

Regional Identity and International Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Rim

Yulia Lamasheva

要 旨

本論文の目的は、環バルト海においてリージョナル・アイデンティティがどのように形成されてきたかを明らかにすることである。歴史上はじめて国境を超えるリージョナル・アイデンティティを造ろうとしたのは、EC/EUであった。環バルト海の多くの国はEUに加盟しているので、EUの影響も考察されている。本論文では特に、スカンディナビアの4カ国（ノルウェー、スウェーデン、フィンランド、デンマーク）における300年間のアイデンティティの形成やバルト3国（リトアニア、ラトビア、エストニア）のアイデンティティ形成の問題に注意が払われた。また、EUに加盟していないロシアのアイデンティティの影響も論じられている。

Keywords: identity, region-building

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Introduction: the importance of identity research

The problems connected with the identity of international relations' actors have been recently perceived as one of the interesting and inspiring research issues. The reasons are, on the one hand, proceeding process of globalisation and intensifying interdependence, which causes the national or state identity transmission into collective, regional or subregional identity level, on the other hand, manifestation of many states' identity crisis. At the same time more attention is paid to other sorts of identity revealing them, for example, in the process of European integration.¹ As Samuel Huntington puts it:

Spurred by modernization, global politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines. Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. People and countries with different cultures are coming apart. Alignments defined by ideology and superpower relations are giving way to alignments defined by culture and civilization. Political boundaries increasingly are redrawn to coincide with cultural ones: ethnic, religious and civilizational...The 1990s have seen the eruption of a global identity crisis. Almost everywhere one looks, people have been asking, "Who we are?" and "Who is not us?" These questions are central not only to peoples attempting to forge new nation states, as in the former Yugoslavia, but also much more generally.²

E. Erikson is commonly regarded as a spiritual father of identity theory. In his research, "identity is understood as a stable and unchanging being" and is related to an individual social actor and expressions of its consciousness³. Identity may be analysed in relation to the psychoanalytical or interactionist tradition. According to this first approach, identity is treated as stable and unchangeable system of values, evaluations and attitudes of an individual identical with somebody or something; according to the second one, identity is comprehended as regenerated and recreated process of self - identification.

Of all kinds of identity creation, this paper is mostly concerned with the regional identity, which means a common identity for a region, consisting of two or more countries. Everyone possesses a national identity, which means everyone can say where he or she comes from. Family, neighbourhood or locality, workplace or occupation, ethnicity, language, religion, class and nationality can all help to define the boundaries of the various communities to which individuals feel connected. Simultaneous membership in a number of such "bounded communities" nurtures within individuals a web of overlapping identities. However, we all live on one planet; understanding of this fact develops an international identity, that is, we are the members of the global community. Regional identity would be a narrowed kind of international identity, limited to some

geographical region consisting of two or more countries or their parts.

Regional identity is often mentioned in the context of the EU integration: now each inhabitant is not only British, German, French or Italian, but also European. No doubt, building a regional identity will take time, it does not come automatically only because of economic integration. However, this type of identity is looser, than the national identity, for instance. People of different countries do not have to sacrifice their respective languages; they do not have to change their traditions.

According to S. Huntington, the problem with many regions is that they are geographical, not political or cultural entities. As with the Balkans or the Middle East, they may be split by inter- and intracivilization conflicts. Regions are a basis for cooperation among states only to the extent that geography coincides with culture. Military alliances and economic associations require cooperation among their members, cooperation depends on trust, and trust most easily springs from common values and culture. As a result, while age and purpose also play a role, the overall effectiveness of regional organizations generally varies inversely with the civilizational diversity of their membership.⁴

There is a different point of view on the inevitability of intercivilizational conflicts in a given region. In 1994 Iver Neumann presented an article advocating a new approach to the analysis of regions, which he termed the region-building approach. In his article Neumann laid out a critique of traditional understandings of regions. Neumann identified two broad approaches in this regard. 'Inside-out' approaches, he noted, tend to see regions as pre-given as a result of a unity of identity and cultural markers in any given area (e.g., tradition, language, ethnic origin, political structure, religion, etc). 'Outside-in' approaches, by contrast, see regions as given as a result of natural geopolitical phenomena or strategic landmarks (e.g., mountain ranges, rivers, peninsulas, etc). Neumann's critique was to argue that regions, whether inside-out or outside-in, are never pre-given and natural. Rather such 'naturalness' is always discursively constructed. Neumann argued that, like nations, regions too are imagined communities constructed in a deeply political process in which discourses compete in the attempt to construct social meaning; that is, to make what is not natural appear natural. To quote Neumann:

The existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region-builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others.⁵

This post-modern turn in the literature on regions was a liberating moment in the small academic community of northern Europe. Once regions became understood as discursively constructed, it followed that

they could also be deconstructed and re-made and altogether new regions actively created. Such a liberating moment clearly struck a chord. No longer need academics resign themselves to a distanced analysis, because they too could actively become engaged in influencing political action and regional construction. Moreover, this chance to play a participatory role in remaking the post-Cold War world was seized upon.

A number of programs took the Baltic Sea as their geographical base and were presented under labels such as the new Hanse, the Baltic Sea Region, Mare Balticum, the Euro-Baltic Region and the Scanno-Baltic Political Space. Although a considerable amount of idealism has been present in the region-building projects, the aim was clearly to transform regional politics in order to break out of the confines of the traditional geopolitical and realist understandings that characterized the Cold War period.⁶

Post-modern actors open new political spaces and work out new identities based on historical narratives, geographical images, shared cultural values, etc. While for a territorially defined actor national identity is supreme, a community operating in political space may be defined by reference to history and geography (the Baltic Sea region), to cultural/ethnic proximity (cooperation between states and regions populated by people of common descent, e.g. Finno-Ugric), or to common principles and shared values (international human rights movement), but any such list is by definition an open one. Such communities may operate as networks with no clear center and open membership or may tend towards centralization and/or closeness (ethnic and religious communities, criminal groups etc.).⁷

The goal of this article is to describe the existing and emerging regional identities in the Baltic Sea Rim, starting from the Nordic (Scandinavian) identity, looking at the Baltic States, and then considering other identities emerging in the region. Since most of the countries of the Rim are members of the EU, the process of European identity creation is strongly influencing them. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Russia – can they form a common regional identity; what pros and cons are they going to meet? The goal of this paper is to answer those questions.

II. Existing regional identities

1. The Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden Denmark, Finland)

Speaking about a regional identity in the Baltic Sea Rim, the first thing that comes to mind is a centuries long cooperation between the Scandinavian states. The long history of coexistence has created a common

identity, which is nowadays called “nordicity”. A substantial research has been done on this topic, primarily by Scandinavian authors.

As Berndt Henningsen has demonstrated, the formation of the Scandinavian identity can be traced all the way back to the sixteenth century, when the idea of the North was adopted to outline essential features of Sweden and Swedish identity. This understanding flourished further during the late seventeenth century. Olof Rudbeck, a professor of Uppsala University, is singled out as a key myth-builder by virtue of his four-volume work *Atlantica*, which did much to attach the new northern attribute to Sweden. In the words of Henningsen, Rudbeck’s goal ‘was to prove the political and moral superiority and the superior civilization of the North in general and of Sweden in particular’. In order to justify such claims, he devised a new creation story which located Paradise in the North. Rudbeck also applied familiar images from classical literature, for example by identifying the North with Plato’s legendary sunken Atlantis. The claim that Sweden was the original home of all the Goths and that they had emigrated further to the South, the East and the West after having inhabited Swedish soil, added to the story. Sweden was thus depicted in terms of a cradle of humanity.⁸ These Rudbeckian moves were quite successful in the sense that Gothicism figured among the Swedish foundational myths for centuries. The Gothic theory also claimed that the Scandinavians and the Germans shared common origins.

The background for the emergence of such narratives is obvious. Sweden had achieved the status of a European great power during the Thirty Years War and practically dominated the Baltic World. The accrued posture called for the coining of myths providing meaning to the policies pursued. The task was not simply to justify Sweden’s role in the Baltic region, but also to stress values relevant vis-à-vis central Europe. The Rudbeckian version of the Creation Story corresponded to the needs of the situation. In his book, Rudbeck laid the ground for a new foundational myth, and invented new mega-narratives that bolstered the position and meaning of Sweden.⁹

After the battle of Poltava in 1708, Sweden lost its position as a great power. This not only impacted on the political map but also left similar marks in the minds of people. The northern myth, however, remained part of the discourse, receiving yet another emphasis. Northern nature was provided with transcendental features, the duality of eternal light and eternal darkness being employed to underline its divine characteristics. According to Montesquieu’s theory, nature and climate do not only mould the characteristics of people, but also the essence of the political system.¹⁰ The wild northern scenery was thus depicted as the source of Gothic values, that is freedom but also religious innocence and piety. In the minds of contemporary

observers, all these features made the North - with Sweden as its prime representation - superior in relation to the South.

The North underwent a considerable decline in status due to the increasing prominence given to the East during the second half of the nineteenth century. Then a new northern myth was employed constructing as part of the construction of national identities in Scandinavia as well as in Germany and Britain.

Jöran Mjöberg distinguishes between three different phases in this usage of northern myths.

1. Initially, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the myths were mostly nostalgic and romantic and were used to construct Scandinavian or German unity.
2. In the second half of the century, the myths were used to support a more liberal and utopian dimension of national identities.
3. Finally, during the early twentieth century, northern myths were increasingly used for populist, sometimes even racist purposes. The clearest example of the latter was the Nazi use of selected northern themes to support claims of racial superiority. As a result, the northern myths were pushed aside after the Second World War. They fell into disrepute and held their ground only in Scandinavia. Northern motifs thus became exclusively Nordic in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹¹

According to Pertti Joenniemi and Marko Lehti, the early nineteenth-century romantic myth of the North invoked images of a misty land full of mythical heroes. In Scandinavia, the Old Norse of the Viking era grew in reputation through the medium of heroic stories like the Edda Saga. This nostalgia for a past glory assumed numerous expressions in the literature and fine arts of the nineteenth century. Helmeted Viking soldiers, with their swords and spears, and mythic northern gods were seen through a new romantic prism. The roots of Scandinavian identity were no longer linked to the Christian tradition; instead, the old pagan past was elevated. The Gothic past had already been present prior to this new twist, but the barbaric past had then been regarded as something shameful in the context of the classical and Christian traditions.

The new usage did not only aspire to add some Nordic cultural motifs to established representations but was also aimed at laying the ground for new identities. A distinctly political dimension was added to the alleged return of the North's lost golden past. The respective movements seeking to construct a unified Germany and a unified Scandinavia were riding on the same foundational myths. The new Nordic one was equated with the ancient spirit of freedom, fostering courage and preserving national independence, all of which can be seen as representing patriotic values.¹²

Finland constitutes a case of its own as far as narratives on the North are concerned. The North had the function of expressing the true nature of Finland as a nation (the state emerged in an unambiguous form only in 1917). In this regard, a myth of a pioneering people, one feeling at ease with northernness, was constructed. It did not struggle with any outside actor but sought purpose and meaning in its northern location. Till the present, northernness remains associated with idealized images of a wild and untouched nature. Although some details have changed, the late nineteenth-century image of a land of never-ending forests and lakes still provides the country with a certain specificity. According to the constitutive myth, the Finns have - despite a cold climate, persistent crop failure and widespread poverty - succeeded in overcoming their difficulties. They have managed to remain a proud and honest nation in the North. This kind of narrative resonates with an early nationalistic rhetoric that idealized the common people. The harsh environment, it was claimed, hardened the nature of the Finns, fostering both humility and persistence, whilst also giving scope to claim the moral high ground.¹³

The constitutive rhetoric assumed a clearly racial dimension during the inter-war period, when, to take one example, the success of Finnish athletics was interpreted as demonstrating some of the qualities of the Finnish race rather than resulting from training or other factors. These racist interpretations vanished entirely in the post-Second World War years. At the same time, moreover, narratives increasingly escaped official control and took a turn of their own, finding expression for example in pop songs, movies and anecdotes. These people-oriented interpretations turned poverty, hard drinking and taciturnity into national virtues. Finland's economic success - particularly visible in the 1980s and more recently - undermined many previously central elements in the national story and paved the way for new ones. The end of the Cold War and the new linkages to Europe, mainly in the form of the EU-membership, have further fuelled this process.

New elements have been added to the national story, with Nokia and success on global markets providing essential building blocks. The Nokia story represents, in this perspective, a very different move. It too is a success story, but not in relation to the challenges posed by a northern location. The northern landscape has lost its key constitutive posture and been redefined as a base for high technology production aimed at conquering European and other markets.

All these narratives can be seen as identity stories employed in order to define the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of a state or a nation. However, they have varied considerably in terms of their articulation of the past, and it is hard to discern any clear unifying elements. The oldest Rudbeckian narrative, for instance, was based on the Bible, whereas the romantic North emphasized the mythical Norsemen (although the Gothic

myth did link the two stories to some extent). The Nordic narrative has carried at least some echoes of such a distant past, but has basically been anchored in the recent era of social democracy, economic success and peaceful development.¹⁴

Edward James Crockford, editor of the new business journal Northern Enterprises argues that ‘northern Europe is pop’.¹⁵ He is confident that the label of northernness – with its underlying claim of a commonly shared culture and heritage – will carry a commercial publication. Further proof is offered by Yngve Bergquist, who runs a hotel built from ice in Jukkasjärvi in northernmost Sweden. In an interview to Scanorama, Bergquist states that the building of the hotel has changed the character of a previously rather quiet place: ‘Winter used to be a problematic time here. Now it is our main attraction’.

In Stråth’s view, nordicity is not an element that is there in addition to the national identities. Rather, it is built into what it means to be a Dane, Swede, Norwegian, Finn or Icelander. In this regard, argues Stråth, Norden functions ‘as a demarcation from Europe, a democratic, Protestant and egalitarian North against a Catholic, conservative and capitalistic Europe’.¹⁶ This move of singling out Nordic specificity and portraying it as something distinct from Russian, German or more general European ‘otherness’ corresponds to commonly held views. Norden is thus singled out as a rather special group of small, highly developed and peaceful nation-states.

In essence, political Norden has constituted an effort to keep German influence at bay. Its history can be traced at least as far back as the days of the Kalmar Union from 1397 to 1523. In the 1830s, nordicity assumed the form of Scandinavianism, a mainly student and academic-led movement which sought to establish a unified Scandinavian polity. The futility of this aim was demonstrated when Sweden-Norway refused to extend help to Denmark during the Schleswig-Holstein war of 1864, at which point the relevant state-actors largely lost interest in the Nordic option. With their withdrawal, however, various non-statist forces and interpretations gained ground, a development which ultimately provided Norden with features of a rather horizontal ‘bottom-up’ type of entity. A rich network of Nordic Associations, for instance, has furnished nordicity with features of a popular movement.

Amongst the milestones of nordicity, one can also cite the efforts to form a neutral group at the beginning of the 1930s and, more recently, the founding of the interparliamentary Nordic Council by Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1952. Finland and Iceland joined this body some years later. The establishment of this institutional framework paved the way for an active period of Nordic co-operation which gave rise to a common labour market (1954), common social security provision (1955) and a passport union (1957)

allowing Nordic citizens to travel freely within the Nordic area. Plans to develop integration through the establishment of an economic area were discussed throughout the 1960s, but these efforts failed. By way of compensation, a Nordic Council of Ministers was established in 1972.

With the foundation of the Council of Ministers, the state-to-state nature of Nordic co-operation became more apparent. In essence, this co-operation is comprehended as a quite intense but informal pattern of social and cultural interaction as well as a we-feeling among Nordic citizens. The latter aspects amount to a transnational 'we', a joint identity and a kind of second order nationalism that extends beyond the usual confines of the respective nation-states. This feeling of forming a close-knit community is not dependent on the formal structures of Nordic co-operation, but rather constitutes something that envelops these structures. Although less visible, it is nonetheless an important, if not the most important, part of nordicity. Civil servants, for instance, can pick up the phone and talk to their counterparts in other Nordic countries almost as easily as they communicate with their own co-nationals. In this respect, the Nordic configuration clearly stands out as a deviation from the ordinary, sovereignty-gearred forms of political space.

2. The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

As soon as the Baltic States managed to restore their independence it was assumed that next political step these countries would take would be aimed at developing cooperation and, possibly, at establishing a new union. The reason behind such expectations is that the Baltic States are generally considered to have a common identity. However, the external image of "Baltic unity" led to an ambivalent reaction within the three countries themselves. Latvia sought to maintain the image and to affirm the ability of the Baltic nations to work in national unions, but Estonia and Lithuania turned toward the intensification of bilateral relations with their immediate neighbours – Finland and Poland respectively. Estonia is considered to be "Nordic", and Lithuania – "Central European".

In order to make any judgements about the state of development of Baltic identity in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania it is necessary to focus on historical experience of Baltic interaction.

Since the 13th century up till the 16th century different Baltic territories were under the German rule. The long period of the German presence in the region was interrupted by the aggression of Swedish, Danish, Polish and Russian troops. From the end of the 18th century the Balts were part of the Russian Empire. Till the beginning of 20th century the only one of the Baltic states - Lithuania experienced its independent status,

by the year 1569 uniting with Poland and establishing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

When the Baltic States became independent states as an outcome of the World War I¹⁷, they initiated the first attempts to create close inter-Baltic links. In the end of the World War I it was relatively easy to identify their common interests: they were based on security and defence concerns. In the beginning of the 1920's, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania started to elaborate on the establishment of the Baltic Union. Their starting point was a geopolitical location but, unfortunately, the national interests prevailed and the Baltic diplomats were not able to reach any agreements in this respect. After several years of searching for the best solutions, Estonia and Latvia signed an agreement on 1 November 1923, which laid the background for further cooperation in political and security affairs. On September 12, 1934 in Geneva, the agreement "On Understanding and Cooperation" was signed by all three Baltic countries. However, the Baltic Entente was never tested.

The common historical identity of the Baltic States developed only after 1940. The Soviet occupation in 1940 and 1944 demonstrated that the three countries were locked in the same geopolitical space, which belonged to the USSR. After the occupation they were functioning within the same economic, political and ideological structure, which helped to develop a sense of the common Baltic fate. According to one of the leaders of the Latvian Popular Front, "It may seem peculiar, but Baltic unity under conditions of occupation was much closer and had much better results than was the case later. It is not difficult to notice that only the one-time dream of the Baltic market has come to pass to a greater or lesser extent, but this is true with respect only to the internal market, not the external market."¹⁸ The more threatened were the Baltic republics in their efforts for sovereignty while they were still in the USSR, the more unified were their activities and the more powerful was their understanding of self-identity.

The initial stage of cooperation between the Baltics was one of the brightest and most active, since the Baltic States were aware of sharing a common historical experience and common prospects for the future i.e. either all three would reclaim independence or they would be redrawn into a "new Union". A sense of a shared past, present and future was the factor that forced Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to search for common markers in the strategy for future action.

The most important result of Baltic cooperation was a draft of a Baltic free trade agreement (BFTA) which was signed in September 1994. The emergence of this agreement provoked visions of a Baltic common market creating opportunities for Western investors, stimulating local manufacturers, forming a potential market of 8 million consumers and creating preconditions for rapid and successful movement towards the

European Union. Thus, the BFTA was clearly linked with the Baltic integration into Western structures. It should be noted that in comparison with some other FTA, the Baltic States included agricultural goods in the agreement. Yet the experience over the past two years indicates that the signing of the free trade agreement has not been a sufficient basis for the Baltics as an effective economic region, since it has not been utilised to the full extent.

The reason for situation when countries would like to cooperate but failed could be found in following explanations. On the one hand, they were evidence of a wish to jointly resolve newly created transitional problems and thereby lessen possible Soviet intervention and level of dependence on the USSR. On the other hand, their content, the haste in which they were signed and the lack of implementation mechanisms and control over implementation led to a situation where successful initiatives remained on paper and were not carried out.

One of the more common ways of comparing the co-operation among the Baltic States is to compare them to an existing model of co-operation among other countries. One of the most commonly used comparisons is with the Nordic countries.¹⁹ However, it is not possible to compare an emerging union of countries with a model that is centuries old. At the same time, we can see a great deal of similarity between the two co-operation models. If we look at the issue more deeply, considering more than linguistic and historical roots for co-operation, we can use the arguments of the newly emerged principle of regionalism, i.e., we can look at a wide variety of motivations for co-operation.

Danish researchers have expressed this thought in the following way: there have been three main causes of Nordic cooperation since World War II:

1) The co-operation involved similar countries with similar sets of values and a common view on the development of economic and political systems. The idea of a so-called “welfare state” in the Nordic countries served as a common foundation for the harmonization of interests.

2) A classical sociological argument in justifying social interaction is the relationship between “us” and “them”. In the case of the Nordic countries, “they” were American capitalism and Soviet bolshevism, while “we” were those who understood the Nordic identity.

3) For all of the Nordic countries, Nordic co-operation meant a way to overcome isolationism and, even more, a way to avoid entrapment in bipolarity.²⁰

When it comes to the first of these reasons, we must say that the three Baltic States can be compared both quantitatively (they are small countries with limited resources; this serves to promote the existence of the

principle of equality in the mutual relationship) and qualitatively (all three have democratic countries and societies that are based on the fundamental values of traditional Western democracies). Unlike the Nordic countries, the Baltic States also have another powerful argument that favours co-operation: they all have identical foreign and security policy goals, i.e., full integration into the European Union and NATO.

The second reason for integration can also be fully applied to the Baltic States. The ideas that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania hold with respect to “them” are identical. “They” are the processes to the East of the Baltic States – processes that are unclear, unpredictable and aggressive in form, influencing all three countries similarly. The sense of “we” is being established not in the context of a narrow Baltic understanding, but rather in terms of belonging to the Western European identity in terms of culture, history, politics and economics.

The third interpretation can also be applied to the Baltic States. The Nordic countries wanted to break out of the trap of bipolarity, and the Baltic States wished to break free from the Soviet Union. This could be done if the three countries worked together and presented a common front instead of standing alone. The co-operation model that was created by the Baltic States was seen by their Nordic neighbours as an alternative to the existing major-power hegemony, and the Baltic States have been seen as an experimental space in which the rules of the game of integration can be learned.²¹

For many citizens in the Baltic states, the word "Baltic" has negative connotations, reminding them of the 1939 Molotov-Ribentrop pact that sealed their destinies for the next 50 years. What unites the Baltic countries today, apart from their common history and the trauma of the Soviet occupation, is their ambition to become members of the European Union (EU) and NATO. The governments of the three countries aim to anchor their national identities and reestablish their sovereignty within a bloc of countries, which seems to be the best option for guaranteeing peace, security and their citizens' welfare and for providing a framework that will guide their economic and political transformation. However, at the present moment, beyond this shared ambition and a long list of shared problems, including relations with Russia and the treatment of Russian minorities, the three Baltic states have little in common, let alone a common Baltic identity. Instead, competition and a lack of solidarity seem to dominate the relationships between the three countries.²²

III. Searching for a new identity

1. The European identity

The European identity, like globalisation, interdependence or transboundary, belongs to the catalogue of new notions, frequently characterised by, firstly, unclear content connotations, secondly, a scope not easy to define and, thirdly, big contextual dynamics. The European identity notion generates a lot of controversies, emotions in the field of culture science, psychology, as well as among the scholars examining the conditions and modifications and collapse of civilisations. There often appear the questions concerning the meaning of the discussion on European identity. The main reasons explaining this situation are: Europe, as A. Podraza writes, has never been conceived univocally in its history, what seems to be implied by the European identity conception, European boundaries - which are the identifications of not only its sameness but also of historic, cultural, political and institutional diversity - are open question²³.

The European identity theme, unlike globalisation, appeared as the expression of opposition towards unification tendencies observed in the European integration process and cultural, economic and technical standardisation of local communities, nations and states regarded as those belonging to the cultural and civilisation circle of European family. The globalisation processes, which were activated by technological revolution and dramatised by the end of Cold war embraced mainly trade, culture and security. Simultaneously, there is a symptomatic fact that globalisation is unequally present in the mentioned three domains of international relations. The most distinctive and complete way in which it manifests itself is trade and financial transactions, and to a smaller extent – in the sphere of culture and international security. The cultural bonds are particularly hard to be submitted to some "global synthesis" or partiality.

Nevertheless, since the end of Cold war European identity has been undergoing its renaissance. Lately this category has been also "noticed" by politicians. One of the most spectacular examples is M. Thatcher' speech (made in Brugia in September 1988) in which she talked about European identity built on the strong national base. "Europe will be stronger - she underlined - just because France will remain France, Spain - Spain, England - England, every state will hold its customs, tradition, identity. The attempt to push them into any European homogeneity would be craziness"²⁴. National identity means centuries of traditions, of specific cultural, experience and emotional feeling bonds, which all together connect an individual with a country, family, farther and closer neighbours. Traversing P. L. Berger statement: "the world of fate is replaced by the

world of choice". This Europe of destination is a Europe endowed with European consciousness "defined by Christianity and by its being different from Islam"²⁵, developed between IV and VIII century, as well as with primary or national identity, which has been shaped for over 300 years. A Europe of choice is the continent whose members perceive European identity as a value, which will allow them to survive and develop.²⁶

As most of the Baltic Sea States are the members of the EU, the European identity is one of the regional identities they are going to embrace. Representatives of seven Baltic Sea region states – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden – met in Riga in May 2001 for XXXIII North European Talks of European Movements of the Baltic Sea region under the title “European Integration as Culture Task in the Baltic Sea Region”. They agreed on the following:

1. The cornerstone of the European unification is European identity that manifests itself in identity of community of responsibility, justice and solidarity, and this political and economic unity is rooted into identity of Western culture.
2. European community, however, is not homogenous, but rather it is unified in variety – it is community of communities. The Baltic Sea region with its common cultural identity is seen as one in the scope of such communities, which together shape Europe. This region is not only built on common economic and political interests, but also, and first of all, is our common geographical and culture homeland.
3. Protection of European cultural diversity is to be considered as extremely important target. This means that Europe has to take responsibility of regional, national and European cultural identity. Common (co-operative) European Union programs supporting culture must be launched and implemented in order to achieve this goal.
4. Facilitating of culture development is necessary also within the institutional framework of the Baltic Sea region. Regional identity must be encouraged particularly in education and dialog in civil society. We expect incentive from the states of the region towards resuscitation of “Ars Baltica”.
5. The identity of the Baltic Sea region facilitates common European project, especially what concerns the European Union enlargement, as it forms mental support from broad society in the member countries to the fast admittance of new countries, especially three Baltic States. This will be return of Europe in the Baltics. In the candidate countries on its turn support to the Baltic Sea region identity might facilitate public support to the European Union. This shapes common task of European Movements of the Baltic Sea region, which might be implemented via cooperation within projects.
6. The impact of the voice of the Baltic Sea region must be strengthened in the European Union institutions.

7. Simultaneously it is necessary to elaborate and adopt common general political Declaration of European Union member countries and candidate countries concerning future of European Union that includes desirable (acceptable) and clearly defined competence sharing between national governments and common European Union institutions.²⁷

2. Redefining the North

As a matter of fact, North did not mean exclusively the Scandinavian countries till the 19th century. The North reaches far back in defining otherness already in the ancient Greece and Rome, and centuries after that. Northernness was created to complement the South and had the function of delineating true cultural and economic backwaters. It ordered political space in constituting the South's Other, and stood out as an ambiguous and hostile sphere inhabited by uncivilised and rough barbarians. The North was comprehended as the land of the dark and unholy forces. Over time, the peripherality of the North turned milder and more positive images surfaced. Northernness became usable as a resource in the identity-building processes of the northern realms and nations located in the area.

Since the mid-17th century North was increasingly depicted as a political marker. The prime actors of the game consisted of the then European major powers: Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, Poland and Russia. The northern qualities were used to bolster the position of kings as well as tsars in European politics. Sweden's Karl XII carried the name of "a northern hero", Russia's Catrine the Second was seen as "Semiramis des Nordens", Nicolai I was interpreted as standing for "the Northern Star" and a Polish legion fighting the Napoleonic forces was known as the "Northern koloss".²⁸ When Alexander I appeared to help Europe to subdue Napoleon, he was seen as arriving from the North and not from the East.²⁹

This image was blurred and downgraded during the Enlightenment, which bolstered and extended the position of easternness at the expense of the North. As Larry Wolff has demonstrated, Eastern Europe was invented during the late eighteenth century, when a variety of travelers and academics of the Enlightenment found and defined a space between the Occident (West) and the Orient - a space carrying characteristics of both Europe and Asia. The co-ordinates of this eastern Europe consisted of St. Petersburg in the North and Crimea, the Balkans and Azov in the South. It covered Russia, Poland, Hungary and the Balkans, although it was understood as a cultural zone rather than a political sphere. For westerners, Eastern Europe represented a backward society whose existence allowed them to prove discursively their own superiority whilst locating an

‘other’ to be patronized. Since easternness was loaded with rather negative connotations, it could not serve as a basis for positive identification for those who fell into this newly defined sphere.³⁰

The transition from the dominance of the North to the broadening of the East spanned many decades. Given the choice between belonging to the North or the East, a considerable number of people still saw themselves as northern European at the start of the nineteenth century. The Crimean War strengthened perceptions of Russia as an eastern rather than a northern actor, although the process remained incomplete at least until 1917, when Soviet Russia was excluded – and excluded itself - from the rest of Europe.³¹ Although the Second World War did blur the picture to some extent, the Cold War re-confirmed the easternness of the Soviet Union. The imagining of a separate eastern Europe and the drawing of lines between Slavic and non-Slavic lands contributed to a relocation of the North.³²

Nevertheless, in Russia the northern identity remained strong. The defeat of the Napoleonic Grand Army in 1812 gave rise to the metaphor of winter as a particularly Russian season. A ‘poetry of winter’ subsequently flourished in Russian literature. Around this time, St. Petersburg was often referred to as the Northern Palmyra. This Russian North was clearly identified with winter, darkness and a cold climate. Even during the Soviet period, some remnants of this romantic image of the North - and particularly the northernmost North - survived. Under Stalin, for instance, the myth of a heroic Soviet Union challenging the extreme conditions of the North was constructed.

Perti Joenniemi and Marko Lehti made a great effort in order to make the relation between “nothernness” and “nordicity” clear. They describe it as follows.

The two concepts nordicity and northernness are clearly related (Norden means literally ‘the North’) and have a certain symbolic and historical affinity. Both originated from the North-South division of the world that dominated European spatial imagination from Antiquity up until the gradual emergence of a new East-West division during the early modern period...In our view, nordicity and northernness should be treated as historically constituted narratives... Both narratives endeavour, in their own way, to define an identity...Northernness itself seems to harbor some plurality. There are certainly different views present as to its meaning and location, and in this sense northernness forms a forum and platform for different interpretations that clash and re-construct each other. The vigour that can to some extent be traced in the recent discourse on northernness may be explained by the fact that each of the participating states and nations can employ and project their own images. They may claim, in the context of the northern marker, that there is certain continuity... All essential actors may upgrade and inject their own

story pertaining to some age-old aspects of Scandinavia, Finland, or Russia, and the same goes for the actors around the Baltic rim, including Britain...We are clearly in the midst an era of naming, as new myths and narratives are invented for constructing a new Europe. ‘It is possible to draw a circle on a map and define this circle as a new and await the events’ says Sverre Jervell, one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. Northernness seems to be part of exploiting the new openness in furnishing time and space with meaning.³³

This indeed appears to be an opportunity of redefining the Northern identity as one of the regional identities in the Baltic Sea Rim.

3. The Baltic Sea identity

Conceptualizing the Baltic Sea area as a construct of identification implied that the Baltic Sea area did not, in practice, exist at all for quite some time. It was not in focus of regional identification during the Cold War era as the division of that world into two opposite camps, East and West, seemed so unquestionable and eternal. The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, tore down the dividing-line. It enabled images of a new kind with lines exceeding and challenging the old ones. No doubt, the East-West division remained in the form of a boundary between different standard of livings. It may be argued, however, that even if this boundary had its role allowing people to construct their regional identities, it is not as absolute or sovereign as the old political and ideological dividing line.

The emergence of the Baltic Sea rhetoric is explained by referring to three issues. Firstly, the Baltic Sea area was something new. Once the feeling was there of living in the midst of a transition period, the new was better than old. Secondly, the form of the Baltic Sea region corresponded with the ideal picture of a European region with a combination of state and non-state actors. With change underway, it was felt important to take part in the regionalisation of Europe and to have a region of one’s own. In the working of the CBSS, the Baltic Sea area constitutes primarily as a region of the coastal states. Simultaneously, other organizations have constructed networks between state and non-state actors, i.e. the BSSSR. Other Baltic organizations have spurred networks only among the non-state actors, i.e. the UBC among the Baltic cities.³⁴ The third reason is to be found among the business and political circles and their aim to renew Europe’s economic architecture—to create a counter-force to the European economic center in the Northern Europe.

The new Baltic Sea identity is built around the “New Hansa” theme. Originally a Hansa was a company of

merchants trading with foreign lands. After the German push eastward and the settlement of German towns in the Slavic lands of the Baltic, the merchant guilds and town associations led to leagues. Most notable was the company of German merchants with headquarters at Visby; pushing east, they founded a branch at Novgorod. In London, where German merchants had traded since the 11th cent., the privileges granted to Cologne merchants were extended to other Germans, and a Hansa of German merchants was formed. A major impetus to the league's development was the lack of a powerful German national government to provide security for trade. In order to obtain mutual security, exclusive trading rights, and, wherever possible, trade monopoly, the towns drew closer together. In 1241 Lübeck and Hamburg concluded a treaty of mutual protection. Other cities joined this association, and a strong league grew up led by Lübeck. Ports and inland towns from Holland to Poland entered the league, but the north German cities remained the principal members. The league vigorously extended its operations, founding principal foreign branches at Bruges and Bergen. The Hansa towns reached their summit in their victories over Waldemar IV of Denmark, gaining in the Treaty of Stralsund (1370) a virtual trade monopoly in Scandinavia. Their Baltic hegemony continued through numerous wars until their defeat by the Dutch in 1441. Despite its success, the league suffered from lack of organization. Although assemblies of the league met irregularly at Lübeck, many towns did not send representatives, and decisions were subject to review by the individual towns. The number of members fluctuated, probably from less than 100 to over 160. By the 16th century internal dissension, curtailment of freedom by the German princes, growth of centralized foreign states and consequent loss of Hanseatic privileges, advances of Dutch and English shipping, and various changes in trade all operated against the league. The last diet was held in 1669, but the league was never formally dissolved. Lübeck, Hamburg, and Bremen are still known as Hanseatic cities.

Since all the countries of the Baltic Sea Rim were represented in Hansa by their cities, that experience is considered a great example of international cooperation on subregional level. This is the main idea nowadays that is supposed to create a new Baltic Sea regional identity on the subregional level.

4. Is Russia an outsider?

As Samuel Huntington maintains in "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order", "the great historical line...existed for centuries separating Western Christian people from Muslim and orthodox people. This line dates back to the division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century and to the creation of

the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. It has been in roughly its current place for at least five hundred years. Beginning in the north, it runs along what are now borders between Finland and Russia and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Russia...³⁵

This brings us to an important problem. Can Russian become a member of the Baltic Sea cooperation network?

In this context it is interesting to look at Russian self narratives since the mid-1980s. Of particular interest is the extent to which these discourses on Russian identity have in fact been framed by and in response to the Western civilizational discourses. On one side has been the argument of Westernisers keen to accept a subordinate position of Russia as a 'willing apprentice' of the West. In this Westernising discourse the West is presented as the future and as that which Russia should aspire to and try to emulate. Given the huge economic problems facing the Soviet Union/Russia at the turn of the 1990s it is understandable that such a discourse became attractive.

However, since the mid-1990s the Westernising discourse of Russia as a student of the West has faced increasing challenge in Russia, which has partly resulted from perceptions that the West was not living up to its promises of large-scale economic aid to Russia, and from feelings that, despite the rhetoric, the West really had no intention of treating Russia as an equal partner. In this second case questions of NATO enlargement, the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic countries and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia have been particularly important.³⁶ The resulting nationalist backlash, therefore, has consequently come to see the West and the Westernising course as the major source of Russia's problems. In this vein, the Western culture is widely seen as polluting and undermining Russia's unique cultural heritage.

Regional cooperation in the European north threatens to be undermined by a general disappointment in the West, and particularly in the Nordic countries, at the poor level of material results cooperation has achieved so far. Since the euphoria of the early 1990s it has become clear that many in the Nordic countries have become increasingly skeptical as to whether Russia is in fact reformable to Western norms at all.

Furthermore, also problematic is the fact that the newly independent Baltic States have set about constructing their identities in direct opposition to Russia. As Aalto notes, the Huntington thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" has been widely accepted and politicians and academics in the Baltic States have drawn on the rhetoric of primordial identities as a way to dissociate the Balts from the Eastern Slavs and to construct a rather impermeable border between the two.³⁷

Christopher S. Browning offers some suggestions on this point.

For many in the West, it would probably be more traumatic if Russia really were to be fully integrated with Western Europe. In such an event the notion of 'Western' Europe itself would lose meaning. If Russia does represent an existential threat to the West, this would be it, because through genuine integration the West would be deprived of its 'enemy'... Consequently, rather than seeing region-building as part of a civilizational project which reinscribes Europe as an imperial marker, we need to open the concept to give everyone a chance to play a role in constituting Europe. However, this will require reworking the stories we tell, so they are not factored into civilizational understandings of Europe so easily. Of course, rearticulating Europe will also open the way to a rearticulation of Russia that would emphasize the role of the regions. This, though, is not something that can be forced onto Russia. All that can be done is to establish the north as an opportunity for Russia to have a constitutive voice in Europe.³⁸

Finally, it is important to realize that Russian attitudes to regional cooperation need to be seen in the context of the development of region-Federation relations within Russia. In short, there is a tendency of the border regions of Russia (the Karelian Republic, the Murmansk oblast and St Petersburg in north-west Russia) to take a positive view towards Western region building projects. The logic here is overwhelmingly economic, with Western investments seen as a prerequisite for survival in a context in which the Russian center is increasingly incapable of meeting the needs of Russia's peripheries.³⁹ Consequently, however, these regions are increasingly acting as foreign policy subjects in their own right, thereby undermining Moscow's monopoly on Russia's foreign relations.

Indeed, through transboundary regional cooperation it is likely that Russia's regions will come to share interests with Western regions. Familiarization with those on the other side of the border has the potential to evolve into regional identities of commonness and ideas of a shared future.

Some Kaliningrad Oblast officials are already concerned about the changes in identity. Young people are mostly West-oriented, most of them have traveled a lot to the West and surrounding countries but have never been to Russia. Valery Ustyugov, then speaker of the Kaliningrad Oblast legislature, stated that they are hardly Russian.⁴⁰ This opinion is strengthened by the separation from the Russian mainland by 3 borders, which creates a psychological distance to Russia; and 'a trip to Russia' sounds a long trip to the non-citizenship country.⁴¹

In St. Petersburg, though, the local mythology is extremely closely linked to the story of Russia's greatness, to the country's glorious past. The city does not want to become a capital once again, but it takes its pride in having been the capital of the imperial Russia. The renaming of the city has also resulted in Peter the Great

becoming a very important symbolic figure in local narratives. It was, after all, Peter who hacked through the 'window on Europe' by taking the Baltic lands over from Sweden and establishing Russia as a great power on the Baltic Sea. In a way, St. Petersburg occupies a very central position in Russian discourse about history and politics.⁴²

One possible way to soften the historical narrative of St. Petersburg is to go beyond the self-evident truth of the above official quotation that 'St. Petersburg was founded by Peter I in 1703', and that before that the area was 'neglected and destitute'. A discussion about 'Petersburg before Petersburg' is by now well under way. The radical proponents of the pre-Peter Petersburg want to make the city several centuries older – as possible starting points, they offer the building of the Swedish Nyenskans fortress with the city of Nyen (1611), the establishment, also by the Swedes, of the Landskrona fortress (1300), or the emergence of Staraya Ladoga (eighth century), now considered to be the first Russian capital. It is persistently emphasised that human settlements, including urban ones, existed on the banks of the Neva regardless of these lands' belonging to any state, and pointed out that the extension of the city's chronological limits strengthens its natural connection with Europe, with its Baltic neighbours. This idea very nicely fits into the new historical narrative of the Baltic Sea region, where the Hanseatic period and the significance of the Baltic Sea as the major trade route between the East and the West play a prominent role, with the unifying features being stressed as a counterbalance to the history of wars for the domination over the coast. If the Russians today, the argument could continue, perceive the Swedes not as their former enemies, but as partners in a joint Baltic project (which is very much the case), if the new identity of St. Petersburg as a Baltic city, which shares a common destiny with Stockholm, Turku, Riga etc., is accepted, then the Swedish, as well as the Finno-Ugric, past of the Neva delta becomes part of our common past. In this new history both the Stolbovo Peace of 1617 and the Nystad Treaty of 1721 should be treated with no more sensitivity than, for example, Moscow's suppression of Novgorod in 1478. St. Petersburg and Stockholm have previously been centres of two hostile political units, but today they – like Moscow and Novgorod – are part of the same political space (although not of the same state territory).

One more potentially highly valuable historical narrative that is right now being reinterpreted in post-territorial terms is the Finnish-Soviet Winter War of 1939–40. The reinterpretation started with a symbolic act of President Putin when he laid flowers on General Mannerheim's grave during his visit to Finland in September 2001.

To sum up, one may say that history is obviously treated as one of the main resources that St. Petersburg

can use for its development, but the power of the textbook narrative is too strong to be overcome without a conscious effort. The Baltic Sea region today is one of the most peaceful in Europe, but our historical legacy is quite traumatic if told in national terms. The only way forward is by moving to post-national history, which would allow us to emphasize unity and diversity, not war and dominance⁴³.

IV. Conclusion: the elements and role of regional identity

As seen from the experience of region-building in the Baltic Sea Rim, the elements of a common identity can be divided into 3 groups: past strengths, present stakes, and hopes or fears of the future.

1. Past strengths. As neighbors, countries or their regions share a common past. Except for the periods, when one or another country closed itself to the outside world, there has always been some kind of interaction. Naturally, there have been times of peace and times of war. Remembering times of war is important in order to prevent future conflicts, but is not a constructive element for promoting cooperation and building a common identity. Concentrating on past cooperation and common successes instead is more fruitful as it calls for future cooperation in order to reach even more. A good example of using the notion of past strengths is a constant reference to Hanseatic League in the Baltic Sea subregional cooperation. There has been more than one war in the Baltic Sea region, including WWI and WWII, but there has also been an experience of prosperity through international cooperation, and this experience is cleverly used.

2. Present stakes. People get united with present dangers, e.g., environmental problems, security concerns, economic underdevelopment etc. In this case what is needed is a clear picture of the situation and a respectively clear understanding, that only together the task can be tackled.

3. Hopes or fears for the future. In the case of the European Union, a part of creating a regional identity was played by external pressures: the fear of war; the need for peace and reconciliation between the people; the fear of decline; the fear of the USSR; the fear of economic competition; the American pressures or, conversely, the need to feel a European specificity in relation to the Atlantic ally.

To make the cooperation in the region most effective it is important to involve as many participants as possible into this process. By sharing information and learning about each other the member regions increase number of actors who are willing and able to cooperate. In other words, the final goal of this process is

creating a regional identity, that means uniting all people living on the shores of the Baltic Sea with a common idea, be it common past, cultural similarity, sharing the same scarce resources or a concept of a common bright future. In the case of cross - border societies' integration, the main idea of and motto of different forms of collaboration was preparedness for cooperation in order to maximise the benefits of all the participants. It must be also mention that the fact of cross - border territories are usually peripheries for states, which have not only similar geographical conditions, natural resources, but also almost identical history and a huge cultural heritage.

In the conclusion I would like to underline the importance of a common regional identity for cooperation, mutual trust and understanding. Why should commonality facilitate cooperation and cohesion among people and cultural differences promote cleavages and conflicts? According to Huntington,

1. The increased extent to which people throughout the world differentiate themselves along cultural lines means that conflicts between cultural groups are increasingly important. Conflicts between groups from different civilizations become central to global politics.

2. The increased salience of cultural identity is in large part the result of social-economic modernization, where dislocation and alienation create the need for more meaningful identities, and at the societal level, where the enhanced capabilities and power of non-Western societies stimulate the revitalization of indigenous identities and cultures.

3. Identity at any level can only be defined in relation to an "other". The differences in intra- and extracivilizational behavior stem from:

- feelings of superiority (and occasionally inferiority) toward people who are perceived as being very different;
- fear of and lack of trust in such people;
- difficulty in communication with them as a result of differences in language and what is considered civil behavior;
- lack of familiarity with the assumptions, motivations, social relationships, and social practices of other people.

4. The sources of conflict between states and groups from different civilizations are, in large measure, those which have always generated conflict between groups: control of people, territory, wealth, and resources, and relative power, that is the ability to impose one's own values, culture, and institutions on another group as compared to that group's ability to do that to you. Conflict between cultural groups,

however, may also involve cultural issues. Cultural questions involve a yes or no, zero-sum choice.

5. For self-definition and motivation people need enemies. They naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them. The resolution of one conflict and the disappearance of one enemy generate personal, social and political forces that give rise to new ones. The end of the Cold War has not ended conflict but has rather given rise to new identities rooted in culture and to new patterns of conflict among groups from different cultures. Simultaneously, common culture also encourages cooperation among states and groups which share that culture.

Therefore it is important to create one or several common identities for the Baltic Sea States and their subregions. Naturally, this process is going to take time and other resources. Every step on this road should be taken with a great care.

In spite of cultural, economical and political differences it is not impossible to create a common regional identity based on common history, common fears and hopes.

Endnote

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主指導教員（小山洋司教授） 副指導教員（高津斌彰教授・佐野 誠教授）