

EXTERNAL BORDER MANAGEMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF MIGRATION CONTROL

THE FINNISH-RUSSIAN BORDER

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This article deals with the Finnish-Russian border in light of the European external border control policy and its impact on immigration. The 1985 Schengen agreement removed internal European border controls and external border protection became a major concern of the European Union (EU) and heads of states. The European discourse towards immigration changed during the last decade and patterns show tighter external borders. This research follows the Copenhagen school of security and scrutinises the Finnish external border approach under the aspect of immigration. It analyses the socio-economic importance of the Finnish-Russian border in comparison to the European trend that decreases the penetrability of external borders. The study results show that the Finnish policy approach focuses on regional development in order to achieve economic balance in the border regions. This approach is supposed to increase security by economic rather than by traditional border control strategies.

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Introduction

The current discourse on immigration in Europe includes concepts referring to societal threats, terrorism, and Islamic fundamentalism that links the issue with risk and security concerns (Neal, 2009, pp. 352-353). In 2004, the European Council states that the management of immigration flows needs to be supported by establishing additional security measures that already come into force at the external borders of the European Union (EU) (European Council, 2004). This was a partial result of the terror attacks in the USA (9/11) and the following bombings in Madrid (2004). The portrayal of unauthorized immigrants as potential terrorists gives European governments the ability to introduce stricter immigration policies (ibid). The latter often refers explicitly to terrorism as an important issue that is addressed in EU policy proposals.

Several scholars (Huysmans, 2000; Neal, 2009; Bigo, 2009) argue that a *securitisation of migration* emerged in Western Europe during the last thirty years and has gained greater attention since the terror attacks in the 21st century. Although the EU tries to increase integration in migration policies, the process is significantly impeded by the public and political migration discourse that represents an increasing reluctance among the European population towards immigration (Léonard, 2010b). Wunderlich (2012, p. 3) points out that the social construction of migration as a threat to internal security leads to anxiety among the local population.

An important political actor in the European security framework is Finland. Geographically speaking, Finland shares the longest external border of the EU -- approximately 1340 km -- with Russia. For this reason, the Finnish-Russian border is an important unit of analysis which can be used to understand the meaning of European external borders as an instrument of immigration control. This study examines the factors influencing border management based on the concept of the Copenhagen school of security that seeks to identify the process of securitising different policy domains, such as immigration. The question that is answered in the following tackles the Finnish external border approach and why it is not connected to immigration control policies as in comparison to the other EU external borders. Huysmans (2000, p. 751) argues that securitisation of migration is a process that can be traced back since the 1980's when the political construction of the migration discourse was concentrated on the destabilizing effects of certain economic and politi-

cal areas; such as employment, the social welfare system and crime prevention. Although the theory of securitisation mainly focuses on military border surveillance techniques, this research presents the hypothesis that, in the case of Finland, border management is less influenced by military issues but rather by economic factors that are necessary for future regional development; including immigration. Laine (2012, p. 51) shows that the Finnish-Russian border is often compared to the Mexican-American border since it divides countries of highly unequal socio-economic patterns. He furthermore points out that people move from underdeveloped Russian areas to Finland in order to find higher paid work and to experience higher living standards. Therefore, Finland concentrates its efforts on development in the neighbouring regions to trigger the beneficial exchange of goods, people, and capital for both countries that lead to stability and security.

Finland- A country of Immigration

As one of the Nordic countries, Finland contains a peculiar position within the European Union. Positioned at the Northern margins of the EU, it shares the longest external European border with Russia. The relationship between both countries is historically remarkable because it was dominated by territorial conflicts and genocide during the World Wars. The Second World War left its marks on Finland that was obliged to pay reparations to the Soviet Union until the 1950's. Since then, Finland was able to develop into one of the most important industrial European economies by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation (Korkiasaari & Söderling, 2003, p. 2). According to the authors Korkiasaari and Söderling (2003), Finland was not an immigration country until the collapse of the Soviet Union that led to high numbers of immigrants from former Soviet Union countries (p. 7). The civil war in former Yugoslavia and the conflicts in Africa and countries located in the Near East have caused an additional inflow of refugees into Finland. As can be seen on figure 1, most foreigners in 2011 originated from the former Soviet Union but the number of refugees from war prone countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia also increased from 2001 onwards (Statistics Finland, 2011).

The following figure shows immigration to Finland in the period 1990-2012. It is important to notice that only permanent immigration is reflected in the statistical data and not for example, temporary labour immigrants and international students. It clearly shows that after the Finnish recession at the end of the 1990's, immigration



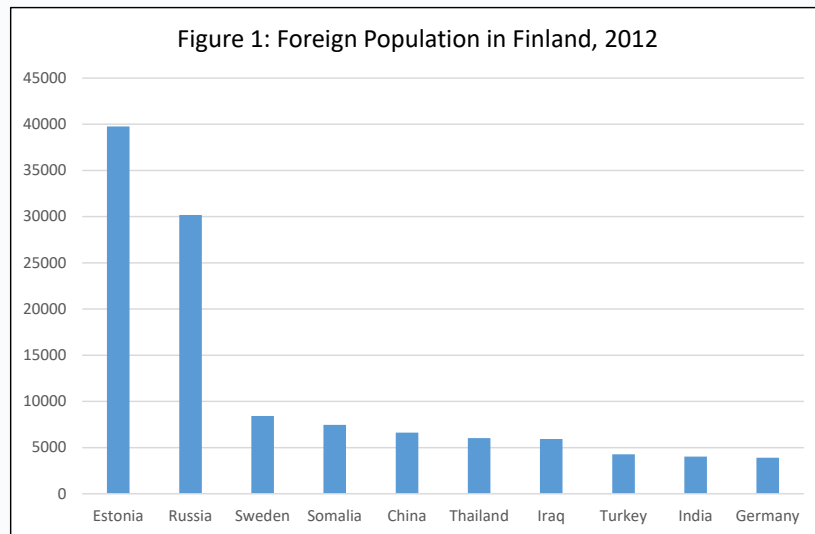


Figure 1: Foreign Population in Finland at the end of 2011. Data Source: Statistics Finland, 2011.

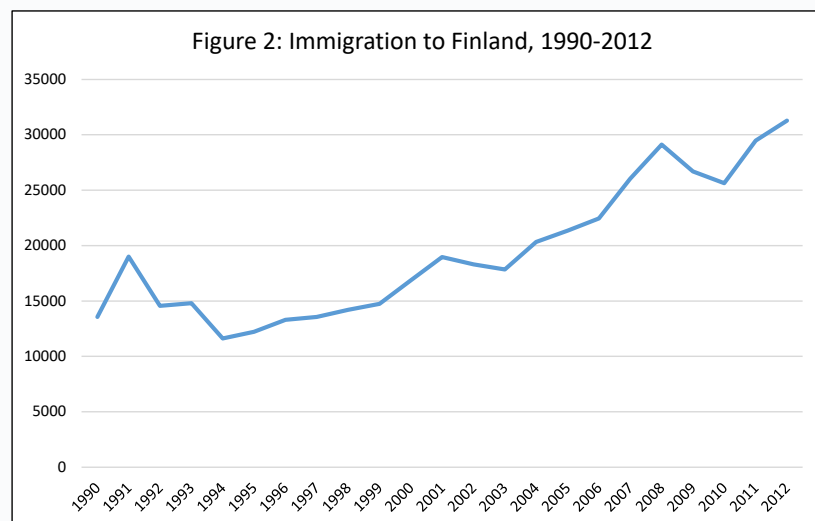


Figure 2: Immigration to Finland, 1990-2012. Data Source: Statistics Finland, 2013.

increased steadily and reached its initial peak in 2012. According to the statistics, the terror attacks of 9/11 did not have an impact on immigration numbers in Finland as it is suggested by the scholars of the Copenhagen school who identify the logical consequence of security threats in a decrease of immigration rates through stricter immigration control. Although a stagnation and slight decrease can be observed in the years from 2001 until 2004, immigration drastically increased again after this period. Nevertheless, the economic crisis of 2008/09 shows a larger impact on the Finnish immigration numbers that decreased by roughly

5,000 during the years 2009 and 2010. The situation can be compared to the economic crisis in 1991, which resulted in the same decline of immigration. As a preliminary conclusion, it can be argued that economic fluctuations have greater impact on Finnish immigration numbers than security related incidents.

The statistics also reflect the Finnish policy approach towards immigration. According to Sivula (2013), the recession at the beginning of the 1990's put a halt to immigration for a short period. This is in accordance with the graph shown above on figure 2. Furthermore, he mentions that Finnish policy

makers did not react to the terror attacks in New York or Madrid by restricting immigration policies. Sivula argued that in a European comparative perspective, Finland keeps a relatively liberal immigration policy and the Ministry of the Interior even developed plans to facilitate the process of labour immigration.

Nonetheless, radicalisation of immigration in the European public discourse also affected the Finnish political landscape. The Finnish right-wing party "True Finns" could register an increase in votes. For instance, during the Finnish presidential elections in January 2012, the extreme right-wing party 'True Finns' was ranked in the 4th place. In 2006, the right-wing party gained 3.4 % of all votes in the first round. In 2012, they already gained 9.4% during the first round (Ministry of Justice Finland, 2012). As a consequence, the plans of the Ministry of the Interior to facilitate labour immigration were abandoned due to the public opinion of immigration (Sivula, 2013).

Research Methodology

In order to analyse the impacts caused by the European discourse towards immigration on border controls, it is necessary to explore the factors that influence Finnish immigration and border policies. The Schengen agreement of 1985 regulated the European external borders and member states needed to adopt the legislations decided by the European Council. Finland became a Schengen member in 2001 and is obliged to apply European legislations. The research follows a descriptive qualitative research design that applies the technique of a discourse analysis. The Copenhagen school of security suggests that discourse analyses are an appropriate tool to discover securitising languages in, for example, policy documents. The time frame of the analysis comprises the year range of 1990-2013, a period when Finland became to be envisaged as an interesting political spot for the EU.

Policy documents, in particular dealing with security and border management form the core of the analysis. Analysed Finnish policies include the Finnish counter terrorism strategies of 2001 and 2004, published by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an immediate response to the terror attacks in New York and Madrid. In addition, the governmental report of the Finnish security and defence policy of 2012 identifies the recent Finnish immigration discourse. Interviews conducted with official experts working in the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and in the Ministry of the Interior in Helsinki give an additional insight into the Finnish-Russian and Finnish-EU relations

concerning external border management. The article is divided into the following sections: (i) the theoretical framework based on the theory of securitisation by the Copenhagen school of thought that helps to explain that Finnish border management is rather influenced by economic than by military means in order to tackle excess immigration; (ii) The Copenhagen school approach is applied through discourse analyses of relevant Finnish policy documents in order to analyse the factors influencing Finnish border management; (iii) The shortcoming of the securitisation theory is shown in detail by giving examples of the Finnish regional development approach and its dominating influence on Finnish border management approaches; (iv) The conclusion states that national goals towards a specific matter, such as external border management, might be undermined by the European integration process. The EU needs to find a policy that recognises the different regions by respecting their particular characteristics and interests.

Copenhagen School of Security-Securitisation Theory

The theory of securitisation emerged during the early 1980's and was explicitly mentioned in the late 1990's by the scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap de Wilde (Buzan, et al., 1998, p. 23). They define 'security' as "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (ibid). The meaning of securitisation can be derived from this definition as a more extreme version of politicization. According to the authors, an issue can develop from being non-politicised through politicised and ends up being securitised (non-politicised -> politicised -> securitised). This means that the matter is presented as an existential threat, requiring immediate action (ibid, pp. 23-24).

Securitisation is defined as a *speech act*; therefore it can be argued that it is a socially constructed process (Balzacq, 2011, p. 1). Buzan et al. (1998, p. 26) state that "the security act is negotiated between the *securitiser* and the audience [...] the securitising agent can obtain permission to override such rules, because by depicting a threat the securitising agent often says something cannot be dealt with in the normal way". A securitising speech act takes a certain issue, as migration, out of the realm of normal politics and shifts it into the area of security. This gives the speaker the authority and permission to implement measurements that would otherwise be restricted by

their institutional position. According to Buzan *et al.*, the common way to study securitisation is with the support of a discourse analysis and of political constellations (*ibid*, p. 25). It is necessary to find out at what point a particular policy is publicly accepted although political actions are violating rules and international standards. In those cases, securitisation can be witnessed (*ibid*). It is mentioned that securitisation either appears on an *ad hoc* basis or it is becoming institutionalised (*ibid*, p. 27; cf. Léonard, 2010). In liberal democracies, it is necessary for officials to inform the public about the reasons why a particular matter demands for security and can therefore be handled differently. In the following section, several Finnish policy documents dealing with border policies are discursively analysed in order to identify how the issue of immigration is rhetorically presented within the border securing strategies.

Border Management as an Instrument for Immigration Control in Finland- A Discursive Analysis

In autumn 2001, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs published its first report on terrorism (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2001). The report states that Finland is not the main target for terrorists but it took several actions to support the EU in combating terrorism. External border controls have been temporarily tightened in 2001 on demand of the EU. However, already after the 20th of September, the level of border controls was diminished. Only after the first air strikes of the US army against Afghanistan, Finnish external border controls were tightened again (*ibid*). Nevertheless, the Finnish government did not recognise the need for urgent amendments in the legislation regarding border surveillance:

“The normal level of preparedness was reassumed by the Frontier Guard on 20 September 2001, after a period of intensified border control. Since the first air strikes by the United States against Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, border control has again been intensified” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2001)

After the terror attacks in Madrid, the Finnish Foreign Ministry published another report on Terrorism in December 2004. It reacts to the bombings in Madrid by addressing the threat of terrorism that also arises in Russia due to the unresolved situation in Chechnya (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2004, p. 1). The report mentions that terror threats increase in those countries and regions that are economically underdeveloped (*ibid*, p. 15). In addition, further causes for the develop-

ment of terrorist groups are related to social inequality, bad governance, exclusion, and ethnic tensions. Heiskanen (2013) argues that regional development therefore plays an important role within the Finnish foreign- and security policy framework. Inequality in terms of GDP per capita and income is considerably high between Finland and Russia and therefore Finland's goal is to strengthen cross-border economic co-operation with Russia to promote social justice and higher living conditions through investments and employment opportunities (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2009).

The Finnish anti-terrorism strategy of 2004 states that “in order to prevent terrorism [...] measures to eradicate poverty and to enhance good governance and respect for democracy and human rights are necessary” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2004, p. 15). It can be argued that economic development diminishes security threats but also the pull-factors for migration. Most immigrants in Finland are from Russia and other former Soviet Union countries such as Estonia and the most important pull factors are better living standards and a higher income level in Finland (Olli Sorainen; Heikkilä, 2006, p. 55). The Finnish Foreign Ministry argues that a close co-operation with Russia remains very important and Finland wants to influence development policies in Russia (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2010). The Finnish Security and Defence Policy Report of 2012 acknowledges the non-traditional security threat of migration and population growth to Finland's security environment (Prime Minister's Office, 2012, p. 14). At the same time they direct the attention toward “strengthening security in its neighbourhood” (*ibid*). Particularly referring to increasing immigration rates and nationalism in Russia, Finland focuses its attention on the potential threat of the formation of extreme right-wing populist groups. In addition, triggered by the ongoing problems during the democratisation process and the struggle to promote steady economic growth, the largest group of asylum seekers in the European Union originates from Russia (*ibid*, p. 35).

The political interest of Finland in Russia can be therefore attributed to the historical and present security situation between the two countries. During the Cold War, Finland had particular economic and security reasons at keeping a stable relationship with the geographically big neighbour, the Soviet Union. After the collapse, a good economic relationship was furthermore pursued because Russia is one main trading partner of the Nordic country. By acknowledging the economic

gap within the border regions, Finland wants to ensure internal security within their own country but also prevent and decrease cross-border crimes in the Schengen area. Although Sivula (2013) agrees that Finnish policy makers did not concentrate their efforts on stricter immigration controls after 2001, Finnish policy regards the unstable situation of Russia as a potential internal security risk. External border controls, which were “always very developed and made use of the latest technologies”, are a valuable tool to stabilise the situation in the border regions. Moreover, Prokkola (2013) points out that the Finnish border guard publishes plenty of bulletins on border incidents since 2008. The Finnish-Russian border is in the focus in those reports but in general “the border security situation has remained stable at our national borders and border crossing points” (p. 87). Temporarily and extraordinarily tightened external border controls were introduced to meet the demands of the EU that asked for a stronger external border protection in order to control irregular immigration. Finland's border management strategy rather aims at: (i) enhancing border management cooperation among the member states; (ii) investing at regional development to increase living conditions in the European neighbouring countries; (iii) decreasing the risk of terror cells formatted in Russia.

Results and Discussion

The rhetoric used in Finnish policy documents shows that Finland's border policies lack a securitisation through immigration. Three reasons can be derived from the analysis: (i) Finland is a relatively newcomer among the immigration countries and the overall number is comparatively low with other continental European countries. It is worth though to follow its future development because the number of immigrants is rising; (ii) although Finland has the longest external land border among all European countries, the number of irregular immigrants does not reach the same quantity as for example in Greece or Italy that are ‘immigration hotspots’. Therefore, although the Finnish public discourse expressed concerns over Russian immigrants (Prokkola, 2013), it did not reach the same emergency situation as in the Mediterranean countries that confront large amounts of irregular immigrants crossing their borders every year; (iii) from a historical perspective, the Finnish-Russian border was closed until the beginning of the 1990's. As the only European country, Finland had no significant immigration rate and border controls were highly effective from both; the Finnish and Russian side. The grad-

ual simplification of border controls was aimed at promoting a favourable dialogue between the two countries that are connected with each other in economic terms. This research suggests that the theory of securitisation is not applicable on a general European scale and that it is rather necessary to at least consider the different country related backgrounds. For instance, an efficient strategy could be to use country clusters, organizing them into different external border regions and their characteristics in order to give a reliable picture of the European wide situation.

Another aspect relates to the policy actions that result out of the Finnish immigration discourse. Rather than focusing on military and traditional security practices as suggested by the EU, Finland pursues an economic and political liberal approach towards their border with Russia. Regional development is a very important part of Finland's policy framework. Finland and Russia, two distinct economic zones, share boundaries where the living conditions of the people display evident levels of economic and social inequality. After the Cold War, many Finns who lived in the former Soviet Union regions re-immigrated into Finland hoping to find a better employment situation. As stated in the Terrorism report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, economic development is necessary to promote peace and to create stability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004). The Ministry of Employment and the Economy concentrates its efforts on regional economic development, for example in the Republic of Karelia and in the region of St. Petersburg (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012). In 1992, Finland and Russia set up an agreement that ensures cooperation in the border areas and focuses on the improvement of the environment and the economy (Nevalainen, 1996, p. 67). From 2007 onwards, economic cooperation is based on three programmes that cover the Kolarctic area, Karelia, and the South-East-Finland-Russia region which replace the Finnish-Russian agreement of 1992. The total funding reaches an amount of € 190 million and aims at supporting economic, social and civic development, and common challenges related to border crossings (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2012). Laine (2007, p. 53) argues in his article that the Finnish-Russian border poses a barrier for cross-national economic development.

Although Russia is not a member of the European Neighbourhood Programme, the EU built up a close cooperation that is regulated in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1994 (European Union External Action, n.d.). According to the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (2009), the amount of EU funded projects in the

Finnish-Russian region reaches an amount up to € 87.6 million in the period of 2007-2013. However, Scott (2013) criticises that cross-border cooperation support “has become mundane, technocratic, underfunded, and bereft of the historical symbolism of earlier cooperation” (p. 33). The author argues that the securitising measurements towards external border controls by the EU is impeding cross-border cooperation, especially in the Finnish-Russian case. The analysis of the respective Finnish policy documents shows a discrepancy concerning the favourable approaches. As Scott underlines, the Finnish-Russian European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) on cross-border cooperation does not properly reflect the requirements that are necessary to be applied in the Finnish and Russian case.

In fact, European integration in border management is counterproductive towards regional development that aims to enhance economic progress (c.f. Neal, 2009). European concerns about irregular immigration, cross-border crimes, and terrorism form new obstacles for further regional cross-border cooperation and integration on this matter that can lead to an impermeable EU-Russian border (Scott, 2013, p. 34). Scott presents that the EU’s cohesion and regional policy programme (2007-2013) are funded by a total amount of € 321 billion. This money is targeted at the EU member states to give aid to poorer European regions. The European Neighbourhood Programme’s budget amounts up to € 11 billion but Scott argues that only a very few amount is used on cross-border cooperation with neighbouring states. In comparison, a total of € 1 billion is spent on border security and technology research programmes that reach a higher amount than the whole budget planned on cross-border cooperation in the European neighbourhood countries. Although Finland established three programmes that are funded with the help of the EU, the entire focus on border management still concerns border surveillance with military means and technological innovations. Rather than allowing economic transactions that also include the fast and smooth movement of people over the Finnish-Russian border, the EU chooses the same approach for the entire external border management. When comparing the budget of the EU that is used for border surveillance and regional development and cooperation, it becomes clear that the focus is still directed at border protection mechanisms that aim to prevent irregular immigrants and to track third country nationals once they are in the Schengen area. These measurements increase the perception that the European

Union and the Schengen area turn into a ‘Fortress of Europe’ (Guild, Carrera, & Geyer, 2008).

Conclusion

This article has explored the securitisation process of immigration in relation to border management. As Huysmans explained, since the 1980’s with the beginning of neoliberal politics and economic upheavals in the European countries, reluctance and hostility among the populations towards immigrants increased. Using the Copenhagen approach, particularly the terror attacks in New York and in Madrid can be acknowledged as a turning point in the actual policy approach towards immigration controls by external border protection. Intriguingly, the analysis of Finnish policy documents shows no relevant securitising language in the traditional sense. Policy makers rather focus on eradicating economic imbalances in the border regions than demanding strict external border controls. The article carves out that not only security and military tools lead to securitising practices but another important factor concerns economic considerations. For the Finnish-Russian case, securitisation of immigration is not sufficient to explain external border management. This can be explained by the fact that Finland only experiences higher numbers of immigrants since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Nordic country has never been a hotspot for irregular immigration and concerns rather point towards economic stability and good governance in the Russian border regions to ensure internal safety.

Having focused on Finnish official policy documents, research shows that Finland’s main approach is directed at supporting the Russian external border regions. Based on the historical diplomatic relations established during the Cold War era, Finland has a great interest in keeping a stable relationship with its geographically large neighbour. Securing the external border became a main concern of Finnish and European politics; however, Finland focuses on securing its border through regional development that builds up a stable economy, good relations, and a strong civil society. This strategy is undermined by the increasing European integration process that focuses on traditional securitisation of border controls by military means (Léonard, 2010a, Neal, 2009). The European Union spends more money on border surveillance and technological innovations than on regional development projects. Instead, highly advanced technology is used to monitor immigrants and travellers including mobile border units.

The EU needs to acknowledge the diversity of the regions and especially when it comes to the European external borders that extend from Lapland to the Mediterranean Sea. Technological advancements in border management to prevent irregular immigration might support the security situation at the external borders in Greece and Spain but impede economic transactions at the Finnish-Russian border that is acknowledged to be stable and is not perceived to be one of the hotspots for irregular immigrants. Therefore, stricter external border management in order to control immigration might be redundant in the Finnish case. A careful re-examination of the ENP budget towards Russia and the focus on liberal economic development seems to be a better option to increase internal safety in Finland.

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