

Volume 1 Issue 2, 2015

# Journal on Baltic Security

**SPECIAL ISSUE: SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION  
IN THE BALTIC STATES**

The EU Migration Crisis and Baltic Security

Balancing between solidarity and responsibility: Estonia in the  
EU refugee crisis

Asylum seekers' crisis in Europe 2015: Debating spaces of fear  
and security in Latvia

Discursive and institutional management of refugees and their  
crisis in Lithuania

How Russian soft power fails in Estonia: Or, why the Russophone  
minorities remain quiescent

Leadership in the contemporary military: Mavericks in the  
bureaucracy?

BOOK REVIEWS

Works by Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and Dan Stone reviewed

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The second issue of the Journal on Baltic Security focuses on the developments that took much of media attention in Europe and the three Baltic countries over the last half a year – mass influx of refugees to Europe and the attempts of the EU and national governments to tackle this situation. While the question of refugees has created tensions in all the European countries, the Eastern European members of the EU in general and the Baltic States in particular have often been singled out for the lack of solidarity and apparent unwillingness to help out their struggling allies.

In this issue of the Journal we present four articles addressing this topic: one from the EU perspective with implications for the security of the three Baltic States and three looking at the debates in the three Baltic States. The first article by Ažuolas Bagdonas looks at the ways of solving the crisis at the EU level and the implications for the Baltic States of these policy decisions arguing for the importance of the rules-based system and the interest of the Baltic States in upholding such a system.

The article by Viljar Veebel looks at the Estonian discussion of the refugee crisis and its possible solutions. The author points out the numerous flaws in the EU relocation mechanisms and discusses their implications as well as security risks that ‘unwanted’ relocation may cause inside the country. Lack of economic resources, experience and skills, he argues, together with the poor management of communication on the issue greatly diminishes the chances of success of the relocation scheme in the country. The next article takes on the Latvian case and analyses it through the framework of spaces of fear and security. The authors analyse the public debate in Latvia on the refugee crisis and explain the supposed hostility of Latvians towards the EU relocation scheme

by pointing to the failure of integrating Latvia's large Russian speaking minority over the last 25 years. Finally, the article on Lithuania looks at the Lithuanian management of the refugee crisis through institutional and discursive dimensions and notes that while institutional practice reflects strong securitization of the issue, seeing refugees largely as potential threats to (hard) security, the discourse surrounding refugees in the country revolves around the economic issues.

The two book reviews in this volume also try to contextualize the current refugee crisis in the wider historical ('Goodbye Comrades, we miss you not') and philosophical ('We can be') debates about the 'European idea.' In addition, this volume contains two research articles on topics of importance for the region and for military education, addressing the issues of Russian soft power and its uses (or lack thereof) in the Baltics compared to that of the EU's soft power as well as discussion of the newest ideas and best takes in the analysis of military leadership.

Dr. Asta Maskaliūnaitė  
Editor-in-chief  
Journal on Baltic Security

## THE EU MIGRATION CRISIS AND THE BALTIC SECURITY

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**ABSTRACT** The article provides a theoretically informed commentary on the ongoing migration crisis in Europe, and discusses its causes and the currently proposed solutions to it. Irregular migration to Europe is likely to remain on the agenda of the European Union for decades to come and, in order to avoid repetitive crises, further integration is needed in the European asylum system. The article suggests that the greatest threat to the security of the Baltic States comes not from irregular migration itself, but from the policy decisions that would fail to address the EU crisis caused by it.

### Introduction

This article seeks to provide an analysis of the ongoing migration crisis in Europe and assess its impact on the security of the Baltic States. The steep increase in the number of irregular migrants entering the European Union (EU) during the last two years led to a frantic search for solutions at both national and European levels, which has not yet been successful. The argument advanced in this article is that while the influx of irregular migrants and the increasing Mediterranean migrant death rate exacerbated the sense of a crisis, the crisis is not about migration as such but about the breakdown of the rules of the European asylum system due to internal contradictions, the incomplete nature of European



integration and the divergence of national interests. While most current measures to address the crisis are generally aimed at reducing the number of irregular migrants, migratory pressures on Europe are likely to increase in the future and a more permanent solution to the migration crisis will involve a rollback of European rules or further integration. The article argues that it is in the interests of the Baltic States to support integration.

The overall intention of the article is not to make a theoretical contribution to the study of migration or institutional reforms in Europe, but rather to provide a theoretically informed perspective for the ongoing political debates in the Baltic States. In pursuing this aim, the first section of the article provides a brief description of the crisis and an analysis of its causes. The following section gives a selective overview of internal and external measures by the European Union undertaken or proposed in relation to the crisis. The final section contains critical observations regarding the challenges that the migration crisis poses to the security of the states and societies in the Baltic States.

### **What is the crisis?**

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR 2015b), more than 820,000 irregular migrants arrived in the EU by sea in 2015, mostly to Greece (673,000) and Italy (142,000). The majority of these migrants came from Syria (52%), Afghanistan (19%), Iraq (6%), and Eritrea (5%), but the wave also included people from Pakistan, Somalia, Nigeria, Sudan, Gambia, and Mali. The number of irregular migrants in 2015 represents a fourfold increase in comparison to the previous year (216,000) and a thirteen-fold increase in comparison to 2013 (59,421). The majority of migrants chose not to stay in Greece or Italy and continued moving north, with Germany and Sweden being the preferred destinations (UNHCR 2015a).

The sudden influx of migrants, many of whom have a valid claim to international protection, exceeded the capacity of national institutions to cope with the situation and revealed inadequacies in the regional asylum system. At the regional level, the centrepiece of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is the so-called Dublin system, which established that the first EU state of entry is typically responsible for examining asylum applications and that asylum seekers will be returned to that state in case they settle somewhere else.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the effect, if not the purpose, of this system was to lay down certain standards for dealing with migrants with a claim to international protection and transfer the responsibility and, to a large extent, the costs of dealing with them to the EU border states. This was designed to prevent asylum shopping, shield wealthy EU states from asylum seekers, and thereby enable the functioning of the Schengen area. However, the sheer number of irregular migrants during the last two years created difficulties in applying these European procedures and standards at the national level. For example, the Greek island of Lesbos, with a native population of 86,000 and a reception capacity of about 2,800, received over 350,000 migrants, at a rate of 3,300 per day during some periods in 2015. Under such circumstances, ensuring even basic standards (food, water, hygiene, medical treatment, and shelter) and applying normal procedures (registration, identification, translation, provision of information etc.) became challenging, if not impossible. Thus, the inability and, to a certain extent, unwillingness to deal with the influx at the national level, led to the breakdown of the enforcement of the CEAS and, consequently, put the existence of the Schengen area into question.

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<sup>1</sup> The basic rules of the CEAS are found in two regulations and three directives: Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, Regulation (EU) No 603/2013, Directive 2013/32/EU, Directive 2013/33/EU, and Directive 2011/95/EU.

It should be noted that by themselves the numbers of irregular migrants or the cost of dealing with them do not represent a crisis. Turkey alone received and hosted two or three times more Syrian refugees than those who arrived in the EU in 2015, yet the situation was not characterized as a crisis by either Turkey or the international community. To a certain extent, the branding of every situation or problem that requires decisions as a crisis comes from the global and social media's focus on the spectacular (Cross & Ma 2015). Thus, for example, while at least 22,400 migrants died crossing the Mediterranean since 2000 (Brian & Laczko 2014, p.20), the public outcry and the sense of urgency was brought by an image of a solitary child washed up on a Turkish shore. In this sense, this particular crisis subsided as soon as the global media's attention was captured by new extraordinary and entertaining events, and the dramatic images of migrants moving across the continent stopped flooding the news feeds of Europe's politicians and their voters.

Nevertheless, if crisis is understood as an extraordinary challenge to the existence and viability of a political order (Ikenberry 2008), then the influx of irregular migrants was indeed a crisis for the EU and remained such, even after the media focus shifted elsewhere. The challenge to the EU stemmed from the inability to maintain some of the existing rules due to their cost, and the inability to change those rules due to self-imposed structural normative constraints and disagreements about the nature of the required changes. It bears emphasizing that while dealing with a large number of migrants may be a problem for the most affected countries, the migration crisis is a crisis of the union and not any individual member state or a group of states.

Several dimensions of this challenge can be distinguished. First of all, there is the clash of the professed values and the actual interests, which results from the incompatibility of the

universalizing cosmopolitan ideology and the reality of material and political life in territorial nation-states. To put it simply, protecting the human rights of strangers is not necessarily beneficial to the existence and the health of one's welfare state. The European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union have set high standards for the protection of asylum seekers' rights by clarifying various issues related to asylum seekers, including the conditions for their reception, detention, living conditions, expulsion, and family reunification (UNHCR 2015c). Courts in member states sometimes choose to raise the bar even higher. For example, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court declared the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act as unconstitutional in July 2012, ruling that the amount of benefits paid out to asylum seekers in cash was incompatible with the right to guarantee for a dignified minimum existence and that in determining the required amount the legislators may not discriminate between nationals and other residents (BVerfG 2012). Maintaining these high standards means that member states incur high costs even in case of migrants without a legitimate claim to protection, and these costs grow in relation to accepted refugees and migrants granted subsidiary protection. Thus, in Germany, a top destination for migrants entering Europe and a key state for understanding the current migration crisis, the costs of housing, feeding and educating 1.1 million migrants this year were estimated to be over €21 billion (Bellon 2015), i.e. roughly the same as the entire GDP of Estonia. Obviously, the situation and the costs differ from country to country. The point here is to note the dilemma created by the conflicting logics of legally embedded values that are in their nature inimical to discrimination and the political organization of material aspects of life around nation-states that are by nature discriminatory and exclusive.

The conflict between values and interests is a regular feature in both domestic and international politics, which is often resolved

through hypocrisy (Perkins & Neumayer 2010). However, the dilemma is perhaps more acute to the EU than to any state, since the EU has defined itself and has been understood as a normative power (Pace 2007). According to Manners (2002, p.32), the norms that serve as the founding principles of the EU (peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and human rights) are not only declaratory aims but are constitutive features of the EU as a polity that give rise to its identity and international agency. It would be much easier to deal with even higher numbers of migrants by lowering or suspending the self-imposed human rights standards. However, in doing so the EU would not merely reduce its legitimacy and increase external operating costs but would undercut the very foundation of its existence (Boswell 2000). Resorting to realpolitik or hypocrisy are neither satisfactory nor sustainable options for the EU as it is today.

The second dimension of the crisis in Europe concerns the fact that not all countries were equally affected by the influx of migrants, resulting in disagreements about the appropriate course of action. The two key factors that explain the difference in the impact of the arrival of migrants are the geographic location and the economic situation of the member states. Located on the Central Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, Greece, Italy and Hungary served as the most common entry point for irregular migrants in 2015, while Germany, Hungary, Austria, Italy, France and Sweden received the largest number of asylum applications (Eurostat 2015). Many other member states, including the Baltic States, were not directly influenced. Furthermore, the affected states differed in their institutional and economic capacity to absorb migrants, which can at least partially explain the difference in the policy preferences and actions among these states. For example, unlike most other EU countries, Germany had a budget surplus of €18 billion (0.6% of the GDP) in 2014, the lowest unemployment rate in Europe, and

about 589,000 unfilled positions in the labour market in July 2015. Given the widespread realization that the future health of the German economy depends on immigration, initially asylum seekers were perceived as an opportunity, and not just a burden or a threat (Dettmer, Katschak & Ruppert 2015). While Chancellor Merkel's sudden announcement of an open-door refugee policy in early September was almost immediately recognized as a lapse of political judgment by the political elites in Germany, it is in Germany's interest to have a steady controlled inflow of migrants. The situation is very different in Greece, which is confronting the worst economic crisis in its modern history and where the rate of unemployment hovers around 25%. Greece's interest was therefore to stop the inflow of migrants and reduce their number in Greece. Consequently, Greece was not eager to register all the arriving migrants or impose controls over their movement in accordance with the Dublin system without a firm commitment by other EU states for their subsequent relocation. Given the unpopularity of the austerity measures imposed on Greece by German politicians, Greece may have derived a certain amount of *schadenfreude* from the knowledge that the majority of migrants are transiting to Germany; however, the actions would have likely remained the same even in the absence of this prehistory.

The third dimension of the crisis that can be noted here is the incomplete nature of the European Union's integration, as well as uncertainty and disagreements about its future. In this way, the migration crisis is comparable to the EU debt crisis, which to a large extent resulted from the transfer of the monetary policy to the EU while leaving fiscal policies to member states. The CEAS is a similar halfway house.<sup>2</sup> The determination of asylum procedures,

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<sup>2</sup> The CEAS is largely disconnected from the EU's external migration and asylum policy, which consists of a confusing disarray of instruments, institutions and policies loosely aligned under the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) since 2005. While there is an obvious link between problems in the CEAS and the GAMM, the

criteria, and reception conditions have been transferred to the EU level, yet the application of these procedures is left to the member states, which in practice results in a patchwork of diverse asylum systems, rather than a common one. Asylum decisions are made not by an EU institution but by individual member states, which means that asylum applications are subject to domestic politics. In 2013, for example, Greece made 13,305 asylum decisions, of which 11,335 were negative, while Sweden made 39,905 decisions, of which only 9,255 were negative (Eurostat 2015). There is mutual recognition of negative but not positive asylum decisions. There is the Dublin system, which requires that asylum seekers stay in the country of first entry, but no functioning system that would regulate their subsequent relocation and distribution among the member states. Asylum seekers and those granted asylum are theoretically entitled to the same rights (food, shelter, access to medical services and schools), yet in practice the packages of rights and benefits offered by different countries vary enormously across the EU. Thus, for example, in some countries they receive help in finding a job and can begin working while their application is still pending, and in others they cannot; in some countries they receive over €300 per month, while in others only €10 etc. The lack of centralization in the funding and implementation of the CEAS creates powerful incentives for the internal flows of migrants seeking asylum and opportunities for buck-passing among member states, thereby undermining the very purpose of the system.

It could be argued that crisis is integral to European integration. This logic is clearly captured in the neofunctionalist concept of spillover – ‘a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action and so forth’ (Lindberg

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scope of this article does not allow for a meaningful discussion. See Andrade, Martin, Vita & Mananashvili 2015.

1963, p.10). Thus, an increased number of irregular migrants and asylum seekers can create a functional spillover and a preference for greater EU involvement further as well (Andersson 2015). From a functionalist point of view, the migration crisis is a normal stage in the process of integration and the predictable response will be to transfer more sovereignty to the supranational level by, for example, assigning external border control to an EU agency and harmonizing or even centralizing the implementation of asylum policies. Crises have a place in the competing intergovernmentalist theories of European integration as well. Internally, the perception of a crisis can help political elites overcome sources of domestic resistance, while externally, major states will find it easier to organize coalitions and impose their preferences on others. From an intergovernmentalist point of view, however, solutions to a crisis may not necessarily produce more integration but can lead to disintegration as well.

### **Solutions to the crisis**

It is clear that the existing coverage of European rules in the area of migration has constrained the ability of individual EU states to respond effectively to the increased numbers of irregular migrants but does not enable a joint response. It is less clear at the moment whether the crisis will lead to further integration or to a rollback. On the one hand, discussions included mandatory and permanent quotas for sharing the distribution of asylum seekers, EU participation in the enforcement of external border controls, and a special EU-wide levy to fund the policies, all of which are integrative measures (Traynor 2015). On September 22, the Council adopted a temporary emergency mechanism for the relocation of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece. On the other hand, despite the urgency attached to this agreement, only 116 asylum seekers were actually relocated by November (European Commission 2015b). Poland's new government, elected



on an anti-immigrant platform, declared that it could no longer participate in the relocation scheme due to the possibility that migrants may include terrorists, and Slovakia and Hungary announced that they would challenge the mandatory quotas in the Court of Justice. Equally importantly, the Dutch government was reported to hold discussions on the creation of a mini-Schengen that would consist of the Benelux, Germany and Austria; rumours were floated that the EU might suspend Greece from the Schengen zone; and Germany threatened to cut access to EU funds for countries that refuse mandatory quotas.

A clear and functioning mechanism for the relocation of asylum seekers is vital for the survival of the Dublin system, while its replacement with an alternative system is likely to be a long and contentious process. However, the German-led attempt to salvage the Dublin system by means of providing additional funding and personnel for the operation of reception facilities in the borderline countries, and to persuade, shame or intimidate the reluctant member states into agreeing to a permanent relocation scheme has not yet succeeded. The intensity and tone of arguments carried out in public reflect not only the difficulty of decision-making in the enlarged EU but also a certain integration fatigue. The rise of populist and extreme right-wing parties across most countries in Europe and the growth of Euroscepticism due to the global financial and Eurozone crises (Torreblanca & Leonard 2013) have created a toxic environment in which the ongoing migration crisis may not necessarily result in further integration at this time.

Externally, the EU has been somewhat more successful. Since the main reason for the crisis is the massive influx of irregular migrants over the past two years, which led to the breakdown of the existing rules for dealing with them, and since it turned out to be difficult to adjust those rules due to the constraints of values and the conflicts of interests, the EU attempted to reduce the

inflow. In addition to the long-standing efforts to reduce irregular migration by means of cooperating with migration sending and transit countries (Boswell 2003), a series of new actions were undertaken. Some of these included boosting the EU's border control. For example, the 30-kilometer long border fence between Bulgaria and Turkey, which was constructed in January 2014, was extended by an additional 130 kilometres in 2015. The Italian search and rescue Operation Mare Nostrum, which rescued over 150,000 migrants in a single year (Ministero della Difesa n.d.) and therefore became a major pull factor, was replaced with the EU's Frontex's Operation Triton, which focused on border patrol and surveillance, and a military naval mission, which is supposed to target Libyan smugglers. Other actions aimed at outsourcing border control or migration management to third countries. Thus, during the Valetta Summit on Migration with various African heads of state on November 11-12, the EU discussed conditionality of development aid and launched a €1.8 billion fund to procure control over major African migration routes to Europe and to enforce return and readmission agreements. Negotiations with Turkey produced a Joint Action Plan on November 29 (European Commission 2015a), whereby the EU pledged €3 billion, visa liberalization, resumption of the EU accession process, resettlement to the EU of some of the refugees in Turkey and acquiescence to human rights violations in Turkey in exchange for stemming the influx of irregular migrants and enforcing the existing return and readmission agreement.

These and other external actions undertaken by the EU in relation to the migration crisis are likely to be successful in the short-term and reduce the number of irregular migrants that would have come next year. However, for a number of reasons, they are unlikely to stem the flow or contribute to a lasting solution to the irregular migration problem. One immediate problem with outsourcing border control and refugee protection to other states is not only

that it has the potential to become a major exercise in hypocrisy but also that it creates dependencies that are both unpalatable and unstable. To put it simply, the EU opens itself to blackmail (Greenhill 2010) and even regular payments cannot ensure the desired outcomes. Thus, for example, the foreign minister of Sudan, whose president is wanted for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court, lost no time during the Valetta Summit to demand that the EU funds the management of its 383-kilometer frontier with Libya. The desperate bargain struck with Turkey can be easily disrupted by Turkey's tendency to overplay its hand, tensions with Greece and Cyprus, domestic politics, lack of progress in EU accession or a number of other developments. A major gap remains in Libya, where the chaos meant that the EU's Border Assistance Mission, endowed with €26 million per year, was stranded in neighboring Tunisia and could not even begin its official task of advising and training the Libyan coast guard (EUBAM Libya 2015). While the UN has been reporting widespread torture, cruel, degrading and inhumane conditions, as well as racism in Libya's detention centers of both Tripoli and Tobruk governments since 2011, the EU and Italy had to continue funding them (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Can the numbers of irregular migrants be kept down more permanently? A more stable solution would require ending the conflicts in Libya, Syria, and Iraq, as well as Eritrea, Afghanistan, and Mali – the countries of origin for most asylum applicants to Europe. Situations in Syria, Libya and Iraq are the proximate causes of the surge in the numbers of migrants. The fighting in Libya is not likely to end soon, and the overall stability and institutional capacity of the country will not improve to the point where it would be able to enforce effective border controls and reign in the smuggling business in any nearest future (Toaldo 2015). The tangle of incompatible global, regional and local interests in Syria makes it difficult to even hope for a lasting

resolution in the coming years. The most likely scenario at the moment is the fragmentation of Syria and Iraq into several unstable quasi-states, but even that would take time. However, the distal causes of migration are even less likely to be eliminated or even constrained through “ordinary” measures, much less those that are focused on dealing with the proximate causes. High population growth; poverty, inequality, and corruption; climate change, which brings acute water and food shortages and is likely to make parts of the Middle East and Africa uninhabitable by the end of the century; and the nature of fourth generation wars which target civilians – the mutually reinforcing combination of these long-term drivers of migration will ensure endless supply of irregular migrants to Europe. Paradoxically, the more successful the EU is in fostering peace, stability and prosperity on the continent, the more migrants it will attract from neighboring regions. In short, irregular migration will remain at the top of the EU’s agenda for the decades to come.

### **Migration crisis and Baltic security**

How does the ongoing EU migration crisis affect the Baltic States and, specifically, their security? The answer to this question depends on both the choice of the referent object of security and the actions of the decision-makers. Several perspectives can be distinguished here: threats to the existence of the state; terrorist threats; threats to the economy; and threats to societal identity.

Russia remains the only source of existential threats to the states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and the Baltic States are not and will never be able to address this by themselves. The fact is that, regardless of the level of investments into their defence, the Baltic States will for the foreseeable future remain net security consumers, dependent on the great powers for their survival. Bandwagoning is the only rational foreign policy and security choice of the Baltic States and, in this regard, membership of

NATO is more important than membership of the European Union, and relations with the US are more consequential than relations with Germany. Nevertheless, the EU provides a vitally important additional layer of protection against Russia, especially since most EU member states are also part of NATO. Thus, the greatest threat to the state security of the Baltic States is that the migration crisis weakens the EU as an entity that is capable of coherent, principled external actions in its neighbourhood. Firstly, in order to accelerate the search for a solution in Syria, Germany and France will be tempted to normalize relations with Russia at the expense of Ukraine. Such a scenario would essentially mean tacit acknowledgement of Russia's claim to a special sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space – an unfavourable development for the Baltic States. Secondly, the likely disagreements between Germany and Poland over the mandatory refugee quotas presage a possible dilemma, especially for Lithuania. Both Germany's approval and Poland's cooperation and goodwill are essential for energy infrastructure projects that are important for both security and the economy.

The media in the Baltic States has done a terrible service to the public and the decision-makers by obfuscating the relation between asylum seekers and terrorist threats, and blowing the latter out of proportion. If there is a link between terrorism and irregular migration, it is that the latter causes the former – a great many of migrants are escaping state and non-state terrorism. The collapse of border controls does create the danger that some terrorists could enter the EU unnoticed; however, this is a problem of border control, not of migration, and this is not a problem for the Baltic States at all. Furthermore, a sense of proportion is necessary when discussing any increase in the threat of terrorism. Terrorism does not and cannot present an existential threat to the state and, in the larger perspective, is not more disruptive to public order and safety than most other violent crimes. The loss of life as

a consequence of any attack would be infinitesimal in comparison to the yearly statistics of deaths due to murders, suicides, traffic accidents, or diseases. In short, the migration crisis does not significantly increase the current level of terrorist threats to the Baltic States.

The economic impact of the migration crisis on the Baltic States is negligible under most conceivable scenarios. According to the European Commission's proposals regarding the emergency relocation mechanism, Lithuania agreed to receive 1,105, Latvia – 776, and Estonia – 525 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy over a two-year period. The EU will give €6,000 for each person received. Since the migration crisis is ongoing, these numbers are likely to grow. However, even assuming that the numbers grow twenty-fold and that all the relocated asylum seekers stay in the Baltic States, this does not represent a significant burden on the budgets. Again, it helps to put these numbers in perspective. Since joining the EU, all the Baltic States have been net receivers of EU support, i.e. they got more money from the EU budget than the amount of their contribution. For example, in 2013, EU funding in Lithuania was to €1.9 billion, in Latvia – €1.1 billion, and in Estonia - €973 million. The Baltic States remain net recipients during the budgetary period of 2014-20. If it helps to think in these terms, decision makers should recall that about 15% of this money comes directly from Germany's contributions to the EU budget.

Finally, perhaps the most sensitive issue about the proposed relocation of migrants to the Baltic States has been their origins and the ostensible threat it poses to the Baltic societies. For example, a survey conducted in Lithuania in October 2015 revealed that 61.3% of respondents were opposed to the government's decision to accept refugees, mostly because they did not think that these were legitimate refugees, did not believe that

Lithuania would be able to integrate them and were worried about the scale of migration to Europe (Spinter Research 2015). Since previous opinion surveys showed that emigration from Lithuania was viewed overwhelmingly positively, it follows that it is not migration as such but migration from outside of Europe that causes concern and disapproval. More research on the sources of xenophobia is needed but it can be suggested that it has a lot to do with the barrage of negative information about migrants in other EU countries in the media. This fear of immigration is irrational. The demographic situation in the Baltic States is the worst in Europe and among the worst in the world, and could not be described as anything but a disaster in progress. The region went from almost 8 million people in 1990 to less than 6.5 million in 2013. It would not be a great exaggeration to claim that the Lithuanians, the Latvians and the Estonians are slowly growing extinct. From the perspective of demographics and the future prospects of the economy and the society, migration to the region ought to be welcomed and encouraged. This being said, even if the nineteenth-century ideal of racial and ethnic purity and homogeneity is embraced and the benefits of an increased population are rejected on that basis, it is inconceivable that one or even twenty thousand asylum seekers could change the life of the titular nations in the Baltic States or cause an upsurge in violent crimes as is widely feared. In any case, the greatest threat posed by the arrival of asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa is that the issue will be securitized and abused for petty political gains, thereby fostering racism and xenophobia.

To recapitulate the argument in the article: the ongoing migration crisis is about the breakdown of rules caused by the clash of values and interests, as well as between the differing interests of the member states. It is a crisis of the European Union, which itself can be viewed as a collection of various sets of rules that embody both foundational values and the outcomes of previous bargains

between its member states. While the numbers of irregular migrants can perhaps be contained in the short-term albeit at the expense of values in external relations, migration to Europe cannot be stopped, and the EU will have to adjust the rules for dealing with it in order to avoid continuous crises that threaten its existence. For the Baltic States, the response to the migration crisis does not represent a dilemma – there is no conflict between values and interests. The contribution that the Baltic States can make in overcoming this crisis is small and not decisive. In practice, this calls for support for proposals that address flaws in the existing European asylum system by expanding, rather than dismantling rules. It also means avoiding the escalation of disagreements to the point where the major states are forced to defend their interests by resorting to threats, variable geometries, or leaving the normative framework of the EU. It is in the interest of national security to seek that the EU emerges out of this crisis stronger and more integrated, rather than weaker.

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## BALANCING BETWEEN SOLIDARITY AND RESPONSIBILITY: ESTONIA IN THE EU REFUGEE CRISIS

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**ABSTRACT** After the establishment of the Schengen area, it was expected that its members would develop a common policy on external border management and protecting external borders. As the current refugee crisis has revealed, some countries have not met their obligations, which has led to serious difficulties in other member states. An unusually large number of refugees are passing through the EU with the purpose of going to countries that attract refugees with better economic and social conditions. Nevertheless, in the present case the criticism at the European Union level has been targeted towards the Eastern European countries for not eagerly enough accepting the proposed refugee strategy and quotas. Estonia's opposition to the EU-wide permanent relocation system of refugees has its roots in the conservative line that the country has followed in the national refugee policy for more than twenty years. However in 2016 the positions among the Estonian governmental coalition differ significantly in terms of long term refugee strategy. The current article will focus on the arguments why Estonia has opted for the conservative refugee policy so far and whether it has been in accordance with the country's capabilities and resources. The development of Estonian refugee policy will be analysed, from regaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 to the present day. The article will also focus

on security risks that might occur due to the pressure from the EU on the member states to impose decisions that do not have broad support at the national level.

## Introduction

In recent years, the European Union (EU) member states have twice confronted the dilemma of whether they should support or not the countries that have broken common rules and agreements. It occurred first during the Greek debt crisis and recurred with the EU-wide refugee crisis. During the Greek debt crisis starting from 2009, the politicians of the EU countries were broadly in agreement that support for Greece should be provided under strict conditions that the country implements austerity reforms and follows the rules of the EU. To quote Dalia Grybauskaitė, the President of Lithuania, for one example: “*Feast time at the expense of others is over, and euro area countries are really not going to pay for the irresponsible behaviour of the new Greek government*” (The New York Times 2015, 1). Thus, criticism has been levelled at the Greek government for not achieving compliance with the commonly agreed rules and the Baltic countries were among the most critical EU members towards Greece.

With the current EU-wide refugee crisis, the situation is not as straightforward as it was during the Greek debt crisis. Paradoxically, at the European Union level the pressure is put on the countries that have opposed EU refugee quotas, rather than on the member states that have lost control over their, and union’s, external borders. After the establishment of the Schengen area in Europe in 1995, it was expected that the members of the Schengen regime develop a common policy on external border management and protect external borders. As the current refugee crisis has revealed, some countries such as Greece, Italy and Croatia have not met their obligations, which has led to serious difficulties in

other EU member states. An unusually large number of refugees are passing through the EU with the purpose of going to countries that attract refugees with better economic and social conditions. Nevertheless, in the present case the criticism at the European Union level has been targeted towards the Eastern European countries, rather than at Greece, Italy and Croatia. The Visegrád-countries together with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been criticized particularly by Germany and France for not understanding how European solidarity works and not being ready to share the burden of the growing influx of refugees into Europe. The reduction of EU subsidies to the member states that opposed the EU refugee quotas has been proposed by the German interior minister, Thomas de Maizière (The Economist 2015, 1), and financial penalties on the EU member states opposing the resettlement of refugees have likewise been suggested (European Commission 2015, 1). At the same time, those EU member states that have lost control over the union's external borders have not been considered as being subject to penalties. Thus, at political level, to some extent those EU member states that have complied with their obligations are currently more under pressure than countries that have failed to do so. This leads to the central question of the current study: Is it legitimate and morally justified to put pressure on the Eastern European countries and to criticize them for their decision to oppose the binding EU refugee quota?

The following article will first focus on the arguments why Estonia has opted for a conservative refugee policy so far and whether it has been in accordance with the country's capabilities and resources. The development of Estonian refugee policy will be analysed, from regaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 to the present day. It will be followed by the debate whether the ongoing pressure to introduce an EU-wide permanent refugee quota could potentially give rise to dissatisfaction in Estonia, which in turn, could give rise to instability in the country. The

focus of this section is on the various parties or stakeholders of the integration process as the current national integration strategy sees them; these include the public sector and political parties, local municipalities, the private sector and civil society partners. The last part of the article focuses on security risks that might occur due to the pressure from the EU on the member states to impose decisions that do not have broad support at the national level. The distinction is made between security risks presented by the Estonian authorities when justifying the decisions and security threats from the perspective of Estonia in the light of the EU-wide refugee crisis, as the author sees them.

The article will use a descriptive analytical approach and comparative method for analysis and conclusions.

### **The foundations of Estonian refugee policy during the period 1991–2015**

After the European Commission for the first time proposed refugee quotas in May 2015, Estonia strongly opposed the intention to oblige all EU member states to share the burden of the refugee crisis. To quote the representative of the Estonian Ministry of Interior, Toomas Viks, “*The resettlement and relocation of refugees is only one of the possible solutions to express solidarity, but the main way is the financial and technical assistance of other member states./ .../ The relocation and resettlement of refugees should remain voluntary for member states.*” (Postimees 2015a, and The Baltic Course 2015). The Estonian Prime Minister, Taavi Rõivas, did not exclude Estonia’s participation in admitting displaced persons, however, he argued that the number of displaced persons should be much less than the 326 persons suggested initially by the European Commission (Estonian Public Broadcasting 2015a). Estonia's closest neighbours such as Finland, Latvia and Lithuania, have expressed similar views. As suggested by the Estonian Minister of Internal Affairs,



Hanno Pevkur, in June 2015, the capability of the country to receive refugees should be taken into account when searching for solutions to the crisis. According to estimations from the beginning of summer 2015, Estonia was capable to resettle 84 to 156 refugees in next two years. That is in accordance with the country's decision from July 2015 to host 150 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy over two years, and potentially 20–30 refugees later on. However, in the light of the new proposal of the European Commission from the beginning of September 2015 as regards the refugee quota, Taavi Rõivas has announced that country agrees with the new numbers of asylum seekers to be relocated to Estonia and accepts an additional 373 asylum seekers (Postimees 2015b). This means that the total number of relocated asylum seekers to Estonia over the next two years exceeds the country's initial capability to receive refugees at least three times. However, despite the decision to relocate refugees from Greece and Italy to Estonia, the country is still opposing the idea of establishing a permanent relocation system of refugees. During the debates over the refugee crisis in the Estonian national parliament, the Riigikogu, on October 13<sup>th</sup> 2015, this statement has been confirmed by the chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee, Kalle Palling.

Estonia's opposition to the burden-sharing among EU member states and to the EU-wide permanent relocation system of refugees has its roots in the conservative line that the country has followed in national refugee policy for more than twenty years.

In the early years of re-independence, the conservative approach has been mainly motivated by the fear that due to its geopolitical location Estonia might become a transit country for asylum seekers between Russia and the Scandinavian countries. This fear has been to some extent justified in the early 1990s, when approximately 400 persons were arrested in Estonia who tried to

go to the Scandinavian countries in order to seek asylum there. It is estimated that the same number of persons has managed to reach Finland and Sweden through Estonia (Potisepp 2002, 281). Estonia had not ratified international conventions that guarantee protection to asylum seekers until 1997, which means that until then asylum-seekers and economic migrants were considered as illegal immigrants in Estonia. The lack of internationally recognized legal guarantees for the asylum-seekers in Estonia received negative attention in the international community and motivated particularly the neighbours of Estonia, Sweden and Finland, to put pressure on Estonia to establish the foundations of the national refugee policy. Before the ratification of the international conventions, Finnish public and non-governmental organizations suggested resettling Estonia's asylum seekers in Finland to protect their rights, but the Finnish government argued that constant resettlement of asylum seekers would work as a pull factor for the refugees from Russia and could lead to unintended consequences (Refugee Magazine 1994, 1). However, in 1994, Finland proposed to relocate 89 refugees of Kurdish origin who applied for asylum in Estonia on the basis of a one-time agreement. This took place in 1995 (Bogens 2013, 20).

The ratification of the Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees from 1951<sup>1</sup> and the adoption of the first law regulating this matter, the Estonian Refugee Act, in 1997 were the first steps towards offering refugees guarantees and services in Estonia. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has been made responsible for the status determination procedures of asylum seekers, and the Ministry of Social Affairs has been made responsible for the reception and integration of refugees. In principle, this division of responsibilities is still in effect to this day.

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1 All three Baltic countries have ratified the Convention relating to the status of refugees from 1951 (the so-called the Geneva Convention involving 4 treaties and 3 additional protocols) in 1997.

However, some institutional changes have been introduced in October 2014, redirecting within the Police and Border Guard Board the migration-related proceeding from the jurisdiction of a separate department dealing with citizenship and migration to the jurisdiction of the migration bureau of the intelligence management and investigation department.

In Estonia, the legal framework has been further updated in the beginning of the 2000s in the light of the country's EU accession. The legislation in Estonia has been harmonized with the regulations of the EU as regards to gender equality, equal treatment and other issues (Legal Information Centre for Human Rights 2010, 11). The Act giving international protection for aliens has been in force in Estonia since July 2006 and since then it has been revised several times (see, Act of Granting International Protection to Aliens 2015).

In addition to the legal regulation, strategies have been developed at the national level with the aim to enhance integration and social cohesion in Estonia, such as the State Programme "Integration in Estonian society 2000–2007", "The Estonian Integration Strategy 2008–2013" and the most recent strategy currently submitted to public consultations, "Integrating Estonia 2020" (see Integrating Estonia 2015). The most recent program defines three types of challenges that Estonia is facing today: 1) to increase openness of the society that, among other things, includes the need to influence the attitudes of Estonian-speaking permanent residents with regard to refugees and integration, 2) to support integration of permanent residents of Estonia, whose mother tongue is not Estonian, and 3) to support integration of the "new immigrants" into the local society (Integrating Estonia 2015, 2). According to the strategy, successful integration is based on cooperation between the public sector institutions, local authorities, the private sector and civil society partners, and is taking place on a voluntary basis (Ibid, 3).

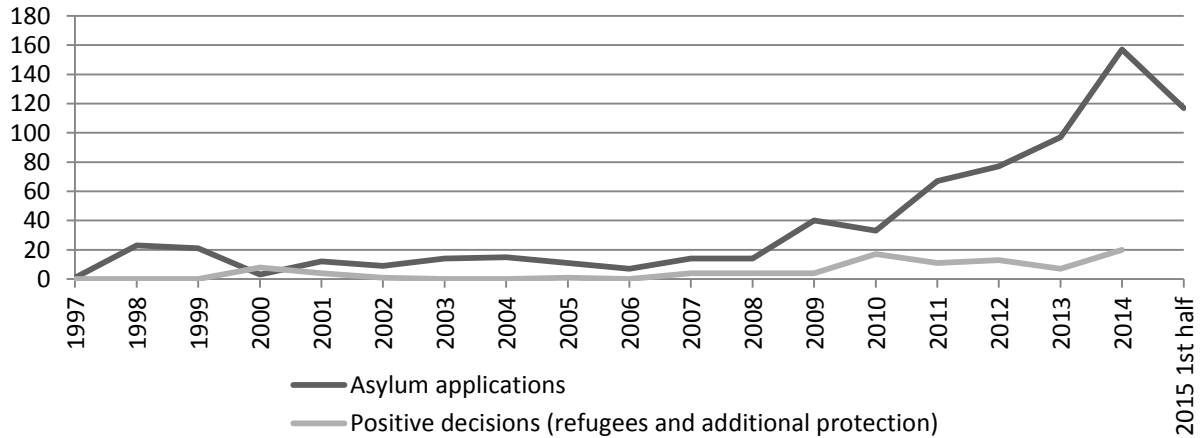
Criticism of Estonia's practice both at the international and local levels is mainly directed at the low rate of recognition (i.e. the low number of positive decisions), the lack of efficiency of the asylum process and the low level of guarantees offered to the asylum seekers. The national refugee policy has been particularly heavily criticised by the Estonian Human Rights Centre and the Estonian Refugee Council, pointing, for example, at the poor living conditions of the asylum seekers and lack of a neutral monitoring program at the Estonian border. At the national level, it has been also referred to in the restrictions in the legislation such as the regulation valid from 1993 on, indicating that the number of the immigrants outside the EU (i.e. the so-called immigration quota) should not exceed 0.1% of the permanent population in Estonia.<sup>2</sup> According to this formula, the “immigration quota” in Estonia for 2015 is 1322 persons.

The conservative line in the refugee policy of Estonia is directly reflected in the low number of asylum claims and the even lower number of positive decisions. From 1997 to the first half of 2015, 732 asylum claims have been submitted in Estonia (Police and Boarder Guard Board 2015, 1), that is the lowest number of asylum claims among the EU member states. The pressure on Estonia has been relatively modest particularly until 2008 (see Figure 1).

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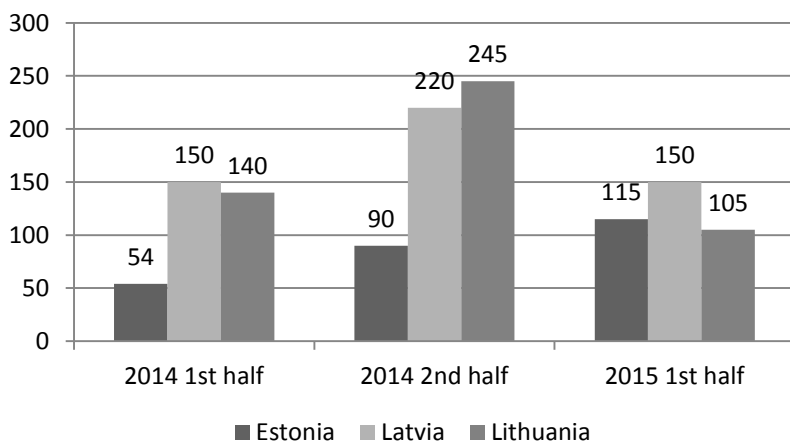
<sup>2</sup> This immigration quota does not concern the refugees that will be relocated in Estonia according to the proposal of the European Commission.

Figure 1: Number of asylum applications and positive decisions during the period 1997-2015 (1<sup>st</sup> half) in Estonia.



Source: Eurostat, 2015.

However, the number of asylum claims has constantly increased in Estonia since 2009 on, reaching the peak in 2014 and in the first half of 2015. According to the semi-annual data on first-time asylum applications, Estonia has received 54 asylum applications in the first half of 2014, 90 asylum applications in the second half of 2014, and 115 applications in the first half of 2015 (see Figure 2). Whereas in Estonia the pressure has been constantly increasing over the past year and a half, it has somewhat weakened in Latvia and Lithuania in the first half of 2015 compared to the second half of 2014 (see Figure 2). During the period 2009–2014, out of more than 600 asylum applications, less than 100 applicants have received either a refugee status or additional protection (see Figure 1). Estonia's low rate of recognition deserved criticism at the EU level, pointing out that, for example, in 2013 it belonged to the EU member states with an overall recognition rate lower than the EU average (ECRE 2014, 16).

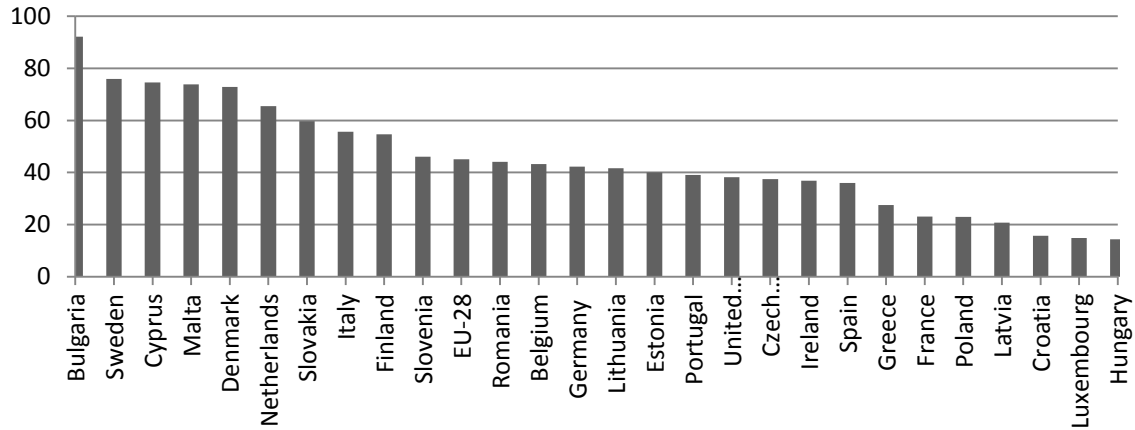


*Figure 2: Number of first-time asylum applicant to the Baltic countries during the period January 2014–June 2015 (semi-annual data).*

*Source: Eurostat, 2015.*

This refers to the tendency that refugees, even the asylum seekers from the same country of origin, might be treated differently in the EU member states. However, the number of positive decisions in Estonia is already remarkably higher when data from the last 18 months are considered. On average, approximately 40% of the asylum claims have been accepted from 2014 on. This number is on the same level as the share of positive decisions (measured as % of all decisions) in Lithuania, Portugal, the UK, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Spain (see, Figure 3). According to the country of origin, Ukrainians, Syrians and Sudanese have dominated among the first-time asylum applicants in Estonia from January 2014 to June 2015, whereas Georgians, Ukrainians and Vietnamese were dominant in Latvia, and Georgians, Ukrainians and Afghans were dominant in Lithuania (Eurostat 2015, 1). Thus, despite similar political and economic backgrounds, the three Baltic countries differ in terms of origins of the asylum applicants. However, it should be also taken into account that the Baltic countries differ in terms of language, culture and religion (Macijauskaite 2014, 17).

Figure 3: Total number of positive decisions on average (% of all decisions) during the period January 2014–June 2015 in Estonia (semi-annual data)



Source: Eurostat, 2015.



Against this background, it could be argued that Estonia's conservative refugee policy has been a conscious choice. To quote Marko Pomerants, the Estonian Minister of Environment, "*The conservative refugee policy is in accordance with the Estonian understanding of refugee policy as well as the real readiness of the country. Estonia should be ready to deal with a large amount of asylum seekers but that doesn't mean that Estonia shouldn't keep following the conservative refugee policy.*" He also refers to the widespread view in Estonian society according to which at first vulnerable groups among the permanent residents in Estonia need to be supported: "*Estonians usually don't understand why we need to help Greece while there is enough poverty in Estonia already*" (Human Rights Center 2015, 1).

However, as the author sees it, there are several reasons why Estonia has chosen the conservative line in refugee policy and has initially opposed the European Commission's idea to relocate refugees from Greece and Italy to Estonia. Firstly, the country has insufficient financial resources to offer support for the vulnerable groups among the permanent residents in Estonia. It must be admitted, of course, that neither has Estonia built a comparable welfare-model to the Scandinavian states on its own level. So, it is partly an ideological question.

Yet, to some extent, this de facto condition makes the re-allocation of financial funds to the resettlement of refugees with partially unknown backgrounds and future perspectives morally questionable from Estonia's perspective. Combined with uncertain economic times and an unclear outlook as regards the solution of the refugee crisis, this is also one of the reasons why public opinion in Estonia has tended mostly to oppose EU-wide refugee quotas.

Secondly, Estonia lacks the experience and “best practices” in integrating ethnic groups that dominate the current refugee flows in Europe, such as Syrians, Afghans, Albanians and Iraqis. This gives rise to the relevant concern that Estonia may not succeed in integrating the “new” immigrants into Estonian society.

Thirdly, the country’s previous experience in integrating the “old” immigrants from the Soviet period has been rather discouraging. More precisely, during the Soviet period, Estonia faced massive inflows of predominantly Russian-speaking immigrants from other republics of the Soviet Union. After restoring independence, persons who settled in Estonia during the Soviet period had to apply for citizenship, following the naturalization criteria and procedures that required basic Estonian language skills. In practice, due to inadequate Estonian language skills among other things, the “old immigrant” have opted for Russian citizenship or remained stateless (Grigas et al. 2013). This has led to a high number of permanent residents in Estonia that hold the status of “person with undefined citizenship”: in 2014, 118191 persons in Estonia had “undefined citizenship” – approximately 9% of Estonia’s population (see, Statistics Estonia 2014).

Indeed, what complicates the situation is the fact that these immigrants did not consider themselves in terms of normal immigration. They could rather be seen as colonisers and many subsequent integration problems become understandable when viewed from this angle. In any case, there is a widespread view among the Estonians that the country has performed poorly in integrating these persons into society, creating insufficient incentives to learn Estonian and so on. Fourthly, pressure of the asylum seekers on Estonia has been relatively modest in the past, compared to other EU member states, particularly Estonia’s Nordic neighbours, or Germany, Hungary and Austria. This could also be the reason why there were virtually no public debates with

regard to national refugee policy in Estonia. The only exception was the debate prior to Estonia's accession to the EU in 2004 and even then the debates were rather focused on possible emigration and brain drain from Estonia, rather than a massive influx of refugees into Europe and Estonia. The potential security threats to the latter were countered with an argument that the EU external borders are secure and Estonia is not attractive to the massive amounts of refugees outside the EU.

### **Reactions to the influx of refugees in Europe and the EU refugee quota**

The current section focuses on the views and attitudes widespread in Estonia towards the influx of refugees and the permanent refugee quota. Different layers of Estonian society – the public sector, local municipalities, private sector and civil society partners – will be observed to determine the potential sources of pressure at the national level. Thus, the results of public opinion polls in Estonia, the views expressed by the political elite and the attitudes of local municipalities and civil society partners in Estonia will be discussed. The analysis allows us to draw conclusions also on the outlook of the integration process of “new” immigrants in general, as according to the recent national strategy, “Integrating Estonia 2020”, the key to integration is the cooperation between the public sector, local municipalities, private sector and civil society partners.

Recent public opinion surveys in Estonia clearly indicate strong opposition both to the growing influx of refugees in Europe in general and to the decisions taken by the government of Estonia with regard to country's obligations in particular. According to the survey of EMOR from June 2015, 32% of respondents (in total, 500 persons were included in the survey) were in favour of accepting refugees into Estonia, 42% of them were against it and 26% had no clear position (Postimees 2015c). However, according

to the survey from the beginning of September 2015, only 22% of respondents were in favour of accepting up to 200 refugees in Estonia (Eesti Päevaleht 2015a). The comparison of the results of both surveys shows a significant drop in support for refugees in Estonian society within three months. However, it is likely that the actual support for refugees was low already in the beginning of summer 2015, since according to another web-based survey from June that included 13 000 persons, more than 80% of the respondents were against accepting refugees in Estonia (Eesti Päevaleht 2015b). According to the public opinion surveys, issues related to the EU-wide refugee crisis have negatively affected the credibility of the Estonian government. This could give rise to the increase in instability at the national level that, in theory, involves high risks and hazards to the country's national security. Navigating between necessary EU initiated policy change and public popularity however has been one of the main dilemmas after the EU accession (Pettai and Veebel 2005, 113-114).

Among the coalition parties, the leading one – the Estonian Reform Party (RE) – has since the beginning of the EU-wide refugee crisis defended the position that Estonia should show solidarity with the EU member states. However, they have expressed more flexible views in the initial phase of the crisis compared to their views today. For example, in spring 2015 some of the leaders of the party stated that countries should contribute to the EU-refugee crisis on a voluntary basis and every EU member state should have the right to decide on the number of refugees (see, e.g. the statements of the Prime Minister, Taavi Rõivas, and the chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee, Kalle Palling). However, after the crisis escalated in summer 2015, high-ranking politicians from the RE tended to support more and more the view that the only option for Estonia is solidarity with the rest of the EU without further questioning the quotas. In this light, Estonia did not oppose the refugee quotas

agreed in July and September 2015, although the number of refugees that will be relocated into Estonia exceeds the country's initial capability to receive refugees several times. Among high-ranking politicians of the RE, the member of the European Parliament, Kaja Kallas, has represented an even more pronounced view compared to other members of the party, by stating that Estonia can't rely on the argument of volunteerism since Estonia has previously hosted only a modest number of refugees compared to the Nordic countries, and, therefore, Estonia's "wish" to contribute to the relocation of refugees voluntarily does not have the scale and the leverage, for example, a similar Finnish statement would have.

The political leaders of another coalition party, the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL), have not shared the views of the Estonian Reform Party as regards the refugee quotas. The Minister of Justice, Urmas Reinsalu from the IRL, stated in May 2015 that the EU quota system could violate both the Treaties of the European Union and the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, and that Estonia should reject the refugee quota. He added that the refugee crisis should be combated at the roots of the crisis by creating better living conditions in the refugee camps located close to the countries where conflicts have occurred. The Minister of Social Protection, Margus Tsahkna, has strongly supported the relocation of refugees during the meetings with the representatives of local municipalities in summer 2015, but he also suggested that Estonia should learn from the mistakes other countries have made and proposed that priority should be given to Syrian Christians when relocating refugees to Estonia and that wearing the burqa in public should be banned.

The leaders of the third coalition party, the Social Democratic Party (SDE), have been relatively modest on the issues related to the refugee crisis. The former Minister of Defence until Sven

Mikser from SDE has opposed the refugee quotas, however, he has rather kept focus on the events in Ukraine emphasizing that the EU cannot ignore Russia's behaviour and the recent developments in Ukraine in spite of the escalating refugee crisis. He has also stressed that the refugees themselves should want to be relocated into Estonia. The current Minister of Defence, Hannes Hanso has stressed that dealing with refugees is more reasonable locally, rather than waiting for refugees to move to the EU countries. He supported providing financial support to the refugee camps located close to the countries where conflicts occurred (such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey).

Among the opposition parties, the newly-founded Free Party (VE) has, more than others, focused on the substance of the refugee crisis at the local level, and not just on the process itself, by stressing that the key element of the refugee crisis in Europe is to distinguish between war refugees and economic migrants. As regards the latter, Estonia should rather continue with the conservative refugee policy based on the need for a qualified labour force. As they see it, instead of the mandatory refugee quota, refugees from Greece and Italy should be relocated on the basis of negotiations between the EU member states. The capability of the EU member states to integrate refugees should be taken into account which should guarantee that internal agreement is reached in the society as regards supporting the refugees without generating radical pressure in the society. Next to the relocation programmes for refugees, the return of refugees to their home countries should be encouraged after the circumstances have normalized there. Since Estonia lacks financial resources, Estonia should apply for additional resources from the EU structural funds in addition to the resources that are meant for the allocated refugees in Estonia.

The most influential opposition party, the Estonian Centre Party (KE), has supported the principle that “refugees should be relocated into Estonia as little as possible and as many as necessary”. This means that Estonia should afford sympathetic consideration to the refugees coming to Europe, but account must be taken also of the actual capability of the country to integrate refugees. Kadri Simson, head of the Estonian Centre Party fraction in the Riigikogu, has stressed that Estonia lacks any long-term plan as regards the solvency of the crisis and integration of refugees. The deputy head of the Centre Party fraction in the Riigikogu, Mailis Reps, has stated that the current situation in Syria is extremely complicated and Europe doesn’t want to deal directly with the issues related to Syria. She has also emphasized that there are people living in Syria and in the neighbouring countries without any chance to leave the region, and if Europe would really like to help somebody, the help should be directed to those in real need.

The third opposition party, the Conservative Peoples Party in Estonia (EKRE), represents the most radical view as regards the refugee quotas among the Estonian political parties. The party leaders, Martin Helme and Mart Helme, do not support the refugee quotas. As stated by Martin Helme, “*the party will continue to put pressure on the government with regards to migration. We don’t rule out ejecting refugees from Estonia, should EKRE win next elections*”. Another member of EKRE, Jaak Madisson, has stressed that the EU-wide refugee quotas represent another step in the way of losing national sovereignty.

To summarise, the views vary widely in the Estonian parliament regarding how the EU should tackle the current refugee crisis and what role should Estonia play in it. Whereas the politicians from the RE tend to support more and more the view that Estonia should not further question the quotas, another coalition party, the

IRL, stresses the importance to learn from the mistakes other countries have made. Other parties represented in the parliament, except the EKRE, have stressed the solidarity argument, but also recognized lack of capability to integrate refugees.

Most of the local municipalities in Estonia have opposed the idea to relocate refugees on a practical level, referring to the lack of resources such as vacant subsidised housing or services to support the refugees. To quote one of the representatives of the local municipalities: *“If the refugees come with state financing, it is no problem to receive them in reasonable amounts. /.../ The main thing is that the local governments would not run into additional obligations without being provided the funds“*, referring to the previous actions of the government (see, Postimees 2015d). At the same time, the representatives of local municipalities in Estonia have also pointed out that they are lacking both preparation and experience in working with refugees and the missing language skills (*Ibid.*). These problems are also understandable, since Estonia has basically been building up the national refugee policy only from the beginning of the 2000s compared to its Nordic neighbours and Germany that have had well-functioning asylum systems already in place since the Second World War. Even in terms of financial support from the EU side for the relocation of refugees in Estonia, the challenges like poor language skills and lack of services at the local municipal level cannot be tackled in weeks and months, as preparations and training are needed. However, since local municipalities play a key role in the national strategy of relocation of refugees in Estonia, it could be assumed that particularly the pressure from the side of government on local municipalities continues. According to the statement of the representative of the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs that if the person who qualifies for refugee status wishes to do so, he or she can settle in also in these local municipalities who have initially disagreed to the relocation of refugees, confirms this view (see, Estonian Public Broadcasting 2015b).



Among the civil society partners, mostly the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church has been active in offering housing for refugees in different locations across Estonia; however, the opportunities of the church are also limited, as they can offer accommodation only for six families of refugees (Postimees 2015e). Specialised non-governmental organizations in Estonia, such as Johannes Mihkelson Refugee Centre and the Estonian Refugee Council have a network of volunteers to offer support for refugees. Early September 2015, before the most recent number of the EU quota refugees, the staff of the NGOs were quite optimistic and started with preparations for integrating the 150 refugees that Estonia agreed to take in according to the initial agreement (The Baltic Times 2015, 1). However, in the meantime the number of refugees Estonia agreed to welcome has increased threefold, and this might pose both significant challenges and a heavy responsibility to the NGOs in view of the public resistance to the relocation of refugees.

The private sector in Estonia has taken a pragmatic approach to the relocation of refugees, as some entrepreneurs have publicly announced that they would like to offer some work to the refugees. However, there appears to be rather little interest in doing so, which is to some extent understandable in light of low public support for the relocation of refugees to Estonia. The Estonian Refugee Council carried out projects in 2012 to increase the participation of refugees in the Estonian labour market and to motivate employers to offer work to refugees. However, only a limited number of asylum applicants and persons who qualified for the refugee status are currently working: approximately 21% of the persons who qualified for refugee status and 11% of the asylum applicants are currently working (Varjupaigataotlejate Majutuskeskus 2015).

To conclude, the decision of the government of Estonia to relocate 550 refugees in Estonia poses a significant challenge to Estonian society. Cooperation is needed between the public sector institutions, local authorities, private sector and civil society partners. However, as the author sees it, the lack of financial resources, experience and skills, combined with low public support and the lack of unanimity in the local political landscape as regards why and how the EU refugee crisis should be solved, significantly reduces the chances of success and increases the security risks at the local level.

### **Security risks related to the EU refugee crisis from the perspective of Estonia**

The current refugee crisis in Europe is to some extent similar to the situation in 2011 when Italy granted visas in the Schengen framework to tens of thousands of migrants from North Africa, including Tunisians who wanted to join their families in France, and allowed them to travel across the Schengen area (BBC 2011). Today, five years later, the Schengen countries are facing the same problem in the European Union, but only on a much bigger scale. However, in 2015, efficient solutions are still lacking for avoiding similar situations that emerged already five years ago. The refugee crisis has clearly revealed the weakness of the European integration model that could lead to the loss of credibility of the EU in the international arena. This could pose a security threat also to Estonia since it has linked its national security with full integration into the European and transatlantic security networks. Indirectly, the security threat is also related to the fact that the refugee crisis showed that in complicated situations, the EU member states tend to protect their own interests, whether justifiably or not. During the current refugee crisis, the member states have accused each other of not following the initial commitments. To bring the most recent example, the Hungarian

government has accused Croatia of having “violated Hungary’s sovereignty” and has rhetorically asked from Croatia about the quality of solidarity according to which Croatia sends asylum seekers directly to Hungary instead of honestly making provision for them (see, Reuters 2015).

The refugee crisis has also revealed the vulnerability of the EU in economic terms that also poses security risks. Specifically, the EU countries have to spend resources for the administration costs of processing the asylum applications and offering guarantees and integration services to the huge amounts of refugees. The costs related to the EU-quota migrants from Italy and Greece will be partially covered from the EU budget. However, the costs related to the steadily increasing “ordinary” asylum seekers needs to be covered from the member states’ own resources. Whereas the “rich” and more advanced EU countries can afford it, the “less prosperous” member states like the Baltic countries, including Estonia, are discussing with justified skepticism how to cover all the costs from their own limited resources, simultaneously facing worsening demographics (which however can be improved by immigration in longer period, while increasing the costs in shorter period). Higher spending for the increasing number of asylum applicants automatically means that it has to be taken from elsewhere in the countries’ own budgets. If the resources will be redirected from those services which citizens receive to the services for refugees, it could create frustration at the national level towards the major political figures of the EU who in their speeches stress the need to support refugees, but in real terms do rather nothing to find a sustainable and broadly accepted solution to the problem and to stop the immigration flows into the EU. As the author sees it, in that regard the European Union is very close also to a loss of credibility in the eyes of its citizens. Particularly, since another intra-EU redistribution of refugees suggested by the European Commission does not represent a sustainable and

efficient solution to the refugee crisis, it also does not boost the credibility of the EU.

On the other hand, the government of Estonia should take more initiative and responsibility for the situation at the national level. Local experts believe that the current low support for refugees in Estonia is, besides the escalation of the crisis at the global arena, related to the poor communication of the national government in explaining the underlying causes of its decisions to the public. As the author sees it, the most questionable issue in giving reason at the local level to the government's decision to accept the EU refugee quota is related to some "over-dramatization" of criticism of the EU core member states towards the Eastern European countries. In Estonia, the politicians of the coalition parties have associated people's willingness to accept refugees with the country's responsibilities towards NATO partners, using the very broad argument "if you want to be protected by the allies, you have to accept refugees". Thus, the refugee crisis has been presented in Estonia as a securitization, meaning that the opposition to compulsory migrant quotas has been "dramatically" described as an existential threat, because it could lead to the isolation of the country from the international community, to the loss of the NATO security network and to exposure to the security threats from Russia. In this light, following the logic of the securitization theory (see, e.g. van Munster 2009, Šulovic 2010, etc.), the migration quotas are justified and should be considered as a priority, since extraordinary countermeasures should be used to handle existential threats. However, in practical terms there is rather little ground for this opinion. To quote principal figures of NATO, e.g. Sir Adrian Bradshaw, different approaches of the allies as regards the refugee crisis do not reduce the contributions of the NATO allies in collective security measures (Postimees 2015f). Also, Estonia does not represent the most "extreme" case among the EU member states and should not be treated as an

“international pariah”. The government of Estonia has rather avoided any public debates to discuss the implications of the EU-wide refugee crisis to Estonia on a neutral basis and has constantly ignored the low public support for the decision to relocate refugees to Estonia.

As the author sees it, in real terms the “existential security threats” at the nation-state level, including Estonia are associated with the potential loss of credibility and legitimacy of the national governments. In other words, in Estonia people are afraid of the government’s actions and transparency, rather than the refugees themselves. Due to the weak and unfocused strategic communication in terms of refugee crisis, the people of Estonia have already started to have some doubts about the long-term sustainability of the process.

### **Debate and conclusions**

The present article has discussed the moral dilemmas associated with sharing the “costs of solidarity” between the EU member states. In detail, the focus of the study has been on the perspective of a small country, that has not broken the common rules (in a particular context it has not lost control over its borders), but is still facing criticism, alongside other Eastern European countries, for not understanding “how European solidarity works”. At the EU level, the EU core countries such as Germany and France have put pressure on the Eastern European countries over the latter’s’ decision to oppose the binding EU refugee quota.

As the author sees it, one of the morally questionable issues in tackling the EU-wide refugee crisis is related to the pressure from the EU on the member states to accept permanent relocation mechanisms of refugees and to share the burden of “solidarity”, even if there is no broad support for that at the national level. In

principle, the ongoing pressure to introduce an EU-wide permanent relocation system of refugees could give rise to dissatisfaction in the society that could, in turn, give rise to instability in the EU member states. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask whether something like this could actually happen in Estonia.

To some extent, Estonia's conservative refugee policy has been a conscious choice due to the lack of resources, knowledge and experience, but also due to the wide-spread view in Estonian society that first the local vulnerable groups among the permanent residents in Estonia need to be supported. What is more, in light of the current refugee crisis, when "calculating" the Refugee quota, the EU has not taken into account country-specific factors such as high numbers of permanent residents in Estonia that hold the status of "person with undefined citizenship" and other issues.

As a result, Estonia had to accept approximately 500 refugees over next two years that exceeds the country's initial capability to receive refugees at least three times. As the author sees it, the pressure at the EU level to accept the EU refugee quota has exposed Estonia to several risks. The decision of the government of Estonia to relocate 550 refugees in Estonia poses a significant challenge to the Estonian society. Cooperation of a hitherto inexperienced sophistication is expected between the public sector institutions, local authorities, the private sector and civil society partners. Thus, the lack of financial resources, experience and skills, combined with the low public support and the lack of unanimity in the local political landscape significantly reduces the chances of success and increases security risks at the local level.

According to the author, in the future the focus should be put particularly on finding support to the plan to relocate refugees among the local municipalities and among to the public. The local municipalities should, in theory, provide accommodation and

other services to the refugees, and the public should help the refugees to better integrate into the society. However, mainly due to poor communication from the Estonian government and the inconsistency in its decisions, the support of both local municipalities and the public is very low as regards the decision to relocate refugees in Estonia.

What has been done wrong? The government of Estonia has rather avoided any public debate to discuss the implications of the EU-wide refugee crisis to Estonia on a neutral basis and has constantly ignored the public opinion. As a result, in Estonia people are afraid of the government's actions, rather than the refugees themselves. To avoid loss of credibility at the national level, it would be justified to follow the legitimate logic of the process. The immigration of third-country nationals has, until now, clearly been within the competence of the EU member states and not of the EU itself. However, the refugee crisis in the EU has been suddenly defined by EU-politicians as a matter of common interest and common concern. The EU migration quotas present a major step in transferring the competence to the EU in this area. However, as the author sees it, since people have not directly given national governments the mandate to agree with the relocation of refugees from other EU countries, the national governments should not delegate the "nonexistent" mandate to the European Commission.

Next to the national government, part of the responsibility for the instability that has been created due to the current refugee crisis is associated with the EU. As the author sees it, from the perspective of a small EU member state such as Estonia, any activities that harm the uniformity of the EU should be avoided and any actions that reduce the tensions between the EU member states should be supported to regain the EU's confidence in the international arena and to guarantee that the EU works as a protection against security

threats. In the context of the current refugee crisis in the EU, the call of the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, to impose mandatory migrant quotas and the most recent decision based on the qualified majority to impose the quotas despite the resistance of some EU member states, could be rather counter-productive since the countries that have opposed the quotas are still forced to implement the majority decision without essentially supporting it. Since the EU migrant relocation program is, in principle, based on the “push” factor (i.e. refugees are “forced” to resettle to the countries they are not interested in), the measure *per se* constitutes another security risk to those countries that agreed to allocate migrants, since neither migrants nor permanent residents of the country are interested in integration. Moreover, despite the statements that an EU mandatory refugee quota are needed to stop “asylum shopping” (for example, by the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte), it is difficult to see any logic in the migrant quotas. The “voluntary” national migrant quotas apply to the relocation of refugees who have reached Greece and Italy; however, it does not include the main destination countries of the asylum seekers, such as Germany and Sweden. Thus, the asylum seekers are still motivated to come to Germany and Sweden to apply for better economic and social conditions. At the same time no reliable mechanism exists that actually guarantees that migrants will stay in the countries where they were relocated.

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## ASYLUM SEEKERS CRISIS IN EUROPE 2015: DEBATING SPACES OF FEAR AND SECURITY IN LATVIA

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**ABSTRACT** In this paper we analyse emerging discourses of fear on the one hand and safety and security on the other. In the context of rupture – sudden, unprecedented asylum flows as well as the historical context of the fear and experience of losing the state’s freedom, we pose the following research question: Where do insecurities and fear come from and how are spaces of security and safety carved out through public discourses? We argue that, instead of singling out political discourses in Eastern European as filled with hatred towards other ethnicities and races or an inability to show solidarity with human suffering, we have to open up a far more deep reaching debate on the interplay of fear and the willingness to create safer, more secure futures. We illustrate this with examples from media debates in Latvia, in late 2015.

### Introduction and the research challenge

Despite a wealth of case studies and empirical material, and the overwhelming depth of consequences in human lives, forced migration and refugee studies is still rather little theorised. In the 1980s it emerged as a distinct field of study (Kunz 1981; Richmond 1988) and refugee and forced migration studies are currently best described as in transition, emerging from a rather

small field in policy analysis it has reached a global interest (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al 2014: 3). Natural disasters, military conflicts, centres of power and political economy at global, national and regional scales are at the core of push factors for refugee flows. Some asylum seekers hit the road in hope for temporary displacement; some engage in onward migration, are settling down and engage in multidimensional integration in new places, become full citizens and form a diaspora in another country. However, possible return is also a specific characteristic of asylum flows and an attendant idea throughout the integration process. It is a theoretical challenge to elaborate theoretical approaches that take into account global processes, local consequences and can work towards durable solutions for refugees. A challenge for a small country, Latvia, with very limited experience of welcoming refugees is our main focus here.

To begin with, we briefly want to state the definitions used in this text. Asylum seekers are persons who have lodged a claim (asylum applications) and whose claim is under consideration. Asylum is a form of international protection given by a state within its territory, usually for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (Eurostat, Asylum statistics 2015). Persons can be recognised and protected in the status of refugees under the Geneva Convention (1951), granted subsidiary protection, which is specific to national legislation and may entail a shorter period of support and a regular review of the status. Also, asylum can be granted for humanitarian reasons or, in fewer cases, as temporary protection.

The EU is striving towards a common asylum system and the most recent European Commission's policy plan on asylum includes three pillars that underpin the development of a common



European asylum system (CEAS)<sup>1</sup>: bringing more harmonisation to standards of protection by further aligning the EU Member States' asylum legislation; effective practical cooperation and increased solidarity and responsibility among EU member states, and between the EU and non-member countries (COM 2008, 360 final). Strengthening the common asylum policy and developing innovative policies on legal immigration is a priority of the European Commission launched European Agenda on Migration (COM 2015).

The quantity of asylum seekers in 2015, originating from Syria but also from elsewhere in Middle East, Balkans and Africa, exceeds the scale of asylum flows during the Second World War, with an estimate of 450 000 to 350 000 respectively (OECD 2015:2).

The number of asylum seekers in the EU is highly unbalanced in terms of distribution in the member states. According to Eurostat, in 2014, by far the highest number of asylum seekers from outside of the EU-28 was reported by Germany, which was two and a half times as many as the number of applicants in Sweden. Both countries are also on the top in terms of the highest number of positive asylum decisions. In 2014 the most positive decisions were recorded in Germany (48 000), followed by Sweden (33 000), France and Italy (both 21 000), the United Kingdom (14 000) and the Netherlands (13 000).

Nearly four in every five (79 %) asylum seekers in the EU-28 in 2014 were aged under 35. Those aged 18–34 accounted for slightly more than a half (54 %) of the total number of applicants, while minors aged under 18 accounted for one quarter (26 %). This age

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<sup>1</sup> The four main legal instruments on asylum are the Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU, the Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU, the Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU, the Dublin Regulation (EU) 604/2013 (EUROSTAT, Asylum statistics, 2015). All these documents are recast in 2015.

distribution of asylum applicants was common in the vast majority of the EU Member States with only one exception to this pattern, as Poland reported a higher proportion of applications received from minors under the age of 18 (Eurostat, May 2015). We can therefore clearly state that asylum flows rejuvenate migration flows in the ageing Europe.

The distribution of asylum applicants by gender shows that men were more likely than women to seek asylum. Across the EU-28 the greatest degree of gender inequality was for asylum applicants aged 14–17 or 18–34, where around three quarters of applicants were male.

### **Historical context in Latvia**

During the Second World War, all three Baltic countries were annexed by the Soviet Union and only regained their independence in 1991. Ethnic proportions in Latvia changed significantly due to inward migration from Slavic Soviet republics. During 1951-1990 more than two million people arrived in Latvia (average 54 300 per annum), while about 1.8 million left (45 000 per annum), resulting in a net in-flow of 524,141 persons in the given period of time (Eglite and Krisjane 2009: 142). About half of the inward migration flow due to socialist-type industrialisation and workforce demand as well as the presence of military personnel originated from the current Russian Federation. The proportion of ethnic Latvians from 77% in 1935 shrunk to 52% in 1989 with non-ethnic Latvians outnumbering Latvians in all bigger urban centres (Eglite and Krisjane 2009: 123). During the so called ‘Awakening’ process in late 1980s a discourse against ‘mechanical population growth’, e.g., more in-migration was gaining particular strength and regulations to prevent inward migration were enacted, creating long-term consequences, most notably, a negative population growth trend ever since (Regulations 1989).

Many Latvians have personal and family experience of becoming refugees during World War II, and learning to live and integrate in societies of other countries. Their experience as a positive example and a source for historical compassion was constantly contrasted to opinions about current asylum seekers, which were more reserved and negative.

For instance, a Latvian refugee child Dita Veinberga has stated that *I often hear that Latvianness is in the genes or blood. Living here we see – if we rely on Latvianness being in biological foundations, Latvianness disappears very fast. Latvian language skills do not arise from inherited blood or DNA. [It] can be maintained by one's choice, standing, worldview, which can be developed. (...) [The] EU has formed from the consequences of World War II. Have we moved far enough away from World War II to be willing to allow for that union to collapse? It is a task of the EU to take care of other people... It means that it is a task of the whole union. If a person is received with kindness, introduced to the Latvian world and showed what we hold close to our hearts, I'm certain they will accept it as a value for them as well'* (LSM 2015d).

However, the opposite opinions in the emerging discourses against forthcoming refugees expressed by some people were characterised as public hostility and hatred. We want to bracket such fast-minded conclusions and argue that the debate rather reveals fear of the unknown, the historical experience of immigration in Latvia during the Soviet times, and potential for more positive attitudes by carving out spaces of safety and security in the current world. In order to justify our arguments, we use a methodological approach of discourses to unpack such spaces of fear, insecurities on the one hand, and safety and security on the other.

In the past decades, Latvia has gained a rather fragmentary experience on welcoming asylum seekers and granting statuses of

protection. From 1998 to 2014, all together 1 440 asylum applicants were received. In 2014 the number was historically the highest – 364. In 2014 only 3 persons were granted a refugee status and 21 – a status of an alternative protection (OCMA 2015).

### **Theoretically methodological approach to emerging discourses of fear and secure spaces**

Securitisation of migration is a social phenomenon with deep reaching consequences in the lives of states and in individual lives. There is a wealth of literature on spaces of fear or safety and security. For instance, prominent authors have theorised on geographies of fear, violence, danger, insecurities (Lupton 1999; Banks 2005 Gregory and Pred 2007; Ingram and Dodds 2009), terrorism (Medina and Hepner 2013), recently re-theorised as ‘fearscapes’ that addresses the mediated nature of fear and imagined danger (Tulumello 2015), and divisions due to ethnic fear (Shirlow 2001). However, it is important to see the other side of the coin and research how people create places of safety (see e.g. Rätzsch (2008) on young people’s experiences in migrant neighbourhoods in cities).

We see space as a highly abstract concept and follow with explanations by Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre, where space is seen as a process, as a representation and practice, not a static unit. According to this understanding, media themselves also form a conceptual space where reality is discursively constructed. Besides, media are among the most powerful nation-state tools through which a national community can be imagined (Anderson 1991).

According to Lefebvre, media spaces are ‘representations of space... shot-through with a knowledge – i.e. a mixture of understanding and ideology – which is always relative and in the

process of change' (Lefebvre 1991: 41). In this article we see ideology also as idealisation towards the future and this process engages both fear and ideals of safety, and can also be directed against the immediate reality.

A nation state and migration are intrinsically intertwined and inseparable from imagining a nation's or region's geopolitical positioning. Media as an open arena for discursive representations of various actors also forms a 'third space,' where 'everything comes together... subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential (...) everyday life and unending history' (Soja 1996: 56-57). Thus local, national, regional and global reflections, interpretations and imaginations, different voices meet and various genres are played out in media (Jones and Fowler 2007). Media not only and not necessarily mimics reality, but rather shapes and creates it through discourses as practices of signification. Discourses both represent and create different spaces (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 5-6). Taking into account the above-mentioned, we further investigate how spaces of security and safety are carved out through the public discourses.

In the situation when discourses are yet emerging, we reviewed printed and internet-based media: Diena, Neatkarīga Rita Avīze, Ir, websites Tvnet, Delfi, paper and website in Russian vesti.lv as well as the paper and website in English baltictimes.com (written form news in the public broadcasting website) from August to early November 2015, reading and taking notes of media debates on a daily basis and searching on two keywords 'asylum' and 'refugee' in archived materials. We focused mainly on the ways how discourse was built, what public actors were involved and what themes emerged. We did not focus on political documents in research for this paper. The following themes emerged most prominently: (1) security versus fear on global-national-local scales, (2) political and

economic desirability of asylum seekers, (3) fear, suspicions of terrorism and radicalisation of the ‘other’ versus possibilities for development and thus, increased safety in future for a more tolerant community.

In the remainder of the paper we will analyse these themes more closely.

### **Fear and safety: global, national and local scales**

A request of the EU to accommodate more than 700 refugees in Latvia provoked a debate on solidarity both on the global and EU scale. For instance, Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma emphasised that *‘we have to realise that we cannot sit at one table choosing the most delicious food, asking that our farmers have milk money, that there are air patrols, but that Italian tax payers pay for that,’* at the same time refusing to take in refugees and saying *“let that also be covered by your tax payers”* (LSM 2015a). Thus, the asylum debate actually became a catalyst for a broader national issue on Latvia’s geopolitical position in the EU and NATO and the responsibilities that come with this position.

Let us consider several further discursive arguments. Dace Akule, director of the think-tank ‘Providus’, has pointed out that the geopolitical situation in neighbouring countries of Latvia should be taken into account when discussing how Latvia should approach the refugee crisis. Akule explained that historically there has been an increase in number of asylum seekers in Latvia at times of geopolitical tensions in neighbouring countries. Therefore, for instance, if the geopolitical situation in Russia, Georgia, Belorussia or Ukraine were to change, *‘we will be the first door because there are family relations, cultural similarities. And then we will be asking for help from other countries’* (LETA 2015a). In the meantime a parliamentarian Atis Lejiņš explained that the government had agreed to take in

refugees from Italy and Greece without consulting the public because the aim was to prevent Latvia from becoming internationally isolated in case a decision could not be made or would be negative. *'A golden rule for us Latvians, citizens of Latvia and everyone who lives here, the golden rule is that never, never again must Latvia become isolated, completely isolated, powerless, as it happened in 1939 and 1940. And that must be understood to understand why our ministers acted as they did'* (LSM, Fridrihsone 2015).

Europarlamentarian Sandra Kalniete has confirmed that in her opinion *'those politicians who place Latvia in state of exclusion do not realize that we are a border state and within the EU many things are interrelated. (...) It is not a different Germany that is sending its planes to patrol above the Baltics because both NATO and the EU are one and the same Germany. (...) When we needed the money we accepted it as common-sense expression of solidarity from other EU countries, but now that we have to express solidarity regarding an issue that is endangering the stability of their societies, we shut ourselves off in our Latvian farmsteads (viensētas – in Latvian)'* (BNS 2015a).

What we see in these arguments is an effort to create and carve out a space of understanding that a nation state cannot achieve any goals and more secure future by applying an isolationist stance. In an interconnected world and Latvia's geopolitical position at the Russian border, the fear of the past should be reworked into more pragmatic arguments and practice which could balance out securitisation needs for a state and human needs for those who flee from armed conflicts. However, in many cases Latvia was discursively represented as an unappealing place on the EU scale due to its relative lack of wealth if compared to most of the other EU countries, whereas missing on a global scale is the representation of Latvia as a safe, democratic and relatively wealthy place.

On the morality line, political scientist Kārlis Daukšts argued that rhetoric of not accepting refugees following the EU request can place Latvia *'amongst the ungrateful Eastern European countries'* as this is not an issue of domestic policy of Latvia but has emerged into the question of European identity. Therefore, in Daukšts's opinion, there is no other option than for Latvia to choose whether to *'be out of Europe or be in it'* (LETA 2015b).

In sum, the nation is placed on global, supranational (like the EU and NATO) as well as the national scale (Jones and Fowler 2007). However, the nation is imagined differently on each scale: if on the global scale the nation is rather imagined as a victim of an inevitable flow of asylum seekers, on the EU scale the morality of solidarity is questioned more. Quota distribution is seen as unjust and involuntary. Yet, the richest debating ground is the national scale which we will analyse in the next section.

### **Future refugees from a perspective of a national public good**

Results of a survey by the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry show that 28.2% of its members would be willing to employ refugees, and 23.1% suspect that refugees might have a positive impact on the national economy and labour market. The Chairman of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry board explained that in the context of the refugee discourse, entrepreneurs are looking realistically at the current situation. If lack of workforce is an obstacle preventing the economy from developing, refugees are a possible solution for this issue, counterbalancing emigration and death-rate. 15.7% of members suggested, though, that in general refugees would not even be able to affect the situation in any way (LSM 2015b).

Here we can see the positive future orientation with respect to the employability of refugees, and this premise is based on the



idealisation that a refugee will be granted a status quickly and is a potential citizen in the future, not a person who may stay just temporarily or engage in onward migration. Yet, the reality in the EU brings some caution: recognition rates in different EU member states, also for the same groups of asylum seekers, indicate the inequality and unsustainability of the so-far existing common asylum policy as well as flows of cooperation and trust between the member states. This is a far-reaching challenge for the European integration process policies that should be addressed in future research (Toshkov and de Haan 2013: 680).

In Latvia's media discourses, the emphasis is on the need for refugees to start working as soon as possible so that the national budget would not be spent on social benefits. Most commonly the simplest jobs are mentioned, therefore creating a 'discursive figure' of an uneducated, inexperienced potential asylum seeker. Only a few voices cautioned against this. Health Minister Guntis Belēvičs emphasised that when trying to 'sort' people and to 'choose' what kind of people and how qualified people we want to welcome in Latvia should be, we should not accept immigrants who would *'do what we ourselves don't want to do'* as it will not further national productivity in the long run (LSM 2015c). However, what else is missing from the debates is a need to provide a decent and liveable wage for the future arrivals.

Minister of Culture Dace Melbārde warned that *'Latvia is not the richest country (...), tension can be created also by ensuring much better conditions for refugees than to people who are already living in Latvia'* (LSM 2015i; LETA 2015h). For instance, discussions already emerged regarding whether or not the amount of social benefits for refugees should be reduced. In the end, the coalition agreed upon reducing them from 256 Euros to 139 Euros per month (Leitāns, Roķis 2015).

Judging from studies elsewhere in the EU, employment transitions are arguably the most important transitions. Empirical evidence show that among high skilled refugees (and alternatively protected adults) initially are those highly motivated to work as this is often by far the most important pathway to start building belonging to the host society. Qualified refugees also often strongly identify with their profession and suffer considerable loss of self-esteem if they are unable to secure employment that matches their skills. However, transition to skills-related employment often includes retraining, language learning, and alternative employment. Lack of support and skills how to search for jobs often causes non-linear and lengthy transitions, and de-skilling (Willott and Stevenson 2013).

Further on the 'selectionist' discourses, it was widely positively perceived that families with children and people who know at least one of the EU languages will be preferred as children become integrated more easily and people who are educated and know regionally used languages can enter the labour market more easily, creating a desired 'discursive figure' of families with children who 'deserve' support and compassion. Yet, more importantly, family people and children were seen as safe and increasing security while, usually, young men evoke fear, being perceived as potential aggressors.

In terms of education, while schools are worried about the language issue and quality of communication in the context of the possible need to enrol refugee children in Latvian schools, many schools are prepared to take part in refugee children reception. Especially enthusiastic were small schools, saying they appreciate every child who moves them further away from being closed due to an insufficient number of pupils. However, the reality of the integration experience reveals rather grim examples that were widely publically discussed. For instance, an interpreter of a

Chinese family living in Latvia noted that resources should be devoted to teacher training, as the child of the family he worked for had no choice but to change the municipal school to a private school as *'[the municipal school] made it clear that he was a hindrance. It can be grasped how he was hindering them and they let it be known suggesting he change schools multiple times'* (LSM, LTV program "Aizliegtais paņēmiens" 2015). On a positive line, teachers increasingly contributed to a discourse that divisions between 'our', namely Latvian children, and 'others' deplete possibilities for future development in Latvia as in the following quote by a director of a regional school: *'When we begin to divide all ethnicities and nationalities, I think, it leads us nowhere,'* (Latgales reģionālā televīzija 2015a).

Now we will turn the focus on the similarly ubiquitous theme in the reviewed media outlets, namely securitisation of borders as significant attributes of a space of an independent state.

### **Securitisation of the EU, the Baltic and the Latvian border**

From the security perspective in the EU the common asylum system can be viewed by member states as the *'one that provides multiple collective goods that are partly public and partly private in character'* (Thielemann and Armstrong 2013: 161). However, more theoretically well-grounded public policy research and evidence based recommendations are needed in the EU to understand and enhance support to solidarity as one of the fundamental cornerstones of the EU.

Prime Minister Straujuma has also expressed the necessity to think in longer terms and not only on a national, domestic level but also on the level of the EU. She spoke about concern regarding the idea to close the EU's outer south-eastern border. *'There is certain disquiet not so much about the ability to protect our border, but about that by closing in Europe's southeast, Europe's outer border in Croatia and other*

*countries, a new route will be sought or created for the refugee flow that might even reach Latvia*' (LETA 2015c). Securitisation goes hand in hand with an emphasis on punishing smugglers who transport migrants and therefore commit crimes against the state. In this line, a safer space is imagined in closer cooperation between the Baltic States in terms of securing borders and implementing an effective mechanism for the return of migrants to their countries of origin. Pētersone-Godmane has suggested that due to that, it would be necessary for the EU member states or even the Baltic States alone to agree upon a unified return mechanism for those who do not apply or qualify for refugee or alternative status in order to minimize costs (LETA 2015d).

Such initiatives confirm that a position taken in refugee discourse largely defines belonging to a particular community: the EU which is associated with Western lifestyle, and the Baltic States which are imagined to have a similar cultural heritage, shared collective memory and history. Also, common within the discourse on refugees and asylum seekers is the idea that integration is the key securitisation of the state border by integrating 'others' in 'our' order of doing things in 'our' country. Yet, again, the realities of onward migration (i.e., re-migration or migration where the primary destination is not the final destination) and outward migration (i.e., movement out of a politically/geographically/administratively defined area within the same country) were mostly overlooked in these imaginations of securitisation of the border.

Asylum flows are changing rapidly: there are various reasons for that, including information flows and *ad hoc* changes of routes of those who organise human smuggling. All these reasons should be studied in depth and in complex ways to yield better knowledge on changing geographies of asylum. Also, for many refugees and for some nationalities especially, high levels of onward intra-EU

mobility can be observed. It is commonly assumed that the presence of ethnic or national communities in the desired destination, economic and educational opportunities as well as differences in integration policies cause onward mobility. However, refugees may (initially) not be in a position to move where they want to move (van Liempt 2013). Redistribution and relocation of refugees should also be considered as interruption along the way with various, including psychosocial, effects on refugees, minors amongst them (Fazel 2015).

Priorities of refugees (or alternatively protected people) themselves are important in order to understand return decisions and improve repatriation policies. Safety and perspectives of reintegration in home countries are crucial and, notably, so are hopes and prospects for better lives (Zimmermann 2012). These, as well as recognition of human agency and capabilities were not yet emerging clearly in debates in Latvia in late 2015. Dominant discourses rather portrayed asylum seekers and refugees who ‘deserve’ protection as powerless or (ab)users of generous benefits, paid by local tax payers in nation states (Gateley 2015; Ludwig 2013).

### **Fear of the ‘other’**

The quintessence of fear spaces saturated on 22 September 2015. Around 500 people participated in a demonstration against refugees carrying posters with various statements, for example, *‘Latvia is not a wastepaper basket for the waste of Africa!’* Protesters stated that refugees do not deserve social benefits and are simply gold diggers who endanger our safety and might possibly mean an *‘ethnic catastrophe’*. A woman explained she had come because she did not want *‘Latvia and Latvians to be annihilated’* because Muslims coming here were *‘reproducing like rabbits’* and would push Baltic people out of their historic territories (Bērtule, Klūga 2015).

Another man explained he had decided to become politically active and join the 'National Bloc' as he has been to Europe and seeing what is going on there, did not want to have such experiences himself: *I will try to fight for the nation state. The nation state perhaps doesn't mean exclusively the Latvian state, also minorities – Russians and Ukrainians.* He was intimidated by the large number of males about his age in the lines of refugees who, he believed, would not work and earn their own living but would most likely 'vegetate' receiving social benefits: *One must wonder why young men have run here. Why doesn't he arrive legally?* [original use of grammar preserved as it vividly demonstrate how discourses shift and switch from a personal to social and from one person experience to talk about masses of men] (Kinca 2015).

This image of a refugee from the Middle East as someone who does not want to work and wants to live off the social benefits of Europe is common both in public speech as well as in political rhetoric. Nils Ušakovs, Mayor of Riga, has stated he expects that, even if placed elsewhere in Latvia at first, refugees will eventually arrive to Riga and become its *'headache'*. Therefore he plans to strengthen the municipal police and seek for employment options for refugees. For instance, he holds a view that refugees could help tend parks and cemeteries and do other simple jobs. Ušakovs has noted that issues regarding homeless shelters are also being considered. For instance, it is hoped to ensure that refugees who will need shelter services will be divided among them equally to avoid formations of refugee concentrations (LETA 2015e; LSM 2015e; LETA 2015f). Accordingly, radicalised fear creates more fear: from ethnic and racial to social and economic, imagining the future refugees as poor, ones who can do menial jobs and even as potential homeless people who could end up in spaces of fear rather than care (Johnsen et al 2005).

The Parliamentary European Affairs Committee has also supported a suggestion made by Rihards Kols, parliamentarian from the 'National Bloc', to state in the national position regarding the refugee issue that Latvia keeps the right to create its own list of 'safe countries' so that on a national level there would be a right to refuse refugees from countries perceived as 'safe' (LSM 2015f). This indicates the presence of prejudice based on ethnic, national or racial stereotypes since people who are refugees come, by definition, from places that are not safe. Which begs a question of what qualifies other countries as 'safe' for Latvia to receive its refugees? One image shaping this perception is probably the previously mentioned 'Middle East (likely Muslim) 'refugee' trope, another one is that of the 'sloppy and unhygienic refugee'.

Within the discourse on the refugee crisis there is a fear that refugees will bring long forgotten diseases back into Europe. The head doctor of the Latvian Centre of Infectious Diseases suspected that if the refugee flow will not subside then in future Europe might have to make some changes in its vaccination calendar. To counter this biological radicalisation of fear the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control stated, however, that so far uncommon infection diseases are mostly brought to Europe by its inhabitants returning from tourist trips not by refugees (Birziņš 2015).

Further, counterbalancing openly negative, fear driven discourses, an ex-parliamentarian who spent her childhood as a refugee, Vaira Paegle, stated that *'every refugee should be given a chance to seek asylum and prove themselves that he or she can become a trustworthy citizen of the asylum country.'* Paegle has stated that the society of Latvia should not focus so much on the experience during the Soviet occupation when masses of foreign immigrants came to Latvia *'who had no obligation to be patriots of the Latvian country and no duty to learn the language.'* Paegle explained that currently there is a different

situation and it will be a task of the inhabitants of Latvia to define how successfully the refugees will integrate and be motivated to learn the national language – Latvian. It will depend on how willing the society will be to accept people of a different race, skin colour and place of origin (LSM 2015g).

Opponents of the idea about solidarity on the refugee issue who are against accepting refugees on the grounds of the EU treaty have said: *'We already have 700 000 inside! Then Europe, those who concluded a treaty after the war, must take those 700 000, then it will be zeroed.'* During the demonstration a spokesperson of the 'Antiglobalists' Kaspars Savickis held a poster saying *'Do not allow the occupation of Latvia'* and said: *'We have enough various outlanders. If more will be officially let inside now, it will be very tough for Latvian culture'* (Rozenberga 2015; LETA 2015g). Opponents of refugees and organisers of demonstrations against them assured that *'just like our ancestors we are ready to protect our land from invaders whatever they call themselves'* (BNS 2015b).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reacted to such rhetoric where it is argued that more so-called third-country nationals reside in Latvia than in any other EU country to plea for a special status for Latvia within the refugee discourse. The ministry has stressed that in such rhetoric, Latvian non-citizens are most likely put in the category of third country nationals which conflicts with the position that Latvia has taken so far regarding the special status of non-citizens in Latvia which is by no means equated to asylum seekers from third countries, and in national laws and in eyes of international human right norms are considered as belonging to the Latvian nation (LSM 2015h).

This prominent focus on creating the 'other' and resisting the radicalising fear of the other clearly indicates Latvia's lack of experience in welcoming refugees and interaction in a more diverse society. The Soviet trauma of loss of independence also underpins



the fear of the inability to fully control in migration in a sovereign territory. Importantly, both Latvian and Russian speaking communities express such fear thus, to some extent, creating a common national and cross-ethnic fear of a new and unknown 'other' (Shirlow 2001).

### **Radicalisation of 'us' facing the 'other'**

Chief of the Latvian Security Police Normunds Mežviets has admitted that in context of the arrival of refugees, right-wing extremism might grow in force in the local public (BNS 2015c). Prosecutor General Ēriks Kalnmeiers has already stated that there are grounds for opening a penal procedure regarding threats to murder refugees expressed by a radio listener who delivered the threats via a phone call during the open mic, asking for guns to be used against refugees and for them to be crushed with tanks (LETA 2015i). Kalnmeiers did not eliminate a possibility that with increased numbers of asylum seekers in Latvia, national or racial hate crimes might increase as hate speech in comments on the internet and elsewhere might turn into actions.

The previously mentioned discussions on whether or not to reduce social benefits for refugees revealed that whether or not asylum seekers and refugees would pose a threat to the Latvian public was at least partly dependent on the attitude and actions of the public. The parliament voted for lower social benefits. Yet, the lack of income to meet even the most vital daily needs was linked to fear of possible crime. The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments agreed that social benefits for refugees should not place them below the minimal income level which would put them in a position where difficult choices would have to be made, either deciding to hope for and rely on the help of the municipalities or possibly even turning to illegal activities (LETA 2015j). Prime Minister Straujuma also agreed that benefits should not be so small

as to turn people to crime but at the same it should be small enough to encourage them to seek employment options – it should be fair to the state and the society where refugees arrive to (LSM 2015j). Though, for instance, Jānis Dombrava, board member of the party ‘National Bloc’ has been critical regarding the social benefit issue. *‘Not all refugees automatically are people without any savings. We know that a bulk of these people have been capable of paying several thousands to human traffickers who have taken them to Europe. Also in ‘Mucenieki’ some refugees have better tablets than a parliamentarian or minister’* (LETA 2015k).

‘Mucenieki,’ the asylum seekers reception centre encapsulated a possible fear place in local contexts addressed in media (Banks 2005). A discursive asylum seeker was seen as ambiguous, context-dependent when it comes to his or her savings before arrival to Latvia. On the one hand there is an ‘infantilisation’ desire to help only the poorest, women and children but on the other hand there is desire to have strong achievers who prove that they are worthy to live in Latvia. Some actors have drawn an even more fatalistic and grim image of the future of Latvia after accepting refugees. The asylum seekers reception centre ‘Mucenieki’ is located in Ropaži municipality near the capital city of Riga. Normunds Vagalis, the head of the association ‘Development Centre ‘Mucenieki’’, has expressed unease regarding the unknown – what the refugees from war zones would be like. He explained that asylum centre ‘Mucenieki’ is a free-regime and currently has only one person on duty working there. Vagalis explained that there have been cases when inhabitants of the centre have been wandering around the Mucenieki village provoking fights with the locals. *‘When 30 young people, whose desires are hard to comprehend, are wandering around, then it’s not safe’* (LETA 2015l).

Here we detect how the fear and the radicalisation of the ‘other’ penetrates deeply into social categories of age, gender and local

lives (Pain 1997; 2001). Yet, above all, this indicates not hatred but fear that is driven by lack of knowledge and personal experience in encountering strangers. Further quotes illustrate this more in detail. Zigurds Blaus, Mayor of Ropaži, stated that at the moment people of Mucenieki village are not negatively minded towards asylum seekers, but they do worry about their safety. They worry as they see how asylum seekers are behaving in other countries, which sometimes does not look pleasing. They are concerned about the safety of themselves and their children. *'Some inhabitants are already considering changing place of residence and leaving Mucenieki. Hence in perspective there can emerge a situation where Mucenieki becomes an asylum seeker village with no local residents.'* One local resident said the relationship with asylum seekers varied: *'Once there were a lot of young men, I think, from Georgia. They consumed a lot of alcoholic drinks and paid a lot of attention to women – it was very unpleasant... That was when there was an incident when local youth had a conflict with them. (...) But now, together with current refugees local children are playing football in the stadium'* (LSM 2015k; Kinca, Rozenberga 2015).

People living in Latgale region, the poorest and depopulating region, where the level of unemployment is the highest in Latvia and from where many people have migrated abroad, seem especially critical. *'They show on TV how a young boy will cut your throat. What kind of a refugee is that? They are bandits not refugees! All kinds of diseases will spread. No, I'm against that!' 'Browsing the internet – they are so sloppy! Our city does not need ones like that!' 'They won't work.' 'If we will offer them empty houses we have in the countryside and land then they will unlikely plough fields, sow gardens and milk cows. I doubt that!'* (Latgales reģionālā televīzija 2015b).

To counteract this fear, the press secretary of the Arabic Culture Centre in Latvia Roberts Klimovičs has said however, that the image of Islamist radicals is perpetrated by media, and he has not met a person like that in Muslim countries. Hence, the public

should not trust the media as much (Kvaste 2015). This emphasis underlines the crucial role of knowledge (Lefebvre 1991) in deflating fear and expanding the space of safety and security through public discourses battled in media.

## Conclusions

Latvia, similarly to other Baltic countries, has the Soviet experience that inevitably underpins discourses of fear and safety and, most importantly, gives the priority role to securitisation of the state borders. Inevitably, the context of asylum seekers' flows, entwined with historical trauma also evoked a heightened sense of external threat. Yet, the space of safer future was based more on a humble positioning of Latvia as an unimportant, low key country, not being targeted by terrorists. However, there is an intangible, yet important discursive boundary between Western and Eastern Europe. While the West may perceive emerging discourses in the Eastern Europe and the Baltics as lacking compassion and suspect even the hatred towards the other, we proposed to start unpacking these challenging discourses through manifestations of fear and active investment into discourses that create spaces for more safe and secure futures. However, the understanding of *the* multiple collective goods that are both public and partly private in terms of increasing sense of safety and security (Thielemann and Armstrong 2013) was still rare in Latvian media in late 2015.

We demonstrated that emerging discourses in the context of rupture – a sudden steep increase in refugee flows – reveal different positioning of Latvia on the global, EU and national scale. The latter one reveals the thickest 'battle ground' where safety and security can be imagined in practical terms such as the employability and education of future refugees. Also, these discourses revealed that safety and security is imagined through certain 'discursive figures' of a desired refugee: family, children,

real political refugee (not an economic migrant), who will work hard to prove his or her worth. Furthermore, ambiguous understanding of temporary, onward and permanent migration of potential asylum seekers identifies the need to saturate public discourse with understanding of the state's positioning in an inevitably interconnected world where continuous dealing with complexity is an imperative to carve out more spaces of safety and security.

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## DISCURSIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT OF REFUGEES AND THEIR CRISIS IN LITHUANIA

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**ABSTRACT** In this article, Lithuanian discourse and institutional management of migration is assessed, using the framework of securitization of migration offered by Jef Huysmans. In Huysmans' work, migration is securitized not only in discourse, but also in the institutional practices of both the states and, in the case of Europe, also the EU. It is not only by talking about asylum seekers as a security problem, but also by moulding it into the practice of border control and policing (treating it in the same documents and institutions as terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime) that migration becomes a security issue. In the Lithuanian case, both discourse and institutional practice leans to treat immigration and asylum as primarily security problems. In the discursive arena, however, the topics of 'hard' security are clearly eclipsed by economic topics and, it is argued, the economic pressures are the ones which could explain best the hostility towards refugees and reluctant compliance with the EU relocation scheme.

### Introduction

In the beginning of 1990s, Lithuania often appeared in the front headlines and breaking news stories of the world media. Its struggle to regain independence became an indelible part of a larger drama of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Removed from this frontline position, during the

rest of the decade, Lithuanians were happy to assume a couch-seat and focus on rebuilding the shattered economy and creating institutions that would allow it to achieve the ambition of belonging to the Western club of nations. The newsworthy events in the meantime were happening elsewhere. The new millennium brought some changes to this attitude as the attacks of September 11, 2001 altered the global international scene and introduced the 'war on terror' as a defining feature of the coming decade. Lithuania was active in supporting the US in its attempt to root out Al Qaeda and the possibility to establish the terrorist havens anywhere in the world. This strategy also led to the war in Iraq which, in 2003, brought ire of the 'old' European states, primarily France, against the newly independent Eastern Europeans for their unwavering support for the United States in its quest.

Lithuania has participated in all the major international operations that the US and its NATO allies have undertaken in this turbulent decade. It overstretched its defence resources when it agreed to take upon itself the lead of a PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) in Afghanistan. It joined the fighting in Iraq, participated in the missions to root out piracy in the Horn of Africa. Yet, this active engagement in the Middle East did not seem to concern much either the political establishment or the public. The former took for granted the need to repay the US for the security guarantees it extended when the country joined the NATO alliance in 2004, the latter preferred to leave security questions to the security professionals and preferred to keep a distance from the foreign policy issues, armed forces and their missions. (Urbelis, 2007)

The Ukraine crisis of 2014 changed the attitudes of both the public and the political elites about the importance of foreign and defence policies. Yet, it was the refugee crisis of the summer of 2015 and its consequent implications for the stability of the European Union and for the obligations of the country towards its partners that

brought home the importance of the world events. As one keen observer noted, ‘Lithuania wasted ten years in the EU and NATO thinking that world events do not concern it and that complicated problems are not that complicated’ (Pugaciauskas 2015) and the current crisis, at least in theory, should have brought both the complexity of the world issues and the need to look further than one’s own backyard home.

Yet, while on the one hand, the refugee crisis served as a kind of wake up call to face up to the global developments, on the other, it worked to entrench existing stereotypes, to rekindle nationalist and populist rhetoric and to increase the undercurrent of Euroscepticism. In this article, I will explore Lithuanian dealings with the issue using the framework of securitization of migration developed, primarily, in the works of Jeff Huysmans. This approach emphasizes the importance not only of discourse, but also of institutional practice in developing securitization of a phenomenon such as migration. I will therefore concentrate on both these elements in the analysis. The first part of this article will present the major tenets of this theoretical approach, the second will look at the institutional aspects of Lithuanian migration policy and its implications, the third will explore the discourse surrounding migration and the EU relocation scheme in the country.

### **Securitization of migration**

Though migration as a phenomenon and even migration of entire peoples is as old as humanity and the states had to manage some types of ‘migration crises’ since the times they were created (it is enough to remember the Roman empire’s unsuccessful attempts to tame migration of Germanic peoples across its borders and the subsequent collapse of the Roman state), the interest in migration as a part of international relations and security studies is rather new. It became an important subject for social sciences due

primarily to two developments in theory and in practice of security towards the end of the Cold War: the widening and deepening of security studies and the introduction of the notion of 'human security' as opposed to state security.

Traditional studies of security within the discipline of international relations (further – IR) focused exclusively on the state as its referent object and on military threats as the existential threats. In the context of an ongoing nuclear race and with the memory of total war still rather fresh in the minds of scholars and practitioners alike, this focus seemed quite natural. With the struggle between the super powers over, this concentration on states exclusively and on their potential military contenders suddenly felt too narrow. The scholars in IR started treating security as a much wider problem both in terms of referents and in terms of the threats they may face. Even when state remained the referent object of security, the threats to it now were much broader. Previously, the thinkers in IR agreed to include economic factors in their investigations of the power of states and hence their security levels, to this in the last decade of 20th century was added a whole plethora of spheres in which threats to security may rise. In the already classical investigation of Barry Buzan and his colleagues, five spheres were distinguished: military, political, economic, societal and environmental. (Buzan et al. 1998) The subsequent attempts to deepen the understanding of security added sectors (e.g. health, see, e.g. O'Manique and Fourie 2010) or distinguished others cross-sectoral threats (such as international organized crime, see, e.g. Terriff et al. 1999).

At the same time, while the state remained in the privileged position of the main referent of security, its monopoly was increasingly eroded. Around the state, the presence of environmental threats and especially the man-made problems, brought the Earth itself as a referent object of security. Within the states, society became a referent object of security and much

attention has been given to its wellbeing and strength of identity in assessing security (or lack thereof) of the states.

Even more importantly, the 'human security' concept was introduced. Theoretical approaches arguing for inclusion of individuals into the investigation of security can be found in the burgeoning literature on these topics towards the end of the Cold war and even more specifically once it ended. The greatest push for the serious consideration of this concept and the challenges it presented came with the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, which clearly stressed the need to move 'from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's security' and argued for the adoption of 'human security' as a guiding principle for making the world a safer place. This report introduced a broad agenda of changes necessary to bring this new security about in seven different spheres: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.

The 'human security' concept became one of the most discussed issues over the decade since publication of the report. For those focusing on state security, primarily the realist school in IR, human security was seen as an unnecessary distraction. In their top-down approach, individual security is also important, but an individual can only be secure in a secure state. This idea stemming from the works of Thomas Hobbes is served as one of the main lines for rebuffing the notion of 'human security' and relegating it to other branches of IR, e.g. development studies.

In the camp of supporters of the notion, debate also raged. This debate focused on the two different understandings of human security: the narrow and broad notions of it. For those advocating the narrow notion, human security should focus on the prevention of direct violence against individuals, ensuring their protection from violent death, primarily because of conflicts taking place inside the country, but also from such potential sources of demise

as organized crime groups. The ideas of the narrow school have been summarized with the metaphor of 'freedom from fear'.

The critics of the narrow understanding of human security emphasize that human dignity requires more than protection from violent death and that human security focus should be on ensuring a possibility not only to survive, but also to live a meaningful life. Such a task includes sheltering individuals from 'all the ills of underdevelopment' (Kerr 2010, p.116). This 'broad' understanding of human security is usually summarized as 'freedom from want'.

One more important theoretical development needs to be mentioned in this context. The notion of security here lost its 'objective' character, scholars stopped seeing it as a given, as certain fact of life, focusing instead on the 'constructed' dimension of security. Nobody, it has been claimed, can be completely secure, but we can feel secure or insecure. In this context the idea of securitization becomes important. Securitization deals with the process of an issue becoming a security threat. Military might or migration, terrorism or healthcare can be framed as security issues, demanding serious intervention from the highest levels of the state or they can be framed as economic, law and order or medical issues, which ask for specialist attention but do not lead to the serious reconsiderations of state policies and do not cause 'existential' fears. Securitization, thus, invites us to think of security issues not as a constant given, but as a result of reinterpretations negotiated between the opinion and policy makers, general public and bureaucratic officials. It invites us to examine the public discourse surrounding the issues and the institutional practices that emphasize their security dimension. As George Lakoff once noted, whenever a scholar hears the words 'common sense', she has an object of investigation, the same way whenever security scholars hear that something is a 'security issue', they have an object of investigation. (Lakoff 2002, p.4)

It could be subsumed from what has been said above that the issues of migration became one of the important focus points for the development of these new approaches to security as they seemed to epitomise the newly discovered trends of seeing humans as a security referent, of the vulnerabilities of societies and their identities and even of the changing nature or at least the understanding of state security itself. One of the most influential is Jef Huysmans' (2006) take on the topic in *The Politics of Insecurity. Fear, migration and asylum in the EU*. In this book, the author goes beyond the discursive approach to securitization taken in most of the previous works on the topic and emphasizes the institutional practice that helps render it a security issue. It is important to go this way, he claims, because: 'even when not directly spoken of as a threat, asylum can be rendered a security question by being institutionally and discursively integrated in policy frameworks that emphasizes policing and defence.' (p.4)

Security thus comes into being as not only discourse, but also a technocratic practice. This is relevant because, as Huysmans emphasizes, 'in technocratic or modern societies expert knowledge is inherently political' (p.10). In the case of the EU, which the author analyses at length, migration became part of security discourse already before the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, which in the Western world brought the most obvious securitization of movement of people. Rather, 'the search for strengthening anti-terrorism policies entered an already heavily prestructured domain of insecurity' (p.63).

The most significant of these developments was the introduction of the Schengen zone and the agreements and procedures that followed its application, specifically the strengthening of external borders that led to the need for stronger policing of these borders. The cooperation between police and customs offices required for this endeavour took place in the framework of discourses that

produced a ‘security continuum connecting border control, terrorism, international crime and migration’ (p.71).

Thus, while in the post-war years in-migration was seen as a necessity, the only way to restore the shattered continent, in the end of 1980s it was still framed as a human rights issue, during 1990s migration came to be framed more and more as a security problem. In addition to the more straightforward policing dimension of migration, the issue was increasingly presented as a threat to cultural identity and a danger to the welfare state. The danger to cultural identity can be linked with the idea of ‘societal security’ within the framework developed by Barry Buzan and his followers (Buzan et al. 1998) and, even though not directly linked to the ‘hard’ security problems, can appear for local communities as security issue, especially if emphasized accordingly in the media and by the political elites. The last point – danger to the welfare state also evokes the dangers to economic wellbeing, therefore, yet another frame of security, presenting migration as a multifaceted threat to the security of the country and its society. All these elements can be encountered in the discourses and practices of Lithuania as well, the examination of which I will now turn to.

### **Lithuania’s approach to migration. Institutional dimension**

Lithuania is a member of a number of international institutions which stipulate the importance of the rights of asylum seekers and the right to asylum. On 12 March 1991 Lithuania joined the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 14 of the Declaration notes that ‘Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.’ Such commitment was strengthened in 1997 by the ratification of the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951 and of its Protocol of 1967. After ratifying this document, Lithuania became a country of refuge for asylum seekers and agreed to implement the system of their integration. Later the legal framework for both conferring asylum



and the integration into society of its receivers was strongly influenced by EU legislation, which establishes more concrete rules for dealing with potential applications for asylum in its member countries.

As Huysmans notes, the procedures that are established in the EU documents tend to treat migration as a security problem and that is especially visible in the actual practices of the agencies dealing with the issue (mainly those engaged in the border control). In these procedures, a balance is sought between the state needs and its obligations to preserve human dignity that are always emphasized by the organizations monitoring the asylum process in the country.<sup>1</sup>

In Lithuania, migration politics is outlined in the Government's Guidelines on Lithuanian Migration politics, adopted in 2014; the procedures of immigration and seeking of asylum are described in

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission's Recommendation establishing a common "Practical Handbook for Border Guards (Schengen Handbook)" to be used by Member States' competent authorities when carrying out the border control of persons (C (2006) 5186 final), *para.* 10,1 reads: 'A third country national must be considered as an applicant for asylum/international protection if he/she expresses – in any way – fear of suffering serious harm if he/she is returned to his/her country of origin or former habitual residence. The wish to apply for protection does not need to be expressed in any particular form. The word "asylum" does not need to be used expressly; the defining element is the expression of fear of what might happen upon return. In case of doubt on whether a certain declaration can be construed as a wish to apply for asylum or for another form of international protection, the border guards must consult the national authority(-ies) responsible for the examination of applications for international protection [emphasis added].' Also: "With a view to ensuring effective access to the examination procedure, officials who first come into contact with persons seeking international protection, in particular officials carrying out the surveillance of land or maritime borders or conducting border checks, should receive relevant information and necessary training on how to recognise and deal with applications for international protection [...]. They should be able to provide third-country nationals or stateless persons who are present in the territory, including at the border, in the territorial waters or in the transit zones of the Member States, and who make an application for international protection, with relevant information as to where and how applications for international protection may be lodged [...]" *Directive 2013/32/EU*

the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens, some procedural stipulations can also be found in the Law on State Border and Protection Thereof. The main institutions participating in creating the migration policy and its implementation are the Ministry of Internal Affairs; Migration Department; State Border Control Agency under the Ministry of Interior and, as its branches, the Foreigner Registration Centre and the Refugee Reception Centre.

Migration politics in Lithuania during the last decade reflected growing concerns with emigration and it is to this type of migration that most attention is given in the current migration policy guidelines. A further look at this document also reveals that the greatest concern of the government lies in economics (both in emigration and the loss of labour resources due to it and in immigration) and in the potential illegal activities of the immigrants. It is emphasized, for example, that the procedure for issuing permits of residence in the country 'is increasingly abused by foreigners' (Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines, point 9.12); that potential students create a 'risk of illegal migration' (9.16), there are not 'enough effective measures for fighting marriages of convenience' (9.18) and that employers are 'interested in importing labour force from third countries with a view to cutting labour costs. This type of immigrated labour poses competition for Lithuanian citizens in the internal labour market.' (9.19) This interest in labour and especially the potential for illegal labour permeates the rest of the document as well. While it is admitted that Lithuania may have a need to import labour, it is stressed that 'regulations should not stimulate employers to use cheap labour from third countries without making all possible efforts to use the internal workforce, and should not create conditions for employees from third countries to travel to other EU Member States through Lithuania, stimulating the economic emigration of Lithuanian citizens and raising additional social tensions.' (19.5) At the same time, 'Provisions stipulating that foreigners who do not

engage and will not engage in actual economic operations will not be granted or allowed to keep the right to residence in Lithuania shall be complied with.’ (19.7)

Lithuanian Law on the Legal Status of Aliens stipulates that an application ‘for refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Lithuania’<sup>2</sup> could be lodged either at the border crossing point, at the territorial police agency or at the Foreigner’s Registration Centre (Article 67). The other procedures and institutional responsibilities that are outlined in this law include the role of the Migration Department, which is responsible for the examination of applications. The initial application and decision whether or not further deliberation on the asylum will take place are supposed to occur within 48 hours. Later, the Migration Department has a maximum of 6 months to provide a final decision on whether or not to grant asylum in Lithuania. During that process the asylum seekers are accommodated at the Foreigner Registration Centre and if the decision is to grant asylum in Lithuania, the refugee is transferred to the Rukla Refugee Reception Centre.

This procedure is in compliance with the international agreements of Lithuania and is following the letter of both the EU regulations and human rights conventions that the country is party to. Yet, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. As following the securitization framework of Huysmans we should look into

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<sup>2</sup> The laws stipulate that there are three categories afforded those who ask for asylum in the country. First is refugee status that grants the right to permanently reside in Lithuania with all the privileges that are tied to it. Second status is that of subsidiary protection afforded those who do not qualify for refugee status, but who cannot return to their country due to potential persecution there and is granted for one year with the possibility of extending it for longer. Finally, temporary protection status is to be granted to incoming people in case of a great influx of people when the state cannot handle their applications with due process (so far this status has never been afforded to anyone). See description of these categories at ‘Migration in numbers’, at <http://123.emn.lt/en/asylum/asylum-10-years-retrospective>

institutional practice, it is exactly the institutions mentioned above whose work should be examined in order to assess the balance between concerns for human security and the views of migrants as a threat in the Lithuanian context.

In the practice of dealing with migration in Lithuania, it is first to be noted that the actual implementation of procedures varies significantly and depends to a great extent on the attitudes of the people involved in carrying them out. The Lithuanian Red Cross Society, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of asylum procedures on behalf of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, notes that the standards of reception of potential asylum seekers are very uneven. Some border guards follow all the procedures by the book, conduct interviews according to the established standards, explaining very clearly to the potential asylum seekers both the purpose of the procedure and the manner in which the application will be assessed, are polite and helpful. Others show with their demeanour that the procedure itself is a burden for them and they just wish it to be over. This is a very problematic attitude as the law on Aliens stipulates that the person requesting asylum to provide reasons for their asylum claim within 24 hours of making an asylum application. (Order of Minister of Interior 2004) It is also assumed that adding new information at a later stage negatively affects the image of the entire application and can lead to a negative decision. In Article 83 (2) of the Aliens Law, the exemption from the duty to support the asylum application by written proof does not apply where ‘contradictions are established between the facts specified by the asylum applicant that have a decisive effect on the granting of the asylum.’

After the first encounter with the officials when trying to enter the country, potential asylum seekers are accommodated either in the Foreigner Registration Centre or (in case of unaccompanied minors) in the Refugee Reception Centre. The Foreigner Registration Centre is under the supervision of the State Border

Control Agency and such arrangement has often been criticised by the asylum experts and NGOs working in the area, emphasizing that the people who are vulnerable and have potentially suffered from persecution in their own countries should not be accommodated in the institution of law enforcement, but rather one that provides social services. (EMN Focused Study 2013, p.26; see also Lithuanian Red Cross 2011)

Yet, many of the potential asylum seekers end up not only in the Foreigner Registration Centre, but outright in prison. It is emphasized in this case that crossing the border without the proper documentation is a crime and therefore those who do not know how to ask for asylum or just appear suspicious in the eyes of the authorities, are sent to such establishments. A case of two Afghani minors who were afforded just such treatment has resonated widely around the country (see, e.g. Sinkevičius 2014), as did the case of a Syrian family with three small children, who came to Lithuania without proper documents and were separated, the adult parents sent to different prisons, the children to a care home. (Lietuvos Raudonojo Kryžiaus Draugija 2014)

All these examples show that migration is viewed through the prism of law enforcement, and the procedures for managing the asylum procedure and the institutions involved are all linked to the policing structures of the state. The only partially independent unit in the structure is the Migration Department that is responsible for the examination of applications. The presence of such a separate institution is considered to be one of the examples of best practice standards in the system of migration management. Yet, in recent years, there were some attempts to reform the system in such a way that the Department would be removed and its functions given over to the Ministry of Interior itself. This potential reform created great concerns in the NGOs observing the situation of migration in Lithuania, who argue that getting rid of such a (at least nominally) independent institution and giving over its

functions to others would disturb significantly the balance of concerns over human rights vis-à-vis those of security.<sup>3</sup>

This securitization is even more fortified by the involvement of the State Security Department (SSD) in all the stages of the procedure. Since the inception of the asylum legislation, the procedure has been established whereby the decision on granting asylum is dependent on the note from the SSD about the potential threat caused by the migrant. These notes are classified and their disclosure can be refused to the lawyers of the asylum seeker in court and would only be shown to the presiding judge if they are deemed to contain intelligence information. In such cases, the claim of SSD that a person represents a threat is most often taken into account even if no documents that confirm such judgement could be located.<sup>4</sup>

The system of double and triple checking the people applying for asylum has reached its peak after Lithuania agreed to the resettlement of the 1105 people in need of international protection, and may be quite indicative of the chances of the EU scheme to succeed. The criteria being discussed: that it should be Syrians with high or professional education, that priority will be given to families, should speak at least one language of the EU, preferably English and express a wish to be resettled to Lithuania. Priority would also be given to Christians rather than Muslims. These criteria (though criticized by some observers) were, as usual supplemented by the requirement to have a note from the SSD saying that the person does not present a threat to Lithuanian security. This led to some curious discussions between the Greek

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<sup>3</sup> These concerns were expressed in a letter of five organizations working in the sphere of human rights to the government of Lithuania. Shown to the author by Gintarė Guzevičiūtė, the Director of Lithuanian Red Cross during the interview, 13 November 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Laurynas Biekša, Associate Professor at Mykolas Romeris University, practicing lawyer in the field of migration. 27 December 2015.

officials and Lithuanian ones, with the Lithuanians ‘accusing’ the Greeks of trying to ‘give’ them some thugs and the Greeks replying that they certainly have no capacity of checking each individual who usually comes to their country without documents. A number of Lithuanian officials flew to Greece. The result of this flurry of activity so far – one relocated family which did not receive the coveted status of refugee, but only that of additional protection. The officials dealing with the issue emphasize that their concern is ‘security first’ therefore when the agreed-upon thousand will be relocated is not entirely clear.

With so much activity to make sure few people manage to reach Lithuania, little time, energy and money is left for the work of integrating those who do. In the migrant integration policy index Lithuania is in 34th place out of 38 countries.<sup>5</sup> The state still relies on the rigid mechanisms it applied until the current crisis. The numbers of migrants were then much smaller and at the same time, the integration procedure had little else but flaws. Already the initial stage, described as ‘integration at the foreigner registration centre’ is a perfect euphemism for the actual lack of integration. The Lithuanian President emphasized the need of ‘not allowing the ghettos’ to be formed, when the actual practice shows people shoved into exactly such type of conditions since their very arrival. In addition, the outrage in the population caused by the relocation support money for the incoming refugees resulted in this sum being cut to such an amount that would hardly allow living in bigger towns where there is actual work and instead of creating incentive, dooms people to remain in areas with high unemployment and little chances of getting off welfare payments, consequently leading to tensions and potential societal security problems which were meant to be avoided.

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<sup>5</sup> See the data and elaboration on it at <http://www.mipex.eu/lithuania>

Though it would be difficult to get out of such vicious circle in the best of circumstances, there seems to be little political will to make it happen in the first place. The politicians gain more points bashing immigrants than trying to find solutions to their integration.

### **Lithuania's approach to migration. Discursive dimension**

Since its entry into the European Union in 2004, Lithuania's issue was with emigration rather than immigration. Since then, 515,707 Lithuanian citizens emigrated, dwindling the country's population to below 3 million.<sup>6</sup> The first wave of emigration started already in 2004-2005, but its peak was reached in the years following the global economic crisis that started in 2008. At that time, most discussions in the public sphere on migration focused on the question of emigration and the ways of limiting it or its impact.<sup>7</sup>

The question of immigration, refugee flows and asylum-seekers was touched upon infrequently in the media and was virtually absent from the political discourse. Reporting on the issues was often tinged with negative tones, such as the frequent use of 'illegals' as a noun to describe the irregular migrants. News on the Foreigner Registration Centre tended to focus on violent incidents, reinforcing the view of asylum seekers as troublemakers.

The decision of the EU that all its members should show solidarity in the unprecedented influx of asylum seekers by participating in the relocation scheme brought these questions out of obscurity into the limelight. In Lithuania, like in most other countries, this question created great tensions in society and brought to the word-

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<sup>6</sup> For migration statistics to and from Lithuania, see <http://123.emn.lt/>. This project created by 6 Lithuanian institutions is aimed at providing accurate statistical information on the issue. It is initiated by the European migration network and presents a useful tool for statistics and background analysis of migration.

<sup>7</sup> A large part of Guidelines on Migration Policy are dedicated to this issue.



warzone two militant camps: those who believe that Lithuania cannot and should not accept any asylum seekers and those who believe that the country should accept even more than the agreed upon 1105 people. The understanding of complexity of current crisis of migration in current public discourse is often sacrificed for the sake of better chances in the war of attrition. Trenches are dug on both the sides of those who would not see a single foreigner (refugee or otherwise) in the country and those who would extend their welcome to everyone without considering the consequences. The obstacles for holding the middle ground in such a battle are quite daunting.

The (more numerous) camp of those who are against accepting larger numbers of asylum seekers into the country usually bring up three types of arguments: economic, cultural and security-based. It must be noted, however, that security-type of arguments are the least invoked in discussions. These were brought out after the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015 and after the Cologne sexual harassment cases on the New Year's Eve of 2015, but they are often used as an afterthought, as an additional argument for those still unconvinced. Terrorist attacks are rare and their impact wears off with time, the same applies to other outbursts of violence, thus those arguing tend to concentrate on the issues that are on people's minds daily, such as their economic welfare, job security and access to health care. All these are seen as being threatened by the influx of migrants.<sup>8</sup> After the relocation scheme has been

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Gudavičius 2015 on the general costs of integrating 1105 people that Lithuania pledged to take in; Delfi.lt 2015a on the health care costs for the potential newcomers; also ELTA 2015b (the costs are linked to the potential costs of health care and, again potential, outbreaks of epidemics); calculations of all kinds of benefits that migrants get or might get are also popular, see ELTA 2015a or BNS 2015a. The offer of Universities to allow refugees study without charge has 'shocked' the Lithuanian students (Pukėnė 2015) Even in some analytical articles 'money for refugees' is discussed in such a way that can incidentally lead to a negative reaction, e.g. the analysis of the state budget of 2016 shows that there is an increase of spending on defence, integration of refugees and the increase of salaries for the public sector employees that reaches 206.5 million

brought up in discussions, these arguments together with the wildest calculations have been floating around the media outlets and enflaming the spirits of local inhabitants. The speculations about the system reached even the level of the President, who intervened to argue for a cut in welfare benefits for the migrants, emphasizing that the support given should not be such that ‘does not encourage looking for a job’ (LRT.lt 2015) This type of argumentation resonates well with the Lithuanian public that is used to the frame of ‘Lithuania is a poor country’ and ‘Lithuania is a country of emigration’ due to economic reasons. Given such frames, Lithuanians are eager to enter the numbers taken out of context that are floating around the media sphere and reach the conclusion that the incoming refugees will be afforded better economic conditions than themselves and consequently that they are not real war refugees, but rather economic migrants who have ‘come to take away our money.’<sup>9</sup>

The cultural dimension is brought in here as well, with the image of an immigrant as a person who comes from a Muslim background and thus brings in all the alien traditions with him. In addition, these traditions threaten to overtake the local culture, especially given that the birth rate in the Muslim communities is seen as larger and their attachment to religion greater than that of their Christian neighbours in Europe. (Sapetkaitė 2013) As Lithuania itself does not have much recent experience of Muslim immigration,<sup>10</sup> most of the descriptions in the public sphere are of

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euros and is responsible for 56% of the total increase of spending and for 32% of budget deficit (see *Laisvos rinkos institutas* 2015) Having in mind that in reality out of this number refugee integration gets 6 million euros (see *ELTA* 2015b) such a way of describing the situation is simply odd.

<sup>9</sup> One of the curious blends of economic and cultural arguments is a respondent to the question of why immigrants are dangerous who answered that it is because, being Muslims, they can work for less as they do not drink alcohol and thus do not have so many expenses.

<sup>10</sup> Islam is one of the recognized ‘historical’ religions in Lithuania, as it had, since

the danger of a Muslim takeover of Europe are linked to the frames proposed in the conservative press of other Western countries. Thus, the information about the 'no-go areas' created in the British or Swedish towns and the introduction of Sharia law in Britain are dutifully reported by the media. Visions similar to the future of Europe predicted by Michel Houellebecq are also very popular, as is the general view of Muslim as a permanent Other of the European.<sup>11</sup> The image of the migrant thus created and recreated through the media is that of a lazy person, looking for welfare benefits in a European country, prone to have a large family and with little loyalty to the accepting state<sup>12</sup> who, with the help of 'the fifth column' inside the West itself works to bring about the 'sunset of Europe.'

There are those who try to bring in some more rationality to the 'against' argument as there are myriad flaws in the current European migration management.<sup>13</sup> They are, however, in a minority. Those who are 'for' accepting migrants in principle also tend to work on existing tropes rather than presenting a balanced analysis of the European policies. Thus, on the pro-immigration side there are mainly economic arguments and analogies with the Lithuanian past.

As already mentioned, emigration from Lithuania reduced its population by half a million over the last 12 years. For the more

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Medieval time a small minority of Crimean Tatars. This community, very small and very well integrated is not so visible in the country. An average Lithuanian, thus, has little chance of being exposed to different cultural traditions.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g. Kasčiūnas 2015 for one of the most vocal advocates of 'multiculturalism is dead in Europe' frame.

<sup>12</sup> See, Laučius 2015a or Laučius 2015b for one of the most vocal advocates of the 'welfare migrants' that are aided by the fifth column of Leftists and Liberals to bring about the death of Europe.

<sup>13</sup> For one of the few proposals, see, Mazuronis 2015. And for an attempt to find balance in argument, though probably not in tone, Tapinas 2015.

economically minded, thus, the potential influx of migrants is seen as a way to compensate for that loss. President Grybauskaitė has insisted on the reduction of welfare benefits for the migrants so that ‘they find work sooner’ and later argued that migrants might be ‘good for the Lithuanian economy.’ (BNS 2015c)

Another set of arguments is based both on humanitarian grounds and bringing in Lithuanian history, particularly the wave of emigration towards the end of WWII. In this type of argumentation, Lithuanians as a nation have suffered enough from wars and its members have tried to look for safety in other countries, therefore, being safe now, they have a responsibility for others in a similar situation. (see, e.g. Baškienė 2015)

While in the public sphere one can find different types of arguments for the relocation mechanism and in support of asylum seekers in general, these arguments do not hold much sway over the majority of the population. According to one major survey, only 15% of the respondents viewed refugees favourably.<sup>14</sup> The Lithuanian decision to agree in principle to the relocation scheme is viewed unfavourably by 61.3% of the inhabitants and even from those who did agree with this decision, 10.9% based it on the idea that the relocated people will not stay in Lithuania anyway. As elsewhere in Europe, the most positive view of migration and the Lithuanian commitments is from people of better education and socio-economic status, inhabitants of the cities who do not feel threatened by the potential new arrivals in their jobs and are not dependent on welfare institutions. In this respect, too, the Lithuanian situation is not much different from that of other European countries.

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<sup>14</sup> The survey phrased the question as refugees, as this is the most commonly used term in the public sphere.

The differences in reception could thus be explained not by some kind of extreme xenophobia of the local population, but more by the precarious economic conditions. Twenty years of exorbitant economic growth and 10 years of EU support did close the gap significantly between the country and the rest of Europe, but are still far from closing it completely. While the macroeconomic situation kept improving, official statistics show that 19.1% of population live below the poverty line, (BNS 2015b) according to other research 32.5% were in the at risk of poverty group. (Zabaraukaitė, Gruževskis 2015) Lithuanian median salaries are some of the lowest in Europe. (Malinauskas 2015) The perception that the state cannot fulfil its obligations to its own citizens by providing them with the conditions of an adequate life is widespread and European rules are seen as an additional burden on this inadequate system.

As elsewhere in Europe, with the issue of migration in front of the public eye, there is an opportunity for the radical right. A radical nationalist party (Tautininkai) which apparently attempts to ride the wave of contention created by the refugee crisis in society tries to establish its political presence. Elections to Seimas due to take place in the autumn of 2016 will show how actual this issue truly is for the citizens of the country.

## Conclusions

In its approach to migration Lithuania followed the established EU standards, adding to them its own tinge. The current migrant crisis in the country can be viewed through the prism of securitization and in so doing it is important to look into the institutional practices as Huysmans suggests. Lithuania being a rather new country and certainly new to the issue of immigration, followed rather closely the practices established in the EU and as these practices themselves were highly securitized (Huysmans 2006) so was the Lithuanian system. Unusually for the region, however, the

system did make some overtures towards treating migration as not only an issue of security but also of human rights. The semi-independence of the Migration Department and the strong institutional presence in the field of organizations monitoring adherence to the standards of Human Rights, such as Lithuanian Red Cross, are indicative of this.

In the public discourse, securitization of migration takes a different angle. The country's population is overwhelmingly against receiving any refugees in the country, yet, when concrete questions are posed, those who come from relatively similar cultural backgrounds (e.g. the Ukrainians) are looked on favourably. Migration is presented also as security issue, especially in connection with terrorism, but even such securitization reflects more the cultural/identity fears than the 'hard' security aspects of the issue. Migrants are not wanted because they are different, but especially because they are seen as competitors for the scarce (welfare) resources.

Yet, these fears are not somehow unique for the country, but are reflections of the general European anti-immigration discourse. Thus the difference in the lack of welcome for the refugees in Lithuania and other Eastern European countries compared to those in the West might not be due to some extreme xenophobia of the inhabitants of those countries, but the economically difficult situation of many of their inhabitants.

Fears and even hopes that the problem would disappear by itself cloud judgement and precludes understanding that in the current world where the movement of people has reached unprecedented heights and with Lithuania being positioned on the crossroads between the East and the West, the issue of immigration will remain constant. Even if they are not resettled through the quotas envisioned by the EU, they will keep trying to reach safer shores or greener pastures and will sometimes end their travels in the

country. The border control issues, thus, important as they may be, should not overshadow the need to create working integration and support mechanisms for these potential new citizens. The best practice standards show that these mechanisms work best when they are not segregated from those devised to help the marginalized social groups in the country, but are made part of the social security enhancement system for all the inhabitants.<sup>15</sup> It would be possible to look at the EU migration quotas as a chance, an opportunity to create such working mechanisms for the future. This transformation, however, requires more societal and political will than the current discourse on migration seems to allow, hence, this optimistic outcome is hardly likely.

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## HOW RUSSIAN SOFT POWER FAILS IN ESTONIA: OR, WHY THE RUSSOPHONE MINORITIES REMAIN QUIESCENT

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**ABSTRACT** This article evaluates the significance of Russian soft power in Estonia, particularly in connection to the minority issue, and compares this soft power to the countervailing pull of the European Union on the other side. It concludes that although Russia does indeed have a number of soft power resources, their potential for being translated into actual power and influence is too often exaggerated, not least because Europe provides a much more attractive focus point for the disgruntled than Moscow. Moreover, Estonia has it fully within its power to bolster its own attractiveness in the eyes of the minority populations. Thus, although relations with Russia should be handled with care, it is not Russia's soft power that should be feared.

### Introduction

Ever since Estonia regained independence in 1991, relations with Russia have been fraught with tension. Disputes exist over border

treaties, transit arrangements, sharply differing official views of the Soviet period, gas prices, energy security, and the status of Russophone minorities; the list of problematic issues is long.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, anxieties over Russian designs, real and imagined, are high. To some extent, membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has allayed concerns over military security – although the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2014 was a stark reminder of why the alliance is considered so essential - while membership of the European Union (EU) fulfils a similar role in terms of economic and other forms of soft security. Other forms of encroachment, of a softer kind, are, however, still treated as a cause for concern (Crandall 2014). It is the possible threat from Russian soft power, and particularly its connection to minority issues that this article examines.

No issue has been as thorny and provoked as much emotion as the status of the Russophone minorities.<sup>2</sup> This dispute has soured not just state-to-state political relations, but has also been a source of tension within Baltic societies, and a source of international criticism.<sup>3</sup> Ethnic relations remain raw more than two decades

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<sup>1</sup> This article uses the term Russophone to denote the minority populations, as these groups, although having Russian as their lingua franca, also encompass Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and other peoples from the former USSR. The discursive labelling of all Russian-speakers as ‘Russians’ thus grossly simplifies the composition of a very heterogeneous group. Therefore, we also refer to the minorities in plural rather than singular.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the arguments and conclusions of this article may also be applicable to Latvia. Probably less so for Lithuania, which never experienced immigration at the same scale as the other two Baltic States. In 1991, Russophone minorities made up 38% of the population in Estonia and 48% in Latvia, but barely 10% in Lithuania. These proportions have decreased significantly since, partly due to the withdrawal of Soviet military forces stationed in these countries. In Estonia the Russophone population is now 31% (2010) and in Latvia 40% (2010).

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International published a rather notorious report in 2006 entitled *Linguistic Minorities in Estonia: Discrimination Must End*. Academic treatments of the Baltic States’ ethnic policies have also tended to be critical (e.g. Hughes 2005). And during the 2014 Ukrainian crisis Russian-American journalist Julia Ioffe rehashed many of the classic

after the restoration of independence, with many Russophones, most of whom arrived during the period of Soviet occupation, still classified as non-citizens.<sup>4</sup> Russia's official policy, as stated in the Compatriots Act of 1999<sup>5</sup> and in the official Foreign Policy Concept (MFA RF 2013), of still having responsibilities towards these minorities has not made for easier relations, but has rather stoked anxieties. While one might charitably choose to interpret this policy as an expression of concern for people who found themselves living outside of their nation state as the Soviet Union collapsed, many see an altogether more sinister picture. Indeed to some, Russia's is an ill-disguised policy of stirring up trouble in neighbouring countries so as to retain influence in the 'Near Abroad'.<sup>6</sup> On this reading, the minorities are primarily used by Russia as a policy instrument (e.g. Friedman, 2009).

Yet for all the securitising discourses in which the minority issue has been cast, in spite of Russia's advantages in soft power, and in spite of there seemingly being no shortage of issues with which Russia could have made hay, the minorities have by and large remained docile and have not to any great extent sided actively with Russia. The number of people seeking Estonian citizenship has grown in spurts, especially among younger people, and the

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stereotypes in a piece in *New Republic* entitled 'Ethnic Russians in the Baltics Are Actually Persecuted. So Why Isn't Putin Stepping In?'

<sup>4</sup> The majority of Russophones who remained in Estonia and Latvia did not automatically gain citizenship in 1991, but were, as part of the legal continuity doctrine, considered as immigrants and hence had to go through the standard naturalisation process. The biggest obstacle to this has been the minority population's generally poor grasp of the national languages. Given the much smaller size of Lithuania's Russophone minority, and that country's very different approach to citizenship issues, the minority issue was never as problematic there.

<sup>5</sup> This shorthand for 'The Law about the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning Compatriots Abroad, 1999', will be used throughout the article.

<sup>6</sup> Concern for local Russian populations was indeed the pretext used for the attack on Georgia in 2008 and first the invasion of Crimea and then annexation of the peninsula in March 2014.



number of people with undetermined citizenship has steadily decreased. So the question beckons, why is Russia's soft power not more effective with the minority populations? Especially considering that Russia has been much more effective in other former Soviet states?

In order to suggest answers to such questions, we will start by outlining the sources of Russian soft power in the Baltics, and how it can potentially influence opinion among the minorities. Secondly, we will discuss the reasons why those same factors that have given Russian soft power such success in other former Soviet states are not working in Estonia. In this we argue that it is not necessarily the intrinsic attraction of the Estonian state and society that does it, for there are indeed some very real and unfortunate problems relating to the minority issue. Rather, we propose the hypothesis that it is Estonia's success in European integration that obviates most of what Russia could offer; EU soft power, in other words, is a big part of what keeps the peace. Lastly, we argue that most of the measures Estonia could take to bolster its own attractiveness towards the minorities are firmly within its grasp: Slightly more confident and visionary minority policies coupled with simple good governance; nothing would do as much as these two to reduce the potential for Russian mischief and strengthen Estonia's hold on the minority populations' loyalty.

### **Russian soft power in Estonia**

Soft power has been defined by Joseph Nye as 'the ability to get others to want what you want' (Nye 2004, p. x). By this is meant the power of attraction, to entice and co-opt others to support your political agenda, to come to your side. Whereas hard power is all the tangible instruments of foreign policy, military force or economic sanctions, soft power is about making others want to support you, by making it appealing for them to do so. The means

are not coercive, nor for that matter rewards in a straight sense, but rather persuasive; making people want to side with you on their own accord. The currencies of soft power can be cultural appeal, if a country's culture resonates with people elsewhere. It can be political values, if these are considered desirable and are seen as being applied without hypocrisy. And lastly, policies that embody such values can be a source of soft power too (Ibid., p. 7, 10). Soft power can also target both elites and the general public. It is, in short, the power of image and reputation, and what such assets can contribute in addition to the more traditional tools of gaining influence in foreign policy. The contribution soft power can make to foreign policy success is of course context dependent. What may count as attractive about an actor in one set of circumstances may not necessarily, as we shall see below, do so in others.

When evaluating Russia's attempts to influence its 'Near Abroad', the former USSR, past research has tended to show it as relatively adept at using both hard and soft power (Popescu & Wilson, 2009). It has at varying times used both economic pressure on countries, e.g. gas supplies and trade sanctions, and it has even used military force, both in a coercive way, as with Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, and in a latent, reassuring way, as with Armenia in the whole period since 1991. Russia has also applied its considerable reservoir of soft power in several contexts with significant levels of success, and since 2012, Vladimir Putin has made soft power a declared cornerstone of Russian foreign policy (Maliukevicius 2013, p. 71; Tsygankov 2013, p. 261). On the whole, Russia has managed, by means both foul and fair, to frustrate EU outreach to several of the countries covered by the Eastern Partnership and to retain significant influence in the region. Its soft power resources have been drawn partly from continued cultural appeal, but also - hard as it may be to believe - from Russia's political example. The order imposed by Putin's

regime is, by many in the former USSR, seen as positive, when compared to the tumultuous upheavals of the post-communist era (Liik 2013, p. 44-45). Comparisons of its hard and soft power usage in countries like Moldova and Armenia, however, has also shown that hard power usage can impair a country's soft power and its chances of having influence (*ibid.*).

The presence of Russophone minorities in Estonia would intuitively suggest open avenues for Russian influence, as its cultural appeal and political stance, as expressed in the Compatriots Act, ought to be strong with these groups. On one reading, Russia's policy might be seen as a way of utilising its soft power to better the lot of ethnic Russian minorities, and to provide these groups with an alternative to their otherwise marginalised position. Others see a more sinister motive, arguing that Russia primarily uses the minority issue to create problems, provoke a reaction from local authorities, and use that as an excuse to reassert themselves forcibly in the region (Friedman 2009). The prospect of these minorities forming a 'fifth column' - and the wariness of Russian soft power that might conceivably make it so - has been a staple of nationalist discourse over the years, and has implicitly informed many policy choices (Crandall 2014, p. 45-49).

That Russian soft power is the most worrying for Estonia is partly a reflection on the fact that hard power has been largely ineffective. In spite of repeated provocations in Baltic airspace, and ominous military manoeuvres in the Pskov Oblast in 2009, the threat of military aggression has come to seem less credible than previously given Estonia's NATO membership (Ehin & Berg 2009).<sup>7</sup> As for economic coercion, it was tried during the 1990s

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<sup>7</sup> The drawing up in 2010 of more detailed contingency plans for the defence of Eastern Europe further assuaged Baltic anxieties about physical threats to their states. The 2014 Crimea crisis of course showed that such traditional threats are not entirely of the past, but it did also lead to NATO discussions on how to strengthen Baltic security.

when Russia operated the ‘double tariffs’ system. Contrary to intention, this policy rather had the effect of turning Estonia’s economy even more firmly to the West for export markets, lessening the dependence on Russia.<sup>8</sup> The 1998 Rouble crash underscored this development even further (Paas 2000). Only after the EU enlargement in 2004, when trade relations came to be regulated by the EU’s common commercial policy, did trade with Russia pick up significantly. Other attempts at coercion, like cyber-attacks and threats to energy security, have also failed to have major lasting impacts. Given these failures to coerce, Russia’s only true hope of influencing Estonia would have to be through shaping public opinion by casting itself as an attractive alternative to the current political order.

As for the political elites, some sections are to some extent swayed. The Centre Party (*Keskerakond*) is a mainstream political party, which speaks firmly for making better relations with Russia a foreign policy priority and who appeal strongly to the ethnic minorities.<sup>9</sup> The Centre Party has sought to forge links with likeminded political parties in Russia, even entering into a formal cooperation agreement with Vladimir Putin’s United Russia party.<sup>10</sup> This runs counter to the dominant line pursued by more national-minded politicians since 1991, which has emphasised western integration and a hard line against Russia. Such actions have frequently led to accusations those who favour

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<sup>8</sup> Estonia’s trade pattern changed dramatically. From being 90% directed towards the rest of the USSR in 1990, by 1998 more than 50% of exports was to the EU alone (Paas 2000; Purju 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Although mostly in opposition at the national level, the Centre Party has had several stints in government, most recently 2005-2007. It also has a strong presence in local government, e.g. having held the mayors’ position in Tallinn since 2005. Although closely identified with the minority issue, the Centre Party does not draw its support exclusively from minority voters, but also has significant crossover appeal.

<sup>10</sup> Since the onset of the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the Centre Party’s leadership has however been busy distancing themselves from this agreement.

rapprochement are Russian stooges, or even have been bought and paid by the Kremlin, although it has never been substantiated that there has been any criminal activity.<sup>11</sup> Proponents of rapprochement of course see themselves as trying to move *beyond* choosing between western integration and good relations with Russia, somehow seeking to have both. Similarly, they might argue, if one genuinely wishes rapprochement with another country, establishing contacts in that country is an obvious step to take. Most noteworthy in this context is that the very presence of proponents for rapprochement even among politicians of the ethnic majority shows that Russia's soft power has a certain effect in casting Russia, in the eyes of some at least, as a potentially attractive partner.

The group which would seem most susceptible to Russian soft power, however, is clearly the Russophone minorities. Language and culture are the most prominent means for making this soft power count. Most of the Russophone minorities inevitably feel their strongest sense of cultural community with Russia; literature, music and film in one's own language will obviously always have great appeal, especially when the cultural context is familiar. Hence the presence of the large Russian cultural space as the immediate neighbour means that the minority will probably always have their cultural orientation somewhat to the east. That is not to say that things are static; social scientists have long pointed to emerging divergences in attitudes and sensibilities between the Russian minority in Estonia and the citizens of Russia itself (e.g. Berg & Boman 2005; Feldman 2005), yet the two groups clearly remain closely culturally linked.

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<sup>11</sup> In December 2010 the Estonian Security Police made public that Edgar Savisaar, the Centre Party leader, had asked for money from Russia to finance the party's election campaign (Jaagant 2011). Yana Toom, today a member of the European Parliament, has also been accused of abetting Russia's Compatriot Policy. Neither has been charged with any criminal offences, and Toom succeeded, through legal action, in getting the Security Police to formally retract the accusation.

This tendency has been reinforced through television, as Estonia for almost 25 years invested little in Russian-language TV broadcasting (Shulmane 2006). Even during Soviet times, the Russophone minorities tended towards a higher consumption of TV relative to radio and newspapers than Estonians, thus making TV all the more crucial for reaching these groups (Vihalemm 2008). Moreover, another imbalance dating from Soviet times, but problematic in the current context, was that Russophone populations were catered to by the all-union TV channels, while broadcasting in other languages than Russian was then more of a sop to local sensitivities. There was therefore little local tradition of Russian-language broadcasting to build on after 1991 (Ruklis 2007). Attempts at establishing Russian-language broadcasting since then were intermittent, project-based, enjoying little official support, and were mostly cancelled again due to low uptake before they had had proper time to catch on with the viewers (Lauri 2014). Only on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2015, did ETV launch a new all-Russian language TV channel, ETV+.

The net effect was that for Russophone viewers wishing to watch TV in their own language, there was for a long time little local supply, but a wide selection easily available on the Russian market. Not surprisingly, the most popular channels among members of the minorities are Russian, and not those of the home country. This reinforces the cultural link between Estonian Russophones and Russia, as everything from children's programmes to movies and TV series are the same as seen by the average Russian viewer. It also means that Russian pop culture has a very big place among the minorities abroad. It's hardly a coincidence that at the annual Eurovision Song Contest, Estonia and Latvia have mostly given very high points to the Russian entry. When a country's popular culture is so readily accepted in another country, it usually tends to create and support more positive images among the recipient

groups. A few exceptions aside, the Russian cultural appeal has been more limited towards ethnic Estonians, although still relatively decent proficiency levels in Russian among the majority groups make them a potential target for media influence (Maliukevicius 2007). To the ethnic minorities, however, the cultural appeal is strong and probably inevitable, and in most cases, to be sure, by itself a quite innocuous factor. While the cultural exposure is one partial effect of Estonia's failure to establish significant local Russian language TV broadcasting sooner, another, much less positive effect has been to spur many from the minorities to rely on Russian broadcasting for news too, as only just under half follow the Estonian language media regularly (Seppel 2015, p. 90).<sup>12</sup> As the Russian news media has come ever more under the Kremlin's thumb, bias in news broadcasts has become ever more clear and unbalanced (Gelbach 2010) – as further evidenced by its coverage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014. As Russia's information policy towards the Baltic States has become more hostile too, it has served to create a certain disconnect between the perceptions of events of Estonians and the minorities. 51% of Russian speakers tend to trust the Russian TV channels they watch – a corresponding figure is 81% of Estonians trusting the main Estonian channels (Seppel 2015, p. 90). While the fact that 28% of Russian speakers do not trust the Russian channels does suggest a certain scepticism, the scale of the propaganda is not in dispute, and its potential impact cannot be blithely dismissed.

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<sup>12</sup> Prior to 2007 ETV only broadcast a short daily news bulletin in Russian. A few programmes were broadcast with Russian subtitles, but never in prime time. ETV 2, opened in 2007, increased the number of items in Russian, taking ETV's Russian-language broadcasting to 5.3% of the total – for which it is the most watched Estonian TV channel among the minority population, showing that there would be a market for such broadcasting. ETV+ was launched only in late September 2015, and it is not possible to assess its real impact at the time of writing, although surveys have shown that during its first week on the air, it was watched for at least a few minutes by a total of 219,000 people, with app. 97,000 having watched it daily during its first week (in a country of 1.3 million people) (*The Baltic Times*, 8 October 2015).

Certainly, the general perception of Russia differs between the minorities and the ethnic Estonians, the former being more favourably disposed than the latter. Similar effects can be seen regarding many of the political disputes between Russia and the Baltic States, and perceptions of Russia's international behaviour otherwise. In terms of Estonia's own international posture 78% of Estonians consider NATO membership essential for national security, while only 41% of Russophones do. 53% of the minorities, on the other hand, view better relations with Russia as the best guarantee for security, as opposed to only 18% of Estonians (Estonian MoD 2014, p. 4).<sup>13</sup> Similarly, members of the ethnic minorities tend to view the Soviet period more positively, and also subscribe in greater numbers to the version of history that holds that the Baltic incorporation in the USSR was voluntary and legal, thus echoing the official Kremlin line as espoused by the Russian mass media. These different historical narratives were also major factors behind the riots that rocked Tallinn in April 2007 over the relocation of the Soviet Era war memorial, the Bronze Soldier, and led to one of the worst deteriorations in Estonian-Russian relations since 1991 (Pääbo 2008).<sup>14</sup>

Such tendencies are extremely unfortunate, all the more so since they are avoidable. Research shows that people of the minority do in fact use what little TV and radio offerings there are.<sup>15</sup> And even

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<sup>13</sup> Roughly equal proportions, however, consider Estonia's own defence capability important (47% for Estonians, 41% for Russophones).

<sup>14</sup> That the row over the Bronze Soldier became as explosive as it did was arguably also a result of the government's own handling of the issue. The rhetoric employed in the run-up to the crisis was clearly one meant to underscore rather than smooth divisions in society. The statue issue had also already been used as a wedge in the run up to the parliamentary elections earlier that same year. Only as the tensions spilled over into violence in the streets did the government change tack and adopt a more conciliatory stance (Brüggemann & Kasekamp 2008).

<sup>15</sup> A full 61% say that they consider the Russian language news on ETV2 an at least somewhat important source of news, against 17% who do not. And Raadio 4, which



in Ida-Virumaa people who tend to distrust Estonian state institutions tend to trust Estonian Russian language media (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 33). Surveys also consistently showed that Russophones would in fact like to have a Russian-language TV channel in Estonia, however as late as 2011, 53% of Estonians were against it (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 20). Official attitudes changed rapidly during the 2014 Ukraine Conflict, as in May 2014 a working group under the Ministry of Culture proposed launching ETV+ in 2015 as a Russian-language only TV channel (Lauri 2014). By 2015, attitudes among the majority Estonian population had also shifted significantly, as now 55% were in favour of Russian-language TV broadcasting (Seppel 2015, p. 90). While such new initiatives are to be welcomed, it does not change that until very recently Estonia had largely ceded the airwaves.

With such advantages, it is interesting that Russia has not made more of its soft power despite periodic attempts to seek influence. Because there are some very real grievances to stir up, particularly the pervasive sense of alienation among the ethnic minorities. The continued non-citizen status of one fifth of the Russophone minority does not endear them to their states. Even among those who have obtained citizenship, as many as one-fifth still complain about not feeling truly accepted as equals by the titular populations, but only as second-class citizens (Võõbus 2009; Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 8). Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves's oft-quoted statement, usually taken out of context, that the Russian language is "the language of occupation" has hardly been helpful.<sup>16</sup> Related to this, several segments among

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broadcasts exclusively in Russian, is the most listened to radio station of all among the minority population. 44% consider it an important source of news, against 30% considering it unimportant (Seppel 2015)

<sup>16</sup> The president's office has always maintained that the seeming stridency of the statement came from the way the questioner framed the issue. Even so, it was criticised domestically for inappropriately conflating a language and a nation with the criminal

the minorities also dislike the language requirements that, in their view, have been imposed on them with little consultation and respect. Proposals to force Russian-language secondary schools to teach 60% of their curriculum in the national language have not been universally popular. The Estonian Minority Nations II Congress decried these reforms as being akin to assimilation rather than integration (Tamm 2010). Attitudes to the reforms, as they were being implemented, also showed significant differences between Estonian and Russophone perceptions of what their impact would be, the latter group being far more worried about the implications than the former (Saar 2008). The Tallinn Bronze Night riots of 2007 for their part showed that while ethnic relations may seem calm at most times, tension between the two major groups can quickly resurface.

And yet, apart from a few ‘usual suspects’ – well-known provocateurs and professionally aggrieved radicals – these grievances on behalf of the minorities do not exactly signal any wide-spread support for Russia either. Although Russian-speakers are unhappy with the decreasing status of their language in the school system, and many tend to feel unwelcome in their country of residence, they do not vote with their feet by moving to Russia. Nor have there ever, at any time, been Ukraine-style seizures of public buildings – not even during the 2007 Bronze Night incident. And much as the Kremlin tries posing as the defender of the disenfranchised minorities, such posturing is mostly met with shrugs by the people being ‘defended’. Likewise, the tendency is for more, not fewer people to seek Estonian citizenship, with only a trickle taking Russian citizenship. The first major wave of naturalisations was in the years 1993-1998, followed by a second wave after 2004. Russian citizenship was a popular option in the early 1990s, but has since dropped significantly.<sup>17</sup> In recent years,

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Soviet occupation regime.

<sup>17</sup> Early in his presidency Vladimir Putin stopped the practice of giving citizenship to

even a few Russian citizens permanently residing in Estonia sought citizenship, although still significantly outnumbered by applicants without any citizenship (Nimmerfeldt 2008). This would all suggest that Russia's soft power has its limits.

### **What holds Russian soft power back?**

How can it be that Russian soft power is not more effective? One need only to look at the situation in other former Soviet republics, such as Moldova and Armenia, for examples of Russia having been very adept at utilising both hard and soft power to claw back some of its lost influence. Many of the same kinds of advantages that Russia enjoys in the Baltics also exist in these countries, yet the results have been markedly different.

The hard power aspect is the most obvious difference; Estonia is, at least for large-scale conventional aggression, under the protection of NATO's collective defence, the Western members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are not. The certain knowledge that in a crisis the South Caucasus or Western CIS states would be on their own, as Ukraine has largely been during the conflict since early 2014, and the certainty that Russia knows it too and gambles on it, makes these states a lot more open to pressure than Estonia is. As one author puts it, Estonia would probably not have sought a confrontation over the Bronze Soldier had it not by then been enjoying the security of both NATO and EU membership (Steen 2010, p. 206). Similarly, being without the security in numbers offered by membership of the EU, the Western CIS states have to conduct their economic relationships with Russia bilaterally. The asymmetric interdependence between the sides makes for an advantageous Russian bargaining position.<sup>18</sup>

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people not resident in Russia. This was later changed again, when the policy on extra-territorial Russophone minorities was beefed up.

<sup>18</sup> Soft power can obviously not explain all things. For instance, Armenia's decision to

In addition, by not having full access to the EU's Single Market, or for that matter having even the prospect of eventual membership, the Western CIS states are simply more exposed than Estonia has been for many years.

It is worthwhile pausing briefly to distinguish soft power from the relatively new concept of 'hybrid warfare'. This term covers a range of irregular tactics, ranging from harassment and chicanery to invasions by 'little green men' or other special forces – typically not using national insignia, so as to ensure a degree of 'plausible deniability' – coupled with extensive propaganda and/or misinformation campaigns. The objective of such operations is often to simply sow chaos or to create incidents, which can then serve as pretexts for further intervention. By their very ambiguity, such campaigns can be very difficult to guard effectively against. It will certainly test NATO's responses, should ostensibly pro-Russian separatists suddenly occupy local administrative building in Ida-Virumaa, and local law enforcement be provoked into a violent over-reaction.

Yet, while soft power is the ability to change perceptions on the ground, and to encourage certain developments, hybrid warfare is very much usage of hard power instruments. It relies on military forces, and is offensive in nature. Moreover, it aims to create facts on the ground, or at least confusion as to the facts, whereas soft power, when present, would genuinely change people's minds. The target audience for hybrid warfare also varies; sometimes it is the local population, at other times it is an international audience that is being sought, with the local population being of secondary importance. Yet hybrid tactics can be particularly successful when

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abandon the Association Agreement with the EU in September 2013 was clearly the result of direct Russian pressure and the country's exposed geopolitical situation. One can perhaps instead infer Russian soft power in that the episode did not generate any significant popular blowback in Armenia.

soft power is strong locally. If home-grown protest movements are already in place, or emotions are running high over certain issues, Special Forces can blend in with the crowd and use it for their purposes, thus obscuring their own role.<sup>19</sup>

However, one should not mistake tactical successes for the long-term kind. In Ukraine, Russian hybrid warfare eventually helped make the mood in non-occupied Eastern Ukraine solidify into anti-Russian sentiment, ultimately undermining what soft power Russia might originally have held. Moreover, the circumstances of Ukraine in early 2014 will not be easily replicated elsewhere – especially not in Estonia, where state authority is much stronger than in Ukraine. Most importantly, Russian irregular tactics are less likely to work in the absence of some kind of significant home-grown movement sharing its aims. Occupations of administrative buildings, such as seen in Ukraine in early 2014, will most likely fall flat if not backed by a significant level of local unrest. As we have seen above, Russian soft power has not translated into that kind of militant support in Estonia.

In other parts of the former Soviet Union, Russia's cultural appeal is a major factor in its soft power. The cultural similarity with both Belarus and Ukraine is significant, and even as Ukraine seeks closer ties with the EU, it traditionally, at least until the events of early 2014, sought to maintain ties with Russia as well. In Moldova the governing elite remained, up until the election of a pro-western government in 2009, largely the same as in Soviet times, and was therefore quite 'Russified' (Crowther & Matonyte 2007).<sup>20</sup> Thus,

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<sup>19</sup> When in late winter/early spring of 2014, thousands of people in Eastern Ukraine came out in public protests – which were far more anti-Kiev than pro-Moscow – the general chaos provided an opportunity for such irregular tactics, something which the Kiev authorities proved ill-equipped to deal with.

<sup>20</sup> Even today, the pro-Russian opposition parties, who argue for abandoning the Association Agreement in favour of the Eurasian Customs Union, remain electorally competitive, as evidenced by the closeness of the 2014 parliamentary elections.

cultural openness plays one part, as does the general openness of Russia to closer integration with the Western CIS countries and their populations. Russia offers closer economic relations and free trade, and usually does so in a fairly straightforward way. This is in marked contrast to the EU, which is often heavy on formal process and short on substance. Visa-free travel, for example, has been high on the wish list of the Western CIS countries, but something that the EU has been dragging its feet on granting for several years. In contrast, Russia has had a more liberal approach, allowing people from the former Soviet Union not just to travel freely to, but also work freely in Russia (Popescu & Wilson 2009).<sup>21</sup> But while Russia can present itself in a more positive light through such measures to former Soviet states with no prospect of full EU integration, the situation is the opposite in the Baltic States which have achieved full membership.

Politically, many in the Neighbourhood countries look to Russia as a politically stable state, and a positive contrast to their own countries' rather chaotic politics (Liik 2013, p. 44-45). In Estonia, which has long since become a consolidated democracy, Russia's stability is typically viewed as being of a somewhat sinister nature. Having never resorted to the sort of illiberalism that has marked the rule of Vladimir Putin, Estonia has become an open society, where the rule of law is well observed and civil liberties respected. Russian-style stability is therefore a lot less attractive than it might be elsewhere. As the former Estonian minister for Education, Jevgeni Ossinovski (himself a member of the Russophone minority)<sup>22</sup> put it, "I don't know anyone who would say that Putin is their protector. Or that they would prefer to live in Russia

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<sup>21</sup> On the coercive side, Russia has dropped not too subtle hints that some of these arrangements may be reviewed should Ukraine or Moldova go ahead with their planned EU Association Agreements.

<sup>22</sup> In May 2015, Ossinovski assumed the leadership of the Social Democratic Party. He currently serves as Minister for Health and Labour.

instead of Estonia” (Puhl 2014). That somehow still does not fully explain why Russian soft power is not more effective with the ethnic minorities.

Part of the issue is that Russia suffers from a certain credibility gap with the very people whose interests they profess to protect. As much as the feeling of alienation many members of the ethnic minorities feel is real, many harbour sincere doubts that Russia’s interest in them is genuine. Interestingly, also, 65% of the Russophone minority do not even feel well-informed about the Compatriot Policy, and most are only interested in its cultural aspects (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 25). The erratic nature of Russia’s policies and investment, and the way this involvement always leads to intergovernmental squabbles, makes many wonder whether the Kremlin is just using them to stir up trouble for trouble’s own sake. Thus although 50% considered the policy positively, a third considered it harmful to their own situation (Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011, p. 25). Indeed there is also some evidence that Russian attempts at meddling has hardened attitudes among the Estonian political elite against greater inclusiveness, and thus actually harmed the status and interests of the minority populations (Schulze 2010, p. 368).

But the other side of Russia’s soft power towards the Western CIS, the offer of integration and free movement and travel, is also much less attractive in Estonia. To put not too fine a point on it, for someone from Belarus or Moldova, moving to Russia in order to escape bad governance and poor economic and social prospects in the home country is an attractive proposition. Not so in Estonia. Whatever feelings of being discriminated against members of the ethnic minorities may hold, their economic and material prospects would not be made brighter by moving east. Although Russia introduced a state financed repatriation policy in 2005, by 2009 only 20 families had moved there from Estonia (Koit 2009).

That does not mean, however, that Estonia is necessarily the preferred country of residence for the ethnic minorities. Previous studies have suggested that since EU accession, ‘exit’ of aggrieved minorities to the rest of the EU has become possible, and acts as a safety valve releasing built-up ethnic animosities that might otherwise lead to more overt conflicts (Hughes 2005). By having become part of an economic space that is far more advantageous and attractive than Russia, Estonia has thus managed to reduce Russia’s soft power significantly. No matter how poor the salaries, job security and public services that most people (majority and minority alike) in the Baltic states have experienced under the weight of government cutbacks, the better alternative is westward rather than eastward migration.<sup>23</sup> Precise motivations may vary – and socio-economic factors do tend to rank higher (55%) than identity-based ones (21%) (Saar Poll 2006, p. 42) – but it is clear that given the choice, more people will choose easy movement in Europe rather than in the post-Soviet space. Thus among the minorities three times as many would rather move to another EU country than move to Russia (Saar Poll 2006). This offers a partial explanation for the eagerness of many, especially younger people, to seek citizenship in Estonia rather than in Russia; there are simply more opportunities offered.

The EU has furthermore bolstered its appeal to the minority populations through support for policies protecting ethnic minorities. These are explicitly mentioned as part of the Copenhagen Criteria that must be met prior to accession negotiations, and are continuously monitored throughout the

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<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, different for those without any citizenship at all. They can only stay put or move eastward, but few have chosen the latter option. Although the Alien’s Passport issued to persons with undetermined citizenship allows the holder visa-free travel for shorter visits to Schengen countries, it does not bestow the same rights to residence and work in the EU that Estonian and Latvian citizens enjoy.



negotiating process.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the Baltic States, the EU made progress contingent on them implementing the recommendations of the OSCE and its High Commissioner for National Minorities (Hughes 2005, p. 749-751). EU pressure thus played a significant part in easing the conditions for the minority populations and forcing national elites towards more inclusive policies. Moreover, the EU is committed to the creation of an integrated Europe where people can move, settle and work freely without facing discrimination. These are also factors in shaping the positive perceptions of minority groups (in the Baltics and elsewhere) of the EU and the opportunities it offers as a way of changing the status they are assigned, with all it implies, in their home countries.

The trend towards minorities taking Estonian citizenship thus invites the conclusion that it is not exclusively because of the minorities' growing sense of belonging or of being truly accepted as equals. The other factor, of the EU providing the minorities with an alternative to their home countries, and thereby reducing the attraction of closer formal and political attachment to their 'nation' state, Russia, also must be considered. It suggests that when especially younger people seek citizenship, many do it for the rather pragmatic reason of using the chance of mobility the EU offers. That in turn becomes problematic for the state when considered together with another broad trend. Since 1991 Estonia has seen a population decline of 230,000 people, due to net out-migration, particularly among the young, coupled with low birth rates. Not only does the loss of many young people remove valuable skills from the national labour market (Estonian Human Resource Report 2010), it has also resulted in a declining and ageing population.<sup>25</sup> More or less equal numbers of Estonians and

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<sup>24</sup> The political criterion consists of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and adequate protection for minorities. The other criteria are about market economy and administrative capability.

<sup>25</sup> For the period 2001-2011 alone net out-migration was 45,000, while the natural

Russophones consider going abroad to work for a while, although it is estimated that Russophones are slightly more likely to follow through on the thought (64% to 54%) (Ministry of Social Affairs 2013, p. 15). Since 2008 the main reasons for leaving have been socio-economic rather than identity-based, but members of the ethnic minorities are less likely to eventually return than Estonians.

### **Bolstering Estonia's own attractiveness**

To note that the soft power of the EU plays a large role in trumping that of Russia, and that the attractions of Estonia are not necessarily what makes the difference for the ethnic minorities, is not to say that it cannot be any other way. In fact, the means for changing this situation and bolstering Estonia's attractiveness in the eyes of its minority populations are very much in its own hands.

The first, and most obvious, starting point is good governance; making Estonia a more attractive place to work and live in. Irrespective of ethnicity, that is primarily a question of sound and responsible economic management, better public services, better living standards for all, and more predictability for the citizens. Both the titular and minority populations care about such issues, and let them influence their decisions on whether to move abroad or stay in the home country. Especially during the economic crisis since 2008 most of these virtues have been in short supply, and have led many, regardless of ethnicity, to question, in the face of plunging living standards, if there is a future for them at all in their own countries. It has long been recognised that the minorities' allegiance can also be strengthened by their experience of social opportunity and material well-being, while a lack of such things is fertile ground for populist pandering. But longer term economic

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negative population growth was put at 32,000 (2012 census).

growth will not come off cheap labour costs alone, but will require investments in infrastructure and human capital. This brings us to the point of why better integration policies are needed, both for their own sake, but also because they can become a source of attraction and loyalty.

The overwhelming obstacle to better integration is a lack of confident and forward-looking policies to bring it about. As Steen (2010, p. 209) points out, the EU may have forced national elites to soften their policies, but they have not changed their underlying attitudes towards the issue. Much policy is still being conducted from a sense of insecurity and a need to protect and assert the national culture, language and status, almost as if it was still under threat (Golubeva 2010). Moreover, the main fear among elites has often been to be seen as being influenced by Russia, resulting in a reflexive hardening of attitudes whenever Russia has made noises on the minority issue (Schulze 2010, p. 378). Such sentiments are quite understandable given the historical context. Moreover, the somewhat exclusionist policies of the early 1990s were clearly necessary at that time in order to secure the restoration of statehood on the majority's terms and to break the link to Soviet practices. But they have equally clearly served that purpose by now, and no longer provide a helpful basis for a future-oriented policy. This article is not the place for setting out a full set of detailed policies, but a few of the core elements of a more forward-looking strategy that would boost Estonia's attractiveness towards its own minority populations can nonetheless be outlined. They would need to start with acknowledging the obvious: That Estonia is not, and never will be an ethnically homogenous state.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> While one should certainly not dismiss the severe impact of the Soviet era's forced demographic changes, one should also not assume that Estonia was ever a truly ethnically homogenous state either. Already in the 1930s it had a degree of multiculturalism that Western Europe didn't reach until the late 1980s. Thus Estonians in 1934 made up 88% of the population and Russians 8%, with Germans, Swedes and Jews prominent among the remainder. The Interwar republic also introduced a feature, novel and progressive for

Instead of, as some nationalist politicians are wont to do, bemoaning multiculturalism, which is already an established fact, the challenge is to make it work. This is not to suggest the somewhat extreme Swedish model of making multiculturalism the official ideology – and relegating the titular nations to being merely the largest single ethnic group – but only to properly institutionalise it in ways that both sides find acceptable. Clearly, there will, and should, always be red lines for the majority, and such things as fully equal status for the Russian language would be going much too far. The primacy of the titular nations' languages should and will remain firmly entrenched, and one should not contemplate a return to the Soviet era's forced bilingualism.<sup>27</sup> But some form of recognised secondary status for the Russian language could surely be crafted if the will was there.

The most important single element in such an exercise would be to change the discourse in which the issue is cast. It is almost paradoxical that while on the one hand the Estonian Constitution (§50-52) provides significant guarantees for minorities, the actual status of Russian language and culture seems deliberately left in flux. The main problem is thus not always in the practices on the ground, but that the atmosphere surrounding the issue all too often gives the impression of the status quo being just temporary until the next change chipping away at people's identity is rammed through. Codification of the current status, however, would in most instances mean little more than giving *de jure* recognition to what is anyway taking place (see also Skerrett 2013, p. 14), and could be rhetorically cast as the majority offering statutory *protection*

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its time, of 'cultural autonomy' for minority populations.

<sup>27</sup> In Latvia, where Citizens' Initiatives are possible, a referendum was held in 2012 on whether to change the constitution to make Russian an official language on the same level as Latvian. On a 71% turnout, 75% voted to reject the proposal; a margin so big that even if all stateless people and Russian citizens with residence permit had participated and voted for the change, it would still not have been carried.

of the Russian language.<sup>28</sup> Of course, if such a law is to avoid being merely an Orwellian use of words, it must place itself firmly on the side of *integration* rather than *assimilation*, which is what many Russophones still suspect is the majority's real agenda. To counter such fears, the majority would have to debate their visions of integration, and do so in an inclusive and cooperative process, instead of treating the minorities merely as passive objects of policy. Such a law, if properly framed, could create a sense of certainty for the minorities, and would be one the majority would be careful about changing too frequently without full and thorough consultation.

Such an approach would have three major advantages. First, it would signal confidence on the side of the majority; that they are willing to guarantee and protect the minorities' culture and heritage. Secondly, it would seek to actively utilise the fact that Russophones in the Baltic States already have different identities from those living in Russia (Berg & Boman 2005; Feldman 2005). Strengthening the discourse that e.g. Estonian-Russian or Estonian-Ukrainian is an acceptable identity and completely distinct from the Russian state would signal inclusivity. Thirdly, it would be in line with Estonia's pre-war practise, when their minority laws were very progressive by international standards. Such changes as suggested here might not be progressive by 21<sup>st</sup> century standards, but would nonetheless rob many of Estonia's international critics of most of their best arguments.<sup>29</sup> It would, moreover, give the political elite something positive to point to rather than having to defend their actions.

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<sup>28</sup> This could, for instance, include giving more explicit approval and support to many existing practices in Russian-speaking areas, like state and municipal authorities also offering their services in Russian, or municipal councils holding their meetings in Russian, but afterwards making a protocol available in Estonian. It would, of course, also define the presence of the Russian language in education.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes 2005 is a good example, as is the aforementioned 2006 Amnesty International report.

Another more confident step in line with this approach, which could bolster Estonia's attractiveness, would be a more systematic approach to giving people the means for integration without signalling, even if unintentionally, an attack on their culture. The numerous reforms to Estonian schools aimed at bringing in more subjects taught in the majority language have been controversial when enacted and the evidence of their benefits to the minority populations has not been entirely unambiguous.<sup>30</sup> Authorities have certainly not been very successful at combatting the perception among minorities that language requirements are forced on them. A clearer overall vision of integration might help them understand the point of it, and convince people that integration is a two-way process, and not a one-way street. Perhaps the Estonian government and parliament ought to change the discussion away from being about which percentages of classes are taught in which languages to whether they are delivering as they should in terms of providing the best possible quality language teaching to children. Research has shown that many Russophone children are still not sufficiently proficient in the language when having to study in Estonian at the high school level, suggesting that basic language teaching at primary school level is not up to standard (Kirss & Vihalemm 2008). This is particularly problematic in places like Ida-Virumaa towns, where the proportion of native Estonia-speakers is already low. Others point out that there is a lack of kindergarten places and other pre-school offers that might help early acquisition of language skills (Estonian Human Resource Report 2010). In like vein, more could be done to make language classes available free of charge for adults wanting to learn. Capping the number of classroom hours, and making reimbursement for courses

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<sup>30</sup> For opposing views on the 2007 Latvian reform, which had similar aims and has been a frequent point of comparison in the Estonian debate, see Kruma 2010 and Skerrett 2013.

contingent on successful completion somewhat defeats the purpose.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, it was a very positive step to introduce proper TV broadcasting in Russian, as happened with the launch of ETV+ in late September 2015, thereby providing a decent alternative to the propaganda of Kremlin-controlled Russian TV stations. If anything, the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 has shown the importance of being able to counter Russian propaganda and provide timely information and fair news coverage to people. Moreover, the most important aspect of increasing the number of programmes offered is gradually building the habit among the target audience, and the influence that media usage can establish with the viewing/listening public. One must therefore hope that ETV+ will be properly prioritised in order to effectively meet its objective. Information is the key to winning hearts and minds. And measures such as the ones outlined in this section would, at a relatively small cost, do much to enhance Estonia's attractiveness in the eyes of the minority populations.

## Conclusion

The conclusion on the themes above is that Russian soft power is not something to dismiss lightly, yet a few home truths about its efficacy should not be forgotten. Soft power does not work everywhere and at all times; it works in a context. In the Estonian context, whatever Russia has to offer, and what it stands for, will always be seen in comparison to what is already there, and Russia does not come off best in that comparison. Moreover, European integration seems to ensure that even the Russophone minorities

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<sup>31</sup> In Estonia, people will be compensated for 120 hours of classes if the exam is passed. However, experts consider that at least 240 hours should be covered (Human Resource Report 2010). A more radical idea would of course be to simply make the classes free of charge, rather than have people pay at all.

look unlikely to ever reorient back to Russia. To be sure, the minority issue can still be a source of occasional trouble, and dormant tensions exist and can be inflamed periodically. But it has lost its potency compared to the situation ten or twenty years ago, not least under the competing influence of Europe.

The decline in Russian soft power in the Baltics should be an opportunity for Estonia to strengthen its own position and its hold on the minority population's loyalty. Overcoming the past - and the traumas that many associate with the presence of the Russophone minorities - is never easy; all of the measures outlined above are sketchy, and none would be easy to implement overnight. Furthermore, all can easily be labelled as concessions from the majority to the minorities; and why should the majority bother? One answer might be that the tactical retreat to the moral high ground is sometimes the winning strategy. Another might be that facing down charges of making concessions is precisely what political leadership is about. Taken together, such measures as outlined in this article could take much of the heat out of ethnic relations, and hence do much to improve the image the Russophone minorities hold of their country. That would be for the good of Estonia, and would in turn undermine any residual soft power and populist influence Russia could wield. There are many reasons to fear Russia, and many reasons for Estonia to treat its big neighbour with extreme caution. However, provided a few prudent steps are taken, it will not be Russian soft power that threatens Estonian security.

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## LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEMPORARY MILITARY: MAVERICKS IN THE BUREAUCRACY?

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**ABSTRACT** In this reflective paper, we study the tension between leadership and institutional control in contemporary Western military organizations. More precisely, we focus on two (out of five) NATO measures of merit, namely the Measure of Performance (MOP) and the Measure of Effectiveness (MOE), and how they manifest this tension at the operational level. We suggest that fixed leadership roles are not enough – what is required instead is an adaptive, pragmatic and even rebellious attitude towards the military bureaucracy in the contemporary, ever-changing conflict landscape.

### Introduction

Military organizations are distinct from other types of organizations due to the content of their operations, as well as their methodology of using force (Lang 1965). Some scholars emphasise the separation of the military from broader society, as well as the difficulties involved in gaining access to relevant data and publishing research findings (Soeters et al. 2014). In this reflective paper, we assess the relationship (and conflict) between two institutionalised measures of merit and operational leaders in

Western military organizations. One of the authors of this paper spent six months participating in an ISAF mission in Regional Command North HQ in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan in 2013 and 2014. This experience of daily work as a colonel in the military headquarters resonated with Peter Drucker's well-known insight: Leadership in an organization entails 'doing the right things', whereas management concerns itself with 'doing things right' (see, for instance, Drucker 2008). In this paper, our interest lies in the administrative culture of contemporary Western military organizations and how leadership is manifested at the operational level.

In the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), two measures are used above all in evaluating the performance of any system: the Measure of Performance (MOP) and the Measure of Effectiveness (MOE). These two concepts from the operational planning process are – we argue – the most important measures of successful mission execution (Research and Technology Organization 2005).<sup>1</sup> The aim of this paper is to discuss the *de facto* leadership culture of Western military organizations. We achieve this by presenting a critical examination of NATO measures of merit in the light of contemporary leadership theories and practice. By juxtaposing leadership literature, NATO manuals and practical experience gained in the field, we identify and shed light on how the commanding officer stretches or even bypasses the official protocol in achieving the objectives, and how well the organization methodically follows the orders set by the management. In other words, the process manual is often in open conflict with how things are done in practice. Moreover, we discuss the fact that, at times, operational leaders have to work in a so-called 'grey' area in bypassing the publicly negotiated, official mandate that trickles down from the political process of national-level leadership. In the

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<sup>1</sup> NATO measures of merit form a hierarchy of five measures. In this paper, we focus on MOP and MOE only.



process, we address a series of questions relating to the legitimacy and desirability of leadership practices in military institutions, as well as the way in which these organizations are able to accommodate these ‘maverick’ leaders.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we review leadership theories in general, as well as the leadership/institutional tension in the military context. Second, we assess how this tension is manifested in the context of contemporary, open societies. Third, we discuss fixed leadership practices in a highly institutionalised military context, focussing on the contemporary conflict landscape. The paper concludes with a call for a more pragmatic or adaptive form of military leadership.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Leadership studies**

Plutarch (1st century) was one of the first narrators of the lives and deeds of the ‘great men’ of antiquity, initiating a genre that combined the (auto)biographies of leaders, general history and fiction. As interest in social phenomena started to emerge after the Enlightenment (and as severe social problems started to emerge in the aftermath of industrialisation), Thomas Carlyle articulated his understanding of leadership with his Great Man theory (1841) – an understanding of charismatic, visionary and skilled individuals that shape the destinies of their societies. Max Weber, in turn, is often considered to have initiated the leadership theorising vis-à-vis the sociology of organizations (1947) with his view of charisma as mirroring the qualities of the society in question (Islam 2009). Weber’s work could also be seen as an attempt to ‘save’ organizations from powerful and aspiring charismatics. Since then, Weber’s articulation has been acknowledged as providing a broader framework for understanding charismatic leadership (Jones 2001), supplemented by behavioural views (Conger and Kanungo, 1987), as well as those pertaining to the ‘need’ for

leadership (De Vries et al. 2002), among others.

Classical views and their developments were not unanimously accepted, however. Herbert Spencer was an early critic of Carlyle, noting that “[t]hose who regard the histories of societies as the histories of their great men...overlook the truth that such great men are the products of their societies” (1891: 268). Further, mainstream, modern leadership theories were criticised for being one-sidedly romanticised and ‘heroic’ in nature as early as the 1980s by Meindl and colleagues (1985). According to the ‘romance’ view of leadership (for a review of this genre, see Bligh et al. 2011), the successes and hardships of organizations are oversimplified and (wrongly) explained solely through the performance or behavioural traits of their leaders. Moreover, the orthodoxy of leadership as the defining factor of an organization was challenged (Gronn 2003), along with the inherent conceptual difficulties ingrained in charismatic and transformational leadership (Yukl 1999). Leadership was also criticised as being an ‘alienating social myth’ (Gemmill and Oakley 1992), a regressive wish to disregard one’s consciousness and responsibility within an organization. It should be noted, however, that despite all the criticism, notions of the charismatic leader prevail in the leadership discourse – both popular and academic. It seems that ‘charisma’ belongs to the definitional conceptual landscape of Western culture. In a sense, the contextual view of leadership (Fairhurst 2009; Ladkin 2011) is aimed at understanding the structuring of this leadership landscape. According to this view, leadership has to be firmly understood in the context of a leader’s followers, as leadership does not exist detached from its context. In its simplest form, this view is merely an acknowledgement that local, cultural and historical factors *do* make a difference – challenging the old view emphasising the behaviour of the particular leader.

Contemporary research is looking for a new disposition to adopt towards understanding leadership, and has arrived at a discursive

reading of heroism. Unsurprisingly – and despite the increased attention to the context of leadership – post-heroism has its share of problems. For instance, Keith Grint has drawn attention to the sacred nature of leadership (2010) – viewing it as an enabler, in a sense an essential ingredient in the social construction of leadership – rather than to the demise of effective leadership. Nevertheless, naïve post-heroism is in evidence in the popular accounts of leadership. Leader archetypes continue to shape their followers’ understanding of the world and the social formation, as well as themselves within those spheres (Alvesson and Spicer 2011; Hatch et al. 2005; Keegan 1988; Kuronen and Virtaharju 2015), despite the outspoken, conceptual (and academic) criticisms. It could be argued that a productive relationship with these different leader archetypes would mean diluting their ontological correspondence in the strictest sense of the analogy. These archetypes might be treated as cultural, epistemic accounts that aim at articulating the nature or functioning of a particular leader in a given cultural and historical context. In a sense, these leader archetypes constitute an extension of the contextual view of leadership. However, even if we assume that the contextual view of leadership is ‘right’, the open question remains: why, despite all of our enlightenment, intellect and moral righteousness, do symbolic displays of leadership inspire such a multitude of people? Assuming there is one, what is the ‘magic ingredient’ in heroism that appeals to something ‘deep’ inside human beings (for a classic treatment of totalitarianism, see Reich 1970)?

### **The context: Leadership-institutional tension in the military**

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) implements ‘the Effects-Based Approach to Operations’ in Afghanistan in an effort to measure performance on a wide range of issues (see Rietjens et al. 2011: 329–338 for further details). In their treatment, the authors highlight two streams of leadership – ‘intuition-driven’ and ‘assessment-driven’. Alternatively, the NATO handbook

(Research and Technology Organization 2005) defines five Measures of Merit (MOM) in the following manner:

- 1) Dimensional Parameters (DP): the properties or characteristics inherent in the physical systems or force elements.
- 2) Measures of Performance (MOP): measure how well a system or force element accomplishes a defined task. It is assessed by the combination of Dimensional Parameters in an appropriate model.
- 3) Measures of Effectiveness (MOE): measure how well systems or force elements accomplish their assigned tasks within an operational context.
- 4) Measures of Force Effectiveness (MOFE): measure the degree to which a force meets its objectives. In this context a force may be any organization or group of organizations, civilian or military, generally under coherent direction.
- 5) Measures of Policy Effectiveness (MOPE): measure how well the overall objectives of the mandating authority are achieved.

Here, we will focus on how a system or force element accomplishes its defined tasks within an operational context. The idea is that the assigned task of a force becomes reality through a context; in other words, MOP becomes through MOE. In this paper, MOP is the key metric of military leadership, whereas MOE is the area of the managerial process associated with the mid- and higher- level goals and objectives of the whole military-political campaign. Naturally, leadership is connected to management and vice versa (see for example Gill 2012: 6–8, among many others). It should also be noted that both leadership and management could be found in all five MOMs. For the purposes of this essay, however, decision-making and execution of the political mandate are reduced to the relationship between MOP and MOE. This is the crucial relationship whereby the field reality of the military

operation is connected to the system of control. DPs are the single target or a part of the military-weaponry systems, while MOFEs and MOPEs are the higher-level abstractions of MOE. DPs and MOPs are closely aligned with the physical and human environment of the battlespace, whereas MOEs, MOFEs and MOPEs are structured to support the conceptual (mind and time) dimension of the campaign design. The political-military campaign formulation and implementation are complex interactive processes in which politics, values and organizational cultures and management styles determine or constrain decisions at the higher levels. Leaders have to form judgements on various unfamiliar and difficult issues while factoring in technologies, limited resources, societal attitudes, cultural differences, government regulations and environmental risk issues. As in any strategy process, they form judgements on organizational structures, systems, staff, and bureaucracies (for the strategy process in general, see Lampel et al. 2013).

Here, we focus on two measures in particular, MOP and MOE. As evaluative criteria in the military context, both are associated with the cohesion of leadership. At the operational level, MOE is essential, as the politically-laden execution has to follow the strict rules of engagement, international agreements and a variety of other norms. At the higher level, MOE often reduces and frames how the sublevel leaders may fulfil their MOP. Thus, in the contemporary military context, normative measures represent a way of understanding and communicating the manner in which the organization is running its institutionalised set of practices. Christopher Coker understands war as a three-fold concept: it is simultaneously an instrumental (rational states forcing their will upon others), existential (warriors need it to affirm their humanity) and metaphysical (sacrifice – death with meaning) concept (Coker 2004: 6). With respect to the leadership literature outlined above, MOP could be seen as the measure that has historically been associated with leaders and leadership. Moreover, we could

perceive the talk of ‘charismatic leadership’ as the first step away from the assumption that leadership inevitably has *everything* to do with the individual leader. In this light, understanding organizations may be seen as a modernist-rationalist reaction to the pre-modern and irrational cult of ‘great men’, embraced by the primitive people of the past – a project of technologized enlightenment of the societies emerging from the horrors of two world wars. With respect to military organizations, it should be kept in mind that the ideology of bureaucratic control has trickled down from above to military organizations, which are reflections of the corresponding societies they serve. Within these organizations, there is an inherent tension between a culture that endorses heroism and the explicit professional metrics that emphasise control.

Dichotomising MOP and MOE further, we could argue that strong and visible commanders are typically represented as the embodiments of the leadership aspect of the matter (MOP), whereas their headquarters play the management role in the operations, engaging in planning, mission execution and control (MOE). From the perspective of deeper emotions, the commander is a metaphor of the agentic, organizational will – while the HQ illustrates the will to realise given directions (obedience). This dichotomy is accentuated in battle situations in which (depending on time and/or changes in the battle) there is often no time to manage the bureaucratic dimension, with leadership being the only solution. How the HQ works largely depends on the commander’s individual way of using the information it provides. For instance, if the commander is very well aware of the details in the field, the HQ has more time to concentrate on the fulfilment of MOE. If the commander is inexperienced and unaware of the field details, the HQ has to provide much more support. The temporal aspect is also an issue here, as the threat often intensifies over time. Taking risks may result in considerable successes or losses on the

battlefield, but in the highly institutionalised contemporary military context, the commander risks their future career even after a successful operation, if things are not done ‘by the book’ (Coker 2002).

From a cultural perspective, armies are reflections of the societies from which they are drawn (Condell and Zabecki 2008: 6–8). The study of WWII propaganda has established that “...most men are members of the larger society by virtue of identifications which are mediated through the human beings with whom they are in personal relationships” (Shils and Janowitz 1948: 315). In the context of historical military thinking, this is significant for the functioning of military systems. In fact, the greater cultural framework shapes the organizational level in general: social order is sustained by “...at least partial consensus about how things are to be perceived and the meanings for which they stand” (Hatch, 1997: 42). For instance, we see that the nationalist-romanticist tradition of German culture is apparent in the German military. A classic German account of the Second World War combat philosophy is based on so-called *Truppenführung* (unit command), according to which war is “...an art, a free and creative activity founded on scientific principles. It makes the very highest demands on the human personality”. In the chaos of war, incalculable elements may often have a decisive influence on victory or defeat. According to this line of reasoning, the German approach to war emphasised the importance of the battle (or mission). At this operational level (which was rather small-scale considering the totality of the world wars), *Auftragstaktik* (mission command) was based on the idea of strong relationships between the military unit and its commander. These relations would be of the utmost importance in training and controlling the armies successfully.

Even today in the contemporary NATO organization, a commander can tell their subordinates *what* to do and *when* to do it

through individual agency (MOP), but not necessarily tell them *how* to do it (MOE). This is possible only if the leader can understand *why* the unit has this kind of task. The unit leaders can be seen more as coaches and teachers than pure commanders – at least their contemporary mode of communication is far from the historical understanding of ‘command’. As the WWII field manual suggests, they must live with their troops and share their dangers and deprivations, their joys and sorrows. Only then can they acquire first-hand knowledge of the combat capabilities and needs of their soldiers (Condell and Zabecki 2008: 4–5).

Keith Grint has pointed to the potential detriment of concentrating on combat amidst large-scale military campaigns (“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing” writes Berlin 2013: 1; Grint 2014 continues from this metaphor). For Grint, the ‘cult of combat’ was one of the determining factors that contributed to Germany’s eventual defeat in the Second World War. Using Archilochus’ classic metaphor of the hedgehog and the fox, he argues that the Allied ‘fox’ was able to defeat the German ‘hedgehog’ thanks to wider attention to, and understanding of, the situation and other contextual determining factors. The fact that the hedgehog was rarely defeated on the battlefield did not prevent the Germans from losing the totality of the war.

In our contemporary times, the media-fed Western populations (and politicians) rarely have personal experiences of war. Despite this, politicians wish to control the military more closely in order to avoid ‘collateral damage’ (*Collateral murder* 2010). Global information networks enable the real-time participation of a vast number of people, thus rendering institutional leaders incapable of controlling information as effectively as in the past. Today, it also seems that the charisma of an active leader is not enough to build trust if the facts and figures are not in line with the opinion shared by the general public. It seems that the Western political discourse



has been taken over by the sensibility of administration, which does not evoke the emotional register of the general population. We are left with the question of *why* the bureaucratic side of normative measures is prioritised in assessing the institutional state of affairs. Why is initiative-seeking leadership often socially punished – to the extent of actively avoiding notable leadership acts in military organizations?

### **The x-ray of openness in contemporary Western societies**

The military context in general, and the battlefield in particular, is where the tension between leadership and bureaucratic control comes to light. It is also close to the fundamental conflict between civil societies and the military – a good example being the ongoing controversy over secret detainment facilities and interrogation methods used by the United States in their ‘War on Terror’. The role of the media is also significant – the general audience prefers to see the military organization in action using minimal kinetic power and solving the conflict swiftly with minimal casualties. The prolonged suffering of innocent people in the conflict area cannot be condoned – no matter how charismatic and skilful the leader might be (Munro 2005). Once again, the amount of available time the commander has – or feels that they have – becomes relevant. The one who takes ‘the lead’ is also the one who shapes any given situation. Obtaining, maintaining and utilising the initiative over the enemy are in the interests of any commander. As there is often little or no time to play ‘by the book’ in live situations, military organizations might be unable or unwilling to play by the rules established by the civil society. Thus, timing is an important factor in the engagement process. Soldiers aim to play by the rules of combat, which can also lead to problems in the ‘new’ conflict landscape, where non-state and hybrid operatives are common and may or may not abide by the same rules.

From the operational perspective, the tragedy often unfolds when either a leadership initiative or a management process assumes too

strong a role (or their respective evaluation processes vis-à-vis the whole system are flawed). Sometimes the impatient commander feels as if there is no time to wait for HQ to develop and execute the plans and procedures 'by the book', or the unit is not yet equipped and trained. Another pitfall based on the commander's lack of competence is the use of 'mission-type' leadership and an attempt to micro-manage and control all the details, using the latest technological solutions. In fact, evidence from air force pilots suggests that errors are manifested in unexpected events but nevertheless are embedded in habitual behaviour and learned-by-heart chains of action (Catino and Patriotta 2013). In other words, outlier occurrences expose the inherent flaws in the process. This gives rise to an overt conflict between the pragmatic leading of changing situations and adherence to the procedure manual. How are members of the organization able to evaluate what to do if institutionalised requirements contribute to potentially detrimental ends?

From the perspective of leader emotions, the commander is tempted to trust the likeminded, emotionally committed officers in HQ that support his or her leadership. This often means that the rest of HQ becomes marginalised by this new sub-organization and the adherent organizational processes. Typically, when an ineffective organization or institution has not been under firm leadership and faces an urgent need to act, the new commander may be in a position to assume power without much information about the real reasons for the inefficiency. He or she has no time to investigate the challenges of the management process and, more often than not, the result will be of a temporary nature only, leaving the leadership performance muted. This leads us to an understanding that the art of leading is based on a balance between efficiency and performance – achieving much while using only a certain amount of organizational resources. The successful commander has understood the pragmatic dimension of his

actions by combining his creative action with the processual execution of orders from HQ.

### **Fixed roles of leadership in the changing conflict landscape**

This brings us to military leadership roles. In his book *The Mask of Command* (1988), John Keegan analyses different commanders and their leadership styles. For him, being a general is much more than commanding armies in the field. Keegan argues that the idealised roles of a commander of a military institution include that of king, priest, diplomat, thinker or doer, and that the leader may be an intellectual rather than an executive. Viewed in this light, it is rather strange that the general audience seems to view the military organization as a stereotype of a tightly managed institution. Studying military history reveals that in addition to a plurality of roles and identities, the general often has a dual role, emerging both as a symbol of the society that sends its youth into battle, as well as a guiding father figure. A vigilant leader builds a strong bond between the whole society and their organization, creating a mindset that motivates soldiers to follow them into war.

The commander, however, bears the ultimate and absolute responsibility for the outcomes of using power through immediate violence – a situation that favours a pragmatic stance towards operating procedures (and, in fact, in the event of an *ad post facto* inquiry, an assessment of conduct is made with reference to the procedure manual). In a sense, it is also a form of accountability, albeit a much more categorical one than in other organizational contexts. It seems unlikely that people would take on responsibilities over which they have limited personal influence. The ‘iron cage’ of institutional control has the potential to cause backlashes: rebellion within the organization need not necessarily be visible. It may appear in the guise of ‘doing things right’, yet in a completely different way from that which the creators of the orders ever imagined. Departures from the code of conduct are many, sometimes visible and often deeply influencing all aspects of

the crisis landscape. The potential for such departures should duly be taken seriously, and addressed by means other than merely increasing institutional procedures.

Echoing Weber, the tension between the administrative process and leadership renders both more apparent. In a way, performing leadership in a 'live' situation reveals an anarchic tendency – a will to challenge the status quo. From this perspective, successful military leaders have to be somewhat anarchistic by nature, while taking the organizational culture and praxis into account. However, it appears that a minority are willing to increase their stress level and put their career on the line by behaving thusly. Such a leader needs to be a *rebel*; someone able and willing to challenge the norm. A recent neuropsychological personality study suggests that extraversion, openness and low agreeableness were typical predictors of 'maverick' individuals. Defined as individuals that "engage in creative, dynamic, risk-taking, disruptive, and bold goal-directed behaviours" (Gardiner and Jackson 2012: 498), mavericks appear to be less neurotic and consistently risk-seeking, even when facing hardships. As consistent and self-assured right-brainers (this brain hemisphere dominance predicts creativity), their creativity is not hampered by difficulties. Moreover, as it seems to be a combination of both biological and social contributors, the issue of maverick leadership becomes a question of choosing the right people and socialising them accordingly through education.

Oddly, the value of taking responsibility (or challenging norms, for that matter) seems to be disappearing from Western societies. This resonates with how Western societies value their leaders more through the register of normative institutions than through ethical considerations – an echo of the diminishing importance of religion in the West. The 'lack of feeling' is also witnessed in the way in which Western audiences in particular prefer video-game-like, rapid, 'surgical' operations that do not cause casualties on their

own side. This serves to play down the significance of military organizations developing information and ‘cyber’ capabilities. Using non-kinetic influence against the adversary is called for in order to avoid the real face of brutal warfare, as exemplified in the spectacle of the Gulf War when TV audiences worldwide saw the combat between Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi military units and the Allied Forces, while Saddam remained in power (Munro, 2005).

Despite leadership’s major role in military education, contemporary warfare is a highly institutionalised social practice. Unintuitively, taking lives is the outcome of combining careful military management and leadership; war needs to be followed through an institutionalised, administrative process. Before soldiers can kill, both management processes and leadership initiatives have to be aligned well with the shared understanding of the society in question. Historically speaking, there have been many models of warfare (Huhtinen 2012). Ideally, for a military organization, this means that *both* the organizational processes (institutions, structure, management) *and* the leadership are superior compared to those of the enemy. At times, the rational and normative (management) nature of warfare (embodied by Hector of Troy) is emphasised, while at other times the intuitive, subconscious-emotional and leadership nature of warfare comes to the fore (exemplified by the Greek hero, Achilles) (Coker 2002). We argue that MOE is the rational process by which the battle is weighed up and controlled, whereas MOP draws more on the narrative and qualitative aspects of evaluating the command performance in combat.

In the contemporary conflict landscape, there are two new dimensions to war – the rise of insurgencies and the Internet. Cyberspace, private security companies, non-governmental organizations as well as the general public have all assumed focal roles in recent military conflicts (Caforio 2013: 9). Consider, for instance, the developments in Ukraine in early 2014. The manner in which Western military organizations are prepared to act

revolves around them being committed to the minimum use of force, and seeking sustainable international relations rather than decisive military victory. These objectives are displayed in the primacy of MOE in the Western military organizations. Risk-seeking, individual effort (MOP) has a minor role in contemporary warfare, as insurgents, motorcycle gangs, or operatives of ideological NGOs do not wear military uniforms, but mingle among the civilian population.

### **The outcome-oriented rebellion**

US General Martin Dempsey recently commented on the new leadership and operational doctrine by stating that: “the recent release of FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*, represents a major shift in how we develop adaptive leaders...who do not think linearly, but who instead seek to understand the complexity of problems before seeking to solve them...” (Cojocar 2011: 13). Here, as in other contexts, the rise of MOE is clearly visible – the process tends to dominate the individual initiative of the commander, felt in the call for ‘adaptive’ leadership. Alternatively, this could be described as ‘pragmatic’ (Mumford and Van Doorn 2001), ‘instrumental’ (Antonakis and House 2014) or, once again, ‘maverick’ leadership (Gardiner and Jackson 2012), the first two having been explicitly associated with each other (Anderson and Sun 2015). Regardless of the exact wording of the concept, the call is for something *which commanders would adapt to the situation in the field, keeping the processual frameworks in mind (MOE), but actively engaging in creative and agentic leadership acts*. This is closely associated with the idea of ‘mission-type’ orders. Today, especially in security organizations, the main aim is not only to avoid risk and minimise threats, but also to exert efforts if and when the risk becomes a reality.

This is also a question of understanding the nature of the organization. It is not only a thing or an entity, but also the repetitive activity of ordering and patterning itself (Chia 1999).

This is also the idea of ‘mission-type’ orders in command and control systems in military organizations, demonstrated in the use of ‘task-forces’ (sub-organizations separate from the organization proper that serve a purpose in a particular time and space). The way to understand organization is to relax – without intervention, orchestration, deeply entrenched organizational and institutional habits and routines – and keep organizing together and allow change to occur. In the modern era, military organizations that are based on networks or meshworks (where there is no organization or rationality per se) have to be adaptive and agile in the context of continuous change in the environment. The contemporary military tries to see the environment as continuously surprising, thus raising cross-level awareness. Culture, however, is grounded in practice, and therefore has to include a dynamic aspect. Static military organizations will find themselves in severe difficulties when they come up against the complexities of contemporary crises.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Leadership is not only about visions, missions and cutting deals; is it also about knowing which vision to project because of domain-relevant knowledge on the organization and its environment, how to implement the vision, and how to show followers the path to the goal by providing resources and monitoring outcomes in a constructive way. (Antonakis and House 2014: 765)

Consistent with the views expressed by the writers above, we argue that situational and emotionally sensitive leadership that is well aligned with institutional control brings about adaptive, pragmatic and even productively anarchistic leadership acts. By virtue of acquiring an understanding of the cultural environment and other situational factors, leaders may overcome the ‘iron cage’ of institutional control. The military is a special leadership context,

especially in terms of the leadership style employed. It should not conflict with the general society too much – despite the fact that civil and military societies are often considerably far removed from each other. At the same time, however, we have to accept that in violent situations such as combat, there has to be space for traditional and even mythological styles of leadership that leave room for creative manoeuvring when necessary. In a live situation the ultimate responsibility is always shouldered by the field commander. At the political and national level, the actions should reflect the international norms. This remains a challenge, as ethical norms are only applied to relatively weak actors. Despite public outrage and protest, the most significant war criminals of the contemporary age have evaded prosecution.

Most military commanders have adopted and developed their personal identities and lifestyles through personal and professional growth in academic military cultures, which have placed a strong emphasis on charisma. However, most of the daily routines of contemporary military commanders revolve around the rules of engagement, a strong media presence and the micro-management of the political leadership. It is, therefore, increasingly difficult to demonstrate MOP in a classical, charismatic way at the operational level. More importantly, MOE is the dimension that trickles down from the political-economic level. The professional officer has experienced a shift from warrior to administrative soldier – along with the domination of MOE over MOP. Things were different in the past when a leader like Admiral Nelson, for example, could practice double standards by requiring absolute adherence to regulations from his subordinates, while breaking every rule himself (Grint 2005: 27). The culture of constant measuring is an issue in other fields as well, a prime example being the preoccupation that universities currently have with international journal rankings (Craig et al. 2014). Over-bureaucratisation overlooks the view that human beings have evolved to adhere to the level of energy of their leaders and resonate positively with the



appearance of sureness and signs of strength on a deeper, emotional level (Collins 2004).

It is probable that the logic of administration becomes impotent in the face of strong, charismatic leadership that has the resources it needs to further its objectives. At the national, strategic level, charismatic departures from the norm are rarely punished, providing that the perpetrator is the leader of a strong enough country. How about at the level of military operations? Should military organizations revert to the use of charismatic leaders and play down the role of the administration? NATO has evolved in conjunction with the socio-political development of its member states, as evidenced in its bureaucratic operating procedures. Thus it seems that a new set of rules might need to be established. So how can this be achieved in practice – without violating the norms of the respective member states? Western countries have not gained leaders whose presence has been clearly and visibly displayed during recent decades, as they seem to be symptomatic of an authoritarian leadership culture. Cultures that are based on ‘soft’ values do not easily produce ‘hard’ leadership. Authoritarian leadership is at odds with Western, post-modern societies that emphasise values such as individuality, minority rights and environmentalism. In such circumstances, military displays of power are easily associated with authoritarian regimes and outright fascism.

In this sense, Western democracies are less vulnerable to the influence of pre-modern, charismatic leadership. The same leadership attributes do not apply irrespective of the context in which the leader operates. For instance, vast military parades are rare in most European countries, whereas showcasing one’s military strength is traditional in Russia. Intriguingly, post-modernists declared the end of ‘grand narratives’ or ‘metanarratives’ as far back as the 1980s (Lyotard 1984). Around the same time, Alvin Toffler viewed the development of societies

as taking place through a series of ‘waves’ (1984). The first wave was the agrarian society that replaced the early hunter-gatherer cultures. The second was the industrial revolution, characterised by the notion of ‘mass’ (production, distribution, consumption and so forth). Finally, the third wave is the post-industrial society, where knowledge is the primary resource. Reflecting on this, we can see that leadership was emphasised in the first wave, and bureaucracy in the second. In the third wave, however, we are witnessing the re-emergence of leadership as societies increasingly challenge the necessity for bureaucracy and institutions – the global economy and media have taken their place as platforms that can seemingly provide us with a sense of integrated security. It remains to be seen whether further civilizations are yet to emerge from the pre-modern and modern phases, although it seems that pre-modernism has reappeared in a heavily technologized form.

The tension that emerges between strong leadership and the ‘iron cage’ of institutions enables us to see what military organizations exemplify rather clearly. On the one hand, they are notably hierarchical in nature. On the other, there are cultures of military education that are torn between conflicting logics. Moreover, the process of contemporary warfare is highly institutionalised, regulated and measured. It is in these institutions that officers are socialised to obedience; but they also glorify heroism in battle, personal sacrifice and the cult of ‘great leaders’ (Harrison 1978: 594). Thus, social development should be understood differently from technological development. Due to the ubiquitous influence of information networks and social media, the contemporary, increasingly pre-modern understandings of society have emerged to dominate the thinking within security organizations. As idealised accounts of the values of the Enlightenment prove to be impotent, the display of strength reappears as the criterion that divides people into those who lead and those who are led.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### WE CAN BE

A review of *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* by Franco 'Bifo' Berardi (London: Verso, 2015)

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I was a junior in high school when I turned the TV on. / James Huberty went to a restaurant, shot everyone up with a machine gun. / It was from my hometown. / We talked about it 'til the sun went down. / Then everybody got up and stretched and yawned, then our lives went on.

'Pray for Newtown' - Sun Kil Moon (*Benji*. Caldo Verde, 2014)

'Why did I write such a horrible book?' (p. 199) asks Franco 'Bifo' Berardi at the start of the concluding chapter of *Heroes*, the Italian autonomist<sup>1</sup> thinker's contribution to Verso's "Futures" series. Thankfully for the reader, Berardi is not criticising the quality of *Heroes*, but rather the subject matter covered within. As Berardi goes on to exclaim, 'crime, mass murders, suicide – these are not subjects for a good natured guy' (p. 199). Berardi is here trying to explain – perhaps more to himself than to the reader – the 'mixture of repulsion and perverse fascination' (p. 1) which he feels in response to the spectacular acts of violence perpetrated by the likes of James Holmes, Adam Lanza and Anders Behring Breivik. The use of the word "spectacular" is not accidental for at

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<sup>1</sup> Autonomism is an anti-authoritarian left-wing movement which emphasises the actions of individuals in their daily lives as opposed to more centralised resistance.



least in the case of Holmes, there appears to have been an attempt to break ‘the separation between spectacle and real life... [Holmes] wanted to eliminate the separation between the spectator and the movie’ (pp. 1-2). Berardi does not suggest that this was a conscious philosophically derived act – he doubts whether ‘James Holmes has ever read Guy Debord’ (p. 1). He then adds as an ironic addendum that ‘often, people act without reading the relevant texts’ (p. 1). This combination of lightness and seriousness continues throughout, a difficult tightrope to manoeuvre yet Berardi manages it with admirable ease.

*Heroes* treats mass murder and suicide (and in particular the sort of mass murder which culminates in the suicide of the perpetrator) as the ‘extreme manifestation of one of the main trends of our age’ (p. 3). The perpetrators are ‘heroes of an age of nihilism and stupidity: the age of financial capitalism’ (p. 3). Berardi carefully distinguishes financial capitalism from the earlier industrial capitalism (pp. 89-92). Whilst the latter had many issues as outlined by writers such as Marx and Engels, for Berardi financial capitalism is much more insidious. Sharing characteristics with the dystopia in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, financial capitalism has resulted ‘in the desertification of the landscape and the virtualisation of emotional life... causing an immense loneliness and despair in the population that is difficult to consciously oppose’ (pp. 194-195).

Most of the book’s chapters begin with a description of a particular incident of mass murder or suicide. This is then followed by discussions of politics, philosophy, movies, personal anecdotes from the author, and so on. These jumps in topics will not be to the taste of every reader, and some may find it an impenetrable barrier. The book is most rewarding if read as the publisher intended for the series in which it belongs – as an intervention on

political and philosophical topics. It is a stream of thoughts in order to provoke further thoughts.

‘The Automaton’, which focuses upon the Breivik case, is the chapter most relevant to the journal’s theme for this issue. After noting Breivik’s diagnosis of alexithymia – an inability to recognise and describe his own feelings (p. 94) – Berardi centres on what he considers to be Breivik’s identitarian<sup>2</sup> ideology. Berardi ascribes to Breivik a fear that European identity is being contaminated by two interrelated poisons: cultural Marxism and Islam. Cultural Marxists, the ‘essential enemy of European identity’ (p. 95), are using mass immigration, and in particular mass Islamic immigration, as a tool to erase Christian Europe’s identity. Berardi attributes this belief to Breivik’s ‘identitarian obsession: the self-identification as the ‘chosen people’, which implies... the identification of the other as the enemy of truth and of the good’ (p. 101). Berardi characterises Breivik as a neo-conservative killer (p. 95), suggesting that his ideology is ‘not so far removed from the agenda of conservative political movements the world over’ (p. 100). Herein lies a missed opportunity for discussion: both Berardi and the identitarians have the same distrust and distaste for the stultifying effects of neoliberal financial capitalism, but the identitarians view multiculturalism and mass immigration as a symptom of this whilst Berardi views these as part of a possible solution. Both Breivik and Berardi believe the current system must be transcended – the difference lies in what shape the ideal future should take. Berardi’s own stated solution that the best way to ‘deny any possibility of becoming a fascist... [is to] resist any pressure to identify oneself’ (p. 103) is not entirely convincing. A more nuanced explanation of how the coexistence of different identities need not result in a Manichean struggle would be more

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<sup>2</sup> Identitarianism places importance on the role of shared ethnic-cultural identity (typically, white European). It is most commonly connected to radical and far-right political and social movements such as the *Bloc Identitaire* in France and the *Identitäre Bewegung* in Austria.

effective. For this reason and more, this is not the strongest chapter in the book. This may be because Breivik's actions were explicitly political, meaning that there is less hidden meaning to explore. Berardi is stronger when teasing out themes concealed beneath the surface of the actions of Holmes, Lanza and Seung-Hui Cho, rather than the political killings of Breivik and Baruch Goldstein.

Berardi's positive vision set out in the concluding chapter is the most difficult part of the book to grasp due to it being the most postmodernist, with many passages relying on neologisms from the writings of Félix Guattari. Berardi describes the chaotic *spasm* being caused by 'info-technologies... provoking an acceleration of the rhythm of information and experience, [whilst] simultaneously the space for physical movement and the resources for economic expansion are shrinking' (pp. 216-217). What is needed in response to this (using Guattari's terminology) is *chaosmosis* – an 'osmotic passage from a state of chaos to a new order' (p. 220). The current situation can be transcended through a change to a new form of thinking. A *chaoide* (another Guattari term) can be a tool to achieve this chaosmosis. A chaoide is an 'artistic poetic, political [or] scientific... [communication] which is able to open the linguistic flows to different rhythms and to different frames of interpretation' (p. 222). Berardi explains that 'the chaoide is full of chaos, receives and decodes the bad vibrations of the planetary spasm, but does not absorb the negative psychological effects of chaos, of the surrounding aggressiveness, of fear' (pp. 221-222). *Heroes* is Berardi's attempt at producing a chaoide – it describes the horrors of the modern world with a playful ironic tone in conscious opposition to the terror described.

Irony in the face of dystopia (*dyst-irony*) is central for Berardi. In some of the most playful sections of the book Berardi rejects the traditional leftist call for political awareness because most people

know something is wrong, the problem is that it is likely nothing can be done (p. 224). He explains that ‘ironic autonomy is the answer... do not take part in the game, do not expect any solution from politics, do not be attached to things, do not hope’ (p. 225), adding ‘if you have to choose between death and slavery, don’t be a slave... You will die anyway; it is not particularly important when. What is important is how you live your life’ (p. 225). If the reader is not convinced by Berardi’s analysis, he concludes by reminding them not to take him or what he has written too seriously – ‘Irony is about the independence of the mind from knowledge; it is about the excessive nature of the imagination. So, at the very end: don’t believe (me) (p. 226). With this statement the book ends.

*Heroes* is a book the reader will either find stimulating, irritating, or perhaps both. You do not have to share Berardi’s vision of financial capitalism as the *causa prima* of the world’s ills to find the book useful, but this *idée fixe* remains a stumbling block. In his criticisms of the contemporary world, Berardi shares many positions with Martin Heidegger. Heidegger also saw the importance of thinking, poetry and art for authentic being. For Heidegger, the key problem is the dominance of the metaphysical/technological-scientific worldview which achieved hegemony when the thought of the pre-Socratic thinkers was overcome. If Berardi had focussed more on the primacy of thought rather than economics – a focus that his discussion implies – with financial capitalism being a symptom of these thought processes (rather than the thought processes being a symptom of financial capitalism), his argumentation would have been strengthened and his discourse would have been more open to those who do consider themselves to be part of the anti-capitalist left. Despite Berardi’s efforts, the next mass murder will no doubt be met by most with an initial moment of shock,

followed by a sigh and then indifference. The signs of malaise are all around us, but we choose not to look.

## GOODBYE COMRADES, WE MISS YOU NOT

*Goodbye to all that?: The Story of Europe Since 1945* by Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

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The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Cold War and the recent financial crisis have led to a tendency to view the alleged stability of post-war Europe before the Berlin Wall fell with a nostalgic air. It has also led to a flurry of books taking advantage of newly released archives and the ability to better analyse the fascinating period of the end of the Cold War with more detachment and a better grasp of the long term trends it represented.

Dan Stone's *Goodbye to all that?*, the title is an homage to Robert Graves memoir of the Great War, is one of the most interesting interpretations of Cold War Europe to come out as part of the flurry of anniversary publications. It is a fascinating and also frustrating work. Stone takes a chronological approach and his range is breath-taking. He is equally at home in Franco's Spain and Ceausescu's Romania, but he fails to grasp that each were uniquely horrible and neither should not be mourned for passing into history.

Stone is a historian of ideas and he takes as his main thesis that the post 1945 consensus was grounded in a common ideological outlook, one based on anti-fascism. In the West this took the form of Social Democracy and the creation of the welfare state, while in the East it was socialism in one country. While the argument is plausible, Stone never really wrestles with the causes for the

decline of the post-war consensus, he ascribes it to neo-liberalism which he claims facilitated a resurgence of far-right politicians, but there is little explanation as to why neo-liberalism was able to sweep the European continent so rapidly and so soundly. Furthermore, far right groups had been around long before neo-liberalism appeared, most notably in France where the far right brought down the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic aided and abetted by a military shaded with more than a tinge of fascist ideology and nearly brought down the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic.

This oversight is unique only in that Stone is overlooking the sins of the right. The most frustrating part of the work is how soft Stone is towards the left. This inability to fully grasp and understand the horrors of communism explains in part his inability to understand why everyday legacies of regimes such as the DDR are quickly being expunged from the collective and even architectural memory. Communism is not in Stone's account a particularly nasty form of tyranny made attractive only by the fact that Nazism was even more nasty. We are told that there were "more extreme intolerant aspects of Stalinism" one wonders what were Stalinism's less extreme intolerant aspects, perhaps deportation as opposed to execution?

Nor can Stone accept that Soviet Communism was ultimately unreformable, which does explain why it failed to meet the challenge of neo-liberalism. Reform was attempted under Gorbachev of course but when reform failed the system collapsed. Stone however can have no enemies or villains to the Left, thus one encounters rather quaint descriptions such as 'renegade communist' to describe Milovan Djilas. Such descriptions reveal far more about the author than the post-war consensus he mourns for passing.

*Goodbye to all that?* will become a standard revisionist text on the cold war period in Europe. It is a valuable book in that it sheds light on common elements and themes across the Berlin Wall, but its greatest value lies in demonstrating to students how the “useful idiots” of the Cold War could overlook the horrors of the Left. The end of the post war consensus brought change and uncertainty, but that does not mean it should be mourned or that it should be revived as a challenge to the current neo-liberal trend that is still dominating European politics. No one can seriously think that a Stalinist regime in today’s world would be where one would like to live or the regime one would want for a neighbour.



# Baltic Defence College



The Baltic Defence College, located in Tartu, Estonia is the only English-speaking multinational military college focusing on operational and strategic level professional military education in Europe outside the British Isles. It was founded by the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – in 1999 to provide professional military education to members of their armed forces and civil services, as well as those of their allies and partners.

In 2014, the Baltic Defence College celebrated its fifteenth anniversary, as a unique cooperative endeavour for military education and research between the three Baltic states. The College acts as a centre for international, strategic and operational affairs, hosting conferences, workshops and roundtable seminars. It seeks to promote consensus in the Baltic states on security and defence policy, acting to facilitate a wide network among the ‘strategic community’, including government, military and societal representatives

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