

BEING INTERESTED IN A BIG NEIGHBOUR: Russia and the Finnish Defence Establishment

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1 INTRODUCTION

Peculiarities¹ of Finland's security and defence policy have often been connected with the fact that the country is a next-door neighbour of Russia. The defence establishment² has an important role in defining the action environment of that policy.

The idea in this paper is to consider, how the defence establishment copes with a changing Russia in its action and policies and how it is evident in the institutional discourse of the establishment, now when the east-west divide and the neutrality of Finland have been almost completely wiped away.³

A central assumption is that knowledge appears at practical conceptions. When framed about Russia, they are framed about Finland and Finnish-Russian relations, which in the defence establishment are constructed along a specific military dimension. That reconstruction is assumed to be changing during the EU membership of Finland, which is the period at focus.

¹ These peculiarities include that Finland has cautiously approached a membership in NATO and still educates around 80 percent of its annual male cohort in general national military service, even if most European states adopt full-professional militaries.

² Here the defence establishment comprises of the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces.

³ The paper is based on the study *Russia in the Institutional Discourse of the Finnish Defence Establishment*, that focuses on the construction of interests of the defence institution and an adjoining expert identity on Russian issues. In that study, I am interested in how the defence establishment in its practices obtains, interprets and employs its Russia knowledge and disseminates it. How the organisation represents itself both as a Russia-specialist and a maker of Finland's security and defence policy focusing on Russia in interaction with its most important domestic interest groups. In this paper, however, I confine myself to examine the institutional discourse of the establishment on Russia. The study is a part of the project New and Old Russia in the Transition Discourses of Finnish-Russian Relationships that is one of the projects in the Research Programme Russia in Flux 2004-2007. Publications of the study will be forthcoming 2008. - The study employs an institutional pragmatist perspective, drawing from ideas of e.g. Agar 1985, Adler 2001, Neubert 2001, Haas & Haas 2002, Hellman 2002, Neubert & Reich 2002, Widmayer 2004, Rytövuori-Apunen 2005. See also Searle 1995, Thornborrow 2001.

As an institution the defence establishment is in the middle of different discussions. Action processes which relate with aims and means of the establishment clarify, in which discussions it must participate. Central processes include the defence planning and participation in total national defence, the framing of security and defence policy⁴ and the exchange of information in international and intra-administrational settings, as well as between administration and research community external to it.⁵

The defence establishment can be expected to aim at policies, which it considers appropriate for itself. This action is not separate from how the establishment takes part in security and defence *politics*.⁶ A specific resource of the establishment is expertise, based largely on professional knowledge. The defence establishment is an institution that professionally contributes to continuity and change in security and defence policies.

The strategy of the research can be defined as an interpretation to reconstruct the process of creating consensual knowledge, interests and an expert identity of the defence establishment on Russia. In this paper, discursive practices are approached on three levels or 'circles' of institutional discourses. Firstly, it is examined, how the establishment articulates general security-and-defence-policy interests of Finland and their national and international dimensions. On this circle the Russia conceptions are formed in the widest field, where the establishment evaluates embedded fundamental questions like the overall situation of Finland in its action environment based on the earlier experiences within the institution.

On the second 'circle' Russia is approached closer to the defence establishment itself, as a state and as a society. On the third 'circle' Russia is an actor in the security environment. Here the domain is the most own of the establishment, near its main processes. It is the issue area, where a possible sensitivity can specifically become part of the information and knowledge exchange.⁷

⁴ This can be also understood as parliamentary defence planning. After the Cold War it has included a frequent governmental reporting, which in addition to the annual budgetary decision-making has become a considerable channel between the parliament, government and defence establishment.

⁵ The interaction of knowledge production and distribution is institutionalised within several cooperative frameworks. In one of them being the establishment contributes to a national defence education. The establishment has also its several informal networks.

⁶ In a pragmatist perspective politics has been modelled like a scientific referee-process, not necessarily very conflictual. See Hoppe 1999.

⁷ This research paper does not deal with the last part of the study, which focuses on the 'knowledge space', where the establishment finally constructs itself as a Russia-expert with the help of its most important interest groups

The research is based on interviews and discussions, as well as documentary evidence. The main material consists of 22 focused interviews of high-ranking persons within the Finnish Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces.⁸

2 STARTING-POINT IN HISTORY

The first and maybe most important starting-point of the study is history. The defence establishment operates on an institutional field⁹, where military¹⁰ *praxis* in strategy and security is at the forefront. It can be assumed that such practices have specifically challenged the reconstruction of Russia in Finland's history.

The Cold War was obviously an important period for developing an institutional 'memory' on Russia within the defence establishment. Accordingly, it must have been essential for many people who still work in high-ranking positions of the defence administration. At the beginning, the basis of defence-planning was a scenario of a major Soviet invasion. Such an attack was considered to be the worst case.¹¹ Later on, the most essential input for Finland's territorial defence was a threat of surprise-attack.¹²

Several scholars have paid attention, how Finland conducted an ambivalent policy during the Cold War.¹³ Finland had to assure publicly, that maxims of its neutrality-policy hold. On the other hand, obviously a firm general understanding prevailed, that if Finland would have to carry out the assistance prescribed in the FCMA Treaty¹⁴, it would be fatal to the small country.¹⁵

⁸ In addition to that, nine more free-floating discussions with either representatives of key interest groups of the establishment in knowledge-production, or with informants inside the establishment were conducted, but that material is not used for this paper.

⁹ Cf. Williams 1997, also Bourdieu 1991. – Institutional field is understood here as a totality of knowledge, trust and symbolic power constructed within and around security and defence policies.

¹⁰ At largest 'military' stands for culturally anchored special routines and their examination from a particular perspective, that has been adopted in the military institution and organisation.

¹¹ Lieutenant General (Ret.) Ermei Kanninen according to Salminen 1995. – LTG Kanninen is one of the creators of the Finnish territorial defence system and was later on the Chief of Staff of the Defence Command Finland (Supreme Headquarters).

¹² Jouko 2006, see also Kylkirauta no. 3 / 2006 (Interview of Major General (Ret.) Juhani Ruutu)

¹³ E.g. Brodin 1975, Penttilä 1988, Salminen 1995.

¹⁴ The Finnish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance from 1948 until 1991.

¹⁵ This is also articulated in the 'political will' of President J.K. Paasikivi. See Visuri 2006.

A detailed discussion on defence possibilities and contradictions was not, however, an appropriate way to maintain and strengthen such a policy. Defence policy could not have a strong position compared with foreign policy. This relation was a kind of way to take distance from crisis scenes, which were more than many in east-west relations. Finland tried to reassure the Soviet Union of the validity of the FCMA Treaty, but at the same time maintained a discreet dissuasion.¹⁶ But the domestic audience had to be assured as well that Finland's defence efforts are effective, even if the threat, spite all public talks, would come from the eastern direction.

This duality catered for a kind of dilemma¹⁷, that was discursive: how to represent relations with the eastern superpower continuously in favourable cooperative terms without giving an impression, that the same neighbour might not be Finland's most important security challenge. Foreign policy could be apparently 'streamlined' in the dilemma, but the defence establishment was in a way left on the focus of it at the public level of policies.¹⁸

Even if the defence establishment took a pragmatic stand on the Soviet Union and the FCMA Treaty, the situation was able to create a 'shadow of crises', a condition to strong rules of cautiousness. The Defence Forces were safe, if they were able to concentrate on professional issues without public considerations on eventual crises between Finland and the Soviet Union.¹⁹ The military learned probably a strong interest to support the two-track policy, which interest was backed up by their organisational culture. Military thought helps to appeal to fundamental but always a remote threat in an uncertain and unwanted future. In the middle of a 'deep peace' the threat, however, is open to different interpretations.²⁰ Experiences of such peace emphasise military expertise in those debates and underline, that governing tensions between the defence planning and public 'political' commentary may be a specific challenge for soldiers.

The defence establishment, however, had to develop discursive strategies to cope with the duality.

¹⁶ Cf. Ries 1988.

¹⁷ Like Osmo Apunen remarks, it was about antinomies. I thank him for waking my attention on this issue. Both a close cooperation with the Soviet Union and preparations to face possibly rapidly arising problems in that cooperation had dimension which increased security.

¹⁸ The same problem did not necessarily exist on the actual defence planning, if it could be really kept secret. About the relationship between a situation in operational and mobilisation planning and its relationship with the FCMA Treaty, see Kanninen 1996b, 138-139.

¹⁹ It was not proper to publicly consider, how Finland's defence capability would work against a western military threat, either. Maybe, the most well-known example was a letter of President Kekkonen to the Chief of Defence Yrjö Keinonen, who had claimed that it would be possible to define a minimum capability needed to fulfil requirements of the FCMA Treaty.

²⁰ I have examined this earlier in Nokkala 2001, 99-114, 388, 393.

Its resources were military-strategic ‘theorising’ but also an institutional opportunity to be silent.²¹ Military strategy enabled references to military capabilities in the neighbourhood in a practical, symmetrical and ‘apolitical’ way without naming enemies.²² Finland’s neutrality policy promoted an appropriate ‘control’ of publicity for the Defence Forces, since the doctrine of territorial defence could be largely represented without the context of the actual international environment.

Not even during its last decade the Soviet Union was usually described as causing threats or problems in public statements of the defence establishment. The FCMA Treaty was an agreed point of reference on the condition, that presentations were confined to its text, where a threat situation was described without further elaborations, how such a situation²³ might develop. But the military threat was in another direction, however:

We had the FCMA Treaty. *The real threat*, of course, was in the east. We knew that inside the Staff of Operations. We knew well, that no western power could attack Finland in those conditions, but of course we had to pay attention on that issue. We had the FCMA Treaty, so we had to prepared for *such a theoretical situation*, as well. The defence 360 degrees to every direction.²⁴

This kind of context for representing Russia changed at the end of the Cold War. Finland applied for the membership in the European Union. The former ‘theoretical’ western military threat appeared almost erased.²⁵ The practice of the defence establishment to talk about Finland’s ‘non-adversarial’ defence in every direction began to appear problematic. Russia was about to remain the only potential invader, even if that was not be stated. Russia did not fit to be an explicit military argument for the EU membership of Finland, either, but the Finnish public wanted credible analyses of changes in Russia and Central Eastern Europe. Those changes needed to be incorporated into defence doctrines of Finland and their foundations.

The defence establishment had to be able to institutionalise a new discourse, as well. The new western connection could not replace specific constructions of Finnish-Russian relations. An

²¹ Different opportunities to be silent can be approached in research e.g. as a rational concealment, representation of possible as truth, or such omissions and silences, which can be according to Michel Foucault understood as products of dominant discourses used to normalise, prioritise experiences and differentiating ‘others’. Silencing is part of using power, the other side of discourse. See and cf. Gibbs 1995, Tunander 1989, Foucault 1990.

²² Military people though had the opportunity to discuss strategy and military postures of great-powers, if they did not address a potential concrete controversy between Finland and either of them. An example is Särkiö & Hägglund 1975.

²³ According to the Treaty: ‘If Finland is attacked by Germany or its ally ---’.

²⁴ Kanninen 2001. – This translation of the citation and its italics are mine like in other citations in this paper when an official English text has not been available.

²⁵ However, this was explicitly stated relatively late. One of the first presenters is Penttilä 1992.

independent and solitary defence of the territory and reliance on capabilities, that the doctrine required, had rooted in Finnish society during the Cold War. Now this cultural deep current was militarily paralleled only with a potential Russia-threat, when non-military threats expanded. Additionally, non-threat based pressures of military integration increased in the 1990s. Instead of the old ‘Soviet-dilemma’ the central point now was to represent Russia so that the Finnish defence works in the western framework, that developed quickly became ever more important for Finland. But it could not compromise particular Finnish interpretations of eastern relations. How the ‘non-adversarial’ defence discussion works now?²⁶ That is one of main interests in this paper.

3 OUTER CIRCLE: SECURITY AND DEFENCE INTERESTS OF FINLAND

3.1 ARTICULATING GENERAL INTERESTS

Finland’s security and defence political interests are essentially constructed between the defence establishment, government and parliament. Crystallizations of those discussions have become government reports to the parliament, i.e. White Papers, the two newest of them are from the years 2001 and 2004.²⁷ Additionally, an important general document is The Strategy for Securing the Functions Vital to Society (SFVS). It has been updated 2006.²⁸ That strategy does not, however, consist of interests, which could be explicitly linked to Russia as a state.²⁹

In the year 2004 general interests were expressed as a policy:

The line of action of Finland’s security and defence policy is aimed at safeguarding the country’s independence and society’s fundamental democratic values and at promoting the security and welfare of all citizens. Finland’s line of action is based on a credible national defence, the functioning of

²⁶ It must be reminded though, that the military threat affiliated with Russia relieved at the end of Cold War also in security-political perceptions of Finland, as well. Paradoxically, the end of the Cold War first brought Russia more explicitly forward a source of threat and Finland as its target, even if the overall intensity of different threats decreased. More on Nokkala 2001, 235-260.

²⁷ Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2001; 2004. – The next White Paper is supposed to be given 2008.

²⁸ SFVS differs from the government reports in the sense, that it is clearly a document only on the governmental level and not voted in the parliament. It is a guiding document of the government for ministries and it is said to concretise the White Paper.

²⁹ Government Resolution on Securing the Functions Vital to Society, Strategy for Securing Functions Vital to Society 2006.

society, a consistent foreign policy as well as a strong international position and an active participation as a member of the EU.³⁰

Compared with the 2001 text a new formulation was that the fundamental values were labelled as democratic. In 2001, one of the basic factors in the line of action was still military non-alignment in prevailing conditions. The international dimension was presented as participation in order to strengthen security and stability.

In the 2001 report, the future role of Russia was considered difficult to predict, and Russia's resistance on the NATO enlargement was underlined. In 2004 that resistance was diluted to a 'fundamental political tension' between NATO and Russia which wanted to gain more influence in the internal affairs of NATO, while NATO would like to make Russia more committed to cooperation. But Russia is seen to have a key objective to cooperate with other European countries. Russia's development is slow but creates major opportunities, though also risks and problems, for Finland. Also in the future, tensions are embedded in Russia's action towards the Baltic States. Additionally,

During the last few years Russia has again become an active international actor, which asserts itself more strongly than before as a major power and an equal partner of other big countries. The primary aim of present-day Russia is to expand its influence in the CIS region.

Finland's line of action is to continue and intensify wide-ranging cooperation with Russia and be an active participant in the EU policy on Russia supporting reforms in the country and developing working partnership.³¹

The defence establishment articulates its interests in its own texts, as well as in public statements of officials. Central documents are Ministry of Defence Strategy 2025³², Information on Total Defence³³ and the General Field Manual³⁴.

Considerable elements of interest construction are the naming of action and definitions of its scope vertically as different 'policies' or 'strategies' and horizontally as 'national' or 'international'.

³⁰ Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004, 5.

³¹ Ibid., 67-69, 82.

³² Securely into the Future.

³³ Tietoja maanpuolustuksesta 2006

³⁴ Kenttäohjesääntö 2007

In addition, the defence establishment defines and values security and defence political discussion and other practices as a part of the definition of its own institutional environment.

Especially, the Ministry of Defence tries to represent defence policy as wide-ranging, though a narrower action than security and defence policy. The extensity is largely based on how ‘national’ and ‘international’ are articulated together, and on how ‘national defence’ and ‘total national defence’ are conceived in connection with ‘politics’.

In documents of the Defence Forces the scope of defence policy is somewhat narrower than in documents of the Ministry. Defence policy connects with national military defence only.³⁵ Also both security policy and foreign policy are seen from a perspective of defence policy. The aim of security policy is to enable effective defence by ‘improving conditions for defence by means of international cooperation’. The aim of foreign policy is to prevent such situations, ‘where the country would be a target of pressure or attack’. A recent development is to avoid a tight line between ‘national’ and ‘international’.³⁶

The strategy of the Ministry of Defence emphasises especially the development of the European Union and an active involvement of international community to conflicts of the world. The document even states, that Finland will likely have to consider participation in pre-emptive military action as a member in a larger country grouping in the future. The extensity of security threats is repeated.

Total defence is our national model in which threats, required preparedness and the measures required in a crisis are considered as an entity. Each branch of administration, private enterprise and non-governmental organisation plays its own role and has its tasks within the total defence concept.³⁷

However, Finland’s military defence is still considered to be the most demanding task of the total defence. The desired end state for 2025 is very conventionally defined: military defence must have a credible capability to prevent and repel military threats against Finland.

³⁵ Ibid, 101.

³⁶ In names of organisations the division still exists. The Defence Policy Department of the Ministry of Defence is divided into the units of National Defence Policy and International Defence Policy.

³⁷ Securely into the Future, 19.

Military capabilities are to be developed flexibly for different main tasks of the defence system³⁸. These tasks, according to the law, are defence of Finland, support for other authorities to face wide-ranging threats and participation in international military crisis management.

In its definition of the action environment the MoD strategy leans on three standard scenarios: a better or more peaceful world, a continuation of the present development, or a retarding and more conflictual world. They are paralleled with improbable trends like pandemics, the EU getting into a serious internal crisis development, or a break-up of a great power.³⁹ The strategy document gives a more negative evaluation about Finland's situation than the government reports, obviously because surprises and factors of uncertainty are important in a text which reaches so far to the future.

In the book *Information on Total Defence* the action environment is divided into environments of national defence, crisis management and new threats. Finland's security policy depends on the development of relations between EU, Russia and the United States, which are affected by events in 'traditional developing countries' and by new threats. Finland's situation has developed positively already a long time.⁴⁰

In texts of the defence establishment Finland's defence is often divided according to three dimensions of action. They are territory of the country, Finland's interests and Finnish values. To defend the territory secures Finland's independence and living conditions for its people. National security interests are safeguarded by participating in crisis management, and Finnish values are defended in humanitarian and peace-operations of the United Nations, thus showing international responsibility.⁴¹

In the *General Field Manual* other actors of the environment but the European Union are not explicitly represented. The EU is described as 'the most central channel of influence' in Finland's foreign and security policy. But the *General Field Manual* is an important conceptual tool for the Defence Forces by giving authorised definitions for different kinds of threat concepts used in different contexts. As such, 'the crisis and threat scenarios used in defence planning' like they appear in the reports of the government are different from those threat scenarios, which are said to

³⁸ The defence is the system that the Defence Forces form.

³⁹ *Securely into the Future*.

⁴⁰ Tietoja kokonaismaanpuolustuksesta 2006.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, see also *Kenttäohjesääntö 2007*, 10.

relate any *named state*, or ‘military threat assessments’ which contain ‘a detailed evaluation of use of military force with different alternatives’ and give a basis for evaluating, how an attacker might act. Since the end of the Cold War, those openly stated scenarios for defence planning have gradually begun to emphasise less an all-out invasion and more the so-called strategic strike or scenarios, where an outsider uses only ‘pressure’.⁴²

The defence establishment aims to have quite unified official definitions, but mutual conceptual relations between national defence, total defence or the action of securing functions vital to society are far from such unification. National defence is now more often presented as the same as total defence, though.

In the research interviews the totality of foreign, security and defence policies was usually understood as a legitimate domain to talk about. However, some soldiers deliberately wanted to exclude foreign policy from the discussion, but were ready to talk about security and defence policies in a wide sense. In practice, the interviewees usually talked about those interests, which they related closely with the activities of the defence.

Finland’s situation is usually described in very positive terms. The position of the country is liberated and its security is good. The argument is usually sought from Finland’s integration with the west, even if also its limitations are often presented.

Finland’s external security may be now better than ever after Second World War. --- I evaluate that the strong economic and military position of the Americans makes NATO more effective in defence arrangements [than the EU]. The European Union, however, gives political, economic and military framework security that improves Finland’s position.

Security environment is said to have changed even enormously. According to some evaluations the overall importance of military force has increased at least in European and global levels. However

--- in a way it has been difficult to figure the situation. It shows also cautiousness that public opinion has brought.

--- now we have had to redefine the threat, that earlier was clearly experienced, and that definition has been difficult.

⁴² Kenttäohjesääntö 2007, 26-27, 72-85, 107.

Before all, Finland's position is defined through the membership in the EU, where Finland is seen as a 'frontier state' but without linking it to a defence dimension. Finland's relations with different countries are good.

Finland's security and defence political line of action is said to be 'traditional'. Defence of the own territory is presented as self-evident also in all future situations. 'The basic interest' is unchanged.

But

Finland is gradually transferring construction of its security to this outer circle. It means crisis management and participation in treating international crises. The war-setting of a Second World War type is giving way. That is a political reality.

In addition to changes of threats, international participation is argued by an increase of dependence or interdependence. It is necessary to get networked, since 'you don't manage alone any more'. Especially EU obligations are lifted to the side of the national defence. Finland can expect support of the other EU countries, but it has to be ready to reciprocate. Tasks of the national defence are seen to expand at the same time, which is a challenge itself.

3.2 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AIMS OF DEFENCE POLICY IN CONCEPTIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

The Chief of Defence has publicly announced, that the 'emblem model'⁴³, where the national and international dimensions of Finland's defence are presented together, is his idea. It got momentum from events in the Balkans in the beginning of the 1990s. The Defence Forces must participate in crisis prevention, but such participation was resisted in the military then.

But the development goes to the direction, where tasks of the Forces include also

securing interests of the Fatherland also outside borders of the country. Of course, this does not include participation in offensive wars.⁴⁴

Later on the Chief argues for the participation by humanitarian causes and opportunities to benchmark training and equipment of soldiers.⁴⁵

⁴³ Referring to the national emblem in hats and aeroplanes of the Finnish military, where a blue ring is surrounded by two white rings.

⁴⁴ Kylkirauta n:o 2/2005, 6-11.

In the research interviews defence policy is mainly said to have the purpose that emphasises the defence of Finland's territorial integrity. Finland's line of action stays traditional, even if the action environment changes. International issues are now more prominent than earlier, but relational shares of 'national' and 'international' are appropriate in the defence policy. Also the action of securing of functions vital to society and thus total defence are said to depend on international cooperation.

Another argumentation emphasises knowledge and learning that the national defence gets from international cooperation. At the same time, Finland promotes a positive image of itself in a wider sense. This thinking is linked with an idea to continue Finland's peacekeeping tradition, even if in more demanding international operations than earlier.

A secondary discourse anchors the defence policy more strongly to Finland. The argument, for instance is, that Finland cannot do much in continuing crises of the world.

However, it is customary to argue that Finland's international participation is limited. Finland uses only a small percent of its defence manpower and financial resources for international missions. It is also normal to say that international operations are far too much emphasised in the media, which is not the truth in practice.

3.3 THE DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENT, PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND GOVERNMENT REPORTS

The defence establishment is very critical about Finnish *public security policy discussion*. It is habitually described as fuzzy, old-fashioned, unbalanced and emotional. 'Fundamental' issues are talked too little about and the analysis is not based on 'facts'. Public discussion is also shallow and often related with everyday policy. The discussion is short of participants and the talk concerns tools instead of objectives, unlike the establishment would like to hear. The criticism seems to be repeated also in articles and other accounts of soldiers. In spite that the discussion is said to have increased and become more transparent especially during last 10 years.

⁴⁵ Kaskeala 2006a.

Parliamentary debates are often said to be clearly better than the general discussion. For instance, the Chief of the Defence Staff says that discussion in the parliament has improved, but

Certainly, there [in the parliament] is then something , where I often would like to intervene, but I find it too political, if I would do it. But it has been possible to bring cold facts to the table in committees of the parliament and in certain speeches and other occasions---- ⁴⁶

Restrictions of Finnish security discussion are recognised and clues about rules given. For example, you have to talk moderately about great-powers. General conscription, the idea of defending the country in its entirety and the credible defence capability must not be questioned.

Research institutes are seen to stimulate public security and defence political discussion, but especially departments of universities are not considered as effective participants. The Defence Forces themselves are said to have the resource of thinking analytically, and accordingly they may have a more systematised perception of matters than in the society at large.

The way how general interests have been defined in government reports and other documents were mostly neutrally or positively valued. Reports are described as successful and useful for the defence. Finland's national interests are represented well.

That [report] gives us [in the defence] very clear lines of action. It is right the way we could imagine to write, if we would like to do it.

The report is also presented as a framework for a long-term development in the administration. This articulation is about the same as in public speeches of representatives of the defence, when they say that reports have brought persistence to planning and on opportunity to argue for development of the defence system in the parliament. But the government reports have their limits:

It is a public document. It cannot say anything specific.

Experts inside the defence establishment seem to get a good support out of the reports also, when they have to give talks to interest groups of the organisation. But for an average citizen the level of generality in the reports is claimed to be either appropriate or a bit complicated.

⁴⁶ Interview of Adm. Juhani Kaskeala 23 November 2005.

When reports are criticised, the criticism mainly comes from the Ministry of Defence. The reports are sometimes seen as too slow or inefficient tools, that include uncertainty, when the government changes. But altogether, the defence establishment believes that the security-political government reporting has future.

4 MIDDLE CIRCLE: RUSSIA AS STATE AND SOCIETY

4.1 THE STATE

In the interviews Russia is relatively widely characterised as a state, political actor and also as a society with which Finland and the Finns have a special relationship. It is presented together with a long historical change. Before all, Russia is described as an important neighbour, a prominent actor in public discussion and a significant object of Finland's security and defence policy interests. According to one characterisation, Russia is an important 'point of reference, yardstick and thermometer'. Russia is different from Finland, non-western, a great-power and a democracy that is slowly stabilising. Finland is small compared with Russia.

-- It is a big country and compared with us always a great-power by its resources. Would it be recession or good times, it is always a great-power. Here as neighbours of the great-power we do have to take Russia into account almost in every action.

Certain differences exist in how Finnish-Russian bilateral relations and in that way the particularity of Russia are emphasised. The primary emphasis seems to be that Russia is put into wider international political context. Such evaluation unites usually with a special stress on the changed position of Finland.

They should be past times, that Finland is somewhere in between west and east. Finland is a part of west.

In an articulation, where the bilateral relations are even more emphasised, Russia is linked to special sectors of Finland's policies. It is also in connection with the question, how Russia might or might not be influenced from outside. Both issues are used as arguments to Russia's permanent position in Finland's policies.

Of course, in defence policy Russia is the most central. I would say that it is the *only* factor. Everything else is something extra. All the core functions focus on Russia. --- Russia is surely in any case.. the history, the land border, Russia's capacity, its uncertainty. They are factors which very centrally determine our actions.

Views differ about what kind of great-power Russia should be conceived and how it could be compared. It is customary to present Russia as a weakened and regional but compared with Finland always a sufficient great-power. Other definitions include 'a second-class great-power' compared with the United States, or a country that tries to follow it. It is much more marginal to claim that Russia is a great-power also in a world-scale.

Russia's Finland-policy is often said to carry old remnants, even if Russia is claimed to aim at genuinely good relations with Finland. Russia's policy is based on economy and that is why Russia is said to be some important for Finland, also. On the other hand, Russia is said to keep military force important, when it evaluates foreign countries.

The past of Finnish-Russian relations is said to burden present relations and effect on thinking of today's leaders. The burden of the past is also argued by citizen's opinions and generational differences. Past experiences have rooted in a deep-level, in emotions and values. One explanation about why Russia's continuities tend to be so significant, is that it has been difficult evaluate the present situation of Russia. Necessarily, the Finnish-Russian relations was not very deep at the end of the Cold War.

The present state of the relations is evaluated good or satisfactory. It is also recognised, that they have somewhat got behind Finland's western (EU and NATO) relations. Another way is to say, that the strengthening of western relations has not replaced the importance of bilateral relations with Russia.

Finland's Russia-policy is mostly considered as long-term, determined and cooperative. The specific idea is to support democracy. Even the Defence Forces have a role to play in that support.

That [scene of cooperation] is what we wish all the time. Finland' support for Russia's democratic development is of course completely unreserved. Through the Northern Dimension of the European Union, through all of these [measures] we here try to support. The military has taken its role in that, too. We try to integrate Russians, get them committed, invite them to cooperative exercises, all that ---

Preferably, Russia's democracy should become western-type. On the other hand, Finland is said to get along, even if the democratic development would not advance as wished. But in that case Russia will be less predictable especially militarily. According to one articulation, Russia's democratic development guarantees, that the former military threat does not arise.

Economic and military considerations are usually emphasised, when Russia's uncertainties are portrayed. Environmental threats are mentioned, but they are said to be fewer in the long-term. One risk is claimed to be, that Russia is seen only as a source of energy.

The change of Finnish-Russian relations is alternatively described as *normalisation*. Things are now better understood and can be discussed more openly and equally. Russia's dependence on oil-exports is said to increase the importance of Finland's neighbouring areas, but it does not bring problems only. Projects promote good relations and increase security. Also a change of generation is positively anticipated.

Even if it said, that Finland's military-coloured worries are not always understood abroad, Finland's and Russia's past relations are now understood better than earlier. But it is also suspected, that many people still have the period of 'finlandisation' in their mind. Additionally, it is said that Finns themselves tend to emphasise 'old Russia'. Some interviewees think though, that people believe that the Finns ground their conceptions on a good Russia-knowledge and undisputed interests.

Russia is evaluated to have different views about Finland and its policies. Finland is also believed to be a bit in a side-track in Russian policies now and that it has chosen its course. Finland is important for Russia as a economic player, and Russia is interested in Finland's NATO and EU policies. Understandings are divided, would Russia react on Finland's potential membership in NATO or not. The main understanding is that it would not like it. In any case, Russia is said to consider Finland and its whole geographic direction unproblematic.

Finland is definitively one of best neighbours of Russia, if we think all of its neighbours. Finland is also the one, whose Russian-border is the most peaceful. Maybe because of these things Russian peacetime forces were so much reduced right from this border.

Articulating Russia as a state gets often reinforcement from *documents* and *other texts* of the defence establishment. For instance, Russia is described as a ‘number one key factor’ in Finland’s security policy and a ‘seeker of its identity’, who tries to learn from the west, that it must approach in the future.⁴⁷ Accounts in 2001-2003 often note a kind of temporality in Russia’s situation, striving for influence and reliance on its military power.⁴⁸ Sometimes Russia is seen to go back towards Soviet times and harbour militarisation.⁴⁹

In more recent statements, the democracy talk has stepped forward. For instance, the Chief of Defence evaluated in a radio interview March 2006, that Russia’s democratic development is not good, if power will be concentrated there. In a future account of the Finnish MoD⁵⁰ Russia is believed to stay as a ‘centrally-controlled market economy’, where positive economic development creates conditions for societal stability, but demographic, infrastructural and political factors endanger that development.

In the public version of the strategy document of the Ministry of Defence *Russia is deliberately* dealt with under the title ‘Use of military force against Finland is still possible – the threat can arise even quickly’.⁵¹ In the ministry, the relationship of strategic planning and especially Russia is also described as an examination on ‘Russia’s will and military capability and a *potential* military threat their change may pose’ (my italics). Russia is said to want to return its great-power position and its military capability is evaluated to be increasing.⁵²

4.2 THE SOCIETY

Russia as a society was asked *in the interviews* by expanding the focus to Russianness and Finnishness to call cultural and identity themes and arguments more clearly forward.

The strongest discourse is represented, when differences between Finns and Russians are emphasised. Differences are mostly generalised to the whole of the Russian society. One example is statement, that the Finnish society has become more firm and people more independent than in the Russian society. A strong groove is to refer to the language difference.

⁴⁷ Suomen turvallisuusympäristö 2000-luvun alussa, 7.

⁴⁸ E.g. Alafuzoff 2001, Forsström 2002, cf. Juntunen 2003.

⁴⁹ Nordberg 2003, 514.

⁵⁰ Puolustusministeriön tulevaisuuskatsaus 2006.

⁵¹ Securely into the Future.

⁵² Puolustusministeriön strateginen suunnittelu ja Venäjä.

An alternative but secondary articulation emphasises similarity. The difference is a myth or just another burden of history. Relations between Finland and Russia may have had different traditions, but:

-- I can say that even in the time of the Soviet Union it was easy for us to understand Russians on an individual level and on the level of people. – It is probably due to the structure of our society plus our, I would say, farmer-worker-civil servant-middle class background by which we have easily identified a certain Russian way of thinking. And it has always been a great advantage for us. And it still is.

Finnish identity is not said to depend on conceiving Russianness or Swedishness. Finnishness is born inside, without external factors. It is grounded for example on a national characteristics of mind, a strong democracy conception and common experiences of Finns.

Russia's picture is typically drawn by emphasising continuities. Sometimes it relates with the argument, that Russia itself has not done its best to improve its image. A negative image is sometimes claimed to be nurtured by only some circles in Finland. A different articulation brings forward a rapid change of Russia and diversification of Russia-perceptions among Finns. All in all, Russia is constructed as relatively unpredictable and different.

The main conception about a desired Russia is, that it should be seen just as a 'normal' unproblematic neighbour that needed not to be feared. But perceptions about Russia's future course vary. In one end of the continuum Russia stays clearly different from Finland, on the other end it develops to the same direction. Differences are believed to be more levelled than expanded.

In *other texts* of the establishment Russia as a society or Russianness are usually not considered. Civil-military relations or demographic factors, in the way strategic resources are usually presented, may sometimes be discussed.⁵³

6 INNER CIRCLE: RUSSIA AS SECURITY ACTOR

6.1 THE THREAT

⁵³ E.g. Forsström 2002.

Russia as an actor in security was examined both in conflict and cooperation dimensions. To present Russia as a threat and a military one seems to be divided in two main ways. First of them underlines, that Russia does not *threaten*. An ordinary argument is that, it does not want to do that, even if it certainly has the capability. That capability is presented as a variant condition, that Russia might in some cases also develop a will to threaten or attack. The lack of will or intentions is enough to stress that no ‘real’ or ‘immediate’ threat exists in a short or middle term. The no-threat situation may be also described as natural: ‘of course’ there is no military threat now.

We have an honest evaluation that Russia does not threaten Finland here and now. Of course it is important for us, that we monitor our national security environment and specifically its potential. Since if the potential exists, we can never foresee 10 to 20 years ahead, which might be intentions to use that potential to one direction or another. So I would not use that word ‘threat’, but, as I said, it is that preparedness of the national defence.

The description and analysis of Russia’s capabilities emphasises observation and taking Russia’s military art and material seriously. Finland can learn from Russia. Strengths of its armed forces are recognised. In this approach, the possibility that Russia might offensively use its capacities are left open, however.

Another approach somewhat implicitly presents, that Russia eventually is the *only military threat* Finland faces. The existence of the sufficient military capability is stressed as its characteristics, but it is linked with the claim that *only Russia* can develop intentions the capability offensively. The threat may have changed anyhow: a ‘concrete’ military threat is not the same as during the times of the Soviet Union. Evaluations are argued e.g. by history and general perceptions of Finns, who usually consider Russia a potential even if not always an actual military threat.

Of course we don’t see any military threat there today, but if the threat usually would emerge at first place, from there it would emerge. It is the potential that exists, and if a military threat emerges it is the Russian threat. Certainly, that is our common perception here [in this organisation].

Only few interviewees talked about non-military uncertainties in the context of Russia. In one account it was considered, if the threat might develop if Russia would fall into a civil war.

The most appropriate attitude concerning threat seems to follow the rule, that changes in security environment must be monitored in order to get grounds for defining the own military capability.

The defence is supposed to work only by 'facts'. They are *calculable* military capabilities and reliable assessments based on them.

It is customary to criticise threat perceptions of public discussion. In the defence establishment, threats in general are something, that should not be discussed as detailed scenarios. The attention should be put on an importance of the defence capability in all kinds of readiness and to prevent threats in general.

It is surprisingly common thinking today, that the only and necessary precondition for readiness and defence capability is that here and now, at least next Tuesday or Thursday, we should have a threat against which we are prepared. If we would act like that, we would always be only reacting and always late.

For instance, a public talk about Finland's *long eastern border* and its defence is often labelled as just a 'layperson thought' or 'political discussion', where the defence institution does not want to intervene.

The Kola Peninsula and the St. Petersburg area are said to be strategically important to Russia, like they were already during the Cold War. Kola is still connected with relations between Russia and the United States, and with the Russian intercontinental missiles as part of its strategic deterrence. The argumentation on St. Petersburg stresses the size of the town and region but also its position as an 'outpost'. This depiction is implicitly connected with the idea, that Russia still views the West as a potential military-strategic adversary.

The interviewees did not usually initiate a strategic-operational analysis, how a military conflict might touch Finland and its relationship with Russia, and how Russian forces might act. In a marginal case the scenario was a conflict between NATO and Russia. Such a conflict might have effects on southern Finland via Estonia. In some cases Russia's military capabilities were evaluated though but mainly as static factors. Its military equipment behind the Finnish border is considered good.

The defence establishment is clearly divided, when the talk goes on how the strategic situation in northern Europe has changed after the Cold War and if main 'pillars' or core issues of Finland's defence have anything to do with the developments in Russia and in its military forces. In public

discussion and politics these core issues are usually the will to defend the country, general conscription, territorial defence and the idea to defend the country in its entirety.⁵⁴

The first choice is that the core issues are all connected with Russia. The general military-technological development has effects as well, even if its effect on Russia's action capabilities may vary. In some accounts, Finland's readiness aims at defence against any attacker, even if the Russian threat towers behind.

All [the central issues of defence] are tied to Russia and scenarios connected with Russia. --- If all the tasks of [the Defence Forces] were only about crisis management, we would need no general conscription, no territorial defence system. We would not need even the will to defend, either. You can always find those 1000 or 2000 volunteers, who want to seek adventures.

The second articulation is, that the core issues are at least very much independent of Russia. Finland develops its own system, for example, according to the 'western way of war' and its changes. The system is effected by the vast land area of Finland, its military non-alignment, the educational task of the Defence Forces and the decisions already made like reductions of forces, not Russia. According to one elaboration, the defence system is developed in order to prevent threats from arising at the first place.

[The territorial defence and related issues] are not connected [with Finland being the neighbour of Russia]. They are connected with the defence of Finland's territory and indeed with creating the action capability to do that so that Finland shows it can take care of its own area. Were threats terrorism... total defence... whatever, military threat... and it is needed to relieve Russia's fears that it could face a threat through Finland's territory.

The issue of strategic continuity and change seems to cause specific tension in articulations. An often repeated continuity in public discussion is about geopolitics or Finland's unchanged geographical position. Obviously, as a specific argument the strategy issue falls now into a logical controversy with the idea that Russia is not to be presented even as a potential military threat. But it is impossible to describe any other actor elsewhere, which would have the same capability as Russia and could not be clearly excluded as an actor able to develop threatening intentions. This way fits together with a relatively neutral talk about Russia vis-à-vis other military capabilities in Finland's security environment. Tension arises, if the speaker is asked to apply the conventional threat

⁵⁴ See earlier in Nokkala 2005, 210-223.

formula in the western direction and to relate it with the habit in Finnish public discussion, where Russia is often still viewed in threat dimensions.

In *documents and other accounts* of the establishment the Russia-talk in conflict dimensions seems to be divided according to authors. Not so explicit military-strategic analysis about what kind of threat Russia might pose, usually prevails in public accounts of higher representatives of the defence establishment or in ‘official’ texts. But even the highest officials may turn more explicit, if the texts are not originally meant to be public. Sometimes former top-ranking officials speak more openly about threats after their retirement than what they have done when still in office.

But another group of Russia characterisations is relatively prominent both in talks of retired officers of all ranks and often in analyses of serving middle-ranking general staff officers. They follow the line that Russia is finally a relatively unchanged military threat. But those officers still in service often integrate their accounts with future developments. Retired officers often rearticulate the view, that Finland must continuously have large land forces to repel large-scale invasions.

6.2 THE COOPERATIVE PARTNER

Representing Russia and its armed forces as a military cooperative partner is often connected with a wider Finnish-Russian cooperation. The interviewees largely focused on Russia’s general behaviour and the quality of cooperative relations.

A dominant theme is a Russian passivity, and it is contrasted with Finnish initiatives. Reasons are found in a Russian lack of interests towards military cooperation. They are said to focus on NATO countries, especially on the United States, instead of the small Finland. On the other hand, Russia does not have resources or consider Finnish initiatives necessarily important.

Russians are not really interested to cooperate with some tiny Finland. They don’t find it very important. They are, if I exaggerate a bit and I don’t even have to do that, interested to cooperate with Americans. They understand that they get so much political use out of it and then they --- learn operational issues there.

Mutual relations between Finnish and Russian armed forces are described as proper and unchanged. The established exchange of visits works, but the volume of cooperation is not high. The cooperation is characterised by a certain formality and even restraint if compared with the western

cooperation. On the other hand, it is said that the Russian tradition is to make deals 'on the table'. Information are exchanged, talks between staffs conducted and contacts work. The visit cooperation has moved from a central to a unit-level. According to one statement the cooperation is about maintenance of relations and not 'practice in the field'. One reason, why Russian interests have diminished, is said to be the end of materiel cooperation⁵⁵.

In more detailed descriptions Finnish and Russian soldiers understand each other well in unofficial occasions. Relations between soldiers were good already during the Cold War. Political issues are not discussed among them. .

Especially in these inspections, when we visit in units, the official talk takes about 15 minutes. But then, when we stay there perhaps overnight or have something else, a dinner maybe, they like to talk openly about their problems. They have become open-hearted.

We had [our relations] on a much more correct level [than some people in Finnish everyday politics imagined] and mutual respect with Russian soldiers.

Special obstacles emerge in training cooperation for crisis management. They are on the Russian side. On the Finnish side the disincentive is most often that 'cooperation' might be understood as an ordinary defence cooperation among the Finnish public. The media magnifies the issue, that has a bad historical echo. The public interest in Finland is additionally said to focus so much on the EU and NATO cooperation that Russia gets less attention.

The dominant conception is that Finland likes to draw Russia into cooperation like to international military exercises, which are always multilateral. Another kind of conception is that Finns actually do not have much to give to Russia in the cooperation. Essential objects of cooperation are difficult to find.

The foremost purpose of military cooperation and exchange is said to be communication of the credibility of the Finnish own military system. It is also claimed to be the Russian intention, as well. Cooperation benefits also Russia-knowledge and information exchange. Perceptions are divided in

⁵⁵ During the Soviet Union Finland bought about one third of its defence materiel from the east.

opinions, if cooperation is about trust or more about communicating a possibility of deterrence or compellence.⁵⁶

An important *document* in the contextualisation of the cooperation talk was agreed between the Finnish and Russian ministries of defence in 1998.⁵⁷ It presents an exchange of opinions, experiences and information among others about peacekeeping, training for peacekeeping, environmental cooperation and development of contacts in the fields of military history, culture, health care and sports. Forms of cooperation include exchange of visits, staff negotiations, conferences and seminars, and training. Also materiel purchases are mentioned. Contact and exchange plans are agreed to be made annually.

An example how Finnish – Russian military cooperation is publicised is a visit of a Russian delegation to the Finnish Carelia Brigade. Its commander described the visit as a normal intercourse between Finnish and Russian militaries and their familiarising with Finnish conditions. ‘Official discussions’ were not conducted during the visit.⁵⁸

The sensitivity of common exercises surfaced 2003 after the Russian minister of defence had proposed them. In the subsequent vivid media discussion his Finnish colleague Seppo Kääriäinen declined that it was only an idea about a small-scale antiterrorist exercise and not about a common manoeuvre. According to a piece of news ‘cooperation with Russia is a dreadful idea to everyone’.⁵⁹

7 DISCUSSION

The heritage from the pre-EU time of Finland

The Cold War period was an important formative ground for institutional rules and practice of the defence establishment concerning Russia in the context of security and defence policies. The way how Russia was presented was strongly normatively divided. That division emphasised that soldiers

⁵⁶ This communication means that militaries want to communicate their action capability to foreign militaries for potential conflicts so that the other side can evaluate its own capabilities also in an adversary role.

⁵⁷ Pöytäkirja Suomen tasavallan puolustusministeriön ja Venäjän federaation puolustusministeriön välisestä yhteistyöstä 22.4.1998.

⁵⁸ Kymen Sanomat 24.9.2003.

⁵⁹ Etelä-Suomen Sanomat 13.11.2003.

should concentrate on regular military issues without excessive ‘security-politicking’. In those issues the Soviet Union was not to be discussed as a threat but not a very close cooperative partner, either.

On the other hand, a security-political consensus intensified. A clear and tight norm-pressure on foreign policy discourse inside the defence establishment contributed to a compromise about what an acceptable ‘neutral’ military-strategic analysis is allowed to include. ‘Non-adversarial’ military discourse that cherished status quo was rooted. Strategic factors like principles of territorial defence had to be articulated roughly in established ways, if they were in the context of the Soviet Union. This is how the defence establishment secured its position in Finnish discussions and could arrange a suitable relation between the secret defence planning and all of its public interaction in different institutional settings.

But the international context changed drastically in a short time since the middle of the 1980s. More variation emerged in threat construction. The change challenged Russia-*pragmas* of the defence establishment. That resulted in a more open talk about Russia that also was clarified as the threat which could be assessed military-strategically.

The criticism the defence establishment already then threw towards public threat discussion pointed that especially rules conducting military strategy were experienced to require some revision. This problem appeared as a hovering about how ‘courageously’ Russia should be talked about during the years before Finland’s EU membership. In one end, the Russia-talk was ‘neutralised’, for which deep-rooted Cold War practices still gave a strong foundation. In the other end, it was felt that Finland’s militarily particular experience on Russia could not be used like earlier.

Altogether, as a Cold War legacy the Finnish defence establishment had a rather stable and unified conception, how Russia should be talked about in security and defence policies so that political decision-makers and the public at large rely on Finland’s defence capabilities. They were strongly connected with the perception that Finland’s territorial defence would work credibly, even in the case that the military threat would come from Russia, but that was not customary to declare among representatives of the defence institution.

Representing general security and defence interests

The defence established has learned to articulate general security and defence political interests tightly as interests of the defence establishment during the Cold War time. *Pragmas* which related to the Soviet Union / Russia were very important, when the own interests of the establishment were formed.

Today the general interests are still represented in a traditional way at least by their core, even if in newest accounts in a more detailed way. The essential change is that interests have been ever more orientated to international cooperation. Additionally, the position of the military defence in total defence is slowly weakening. Different borderlines become fuzzy and expressions fluctuate more than earlier. This creates a foundation also to rearticulate Russia as 'old' and 'new'.

The interests of securing national independence and living conditions of citizens are less emphasised than earlier. But the talk about promoting democracy and common values is becoming more prominent. Societal security or security and welfare of citizens is now more promulgated side by side traditional national security.

Wide security has been institutionalised also in the defence establishment. Accordingly, security and defence policies is endorsed to be quite wide-ranging and a legitimate issue to talk about, though soldiers like to talk about defence policies and stress the defence of the country territory. But internationalisation is now more strongly than earlier in the interests of the whole branch of administration. The defence institution likes to participate in defining wide-ranging security interests, but conceives them also from a specific defence perspective and an action of the defence forces. At the same time, the institution tries to keep such a Finland-centric definition, where demands of the international participation are seen from established starting-points of national defence.

The defence establishment gives even a more optimistic and complacent picture about Finland's 'general situation' than the main security texts of the government. The description of the situation is also more Finland-centric. The change in action environment is contrasted with continuity factors of Finland's decisions. The establishment also underlines the increasing importance of military force in international relations more than, for example, reports of the government do.

The establishment recognises that the change of environment has been great. It has resulted in more options to define the situation, which has, however, made them targets of discursive struggles.

Finland's 'own' situation as a neighbour of Russia is presented by positive terms, even if the establishment attaches a kind of permanent uncertainty on Russia – unlike on western countries.

The naming of different ways to analyse the environment and talk about the results of those analyses still portrays instability. It is clear that 'real threat assessments' exist. In them, the defence establishment may relatively accurately discuss, for instance, how Russia might use its military capabilities in different cases. But utilising such assessments in different public institutional settings which the establishment must meet, is not necessarily easier than earlier. It may be even more difficult.

The dominant discourse embraces military challenges which Finland's deepening EU- and NATO cooperation and the internationalisation of defence in Europe pose. But at the same time the defence of Finland's territory is strongly emphasised. Its primacy is argued by the amount and use of resources. A central argument is also, how international tasks contribute to the defence of Finland as the primary interest of the Defence Forces. An established contrast is to repeat, how other Nordic countries use their militaries totally differently from the Finnish way and how they focus abroad. This kind of discourse, however, lifts up possible rules that concern the talk about Russia.

The definition of interests within the defence establishment is obviously challenged by the point that the development of international environment shows so many alternatives which 'standard' scenarios do not reach. That brings tensions to re-articulation of institutional interests. The strong criticism on the public and media discussion shows, how the defence establishment is not satisfied with the rules it must follow. The establishment is well aware that it cannot participate in the discussion in the way its experience would give best opportunities. Evidently, behind that criticism is also policy sketching, part of which advocates Finland's quick membership in NATO⁶⁰, but Russia is hardly out of mind, either. People in the defence establishment are not, however, very eager to represent, how their expertise could be brought to bear more on the discussion.

Institutional discourse on Russia (and Finland)

Discourse on Russia as a state is about the great-power that can be only limitedly be influenced by the small but self-assured Finland. Continuity of relations is much about a worry that Russia is not a

⁶⁰ Which the public opinion and so far the 'official' policy clearly resists.

state like others. This is evident, when bilateral Finnish-Russian relations are considered. Even if the importance of the EU context is admitted, interests of other EU partners are suspected. It is still a debatable problem, if Finland could get help from Europe and elsewhere, if it would get into conflict with Russia. But on the other hand, it is feared that Finland would be in a sidetrack, when other European countries approach Russia in their own ways.

Re-articulations of Russia are based on a kind of *diplomacy discourse*, that now includes relatively strong cooperative effort. It is combined with wishes especially about Russian democracy, good economic relations with it, Russian integration with Europe and that Russia would change to be like 'us'. In the Russia as a society –discourse the emphasis given to difference limits the possibility of change in Russia, but underlines the small state identity of Finland at the same time.

It is characteristic for the defence establishment that it must lean on a specific *military-strategic discourse*. When Russia is articulated as a security actor, the relationship between it and the diplomacy discourse begins to crystallize. The international change has obviously reinforced the diplomacy discourse, which can be seen in a coherence of the military-strategic discourse, as this study seems to show.

The conceptual intermingling of the national and international dimensions of Finland's defence policy reinforces specifically the diplomacy discourse. In military-strategic talk internationality is less rooted. The Ministry of Defence endorses the strengthening of internationality more strongly than the Defence Forces.

Both the aim to revise security discussion but also to keep 'defence' a strong element of foreign and security policies can be found within the defence establishment. The 'circle thinking', created already early in the 1990s, has been a good rhetorical way to adjust action, when wide-ranging security has become institutionalised and the defence is internationalising. But it poses a challenge for the Finnish defence establishment, who has the Russia neighbour as an important object of its discussion and other action. The establishment does not need to use military-strategic argumentation in the way it had to do when the Soviet Union was still alive.

But especially the highest leaders of the defence establishment use a lot of coded talk, when they rearticulate Russia in the context of their own action. The standard way is to draw from the old 'geopolitics and history' –discourse, that is largely accepted within the Finnish society. But in the

documents of the defence establishment, which are even more analytical than reports of the government, that way is also questioned. But the idea of a relative dissuasion against Russia is still prominent and understandable as an element of military-strategic discourse also during the EU time. The talk ‘we are part of EU now’ has been well adopted within the defence establishment, but the basic interest of it to defend firstly Finland’s territory is argued on the ground that the European Union, however, is not an essential actor of defence, the way the establishment conceives such defence.

It is a paradox that Finland’s situation is represented as improved all the time, but the security environment greatly changed and more challenging than earlier. It can be interpreted to point at tensions, how the ‘traditional’ defence solution needed in the Russia neighbourhood in practice can be fitted with increasing pressures of internationalisation of defence. The attention given to the scant percentage of resources used for international missions can be partly understood as a conventional *material discourse* among soldiers.⁶¹ But such talk can also assure those domestic audiences, who suspect that Finland commits itself too much to crises around the world.

The great-power Russia – the small neighbour Finland – talk is based on a realistic framework, like the military-strategic discourse, as well. However, the belief that democracies do not fight against each other and that an advance of democracy in Russia reduces a potential military threat Finland might face, has sneaked into military talk. The emphasis on economy, democracy and integrating Russia may be forming a new dominant discourse within the defence establishment. So far, though, such discourse is probably seen to be prominent outside the establishment but calls for its reaction. The realistic geopolitical discourse may be weakening, which means also that military strategy loses some of its value also when the military might use it in public settings.

Geopolitical conceptions are articulated usually in the context when Russia is said to emphasise military force. That relates more strongly with an ‘old’ than a ‘new’ Russia and Russia as an heir of the Soviet Union. But if the change of Russia is in question, it is very much in Russian own hands. Finland is a good neighbour, but cannot much influence Russia.

When using military-strategic talk the highest military leadership protects conceptual orthodoxy but is not totally logical. Younger ranks seem to be more ready to put military strategy forward.

⁶¹ It means that soldiers are used to talk about the crucial role that weapons, vehicles etc. have in making the own and foreign military effective, instead of less calculable ‘spirit factors’.

The military-strategic professional talk and a general, more public policy discourse differ in the sense that capabilities are less prominent elements in the latter. Discursive strategies to dissolve tensions is the talk, where military potential is presented symmetrically in the environment. This means that Russian potential is presented always in the context of other foreign military potentials in the neighbourhood as well. Additionally, the lack of Russian intentions is brought forward and the general strategic development is referred to. An appropriate articulation is a challenge. Problems can be seen especially, if discussion touches threats and conflict scenarios. In them, the defence establishment cannot totally 'get rid' of Russia and retreat into a mere Finland-centric attitude the way it could do during the time of the Soviet Union.

To sum up, Russia is now rearticulated as seeking its course, uncertain and different. At least long-term predictions can not be presented about its future. This rule prevails also in the use of the 'threat-formula' that the defence establishment cherishes.⁶² Both Russian intentions and military capabilities are said to change rapidly. If military-strategic discursive practice at one point emphasises capabilities and also their calculability and an uncertainty of will, the other practice makes clear that also military capabilities can change rapidly. This possibility is argued by saying that Russia's great-power aims have returned and they get strength from its economic rise enabling it to increase its military power as well. Russia seems to be still a specific problem for the defence establishment and an image or an 'ordinary' state cannot be constructed out of it. Russia is an exception and for the military even a necessary exception.

If Russia-discourses are examined in their different institutional action settings, parliamentary defence planning (or participation in formulating security and defence policy) seems to be a specific challenge to the institution, because it has to know how to articulate military strategy and diplomacy together and deal with all interactions between Finland and Russia, if necessary. The public discussion is more unproblematic. It can be strongly criticised but also let to float freely. The defence establishment gets only somewhat annoyed, if core issues of the military are challenged by influential persons.

Military-strategic talk is avoided, when the establishment enters in public discussion. This habit may be due to understandings that such a talk is difficult to understand in the present context. A

⁶² Threat = will x capability. See *Securely Into the Future* 2025, 11.

new international military strategy has not got a suitable ‘translation’ for the Finnish public use, yet. The research cannot get deep into discussion in purely professional settings, but obviously it is the most unproblematic. The basic pattern is clear and rules established.

Discourses of the defence establishment have become more versatile during Finland’s EU membership than before that. It is a kind of opening up, but the legacy of double-talk still effects. The establishment has, however, a need to bring internationalisation elements to its ‘old’ Russia-context. This need seems to be stronger within the Ministry of Defence than in the Defence Forces, some public considerations of younger officers notwithstanding. At the same time, the establishment gets possibilities to use discourses as resources even against an excess internationalisation from its own institutional perspective. But this means also, that the most characteristic practices of the establishment have had to be adjusted more to cooperation and internationalisation talk.

Russia’s military potential is a threat but does not threaten now, cooperation with Russia is established but not intensive. This institutional discourse on Russia prioritises continuity and the military-strategic thinking behind it, but has been challenged by the new internationalisation discourse of ‘western defence’. The problem is much about that a consensual way to present Russia military-strategically has not been found in cases where it must be done publicly. *Pragmas* that conduct policies of the defence establishment are still being rearranged at the beginning of the 2000s.

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