LOST TRIBES OF NATION BRANDING? REPRESENTATION OF RUSSIAN MINORITY IN ESTONIA'S NATION BRANDING EFFORTS

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Submitted to
Central European University
Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Advisor: Professor Szabolcs Pogonyi

Budapest, Hungary
2012

Abstract

The focus of the following research is Estonia's nation branding efforts. In particular, the thesis examines its nation branding narratives with regards to manifestations of ethno-nationalism and representation and portrayal of the country's ethnic Russian minority. The problem of the research is connected to Estonia's division along ethnic lines, which still dominates the nature of the society's interethnic relations twenty years after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Thus, the expectation, based on the limited preliminary research, is that the nation branding narratives in question follow the general, for the most part mono-ethnic and exclusive, attitudes and policies of Estonia's regime of ethnic democracy.

In the first theoretical section I describe the concept of nation branding and its complex relations with national identity/nationhood construction. The second part of the theoretical framework focuses on majority-minority relations in polyethnic societies, employing theories on representation; multiculturalism; modes of majority-minority coexistence; the role of narratives in interethnic conflicts; and the model of ethnic democracy. Background on the Russian-Estonian relations is provided to better illustrate the historically traumatic nature of these relations, which informs these relations up to this day.

I examine Estonia's strategic documents on minority integration and then correlate it with narrative analysis of the three specific examples of Estonia's nation branding efforts. The findings, on the whole, suggest that the nation branding narratives do indeed follow broader attitudes and policies of Estonia's political elites in their mono-ethnic view of the ideal society.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Szabolc Pogonyi for helping me in the initial and most painful stage of formulating the research focus, and consequently guiding through the entire process. I am also grateful to Matvey Lomonosov and all my departmental colleagues for providing their ears and thoughts during the numerous thesis discussions we have had over the course of the year.

Contents

Introduction

The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 produced a myriad of consequences on all levels: political, economic, social, demographic and many others. One of such effects was the division of ethnic Russians by the newly established state borders, making them the largest divided nation in Europe and one of the largest ones in the world. Ethnic Russians residing in Soviet republics outside of RSFSR literally overnight went from being a titular majority in the broader framework of the Soviet Union to national minorities scattered across the states nearby Russia.

After decades of being instructed by Moscow, local republican elites for the first time in years were free to rule over their countries as they desired. Unfortunately, the newly acquired freedom from the metropolitan dictate almost immediately engendered tensions – of various forms and magnitudes – between the dominant ethnic majorities and Russian ethnic minorities. The tensions were especially high in the Baltics, due to the traumatic nature of their incorporation into the USSR in the 1940s and the following decades of imposed cultural and linguistic Russification.

Lithuania, having the smallest percentage of minorities of the three Baltic states, dealt with the issue rather quickly and swiftly by automatically granting citizenship to the representatives of all ethnic minority groups. Estonia, whose ethnically Russian population increased fourfold over the years of Soviet presence and constituted almost a third of the country's population in 1991, did not follow its neighbor's example. Instead, local elites viewed the Russian minority as a threat and liability, and established regimes of ethnic democracy by granting dominant majorities structurally privileged relations with the state.

In the meantime, both Estonia made it clear from early on that one of their primary goals as a newly independent state was to leave the Communist past behind and 'return to Europe'. One of the key tactics for the return was joining European and international organizations, such as European Union and NATO. This, in turn, imposed certain normative standards with regards to minority rights. Since then, Estonia has tried to balance between the desire to preserve its ethnic democracy and the need to adhere to international legal norms regarding minorities.

In the early 2000s the palette of instruments for re-joining the European and world community was enhanced by the emerging field of nation branding – a set of branding and marketing techniques employed by governments to promote their country's various assets in order to attract tourists, investors, human talent, and in general raise the level of awareness and international prestige of the state. Nation branding is thought to be particularly useful for smaller and newer countries that don't receive adequate media attention and otherwise possess limited resources to compete in the international arena.

The dichotomy of nation branding stems from the fact that, on the one hand, it is part and parcel of the globalized, neoliberal, postmodern, mediated age, where countries and commercial enterprises increasingly take on each other's roles; an age when the notion of added value could equally be applied to the Republic of Estonia and Coca-Cola. On the other hand, nation branding looks into the country's past and its perceived national traits to articulate the key values and characteristics of the nation branding discourse. Moreover, nation branding narratives, especially in the countries undergoing transitional period, enter the broader public discourse and can influence the shaping and formulation of national identities and nationhood under (re)-constriction.

Despite the increasing use of the same methods, the major difference between countries and private enterprises remains in the fact that states, as political entities, bear responsibility for their citizens and risk much more than a mere drop in profitability. Therefore, I assert that once a narrative of any kind has an official governmental stamp on it, it must be viewed and analyzed as critically and scrupulously as any other official narrative, even if it employs branding and marketing techniques. Narratives that follow the market logic can still influence the reality on the ground, especially in such delicate issues as interethnic relations. Similarly, for example, public speeches by top politicians could be considered mere window dressing and public relations, but they still tell us a lot about the official views, enter public discourse, and eventually influence people's opinions and concrete state policies.

Thus, I take as a point of departure nation branding's power to influence not only understandings of national identity and nationhood in the societies that engage in nation branding efforts, but also its influence on the course of interethnic conflicts in general, as shown by Marc Ross' theory[1] on the role of psychocultural narratives in relations between hostile ethnic groups. My research, then, focuses on Estonia's nation branding narratives in an attempt to explore whether Russian minority is represented there and, if so, how it is discursively portrayed. The importance of adequate, respectful, and inclusive representation is explained in terms of Charles Taylor's theory[2] of recognition, the lack of which traumatizes the non- or misrecognized groups and only aggravates existing conflicts.

[1] See Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[2] See Taylor, Charles, and Amy Gutmann. 1992. *Multiculturalism and "The politics of recognition": an essay*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Preliminary research showed that the Russian community in Estonia tends to be excluded or misrepresented in Estonia's nation branding narratives. I argue that there are two interconnected explanations for this. I assert that the very conceptual design of nation branding is problematic in terms of adequately representing a country's cultural and ethnic diversity, since one of the main tasks of nation branding, according to the field's theory, is to promote a unified and solidified message of a state. Therefore, nation branding designers have to be selective about the ethnic or cultural diversity narratives they include in the respective discourse.

These decisions, in turn, are based on the nature of majority-minority relations in each specific case. In other words, my hypothesis is that nation branding narratives are reflective of the country's regime – public discourse, normative aspect, etc. – with regards to minorities. Accordingly, since Estonia can be described as an ethnic democracy[3], my expectation is that the nation branding narratives will be in line with the country's broader official approach to the issue. I will be analyzing at Estonia's general strategic integration and social cohesion documents, leaving aside such important issues as citizenship or linguistic policies, as they have been extensively examined in the literature on the subject.

Apart from personal interest in the region and particularly in the relations between the titular majorities and Russian minorities, there were several reasons that prompted me to focus on the Estonian case. Firstly, as was mentioned earlier, the majority-minority relations in the country have an especially dramatic background due to the events surrounding Estonia's incorporation into the USSR and the decades of forced Russification that followed. Current

[3] See Järve, Priit. *Re-Independent Estonia*. *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. Edited by Sammy Smooha and Priit Järve. Budapest, Hungary: Open Society Institute, 2005.

relations are thus informed by the past traumatic experience. Secondly, Estonia, along with Latvia, has one of the world's largest ethnic minority groups in terms of percentage of the total population – over a quarter. Thirdly, Estonia was the first of the post-Soviet states to heavily engage in nation branding efforts and is considered a successful and even exemplary case by various nation branding scholars.

The aim of the thesis, it should be emphasized, is not to assign blame or victimize any of the groups involved in the conflict. Rather, through critical – sometimes intentionally overly scrupulous – examination of the case, I hope to shed some light onto this fairly unexplored issue and situate nation branding narratives within the broader framework of governmental policies, public discourses, and majority-minority dynamics in polyethnic states. So far, only a handful of nation branding scholars have raised questions regarding the phenomenon's relation to the construction of national identities and interethnic relations. Even fewer have engaged in deeper research on the topic. Yet, with the growing nation branding industry and the advancement of multiculturalism all over the world, the issue will only gain in its topicality.

Nation branding

The concept of nation branding

Nation branding (interchangeably referred to as reputation management, national image management, or competitive identity) is a "compendium of discourses and practices aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms"[4]. Nation branding has also been referred to in terms of commercial nationalism and described as a "phenomenon whereby commercial institutions take on an increasingly important role in framing issues of national identity and promulgating branded forms of nationalisms and nationalist brand identities"[5].

Nation branding serves as one of the instruments for countries to manage their international reputation in the neoliberal mediated world and is characteristic of the broader turn from the politics of power to the postmodern politics of images and influence[6]. Nation branding can also be viewed, among other things, as an answer to the infinite global mediation and a defensive mechanism that nations can undertake[7]. Simultaneously, following the general market logic, nation branding adds value to the national brand, since branding in general adds to the

[4] Kaneva, Nadia. 2011. *Nation Branding: Towards an Agenda for Critical Research*. International Journal of Communication. (5): 117-141, p. 118.

[5] Volčič, Zala, and Mark Andrejevic. 2011. *Nation branding in the era of commercial nationalism*. International Journal of Communication. (1): 598-618, p. 612.

[6] See Ham, Peter van. 2001. *European integration and the postmodern condition governance, democracy, identity*. London: Routledge.

[7] See Kaneva, Nadia. *Nation Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy.Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012.

exchange value of anything it is applied to (a commodity, concept, person, space, or place) by creating a lifestyle identity and a loyalty among customers.

Concrete manifestations of nation branding could be found in advertising, brochures, web sites, competitive tenders, beauty parades, presentations and various other examples of modern marketing, particularly at major international events that draw extensive media coverage – World Cups, Olympics, Eurovision, expos and so on. Nation branding is a by-product of informational consumerist world economy:

> "One of the most crucial functions of the informational economy lies in the selling of symbolic goods (images, data, visual games, media, and other immaterial commodities). This requires a greater emphasis on consumerism, as the prevailing "religion", and the "opening up of more and more of the spaces of everyday life to promotional activity" (Moor 2008)"[8].

One of such newly opened spaces for promotional activity was the space of nation-states, as countries increasingly engaged in fierce competition for the scarce pool of world resources, such as tourists, investors or human talent. However, the concern of states with imagery and symbols is certainly not a new phenomenon. As Wally Olins points out[9], the First French Republic changed its flag, the anthem, old weights and measures, introduced a new calendar and even God was substituted by the Supreme Being. Later, the British ruling dynasty rebranded itself when the House of Saxe Coburg Gotha became the House of Windsor, as Germany became the country's enemy during the First World War. World Fairs of the 19th century could also be

[8] Sussman, Gerland. *Systemic propaganda and state branding in post-Soviet Eastern Europe.Branding post-communist nations : marketizing national identities in the "new" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 24.

[9] See Olins, Wally. 1999. *Trading identities: why countries and companies are taking on each others' roles*. London: Foreign Policy Centre.

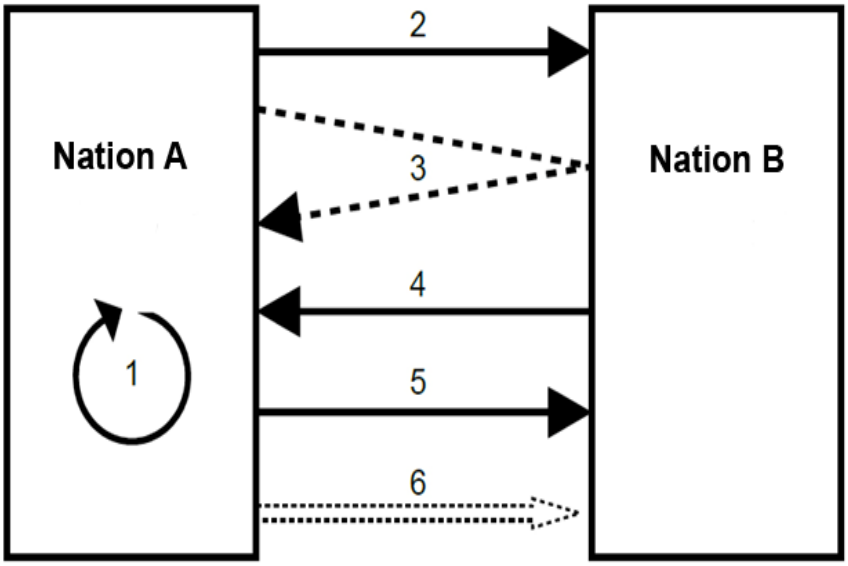
considered an early, but limited example of nation branding, since they only focused on presenting technical and artistic achievement, not the countries' populations.

The principal difference between national image making of the bygone centuries and contemporary nation branding is that in the past these efforts were primarily aimed at internal audiences to persuade citizens to pay taxes and fight wars to build a nation, while the new projects are additionally, but not exclusively aimed at external audiences.

There are several dimensions of nation branding that are fully or partly recognized by scholars in the field, such as tourism, export brands, policy, investment, culture, and people. Out of these, tourism is unanimously viewed as an indispensable part of nation branding, addressing the widest range of topics and targeting the widemost potential audience. It is thus particularly in the realm of tourism promotion within the broader nation branding framework that nationalism-related narratives enter the discourse and more traditional nationalistic rhetoric can be used as a resource.

Figure 1 explains the process of nation brand creation and in particular illustrates how national identity serves as a point of departure for nation brand creation.

Figure 1. Perceptual relations between two nations.



Source: Stock, F. (2009) 'Identity, image and brand: A conceptual framework', *Public Diplomacy and Place Branding*. 5: 118-125.

1. National identity. The way Nation A perceives itself.

   This model relies on Anthony Smith's understanding of national identity as a group identity based on key elements such as historic territory, common language, laws, myths and memory[10]. In order to engage in any kind of nation branding efforts, designers of a campaign must first clearly articulate their vision and understanding of the national identity they are trying to channel in branding and marketing terms.

2. Reference point. The way Nation A perceives Nation B.

   In order to promote an image of a country among the populations of other political entities, the nation that sets out on a mission to improve its image must hold an idea about the nations its efforts target. This particularistic approach could result in somewhat different content when targeting culturally different markets.

3. Construed image. The way Nation A *believes* it is perceived by Nation B.

[10] See Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Construed image is in a way an extension of a reference point. Among other things Nation A believes Nation B to be, there is an understanding – which could be completely wrong – of how Nation B views Nation A. For instance, Nation A could be assured that Nation B is extremely hostile towards it, while in reality Nation B might have no specific opinion on or attitude towards Nation A.

4. Reputation/Actual image. The way Nation A is *actually* perceived by Nation B.
   Because, like the previous point suggests, the believed attitude of one nation towards the other could be dramatically different from the reality, when planning a nation branding campaign it is crucial to first acquire accurate information on the actual perception.
5. Current projected image. The way Nation A is promoting itself to Nation B.
   This point encompasses all efforts to promote a certain image of a nation to the outside world. Thus, the precise body for empirical analysis in this paper falls under this category.
6. Desired future image. The way Nation A wants to be perceived by Nation B.

The final point of the scheme refers to the desired result of all promotional efforts – the way nations want to be seen by other nations and the outside world in general. The content of the promotional materials and the general logic of any nation branding campaign are thus dictated by this desired future image. This allows one to draw conclusions about the ideals held by the elites responsible for nation branding, including those regarding ethnic composition of a nation. For example, if an ethnically heterogeneous population is presented in a strikingly different homogenous way, one might conclude that this is an ideal situation in the eyes of the responsible elites. Such factually inaccurate and essentially exclusive nation branding narratives might then reinforce the existing intergroup conflict.

Nation branding and nationhood

While at this point in time the proposition that the "processes of nation branding are becoming a dominant way of defining the nation"[11] seems too bold and far-fetched, I argue that there is nevertheless a direct connection between nation branding and nationalism, as "branded imagination seeks to infiltrate and subsume the symbolic order of nationhood"[12]. Firstly, nation brand is derived and to a large extent based on the existing understanding of national identity by the elites responsible for nation brand design. Secondly, nation branding narratives, upon entering public discourse, in turn, influence the relations and attitudes within the society and could either foster processes of integration and social cohesion or, on the contrary, aggravate and deepen preexisting conflicts.

The much debated and contested notion of national identity is extensively used in the literature when discussing the essence of nation brands. The national identity itself is, however, rarely defined in these works and could only be assumed from the context. After examining a wide range of nation branding literature, one can conclude that the approach to the term is rather liberal. Most authors tend to view national identity as constructed by the elites in the vein of Benedict Anderson's theory on imagined communities. In the meantime, the construction blocks, so to speak, which constitute this socially created notion, are derived from Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolic understanding of the term:

[11] Bolin, Goran, and Per Stahlberg. *Between Community and Commodity: Nationalism and Nation Branding.Communicating the Nation. National Topographies of Global Media Landscapes.* Edited by Anna Roosvall and Inka Salovaara-Moring. Goteborg: Nordicom, 2010, p. 80.

[12] Kaneva, Nadia. *Nation Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy.Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012, p. 11.

> "National identity plays a key role in nation branding. An awareness and understanding of the core features of national identity is a prerequisite for developing nation-branding campaigns, as the essence of any nation brand derives not only from the country's companies and brands but also from its culture in the widest sense – language, literature, music, sport, architecture and so on all embody the soul of a nation"[13].

Despite growing similarities in the ways countries and companies position and promote themselves, nation brands still differ from most other brands in breadth and depth. Through the essence of their national identity, nation-brands possess significantly deeper and more varied cultural resources than any other type of brand, be it product, service, corporate or any other brandable entity.

Skinner and Kubacki argue that the place's brand identity is closely linked to the national identity of the place, which is also inextricably linked with the nation's cultural identity[14]. Other authors, such as nation branding's leading scholar Simon Anholt, go as far as equating national identity with nation brand. In his view, nation brand is merely a tangible, robust, communicable, and above all useful version of national identity. Moreover, since national identities can be viewed as discursively constructed and maintained, "nation branding as a discourse delimits the boundaries of possible truth claims about national identity. It privileges the logic of value exchange, while concealing alternative possibilities for narrating the nation"[15].

[13] Dinnie, Keith. 2008. *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 111.

[14] Skinner, Heather, and Krzysztof Kubacki. 2007. "Unravelling the complex relationship between nationhood, national and cultural identity, and place branding". *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy.* 3 (4): 305-316.

[15] Kaneva, Nadia. *Nation Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy.Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012, p. 12.

The practically bottomless nature of national identity, when translated into a discursively limited notion of a nation brand, may create problems of exclusiveness:

> "It would be impossible to effectively develop a nation-brand identity that drew upon every strand of a country's national identity. External audiences are not going to be willing to receive gargantuan amounts of information about a country's history, culture and people. Therefore, a key task of those engaged in constructing a nation-brand identity is to be selective in identifying which elements of national identity can usefully serve the stated objectives of the nation branding campaign"[16].

In other words, the circumstances dictated by the market compel nation brand creators to consciously highlight particular meanings and myths and ignore the others, while justifying it as a means of promoting national identity[17]. One of the primary goals of this selective approach is to convey a unitary monolithic message to the target audiences. For example, if a country, comprised of dozens of ethnic groups, is promoting itself in the marketplace, it would be confusing for the audiences to receive a narrative focusing on the peculiarities of all these groups and not draw a fairly simple overarching picture. While this logic does make sense in market terms, I would again stress its danger from the societal point of view, as it, in essence, becomes another exclusionary practice.

[16] Dinnie, Keith. 2008. *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 46.

[17] See Aronczyk, Melissa. *New and improved nations: Branding national identity*. Practicing culture. Edited by Craig Calhoun and Richard Sennett. London: Routledge, 2007.

Thus, internal diversity often falls prey to the effort of consolidating the information into one comprehensible narrative, and consequently nation branding disregards internal conflicts by neutralizing what is, at a nation's core, difference and often discord[18].

Nation branding in Central and Eastern Europe

In today's world, all countries, if they want to succeed in securing an advantageous and respected position among other states, must pay close attention to their international image and devote adequate resources to its management. The starting point for each country is, of course, very different. Some, like the United States, have an extremely diverse and complex worldwide image due to the country's very active involvement in world affairs. Others – like, for instance, Japan, Germany, India or Russia – have fairly strong, but often too narrow and too stereotypical images: hi-tech Japan, efficient Germany, spiritual India, and cold Russia.

The third, and by far the largest, category of countries includes states with very weak, very negative or simply almost no recognizable international image. All newly-established post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe still fall under this last category, despite numerous efforts in the past 20 years to boost their international image. The lamentable image and reputation situation made the countries of the region perfect candidates for engaging in nation branding activities, since nation branding "provides a clue to the way in which newer, smaller and poorer countries can establish and broadcast their true cultural, social and historical identity, and carve out a "perceptual niche" for themselves in the global community"[19].

[18] Sussman, Gerland. *Systemic propaganda and state branding in post-Soviet Eastern Europe.Branding post-communist nations : marketizing national identities in the "new" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge, 2012.

[19] Anholt, Simon. 2007. *Competitive identity: the new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 118.

Nation branding is particularly suitable for communicating changes of any kind (economic, demographical, political, social, etc.) that a society is undergoing; the more sudden and drastic the changes, the more relevant engagement in nation branding could be. Outdated stereotypes take a very long time to disappear. So, when a country undergoes major changes, nation branding serves the purpose of projecting and reinforcing this changing reality – as long as it is based on facts.

The states of Central and Eastern Europe experienced this dramatic and almost overnight change in the late 1980s – early 1990s, when after being part of the socialist bloc for 50-70 years, they began the process of building pluralist and capitalist societies with an eventual goal of (re)-joining the rest of Europe, from which they have been in many ways isolated for half a century:

> "By stopping the export of their national products and preventing people from travelling abroad, the Soviet regime effectively deleted the old, distinctive European nation brands that had been created and enriched over centuries of more benign rule. Most of these states are now working hard to rebuild their images and their identities, and it is a slow and painful process."[20]

In one word, the nations of the region entered the phase of transition: "Nation branding arrived to CEE in the thick of transition and is, therefore, inevitably intertwined with post-communist identity struggles. What kinds of identities were marked as "shameful" or as "desired" became a central area of contestation in nation branding initiatives"[21]. Western PR specialists rushed into the region, successfully convincing local business and political elites to undertake public relations efforts, and making Central and Eastern Europe the world's fastest

[20] Anholt, Simon. 2007. *Competitive identity: the new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 118.

[21] Kaneva, Nadia. *Nation Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy.Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012, p. 7.

growing advertising market. Predictably, the rationale underlying these advertisement and PR campaigns was to remove the air of socialism, bureaucracy, and its discursive balkanization by the West[22].

Due to the dramatic transition in all spheres of society, the social role of nation branding in the region was thus more substantial than is generally attributed to the phenomenon. One of the promises of nation branding was to introduce, so to speak, a different discursive technology for the construction of identity narratives. Accordingly, nation branding throughout the region is related to re-inventing national identities, which go beyond solely commercial motives.

In the meantime, the desire to enter broader European context created the problem of conflicting identification, when discursive narratives had to balance between promoting national particularities and common European similarities:

> "The conflicting discourses of national self-identification and of European integration coexist in the post-Soviet environment and are continually renegotiated in political, economic, and cultural terms. In this context, nation branding provided one opportune site for such negotiations, and a discourse of identity construction that could, at least superficially, accommodate the conflict pressures of differentiation and integration"[23].

[22] See Sussman, Gerland. *Systemic propaganda and state branding in post-Soviet Eastern Europe.Branding post-communist nations : marketizing national identities in the "new" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge, 2012.

[23] Kaneva, Nadia. *Nation Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy.Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012, p. 9.

Psychocultural Narratives[24]

Social significance of psychocultural narratives

Nation branding can be described as a set of promotional narratives, rooted in the understanding of the nationhood of a country that is being promoted. At the same time, nation branding not only reflects the existing understandings and notions, but, being a part of public discourse, helps articulate and shape these understandings. I am using Marc Ross' conceptualization of psychocultural narratives to theorize the significance and typology of narratives in ethnically based intergroup conflicts.

"Each group expresses collective memories and perceptions through narratives that seek to make sense of its experiences and to explain events in terms of their interpretations of past and future actions"[25]. Different accounts thus reflect diverse social and cultural experiences of conflicting groups. While shared narratives emphasize and reinforce the sentiment of belonging, togetherness, and sameness, exclusionary narratives, on the contrary, can intensify a conflict by underlining differences and gaps between opposing groups. The narratives may or may not be expressed through dramatic rituals and symbolism, but their true power and significance lies in the fact that ultimately narratives shape and frame daily interactions and behaviors. Thus, narratives open an analytical window for examining intergroup conflicts.

Narrative analysis bases its analytical significance with regards to intergroup conflicts for a number of reasons.

[24] Unless otherwise indicated, the chapter elaborates on Ross' theory of psychocultural narratives presented in Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

[25] Ibid. P. 30.

1. The images and language of a narrative can tell us a lot about the way individuals and/or groups perceive the political and social worlds they inhibit and provide explanation for the conflicts they are involved in.
2. Narratives can expose deep fears, past grievances, and perceived threats that drive a conflict.
3. Narratives prioritize and privilege particular actions and events over others, thus shedding light on the perception of the world by the parties involved.
4. Storytelling in the form of narratives is part of the processes of community construction and strengthening.

Since at a deeper level narratives reveal – sometimes definitively and sometimes indirectly – the reactions and motivations of the actors in the conflict, it is of great analytical importance both what narratives include *and* exclude. By excluding certain shared events or certain groups as a whole from the dominant narrative, one of the parties is indicating its view of the other – a view that implies no shared goals or interests, no common present or future. A view that stands in the way of social cohesion, tolerance, and mutually beneficial coexistence.

An equally socially damaging effect may be an outcome of communicating purposefully controversial and conflicting narratives, which is often the case when "opponents draw on distinct metaphors, emphasize different actions, [and] cite clashing motivations to such an extent that it is sometimes hard to a naïve observer to recognize that the narratives protagonists are describing the same conflict"[26]. On the other hand, central to the process of social cohesion is the development of new narratives that do not directly challenge older ones, but reformulate them in

[26] Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 31.

more inclusive terms that deemphasize emotional importance of difference between groups and point out to the shared experiences and goals.

The reframing of older narratives or creation of new ones (for instance, less antagonistic and more inclusive) is possible due to their liquid nature. Constituent elements of any narrative can be added, removed, rearranged, emphasized, and deemphasized, as narratives in general are best understood as existing at different levels of generality, selectively remembered and interpreted experiences and projections.

Characteristics and features of narratives

The following description presents a number of popular types of narratives employed in intergroup conflicts. The list is not exhaustive, and these characteristics are not mutually exclusive – several of them could at once apply to one single narrative.

Past events as metaphors and lessons. The past could serve as a bottomless storage of wisdom to draw upon for contemporary, especially political, needs, as narratives rooted in emotionally meaningful shared memories are used – often rather instrumentally and opportunistically – to strengthen communal sense. For example, the temporal dimension could be characterized by ascending or descending anachronisms. In the former case, the events are discursively pushed further back in time to emphasize the sense of historicity. In the latter case, the time distance is almost ignored to showcase the direct connection between an event or notion and the present claims.

Narratives as collective memories. The use of the past events as collective memories is specifically tailored to engender in individuals the sense of belonging to a group. As a result, the interpretations and allotment of significance to various events from the points of view of

contemporary narratives and historiography might differ. The former's objective is not so much to learn the historical truth about an event, but to present it in an advantageous way as a group-binding memory. Thus, many national holidays commemorating battles and victories of the past have not been officially celebrated until decades or even centuries after they took place – not until they were recognized by the elites of the time as additional resources for nation-building.

Selectivity. The selectivity can occur for at least three reasons. Firstly, what is included and the centrality of its role is dictated by the narrative's focus on emotionally significant events. Secondly, the narratives, although they aim to come across as objective and realistic, offer an account of events that makes no effort to comprehend the other side's perspective. Thirdly, an opponent in general receives little to no attention in the in-group narratives. And since a narrative is shaped by present challenges and needs, specific events change their importance, elaboration, and emotional significance over time.

Fears and threats to identity. Narratives play a central role in articulating who constitutes a people, spelling out what exactly in their imagined past is shared, what challenges and dangers they are facing, and providing a vision for their common future. "These narratives articulate an ethnic conception of the nation and its past that emphasizes the group's community at birth and shared culture"[27]. Thus, by defining who is included in a group, a narratives simultaneously implies who is left outside the group's boundary and might thus threaten to distort the group's identity.

[27] Smith, Anthony D. 1991. *National identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press cited in Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In-group conformity and externalization of responsibility. Because all groups apply conformity pressure on their members, narratives reinforce in-group consensus, leaving less room for any dissent, as the narratives become self-perpetuating. Any kind of diverging opinion from the mainstream narrative is thus seen not simply as an expression of pluralism, but as a threat to the well-being or even existence of the very group. The conformity pressure is especially high during the crises and high-stress situations, when narratives more than ever are viewed as safe and familiar harbors where one can hide from the stress of transition taking place around.

Multiple within-group narratives. Somewhat contrary to the previous feature, there is certainly a degree of dissent and minority views within each group, since the very flexible nature of culture implies the existence of multiple narratives to deal with the same event or number of events. The diversity of views can in some cases engender significant debates and disagreements: "Within each group, there are some who view the other community as capable of living in relative peace and harmony with their own group, and others for whom any move toward peace is viewed with suspicion, heightened insecurity, and is perceived as a potential first step toward even greater demands"[28].

Evolution of narratives. Contestations over the framing of narratives are an ongoing process, as interpretations of the past have direct implications for group identity in the present. Alongside the evolution of conflicts, one can also see the shift in contested cultural expressions and their significance. One such case, particularly relevant for this research, is the emergence of

[28] Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 39.

language issues in the former Soviet republics after the collapse of the Union in 1991 – issues that were difficult to predict literally several years before that[29].

Enactment of narratives. Powerful narratives are not necessarily limited to verbal accounts and could be manifested in the form of flags, memorial sites, inaugural ceremonies, national holidays, and various other ritual events and objects that reinforce and strengthen group identity and the emotional significance of the group's narratives. Naturally, the very same narratives that unify a group could also give rise to intergroup conflict and contestation.

Ethnocentrism and moral superiority claims. Group narratives are usually not neutral in tone, wording or message in general. Instead, they tend to portray a group's background and experiences in a favorable light, underlining the qualities that allowed it to overcome all the obstacles throughout history, including threats to its existence. It is often the case that, even when a group possesses sufficient resources to cope with the obstacles, it is particularly the moral values that are emphasized and presented as rationale for superiority claims. The ethnocentric pattern of such claims naturally fosters in-group solidarity and out-group hostility.

Narratives as reflectors, exacerbators/inhibiters, and peacemakers

Significance of narratives comes from the fact that by framing events and attributing motives they shape individual and group behavior. People's actions with regards to a conflict are rooted in their understanding and perception of it. If an opponent is not viewed as a legitimate counterpart for a constructive dialogue in an attempt to overcome differences and find a mutually agreeable solution to a conflict, it is much less likely that peacemaking steps will be made and, even if they are, that such approach will resonate with the public.

[29] See Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in formation: the Russian-speaking pupulations in the near abroad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

As reflectors, narratives show us how the parties involved in a conflict understand it. For members of the group, narratives signify and articulate the supposedly consensual group stance on the issue and imply that dissenting from this position may have dire consequences for societal balance. For parties not directly involved in the conflict, narratives provide insights into each of the conflicting party's logic. This helps potential mediators understand how a constructive outcome can be achieved, since settlement efforts are unlikely to succeed, unless the resolution process involves addressing each party's primary concerns and fears. Additionally, narratives accommodate identification of the barriers of the conflict and opportunities for strategic intervention, because quite often parties in the conflict have an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of their opponents' demands and needs.

As exacerbators or inhibiters of conflicts, narratives emphasize differences or commonalities among the parties that either support continuing hostility and escalation or moderation and de-escalation. Due to their constantly evolving nature, narratives possess great potential for conflict de-escalation. In a long-term conflict there could be a gradual, but significant change in how the sides view, treat, and call each other, with eventual emergence of understanding of the benefits of peaceful coexistence. Of special importance for the study of representation of minority groups in nation branding narratives and the current research in particular is the notion that "when the narratives begin to include more nuanced views of the other side, people can envision a future apart from the intense conflicts, and political leaders have newly opened space to move the settlement process forward"[30].

[30] Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 45.

Since it is not the facts as they are, but rather the images and organization of narratives that give them such social power, "a strategy to develop more inclusive narratives needs to be part of an effort to address the causes of conflicts"[31]. Inclusion of previously disputing groups could facilitate the development of new narratives of peaceful coexistence and possibly reconciliation. In order to develop narratives as part of the reconciliation strategy, the conflicting parties must alter the existing exclusive paradigm and substitute it with narratives of common experience, emotional connectedness, and elements of new or revised intergroup linkages.

On top of that, the goal of narratives, if they are meant to help resolve conflicts, should be to foster understanding that the groups should not be alarmed or threatened by the differences of their world views. On the contrary, these differences should not be ignored, but rather acknowledged and respectfully accepted. "When acknowledgement occurs, more inclusive, less threatening, and partially overlapping narratives and identities can arise from mutual listening and acknowledgement, and a politics that emphasizes possible benefits arising from respect and cooperation develops"[32].

[31] Ibid. P. 46.

[32] Ibid. P. 47.

Majority-minority relations

Core ethnies and majority-minority relations

As modern societies become increasingly multicultural and polyethnic in their composition, minority groups are becoming more vocal in demanding recognition of their identity and accommodation of their cultural peculiarities. Far from erasing ethnic differences, the evidence suggests that globalizing trends, including mass migration, emphasize cleavages and inequalities, particularly with regards to ethnicity, and where nationalism is invoked as the ground and goal of revived ethnic aspirations[33].

In fact, the contestation between dominant and peripheral ethnies is not only becoming more relentless, it is actually a byproduct of the cultural and political pluralism of the contemporary world order. In the cases where states remain for the most part sovereign, the plausibility of conflict between the ethnic powerholders and the marginalized ethnies is much higher. The outcome has been, on the one hand, the intensification of conflicts between dominant ethnies and ethnic minorities; and, on the other hand, a range of measures and proposed solutions for conflict management, including arbitration, minority rights, consociation, autonomy and even federalism[34].

Besides nationalist ideologies, modern centralized states tend to reinforce the role of ethnicity and produce interplay between dominant and peripheral ethnies competing for resources through the state institutions. As long as the cultural and political pluralism that

[33] See Smith, Anthony. *Ethnic Cores and Dominant Ethnies*. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities*. Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London : Routledge, 2004.

[34] Ibid.

underpins the inter-state order remains intact, the contestation between dominant ethnies and peripheral ones will continue.

Such is the case in the post-Soviet space where "the aftermath of the Cold War and the attendant loss of ideological discipline have led to a fracturing of many fragile ex-communist and post-colonial regimes along ethnic lines"[35]. Virtually every post-Soviet independent state saw an interethnic conflict arise between the local ethnic majority and ethnic Russian minority – in some instances it took on violent forms, in others discriminatory policies, and sometimes the tension was limited to public debates.

Upon the breakup of the Soviet Union, the majority-minority dynamics in the newly independent republics have undergone an almost 180 degrees turn, as the indigenous populations, and not ethnic Russians, became dominant ethnicities, which implies a particular ethnic group exercising dominance within a nation and/or state. The phenomenon where a minority becomes a majority literally overnight is not historically unique. Over the course of the 20th centuries in various parts of Central and Eastern Europe – for example, in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania – "the long-resident 'peripheral' *ethnies*, on becoming masters in their own houses, transmuted into dominant ethnies in national states, or indeed into dominant nations – with or without small ethnic minorities and peripheral *ethnies* within their borders. These demotic *ethnies* arrived at the dominant-*ethnie* national end-point"[36].

[35] Kaufmann, Eric P. *Introduction. Dominant ethnicity: from background to foreground. Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities*. Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 1.

[36] Smith, Anthony. *Ethnic Cores and Dominant Ethnies*. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities*. Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London : Routledge, 2004.

Majorities can manifest their dominance through two primary strategies: expansive and restrictive[37]. Expansive dominance seeks to project dominance outward to new lands, and in so doing may be content to let dominant ethnic particularity lapse in favor of a broader national or imperial construct. Restrictive strategies center on purifying the dominant ethnic core from external influences and usually employ instruments like immigration restriction, deportation, endogamy and cultural refinement. Having been subjected to the expansive strategies of the Russian Empire and then Soviet Russia in the preceding centuries, the new ethnic elites of the post-Soviet space adhered to the restrictive strategies once they became dominant majorities.

The mode of majority-minority relations depends greatly on how the minority group came into being. There are generally two ways for a minority group to be formed: depending on the mode, they constitute either a national minority or an ethnic group[38]. In the former case, the territory where a nation resides could be conquered and subsequently incorporated into a larger political entity. In this case, a people involuntarily become a minority in relation to the invading majority group. As a result, a minority group would often demand self-governance or even independence.

In the latter case, a minority might come into existence through voluntary migration into new territories. Here, the demands tend to be less radical, as there is no strong historical legitimization for self-governance or independence claims. Rather, such groups strive for greater recognition of their ethnic identity or alteration of the institutions and laws of the mainstream

[37] See Kaufmann, Eric P. *Introduction. Dominant ethnicity: from background to foreground. Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities*. Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London: Routledge, 2004

[38] See Kymlicka, Will. 1995. *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press.

society to make them more accommodating toward cultural differences. These are the two primary modes encompassing most of the known cases. Still, there are exceptions to the rule, which prompt to analytically view each case as falling on a continuum between the two modes in question rather than trying to necessarily fit them into one of the two categories.

In addition to the way a minority was formed, the mode of interethnic relations depends on the nature of a society with regards to the composition of its population. While an argument can be made that there are no strictly immigrant societies, since people, albeit in relatively small numbers, have populated virtually all places on Earth, it is still extremely relevant and significant whether a certain territory has had a population that had been historically connected with this geographical location. In long-resident national states the relations between such historical majorities and the state tend to be privileged, producing structural inequalities and thus discriminatory practices towards minority populations.

Therefore, nation building process in long-resident national states is likely to be closely linked to a core ethnic group, since to mobilize people to make the required sacrifices for the nation, one need ethnic ties, which can underpin the new national 'construct' and show the members of the core ethnie that they are one historical people of common devotion, and preferably that they are ancestrally related, however fictively[39].

This, again, may lead to structural discrimination upon ethnic basis, as the dominant ethnie, due to their overwhelming numerical majority or political dominance, receive disproportionately high economic advantages, engendering a feeling of alienation and exclusion felt by members of peripheral ethnies. Bureaucratic interference and social and economic neglect

[39] Smith, Anthony. *Ethnic Cores and Dominant Ethnies*. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities*. Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London : Routledge, 2004.

highlight the ethnic divisions within the national state and the often unintentional bias on the part of the authorities toward the needs and interests of members of the dominant ethnie. Considering the vital role of perception and sentiment in interethnic relations, the notion of bias and sense of alienation often has more influence on the majority-minority dynamics than explicit discrimination by the elites of the dominant ethnie against peripheral ethnies[40].

The danger presented by such intergroup contestation and/or confrontation and the rationale to find solution to these issues lie in the fact that "multination states cannot survive unless the various national groups have an allegiance to the larger political community they cohabit"[41]. At the same time, this very allegiance to the larger state occurs only when the larger state evidently manifests recognition and respect for the distinct national existence of ethnic minority groups. There, of course, may be varying opinions as to whether the majority, with its privileged relation to the state, or the minority should take the first step toward this mutual respect and common goal creation. Ideally, it should be a two-way process. I assert that the majority, possessing much greater real and symbolic resources, should be the driving force behind the normalization process.

Politics of recognition

One of the foundational strategies on the part of the majority in the direction of normalizing majority-minority relations is recognition, as "nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced

[40] See Smith, Anthony. *Ethnic Cores and Dominant Ethnies*. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Majority groups and dominant minorities.* Edited by Eric P. Kauffman. London : Routledge, 2004.

[41] Kymlicka, Will. 1995. *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press, p. 13.

mode of being"[42]. Recognition is not simply about respect, because misrecognition can bear far worse consequences than a feeling of being offended. It could potentially engender self-hatred and inflict grievous psychological wounds.

The importance of recognition is related to the logic of identity formation, which is not a wholly internal process that develops in isolation. Rather, it requires a dialogue, often a struggle, with significant others and the way they perceive these identities in formation. In the case of collective group identities, such as ethnic or cultural minorities, the dialogue is between these groups and the larger society. If the process of identity formation and articulation lacks dialogical relation with others, or the significant other intentionally corrupts this relation by non-recognition or misrecognition, the identity itself will most likely be negatively affected:

> "Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it. The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized. The withholding of recognition can be a form of oppression"[43].

At the same time, there are two contradictory concepts and understandings of the politics of recognition. On the one hand, the politics of universalism emphasize the equality of all citizens, regardless of their group affiliation or identity, and strive for eradication of the division into, so to speak, first-class and second-class citizens. Another approach is concerned precisely with the distinction that, according to its proponents, has been ignored and/or assimilated into a dominant or majority identity. This very assimilation is perceived as a threat to the ideals of

[42] Taylor, Charles, and Amy Gutmann. 1992. *Multiculturalism and "The politics of recognition": an essay*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

[43] Ibid. P. 36.

authenticity and diversity, since it is presumed that all cultures have something important to say and therefore should be given equal voice and recognition.

The two approaches reflect the debate between adherents of more liberal and more communitarian take on the group rights issue. The liberal view is less hospitable to the idea of difference. Firstly, it insists on equal application of individual rules and rights, regardless of group belonging. Secondly, it is cautious of collective goals in general. Yet, it could be argued that in modern multinational and multicultural states, the populations of which are composed of various ethnic and cultural groups, societies in general and authorities in particular should strive to find a balance between individual and collective rights, while still preserving the overarching liberal framework of governance.

The two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive in practice: a society with collective goals can still be liberal, if it respects diversity and is able to provide fundamental rights for its members. Consequently, it is increasingly acknowledged all over the world that some forms of cultural difference can only be accommodated through special legal or constitutional measures, beyond the common rights of citizenship[44].

Integration models

Depending on the nature of majority-minority relations and in particular on the mode of recognition, the authorities can pursue one of the three policies with regards to minority integration into the larger society: ghettoization, assimilation or multiculturalism[45].

[44] Kymlicka, Will. 1995. *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press.

[45] Guibernau i Berdún, M. Montserrat. 2010. *The identity of nations*. Cambridge: Polity.

Ghettoization implies isolation of the minority from the mainstream society: existentially and often physically. A group may actually be residing in a neighborhood or community, where its members constitute almost the entirety of local population. Thus, a minority might preserve a lifestyle of its country of origin with little or no effort to adapt to the new society. Modern technologies and logistics make it especially easy these days to adhere to the familiar ways of life, even if living thousands of miles away from the historical homeland. The sense of belonging to one's ethnic or cultural roots might even become stronger in a foreign land due to technological developments in communications[46].

Although, some members of minority communities might be happy about preserving the old ways, ghettoization is always a symptom of unhealthy majority-minority relations and thus should not be viewed as an acceptable and long-term solution to majority-minority relational problems. Most likely, these relations are characterized by non-recognition, discrimination or blunt racism on the part of the majority. Minority population somewhat participates in the socio-economic life of a country in the role of producers and consumers, but culturally remains on the margins of the society, forming an almost parallel social reality.

Assimilation understood in strict terms assumes that minority groups adapt to the mainstream society and culture by fully giving up their own cultures, languages and identities and replacing them with those of the dominant majority culture, thus symbolically pledging full allegiance to their new host society. This strategy is considered to be psychologically damaging to the minority groups, since they are still not likely to be accepted as indigenous people even if they undergo all these struggles to adapt. Integration is considered to be a "lighter" version of

[46] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1992. *Long-distance nationalism: world capitalism and the rise of identity politics*. Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam.

assimilation in Guibernau's theory[47]. Unlike assimilation, integration sees adaptation to a new society as a gradual and long term process, thus not putting pressure on minorities to adhere to the local lifestyle immediately, allowing for a much more relaxed and much less traumatizing adaptation process.

Lastly, multiculturalism is a regime that implies equal rights of non-titular groups in all spheres without the expectation of them giving up their diversity, but when conformity to certain majority key values is still expected. Multiculturalism is characterized by "tolerance of diversity, equal dignity and equal rights for individuals belonging to different groups living within a single nation-state"[48]. Multiculturalism also implies full recognition of minorities by the state. Multiculturalism can succeed only under the condition that culture is not seen as sacred and a set of values and traditions which must be dictated by the state.

Ethnic Democracy

The majority-minority dynamics, if the nature of these relations is rather hostile, can translate into a particular form of governance called ethnic democracy[49]. Ethnic democracy is found in some societies, where ethnic majority-minority relations play a great role in defining political, social, and economic reality, such as Israel, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Belgium, Canada, and others. The mini-model of ethnic democracy outlines three core features of this regime of governance.

[47] See Guibernau i Berdún, M. Montserrat. 2010. *The identity of nations*. Cambridge: Polity.

[48] Ibid. P. 68.

[49] Smooha, Sammy. *The Model of Ethnic Democracy*. *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. Edited by Sammy Smooha and Priit Järve. Budapest, Hungary: Open Society Institute, 2005.

1. Ethnic ascendancy. Ethnic nationalism, practiced by the core ethnie / ethnic majority, defines the political and social order of the country. The dominant ethnic group has privileged and exclusive relations with the state, shaping its laws, symbols, and policies to the benefit of the ethnic majority and with lesser regard for the minorities.

2. Perceived threat. Non-members of the ethnic nations are perceived as posing a threat to the well-being or even very existence of the core ethnie through biological dilution, demographic swamping, cultural downgrading, security danger, subversion and political instability.

3. Diminished type of democracy. On the whole, the system of governance meets the basic requirements of a democracy. However, the system is characterized by a constant struggle between principles of civic equality and ethnic ascendancy. In the end, the rationale of national survival and security predominates.

The theory point out four factors conducive to the emergence of an ethnic democracy:

1. Ethnic nation precedes the ethnic state.

2. The ethnic nation experiences a threat (real or imagined).

3. The majority is committed to democracy (for either ideological or practical reasons).

4. The size of the minority is relatively small or manageable.

Since ethnic democracies, albeit in a reduced and reshaped form, are still essentially democratic states, they tend to shy away from outright and crude forms of minority assimilation policies. Instead, they propagate some form of integration into the mainstream society. However, these policies, in reality being informed by concerns about ethnic dominance and only superficial

attempt to adhere to international norms, often take the shape of quasi integration policies with assimilationist undertones. These policies, met with resistance by non-titular minorities, only deepen the divide along ethnic lines. In the long run, as in the Estonian case, the non-inclusion and non-recognition lead to economic and cultural marginalization, which, in turn, leads to 'lumpenization' and criminalization of minorities[50] – in other words, ghettoization. Thus, ethnic democracies are far from the multicultural ideal, which is perceived as the best solution for polyethnic societies by various scholars and international organizations.

[50] Järve, Priit. *Re-Independent Estonia*. *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. Edited by Sammy Smooha and Priit Järve. Budapest, Hungary: Open Society Institute, 2005.

Russification of Estonia

Compared to most post-Soviet republic, economically and politically Estonia made a relatively painless and quick transition from a Soviet republic to an integral part of the European community. The country has been an EU and NATO member since 2004 and in 2011 adopted Euro as its currency. However, twenty years after Estonia regained its independence from USSR, the legacy of official Soviet policies remains in the form of the Russian minority that constitutes 25,6%[51] of the population– more than three times its size before Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940.

The section provides historical background on the formation of the Russian community in Estonia. The primary focus is on demographics, as opposed to cultural or administrative Russification. Information on the Russians in Estonia pre-1940 is intended to illustrate, on the one hand, the long history of the official nationalism policy by Russian authorities, and, on the other, the swift, traumatic, and coarse nature of the demographic changes during the Soviet times. This history sheds light on the tensions between indigenous and, so to speak, alien populations. I assert that both the number of Russians in Estonia and the radical demographic change in the country's ethnic composition are of extreme importance for understanding the majority-minority relations in present-day Estonia.

Estonia has one of Europe's largest single minority groups, comprising over a quarter of the total population. Unlike many other European regions, where large minority groups have been gradually formed over centuries, hundreds of thousands of Russians were relocated to the area literally within several decades. The campaign was orchestrated by the federal authorities as

[51] CIA (2011) *The World Factbook: Estonia*. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html (10 December 2011)

part of the broader logic of official nationalism. Coupled with cultural Russification and political Sovietization, this naturally created tensions between the indigenous population and the newcomers – the same tensions that characterize post-1991 Estonia. The major and crucial difference is that after 1991 ethnic Estonians took the place of ethnic Russians in terms of privileged relations with the state.

Demographic numbers play an important role in majority-minority relations. For example, as part of the Soviet Union, Lithuania has undergone roughly the same changes as neighboring Estonia and Latvia. However, the percentage of minorities has been much lower – Russians never comprised more than 10% and after the collapse of the Soviet Union the number remained at approximately 5%. The relatively insignificant minority population prompted the authorities to grant citizenship to all residents, thus radically lowering the potential for majority-minority tensions. Additionally, the larger the minority population, the more sound and legitimate their claim for representation is, including representation in various official public narratives, which are the focus of this research.

Russians in Estonia pre-1940

Due to their geographical proximity, political and economic connections between Estonia and Russia go back hundreds of years. The first Russian-speaking settlers are known to have lived in the region as early as 900 years ago. For centuries to follow there was always a minor presence of the Russian community, which, however, was mostly related to economic ties and never played a significant role in internal politics of the region.

At times, the community would dramatically increase due to political struggles within Russia itself. The first period of this flight was during the rule of Ivan the Terrible, which drove

large numbers of his political opponents out of Russia. Another instance followed the reform of the Russian Orthodox Church in mid-XVII century, when in the XVIII century many Old Believers ended up in what is today Estonia. The last major influx of Russian-speakers before 1940 happened after Bolsheviks came to power in the early 1920s, as thousands of White Russian officers, priests, aristocrats, Russian-speaking Jews and intelligentsia fled the Communist regime.

Due to the rapidly rising prestige all over Europe of the national idea by the mid-XIX century, there was a visible tendency among the monarchies to turn towards an enticing national identity[52]. At the same time, in the age of growing capitalism, skepticism, and science, these articulated legitimacies (for instance, Romanovs as Great Russians), based on notions of sacrality and antiquity, were less and less likely to find acceptance and admiration among their populations.

The 'naturalizations' of Europe's dynasties eventually led to something that has been termed as official nationalism[53]. Tsarist Russification is probably the best-known example of the first wave of official nationalisms. The phenomenon can be best understood as a combination of naturalization and an attempt to preserve dynastic power, particularly over vast multilingual territories accumulated since the Middle Ages. Or, as Anderson metaphorically and poetically puts it, "stretching the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire"[54].

[52] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 2006. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid. P. 87.

The two possible responses by ruling dynasties to the new born national sentiments could be either liberalization of the cultural regime or, on the contrary, forced cultural homogenization. Most European monarchies, Romanovs in particular, chose the latter. Minority groups could not successfully resist this process due to the might of the empires, but decades later this dichotomy of official and local cultures almost always spilt into violent conflicts:

> "Revolution of 1905 was as much a revolution of non-Russians against Russification as it was a revolution of workers, peasants, and radical intellectuals against autocracy. The two revolts were of course connected: the social revolution was in fact most bitter in non-Russian regions, with Polish workers, Latvian peasants and Georgian peasants as protagonists"[55].

Russia acquired Livland, Estland, and other territories in the region as a result of The Great Northern War (1700-1721) against Sweden. With its Baltic conquests, Russia had formally become an empire, and its new acquisitions were now counted among its provinces. However, the first deliberate Russification campaign designed by metropolitan authorities did not take place until the last quarter of the XIX century.

The Tsarist Russification policy had two major trends: cultural and administrative[56]. Thus, demographic Russification was not a separate and explicit part of the broader official nationalism policy; it simply accompanied cultural and administrative initiatives in the form of relatively small numbers of Russian official personnel resettling into the region to carry out and oversee the reforms. Federal authorities did not see relocation of loyal and culturally close subjects into the region as a mean of combatting the growing and thus potentially regime-threatening national consciousness of the indigenous populations.

[55] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 2006. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, p. 88.

[56] Rywkin, Michael. 1994. *Moscow's lost empire*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Human losses in Estonia in the 1940s

Estonia suffered great human losses during WWII and the first several years of Stalinist rule afterwards. The question of concrete numbers is politicized, so the real figures are difficult to establish: one set of numbers presented in the literature on the issue may be several times higher than the other. It is likely that the Baltic countries lost about 20 percent of their population during World War II[57]. And in the postwar years alone, it is estimated, Estonia lost 100,000 of its citizens[58].

The drastic decrease in populace can be attributed to several factors. One of them is the politically motivated flight of people not willing to live under a totalitarian regime – neither Nazi, nor Stalinist. Having endured a year of Sovietization in 1940-41, most Balts knew just what to expect from a second occupation and at least a quarter-million people chose to flee, mostly in 1944 and 1945, westwards rather than live under a restored Soviet regime.

Other factors include the resettlement of Baltic Germans and Swedes in 1939-1940; military losses, as the local population were drafted to either Nazi or Soviet army or killed in partisan warfare; Soviet mass deportations and executions; guerilla warfare by the Forest Brothers against the Soviet regime that lasted up until the mid-1950s.

Not only ethnic Estonians, but also ethnic Russians living in the country at the time became victims of the Soviet regime during the first occupation of 1940-41. In 1934 Russians constituted 8,1% of Estonia's population, although a large percentage of those lived on the historically Russian territories, which became part of Estonia only in 1920 under the Estonian-

[57] O'Connor, Kevin. 2003. *The history of the Baltic States*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

[58] Clemens, Walter C. 1991. *Baltic independence and Russian empire*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Soviet Peace Treaty of Tartu. Most of these Russians, being of aristocratic descent or having fled the Soviet rule in the 1920s, were perceived as alien social elements by the new Soviet authorities. By 1945 the prewar Russian communities of the region were almost completely extinct.

The rationale behind the political terror in the immediate aftermath of the WWII was predominantly political. Following a famous chilling quote attributed to Stalin – "Death solves all problems: no man, no problem" – the new Soviet authorities aimed to physically liquidate vocal opponents of the new regime. The influence and popularity of communism in the years of interwar independence in the Baltic states was always minimal by any standards and there were several explanations for that[59]. Firstly, the Baltic countries were still for the most part agricultural and patriarchal. Secondly, local Communist parties openly advocated Sovietization and eventual incorporation into the USSR. For Estonian society, which for the first time in its history was enjoying independence from any major European power, the idea of voluntarily going back to the Russian rule was absurd and offensive.

After Hitler's coming to power in 1933 and the frighteningly fast rise of Nazi Germany, communist ideas did gain more popularity among the left and liberal-leaning parts of population that saw it as a lesser of two evils. However, overall the support was marginal and the local Communist party remained tiny, sectarian, and clandestine: even Soviet data put Communist Party memberships in June 1940 at only 133 in Estonia[60]. The unleashed terror thus removed the

[59] Shtromas, Alexander. *The Baltic States*. *The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future*. Edited by Robert Conquest. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1986.

[60] Clemens, Walter C. 1991. *Baltic independence and Russian empire*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

most vocal opponents of the new regime from public sphere and established atmosphere of fear in the society as a whole.

Soviet Russification

Estonia was heavily depopulated towards the end of the 1940s, and for a country of its size a loss of more than 100,000 people was significant in terms of the percentage of overall population. Thus, after the Soviet reoccupation of the Baltic lands in 1944, a policy of steady settlement of Russians was put in place to make up for the demographic losses.

During the first Soviet occupation of 1940-1941 the resettlement policies were dictated solely by political rationale, but starting from 1944 and onwards the need for it was more objective. As a result of scorched-earth policies of both the Soviets (during the 1941 retreat) and the Germans (throughout 1944), damage to the Baltic infrastructure in general was devastating and the Soviet authorities faced the genuine challenge of reviving local economy, industry, and infrastructure[61]. However, the less benign and objective reasoning behind demographic Russification, of course, still remained, for the presence of a large Russian-speaking community would reinforce Soviet control over the Baltic republics.

Table 1. Population of Estonia by ethnic origin 1935-89.

Ethnicity	1935	1959	1970	1979	1989
Estonian	992 (88.1%)	893 (74.6%)	925 (68.2%)	948 (64.7%)	963 (61.3%)
Russian	92 (8.1%)	240 (20.1%)	335 (24.7%)	409 (27.9%)	475 (30.3%)

[61] O'Connor, Kevin. 2003. *The history of the Baltic States*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.

Jewish	4 (0.4%)	5 (0.4%)	5 (0.4%)	5 (0.3%)	5 (0.3%)
German	16 (1.5%)	2 (0.1%)	8 (0.7%)	4 (0.3%)	3 (0.2%)

Adapted from: Estonia and Soviet Census Data (cited in Melvin, R. (1995) *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs).

Russian-speaking immigrants settling in the area in the first years after the WWII comprised several distinct groups. The first group was officials and military personnel with their families. Secondly, came workers hired by the newly established heavy and defense industries. Thirdly, newcomers of other categories were sent to move into areas depopulated by the war.

The peak influx of Russian-speakers came during the immediate postwar years, but immigration continued for the next several decades, although less intensively than in 1945-47. In the 1960s-1970s the economic development of the republics, envisaged by the Soviet state planning ministry, brought further immigration to the region. Large all-Union, Moscow-directed enterprises, often connected to defense, were constructed in the Baltic republics with little regard for the availability of labor, and labor in the form of Russian-speaking workers was considered to be the most easily transportable of all resources[62]. On the whole, immigration continued up to 1991.

After hundreds of years of complex historical and political relations between Estonia and Russia, as of today, the Russian community in this Baltic state is comprised of several major subgroups[63].

[62] Melvin, Neil. 1995. *Russians beyond Russia: the politics of national identity*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

[63] Rywkin, Michael. 1994. *Moscow's lost empire*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

1. The oldest, but the smallest group comes from families of Russians who lived here before World War II, moving either during the Russian Imperial times or fleeing Bolsheviks in the interwar period. They tend to be more respectful and understanding towards local culture, customs, and language.
2. Despite the brutalities of the first years of the Soviet rule, the Baltics always remained the most prosperous, free, and westernized part of the Union. Although they constitute a much smaller group, some Russian-speakers moved to the area to enjoy these advantages. Those more educated and privileged postwar immigrants who were lured in by the freer atmosphere and more Western way of life in the Baltics and have also been sympathetic to the cause of indigenous population.
3. Both during the Tsarist and Soviet times, the regime needed loyal bureaucrats to carry out and implement cultural and administrative reforms. Moscow-dispatched officials of the XX century, whose allegiance has always been to the center and who never bothered to learn the local languages or customs. They have always sided against local aspirations.
4. The mass of Russian workers and blue collar personnel, partially relocated by the government and partially attracted by higher living standards. They barely recognized that they were working in another republic and thus also made no effort to blend into their new environment.

Estonia's Integration Strategy

Following the proposed hypothesis that nation branding narratives with regards to minority representation and portrayal are in line with official state agendas and policies, which are, in turn, informed by the majority-minority relations in a particular society, I examine the Estonian state documents, outlining the country's policies in the area of minority integration.

Relying predominantly on Malloy's in-depth analysis[64] of the strategic documents that have so far been adapted on Estonia's highest political level to reflect the country's dedication to the policy of inclusiveness and multiculturalism, I illustrate that in essence the attitudes and policies have not significantly changed over the past two decades and are still reflective of the ethno-nationalistic approach. In particular, I am looking at four documents, introduced consequently from 1998 to the current one covering the period from 2008 to 2013.

The notion of social cohesion is especially relevant, but at the same time especially problematic for societies undergoing major historical changes and transitions. The danger is that the ideal of social cohesion may well become obscured in ethnically divided societies. Moreover, collective dogmatization tends to portray minorities as targets of resentment to protect the majority's own collective identity.

After regaining independence in 1991, ethnic Estonians became a majority in their own land, as opposed to a tiny minority in the broader framework of the multimillion population of the Soviet Union. With a quarter of the population representing Russian speakers, who for the most part did not view Estonia in its own right and simply considered it a part of the Union where they happened to be working at the moment[65], tensions along ethnic lines did not come as a surprise.

Social policies, if they take into consideration the difference and diversification in a society, have the power to foster social cohesion – and the other way around. The argument here

[64] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009.

[65] Rywkin, Michael. 1994. *Moscow's lost empire*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

is that in the case of Estonia it is the former, rather than the latter that characterizes social relations, state policies, and – as a result – nation branding narratives, which are the particular focus of the research. Attempts on the part of the authorities to keep an essentially ethno-nationalist policy while disguising it behind the seemingly multiculturalist and EU-appropriate phrasing can be viewed as an 'effective reframing' of peoplehood and nationhood, which may result in the overt and covert manipulation of public discourses and policies to fit a desired outcome. In the case of Estonia such outcome could be either essentially forced assimilation of the Russian minority or the division between public (Estonian) and private (minority) spheres, which would lead to the minority's ghettoization.

The first legal document informing Estonia's minority policies introduced after 1991 was the Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities. Formally, it came into effect on November 11th 1993. However, it is in essence the same document that was adapted in 1925 and guided Estonia's minority policies during its first independence period between the two World Wars. At the time, there was no one major minority that could supposedly threaten to distort the ethnic Estonian collective identity and in this sense the document has no relevance for the present-day situation.

Today, ethnic composition of the population is strikingly different than 70 years ago, as almost a third of the residents belong to a distinct cultural and linguistic group. For example, Article 2 of the Chapter 1[66] grants the following minorities the right to cultural autonomy: Germans, Russian, Swedes, and Jews. Whereas Germans and Swedes still constituted a sizeable minority before the World War II, the following years saw an almost complete disappearance of

[66] Estonian Institute, "The Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities." Accessed May 01, 2012. http://old.estinst.ee/historic/society/cultural_autonomy_the_law.htm.

these groups from the territory of Estonia. This is just one example of the disturbing obsoleteness of the document.

The bases of the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into Estonian Society (1998)

Five years after the re-adoption of the Law on Cultural Autonomy and seven years after regaining independence, Estonian authorities for the first time adopted a document explicitly addressing the issue of social cohesion and ethnic relations – The bases of the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into Estonian Society (BESIP). Put simply, the general goal of the document was to outline measures for the creation of one homogenous society.

A number of seemingly positive steps (better education system as the basis for integration, political participation of minorities in Estonian society, improved access to citizenship, improved language skills among non-native speakers, etc.) were introduced in the document. Yet, the underlying logic of the text was that of two societies: Estonian and non-Estonian. The Russians were framed as the Other, whose only chance to become legitimate members of the society was through becoming 'normal', i.e. by assimilating into the homogenous society based on Estonian ethnicity, language, culture, espousing a strong mono-ethnic attitude[67].

The superficial view of tolerance in the document does not see difference as a benefit in society. As is often the case in deeply divided societies, tolerance rather means acceptance to co-

[67] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009.

exist alongside a different culture, which is not approved by the majority. In the case of BESIP the toleration was meant to be temporary, and accompany the process of assimilation. Such kind of toleration prevents mutual understanding, as the dominant side comes to view their attitude as an additional badge of superiority. In turn, when the notion of superiority prevails in a society, an environment of antagonism is highly likely to be an outcome of the existing resentment.

The struggle for cultural hegemony is a natural part of life of any multicultural society, but for such struggle to be civic and democratic all parties must be invited and have means to participate in the contestation. This was not the policy promoted by BESIP, as it, for instance, almost entirely avoided the issues of linguistic rights of minorities or a human rights approach. Some of the promoted policies followed colonialist logic, as the ethnically Estonian population was encouraged to resettle into areas predominantly occupied by ethnic minorities, while minorities were expected to integrate into the majority culture. Thus, ethno-nationalism and ethnic conservatism could be seen as the main driving ideology behind the proposed state policies in the realm of ethnic minorities.

Overall, the logic and mindset of the document designers in particular and the Estonian elites in general could be best described as post-imperial[68]. The philosophy of the document was dictated by the fear of ethnic and linguistic extinction, although after surviving centuries of foreign influence by the Germans, the Swedes, and the Imperial Russians, such fears seem clearly unfounded. The fear is reflective even in the language and terms that are used, or rather not used – words like inter-ethnic cooperation or dialogue are nowhere to be found, and in general the document leaves an impression of a failed attempt to simultaneously meet the

[68] Laitin, David D. 1998. *Identity in formation: the Russian-speaking pupulations in the near abroad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

normative requirements and expectations of the international community while fostering the creation of a mono-cultural state.

The integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society (Action Plan 1998-1999)

The first document was followed up by an Action Plan that at first glance seems to have expanded on and advanced some of the notions and policies introduced in BESIP. First, the notion of multiculturalism was formally introduced into the document. However, the interpretation of the term by the document designers leaves questions as to whether it is truly multiculturalist in nature or whether it is another attempt to adhere to the international discourse on paper – multiculturalism-as-ideology is missing in the document[69].

Second, while referring to a certain common cultural core of the country, the document clearly implies that this core is to be built around ethnically Estonian culture. The strategy would be less questionable if the notion of Estonian culture would be understood as flexible, evolving, and inclusive, so as to leave the door open for other cultures to become a part of this common core over time. Yet, the document is quite specific about the centrality and fundamentality of the core Estonian ethnicity and its culture, thus creating a hierarchy of cultures, in which Estonian culture is in a privileged position with regards to the state. As such, while the society may become multicultural, the state is and should remain Estonian-centered[70]. This official stance does not allow for a truly multiculturalist discourse to flourish.

[69] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009.

[70] Ibid.

Integration in Estonian Society (2000-2007)

The third document (IES), so it might have seemed again after a superficial reading, made a step forward towards truly multiculturalist and inclusive discourse and policies. The cultural rights of ethnic minorities were to be recognized and integration was to be achieved through bilateral and harmonizing processes, allowing for the maintenance and respect of ethnic differences. Integration strategy was divided into three simultaneous processes: linguistic-communicative, legal-political, and socio-economic. Overall, the tone of the document could lead one to believe that the elites finally deviated from the post-imperial fears of ethnic minorities as a threat to the existence of indigenous culture and language, and were ready to take a step in the direction of a genuinely pluralist society. Yet, upon closer reading, the overarching mono-ethnic approach and ethno-nationalism as official state policy still underlie the multiculturalist rhetoric on the surface.

The view of the Russian minority by the elites and the general population, however, did change. Following the prevalent perception of Russian-speakers as guest workers, dictated by the nature of Soviet relocation policies, in public discourse they started to be seen rather as immigrants, once the majority realized that they were not leaving Estonia any time soon. Although, one the one hand, this might be seen as a small step in the direction of a dialogue and inclusion, this was still a strategy of avoidance rather than acceptance, as the notion of Estonia as a culturally dual society with an integrated fully fledged ethnic minority was not yet a part of the official agenda.

The principal critique of the IES from the multiculturalist point of view is the rigid division between public and private spheres. The phenomenon of ethnic minority culture is framed as an individual concern, which should thus be allowed and practiced in the private

sphere. This understanding leads to the exclusion of minority characteristics from the public sphere and the common core. So while correctly noting the importance of fostering social cohesion through political institutions, the IES evidently suggests that the elites are not willing to renounce the ethno-cultural approach to the issue. In line with this logic, the definition of the common core still requires one language, the Estonian language and one caretaker of the state, the Estonian culture[71].

In the end, IES essentially provides minorities with only one choice – assimilation. This approach is in full accordance with the country's Constitution, which articulates Estonia as a country with a dominant ethnic group exercising cultural hegemony over the state institutions by means of constitutional exclusiveness. Thus, IES is characterized, at best, by a muddled and exclusionary communitarian approach, which promotes normative standards while risking damages to the self-identification processes of minorities[72].

Strategy for the integration of Estonian society 2008-2013

The current document (SIES) informing official policies of integration and majority-minority relations in Estonia overall follows IES' theoretical approach to the issue, but is vastly improved in terms of the use of ethical language and references to international normative documents and standards. For instance, it eradicated the use of the bluntly discriminatory term 'non-Estonians', which referred to Russian population living in Estonia without Estonian citizenship. The distance between Estonians and minorities still remains, however. To a large

[71] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009.

[72] Ibid.

extent, because the country lacks common public communicative space. Though, the officials pride themselves on the number of minority media existing in the country, the virtual separation of media according to the language is precisely one of the major reasons for the separation of the public sphere.

Despite the improved rhetoric, SIES stays within the mono-ethnic and mono-lingual framework, as suggested by the Constitution. Multiculturalism is thus, even if situation on the ground is slowly improving, remains essentially unconstitutional. The deliberate separation between the public and private spheres is also articulated and rationalized in SIES, though possibly not as detailed as in the previous document. The notion of a common Estonian identity is present as well, although it is now disguised under the term of a common state identity, which is quite vague and problematic itself. Additionally, the fear of the dual-society is carried on from the IES, however, this time it is formulated in terms of isolation and withdrawal, as opposed to sovereign and political division. Lastly and disturbingly, the notion of toleration remains an agent meant to foster integration.

With the introduction of the notion of state identity, which in reality masks Estonian ethnic identity, the public discourse has further moved towards understanding 'the national' as exclusively Estonian and not Russian. "Had the framers settled for a reference to national identity it might have been, therefore, an opportunity to invite members of the Russian-speaking community to join an Estonian nation that was willing to be flexible and redefine itself"[73]. 'Estonianness' as a civic state identity could be the precise solution to the conflict, should it be a

[73] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 243.

genuine inclusive towards all members of the society, regardless of their ethnicity. As long as the ideal is equated with Estonian language and Estonian culture, it would, in turn, remain an unachievable illusion.

Conclusion

In societies divided along ethnic lines, political and intellectual manipulation by the elites in the realm of social cohesion and integration can have a dire outcome. Such manipulations may create a seemingly horizontal cultural landscape with equal access by all groups, while in reality maintaining a cultural hierarchy that follows the power structures of the society. The privileged position at the top of the hierarchy is thus occupied by the dominant majority group, which has the power to disguise particularistic values as universal ideals. This hegemonic approach is vividly reflected in the integration strategies analyzed in the section.

The elites create a social cohesion myth based on pluralist ethos, which conceals the real aim of preserving the hierarchy of cultures and mono-ethnic state on the official level – Malloy characterizes this policy as fictive pluralism. Another factor hindering the development of real pluralism and multiculturalism is the founding document of Estonia – its Constitution – which decrees ethnic dominance, despite the seemingly inclusive language of the strategic documents:

> "The contradiction between ideology and instrumental goals, i.e. ethno-nationalism and dominant Estonian ethnicity, on the one hand, and public policies of integration setting fictive targets for pluralism for some, but not for others, on the other, puts authenticity of the Strategy in question"[74].

[74] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 246.

The setting of fictive goals and the use of fabricated pluralist notions in reality separate the population according to the spheres. Antagonism and dogmatism, negatively informing the Estonian integration Strategy, thus cover for resentment within the dominant Estonian ethnicity and its elite. The strategy, based on a false pretense, is practically doomed to fail and is hardly a way to achieve genuine social cohesion, since the noble normative language of the documents does not reflect the real mindset and immediate aims of the ruling elite. "If the Strategy is to be successful in enhancing social cohesion in a globalizing world, it will have to be further de-essentialized, de-antagonized and de-territorialized"[75].

Amnesty International's report[76] on ethnic relations in Estonia illustrates the fictive pluralism of the country's integration strategies and the reluctance of its authorities to give up the mono-ethnic approach to its policies and attitudes. According to the report, non-Estonian speakers were denied employment due to official language requirements for various professions in the private sector and almost all professions in the public sector. In the meantime, most did not have access to affordable language training.

The Equal Treatment Act, prohibiting discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, race and colour in areas such as employment, education, and social and health care, entered into force. Yet, the measure had limited effect in the area public sector employment, because amendments to the Public Service Act established that unequal treatment of state and municipal officials based on official language requirements should not be considered as discrimination.

[75] Malloy, Tove H. *Social Cohesion Estonian Style: Minority Integration Through Constitutionalized Hegemony and Fictive Pluralism*. *Minority Intergration in Central Eastern Europe: Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality*. Edited by Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig. New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 246.

[76] Amnesty International, "Estonia - Amnesty International Report 2010." Accessed May 15, 2012. http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/estonia/report-2010.

In an attempt to discredit Aleksei Semenov, the director of the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (NGO concerned with defending the rights of linguistic minorities), the Security Police Board reported that he would supposedly run for the European Parliamentary elections and that these activities would be financed and directed by the Russian authorities.

In 2009 the plans to relocate the Bronze Soldier statue, which commemorates the fallen soldiers of the WWII, caused intensification of interethnic conflict in Estonia. On the VisitEstonia.com website the events are framed in rather questionable terms as night riots between "young Russian speaking minorities and Estonian authorities"[77]. In October 2010, the Parliament passed the so-called "Bronze Night" package, a set of amendments to the Penal Code, the Public Service Act and the Aliens' Act. The amendments expand the definition of "an offence committed during mass disorder", which might now include acts of non-violent disobedience during peaceful demonstrations. They also provide for non-nationals, including long-term residents and those born in Estonia, to have their residence permit revoked for these offences and for other "intentional crimes against the state". This could include non-violent acts such as the symbolic destruction of national flags or those of foreign states or international organizations.

[77] Visit Estonia. "Estonian History". Accessed May 18, 2012. http://www.visitestonia.com/en/about-estonia/estonian-culture/estonian-history-a-timeline-of-key-events

Estonia's Nation Branding

Brand Estonia

Brand Estonia 2001-2008: Positively Transforming

The collapse of the Soviet Union engendered great demand in the post-Soviet sphere not only for reorganization of the political and economic infrastructures of the newly established independent states, but also for re-introducing themselves to the world. The geopolitical changes were taking place simultaneously with the development of the nation branding phenomenon. "Estonia was the first former Soviet state to undertake a comprehensive branding initiative. It is also regarded as an exemplary case in the branding literature"[78].

The notion of successful nation branding efforts is very difficult, if not impossible, to measure in terms of hard evidence. For instance, even if nation branding campaign coincides with a dramatic growth in tourist flow, it could be attributed to a variety of factors: improved infrastructure, new airline routes or relaxation of visa requirements. It is hardly possible to measure specifically the role of nation branding in tourism or investment achievements. In this respect, one has no choice, but to rely on the opinion of the industry professionals and scholars.

After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia was almost completely unknown or at best misunderstood beyond the realm of its immediate neighbors and historically related nations, such as Russia, Finland, or Latvia. Re-emergence on the world scene provided the country with a unique opportunity of making the first impression on millions of people. The first conscious and strategic attempts to engage in such kind of efforts were undertaken exactly ten years after

[78] Jansen, Sue Curry. *Redesigning a Nation: Welcome to E-stonia, 2001-2018*. *Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012, p. 81.

attaining independence – in 2001. What pushed Estonian authorities in this direction was the victory of the country's representatives Tanel Padar, Dave Benton & 2XL at the Eurovision Song Contest, which, according to the rules of the competition, made Tallin a host city for the following year's event.

Eurovision is much more than simply a contest of melodies and vocal abilities – it is the biggest opportunity for European countries to present themselves in front of hundreds of millions viewers all over the world[79]. Smaller nations receive a very insignificant share of the world's media attention and therefore in general have to put extra effort to be heard and noticed, not to mention liked. It is thus understandable why the Eurovision victory prompted the beginning of Estonia's nation branding efforts, which have since developed into a full-fledged and complex campaign.

The first step towards reputation management efforts was their institutionalization through the creation of Enterprise Estonia. The organization was appointed responsible for coordinating and overseeing all nation branding-related activities by the Estonian Tourist Board, the Estonian Technology Agency, the Trade Promotion Agency, and other governmental bodies.

Several weeks after the victory at Eurovision, Enterprise Estonia, in turn, initiated the project Brand Estonia. Its development was commissioned to one of the world's leading branding and marketing companies Interbrand, which was assisted by the local Estonian firm Emak. The first step of the campaign, as any nation branding theoretical literature would suggest,

[79] See Torres, Gonzalo. *Pan-European, National, Regional and Minority Identities in the Eurovision Song Contest . Media, nationalism and European identities*. Edited by Miklós Sükösd and Karol Jakubowicz. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2011.

was to carry out an extensive research in order to find out how the country and the society is viewed by its own population and various opinion leaders, both in Estonia and abroad:

> "This research involved extensive reading and desk research, 70 in-depth interviews with Estonian political, cultural and opinion-leaders, entrepreneurs and journalists, a comprehensive audit of Estonia's existing visual identity, focus-groups with Estonian and non-Estonian business people, 250 telephone interviews within Estonia and a further 1476 with tourists, investors and importers in the UK, Germany, Finland, Sweden and Russia, team participation in several public panels and conferences on national identity and, lastly, input from artists, designers, marketing professionals, researchers and public and private officials in Estonia"[80].

The branding imagery and narratives were transmitted through an array of media: "Welcome to Estonia" logo; a photographic style, color palette, and graphics; promotional materials, including short video documentaries, a PowerPoint presentation, pamphlets, and a CD-Rom; an outdoor display campaign and press events. The Brand Estonia campaign was adopted by the Estonian national airlines, airports, shipping docks, emerging tourist industry, and many businesses.

The overarching message of the initial campaign was summarized in just two words: Positively Transforming. The intent was to portray Estonia as a country undergoing transition in all spheres of its life and thus entering the world and European community, from which it had been isolated for years. While transition, especially in the Central and Eastern European context, could be perceived negatively as a period of hardship, the idea was precisely to emphasize the peaceful, quick and, most importantly, overall successful transformation of the country.

In reality, the transition was, of course, not entirely unclouded. Particularly with regards to ethnic relations between the Estonian majority and the Russian minority. For

[80] Dinnie, Keith. 2008. *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 232.

instance, the 2001 Estonian Human Development Report pointed to the fact that the integration propaganda was not able to bridge the gap of segregation between Russian and Estonian communities, which had only deepened through the decades[81].

Brand Estonia since 2008: Positively Surprising

In 2008 Enterprise Estonia went on to redevelop and breathe new life into the seven year old Positively Transforming concept without dramatically changing its essence, but slightly changing the slogan to Positively Surprising: "While the platform Positively Transforming introduced the main pillars of Estonia as a brand, the Positively Surprising elaborates, modernizes and systemizes them, bringing the brand significantly closer to practical communication"[82]. The conceptual scheme of the new strategy is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Marketing Concept for Estonia.

[81] Jansen, Sue Curry. *Redesigning a Nation: Welcome to E-stonia, 2001-2018. Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012.

[82] Enterprise Estonia, "A Toolkit for Introducing Estonia." Accessed May 16, 2012. http://tutvustaeestit.eas.ee/en/brand-estonia-and-terms-of-use/brand-estonia/marketing-concept-for-estonia.

Source: A Toolkit for Introducing Estonia (www.tutvustaeestit.eas.ee). Marketing Concept for Estonia.

Any brand model contains a number of interrelating components that include essence that defines the country when seen as a brand, a series of brand stories or narratives to explain and explore their breadth and a translation of those stories into specific messages for tourism, exports and inward investment. The nation branding narratives of Estonia are informed by the four cornerstones of the strategy, detailed on the Enterprise Estonia's website[83].

The Nordic influence. Estonians are rational and prudent. Estonians live in a Nordic country. This means pristine nature and pure wilderness, as well as periods of white nights or limited daylight. It is the climate that has given Estonians their strict discipline: clear shapes and quality both in thinking and actions. It is also about being introvert and stressed because of

[83] Enterprise Estonia, "A Toolkit for Introducing Estonia." Accessed May 16, 2012. http://tutvustaeestit.eas.ee/en/brand-estonia-and-terms-of-use/brand-estonia/four-cornerstones-of-brand-estonia

painfully long winters and short summers. For the same reason Estonians care about sustainable development and are concerned about the future.

Rootedness. Estonians have deep roots. Estonians have been living in their homeland for thousands of years. This is rare even in Europe, not to mention the rest of the world. They have been facing disasters, rulers, wars and climate, but we have prevailed. This gives Estonians their historic heritage, unique in the whole world. There is a kind of heroic romanticism in the way they feel about Estonia. It gives them the unique language and traditions, but also makes them calculating and introverted.

The Eeastern Influence. Estonians are an open Nordic nation. Estonians originate from the East and in the course of times many other people have come there to stay as well. It would be naive to think that Estonians have no connection to the Rising Sun. Within the ancient and closed world there is another world full of emotions, surprises and exotics. Estonians' sense of hospitality has come from the East. The Eastern influence can also be felt in the modern-day educational level of Estonians. They understand civilised East better than many Western nations. The influence of the East can also be interpreted as Estonians' international or multi-cultural feature.

Progress. Estonians adapt fast. Estonia is logistically in a challenging location – at a meeting point of seas, land, forest and different cultures. Throughout existence Estonians have been forced to adjust to different influences and restrictions. Perhaps their creative skills are not as good as in Southern nations, but they are smart and quick in implementing novel technologies. Estonians' love for the Internet and mobile technology is a good example of their adaptability. Estonians are pioneers, who rapidly deploy efficient means (from slash and burn agriculture to

gene technology). There are many things that Estonians take for granted, while in the rest of the world these things still belong to science fiction.

The key areas of Brand Estonia are divided into four categories according to primary target audiences[84].

Tourism. People come to Estonia to experience something new, and if we can positively surprise them, they will tell many others about it. This will bring us fame and good reputation.

Business. These are the people – mainly entrepreneurs: foreign investors or importers – who directly or indirectly help create jobs here, thereby increasing our country's wealth. This category also includes international conference organizers, travel agents and other 'mediators', who help many people with business interests to visit our country (business tourism).

Living environment. These are the people, who may decide to come here to study for an extended period, to live here or to take up a job that creates added value. They enrich us and are enriched themselves. They will become the best advertising agents for Estonia when they return home. In a way, they are similar to tourists, but as they stay here longer, they participate in our life and environment significantly more than tourists.

Internal communication. We are proud of our country. The more we get to know it, the more we are able to speak about it to the world. Our history and culture, our progressiveness and achievements are important to us.

[84] http://tutvustaeestit.eas.ee/en/brand-estonia-and-terms-of-use/brand-estonia/key-areas-of-brand-estonia

Estonia's Nation Branding Narratives

Following Billig's assertion[85] that the study of identity should involve detailed study of discourse, I employ narrative analysis of the various nation branding materials, such as website sections and brochures. By narrative analysis I understand the establishment of analytical categories, the ascription of textual (I will not be focusing in detail on the visual component) units to these categories, as well as correlation of findings with theoretical conceptions of society and culture[86].

Manifestations of Estonia's nation branding are very diverse and numerous. They include dozens of brochures, presentations and videos, several websites with immense amounts of information, and more. Due to time and space limitations, I am focusing on just three cases.

1. *I Love Estonia* brochure. The brochure is targeted at internal audiences and is positioned as a message 'from us to us'. Few nation branding campaigns include specifically self-targeted and self-referential materials. The expectation here is that such peculiar and rare positioning could provide deeper insights into self-understanding and self-identification by the regime, which in the end is responsible for any nation branding efforts. Hopefully, the content would give an answer as to who is understood and included in / excluded from the notion of 'we'.
2. *An Introduction to Estonia* brochure. Of the many brochures produced as part of Estonia's nation branding efforts and targeted at tourists, this is the most recent and most

[85] Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.

[86] Schrøder, Kim Christian. *Discourse as Fact. A Handbook of Media and Communication Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies* . Edited by Klaus Bruhn Jensen. London: Routledge, 2002.

generic one. The brochure provides a short introduction to various aspects of the country's life, and tells a potential visitor what he/she could expect to find in Estonia. As was mentioned in the section on nation branding theory, nation branding often employs nationalist rhetoric when trying to attract tourists. Thus, I expect to find various manifestations of nationalism in this brochure and in particular see what its creators understand by Estonia and Estonians.

3. *Estonia.eu:* Estonian Culture and Estonian Language. Throughout most of Estonia's nation branding, the importance of the culture and especially the language in the nation's history is continuously emphasized. Both culture and language are also included in most accepted and mainstream definitions of a nation – for instance, Guibernau asserts[87] that cohesion is impossible to achieve if culture is perceived as sacred. The sections under analysis are expected to provide understanding of how the issues of culture and language are framed by the campaign creators.

When analyzing the narratives, I intentionally adhere to a rather rigid approach of a multiculturalism ideal. First of all, the authors, whose theories this research is based upon – Guibernau, Kymlicka, Malloy, Ross, Smooha, Taylor – all strongly favor multiculturalism as a mode of ethnic relations in polyethnic states. Secondly, the assumption is that the rigid approach would allow for a more critical reading of the narratives, thus helping better uncover relevant meanings that lie beneath the surface.

[87] Guibernau i Berdún, M. Montserrat. 2010. *The identity of nations*. Cambridge: Polity.

I Love Estonia: The Most Ancient Modern Nation

As was outlined in the previous section, Estonia's nation branding efforts are subdivided into four categories according to the primary target audience. Tourism, Business, and Education constitute the nominally external communication group, while the *I Love Estonia* campaign is 'a message directed from us to us'. The rationale behind the latter campaign is to reinforce the Estonians' pride in their country, to foster domestic tourism, and overall to strengthen the link among the people, as well as between the people and the country. I am examining the 16 page brochure available at Enterprise Estonia website, which extensively describes the message that *I Love Estonia* campaign is communicating.

The first question that the brochure's title *The Most Ancient Modern Nation* raises is what understanding – especially in terms of inclusivity – of a nation its authors had in mind. To use Kymlicka's definition of the term, "nation is a historical, intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture"[88]. Estonians and Russians in present-day Estonia occupy the same territory and both constitute intergenerational (although, to a different degree) communities. The language and culture of Estonians and Russians, however, are very different, so the logical conclusion is that the nation here is equated strictly with one of the groups, namely ethnic Estonians. Reference to the antiquity of the nation seems to prove this point. Antiquity of ethnic Estonians is emphasized throughout the country's nation branding efforts. Considering that the majority of Russians moved to Estonia in the latter half of the XX century, one can hardly assume that the title refers to this minority group.

[88] Kymlicka, Will. 1995. *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press, p. 11.

Pages 2[89] and 3 present the country's official anthem "My native land, my joy, delight" in both Estonian and English languages. Due to its official status as a civic state anthem, this could be perceived as a rather neutral narrative. However, firstly, between the two versions of the anthem is a photograph depicting two small Estonian girls in traditional costumes, which also can be attributed to distinctly ethnic understanding of a nation. Secondly, the anthem's history itself is closely linked to Estonia's national movement and bears strong emotional sentiments for ethnic Estonians, symbolically representing the struggle for self-governance and national culture:

> "[The anthem] gained in popularity during the growing national movement [of the late XIX century]. When Estonia became independent after the First World War this melody was recognized as the national anthem. Officially, Estonia adopted it in 1920, after the War of Independence. During the decades of the Soviet occupation of Estonia, the melody was strictly forbidden and people were sent to Siberia for singing it. However, even during the worst years the familiar tune could be heard over Finnish radio, every day at the beginning and end of the program. With the restoration of Estonian independence, the national anthem has, of course, been restored too."[90]

The next page (p. 4) confirms the assumption of ethnically-based understanding of the narrative. Against the background of a dramatic picture of northern seashore full of stones at sunset, the paragraph elaborates on the nature of the song. The anthem is called "the holiest song", which supposedly expresses the feeling of love for the "special country" using "its own language". Considering the history of cultural imperialism, experienced by Estonia throughout the ages of foreign rule, the emphasis put on the language is, again, a clear ethno-symbolic reference.

[89] All references to page numbers in this section imply pages in the respective brochures.

[90] President of Estonia, "National Symbols." Accessed May 10, 2012. http://www.president.ee/en/republic-of-estonia/symbols/index.html.

Circumstances for using the song, listed further, also hint at nationalistic motives. One such instance is when the "heroes" return home with gold medals from sports competitions. Modern sports bear social and political significance, going beyond purely athletic competitions and serving as one of the most popular grounds for expressing nationalistic sentiments[91]. The second suggested instance for singing the anthem is to celebrate Estonia's independence – the cornerstone of Estonia's historical narrative and national identification. The text rather categorically states that, when singing the song, the whole nation experiences "the same feeling – love for our small country". Such coarse generalizations are imposing and dogmatic, on the one hand, and, by stressing the supposed unity of the majority group around its symbols, somewhat exclusive to the groups outside of the ethnic national core.

The visual background of page 5 is a no less dramatic and picturesque natural scene of fields and forests stretching beyond horizon on a bright warm day. Here, the narrative revolves around appreciation of nature, which is one of the most important and popular pillars of ethno-symbolic narratives. The Nordic nature and traditions are said to be "dating back thousands of years". The reference to Nordic nature and traditions distinguishes the population along ethnic lines. The framing of nature and especially traditions as Nordic evidently refers to Estonian ethnicity, as the Russian minority have a different ethnic background. Additionally, yet another reference to antiquity of the nation narratively implies only the majority ethnic group, the long historical tradition of which is omnipresent in Estonia's nation branding efforts on the whole. On top of that, the connection is made between the nature and the roots of the nation: supposedly, the more people travel and experience their nature, "the deeper [their] roots grow". This could also be ascribed to the category of ethno-nationalistic symbolism.

[91] Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.

Page 7 is entitled "Love for your country is a matter of heart". The three paragraphs are expanding on this idea and trying to convey the supposedly natural and inescapable emotional connection between one's feelings/passion and their place of birth (in this case Estonia). The opening sentence states that "Our home is located in the North", thus translating the notion of a country as political entity into more emotionally appealing idea of a home. Further sentences, again very imposingly and dogmatically, draw conclusions about various traits of the national character, stemming from the northern location of the "home". The repeated usage of the word "we" to describe these traits implies some form of assumed collective identity, which can also be seen as something that draws a distinctive line: who are, then, the people, which do not fit the description of this supposedly typical northerner? The creation of the Other is also a common theme used in nationalistic narratives, even if the Other is not explicitly described, but is instead implied through the pronounced description of We/Us.

The second paragraph on page 7 begins with an outright expression of ethnic nationalism: "The blood in our veins is ancient and honest". As opposed to civic nationalism, which defines a nation in terms of, for instance, language or citizenship, ethnic nationalism defines belonging to a nation through blood[92]. Thus, for example, whereas in France (an example of civic nationalism) a person of Arab or black origin would be considered French if he/she just became French citizens, in Germany a guest worker living there for decades and perfectly speaking the language would not be considered German – as opposed to newcomers of ethnically German background from Kazakhstan. Speaking in terms of blood, the brochure in question separates the population along ethnic lines, as, in ethnic nationalism terms, one can never join the nation while not being of the same blood. Later, the recurring themes of the nation's antiquity, independence,

[92] Greenfeld, Liah, ed. *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*. New York: Academic Press, 2001. s.v. "Etymology, Definitions, Types."

and roots are reiterated: "we have one of the world's oldest stories" and "we know the price of our independence and the strength of our roots".

In the concluding third paragraph of page 7 Estonia is for the first time referred to in civic terms – as a "country". Yet, here it seems to be used as a synonym for the nation, since the country is described as having "an ancient Nordic heart". As was mentioned earlier, references to antiquity and Nordic roots are, due to differentiating historical and cultural backgrounds of ethnic Estonians and Russian, are clearly pointing to the identity of the former group.

Page 8 describes the meaning behind the sign "I Love Estonia" (in Estonian) that serves as a visual representation of the message and can be used anywhere as part of the campaign. The message is supposed to "strengthen the emotional connection between Estonians through [the] country". This is the first time that Estonians as a group are pronouncedly mentioned in the brochure and by this point one has enough evidence to assume that Estonians here are most likely seen as the ethnically Estonian majority inhabiting the Republic of Estonia. The love for Estonia, expressed in the message and the sign in particular, is said to be an answer as to why the people have stayed in the hostile Nordic climate "for thousands of years". The last paragraph on the page stresses the connection between ancestors and the following generation in the vein of Smith's argument[93] about the centrality of historical continuity in ethno-symbolic nationalism rhetoric.

Page 9 explains the rationale behind the "I Love Estonia" branch of the wider nation branding effort. The main idea is that the message serves as a way for Estonians to express their passion for the country. "The faith, love and hope" for Estonia are said to be rooted on the

[93] See Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

"emotionally fundamental level", explaining it as natural and given. Moreover, the text goes as far as saying that "the country and us – we are one". If by "we" the brochure means ethnic Estonians, as has been established by this point, and they are narratively equated with the nation, then it would be logical to assume that non-Estonians are perceptively left outside the nation. The love for the country is further stressed as "affiliation and dedication to our home".

Page 11 discusses the centrally coordinated brand applications of "I Love Estonia" and points out to the "magnificent variety and diversity of cultural levels". However, from the context it becomes evident that the text refers not to the diversity of *cultures*, but specifically to the diversity of *levels* of culture in Estonia, which supposedly makes it possible to widely introduce "I Love Estonia" message through various culture and travel-related organizations, events, and spheres.

Page 12 once again uses dogmatic rhetoric to stress that "Estonians are proud of their country". For the first time the brochure refers to a seemingly neutral and civic notion of citizenship, when complaining of how little, at the same time, Estonians travel around their country and thus how little they "communicate with [their] fellow citizens". The text does not expand on the intended meaning of the notion, but in the Estonian context even such an unbiased and strictly legal term possesses – again, possibly involuntarily – an exclusionary shade. Even today, almost 7% of the population is of so-called undetermined or undefined citizenship – almost all of them are Russian Estonians. However, it should be noted that substantial progress has been made in this respect over the years, since in 1992 citizens with an undetermined status made up 32% of the population.

Page 13, entitled What Can We Talk to Ourselves, discusses the meaning and essence of the message and its constituent parts. The message is divided into three semantic parts: Origin, Progress, and Extension. Origin is understood as all things, so to speak, authentic and historical: "history, traditions, mores, folklore". The following symbols, according to the strategy, would be included in the Origin narrative of the Value Matrix: "People and culture, folklore, folk music, handicraft, national epic, indigenous religion, religion in general, history of Estonia and Livonia and historic persons, Estonian language, structure of settlements, Old Town, agriculture, marine culture, forestry, hunting, army, constitution, tourism farms". The Progress narratives would include "science, business environment, technological appliances, telecommunication, Internet, online and mobile solutions, adding surplus value, quick implementation, innovation, smart industry, openness to everything new, infrastructure".

Eastern Influence narrative is referred to as a possible Option for Extension – something that could be included and implemented, should there be a necessity for it, a sort of hidden reserves. This is the first time when the brochure mentions the existence of other people, except for ethnic Estonians, inhabiting the country. They are presented in a positive light and viewed as a potential asset: when travelling in Estonia, "people are hospitable and helpful – no matter the nationality". Multiculturalism is listed among the Values of Eastern Influence on page 13. And Symbols of Eastern Influence mention specifically "Russian heritage".

On the one hand, this goes against the ethnic and exclusive understanding of Estonianness so far propagated in the brochure: here, all nationalities are said to be hospitable, multiculturalism and even Russian heritage in particular are mentioned as positive assets. On the other hand, even this seemingly inclusive understanding, if critically approached, raises some questions. First of all, all these notions are put into the optional category for extension of the

narrative, should the circumstances require their use. Thus, they are not considered an inherent and indispensable part of the message/narrative and could, if so decided, be not used at all. Secondly, authors of the message still clearly draw a diving line between the original, historic, indigenous, and national as the core of the message and the "exotic" (also one of the values of Eastern Influence) influence. Consequently, despite the mention of other nationalities in positive context, the overarching understanding of Estonianness is still formulated in terms of ethnic nationalism.

Page 14 described the idea behind the de-centralized spreading of "I Love Estonia" message visually and narratively. The concept is that people and/or enterprises would be able to use the message at their own will, should they want to express their pride and sense of belonging to Estonia and, in turn, create additional symbolic value for the country. The description concludes by saying that "The most important thing is for the activities gathered under the "I Love Estonia" sign to be directed to Estonians, and for the parts or values created to be of Estonian origin". This, again, raises question as to what is understood by "Estonians" and "Estonian origin". Here, we can refer to the previous page where the notion of Estonian origin was outlined in specific terms, which included, among others, national epic, indigenous religion, history of Estonia and Livonia and historic persons, Estonian language, constitution. All of these (arguably, even the constitution, since it possesses ethno-nationalistic overtones), then, imply that Estonian origin is ethnic Estonian origin and, therefore, Estonians are also understood as ethnic Estonians.

The concluding page 15 in its title reiterates the notion that using "I Love Estonia" is a matter of heart, pointing to the emotional connection between the people and the country. The explanation behind the de-centralized efforts of using "I Love Estonia" lay in the fact that

"Everyone has the right to declare dedication to their country and nation". Although technically the terms country and nation are divided here by *and*, considering the context, the phrase reads as if the two terms were used synonymously to actually emphasize the connection.

An interesting and rather confusing term of "a single domestic entirety" is used for the first and only time in the brochure as a desired outcome of the analyzed efforts. The term parallels a vague and misleading notion of state identity, used for the first time in Estonia's latest integration strategy of 2008-2013 and, as was shown in the respective section of this research, essentially disguising in more acceptable terms the notion of ethnically Estonian identity. The assumption seems to find its confirmation in the next sentence, which states that the message would provide a signal to "other Estonians that these activities derive from us and are directed to us". So far in the brochure, as was illustrated above, the references to "we" and "us", as well as references to Estonians as a group of people, implies the ethnically Estonian majority.

An Introduction to Estonia: Where Medieval Meets Modern

The brochure is a 16 page long general introduction to multiple aspects of Estonia's life: culture, history, sights, sports, traditions, etc. The document is made available for downloading at VisitEstonia.com website in the respective section. The site itself is a part of Estonia's nation branding efforts and serves the purpose of talking specifically about the tourist aspect of the broader campaign. The brochure was developed by the Estonian Tourist Board in 2010 with financial assistance of the European Union Regional Development Fund.

Narrative analysis of the brochure enabled to distinguish several themes, which could be situated within the framework of Smith's ethno-symbolism theory[94] and/or Billig's theory of banal nationalism[95]. Of the numerous manifestations of nationalism found in the text, only those most relevant for the purposes of this research are provided below.

Ancient / Medieval past

Almost all nationalistic and nation-building discourses use a myth of the glorious past[96]. The past of the nation is portrayed as a time of ultimate success and purity, something a nation should strive to achieve once again in the future. Historical continuity could also serve as a legitimizing instrument for territorial and/or independence claims. It could be used as a supporting argument in the narrative of the revival of a nation. The past is thus romanticized and idealized to a great extent. It is especially relevant for the newly-established political entities that strive to find some reference points in the past to base national identity around them.

- "Step onto the small, meandering streets paved in granite and let the ancient city walls and red-stoned roofs carry you back to centuries past." (p. 3)
- "In this very same Old Town Square the world's first Christmas tree stood in 1441." (p. 3)
- "In the Old Town Square you'll find Europe's oldest operating pharmacy, founded in 1422 and still open for business today." (p. 3)

[94] Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[95] See Billig, Michael. 1995. *Banal nationalism*. London: Sage.

[96] Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- "[The statue of the guardian of the city] held the post since 1530 and is the most recognised man in the entire city." (p. 5)

Cuisine / Food

Traditional national cuisine is one of the key elements of national identity[97]. Nations take pride in having invented or having traditionally consumed certain dishes – usually made with local ingredients. Traditional cuisine is thought to be something pure, provided by the nature, inherently good and is often contrasted to modern fast food chains. On the other hand, the brochure under analysis stresses that one can have all sorts of national cuisines while visiting the country, thus supposedly emphasizing the cosmopolitan and multicultural nature of the society. Interestingly, Russian cuisine is described in the context of international cuisines one can find in Estonia, locating it in the realm of *international*, rather than *local* phenomena.

- "Visitors from every nation find something familiar in Tallinn. The Irish find dark beer, the Italians pizza restaurants and the Russians taverns where the waiter's shirt is worn outside the belt to cover his trousers and vodka flows in a thin icy stream. Those from the dark continent will find a man from Mozambique at a wok, chilli pepper and garlic in hand." (p. 4)

Minorities

The brochure – either in passing or pronouncedly – mentions various ethnic groups and minorities. However, these are either the groups that are almost extinct in Estonia at present (Baltic Germans or Jews) or are smaller ethnolinguistic groups that are essentially part of the

[97] Wilson, Thomas M. 2006. *Food, drink and identity in Europe*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Estonian ethnos (Kihnu). The contemporary Russian minority receives no mention in the text. The conscious exclusion and non-recognition of the group in this particular case follow the broader nation branding discourse of condemnation of the Soviet past on the whole and the issue of the ethnically Russian population as its legacy.

- "The old manor houses, at one time the living quarters of Baltic Germans, number in the thousands in Estonia." (p. 8)
- "On Kihnu island the local women ride motorcycles with sidecars, their brightly coloured, striped national folk costumes flapping in the wind." (p. 10)
- "When you step off the ferryboat on to Vormsi Island you may be convinced you've landed in Sweden." (p. 10)

Nature / Countryside / Rural life

Ancestral homeland – the mountains, rivers, lakes and forests of a particular geographical space have provided the scene for historic events (battles, treaties, reve1ations, oaths, shrines, migrations, etc.) associated with a given community, and subsequently became an indispensable part of the shared memories and mythology of that community. Like countryside (which itself is so closely connected to nature), nature is portrayed as one of the strongest remaining links with the past. The more preserved the nature is, the better – not only due to environmental concerns, but as part of the historical link.

- "Such pristine and untouched nature is found in only a few places in Europe." (p. 2)
- "Marvel at the construction skills of the Estonian farmer, who centuries ago, with nothing but the naked eye, achieved proportions in his chimneyless home as if he'd studied the golden ratio in a university." (p. 5)

- "In the first half of summer, mothers of Estonian households send their families to the forest to gather chanterelles, wild strawberries, and cberries." (p. 11)
- "From forest and meadow the Estonian woman also gathers healing plants for the making of tea for the family during darker seasons." (p. 12)
- "Where once was hay or potato fields are now "high seas" and the village woman travels across her yard to the barn in a skiff in order to feed the pigs and the chickens." (p. 12)

People / National character

In the nationalist consciousness, nations, national identities and national homelands appear as "natural". The brochure reinforces stereotypes about ethnic Estonians by describing various characteristics as inherently national. As in the case of cuisine, the Russians are mentioned in the international context – not as Russian Estonians, but only as Russian citizens, those who live outside Estonia, over the border.

- "To our eastern neighbours the Russians and our southern neighbours the Latvians an Estonian is thought to be calm and slow to act. But to our northern neighbours the Finns we are a fast act which is tough to follow! When Latvians start to tell jokes, it's often at the expense of Estonians. But what might appear a guarded and suspicious Estonian is quite the opposite, once you get acquainted with him." (p. 2)
- "Something very Estonian can be found if you happen to visit during the Song Festival." (p. 5)
- "Estonians are so connected to their land that most everyone has a favourite boulder, a giant tree, or a forest lake – old acquaintances to be visited again and again." (p. 11)

Russian / Soviet heritage

Interestingly, two of the three references to the times of the Russian Empire are related to the spa industry. The fact that they were known all across the country at the time and that even the Russian Tsar paid a visit is used to convey their high quality, considering the gigantic size and grandeur of the Empire. Although the political context of the Russian Empire and the USSR differed greatly, Estonia was not independent under both regimes. Still, it is the popularity enjoyed by the spas precisely under the Imperial rule that is portrayed in a clearly positive way.

Considering the harsh framing and wording of narratives concerning the Soviet period found elsewhere in Estonia's nation branding narratives, it is surprising that in this particular brochure the references are limited to one and rather neutral mention, merely implying the out datedness of the Soviet period. For instance, similar brochures of Latvia and Lithuania at length describe the horrors of the Soviet past.

- "Visit the palace in Kadriorg (Katherine's Valley) which Tsar Peter the Great commissioned for Katherine the Second." (p. 5)
- "The first mud clinic in Haapsalu opened its doors in 1825 and from that time on it has attracted visitors from around the world who appreciate the mud bath, including Russian Tsars." (p. 14)
- "Some [water centers] are ultra-modern and others retro, carrying an air of the Soviet period." (p. 14)

Symbols

Representations of various national symbols – flags, historical places, jewels – are also found in the brochure. They are a mixture of banal nationalism when it comes to present-day symbols, such as flags, and ethno-symbolic nationalism when it comes to Medieval castles and

similar kind of places. The flag is referred to as the nation's, and not the country's flag, pointing rather to an ethnic and not a civic sentiment in the symbol's perception.

- "With the morning's sunrise, the nation's flag is hoisted above Tall Hermann tower." (p. 3)

Traditional arts / crafts / festivals

Traditional festivities, alongside the idyllic and romanticized representations of the rural life and glorious ancient/Medieval times, are a way to draw a link between the present and the past[98]. They are the days and events where the spirit of the glorious past is exaggeratedly pronounced and celebrated. Additionally, in this particular case the connection to the German (Hanseatic) origins is articulated.

- "Old Town Days, which take place at the beginning of June in the old Hanseatic city of Tallinn, are a shining example that the darkness of the middle ages was actually quite colourful – visually, audibly, and with respect to tastes." (p. 3)

Estonia.eu

Estonia.eu website is part of the broader nation branding campaign and serves as the country's primary virtual embassy in terms of cultural representation: "a virtual encyclopedia of Estonian government, culture, commerce, trade, education, history, science, and information technology, with hundreds of informational links that would fill a bookshelf if translated into the

[98] Smith, Anthony D. 1999. *Myths and memories of the nation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

retro-world of paper"[99]. The section About Estonia is divided into several rubrics: Country, Society, Economy & IT, Culture & Science, and History. Each of them, in turn, is further split into 7-10 subrubrics. Due to time and size limitations, I will be examining a limited number of rubrics presented on the website, which have the most relevance for the work's argument.

Culture → Estonian Culture

The very opening paragraph of the Estonian Culture subrubric explains the importance of culture in Estonian context:

> "Estonian culture is that of a nation of a little more than one million people. Along with the language, this culture is the main vehicle for Estonian identity, hence the respect which Estonians feel for it"[100].

The text is evidently portraying Estonian culture and identity in ethnic terms. To begin with, the notion of culture here is linked to a nation, not a state or a country. Moreover, along with Estonian language, it is said to constitute one of the two pillars of Estonian identity. This falls under Kymlicka's definition of a nation, which, among other characteristics, includes a shared language and culture. Further paragraphs clarify the initial assumption of ethnic understanding of Estonian identity by the narrators.

The subrubric goes on to describe the brief history of Estonian culture starting with "the culture of ancient Estonians". The most popular notion of Estonian nation's antiquity is thus reiterated. The following several paragraphs talk about the impact of other cultures on Estonia, as

[99] Jansen, Sue Curry. *Redesigning a Nation: Welcome to E-stonia, 2001-2018. Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the "New" Europe*. Edited by Nadia Kaneva. New York: Routledge , 2012.

[100] Enterprise Estonia, "Estonia.eu: Official Gateway to Estonia." Accessed May 7, 2012. http://estonia.eu.

the territory was consecutively invaded, conquered and/or ruled by major foreign powers. The Teutonic Order in the 13th century left the heritage of "small country churches with tarred spires, situated near the coast". The German colonists allowed for Estonia to enter the mainstream of the Occident and further developed "their own brand of specifically Baltic German sub-culture". The Swedes "built the city of Tallinn" and "founded the University of Tartu in 1632". Each of the mentioned cultures seems to have brought something valuable to Estonia and is clearly viewed as a positive influence.

After this, a separate one sentence paragraph states that "Russian cultural influence has been relatively small, barring a couple of waves of Russification by the authorities". It falls out of the scope of this research to analyze the factual credibility of the statement. However, according to Ross[101], the very fact of including or not including certain messages in a narrative is very telling and is no less important compared to content of a message. The fact that the authors felt it necessary to specifically point out the lack of Russian influence on Estonia's culture and frame it solely in terms of forced governmental efforts, shows clear hostility to that culture. If Russian culture had no influence on Estonia, it would seemingly make sense not to mention it at all – rather, it is explicitly mentioned in a negative light.

Ethnically and culturally close Finns are referred to as cousins and they are said to have common national epics with Estonians; the XIX century culture is discursively linked to the national movement, while the Soviet period with its Russification is termed "Russian tutelage", hinting at the foreign and undesired influence. All of this additionally emphasizes the ethnically based understanding of a national culture and the desire to protect it against those cultures

[101] See Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

considered more alien, such as the Russian one. The ethno-nationalist, isolationist, and protective mode of thinking is explicitly articulated in the last paragraph: "The task now facing us is to ward off globalization and guard against the whims of market forces so as to keep our own national culture retain our specific cultural features even as a Member State of the European Union". Ironically, these isolationist lines are written on a website, which is part and parcel of globalization and market forces in the form of nation branding efforts.

Culture → Estonian Language

Since language, along with culture, is perceived as the second founding pillar of Estonian identity by the narrators, Estonian Language is another subrubric I am examining in the Culture section of the website. The history of Estonian language is divided into three time periods.

- Act One: Finno-Ugric Europeans.
- Act Two: From the rise of the written language to literacy.
- Act Three: From cultural autonomy to independence.

Throughout the section, the language is portrayed as an element of self-identification and nation-building over the centuries, since it was the one element that united the people, no matter what the regime was. The narrator rather neutrally views the German influence back in the 13th century, despite the heavy influence: "About one quarter of the roots of the words that form the present-day Estonian vocabulary come from Low German". Yet, further mentions of German or Russian influence are seen as obstacles to the development of the truly authentic and independent Estonian culture, which, however, the nation managed to bypass:

- "In 1710, Russia conquered Estonia. Conditions began to deteriorate in Estonia, but the tradition of educational and cultural endeavor continued".

- "The Estonian national movement had to sail skillfully between the reefs of the Russian authorities and the Baltic Germans, both Russification and Germanisation of the Estonian people were probable".
- "Estonians could distract the attention of both the Baltic Germans and the Russian authorities by means of their "secret" language".

Conclusion

The general tone, logic, and often particular phrasing of the analyzed materials reflect the ethno-nationalistic approach of the authors. The majority of the narratives could be characterized in terms of either Billig's theory of banal nationalism or Smith's theory of ethno-symbolic nationalism. While sometimes these manifestations could be perceived as purely marketing logic, following Ross' theory[102], I argue that they are still reflective of the attitude of the elites and, upon entering public discourse, have the power to influence the situation on the ground. Moreover, at times the culturally isolationist and mono-ethnic logic is too explicit to be confused with anything else. And, as Guibernau has pointed out, multiculturalism is difficult to achieve as long as culture is viewed as sacred and is defended against any changes.

As per the representation of the Russian minority in particular, from the analyzed narratives it is simply impossible to tell that the group constitutes a quarter of the country's population and plays any role in the life of the society. Understanding of being an Estonian is equated to being ethnically Estonian, thus excluding all other groups residing in the country. At best, Russian influence is seen as exotic, however, at others times it is specifically emphasized how little influence Russian culture had on the country.

[102] Ross, Marc Howard. 2007. *Cultural contestation in ethnic conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Conclusion

More than twenty years after regaining independence, Estonian society is still divided along ethnic lines. The ¾ of the ethnic Estonian majority and a quarter of the Russian minority speak different languages, consume different media, work different jobs, and up to this day often even have different legal statuses. Many Russians, having lost hope to gain Estonian citizenship, opted for a Russian one; others are still living as 'undetermined citizens' or 'aliens'. On the one hand, some progress with regards to integration and social cohesion has been made over the years and the conflict, so it seems, is no longer as tense. On the other hand, the divide is still present and manifests itself in legal documents, state policies, public discourse, and everyday life.

Another issue that Estonia has been simultaneously struggling with over the past 20 years is the desire to 'return to Europe' and, accordingly, boost its international image and reputation. A set of branding and marketing techniques employed to reconstitute a country's nationhood, known as nation branding, came into being at just the right time for Estonia. Since 2001, the country has been heavily engaged in a variety of nation branding activities in an attempt to articulate a clear, concise, and appealing message about itself and present it to the world. Despite having joined the European Union and NATO in 2004, Estonia has continued its engagement in nation branding – one of the few strategies that smaller and newer countries without sufficient resources (including international media presence) can employ to punch above their weight in the international arena.

The research attempted to correlate the two phenomena: Estonia's interethnic struggles and its nation branding activities. In particular, I was interested in the way the Russian minority is portrayed (if at all) in these narratives. The presumption was that nation branding narratives,

being coordinated by governmental bodies, would reflect the broader political stance of the regime. Overall, the presumption proved to be correct.

Despite being a member of EU, Estonia remains an ethnic democracy. International normative obligations somewhat shape the language of its strategic integration documents, analyzed in-depth in one of the chapters. However, the more EU-appropriate wording cannot disguise the overarching mono-ethnic and ethno-nationalistic ideal held by the country's ruling elites. The same ideal is present in the country's nation branding activities, as shown by narrative analysis of the three examples of Estonia's nation branding efforts.

Future research on the topic could engage in comparative analysis. The immediate comparison could be with Latvia – a country facing almost exactly the same interethnic issues and also engaging actively in nation branding. On a broader scope, a much larger number of cases could be analyzed with regards to minority representation and portrayal. As a result, a typology could be drawn, outlining correlations between the regimes of the countries in question and the essence of their nation branding narratives minorities wise.

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