

MODERN TRENDS IN PARADIPLOMACY: A CASE OF RUSSIAN-FINNISH REGIONAL COOPERATION

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For several decades, EU-Russian regional cooperation helped effectively respond to the local challenges. The EU terminated programmes for regional cooperation with Russia and Belarus in 2022. The existing paradiplomatic structure, however, may be of interest to scholars and policymakers as a model to be reproduced by Russia in cooperation with non-EU neighbours. The study aims to identify the main trends in paradiplomacy by examining Russian-Finnish regional collaboration. It reviews theoretical approaches to paradiplomacy, conducts a case study analysis of three forms of Russian-Finnish regional interaction and defines the main trends in paradiplomacy. The author concludes that paradiplomacy intensifies globalisation and regionalisation processes. In the past years, the main paradiplomacy trends in cooperation between Russia and the Baltic Sea region states, particularly Finland, were as follows: (1) project activity gathering momentum; (2) diversification of paradiplomatic actors; (3) equal and symmetrical partnership between Russia and the European states.

Keywords:

Russian Federation, Finland, Baltic Sea region, paradiplomacy, regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation

Introduction

During the past few decades, EU-Russian regional cooperation was a channel of interaction between communities on both sides and demonstrated its resilience even in times of crisis. The relations between Russia and Finland, in particular, were built on the common historical past and strong economic and political ties. In 2022, the European Commission stopped cross-border cooperation programmes with Russia and Belarus, and, later on, Finland froze intergovernmental and inter-departmental contacts, trade and economic cooperation between the countries, as well as projects in science, education, culture, and sport. However, the system of paradiplomacy that has developed between Russia and the EU, and in particular, Finland, is a vivid example of positive cooperative practices that need to be ex-

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plored theoretically. Moreover, these practices should be studied from a practical perspective as they contribute to the development of a similar institutionalized model of cooperation between Russia and the neighbouring non-EU countries.

The research aims at identifying the main trends in paradiplomacy by examining the experience of Russian-Finnish regional cooperation.

To achieve this goal, several objectives should be reached:

- to overview the theoretical grounds of the concept of paradiplomacy;
- to analyse three cases of regional Russian-Finnish cooperation;
- to identify and characterize the main trends of modern paradiplomacy.

Theoretical framework

Since the 1980s, academics have been deeply concerned about international cooperation of subnational entities. However, a unified definition of this phenomenon is still lacking. Except ‘paradiplomacy’, there are other terms describing external relations of subnational actors, such as ‘constituent diplomacy’, ‘regional diplomacy’, ‘sub-state diplomacy’, ‘microdiplomacy’, ‘multilayered diplomacy’, ‘catalytic diplomacy’, ‘protodiplomacy’, and ‘post-diplomacy’ [1, p. 25]. In our research, we will stick to the notion of paradiplomacy as an umbrella term that characterizes different aspects of subnational initiatives.

In the 1960s, Rohan Butler introduced the term “paradiplomacy” to describe the “personal or parallel diplomacy complementing or competing with the regular foreign policy of the government” [2, p. 13]. The modern understanding of paradiplomacy has become firmly established in academic literature following the publication of the works by Panagiotis Soldatos and Ivo Duhacek. According to them, paradiplomacy is an international activity of sub-national actors (regions, cities) that is “parallel to, often co-ordinated with, complementary to, and sometimes in conflict with their central governments’ diplomacy [3, p. 48]. Duhacek further developed the concept of paradiplomacy by identifying the following types of subnational initiatives in the international arena: (1) transborder regional microdiplomacy, (2) transregional microdiplomacy, (3) global paradiplomacy and (4) protodiplomacy [4]. Joenniemi and Sergunin identify two types of paradiplomatic methods. The first one is a direct method that implies the development of distinct foreign ties between cities and regions. The second one is an indirect method in which cities and regions impact national foreign policy [5, p. 23].

The presence of direct channels of communication is a central feature of paradiplomacy [1–3]. Emphasizing this aspect, Kuznetsov defines paradiplomacy as “a form of political communication for reaching economic, cultural and political or any other types of benefits, the core of which consist in self-sustained actions of regional governments with foreign governmental and non-governmental actors” [1, p. 31]. Cornago also focuses on communicational aspect and understands paradiplomacy as “non-central governments’ involvement in international relations through the establishment of permanent or *ad hoc* contacts with public or private entities, with the aim to promote socioeconomic or cultural issues”

[6, p. 40]. At this point, paradiplomacy might become an object of multi-level governance studies since multi-level governance reflects a system of interaction, which involves a wide range of actors and institutions at various administrative levels [7, p. 392].

Andre Lecours developed his paradiplomacy theory by introducing the concept of ‘layers’ of paradiplomatic activity [8]. According to Lecours, the first layer is represented by economic cooperation. In this context, regional governments seek to develop an international presence in order to attract foreign investments and international companies to the region and enter new markets. As noted by modern scholars, for instance, Mezhevich and Bolotov, economic cooperation creates additional financial opportunities for regional authorities, and over the past decades, it has transformed into a full-fledged regional development mechanism [9, p. 108–109].

The second layer of paradiplomacy involves cultural, educational, technical, and technological cooperation. At this level, paradiplomacy is more extensive and multidimensional as it pursues more complex objectives. These aspects of cooperation within the context of Russian-Finnish cross-border collaboration have been emphasized in the writings of Sebentsov [10; 11], Fritsch, Nemeth, Pippinen, and Yarovoy [12], as well as Koch [13].

The third layer of paradiplomacy is related to the political space. At this level, the local expression of identity (which may differ from the national one) emerges. Some scholars [6; 14] note that due to technological development, contemporary paradiplomacy operates not only in instrumental fields (such as international trade and global markets, environmental issues, scientific and technological cooperation, and transport), but also in “areas of social and political concern such as ethnic conflicts, public health, education, cultural diversity, human security, human rights, and humanitarian relief or development aid” [6, p. 6]. Therefore, all three layers adopted by Lecours tend to accumulate and intertwine with one another.

Paradiplomacy trends mostly replicate the general tendencies of international relations. In particular, paradiplomacy reflects the globalization and regionalization processes that increase the importance of non-state actors in international relations, especially subjects of federations or regions of unitary states, and megalopolises [15; 16, p. 43].

Materials and methods

Methods of the research. A case study is a central method of this research. A case study makes possible “an in-depth analysis of a single unit (...) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena” [17, p. 341]. Hence, a case study enables us to fulfill the objective of our research, which is to identify contemporary trends in paradiplomacy through an examination of the case of Russian-Finnish regional cooperation.

Apart from the case study, this work is based on comparative analysis and systems analysis. Comparative analysis allows us to match empirical evidence collected from the recording and classification of Russian-Finnish paradiplomatic activities. Moreover, following the logic of systems analysis, the paper summarizes the principles of cooperation between the regions of Russia and Finland and identifies general trends in paradiplomacy.

Methodology. The methodology adopted in this article is built on the approach proposed by Kuznetsov. According to him, qualitative techniques are more applicable for analyzing paradiplomatic activities than quantitative approaches due to the absence of adequate data sets. Complex operationalization and definition of the variables of paradiplomatic practices become the main problem for quantitative analysis. A case study, on the contrary, helps to “better cover the contextual peculiarities of the multidimensional phenomenon” [1, p. 15].

With particular emphasis on the EU – Russia cooperation, our article is based on the methodological findings of Koch [13], Laine [18], Khasson [19], and Sologub [20] who overview transborder relations through the analysis of the partners’ structure. It allows us to examine the range of entities involved in international activities and understand how they relate to each other. This analysis helps us uncover the specific traits of local participants and describe how they communicate with one another.

Materials. The methods of data collection and data themselves should be diverse in order to conduct an informative case study analysis in “a more synergistic and comprehensive view” [21, p. 12]. The materials for the analysis can be divided into the following groups:

- European documents as well as Finnish and Russian national documents;
- Joint Russian-European and Russian-Finnish documents;
- Cross-border cooperation projects’ websites and related statistics;
- Universities’ websites including programmes’ descriptions and curricula.

While working with the materials, special attention was paid to the reliability of the resources, therefore, only official websites and statistical resources were chosen for the analysis in order to exclude erroneous or inaccurate data. Moreover, in accordance with the methodology of Bobylev, Gadai, Kireyev, and Sergunin [22, p. 844–845], selected sources were considered representative as they demonstrated common characteristics of Russian-Finnish paradiplomacy that can be traced in all three case studies. Studying the trends of paradiplomacy top-down (through national regulations and joint documents) and bottom-up (through particular cross-border cooperation projects, universities’ programmes, and curricula) helped us to analyze in complexity the phenomenon of Russian-Finnish paradiplomacy.

Criteria for case selection. The case study implies a careful choice of case parameters. Based on the case study methodology proposed by Yin [23], the cases for the study were selected according to the criteria we defined: time frame, participants, place and process (table 1).

Table 1

Criteria for selecting cases for analysis

Case criteria	Description	
The timeframe	Years 2000—2020	
The participants	Subnational actors	
	Twin cities Imatra-Svetogorsk	Cities administration
	South-East Finland — Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014—2020	Universities, businesses, NGOs, municipalities, regional authorities, and budgetary institutions (as project partners).
	Russian-Finnish Cross-Border University	University of Helsinki, University of Joensuu, University of Kuopio, Lappeenranta University of Technology, University of Tampere, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, Petrozavodsk State University, European University at St. Petersburg
The location	A transborder component of the cases	
	Imatra and Svetogorsk are located on the Russian-Finnish border 7 km apart from each other	
	Cross-border cooperation programme covers border regions of South Karelia, South-Savo, and Kymenlaakso (Finland) as well as St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region (Russia)	
	Russian-Finnish Cross-Border University: universities located in St. Petersburg and the Republic of Karelia in Russia, universities located in Pirkanmaa region, North Karelia, Northern Savonia, South Karelia, Uusimaa region (part of them is represented by bordering regions)	
The process	All the cases represent paradiplomatic activities between Russia and Finland. In our research, we view “paradiplomacy” as an umbrella term that describes a variety of international activities of subnational entities. More precisely, by “paradiplomacy” we mean an international activity of sub-national actors (regions, cities) that is “parallel to, often co-ordinated with, complementary to, and sometimes in conflict with their central governments’ diplomacy” [3 p. 48]	

Twin cities Imatra-Svetogorsk

Owing to globalization processes, nowadays cities play a significant role in transnational cooperation. This phenomenon is called “city diplomacy”, that is, “the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another” [24, p. 7].

The term ‘twin cities’ originally described the phenomenon of cities located on opposite sides of an internal state border. Later on, it began to characterize cities separated by an external state border [25].

For urban areas to be distinguished as twin cities certain criteria should be met:

- both cities should be located on the state border;
- city dwellers should share a common historical past;
- the cooperation between twin cities should be conducted through institutional and legal mechanisms.

In addition, twin cities are often located on two sides of the same river, which is a natural geographical boundary. Plus, the residents of the cities are usually ethnically mixed and speak both languages [26]. Imatra and Svetogorsk meet most of these criteria, therefore, they are referred to as twin cities in academic literature [25; 26] and legal documents.¹

After the Second World War, the Soviet-Finnish border was redrawn. Then, two cities, Imatra and Svetogorsk, emerged as a result of partition and duplication. The settlement cluster around the Finnish industrial town of Enso was once a single entity. However, after the war, the settlement was divided into two cities on different sides of the state border. The part of the settlement that remained in Finland was renamed Imatra, while the part that was in the Soviet Union was renamed Svetogorsk. It was populated by people from different parts of Russia [27].

During the 1970s and 1980s, close ties were formed between the two cities as they worked together on a joint project to reconstruct the Svetogorsk Pulp and Paper Mill. At this time, the main facilities of the factory were built. Although the negotiations about the mill reconstruction were held at the state level and did not fully involve regional actors, a temporary border crossing and a growth of local contacts on both sides of the border stimulated mutual interest in further communication [28, p. 32].

Despite the fact that after the Second World War otherness was projected across the border, later on, twinning became a tool for strengthening the input of peripheral polities [29, p. 11] and the socio-economic development of bordering areas. In 1993, the signing of an agreement on cooperation between the neighbouring cities ushered in a new wave of cooperation. Intercity cooperation covered areas such as economy, education, culture, sports, youth policy, and environmental protection. Measurable outcomes of this interaction include air quality monitoring and air emissions measuring.²

Full-fledged cross-border cooperation began in 1996, when the cities launched their first joint initiative: the issuance of free visas and the construction of cross-border cycle paths.³ The cities continued to use the border as a resource

¹ Annex to the Cooperation Agreement between the Border Cities of Svetogorsk and Imatra, 20.01.1993. Protocol 21 of April 16, 2013. URL: http://www.svetogorsk-city.ru/regulatory/files/protokol_2013.doc (accessed: 19.06.2023).

² Cooperation agreement between the border towns of Svetogorsk and Imatra. 20.01.1993, *MOT*, URL: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/resources/territories/cross-border-conurbations/imatra-svetogorsk/imatra-svetogorsk-2/> (accessed 24.01.2023).

³ Imatra-Svetogorsk, *MOT*, URL: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/resources/territories/cross-border-conurbations/imatra-svetogorsk/imatra-svetogorsk-2/> (accessed 24.01.2023).

for exchanging positive practices aimed at cooperation and strengthening interaction. Later, the number of economic contacts increased, owing to the development of shopping and leisure tourism.

In the late 1990s, the self-positioning of Svetogorsk and Imatra as a ‘dual city’ began [27]. Until 2013, the local authorities had implemented the strategy of international cooperation “Imatra-Svetogorsk Twin Cities”,¹ which illustrates how the concept of “twin cities” passed from a theoretical category to foreign policy practice and entrenched itself in normative documents. As part of the strategy, working groups were created to prepare applications for funding within the framework of cross-border cooperation programmes. The groups also worked out ways to solve common logistical problems related to the development of automobile and railway communication.

In 2004–2006, the cities of Imatra and Svetogorsk participated in the project “City Twins Cooperation Network” aimed “to promote the exchange of best practice in the fields of local administration, education, culture, social affairs, economic development and cross-border cooperation”.² The project culminated in the creation of the Association of the Twin Cities in December 2006. As evidenced by all these stages of cooperation, practical initiatives were crucial for Imatra-Svetogorsk twin cities. This is consistent with the view of Joenniemi and Sergunin that the “instrumental aspects of twinning, including development issues, have increasingly been brought to the fore” [30, p. 452].

The case of Imatra-Svetogorsk twin cities illustrates three layers of paradiplomacy (Lecours [8]):

Layer 1 represents economic issues. Sub-state entities focus on “attracting foreign investment, luring international companies to the region, and targeting new markets for exports” [8, p. 2]. Shopping tourism from the Russian side to Imatra and the Finnish side’s readiness to invest in a railway hub in Svetogorsk exemplify the first layer of paradiplomacy.³

Layer 2 involves multidimensional cooperation (cultural, educational, technical, technological, and others). This layer is illustrated by all forms of Imatra-Svetogorsk cooperation within the agreement on cooperation between the neighbouring cities and mutual projects within the cross-border cooperation programmes: air monitoring, educational cooperation, youth policy initiatives, transport infrastructure building, and others.

¹ Annex to the Cooperation agreement between the border towns of Svetogorsk and Imatra, 20.01.1993. Protocol 21 of April 16, 2013. URL: http://www.svetogorsk-city.ru/regulatory/files/protokol_2013.doc (accessed: 19.06.2023).

² Imatra-Svetogorsk, *MOT*, URL: <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/resources/territories/cross-border-conurbations/imatra-svetogorsk/imatra-svetogorsk-2/> (accessed 24.01.2023).

³ Svetogorsk kak novyj transportnyj hub. Finny hotyat elektrichku Peterburg — Imatra k 2025 godu [Svetogorsk as a new transport hub. Finns want a St Petersburg — Imatra train by 2025]. *Fontanka*, 22.04.2019, *Fontanka.ru*, URL: <https://www.fontanka.ru/2019/04/22/042/> (accessed 12.06.2023).

Layer 3 of paradiplomacy reflects political considerations. At this level, sub-national governments may express a common identity (distinct from the national one) or try to impact the behaviour of a neighbouring region. In the case of Imatra-Svetogorsk, there is no evidence that they have sought to “affirm the cultural distinctiveness, political autonomy, and the national character of the community they represent” [8 p. 3]. However, the Strategy of International Cooperation “Imatra-Svetogorsk City Twins” and participation in the project “City Twins Cooperation Network” show that Imatra and Svetogorsk have positioned themselves as ‘dual’ or ‘twin cities’ in political discourse. This demonstrates that they share common interests and self-perception as a community.

South-East Finland — Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (2014—2020)

Cross-border cooperation for a long time remained an important channel of interaction between the regions of Russia and the EU, particularly the regions of Finland. In our research, we view cross-border cooperation as a form of paradiplomacy and define it as a type of coordinated actions aimed at strengthening relations between neighbouring regions.

After the EU enlargement in 2004, the European authorities questioned how to build up relations with new neighbours. At that moment, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) emerged to create a common economic, cultural, and social space based on shared interests with partner countries of the East and the South that would ensure stability in the region. However, Russian authorities insisted on the format of a strategic partnership. Consequently, Russia remained eligible only for cross-border cooperation programmes. In the year 2007, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) came into force substituting the MEDA instrument, TACIS instrument for the Eastern neighbours, and other financial means of support. The ENPI was a financial instrument for implementing the Action Plans which covered sixteen partner countries and Russia within Strategic Partnership in 2007—2013. In the year 2014, the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) substituted the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument.² The main principles remain the same: commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles, and sustainable development based on political dialogue, trade-related issues, economic and social cooperation.

¹ European Neighbourhood Policy. What is it? *European Commission*, URL: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en (accessed 14.05.2023).

² Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, 2014, *EU-Lex*, URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/LSU/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0232> (accessed 24.01.2023).

South-East Finland — Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014—2020 was one of the seven cross-border cooperation programmes between Russia and the EU and one of the three programmes implemented directly between Russia and Finland.

The eligible territory of the programme consisted of the core regions: South Karelia, South-Savo, and Kymenlaakso in Finland and St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region in Russia. There also were adjoining areas: Uusimaa, Päijät-Häme, North-Savo, North Karelia, and Republic of Karelia, besides, partners from Turku and Moscow may participate in the projects to a certain extent if their experience can enrich a particular initiative.¹

The programme encouraged joint initiatives towards the solution of common challenges in cross-border areas and formulated the following strategic objectives:

- 1) promotion of economic and social development in bordering regions;
- 2) addressing common challenges in the environment, public health, safety, and security;
- 3) promotion of better conditions for persons, goods, and capital mobility.

The above-mentioned strategic objectives were reflected in thematic objectives in order to categorize projects and make their monitoring and evaluation easier:

- 1) business and SMEs development;
- 2) support of education, research, technological development, and innovation;
- 3) environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and adaptation;
- 4) promotion of border management and border security, mobility, and migration management.

The total budget of the Programme was 77.5 million euros. Half of this amount was contributed by the European Union and the other half was equally contributed by Russia and Finland.²

We believe that the CBC Programme formed a unique system of regional cooperation between Russia and the EU, and especially Finland. Some scholars highlight the following challenges during CBC programmes implementation: partners' readiness to participate in a programme, the capacity to responsibly manage the programme, the level of partners' knowledge, and the readiness of regional and local authorities to support a programme [22, p. 856]. Despite the challenges, CBC programmes have proven to be effective, as evidenced by the South-East Finland — Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2014—2020. The programme achieved both quantitative and qualitative results.

Firstly, both Russia and Finland were equally involved in the management of the programme. Originally, the ENI programmes were developed as European policy and European documents reflect a coherent structure of multi-level institu-

¹ South-East Finland — Russia CBC 2014—2020. Joint Operational Programme, *CBC*, URL: https://www.cbcpjoints.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/South-East-Finland-Russia-CBC-2014-2020-JOP_EN.pdf (accessed 24.01.2023).

² Ibid.

tions responsible for cross-border cooperation. Some scholars argue that the ENI cross-border cooperation programmes are still hierarchical and are governed by the EU [13]. Despite this fact, we claim that in recent years Russia has remained a full-fledged partner. As it is shown above, the Russian party has participated on equal terms in the preparation and determination of strategic and thematic priorities and their financing, took part in decision-making, selection of projects, monitoring and assessing their results.

Secondly, for many years, cross-border cooperation programmes have been a unique mechanism helping to respond to local challenges while remaining relatively depoliticized. Some scholars approach the relationship between the European Union and Russia using the concept of ‘resilience’. This entails that the system displays adaptability in response to various challenges [31]. Cross-border cooperation had remained a robust means of communication until the spring of 2022, thereby affirming the validity of this concept.

Thirdly, the configuration of partners also garnered attention. On the Finnish side, the prevalent types of partners included non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses, while on the Russian side, municipalities, NGOs, and universities. This aligns with the perspectives of Scott [32], Sebentsov [10; 11], and Koch [13] that cross-border cooperation, particularly within the ENI CBC Programmes, exhibited numerous characteristics of multi-level governance. This theory elucidates the diversification of actors and their alignment, encompassing both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Finally, cross-border cooperation became ‘more cross-border’: projects moved from large cities to local centres located directly at the border. This trend emerged in the 2007–2013 programme period and consolidated in 2014–2020 [10; 11].

Hence, by 2020, an institutionalized system of collaboration between local entities in Russia and Finland had been established, a development that was also shaped by the South-East Finland—Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (2014–2020).

Russian-Finnish Cross-Border University

Nowadays, universities actively participate in international cooperation and are involved in globalization as both its subjects and agents [33, p. 63–67]. Indeed, the growing role of knowledge diplomacy implies the increasing importance of universities as actors of soft power.

The Russian-Finnish cross-border university (CBU) was a vivid example of the agency of universities in international relations and, in particular, in paradiplomacy. The cross-border university consisted of a community of Russian and Finnish universities, which aimed to elaborate and develop joint master’s programmes. The language of instruction was English, and classes and research activities took place in both Finland and Russia. Master’s programmes lasted for two years, consisted of 120 ECTS, and included classroom training, internships, and master’s thesis defense in both universities.

Concerning the legal grounds of such cooperation, the initiative was conducted under the Finnish and Russian normative base. The Ministries of Education of Finland and Russia approved the project as it was compatible with the main goals of the “Strategy for the internationalization of universities in Finland”¹ and met Russian national priorities such as the development of academic mobility, strengthening of international research activities and implementation of joint and double diploma programmes [34].

One of the most significant and enduring connections was forged between St. Petersburg State University and the University of Tampere in Finland. In 2003, St. Petersburg State University professors developed a master’s degree programme “Baltic and Nordic Studies” and in 2004, the joint Master’s double-degree programme with the University of Tampere was launched.

The curriculum of the joint programme was flexible and combined courses from St. Petersburg State University and Tampere University.

Some of SPbU main courses were:

— Social and economic development of the countries and regions of the Baltic Sea;

— Foreign Policies of Baltic and Nordic Countries;

— History of International Relations in the Baltic region;

— Special Forms of International Relations in the Baltic region;

— Russian Policy in the “New North” Region.²

Courses offered by Tampere University were the following:

— Key Concepts in Political Science;

— Theory and Metatheory in International Relations;

— Political Leadership and Political Processes;

— Political Systems;

— Advanced introduction to Research methods, Argumentation, and Philosophy of science.³

As indicated by the curriculum, both SPbU and Tampere University incorporated not only general theoretical courses but also practice-oriented ones into the programme. Some of these courses were mandatory for the successful completion of studies, while others were optional, allowing students to select study fields that aligned with their research interests.

As noted by Hudolej, Novikova, and Lanko, the contribution of Finnish colleagues to the programme encompasses the advancement of theoretical underpin-

¹ Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009—2015, 2009, *Valtioneuvosto Statsradet*, URL: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/77779> (accessed 24.01.2023).

² Baltic and Nordic Studies. *Saint-Petersburg State University*, URL: <https://spbu.ru/postupayushchim/programms/magistratura/issledovaniya-baltiyskih-i-severnoy-stran> (accessed 24.01.2023).

³ Master’s Programme in Leadership for Change, *Tampere University*, URL: <https://www.tuni.fi/studentsguide/curriculum/degree-programmes/uta-tohjelma-1698?year=undefined&activeTab=1> (accessed 24.01.2023).

nings of pragmatism in international relations, critique of the liberal world theory, and the evolution of the gender-oriented approach [35]. This assertion finds support in the learning materials designed by Tampere University. For instance, the suggested reading list for the International Relations course in Tampere included numerous texts dedicated to critical approaches, feminist theory in the postmodern context, and interdisciplinary perspectives.¹

In turn, the unique features of the St. Petersburg State University research school include:

- The reductionist approach to foreign policy analysis involves examining the influence of domestic decisions made by a large state when analyzing various components of foreign policy;
- the historical approach to the dichotomy ‘small countries — big powers’;
- extensive use of foreign languages in education and science [35].

Courses from the SPbU curriculum, such as “History of International Relations in the Baltic Sea Region” and “Russian Federation Policy Towards the Baltic and Nordic Countries,” serve as examples that can illustrate these particular characteristics.²

The effectiveness of the Cross-border university can be gauged by factors such as the count of existing international programmes and the number of alumni who have acquired double degrees. Additionally, from a more conceptual standpoint, the effectiveness of this form of collaboration is rooted in the growing significance of universities in Russian-Finnish paradiplomacy. As mentioned earlier, there is a notable trend involving the active engagement of Russian and Finnish higher education institutions as partners in cross-border cooperation initiatives. Universities have become traditional participants in cross-border projects, particularly from the Russian side.³ That demonstrates how universities turn into significant actors of multi-level governance in the Russian-Finnish relations and in the Baltic Sea region in general.

Discussion and conclusion

As demonstrated by the theoretical framework, there is no singular definition for paradiplomacy. It serves as an overarching concept encompassing the international engagements of sub-national entities. Paradiplomacy employs both direct and indirect strategies [5] and is composed of multiple dimensions or layers that signify varying levels of cooperation [8].

¹ Theory and Metatheory in International Relations, *Tampere University*, URL: <https://www.tuni.fi/studentsguide/curriculum/course-units/uta-ykoodi-37572?year=undefined> (accessed 24.01.2023).

² Baltic and Nordic Studies, *Saint-Petersburg State University*, URL: <https://spbu.ru/postupayushchim/programms/magistratura/issledovaniya-baltiyskih-i-severnoy-stran> (accessed 24.01.2023).

³ Funded projects. CBC 2014—2020 South-East Finland — Russia, *Cross-Border Cooperation*, URL: <https://www.sefrcbc.fi/funded-projects-2/> (accessed 05.06.2023).

Through an examination of the modes of regional cooperation between Russia and Finland, distinctive as well as shared attributes were identified. These attributes were subsequently consolidated, forming the foundation for outlining the trajectories of paradiplomacy advancement within the Baltic Sea region and on a global scale (Table 2).

Table 2

Trends in the development of paradiplomacy at the regional and global levels

Baltic Sea Region	World
<p>The significance of project activities grew, both in the context of Russian-Finnish collaboration and across the broader Baltic Sea region.</p> <p>The variety of communication methods and the entities engaged in cooperation projects highlighted a shift toward multi-level governance.</p> <p>Russian-Finnish paradiplomacy, along with broader Russian-European paradiplomacy, displayed an ascending trend of becoming more equitable and symmetrical.</p>	<p>The Baltic Sea region strengthened its position as an actor in global politics, as paradiplomacy simultaneously strengthens globalization and regional political processes.</p>

As previously mentioned, paradiplomacy not only mirrors but also amplifies two pivotal trends in international relations: globalization and regionalization [15; 16; 36]. Cases of Russian-Finnish regional collaboration substantiate this assertion. City diplomacy, exemplified by the twin city initiative, and cross-border cooperation programmes showcase regionalization processes. Simultaneously, knowledge diplomacy and the internationalization of higher education, as demonstrated by the Cross-border university, underscore globalization processes.

The Russian-Finnish paradiplomatic experience can be generalized and described from a theoretical perspective as a distinctive system of regional cooperation. Generally, the Russian-European cross-border cooperation programmes evolved into structured institutions facilitating collaborative initiatives through which specific projects were implemented. The distinctiveness of this model lay in its amalgamation of both top-down and bottom-up approaches, while encompassing all three layers of paradiplomacy identified by Lecours [8]. Cross-border initiatives influenced two key aspects: (1) the establishment of particular links between local partners and interpersonal connections; (2) the shaping of strategic foreign policy priorities for Russia, Finland, and Europe. This phenomenon is theoretically explicable by the application of both direct and indirect methods of paradiplomacy [5].

Furthermore, certain forms of paradiplomatic engagement, such as the Cross-border university and twin cities, contributed to a distinct landscape of Russian-Finnish cooperation. They also heightened the role of regional actors, thereby reflecting the trend of increased project activity within the Baltic Sea region and the strengthening of the principle of multi-level governance [13; 20].

At the moment, the prospects for the development of Russian-Finnish regional cooperation appear to be uncertain. In March 2022, the European Commission suspended all cross-border cooperation programmes involving Russia and Belarus, a move followed by Finland. Consequently, in the short-term perspective, while certain communication channels might endure, the possibility of comprehensive cooperation seems improbable. As a result, the evolution of paradiplomacy will be shaped by the broader trajectory of Russian-European relations.

Nevertheless, this effective cooperation model holds the potential for replication in other border regions of the Russian Federation. Given that the current cross-border initiatives operated within the framework of European legislative instruments (such as ENI, ENPI policy, etc.), it was unilaterally suspended. To avert such situations and potentially pioneer paradiplomacy in the Far East and Central Asia, Russia could establish a cross-border cooperation system anchored in the national legislation and its own institutional frameworks. Hence, the positive experience gained from Russian-European cooperation could serve as the foundation for a comparable institutional model, fostering cross-border cooperation along other parts of the Russian national border.

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