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Karelia as a Finnish-Russian Issue: Re-negotiating the Relationship between National Identity, Territory and Sovereignty

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KARELIA AS A FINNISH-RUSSIAN ISSUE: RE-NEGOTIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL IDENTITY, TERRITORY AND SOVEREIGNTY

INTRODUCTION

As stereotypes would have it Finland is a stable, peaceful Nordic country, located in the calm environment of northern Europe. It is developed, well regarded, has stable borders and is particularly known for its friendly relations with its neighbours and with having developed a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with Russia in particular.

It has, however, not always been so. Finnish-Russian/Soviet relations have historically often been tense, wars have been fought, borders contested and sovereignty threatened and defended. At times, as during the Second World War, Finland's very existence has been in question. In particular, disputes have been evident over the contested territory of Karelia, a region that transcends the border between Finland and Russia. While Russia has historically constructed a close link between territory and security and sought control of Karelia[1] by pursuing policies based on a mixture of imperial and geostrategic reasoning[2] – with possession of Karelia perceived as providing a greater depth of territorial defence for the imperial city of St Petersburg – for Finland Karelia has been less linked to physical security and border-related safety. Instead, it has assumed a deeply ontological dimension as a mythical territory and soul of the nation. In this respect, being depicted as the cradle of the nation, Karelia has at times become seen as central to any understanding of Finnishness and occupies a central place in processes of national awakening in the nineteenth century. During the inter-war period

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1 Hirsch, Francine (2005), *Empire of Nations: Ethnic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Kangaspuro, Markku (2000), *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehallinnosta. Nationalismi ja suomalaiset punaiset Neuvostoliiton vallankäytössä 1920–1939* [Soviet-Karelia's Fight for Independence. Nationalism and the Red Finns in the Soviet Use of Power 1920–1939], Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden Seura; Liikanen, Ilkka (1999), 'The Political Construction of Identity: Reframing Mental Borders in Russian Karelia', in Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen, and Jukka Oksa (eds.), *Curtains of Iron and Gold. Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 358.

2 Cf. Laine, Antti (2002), 'Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia: Continuity and Change in 20th Century Russia', in Antti Laine and Mikko Ylikangas (eds.), *Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia. People and Power*, Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, p. 11.

Karelianism reached fever pitch in Finland and calls to annex the territory were met with military incursions, which during the Continuation War (1941–1944) resulted in a full-scale invasion and programme of assimilation of the region into Finnish territory. As a result of the post-War settlement the major part of Karelia[3] was ceded to Russia, 420,000 Karelian refugees moved to Finland and all the ingredients for future conflict seemed to be in place (see Fig.1).

Instead, since the end of the Second World War the role of Karelia as a source of tension in Finnish-Russian/Soviet relations has over time been meliorated, and, more generally, the anxiety generated by the loss of Karelia has been salved through the formulation of different self-narratives. Indeed, given the ontological significance of Karelia to Finnish national identity the case appears to be a rather unlikely and successful instance of conflict resolution, especially if compared to other contested territories impregnated with ontological significance such as Abkhazia, the Falklands, Kosovo, the Kurile Islands/Northern Territories, Jerusalem or South Ossetia. Here we argue that this development was the result of a combined process of renegotiating the nature of Russia/Soviet Union from that of an implacable enemy to an international great power and partner, while simultaneously renegotiating the position of Karelia in Finnish identity narratives. Combined, these provided new grounds upon which the Finnish sense of ontological security and national self-esteem could be reinstituted, even during a process of giving up claims on a territory widely considered to be a constitutive and fundamental part of the national self.

In making the argument we first establish the ontological importance and status of Karelia in Finnish national identity discourses in the nineteenth century. This then provides the basis for understanding how and why Karelia became a point of heightened securitization and conflict in nationalist narratives following Finland's declaration of independence in 1917 through to the end of the Second World War. The paper then turns to the process of conflict resolution and draws a distinction between the Cold War and the post-Cold War period where it is argued that significantly different strategies of desecuritization have been evident. Before engaging in the analysis, however, a theoretical discussion of ontological security and conflict resolution is required.

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3   The area, consisting mainly of the Karelian Isthmus and the Ladoga Karelia, comprises more than
     a tenth of Finland's total area. As such, 'Karelia' tends to have divisive connotations. It refers in
     Russia to the Republic of Karelia whereas it usually stands in the Finnish discussion for the ceded
     areas. Notably, Karelia has never existed as a distinct and unified entity and has often appeared as
     mythical in nature and figures as an 'imagined community' par excellence (Harle 2000; Harle and
     Moisio 2000; Paasi 1995). As noted by Pirjo Jukarainen (2009), the Karelian borderlands are located
     on both sides of the Finnish-Russian border, and fused with numerous meanings as the boundaries
     have been frequently shifting mainly due to wars.

Figure 1. Karelia[4]

ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY, DESECURITIZATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As a concept, and at its most fundamental level, ontological security concerns the ability of actors to 'go on' with their lives without succumbing to paralyzing anxieties and insecurities about the nature of existence. Ontologically secure actors, it is argued, are those capable of upholding consistent self-biographies and understandings of self-identity[5]. To the extent to which this is possible, actors are liable to feel secure about the nature of their environment and their role and place within it. A focus on ontological security therefore ties the logic of security fundamentally to the production and reproduction of identities, rather than the traditional emphasis on the avoidance of, or defence against, threats of physical violence. As such, a condition of ontological security need not imply that the environment of the ontological secure actor is one of peace or lacking tension. What counts is rather the stability of expectations surrounding particular relationships. As noted by Mitzen[6], while on the one hand security dilemmas may indicate the existence of a precarious threat environment where war is understood as a constant possibility, at the ontological level security dilemmas can actually reinforce the sense of being and identity of the actors involved. A similar point is evident in post-structuralist and psychological arguments that the constitution of enemies often appears central to how states/groups create a sense of being and subjectivity in international relations[7]. Only by knowing who we are not does it become possible to know who we are.

In this respect, ontological security is the product of stable relationships and the expectation that actors will be treated by others in predictable ways – whether as friends or enemies. In contrast, the breaking down and transformation of stable relationships can in turn become a source of existential anxiety and fear[8]. This is precisely one reason why processes of conflict resolution can be so difficult, since while peace may enhance the overall sense of physical security of the parties to a

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5   Giddens, Anthony (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

6   Mitzen, Jennifer (2006), 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 341–70.

7   Campbell, David (1992), *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Mouffe, Chantal (1994), 'For a politics of nomadic identity', in George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis and Tim Putnam (eds.), *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, London: Routledge, pp. 105–13; Mouffe, Chantal (2000), *The Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso; Dijker, Anton, Koomen, Willem, Heuvel, Henriette van den, and Frijda, Nico H. (1996), 'Perceived antecedents of emotional reactions in inter-ethnic relations', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 313–29.

8   Roe, Paul (2008), 'The 'value' of positive security', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 34, p. 782, 778.

conflict, it may in turn provide fundamental challenges to the established grounds upon which they have constituted their identities (see Rumelili forthcoming). Peace processes may therefore generate anxiety over identity, even to the extent that they might be rejected in favour of upholding established identities premised on conflict between enemies. As Wæver[9] notes, such processes are particularly evident and problematic in the context of long established conflicts, where conflicts over material issues have transformed into conflicts over mutually reinforcing opposing identities.

Conflict resolution therefore relies upon the desecuritization and reconciliation of identities as much as it does on resolving the material issues about which any conflict is ostensibly concerned. Desecuritization hence concerns opening up previously securitized identities to new possibilities, shifting away from mutually reinforcing depictions of enmity to more benevolent views of the Other. It is thus important to consider what desecuritization actually entails and how it might be achieved in more detail.

In this respect, and in contrast to widespread discussion about the concept of securitization, debate about desecuritization processes has been relatively limited. Indeed, to the extent to which debates have taken place they have generally focused on establishing (or contesting) the presumed normative benefits of desecuritization, as opposed to focusing on the actual mechanics of how desecuritization might take place[10]. Saying this, in his initial discussion of the term Wæver[11] essentially envisaged desecuritization as a reversal of processes of securitization. Thus, if securitization highlights how presenting issues in the language of security can foster the development of enemy images and come to justify the adoption of exceptionalist measures in tackling them, then on this score desecuritization largely amounted to an appeal to avoid the language of security through the presentation of issues in other terms.[12]

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9   Wæver, Ole (2008), 'Fear and Forgetting: How to Leave Longstanding Conflicts through De-securitization', paper presented for the first Research Seminar of CAST, Copenhagen University, 29/10/2008.

10 E.g. see Aradau, Claudia (2004), 'Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation', *Journal of International of International Relations and Development*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 388–413; Behnke, Andreas (2006), 'No Way Out – Desecuritization, Emancipation and the Eternal Return of the Political – A Replay to Aradau', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 62–69.

11 Wæver, Ole (1995), 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press.

12 Also see Deudney, Daniel (1990), 'The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security', *Millennium*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 461–73.

Arguably, however, this emphasis on *rearticulating* threats in non-securitized terms, by trying to convince people that the Other (or the issue at hand) is not as irrational or dangerous as perceived, only captures one possible mechanism towards promoting the desecuritization of conflicts[13]. As noted above, it is also a process which, while tackling the fear of the Other, may also induce considerable anxiety by undermining established conceptions of identity. However, de-securitization may also take different forms, potentially with different effects. In this respect, Hansen[14] has identified three other strategies of desecuritization alongside that of *rearticulation*. These alternatives can be labelled strategies of *replacement, silencing and fading*. 'Replacement' refers to a process whereby one perceived threat is downplayed by emphasizing another threat of mutual concern. At one level this could entail a process of simply swapping enemies, and as such might be seen as resolving one conflict via a process of generating another. However, cases of emphasizing common soft security concerns (health, pollution, development, organized crime) as a means to foster common approaches and ameliorate previously highly securitized relations can also be identified – not least in the Baltic Sea Region.[15]

In contrast, a strategy of 'silencing' achieves desecuritization through actively repressing discussion of the issue at hand. This may take the form of providing incentives (e.g. threats of punishment, ostracism, humiliation) to avoid any mention of the security problem.[16] Finally, 'fading' indicates a situation in which a normalized politics is presumed as evident from the start and where questions of security are largely absent from discussion because they are no longer deemed relevant.

In Hansen's[17] terms, fading is a situation where former threats 'no longer exercise our minds and imaginations' and are ultimately forgotten. Importantly, this is not about burying one's head in the sand and suppressing talk about extant securitizations in the hope they might just disappear[18]. Instead, fading entails embracing a different ontological perspective from that which has generated and

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13 Huysmans, Jef (1995), 'Migrants as a security problem: dangers of 'securititizing societal issues', in Miles, Robert and Tränhardt, Dietrich (eds.), *Migration and European Integration* London: Pinter Publishers, p. 65.

14 Hansen, Lene (2010), 'Re-reading Desecuritization: Uncovering the Normative-Political in the Copenhagen School', Paper presented at the SGIR 7th Pan-European International Relations Conference, Stockholm, September 9–11, 2010; Hansen, Lene (2012), 'Reconstructing de-securitisation: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and direction for how to apply it', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 525–46.

15 Browning, Christopher, S. and Joenniemi, Pertti (2004), 'Regionality Beyond Security? The Baltic Sea After Enlargement', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 239.

16 For a critical analysis of such a 'silencing' process see Hansen (2000).

17 Hansen, Lene (2010), op. cit.

18 Huysmans, Jef (1995), op. cit., p. 65.

supported a conflict in the first place, and might, for instance, entail abandoning a differential logic of identity construction or, as in the case of Karelia in Finnish identity discourses, entail renegotiating the relationship between national identity, territory and sovereignty.

Before turning to the case analysis it is, however, important to make one further point about ontological security. As indicated by the above discussion, ontological security is fundamentally linked to the preservation of stable relationships with significant Others – whether those relationships be friendly or antagonistic – and this dynamic is obviously central to any understanding of the nature of conflict and prospects for conflict resolution also in the case of territorial disputes. Yet, the ontology of ontological security has dimensions that also go beyond this. For example, ontological security is also likely to be tied to socially constructed understandings of the nature of subjectivity in specific contexts. Indeed, the nature of any specific Self-Other relationship may itself be a function of perceived threats to these other foundations of ontological security. In terms of understanding the emergence (and subsequent resolution) of the conflict over Karelia, for example, it is important to understand how contemporary ideas about nationalism impacted upon Finnish understandings of the requirements and needs of national identity – in particular, the extent to which the emergence and success of the nineteenth century project of national awakening became tied to Herderian and Hegelian understandings that, to be complete, nations needed to possess a distinctive culture, territory and ultimately sovereignty over that territory. It is these ideas – and their translation into a Finnish context – that ultimately provided the grounds upon which Karelia was to be ascribed with mythical and privileged status in the mental geographies of Finnish nationalism.

NATIONAL AWAKENING AND THE MYTHOLOGIZATION OF KARELIA

As a politico-national entity Finland is a relatively recent construction. Prior to 1809 most of present day Finland was part of Sweden and lacked any heritage of administrative unity, or its people any discernible sense of history and national identity as Finns[19]. Indeed, most of the elite spoke Swedish with the people's loyalties largely directed to the Swedish Crown[20]. Following the 1808–1809

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19 Klinge, Matti (1993), 'Finland: From Napoleonic legacy to Nordic Cooperation', in Mikulás Teich and Ray Porter (eds.), *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 321.
20 Huxley, Steven D. (1990), *Constitutionalist Insurgency in Finland*, Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura; Studia Historica 38, p. 85.

Swedish-Russian war, Finland was ceded to Russia, which in an attempt to win over the loyalties of their new subjects granted Finland an autonomous administrative status as a Grand Duchy of the Russian empire[21]. Thus, while in 1809 the sense of Finnishness may have been limited the creation of the Grand Duchy certainly provided the grounds upon which a distinct political national consciousness might be built[22]. Indeed, before long Swedish-speaking elites were actively seeking to do precisely that and it was in this process that the ideas of Herder and Hegel were important in providing an understanding of what it was to be a nation and therefore framing what became understood as the essence of Finland and Finnishness in the nineteenth century and beyond.

Herder's emphasis on culture as the foundation of national distinctiveness was particularly influential in Finland, in part because of the country's lack of a distinct political or monarchical history to draw upon. For Herder nations were natural and organic products of the distinct physical environments they inhabit. These environments, he contended, account for differences in national character and culture, with national cultural distinctiveness primarily expressed through the original language of the people, as evident in the nation's presumed unique folk poetry and oral tradition. Indeed, for Herder folk poems were 'the archives of a nationality', 'the imprints of the soul', 'the living voice of the nationalities'[23]. As received in Finland the implications of Herder's analysis was that to awaken the nation the nationalists needed to provide evidence of the nation's distinctiveness, to recreate the national memory, by rediscovering the national soul in its folk poetry and oral tradition.[24]

In contrast, while Herder was primarily concerned with the survival of national cultures[25], Hegel's influence stemmed from his understanding that all things that entered history were endowed with a particular historical mission. For nations, Hegel argued, this mission would be fulfilled through the achievement of statehood[26].

21 Lundin, C. Leonard (1981), 'Finland', in Edward C. Thaden (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 362.

22 Kemiläinen, Aira (1989), 'Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Finland', in Antero Tammisto, Katarina Mustakallio and Hannes Saarinen (eds.), *Miscellanea*, Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura; Studia Historica 33, p. 111.

23 Quoted in Wilson, William A. (1976), Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 29, 30; Branch, Michael (1998), 'Kalevala', http://www.vn.fi/vn/um/finfo/english/kaleveng.html (accessed 08/04/98).

24 Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., pp. 28–30;

25 See Joenniemi, Pertti (2002), 'Finland in the New Europe: A Herderian or Hegelian Project?' in Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (eds.), *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, London: Routledge, p. 192.

26 Gellner, Ernest (1997), *Nationalism*, London: Phoenix, p. 65; Rocker, Rudolf (1998), *Nationalism and Culture*, Montreal: Black Rose Books, p. 195.

The importance of Herder and Hegel, therefore, was that they provided a blueprint of the ontological foundations of national subjectivity, a checklist against which the national project could be measured and national self-esteem built. According to this checklist the nation needed a distinct language, a distinct folklore tradition, a distinct national territory, and ultimately, sovereignty over that territory.

The initial result of such influences was that the first goal of Finnish nationalists became that of promoting the use and development of Finnish literature and the Finnish language throughout society. A key mechanism for this was the creation of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831.[27] However, it also entailed large numbers of the Swedish-speaking elite fennicising their names and adopting Finnish as their primary language. Given that a distinctive literature and history was largely absent the leaders of the nationalist movement devoted particular attention to filling this gap. Drawing on Herder they identified the language and folk traditions of 'ordinary people' as their primary source material and set about collecting as many tales and poems as possible. Also following Herder they believed the most authentic language, tales and poems would be found in the wilder and more remote areas of Finnish-speaking habitation – the view being these were less likely to have suffered from foreign influences. Here the national soul would be purest. This led the national romanticists – motivated by the assertion that they were neither Swedes nor Russians[28] – to the Finnish-speakers of the north and east of the Grand Duchy and the Karelians of Archangel Province and across the border in Russia[29], as the people whom it was believed could furnish them with the required dose of originality and authenticity.

Central to this movement was Elias Lönnrot, who in 1835 published a collection of folk poems, the *Kalevala*, which was to have a profound impact on the development and nature of Finnish nationalism. The *Kalevala* depicted a golden age of ancient Finnish peoples who, free of the yoke of foreign domination, lived epic lives of adventure and magic. Depicting an ancient history of the Finns from the creation of the world to the coming of Christ the *Kalevala* was invoked to support the claim that the Finns were an ancient, cultured, civilised people with a pure and grandiose past. In short, the Finns now had a national epic to compare with that of the Greeks, but an epic that was also viewed as a valid historical document in its

27 Vuorela, Toivo (1977), *Ethnology in Finland Before 1920*, Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, p. 22; Klinge, Matti (1990), *Let Us Be Finns: Essays on History*, Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company, p. 77.

28 Harle, Vilho and Moisio, Sami (2000), *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka* [Where is Finland? The History and Geopolitics of National Identity Politics], Tampere: Vastapaino, p. 74.

29 Branch, Michael (1998), op. cit.

own right[30]. In this respect the *Kalevala* provided the Finns with an historical self-awareness[31] and a national project to recover the history and culture of the nation, and ultimately to reclaim national independence. As Wilson[32] puts it, 'The Kalevala thus became their book of independence, their passport into the family of civilised nations'.

In respect of Karelia, the key point is not only that Lönnrot collected his source material for the *Kalevala* from the region, but also that he conjectured that the Finnish ancestors of whom the *Kalevala* told had lived in the area of present day Karelia.[33] Ultimately this had the effect of turning Karelia into an almost holy territory and the promised land of Finnish nationalism, with the land of Karelia becoming the fount from which Finnish culture and nationhood derived. This assumed Herderian connection between nature, land and the nation turned Karelia and the *Kalevala* into a primary inspiration for artists, composers and historians, whose works in turn served to enhance the sense of national emotional attachment to the territory. As Engman[34] notes:

> Finnish artists and scholars were looking for an original Finnish paradise and found their last traces of it in Eastern Karelia. The national-romantic currents of ideas that may have been given their most pregnant expressions in connection with Karelia played an important part in building the nation in Finland, and also in making Karelia a kind of Promised Land to Finns.

This connection to Karelia became important, not least because prior to the nineteenth century a clearly demarcated and accepted understanding of the nature of Finland and its borders was largely lacking. The creation of the Grand Duchy in 1809 existed as one concrete manifestation of Finnish territory, but one that, as the nineteenth century progressed, nationalists increasingly viewed as artificial. Indeed, as the century progressed a Hegelian emphasis on the need to amalgamate national and state borders gained ground, which when combined with the Herderian emphasis on organic cultures increasingly led nationalists to make territorial claims on Karelia.[35] Given its position as the mythologised

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30 Branch, Michael (1998), op. cit.; Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., pp. 70–82.

31 Singleton, Fred (1989), *A Short History of Finland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 75.

32 Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., p. x.

33 Rubulis, Aleksis (1970), *Baltic Literature*, London: The University of Notre Dame Press, p. 8.

34 Engman, Max (1995), 'Karelians between East and West', in Sven Tägil (ed.), *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*, London: Hurst and Company, p. 221.

35 Indeed, some nationalists had even broader ambitions, claiming vast tracts of northern and central Russia as being Finnish land on the grounds that their inhabitants spoke languages related to Finnish. This also indicates how racialist ideas that conflated race with language and nationality were also influential at the time (Wilson 1976: 138–9).

heartland of the nation, the separation of most of Karelia from the Grand Duchy increasingly began to take on existential dimensions – a sign that Finland was not yet whole, but deformed. Calls to (re)incorporate Karelia into Finnish territory grew, and from the 1880s provided the inspiration for teachers to start crossing the border into Karelia to teach the Karelians Finnish and Finnish ideas.[36] The Russians resented such moves, not least because they considered the Orthodox Karelians as 'potential Russians'. Attempts to promote Lutheranism and fennicisation were therefore countered by the Russian authorities reasserting Russian claims to the region, not least through establishing Russian schools.[37]

Indeed, by the 1890s the loyalty of the Finns to the empire was being increasingly questioned, with this resulting in a more general process of russification designed to bring the Finns to heel. Amongs other things the freedoms of the Grand Duchy were restricted, while the Russian language was introduced into the Finnish Senate, educational institutions and administrative offices.[38] Russification, however, only fostered unrest, one element of which was a renewed wave of cultural production drawing predominantly on themes from the *Kalevala* and Karelia.[39] By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, it is clear that Karelia, as an integral part of territorially based nationalism, had come to occupy a special status in Finnish national discourse. Not only was Karelia viewed as a site of national authenticity and the resting place of the Finnish soul (the *Kalevala*), but it was also the land from which the Finns and Finnish culture sprang. By the end of the century Karelia was therefore not simply of cultural or even territorial importance, but of fundamental ontological salience.

FIGHTING FOR KARELIA

In 1917, and in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, Finnish independence was declared, shortly followed by the outbreak of civil war between worker groups (the Reds) and the bourgeois elite (the Whites). For the Reds the civil war was a 'class war'

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36   Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., p. 141.

37   Engman, Max (1995), op. cit., pp. 222–3.

38   Thaden, Edward C. (1981), 'The Russian Government', in Edward C. Thaden (ed.), *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 82.

39   It is important to note that for most of the nineteenth century, most Finns remained loyal to the Tsar and saw Finland's future as best assured within the confines of the empire. It was only towards the end of the century and in the run-up to the Bolshevik Revolution that sentiment turned against Russia and in favour of independence more broadly (see Browning 2008: 96–112).

with the aim of pushing the new country in a more socialist direction[40]. In contrast the Whites (the victors) viewed the Reds as Bolshevik inspired agitators whose triumph would result in Finland's absorption into Bolshevik Russia. For them, the civil war was therefore understood as a 'war of independence'.[41] Across the right of Finnish society anti-Russian feeling flourished, with Russia quickly becoming designated as the nation's hereditary enemy.[42] Seen as siding with the Bolsheviks the Reds were also depicted as national traitors and therefore liable to extreme punishment.[43] In this respect, the emergence of anti-Russian sentiment in Finland in the inter-war period – which during the period of the Grand Duchy had been limited to a social fringe – was intimately connected to the country's internal political struggles. From the perspective of the Whites, however, Bolshevik Russia represented an existential threat to the social order, with the Reds' uprising ultimately explained away as a result of the workers becoming infected with a cancerous Russian disease.[44]

The effect of this was that in Rightist thinking anti-Russianism became a central narrative on which to build national unity. As expressed in 1923 by Elias Simojoki (a theology student and later Lutheran priest and right wing politician) 'Hate of the Ruski was that power which made Finland free. Hate of the Ruski… is the Finnish spirit'.[45] Thus, while Bolshevik Russia was perceived as a constant threat to the sovereignty and independence of (bourgeois) Finland, it also existed as a defining radicalised Other upon which an identity and mission for independent Finland could be built. Throughout the course of the 1920s and 1930s this mission was framed in terms of Finland as an outpost guarding the borders of Western civilization from Eastern barbarism.[46] Organisations like the Academic Karelia Society – particularly

40 Karvonen, Lauri (1988), *From White to Blue-and-Black: Finnish Fascism, in the Inter-War Era*, Helsinki: Commentationes Scientiarum Socialium, 36, p. 14; Maude, George (1976), *The Finnish Dilemma*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 6.

41 Jutikkala, Eino and Pirinen, Kauko (1996), *A History of Finland*, Helsinki: WSOY, p. 397; Alapuro, Risto (1994), 'Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland', in Øystein Sørensen (ed.) *Nordic Paths to National Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, Oslo: The Research Council of Norway, pp. 89–90.

42 See Karemaa, Outi (1998), *Vihollisia, vainoojia, syöpäläisiä: Venäläisviha Suomessa 1917–1923* [Foes, Fiends and Vermin. Ethnic Hatred of Russians in Finland 1917–1923], Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, Bibliotheca Historica 30.

43 Arosalo, Sirkka (1998), 'Social Conditions for Political Violence: Red and White Terror in the Finnish Civil War of 1918', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, no. 2, p. 155; Upton, Anthony F. (1980), *The Finnish Revolution 1917–1918*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 313.

44 Luostarinen, Heikki (1989), 'Finnish Russophobia: The Story of an Enemy Image', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 26, no. 2, p. 129; Hannula, J. O. (1939), Finland's War of Independence, London: Faber and Faber Limited, pp. 33–34; Wuorinen, John H. (1931), *Nationalism in Modern Finland*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 222.

45 Quoted in Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., pp. 132–3.

46 Browning, Christopher S. (2008), *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland*, Oxford: Peter Lang, pp. 131–6; Paasi, Anssi (1996), *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, p. 171.

influential amongst students – actively fostered anti-Russian sentiment and told their members to prepare for the inevitable future fight.[47] In this sense, the threat of Bolshevik Russia was offered up on the right of Finnish society as a considerable source of identity and ontological security for the new nation-state.

Despite having gained independence, the prospects for conflict with the Soviet Union were enhanced by continued dissatisfaction about the perceived lack of congruence between Finland's national and territorial borders. Across the political right the national mission was not confined to protecting the borders of Western civilisation, but was extended to the need to build a Greater Finland through liberating the cultural kinfolk beyond the national borders.[48] While the most ambitious envisaged annexing Estonia, Western Bothnia (in Sweden), Finnmark (in Norway) and large swathes of Russian territory, Karelia remained the primary goal.[49] Finland's claim to Karelia was asserted in various ways. Folklorists found justification in the *Kalevala*'s Karelian heritage[50], while geographers proclaimed the 1918 borders 'artificial' and identified the nation's expanded 'natural' borders as encompassing Karelian territory.[51] Linguists and ethnicists made similar arguments.

Such securitized arguments proved motivating. In 1918, for example, with tacit support of the government Finnish volunteers launched a military incursion across the border, with plans drawn up for a full invasion in fulfilment of annexing Karelia.[52] When a new government brought the mission to a halt and later signed the Treaty of Tartu (1920) with the Soviet Union, thereby confirming the 1917 borders, the action was considered both dishonourable and treasonous on the right. The strength of feeling was demonstrated by Bobi Sivén, an official from Repola – a parish due to be handed back to the Soviet Union – who on lowering the national flag for the last time shot himself, becoming a martyr to the nationalist cause and whose death the Academic Karelia Society subsequently commemorated in following years by marching to his grave on the anniversary of the signing of the

47 Browning, Christopher S. (2008), op. cit., p. 137.

48 Rintala, Marvin (1962), *Three Generations: The Extreme Right Wing in Finnish Politics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 74.

49 Paasi, Anssi (1996), *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, p. 101.

50 Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., pp. 94–102.

51 Paasi, Anssi (1996), op. cit., pp. 182–3.

52 Kangaspuro, Markku (2000), *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehallinnosta. Nationalismi ja suomalaiset punaiset Neuvostoliiton vallankäytössä 1920–1939* [Soviet-Karelia's Fight for Independence. Nationalism and the Red Finns in the Soviet Use of Power 1920–1939], Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden Seura; Rintala, Marvin (1974), 'Finland', in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (eds.), *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 421.

Treaty of Tartu. They also sewed the fatal bullet into the Society's flag.[53] Indeed, come 1921 volunteers launched another unsuccessful attack into Karelia, and this time murdered the Minister of the Interior in response to government efforts to stop the action.[54]

The most significant action, however, took place during the Second World War, in what in Finland is known as the Continuation War (1941–1944). During this conflict Finland aligned with German forces to launch an offensive deep into Soviet territory. For nationalists the prospects of fulfilling the national mission by incorporating Karelia and making Finland whole was enthusiastically embraced. Indeed, privately President Ryti declared the creation of Greater Finland to be an explicit war aim.[55] Such aims were made public by Carl Gustav Mannerheim, the Commander of the Finnish Forces, in an Order of the Day delivered to soldiers on 10 July 1941.

> In the War of Liberation in 1918, I swore to the Finnish and Viena Karelians that I would not sheath my sword until Finland and East Karelia were free… For twenty-three years [the provinces] of Viena and Aunus have awaited the fulfilment of this promise… Fighters in the War of Liberation, famous men of the Winter War [1939–1940], my gallant soldiers! A new day has dawned… Karelian freedom and a great Finland glimmer before us in the powerful avalanche of world historical events…Soldiers! The soil on which you tread is holy land, full of the blood and suffering of our tribe. Your victories will free Karelia; your deeds will create for Finland a great, happy future.[56]

Mannerheim clearly believed in the motivational force of Karelia. Once again attempts were made to justify the annexation of Karelia by emphasising its distinctly Finnish attributes via the publication of maps and books on Greater Finland and the teaching of the *Kalevala*.[57] In 1941, for example, a special edition of the journal *Terra*, sought to prove through analyses of bedrock, flora and fauna and economic connections that the 'forthcoming' Finland was justified, while the Ministry of Education established a Scientific Committee for Eastern Karelia, and published a book, *Finnlands Lebensraum*, establishing Finland's need for expansion.[58] Not least,

53 Rintala, Marvin (1962), *Three Generations: The Extreme Right Wing in Finnish Politics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 99–102.

54 Selén, Kari (1985), 'The Main Lines of Finnish Security Policy Between the World Wars', in Commission Finlandaise d'Histoire Militaire (ed.), *Aspects of Security: The Case of Independent Finland*, Vaasa, pp. 17–18.

55 Puntila, L. A. (1974), *The Political History of Finland 1809–1966*, Helsinki: Otava Publishing Co, p. 176.

56 Quoted in Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., p. 184.

57 Engman, Max (1995), 'Karelians between East and West', in Sven Tägil (ed.), *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*, London: Hurst and Company, pp. 217–46, p. 232.

58 Paasi, Anssi (1996), op. cit., pp. 185–6.

in the annexed areas a programme was established and designed to re-educate the local Karelians as Finns and to naturalise Finland's new geographical borders.

REARTICULATION AND SILENCING DURING THE COLD WAR

In the end, however, Finland lost the war. The post-war settlement proved costly. Finland was saddled with paying a large war indemnity to the Soviet Union, the positioning of a Soviet military base at Porkkala on a peninsula west of Helsinki, was required to withdraw to the 1940 borders and on top of that was forced to cede Petsamo, its Arctic gateway to the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, 420,000 refugees – almost all of them Karelian by background – needed to be resettled in Finland, with this highly symbolic of the failure of wartime dreams of annexation. Indeed, the Soviet Union set about a systematic policy of sovietisation in the region, by replacing the population with thousands of migrants from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and beyond.[59]

Combined, the lost war, the post-war settlement (in particular the enforced encounter with an extensive group of Karelians), and the loss of Karelia proved a traumatic experience for the nation. The loss of territory and homes in Karelia was felt by many as a grave injustice, while in the immediate post-war years there was a deep sense of vulnerability, anxiety and dread that the fate of Karelia might yet await the rest of Finland. Throughout the Cold War, however, Finland retained its independence and even developed what was widely perceived at the time as a mutually beneficial relationship with the Soviet Union. To understand how this was possible requires understanding both how previous enemy images of the Soviet Union/Russia were transcended and how the privileged and mythologized position of Karelia in Finnish nationalist narratives was reconfigured. Arguably this took place through a desecuritization process that combined strategies of both rearticulation and silencing.

The most significant move was made by Finland's post-war president, Juho Paasikivi (1946–1956), who called for a complete reappraisal of the foundations of post-war Finnish foreign policy, which was to be premised upon a fundamental rearticulation of established inter-war understandings of the Soviet Union. Instead of being driven by an inherently expansionist ideological impulse, Paasikivi argued the Soviet Union was much like other great powers, with largely limited and strategic interests. So long as Finland was sensitive to those interests the Soviet Union would

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59 Jakobson-Obolenski, Sergei (1999), Karelia within European, Russian, Northern Dimension: Problematizing Spatio-Territorial and Political Relations in Northern Europe', *Gateway Papers* no. 3. International School of Social Sciences. University of Tampere, pp. 19–20.

respond favourably.[60] Paasikivi argued that the Finns' failure to understand this during the inter-war period was a direct result of their misperception of Soviet/ Russian identity. For Paasikivi, inter-war Finns had been blinded by an unjustified hatred of the Russians, with the depiction of the eastern neighbour as the 'hereditary enemy' resulting in reckless foreign policy choices.[61] From this perspective Finnish national identity needed to become less 'chauvinistic', 'intolerant' and 'emotional'[62] and more pragmatic, rational and realistic. Indeed, from this perspective, as a small state in a *realpolitik* world, Finland's very survival depended on it.[63]

In itself, however, this effort to 'rearticulate' the nature of the Soviet Union and the potential threat it might pose to Finland was not considered sufficient. Indeed, premised as it was on rejecting established worldviews and systems of meaning, the rearticulation strategy was a source of anxiety for many, and for whom fears of Soviet annexation remained high, although as time passed these did weaken. It is notable, therefore, that the rearticulation strategy was accompanied by moves designed to further promote the Soviet Union's desecuritization and the reconfiguration of Finnish national identity through 'silencing' practices. These practices took various forms. For instance, rightist organisations (now labelled 'fascist') like the Academic Karelia Society and the Civil Guards were prohibited, inter-war politicians were encouraged to step aside, with several wartime leaders imprisoned. Particularly notable, however, was a systematic process of eradicating negative images of the Soviet Union from the public domain. This included libraries destroying hundreds of books, disparaging references to the Soviet Union being erased from school textbooks, 'unsuitable' gramophone records being removed from the archives of the national broadcaster, and the removal of 'anti-Soviet' monuments.[64] Indeed, in 1948 a law was passed that provided for a two-year prison sentence for journalists

60 Paasikivi, Juho Kusti (1956), *Paasikiven Linja I: Juho Kusti Paasikiven Puheita Vuosilta 1944–1956* [The Paasikivi Line, vol.1. Speeches 1944–1956], Porvoo: WSOY, pp. 35–6; Hanhimäki, Jussi M. (1997), *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution"*, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, p. 11.

61 Pajunen, Aimo (1969), 'Finland's Security Policy', in Ilkka Heiskanen, Jukka Huopaniemi, Keijo Korhonen and Klaus Törnudd (eds.), *Essays on Finnish Foreign Policy*, Vammala: Finnish Political Science Association, p. 8; Paasikivi, Juho Kusti (1956), *Paasikiven Linja I: Juho Kusti Paasikiven Puheita Vuosilta 1944–1956* [The Paasikivi Line, vol.1. Speeches 1944–1956], Porvoo: WSOY, p. 14.

62 Kekkonen, Urho (1970), *Neutrality: The Finnish Position*, London: Heinemann, p. 110.

63 For a detailed account of the post-war reappraisal see Browning (2008: 172–8).

64 Salokangas, Raimo (1996), 'The Finnish Broadcasting Company and the Changing Finnish Society, 1949–1966', in Rauno Endén (ed.), *Yleisradio 1926–1996: A History of Broadcasting in Finland*, Helsinki: WSOY Painolaistokset, p. 117; Hadjú, Zoltán and Paasi, Anssi (1995) 'The Changing Representations of Finland in Geographical Texts in Hungary: a Contextual Analysis', Fennia, vol. 173, no. 1, p. 43; Uola, Mikko (1999), 'The Dissolution of Organisations During the Finnish 'Years of Danger'', in Mikko Uuola, *Suomi sitoutuu hajottamaan…: Järjestöjen lakkauttaminen vuoden 1944 välirauhansopimuksen 21. artiklan perusteella*, Helsinki: Suomem Historiallinen Seura, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia 201, p. 282.

convicted of writing articles deemed defamatory to 'foreign powers' (a euphemism for the Soviet Union), and which was only rescinded in 1995.[65]

As the Cold War progressed such silencing practices became increasingly self-fulfilling (and socially pernicious) as social organisations – and citizens more generally – increasingly responded to government demands for self-censorship in respect of the eastern neighbour – a tendency that became one element of the pejorative label of *Finlandization* during the Cold War. To this extent, while silencing practices may have helped reinforce the strategy of rearticulation by curtailing the space available for alternative narratives openly questioning Paasikivi's reappraisal of the Soviet Union's identity and interests, it also had the potential to generate significant anxieties for those citizens who challenged the official line, and who faced social opprobrium – and, as noted, even threats of imprisonment. Meanwhile, despite its intention, the silencing strategy also seems to have masked rather than resolved extant fears, since silencing was premised on fears that imprudence could ultimately provoke Soviet aggression – a view that returned after the end of the Cold War.

Unsurprisingly, silencing practices were also extended to discussion of Karelia, and in this respect nationalist sentiments towards the territory, were sacrificed for the overall goal of preserving independence and sovereignty. Various efforts to raise the issue and place it on the Finnish foreign policy agenda and that of Finnish-Soviet relations failed.[66] Indeed, the Soviets actively threatened negative consequences should the Finns decide to raise the issue at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference.[67] For his part, Paasikivi told a delegation of Karelian members of parliament to dampen their aspirations, warning them: 'It is not the small nations which decide things now, but the large ones which draw the borders they want on the map; the victors decide'.[68] However, while public discussion of the Karelia question was dissuaded, from 1968–1972 President Kekkonen did raise the issue secretly with Soviet leaders on several occasions. Indeed, according Max Jakobson[69], Kekkonen was actually obsessed with the issue and thought that regaining Karelia would significantly

65 Salminen, Esko (1999), *The Silenced Media: The Propaganda War between Russia and the West in Northern Europe*, Macmillan Press Ltd, p. 16.

66 Fingerroos, Outi (2012) Karjalan kysymyksen kolme aaltoa [The three waves of the Karelian question], in Fingerroos, Outi and Häyrynen, Maunu (eds.) *Takaisin Karjalaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura), pp. 31–1.

67 Polvinen, Tuomo (1986), *Between East and West: Finland in International Politics, 1944–1947*, Porvoo: WSOY, pp. 230–1, 236; Heikkilä, Hannu (1989), 'Finland's Road from War to Peace, 1944–1947', in Tenho Takalo (ed.) *Finns and Hungarians Between East and West*, Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura; Studia Historica 32, pp. 173.

68 Quoted in Polvinen, Tuomo (1986), op. cit., p. 159.

69 Jakobson, Max (2003), *Tilinpäätös. Osa III* [Closing the Books. Part III], Helsinki: Otava, pp. 219–220.

enhance public support for the restrictive policies being pursued domestically. In particular, Kekkonen proposed an exchange of territory, whereby in return for receiving Karelia, Finland would grant the Soviet Union significant territorial concessions in Lapland.[70] The proposal is instructive on several counts. First, it indicates the extent to which territorial sovereignty over Karelia continued to evoke emotional resonance amongst Finnish leaders and how its loss was viewed as ontologically damaging to Finland's sense of selfhood. Second, it is indicative of the extent to which Karelia remained a mythologized and privileged part of the homeland, at least when compared to Lapland.

Also interesting is that alongside the more general silencing of debate about Karelia there also took place a significant rearticulation and reappraisal of the status of the *Kalevala* amongst Finnish folklorists. Previous scholars (e.g. Kaarle Krohn, Martti Haavio, Jalmari Jaakola) were now attacked 'for their ultra-nationalism, their imperialistic dreams of a Greater Finland, and their unrelenting hate of the Soviet Union', and their use of the *Kalevala* and the broader folklore tradition to this end.[71] Instead of being a tale of a real historical past reflecting the ancient Finnish life and spirit, the *Kalevala* was now seen as simply a largely fabricated product of Lönnrot's imaginative genius.[72] Reducing it to simply a work of art, in this way served to strip it of much of its political and security-related significance, further supporting the reconstitution of national identity along more 'pragmatic' and 'realist' grounds, while simultaneously to some extent demystifying the Karelia myth.

REPLACEMENT AND FADING IN POST-COLD WAR FINLAND

The end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union resulted in a considerable amount of soul-searching and critical reflection on the nature of Finnish-Soviet relations in Finland, one result of which was that previous desecuritizing strategies of rearticulation and silencing were challenged and to differing degrees delegitimized. The suppression of public debate and criticism, and the widespread adherence to demands for self-censorship occasioned by the Finlandization phenomenon was no longer seen as the prudent course of action

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70 Suomi, Juhani (1994), *Presidentti. Urho Kekkonen 1962–68* [The President. Urho Kekkonen 1962–68], Helsinki: Otava, pp. 480–4; Finland was able to regain the Porkkala base in 1956 and reached an agreement in 1963 with the Soviet Union on renting the Saima canal connecting Lake Saimaa (via Viborg) with the Gulf of Finland. The discussions on these two issues have, however, remained largely detached from that over Karelia, indicating that Karelia remains ontologically in a separate category.

71 Wilson, William A. (1976), op. cit., p. 199.

72 Ibid., pp. 196–7.

for a small state with a great power neighbour, but was now viewed by many as having had a much more pernicious effect on the quality of Finnish democracy.[73] This critique of attempts to desecuritize Finnish-Russian relations and debate about Karelia through silencing practices was, in the 1990s, in turn accompanied by a revisionist understanding of the nature of the Soviet threat. Contra Paasikivi's depiction of the Soviet Union as a pragmatic great power with limited territorial aspirations, Soviet/Russian interests in Finland were now depicted as having been inherently expansionist.[74]

Although such processes of critical reflection resulted in a renewed tendency to depict the eastern neighbour as Finland's historical threatening other, arguably the principal securitizing move here was one about Finland's own past behaviour whereby the fundamental threat of the Cold War was not so much posed by the Soviet Union, but by what the Finns did to themselves. Critics, for example, spoke of Finnish leaders having made a Faustian deal with the Soviet leadership after the war, following which they acted in symbiosis with their foreign masters.[75] Finnish behaviour was depicted as obsequious, submissive and sycophantic, with internal Finlandization a matter of national shame and humiliation – at least for critics. In this respect, such critiques resonate with a 'replacement' strategy whereby desecuritization of one relationship is facilitated through the securitization of something else (in this case a prior rendering of the Finnish self). Restoring national pride and ontological security would therefore require reinstituting democratic principles of open discussion and vigorous political debate.

This openness to debate was also evident over Karelia. As indicated, during the Cold War Finnish leaders, including Finland's last Cold War president, Mauno Koivisto (1982–1994), contributed to keeping Karelia-related discussion on a backburner in favour of prioritizing a normalization of relations with the Soviet Union/Russia. Central to this strategy was extricating Finland from its previous treaty-bound commitments of the post-WWII years and establishing closer links with and eventually membership of the European Union.[76] In particular, the issue

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73 Majander, Mikko (1999), 'The Paradoxes of Finlandization', *Northern Dimensions*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs Yearbook, pp.85–94; Penttilä, Risto E. J. (1992), 'Official Religions', *Books From Finland*, no. 1, pp. 41–3; Salminen, Esko (1999), *The Silenced Media: The Propaganda War between Russia and the West in Northern Europe*, Macmillan Press Ltd..

74 Vihavainen, Timo (1998), *Before the War: Finland, Stalin and Germany in the 1930's* http://virtual.finland.fi/finfo/english/before.html (accessed 02/04/98); Jakobson, Max (1998), *Finland in the New Europe*, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, pp. 27, 41.

75 Majander, Mikko (1999), op. cit., p. 89.

76 Kangaspuro, Markku (2012), Salaista kaupankäyntiä Karjalalla [Secret Trading with Karelia], in Fingerroos, Outi and Häyrynen, Mauno (eds.), *Takaisin Karjalaan*, Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, p. 67.

was seen as closed in view of various peace treaties and Finland's having signed the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), i.e. a document premised on the inviolability of existing borders in Europe. However, the demise of the Cold War and the subsequent flexibility shown by the Soviet Union, in particular in respect of the re-unification of Germany, generated hopes among the Finnish public that this flexibility might also extend to the Karelian question. Hence, with underlying fears of the Eastern neighbour diminishing, the strategy of silencing no longer worked and a new approach had to be instituted. What resulted was an approach that continued to acknowledge the sensitive nature of the issue.

This, for example, was evident in the 1992 statement of Gustav Hägglund, a member of the military leadership, that for serious reasons of national defence Finland would not wish to have Karelia returned 'even if it was offered on a golden plate'. In his view – and mirroring concerns expressed during the Cold War – such a move could only problematize relations with Finland's neighbour by seriously impacting on Russia's ability to adequately defend St. Petersburg.[77] Aside from such assertions, however, it was emphasized that Finland would not itself make a move to open the question, but that it would be prepared to discuss the issue if the Soviet Union/Russia itself first indicated a preparedness to engage in talks.

However, despite such statements indicating that until such time as Russia raised the issue the matter should be seen as closed, in the new spirit of openness various officials also actively endorsed open discussion of the issue as a sign of a healthy democracy.[78] As President Martti Ahtisaari put it in 1998 in respect of the question of sovereignty over Karelia: 'It is part of civilized society that variant opinions too may be expressed… [I would be]… the last one to deny the people any such discussion'.[79] Indicative, here, is that since the end of the Cold War calls for restitution have once again been raised within Finnish society. These have principally come from organisations, like the Karjalan Liitto (The Finnish Karelian League) and ProKarelia, who represent the Karelian refugees and their descendants and are in particular concerned with restitution or compensation for their lost properties. Such organisations, however, have also discussed the possibility of returning Karelia to Finnish sovereign jurisdiction. In this respect, while the previous emphasis on silencing discussion of Karelia may have removed it as a direct point

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77 Ainola, Olli (1995), 'Kiusallinen Karjala' [Aggravating Karelia], *Suomen Kuvalehti*, no. 49, pp. 16–21; Ainola, Olli (1998), 'Karjala takaisin?' [Regaining Karelia?], *Helsingin Sanomat, kuukaisiliite*. September, pp. 54–59.

78 Forsberg, Tuomas (1995), 'Karelia', in Tuomas Forsberg (ed.), *Contested Territory: Border Disputes at the Edge of the Former Soviet Empire*, Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, p. 215.

79 Ainola, Olli (1998), op. cit., p. 58.

of contention in Finnish-Soviet relations during the Cold War, it also indicates that the suppression of discussion postponed, rather than resolved, the issue.

It should also be noted, however, that while public debate on the issue has been endorsed at the highest levels, Finnish governments have continued to indicate they have no desire to unilaterally raise the issue with Russia at an official level, with Finland's post-Cold War presidents and governments consistently arguing that the border question is not a meaningful political objective. In part, this reflects Russia's continued sensitivity towards the issue, and which stems from its own rather close relationship between national identity, territory and sovereignty,[80] with President Putin warning in 2000 that any discussion on borders would threaten to 'ruin' the countries' relations.[81] In this respect, Karelia is no longer considered so important as to risk damaging the Finnish-Russian relationship. This, though, raises the question why?

One explanation is that since the end of the Cold War the ontological foundations of Finnish nationalism and the grounds on which national self-esteem is to be achieved has begun to change. In particular, space has been opened up for a reformulation of national self-narratives, the result being that Herderian and Hegelian principles, which were previously combined into an emphasis on the need to unite the Finnish tribes into a single state, centred on the presumed territorial heartland of the nation, have lost influence. The decline in standing of the territorial principle has arguably been driven through several processes.

At the general level it has reflected Finland's post-Cold War drive to be accepted as a full member of the West and the European community of nations more specifically.[82] In the early 1990s, for example, it was realized that reigniting a territorial dispute with Russia was only likely to undermine Finland's chances of EU membership.[83] Instead, Finland sought to position itself as a responsible member of the international community by adhering to the principles of the CSCE that

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80 It also appears that the question of potential concessions in the case of the Finnish-Russian border is tied to other border-related issues, above all that between Russia and Japan in respect of the Kurile Islands/Northern Territories (cf. Ishiwatari, 1995). On occasion the argument is presented that Russia has the right to these areas as compensation for the losses suffered in WWII. These attitudes do, however, present a willingness to consider various 'soft' policies adding to the permeability of the Finnish-Russian border (cf. Marin 2006; Yarovoy 2010; Prozorov 2004).

81 Goble, Paul (2000), 'Russia: Analysis From Washington – Borders and Frontiers', *Reuters* at http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/06/F.RU.000612132126.html (accessed 19/06/2000).

82 Browning, Christopher S. (2002), 'Coming Home or Moving Home? "Westernizing" Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Reinterpretation of Past Identities', Cooperation and Conflict, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 47–72.

83 Medvedev, Sergei (1998), *Russia as the Subconsciousness of Finland*, Helsinki: UPI Working Papers; Finnish Institute of International Affairs, no. 7, p. 17; Forsberg, Tuomas (1995), op. cit., p. 216.

precisely encourage states to refrain from making such claims.[84] More particularly, such restraint should also be seen in the context of the then ongoing fragmentation of Yugoslavia.[85] Not making claims on Karelia and provoking Russia as such was a way of signalling that instead of being mired in the territorial politics of modernity, Finland had embraced the new world of supposedly post-national, post-territorial politics. Finland was not East European (Balkan), but a level-headed rational West European.

This decline in the salience of the territorial principle, however, has also been evident in a more fundamental restructuring within governmental and business circles of the perceived ontological foundations of the salient features of the international system. In this restructuring, geopolitical mindsets emphasizing territorial borders have increasingly been replaced by geoeconomic mindsets closer to a Herderian than a Hegelian viewpoint, and primarily concerned with how best to make one's mark in a globalizing world. From this perspective, success and national self-esteem are increasingly seen as dependent upon successfully integrating into globalized markets and securing a seat at the tables where the major decisions are made.[86]

At the specific level of Karelia, such ontological shifts have in part been a result of more experiential factors. With the opening of the border thousands of Finns took the opportunity to visit Karelia. However, instead of discovering the mythical Promised Land, for many the overriding impression was one of economic stagnation, backwardness and a land that had been largely russified (e.g. through name changes and the removal of historical memorials). The result for many was disillusion. Returnees found their former homes occupied by people who had established their own lives and traditions on the land, and in many cases had very limited knowledge of Karelia's previous history and proclaimed Finnish roots.

This is not to say Karelia has altogether lost its evocative role in Finnish national identity discourse, but rather that the nature of this role has begun to change. Particularly important is the apparent reconciliation with the loss of Karelia and its replacement with a truly mythical Karelia that need not be so obviously tied to a specific territory. Indeed, confronted with the economic and social realities of the region it rather seems that the value of Karelia for Finnish national identity has,

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84   Joenniemi, Pertti (1998), 'The Karelian Question: On the Transformation of a Border Dispute', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 33, no. 2, p. 194.

85   Saarikoski, Vesa (1997), 'Finland in the Context of the "Europe Between" in the 20th Century', in Vesa Saarikoski (ed.), *And Never Shall They Meet? European Space and Thought Between East and West*, Turku: Department of Political History, University of Turku; Publications 6, p. 91.

86   Browning, Christopher S. and Marko Lehti (2007), 'Beyond East-West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction', *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 691–716.

for many people, shifted from its location as a particular territorial space, precisely to its status as a mythical and fantastical construct whose actual location and bordering are largely irrelevant.[87]

What this points to is a process of desecuritization through 'fading'. Karelia has stopped being a point of conflict because its significance in the construction of Finnish national identity has transformed owing to a more general shift in how the needs of ontological security and national self-esteem are to be achieved in post-Cold War Finland. Two things seem to be important in this respect.

First, the post-Cold War emphasis on the emergence of a post-territorial politics, most evident in the breaking down of borders in the context of European integration, has downgraded the importance of questions of (extra)territorial sovereignty. In this context, the exteriority of Karelia has even proved something of a resource for a nation keen to demonstrate its post-Cold War European credentials. In this context, instead of asserting claims of territorial sovereignty the emphasis has rather been on transforming the divisive border into a unifying frontier, a place of exchange, cooperation and dialogue – a place for exploring a new less exclusionary politics. An initial move in this direction was evident in the signing of the Nearby Region Agreement in 1992, through which the Finnish and Russian governments permitted municipalities on either side of the border to engage in cooperative dialogue outside of the states' direct control.[88] Also important has been the improvement of cross-border road and rail infrastructures, the creation of new border crossing points – now straddling a border that was closed for some 70 years – and the proliferation of cooperative business ventures.[89] In particular, the establishment of the Euroregio Karelia in 2000 as a vehicle for cooperation, comprising of the Karelian Republic on the Russian side and three different regions on the Finnish side, testifies to the dominance of a new and cooperative territorial

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87 Harle, Vilho and Moisio, Sami (2000), *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka* [Where is Finland? The History and Geopolitics of National Identity Politics], Tampere: Vastapaino, pp. 115–7; Although the debate continues, it is less of a national debate and also far less contentious than it used to be. The ammunition generating some debate consists mostly of books and other materials produced or sponsored by the various associations engaged in claiming Karelia back (cf. Minkkinen 2012; Saksi 2005; Seppinen 1998).

88 Eskelinen, Heikki, Haapanen, Elisa and Druzhinin, Pavel (1999), 'Where Russia Meets the EU. Across the Divide in the Karelian Borderlands', in Heikki Eskelinen, Ilkka Liikanen and Jukka Oksa (eds.), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 333; Tikkanen, Ville and Käkönen, Jyrki (1997), 'The Evolution of Cooperation in the Kuhmo-Kostamuksha Region of the Finnish-Russian Border, in Ganster, Paul, Sweedler, Al, Scott, James and Eberwein, Wolf-Dieter (eds.), *Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America*, San Diego: San Diego State University Press, pp. 169–70.

89 Goble, Paul (2000), op. cit.

logic.[90] The coincidence of national territorial boundaries with state boundaries therefore appears to have lost some of its motivating force in the national project. Thus, while Karelia remains salient to Finnish culture, the belongingness of Karelia, and either/or delineations of political space more generally, have declined in importance, thereby allowing the border increasingly to connect rather than isolate.[91]

Second, while Karelia remains important to Finnish national identity, it increasingly appears to be less of a holy territory for a nation that in the post-Cold War period has actively embraced globalization as the principal challenge of the contemporary age. Put differently, the myth of Karelia has increasingly been pushed aside by new myths of the Finns' entrepreneurial spirit and technological prowess – most notably crystallized in the late 1990s and early 2000s in proclamations of a new Finnish model of the 'information society', epitomized in the success of the IT sector and the occasional repackaging of the country as 'Nokia Finland'.[92] Self-esteem and ontological security, therefore, are no longer to be grounded in the tales of the *Kalevala* and working towards the consolidation of the national space of Greater Finland, but rather through getting to grips with globalization and succeeding in global markets.

CONCLUSION

The case of Karelia is, as an instance of conflict resolution, no doubt both interesting as well as relevant. From the Finnish perspective conflict over Karelia from the end of the nineteenth century through to the end of the Second World War was primarily a result of how the region was imbued with deep ontological significance. Under the influence of Herderian and Hegelian conceptions of the nature and requirements of nationhood Karelia became not just a part of Finland, but representative of its essence and without which Finland could not really be truly Finland or Finnish. In the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, the declaration of independence and a civil war Finnish identity also became increasingly articulated through the radicalization

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90 Cronberg, Tarja (2003), 'Euroregio Karelia: In Search for a Relevant Space of Action', in Hedegaard, Lars et al. (eds.), *The NEBI Yearbook 2003. North European and Baltic Sea Development*, Berlin: Springer, pp. 231–39; Scott, James (2013), Construction of Familiarity in Finnish-Russian Karelia: Shifting Uses of History and the Re-Interpretation of Regions, *European Planning Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 75–92.

91 Joenniemi, Pertti (1998), op. cit., p. 199.

92 Castells, Manuel and Pekka Himanen (2002), *The Information Society and the Welfare State: The Finnish Model*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Hakala, Ulla, Arja Lemmetyinen and Juergen Gnoth (2010), 'The Role of Nokia in Branding Finland – Companies as Vectors of Nation Branding', in Frank M. Go and Robert Govers (eds.) *International Place Branding Yearbook 2010*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 55–65.

of an enemy image of Russia/Soviet Union. In this context, the inter-war period became one of high-level securitization in Finnish-Soviet relations with this further heightening desires to annex Karelia into the homeland.

In this respect, the argument advanced has been that conflict resolution in respect of Karelia has taken place through a two-stage process of desecuritization. After the Second World War desecuritization was driven by dual processes of rearticulation and silencing. The tragedy of the war, it was argued in the Finnish discourse, was a direct result of the failure to understand the true nature of Russian/ Soviet identity. Given the centrality of the Eastern neighbour to Finland's own sense of self-understanding, any rearticulation of Russian identity explicitly implied a renegotiation of what it was to be Finnish and what Finland's role, international identity and interests should be. The imperative that Finland's survival was seen as dependent upon the public accepting this new discourse of the nature of Self and Other in turn resulted in active processes of silencing designed to suppress dissenting views and which, as the Cold War progressed, became increasingly oppressive in nature. In this context, public discussion of the Karelian question was viewed as threatening national security. Framed slightly differently, attempts to put the Finnish-Soviet relationship on a more normal footing and to desecuritize the question of Karelia in this context, were, as such, ultimately premised on the high level securitization of the Finnish-Soviet relationship within internal Finnish politics. In this respect, enforced silencing and the curtailing of democratic debate was a clear instance of exceptional measures being justified through the invocation of questions of national security. Thus, while seeking to dampen fears of the Soviet Union, the strategies of rearticulation and silencing often served only to mask them, and at times (though not always) could generate heightened anxieties, especially amongst critics.

In the post-Cold War period desecuritization of Karelia has taken different forms. Throughout the 1990s, for example, criticism of Cold War (self)-censorship seems to have resulted in a strategy of replacement, whereby internal securitization of the Finnish-Soviet relationship was replaced with a withering critique of Cold War domestic politics and the need to uphold democratic principles of open and free discussion. Such criticisms have generated a certain amount of introspection and anxiety by raising rather fundamental questions about the morality of Finland's Cold War positioning and what this might say about Finnish identity. More significant, however, has been considerable evidence that a process of fading is underway as a result of which Karelia has simply lost its security significance in most debates about Finnish national identity.

Central to this has been the emergence of a different ontological perspective whereby the Herderian/Hegelian emphasis on organic national essences and territorial sovereignty has been displaced as the central grounds on which claims to national identity are made and national self-esteem sought. While Karelia remains ontologically significant, this significance has gradually been stripped of its territorial imperative, and now essentially resides on the mythical plane. Instead of the territorial principle – and securitization on that basis – exercising nationalist minds, increasingly ontological security and national self-esteem are understood as being gained through successfully playing the new games of Europeanization and globalization.

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