs stock of global scale», the «Russian Hong-Kong», the «five-stars-hotel», «testing ground» and «Eurobridge», conflate and clash with metaphors of a more realist background – like «the island» or «garrison», «infrastructural hole», «poor neighbor», «black hole», «the colony» and so forth.

The example of *St.Petersburg* illustrates even better the roles and functions of images, myths and stereotypes within the frameworks of discourses in the subjects of the federation. At the sub-district level, cognitive ideas have to share intellectual space and compete with

---

<sup>74</sup> Wallace, William. Between two worlds. Think tanks and foreign policy, in: Two worlds of international relations. Academics, practitioners and the trade in ideas. Edited by Christopher Hill and Pamela Beshoff. Routledge: An LSE Centenary Publication. London and New York, 1994. P. 143.

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.csr.ru/csr-northwest/19-03-2002-vstr.html>

<sup>76</sup> Chilton, Paul and Schaffner, Christina. Discourse and Politics, in: Discourses as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies: a Multidisciplinary Introduction. Volume 2. Edited by Teun A.van Dijk. SAGE Publications: London, Thousands Oaks, New Delhi, 2000. Pp. 208, 210.

other products of intellectual creativity, all of which are also parts of specific PR-based manipulative technologies.

### **3.1. St.Petersburg: Competing Images**

Unlike the other main cities of the federal district, St. Petersburg faces no regional challenger to question its supremacy in the NWFD<sup>77</sup>. The city's political elites have far-reaching ambitions. For example, the goal of the «Volia Peterburga» («St.Petersburg's Will») party is to turn the city into the «innovative locomotive of Russia»<sup>78</sup>.

St. Petersburg has multiple images, both in Russia and internationally. In this paper I propose to group them into two broad categories. Each of the images is supported by its own narratives and discursive practices.

#### ***Capitalizing on the Past***

The first group comprises what could be figuratively called «export variant» images. These are outward-oriented, predominantly retrospective and are aimed at taking advantage of the city's historical resources. To some extent they can be equated with what Viacheslav Morozov has called the «official discourse»<sup>79</sup>, and they are based on certain stereotypes – which can be treated as «pictures in our heads», or «maps» that simplify cognition<sup>80</sup>.

Since there are relatively few resource constraints on the (re)production of symbols, local authorities widely use them to further corroborate their international credentials. As Malcolm Waters puts it, «symbolic exchanges» are easily transportable and hence easily «go global»<sup>81</sup>. Furthermore, globalization has widened opportunities for trading international images<sup>82</sup>. The result is that St. Petersburg has

---

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.geocities.com/west\\_west\\_99/stenogramma9.htm](http://www.geocities.com/west_west_99/stenogramma9.htm)

<sup>78</sup> *Izvestia*, April 12, 2002. P.2.

<sup>79</sup> Morozov, Viatcheslav. The Discourses of St.Petersburg and the Shaping of a Wider Europe: Territory, Space and Post-Sovereign Politics. Copenhagen Peace Research Institute Working Papers 13/2002. P. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Leyens, Jacques-Philippe; Yzerbyt, Vincent; Schadron, Georges. Stereotypes and Social Cognition. SAGE Publications: London, Thousands Oaks, New Delhi, 1994. P. 10.

<sup>81</sup> Waters, Malcolm. Globalization. Routledge: London and New York, 1995. P. 9.

<sup>82</sup> Mattelart, Armand; Delcourt, Xavier, Mattelart, Michelle. International Image Markets, in: Search of an Alternative Perspective. London and New York: Comedia Publishing Group, 1984

surrounded itself with multiple myths, each of which, in a sense, is quite consonant with the city's cultural legacy.

*First*, St. Petersburg is baptized as being «Russia's window to Europe», which initially symbolized the empire's foreign policy ambitions, and later was transformed into the «bridge» metaphor. In particular, the city authorities are eager to use the symbolic capital related to this historical legacy whilst celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city in 2003. On the eve of the city's «birthday celebration» the local authorities have launched a robust campaign aimed at converting the symbolic capital of St. Petersburg into a tangible asset. For example, to give more international publicity to the city he runs, in March 2002 governor Vladimir Yakovlev visited a town of the same name in Florida.

*Second*, St. Petersburg proudly bears the image of being Russia's cultural capital (the «Northern Palmyra» or «Northern Venice» metaphors), the depository of world-class masterpieces of art and architecture. Here, it is traditional to treat St. Petersburg as «a living chronicle of the Russian empire, Soviet Union and today's Russia»<sup>83</sup>. The fact that the last tsar's family was re-buried in the city is of symbolic importance to the city's pride.

The *third* (and very much imagined) «mask» of St. Petersburg is the metaphor of the «free Hanseatic city». This image combines the «nostalgia for Europe», «the spectacle of Russian Europeanization», and the idealistic dream about the «mythical European city-state» – making St. Petersburg «the city of memory», «longing for a home which no longer exists or, perhaps, which has never existed»<sup>84</sup>.

Reviving the cultural capital and selling/exporting it to the West has been a rather successful enterprise. In the West, the general attitude to St. Petersburg is quite favourable. It could be read that «unlike many Russian city administrations, that of St. Petersburg continues to have a presence at Western trade shows, and thus hopefully in the minds of those who sit in the boardrooms of Western business»<sup>85</sup>.

---

<sup>83</sup> *Peterburgskii stil'*, N 2, 1998. P.5.

<sup>84</sup> Boym, Svetlana. Leningrad into St.Petersburg: The Dream of Europe on the Margins. In: Europe and the Other, and Europe as the Other. Edited by Strath, bo and Witoszek, Nina. P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2000. P.315.

<sup>85</sup> Bater, James; Staples, John. Planning for Change in Central St.Petersburg // *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*. Vol. 41, N 2, 2000. P. 97.

St. Petersburg is one of the few Russian cities deeply embedded in the international political milieu. For example, St. Petersburg is a member of the «Baltic Palette», a group of cities consisting of Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga and Stockholm. The «Baltic troika», involving the mayors of Helsinki, Stockholm and St. Petersburg, is another example.

Within the city polity there are groups that lobby for specific international orientations – for example, the local media has published a number of articles encouraging Yakovlev to give priority to relations with Finland, and to play down contacts with Sweden, Denmark and Norway<sup>86</sup>. This debate means that the international situation and environment is an organic part of policy debate in St. Petersburg.

### ***Back to the Present***

Analyzing these images as the products of «symbolic technologies», we should ask what are the alternative discourses of St. Petersburg. At least three can be discerned. All are much more inward-oriented and based upon predominantly domestic narratives.

*First*, one of St. Petersburg's images is as «the heroic city», the symbol of proletarian revolution with its legendary «Aurora» cruiser and the glorification of Vladimir Lenin. This image has strong connotations with Soviet concepts of equality, socialism and nationhood<sup>87</sup>. These were exactly those concepts that divided Russia and the West for the bulk of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and St. Petersburg unfortunately bears its part of historical responsibility for their unfolding and implementation.

The *second* alternative discourse is that of being «Russia's crime capital», evidenced by the practice of contract killing, rampant crime and corruption. «We do have a bad reputation», - admits Mikhail Amosov, an influential local legislator<sup>88</sup>. In 2000, for example, four deputy governors were indicted on charges of bribery and the misuse of administrative resources<sup>89</sup>. The Russian media has widely commented on gross mismanagement of the 1997 pilot project funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and that

---

<sup>86</sup> <http://polygamist.narod.ru/nato/koster.htm>

<sup>87</sup> Karpeev, A.M. Mify Leningrada (Leningrad's Myths), at <http://www.russ.ru/antolog/vek/1994/3-4/provin.htm>

<sup>88</sup> <http://apn.ru/lenta/2002/5/17/16937>

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/117384.html>



aimed at the renovation of the city's downtown<sup>90</sup>. In March 2002 the city legislature refused to accept the financial report on budget issues submitted by the city administration, and filed the case to the prosecutor's office. Legislators have had good reasons to be suspicious of financial mismanagement, particularly in regard to the city administration's dealing with a number of «proxy banks», and in the construction of the Ice Palace for the 2000 World Hockey Championship<sup>91</sup>. Policy experts openly say that the St. Petersburg authorities will inevitably steal a significant part of the federal grants allotted for the city's 300-year anniversary celebrations<sup>92</sup>. Likewise, well informed observers have called elections in St. Petersburg «a tournament of provocateurs» and a humiliating farce<sup>93</sup>.

Those trying to counter the «criminal capital» image by referring to statistics – showing that in some respects the crime rate in St. Petersburg does not differ much from the Russian average – seem to misunderstand the very nature of regional symbolism. Images are not about figures and/or numbers at all, but overwhelmingly about human stories and narratives. In this respect, the negative image of St. Petersburg associated with crime is due to the symbolic importance of those people that have either been indicted (four vice governors) or killed (like Galina Starovoitova, a Duma member and former advisor to President Yeltsin on ethnic issues).

The *third* and most recent facet of St. Petersburg is as the home of President Putin and a significant part of the federal political elite. Putin's personal affiliations to St. Petersburg re-direct the city discourse from culture to politics, from spirituality to power sharing. Since the fall 2000 there has been much talk about moving the nation's capital to St. Petersburg. Due to Putin's benevolence some of the federal ministries and agencies are to be transferred to St. Petersburg, which means that the city has been granted some of the functions of a capital. St. Petersburg has also been given a prominent position within the Commonwealth of Independent States as the CIS parliament is to

---

<sup>90</sup> Belousova, Taisia. Kak konsul'tanty gubernatoru pomogli (How the advisors have assisted the governor) // *Versia Digest*, February 19-25, 2002. P.6.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/121064.html>

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.fep.ru/publications/management/22-04-2002-izvp.html>

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.politstudies.ru/fulltext/1999/2/9.html>

be located in the city<sup>94</sup>. St. Petersburg has therefore taken under its control some of the federal property<sup>95</sup>.

What unites all discourses in the second group is their strong attachment to political authority, power distribution and Realpolitik. These three alternative discourses distract us away from St. Petersburg's cultural affinities and illuminate the other side of the local identity. Since these discourses are very much about territorial politics and ambitions, it is likely that they will «reduce the chances that St. Petersburg could sooner or later play a role in bringing Russia closer to European post-modernity»<sup>96</sup>.

A great many of the current practices of St. Petersburg are quite detached from the cultural symbols of the city's Europeanness. Suffice is to recall that Dmitrii Likhachov, the most reputed humanitarian academician in Russia, on the eve of his death issued an open letter to the city authorities. In this letter Likhachov expressed his deep regret and sense of shame for the way the media operates in his native city, having definitely in mind negative political campaigning and servility to the government in power.

To sum up, one of the interesting (and sometimes overlooked) implications of regional discourses is how they can serve as tools for creating an artificial, illusory milieu of meanings, furnished by the rhetoric of «wise men». This is to say ideas can turn into labels, myths or stereotypical symbols of somebody's political ambitions. The function of this type of discourse is that of making the 'right' impression by emphasizing certain traits and hiding others. Eventually, the result might be a deceptive imitation of reality, a sort of theater show with its own 'stars' and 'fans'. As a result, the regional discourse generates new meanings that have to perform specific political functions. This is very much true in the case of St. Petersburg, which is heavily involved in a power struggle with the NWFD's «political machine». Since political competition is strong, the regional political discourse not only receives more publicity, but its cognitive structure contains propaganda, rumors, and information wars against opponents, etc<sup>97</sup>.

---

<sup>94</sup> Hedenskog, Jakob. Windows onto Europe or Russian Dead End? The Federal Centre and the Foreign Relations of Russia's Western Regions // The NEBI Yearbook, 2001/2002. P.296.

<sup>95</sup> *Vedomosti*, February 8, 2002. P.A3.

<sup>96</sup> Morozov, Viatcheslav. Op.cit. P.29.

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/134527.html>

### **3.2. St. Petersburg's Cognitive Actors**

Institutionally, the intellectual scene of St.Petersburg is rather diverse and obviously understudied<sup>98</sup>. The major cognitive actors are non-governmental think tanks – the perfect illustration of the dramatic shift of explanatory resources from the government to non-state actors.

#### Leontief Center

The Leontief Center is perhaps the most reputed of St. Petersburg's think tanks. It is widely known for its innovative thinking – be it «The Strategy of Developing the Information Society in St. Petersburg», with its key idea of keeping the emerging networking patterns of communication beyond the state's reach<sup>99</sup>, or «Creative Industries», a project aimed at conceptually framing and rediscovering the new social meaning for the operation of arts, media business, entertainment infrastructure, etc<sup>100</sup>.

Yet the most important document produced by the Leontief Center was the blueprint of the «Strategic Plan of St. Petersburg» in 1997. This important document is based on the idea of finding St. Petersburg's economic and political niche within Russia. A number of conceptual assumptions are of prime significance for this Plan:

- city-level strategic planning has to enhance its competitiveness in the increasingly demanding environment of inter-regional relations;
- strategic planning has to extend beyond the administrative market and become a part of wider public debates on the nature of regionalism and the city's role in it;
- the main challenges for St. Petersburg are those related to the federal center. In particular the over large military industrial complex and too restrictive state customs regulations;

---

<sup>98</sup> Usually, think tanks are only cursorily mentioned in the literature as policy actors (See, for example: Tkachenko, Stanislav. Regionalization of Russian Foreign and Security Policy: The Case of St.Petersburg. Zurich: Center for Security Studies & Conflict Research. Working Paper N 21, March 2002. Pp. 25-37).

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.infodev.spb.ru>

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.creative.leontief.net/about.html>

- an economically open policy would bring more advantages to the city than the federal center's protectionism which helps to keep afloat insolvent enterprises;
- in promoting the idea of a «St. Petersburg mentality», the city authorities have to look pragmatically for further concessions from the federal center and make it take those decisions that will contribute to the city's well-being<sup>101</sup>.

The Leontief Center is also known for its contribution to the debate on the merging of the subjects of the federation. This issue has a long record of attention within and outside Russia. There are several speculative projects of this kind in the air. These include possible mergers between Arkhangel'sk oblast and the republics of Karelia and Komi, Nenets okrug, and Murmansk and Vologda oblasts; between Komi and Nenets okrug<sup>102</sup>; or between Arkhangel'sk oblast and Nenets okrug; or between Pskov and Novgorod oblasts<sup>103</sup>. Yet the most widely discussed possibility is uniting St. Petersburg and the adjacent Leningrad oblast into a single federal unit. In 1996 the two regions' chief executives signed a protocol of intention along these lines, and the presidential representative in Leningrad oblast has upheld this idea. As a result, a commission on integration was created with the aim of preparing for a referendum in these two subjects of the federation<sup>104</sup>. However, since integration was a high-profile issue in all local political campaigns, the whole problem became extremely politicized.

It would be logical to treat this experiment as a litmus test of St. Petersburg's ambition to become the pivotal gravitational pole of the whole of Russia's North West. That is why ideas of merging St. Petersburg with Leningrad oblast were addressed by the Leontief Center's study on «Enhancing Synergy: the Project of Forming a Coherent Policy for St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast within the Context of Russia's North-West Region». This study was undertaken along with TACIS and the Netherlands' Institute for Economics. Combining together four criteria – centralization and de-centralization,

---

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.stratplan.leontief.ru/textsp/1napr.htm>

<sup>102</sup> Shabaev, Yurii. Budet li Nenetskii okrug v sostave Komi respubliki (Will the Nenets okrug become a part of Komi?) *Russian Regional Report*, N 20, 2001. Moscow: East-West Institute.

<sup>103</sup> [http://www.abnews.ru/type\\_news.html?t=14770&data=news](http://www.abnews.ru/type_news.html?t=14770&data=news)

<sup>104</sup> [http://www.lenobl.ru/join\\_1.htm](http://www.lenobl.ru/join_1.htm)

openness and closeness – the experts have singled out four alternative scenarios that I have presented in the following table<sup>105</sup>:

	<b><i>De-centralization/ regionalization</i></b>	<b><i>Centralization/strengt hening the power vertical</i></b>
<b><i>Economic openness</i></b>	The most optimistic option. St. Petersburg becomes the center of the North-West region. Private initiatives are supported and communications with Western countries are on the rise	Federal government prefers to deal with a select number of regional actors, and St. Petersburg has to struggle to be one of them. Most important sectors of the economy suffer from the lack of competition. Moscow is investing in military industry and sea port facilities and pays scarce attention to societal needs.
<b><i>Protectionism</i></b>	The worst alternative. State investments are ineffective and insufficient. The private sector is discriminated against. Integration between the two subjects of the federation is effected only in administrative terms.	Governors try to protect their regions from outsiders. The federal state is not interested in inter-regional integration, and the regions are on their own.

However, many parameters of unification are still open to debate. It is admitted for example that the two subjects of the federation are as much competitors as they are allies. For example, according to economic estimates, Leningrad oblast is well ahead of St. Petersburg

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.tacis-synergy.leontief.net/tacis.phtml?Lang=1&>

in attracting outside investors, including foreign investors, by granting them tax bonuses<sup>106</sup>. The political compatibility of the two subjects of the federation is also questionable. One view is that many inhabitants of the more democratically oriented St. Petersburg are reluctant to join a more conservative surrounding oblast<sup>107</sup>. Yet another standpoint argues that St. Petersburg's system of power is more «vertical» and «authoritarian», while in Leningrad oblast there is more room for grass-roots activities on the level of municipal self-government<sup>108</sup>.

St. Petersburg Branch of the Sociological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences

This think tank is one of the leading centers of sociological analysis in St. Petersburg. It has also contributed to academic debates on the merging of Leningrad oblast with St. Petersburg. According to its research, St. Petersburg and Leningrad oblast differ in terms of the primary images of the future that are embedded in mass public opinion. These hierarchies of divergent outlooks can be presented as follows in the table below, which contains data taken from sociological research conducted in both subjects of the federation<sup>109</sup>:

<b><i>St.Petersburg</i></b>	<b><i>Leningrad oblast</i></b>
Cultural center	A region convenient for living
Center of science and advanced technologies	Gate to Europe
Center of domestic and international tourism	Free economic zone
Gate to Europe	Major financial center
Major industrial center	Center of science and advanced technologies
Financial center	Center of domestic and international tourism

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/61466.html>

<sup>107</sup> Hedenskog, Jakob; Oldberg, Ingmar. Russia's Western Border Regions: Gateways to Europe? Slavic Research Center, University of Hokkaido, Sapporo. *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2002. P. 80.

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/64872.html>

<sup>109</sup> Regional'nie elity Severo-Zapada Rossii (Regional Elites of Russia's North West: Political and Economic Orientations). Edited by Alexander Duka. St.Petersburg: Aletheia Publishing House, 2001. P. 286.

Free economic zone	Cultural center
Military industry hub	Financial center

### «Peterburg 2015» Club

This is a relatively new source of expertise that was established in 2000 by a group of local businessmen, managers, scholars and journalists, mostly of a liberal persuasion, and led by Andrey Likhachov, the local leader of the Union of Right-Wing Forces. The Club is known for offering three alternative scenarios for St. Petersburg:

- »Russian Venice«. This option gives priority to enhancing St. Petersburg's cultural capital, and thus upgrading the tourist infrastructure<sup>110</sup>;
- »Russian Amsterdam«. This is a scenario of turning St. Petersburg into a transportation hub and communication center for East-West commodities flows<sup>111</sup>;
- »Russian Boston«. This idea lays the ground for making St. Petersburg one of the leading centers in Russian education<sup>112</sup>.

### Center for Integration Research and Programs

The Center (CIRP) specializes in Western European questions and keeps close working relations with foreign diplomatic institutions and foundations located in St. Petersburg. It organizes summer schools and carries out some research on Russian-EU relations.

CIRP's former director, Igor Leshukov, is known as being one of the most pessimistic Russian analysts of this issue. In his view, the liberal expectations of Russia's openness to Europe in the beginning of 1990s were based on the questionable assumption that, through increased interaction with their neighbours, the North-Western regions would evolve into the most advanced of Russia's entities, and would become compatible with Western norms and practices. On closer

<sup>110</sup> Travin, Dmitry. Peterburg v XXI veke: venetsianskii stcenarii (St.Petersburg in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Venician Scenario), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/publications.php?code=144>

<sup>111</sup> Shelin, Sergei. Peterburg v XXI veke: amsterdamskii stcenarii (St.Petersburg in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Amsterdam Scenario), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/publications.php?code=145>

<sup>112</sup> Schiolkin, Alexander. Peterburg v XXI veke: bostonskii stcenarii (St.Petersburg in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the Boston Scenario), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/publications.php?code=147>

scrutiny, however, it turned out that the regional actors were not immune to corruption, mismanagement, and the abuse of law. In Leshukov's assessment, civil society institutions are weaker in the regions than on the federal level, and there are few checks and balances to constrain the regional authorities. His prediction is that further opening up to Europe will channel prostitution, drug trafficking, AIDS and organized crime westward<sup>113</sup>.

The Russian government believes that EU enlargement might bring positive results for some Russian regions because it is expected that custom duties would eventually be lowered, and transit issues might be solved more smoothly<sup>114</sup>. However, in Leshukov's opinion, the European Union is guided by »double standards« in its policy towards Russia, either ignoring her interests or deliberately trying to block Russia's way to Europe<sup>115</sup>.

#### «Strategia» Center

The «Strategia» Center agrees that the main problems for St. Petersburg – as well as other NWF provinces – is the lack of transparency, the proliferation of «shadow politics», and the weak defence of human rights. However, this think tank's attitude seems to be more optimistic than that of CIRP. Notably, it advocates the greater involvement of NGOs in lobbying and in strengthening the institutions of civil society. There are several priority areas in which «Strategia» works. These are, the introduction of an ombudsman for the regions<sup>116</sup>, anti-corruption campaigning, opening up the budget making process to the public,<sup>117</sup> studying electoral behaviour, and the promotion of think tanks<sup>118</sup>. Alexander Sungurov and Mikhail Gorniy, two founders of «Strategia», are known as strong advocates of strengthening civil

---

<sup>113</sup> Leshukov, Igor. The Regional-Centre Divide: The Compatibility Conundrum. In: The EU and Kaliningrad: Kaliningrad and the Impact of EU Enlargement. Edited by James Baxendale, Stephen Dewar and David Gowan. Federal Trust, 2000. P.130.

<sup>114</sup> See Igor Ivanov's statement of 11-05-2001, at <http://www.ln.mid.ru>

<sup>115</sup> Leshukov, Igor. *Rossia i Evropeiskii Soyuz: Strategia Vzaimootnoshenii* (Russia and EU: Strategy of Interrelations), at <http://pubs.carnegie.ru>

<sup>116</sup> *Grazhdanskoe obschestvo protiv korrupsii* (Civil Society Against Corruption). St.Petersburg: Center «Strategia», 2002. P.282.

<sup>117</sup> <http://www.spb.org.ru/design/strategy/>

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.strategy-spb.ru>



society institutions and stimulating dialogue between NGOs and the public authorities<sup>119</sup>.

### «Zapad – Zapad»

The «Zapad-Zapad» («West-West») Discussion Club represents a source of quite different regional discourse. It has formulated a number of ideas that have met rather controversial reaction, both in society and within the political establishment. Some of these ideas are as follows.

- St. Petersburg is a peculiar city-region, very different from Moscow, which is portrayed as full of brutality and arrogance. Hence, St. Petersburg is treated as the natural opponent of Moscow, its perennial rival and challenger. It is argued that there is no space for autonomy for St. Petersburg within the framework of a Moscow-dominated polity. Thus, in the long-run perspective St. Petersburg has to be ready to take historical revenge and break away;
- St. Petersburg ought to begin its cultural expansion to other North West provinces of Russia and become their genuine fore-runner;
- Russia's North West should become a «zone free of post-totalitarian vandalism», and should culturally distinguish itself from the rest of Russia;
- Russia's North West is the sole region of Russia capable of creating a civilizational milieu compatible with that of Europe, and thus should take the mission of being the buffer between a supposedly ungovernable Russia and Western European countries<sup>120</sup>;
- Economically, it is suggested that St. Petersburg should build its policy upon liberal principles – e.g., market circulation of land, privatization of state-owned enterprises, creation of equal conditions for foreign business, targeted social support to those

---

<sup>119</sup> Sungurov, Alexander. Organizatsii-posredniki kak zveno v stanovlenii grazhdanskogo obshestva (Intermediary Organizations as the Links in Civil Society Construction), at [http://strategy.spb.osi.ru/Koi-8/Pablik/Other/st\\_3.html](http://strategy.spb.osi.ru/Koi-8/Pablik/Other/st_3.html)

<sup>120</sup> Shinkunas, Viacheslav. Rossiiskii Severo-zapad dolzhen stat' bufernoi zonoj (Russian North West ought to become a buffer zone ), at [http://www.geocities.com/west\\_west\\_99/shinkunas.htm](http://www.geocities.com/west_west_99/shinkunas.htm)

in need, and switching on the green light to private capital investment in the city's industry<sup>121</sup>.

The views of «Zapad-Zapad» have become incorporated into wider political debate on the nature of St. Petersburg's identity. Daniil Granin, one of the living legends of Soviet/Russian literature, shares similar ideas. Russia, in his reading, is an «unmanageable monster», and as a country it could not be properly assembled. Granin's message calls for turning St. Petersburg into the pivot of a North West region, which is economically self-sufficient and culturally distinct from the rest of the federation<sup>122</sup>.

The late Galina Starovoitova has also explained the peculiarity of St. Petersburg's identity in tones very similar to that of «Zapad-Zapad». As she puts it, «St. Petersburg as a part of European Russia is in contrast with Moscow which was historically oriented towards Asia and now perhaps tries to become oriented towards the United States... St. Petersburg residents find themselves alienated as to the system of power centered around Moscow. That is why they have reacted so fiercely and negatively to the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Moscow»<sup>123</sup>.

Even St. Petersburg's governor, Vladimir Yakovlev, who is known for his loyalty to Moscow, has taken the view that «theoretically St. Petersburg could gain associate membership in the EU, and could be economically supported» by Europeans, although eventually this would lead to Russia's disintegration<sup>124</sup>.

«Zapad-Zapad» is also known for its relationship with indigenous separatists – in particular, the Movement for Autonomy, which was legally registered in 1996. The Movement advocates the re-creation of 'Ingermanlandia', the imaginary hotbed of local historical legacies. It is also interesting to note that the political discourse of St. Petersburg's separatists is very much in tune with the rhetoric of nationalists in Tatarstan, another region with a very special understanding of its identity:

---

<sup>121</sup> [http://www.geocities.com/west\\_west\\_99/stenogramma21.htm](http://www.geocities.com/west_west_99/stenogramma21.htm)

<sup>122</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/B-16.htm>

<sup>123</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/E-7.html>

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/E-11.htm>

- both deem that all federal institutions are «occupational» and «anti-popular»<sup>125</sup>;
- their political philosophy is based on the principle of self-sufficiency («St. Petersburg is the whole Universe where you can find everything»<sup>126</sup>);
- they negate geopolitical determinants (like war with the Taliban or the issue of the Kuril Islands) and opt for more accentuated geoeconomic orientations<sup>127</sup>;
- they oppose Russia's war in Chechnia and Russia's unification with Belarus;
- they wish to conclude a special «divorce» treaty with Russia and to institute regional citizenship<sup>128</sup>;
- they advocate the transformation from federation to confederation as a step towards the further decentralization of Russia and the emancipation of its constituent territories.

\*\*\*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters have shown that there are many differences between the district and sub-district territorial units in terms of how and what kinds of ideas circulate in society. The symbols and myths, on the one hand, and long-term cognitive ideas, on the other, are widely used in the political discourse of region building. Both approaches entail a strategy of appealing to certain groups of people and mobilizing them. What makes the whole picture even more complicated for the NWFD is the conflation of domestic and international discourses that will be analyzed in chapter 4.

#### **4. DISCOURSE VECTORS OF TRANS-NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

There are competing visions of the future international and trans-national relations in which the NWFD should partake. The concept of

---

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.geocities.com/ingermanland.geo/inger05.htm>

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/C-16.htm>

<sup>127</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/C-11.htm>

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.alkor.ru/page/freespb/4.html>

«Euro-Russia»<sup>129</sup> which was launched not long ago still waits for more clarity and precision.

To trace the different international discourses that are projected onto the NWFD, I would like first to introduce the concepts of »hard« and »soft« regionalism. »Hard regionalism« refers to top-down, state-centric, security-oriented, and a rather centralized and hierarchical pattern of region-building. The core of hard regionalism is control over sovereignty, territory and borders.

The concept of »soft regionalism« applies to more decentralized, network-oriented models of region-building, which leave open space for grass-roots initiatives beyond the »administrative market«. Hence, creativity, inspiration and the force of imagination become the guiding principles of »soft« versions of regionalism.

The visions of the region as a concept and as a network are by and large overlooked in Russia. These omissions are a great pity because the NWFD faces multiple alternatives in terms of future regional arrangements. For example, the district could opt for identifying itself with the Baltic, Nordic, or perhaps Central European «open geographies». Northern Europe, the Baltic Sea area and the United States are the core pillars of a vast territorial space in which the NWFD has to locate and define itself<sup>130</sup>.

#### ***4.1. Models of «Hard Regionalism»***

##### ***EU Model***

There is some irony in the fact that Russia has treated the EU's eastward expansion much more favourably than NATO enlargement in the same direction. This has perhaps been the result of misreading the basic messages that the EU has repeatedly sent to Russia. These show that the EU gives clear priority to security and border crossing as a result of persistent concerns about the need to fight illegal migration into the Western European countries.

---

<sup>129</sup> *Nordicum*. Business to Business. Special Russian Language Issue, 2002. P. 45.

<sup>130</sup> Yagia, V.S. Baltiiskaya idea i rol' Sankt-Peterburga na rubezhe XX-XXI vekov (Baltic Idea and the Role of St.Peterburg at the edges of 20st and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries), ar <http://www.rami.ru>

It comes as little surprise, therefore, that in May 2002 Russia found herself in a state of political confrontation with the EU over the Kaliningrad issue, which is a classical instance of a modern, territorially defined conflict. This is a sovereignty issue that clearly divides Russia and the EU and has led to a major crisis in EU-Russia relations. Formally, it was provoked by the EU's refusal to accept Moscow's proposals contained in a memorandum presented by Prime Minister Mikhail Kasianov, and by Russia's harsh reaction to the resolution of the European parliament on Kaliningrad<sup>131</sup>. Yet the crisis has much deeper conceptual underpinnings. For example, Russia insists on the right of her citizens to freely travel from the country's Baltic exclave to the mainland, while EU accession countries make the case for the need to apply the Schengen rules and visa regulations. Both parties therefore adhere to «hard» (top-down, state-centric) approaches to the Kaliningrad puzzle. Consequently the territory has also been made the object of trade and high-politics bargaining where the stakes are Russia's WTO accession, the recognition of Russia's status as a free market country, and other wide-scale issues that have no direct relevance to the troubled territory. «European dead end», «bureaucratic madness»<sup>132</sup>, new «iron curtain», «Germany's tacit policy of pushing Russia out of Eastern Prussia»<sup>133</sup>, «discrimination»<sup>134</sup> and «humiliation»<sup>135</sup>, «the smell of Chechnia»<sup>136</sup> in the Baltics – these are the most typical discursive reactions in Russia to the conflict with the EU over Kaliningrad.

### ***Trans-Atlantic Model***

There is a US North European Initiative (NEI) that directly applies to Russia's North West territory<sup>137</sup>. The NEI idea has had some theoretical underpinning. This was presented by the RAND scholars, Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick, who have laid out its conceptual foundations. In a sense, the NEI might be interpreted as a

---

<sup>131</sup> <http://www.strana.ru>, July 7, 2002

<sup>132</sup> <http://www.grani.ru/enclave/articles/corridor/print.html>

<sup>133</sup> [http://www.aif.ru/aif/1127/02\\_02.php?forprint](http://www.aif.ru/aif/1127/02_02.php?forprint)

<sup>134</sup> <http://gov.kaliningrad.ru/news.php3?uid=630>

<sup>135</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/149392.html>

<sup>136</sup> [http://www.grani.ru/enclave/articles/schengen\\_waves/print.html](http://www.grani.ru/enclave/articles/schengen_waves/print.html)

<sup>137</sup> <http://usinfo.state.gov/ruski/regions/nei/homepage.htm>

constructivist project since there were at least three competing visions of its content – geopolitical, liberal internationalist, and post-modernist.

In the view of the liberal internationalists the «new NATO» is no longer a purely military machine, but rather an instrument for making the applicant countries (e.g., the three Baltic republics) more compliant with international norms concerning the treatment of minorities, citizenship legislation, and border conflict management. In this sense, the aspiration to obtain NATO membership had rather positive effects on the state of the Baltic countries' relationship with Russia and her border regions.

Other authors tend to emphasize the post-modernist underpinnings of the US vision of regionalism in the North and Baltic areas. In Christopher Browning's assessment, the United States have «renounced traditional power politics for an understanding of the power of the production of ideas and agenda setting»<sup>138</sup>. In a similar way, it is claimed that the US policy in Northern Europe has shifted «away from state-centric models of security-building»<sup>139</sup>.

Yet there are geopolitical interpretations that put in question the optimism of these statements. In a revealing confession of Ronald Asmus, the US prefers to apply a «top-down approach» to its North European Initiative, which is not about regionalization at all. Rather, the United States «want to bring this part of Europe into the European mainstream, not make it some special area. It is not an attempt to create new institutions, and ... it is not an attempt to sugar coat the bitter pill of NATO enlargement for the Russians»<sup>140</sup>. In the light of this sincerity it remains highly doubtful whether indeed «the NEI aims at creating an economically and socially unified region with strong cross-

---

<sup>138</sup> Browning, Christopher. A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Regional Cooperation: The United States and the Northern European Initiative. COPRI Working Papers 15/2001. P. 18.

<sup>139</sup> Rhodes, Edward. Rethinking the Nature of Security: The U.S. Northern Europe Initiative. COPRI Working Papers 9/2002. P. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Asmus, Ronald. American Views on Security and Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, in: Towards an Inclusive Security Structure in the Baltic Sea Region. 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Stockholm Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation. Edited by Joseph P.Kruzich and Anna Fahraeus. Stockholm: the Embassy of the United States of America, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, 1997. P. 44.

border ties», or that the «NEI casts doubt on the key principle» of the indivisibility of the European security architecture<sup>141</sup>.

The reality is that for the United States, the perception of Europe's North continues to be dominated by recent memories and experiences of the Cold War<sup>142</sup>. Perceiving the Baltic area basically through a global security lens<sup>143</sup>, the United States does not seem to be an organic actor in this part of Europe. NATO expansion remains the backbone of the US stance with regard to the whole complex of issues related to the Baltic and Nordic regions. The importance of this part of Europe, in American eyes, stems from the presumption that US-Russian confrontation is still feasible here. In a telling manner, the 2000 report by the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis confines the whole plethora of trans-boundary exchanges to crime and environmental hazards, and thus treats them as challenges (neglecting by default the issue of opportunities). Moreover, Russia is portrayed, not as a partner, but rather as the major source of danger for the whole region<sup>144</sup>.

As Richard Krickus admits, the US's hard-security-oriented position could place at risk many European regional initiatives and «diminish prospects that Russia would cooperate in accomplishing regional priorities»<sup>145</sup>. In this sense, the US and Nordic/Baltic positions might diverge and become a source of friction<sup>146</sup>.

---

<sup>141</sup> Sergounin, Alexander. The United States' Northern Dimension? Prospects for a U.S.-Russian Cooperative Agenda in Northern Europe. PONARS Policy Memo No. 232. Washington, D.C.: January 25, 2002. P.2.

<sup>142</sup> Van Ham, Peter. U.S. Policy Toward Northern Europe: Political and Security Aspects, in: The NEBI Yearbook 2000. North European and Baltic Sea Integration. Edited by Lars Hedegaard and Bjarne Lindstrom. Springer & Nordregio, 2001. P. 276.

<sup>143</sup> See, for example: German and American Policies towards the Baltic States. The Perspectives of EU and NATO Enlargement. Edited by Sven Arnsward and Marcus Wenig. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2000; Change and Continuity in Europe's Northern Region. A Conference Report. Edited by Paul J.Cook. Significant Issues Series, Vol. XIII, N 4. Washington, D.C.: the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1990.

<sup>144</sup> Perry, Charles; Sweeney, Michael; Winner, Andrew. Strategic Dynamics in the Nordic-Baltic Region. Implications for U.S. Policy. Brassey's: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis & Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2000.

<sup>145</sup> Krickus, Richard. The Kaliningrad Question. . Lanhan, Boulder, New Your, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002. Pp. 167-168.

<sup>146</sup> Cambone, Stephen. The Implications of U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy for the Nordic-Baltic Region. In: Nordic-Baltic Security. An International Perspective. Edited by Arne Olav Brundland and Don M.Snider. Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, D.C., and The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, 1994. P. 67.

In the light of criticism from its European allies, the United States have started raising the profile of economic issues in their Baltic / North European strategy. American officials have reiterated that this part of Europe «must do more to open its doors to foreign imports and share» the burden of the global economic crisis with the US. In this context, Americans put much stress on the need to remove existing trade barriers and on Russia's WTO membership<sup>147</sup>, which resonates with Russian interests in this part of Europe.

### ***The Barents Model***

The Barents region project is a matter of different interpretation. What has prevailed in Barents discourse so far has been «hard» versions of regionalism. For example, it is widely acknowledged that the Barents project was born in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and is a «top-down initiative», with security considerations at the very top of its operational agenda<sup>148</sup>. In fact, the security concerns are predetermined by geopolitical location. Thus, by the beginning of 1990s this was the only region in Europe where Russia and NATO had a common border. What is also important here is cargo flows, transit routes, ports, sabotage, commodities, fuel delivery and other technicalities<sup>149</sup>, which are closer to the traditional bilateral agenda of Russian – Norwegian relations than to regionalization.

Focusing too much attention on perspectives of the «exploitation of gas and petroleum»<sup>150</sup> has resulted in Russia expressing its disappointment with the whole Barents idea. «There is much Russian frustration at the absence of foreign investments, at futile promises from Nordic politicians and businessmen, at the disregard of existing

---

<sup>147</sup> Mulloy, Patrick. The U.S. View of the Baltic Regional Market. In: The Baltic Sea Region. Building an Inclusive System of Security and Cooperation. The Third Annual Stockholm Conference on Baltic Sea Security and Cooperation. The Embassy of the United States of America, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. November 19, 1998. P. 39.

<sup>148</sup> Eriksson, Joham. Interpretations and Implications of the Norwegian Barents Initiative // *Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 30 (3), 1995. Pp. 260, 270.

<sup>149</sup> Ragner, Claes Lykke. The Northern Sea Route – Commercial Potential, Economic Significance, and Infrastructure Requirements // *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*. Vol. 41, N 8, 2000. P. 541.

<sup>150</sup> Moe, Arild; Jorgensen, Anne-Kristin. Offshore Mineral Development in the Russian Barents Sea // *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*. Vol. 41, N 2, 2000. P. 98.



Russian competence reflected in the endless attempts to 'transfer knowledge', and at humiliation of being forced to receive humanitarian aid»<sup>151</sup>.

Yet there is the other side of the coin as well. What is encouraging is that in the BEAC (Barents Euro-Arctic Council) the regions (along with the states) are the dominant operational actors<sup>152</sup>. Moreover, the Barents region is a site of non-military security problems, most of which concern civic security inside Russia<sup>153</sup>. The Pomor trade model actively propagated in the Barents discourse is also a sign of departure from «hard regionalism» thinking<sup>154</sup>.

This is not to say, however, that the Barents cooperation might fit a «soft regionalism» model. In Geir Honneland's view, the historical trans-national identity outlined in the 'Barents rhetoric' has never existed»<sup>155</sup>. In his reading, the Barents region is a myth, a castle in the air, whilst the Barents concept is promoted by a «very limited group of entrepreneurial people with particular interests in developing contacts at the other side of the border»<sup>156</sup>.

\*\*\*

To sum up, it is hard to say in which way NWFD-EU relations, as well as the NWFD's participation in trans-Atlantic structures, might develop in the future. The activism of the NWFD will be, at any rate, inhibited by the fact that, in both cases, these are global issues that are at stake. In Russia-EU and Russia-NATO relations, the NWFD is doomed to play (at least for the time being) a passive role of being a

---

<sup>151</sup> Honneland, Geir; Jorgensen, Ann-Kristin. Cross-border Perspectives on a North Russian Gateway // *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*. Vol. 40, N 1, 1999. P. 59.

<sup>152</sup> Hedenskog, Jakob. Window onto Europe or Russian Dead Ends? The Federal Centre and the Foreign Relations of Russia's Western Regions // *The NEBI Yearbook*, 2001/2002. P. 303.

<sup>153</sup> Arto Nokkala. Security Development in the Barents Region // *The NEBI Yearbook* 2000. North European and Baltic Sea Integration. Edited by Lars Hedegaard, Bjarne Lindstrom, Pertti Joenniemi, Anders Osthol, Karin Peschel, Carl-Einar Stalvant. Springer & Nordregio, 2001. P. 293.

<sup>154</sup> Ola Tunander. Inventing the Barents Region: Overcoming the East-West Divide in the North. In: *The Barents Region. Cooperation in Arctic Europe*. Edited by Olav Schram Stokke and Ola Tunander. The Fridtjof Nansen Institute & International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. SAGE Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 1994. Pp. 31-33.

<sup>155</sup> Honneland, Geir. Identity Formation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region // *Cooperation and Conflict. Nordic Journal of International Studies*. Vol. 33, N 2, June 1998. Pp. 288-289.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

by-stander, an object of «high politics» deals made elsewhere. The chances for the NWFD to participate, in one way or another, in the Barents cooperation are slightly higher. However, much will depend on whether Russia (the NWFD and the North West regions) is able to discern what its interests are and to offer its own (perhaps alternative) visions of regional cooperation.

## 4.2. Models of «Soft Regionalism»

### *The Baltic Model*

The Baltic Sea is the home of the revived visionary concept of the «*New Hansa*», which was articulated in 1987 by «Denfabrik», a think tank established by the German government for producing fresh ideas for the Baltic Sea region. The idea of the «*New Hansa*» leaves much room for sub-national units to participate in designing what could be called a «region-in-the-making». One of the most interesting examples of the sub-national contribution to Baltic regionalism is, for example, the trans-national commitments of Schleswig-Holstein<sup>157</sup>.

If the «*New Hansa*» concept is based on ancient narratives, other European visions of the Baltic Sea vector of integration are of a more practical nature. These are well represented in VASAB (*Visions & Strategies Around the Baltic 2010*) papers. VASAB visions are very technical and functional, with minimal political interference and have global (or even pan-European) ambitions<sup>158</sup>. Adhering to the school of spatial planning, VASAB experts perceive the Baltic region-building through the prism of such metaphors as «pearls» (major international cities) that have to be connected to each other through «strings» (communication corridors). These communications are knowledge-based and designed to enhance the competitiveness of major centers of urban networks in the area (like Petrozavodsk – Joensuu – Oulu, Gdansk – Kaliningrad – Klaipeda – Karlskrona, or Stockholm – Riga – Tallinn – St. Petersburg – Helsinki). From the Russian side, these projects are heavily inhibited however by the weak development of the

---

<sup>157</sup> Krohn, Axel. Schleswig-Holstein Goes International. Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) Working Paper N 30, 1998. P. 15.

<sup>158</sup> An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region. Baltic 21 Series, N 1/98, at <http://www.ee/baltic/publicat/R1.htm>

supporting facilities (hotels, attraction industries, housing and other services)<sup>159</sup>.

Another vision of Baltic regionalism can be found in the concept of *Growth Triangles* as presented by Urpo Kivikari from the Russian-European Centre for Economic Policy, one of the few trans-national think tanks with a specific focus on the NWFD. The whole idea is to project the experience of Asian economic regionalization onto the Baltic Sea region, especially in the areas of the Gulf of Finland (Southern Finland, Estonia and St. Petersburg). Another option would be 'geometrically' connecting Kaliningrad, Lithuania and neighboring areas of Poland. In each of these two cases under consideration, the Growth Triangle concept is aimed at capitalizing on the parties economic complementarities, on their geographic proximity, and on launching common infrastructure projects<sup>160</sup>.

Integration scenarios might also involve joint transportation routes and facilities. The variants discussed among experts are:

- «Northern ray» (St. Petersburg – Helsinki – Stockholm);
- «Southern ray» (St. Petersburg – Ukraine - Moldova – Romania – Bulgaria – Greece);
- «South-Eastern ray» (St. Petersburg – Novorossiisk – Astrakhan);
- «Asian ray» (St. Petersburg – Central Asia – China);
- «Far Eastern ray» (Trans-Siberian rail road)<sup>161</sup>;
- the modern version of the «Way from Varagians to Greeks and Hazars», basically with tourist purposes;
- «King's road» from Norway to St. Petersburg through Sweden<sup>162</sup>;
- «Murmansk corridor» from Kirkenes to the Kola isthmus<sup>163</sup>;

---

<sup>159</sup> Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems in the Baltic Sea Region, at [www.vasab.leontief.net](http://www.vasab.leontief.net)

<sup>160</sup> Kivikari, Urpo. A Growth Triangle as an Application of the Northern Dimension Policy in the Baltic Sea Region. Russian-European Centre for Economic Policy. Policy Paer, May 2001. Pp. 13,17.

<sup>161</sup> Tkachov, G.I.; Makarov, V.L.; Churov, V.E.. Mezhdunarodnie i vneshneekonomicheskie sviazi Sankt-Peterburga v 1999 godu (International and foreign economic contacts of St.Petersburg in 1999), at <http://www.ln.mid.ru>

<sup>162</sup> How to establish a Russian-Finnish Joint venture. Manual for entrepreneurs. St.Petersburg: Phare/Tacis Cross Border Co-operation Small Project Facility, 2000. P. 42.

<sup>163</sup> Smirnov, A. K itogam mezhdunarodnoi investitsionnoi konferentsii «Vozmozhnosti regionov Severa-97» (On the outcomes of international investment conference «Opportunities of North's regions – 1997»), at <http://www.ln.mid.ru>

- «Arkhangelsk corridor» intended to connect German industrial centers, ports of the Gulf of Bothnia and Russia's North East;
- «Blue Road», a highway and a tourist route crossing Norway, Sweden, Finland and Karelia<sup>164</sup>;
- South Baltic Arc (Lubek – Rostock – Szczecin – Gdansk – Kaliningrad – Klaipeda – Liepaja).

### ***The Nordic Model***

Conceptualization for the «Nordic project» has been provided by a number of academic institutions, primarily with a peace research background, such as COPRI and TAPRI<sup>165</sup> (Copenhagen- and Tampere-based, respectively). Of course, there are some «hard» interpretations of Nordic regionalism as well. For example, it can be represented as a security project, or as a tool for tightening control over Russia's natural resources.

However, most typical are «soft» readings of Nordic regionalism. In particular, Norden is usually seen as a forum for crossing «mental bridges». Nordic political values are characterized by «transparency, egalitarianism, and consensual democracy which together form a distinct protestant identity»<sup>166</sup>.

What is important is that Nordic (as well as Baltic) regionalism first started as a concept, and is context-dependent<sup>167</sup>. Thus, it is often said that a region should have *common* historical experiences, *similar* problems, *strong* social bonds, etc. But what is to count as common, similar and strong, as opposed to distinctive, peculiar and weak? Such meanings depend on dominating perceptions. In this sense, all major markers of Nordicity are normative and consensus-based («non-European, non-Catholic, non-Rome, non-imperialist, non-colonial, non-exploitative, peaceful, small, and social-democratic»). In other words,

---

<sup>164</sup> Shlyamin, Valery. Economic Problems of Regional Politics in the North-West of Russia – Karelian View, in: St.Petersburg, the Baltic Sea and European Security. Helsinki: Nordic Forum for Security Policy and the Finnish Committee for European Security, 1997. P.75.

<sup>165</sup> Kakonen, Jyrki. Appendix 1, in The New North Europe. Perspectives on Northern Dimension. Edited by Lassi Heininen and Jyrki Kakonen. Tampere Peace Research Institute Research Report N 80, 1998. Pp. 118-123.

<sup>166</sup> Schumacher, Tom. The Emergence of the New Nordic Co-operation. Helsinki: DUPI Working Paper 2000/6. P.11.

<sup>167</sup> Tiilikainen, Teija. The Political Implications of the EU Enlargement to the Baltic States. European University Institute Working Paper RSC N 2001/21. P.2.

region building begins in the field of ideas, and is designed to convince participants of an available common background, or by making common values reappear and come into force.

Therefore, «soft» regionalism not only incarnates a specific geographic location, but to a great extent also a set of (supposedly) shared norms and meanings which give rise to a «sense of belonging». Hence, the region is born out of a dialogue of ideas and public policy debates, as illustrated for example by the creation of the Northern European Knowledge Network of Excellence comprising 16 Universities from all the Nordic countries. What this means is that region building is not strictly bound to pre-fixed geographical borders. In this sense, there is always something «new» in its content, since it is socially and intellectually constructed.

### ***The Arctic Model***

The Arctic discourse in the last decade has significantly shifted from a hard security accent at the beginning of the 1990s (with its concerns over great power rivalry, military vulnerabilities, border delimitation, etc.<sup>168</sup>) to what could be portrayed as an «international political region», with such markers as coordination and integration particularly important, as seen from the perspectives of the periphery<sup>169</sup>. The cognitive dimension of the Arctic-building process has been manifest in the establishment of a number of organisations such as, the International Arctic Social Science Association, Unuit Circumpolar Conference, International Council for Scientific Cooperation in the Arctic, the Northern Forum.

There are also the institutional foundations for circumpolar integration, especially the Arctic Council, which is a high-level intergovernmental forum, with Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway Russia and Sweden as members, and with the Arctic

---

<sup>168</sup> See for example: Gail Osherenko and Oran R.Young. *The Age of the Arctic: hot conflicts and cold realities*. Cambridge University Press, 1989; *Vulnerable Arctic Need for an Alternative Orientation*. Tampere Peace Research Institute Research Report N 47, 1992

<sup>169</sup> Franklyn Griffiths. Introduction: *The Arctic as an International Political Region*, in: *The Arctic Challenge. Nordic and Canadian Approaches to Security and Cooperation in an Emerging International Region*. Edited by Kari Mottola. Westview Press, Boulder & London, 1988. P.3.

indigenous peoples participating in its work on a permanent basis<sup>170</sup>. Russia has been pleased that the Arctic Council is not supposed to deal with matters related to military security, and that the use of the term «peoples» is not to be construed as having any implications as regards the rights attached to the terms under international law<sup>171</sup>.

Some authors speak about an «Arctic boom», or a «race» between the states of the region to draft the best strategy and concept for cooperation in the circumpolar north<sup>172</sup>. In Sergey Medvedev's portrayal, «lacking in rationality, the North is rich in mythos and implied meanings», and constitutes «the white space in our mental maps». This interpretation treats Nordicity as «the emptiness we are filling with our imagination»<sup>173</sup>.

So far Russia seems to have kept aloof from these debates. Partly this might be explained by the fact that in Russia the North has a dual image. On the negative side, it is associated with remoteness and cultural backwardness:

- the North can be seen as synonymous with vast loosely organized spaces, which have to be somehow preserved or conserved;
- the North is connoted with social conservatism and traditionalism<sup>174</sup>;
- the North is a depopulated area<sup>175</sup>;
- the Northern provinces are perceived as prone to «row material separatism» and even isolationism, and in this capacity they might contribute to the disintegration of the federation<sup>176</sup>;

---

<sup>170</sup> Antarctic Treaty XXIV Consultative Meeting, St.Petersburg, 9-20 July 2001, at [http://www.arctic-council.org/arctic\\_antarctic.asp](http://www.arctic-council.org/arctic_antarctic.asp)

<sup>171</sup> Declaration on the Establishment of the Arctic Council, at <http://www.arctic-council.org/establ.asp>

<sup>172</sup> Williams, Leena-Kaarina. The Baltic Sea Region: Forms and Functions of Regional Cooperation. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdanskiego; Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Gdansk-Berlin 2001. P.18.

<sup>173</sup> Medvedev, Sergei. Glenn Gould, Finland, Russia and the North // *International Politics*. Vol. 38, N 1, March 2001. Pp. 91-92.

<sup>174</sup> Gladkii, Yu.N., Chistobaev, A.I. Osnovy regional'noi politiki (Foundations of Regional Policy). St.Petersburg, V.Mikhailov Publishers, 1998. P. 205.

<sup>175</sup> Heleniak, Timothy. Out-Migration and Depopulation of the Russian North During the 1990s // *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*. Vol. 40, N 9, 1999

<sup>176</sup> Salmin, A.M. Dezintegratsia Rossii? (Russia's Disintegration?). Moscow: Council of Defense and Security Policy, «Strategy for Russia» Program, at <http://www.svop.ru/doklad05.htm>

- the peoples of the North are on their way to emphasizing their self-identities, which is a challenge for the federal authorities<sup>177</sup>.

On the positive side, the Arctic North is considered to be «Russia's future», the country's strategic reserve. Some of the NWFD territories – like Murmansk oblast for instance – have been labelled as the «New Ruhr» or the «Northern Near East» as a result of their immense natural resources<sup>178</sup>. However, the federal government has expressed its intention to lower state support of the Northern regions. This will include gradually doing away with tax privileges, compensation and special guarantees for employees, as well as closing down ineffective industries<sup>179</sup>. In fact, the policy of the central state towards supporting the country's northern periphery is the pivotal point in Russia's Arctic discourse<sup>180</sup>.

\*\*\*

What unites all three discussed forms of «soft» regionalism are the networks that are at their heart. Networks do not necessarily have to coincide with state borders, and might have different (and even competing) spatial shapes.

Networking in «soft» regionalism blurs the distinction between «insiders» and «outsiders». This is well described by the concept of «open geography»<sup>181</sup> (as opposed to the idea of «inescapable geography»<sup>182</sup>). 'Open geography' posits that «geographical cardinal points are relative»<sup>183</sup>, and that there are no strict dividing lines between regions. Here regions are understood as mobile social and cultural constructs that might «encounter», «clash», «inject their own

<sup>177</sup> Sibir' i Dal'nii Vostok v XXI veke (Siberia and Far East in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century). Moscow: Council of Defense and Security Policy, at <http://www.svop.ru/sibdocs/aborigen>

<sup>178</sup> Smirnov, A. K itogam mezhdunarodnoi investitsionnoi konferentsii «Vozmozhnosti regionov Severa-97» (On the outcomes of international investment conference «Opportunities of North's regions – 1997»), at <http://www.ln.mid.ru>

<sup>179</sup> [http://www.akm.ru/rus/gosinfo/progr\\_gov/1\\_9.stm](http://www.akm.ru/rus/gosinfo/progr_gov/1_9.stm)

<sup>180</sup> Golubchik, Sergei. Arkticheskii vektor Rossii (Arctic Vector of Russia), at [http://regions.ng.ru/printed/gubern/2000-06-27/1\\_arctic\\_vector.html](http://regions.ng.ru/printed/gubern/2000-06-27/1_arctic_vector.html)

<sup>181</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. Racing to Regionalise? P. 5.

<sup>182</sup> Gray, Colin. Inescapable Geography // *The Journal of Strategic Studies*. Vol. 22, June/September 1999, N 2/3. P.161.

<sup>183</sup> Stalvant, Carl-Einar. The Northern Dimension: A Policy in NEE of an Institution? Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdanskiego, Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt zu Berlin. Gdansk-Berlin, 2001. P.5.

stories», etc<sup>184</sup>. Importantly, the idea that regional identity is determined in geographical categories actually always involves a choice (i.e., «what we wish to belong to?»), because the social world is defined not only by physical constraints but also intellectually and spiritually. As such, there can be no single mode of spatial representation or articulation of spaces. Hence, all spatial arrangements can be opposed by alternatives<sup>185</sup>. Geography cannot lock up regions in a 'steel cage', and geographical affiliations are subject to re-writing and re-interpretation<sup>186</sup>. Thus, it is notable that the Baltic Sea area is often treated as representing the North, whilst the mechanisms of the Northern Dimension, it is thought, might be adjusted for the Baltic region<sup>187</sup>. In Pertti Joenniemi's reading, the Nordic region is extending in a Baltic direction, thus forming «a Baltic North»<sup>188</sup>.

The concept of «open geography» might explain the spread of «the multiplicity of Baltic regions», which implies that the region in this sense is not a purely geographical notion (otherwise it would be useless to speak about «multiplicity»). For example, in Lithuania there is much talk about an «Eastern Baltic sub-region» consisting of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia<sup>189</sup>. The same goes for the concept of the «Neo-North», which is based on a «geographically open» reading of region building.

### **4.3. Where Is Russia and Its NWFD Positioned?**

---

<sup>184</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti; Lehti, Marko. On the Encounter Between the Nordic and the Northern: Torn Apart but Meeting Again?. COPRI Working Paper 36/2001. Pp. 32-33.

<sup>185</sup> Albert, Mathias. From Territorial to Functional Space: Germany and the Baltic Sea Area. Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI) Working Paper N 39, 2000. Pp. 10-13.

<sup>186</sup> Nekrasas, Evaldas. Is Lithuania a Northern or Central European Country? // *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, N 1, 1998. P.22-23.

<sup>187</sup> Stadius, Peter. Southern Perspectives on the North: Legends, Stereotypes, Images and Models. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdanskiego, Nordeuropa-Institut der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Gdansk-Berlin 2001. P.6.

<sup>188</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. Can Europe Be Told from the North? Tapping into the EU's Northern Dimension. COPRI Working Papers 12/2002. Pp. 9,16.

<sup>189</sup> Vareikis, Egidijus; Zygelyte, Juraite. The Eastern Baltic Subregion: Conflict and Cooperation // *Lithuanian Foreign Policy*. N 2, 1998. P.45.



Where does the NWFD sit in relation to the «hard» – «soft» regionalism scheme presented above? My suggestion is that it is located closer to the «hard» side of the spectrum.

Having tried to project the concept of the «learning region» into the NWFD, we should keep in mind the ambiguity of this endeavor. On the one hand, indeed, there is much room for cognitive ideas in the process of district-building, as I have shown above. On the other hand, however, Russian visions of the NWFD's future international integration are politically biased and have in mind wider geopolitical horizons. Importantly, for the most part cooperation is perceived in Moscow basically through the lens of security. As a result, in Russia territory is prioritised (what, in Pertti Joenniemi's words, could be termed a «naturalist interpretation»<sup>190</sup>); while in the Baltic / Nordic case ideas precede institutionalization and take the lead.

In particular, the Kaliningrad issue is a good example of Russian attitudes to region building, with Russian policy discourse on Kaliningrad centered around the «hard» – «soft» dilemma. One group of analysts, sticking to pro-Kremlin approaches, emphasizes the geopolitical situation. Thus, Valerii Khomiakov, the Director of the Agency for Applied and Regional Policies, argues that it is Germany that stands behind discussing the issue of Kaliningrad-Moscow relations<sup>191</sup>. A similar view is articulated in some publications of «Russian Journal» authors<sup>192</sup>.

In response to what are considered to be unfriendly gestures from the West, the argument from these quarters is that Russia must remain tough on the Kaliningrad issue – irrespective of the practical implications of such a stance. This was the main message to be discerned from interviews conducted with Fiodor Burlatskii, the vice president of the Association for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation<sup>193</sup>, and Yurii Borko, the head of the Center for the Study of European Integration at the Institute of Europe in Moscow, in summer 2002<sup>194</sup>. Solomon Ginzburg, the director of the «Regional Strategy» Foundation in Kaliningrad also says that the regional situation should be tackled from

---

<sup>190</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. Racing to Regionalise? The EU's Northern Dimension Initiative. Paper presented at the CEEISA/RISA/NISA Convention, Moscow, June 21, 2002. P.4.

<sup>191</sup> <http://tema.ntv.ru/interview/16feb2001/244.html>

<sup>192</sup> <http://www.russ.ru/politics/20020625-kaz-pr.html>

<sup>193</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/145843.html>

<sup>194</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/141456.html>

a geopolitical angle, because the EU dictates that its standards should also be applied in adjacent areas<sup>195</sup>. In a very indicative manner, Gleb Pavlovskii, the head of the Foundation for Effective Politics, actually used the word «sovereignty» 17 times in a two-page interview in the aftermath of the EU-Russia meeting in Svetlogorsk in May 2002<sup>196</sup>. What is interesting about Pavlovskii is that he manages to combine all the basic assumptions of Realist thinking in his argument. This includes: his adherence to «domino theory» (i.e., he contends that granting a special administrative status for Kaliningrad's residents would provoke a chain reaction in Tatarstan, the Kuril Islands and other potentially troublesome parts of Russia); his accusation that the local authorities are becoming too self-interested (presumably at the expense of federal interests); and his explicit admittance of the rampant corruption in the Russian Baltic enclave (e.g., he predicts that as soon as a form of «Kaliningrad citizenship» is introduced, it will be widely sold to outsiders). A good addition to this blend is the standpoint of Mark Urnov, the Chairman of the Center for Political Technologies, who – referring to Poland's reluctance to accept the idea of transit «corridors» from Kaliningrad to Russia - accused Poland («a small country», in his judgement) of being swayed too much by the «foolish myths and prejudices of the crowd»<sup>197</sup>.

On the other hand, there are other interpretations of the nature of the EU-Russian conflict over Kaliningrad. For example, Viacheslav Nikonov, the president of the «Politika» Foundation, argues that what is really important for Russia is to accept the difficulty (impossibility) the EU faces in granting any exceptions to the Schengen rules. Instead, Russia should concentrate on upgrading ferry and aircraft communications between Kaliningrad and mainland Russia<sup>198</sup>. Konstantin Voronov, an expert at the Center for European Studies at the Institute for World Economy and International Relations, supports this approach and posits that it is wrong to depict Kaliningrad as an isolated or encircled territory. In his view, Russia faces technical, not political problems in this territory<sup>199</sup>.

---

<sup>195</sup> <http://gov.kaliningrad.ru/pintro.php3>

<sup>196</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/137124.html>

<sup>197</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147360.html>

<sup>198</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147346.html>

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147872.html>

Pavel Felgengauer, an independent military analyst from Moscow, is also inclined to be critical of Russian policies in Kaliningrad. In his view, the central government should take charge of providing the residents of the oblast with international passports (instead of the obsolete Soviet ones still widely in use, now more than ten years after the dissolution of the USSR). Likewise, before raising the issue of visa-free travel, the federal authorities should also be prepared to sign a re-admission treaty with the EU, thus taking full responsibility for accepting back to Russia thousands of illegal migrants from Asian and African countries. In this respect, whilst it is known that transporting people through Russia's western border has become a very profitable business in many regions, it is also clear that the federal government has reacted inadequately to counter this trade. Felgengauer also accuses the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for deliberately blocking the opening of new consulates in the Kalinigrad oblast under the pretext of the increased foreign influence they will bring into the region<sup>200</sup>.

This critical view is also supported by the experts of the Center for Political Technologies who suggest that the main problems with Kaliningrad are: Russia's unwillingness to ratify the Treaty with Lithuania<sup>201</sup>; the over-emphasis on emotional arguments (like the human rights violations that it is argued will be caused by higher airplane travel tariffs as compared with those applied to railway tickets); and the spread of the «shadow economy» in Kaliningrad<sup>202</sup>. Interestingly, the later issue, which is very sensitive for all Europeans, has been discussed by experts of the Russian-European Centre for Economic Policy<sup>203</sup>.

Natalia Smorodinskaia, the head of the Center for Growth Poles Analysis at the Russian Institute of Economics, argues that current Russian policies in Kaliningrad are determined by the «defense thinking» of the upper echelons of the military elite. This thinking gives clear priority to the accessibility of traditional routes for the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet. In her view, however, what really threatens

---

<sup>200</sup> <http://www.politcom.ru/print.php?fname>

<sup>201</sup> <http://www.politcom.ru/print.php?fname>

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Burova, Natalia. Measuring Shadow Economy in the Kaliningrad Region (abstract). RECEP Research Papers Monthly, 21 May 2002.

Kaliningrad's future is not the new visa regulation system, but Russia's lack of resources for drastically upgrading the region's eastward communications, and the low competitiveness of local commodities<sup>204</sup>.

Irina Kobrinskaia, an analyst at the East West Institute office in Moscow, also shares criticism of Russian official policy. In particular, she is very skeptical of those who fear and anticipate that Kaliningrad will secede from Russia. In her opinion, no one in the Baltic area (including Germany) is interested in the appearance of a fourth Baltic republic which would be unable to properly deal with corruption, unemployment, and environmental degradation. Notably, Kobrinskaia has been one of the few Russian commentators to explicitly argue that the EU has no financial obligations to the Kaliningrad oblast, and has no obligation to help overcome its intrinsic economic problems<sup>205</sup>.

Another important critical voice is Maxim Dianov, a policy analyst and director of the Institute of Regional Issues in Moscow. His analysis has led him to conclude that it is basically domestic issues that have exacerbated the position of Kaliningrad. These include the way the federal center has ignored the regional authorities in solving the plethora of exclave issues and the increasingly evident tensions existing between the NWFD authorities and the Egorov administration, which is accused of mismanagement and economic failure<sup>206</sup>. Dianov has called on the Kaliningrad elite to be more active in lobbying the federal center on behalf of their regional interests.

Thus, the debate is well underway, and Russia's community of experts is deeply divided on this issue. However, one thing that is displayed in the Kaliningrad case is the way that both Russia and the EU are playing the same game, by putting on top of the agenda issues of control, borders and criteria for citizenship. Since the NWFD is the creation of Russia's federal authorities, it is also supposed to be a part of this game. This is perhaps why the version of regionalism adopted in the NWFD is also rather «frozen», fixed, pre-set, establishment-driven, orderly, uniform, elite-controlled and excessively political<sup>207</sup>. A quite

---

<sup>204</sup> Smorodinskaia, Natalia. Baltiiskaya zagvozdka (The Baltic Unease), at <http://www.expert.ru/sever/current/tema.shtml>

<sup>205</sup> Kobrinskaia, Irina. Pri chom zdes vity (What the Visas Have to Do With All That), at <http://www.mn.ru/issue.php?2002-25-26>

<sup>206</sup> <http://www.apn.ru/diagnostics/>, July 11, 2002

<sup>207</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. Can Europe Be Told from the North? Tapping into the EU's Northern Dimension. COPRI Working Papers 12/2002. Pp. 5,11.

indicative illustration of the attitudes of both national and sub-national authorities to academic expertise, however, was the fact that key decision makers actually ignored a major conference on Kaliningrad that was held in Svetlogorsk in fall 2001<sup>208</sup>.

However, the «hardness» of Russian approaches should not be seen in absolute terms. A number of trends also contribute to its gradual «softening». As I have shown earlier, an important factor undermining the «hard» approach to region building in the NWFD is the spread of independent policy expertise on regional and district issues. Hence, some of the region building instruments reflect this need for analysis – e.g., conferences, drafting blueprints, discussion and policy papers, and reporting to the press are among the most important tools of opinion making at the district level. Coming back to the Kaliningrad oblast, a good sign is that a group of «young Kaliningrad experts» has been formed, incorporating analysts from the East-West Institute, the Agency for Regional Development, and the Center for Growth Poles Analysis at the Institute of Economics. They argue that it is small and medium-size businesses and information services that might lay the foundation for Kaliningrad's reorientation to European markets<sup>209</sup>. Within Kaliningrad's political elite, there is also a growing understanding that strategic planning is imperative for regional survival (in particular, this is the opinion of Boris Shushkin, a member of the Kaliningrad oblast legislature)<sup>210</sup>. The local expert community, therefore, has become an important pressure group highlighting that the principal failure of the Egorov administration has been the lack of fresh ideas, its limited analytical capabilities and the low coherence between all subjects of strategic planning (governmental bodies, think tanks, non-profit organizations, business associations)<sup>211</sup>. To some extent, these pressures have started to bring results. For example, John Mroz, the president of the East-West Institute, has confirmed that in 2001 governor Egorov contacted this international think tank with a proposal that it prepare a study on budget transparency in relation to Kaliningrad oblast<sup>212</sup>.

---

<sup>208</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=280>

<sup>209</sup> Krom, Elena. V poiskakh mysley (In search for thoughts), at <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=176>

<sup>210</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=386>

<sup>211</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=161>

<sup>212</sup> <http://www.csr-nw.ru/text.php?item=publications&code=280>

There are other signals as well. For example, immediately after receiving the EU's negative answer to Kasianov's memorandum on Kaliningrad, Moscow officials began putting the issue in a network-like context. Thus, in June 2002 president Putin called on the subjects of the federation of the NWF to be more active in establishing horizontal links with Kaliningrad<sup>213</sup>. He then tabled this issue before a Council of Baltic Sea States meeting held in St. Petersburg<sup>214</sup>, while prime minister Kasianov, for the first time, has raised the Kaliningrad problem in a meeting with his Estonian counter-part<sup>215</sup>,

In other regions, a good illustration of the sometimes blurred lines between those who are «in» and those who are «out» is cooperation along ethnic lines. The Finno-Ugrian community is a case in point, bringing closer to each other peoples of Karelia, Finland, Komi and Estonia. Interestingly, some IT-based projects have emerged that aim to create a common information space for all those ethnic groups that share a Finno-Ugrian identity.

Russia, therefore, cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the proliferation of soft patterns of regionalism because they present a serious challenge. What is at stake here is Russia's inclusion in or exclusion from a number of region building projects. For example, the «Eastern Baltic sub-region» concept presupposes a departure from the Baltic Sea concept of regionalism and is designed to further distance the three post-Soviet republics from Russia, which remains perceived as «the chief external threat»<sup>216</sup>.

## Conclusions

1. It is my contention that images are important parts of identity politics. Thus, the stronger the regional identity, the more room there is available for the dissemination of symbolic and stereotypical messages and signals that the region uses for communication with the outside world. As such, identity regions are prone to produce

---

<sup>213</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147499.html>

<sup>214</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147615.html>

<sup>215</sup> <http://www.strana.ru/print/147700.html>

<sup>216</sup> Vareikis, Egidijus, and Juraite Zygelyte. Op.cit. P.63.

cultural and historical myths and sets of beliefs that create symbolic values for the region's global positioning<sup>217</sup>. These signals »are issued to influence the receiver's image of the sender»<sup>218</sup>.

The »symbolic technologies» of opinion making give rise to the emergence of »symbolic analysts», the well trained and educated group of intellectuals that »rule the web» and »float above territorial boundaries»<sup>219</sup>. The case of St. Petersburg illustrates well the salience of image-based identity politics<sup>220</sup>.

2. In regions where identity is not among the high-profile issues, there is not much space for constructing and reconstructing images. In these cases, there is a good chance that region-building projects, to a significant extent, will be based on «epistemic communities», or regional political/academic complexes. The case of the NWFD serves as a good illustration of the way networking analytical resources can shape policy priorities and influence policy thinking.

The following table provides an illustration of the role of think tanks in region building<sup>221</sup>:

<b><i>Roles of think tanks</i></b>	<b><i>Think tanks functions</i></b>	<b><i>Examples in the NWFD</i></b>
Political infrastructure builders	Informally negotiating with key decision makers	CSR-NW, SVOP
Technical advisers	Providing contract services to the authorities	Leontief Center
Agenda setters	Generating ideas and	All

<sup>217</sup> Rokkan, Stein and Urwin, Derek. *Economy, Territory, Identity. Politics of West European Peripheries*. SAFE Publication: London, Beverly Hills, New Delhi, 1983. P. 67.

<sup>218</sup> Jervis, Robert. *The Logic of Images in International Relations*. A Morningside Book, Columbia University Press, 1989. P. 18.

<sup>219</sup> Michael Veseth. *Selling Globalization. The Myth of the Global Economy*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, London, 1998. Pp. 24-25.

<sup>220</sup> Marin, Anais. *The International Dimension of Regionalism: St.Petersburg's »Paradiplomacy»*. Paper presented at the workshop on »Dimensions of Russian Regionalism», Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, November 24, 2001. P.2.

<sup>221</sup> Some of the wording is borrowed from: Scott, James. *Transnationalizing Democracy Promotion: the Role of Western Political Foundations and Think Tanks // Democratization*. Vol. 6, N 3, Autumn 1999. Pp. 157-166.

	applying pressure for change of policy	
Facilitators of interactions between democracy-oriented groups	Multiplying the voices that are brought to bear on an issue and offering alternative routes	«Strategia» Center

3. In this paper I have shown that ideas are shaped differently depending on where they are circulated - that is, either in the «new» (federal districts) or «old» (subjects of the federation) sub-national regions. The opposition between «cognitive» and «normative» ideas provides a better conceptualization of this distinction. The table below offers an illustration of this point:

<b><i>Cognitive Ideas</i></b>	<b><i>Normative Ideas</i></b>
Take the form of concepts, strategies, doctrines and programs of regional development	Take the form of images, symbols, stereotypes and metaphors
Are based on rational, analytical assumptions	Contain a great deal of emotions and aesthetic appeal
Are products of expertise	Are products of interpretations and subjective readings
Elite-oriented	Oriented to the general public
Promote policy innovations	Promote policy legitimation
Future oriented (reinvent and rediscover a new reality)	Have strong historical connotations and retrospective outlooks
Argumentative	Rhetorical

4. This paper draws the reader's attention to a distinction between two models of region building as summarized in the table below:

<b><i>Hard Regionalism(s)</i></b>	<b><i>Soft Regionalism(s)</i></b>
Vertical-based	Horizontal
Heavily dependent on administrative and/or diplomatic levers	Relies upon a networking concept of integration



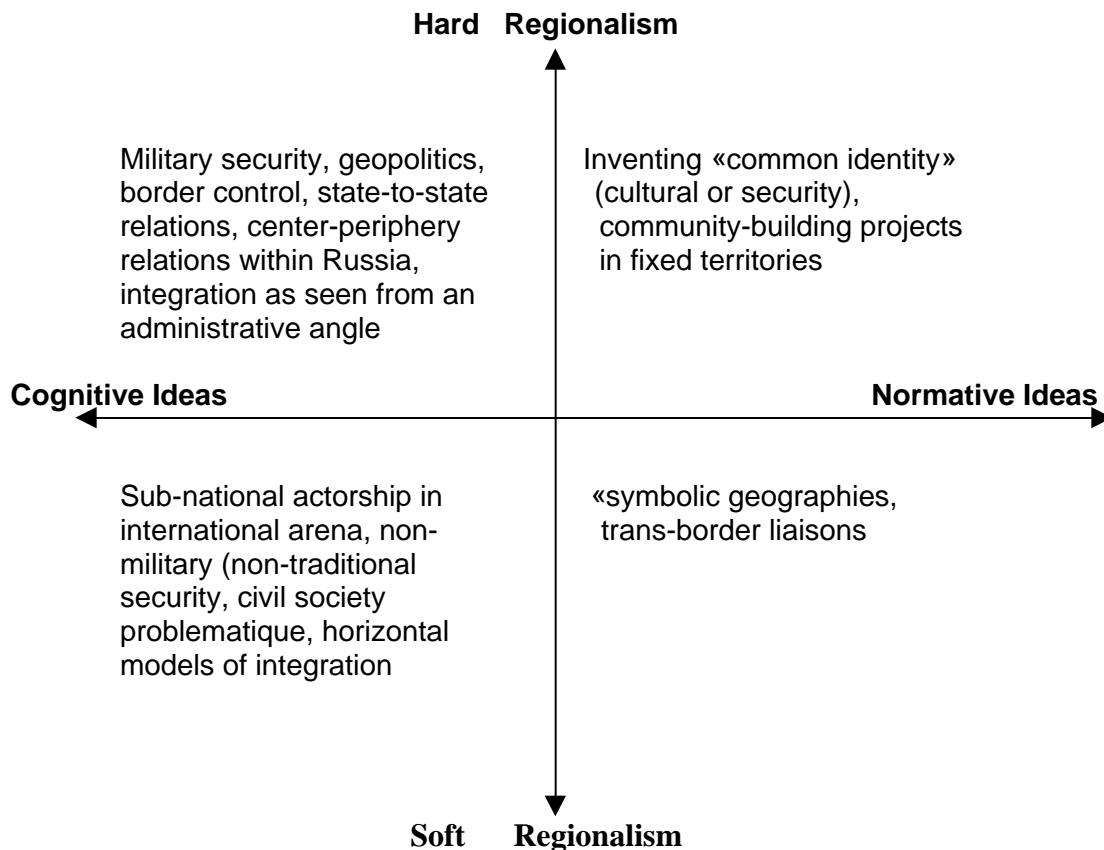
Territorially confined (what matters are borders)	Intellectually defined (what matters are ideas)
Control	Influence
Hierarchy and standardization	Autonomy and variety <sup>222</sup>
Main organizing principles are sovereignty and security	The key marker is de-regulated regionality
«Naturalist interpretation» of the concept of region	The concept of «open geography»
Relations between constituent parts are more formal (framework-oriented)	Relations are less formal, more flexible and context-dependent (network-oriented)
Epistemic communities are used by political groups to set their own political agendas	Epistemic communities incite changes within the regime of governance <sup>223</sup>
Implies modern visions of regionality and territoriality	Reflects late-modern or post-modern territorial arrangements <sup>224</sup>

5. Finally, as a working hypothesis I contend that there might be a correlation between the two dimensions discussed in the paper of cognitive / normative ideas and hard / soft regionalism. In trying to relate them to each other, I propose the following scheme consisting of two axes:

<sup>222</sup> Veggeland, Noralv. The Barents Region as a European Frontier Region: A Comparative Study. In: The Barents Region. Cooperation in Arctic Europe. Edited by Olav Schram Stokke and Ola Tunander. The Fridtjof Nansen Institute & International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. SAFE Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 1994. P. 203.

<sup>223</sup> Hjorth, Ronnie. The Role of Epistemic Communities and the Politics of Regime Change // *Cooperation and Conflict*. Vol. 29 (1), 1994. P. 25.

<sup>224</sup> Joenniemi, Pertti. Regionality: A Sovereign Principle of International Relations? In: Peaceful Changes in World Politics. Tampere Peace Research Institute Research Report N 71, 1995. P. 373.



This typology again brings us back to my argument that institutions and ideas are closely interlinked. What is shown is that social knowledge production and territoriality are intertwined in Russia's North West<sup>225</sup>. More specifically, one may discern four segments of intellectual space, each one located at a specific intersection of certain patterns of predominant ideas and forms of regionalism. Thus, the first segment might be occupied by a number of think tanks (like the Expert Council of Cherkessov's district administration or the RAND Corporation) that promote cognitive, expert-based ideas within the framework of hard models of regionalism. The second segment is reserved for producers of normative ideas that also stick to hard regionalism. The third segment visualizes normative ideas being spread as a part of a soft regionalism model – this is the correct location for those advocating the Baltic and Nordic identity

<sup>225</sup> Häkli, Jouni. In the Territory of Knowledge – State-Centered Discourses and the Construction of Society, at <http://www.ciaonet.org/isa/haj01/>

projects. Finally, the fourth segment is a home for those cognitive actors (CSR-NW, »Strategia» Center in St. Petersburg, COPRI, TAPRI) that contribute to promoting the soft version of region building.