

**Security Perceptions Among Local Elites  
and Prospects for Cooperation  
Across Russia's Northwestern Borders**

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***Working Paper No. 16***



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## Foreword

Over the last decade, a profound rethinking of the concept of security has been underway. A clear shift away from conflicts between states towards conflicts within societies has taken place. Today's conflicts tend to be related less to interstate relations and more to local conditions, such as human rights, environmental hazards, drug trafficking and organized crime. As a result, it is now widely recognized in the West that the focus of security policy can no longer be limited to military threats posed by state actors and must be expanded to include societal dimensions of security.

Despite its acceptance of common security interests and norms, Russia remains on the edge of an emerging European security community in which a common set of security expectations, norms and values increasingly regulate security behavior. In contrast to the member-states of the European Union (EU) that share a common economic and legal space and a multilevel authority structure that may enhance their ability to address new security challenges, Russia faces a radically different reality. Its weak legal and economic base threatens to transform it into a failed state, making Russian elites sensitive to perceived threats to Russian sovereignty and territorial integrity, made even more acute by the increasingly important role of Russia's regions in Russian domestic and international politics.

This study is written by Derek Averre, Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham. It analyzes the perceptions of both traditional and non-traditional threats to security amongst elites in Russia's northwestern border regions, the closest points of contact between Russia and an enlarging and ever more integrated European Union. In an attempt to better formulate approaches to security governance across the continent and to identify the key agents and institutions within an altered security environment, the paper seeks to determine the relationship between transnational forces and interactions, national government policy and local political developments in three of Russia's northwestern bor-

der regions: the Republic of Karelia (RK), Kaliningrad Oblast and Pskov Oblast. The author demonstrates how perceptions of security in these border regions differ from those at the federal center. In contrast to the geopolitical security concerns that dominate the security agenda in Moscow, regional elites in the RK, Kaliningrad and Pskov tend to define their regions' security interests in non-traditional terms. The most pressing security concerns in the border regions appear to be economic-related, including resource depletion, economic restructuring difficulties, unemployment, demographic problems and failure to establish adequate legal and economic infrastructure compatible with the rest of Europe. The most important issue on the regional security agenda was the regions' ability to generate sufficient human capital to guarantee economic well-being and future integration into a wider regional system.

In addition to the convergence of security perceptions with "core" Europe, the study indicates the emergence of positive and increasingly close relations between the three border regions and their Baltic, Finnish and Polish neighbors. However, despite this encouraging development in Russia's security environment, the study shows that there continues to exist a sense of "peripheralization" among elites in the northwestern border regions of Russia not only in relation to Moscow, but also to Brussels. The EU's ability to engage its eastern neighbors as well as Moscow's ability to strike the correct balance between regional and federal authorities will therefore be key determining factors in greater sub-regional integration and the creation of a stable security environment.

The paper is sixteenth in a series of working papers written in the context of the project "Regionalization of Russian Foreign and Security Policy: Interaction between Regional Processes and the Interest of the Central State." The Project is funded by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich. All of the studies in this series are available in full-text at <http://www.fsk.ethz.ch>.

Zurich, September 2001

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## Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the transformation of the international political order in Europe have prompted a far-reaching and profound re-conceptualization of security relations across the continent. Academic analysis has largely moved away from the assumption that self-interested states manipulate power and force in order to cement their positions in an international “self-help” environment defined by anarchy, towards examining the circumstances and factors determining the development of common or cooperative security, or even a transnational “security community” based on shared identities and values, reciprocity and common interests.<sup>1</sup> While accepting the argument that states remain the primary unit in the international political order, many are prepared to accept that security should be analyzed on different levels (societal, individual, regional, etc.) and that the concept should be broadened beyond the political-military dimension to consider the impact of economic, societal, environmental and other factors.<sup>2</sup>

At the policy level, the contemporary focus in Europe is on new functional structures of security governance capable of managing this broader array of security challenges across a tremendously diverse political, economic, social, cultural and technological space. This involves the highly complex interaction between supranational or international organizations, states, non-governmental organizations and informal institutions, and the search for a set of norms that might provide the foundation for new security regimes or a new security “architecture” across the continent. This policy-related research agenda also involves attempts to revise conventional thinking on security and power in pursuit of a pluralistic security community.

- 1 Adler, E. and M. Barnett. “A Framework for the Study of Security Communities.” In *Security Communities*, eds. E. Adler and M. Barnett, p. 31. London: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- 2 See for example Buzan, B., O. Wæver and J. de Wilde. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998.

Russia's position *vis-à-vis* this emerging security community has provoked much debate. Despite its acceptance of common security interests and of the norms embodied in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, the waning of Russia's influence in East-Central Europe (ECE) over the last decade, not only in military but also in economic and political terms, has been difficult to come to terms with. The accelerating process of European integration producing a European "core" and periphery, expressed institutionally in the enlargement of both NATO and the EU to include some ECE states, is leading to Russia's exclusion, not only in terms of formal membership of these institutions but also in psychological terms.

The coming decade will produce fresh challenges. The Russian foreign and security policy elites are faced with the emergence of a new type of international society, a unified legal and economic space in which states, while remaining the major point of political reference, accept limitations on their sovereignty and where governance is fragmented among a number of public and private actors.<sup>3</sup> This comes at a time when these elites' inability to establish a strong legal and economic base threatens the development of effective statehood in Russia and makes them highly sensitive about threats to sovereignty, a fact recognized in the Russian Federation (RF) *National Security Concept*,<sup>4</sup> and at a time when the emergence of sub-national interests and identities is becoming an important factor in both Russia's domestic and international politics.

In geographical terms, the closest points of contact between Russia and an enlarging Europe lie along Russia's northwestern borders. The responses to the changing political and economic situation by the regions concerned are the subject of this paper,<sup>5</sup> based on research into perceptions of security among sub-national elites in border localities in Russia's Northwest, Poland and Lithuania, which was aimed at developing a better understanding of how sub-regional security relations<sup>6</sup> are developing.

3 Krahmann, E. *Security Governance in the New Europe*. Draft paper for ESRC "One Europe or Several?" program, April 2000; W. Wallace. "Europe After the Cold War: Interstate Order or Post-sovereign Regional System?" *Review of International Studies* 25, special issue (December 1999), p. 203.

4 "The National Security Conception." *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie* 1 (2000), pp. 1, 6–7 (see especially section III).

5 The research was made possible by a grant from the University of Birmingham's Interdisciplinary Research Fund. Field work was carried out by the present writer together with Paul Holtom of CREES (Kaliningrad, Lithuania) and Marcin Zaborowski of the Institute for German Studies (Poland). The assistance of Dr. Oleg Reut, Petrozavodsk State University, in the Republic of Karelia and Viktor Ostrenko, of the *Vozrozhdenie* not-for-profit organization, in Pskov is gratefully acknowledged.

6 For the purposes of this paper the following definitions are used: region/regional refers to Europe, except where specific reference is made to the Russian regions (i.e., the administrative-territorial subdivisions, or *sub"ekty*, of the RF) or center-region interaction in Russia; sub-region/sub-regional refers to specific areas within the region, for example that included in the Northern Dimension initiative or the Baltic Sea area; local/locality refers to the particular territory in a case study, for example Kaliningrad.



Specific objectives of the study were:

- to investigate perceptions of security threats and challenges, both traditional and non-traditional, among elites in specific localities within the sub-region, including changes in these perceptions in the period since 1989;
- to study the relationship between transnational forces and interactions, national government policy and local political developments in each of the case studies with a view to understanding approaches to security governance and the role of various agents and institutions in advancing it;
- to provide information on the interaction of national, sub-national and transnational elites which potentially has considerable significance for understanding how national security policies are formulated and executed;
- to develop analytical methods aimed at gathering reliable empirical data which will form the basis for new perspectives on sub-regional security and provide a methodological foundation for studying security in other sub-regions.

Section 2 of this paper examines sub-regional security developments in northern Europe over the last decade and argues the case for focusing on the sub-national level, going on to point out some of the challenges posed by the division of authority between center and regions in Russia. The methodology used in this study and the findings of the field research are described in section 3. Section 4 attempts to draw broad conclusions from the findings of the study about security developments in the sub-region and the prospects for relations across Russia's northwestern borders. The final section contains the main conclusions from the research.



## Security challenges in Russia's Northwest

### 1.1 *Sub-regional security in northern Europe*

In terms of regional security, the impact of NATO enlargement has hitherto received more attention at the state level than at the sub-regional level in Russia. Despite the progress achieved in stabilizing the political-military situation in Europe, the enlargement of the Alliance into ECE, which coincided with its armed intervention in the Kosovo conflict in 1999 and its elaboration of a new strategic concept that – in Russian eyes – arrogates to itself responsibility for security throughout an undefined “Euro-Atlantic area,”<sup>7</sup> has provoked a bitter clash over security governance and the fundamentals of international law and a renewed debate within the Russian political establishment about threats to national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Even if decisions on defense issues remain under the control of NATO member-states rather than being taken at supranational level, NATO membership places a country within the core of power at the heart of a European security community.

Relations with the EU are gaining in importance at a time when economic transformation is creating changes in production and trade relations and greater labor flows between states within the ECE region, and against a background of rapidly developing transnational production and capital networks. Common economic interests have been identified and a regulatory and normative base for EU-RF interaction is being established, aimed at creating a “strategic partnership.”<sup>8</sup> The relationship has an explicit security aspect, on a political-military level with the emergence of a Common European Security and Defense Policy, aimed at strengthening the unity of EU member states in non-collective defense matters, and also with the increasing promi-

7 “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept.” *NATO Review*, no. 2 ( Summer 1999), pp. D7–13.

8 Likhachev, V. “Russia and the European Union: A Long-Term View.” *International Affairs (Moscow)*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2000), pp. 116–25. Likhachev is Russia’s permanent representative at the EU.

nence of common “soft” security challenges.<sup>9</sup> Still, the partnership is in its infancy and substantial barriers must be overcome if Russia is to move significantly closer to “core” Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Russia’s sense of isolation in Europe has to an extent been attenuated by sub-regional security developments in the north of the continent. The initiatives that have emerged in recent years – in particular, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Council of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (BEAR) and the EU’s Northern Dimension initiative<sup>11</sup> – have brought countries in the sub-region together and fostered a sense of shared responsibility. With the partial exception of the BEAR, these sub-regional initiatives have avoided dealing with “hard” security issues, concentrating instead on “soft” security (primarily transnational criminal activity, border issues and illegal migration), economic and social issues and environmental challenges. Russian diplomatic communiqués have been optimistic about the prospects for cross-border cooperation and stability and have been largely free of the geopolitical rhetoric that has characterized interstate exchanges, notably with the Baltic states. Russia’s northern territories, including the RK, and the Leningrad, Novgorod, Pskov and Kaliningrad Oblasts have actively participated in these initiatives. They have been complemented by US policy in the sub-region; the US Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force notes that a key point of the Clinton administration’s policy was its efforts to promote sub-regional cooperation – “a litmus test of its efforts to overcome the old zero-sum Cold War paradigm and demonstrate that greater regional cooperation can bring benefits to all, including Russia.”<sup>12</sup>

It has even been argued that, with the multiplicity of programs and initiatives at the EU’s external borders, sub-regions “have acquired a new independent-actor status

9 See Foreign Minister Igor’ Ivanov’s speech at a session of the Russia-EU Cooperation Council on 11 April 2000; *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* 5 (2000), p. 5.

10 For an excellent recent analysis see Borko, Yu. “Thorny Path to Partnership.” *Svobodnaia mysl’* 2 (2001).

11 Russia, Poland and Lithuania are all members of the CBSS, along with Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and the European Commission. Russia is a member of the BEAR along with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the European Commission; the RK and the Murmansk and Arkhangel’sk oblasts play a prominent role in it. According to the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Northern Dimension is understood to include the countries bordering the Baltic Sea and the northwestern Russian regions including Kaliningrad, covering the geographical area from Iceland in the west to northwestern Russia in the east, from the Norwegian, Barents and Kara seas in the north to the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. The sub-region has around 84 million inhabitants, of which the five Nordic countries account for 24 million, the Baltic states 7.8 million, Poland 38.6 million and northwestern Russia (including Kaliningrad) 13.5 million; Jansen, K. Keynote paper presented at workshop *Towards Closer Engagement: Russia and the Northern Dimension of the EU*, St Petersburg, 10 September 1999.

12 Report of April 1999, pp. 3–4. Available at: [www.cfr.org/public/pubs/baltics.html#russian](http://www.cfr.org/public/pubs/baltics.html#russian). For an interesting discussion of US policy see Moeller, Frank. *Toward a Post-Security Community in Northeastern Europe – Policy Initiatives of the Clinton Administration toward the Baltic Sea Region*. Paper presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> General IPRA conference, Tampere, August 2000.

and are creating their own boundary-producing practices” so that a discursive framework for a kind of sub-regional foreign policy is emerging.<sup>13</sup> This idea of a “foreign” policy both “*below* and *beyond* the nation-state level” has been forwarded by other scholars.<sup>14</sup> Joenniemi argues that a “‘Europe of regionalities’ (...) is not a Europe consisting of processes within and between clearly bounded territorial entities (regions in a traditional sense), though on a smaller territorial scale than the state, but part of a setting with binary, territorial divisions being replaced by a multitude of regulatory spaces which are horizontally and vertically overlapping. Such developments are already strongly present around the Baltic Rim.”<sup>15</sup> Devolving decision-making processes in the sphere of sub-regional security governance to the sub-regions themselves may provide solutions to long-standing international problems: “Regionalization and ‘integrated borderlands,’ rather than a nineteenth-century model of the nation-state, could offer a more tranquil future for non-homogeneous states with large ethnic minorities within their borders.”<sup>16</sup>

However, a paradox here is that initiatives aimed at “softening” territorial boundaries in the Baltic Sea sub-region affect countries – Russia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – where state-building and the search for national identity in post-Cold War Europe have tended to reinforce political dividing lines. Also, they exist alongside institutional frameworks dealing with security that lie firmly within the traditional approach of state-level engagement – NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council and the US-Baltic Partnership Charter.<sup>17</sup> It might thus be argued that, while there are processes afoot that are changing the political landscape in Europe more fundamentally than in the 1989–91 period, and while these initiatives contribute a lot to the way we think about a future Europe, they are not yet capable of transcending hard practical decisions about the territorial limits of security institutions, the institutionalization of borders, trading regimes and defense policies.

13 See Cronberg, T. *The Making of Euregios: The Case of Euregio Karelia*. Paper for COST A10 workshop: The Borders of Defense Restructuring, Joensuu, Finland, 14–15 September 2000. Cronberg argues that this is seen in Euroregions, a “new kind of cross-border regional territoriality making state borders “softer.” It redefines the divide between foreign and domestic policy (...) [sub]regions, not only states, may have a ‘foreign’ policy.”

14 See Moeller, *Toward a Post-Security Community in Northeastern Europe*, p. 7.

15 Joenniemi, P. *Kaliningrad: A Pilot Region in Russia/EU Relations?* Paper presented at a research seminar on the Northern Dimension, Helsinki, August 2000, p. 23.

16 Bort, E. *Illegal Migration and Cross-Border Crime: Challenges at the Eastern Frontier of the European Union*. San Domenico: Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies. EUI Working Paper (RSC no. 2000/9), 2000, p. 17.

17 One source notes that sub-regional cooperation has been developing within the PfP and EAPC, though hardly dominant; Cottey, A. “Europe’s New Sub-regionalism.” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2000), p. 41.

## 1.2 *Focusing on the sub-national level*

Because the political changes in post-communist Europe have been so far-reaching, the study of security has focused primarily on the development and enlargement of international institutions, on interstate relations in the region and on conflict resolution and peacekeeping in those countries beset by armed conflict. Most analysis has remained at the state level. There has been less research, either theoretical or policy-related, into how external events have impacted on the security dynamic at the sub-national level and in turn how local perceptions are shaping and constraining external relations. This paper contends that new perceived security threats stemming from the “twin dynamics of the fragmentation and integration of existing states, and challenges to sovereignty from a range of transnational and sub-national forces” make it necessary to go beyond a purely state-centered focus.<sup>18</sup> State interests evolve within and are constituted by a normative structure that emerges from the interactions of both state and non-state/sub-state actors. Authoritative writers emphasize “the importance of patterns of relations and sources of insecurity at all levels through which power relations are mediated.”<sup>19</sup> Sub-national perceptions of security are of considerable interest in border localities where state territorial divisions are clearly marked while problems of political identity may yet be acute.

The need to examine the practical relationship between the European “core” and countries at its borders also makes the sub-national dimension and its impact on national security policies important. The tension between traditional national security concerns and prospects for transnational economic development through trade and infrastructure projects are keenly felt at the local level and are an important part of contemporary international relations. The local level is important in security governance, most obviously in terms of non-traditional security categories; local actors need to be closely involved in issues such as economic development, migration, combating crime, drugs trafficking and environmental management.<sup>20</sup> However, local responses to more traditional military-political security issues can also be important, for example in the sphere of society-military relations, or to the continuing economic and environmental legacy of Cold War military confrontation.

18 Krause, K. and M. C. Williams, eds. *Critical Security Studies*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. ix.

19 Buzan, B. *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*. New York, London, etc.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

20 See for example the agenda of the Euroregion Karelia; Cronberg. *The Making of Euregios*.

### 1.3 Center-regions security dynamic in Russia

As the first two working papers in this series<sup>21</sup> argue at some length, the decentralization of power in Russia and the greater freedom of regional elites to pursue local interests are important factors in the country's development. It is not the primary concern of this paper to analyze the process of regionalization itself; rather, we seek to investigate to what extent actors in the regions under examination are beginning to play a role in forging international links, how the regions' security interests are articulated and to what extent they coincide with national security interests. As Perovic points out, "it is particularly important to establish whether the individual regions regard their interests as being adequately represented by the center and the reasons which lead to differences between the center and the region."<sup>22</sup>

While the constitution of the RF reserves matters of "hard" security for the federal authorities, there is joint jurisdiction of federal and regional authorities over many "soft" security matters. The fact that Russia's regions are legally permitted to maintain relations and conclude agreements at levels below the federal center with foreign entities, including government bodies, if they have the consent of the federal government is a sign of their growing autonomy.<sup>23</sup> Border localities have a special legislative status at the federal level for developing overseas contacts via trans-border cooperation agreements signed between Russia and several neighboring countries, including Finland, Poland and Lithuania.<sup>24</sup> The border cooperation agreement signed between Finland and Russia in 1992 featured the Republic of Karelia (RK) as one of the contracting parties.<sup>25</sup> According to official sources, coordination at the federal level of border coop-

21 Perovic, J. *Internationalization of Russian Regions and Its Consequences for Russian Foreign and Security Policy*, and A. S. Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization: Regional Russia and the Outside World*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research. Working Papers, no. 1 (2000) and 2 (2000).

22 Perovic, *Internationalization of Russian Regions*, pp. 33–34.

23 "Under the [RF] Constitution (Article 71), foreign policy, international relations and the signing of international treaties come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federation. Coordination of international contacts of the regions is included within the range of matters being in the joint jurisdiction of the Federation and its components [i.e. the 89 administrative-territorial regions] (Article 72). Thus, Russia has opted for a special model of delimitation of powers in the international sphere that distinguishes between relations and ties. Whereas the majority of federative states have a two-tier arrangement of authority (the Federation is in charge [of] foreign policy and coordination of foreign ties of its components, and the components carry out international ties) the Russian Constitution provides for a three-tier arrangement in this sphere (the Federation is in charge of foreign policy; the Federation and its components coordinate external ties of the components; Federation components maintain international ties);" Orlov, V. "Foreign Policy and Russia's Regions." *International Affairs (Moscow)*, vol. 46, no. 6 (2000), p. 81.

24 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, p. 19; Orlov, "Foreign Policy and Russia's Regions," p. 86.

25 *Crossing Borders in the Northern Dimension*. INTERREG II Karelia Programme. Oulu, 1999, p. 9.



eration is currently being developed via an interdepartmental commission, although much remains to be done.<sup>26</sup>

The pressures for constitutional change to reflect this process of decentralization have potentially far-reaching implications for national integration and state capacity, and hence for security both within the RF and in Russia's security relations with neighboring countries. In fact there is still a great deal of ambiguity regarding the authority of the federal and regional governments in the sphere of foreign relations, and it would be difficult to argue that the Russian regions are free to act independently in foreign affairs. Recently, the tendency has been more towards re-centralization, with the federal center seeking more administrative control over the regions' autonomy in the sphere of international contacts.<sup>27</sup> The creation of 7 federal okruga in May 2000, headed by governors reporting directly to the Kremlin with extensive powers to oversee the regions' compliance with federal laws and presidential decrees, place personnel in regional branches of federal government agencies and monitor national security interests in the regions, is aimed at ensuring greater state coordination of regional policy.<sup>28</sup>

Makarychev points out that whereas in Western Europe a degree of autonomy of sub-national entities in a "Europe of the regions" is complemented by "supra-regionality" in the form of the EU, in Russia's fragmented post-Soviet space regionalization lacks such a strong integrative drive at a supranational level and is thus in many respects disintegrative.<sup>29</sup> A senior figure from within the policy community concurs and argues that many of the individual agreements negotiated between the federal center and the regions are poorly drawn up and lack mechanisms to ensure they are carried out and to enforce accountability: "If, within the EU, regional policy (...) [is] one of the priorities of EU activity, in the RF with its 89 subjects, so diverse in natural resource, industrial, scientific and cultural potential and in level of development, and finally in terms of geopolitical position, there has hitherto been no proper clearly formulated regional policy."<sup>30</sup> The federal center has taken advantage of the fact that

26 Russia signed the 1980 European Framework Convention on border cooperation between territorial communities and authorities on 4 November 1998; Orlov. "Foreign Policy and Russia's Regions," pp. 88–9 and 91. The RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently drafting documents to submit the Convention for ratification in the State Duma so that it becomes part of RF legislation; Avdeev, A. "International Economic Relations of the Russian Regions." *International Affairs (Moscow)*, vol. 46, no. 3 (2000), p. 168.

27 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, p. 56. For an account of regional developments in the RK see Risnes, B. "Relations Between Moscow and the Regions of Northwestern Russia: The Legal Aspect." In *Center-Periphery Relations in Russia: The Case of the Northwestern Regions*, eds. G. Honneland and H. Blakkisrud. Ashgate, 2001.

28 Presidential decree no. 849 of 13 May 2000; *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva* 20 (2000), pp. 4318–24. See also *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol. 52, no. 20 (2000), p. 4.

29 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, p. 12.

30 Deriabin, Yu. S. "Severnoe izmerenie" politiki Evropeiskogo soiuzna i interesy Rossii (*The "Northern Dimension" of European Union Policy and Russian Interests*). Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Europe Report, no. 68. Moscow: Ekslibris-press, 2000, p. 56.



informal rules and institutions have hitherto dominated in federal-regional relations and has imposed its will on the regions.<sup>31</sup>

Regional elites have, however, also benefited from this lack of clarity. Recent studies of local developments suggest that national political parties have had little success in penetrating politics in the Russian periphery; underdeveloped political institutions are preferable for local political and economic elites who have benefited from the early stages of post-Soviet transition and who “are not interested in constructing organizations that might enable the national state to introduce curbs on their own avenues of direct influence and authority over regional political affairs.”<sup>32</sup> All of this suggests that there is already a high degree of political fragmentation in Russia, with regional political activity often highly idiosyncratic and local issue-specific. The impact of Russian regionalization on security relations with neighboring countries is thus likely to vary considerably across Russia’s regions.<sup>33</sup>

31 See Vladimir Gel’man’s comments in *Russia’s Regions: The Results of the Year 2000*. Moscow Carnegie Center. Available at: [www.carnegie.ru/english/Pr/2001/rep01-0119.htm](http://www.carnegie.ru/english/Pr/2001/rep01-0119.htm).

32 Stoner-Weiss, K. *The Limited Reach of Russia’s Party System: Under-Institutionalization in Dual Transitions*. Revised draft paper prepared for ESRC project, September 2000, p. 28. See also Golosov, G. “From Adygeya to Yaroslavl: Factors of Party Development in the Regions of Russia, 1995–98.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 8 (1999).

33 One Russian political scientist has argued that if only as an analytical tool, “for an analysis of regional political regimes in Russia, it is possible to identify regional entities as if they were nation-states (...) within this framework, federal authorities (as well as other actors outside a particular region) may be regarded as “external” actors, or as if one were analyzing the impact of international influence on national politics.” Gel’man V. “Regime Transition, Uncertainty and Prospects for Democratisation: The Politics of Russia’s Regions in a Comparative Perspective.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 6 (1999), p. 942. This may be challenged for reasons outlined above; nevertheless, it may be useful in analyzing the center-periphery security dynamic in Russia.



## Security perceptions among sub-national elites: a pilot study

### 2.1 *Approach and methodology of the pilot study*

This paper argues that focusing research resources on studying the views of local elites provides the most effective and reliable empirical data on which a study of changing security perceptions in the sub-region can be built. This focus on elites takes its lead from Adler and Barnett's ideas on "social learning," the capacity and motivation of social actors to manage and transform reality by changing their beliefs of the material and social world and their identities: "While social learning can exist at the mass level, and such changes are critical when discussing collective identities (...) policy-makers and other political, economic, and intellectual elites are most critical for the development of new forms of social and political organization that are tied to the development of a security community."<sup>34</sup> This is particularly true in Russia, where institutions that reflect the interests of social groups are, to varying degrees, still weak and unstable.<sup>35</sup>

Although the study of elite formation or elites themselves is not a central concern of this paper, some explanation of the selection of respondents is necessary. It has been argued (and this is to an extent reflected in the interview responses described below) that "the [Russian] regions' foreign affairs is overwhelmingly dominated by regional political/administrative elites."<sup>36</sup> However, with trans-border initiatives in Russia's Northwest involving links with regional administrations, municipal authorities, economic agents and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and fostering

34 Adler/Barnett, "A Framework For the Study of Security Communities," p. 44.

35 See *Sotsial'nye Issledovaniia v Rossii*, Polis/Berliner Debatte, 1998.

36 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, p. 12.

social and cultural exchanges, interviewing elites other than political and administrative leaders was considered important for the research. This study thus defines elites more broadly, as groups or individuals holding leading positions in prominent public bodies or economic organizations that actually or potentially have a significant influence on political processes and discourses.<sup>37</sup> James Hughes argues that there is an integrated political/economic elite emerging at the sub-national level and observes that “the policy implications of the trend for the integration of political-administrative and economic elites into a political elite remains to be investigated (...) coalitions between public and private elites will be an increasingly important factor in understanding the transformation of Russia.”<sup>38</sup> The print media were also included among elites in this study, as they play a significant role in the formation of local opinion and often act in support of local political (Oblast/republic or municipal) elites.

The research methodology for this study consisted primarily of a qualitative and comparative survey by means of extended interviews of security perceptions of key elites in selected localities in Russia (Kaliningrad, the RK and Pskov Oblast), Poland (Elblag and Bialystok) and Lithuania (Kaunas). These territories were conceived as part of a sub-region in which there have historically been close contacts at national and sub-national levels.<sup>39</sup> Preliminary research involved analyzing the official position of each country *vis-à-vis* key international and supranational institutions in the field of security as well as available information on the impact on the localities being studied. This included an analysis of local political and economic developments. The participants in the study then identified and contacted for interview senior figures in the regional administration and from national political parties at the regional level, economic and

37 Neil Melvin in his case study in Omsk focused on the local elite as “a small self-conscious group that commands a disproportionate share of power, occupies authoritative positions in leading political, economic and cultural organizations and movements such as to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially, and enjoys a significant degree of autonomy from other social groups;” “The Consolidation of a New Regional Elite: The Case of Omsk 1987–1995.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 50, no. 4 (1998), p. 644 (fn. 2). Melvin cites a number of studies of regional elites in Russia (fn. 3).

38 Hughes, J. “Sub-national Elites and Post-Communist Transformation in Russia: A Reply to Kryshstanovskaia & White.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 49, no. 6 (1997), p. 1032. Hughes argues in favor of focusing on sub-national elites, especially in the case of weak states in transition (p. 1017). Stoner-Weiss quotes the RF Central Electoral Commission as follows: “In practically all legislative organs of the subjects of the Federation it is possible to meet leaders of strong enterprises and commercial structures of the region.” *The Limited Reach of Russia’s Party System*, p. 31.

39 Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define a “security complex” as “a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another;” *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, p. 12. They argue that one cannot define any group of states as a “security complex;” there is a European security complex but not a northern one, as the latter is part of a larger pattern of interdependence (p. 14). Given the changing nature of security governance in Europe, focusing on security relations in a particular region or sub-region is problematic. This study examines security relations in the Baltic sub-region purely as a means of focusing attention more clearly on shared interests and problems rather than as a specific security complex.

business elites, editors of local newspapers, senior academics and representatives of NGOs. This paper focuses primarily on the Russian case studies.

A major concern when carrying out interviews was to avoid constructing leading questions based on a preconceived definition of security or notion of which issues are important, an approach which would carry the risk of narrowing responses and missing important information. At the same time, it was thought that vague requests for respondents' definitions of security would risk obtaining amorphous data that would be of limited use in developing new perspectives on security relations. Interviews were therefore introduced by describing in broad terms contemporary notions of security, followed by questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their own perceptions. Anticipating the likely time constraints in some interviews with busy elite group representatives, 5 main questions were devised, with a number of secondary questions attached to each of these in case time allowed for a more extended interview (see appendix).<sup>40</sup>

These questions focused on the respondent's conception of the term "security" (*bezopasnost'*); whether and how the security environment in the locality and the sub-region as a whole is perceived to have changed over the last decade; whether there is any perceived difference between national and local elites in their understanding of security issues; whether and how the locality influences sub-regional (trans-border) security arrangements; and whether respondents feel that neighbors across national borders share their security concerns. Empirical evidence from responses was augmented by surveys of local media and official publications aimed at capturing public perceptions of security relations.

## **2.2 *Security at Russia's northwestern borders: Kaliningrad, the Republic of Karelia and Pskov Oblast***

The three Russian regions selected as case studies provide an interesting mix in terms of national borders. The RK was, during the Soviet period, one of only two regions bordering a non-Warsaw Pact European state, and is currently the only one bordering an EU country, Finland. With the break up of the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad became a small Russian exclave situated between Poland and newly-independent Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. Poland's accession to NATO thus brought the Alliance up to the borders of Russia; if Lithuania were to join NATO, the exclave would be surrounded by territories within the Alliance. The prospect of Poland and Lithuania acceding to the EU within the next few years would similarly place Kaliningrad in the midst of EU territory. If, as currently seems likely, the EU borders *acquis* based on the Schengen

40 These questions directly or indirectly address the key research questions in this working paper series, while security issues provided the thematic focus; Perovic, *Internationalization of Russian Regions*, especially sections 2 and 3 (pp. 15–36). Field visits typically lasted for between one and two weeks, with around 15–20 interviews held.

agreement is applied in full, both the RK and Kaliningrad would be subject to full EU external frontier controls with the concomitant trade and visa restrictions.<sup>41</sup> Pskov Oblast borders Latvia and Estonia, two “pre-ins” in terms of EU membership and aspiring NATO applicants, and Belarus, currently closely allied with Russia through the RF-Belarus Union. The three regions are linked in terms of political-territorial organization in that they all fall within the northwestern Federal *okrug*, following Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decree instituting presidential representation in federal *okruga* to replace representation in the 89 regions. The governor of the Northwestern Federal *okrug* is Lt Gen Viktor Cherkesov, first deputy director of the Federal Security Service and former head of the St Petersburg administration and, according to some reports, a close associate of Putin.<sup>42</sup>

### *Kaliningrad*

Security developments in Kaliningrad Oblast have been analyzed elsewhere<sup>43</sup> but will be briefly set out here by way of introduction. During the Soviet period, it was a strategically important outpost, heavily militarized and with a concentration of military-related industry. Over the last decade, the military presence has been scaled down (both in terms of the number of active servicemen and the size of the Baltic fleet), partly for economic reasons and partly due to a switch in defense priorities. With the exclave’s borders not being seriously challenged by neighboring countries – even though the issue occasionally surfaces – the political-military situation in the sub-region is currently stable. Transit of Russian military convoys through Lithuania has not hitherto proved a major problem, although the issue would naturally undergo reexamination if Lithuania were to become part of NATO. Sub-regional cooperation is well advanced; in addition to its participation in the CBSS and the Northern Dimension,<sup>44</sup> Kaliningrad has agreed on partnership links with a number of Lithuanian districts, Polish provinces, Danish and German districts and participates in the “Baltika” and “Saule” Euroregions and various economic initiatives, as well as hosting consular representation of a number of countries in the Baltic Sea region.

41 See Joenniemi, *Kaliningrad: A Pilot Region in Russia/EU Relations?*, pp. 18–19.

42 *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, vol. 52, no. 20 (2000), pp. 1, 3. In this study the three regions are referred to as “northwestern” in line with this delineation and that of the Northwestern Economic Association, though they are split between different economic macroregions; see Honneland/Blakkisrud, *Center-Periphery Relations in Russia*, p. 9.

43 See Joenniemi, *Kaliningrad: A Pilot Region in Russia/EU Relations?*; Joenniemi, P., S. Dewar, L.D. Fairlie. *The Kaliningrad Puzzle: A Russian Region Within the European Union*. The Baltic Institute of Sweden/Åland Islands Research Institute, February 2000. See also Commission of the European Communities. *The EU and Kaliningrad*, Communication from the Commission to the Council, COM (2001) 26 final, Brussels, 17 January 2001.

44 Russia and Lithuania have agreed and submitted to the EU joint proposals – the Nida initiative – on concrete projects in the areas of transport, energy, trade and investment, the environment, education, guarding the border, health and the fight against crime; Deriabin. *Severnoe izmerenie*, p. 54.

If the political situation appears to have radically improved since the end of the Cold War, the exclave's socioeconomic position is unenviable. In spite of its favorable location as a Baltic port and trade links with neighboring countries, its uncompetitive industrial mix, poorly developed infrastructure and service base and low attractiveness for potential investors have made it economically depressed, even by Russian standards, despite the introduction of a free economic zone, which subsequently became a special economic zone in 1996. The social effects of this in terms of crime, health and demographic indicators are giving rise to concern, both within and beyond Kaliningrad.

The future of Kaliningrad has become a subject of intense speculation. Placing it on the agenda of the Northern Dimension initiative and of the Common Strategy of the European Union on Russia has raised its profile, suggesting that its long-term future will be "something of a shared responsibility between Russia and the EU (...) a 'pilot region.'"<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the official Russian strategy paper for the development of relations with the EU emphasizes that, although Kaliningrad should be recognized as "an inalienable part" of Russia, it could become a "pilot" region for EU-Russian cooperation.<sup>46</sup> However, these documents provide little practical guidance to Kaliningrad's place in the sub-region. There has been little coordinated action at federal level so far,<sup>47</sup> and only patchy evidence to suggest that Russia has a cohesive set of policies to address the exclave's problems. The economic challenges are also considerable. With the EU unlikely to provide extensive aid beyond existing programs, Russia has to find the financial wherewithal to contribute to Kaliningrad's development and establish a legal and institutional base that can attract investor confidence.

The inability of federal and regional authorities to put in place a strategy can be explained by competing desires for an isolationist policy – which would keep Kaliningrad firmly within the RF's political and economic borders – and for policies which would open it up to trade with neighboring countries. The federal government's suspicion regarding separatist trends and the implications for national security concerns have been unambiguously expressed by officials pointing to territorial claims on the Oblast, its continuing strategic importance, its vulnerability as an exclave that may become surrounded by NATO and the EU, its economic difficulties and dependence on imports, and the question marks raised – including in the European Parliament and the Baltic Assembly – over its future status:

The Russian position in this matter is utterly clear and unchanged: the Kaliningrad Oblast has not been granted international legal identity (pravosub'ektnost') (...) organs of state power in the Kaliningrad Oblast are obliged to coordinate (soglasovyvat') their actions in the sphere of external links with the federal center (...) Meanwhile in a number of Western states and on the part of certain international organizations some-

45 See Joenniemi/Dewar/Fairlie, *The Kaliningrad Puzzle*, pp. 10–19.

46 "Strategy for the Medium-term Development of Relations Between the RF and the European Union (2000–2010)," text presented to the RF-EU summit in Helsinki, 22 October 1999; *Sovremennaiia Evropa* 1 (2001), pp. 103–4. See also Morozov, V. *The Baltic States in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse*. COPRI Working Paper, no. 8, 2001, pp. 15–16.

47 Deriabin, *Severnoe izmerenie*, pp. 54–55.



times open, but more often hidden attempts can be observed to weaken the links of the Kaliningrad Oblast with the rest of Russia, calls are heard to grant Kaliningrad wider rights and accord it a status allowing it to hold talks independently with, for example, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Union. Naturally such a counterproductive position is unacceptable for Russia.<sup>48</sup>

If there is to be far-reaching sub-regional cooperation, Russia and the EU will have to reach agreement on the legal status of Kaliningrad, ensuring that policies there correspond to both EU and RF law while creating an enabling rather than a constraining framework for regional development – in effect, a policy for Kaliningrad rather than for Brussels or Moscow. The implication would be to allow the local authorities a large measure of self-government rather than having key decisions referred back to the capitals, a task to which local politicians and administrators must be equal. Kaliningrad will not be able to join a “Europe of the regions” while remaining wholly within the same centralized, state-focused Russia and with a weak civil society prey to all kinds of pressures – economic, social, cultural and informational. Equally, the EU will not be able to provide the required administrative and financial resources to integrate the exclave in the sub-region without effectively separating it from Russia. Any jointly-sponsored sub-regional arrangement must be, first, adequately resourced and, second, “soft” in the sense of Moscow and Brussels refraining from the enforcement of “hard” borders.

This presents challenges for both capitals in terms of security governance. The psychological challenge to the Putin government and its successors of “letting go” of part of sovereign Russian territory must take into account not only the logic of sub-regional economic cooperation with the EU, but also the currently intransigent logic of national security policy in the face of NATO enlargement. This challenge is matched by the potential political consequences of devolving a large measure of authority to Kaliningrad; the claims of other regions, coming either from border territories such as Karelia that may see their future as bound up as much in a regional as a national federal dimension, or from the more economically viable regions, particularly autonomous republics with strong national (in the sense of ethnic) identity, would be difficult to ignore.

The political challenge facing the EU is also considerable and is arguably more urgent. Safeguarding its member states from the “soft” security threats from which Kaliningrad, and Russia as a whole, by placing Kaliningrad outside of the zone of the Schengen *acquis* would deprive its inhabitants of relative freedom of movement and possibilities for trade. The economic, social and cultural isolation this would produce would make far-reaching sub-regional integration, as distinct from the current cross-border cooperation, more difficult.

48 Pozdorovkin, V. G. and Yu. S. Arutyunov. “The Kaliningrad Factor in Russia’s Cooperation with Countries of the Baltic Region.” *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* 1 (2000), p. 69. See also similar statements by foreign minister Igor’ Ivanov in *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* 4 (2001), pp. 71–3.



### Republic of Karelia

The RK has also been active in sub-regional relations. Alone among the constitutional subjects of the RF, it acquired its own representative in the CBSS and the BEAR Council at the sub-regional level.<sup>49</sup> The Euroregion Karelia project, proposed jointly by the RK and Finland and stemming from the Northern Dimension initiative and traditional links between the RK and districts in eastern Finland, was approved at the Assembly of Euroregions of Europe in September 1999. It addresses social and economic problems and border issues and coordinates TACIS and INTERREG programs as well as national and regional development programs. Within the Northern Dimension, a program called “Eurorussia” has also been adopted that provides for cooperation between civil society and the private sector. The “Eurorussia” program would provide a venue for official bodies and firms in Russia, Finland and the EU to jointly develop preconditions for investment activity, especially in the hi-tech and information sectors.<sup>50</sup> Relations on the Russian-Finnish border are stable; despite the imposition of tighter controls, 15% more passenger border crossings were made and 10% more transport units crossed the border in 2000 than in 1999.<sup>51</sup>

The legal base for cooperation between the RK and Finland, important since this is currently Russia’s only border with the EU, nevertheless remains narrow and fragmentary, with only certain aspects of trans-border policy being regulated, primarily via decrees rather than laws. The law “On the legal status of border territories” has been before the Federal Assembly since 1996 and the law “on the general principles of trans-border sub-regional cooperation with the participation of the subjects of the RF” is still to be elaborated. The RK itself has yet to put in place effective measures for a number of adopted local laws on foreign economic activity.<sup>52</sup> The need for continuing border cooperation is stressed by local actors despite the anticipated introduction of Schengen controls in 2001. One respondent speculated that Schengen might not be so much of a problem for the RK as residents can apply for visas for Finland in the Petrozavodsk branch of the Finnish consulate in St Petersburg, but the exact impact of the new regulations is as yet unclear.

49 Reut, O. *The Baltic and Barents Regions in Changing Europe: New Priorities for Security*. Groningen: Center for European Security Studies. EFP Working Paper, no. 2, 2000, p. 36.

50 Deriabin, *Severnoe izmerenie*, pp. 60–3.

51 198 people illegally crossing the border (up 65% on 1999) were detained, of which more than half were illegal migrants from 23 countries, mainly Romania and Moldova; Plotnikov, N. “No Great Shocks at This Border.” *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 10 (2000), p. 3.

52 These are “On State Guarantees for the Implementation of Foreign Investments in the RK,” “On Investment Activity in the Republic of Karelia” and “On Republican Taxes (taxation rates),” which would free investors from paying taxes into regional and Oblast budgets until investments were fully recouped; Deriabin, *Severnoe izmerenie*, pp. 59–60.

As in Kaliningrad, the RK's political and administrative capacity is weak. The previous elected head of government, Viktor Stepanov, had broader political skills but lost to Sergei Katanandov in the 1998 elections. The latter introduced a team of technocrats, *promyshlenniki*, who are perceived as more limited in terms of political strategy for the region. This is causing some alienation among the RK public, who see that key issues are not being tackled. There is also concern that local media have come under pressure from the regional administration and are taking less of an oppositional stance.

### *Pskov Oblast*

Apart from the Northern Dimension initiative and the CBSS, the main channels for sub-regional cooperation involving Pskov are with Finland<sup>53</sup> and those linked to TACIS/PHARE cross-border cooperation programs. Under the latter, the Council for Cooperation of Border Regions of the Republic of Latvia, the RF and the Republic of Estonia, a voluntary association of local government bodies and regional authorities of border districts, is developing cooperation on joint programs and projects that represent the members' common interests in their respective national governments and international organizations. It is also building a network of partners, with specific trade and infrastructure projects identified. The PHARE Baltic Project Facility provides funds for local and regional democracy, local economic development, environment and energy, and local and regional policies and services. Other specific initiatives link municipalities in the Baltic Sea sub-region.

Political developments in Pskov since 1991 have been uneven. In the 1996 gubernatorial campaign, Pskov's geopolitical position was made an issue by the *Nash dom Rossiia* candidate Vladislav Tumanov, a Yeltsin supporter appointed in 1992, who campaigned for strengthening the military in Pskov (as our interviews below showed, the large number of retired military families in Pskov "ready to defend the country from the enemy abroad" ensures that, although its impact on local politics may arguably be limited, the issue has entered political discourse in the region). However, he was defeated by the Liberal-Democratic Party candidate Evgenii Mikhailov, not because of the appeal of Zhirinovskii's policies but because Mikhailov downplayed geopolitics and offered instead a "better vision of regionally sustainable economic development."<sup>54</sup> Both Tumanov and Mikhailov promoted a policy of extracting federal subsidies from Moscow, however; since they had incentives to increase local trade and economic exchange with Belarus in line with state policy rather than to integrate with the Baltic-Nordic area, links with the Baltic states were not promoted with any enthusiasm. Mikhailov intensified local contacts with Belarus, and heads of administrative

53 Avdeev, "International Economic Relations of the Russian Regions," p. 167.

54 Alekseev, A. and V. Vagin. "Russian Regions in Expanding Europe: The Pskov Connection." *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1 (1999). See also Ekberg, A. *Kaliningrad and Pskov – Russia's "Gateways to the West" or "Post-Soviet Dead Ends?"* Draft paper, Uppsala University project "Low-level Threats in the East Baltic Sea Region."

districts along the Pskov/Vitebsk border established a RF-Belarus Center for Sustainable Development of Border Districts, which was strongly supported at national and regional level.<sup>55</sup>

However, administrations of districts along borders with Estonia and Latvia were unhappy with the federal center's bureaucratic insensitivity and managerial ineffectiveness and claimed that geopolitics in the shape of the RF-Belarus Union were harming trade and development prospects in an already depressed region. Regional policy in the recent period has been increasingly directed towards links with the Baltic-Central European trade area. Estonia and Latvia have offered Pskov tangible benefits and regional links have been developing rapidly; the inhabitants of Pskov Oblast have a generally positive outlook on relations with their Baltic neighbors. Research for this project indicates that there has been a turnover of political elites over last two years; the Mikhailov administration, now in its second term, is trying to "open up" and lower barriers between itself and the Pskov public. The growth and internationalization of private business has created a layer of new actors who are beginning to play a role in the development of regional strategies.

### **2.3 Findings of case studies<sup>56</sup>**

#### *What do you understand under the term "security"?*

The overwhelming majority of elite group representatives interviewed across the three regions either stated explicitly that they perceive no external military threat to their territory, or did not raise the issue of external threats at all. Moreover, NATO was mentioned by only a few respondents. Only one respondent, an established senior figure in the RK administration, perceived security in terms of a conflict between competing political-military and economic entities, citing NATO and EU enlargement as a threat to the RK and Russia as a whole and arguing that talk about democracy, "soft" borders and the primacy of socio-economic factors are hard to reconcile with the fact of enlargement. Even this respondent, however, stated later in the interview that the main security threats facing the region are internal. It was symptomatic of responses in

55 Alekseev/Vagin, "Russian Regions in Expanding Europe," pp. 47–9.

56 Breakdown of respondents was as follows. The RK: 5 from the republic's administration (the most senior of whom headed a large industrial enterprise prior to taking up the public position), 2 representatives of RF federal government structures in the RK, 2 from Petrozavodsk municipality, 1 from the legislative assembly of RK, 4 economic/financial elites, 5 academics, 1 media and 1 NGO. All interviews were carried out in September 2000. Pskov: 3 from Oblast administration (including one at *raion* level from the border with Estonia and Latvia), 4 representatives of political parties or deputies at Oblast level, 1 municipality, 1 economic (chamber of trade and industry), 3 academic, 3 media or information agencies, 2 NGOs. Interviews were carried out in February, March and April 2001. Problems were encountered in Kaliningrad due to the regional elections. A sample of elites was interviewed in July/August 2000: 1 regional deputy, 1 representative of municipal authorities, 3 economic elites, 1 media, 1 academic, 1 NGO. Findings were augmented by extensive scrutiny of regional media.

general that the most senior figure in the RK administration interviewed did not want to discuss “big politics” and restricted his comments to internal economic problems.

Three respondents from Pskov made specific reference to traditional political-military security threats and spoke at length about the geopolitical significance of the region’s new status as a Russian “frontier” region, but in each case this was to illustrate the danger of Cold War “imperial complexes” and the perception of vulnerability to invasion that has been exacerbated in Pskov by uncertainty over border demarcation. One respondent described this as “myth creation,” indulged in by sections of the political elite and media, feeding on socioeconomic problems stemming from the resettlement of a large number of military families from the Baltic states. The “militarization” of political thinking based on, as one respondent expressed it, “fears formed by the ideology which the state hands down to its citizens” was considered a danger. Similar responses were heard in Kaliningrad, where local elites believe that the exclave is or should be “moving on” despite Moscow’s persistence in accentuating traditional “national security” concerns.

Security was primarily perceived by respondents in terms of internal challenges to economic and social stability. With individualism having replaced collectiveness as the basis of social values in Russia, several respondents saw social differentiation and the stratification of society as important challenges. Several in the RK, including some politically active or with experience in the regional administration, explicitly identified the weaknesses of democratic, law-based institutions and civil society and the potential threat of a new authoritarianism as sources of insecurity. An important consequence of this is that the focus on individual and societal security has sharpened; the security of the state received little emphasis, with many respondents considering it a concept too remote or abstract to relate to. Those who did not focus on the individual were mainly political elites who appeared more inclined to discuss “big politics.” Virtually all respondents in the RK stated that, if they think beyond the individual and society at all, it is about the northern sub-region; some added that Europe and Russia are “too big to think about.”

*Do you think the security environment has changed over the last decade, and if so, how?*

The national and international impact of the Gorbachev period – the opening up of society, the end of ideological confrontation with the West and ultimately the collapse of the communist system, the partial opening up of borders, changes in the political map of Europe and Russia’s integration into certain international institutions and sub-regional initiatives – and the economic reforms of the Yeltsin years were both cited in roughly equal measure by the majority of respondents as key changes. No respondent was prepared to state unequivocally whether the overall sense of security has increased or been reduced; responses to this question were differentiated.

Although these changes were generally assessed as having a positive impact on European security, a number of respondents insisted that political-military factors are still actual. The Kosovo conflict was cited by several of them although, as mentioned above, there was no perception of a direct threat to Russia. Concern centered on the shock that a war could still occur so close to the heart of Europe, and on NATO taking on the role of an “enforcer” without effective instruments for peacekeeping at the international level – together with NATO enlargement and the reorientation of security policies of some USSR successor states, this raises problems for Russia. Other political-military concerns were voiced in isolated comments, including the continuing presence of the nuclear deterrent and the inability of a weak army to defend the country. A couple of respondents in the RK mentioned the residual mistrust between Finland and Russia stemming from calls for Finland to join NATO and the Finns’ traditional fears of military threats from Russia; the historical border question<sup>57</sup> was not raised in any meaningful way, however.

Sub-regional security concerns, in many respects just as complex, were more in evidence. Problems posed by the imposition of the Schengen *acquis* after EU enlargement and uncertainties over the border regime in the sub-region were mentioned by several respondents, particularly in Kaliningrad, though the negative effect on neighboring localities in Poland and Lithuania as well (especially in trade) was mentioned. One respondent pointed out that of permanent Kaliningrad residents under 30, only 10–15% have visited mainland Russia, while around 75% have visited neighboring countries such as Poland, Lithuania, or Germany at least once, and the majority of these “many times.” Several respondents across the regions expressed the view that the freedom to move across borders is “a basic human right,” as well as fears over the difficulties of a tighter visa regime. This was despite concern over the loss of educated young people to more prosperous European countries; the threat of social instability is seen as stemming from the divergence between the expectations of younger people and what these peripheral regions have to offer.

The impact of change on the internal political life of the regions also prompted varied responses. These focused on: powerful economic interests, including those of overseas actors, threatening local interests; concern over centralization and the threat to regional autonomy and to integration into European structures; the absence of clear political direction at the federal and regional levels causing political, economic and social problems; and political immaturity at the local level, where informal elite networks play the main role, where politics interferes in business and where society finds it difficult to make rational political choices. There was no sense of an existential state of upheaval, but rather a general perception of poor governance in the regions and the country as a whole. The attack on the White House in October 1993, political fragmentation in Russia, attempts by elements in the RF State Duma to stir up nationalist sentiments, the authorities’ handling of the sinking of the *Kursk* (which had just

57 See Joenniemi, P. “The Karelian Question: On the Transformation of a Border Dispute.” *Cooperation and Conflict, Nordic Journal of International Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2 (1998), pp. 183–206.



occurred at the time interviews were held) and Russia's difficulties in meeting norms of the "European family" were all mentioned, but only by one respondent.

A number of "soft" security issues that receive prominent coverage at the national level and in international collaborative initiatives – environmental hazards, in particular the effects of deforestation and resource depletion; health; demographic factors; organized crime, including that originating outside the regions; corruption; drugs trafficking – were mentioned in responses but were categorized as socioeconomic problems manageable within normal political processes rather than as major threats. The RK, in particular, was seen by its elites as being in a favorable situation compared to other Russian regions. Migration and problems caused by minority groups from Russia's south were mentioned by a few respondents (other minorities cause no real problems) across the three regions, though most considered this a minor problem that is unlikely to grow.<sup>58</sup> The issues of Chechnya and terrorism were raised; this was mainly in the context of the problems of the country as a whole, though a couple of respondents in Pskov perceived a terrorist threat to the region resulting from it having sent troops to Chechnya. Several respondents emphasized the negative role of the visual media, both in Russia and abroad, first in magnifying certain "soft" security issues so that they become threats and portray Russia as being on the brink of conflict and social disintegration, and second in the generally deleterious effect the media have on the younger generation.

Responses concerning the role of the military in Kaliningrad centered on the feeling that it should be safeguarding borders and the local population against the smuggling of goods and people, dumping, illegal fishing, etc., rather than against military incursion. More than one respondent was skeptical about whether the local troops would be capable of posing any real military threat to its neighbors, given problems among the former with health and morale. One respondent pointed out that, while the military is a federal and not a local concern, those leaving the army and wishing to stay in Kaliningrad (which the overwhelming majority does) then become a local concern since they have to find jobs, housing, and so on. There was no suggestion in interviews of the emergence of local political-military interests that might be a source of insecurity, as some have predicted.

The views of respondents in Pskov suggested a lower sense of security there than in Karelia and Kaliningrad. Their specific responses about which changes were most important seemed more focused on the narrower local impact, and only occasionally on the sub-regional level. One Pskov respondent suggested that the inability to adopt a wider perspective is due to the depressed socioeconomic situation and insufficiently developed information links. Pressure on the independent media was mentioned in both Pskov and Kaliningrad, where there are only two or three main newspapers facing political and financial problems. While most Pskov respondents affirmed that non-

58 It was noted that some regions in Russia are destinations for migrants; there is an influx of seasonal workers into RK, for example. Makarychev mentions that the government of RK created a commission to regulate the inflow of foreign workers; *Islands of Globalization*, p. 21.

traditional security issues are more prominent, around half asserted that traditional political-military aspects of security are still relevant for Pskov Oblast. One referred to the presence of a paratroop division there as a sign of its strategic importance. Several respondents stated that security had decreased due to the loss of the USSR's "western republics," although they did not mention an external threat but referred instead to the harm this has caused to the region's economic links and potential for development. A couple described the difficulties in relations with the Baltic states over the last decade, while remarking that relations had improved in the recent period. Several expressed doubt over whether the security of the Baltic states themselves had been enhanced since independence, either in political-military or economic terms (citing threats of their markets being "seized" by larger European countries).

In general the most prominent issues are the export of capital and primary goods and resources, particularly in the RK; the trade imbalance with neighboring countries; the prospect of growing technological backwardness; the brain drain; and the need to rebuild an adequate social security system. Poor socioeconomic conditions in the context of a weak state are giving rise to a fragmented society and engendering crime, making personal insecurity more of an issue now than a decade ago. Respondents' attitudes did not take the form of nostalgia for the communist period but highlighted problems that are proving difficult to solve. General economic instability and the attendant social, demographic and health problems<sup>59</sup> are creating a disillusioned, "lost" older generation and an inability to support the emerging younger generation in terms of employment opportunities and economic independence, resulting in the fact that the middle, "active" generation is narrower.

*Do you perceive any difference in the understanding of security issues between national and local elites? Who decides on security policy in the RK?*

Two main observations can be made from responses to the first question above. Around a third of respondents lacked knowledge of the Russian *National Security Concept* of January 2000 and were unable to speak cogently on the relevance of national security concepts to their region. Among those who did comment there were conflicting and varied views on its coincidence with or relevance to local perceptions of security issues. In the RK the majority believed that national security conceptions do accord with local security concerns; in Pskov, only political/administrative elites in power agreed with this. This opinion was sometimes qualified or even contradicted, however; for example, the most senior figure in the RK administration interviewed stated that perceptions do coincide but then said that "the *National Security Concept* does not reflect the main security problems of the RK," and another with extensive experience in the RK administration admitted that it contains misleading rhetoric about the external threat of NATO and EU enlargement.

59 Recent *Goskomstat* data indicate that population decrease in the three regions is greater, in Pskov's case substantially so, than for the RF as a whole; *Rossiiskii statisticheskii ezhegodnik 2000*, pp. 77, 79, 97.

A minority in the RK and a majority in Pskov and Kaliningrad Oblasts, mainly elites outside regional power structures, replied that local factors are not taken into account in national security concepts. The perception is that there is a strong barrier between national elites and local actors in this regard and that insufficient information exists at local level; some stated that local authorities tend to support uncritically what is handed down from federal to local level. One argued that the National Security Conception is “Soviet” in spirit except for some “lexical modernization.” Those who thought there was a difference argued that the conflict between national and regional interests has not been resolved. A few respondents were unequivocal in rejecting state-level concerns in favor of the primary importance of policies aimed towards sub-regional economic integration. However, others expressed an understanding that federal authorities have access to the “bigger picture,” which is not always the case at local level, and that national policies need to be taken into account in some spheres.

The second observation is that there is an acute awareness that the RF does not constitute a single security “space.” Several respondents pointed out that local elite perceptions vary widely from locality to locality and therefore the regions interpret the concept of “national security” in different ways, depending on geographical location (border/internal), level and breakdown of economic performance, political culture and other factors. Some representatives of Pskov’s elites stated that, since the level of political culture there is lower than in other regions that are more cosmopolitan or are having greater success in economic links with Europe, this tends to make Pskov more susceptible to the “patriotic” element of national-level discourse and to reinforce “false patriotism.” Political-military concerns are felt more there than in the RK or Kaliningrad, where there is little interest in strengthening a regional military presence.

The overwhelming majority of respondents gave the opinion that the federal government and federal organs at the local level – the Federal Security Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs, the border, customs and tax services, the *voenkomat* dealing with conscription, etc. – have the greatest weight in carrying out security policy in the regions. Regional authorities – the head of the administration, local government organs and the regional assembly of deputies – take some decisions on internal, mainly social and economic matters (including currency and export control and civil defense) within their sphere of responsibility, but decisions are coordinated with the center; only a few respondents thought that regional authorities take major decisions. Respondents in the RK described how the government and legislative assembly there formulate their assessment of the local security situation and channel it to the federal center. The general perception is that there is little genuine federalism in the sense of devolution of authority for security policy to the local level. This situation was not seen entirely negatively; several respondents declared that the federal center should be involved in regional security affairs and that the center’s attempt to “claw back” some of the authority devolved in the first post-Soviet years is probably necessary to avoid fragmentation. It is interesting that a couple of respondents, who might be considered independent thinkers, approved Putin’s reintegrative policies as an attempt to reverse disintegrative tendencies.



Few respondents provided detailed comments that might provide more clues about the relationship between federal, *okrug* and Oblast authorities; a few suggested conflicts between the various actors. Several suggested that the specific problems with federal-regional, as well as regional-municipal, interaction deriving from the “as yet unfinished process of redistribution of resources and powers”<sup>60</sup> has some impact on trans-border security relations in that the regions cannot “offer a coherent message,” which reinforces perceptual uncertainties about the locality from outside.

Responses varied both within and between regions regarding the degree of interaction among local elites. Most respondents in the RK stated that there was some interaction, although the perception is that there is no single strong identifiable local elite which forms a broad-based locus of political power (the most senior figure in the RK administration interviewed in fact admitted that the administrative elite itself is “rather weak”). Industrialists and executives participate in local commissions and meetings called by the RK administration, sometimes with the participation of federal government representatives. Also, the bicameral legislative assembly provides a forum for elite interaction on regional security matters, backed up by associations such as the association of local governments. There was until 1998 a RK security council within the regional government, which, like its federal counterpart, played a consultative role, but there is now no specific security-related forum for interaction.

However, as might be predicted from answers to the previous question, a majority of respondents in Pskov stated that there is little evidence of interaction. Several suggested that there is a number of distinct elites (bureaucratic, economic, political) with different aims and priorities rather than a cohesive regional elite, though it was mentioned that economic elite actors have entered the Oblast administration and influence decisions in this way. One mentioned that there is some interaction between opposition parties but that this has mainly been sustained by a common agenda of opposition to the prevailing administration and is now weakening. Socioeconomic issues, including those pertaining to “soft” security such as juvenile crime, are addressed in inter-departmental commissions and municipal organizations, or in the case of economic questions in meetings to discuss trade and customs policy. Several respondents across the three regions gave the opinion that informal or spontaneous (*stikhiinyi*) rather than formal, structured interaction appears to be the rule.

*Do you feel that your locality influences sub-regional (trans-border) security arrangements, and if so how?*

Again, there was some differentiation in responses to this question. In the RK, there was a virtually unanimous response to the effect that local initiatives are extremely important – most respondents considered them more important than federal initiatives – in sub-regional and border security relations. Participation in sub-regional

60 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, p. 33.

forums such as the CBSS, BEAR, Northern Dimension and Euroregion Karelia initiatives, and bilateral interaction in the spheres of economy, trade and infrastructure between local authorities in the RK and neighboring countries (primarily Finland), are perceived as having an influence on sub-regional political developments. However, several respondents qualified this, voicing doubts about the effectiveness of local initiatives. Most suggested that this was due to the primacy of the federal center in decision-making and the lack of clear regulation and local autonomy in the economic sphere; federal authorities have not come up with a strategy to harness the potential of the northern and western regions. Respondents extensively involved in the Euroregion Karelia initiative gave a sober assessment: there has been little attempt to assess how adequate such trans-border initiatives have been, and any success in ameliorating sub-regional political relations have to be seen in the context of the larger geopolitical problems Moscow has to deal with and the authority it exerts. There was no response that indicated that greater autonomy would, rather than should, be granted to the RK in the foreseeable future.

In Pskov, the feeling expressed was that its influence on trans-border security arrangements stems almost entirely from the federal level perception of its geopolitical location as a strategic border region. The lack of any broader sub-regional trans-border strategy at federal level and the inability of the regional government to formulate and carry out its own policies mean that the few local initiatives which do exist, though positive in the sense that dialogue is maintained, have little real impact beyond trade and cultural links. Several respondents recognized that Pskov needs to function as part of a wider European sub-region, but borders need to be more “transparent” to allow these to flourish – as one respondent put it, “it is in the competence of federal authorities to close the border, but it is the job of the locality to keep it open.” Currently only the border with Belarus is perceived as transparent; however, a notable feature of responses was that Belarus was only briefly mentioned, and in general very negatively – some respondents referred to the economic “black hole” on the border with Pskov and expressed dismay at the proximity of the Lukashenko regime. Most specific references to neighbors were to Estonia and Latvia, although senior administration figures interviewed were non-committal about the latter, stating that local elites want to keep links open but that authorities in the Baltic states have followed a path of isolation.

Several respondents stated that there have been few tangible benefits to their regions in terms of economic and trade development; a few thought that St Petersburg and Murmansk are a greater priority for European neighbors. Implicit in these responses was a lack of certainty as to what their regions have to offer Europe in economic terms. A number of respondents thought that there is a lack of adequate human capital in their regions that prevents them from being able to participate fully in sub-regional political and economic developments.

The overwhelming majority of Kaliningrad respondents considered “Europe” – in the sense of the more prosperous and enlarging Western section of the continent – to be more relevant to their security concerns than mainland Russia.

“Europe” has showed greater interest in Kaliningrad than Moscow has in terms of economic development, although local elites are aware that there is still a strong perception in Europe of the risks associated with doing business in Kaliningrad [“there is still a strong perception that there are risks associated with doing business in Kaliningrad,” or: “there is still a strong awareness of the risks (...).” In the first sentence, it is left open whether objective risks really exist or whether these are only in the minds of the elites. In the second sentence, it is implied that these risks really exist and that the elites are aware of them]. However, despite the characterization of Kaliningrad as “simultaneously Russian and European,” responses in interviews indicate that the prevailing perception is closer to the idea of Kaliningrad as a “double periphery.”<sup>61</sup> The feeling of detachment from mainland Russia was accompanied in the eyes of some respondents by remoteness from the EU, in the sense that the latter seems not to want to understand or listen to the views of Kaliningraders despite the recognition that, for the EU, Kaliningrad poses an economic rather than a military problem.

*Do you feel your neighbors over the border share your key security concerns?*

Most RK respondents expressed the opinion that neighboring countries share their key security concerns and virtually all said that there are common interests across the sub-region, with only a couple of dissenting viewpoints. Over half of the former group qualified this statement, however. A few thought that Finns and Europeans as a whole still have problems in understanding the Russian mentality, and that perceptions of certain issues differed as a result. Several thought that in addition to neighboring countries’ concern over Russia’s internal problems, traditional fears persisted concerning the latter’s external defense and security policy. A couple of respondents suggested that this was to a large extent because Russia was only just “catching up” with contemporary thinking on security and often conveyed the wrong message. Responses in Kaliningrad were also generally positive, with relations between the locality and those of other countries in the sub-region perceived to be very good, if not problem-free; none of the respondents raised the question of territorial claims on Kaliningrad from other countries in the region. Trans-border economic activity, trade, population movements and local economic and social initiatives seem to have fostered a strong sense of sub-regional cooperation based to a considerable extent on a recognition of shared problems. This partly stems from the Soviet period; as well as links with the fraternal Soviet republic of Lithuania, Kaliningrad had good links with the northeastern *voevodstva* of Poland during Soviet times.

There was greater ambivalence in Pskov Oblast, with an exact fifty-fifty split in the interview sample in terms of an unequivocal yes or no, and a few qualified responses. The various elite groups were also divided; one senior regional administration figure stated that key concerns are not shared, while another gave a contrary view.

61 See Joenniemi/Dewar/Fairlie, *The Kaliningrad Puzzle*, pp. 4, 6. One Kaliningrad respondent, a Duma deputy, complained about representatives from St Petersburg, Estonia and Finland “mudslinging” and “conspiring” against Kaliningrad in CBSS and other Baltic forums.

Several respondents indicated that many differing perceptions exist not only across the sub-region, with differing political and economic conditions determining divergent perceptions, but even within its various localities. The impression gained was that an evolving sub-regional identity is less in evidence in Pskov than in Karelia or Kaliningrad, with a considerable sense of uncertainty about Pskov's place in the wider sub-region.

Concerning common interests, responses were largely similar and centered around sustainable economic development and preserving the social and cultural identity of the sub-region, including stemming the outflow of young and qualified labor, particularly in the more economically underdeveloped districts (for example, on either side of the Karelian-Finnish border). Increasing the economic and technological level of the regions within overall sub-regional development, necessitating a degree of transparency of borders to facilitate freedom of movement and trade and support at a wider European level, is seen as vital: as one respondent in the RK put it, "common [Northern] territory, common problems." This is also suggested by the high degree of unanimity regarding the principles which should inform sub-regional security relations: openness, mutual trust and accessibility, and partnership and cooperation across a broad spectrum of activity – political, economic, social, cultural – aimed at securing society and the individual were generally seen as paramount. A few respondents considered freedom of information – a "common information space" – and education to be specific preconditions for this. Perhaps interestingly, democracy received only isolated mention as a specific principle in security relations. A few respondents did, however, state that the Russian regions need to be realistic with regard to security relations with Western neighbors and show that they can be worthy political and economic partners; with little prospect of integration into the main European institutions, attention should be directed towards avoiding the erection of new dividing lines. Several respondents in Pskov were particularly concerned – more so than elites in Karelia and Kaliningrad, where there seems to be a greater confidence about these matters – about the need to strengthen political-military relations with neighboring countries.

The final question, regarding which agents/institutions should advance sub-regional security relations, prompted very varied responses. Several respondents stated that a combined approach involving European institutions, neighboring countries, federal and regional Russian authorities should be pursued, although a few suggested that European institutions lacked a strategy with respect to Russia, and a number omitted Europe from their responses altogether. Some, mainly senior figures in the regional administrations, thought that federal government should take the lead in providing the political framework for cooperation, but with the input of regional authorities on specific initiatives. Several thought that local political elites should lead, either alone or with economic actors and other groups. Only a few respondents replied that economic elites should play the leading role, while a few stated explicitly that they should not lead because they are unsuited to the task. Several respondents, mainly from the RK, stressed that civil society must lead or play a prominent role, reinforcing the perception that social and cultural contacts are extremely important in sub-regional relations.

## The developing security environment and prospects for cooperation across Russia's northwestern borders

### *3.1 Rethinking security in Russia's Northwest*

The overriding impression from this study was that the vast majority of respondents were able to respond to contemporary thinking on security, even if perceptions were sometimes blurred or colored by the national political debate. The reason for this was summed up by one respondent: "The society in which we happen to live is a transition-type society, in which security is a key concept." Indeed, there was a general awareness, also among prominent regional political elites, of the importance of improved governance, both at federal and regional level, as a precondition for political, economic and social development and for progress in sub-regional relations.

The impression gained from interviews was that most regional elites no longer perceive there to be an external military threat to Russia. Only a couple of respondents from the regional administrations voiced concerns about NATO enlargement and the problems it causes in terms of Russian national security; several others raised the issue of NATO simply to illustrate the hold it still has on national security discourses. There were other signs that political-military issues do not dominate the regional agenda. As might have been expected, the break up of the USSR was perceived as one of the key events in recent history by many respondents; however, there was little sense of a national disaster or humiliation involved in this. Only three respondents, all from Pskov, thought that the security threshold had been lowered due to the loss of the Baltic states, while most people interviewed perceive the political situation in the sub-region to be more stable than a decade ago. There was no mention in responses of a



close political-military security link with Belarus, which forms part of the thinking of Russian and Belarusian foreign policy elites.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, there is some concern over the political-military security situation in Europe as a whole in that gaps and imbalances exist which need to be addressed.

Internal, “soft” security issues dominated the perceptions of respondents. However, these issues are largely perceived in the regions studied as challenges that are more or less difficult according to issue and region, and that are to be managed through normal processes of government and law. Crime, while evidently a concern in terms of personal security, was seen as a far less serious problem than in Moscow or St Petersburg. The interview findings suggest the overriding importance accorded to economic problems: resource depletion, difficulties in restructuring and developing key branches of the economy, unemployment, demographic problems and delays in introducing a satisfactory legal and economic infrastructure that conforms to the basic standards and practices elsewhere in Europe<sup>63</sup> and provides for outside participation and investment were explicitly perceived as security issues. Among the issues perceived as being especially problematic are the export of primary products at low prices and the import of value-added goods, and the difficulty of identifying and developing areas of technology that could strengthen the region’s economy. These problems are common throughout Russia, but some of them are more acute in these peripheral localities. Of particular concern for the future appear to be the inability to guarantee satisfactory prospects which can engage the active sections of the population, especially the productive younger generation, and the consequent pressures to migrate or to seek work in the shadow economy – in other words, to create and nurture human capital.

In the absence of immediate threats to the state or nation, the primacy of the security of the individual as the linchpin for societal and state security appears to be widely accepted among elites in the regions studied. This prompts two responses to the current situation in Russia. On the one hand, many respondents feel that order needs to be introduced or reintroduced into society and social cohesion improved. Although state security is not felt to be paramount, there is still a key role for the federal state as a “provider” of security within the changing environment; rather than outright repudiation of the state, the perception is that its task consists of mitigating economic and social fragmentation. This is also suggested by responses to last interview question, where the majority sees the federal authorities, together with regional authorities, as

62 One source describes the conviction of Belarusian foreign policy elites that the RF-Belarus Union and the Eurasian Economic Community may create a common, prosperous economic space and provide a core of integration mirroring EU structures, as well as the potential of the former to become a nucleus of the CIS Collective Security Treaty as a putative pole of resistance to a NATO-centric security environment; see Rontoyanni, C. “Russia-Belarus Union: The Role of NATO and the EU.” In *European Security & Post-Soviet Space: Integration or Isolation?* Eds. G. Herd. Sandhurst: Conflict Studies Research Center, December 2000, pp. 80, 82, 87–8.

63 See Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, pp. 22–3.

playing the leading role in sub-regional security relations.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, several respondents stressed that individual freedoms need to be preserved and a renewal of authoritarianism avoided, and that civil society should therefore play a prominent role in security relations.

### **3.2 Sub-regional cooperation: borders and the “double periphery”**

The picture emerging from this study is one of positive, if not very close, relations between Kaliningrad, Karelia and, increasingly in the recent period, Pskov Oblast and their Baltic, Finnish and Polish neighbors together with a sense of peripheralization, if not isolation, with respect both to the federal capital in Moscow and Europe’s institutional capital in Brussels. The strategies that are being put in place to ameliorate the sub-regional situation are appreciated, but their impact appears uneven; in Pskov in particular, there is not much sense of inclusion in any wider project. A strong impression was conveyed that local initiatives and needs must be heeded more by both Moscow and Brussels and a dialogue established which includes Russia’s regions.

Responses suggest that the threat of exclusion or peripheralization of Russian regions is not simply a geopolitical or geoeconomic phenomenon, but must also be seen in terms of culture and the development of institutions and civil society across a much broader geographical expanse. The importance of social and cultural contacts to border regions was repeatedly expressed. It was mentioned more in the RK and Kaliningrad than Pskov, presumably because the former have been more involved in sub-regional “socialization” through the Northern Dimension initiative and participation in the CBSS – as one source describes it, a kind of northern outer rim of multilateral EU governance.<sup>65</sup> Even in the RK, however, there is still a degree of alienation between the local people and their Finnish neighbors, prompting recognition of the need for social interaction to foster greater understanding and cooperation and to break down stereotypes.

The question of borders inevitably surfaced in interviews. Although concern over NATO and EU enlargement was voiced by a number of respondents across the three localities, there was no overwhelming impression that the imposition of “hard” borders through the Schengen *acquis* or the accession of the Baltic states to NATO would be seen as erecting political and psychological dividing lines tantamount to a new Iron Curtain. Some responses suggested that this might be because the implications of Schengen borders are not yet clear to regional elites. However, concern over borders seems to be linked more to the state of sub-regional relations than to NATO/

64 One respondent pointed to the lack of security for Kaliningraders abroad, including in Poland and Lithuania, echoing state-level security concerns regarding the rights and status of Russians abroad.

65 See Joenniemi, P. and A. Sergounin. “Russia, Regionalism and The EU’s Northern Dimension.” In *European Security & Post-Soviet Space: Integration or Isolation?* Ed. G. Herd, p. 40.

EU enlargement. There was less concern about borders in the RK than in Pskov; this may be explained by the good relations between the RK and Finland across the “hard” but stable Karelian/Finnish border, which has existed throughout the recent period of history, whereas Pskov has suffered indirectly from the marginalization of the Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia and the influx of migrants from the Baltic states. The minorities issue has been presented as essentially a security problem, and so the material borders between the Baltic states and Russia have been reinforced in perceptual terms by the identity boundaries between national groups.<sup>66</sup>

The interviews indicated that sub-national elites perceive other security challenges as being more important than those that dominate the interstate agenda. As Berg argues, the role of borders is seen differently at the national and sub-national levels; the location of a border may be of major importance to the states involved – national interests overshadowing other interests and needs – but of minor importance to border communities. Priority is mostly given to satisfying national interests, whereas people living in border areas can develop stable relations and even sub-regional identities, perceiving borders as contact zones rather than boundary lines.<sup>67</sup>

There was a strong suggestion that problems are often inflated by the media, both in Russia and abroad. Several respondents gave the opinion that neighboring countries receive a false picture of Russian reality, or that there is a need for a “common information space” across the sub-region. Several stated that the Internet has an important positive role to play here, although access to it is relatively restricted at present. This is arguably true of Europe as a whole; one leading scholar has suggested that “The limits of political community are also evident in the weakness of the European-level media, with the consequent absence of a shared public debate across this half-established West European space (...) National media, from newspapers to TV, respond to and reinforce national images and assumptions, interpreting the same event in different ways to different audiences.”<sup>68</sup> This may well be a fruitful area for further research.

The economic dimension of sub-regional security at Russia’s northwestern borders is likely to be crucial, not just in terms of maximizing welfare but also in terms of the regions’ capacity to exist within the larger regional economic system. On the one hand, the three Russian localities studied share many of the challenges faced by neighboring territories that lie at the margins of a prosperous “core” Europe; the Baltic states may to an extent remain on the margins even after they join the EU. Transition, however positively viewed in the West since the communist system has effectively been overcome, has produced neither the expected economic benefits nor the perception of a fairer and more efficient system. This is true across large swathes of the sub-region, not just in Russia’s Northwest, and prompts demands for joint or at least cooperative

66 See Aalto, P. “Beyond Restoration: The Construction of Post-Soviet Geopolitics in Estonia.” *Cooperation and Conflict, Nordic Journal of International Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2000).

67 See Berg, E. *Writing Post-Soviet Estonia onto the World Map*. COPRI Working Paper, no. 32, 2000, p. 10.

68 Wallace, “Europe After the Cold War,” pp. 208–9.



action. On the other hand, disparities in income and standard of living between – and to a degree within – countries in the sub-region produce economic imbalances that may well grow and lead to instability.

On balance, the interview findings offer a negative assessment of the prospects for the regions studied, despite signs that sub-regional cooperation is beginning to have some impact on regional elites' behavior. A number of problems were highlighted by the study: foreign businesses seeking to evade legal provisions and exploit local resources and markets; a substantial percentage of illegal or informal trade; the lack of firm investment legislation to attract foreign investors; the lack of an effective foreign economic strategy for border regions on the part of the federal authorities; and the inexperience of local actors in the market economy and trade matters.<sup>69</sup> One interesting finding was that several respondents expressed mistrust of economic actors, saying that they should not take the lead in sub-regional relations. Given the fact that, as several studies have shown, economic actors are extensively represented in regional administrations,<sup>70</sup> this mistrust may be more directed towards actors in the informal economy, but it may indicate a deeper ambivalence about opening up the local economy to sub-regional cooperation. The negative effects on the Russian economy as a result of the outflow (sometimes illegal) of primary goods, problems with balance of payments and other factors visible in the regions have prompted criticism by federal officials: "ill-considered emphasis on foreign trade threatens to reorient the regions to the economy of foreign states, i.e. to erode Russia's economic area (...) given the weakened state of the Russian economy, this creates a threat to the country's economic security."<sup>71</sup> Other officials have given more positive assessments, but the overall impression is one of uncertainty.<sup>72</sup>

69 Makarychev refers to the lack of experience of international relations in regional governments, lack of coordination between agencies and minimal interaction between authorities and the nascent third sector which is impeding sub-regional integration, including its economic dimension; *Islands of Globalization*, p. 38. Regarding the substantial concerns of the EU about the business climate in Russia, see Wright, R. "The Future of EU-Russian Economic Relations." *Russian Economic Trends*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2000), pp. 8–10.

70 Melvin ("The Consolidation of a New Regional Elite," pp. 642–3) describes the emergence in Omsk in 1995 of a "powerful core grouping, formed from the merger of the local state apparatus and leading economic interests", which dominated key positions of power; see also Stoner-Weiss, *The Limited Reach of Russia's Party System*, pp. 27–31. This appears also to be the case with the *promyshlenniki* in Karelia.

71 Orlov, "Foreign Policy and Russia's Regions," p. 85.

72 Avdeev describes the interregional associations set up (according to the federal law of 17 December 1999) for the purpose of interregional integration and socioeconomic development of federation *sub'ekty*; their external partners are currently sub-state entities but "we do not rule out, and I stress this, the possibility for associations to negotiate directly with the bodies of power of foreign states which will, of course, need a corresponding legal base." He also warns, however, against the danger of cultural-religious, economic and demographic expansion by neighboring states into Russian territory; Avdeev, "International Economic Relations of the Russian Regions."

### ***3.3 Federal and regional outlooks: disjunction between discourses***

Makarychev's paper in this series neatly tabulates the disjunction between the geopolitical/geostrategic outlook of the federal center and the "gloeconomic" outlook underpinning regionalization.<sup>73</sup> The findings of this pilot study suggest that, in the minds of those who have some understanding of these issues, there is indeed a perceived gap between "geopolitical" national security concepts and the key security challenges facing the regions. The contrast between the state-centered policies of a nationalizing regime that claims hegemony over the polity as a whole, and the diverse interests of border regions in particular, resonate throughout this study. Several years of participation by the RK and Kaliningrad, and to a lesser – though increasing – degree Pskov Oblast, in cooperative initiatives within a relatively stable sub-region has focused minds on economic development, trading links, social and demographic problems; this contrasts with the often assertive and sometimes contradictory national security discourse, often inspired by political debates among national elites in the countries concerned, which has tended to dominate political relations between Russia and the Baltic states.

Importantly, however, Makarychev also argues that the disjunction should not be seen in terms of absolutes. Russia's attempts to resolve the complex set of problems arising from the need for political and economic modernization, while redefining boundaries of national political space to suit her security needs, mean that the edges of both federal and regional level discourses are frequently blurred. The RF government has recently started, at least in terms of policy statements and in exploratory talks with the EU, to respond to regional needs in northwestern Russia that demand the kind of greater sub-regional integration approximating the preconditions of a security community, even though local elites do recognize difficulties stemming from, first, their peripheral location, and second, adapting the Russian political and legal system to European norms. The gradual penetration of the economic imperative into political arrangements is a key factor in the future development of the sub-region.

However, at the present stage of Russia's political development, it is by no means clear how far integration can or will go. There is a clear tension between preserving and strengthening the sovereignty and integrity of the state and seeking integration into a broader political community. In terms of internal political arrangements, how this tension is resolved will determine the degree to which the regions have autonomy in

73 Makarychev, *Islands of Globalization*, pp. 28–9. These are: Hard security vs. soft security approach; reliance on balance of power/military strength vs. non-military priorities – trade, etc.; divisive vs. integrative; sub-regional security arrangements strongly tied to pan-European security vs. security compatible with regionality; sub-national units tied to policies of major powers/alliances vs. sub-national units not used as hostages in competition for hegemony; Russia seen as an object of regional policies of rivals vs. Russian northwest as an organic part of wider Europe; Russian resistance to West's eastwards expansion vs. search for new opportunities from proximity to expanding Europe; border regions as barriers to foreign expansion v. border regions as gateways and trade links to more developed countries.

matters of trans-border security governance; the present study suggests there is considerable uncertainty at regional level over the future scope of their autonomy. In terms of external policy, this question will influence the development of Russia's relations with Europe. A recent paper argues that,

if regionalism is understood as a search for a new identity, Russia is unlikely to take part in this process. In the dominant self-image of Russia as a great power, there is no place for a Baltic regional identity, even if there are reasons to believe that Baltic cooperation can benefit Russia by bringing her closer to Europe (...) the calculation of costs and benefits is very likely to determine Russia's policy on low-key issues, which do not affect her self-perception and self-definition. Regional cooperation is thus possible even without regionalism (...) Baltic regionalism is possible as a way of identification at the local level (...) but the centralising tendencies in the development of the RF after the last presidential elections can deprive these regionalist feelings of any political significance.<sup>74</sup>

The paper goes on to suggest that, even if we focus purely on interests as an exogenous factor rather than identity,

it is still not self-evident that Russia should act according to its interests in the Baltic Sea area. The Russian state as a whole can have the more high-ranking interests that contradict its specific interests in the Baltics. For example many analysts today would argue that "preserving strategic stability" and holding out against the looming "unipolar world" may require a more confrontational stand in the face of the West, and especially of its "satellites" bordering Russia. The benefits of cooperation in the Baltic sea region are recognised by the Russian foreign policy elite (...) However, the effect of this recognition is neutralised by the geopolitical considerations (...).

Cooperation taking place at present through sub-regional forums only encompasses "low-key issues;" in larger issues of governance, "too much is at stake for the Russian foreign policy elite to enable it to make any concessions."<sup>75</sup>

Much remains to be investigated concerning what exactly is at stake in terms of national interests and how they impact on regional interests, and how the privileged discourse of foreign policy elites influences regional policy – in essence, how governance and politics at state and local level interact to produce sub-regional foreign policy.

74 Morozov, *The Baltic States in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse*, pp. 1–2, 15.

75 *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 16.



## Conclusions

Sub-regional initiatives that have emerged since 1991 have made a perceptible, and possibly lasting, impression on elites in Russia's northwestern regions. The avoidance of traditional political-military security discourse was evident in early statements about the future of the Baltic Sea region,<sup>76</sup> and this has become a generally accepted principle in sub-regional cooperation. Studies of debates in the Baltic states have noted a shift away from the heavily security-oriented, "nationalizing" discourse of the early 1990s towards a more accommodating and diverse concept of relations.<sup>77</sup>

76 See the "Vision and Strategy around the Baltic Sea 2010" concept, in Reut, O. *The Baltic and Barents Regions in Changing Europe: New Priorities for Security*. Groningen: Center for European Security Studies. EFP Working Paper, no. 2, June 2000, p. 25. Moeller refers to the US Northern European Initiative which treats northeastern Europe "not as a region which requires extraordinary means to tackle the problems" by "adding non-state actors to state actors [and] transforming the conventional meaning of borders (...) de-militarizing security by both following a comprehensive conception of security (without calling it security) and by generally downplaying the importance of traditionally defined security," and also to the BEAR, about which "the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs proudly states that 'people-to-people cooperation has proved to be a security policy instrument that is far more effective than the threat of military force,'" *Toward a Post-Security Community in Northeastern Europe*, pp. 9–10.

77 One study argues that, in connection with the Northern Dimension initiative, "Lithuania's debate on Kaliningrad contains an explicit discursive move to internalise the Russian 'other' and bring it closer to the European 'self;'" Kaliningrad is not presented as a direct threat to Lithuania's sovereignty and the Lithuanian political elite has taken on the task of helping Kaliningrad in sub-regional cooperation, seeing "a perfect opportunity to display its Europeanness and internalised norm of co-operation," instead of promoting the "threat" discourse "the 'East' is constructed as a partner for co-operation, and arena to display Lithuanian Europeanness, relations with the „East“ acquire more varied, less survival-like character;" Pavlovaite, I. *Paradise Regained: The Conceptualisation of Europe in the Lithuanian Debate*. Unpublished paper. Aalto notes a similar, if uneven, trend in Estonia; *Beyond Restoration*, pp. 79–81.

The changing structural context of contemporary Europe, characterized by complex elements of globalization – the “dynamic intersection (or even synergy) among a wide range of expanding social, economic and political processes of internationalization”<sup>78</sup> – is reflected in initiatives such as Northern Dimension, which is seen as “launching a regional development policy”<sup>79</sup> to respond to challenges at the northern periphery of the EU, with emphasis on integrating policy across administrative boundaries to produce economic and social cohesion. With funds for cooperation and technical aid from international organizations often targeted on Russia’s regions, this process of, in effect, internationalization across boundaries of economic and social welfare, supported in principle by the EU Commission, should have a positive effect on security across the sub-region.

This leads us to consider the longer-term impact of Russia’s inclusion in sub-regional economic development and its implications for the country’s security. Integration into energy, transport and communications networks may provide a parallel to the Coal and Steel Community post-1945 and provide a basis for accelerated technological development and information links. If Russian national elites can accept the “change [in] emphasis from the traditional military-political agenda to an economic-commercial one,”<sup>80</sup> which our evidence suggests is entering the intellectual process among local elites in the regions studied, the alteration in the security environment of Russia, though difficult to predict accurately, will possibly be greater than after 1991.

There is, however, an evident gap between attempts to play down geopolitical factors in sub-regional relations, thereby enabling development of a closer political community, and what has often been implied in discussions about NATO and EU enlargements, namely importing the Baltic states into the “zone of stability” provided by “core” Europe. The implied logic is that East-West cultural and political boundaries remain – in effect, that the “Euroatlantic area” is one of prosperity, democracy and stability and the post-Soviet area one of poverty, authoritarianism and instability. Even if Western European elites are careful not to mention the potential for renewed political-military confrontation, it fundamentally cuts across sub-regional cooperation. While the shift in emphasis to address common “soft” security challenges is a positive

78 Cerny, P. “The New Security Dilemma: Divisibility, Defection and Disorder in the Global Era.” *Review of International Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2000), p. 625. Cerny writes (pp. 643–4): “the emergence of international or transnational *regions* [emphasis in original] is playing an increasing role in territorial organisation (...) what is most interesting about these regions is not their institutional coherence or suprastate-like structural form (...) What is most interesting is that they are themselves multilevel, asymmetric entities, with crosscutting internal fault lines – sub-regions, cross-border regions, local regions, not merely ‘nested’ but often including subnational, national and transnational rivalries in uneasy proximity. The main structural fault-lines – political, social and economic – in this complex world reflect not clear territorial boundaries enclosing hierarchical authority structures, but new distinctions between different levels of socioeconomic cleavage, urban/rural splits, etc.”

79 Joenniemi/Dewar/Fairlie, *The Kaliningrad Puzzle*, p. 20.

80 Joenniemi/Sergounin, “Russia, Regionalism and The EU’s Northern Dimension,” p. 42.

one, creating the picture of drug-crazed, HIV-positive illegal migrants fleeing from catastrophic environmental hazards and aided by the *mafia* in cahoots with corrupt police-state officials – which it might be argued informs EU policy on borders flowing from the Treaty of Amsterdam<sup>81</sup> – is not calculated to promote understanding. Though socio-economic problems undoubtedly exist in Russia's northwestern regions, the present study suggests that the perception of chaos threatening the security of the sub-region is misguided.<sup>82</sup>

The dual challenge of maintaining a degree of openness to allow cross-border movement of people and goods to facilitate integration, while ensuring control over cross-border trade and illegal movement of people, is a key one. Concern about Schengen-inspired visa regimes, and the security implications of imposing barriers that might affect sub-regional actors' cooperation on a range of "soft" security issues – not to mention the basic human right of traveling across borders, which was formerly denied by the Iron Curtain – echo the concerns of recent scholarly and policy-related research. A number of studies have concluded that the perception that the external borders of the EU are under stress from pressures of migration and that allowing free movement of labor provokes large migratory flows has been misplaced. Central and East European leaders "have repeatedly expressed their concern that such measures should not introduce new barriers between their populations, but the priority given to EU demands has caused acute dilemmas for domestic policy-makers. Behind the rhetoric of "not putting up a new Iron Curtain" lies a complex set of compromises whereby each country has tried to navigate between EU pressures and other policy concerns, both domestic and external."<sup>83</sup> A report for the European Commission argues that an enlarged EU will need to show greater sensitivity to the existing economic and cultural links between the new member-states and their neighbors to the east. A more flexible visa regime as part of a comprehensive immigration policy should be considered, since a

81 See Joenniemi/Dewar/Fairlie, *The Kaliningrad Puzzle*, p. 20.

82 It is perhaps typical of contemporary media coverage that an informative, balanced article on Kaliningrad by EU commissioner for external relations Chris Patten, which made brief reference to these problems, was entitled by the sub-editors of what is a respected British newspaper "Russia's Hell-hole Enclave: There is a Center of Organised Crime in the Middle of Europe." *The Guardian*, 7 April 2001.

83 See Grabbe, H. *The Sharp Edges of Europe: Security Implications of Extending EU Border Policies Eastwards*. Western European Union Institute for Security Studies. Occasional Paper, no. 13, March 2000, pp. 6, 20, available at: [www.weu.int/institute/occasion/occ13x.htm](http://www.weu.int/institute/occasion/occ13x.htm). Grabbe provides a close study of the Schengen *acquis* and EU policy on eastern borders. She writes: "After all, the Treaty of Rome resolved 'to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe' and aspired to 'an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe,' an aim that has been extended to include east European peoples following the collapse of communism in 1989" (p. 3). See also Bort, E. *Illegal Migration and Cross-Border Crime: Challenges at the Eastern Frontier of the European Union*. San Domenico: Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies. EUI Working Paper (RSC no. 2000/9), 2000.



“fortress Europe” approach would undermine the broader foreign policy role of the EU and would not work in practice. There should be greater willingness to engage with eastern neighbors in support of their economic development, administrative reform and political stability.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, the findings of the present study suggest that the impact of sub-regional cooperation has been limited and that there is ambivalence over the benefits that have accrued to Russia’s northwestern regions. It is by no means certain that commercial and socio-cultural exchanges are providing what Cerny calls “divisible benefits”<sup>85</sup> across Russia’s regions. If the periphery gains little in terms of prosperity, the source of which is controlled by two “cores” of power – if neither the state, i.e. Moscow, nor the regional system, i.e. Brussels, can either individually or jointly create a stable, pluralistic system of governance – substate groups may “exit” the security order, for example by entering the shadow economy or by building local monopolies to exclude outsider participation. New informal regimes and networks of power may emerge – indeed, in some respects are already emerging in Russia’s regions – to challenge governance by the “cores,” albeit existing alongside local or sub-regional agreements on specific issues. The institutional vacuum, or at least institutional gaps, created may engender insecurity and hinder the prospects for broader sub-regional integration leading to a stable security community.

84 See Amato, G. and J. Batt. *The Long-Term Implications of EU Enlargement: The Nature of the New Border* (Final Report of the Reflection Group). San Domenico: Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 1999, and Grabbe, *The Sharp Edges of Europe*.

85 Cerny, “The New Security Dilemma,” p. 626. The argument below owes a lot to Cerny’s thoughtful arguments, particularly on what he calls the “New Security Dilemma” which is replacing the traditional security dilemma; see pp. 642–5.

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# Appendix

## Questions for field work interviews

### *1 What do you understand under the term 'security'?*

Do you think in terms of threats or challenges to security?

Do you primarily think of threats/challenges to yourself? yourself in relation to a particular social, political, economic or ethnic group? your locality? the state/nation? the region? other?

What are the sources of these threats or challenges?

### *2 1989 is usually seen as a watershed in terms of security in Europe. Do you think the security environment has changed over the last decade, and if so, how?*

What were the key events/factors in these changes?

Is there a greater or lesser sense of security in your locality? your country? your sub-region?

Is the 'traditional' (define) security agenda still relevant, and why?

Which dimensions of the 'non-traditional' (define) security agenda are relevant to your locality (economic; environmental; migration; crime; other)?

**3 *Do you perceive any difference in the understanding of security issues between national and local elites? If so, can you explain the difference?***

How relevant are national security concepts to your locality?

What has been/is the impact of national security policy on developments in your locality?

Whose voice has greatest weight in deciding what constitutes a security challenge in your locality?

How are these security challenges dealt with?

How do local elites interact to promote local concerns over security-related issues?

**4 *Do you feel that your locality influences sub-regional (trans-border) security arrangements, and if so, how?***

What role do local elites play in sub-regional (trans-border) security initiatives?

Do you think local initiatives are more or less important than national security policy? Why?

**5 *Do you feel your neighbors over the border share your key security concerns?***

Do you consider there is a high degree of common interests in terms of security across the sub-region, and why?

Can you describe these common interests?

What principles should sub-regional security policy be based on?

Which agents/institutions should advance sub-regional security relations?



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