

# CONSTRUCTING THE “NON-ESTONIAN”: THE POLICY AND POLITICS OF ETHNIC AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN ESTONIA

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## Introduction

This paper examines how the politics of European Union (EU) accession inform the design of Estonia’s main policy for ethnic integration entitled *State Programme: “Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007.”* This policy exists in the context of Estonian-European<sup>1</sup> relations, particularly on the issues of regional stability, preserving the Estonian language and nation, and expanding markets across the Baltic Sea region.

The case of ethnic integration in Estonia is not simply a matter of the global (Europe) meeting the local (Estonia) in which a fiercely nationalist Eastern European state yields to the demands of Western Europe. Rather, a delicate political relationship exists among European officials, liberal Estonian officials, and conservative Estonian officials based upon conflicting and common interests. As a result, a process of nation building through ethnic integration is occurring in tandem with, rather than as resistance against, EU accession. In brief, I argue that the politics of EU accession enable Estonian officials to appropriate a liberal discourse<sup>2</sup> of the self-motivated individual to legitimize ethnic integration policy, a tool for nation building.

I first clarify my theoretical and methodological approach, and provide a background sketch. Next, I draw on ethnographic evidence to demonstrate the Estonian officials’ strong position in negotiations with European officials on the issue of ethnic integration. I then discuss European officials’ interest in this issue. Finally, I examine how Estonian and European relations enable the construction of the “non-Estonian”, and how the administrative organization of the *State Programme* renders its full implementation vulnerable to delays.

## Policy and discourse

This paper contributes to an anthropology of policy largely developed by Shore and Wright (1997). They argue that anthropological studies of policy can show how neo-liberal ideas and practices are used “as instruments of power for shaping individuals – or, to use Foucault’s term, as a political technology.... (p.4)”. Policies, a central concept in the organization of contemporary society, are unequivocally anthropological phenomena since they can be read as cultural texts, classificatory devices with various meanings, and rhetorical devices that empower some people while silencing others (p.7). The case of ethnic integration in Estonia highlights the conditions under which officials can appropriate neo-liberalism to serve ethnic integration policy. This appropriation becomes apparent in the construction of the non-Estonian in the *State Programme*.

I take discourse to be “a question of what *governs* statements, and the way in which they govern each other so as to constitute a set of propositions which are scientifically acceptable, and hence capable of being verified or falsified by scientific procedures” (Foucault 1980: p. 112) [italics in the original]. While I will examine the role of science in legitimizing the *State Programme* in future research, that which “governs statements” about ethnic integration is revealed in officials’ routine utterances and in key passages in the *State Programme* itself. One can rely on Foucault’s notion of genealogy to understand how the given political forces pervading ethnic integration make possible the discursive strategies deployed by European and Estonian officials.

The problem is at once to distinguish among events, to differentiate the networks and levels to which they belong, and to reconstitute the lines along which they are connected and engender one another. From this follows a refusal of analyses couched in terms of the symbolic field or the domain of signifying structures, and a recourse to analyses in terms of the genealogy of relations of force, strategic developments and tactics (p.114).

As will be discussed below, the “relations of force” involve a political alignment of European and liberal Estonian officials pitted against conservative Estonian officials. This genealogical approach to ethnic integration illuminates the link between the politics and discourse that “account for the constitution of the [non-Estonian] subject within a historical framework. (p.117).”

## Background

The Estonian republic was re-established on August 20, 1991. In October of the same year, the 1938 Citizenship Law was re-instated which established a command of the Estonian language as the major condition of naturalization. As a restituted state, all inhabitants who were either citizens of the republic prior to Soviet occupation in 1940, or their descendents, automatically acquired citizenship. Eighty thousand non-Estonians fell into this category. In 1993, the Estonian Parliament passed the Alien’s Law which classified everyone else (immigrants to the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic and their descendents) as non-citizens. These individuals were now required to obtain a residency permit if

they wished to legally remain in the country. Furthermore, they had to choose whether to become Russian citizens, Estonian citizens, or remain as temporary or permanent residents. By June 1998, permanent residence permits were issued to 310,584 people while 19,742 people obtained temporary residence permits. Residence permits were issued to 89,348 legal residents of Estonia who are also citizens of the Russian Federation (Estonia Today: 1999)<sup>3</sup>.

Estonia's current ethnic composition differs dramatically from that of pre-Soviet Estonia largely because of the emigration, deportation, and execution of ethnic Estonians between 1940 and 1953, and the immigration of non-Estonians to Estonia during the Soviet era. In 1934, ethnic Estonians accounted for 991,000 (88%) out of 1,126,000 people living in the country (Raun 1991: p 129). Ethnic Russians numbered 90,000 (8%) and ethnic Germans accounted for 16,900 (1.5%) (Ibid: 247). Now, ethnic Estonians number roughly 942,000 (65%) out of 1,445,000 people living in the country. Non-Estonians make up the remaining 35% (or 505,000 people) with the vast majority of this group consisting of ethnic Russians (406,000), followed by Ukrainians (37,000), Byelorussians (21,000), and Finns (13,000) (Statistical Office of Estonia: 1999). Roughly 330,000 non-Estonians do not possess Estonian citizenship (Estonia Today: 1999). Citizenship exclusively provides the rights to belong to a political party, to vote in national elections, and to run for any political office.

Despite these factors, Estonia has experienced political stability and rapid economic growth over the past decade. It was invited to begin accession talks with the EU that commenced on 31 March 1998. Economic growth was fueled by the Nordic countries' extensive business interests in Estonia, which the Estonian government courted by introducing radical market reforms in the early 1990s. Thanks to the Nordic countries, Estonia received the highest amount of foreign direct investment per capita among all Central and Eastern European countries in 1998 (EIA 2000). While European officials and conservative Estonian officials have differences of opinion concerning ethnic integration, both sides cooperate closely in linking Estonia's economy to Europe's. However, the Language Act requires the use of Estonian in state agencies, local governments, companies, and foundations whenever it serves the public good. This legislation restricts the full participation of many non-Estonians in the public and private sectors.

Throughout the 1990s, Estonia's accession to the EU has been conditioned upon a moderation of Estonia's ethnic legislation. Yet, the Estonian government holds the legal right and political will to establish Estonian as the only state language. Its moral justification for this position is that the Estonian republic is the only state in the world that can guarantee the preservation of the Estonian language. The government's responsibility is made even more pressing given that only 1.1 million speakers of Estonians exist world-wide. One hundred sixty thousand ethnic Estonians live abroad and lack an environment where they can routinely speak Estonian (Kulu 1997: 280). Many officials argue that if Estonia would recognize Russian as a second official language, it would become the sole state language, *de facto*, since there are proportionately more Estonians who speak Russian than non-Estonians who speak Estonian.

By 1997, liberal Estonian officials were in a strong enough position to argue that EU accession would require Estonia to design a comprehensive policy to facilitate the naturalization of non-citizen non-Estonians. Conservative factions in the government and parliament have long argued that the state has no moral obligation to provide language training for people, and their descendants, who arrived as a consequence of the illegal Soviet occupation. For analytical purposes, liberal Estonian officials can be defined as those who push to erect a institutional framework through which non-Estonians can be naturalized, and conservatives, viewing naturalization as the non-Estonians' burden, who passively approach establishing this framework. Both groups are committed to asserting the dominance of the Estonian language<sup>4</sup>.

Liberals accept the notion that non-Estonians can be "competent" members of Estonian society as long as they demonstrate a command of the Estonian language. This condition is not in place entirely for the sake of enabling communication between Estonians and non-Estonians. Instead, a feeling exists that appreciation of Estonian culture and history and loyalty to the Estonian state are tied to one's knowledge of the language.

Conservatives, however, are wary about the morality of integrating non-Estonians. Even if non-Estonians speak Estonian, their perceived fundamental differences jeopardize the process of rebuilding the Estonian nation. Mart Nutt, a conservative Member of Parliament and author of much of Estonia's citizenship and minority legislation, expressed this sentiment in article in Estonia's leading daily newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht*. Commenting on NATO airstrikes in the Kosovo War, he wrote that it is "a ruthless fact" that a Russian considers a Serb a brother while an Estonian will remain an alien. "Blood is thicker than water...And this holds true also for the Russian who, according to some sociologists has been integrated" (Nutt: 1999 cited in M. Feldman: forthcoming research).

Naturalization is a state-designed rite of passage in which a non-Estonian individual is discursively transformed into a citizen by the acquisition of the knowledge necessary to uphold "socially accepted" values. The bulk of this knowledge comes in the form of language training. At the end, the individual must swear an oath of loyalty to the Estonian state. He or she is then prepared to assume greater responsibilities commensurate with the new status (Turner: 1979). In Foucauldian terms, the rite of passage aims to purify the body politic by means of an extensive administrative apparatus involving educational reform, Estonian language teacher training, publication of language textbooks,

production of audio-visual teaching aids, and the launching of a large-scale public awareness campaign to name just a few of the “political technologies” deployed under the *State Programme*.

The state, under the influence of liberal officials, offers language learning to the non-Estonian population in its attempt to regain full control over its territorial space by ensuring the omnipresence of the Estonian language. Though not usually expressed directly, conservatives prefer to regain territorial control by marginalizing non-Estonians, which they can accomplish by impeding or delaying the administration of language learning. Europe has supported liberal Estonian officials’ efforts to institutionalize the necessary administrative channels for naturalization. The bulk of their efforts appear in two major programs: the *European Union-Phare Language Training Programme* and the *Nordic/UK/UNDP project “Support to the State Integration Programme”*. The two programmes, initiated in 1998, conform to the *State Integration Policy*, also approved in 1998, which established the basis of the *State Programme*: “*Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007*.”

The *State Programme*, approved by the Estonian government on 14 March 2000, is the state’s long-term plan to incorporate non-Estonians into the body politic. The existence and final approval of the *State Programme* is largely a function of international pressure from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Commission (EC) in combination with the cooperative political efforts of liberal ethnic Estonian politicians and ethnic Russian politicians. Without this pressure, conservatives in the Estonian government would have been content to ignore the issue altogether or simply let it sit in a state of indefinite formulation. Indeed, the *State Programme* had been promised by the autumn of 1999, but, according to one EC official, people in the diplomatic community were wondering if it would come at all.

### **The retreat**

In November 1999, officials from the Estonian government and administrators from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)<sup>5</sup> organized a retreat in the Estonian countryside. The retreat was held in a renovated nineteenth-century Classicist manor house once inhabited by Baltic German landlords<sup>6</sup>. Like many manor houses, this one is now a tourist attraction featuring guides and hostesses dressed in colorful, Estonian national costumes. Much of contemporary national identity is constructed upon Estonian peasant life, connoting the purity of nature and the Estonian language, and the virtues of self-reliance and rustic living. The retreat’s planners considered this setting to be a relaxing environment to discuss ethnic integration.

The planners invited, among others, European officials whose governments are major donors to ethnic integration projects in Estonia. The ambassadors of Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were all in attendance with their first secretaries. The ambassadors of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States were also present as well as a diplomat from the German embassy. The first, and most important, item on the agenda was a discussion of the current draft of the *State Programme*. Ostensibly, this retreat would help to maintain transparency in formulating the *State Programme*, to receive input from European donors, and to assuage fears among the European officials that it was being shelved.

After a welcome reception in the foyer, the participants gathered in an elegant second floor hall with parquet floors, chandeliers, elegant white draperies, and ornate window trimming. The director of the Integration Foundation<sup>7</sup> escorted the ambassadors of Finland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and the resident representative of UNDP to the front row of chairs which was informally deemed “ambassadors’ row”. These particular officials, of all the guests, are the most involved in ethnic integration in Estonia.

The Minister without Portfolio for Ethnic Affairs (hereafter the Minister) greeted the audience and gave brief introductory remarks. She spoke of an older ethnic Russian man living in Ida-Virumaa<sup>8</sup>. Though the old man cannot speak Estonian, he is still contributing to ethnic integration in two ways: by working as a small merchant, and by sending his daughter to take Estonian-medium courses at Tartu university, the country’s premier institution of higher learning and main study center of the Estonian language and literature.

The old man’s situation conveys the government’s approach to ethnic integration by allegory. Having concluded that the older generation of non-Estonians is too lethargic to learn Estonian, and thus acquire citizenship, efforts at language training are aimed mainly at the younger generation. Yet, the old man’s employment in small business connotes neo-liberal economic self-reliance. Moreover, his daughter’s attendance at Tartu University signifies the connecting links between one’s command of the Estonian language, appreciation of Estonian identity, enhanced career potential, and economic growth for Estonia. This representation brings to life the rhetorical mix of nationalism and liberalism, in which the non-Estonian individual can achieve personal fulfillment simultaneous to preserving the Estonian language and nation.

Next, the Minister reviewed the draft of the *State Programme*. She explained that ethnic integration should occur through a division of three spheres: the linguistic-communicative, the legal-political, and the socio-economic. The first ensures a common Estonian sphere of communication across the country without forcing cultural assimilation. The second clarifies the relationship between the state and the non-Estonian population which was vaguely worded in earlier policies. The third addresses social problems and aims to stimulate economic growth<sup>9</sup>. By fostering ethnic integration

through these spheres society will harmonize while also preserving ethnic differences. The result will be an “Estonian model of a multicultural society, which is characterised by the principles of cultural pluralism, a strong common core and the preservation and development of the Estonian cultural domain (Estonian Government 2000: p.5).”

The Minister concluded her introduction lamenting the lack of national identity in Estonia. “When you ask people in Narva where they are from,” she explained, “they simply respond ‘Narva’, not ‘Estonia’.”<sup>10</sup> Her lamentation echoes the fundamental way in which ethnic relations are problematized. The *State Programme* posits that separate Estonian and Russian-speaking societies are forming in the same country. This bifurcation “may become dangerous both socially and from the point of security policy. (Estonian Government 2000: p.17)” The *State Programme* emphasizes that language training will unify the country into a common sphere of communication. Thus, people in Narva will identify themselves as Estonians, not ethnically but as members of Estonian society.

The Minister then opened the floor for questions. Ambassador #1 raised a hand, and prefaced a question by supporting the long-term goals of the *State Programme*. The ambassador then noted that the Programme has no sub-targets to help implement it in a step-by-step process. “Where are the stations on the road map?” the Ambassador asked, adding, “The linguistic side is there but not the social and economic aspects. These are not quite as developed.” The Minister concurred that specific activities had not yet been delineated.

Ambassador #2 spoke: “[My capital] would support it, but it needs more specifics. It needs a budget. How will it be funded from Estonia? It should also address how the programme will be administered. It’s such a cross-cutting issue.” The Minister replied, “This is an extremely important issue.”

Ambassador #3 had also expected greater stress on the social, legal, and economic aspects. The ambassador also called for yearly progress reports, interjecting that “You, Madame Minister, are the privileged interface with the outside world. This would help clear up many political problems.” The Minister commented that the Latvians have focussed more on labor and economic issues, but noted that other policies addressed these issues in Estonia.

Ambassador #4, expressing frustration, inquired, “Have we evaluated what has been done before...Are you ready to take over, and make lasting work in Estonia?” The Minister responded that evaluations are needed, and that “this is a learning process.”

The above turn of events signifies the Minister’s strong position. The Minister controlled the setting. The retreat’s very location embodied Estonian nationalism in the form of the rural manor house and the traditional maidens. This venue symbolically reinforced the Estonian nation at the expense of minority cultures in Estonia and to the neglect of European input. The Minister also controlled the pace of the discussion. Her introduction took thirty-five minutes away from a discussion scheduled for seventy-five minutes enabling her to reduce the number questions and comments. When questions were asked, she answered them in a terminal manner. The Minister could even gain rhetorical control over the pace of the ethnic integration process. Her response to Ambassador #4, “this is a learning process,” allows her to distance the government from criticism for hesitating on ethnic integration on the pretense that Estonia is not yet a fully mature civil society. The Minister used Europe’s stereotype of Estonia to her own advantage.

Other comments reflected concern toward the Estonian government’s commitment to implementing the *State Programme*: “Where’s the road map?”; “It should also address how the programme will be administered”; and “are you ready to make lasting work?” The audience, in the words of Ambassador #3, had to push the Minister to communicate with Europe: “You, Madame Minister, are the privileged interface with the outside world.” Significantly, the ambassador’s frustration is that of the European official wanting to learn more about the applicant state rather than the applicant demanding the attention of Europe.

Despite the ambassadors’ reservations, their governments still provided, directly or indirectly, fifty-two percent of the *State Programme*’s budget for the year 2000. Now that it exists, European officials want it to stay. A member of the expert committee to write the *State Programme* explained why foreign funding is easily secured. “To other issues, it’s comparatively easy because they think it is bad to have conflict. They’ve been watching Yugoslavia. They are ready to pay because they are afraid.”<sup>11</sup> Capturing the ambiguity of the power relationship between Europe and Estonia, one Estonian official noted that the “[*State Programme*] is only good for raising money. We can show it to whomever.” The individual then lifted a hand in the air with an open palm facing outward. The gesture carried a double meaning. It symbolized both the presentation of a transparent policy worthy of foreign support as well as an order to “Stop! Don’t look any further.” Indeed, European officials respond to both meanings.

### **The European politics of ethnic integration in Estonia**

Judgements about political stability and economic growth in the Baltic Sea region, made in reference to liberal and nationalist discourses, make possible the discussion at the retreat and the premise of the *State Programme* itself. Interviews with participants after the retreat provided further elaboration of the discursive strategies involved in ethnic integration in Estonia.

A senior Nordic diplomat explained the importance of ethnic integration in terms of regional stability. “It’s an advantage that the Baltic area have a positive development as well as Russia...It adds security to us all. The human side, the altruistic side [*is that*] all countries have the right to determine themselves. The basic fact is that the countries are

now independent...but in a good neighborhood.” Following this logic, the best way to guarantee regional stability is to accept nation building as the Estonian government approaches it, through linguistic expansion across the non-Estonian population. Also, who is able to define “country” and how a non-Estonian becomes a member of the country is not this diplomat’s concern. The “neighborhood’s” social contract, so to speak, permits an ethnic majority to morally define the country.

Closely following the concern for stability comes economic interests. “The first concern when the USSR collapsed was certainly stability” another diplomat added, “Stability is one area but also building a market economy is important....There aren’t many controversial issues in the current text [of the *State Programme*].” However, the diplomat made no mention of how this program facilitates labor mobility and market growth when it imposes a linguistic hurdle between the non-Estonian and their full participation in the economy. The diplomat must be content to wait for non-Estonians to master the Estonian language before the Estonian market can reach its full potential.

Another diplomat also stressed the economic dimension of stability by highlighting the importance of trade, investment, outsourcing, and knowledge transfer. “Anything we can do to expand our networks across the area must be a plus for everyone in the region...The goals are market economy, democracy, and environment....” Market economics is the metaphor through which Nordic participation in ethnic integration is understood. Explaining these countries’ role in the Nordic/UK/UNDP Project, which funds several ethnic integration projects, the diplomat said that “We monitor the process and give advice. We are like the major, strategic stockholders with interest in the company. The Governing Board of the Integration Foundation is the board of directors. We step in when our interests are threatened.”

Nordic business activities across the Baltic Sea require a population with as much access to jobs, training, and purchasing power as possible. Yet, since non-Estonians’ economic participation is contingent upon knowledge of Estonian, the nationalist discourse trumps the liberal discourse which would privilege individual pro-active participation in the market. The *State Programme* presents the lack of knowledge of Estonian as the principal impediment to the career potential of non-Estonians and economic growth in Estonia (Estonian Government 2000: p.20). By premising economic potential upon language ability, the *State Programme* reverses the logic of market economics: the labor market does not adapt to the capabilities of one-third of Estonia’s labor force, rather the latter must adapt to the former by learning Estonian.

The above claims to geopolitical security, nation-building, and economic growth help explain why the Nordics accept the limits on liberalism. Foreign donors, liberal Estonian officials, and non-Estonian leaders view the mere existence of the draft of the *State Programme* as a hallmark achievement. Interviewees interpreted this achievement as progress compared to the early 1990s when radical nationalists called for the expulsion of Soviet era immigrants. Now, in great contrast, a programme exists to incorporate them into the body politic, and Europe does not want to risk losing it.<sup>12</sup> As such, European officials are wary of making their criticism of ethnic integration too explicit lest they themselves trigger a reversal the progress in ethnic relations. The EC’s most critical recent statement of the government’s efforts to provide language training is simply that “Progress in this area is handicapped by lack of financial resources” (European Commission: 1999).

The EC must be aware not to overly favor Estonian or Russian nationalism. The perception of EU encroachment upon Estonian cultural identity, by applying too much pressure to integrate non-Estonians, would jeopardize the relationship between the EU and Estonia. Furthermore, European officials are careful not to fan flames of Russian nationalism by highlighting the slow rate of naturalization. This would encourage nationalists in the Russian Federation who exploit the conditions of the ethnic Russians living in Estonia. One ethnic Russian on the expert committee to write the *State Programme* explained the EC’s muted commentary. He said, “They don’t want to put it at a higher level because Moscow and Russian extremists in Estonia will react. They want a stable Estonia for the European Union.”

### **Ethnic integration policy: appropriation and administrative organization**

In this context, the genealogical link between the politics of EU accession and the construction of the non-Estonian subject becomes intelligible. The above “relations of force” enable the authors of the *State Programme* to appropriate<sup>13</sup> a liberal discourse of the self-motivated individual and places it in the service of Estonian nationalism.

The document’s chapter entitled “Main Aims” asserts that a “Focus on the individual means that ethnic integration into society is the result of the free choice of the individual, not a decision dictated from ‘above’” (Estonian Government 2000: p. 20). Later in the document, non-Estonians, though constructed as lethargic and apathetic, should be redeemed through self-motivation. “The diffident and passive attitudes widespread among non-Estonians must be replaced by the understanding that each person’s prospects for a secure future in Estonian society depend above all on his own activeness and co-operation” (p. 21). Indeed, the non-Estonian individual is required to uphold Estonian nationalism.

The direct subjects of integration are individuals. Integration on the level of the individual shapes the common core in the public sphere of society, and that common core operates on the basis of the Estonian language, common social institutions and democratic values. Integration grounded in the principle of individuality is

supplemented by the recognition of the rights of ethnic groups, which are expressed in the principles of cultural pluralism and the preservation of the Estonian cultural domain (ibid).

In the end, non-Estonians are only able to fulfill their political and economic ambitions after they have done their part to preserve the Estonian nation through language training.

While liberal Estonian officials authored much of the *State Programme*'s text, conservatives can threaten its implementation, precisely the move that European officials want to avoid. The document clearly states that the "overall guarantor of the *State Programme* is the Minister for Ethnic Affairs" (p.27). However, the Minister holds no authority over the other ministries responsible for implementing the specific activities of the *State Programme*, specifically the Ministries of Education, Culture, Social Affairs, and Internal Affairs. The Minister can neither force her counterparts to implement the activities if they should stall nor dictate how they should allocate the money in their budgets. She can only try to persuade them through political gamesmanship. Only the Prime Minister holds the undisputed authority to ensure *State Programme*'s full implementation, and this decision depends upon ethnic integration's perceived political payoff.

The *State Programme*'s administrative organization and discursive premise reveals the compromise among European officials, liberal Estonian officials, and conservative Estonian officials. Estonia's economic integration into Europe is rhetorically strengthened by constructing the non-Estonian as a transforming, self-motivated actor preparing for participation in a market economy. Estonia also wins favor by hinting that Estonian society is a democratic civil society built by the activity of "average" people. However, full economic and political participation is contingent upon knowledge of the Estonian language. Estonian officials see linguistic hegemony across the Estonian territory as the basis of nation building, yet they disagree as to whether an Estonian speaker's ethnicity is a relevant factor in rebuilding the nation. The *State Programme*'s existence is a victory for liberal Estonian and European officials. However, the full implementation of the administrative apparatus that would help naturalize non-Estonians is dependent upon the tenor of Estonian-European relations.

## Conclusion

Ethnic integration in Estonia illustrates that the process of nation building does not mutually exclude the process EU accession. It does, however, force a reconsideration of the notion of Estonia as local and parochial, and Europe as global and liberal. Europe continues to make political and economic inroads into Estonia, which liberal and conservative Estonian officials greet as necessary preconditions for the viability of the Estonian Republic. In this context, Europe supports the liberal officials' version of nationalism which involves integrating the non-Estonian on the condition of language acquisition. Partly motivating their support is the goal of political stability in the Baltic Sea region, which forces European officials to balance Estonian nationalism against Russian nationalism. Conservative Estonian officials see a fundamental incompatibility between Estonians and non-Estonians, and, therefore, resist ethnic integration. For them, nationalism is a process of exclusion. The current construction of the non-Estonian subject is a logical consequence of European and liberal Estonian officials attempt to gain control of the ethnic integration process from conservatives. The resulting compromise is a nationalist appropriation of liberalism.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In this paper I use the terms "Europe" and "European officials" to refer to the European Commission and to the countries, mostly European Union (EU) members which have been most involved in ethnic integration in Estonia. The "Nordic countries" specifically refers to Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway. Although, Norway is not an EU member, all four Nordic countries share common objectives in supporting ethnic integration, which are compatible with Estonia's accession to the EU. While I do not personally subscribe to a discursive distinction between "Europe" and "Estonia", I employ it here to facilitate the paper's narrative.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of Estonia, nationalism is the effort to elevate the status of a linguistically-defined ethnic group over others with respect to its relationship with the state. Liberalism refers to a political philosophy which, in principle, affords all individuals equal status with the state and equal chances to maximize their own political, economic, and social goals, regardless of demographic characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to clarify that Estonia does not violate any European treaties and conventions in terms of the definition of a minority, the rights of minorities, and the requirements which non-citizens must meet to obtain citizenship. For example, requiring that potential citizens demonstrate proficiency in the language of the ethnic majority is practiced internationally. However, the degree to which the language must be commanded and the opportunity to learn the language are vague and contentious issues that weigh heavily upon the success of the *State Programme*. See Thiele (1999) for an explication of Estonia's citizenship policy in the European and international contexts.

<sup>4</sup> Some liberal Estonian officials have claimed that the *State Programme* is not a nationalist project because establishing the dominance of the Estonian language should result neither in cultural assimilation or the marginalization of non-Estonians. They argue that the *State Programme* should create social harmony by 1) facilitating communication across ethnic groups; 2) improving non-Estonians' political and economic status through language learning; and 3) preserving ethnic differences by providing funding for non-Estonian cultural activities. Many non-Estonian leaders argue that the *State Programme* is nationalist because it will either marginalize or assimilate non-Estonians by placing them in situations where they must speak Estonian. I maintain that the *State Programme* is nationalist, because it explicitly asserts "the development of the Estonian cultural domain" as the context in which ethnic integration must occur. However, even though the term "nationalist" carries negative connotations, I attempt to avoid passing moral judgement on the *State Programme* itself.

<sup>5</sup> UNDP has been providing administrative assistance to the Estonian government's integration projects as the government has lacked the capacity to run these projects alone. Their role will phase out during 2001.

<sup>6</sup> The notion of Teutonic/German occupation and the servility of the Estonian peasantry for 700 years does not enter into this construction.

<sup>7</sup> The Integration Foundation is a government-chartered non-profit organization assigned with the task of administering most integration activities in Estonia. Though not formally a government ministry, the Minister without portfolio for Ethnic Affairs chairs the governing board of the Integration Foundation.

<sup>8</sup> Ida-Virumaa, a county in northeast Estonia, is a main geographic focus of the *State Programme*. It is an economically depressed area faced with the challenge of revamping its Soviet-era industries. The population is ninety-percent Russian-speakers (over 125,000 people), mostly blue-collar workers who immigrated to Ida-Virumaa during the Soviet era to work in the expanding industrial sector. The Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic was a desirable place to live for workers since its standard of living was among the highest in the USSR.

<sup>9</sup> Although the *State Programme* asserts that socio-economic development is one of three spheres of ethnic integration, it relegates this task to currently existing development programs that have yet to bear fruit. The lack of commitment to economic development in Ida-Virumaa is challenged by the county's state-appointed governor. He has repeatedly argued that the state's commitment to socio-economic development must match its commitment to language training.

<sup>10</sup> Narva is the largest city in Ida-Virumaa.

<sup>11</sup> I hasten to add this individual does not think that Estonia should blackmail the donors with violent ethnic conflict in Estonia to receive funds, or cut off Estonia's nose to spite its face. Rather, this individual is keenly aware of the donors' aim to gain hegemonic control over an area that is situated uneasily between the Western and Russian spheres of influence.

<sup>12</sup> One could argue that the *State Programme* is a also device to marginalize non-Estonians rather than incorporate them by installing a linguistic requirement for citizenship acquisition. Valid as this argument might be, the *State Programme* is still a more moderate strategy of manipulating non-Estonians than expulsion.

<sup>13</sup> By "appropriation", I mean bringing the potency of one force into the service of an opposing force. In strict terms, nationalism and liberalism are logical opposites as the former privileges the "culture" of a group over the "will" an individual from any "culture". In Estonia, therefore, individual "will" can only be fulfilled after learning Estonian which furthers the cause of nationalism.