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Opiłowska | Roose [eds.]

Microcosm of European Integration

The German-Polish Border Regions in Transformation

Nomos

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Uniwersytet Wrocławski

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Edited by

Prof. Dr. Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski (managing editor)
Prof. Dr. Jochen Roose
Prof. Dr. Krzysztof Ruchniewicz
Prof. Dr. Marek Zybura

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Elżbieta Opiłowska | Jochen Roose [eds.]

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Microcosm of European integration. The German–Polish border regions in transformation. Introduction

Jochen Roose, Elżbieta Opiłowska

European integration and the promises of border regions

European integration started unquestionably as an elite process back in 1951 when six Western European countries decided to cooperate closely in the economic sector of coal and steel. The community was intended (Hallstein 1951) and expected (Haas 1958; Deutsch 1962) to become a starting point for the integration of Europe. This integration should not only include multiple and finally all economic sectors, as it step-wise did, but also the people in Europe were intended as well as expected to integrate, to become one big social unit.

Roughly 60 years later the community changed its shape fundamentally in all respects. It is now called the European Union, has a common market for all goods, partly a common currency, between a large part of its member countries (the Schengen area) obligatory border controls are removed, to name just a few changes. Among the most important changes is of course the enlargement of the Union from the initial six Western European countries to now 28 member states with more candidates for further enlargements. All these step-wise changes sum up to a quantum leap in the integration process. The changes are more than just increases in quantity. Rather, the character and *Wesen* of the contemporary union is fundamentally different to what the early founders of the European Coal and Steel Community formed. Though the question of which decisions, mechanisms and processes can be identified as causes for this process (see Wiener/Diez 2004 for an overview), without question most (if not all) of these changes were intended by the founding fathers or would at least be welcomed.

However, this general diagnosis does not apply to the integration of the people in Europe. The "ever closer union among the peoples in Europe", a declared goal already in the preamble of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community of 1958 (Treaty of Rome), did not materialise, at least not to the extent probably expected. Without doubt transnational links have increased and this phenomenon, though global, is partic-

ularly strong in the European Union (Beisheim et al. 1999; Held et al. 1999; Mau/Büttner 2009). Also, we can detect traces of European identification (Karolewski 2010; Risse 2010), though not considerably stronger than continental identification on other continents (Roose 2013). People still think and act primarily in a nationally confined manner. The social integration of Europe, the union of the people, lags behind. To a considerable extent, the European integration process has remained an elite project (Haller 2008; Fligstein 2008).

Without challenging this general assumption there are specific circumstances in which we can expect a different pattern. Border regions in the European Union are particularly prone to show transnational practices by ordinary people. As the removal of borders is not only an intention of the European Union but meanwhile a reality, especially in the Schengen area, we can expect a lively exchange across borders. For people living in border regions, transnational activities and border crossings in their daily lives could be expected to become the norm rather than the exception. Therefore, border regions have moved into the focus (see for example Müller 2014; Roose 2010; Weigl 2008).

Border regions were regarded as the constellation of European integration in a nutshell. Problems and opportunities which can be found on the European level are often mirrored in local constellations in border regions. This regards the need and the opportunities of administrative and political cooperation as well as personal contact across borders. However, as the local constellation is less complex with only two or in rare incidences three countries involved, cooperation should be easier.

Research has focused on border regions with enormous expectations.[1] As a working hypothesis, researchers often assumed the blossoming of cross-border contact. Administrative and political cooperation was expected to be fairly smoothly working, and a transnational lifestyle would be widespread among the "borderlanders" (Martinez 1998). The political removal of border controls and restrictions should result in a dense web of interlinkages, regarding local political institutions, local organisations and collective actors, as well as ordinary people. The forms of established contact could in a second step inform integration in Europe as a whole. Border regions were time and again regarded as "laboratories of European integration".

1 For an overview of border region studies see for example van Houtum (2000).

However, border research has shown that borders remain, also after European integration, after Schengen etc. Language barriers, gaps in the infrastructure, mental barriers, administrative obstacles, historical trauma – reasons are manifold and differ in their kind and extent across border regions. The local constellation shapes the potential of cross-border contact in respect to opportunities and obstacles alike. It does not suffice to hypothesise intense transnational integration just due to the political and legal transformation of borders. To understand cross-border processes and the lack of them, a sound consideration of the local constellation is needed. History, culture, politics, infrastructure, geography; all these factors shape the potential for cross-border contact.

Polish western border in focus

Cross-border constellations are specific at each European border. The enlarged Europe has a lot of different inner borders and border constellations. Countries of the same or different language, similar or dissimilar economic wealth, peaceful or violent history, etc. are situated next to each other. The broadness of constellations translates into a wide array of different constellations.

To understand social processes and identify crucial factors in varying contexts, social sciences have developed two different approaches. The quantitative process focuses on correlations among many cases assuming that external influences level each other out. The qualitative approach aims at identifying the broad spectrum of influences and reconstructs the causal processes, the actual social mechanisms (Hedström/Ylikoski 2010). These general approaches are applied both to the level of individuals and to the macro level of societies and larger social units. In this volume, we opt for the latter approach and focus on one particular border in the European Union: the western Polish border.

All border regions in Europe are special in some respects, in their very specific constellation of neighbouring countries combined with local configurations. Still, the Polish–German border is special and stands out from other constellations. As a political border it is a comparatively new one. This refers firstly to the accession to the European Union. Poland became an EU member in 2004, just ten years ago. Though ten years may seem a long time, it is short in respect to social processes. There is still no adult

generation which has grown up knowing only the time when both countries were part of the EU.

The juvenile character of the border applies also in national terms. While most borders in Western Europe have not been changed for centuries, the Polish–German border in its current shape was drawn at the end of World War II. Its implementation was paralleled by a fundamental exchange of population. Germans formerly living there moved to the west and Poles stemming from eastern parts formerly belonging to Poland but then Belarus and Ukraine moved into the new Polish space. These developments traumatised both countries and the respective populations far beyond the directly affected people (Opiłowska 2009). This is probably best illustrated by the fact that the naming of the population exchange is still highly contested, with the German side talking about expelled people while the Polish side speaks of relocated people. Obviously, there are multiple border regions with a highly conflictual history. Rather, there are no border regions without conflictual histories as nation state formation and border constellations was in most cases a highly violent process (Tilly 1985). However, in most other regions these wars are longer ago or were at least less deeply traumatising. Additionally, the reconciliation processes which have especially taken place between Germany and most of its neighbouring countries after the Second World War started much later in respect to Poland. Overall, the Polish–German border is special and probably unparalleled within the EU in the intensity of historical conflict in the recent past.

Economically the constellation at the Polish–German border is special as well, and again extreme in the European, if not global dimension. The difference of economic wealth of directly neighbouring countries is exceptional in Europe. While in 2013 the GDP per capita in Poland was €10,100, the respective figure for Germany was 3.3 times higher, i.e. €33,300. This is the largest economic difference in Europe in 2013. In Europe only the (short) border between Greece and Bulgaria is marked by a similarly deep economic difference, paralleled by the economic difference along the border between Mexico and the USA.[2] Sharp economic differences in direct proximity are highly consequential in multiple dimensions.

2 In 2007 the economic difference between Greece and Bulgaria was even higher, with Greece having a five times higher GDP per capita than Bulgaria. Due to the economic crisis, this difference was reduced in 2013 to 3.2. Source for all data: eurostat.ec.europa.eu, accessed 13.01.2015.

They provide strong incentives for border crossing to earn higher wages or to benefit from lower prices. Effects for the respective domestic market are immediate.

Vobruba (1997) pointed out that sharp wealth differences in border regions lead to social dynamics going beyond economic terms. Prestige is often associated with wealth, however unjustified. Wealth differences motivate individual reallocation, commonly known as criminality. And, as we can learn with respect to Maslow's hierarchy of motives, at borders with sharp wealth differences we will also find cultural differences. Typically, less wealthy people are more concerned with securing material needs while the more affluent favour post-material values (Inglehart 1977). Constellations of mutual misunderstanding and cultural alienation are a likely result. In fact, according to Roose's index of cultural similarity (Roose 2012), although cultural differences between Poland and Germany are large, there are four other neighbourhood constellations with an even larger cultural gap.[3]

Historically, economically and culturally the Polish–German border is special and in various aspects extreme in its kind. It is this special character which makes a close inspection of cross-border cooperation and interaction in this border region so promising.

A microcosm in close-up

The aim of this volume is to take a close look at this very special Polish–German border, particularly from the Polish side. To describe and understand the multiple patterns and shapes of cross-border links – and especially the lack of such links – we brought together contributions which take very different perspectives. *Katarzyna Stokłosa* puts the Polish–German border region in perspective. She discusses border constellations in Eastern Europe and outlines the specificity of borders in this world region. Unlike Western Europe, borders in the east are comparatively young and unsettled. *Elżbieta Opiłowska* narrows down the perspective to the Polish–

3 According to the index, which is based on survey questions on general values, the most dissimilar countries in direct neighbourhood are France and Italy. A dissimilarity larger than between Poland and Germany is also found in the following constellations: Slovakia–Hungary, Austria–Slovakia and Italy–Austria (Roose 2010: 103).

German border region. She discusses the development of administrative cross-border cooperation and links the developments with questions of identity. Her analysis is embedded both historically and internationally in comparison to other border regions.

In the first section, we take a look at institutional and administrative cooperation. *Maria Zielińska* takes up the historically poisoned relation and discusses steps of trust-building in a highly difficult situation. Building the foundation of a durable peace in Europe was the raison d'être of the European Union. Though usually associated with French–German relations, this aim is still relevant with regard to Polish–German relations and building up trust as a basis for mutually supportive relations is an ongoing task. *Anna Bachmann* looks at the development of cross-border cooperation from a neo-institutional perspective. She argues that cross-border cooperation is initiated and driven by local municipalities in the border region cooperating on issues of shared interest. Support by higher levels – national and European – is welcomed and crucially supportive but is unable to explain the blossoming of cooperation in the border region.

The second section discusses attitudes and daily practices of the people living next to the border. *Robert Knippschild* and *Anja Schmotz* present findings from a standardised survey on life satisfaction in the border region. As border regions are classically peripheral regions, life satisfaction is usually limited. Cross-border cooperation could compensate for this deprivation. The authors present the perception of locals in respect to cross-border opportunities in the districts of Görlitz and Zgorzelec and confront them with data from other sources of cross-border activities by the population. *Kamila Dolińska* and *Natalia Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak* refer to the same region and also take up the peripheral image of border regions. However, they discuss to which extent the description as periphery is still adequate in times of open borders and cross-border links, using a standardised survey in Gubin and Zgorzelec. They argue that the peripheral character of border regions is reduced by opportunities beyond the border. *Beata Trzop* draws on an extensive quantitative and qualitative study on cross-border practices and perspectives, the Lubuskie Social Survey with two waves (2005 and 2010). She finds overall a surprisingly low level of cross-border activities, compared with expectations based on the attractive cross-border opportunities. In a qualitative section she can identify three types of people in regard to cross-border practices and perspectives. Finally, *Dorota Szaban* and *Krzysztof Lisowski* focus on young people in the border region. On the basis of qualitative interviews they reconstruct atti-

tudes to Germans, and possible opportunities in the neighbouring country. Though different types emerge, their overall finding is a reluctance and hesitation to come into contact with people from the other side of the border or to extend practices in everyday life across the border.

In the concluding section, practitioners report on their experiences and programmes working in cross-border cooperation. *Tomasz Jaśków* points out the importance of language acquisition in the border region and presents current projects. As German and Polish stem from different language families, language learning is not only of major importance but also a major challenge. *Agnieszka Korman* reports on cooperative strategies in education policy. She embeds her analysis in the historical and cultural environment, pointing out the difficulties and chances of such a cooperation. This volume is a border crossing in itself. In international border studies some border regions are intensively studied while others have received much less attention. The reason for this unbalanced coverage in research is similar to the cross-border connections studied: personal networks, language competencies, funding opportunities. The aim of this volume is to present the scene of Polish border researchers to a wider community, to enhance exchange and provide information on this specific and particularly interesting border region to the international audience.

For this volume we initiated a peer review process. We received very substantial contributions from reviewers who commented thoroughly on the chapters. Our gratitude goes to Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, Nils Müller, Solvejg Jobst and Jarosław Jańczak for their critical comments and suggestions for improvement. We would also like to sincerely thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Poland for the support of the border studies conference in 2013, which provided a sound basis for this volume.

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Border Regions as Laboratories of European Integration

Katarzyna Stokłosa

Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe can be seen as a laboratory of border demarcation. The enormous and violent shifting of power through the 20th century has been marked by the shifting of borders. This part of the continent in particular has been characterised by ongoing border and regime changes. In most cases, these were connected with the emergence of new states and societies.

Therefore, Central-Eastern European border regions are a very good example to show how border regions have changed their national sovereignty many times (Schultz 2002: 9-13). The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire were both characterised by their multi-ethnic and multi-confessional character and formed a part of a big economic area that consisted of regions and was characterised through changes (Becker/Odman 2004: 76). For example the entire territory of the Transcarpathian region belonged first to the Hungarian, then the Austro-Hungarian state. At the end of the First World War, Austria-Hungary was broken up, and a part of the region with Uzhgorod as the administrative centre was ceded to the newly created Czechoslovakia (Stokłosa 2003b: 180). In this example we can see that development in the past was not only from East to West, but also in the opposite direction. An important characteristic of Eastern and Central-Eastern European border towns is the fact that they have generally changed their names at least twice. For example the former German cities Breslau, Hirschberg and Grünberg changed into Wrocław, Jelenia Góra and Zielona Góra when they became Polish towns after World War II. Lviv in Ukraine was L'vov in the Soviet Union, Lwów while a part of Poland and Lemberg when annexed by Austria in 1772.

Central-Eastern and Eastern European borders are all but stable phenomena. They change constantly. This means that regions change their sense of political allegiance and, at the same time, their political significance as well. During the 20th century, there has been the tendency for a continuous progressive shift towards Western Europe. Regions that some decades, or even years, ago formed a central part of Eastern Europe now belong to the Western part of the continent. This is the general trend, and

also a big desire among the inhabitants of these territories. Everybody wants to be a part of Western Europe; nobody wants to be aligned to an Eastern Europe that has always been stigmatised for its underdevelopment. This concept of development can be linked with the European Union, where Western countries count as the most democratic and experienced in the development of their neighbourhood, and in cooperation and exchange in border regions, and, for this reason, they serve as indicators of successful cooperation (Anderson 1998). March 2014 has been called "the month that changed the borders of Europe" (Financial Times: 9).

The events in Ukraine and Russia since November 2013, and the subsequent incorporation of Crimea to the Russian state in March 2014, with the support of the majority of inhabitants of the Peninsula, demonstrate that the desire to belong to the Western part of the European continent is not necessarily always the case. In some instances, people do prefer to belong to the Eastern part of Europe. The East–West tug-of-war over Ukraine was reignited in November 2013 after President Viktor Yanukovych failed to sign an association agreement with the EU, opting instead for a 15 billion dollar bailout and a cheaper gas deal from Russia. Pro-EU demonstrations in Kiev's Independence Square turned into mass protests after riot police attacked student protesters on 30 November. Further violence ensued, resulting in scores of deaths and in Yanukovych's deposition. Finally, in March 2014, Russian forces were dramatically increased in Crimea under the pretext of protecting Russian interests, notably Russia's Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol and Crimea's Russian-speaking majority (Luchterhandt 2014: 61). The majority of the inhabitants of Crimea supported Russia's annexation of Crimea. In reality, the Russian media propaganda had a large impact on such attitudes (Haran/ Burkovskiy 2014: 16; Voswinkel 2014). As a result, a strong Russophile Crimea identity developed and formed a social basis for separatist movements in the region (Stykow 2014: 58).

This development in Crimea is proof that the reason for the desire to be a part of either Western or Eastern Europe invariably lies in the knowledge and experience one has already gained. Most of the inhabitants of Crimea hadn't had the opportunity to experience the European Union personally; they only knew Eastern Europe, primarily Russia. This experience resulted in a sense of confidence in Russia, and distrust regarding the European Union. The idea that the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, would help improve the economic situation of Russian and Ukrainian inhabitants in Crimea led the majority to support the incorporation of

Crimea. From March 2014, an almost identical development could be observed in many regions of Eastern Ukraine, where numerous inhabitants expressed their desire to belong to Russia, and no longer to Ukraine. Once again, it was a very clear desire to shift into the Eastern region, and away from the Western part of the continent (Fisun/Avksentiev 2014). Since the end of August 2014, we have experienced a 'state of war' in Eastern Ukraine.

In this article, the shifting of borders from East to West and vice versa will be analysed using examples of diverse European cases. The aim is to show that borders are never a stable phenomenon; they can change very quickly, and so too, the national belonging of a region can shift.

Borders on the move

In this section, the example of the Finnish–Russian border will provide evidence of how changeable borders are, and how many myths have been constructed in connection with borders. This border region is exemplary in demonstrating the development of Eastern European borders, because even today it continues to represent a hermetic border between Eastern and Western Europe.

Myth-making

The consequences of World War II included changes of borders, battles in border regions and movements of people across the borders. For this reason, we can assert that border regions played a special role in relation to World War II. Furthermore, this historical event produced a lot of myths concerning battles, border changes, people's movements and a new life in border regions. This is, of course, different in the case of border regions where border changes didn't greatly affect the lives of inhabitants; where people were allowed to stay in their territories even though they had become a part of another country. Such was the case for the Danish–German border after World War II, where Danish and German people continued their lives in Schleswig under the changed rule (Frandsen 2014: 93-94). In the German–Polish border region, where German inhabitants were expelled from the new Polish territories, or in the Polish–Soviet border region, where Poles lost their homes and had to move either to Central or to

Northern and Western Poland, World War II is very strongly present in the narratives and collective memory of these regions' inhabitants (Stokłosa 2011a).

A very strong process of memory-building can be observed in the Finnish–Russian border region. Today, this border is 1,340 kilometres long (Kolossov/Scott 2013: 198). All major battles between Finland and the Soviet Union during World War II took place in Finnish Karelia and in Soviet Eastern Karelia. As a result, Karelia became particularly important in the Finnish memory culture. The 'Karelia issue' today mostly refers to the question of the areas annexed by the Soviet Union in World War II. Finns have started to talk about 'lost Karelia', but not about the question of creating Greater Finland by incorporating Eastern Karelia (Fingerroos 2012: 483-484). This is similar to the case of the Polish Eastern territories that became a part of the Soviet Union after World War II and started to be remembered by many Poles as 'the lost Polish ground'. But at the same time, the new Western and Northern Polish territories that had previously been part of Germany started to be described as the 'recovered Polish territories' (Faraldo/Thum 2000).

Between 1939 and 1945, two wars took place in the Finnish–Soviet border region. The effect was the creation of an ethnic and cultural border (Kolossov/Scott 2013: 199). The Soviet Union attacked Finland on 30 November 1939. From the Soviet side, more than 200,000 people were killed and still more wounded. Exact numbers have never been published. The Finns lost almost 25,000 and more than 43,500 were wounded. For a nation with a population of only 3.75 million, this loss was enormous. Finland lost around 10 per cent of Finnish pre-war territory, about 12 per cent of the population, 30 per cent of its energy sources and 20 per cent of its railway lines (Lunde 2013: 16-19). Finland lost a part of Finnish Karelia including the Karelian Isthmus and Ladoga Karelia with the city of Vyborg in the heart of the region. These areas were annexed by the Soviet Union after the Winter War in 1940, recaptured by the Finns in 1941 and lost again in 1944 (Fingerroos 2012: 483-484).

The so-called 'Karelian evacuees' (Fingerroos 2012: 484) were evacuated and resettled inside the new Finnish borders, where former inhabitants had to move together to make space for the newcomers (Møller 2007: 8-7). They also had to adjust to people with other habits and in many cases a different (Orthodox) religion. The majority of these expellees returned to their homes during the Continuation War (1941–1944) only to be expelled again in 1944. Over 400,000 Finnish Karelian people

had to leave their homes after their regions were annexed by the Soviet Union. There was no further comeback for Karelian evacuees and they had to establish new homes in other Finish regions (Fingerroos 2012: 484). World War II also radically changed the Finnish–Russian border. Finnish inhabitants of the border region did not truly accept the new border agreement signed in Moscow in 1944 (Laurén 2012: 48). Before the final peace terms were confirmed in 1947, the evacuees and many other Finns hoped that the border question would still change (Fingerroos 2012: 491). The lost Karelia became a place in memory for Karelian evacuees, a place preserved in their narratives and hopes. Karelian refugees' memories were closely connected with dreams of returning home (Fingerroos 2012: 501). People living close to the border felt insecure, and their emotions were dominated by fears. They were afraid that something dangerous could reappear (Laurén 2012: 48). A similar atmosphere existed in the German–Polish border region after World War II. German evacuees hoped for changes to the border and to be able to go back to their old homes until the recognition of the German–Polish border by the East German state in June 1950 in Görlitz. At the same time, new Polish inhabitants of the border region were afraid that the border could change again and that once more they would have to leave their new home (Stokłosa 2001).

Eastern Karelia has never been a part of Finland. During the Continuation War in 1941–44 Finland occupied most of Eastern Karelia for over two and a half years. This was the time when the dream of Greater Finland became a reality. Many Finns, especially people with a right-wing orientation, welcomed the conquest with great enthusiasm (Fingerroos 2012: 489-490). This part of Finnish–Russian history continues as a form of taboo topic until the present time. The occupation of Soviet Eastern Karelia and the close relationship with the Third Reich, including Finland's role in the Holocaust, still remain difficult topics to this day. Finnish narratives talk about double aggression by the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1941. According to them, Finland was only a *Waffenbruder* (brother in arms) and the Continuation War was a legitimate extension of the Winter War (Kinnunen/Jokisipilä 2012: 455).

First and foremost, Finns identify with their nation through the memory of the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War (1941–44). This is especially the case for Finns who live in the Finnish–Russian border region or for the Karelian evacuees (Kinnunen/Jokisipilä 2012: 435-437).

Immediately after World War II there was a resounding silence about the war in official, state-level memory production. The Soviet Union was

presented as a brother country, and bilateral relations between the countries were to be based on mutual cooperation and trust. There was also a relative silence among ordinary Finish people about the war experiences. The people were mentally tired and didn't want to talk about the violent events. In Central and Eastern European countries the communist narrative that underlined the anti-fascist resistance began to dominate. Likewise, in Western European countries that had been occupied by Germany, the myth of collective resistance and victimhood became the most important part of historic narratives, while collaboration and co-responsibility were downplayed. Official silence about wartime became necessary political realism (Kinnunen/Jokisipilä 2012: 454).

Discussions about the meaning of the Winter War and the Continuation War started in Finland in the 1950s with the production of war fiction and state-funded historical research. In the years 1951–1975, the Office of Military History under the Finnish General Staff published an 11-volume history of the Continuation War, and a four-volume history of the Winter War followed in the years 1977–1981. In 1988–1994 an updated six-volume history of the Continuation War was published (Kinnunen/Jokisipilä 2012: 448-449). After the 1989 collapse of the communist regimes, a new trend referring to the memory of the Winter War developed. Many Finns became interested in the Finnish wars against the Soviet Union. But instead of critical interpretations, nationalistic discourse of 1939–1944 began to dominate (Kinnunen/Jokisipilä 2012: 450). This development was typical not only for Finland, but for many countries of Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe as well (Stokłosa 2001). For example, in Polish and Czech discourse after World War II, all Germans in the population were presented as Nazis. In Finnish nationalistic discourse the Winter War and the Continuation War have been described as the best qualities of Finnishness: the will to sacrifice oneself for the common good, for national solidarity and for a sovereign state. Again, Finland was not the only state to act this way. In Poland, the mode of describing the Polish nation was very similar (Stokłosa 2011: 35-75).

During the anniversaries of the outbreak of the Winter War in 1989/1990, 1999/2000 and 2009/2010, the Winter War had a high level of visibility in public commemorations. Although in military terms Finland had lost both the Winter War and the Continuation War, the wars are remembered as heroic defensive victories. Even today, the memory of these wars forms an integral part of the nation's most important collective experience. In public commemorations, the 1939–1944 wars are celebrated as