

# Identity and Foreign Policy

Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration

*Edited by*

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Published by

Ashgate Publishing Limited  
Wey Court East  
Union Road  
Farnham  
Surrey, GU9 7PT  
England

Ashgate Publishing Company  
Suite 420  
101 Cherry Street  
Burlington  
VT 05401-4405  
USA

www.ashgate.com

#### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Identity and foreign policy : Baltic-Russian relations and European integration

1. European Union - Baltic States 2. Baltic States - Relations - Russia (Federation) 3. Russia (Federation) - Relations - Baltic States 4. Baltic States - Politics and government - 1991- 5. European Union countries - Economic integration

I. Berg, Eiki II. Ehin, Piret  
327.4'79'047

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Identity and foreign policy : Baltic-Russian relations and European integration / [edited] by Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7546-7329-3

1. Baltic States--Relations--Russia (Federation) 2. Russia (Federation)--Relations--Baltic States. 3. Baltic States--Politics and government--1991- 4. European Union countries--Economic integration. 5. European Union--Baltic States. I. Berg, Eiki. II. Ehin, Piret. III. Title: Baltic-Russian relations and European integration.

DK502.715.I34 2008

327.479047--dc22

2008031805

ISBN 978-0-7546-7329-3

eISBN 978-0-7546-8990-4



**Mixed Sources**

Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources  
www.fsc.org Cert no. SA-COC-1565  
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Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall.

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complex process. This may contribute to the continuation of strategic zigzags and parallel existence of several Latvian foreign policies. Latvia has effectively become a discursive battlefield for diverging ideas and interests among national political elites and societal groups and the search for a reconstructed consensus will remain part of Latvian politics in the foreseeable future. The outcome of this debate and eventually adopted policies will have clear implications for Latvia's place in the European Union in general and Latvian-Russian relations in particular.

## Chapter 8

# Neighbourhood Politics of Baltic States: Between the EU and Russia

Dovilė Jakniūnaitė

### Introduction

The biggest enlargement in the history of the EU not only brought 10 new members into the Union, but also multiplied the length of its external borders and created new neighbours and neighbourhoods. The EU decided to manage these extensive changes by creating a new institutionalized policy – the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).<sup>1</sup> The eastern part of the EU's neighbourhood coincides with the traditional sphere of interest of another major player – Russia. Increasingly, the shared neighbourhood is treated as a sphere of competition by both the EU and Russia. The “orange revolution” in Ukraine, the “rose revolution” in Georgia, the problem of “frozen conflicts”, competing energy projects involving eastern ENP states – all these instances reveal the growing presence of the European Union in territories where Russia has sought to retain its influence and hegemonic action autonomy. Thus, the eastern neighbourhood seems to have become a new front line in the already complicated EU-Russian relations.

Almost immediately after their entry into the EU, the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – took a keen interest in the possibilities provided by the ENP to develop and redefine relations with the “new” neighbours. Estonia stated that the “shaping and effective implementing of the EU Neighbourhood Policy is one of the most essential goals of our foreign policy” (Mihkelson 2004); Latvia promised “to devote particular attention to the countries of Eastern Europe” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia 2006); and Lithuania proclaimed to have regional ambitions in the eastern neighbourhood (Paulauskas 2004). Thus, the EU Neighbourhood Policy became the important focus of the foreign policies of all three Baltic states (for example Berg 2005; Galbreath 2006; Gromadzki et al. 2005).

<sup>1</sup> The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), adopted in 2004, applies to Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Usually, the ENP is divided into two dimensions – the eastern and the southern. This chapter deals only with the eastern dimension of the ENP, which covers six states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Why have the countries of the eastern neighbourhood become so central to the foreign policy of the Baltic states? This chapter argues that the eastern neighbourhood policy is used by the Baltic states to consolidate their identity as true European and Western states and to redefine and change their relations both with Russia and the EU. To support this thesis, the chapter examines the neighbourhood concept and policy of the Baltic states against the broader background of EU and Russian policies in the shared neighbourhood. The chapter proceeds, first, by explaining the nexus of identity and foreign (neighbourhood) policy. The second section presents the neighbourhood conceptualizations of Russia and the EU as structural constraints for the behaviour of the Baltic states. The third section analyses the neighbourhood policy of the Baltic states as an instrument for consolidating their European identity and strengthening their status and position in the EU and Europe as a whole.

### Identity Representations and Foreign Policy

Constructivist analysis in the discipline of international relations emphasizes socially constructed identity politics (for example Neumann 1996b; Wendt 1992). According to this theoretical position, the way actors behave mostly depends on how they imagine themselves. Identity is defined as a set of relatively stable understandings about the self and its role in social relations. It gives order and stability to any social system because identity is knowledge about the self which is shared with the others. According to Hopf, "an individual needs her own identity in order to make sense of herself and others and needs the identities of others to make sense of them and herself" (Hopf 2002: 4). Thus, identity is the answer given to the question "who am I?" using the other(s) as definitional representations.

Identities are not reified, stand-alone entities. Identities are always relational. "The identity/difference nexus is performatively constituted by both self and other" (Rumelili 2004: 37) and this means that identities are not defined and supported one-way, just by the self alone, they are supported through interactions with the other. Conceptualization of identities is performed in the context of the others performing their identity representations and constructing them through their own foreign policy practices. Thus, self-construction is inseparable from the constructions by the other about the self. How the other thinks about us influences our own identity constructions.

The notion of the other is always connected with the idea of difference. Identity always draws the border which delineates the homogeneity inside and the difference outside (see Kowert 2001: 282 (f. 7)). The other must be different from the self to have some meaning. That is, who (what) we are can be known only through what we are not (see Rumelili 2004). Marking difference from the others determines who does and does not belong to the imagined community. In international politics, the self of the state and also its relation to the other manifests itself through its foreign policy.

In the constructivist interpretation, foreign policy is not about physical survival or defending the national interests. Foreign policy, first of all, is about the mutual construction of the other and the self through drawing and maintaining the lines of difference, usually, through drawing borders. Of course, the state identification processes are also happening inside the state using the internal others, historical myths, national narratives, collective memories, symbols and so on (cf. K.E. Smith 2002). However, social constructivism generally assumes that the state's identity cannot be constructed just internally: "it is only in interaction with a particular Other that the meaning of a state is established" (Hopf 2002: 288). Thus, foreign policy is a manifestation of state identity, and its analysis can be used to understand how the state is transforming, what message about itself is transmitting to the world, how it understands the world, and how it sees the others. For the state, the most important other most frequently is the closest other – the neighbour. The existence of the neighbour as the most proximate other creates also the unavoidable need to clearly draw the border from it and to define the differences.

All three Baltic states share common others, both positive and negative. Put simply, Russia is regarded as the main negative other, while Europe constitutes the primary positive other (cf. Pavlovaite 2003; Lehti 2005; Miniotaite 2003). These two others defined for a long time the surrounding space of the Baltic states, making them seek identification with Europe and resist the influence of Russia. However, identities, as noted by Kuus (2004) do not always allow clear distinctions between the self and the other but involve gray areas. The Baltic states' relationship to Europe is the exemplary situation: Baltic states are Europeans yet not fully. There are various othering, "orientalising" (cf. Kuus 2004) processes that make them appear or feel as inferior, lesser parts of Europe. And exactly this perception forces the Baltic states to constantly confirm their Europeaness and to constantly seek confirmation of their aspirations from (western) Europe (for example Budryte 2005a, Kuus 2002a).

Mälksoo (in this volume) explicates this situation using the concept of liminality. Liminality is an ambiguous borderline condition; a situation where some entity finds itself between two stable orders and seeks to transgress its status into the stable one. This semi-insiderness of Baltic states (see also Aalto 2006) forces them to constantly confirm and reconfirm their European identity and to constantly search for new ways, different policies of becoming European. Besides constituting borderline cases for Europe, the Baltic states are also well aware of their smallness and irrelevance (more about that in the third section). The liminal condition combined with small size makes the existential insecurity of the Baltic states another inseparable characteristic of their identity.

Identities are not stable constructs. They are floating, fluid in the sense that meanings defining it constantly interact and change what they are signifying. Similarly, states are constantly looking for more precise, accurate ways to define themselves and their place in the world. Changes in identity perceptions are manifested in transformed foreign policy, although sometimes it is namely the

desire to sustain and strengthen existing narratives of the self that forces foreign policy to change.

In order to understand better how the Baltic states project their identity towards the neighbours and how the conceptualization of other actors about them influences their interpretations and actions, we must first examine how the two most important others of the Baltic states – Russia and the EU – transmit their identity through the neighbourhood policy and how they define their relationship with the Baltic states.

### Differing Neighbourhood Policies of the EU and Russia

Russia and the EU are often regarded as two very different international actors. The EU constitutes an anomaly for traditional conceptual categories in international politics: it is neither a state, nor a normal international organization. A variety of conceptualizations have attempted to grasp the EU's peculiar combination of supranational and intergovernmental features; it has been variously described as a "post-modern", "post-Westphalian", "post-nationalist" (Rumelili 2004: 27) and "multiperspectival polity" (Ruggie 1993). Its "overlapping forms of authority" and "nonexclusive forms of territoriality" (Ruggie 1993: 168–174) have been noticed. It acts using "soft power" (Kagan 2003) in order to become a "normative power" (Manners 2002). Supposedly, power politics and sovereignty discourses lose their traditional meaning in the context of EU studies, and therefore, the EU's neighbourhood policy should not be equated with a neighbourhood policy of a state.

Russia, in contrast, is frequently characterized as a very "modern", territorial state which cares about achieving hard power and strives for recognition as a great power (for example Hedenskog et al. 2005). Directed by principles of *realpolitik*, it pursues its national interests and is not overly preoccupied with morality (Bugajski 2004). It uses material power (economic, military, political) to gain both global and regional leverage (Lucas 2008a).

For both actors – their differences notwithstanding – the neighbourhood is the place to fix or to convey their prevalent understanding about themselves. Through their neighbourhood policies we can also see how they are trying to construct the closest others – their neighbours. Their neighbourhood conceptualizations reveal a lot about the actor's world view and self-view.

The European Neighbourhood Policy, officially established in 2004, is designed "to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union" (Commission of European Communities 2003: 4). The EU takes a normative stance towards its neighbourhood, constantly stating that its policy is built on a "mutual commitment to common values" (*ibid.*). The stress is clearly on "common", on what the EU and new neighbours share. However, when we examine the relationship more closely, the alleged normative equality disappears. The EU becomes more of

a value exporter by giving conditions and presenting itself as the best example (see also K.E. Smith 2005: 763). The EU clearly states who is in the dominant position, whose values are better, and consequently, who has the right to demand and direct.

The Neighbourhood Policy appears to be based on a "student-teacher" relationship. This asymmetrical discourse is further strengthened by the responsibility idea (Prodi's 2002 speech is an example of responsibility discourse). The EU's neighbour becomes the one who needs teaching, who does not know what to want and, consequently, how to reach it. Neighbourhood becomes the space which is dependent without being invaded.

Second, the ENP represents not only the EU as the value exporter; the European neighbourhood also involves a statement about the EU's borders. Romano Prodi admitted that the EU cannot enlarge indefinitely: "We need a debate in Europe to decide where the limits of Europe lie and prevent these limits being determined by others" (Prodi 2002). This desire to delineate Europe shows that the European neighbourhood discourse is still part of the traditional, "modern" nation-state discourse and the EU still holds on to a Westphalian worldview.

This tension between the two discourses – the discourse of closeness and the discourse of openness – describes the ENP. The EU currently has chosen to use both definitions of its borders. On the one hand, the EU is depicted as open, expanding and inclusive; on the other hand, there is the need to find the limits of the EU. These discourses construct both the EU's neighbours and the EU itself. The neighbour is unstable, uneducated, in need of illumination, and the neighbourhood is the space where the fight for stability takes place, as the EU is both opening itself up with its hegemonic normative position and closing itself by bordering processes.

The eastern neighbourhood of the EU is part of Russia's western neighbourhood. A powerful representation of the Russian understanding of the neighbourhood is embodied in the term "near abroad" (*ближнее зарубежье*), which was used by Russia to describe the former republics of the Soviet Union and implied a special relationship between these countries and Russia. Repeated for almost 10 years, the "near abroad" term left its trace both in Russia's more recent neighbourhood constructions, and also in the perceptions of Russia in the neighbouring states. The neighbourhood as the "near abroad" implied a status of dependence which was regarded as an inevitable consequence of common history. The imperial connotations about expansion and influence were undoubtedly present, as well as the idea about former Soviet republics not constituting the "real abroad". The term was widely used during Yeltsin's era; however, after Putin became the president the term gradually lost its popularity in the Russian political discourse (Lomagin 2000). Later, Russia's neighbourhood discourse became more subtle although the meaning did not change much. This stability is connected with how Russia perceives itself in international politics and what it considers the most important aspects of its identity (for more on identity components of Russia, see Jakniūnaitė 2007).

It is hardly novel to note the aggressiveness and offensive behaviour of Russia towards its neighbours in general, and towards the Baltic states in particular. Russia's "new imperial" policy towards the post-Soviet countries involves diverse instruments, including diplomatic pressure, propaganda, disinformation campaigns, control of energy resources, usage of ethnic groups, creating social discontent, and so on (Bugajski 2004). In Paulauskas's view, "Russian government has an active albeit little advertised agenda aimed at influencing the politics and the policies of the Baltic States" as well as "using the 'Baltic factor' in the domestic politics" (2006: 11).

So, Russia's approach towards the neighbourhood appears to be more aggressive than that of the EU. Russia defines its relationship with its neighbourhood also asymmetrically but more from the position of the master, rather than the teacher – it controls, protects and distrusts. The same idea about responsibility for the neighbour is also prevalent, but it arises from a different definition of the relationship. As in the case of the EU, there is also the same demand to define the boundaries through identity definition (cf. Dubin 2004). However, the tension with the neighbour arises because of the rude methods used in relations with the neighbours. From here the negative assessment of Russian foreign (neighbourhood) politics arises.

Europe as cultural, civilizational and geographical category is the most important "other" for Russia (for example see Billington 2004; Neumann 1996a). Europe for Russians has a mythologized image, it is the good "which we do not have"; however, Europe is also identified with the loss of cultural individuality and social disorganization (Dubin 2004). Russia both wants and does not want to be European (see Chapter 9 in this volume). This ambiguity is very well reflected in the identification of Russia as being special, unique, as laying in between (cf. Zvereva 2005). This in-between is between Asia and Europe, that is, in Eurasia. This description moves towards the idea of not belonging to anybody, to being alone and unique. Thus, the spatial self-construction of Russia is to be everywhere and nowhere.

That is why those living nearby formally are considered and accepted as neighbours, but their representation is very vague and indeterminate – they either just share their space/place with Russia, or are part of the Russian space. The case of the so-called compatriots (*соотечественники*) is a very good example (the analysis of the compatriot case is based on Jakniūnaitė 2007). Although Russians live all around the world, the Russians living in the post-Soviet space are singled out. They are the ones who need help, who need to be defended. The compatriot discourse is based on the attitude that Russia must compensate their loss of the homeland and that one does not have to live in Russian territory to be its citizen mentally. Interpreted this way, the homeland for the compatriots becomes not a territorial formation, but the entity that feels the responsibility but in this case cannot propose anything tangible.

The phenomenon of the compatriots demonstrates how the neighbouring space is understood as a strange place, "not ours" anymore; however, it does not belong only to the neighbours either. Thus, the closest others become the ones

with whom the neighbouring space is shared, and they are more of an object, not the independent subject. That is why attempts by outside actors to establish a relationship to the neighbourhood is treated as an infringement of Russia's own territory, as for example the debates on the enlargement of NATO demonstrated. Fofanova and Morozov (in this book) analysing differing historical narratives of Russia and Baltic states come to the similar conclusion by noting conflicting strategies to construct political communities. Thus, the space around and nearby Russia is not just neighbouring space, but specifically Russia's neighbourhood. That which is neighbour to Russia can only be neighbour to it alone and can have relations with it alone; anything more is a threat to Russia's own identity, territory and borders.

To sum up, the neighbourhood policies of the EU and Russia can be explained as the clash of two discourses of power – "normative" and "imperial". This is the fight where the competition is about the right to form the identities of the others and where the drive behind this is the demand for self-definition and own limits. The tension between the different conceptualizations of the neighbouring space and their role in the identity projects of both makes the position of the three Baltic states ambivalent and ambiguous. From Russia's side they are not treated as independent subjects. They are like the objects through which Russia is solving its territorial identification issues. For the EU, the Baltic states are formally in, they "officially" belong to Europe. However, the Baltic states do not feel that way; instead they feel the constant urge to confirm and remind how they are part of them. So, the Baltic states have this constant need to show the outside world that they exist, who (what) they are, and how they have changed. Their approach towards the EU's new neighbours expresses and constructs these identity representations and also demonstrates how they creatively use and react to the identity constructions of the EU and Russia.

### The Baltic States Between Two Dominating Neighbourhood Discourses

Having reached two most important and most desired goals – membership in the EU and NATO, Baltic states for a short while found themselves in a condition of zero gravity. It was not clear what was expected from them now that they were safe and secure and on the path towards prosperity. However, the Baltic states have found a new foreign policy rationale – to help the eastern (and, more recently, south-eastern) neighbours. The new EU external policy instrument, ENP (which not incidentally was also promoted by the Baltic states themselves), proved to be exceptionally well suited for defining the new foreign policy mission of the Baltic states.

Before the membership, the priorities of the Baltic states have been the integration into the Euro-Atlantic alliance. It was seen as the only way to ensure the survival of the three small states in the western neighbourhood of Russia. It was also the only way to confirm and validate their status as the true European

(Western) states. So, from one side, the shift of foreign policy goals towards the eastern neighbourhood can be understood in quite simple terms – Baltic states were in need of new foreign policy goals. From the other side, it is not difficult to notice that the EU membership did not dissolve the feeling about Russia as an important security consideration. “There is more than enough evidence to believe that Russia seeks to retain political, economic and even cultural influence in the Baltic States” (Paulauskas 2006: 19) – it is the prevalent opinion about Russia’s goals in the Baltic states. Furthermore, it became clear that it will not be easy to influence the Russian policy of the EU as it was initially considered, nor the status of the Baltic states as true Western, European states has been confirmed unconditionally.

This section analyses how the Baltic states create and secure their identity through the ENP framework and how their understanding of themselves forms and constructs policy towards the neighbours. That means that the Baltic states have chosen (not necessarily voluntarily) to participate in the clash analysed above as additional architects of meaning, belonging and territoriality. This section also examines the peculiarities of the neighbourhood concepts of the Baltic states and discusses how their neighbourhood conceptualizations demonstrate the urge to become fully European.

What kind of identity is being constructed by the Baltic states through their versions of the ENP? Immediately after the EU’s new policy towards the neighbours was declared, all three Baltic states proclaimed an active and successful ENP to be their foreign policy priority and emphasized the particular relevance of their own transition experience and reform know-how:

Latvia will devote particular attention to the countries of Eastern Europe, with which it will continue to develop intensive political dialogue and co-operation so as to transfer the reform experience which it has accumulated in recent years (Latvia’s Foreign Policy guidelines 2006–2010 2006). (For similar statements by Estonian and Lithuania representatives see, for example, Adamkus 2007; Ojuland 2004b; Paet 2005; Seimas Resolution 2004.)

The Baltic states also regarded the ENP as an opportunity to overcome the perennial problem of being small and insignificant. Statements like “size does not matter” (Adamkus 2005a, 2007); “the impact of a small country is based on the strength of its arguments” (Pabriks 2006: 5); or “Estonia’s experience shows that despite the limitations posed by the smallness of a country, it also opens up opportunities for success if we have the skills and courage to use them” (Rüütel 2006; see also Paet 2005) demonstrate the preoccupation of the Baltic states with the size issue. The acceptance of the identity of the small state stimulates the foreign policy of the Baltic states. It urges them to use the symbiotic relationship with the EU to their advantage and to use it as the balancing tool between these two big players. An active adaptation of the neighbourhood policy of the EU appears to be the

possibility to disregard the size issue and solve the balancing problem giving the leverage against Russia.

The Baltic states became strong and active proponents regarding the “new neighbours” and first of all sought to represent themselves as influential and independent actors and experts of post-communist transition. This allowed them, the recent “graduates” in making democracy work, to become “professors”. Just a couple of years ago, the Baltic states were the ones to be taught and tested in doing things the “European way”. With the help of the ENP, they very quickly took over the role of the teacher and began to emphasize their experience, expertise and credibility, as well as the student status of the neighbouring states:

How we can prepare, contribute to and by doing so – help finish the homework – the countries that have chosen to embark on the road of democracy and transatlantic integration ... how to apply the knowledge of successful transitions in Eastern Europe to countries and regions that are far far away from the cradles of the Velvet and the Singing Revolutions (Adamkus 2005a). Previously Latvia was a recipient of assistance during its democratization process. The moment has now come when Latvia can pass on its experience and knowledge to other countries and international organizations. Latvia has carried out a number of reforms which the “old” European Union member states are yet to face ... Good project can fail only because it is not adapted to concrete country and Latvia can offer its help (Pabriks 2005). We, Estonians, have not forgotten the days when we were supported in our aspirations. Today, we are a nation that wants to help its neighbours – to help those neighbours who want to help themselves (Ojuland 2004a).

The Baltic states perceive themselves as having changed a lot through the help of western Europe and the EU. They are transmitting the message that they have managed very quickly to jump from being underdeveloped and post-Soviet to becoming modern European states. This “brand new” Europe is prepared to help the remaining liminal cases to make the leap from one category to another. The willingness to help is also motivated by the desire to move the borders of the European civilization further from the borders of the Baltic states in order to move closer to the “centre”. The Baltic states do not like to be perceived as liminal states, a condition that not only perpetuates the feeling of insecurity, but also destabilizes identity construction processes. Their new role *vis-à-vis* the eastern ENP states allows the Baltic states to indulge in a sense of superiority and instills greater self-confidence, something that they so often have lacked.

Thus, the partnership between the Baltic states and the new eastern neighbours is also asymmetric despite the commonalities that are often emphasized. In various declarations by Baltic leaders, one can detect the attitude that the situation of eastern partners is worse than anything the Baltic states experienced during their own transition. Eastern ENP countries have had very little democratic experience

before (for example Adamkus's references to the lacking Singing or Velvet revolutions above), they are much poorer and much more underdeveloped:

And certainly not the least important factor – responsibility. The responsibility that the wealthier bear for the less privileged. The responsibility that the more advanced bear for those yet developing. The responsibility that club members bear for membership candidates (Paet 2006).

The asymmetric relationship that the Baltic states are constructing is also reflected in the responsibility discourse they are spreading. This is a continuation of the EU's responsibility discourse, pointing at the important role of those who have successfully completed the transition and thus possess know-how that Old Europe does not have. And precisely this allows them to be the better teachers, most suitable for the job.

The EU as a teacher is nothing new. The novelty is how the former students immediately became teachers after completing their own lessons. The asymmetric relationship formulated by the EU regarding the adjacent outside world was very easily overtaken by the Baltic states in order to show how they are better, more successful, hence, more lucky, but all together prepared to share and to teach. This superiority also transcends further and is manifested in the relationship to the "older" EU states as well. The Baltic states have not only transformed. They still remember "how it was" and know how "it feels" to undergo the transformation. They can be better teachers than their teachers.

Not surprisingly, Baltic leaders talking about the ENP or European-Russian relations easily adapted also the EU value discourse:

[Lithuania should become] a dynamic and attractive centre of interregional co-operation, which spreads the Euro-Atlantic values and the spirit of tolerance and co-operation across the borders and unites cultures and civilisations (Agreement between Political Parties of the Republic of Lithuania 2004). Since we share the same values, we believe, that these values are good and right, and that observing and spreading them in the world is a just case (Paet 2005).

The Baltic states quickly learned the discourse of democracy and human rights and have now become not the receivers, but the spreaders of these ideas and norms. The Baltic states use the ENP for the formulation of their neighbourhood policies, constantly repeating and reinforcing, reconstructing and recreating their identity of perfect teachers, good, advanced members of the EU that understand what the EU is about and are able to spread the ideas beyond the EU's borders. The reinforcement of this identity demonstrates again how important it is to be recognized and accepted.

Kuus noted the strategy of current new EU members to "locate their countries in Europe while othering their Eastern neighbours, particularly Russia" (Kuus 2004: 474). The neighbourhood discourse of the Baltic states, however, does not engage

in "othering" in a strict sense, that is, the Baltic states do not try to draw clear borders in the east (except, perhaps, with Russia). Although one of the functions of the ENP is to draw definite borders around the European community, the Baltic states' discourse on the eastern neighbours lacks this dimension. Instead, the Baltic governments are sending a different message – a message about the impossibility of the EU closing itself off. If the EU wants security, it must be open and ready to expand:

The founding fathers of the European project wisely kept wide ideological and physical boundaries for the rapidly evolving economic and political model of Europe. ... there is no point for us to reinvent the wheel (Adamkus 2005b). ... no geographic barriers should be set for the European Union's enlargement. Since, if the EU sends, in the future, to those that wish to accede, the message that the door is closed, then those left out in the cold might make a choice that could be dangerous and damaging for Europe (Paet 2006).

Although being asymmetrical and dominating, the neighbourhood discourse of the Baltic states is also inclusive and open. It seems that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are ignoring the EU's identification needs, which are manifested through bordering. The implementation of the EU strive for fixing its borders would place the Baltic states on the frontier and perpetuate their status as border states. This also would mean that they would feel the clash between the EU and Russian neighbourhood policies most severely. Kuus (2004: 473) asserted that "enlargement reconfigures the specific borders of Europe but not the underlying dichotomy of Europe and Eastern Europe". Having realized that, the Baltic states want to move closer to Europe's centre, not by othering through bordering but through including and blurring, or even erasing, the lines with the neighbours in order to be "further" from Russia. So, the neighbourhood policy is used to create the identity of the Baltic states as truly European, advanced, modern states as well as to help solve their security concerns.

After the EU's largest-ever enlargement there was a lot of hope that "at least for once in their troubled history the stakes for these countries [Baltic states] are their credibility and prestige, rather than national survival" (Paulauskas 2006: 6). It appears not to be that simple, however. National survival is still in question and the neighbourhood policies of the Baltic states still reflect the thinking about the borders and, hence, security. The fact that they are trying to push these borders further than the official border of the EU does not mean that they do not care about the borders.

All three Baltic states feel very strongly the fragility of their territorial security. The discourse of being "small, but important" that is directed more towards the outside still has not replaced the dominant internal discourse of being "small, therefore vulnerable". The independence these states got in 1990 or 1991 is first of all about national territorial sovereignty (see among others Kuus 2002a; Miniotaite 2003; Schwartz 2007). Not surprisingly, the most important other of the Baltic

states, Russia, emerges here again. It is the border of this country where the virtual fence has to be built.

The ENP does not cover Russia, and the Baltic states also rarely talk about Russia in the context of the ENP, except some occasional remarks noting that “we must not forget Russia”. The ENP value discourse is not applied to Russia either. However, the Baltic states are well aware that their neighbourhood discourse competes with the Russian one, which also includes them. Thus, the Baltic states’ interpretation of the ENP further and deeper perpetuates the dichotomy between Europe and Russia.

In that sense, the ENP for the Baltic states is still about defining the borders and limits of Europe. These borders, however, are drawn further (east) than the current official EU discourse does. The goal is to resist a blurred, expansionist and therefore threatening neighbourhood conceptualization by Russia and to be finally accepted as equal subjects in the neighbouring as well as bilateral relations.

My final point about the neighbourhood policies of the Baltic states concerns the question of Baltic unity. The tendency to treat the three states as a homogeneous unit has been criticized by several authors (see, for example, Paulauskas 2006: 21–26; Kapustans 1998). As Miniotaite explains, “Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania having been ‘put in the same basket’ by 50 years of the common past, are united not by a positive identification, but by a construction of a common danger from the East” (Miniotaite 2003: 213). This lack of positive identification, except the common difficult past, has troubled the proponents of Baltic unity. Indeed, almost 20 years of independence has not brought these states very close to one another. Although on the public level there is no discussion of any major differences, no coordinated or institutionalized Baltic version of the ENP has emerged either.<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to understand why this is the case. Instead, in the context of the current discussion, it is more interesting to go into some differences among the Baltic states regarding the ENP. Although subtle, these differences seem to reflect important differences in the identity constructions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Of the three, Latvia places the least emphasis on the ENP. While Latvia also emphasizes the need to transfer knowledge and experience to “countries lying in the Eastern Europe” (Penke 2005), it tends to categorize relations with eastern neighbours under the broader framework of development policy. Latvia positions itself as a “responsible member of international society” (Penke 2007: 11) and tries to avoid more particular geographical obligations. The idea about state smallness in internal identity constructions is prevalent (cf. Schwartz 2007), but Latvia’s foreign policy documents do not seem to emphasize this. Thus, in Latvia,

<sup>2</sup> Possibilities to strengthen the ENP cooperation are discussed. See, for example, the speeches at the 13th Baltic Council and the conference “Baltic States and the EU Neighbourhood Policy”, which took place 23 November 2007 in Riga (see <http://www.baltasam.org/?DocID=704>, accessed 25 January 2008). However, any tangible results are still to be reached.

we find the least amount of euphoria about the ENP. The proclaimed foreign policy objectives regarding the eastern neighbours appear to be rather pragmatic, focusing on the need to “strengthen economic ties and cross-border cooperation” (Penke 2005: 9). The pragmatic as well as dialectical nature of Latvian foreign policy is also noticed by Andris Spruds in this book.

On the other end of the scale of ENP euphoria is Lithuania, which immediately after gaining EU membership declared the wish to become “the regional leader through its quality of membership in the EU and NATO and through proactively developed neighbouring relations” (Paulauskas 2004). Through this, Lithuania portrayed itself as “an active country, visible in the world and influential in the region” (Seimas Resolution 2004). For such a small country it was clearly a very ambitious task, quite difficult to support with existing resources. Subsequently, leadership rhetoric appears to have diminished and been replaced, to an extent, by an idea of partnership. However, these initial ambitions demonstrate how Lithuania sought to be distinguished from the other Baltic states and also from its bigger neighbour in the south-east, Poland. This state is the additional important other in the country’s identity constructions because of historical reasons. Lithuanian identity is strongly connected with Poland’s and it tends to perceive itself as competing with Poland in the eastern neighbourhood (the Poles do not seem to share this sentiment, see, for example, Sirutavičius 2001; Korzeniewska-Wolek 2001). The idea about Lithuania as a regional centre can also be treated as a national interpretation of the “normative power Europe” narrative (see Miniotaite 2006: 5).

Estonia’s ENP rhetoric, although perhaps less leadership oriented, does not differ that much from the Lithuanian one. The biggest difference lies in the greater emphasis on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (for example: “(...) reason why we want a stronger Common Foreign and Security Policy is Estonia’s smallness. Just as the EU is as strong as its Member States, each Member State is exactly as strong as the EU as a whole” (Paet 2005)). Of the three, Estonia is most acutely aware of its smallness; this may help explain the fact why Estonia’s approach seems to be less ambitious and more pragmatic, compared with Lithuania. Estonia also carefully cultivates an image of itself as a technologically advanced state.<sup>3</sup> Quite logically, this aspect was also noticeable in how the country defined the spheres of expertise and assistance: compared with the other two states, Estonia puts more emphasis on information and communication technologies and e-government development (for example Ojuland 2004a).

Wæver, among others, has noted that conceptions of Europe are constructed in a way that supports existing national identity discourses (Wæver 1998a). As a result, we have a lot of localized understandings of Europe. The meaning of Europe for every state must coincide with its own identity constructions. We could see here how the ENP has provided opportunities for Baltic states to strengthen

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, “E-estonia”, [http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat\\_175/pea\\_175/1163.html](http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat_175/pea_175/1163.html) (accessed 10 February 2008).

their European identity through emphasizing and celebrating their own narratives of self. Similarly, the differences in the Baltic states' neighbourhood policy conceptualizations demonstrate the continuity in how they construct their foreign policy in general and how they usually stress their differences from one another: Estonia as the smallest and the most advanced one, Latvia as constantly finding itself in between, Lithuania, owing to its different historical experience, as having more capabilities and, therefore, a right to be more ambitious and assertive.

Hence, the analysis of the neighbourhood policy of Baltic states shows that by taking a proactive role towards the neighbourhood, the Baltic states are trying to become more European and transcend their own, still strongly felt, status as semi-insiders. Two narratives have been created and reinforced since the restoration of independence: one is that of belonging to the West, while the second is the narrative of the dangerous and threatening other in the East (cf. Miniotaite 2003). Membership in the EU moved the focus of Baltic states' foreign policy elsewhere. The neighbour, in an adapted Baltic version of the ENP, became the object through which the small Baltic states can demonstrate their "realness" to the world, to show that they can matter. The neighbourhood has become a space for self-expression, a land of opportunities that the Baltic states can venture into to bolster their own sense of importance and relevance.

## Conclusions

This chapter demonstrated how the European Neighbourhood Policy allows the Baltic states to construct their narrative of the self for the outside world and for themselves. The practices of identity creation through policy towards the eastern neighbours are performed under the conditions of manoeuvring between the bigger and more powerful neighbourhood discourses of the EU and Russia. In formulating its neighbourhood policy, the EU finds itself caught between asserting its normative characteristics and acting as a traditional power, between being open and defining and guarding its borders in order to "put the inside in order". Russia also needs "to put in order" its identification processes, but its territorial conceptualizations at the moment make it impossible to share its neighbourhood, making the state very sensitive to any efforts (by the EU or others) to come closer to its loosely imagined territory. The manoeuvring of the Baltic states under this tension between the two dominating discourses demonstrates how territorial identification processes and the need to make sense of the space around oneself are reflected in policies and actions towards the closest others.

The ENP adaptation by the Baltic states enthusiastically promotes and supports the normative EU discourse and, in doing so, is designed to solve the three countries' own problems. Through the ENP the Baltic states present themselves as true European states that, despite their small size and lack of muscle, manage to provide tangible input into "making the EU work". The Baltic states have had for quite a while the desire to be accepted as important European countries. Thus,

the ENP for the Baltic states becomes the continuation of the enlargement process, which served two important goals: that of adding a European layer to the national identities, thus strengthening and confirming their civilizational belonging, and that of drawing a definite line between themselves and the still dangerous other – Russia – and eradicating as much as possible the feeling of insecurity living next to it.

Besides, these three states use the ENP also to show to the new neighbours and also Russia how authoritative, influential and responsible, and, hence, more powerful they have become. By constructing an asymmetric relationship with their eastern partners they assert their superiority and importance despite their smallness. Consequently, the ENP has also come to signify the message that Russia should look at the Baltic states as part of something bigger, more influential and stronger.

Thus the neighbourhood policies of the Baltic states not only reconstruct their identities, but also allow them to work towards their ultimate goal of moving away from Europe's edge and becoming something that does not belong or adhere to Russian constructions and conceptualizations of the neighbourhood and of the world – thus finally and truly belonging to Europe.