

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.

Keywords: Finnish-Russian border, securitisation, immigration, EU external borders, regional development.

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, 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 (2001) 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 issue that is addressed in EU policy proposals.

Several scholars (Huysmans 2000; Neal 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). She furthermore points out that the social construction of migration

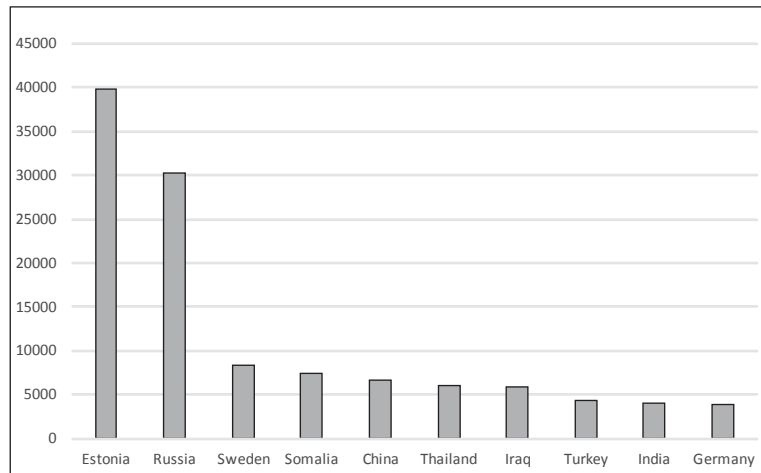
as a threat to internal security leads to anxiety among the local population.

An important political actor in the European security framework is Finland. Geographically speaking, Finland shares the longest external border of the EU - approximately 1 340 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 external border management based on the concept of the Copenhagen

school of security that seeks to identify the process of securitising measurements. 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 other EU external borders. Huysmans (2000, 751) argues that securitisation of migration is a process that can be traced back since the 1980s when the political construction of the migration discourse was concentrated on the destabilizing effects of certain economic and political 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.

Finland – A Country of Immigration

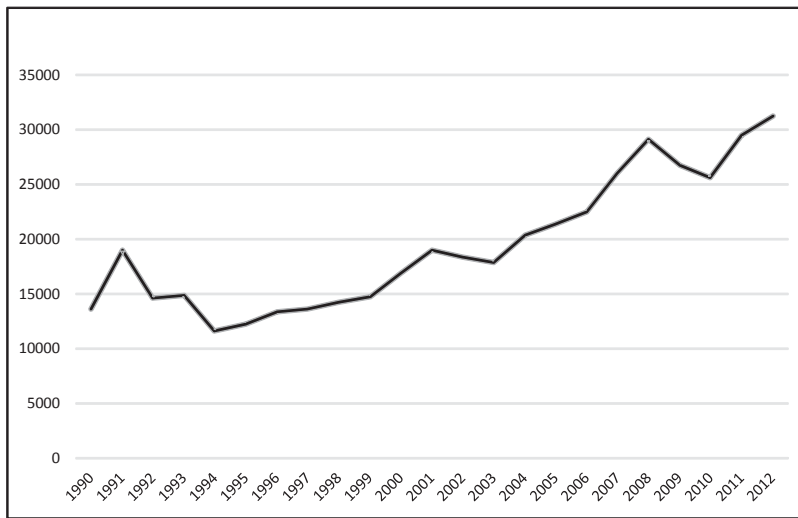
Finland was not an immigration country until the collapse of the Soviet Union that led to high numbers of immigrants from former Soviet Union countries. The civil war in former Yugoslavia and the conflicts in Africa and countries located in the Near East have caused an additional inflow of refugees



Foreign Population in Finland at the end of 2012. *Data Source: Statistics Finland 2012.*

into Finland. As can be seen on figure 1, most foreigners in 2011 originated from the former Soviet Union and Russia 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 1990s, immigration increased steadily and reached its initial peak in 2012. According to the statistics, the terror attacks of 2001 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 conclu-



Immigration to Finland, 1990–2012. *Data Source: Statistics Finland 2012.*

sion, 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.

Research Methodology

In order to analyse the impacts caused by the European discourse of immigration on border controls, it is necessary to explore the factors that influence Finnish immigration and border policies. 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 external 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.

Copenhagen School of Security – Securitisation Theory

The theory of securitisation emerged during the early 1980s and was explicitly mentioned in the late

1990's by the scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap de Wilde (Buzan et al. 1998, 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 23-24).

Securitisation is defined as a *speech act*; therefore it can be argued that it is a socially constructed process (Balzacq 2011, 1). 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. (1998, 25), the common way to study securitisation is with the support of a discourse analysis and of political constellations. 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).

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 reassessed 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, 1). The report mentions that terror threats increase in those countries and regions that are economically underdeveloped (ibid, 15). In addition, further causes for the development 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, 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 2013; Heikkilä 2006, 55). The Finnish Foreign Ministry argues that a close cooperation 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, 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, 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. Finland's external 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'; (iii) from a historical perspective, the Finnish-Russian border was closed until the beginning of the 1990s. 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 gradual 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 and regional development is a very important part of Finland's policy framework. 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, 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).

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, 33) criticises that cross-border cooperation support “has become mundane, technocratic, underfunded, and bereft of the historical symbolism of earlier cooperation”. 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, 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. These measurements increase the perception that the European Union and the Schengen area turn into a ‘Fortress of Europe’ (Guild et al. 2008).

Conclusion

This article has explored the securitisation process of immigration and the role of external border management within this process. As Huysmans

(2000) 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, the securitisation in the traditional sense of the Copenhagen school is not sufficient to explain political decisions.

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 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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