

Transforming an EU foreign policy initiative into a 'shared policy' of equal partners: The 'new' northern dimension

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Abstract

The Northern Dimension (ND), established a decade ago, has recently been reshaped from at the outset being developed as an initiative on the European Union's foreign policy agenda to becoming a 'common policy' of the four equal partners involved, namely the EU, Russia, Iceland and Norway. The author addresses the characteristics of the 'new' ND which are put in relation to its original objectives, features and achievements during the last decade, where its two sectoral partnerships – the NDEP and the NDPHS – are given a particular emphasis. The author argues that the 'new' ND can be conceptualized as a multidimensional 'composite policy regime', in which the EU and its member-states, partner countries, as well as regional bodies and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are important actors for its general development and implementation. It remains, however, to be seen whether the 'new' ND becomes a genuine 'common policy' of the partners involved.

1. Introduction

Just about a decade ago, Northern Dimension (ND) became an official part of the European Union's (EU) foreign policy agenda on a Finnish initiative. The ND was from the outset designed to geographically embrace the area from the European Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas to the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, including the countries in its vicinity from Northwest Russia in the East to Iceland and Greenland in the West. However, it has since its inception had a very clear focus on Northwest Russia and the soft security challenges that emanate from this part of the region. Its main strengths have been considered to lie in the combined impact of the activities of all actors in the region, including EU member-states and non-members, international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector, as well as the four regional councils active in the area – the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the Arctic Council (AC) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). Through cooperation and joint projects

in various fields such as environmental protection, including nuclear safety, facilitating trade cooperation, combating communicable diseases and other health related problems, organized crime, trafficking in drugs and human beings, the ND has had the ambition to strengthen the pronounced 'common' values of security, stability and sustainable development as well as to avoiding the establishment of new dividing-lines in the region as a results of the EU enlargement.

Due to the new situation in the region in which four of the initial seven partner countries. i.e., the three Baltic States and Poland, in 2004 became EU members, and as the Road Maps for the four Common Spaces between the EU and Russia were adopted in May 2005 at the 25th EU–Russia Summit, the ND was last year transformed. From initially being developed as a regional approach towards the Baltic Sea region on the EU's foreign policy agenda whose development from the start has been rather dependent on the Nordic member-states, their EU presidency periods¹ and on the activism of the European Commission, the 'new' ND that entered into force on 1 January 2007 is described as a 'shared policy' of the ND partners where the concept 'joint ownership' is stressed more than ever. Whereas the partner countries from the outset comprised Iceland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia – today, there are four partners on equal terms, namely, the EU, Russia, Iceland and Norway.

The ND has from its inception entailed a number of innovative elements – some even more pronounced in its 'new' version – and as such it does not represent traditional EU foreign policy-making. Its geographical scope includes also a number of member-states – initially the three Nordic EU members (and northern Germany) but since 2004 also the three Baltic States and Poland; EU foreign policy initiatives traditionally address third countries. The ND involves an extended consultative approach towards the non-EU partner countries, and today it is even seen as a 'shared policy' of the equal ND partners; non-members are traditionally not allowed to participate in the EU foreign policy-making process and to influence the policy formulation. Other interesting features include the fact that only a part of the most important partner, Russia, is addressed (its north-western regions including Kaliningrad) and that it involves a high level of cooperation with other regional bodies for its implementation; the Commission is even a formal member of two of the these councils. These features and its transformation make the ND appealing to address from a conceptual point of view.

¹ Indeed, at a Nordic prime ministers' meeting in Malmö, Sweden, in June 1998, the ND was identified as one of the themes that the Nordic EU members would cooperate in promoting with an eye to the forthcoming EU presidencies of Finland (1999), Sweden (2001) and Denmark (2002) (cf. Arter, 2000: 692. For a deeper study on the role of the Nordic EU presidencies in the development of the ND, see Haglund 2004a).

How can the 'new' Northern Dimension be conceptualized, and what impact can its transformation have on its standing in the region when it comes to achieving pronounced objectives and enhancing actors' cooperation and coordination in order to better deal with common challenges? The main argument in this study is that insights drawn from international regime theory seem pertinent when it comes to conceptualizing the transformation of the ND into a 'common policy' of four equal partners that is based on a number of sectoral partnerships that together contribute to the concrete implementation of the ND, and in which both state and non-state actors play a fundamental role. The study initially illuminates the main characteristics of the ND in terms of objectives, implementation mechanisms and important actors involved, where the features of the 'new' ND are put in relation to its original characteristics. In order to better understand the recent transformation, its main achievements in the last decade are treated. The final part constitutes an attempt to conceptually approach the 'new' ND.

2. Origins and characteristics of the Northern dimension

In the spring of 1997, the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen wrote a letter to the President of the Commission Jacques Santer and suggested that the EU should develop a strategy for the ND; as the Union had acquired a natural 'northern dimension' with the 1995 enlargement, it was now need for a coherent and efficient EU policy that clarified and addressed the economic, social and environmental soft security challenges (excluding traditional 'hard' security matters) and generated activities to explore the opportunities existing in the region. The aim of the proposed ND was to address the challenges in the area, enhance the Union's international role in the region, bringing economic benefits, and strengthening the positive interdependence between the EU, Russia and the Baltic Sea region, as well as integrating Russia into European and global economic structures. In order to achieve the aim a great number of cooperation areas was envisaged, including a more efficient use of natural resources, safety of energy supply, environmental protection and nuclear safety, combating border problems such as organized crime, illegal immigration and drug trafficking, facilitating economic interaction by improving infrastructure and removing obstacles to trade and investment, as well as improving living-standards in the partner countries (see Lipponen 12 Nov. 1999).

The ND constitutes Finland's first political initiative as an EU member. The notion itself appeared in some form already in Finland's membership negotiations, despite the fact that neither the 'Northern Dimension' concept as such was mentioned at this point, nor the intention to make it a common EU policy

approach. Yet, it brought attention to the new elements and Nordic values that the Nordic countries Finland, Sweden (and Norway) would bring to the Union after accession, i.e., the specific climate concerns of the 'High North', the Nordic welfare state model, openness and transparency, equality and strict environmental regulations (see also Arter, 2000: 677–82; Jopp & Warjovaara eds., 1998: 8–11).

The ND can be related to the previous EU approach towards the Baltic Sea region² developed during the mid-1990s, to the Barcelona Process (the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, or the so-called 'Southern dimension') initiated in 1995 and to the launched activities of the CBSS. Its timing was linked both to the recent EU membership of Finland and to its forthcoming EU Presidency period.³ Through a rather intensive lobbying campaign the Finnish government managed to get the support from the Commission and the other member-states (largely thanks to its low financial profile and its linkage to the 'Southern dimension') to develop the ND as an official part of the EU's foreign policy agenda prior to its EU Presidency term in 1999. A relevant part of the political background to the official launch of the ND was that the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Russia, signed in 1994, entered into force in December 1997. This offered a new institutional framework for the relationship between the EU and Russia, including cross-border cooperation (CBC). Hence, Lipponen's letter to the President of the Commission regarding the proposed Northern Dimension was positively received and Santer promised a progress report on the topic for the following EU Summit. Consequently, the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997 requested the Commission to submit an 'interim report' on the ND, and the following Cardiff European Council of June 1998 called for a Communication. The resulting Commission Communication on a 'Northern Dimension for the policies of the Union', adopted by the Vienna European Council in December 1998, states that '[t]he security, stability

² The first EU approach towards the Baltic Sea region was developed in the early and mid-1990s through a number of Commission communications, developing a distinct regional approach in the EU's external relations to the countries in the area. The first communication, the 'Orientations for a Union Approach towards the Baltic Sea Region' from 1994, was adopted by the Council in its 'Council Conclusions on the European Union policy *vis-à-vis* the Baltic Sea Region'. The second communication was the 'Baltic Sea Region Initiative', adopted in 1996, much supported by the Swedish government. As there are several similarities between the BSRI and the ND launched in 1997, it seems possible to argue that the Finns were strongly influenced by the already existing Union initiative towards the region when forming the basis for the ND. Finland wished to accelerate, complement and speed up the EU's activities in the Baltic Sea region, and add some more particular Finnish concerns, especially *vis-à-vis* Russia, to the existing regional approach (cf. Haglund, 2004).

³ In addition, the Dublin European Council in 1996 gave an explicit support to increased regional cooperation in Europe – from the Arctic region to the Black Sea – which Finland interpreted as a support for this new initiative towards the Baltic Sea region.

and sustainable development of Northern Europe are of major interest for the Union' (Commission of the European Communities, 25 Nov. 1998, §12). In contrast to the original Finnish initiative, the 'High North' is less stressed. The Communication recalls the Union's activities and instruments with regard to the ND, sets out the challenges facing the region, identifies the areas where the EU could provide added value, and establishes guidelines and proposes operational recommendations for future activities. The ND was to promote economic development, regional cooperation, stability and security in the region, improve energy and transport infrastructure, address cross-border issues, contribute to narrowing the disparities of living standards and prevent and ward off threats originating in the region, such as reducing environmental and nuclear threats (Commission of the European Communities, 25 Nov. 1998, §1). The non-members of the region were at this stage not called partner countries, and one did not speak about a policy for a Northern Dimension, but rather a Northern Dimension for the policies of the EU (see also Heininen, 2001: 30).

In the General Affairs Council's Conclusions 'On the Implementation of a Northern Dimension for the Policies of the European Union' from May 1999, it is mentioned that the implementation and further development of the ND should be done in close consultation with the now called 'partner countries'. As the implementation should take place within the framework of existing contractual relations (Europe Agreements towards the candidate states in the region, the PCA and the European Economic Area agreements with the non-EU Nordic states) financial instruments (PHARE, TACIS, Structural Funds/INTERREG) and regional councils (the CBSS, the BEAC, the AC), it can be seen as a rather low-key approach. An enhanced participation of the private sector and of IFIs as well as cooperation with North America was further deemed useful (Council of the European Union, 31 May 1999, §3; Cologne European Council, June 1999, §1 undefined 96; Commission of the European Communities, 25 Nov. 1998, §25).

As we can see, the ND was firmly anchored within the EU prior to the Finnish EU Presidency period. As a part of the Finnish strategy, it was now time to bring in the partner countries in the process. Consequently, a first gathering of all the ND partners was organized in Helsinki in November 1999 through the first Foreign Ministers Conference on the ND in order to include the partners' interests in the ND process. As a result of this, the ND was adopted by all partner states. In line with the Finnish Presidency priorities to move the ND to the implementation phase, the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 invited the Commission to prepare a *Northern Dimension Action Plan*, which was adopted by the Feira European Council in June 2000. The first Action Plan for the period 2000–2003 lists the horizontal challenges, existing instruments, funds and commitments

involved in the ND area. Three priority areas were identified namely, the environment including nuclear safety, the fight against organized crime and the situation of Kaliningrad (Valtasaari, 1999; Helsinki European Council, 1999, §I.21.62). In 2002, the Danish EU Presidency prepared for the second Northern Dimension Action Plan (2004–2006), which was adopted by the Brussels European Council in October 2003. In this, Kaliningrad and the Arctic region were singled out as areas needing special attention. Kaliningrad had been a priority before, but the Arctic region with accent on the ‘High North’ of Russia gained greater emphasis in the second Action Plan (Danish Presidency, 21 Oct. 2002; Commission of the European Communities, 12 Jul. 2002: 2–3). Five priority areas were established: economy, business and infrastructure; social issues (including education, training and public health); environment, nuclear safety and natural resources; Justice and Home Affairs (JHA); and CBC. This Second Action Plan has been followed by annual progress reports, and the third and last progress report was on the year 2006.

3. A ‘new’ Northern dimension

As the circumstances of the ND changed a few years ago due to the 2004 EU enlargement and the adoption of the Road Maps for the four Common Spaces between the EU and Russia in May 2005, the ND partners decided at a fourth ND Foreign Ministers Conference on the ND organized by the British EU Presidency in November 2005 to reshape the ND to better fit into the new operational environment. At the first ever ND Summit organized by the Finnish EU Presidency in Helsinki in November 2006, the ‘Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document’ and the ‘Political Declaration’ were solemnly adopted. The ‘new’ ND policy entered into force on 1 January 2007 when the second Action Plan expired.

There are two main characteristics in the ‘new’ ND. *First*, it is considered a ‘common policy’ of its four partners (EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland). It is described as their joint achievement, with a continuous involvement of the other main ND participants and actors (particularly the four Northern regional councils and the IFIs). This shared policy is seen as providing a stable and permanent basis for discussing Northern issues and concerns, as opposed to the previous character of the ND as an EU foreign policy initiative being based on temporary three-year action plans. ‘Common ownership’ is considered the ultimate goal, including a full Russian participation in all ND structures and activities (Commission of the European Communities, 4 Jun. 2007: 6; *Northern Dimension Policy Framework*, 24 Nov. 2006). *Second*, the ND is seen as the ‘regional expression in the North of the EU/Russia Common Spaces’ with the full participation of Iceland and Norway,

with the implication that the ND cooperation areas should be re-focused in line with the Common Spaces. Indeed, the sector division of the 'new' ND coincides notably with those covered by the EU–Russia Common Spaces (i.e., economic cooperation, JHA, external security, and research and education including culture), covering six areas, compared to the five listed in the second Action Plan:

- *Economic cooperation*: promotion of trade, investments, customs, SMEs, business, innovation, well-functioning labour markets, financial services, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, forestry, transport and logistics, telecom and IT.
- *Freedom, Security and Justice*: facilitation of people-to-people contacts, development of border management, good governance, efficiency of the judicial system and judicial cooperation in criminal and civil matters, fight against organized crime, trafficking in human beings, drugs trafficking, illegal immigration and other cross-border crime.
- *External security*: civil protection.
- *Research, education and culture*: increased cooperation in research and education exchange programmes, youth policy, promotion of people-to-people contacts, links between cultural and economic life, visibility of regional and local cultural identity and heritage.
- *Environment, nuclear safety and natural resources*: reduction of the risk of nuclear and other pollution, maritime safety, protection of the marine environment, biodiversity, forests, fish stocks and protection of the Arctic ecosystems, cooperation in the field of water policy, climate change, environmental legalization and administrative capacity-building.
- *Social welfare and health care*: prevention of communicable diseases and lifestyle related diseases and promotion of cooperation between health and social services (Commission of the European Communities, 4 Jun. 2007: 6).

In comparison with the priority sectors included in the second Action Plan one can notice that the sectors of economic cooperation, JHA and environmental protection are the same as before. The two areas of public health, and education and research are somewhat more pronounced in the 'new' ND as they before were grouped within the same priority sector. However, the most prominent change in comparison to the second Action Plan is the new introduced sector of external security (civil protection), which is in line with one specific field in the EU–Russia Common Spaces. In addition, CBC does no longer constitute a separate priority sector but is seen as a cross-cutting theme of all of them. The geographical priorities have expanded from two to four in the 'new' ND, including not only Kaliningrad and the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions as in the second Action Plan, but now also the Baltic and Barents Sea Regions. However, the focus

remains as before on Northwest Russia. An interesting remark regarding the geographical scope is that Belarus is now seen as potentially being encouraged to participate in expert level cooperation in the ND framework (see *Political Declaration of the Northern Dimension Policy*, 24 Nov. 2006; *ND Policy Framework*, 24 Nov. 2006: 4). Moreover, besides this focus on Northwest Russia, the 'new' ND will continue to address the objectives of specific relevance in the North, i.e., its fragile environment, indigenous peoples' issues, cultural diversity, health and social well-being.

The objectives of the 'new' ND are highlighted in its founding documents. It aims at 'providing a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development.' The ND will be based on internationally recognized principles, such as 'good governance, transparency and participation, sustainable development, gender equality, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, cultural diversity, social cohesion, fair working conditions and corporate social responsibility, non-discrimination, the protection of indigenous peoples and supports the further strengthening of civil society and democratic institutions.' It will also aim to improve the conditions for border crossing of people and goods (Northern Dimension Policy Framework, 24 Nov. 2006: 3).

The funding of the 'new' ND will continue to be based on co-financing by ND partners and, when appropriate, from other sources, including the IFIs. There is no specific EU budget line available. Instead, ND activities are implemented by various actors and financed by different sources, including EU funding and programmes, national budgets, international regional organizations, IFIs, regional and local public organizations, other public bodies, such as universities and private sources, including civil society. Regarding Community funding for ND activities, this has up until the end of 2006 been based primarily on the TACIS and INTERREG programmes. As from January 2007, the main source is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and its country specific programme for Russia and the CBC programme (for instance the ENPI CBC programmes along the Finnish–Russian land-border and the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013 under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective). This is in fact the only way in which the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is implied in relation to the ND. The ND can also benefit from other applicable EU programmes. In addition to this, since March 2001 also the European Investment Bank (EIB) may offer special loans for environmental projects in Northwest Russia (Statsrådsberedningen, 1 Jul. 2001: 22; Commission of the European Communities, 5 Jun. 2001: 2–3).

3.1 Institutional arrangement of the Northern dimension

Various institutional mechanisms have been developed in the ND over the last decade. First, there are the *Foreign Ministers Conferences*, which take place every two years with the participation of the four partners (EU member-states/Commission, Norway, Iceland and Russia). In addition, an extraordinary ministerial meeting may be called upon. These ministerial meetings provide policy guidelines and monitoring to the ND implementation, and their agendas are prepared in full consultation between all ND partners. The first Foreign Ministers' Conference was organized by the Finnish EU Presidency in November 1999; the second by the Swedish EU Presidency in April 2001; the third by the Danish EU Presidency in October 2002;⁴ and the fourth was chaired by the British EU Presidency in Brussels in November 2005. Russia has proposed to organize the first Foreign Ministers Conference in the 'new' ND during the fall of 2008 in Saint Petersburg.

Besides the foreign ministers meetings, there are *Northern Dimension Senior Officials Meetings*. These are held whenever necessary and, as described in the 'new' ND documents, at least every alternate year between Ministerial meetings. Partners and observers are invited to both ministerial and senior officials meetings. A first Senior Officials Meeting in the Second Action Plan was held in October 2004 during the Dutch Presidency in Brussels and a second was organized in September 2006 by the Finnish EU Presidency in Imatra, Finland. In November 2007, a first Senior Officials meeting in the 'new' ND was held in Saint Petersburg.

A new structure has been established in the 'new' ND, namely an expert level *Steering Group* with representatives of the EU, Iceland, Norway and Russia. It has the ambition to provide continuity between the meetings mentioned above, and it will, as a rule, meet three times a year, avoiding duplication with the other meetings (see Northern Dimension Policy Framework, 24 Nov. 2006: 6). Indeed, three such meetings were held in 2007.

In addition to these formal institutional arrangements within the ND, the European Parliament proposed during its conference on the ND in February 2007 to introduce a recurrent event in the form of a *Northern Dimension Parliamentary Forum* to be held every two years. This would be prepared by the President of the European Parliament and the Speakers of the parliaments of Iceland, Norway and Russia, having a flexible structure and ownership in order to promote the coordination and exchange of views between different institutions for regional cooperation in the North. This is intended to provide representatives of the parliaments

⁴ The Danish EU Presidency also organised a second conference in relation to the ND on the so called 'Arctic Window' of the ND, in Ilulissat, Greenland, with an ambition to bring in Arctic issues in the ND.

of the EU member-states and the ND partners, the European Parliament, together with the parliaments of the ND observer states and the elected representatives from indigenous peoples' and regional parliamentary assemblies, opportunities for discussing new initiatives, with the ambition to bring greater democratic legitimacy to the ND (Northern Dimension Parliamentary Conference, 1 Mar. 2007: 3).

In the context of the institutional arrangements of the ND one may also add the first ever *Northern Dimension Summit* organized by the Finnish EU Presidency in Helsinki in November 2006.⁵ Moreover, two *Northern Dimension Business Forums* have been held: the first in Tallinn during the Swedish EU Presidency in April 2001, and the second during the Danish Presidency in October 2002. Finally, the two sectoral partnerships in the ND – the NDEP and the NDPHS – involve rather developed institutional arrangements as we will see in the following section.

3.2 Practical implementation through sectoral partnerships

Two partnerships have developed during the last decade that together contribute to the concrete implementation of the ND in two separate sectors. In March 2001, the Swedish EU Presidency invited the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) to host a meeting in Helsinki to discuss key issues related to the financing of infrastructure and environmental investments in the ND area. On a proposal by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the meeting suggested to establish a *Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP)*, aiming at launching a more structured cooperation between IFIs, the Commission, bilateral and multilateral donors and the non-EU partner countries in order to more efficiently address environmental problems spilling over from Northwest Russia, in particular the Kola Peninsula, into the area around the Baltic and Barents seas (Steering Group of the NDEP, 2002: 3; Commission of the European Communities, 5 Jun. 2001: 6). The NDEP was adopted by the Göteborg European Council in June 2001 and a pledging conference for the launch of its Support Fund was organized by the Commission and the EBRD in July 2002.⁶ At this conference, Russia, the Commission, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden announced initial contributions totalling €100 million. During 2003, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK joined the Fund as contributors. The Fund is open to new contributors from existing and new donor countries, where the minimum first contribution is €10 million. As a further development of the Göteborg Euro-

⁵ This was organized in connection to the general EU–Russia Summit.

⁶ For this reason, the Board of Directors of the EBRD approved the specific rules and established a set of principles of the Support Fund in December 2001.

pean Council decision on extending the EIB lending mandate to projects under the ND in Russia for an amount of €100 million, the ECOFIN Council in November 2003 agreed on an additional allocation of €500 million for EIB lending to Russia and the Western NIS in the period 2004–2006 (NDEP Information Memorandum, 28 Feb. 2005: 4; EBRD, 2001; Council of the European Union, 5 Jun. 2001: 5; Göteborg European Council, 2001, §64).

The NDEP Support Fund is designed to pool grant contributions and ensure harmonized delivery of assistance. The NDEP has two separate envelopes or ‘windows’: environmental projects in Northwest Russia (non-ear marked, environmental window), and projects aimed at improving the management of nuclear waste on the Kola Peninsula and the Barents Sea (the nuclear window).⁷ These projects require loans and grant financing from a number of different financing sources as well as local financing. There are currently 15 priority environmental projects whose combined cost exceeds €2 billion. These projects aim to deliver environmental solutions to Northwest Russia in the areas of district heating, solid waste management, wastewater treatment and energy efficiency (cf. NDEP Information Memorandum, 28 Feb. 2005: 14–15).⁸ In 2006, Germany pledged €10 million over 2006–2009, Finland pledged €6 million over 2006–2009, and Norway made a donation of 2 million Norwegian kroner in 2006. With this additional funding, the NDEP Support Fund reached €242 million by the end of 2006, out of which 149.7 is earmarked for the nuclear window.

Regarding the institutional arrangement, the main operational body of the NDEP is the *Steering Group*, composed by the European Commission, the *Implementing Agencies* (EBRD, EIB, NIB and the World Bank/IBRD) and Russia. The Chair of the Steering Group and the *Secretariat* rotates among the IFIs involved on an annual basis and decisions are adopted by consensus.⁹ It has further an *Assembly of Contributors*, composed by a representative from each contributor and chaired by the biggest contributor – the European Commission. The NDEP Support Fund is governed and administered by a *Fund Manager* – the EBRD. There is also the *Nuclear Operating Committee*.

⁷ The conclusion of the Multilateral Nuclear and Environment Programme in Russia (MNEPR) agreement has been seen as a precondition to opening the ‘nuclear window’, which finally was signed at a meeting in Stockholm on 21 May 2003. The MNEPR establishes a legal framework for assistance and cooperation activities allowing effective implementation of environmental projects dealing with nuclear safety and waste management, particularly in Northwest Russia (Commission of the European Communities, IP/02/1024, 9 Jul. 2002)..

⁸ In September 2007, the most substantial NDEP grant agreement of €10 million was signed between the EBRD (as the NDEP Fund Manager), and the Kaliningrad water utility Vodokanal.

⁹ The NIB started as its chair in mid-2001, and was followed by the EBRD. Since July 2007, the Steering Group is chaired again by the President of the NIB.

Besides the NDEP, a second sectoral partnership has developed within the ND umbrella. In 2002, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health assigned the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health the task of examining the best way to enhance international cooperation in health and social protection within the framework of the ND. It proposed the establishment of a *Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Wellbeing* (NDPHS) (cf. Lipponen, 16 Sep. 2002). The Third Foreign Ministers' Conference brought up the issue, and the NDPHS was finally established at a meeting in Oslo of Ministers of Health and Social Affairs and other High representatives of the founding partners (see the Oslo Declaration, 27 Oct. 2003). These partners were the five Nordic countries, the three Baltic States, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, the European Commission, the World Health Organization (WHO), the BEAC, the CBSS, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the NCM and the Joint United Nations Programme against HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (NDPHS, 27 Oct. 2003).

The NDPHS is multinational and multi-stakeholder in its composition, and the membership is comprised of thirteen partner countries and eight partner organizations.¹⁰ It provides a forum for concerted action and intensified cooperation to promote the objective of sustainable development in the ND area by tackling challenges to health and social well-being, with a particular focus on Northwest Russia. It assists the partners and participants in capacity building, and supports the reorientation of and greater efficiency within the health and social care systems, not least by enhancing the extent of coordination between international activities within the ND area. The partners focus on increasing political and administrative coherence between the countries in the ND region, narrowing their social and economic disparities, and improving peoples' overall quality of life (NDPHS, 27 Oct. 2003, §1).

The partnership has two main priority fields for cooperation and coordination. First, to reduce the spread of major communicable diseases and prevent life-style related non-communicable diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, sexually transmit-

¹⁰ The partner countries are: Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The partner organizations are: the European Community represented by the Commission, BEAC, Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC), CBSS, ILO, IOM, NCM, UNAIDS and WHO. Eligible NDPHS partners are the founding partners, the EU member-states and ND partners, the European Commission and other relevant institutions and IFIs. Eligible participants are interested sub-national administrative entities in the ND area. Other countries or organizations associated with the ND may become partners or participants of the NDPHS in accordance with national legislation or statutes and through a procedure to be established by the CSR (see Oslo Declaration, 27 Oct. 2003).

ted infections, cardiovascular diseases, resistance to antibiotics), as well as other major public health problems that arise from the use of illicit drugs and socially distressing conditions. Second, to enhance the level of social well-being and to promote socially rewarding lifestyles, with a particular focus on youth. Here, an emphasis is put on encouraging proper nutrition, physical exercise, safe sexual behaviour, ensuring good social and work environments, as well as supporting alcohol, drug and smoke-free leisure activities.

Regarding the most recent development, the main activities of the NDPHS was in 2007 related to (1) taking a coordinated approach to preventing major public health and social problems in the ND area by developing the NDPHS Project Database;¹¹ (2) ensure adequate funding for the NDPHS and other parties' activities and projects, inter alia, through the NDPHS Project Pipeline (see below); (3) provide expert input to the preparation and implementation of joint activities carried out within the partnership framework, inter alia, by the NDPHS Expert Groups; (4) involving all relevant stakeholders in endeavours to achieve NDPHS goals and objectives, and further engaging non-partner countries and organizations; and (5) promoting the visibility of the partnership and its mission (see NDPHS Work Plan for 2007).¹²

The funding of joint projects within the partnership depends on national, bilateral or multilateral financing. It has recently been decided that a 'Project Pipeline' should be developed that would enable actively seeking sources of funding. In addition, the partnership will examine the possibility of organizing a NDPHS-sponsored resource mobilization (pledging) conference in 2008, which would bring together potential donors from the ND area and beyond to fund selected projects in the Pipeline (NDPHS, 27 Oct. 2003, §6).

Regarding the institutional arrangement, the NDPHS is based on *Partnership Annual Conferences*, which constitute the highest cooperation structure and the main decision-making body, chaired by one of its members. There is a *Committee of Senior Representatives* (CSR), which is the regular coordination mechanism with meetings twice a year or whenever required. The permanent *NDPHS Secretariat* started its activities in September 2004 and is hosted by the CBSS

¹¹ Since 1 February 2007 the partners have been working to implement the NDPHS project on 'A Database on Public Health Projects in North Eastern Europe and its neighbouring countries'. It is co-funded by the NDPHS partner countries and the European Commission and has the duration of 2 years.

¹² In 2006, a new NDPHS application was developed to the EU Public Health programme for funding that would allow the partnership to implement these mentioned priorities. This application, which was the highest ranking proposal, was awarded funding by the Community. Co-funding will come from 10 NDPHS partners and its Secretariat (Commission of the European Communities, 4 Jun. 2007: 31).

Secretariat in Stockholm, yet, with its own Head and Senior Adviser (NDPHS, 17 Nov. 2005: 2).¹³ In addition, *Expert Groups* may be established composed by experts from interested partners and participants and other international experts in order to carry out the tasks of the CSR. There are currently four Expert Groups in the NDPHS; on *HIV/AIDS*, on *Prison Health*, on *Primary Health Care*, and on *Social Inclusion, Healthy Lifestyles and Work Ability*. Expert Groups may also establish *sub-groups* to deal with further specified issues, and *Associated Expert Groups* may be appointed.¹⁴

In the founding documents of the 'new' ND it is expressed that the ND partners favour the model of partnerships (in particular the NDEP) as an effective way to organize practical implementation of projects in the agreed priority sectors, and that the ND partners will examine the possibility to apply this 'partnership model' to other sectors (cf. Commission of the European Communities, 4 Jun. 2007: 31). The ND partners should ask ND senior officials to examine the desirability of a ND partnership on *transport and logistics*, and to examine enhanced cooperation in the field of *energy efficiency and renewable energy*, inviting for this purpose also experts and IFIs.¹⁵ Any such new partnership 'should enjoy support from the Northern Dimension partners, be ensured appropriate funding from the start, be self-sustainable in terms of management and supplement the efforts of national authorities' (Northern Dimension Policy Framework, 24 Nov. 2006: 7; Political Declaration of the Northern Dimension Policy, 24 Nov. 2006). As a result of this request, the NIB hosted an expert workshop on the *Northern Dimension Transport and Logistics Partnership* (NDTLP) in Brussels in June 2007, which discussed a background paper prepared by NIB in April 2007 on the desirability of such a NDTLP. At the following ND Senior Officials meeting in November 2007, the ND Steering Group was instructed to set up a working group in order to study the possibilities of creating the new NDTLP, which would report its conclusions to the next ND Foreign Ministers Conference in the fall 2008, where a formal decision could be taken. The expressed aim of the NDTLP would be to 'accelerate the implementation of large transport or logistics infrastructure projects and to facilitate the approval of smaller projects by offering a faster access to a large financial pool' within the geographical scope of the ND (Nordic Investment Bank 2007: 14).

¹³ Efforts are currently made to reach an agreement on the Secretariat's legal status, which will make it independent and more effective (see ND Senior Officials Meeting, 21 Nov. 2007).

¹⁴ There are currently two Associated Expert Groups, namely the CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) and the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN).

¹⁵ Also at the European Parliament's Conference on the ND in February 2007, the participants asked all ND partners to examine the possibility of applying the partnership model in these two areas (ND Parliamentary Conference, 1 Mar. 2007: 2).

It would provide a forum complementing existing modalities and mechanisms and enabling the coordination of the financial resources provided by IFIs, governments and the private sector for large transport infrastructure projects, especially those with regional importance. The focus would be on the northern main axes and cross-border infrastructure, roads, railways, the development of ports, efficient logistical chains, trade facilitation, and customs procedures (see also Väyrynen 2007).

The Senior Officials Meeting in November 2007 also welcomed the NCM Conference on the 'Northern Dimension and Culture', organized in Kajaani by the Finnish Ministry of Education in October 2007, which instructed the ND Steering Group to discuss at its nearest meeting together with the NCM the perspective of cultural cooperation in the ND framework 'including the possibility to create a Partnership.' (ND Senior Officials Meeting, 21 Nov. 2007: 2. See also Väyrynen 2007). Energy efficiency and renewable energy were also recognized as a promising direction of cooperation in the ND. As the ND partners already cooperate in these fields on a bilateral basis and also in the framework of the BEAC, the ND cooperation should be 'complementary and developed in coordination with the existing cooperation structures.' It was also discussed that projects in this sphere could be realized in the NDEP framework (ND Senior Officials Meeting, 21 Nov. 2007: 2–3). One can thus notice that a NDTLP is currently being developed, and that a fourth sectoral partnership might come to be launched in the area of *culture*. Whether or not a ND partnership is considered needed in the sector of renewable energy and energy supply remains, however, uncertain.

4. Concluding discussion: Conceptualizing the 'new' Northern dimension

The ND has from its inception been based on a partner-oriented approach and last year it was even transformed into a 'shared policy' of the four equal partners involved with a permanent structure instead of being based upon temporary action plans. Due to its geographical inclusion of some EU-members, its broad scope and connection to various internal EU policies, the active role of the 'equal' non-EU partner countries both in its formulation, development and implementation, along with the acknowledged potential of other regional bodies and IFIs, the ND does not represent traditional foreign policy-making, despite being developed as an EU external relations' initiative. Today, this is even less the case with its recent reshaping into a 'common policy' of the four partners, where the EU is seen as an equal partner to Russia, Iceland and Norway. Member-states are usually not addressed in foreign policy approaches and non-EU actors are tradition-

ally not allowed to participate in EU foreign policy-making. This makes the ND challenging to conceptualize.

The ND is not a single-issue policy area in its own right. It is rather a broad multidimensional policy framework, involving a range of various policy-areas and a great number of actors. With these characteristics and by using Sedelmeier & Wallace's (2000: 429–30, 439) terminology in an enlargement context, it can be labelled a 'composite policy'. This description involves an analytical distinction between two dimensions of policy applicable to the fact that the ND is rather dependent on the EU and its member-states, not least the Nordic ones. First, at the *macro level* of policy, the overall objectives, principles, broad framework and parameters of policy are described, including the direction for the cooperation and the policy instruments (policy framework and range of policy areas). At this level, policy-makers occupy positions at the top of the decision-making hierarchy within the relevant political system (national and EU) – i.e., the Commissioners, their cabinets and Directorate-Generals responsible for external relations, and the member-states' Foreign Ministry officials, foreign ministers and heads of government or state. Second, to translate these objectives into substantive outputs requires a decision on what instruments to use and how to use them, which means more detailed decisions across a wide range of EU policy areas relevant to the ND. In other words, the macro policy is composed of a range of distinctive *meso policies*, which simultaneously are parts of other EU policy areas and share their instruments in order to achieve the objectives. At this level, the principal policy-makers are sectoral ones in both the Commission and the member-states, such as ministers from different policy fields.

Besides constituting a 'composite policy', the ND possesses several characteristics comparable to the consensus definition of international regimes, and has therefore in an earlier study by the author (Haglund 2004a) been labelled a 'composite policy regime'. The general aim of international regimes is to strengthen the ability of their participants to cooperate in specific issue-areas by facilitating international agreements and to provide a guiding framework for joint problem-solving and horizontal coordination of the actors involved, and they tend to arise wherever there are underlying cross-border transaction flows and where the level of interdependence is high among the participants (cf. Krasner, 1982: 187, 196; Hasenclever, Mayer & Rittberger, 1997: 16; Arts, 2000: 530; Young, 1991: 282. Levy *et al.*, 1995: 278–9). These characteristics are comparable to the ND. However, instead of being based on one single issue-area and on sovereign states, the ND is 'composite' in its nature, involving a broad range of cooperation areas and coordination activities across a number of issue-areas. A number of values, principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures are embedded in this 'composite

policy regime'. A variety of actors are involved in its development and implementation, and a great number of EU policies are concerned, which make the regime 'multidimensional'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the regime has been rather dependent on the EU as being developed as one of its foreign policy initiatives and only recently it has come to be considered a 'shared policy' of the four partners. It still remains to be seen whether the ND will be transformed into a 'composite policy regime' that is truly based on four genuinely 'equal' partners, or if it continues to be dependent on one of the four; the EU. The status of 'equal' non-EU partner countries, the important role given to regional bodies and the fact that the ND focuses on common challenges, shared values, as well as on jointly defined cooperation areas instead of differentiating between various kinds of countries ('insiders' versus 'outsiders') in the region, makes an international regime approach pertinent for the analysis of the ND.

Embedded in the proposed 'composite' concept the author has previously argued that a number of 'sub-regimes' might appear in the development of the regime, which may be related to the discussion above on the *meso policies* involved in the *macro policy* of the 'composite' concept (cf. Haglund 2004a: 25 ff.). The NDEP can be seen as one such developing sub-regime within the ND, which addresses one specific issue-area, one kind of common problem in the region, which has its own specific principles, priorities, decision-making procedures and funding approach that includes a set of rules. Another sub-regime is the NDPHS, similar to the NDEP, but addressing another issue-area. A third sub-regime, the NDTLP, is already being developed, and a fourth and a fifth one might come to be established in the years to come in the sectors of culture and energy.

In this context, it is interesting to relate these sub-regimes to the components of the ND composite regime. Both the NDEP and the NDPHS focus on the currently most important *principle* of the ND, namely CBC in order to address common, mainly soft-security challenges in order to strengthen sustainable development. Both put soft-security challenges (environmental and nuclear safety problems, and problems related to communicable diseases, human health and social wellbeing) in the centre of attention. They acknowledge the general regime *norms*, namely the importance of equal participation of the partner countries, and at least implicitly emphasize the value of avoiding new dividing-lines. Both have a particular focus on Northwest Russia and Russian active involvement. They have their own *decision-making procedures, rules, and funding mechanisms*

¹⁶ Xenakis has in this context used a similar approach by applying regime theory to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which is conceptualized as an embryonic multidimensional international regime that involves many issue-areas (see Xenakis, 1999; Xenakis, 2000; Xenakis & Chrysoschoou, 2001: 14, 108).

for the making and implementation of the initiatives. Although existing sectoral partnerships (or sub-regimes), it is still possible to discern overall regime elements embedded in the umbrella – or macro level – character of the ND composite regime, valid for all the distinct issue-areas.

By the endorsement of the 'new' ND documents, the leaders of the four partners have declared their firm commitment to cooperate within the ND framework. As we have seen in this study, the development of the ND has been based primarily on the activism of the three Nordic EU member-states and of the Commission. Russia has taken a somewhat laid back position. In order for the ND to become truly efficient, the most important partner – Russia – needs to be convinced and active in its development and activities. As Russia today is seen as an equal partner to the EU in this new 'shared policy', this might be the right incentive for Russia to become fully involved. Russia was considered an equal partner also prior to the transformation of the ND. However, as the ND in general has been developed primarily as an EU initiative, adopted and developed by EU actors before the partner states have been involved, a certain imbalance among the ND actors has been visible. In addition, Northwest Russia, with its soft security challenges, is often considered the target of the ND as a foreign policy of the EU. If Russia considers itself being truly equal to the EU in the 'new' ND, this may increase its support to launched ND activities. The recent proposal of Russia to host the next Foreign Ministers Conference in the fall of 2008 can be interpreted as an alteration of Russia's position towards the ND; something that is needed in order for the ND to have a greater impact in the region. The new structure of a Steering Group and the fact that some of its meetings already have been held in Russia can also be related to the new character of the ND as a 'common policy'.

When conceptualizing the 'new' ND, it is of course important to put it in relation to other similar arrangements towards the EU's closest neighbours. One of the main foreign policy priorities of the EU is currently the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), established in 2004. How is the ND 'composite regime' related to this? Despite the ambition of the Danish EU Presidency in 2002 to integrate the ND within the 'Wider Europe initiative' (the origins of the ENP), the ND is not a part of the ENP and does not cover the same neighbouring states as the ENP. However, one can notice that many of the characteristics of the ND were picked up by the ENP, such as the focus on a number of shared values, common challenges, domestic reforms by the target states and a joint ownership (see Haglund 2004b). However, whilst both policies have a 'partner' approach, this seems stronger in the 'new' ND as this is considered a 'common policy' of equal partners, than is the case in the ENP. As Russia is seen as a 'strategic partner' of the EU, Russia prefers not being part of the ENP and its relations with the EU are

based on the Common Spaces. Since the TACIS agreement was replaced by the ENPI in January 2007, the solution by the EU was to include Russia in the ENPI (which also explains the very name 'European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument'), despite not being a partner in the ENP.

The recent development of the ND into a permanent 'shared policy' of its four equal partners is indeed interesting to address from a conceptual point of view. The argument put forward in this study is that the application of a regime approach is one fruitful perspective; one that brings in common challenges, values and the equal status of the partners involved, and one that acknowledges the potential development of sub-regimes within the over-arching macro-level regime.

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