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Two Centuries of Russian Sámi Policy: Arrangements for Autonomy and Participation Seen in Light of Imperial, Soviet and Federal Indigenous Minority Policy 1822–2014

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ABSTRACT This article reviews arrangements for Russian Sámi self-government during the Late Imperial (1822–1917), Soviet (1917–1991) and Federal (1992–) Eras of Russian history, comparing them to developments in the country's general indigenous minority policy. Since the Soviet Era, indigenous minority policy has been delimited to a subset of the country's actual indigenous nations – smaller groups traditionally involved in certain rural economic activities. State paternalism, the framing of indigenous minority policy as giving aid to weak groups, is a constant trait of Russian indigenous minority policy. This paternalism has been channelled towards different goals at different times – the building of Communist nations, assimilation, or traditionalist preservationism. Indigenous minority policy has generally been weakly institutionalized, and its interests come into conflict with stronger actors who anchor their political activity in northern economic development and state security. Different forms of territorial autonomy have been practiced throughout the period, non-territorial arrangements becoming more common only in the Federal Era. Russian Sámi politics generally match the national trends but are a case of particularly weak indigenous autonomy and participation. A very case-specific phenomenon is the Federal Era conflict over whether or not to import the Nordic Sámi Parliament model. Case specifics are explained by the weak demographic position of the Russian Sámi, the lack of any significant symbolic connection between the province and its indigenous people, and the border proximity and border-transcendence of the Sámi people, which has repeatedly been used to frame their activism as a security concern.

KEY WORDS: Russian history, Sámi history, Russian indigenous policy, Indigenous selfdetermination,Territorial autonomy, Non-territorial autonomy

Introduction

The Russian Sámi are the indigenous people of northwestern Russia's Kola Peninsula. They are one of the country's less numerous indigenous peoples but form part of a larger nation whose traditional homeland – Sápmi – is also divided between Finland, Norway and Sweden. A large majority of the Sámi live in these Nordic countries. Certain events in Russian Sámi political

history have received special attention in the West. These include the claim that an institution similar to the modern Nordic Sámi Parliaments existed in Imperial Russia; the political repression of "Sámi separatists" during the Soviet Era, which in the context of Sámi history is a strikingly violent episode; and the attempt to establish a Sámi Parliament in current-day Russia.

Western media and academia tend to compare what they observe in Russian Sámi politics with the situation on the Nordic side of the borders, setting Western conditions as the benchmark (Berg-Nordlie 2011, 27–28, 33). Such international comparisons can be of great value. Focused comparison of conditions in different states can contribute to a broadened understanding of the great differences within Sápmi and the Sámi people. If we scale up from the pan-Sámi level to the global level, we find that international comparison between different states' indigenous policies is an oft-applied and valuable method to uncover case specificity. Through international comparison we can identify variance, but in order to explain it we must investigate domestic politics. It has been established that Russia is a strongly deviating case when seen from a pan-Sámi perspective (Berg-Nordlie 2015a, 417–418) but to understand why we must study Russian politics.

The hypothesis of this article is that key events in Russian Sámi political history will be explainable as deriving from tendencies in Russia's general indigenous minority policy. Developments in this policy field will be presented before checking the Russian Sámi case for deviations. When accounting for these developments, there will be a constant side view to how the perceived interests of state security and economic development of the North[1] have influenced policy towards indigenous minorities.

The article also sheds light on the following questions:

- Is it reasonable to say that there was a Sámi Parliament in Imperial Russia?
- Was the Soviet Union a universally negative regime for the Russian Sámi?
- How unique is the conflict over Sámi representation that we observe in Murmansk Region, the province[2] of the Russian Federation that covers Russian Sápmi?

In the following section, theoretical considerations and methodology are presented, after which I review general and case-specific developments in the Imperial, Soviet and Federal Eras. I conclude by summarizing findings and revisiting the research questions.

Theory and Method

The concept "indigenous self-determination" forms part of a historically relatively new discourse. It may appear anachronistic to apply it in the analysis of events that predate that discourse, but when concretizing the concept we find political arrangements of a type that are far older than the global indigenous movement, and quite valid for the Russian case. Indigenous self-determination is generally interpreted as self-government within existing states (Anaya 2004, 100–103, 110–115; Robbins 2015). Anaya (2004, 150–156) divides arrangements for indigenous self-government into *autonomy* and *participation*, which we can sum up as decision-making authority vs. rights to participation in processes where the ultimate decision-making power lies within non-indigenous

institutions. Participation can be said to constitute self-government if a decision cannot be made without the agreement or acceptance of the participating indigenous representatives (Berg-Nordlie 2015b). Such arrangements can to differing degrees be *territorial*. The ideal-typical territorial autonomy is a geographic area inside which indigenous peoples govern. Non-territorial autonomy can be defined as indigenous bodies having decision-making power over certain matters but no territory inside which they have special authority (Berg-Nordlie 2015a, 388–389; Josefsen 2015, 32–33, 46–47, 52–53; Osipov 2013, 7–13). Just like the same indigenous institution can have decision-making powers over certain issues, but only participatory rights when it comes to other issues, patterns of the mix are also possible when it comes to territoriality. For example, the basically non-territorial Norwegian Sámi Parliament has stronger influence in specified geographic areas (Finnmarksloven 2005; Konsultasjonsavtalen 2005, 2).

This article attempts to understand the presence or absence of Russian Sámi autonomy and participation by investigating general Russian indigenous minority policy. The approach is based on ideas about the strength and weakness of policy fields. Inspired by Massey and Huitema (2013, 333–334, 348–350), I define a policy field on any given object as robust if there exist *official institutions* whose main responsibilities are explicitly formulated asconnected to that object; actors who claim to represent *expertise and/or special interests* relative to the object; and *official decisions* that have as their main goal to regulate policy towards the object.[3] All this necessitates a *dominant discourse* among decision-makers which constructs the object as suitable for separate and targeted policy, as opposed to just one element within a broader policy field, or a matter of no concern for the state. When a robust policy field is established, this reinforces said discourse. Policy fields and the discourses on which they are based can be quite resilient to change. Nevertheless, change may occur through "evolutionary" bit-by-bit replacement of old ideas and structures or through more sudden "revolutions" (Lynggaard 2007, 294–295; Malakhov and Osipov 2006, 506–508). An indigenous example of this is how Norwegian Sámi policy shifted from assimilation to an indigenous rights-based approach, which is analyzed by some in terms of revolution and others as a more gradual change (Minde

2005a, 77, 100, 2005b, 22–24; Myklebost and Niemi 2015a, 2015b; Niemi 2006; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 13–16). Even when change happens in a revolutionary fashion, the "new regime" tends to retain some aspects of the old one. It is difficult to overnight replace an entire system with all its institutions and staff, attitudes and practices. Scholars of Russian history, rich in both revolutions and continuities, can bear witness to this. In this article we will observe not just significant changes in Russian indigenous minority policy but also identify continuities.

Based on the above definition, it is difficult to argue that "Sámi policy" has constituted a robust policy field in Russia, or indeed that it has even existed as a separate policy field. The central level has never had a policy specifically for the Sámi nor have lower level state bodies tended to tailor-make policy for this specific ethnic group. Instead, the central level placed the Sámi into a larger category of ethnicities which did become the object of a policy field with its own institutions, experts, laws and decisions. Policy goals for these ethnicities have been set at the central level, and lower levels of the state have been given the task of implementing the goals in relation to

"their" local indigenous minorities. The hypothesis presented above is inspired by this observation.

There is a large "library" of academic literature on Russian indigenous politics and society and also concretely on the Russian Sámi. For the purposes of this article a review of literature dating back to the 1800s has been performed. Data gathering has also been done through semi-structured interviews in the period 2008–2015, with activists and officials on the Kola Peninsula and elsewhere in Russia, and in the Nordic countries. Detailed interview data have been left out for ethical reasons. Such anonymizing reduces research transparency but has been deemed necessary, not least because some interviews were made under conditions of anonymity. Finally, fieldwork has included focused investigations of newspaper archives, news websites and official online information channels.

The Late Imperial Era (1822–1917)

During the 1800s, the indigenous peoples of Russia's northern and eastern peripheries were conceptualized as part of the ethno-political category *inorodtsy* – "people of alien origin" (Slocum 1998, 174–176). Responsibility for the groups was placed first in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then the Ministry of State Property and finally in the Ministry of the Interior (Kryazhkov 2010, 43). This can be read as reflecting a process of conceptual colonization, an institutional removal of the peoples from externality to firmly within the domestic policy sphere. In 1822 Russia received its first major legislation on indigenous minorities, the "Charter on governance of the *inorodtsy*". The Charter has been explained as an attempt both to improve administrative efficiency and to protect indigenous culture whilst allowing for the gradual "civilizing" of the peoples it targeted (Slocum 1998, 179, 181).

The Charter subdivided *inorodtsy* into the categories "settled", "nomadic" and "wandering". The settled were considered more civilized and equal to

ethnic Russians in rights and obligations (Slocum 1998, 179). The state expected *inorodtsy* to gradually undergo "social evolution", e.g. acquire key aspects of ethnic Russian culture and society and become eligible for citizenship with full rights, but the legislation contained no criteria for how they could achieve such a "promotion" (Slocum 1998, 174, 177, 179, 181). While aimed at integration, Imperial indigenous minority policy also had preservationist aspects. Administrative structures for indigenous communities were based on traditional leadership structures, in practice bestowing a measure of local territorial autonomy. Implementation of the Charter proved imperfect, to say the least, and its preservationist aspects were inadequate to secure indigenous interests against the mounting tide of colonization (Kal'te 2003, 16–19, 20; Kryazhkov 2010, 34–43; Myklebost and Niemi 2014, 323; Shapovalov 2004–2005, 447–449; Slocum 1998, 174, 178–181; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 164–165).

The Empire showed no special interest in militarizing the North, and security policy had little impact on indigenous minority policy (Orekhova et al. 2014, 253; Myklebost and Niemi 2014, 319). The drive for northern economic development was also quite modest compared to Soviet ambitions, but the Empire did focus increasingly on this, leading them to facilitate colonization.

One aspect of Russia's indigenous legislation fit this new colonization drive very well: indigenous lands were considered *terra nullius*, previously ownerless, and open for utilization by newcomers (Shapovalov 2004–2005, 447–449, 460).

The Sámi Case

The above account may surprise those familiar with modern Russian Sámi political discourse, which credits the Russian Empire with creating an institution referred to as "the first Sámi Parliament". This organ, the *Kola Sobbar*, an annual gathering of Sámi envoys and Russian bureaucrats, is often presented as an independent participatory and decision-making organ elected by the Russian Sámi (Kalstad 2003, 49, 2009, 21–24; Sovkina 2008). Such a body would have constituted a deviation from Imperial indigenous minority policy. A closer inspection of the Sobbar reveals that the metaphor of a "Russian Sámi Parliament" misleads more than it clarifies.

The institution referred to in Sámi as the Kola Sobbar was the Kola-Lappish[4] District Court. This was not a unifying organ for all the Russian Sámi. The Kola-Lappish District was just one of two administrative districts (*volost*) on the Kola Peninsula where the Sámi lived particularly compactly. The other was Ponoy District, further east (Kharuzin 1890, 331; Tanner 1927, 332–335; Ushakov 1997, 306–307, 436–437). Tanner (1927, 334–338) claims that Pechenga Sámi who had become Finnish citizens after the Russian Revolution remembered the Sobbar fondly, and Myklebost and Niemi (2014, 331) underscore that the Kola-Lappish District's authorities were sympathetic to the vulnerable position of the Sámi. Nevertheless, contemporary authors emphasized that the Sámi avoided the district courts, preferring to solve their disputes at the more local pogost level where traditional social

structures continued (Yefimenko 1878, 55–59; Kharuzin 1890, 331; L'vov, 1903, 55).

As it turned out, neither the districts nor the *pogost* level of territorial autonomy had the authority needed to protect Sámi lands from outsiders. Colonization intensified from 1860. The Empire now invited Norwegian citizens to establish coastal colonies in order to boost economic productiveness. During the administrative reorganization of 1866, the Kola-Lappish and Ponoy Districts were created and the Sámi were told that "possession of the lands would stay with them forever" (Ushakov 1997, 369–370), but in 1868 a new law allowed colonists to freely exploit natural resources on the peninsula (Ushakov 1997; Myklebost and Niemi 2014, 324; Orekhova et al. 2014, 237). From the 1880s, Izhma Komi from east of the White Sea settled the peninsula's interior. Outsiders now challenged the Sámi both on the coast and on the inland. By the end of the century, the Russian Sámi were economically and socially marginalized (Kharuzin 1890, 125–134, 246–247, 330–337; Konstantinov 2005, 174–181; Myklebost and Niemi 2014, 329–331, Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 32–33; Orekhova et al. 2014, 219–253).

At the cusp of the Imperial Era, security concerns led to an event that would impact the Russian Sámi deeply: the 1915–1917 construction of a railway between St. Petersburg and the Kola Peninsula's northern shoreline, the Murman Coast. Originally proposed in the late 1800s by a Northern Commission working for socio-economic development, but rejected as nonrational and unprofitable, the idea was picked up again for military reasons during WW1 (Baron 2007, 1–2,

75–76). In 1916 the city Romanov-na-Murmane was founded at the northern end of the railway. It was later to be renamed Murmansk.

The Soviet Era (1917–1991)

The Russian Revolution opened a window of opportunity to also revolutionize indigenous minority policy. That opportunity was seized eagerly.

The strengthening and reconstruction of the indigenous minority policy field was influenced heavily by ideas about how to solve Russia's more general "nationality issue". Key ideas in the broader field of Soviet nationality policy were *korenizatsiya* ("rooting") and territorial autonomy. *Korenizatsiya* implied recruiting and educating indigenous individuals who could participate as cadres in the Soviet political system. Regarding autonomy, Bolshevik ideologues had long criticized the Austro-Marxist ideas about non-territorial autonomy, instead defining nationhood as dependent upon attachment to a specific territory and advocating self-determination within these (Bowring 2008, 13–18; Osipov 2013, 10, 13–14). The Soviet authorities now established, at various levels of the administrative hierarchy, geographical areas that were symbolically connected to specific "titular nations" (Fondahl 1993, 484–485; Friedgut 1992, 196–201; Myklebost and Niemi 2015a).

Usage of the word *inorodtsy* was discontinued. The concept had over time become exceedingly broad, by the time of the Revolution referring to all

ethnic minorities in Russia. It was also tainted by nationalist and racialized usage (Slocum 1998, 182–189). A more specific name, with less problematic connotations, was brought into use: *malye narody severa*, "small peoples of the North". These peoples were to become the object of the new indigenous minority policy field. In 1924 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee created the State Committee for Assistance to the Peoples of the Far North ("the Northern Committee") to solve "the small-numbered peoples' economic, cultural and political problems" (Kryazhkov 2010, 58–60; Pika 1996, 18; Sorokazjerdjev 2006, 29–41; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 166). In 1925 a list was produced to define exactly which peoples these were. Far from including all indigenous nations of Russia, the list was limited geographically to the North, demographically to small-numbered peoples and socioeconomically to peoples involved in traditional economic activities (reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, sea mammal industry, gathering) or with a semisettled or nomadic lifestyle (Kalte 2003, 23; Konstantinov 1999, 15–16; Kryazhkov 2010, 45; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 182–183). The dominant discourse constructed ethnic groups as standing at different points on a ladder of social development, from primitive societies via feudal to capitalist ones, leading up towards communism. The 26 ethnic groups on the list were seen as the realm's most primitive peoples, in need of development aid to climb the ladder (Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 25; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 165–166).

Though essentially paternalistic, indigenous minority policy aimed for the preservation of separate ethnicity within the Soviet "family" of nations, as opposed to overtly assimilationist ideas popular in, for example, Norway at the time (Myklebost and Niemi 2015a; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 33; Shapovalov 2004–2005, 449). Instead of fearing indigenous nationalism,

the attitude was that "national self-consciousness and initiative must be awakened" (Northern Committee member A. E. Skachko,[5] quoted in Pika 1996, 21).

Relations between the Northern Committee and provincial authorities were sometimes strained. It was held in the Committee that local politicians and bureaucrats gave little priority to indigenous peoples and needed counterbalancing (Pika 1996, 18–19). During the 1920s and 1930s, Committee envoys were sent to the provinces and local indigenous peoples were empowered through territorial autonomies such as "national" areas (*okruga*) and districts (*rayony*), with borders drawn to facilitate indigenous dominance. Nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples were also given the opportunity to form councils that would facilitate political participation and autonomy (Kalte 2003, 21, 23–27; Kryazhkov 2010, 52–55; Pika 1996, 19; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 166).

Indigenous minority policy was fundamentally based upon the general Soviet nationality policy, but another policy discourse also came to have a lasting impact on the fate of the peoples in question. The discourse on "acquisition of the North" (*osvoenie severa*) framed the North as a separate policy object, with a special focus on its economic development. *Osvoenie* literally means "making ours" – from *osvaivat*, "conquering/developing"

(Rowe and Blakkisrud 2014, 10), implying appropriation of the North through active reshaping of land and culture into something less alien. As such, the slogan reflects a continuation of the Imperial idea of terra nullius, that the North is an "empty" space to be appropriated, civilized and utilized for the benefit of the realm (Blakkisrud 2006, 26–29; Hønneland 2010, 13–16, 70–73, 126–132). Nevertheless, economic development and indigenous empowerment were presented as simultaneously possible, and the discourses were mixed, also by Northern Committee staff (Vinogradova 2010, 130–131):

> When acquiring the Arctic, when developing its industrial force and utilizing its natural wealth, we should not disregard the small peoples of the North and not do all this over their heads (as is done in the capitalist countries) but do it while fully supporting these peoples, in parallel lifting, developing and including these peoples into the building process of socialism (A. E. Skachko 1932, quoted in Kiselyov and Kiselyova 1989, 58).

Eventually, though, the indigenous minority policy field became subsumed within the broader field of northern policy. In 1935 the indigenous field was institutionally crippled by the abolishment of the Northern Committee. Its responsibilities for traditional economic activities and cultural services were transferred to the Central Administration for Northern Ocean Routes, and other responsibilities were scattered around in different state organs. The functions of the Northern Committee's local offices were transferred to those same provincial authorities that the Committee had felt needed counterbalancing (Kalte 2003, 28; Kryazhkov 2010, 60–61).

The Committee's campaigns for territorial autonomy had always faced some opposition from provincial authorities, including accusations of political adventurism and sabotage. As the Stalinist purges began, many of the state operatives that had worked with indigenous minority policy found themselves under investigation, and several were imprisoned or executed. During the

1930s the number of "national areas" was halved, and indigenous districts lost their national status (Kalte 2003, 22–23, 28; Kryazhkov 2010, 54; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 167).

The Soviet spring of the indigenous minorities had come and gone. Under northern development policy they experienced harshly enforced collectivization, forced removals and large-scale influxes of non-indigenous migrants. As geopolitical instability loomed, populations in border-near areas were impacted by heightened military presence and witch-hunts for "nationalist" oppositional elements within their fold (Blakkisrud 2006, 26–29; Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2006, 11; Fondahl 1993, 485–487; Pika 1996, 18–33; Shapovalov 2004–2005, 449; Vinogradova 2010, 128–133; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 167). The end of Stalinism saw no return to the spirit of the 1920s. The indigenous minority policy field remained weakly institutionalized, and the interests of economic development and security held sway in the North.

In 1957 the indigenous minorities again became the object of focused policy, but this entailed no return to the early Soviet ideas of indigenous selfdetermination. The resolution "On the long-term economic and cultural

development of the small peoples of the North" held indigenous peoples' current economic units to be economically inefficient, and initiated a policy of *ukrupnenie* (amalgamation) in which the collectivized indigenous societies were merged into larger units, often managed by outsiders. This reflected tendencies in general agricultural policy at the time (Fondahl 1993, 487; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 36; Vinogradova 2010, 134; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 167–168). Other goals of post-WW2 indigenous minority policy involved preserving the more folkloristic aspects of culture, supplying material support and assimilating the "small peoples" into the Soviet fold by having them adopt the majority's Russian culture and language. Assimilation was ideologically underpinned by a discourse stating that the Soviet peoples would merge into one Soviet nation (*sliyanie*) through cultural convergence (*sblizhenie*) (Hazard 1992, 114–115; Hill 1992, 58–59; Krupnik and Vakhtin 2002, 17–21; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 38; Vinogradova 2010, 133–136).

The Sámi Case

The Kola Peninsula was claimed from foreign interventionists and Russian anti-Bolshevik forces in 1920 (Lokhanov 2013c). Soviet authorities took an immediate interest in the area's challenges and opportunities regarding security and economic development. The Murmansk Railway was referred to as a potential "catalyst for colonization and development", and as a strategic way to connect "Russia's only ice-free coast" to the centre and shield the "deserted and rich periphery from the acquisitive impulses of neighboring states". During the inter-war period there was to be a massive influx of settlers from the south, and lands were alienated to the railway, industry and military (Baron 2007, 75–78).

In the midst of this colonization process, there was an attempt to realize the ideals of Soviet indigenous minority policy. The Northern Committee established a Murmansk branch in 1927, headed by ethnographer V. K. Alymov. The work of Alymov and his network of experts and activists focused on education, language and culture, the recruitment of Sámi cadres, and Sámi territorial autonomy. The Murmansk branch had no ambitions of turning the entirety of Russian

Sápmi into a titular Sámi national area but did suggest creating two territorial autonomies more modest in scope – an East Lappish and a West Lappish National District. If we are to believe Kiselyov and Kiselyova (1989, 44), such self-government districts had been suggested by Lovozero-based activists already in 1920. The Murmansk Area government supported only the establishment of the East Lappish National District. One may speculate that security concerns formed part of the reason for their reluctance to have a Sámi autonomous territory directly bordering the West. In 1930 the suggestion was scrapped by the authorities in Leningrad.[6] Later that year, the Murmansk branch of the Northern Committee was abolished, but Alymov remained active as the Committee's local envoy.

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Instead of establishing an East Lappish District, Lovozero District was declared a "national" district in 1931, despite the largest group of that district being the Izhma Komi and not the Sámi. In 1936, the Ponoy District further east and north was renamed "Sámi District". Four lower level rural national councils were also established in the 1930s. However, already by the end of the 1930s Lovozero was no longer referred to as "national", and the rural national councils were abolished in 1939. The Sámi District was abolished much later, in 1963, when its lands – except for the military area Gremikha – were transferred to Lovozero (Alymov 1927, 1930, 57–60, 2006, 19–29, 41–45; Dasjtsjinskij 2006, 67–76; Kiselyov and Kiselyova 1989, 31; Lokhanov 2013a, 2013b; Pika 1996, 23; Sorokazjerdjev 2006, 29–40).

One of the most discussed events in Russian Sámi history is the "Sámi Republic affair". Local security structures fabricated a conspiracy in which Sámi and non-Sámi people were accused of sabotage and planning terrorism with the intention of creating a Sámi Republic that was to join with a "Greater Finland" stretching from the Bay of Bothnia to the Urals. Alymov was accused of leading the conspiracy and his old proposal for Sámi territorial autonomies was now used against him. He was executed in 1938 (Kalstad 2009, 38–42; Kuznetsova 2006, 127–128; Sorokazjerdjev 2006, 61–67; Stepanenko 2003).

According to Myklebost and Niemi (2015a) the Sámi were much harder hit by the Stalinist purges than the Nenets people, a fact they relate to the border-transcending aspect of the Sámi people. Still, the "Sámi Republic affair" was not unique but followed the general pattern of conspiracy fabrications during the time of the purges. The fear of Finland was also not unique to the Sámi case. Karelian politician E. Gylling and people in his circle were simultaneously executed or sent to camps for pro-Finnish "counterrevolutionary nationalism" (Myklebost and Niemi 2015a). Just as Alymov's work for Sámi territorial autonomy had been in line with Soviet indigenous minority policy, Gylling's Finnish nationalism had been cultivated by the authorities until the political climate changed. The idea of an anti-Soviet "Greater Finland" that the security structures now used against the Sámi was, interestingly, a mirror image of a proposal made by Gylling: that Soviet Karelia should be expanded into northern Finland, Sweden and Norway to make a "Soviet Republic of the North" (Baron 2007, 20–51, 189–227; Korablev and Makurov 2009; Salmon 1997, 228).

The *ukrupnenie* policy of the 1950s hit the Sámi hard. Their siyts[7] had earlier been turned into collective farms and were now merged into ever larger units. The forced removals were spoken of in the discourse of development aid to the small peoples. It would better their access to

welfare goods, ensure the survival of their traditional industries in a modern context, increase their "educational and cultural level" and combat internal economic discrepancies (Afanasyeva 2013, 26–43; Kiseljov and Kiseljova 1981, 94–106; Kiselyov and Kiselyova 1989, 29–34, 67–83; Lukyanchenko 1971, 20–25; Myklebost and Niemi 2015b; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 34–38; Sergejeva 2000, 31; Øverland 1999, 63–64).

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Throughout the 1900s, different reasons had been given for alienating land and removing the Sámi, but one cannot avoid noticing one effect: the western half of the Kola Peninsula had been effectively "de-indigenized" (Konstantinov 1999, 20–22; Konstantinov 2005, 179–183; Stepanenko 2003). Rid of semi-nomadic and border-transcending elements, the USSR's northwestern border with NATO was freed to become one of the most militarized areas in the world, and it was also freed for intensive industrial exploration. Konstantinov (1999, 21) sums the long removal process up as dividing the peninsula into two spheres, "western industrialist and eastern pastoral."

As for education policy, the attempts to facilitate mother-tongue learning by Alymov, the ethnographer Chernyakov and the linguist Èndyukovskiy had ended abruptly and tragically. The two latter had also been accused of "Sámi separatism" and Èndyukovskiy had been executed. In the latter half of the Soviet Era, the adoption of Russian language and customs was considered voluntary cultural convergence and ultimately beneficial for the Sámi. We observe a continuance of the discourse of "developing" the small nations, but now masking a practice of Russianization (Myklebost and Niemi 2015b; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012, 38–39, 88–63; Utvik 1985, 10–18, 23–30, 51–52; cf. Kiseljov and Kiseljova 1981, 69–83, 106–120; 1989, 40–41). Official and majority Soviet attitudes to the Sámi are summed well up in the propaganda song "About the new life of the Sámi":

> Earlier, under the Czar, the Sámi lived – illiterate, not knowing happiness. We lived in the forest, like grouses. The Soviet authorities came – and we, the Sámi became happy (…) We work on the collective farm, learn and will live in a cultured manner, unlike how we lived before (quoted in Kiselyov and Kiselyova 1989, 98).

The Federal Era (1992–)

During the last years of the Soviet Union, NGOs for indigenous minorities were founded.[8] These united in the Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). RAIPON demanded increased indigenous control over traditional lands and also suggested that their category of peoples get their own Union-wide congress of directly elected deputies that could participate in policy-making (IWGIA 1991, 17–18; Yetylen 1996, 83–94). After the USSR gave way to the Russian Federation, RAIPON has reiterated its request for such an institution. It has also been suggested to make RAIPON the "authorized representative" of the indigenous minorities (Murashko 2005, 22–24; Sleptsov 2005, 66–67; Xanthaki 2004, 86). What is suggested here is essentially a Federation-wide non-territorial channel for indigenous participation and (if it has decision-making power) autonomy, similar to the Sámi Parliaments. So far, these requests have not been granted.

Non-territorial autonomy did receive discussion in Russia after the fall of the USSR, leading to the enactment of a law in 1996 that gave rights to establish "national cultural autonomies" (NCAs). In practice, the NCAs have become just a type of NGO that enjoys high symbolic status but does not

have decision-making powers. This type of organization is not widely used by indigenous minorities (Berg-Nordlie 2015b; Osipov 2013, 10–11, 14–15, 18).

Indigenous minority policy remained poorly institutionalized after the fall of the USSR. A State Committee for Development of the North was created in 1990 (Kalte 2003, 28; Kryazhkov 2010, 60–61) but was short-lived. During the 1990s, responsibility for indigenous minority policy shifted rapidly between different State Committees and Ministries, and the policy field was institutionally "homeless" in the period 2000–2004 (Shapovalov 2004–2005, 435; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 177). In 2004 indigenous minority policy was handed to the Regional Development Ministry (Shapovalov 2004–2005, 435; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 177), which had a host of other demanding responsibilities, including the management of ethnic interrelations that for security reasons were much higher on the political agenda. RAIPON and this ministry established relatively good working relations (Berg-Nordlie and Rowe 2009, 16–17, 20–21; Kalte 2003, 83).[9] In 2014 this ministry was abolished and indigenous minority policy transferred to the Ministry of Culture (Kremlin.ru 2014b). We observe that in the Federal Era indigenous minorities have often been the responsibility of organs dealing with development issues. Policy has also been focused on targeted support programmes for economic and social development among the indigenous minorities. This demonstrates a certain overhanging paternalism from the Soviet period, albeit softened by the participation of RAIPON in the work with these programmes (Kalte 2003, 80–83).

The 1990s has been described as "a lost decade" when it comes to indigenous law-making (Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 186, IWGIA 1996, 33; 1999, 37). In the Constitution of 1993 (§69) indigenous minorities were guaranteed rights in accordance with international rules and agreements, but this norm was not fulfilled in practice (Niemi and Myklebost 2015b). Around the turn of the millennium, following a decade of RAIPON lobbyism, there was a flurry of legislative activity.

In 2000 a Unified List of "native, small-numbered peoples of the North" (*korennye malochislennye narody*) was fixed (Konstantinov 1999, 15–16; Øverland and Blakkisrud, 170–171). Criteria include that the group must identify as a separate people, live in territories inhabited by their ancestors, number less than 50,000 individuals, and maintain traditional ways of life and economic activities. A few non-Northern people were included. The list currently includes 47 peoples, of which RAIPON claims to represent 41 (IWGIA 2014a, 26; Malakhov and Osipov 2006, 500; Perechen 2000; Shapovalov 2004–2005, 437–442; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 172–174).

Three Federal laws came to constitute the legal foundation for Russia's indigenous minority policy (Bowring 2013, 30–31). "On guarantees of rights for indigenous peoples" (1999) gave provinces the right to give indigenous peoples special representation in their parliaments (this was

revoked in 2004) and to organize councils of representatives under provincial and local executive branches (IWGIA 2005, 52; Kalte 2003, 76, 84–85; Malakhov and Osipov 2006, 522; Guarantees 2009; Xanthaki 2004, 84). "On general principles for the organization of *obshchiny*" (2000) regulated the establishment of kin- and

community-based entities to practice traditional economic activities (*Obshchiny* 2000). Similarly to the NCAs, Federal law formalized *obshchiny* not as decision-making or land-owning bodies but something more akin to civil society formations (Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 175–176). "On territories for traditional nature use" (2001) regulated the creation of TTPs, special areas where indigenous peoples could practice their traditional livelihoods (TTP 2001). TTPs were considered relatively promising for facilitating indigenous control over land, but indigenous peoples cannot determine the borders of such areas and have no veto rights if the state wants to alienate TTP lands, for example for industrial purposes (Kalte 2003, 78–79; Shapovalov 2004–2005: 453, 59–60; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006: 175–176).

Russian indigenous law has a notable focus on traditional economic activities. This falls in line with a widespread idea that rurality and traditionalism are markers of "true" indigenousness (Berg-Nordlie and Rowe 2009, 7–8) and that these "essential" traits of indigenous peoples must be preserved. While traditional economic activities do need protection, such preservationism has been criticized for reifying indigenous peoples as communities living traditionally and apart from the rest of society, to the exclusion of indigenous people who lead a more modern lifestyle, e.g. are settled in urban areas and do not participate in the traditional economic activities. The *obshchiny* and TTP legislation does nothing to ensure the self-government of this growing share of Russia's indigenous population (Malakhov and Osipov 2006, 500–501, 530; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 174).

These Federal laws reflected arrangements that had already been created in various provinces. *Obshchiny* and TTPs already existed, but there was no streamlining Federal legislation (Stammler 2005, 111–115; Turaev 2005, 77). Provinces had also created arrangements for indigenous interest representation before the law "On guarantees of rights" and continued to do so during the 2000s. Examples of such arrangments include indigenous quotas in provincial legislative assemblies (Yamalo-Nenets and Nenets Autonomous Areas, Sakha Republic) and assemblies of elected indigenous representatives (Yugra Autonomous Area). Other provinces gave indigenous NGOs the right of legislative initiative or organized consultative councils staffed with indigenous representatives pre-approved by the head of the province. The arrangements made by the provinces facilitate participation rather than autonomous decision-making (Kalte 2003, 70–72; Kryazhkov 2005, 68–73, 343–352; Postanovlenie 2001; Postanovlenie 2003; Turaev 2005, 82–83; Todishev 2005, 58–63; Zakharov 2005, 91–92).

While such non-territorial participation arrangements became more widespread, the star of territorial autonomy waned. After the USSR collapsed, indigenous minorities' autonomous areas[10] had been promoted to provinces instead of third-tier administrative bodies. Under Putinism these autonomous areas were decimated. Today only Chukotka, Yugra, Yamalo-Nenets and Nenets remain. The abolished autonomous areas retained their borders and names but became third-tier

entities within other provinces (IWGIA 2005, 54–56; 2006, 56; Oversloot 2013, 99–103; Øverland and Blakkisrud 2006, 179).

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Another feature of Putinism of relevance to indigenous minorities is the increased focus on the North's economic importance. The discourse of "acquiring the North" and "acquiring the Arctic" (*osvoenie Arktiki*) is being utilized actively by top politicians when debating northern policy (Kremlin.ru 2014a; Rowe 2011, 2–5; Rowe and Blakkisrud 2014, 3–4). There had also been conflicts over industrial acquisition of indigenous lands during the 1990s (IWGIA 1997, 33–35; 1999, 33–35), but following the economic crisis of that decade, the natural resources of the North received heightened national focus. Russia's central authorities now, again, primarily consider the North in light of its economic potential (Blakkisrud 2006, 29–30, 37–40; Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2006, 6–7; Niemi and Myklebost 2015).

Indigenous people are not necessarily opposed to industrial ventures but are often concerned about their impact on traditional economic activities, whether they will be compensated for negative impacts, and if they will benefit from the projects at all. Some take a fundamentally critical stance, while others are more positive to industrial development and argue the possibility of combining industrial activities with traditional economic activities (IWGIA 2006, 59; Zakariassen 2014, 362–373). Which of these approaches dominate within province-level indigenous NGOs vary from case to case. RAIPON's central offices came to work against many prestigious economic development projects, following a combined strategy of lobbyism and international networking.[11] Activists that articulate an indigenous rightsbased discourse during conflicts over resource extraction have faced accusations that they are "blackmailing" Russia's vital industries (Finugor.ru 2008; IWGIA 2009, 49). Such discourse has also been articulated by pro-industrial indigenous activists who accuse their opponents of not wanting to find a "normal solution", or of demanding money for not protesting. Conversely, pro-industrial activists are accused of being coopted by the authorities and big business.[12]

The resurgence of northern economic development on Russia's political agenda has led to a duality in the authorities' relations to other actors with an interest in Arctic natural resources. On the one hand, there is a very strong discourse framing the Arctic as a natural arena for international cooperation, where friendly relations and smooth cooperation is to the benefit of all parties (Rowe and Blakkisrud 2014, 17–18). On the other hand, the oil and gas sector – and hence the North – has become securitized, considered vital for the survival of the Russian state (Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2006, 8–9; Rowe and Blakkisrud 2014, 5, 9). In connection with this securitization, contacts between Russian and foreign indigenous activists have been construed as the foreigners using their Russian partners to foment inter-ethnic strife in the North (Gray 2004, 175). In the 2012 "Moseyev Case" an activist for the recognition of Pomors as an indigenous minority was charged with incitement of inter-ethnic conflict, and in the ensuing public debate his connections to Norway were used to accuse him of foreign agency (BO 2012a, 2012b).

In 2012, a crackdown on civil society organizations with foreign funding began. This was worrisome for indigenous minority NGOs, since many of them had long worked closely with foreign partners (IWGIA 2013, 32;

Newsru.com 2013). In fact, RAIPON began to receive negative attention already in 2009. Formally, this was not because of its foreign contacts or its criticism of extractive industries but over technicalities. RAIPON apparently did not fulfil formal requirements to be registered as a Federation-wide organization. In 2012 the organization was suspended and threatened with closure. This event should be considered in the context of a tendency in Russia for law to be used selectively, e.g. attacking one's opponents by finding laws and regulations that can be utilized to remove them from the gameboard, whilst refraining from prosecuting actors considered to be loyal (Bækken 2014, 57–79, 159–80). RAIPON avoided closure but had to change its statutes: its president now had to be elected by a two-thirds majority. When RAIPON held its next Federal-wide congress (2013), veteran activist Pavel Sulyandziga won the majority in the presidential election. Due to the new regulations he had to run again against the second-most popular candidate – Grigoriy Ledkov, a Duma deputy from Putin's United Russia Party and the gas-rich Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Area which hosted the congress. Foreign observers and press were asked to leave the premises and in a closed session between elections Sulyandziga withdrew his candidacy (IWGIA 2013, 33–34; 2014, 28–31). Some observers have considered this a subjugation of RAIPON to extractive industries and the Russian state apparatus (BO 2013; Niemi and Myklebost 2015).

The Sámi Case

For a brief period during the Soviet Era, the Russian Sámi had one district that at least nominally bestowed territorial autonomy. During the Federal Era, Lovozero District has not reverted to this status. Even if they did, the Sámi would still be in a minority position also within that district. The Russian Sámi are today a minority everywhere on the Kola Peninsula so it is hardly feasible to organize Sámi self-determination through simple territorial autonomy. There are no TTPs in Murmansk Region, but numerous Sámi *obshchiny* have been established. The *obshchiny* cannot be considered to facilitate neither territorial nor non-territorial autonomy, but as we will see they have been given a role in Murmansk Region's arrangements for indigenous participation.

Since the *Perestroyka*, Sámi civil society activists have eagerly sought to improve their province's arrangements for indigenous political participation and autonomy and have developed a complex landscape of civil society organizations to represent their interests. The two main organizations are the Association of the Kola Sámi (AKS, est. 1989) and the Murmansk Region Sámi Civil Society Organization (OOSMO, est. 1998). There are also more interest-specific Sámi civil society organizations, such as the handicraft group Chepes' Sám' (1993), several *obshchiny* (since 2002), a few NCAs organized by Sámi in urban areas (since 2007) and in 2009 the youth organization Sám' Nurash was founded (Berg-Nordlie 2015b).

Nevertheless, in the period 1992–2004 provincial authorities showed little interest in Sámi politics. The institutionalization of indigenous minority

policy remained weak. The responsible organs were understaffed, administrative responsibility changed hands several times, and the policy field's status in the hierarchy varied. It had its own committee 1992–1997 and 2000–2002, but 1997–2000 it was under the Committee on

Governance of the Agricultural–Industrial Complex, Trade, Connections at the Inter-Provincial Level and with Former Soviet States, and 2002–2004 it was part of the Committee for Issues of Local Self-Government, Problems of Military Garrisons and the Affairs of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples. Arrangements for Sámi participation were rather disorganized in this period, relatively *ad hoc* and focused on individual leader figures (Berg-Nordlie 2015b). Murmansk Region's 1998 Charter declared that the authorities should cooperate with the province's indigenous people (Kal'te 2003, 92, 118–119), but this was not followed by any immediate reform of systems for Sámi representation.

The weak institutionalization of representation in the period 1992–2004 reflects the Federal situation in the same period. And yet, many provinces in the Russian Federation took a more proactive stance than Murmansk (cf. Gutsol and Riabova 2002, 328; Kalte 2003, 14, 95). Why did Murmansk lag behind these? There were conflicts over natural resources that made sidelining the Sámi favourable to certain actors, but these were no more intense than those taking place in other parts of Russia. Also, Murmansk Region's extractive industries are not as nationally important as those of certain provinces that had a more proactive indigenous policy, like Yugra and Yamalo-Nenets. Instead of explaining the low level of policy development as a reaction to conflict, we could perhaps theorize that it is the result of the opposite – decision-makers had a low level of consciousness about the existence of the Sámi and their problems.

The Russian Sámi are one of the most small-numbered of the Russian indigenous peoples and Murmansk Region is one of the most densely populated areas in the Russian North. In the last census (2010) only 0.2% of the province's citizens chose to register as Sámi, totaling less than 2000 people. The majority of the province's nearly 800,000 citizens are descendants of Soviet-Era migrants from the south. Furthermore, Murmansk Region is not nominally or in any other way symbolically connected to its indigenous population. The province was not created to facilitate ethnic minorities' selfgovernment, on the contrary being administratively framed as just a common region (*oblast*) of Russia. All these factors make it challenging to set indigenous affairs forcefully on the agenda.

It could perhaps serve as an example of officials' lacking consciousness about the Sámi that Governor Dmitriy Dmitrienko (2009–2012) in 2011 made the following statement during a meeting with representatives of various ethnic minorities: "Historically, on the territory of Murmansk Region, a native population has virtually not existed. All the people here, in one way or another, came from the outside…" (YT 2011).

Seen in this light, it may not be so prudent to compare indigenous minority politics in Murmansk Region to those of autonomous areas like Yugra and Yamalo-Nentets, or other provinces that were created to facilitate ethnic selfgovernment, like the Sakha Republic. More comparable provinces would be

southeast Siberia's Khabarovsk and Primorsk Territories, and Amur and Sakhalin Regions. Amur conforms rather well to our case, having given little priority to indigenous legislation during the 1990s and not instituting a participatory council of indigenous representatives until the early 2000s. Neither has Primorsk been on the forefront regarding the institutionalization of Russian

indigenous participation and autonomy. Khabarovsk conforms to a certain extent. Like Amur, it had no indigenous representation body before the early 2000s, but in other areas of indigenous minority legislation it has been ahead of Federal standards. As for Sakhalin, they made arrangements for indigenous representation already during the 1990s (Anaya 2010, 15; Kryazhkov 2010, 350–352; Postanovlenie 2013; Todishev 2005, 62; Turaev 2005, 77–82; Zakon 2001).

In 2004 there was a general reorganization of Murmansk Region's administrative apparatus (Vinogradova 2005, 3) during which indigenous minority policy found the institutional anchoring that it retains to this day: the Centre for Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North ("the Indigenous Centre"), which is subservient to a committee of the province's government – currently the Committee on Contacts with Civil Society Organizations and Youth Affairs. In 2006, the Indigenous Centre established a structure for indigenous participation in its activities – representatives from all Russian Sámi NGOs, *obshchiny* and NCAs were invited into the Coordination Council (Berg-Nordlie 2015b).

As for why the Coordination Council was established, one provincial administration employee claimed it was due to a formal need to consult with Sámi civil society during implementation of a regional programme for indigenous economic and social development.[13] As at the Federal level, such funding programmes have a central place in the region's indigenous minority policy (Gov-murman.ru 2015; Gutsol and Riabova 2002, 329; Kalte 2003, 92, 105–106, 116, 118–119; Kuchinskiy 2011, 119; Vinogradova 2005, 6). The establishment of the Coordination Council also falls in line with the general tendency in contemporary Russia to increasingly involve selected civil society representatives in policy-deliberation (Berg-Nordlie 2015b). According to this version of events, the Coordination Council was a result of bureaucratic rule-fulfilling mentality rather than a response to demands from below. And indeed, there had been no particular mobilization for a representative organ just prior to the establishment of the Coordination Council. When the Council brought Sámi representatives together, though, such a mobilization materialized. Demands were made for a more democratic organ, placed higher in the provincial hierarchy.

Western media described the ensuing events as a campaign for a Russian Sámi Parliament. Indeed, the activists did refer to the organ they envisioned as a "Sámi Parliament" and their description of the desired organ was clearly inspired by the arrangements for indigenous autonomy and participation found in the Nordic countries (Berg-Nordlie 2015b). Nevertheless, they also argued their case by referring to the Federal law "On guarantees of rights" which enabled provinces to create councils of indigenous representatives and referred to the Kola Sobbar of the Imperial Era as giving precedence to the

existence of elected bodies of Sámi representatives in Russia (Sovkina 2008). The authorities called for an indigenous congress to debate the issue. Discussion at this congress (2008) came to revolve around whether an indigenous council should consist of elected members and be "independent" or be official and consist of members appointed by the authorities (Berg- Nordlie 2015b; Kuchinskiy 2011, 125–126). The former model won out and the congress elected a Council of Authorized Representatives of the Sámi, which set out to work for a Russian Sámi Parliament. "Authorized representatives" is the exact phrase used in the law "On guarantees of

rights" when discussing indigenous representation. The name was apparently given to discursively anchor this council in Federal law.

The provincial authorities did not recognize the election as valid and created their own Council of Native, Small-Numbered Peoples of the North under the Governor.[14] This Council consisted of individuals nominated by the *obshchiny* and approved by the Governor, a representative of the province's government, plus one ethnically Sámi member of provincial Public Chamber (Berg-Nordlie 2015b). According to the authorities, this body fulfilled the Federal law "On guarantees of rights" and also answered the congress' request for a representative Sámi council.

In Russia it is quite common that members of consultative councils are nominated by civil society groups, but ultimately chosen by the authorities. A nearby example from indigenous minority policy can be found in Murmansk's neighbouring republic, Karelia, which has a Council of Representatives for the Karelians, Veps and Finns, whose members are approved by the governor following elections at indigenous congresses (Postanovlenie 2001). What really stands out in the Murmansk case is the limitation of representation to the *obshchiny*, a very narrow sector of the Sámi community. This even introduces a pseudo-territorial limitation to the participatory organ: *Obshchiny* are as a rule only registered in districts on the Federal list of Places of Traditional Inhabitance and Economic Activities (2009). While all of Murmansk Region is traditional Sámi land, the list excludes all the province's major urban districts and the military area Ostrovnoy (formerlyGremikha; Berg-Nordlie 2015b).

We may consider two reasons for this limitation. First, the regional programme for indigenous minorities' economic and social development (Gov-murman.ru 2015) is heavily oriented towards supporting the *obshchiny* – in line with Russian traditionalist–preservationist attitudes to indigenous peoples. Since the Council of Representatives is to participate in the work with this programme, there is a certain logic to basing the Council on the *obshchiny*. The other NGOs tend to be headed by urban individuals, and their activities are weakly connected to traditional economic activities. Second, assuming a more Machiavellian logic, the delimitation to *obshchiny* effectively sidelined AKS and OOSMO, who had supplied the most vocal pro- Parliament activists, and who are most involved in border-transcending Sámi ethno-politics.

The border-transcending aspect of the Russian Sámi revival was already during the 1990s met with sceptical attention from the security structures.

Province officials would also, at times, accuse Sámi activists of separatist intentions when discussing improved arrangements for indigenous political participation. Accusations of separatism also manifested in public discourse. One readers' letter to Lovozero's local newspaper in the 1990s went so far as to warn of an impending "Nagorno Karabakh" in Murmansk Region, referring to the Armenian-populated breakaway province in Azerbaydzhan (Larsson-Kalvemo 1995, 44–45, 72–73; Overland and Berg-Nordlie 2012,94).[15] Requests for a Russian Sámi Parliament had also been met with scepticism due to the distinctly non-Russian roots of that institution (Berg- Nordlie 2015b; Kalte 2003, 110–112).

In 2010 pro-Parliament activism came to a peak as a congress of Sámi activists launched a self-declared Sámi Parliament. This organ was called the Kuellnegk nyoark Sám' Sobbar, taking its name from the Kola Sobbar (Berg-Nordlie 2015b; Kuchinskiy 2011, 126; Sovkina 2008). They received vocal support from several Western Sámi politicians and activists. These events coincided unhappily with the trend in Russia towards increased scepticism against cooperation between Russian NGOs and foreign actors. Russian Sámi activists were called to the security structures for conversations on the matter,[16] and there were accusations in the media that "the West" supported the Sámi in order to destabilize Russia. One notorious newspaper text labelled the Sámi as "the new card of the West in the battle for the Arctic" (Finugor.ru 2012; Regnum.ru 2012).

In 2012 a Murmansk Region media spokesman accused named pro- Parliament activists of wanting to leech revenues from industrial ventures (a statement that falls in line with the "indigenous blackmail" discourse found elsewhere in Russia), of "separatism" (a traditional accusation against Sámi activists), and of being "coordinated from abroad", more precisely by the Norwegian Sámi Parliament. The Sobbar's leader was accused of utilizing her role as Russian Sámi representative in the Barents Cooperation's Working Group for Indigenous Peoples to perform such subversive activities (7x7.ru 2012).[17]

Summary

This article has comparatively investigated tendencies in Russian indigenous minority policy and Sámi policy, more precisely the presence or absence of arrangements for self-determination, here operationalized as structures for indigenous autonomy and participation. The period 1822–2014 has been divided into three "eras" – Late Imperial, Soviet and Federal.

If we are to sum up the "long lines" in Russian indigenous minority policy across these three eras, four aspects stand out.

First, *the delimitation of indigenous minority policy to a subset of the actual indigenous population*. While the Imperial *inorodtsy* category gradually came to include other minorities than the indigenous ones, the subsequent Soviet delimitation used demographic and socio-economic criteria to split the indigenous population into different categories. The Imperial categorization system had also separated internally between different categories of peoples,

but under Soviet policy the peoples that were considered "least developed" were isolated entirely from other indigenous peoples and made into the object of a separate policy field. This approach has been retained by the Russian Federation.

Second, the categorization reflects a fundamental attitude of *state paternalism*. The indigenous minorities are treated as groups needing state support, rather than as rights-holders that are owed something by the state. Both the 1822 Charter and early Soviet policy can be explained as resulting from a perceived need both to improve administration over a multi-ethnic realm and to

protect indigenous minorities' cultural distinctiveness whilst allowing for gradual "civilizing". It was not until the Soviet Era that Russia really began to have an active policy aimed at "developing" the indigenous minorities towards a "higher" level of civilization. Soviet indigenous minority policy can be subdivided into at least two distinct periods. Until the mid-1930s, policy followed a nation-building line that focused on assisting the indigenous peoples into becoming modern Soviet nations. Paternalism was somewhat tempered by the establishment of territorial autonomies and the education and recruitment of indigenous cadres. Following the turmoil of Stalinist terror and world war, a policy of assimilating the indigenous minorities into Soviet (Russian) culture came to dominate. Collectivized indigenous societies were gradually merged, involving forced relocations of communities from their traditional lands. These policies were also presented in the language of assisting the "small peoples" on the path to progress. In the Federal era, paternalism has continued through programmes aimed at facilitating the survival of traditional economic activities, programmes that indigenous communities to varying degrees participate in shaping and implementing. Paternalism is also inherent in the traditionalist and preservationist view of indigenousness as unbreakably connected to traditional economic activities that cannot survive without special protection. Structures for indigenous interest representation have been established in several Russian provinces. These structures, however, are not given the power to protect the lands necessary for traditional economic activities. Indigenous communities are dependent on the state to enforce protection or, when their lands are alienated, compensation. No authorized structure for indigenous representation exists at the Federal level.

Third, a consistent aspect of the Russian indigenous minority policy field has been its *weak institutionalization*. Actors in the policy field have lacked power to successfully work for the interests of indigenous minorities, particularly when coming into perceived conflict with the state's economic benefit or security. Following the Russian Revolution a more robust institutionalization of the policy field took place and state officials approached indigenous minority policy with a zeal that has been seen neither before nor after in Russian history. This could have been the beginning of something truly revolutionary in Russian indigenous history, but the emergence of Stalinism betrayed those hopes. Indigenous minority policy was soon "put in its place" again. In practice, indigenous minorities became subsumed within the broader policy object of "the North", which was increasingly identified as an arena for economic

development and international rivalries. In the Federal Era, we again see that the Arctic's natural resources are viewed with great interest both by Russia and other powers, international relations are deteriorating, and the indigenous policy sector remains weak.

Fourth, *territorial autonomy* has been present in indigenous minority policy throughout all the three eras, although in different forms. Nonterritorial arrangements have had a lesser role, only becoming widespread in the Federal Era. In the Imperial Era certain low-level administrative divisions of the state were based on traditional indigenous governance structures. This supplied indigenous peoples with a small measure of selfgovernment, albeit not enough to effectively counter the problems of colonization. The Soviet territorial autonomies cannot be seen as having evolved from the Imperial system. This was a qualitatively different approach and must be considered a genuine policy revolution. Even following the backlash of Stalinism, many of the

larger territorial autonomies remained in place. These became provinces of the Federation after the fall of the USSR. During Putinism, many of them have been moved down again to the third tier of the administrative hierarchy, and only four autonomous areas remain on the second tier.

The hypothesis of this article was that key events in Russian Sámi history would be explainable as deriving from tendencies in Russia's indigenous minority policy. Generally, this hypothesis holds. There was no "Sámi Parliament" in Late Imperial Russia, but there was an implementation of the general system of ethnically delimited territories, some of which allowed traditional governance systems to continue. The Soviet history of the Sámi also followed the general pattern: there was an early period of state assistance to the Sámi, which also included the establishment of one nominal autonomous territory, but this came to an end in the 1930s. Subsequent policy came to be dominated by assimilation and forced removal. In the Federal Era, Sámi policy has been very weakly institutionalized, particularly until 2004. That year a more stable, although not very powerful, structure was established, and the authorities began to work for a more systematized form of indigenous representation. This, too, falls in line with general tendencies.

There are, nevertheless, some case-specifics. These cases can be explained by the extreme demographic weakness of the Russian Sámi, Murmansk Region's lack of symbolic connection to indigenousness or ethnic selfgovernment, and the fact that the Russian Sámi inhabit an area bordering Western powers with which Russia has had a turbulent relationship, and that the Russian Sámi form part of a nation that transcends this border.

(1) *The Sámi have been repeatedly accused of separatism*. The border.transcending nature of the Sámi and their proximity to the Russian-Western border has repeatedly caused security structures to take an interest in them, the most dramatic example being accusations of separatism during the Stalinist terror. This is not an entirely unique feature of the Sámi case, though. During the Stalinist terror, ethnic minorities were targeted all over Russia. The specific accusation of pro-Finnish activity was not unique to the Sámi but also used against Finnish-Karelian activists.

(2) *Territorial autonomy has been less practiced.* In the early Soviet Era, the Northern Committee's proposed territorial autonomies were rejected. It is likely that security concerns played a part in that decision. Only Lovozero District was made a formally national district, and this proved to be temporary.

(3) *Murmansk Region has a particularly weak tradition of indigenous minority policy*. The authorities in Murmansk have never gone beyond the central level's demands for indigenous autonomy or participation. The most promising period in Russian Sámi policy history was the early Soviet Era, when the driving force was an envoy from Moscow and not the provincial authorities themselves.

(4) *There has been conflict over the demand for a foreign type of indigenous representational organ*. The specific demand for a Sámi Parliament-type institution occurred because many of the Russian Sámi civil society leaders are part of border-transcending networks where political ideals and ideas have spread from the West to the East. When seen from a pan-Sámi perspective, the Sámi Parliament model appears to be the natural way to organize Sámi representation. The model was, however, perceived by provincial authorities as out of line with principles of Russian indigenous minority

policy. The ensuing debate coincided with increasing scepticism to Russian-Western civil society cooperation and discussions came to be haunted by old uncertainties about the loyalty of the Russian Sámi. The authorities' eventual decision on a consultative council of governor-selected activists was in line with current Russian governance trends, and their delimiting of the council to *obshchiny* activists can be interpreted as resulting from a combination of traditionalist–preservationist attitudes to the "small peoples" and a desire to sideline the actors that were most connected to the West and articulated a Nordic Sámi-inspired discourse on indigenous representation. While pro-Parliament activism represents a truly unique aspect of the Sámi case, reflecting the border-transcendence of this concrete indigenous group, pro-Parliament activists have nevertheless anchored their proposed organ in the Kola Peninsula's local traditions for indigenous representation and consistently argued that their desired representation model is within the scope of Russian indigenous minority legislation.

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Notes

1 "The North" here refers to Circumpolar European Russia, Siberia and the Far East (Blakkisrud andHønneland 2006, xi, 8–12).

2 "Provinces" here refers to all second-tier administrative bodies in Russia, including, for example, regions (*oblasti*), republics (*respubliki*), territories (*kraya*) and autonomous areas (*avtonomnye okruga*).

3 For Massey and Huitema a policy field is defined by the presence of these three phenomena, which they term *institutional order*, *substantive expertize* and *substantive authority*. I do not operate with a so strict definition of the term "policy field" but consider a policy field to be weak, or poorly institutionalized, if one or more of these phenomena are less than fully present.

4 "Lapp" (Russian: *lopar*) is an old exonym for the Sámi people. It is currently considered to constitute a slur when used by non-Sámi.

5 Skachko is referred to in Overland (1999, 59) as the Committee's "*de facto* head". See also Pika (1996, 18–33).

6 Until 1938 Murmansk was an area (*okrug*) within Leningrad Region (*oblast*).

7 *Siyt*: Traditional Sámi social organization unit, group of people jointly managing certain resources (e.g. territory).

8 This section describes events from 1992 to October 2014.

9 Interviews: Krasnoyarsk, Yugra, Moscow, 2008.

10 *Avtonomnye okruga*, before the 1970s called *natsionalnye okruga* ("national areas")

11 Interviews, Krasnoyarsk, Yugra, Moscow; 2008.

12 Interviews: Krasnoyarsk, Yugra, Moscow, 2008.

13 Interviews, Murmansk Region, 2009–2015.

14 All these bodies use the general categories for indigenous minorities in their names but are oriented towards the Sámi. There are those who hold that the Izhma Komi should be treated equally to the Sámi, by virtue of socio-economic similarities. The Izhma Komi arrived relatively late on the peninsula and form a subset of the greater Komi people, who number more than 50,000 and hence are not small-numbered enough to be considered part of the Russian indigenous minority category.

15 Interviews, Murmansk Region, 2009–2015.

16 Interviews, Murmansk Region, 2009–2015.

17 This was not the first time the Barents Cooperation (a Russian-Nordic cooperation regime) was framed as having a suspicious role in Russian Sámi politics. Similar accusations had been voiced when the same person was employed by the Barents Indigenous Peoples' Office the year after she had become leader of the Council of Authorized Representatives.

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