

Local Resistance, National Identity and Global Swings in Post-Soviet Estonia

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Estonia is a border nation as all nations are. Borders form an inside and outside. They can be crossed. All borders are fragile, shiftable, permeable, transgressable and invadable. Estonians know this, they have been invaded so many times; by the Russians, the Germans, the Swedes, the Poles, by a variety of languages and religions, and now by commercialisation, pollution and the electronic highway. A small nation is no safer than a body. (Maire Jaanus, 'Estonia's Time and Monumental Time', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 28, 2, 1997, p. 126)

ESTONIA HAS OFTEN BEEN DESCRIBED as the southern part of Finland, and not just because of the spoken language and culture, by which Finns and Estonians belong to the same group, albeit residing on opposite coasts of the Gulf of Finland. Even the music of their national anthems and the *leitmotif* of national epics sound familiar to both Estonians and Finns, but this alone would not cause identity shifts and cultural homogenisation. Yet since Estonia escaped from Soviet-imposed isolation, cultural Finlandisation has become a reality owing to the fact that the 78 km distance between Helsinki and Tallinn has almost disappeared because of intensive traffic and communication flows. The traffic between Tallinn and Helsinki has reached a regularity unseen on the coasts of the Gulf of Finland ever before: ferries, hydrofoils, helicopters and planes leave in both directions more than 30 times per day in summertime. Close relationships are also revealed on the basis of telephone calls, international mail, foreign trade and investment, daily commuting and weekend tourism. As Tallinn has become a Nordic gateway and transit destination for Eastern riches, and Helsinki locates close to the information technology hub, in the land of Nokia, then one could easily envision these national capital cities forming a single functional entity ('Talsinki' or 'Hellinn') as a part of the globalised world, in line with 'Eesti 2010', Estonia's 1998 National Planning Programme's vision of future developments on the eastern rim of the Baltic Sea Region.

Related to the intensification of global communications and international links is the rise of 'de-territorialised' signs, meanings and identities in post-Soviet Estonia. Globalisation has clearly intensified contacts among the world's population and even contributed to the emergence of albeit weak macro-regional identities that encompass several states, such as the European Union, but it has also encouraged competing visions, counter-identities and internal social groupings within the states to resist

(Herb, 1999). This has been the case in post-Soviet Estonia too. Therefore one may easily observe similar tendencies as contrasts across national boundaries melt but the differences among groups within a territory magnify. Estonia is becoming more similar to Finland and/or Europe but at the price of internal resistance. At issue is whether to reduce the exclusive significance of borders, becoming part of the international community and entering into binding commitments to a firm European-ness, which is assumed to constitute the best defence of the nation-state, or whether to revert rather to a strategy of national interest, better protected borders, ethnic homogeneity, pragmatic alliances and traditional sovereignty, in spite of the political costs such a strategy might have in a longer view (Hedetoft, 1998).

Globalisation has turned out to be the opportunity for those who have been dreaming of free movement of goods, capital and people through the 'light blue transit pipe', and who identify themselves with the global world despite the fact that they speak and think in Estonian—although 'modern' Estonian is full of international loan words. At the same time, 'identity' and 'sovereignty' have both turned out to be worrisome keywords for those who dislike contemporary developments such as opening to global markets, Europeanisation and consuming mass culture products. Nowadays Estonia is faced with resistance movements which voice national challenges to the proposed EU membership as well as argue for local and national distinctiveness, which may loose ground within the prevailing global swings. Anti-globalists and (economic) nationalists fear that integration might lead to global supranational governance or create regional free trade areas at the expense of national interests and sovereignty. This borderless world, threatening to break the last barriers which separate 'us' from 'them', makes the 'self' insecure and rather unclear. Both the return of Estonia to the world arena in 1991 and the preparations for EU accession since 1997 have inspired some groups to search passionately for ethnic/local identity and a proper path to follow as an alternative to Europeanisation. Although marginal and insignificant at the moment, they may mobilise and gain more support from those who are disillusioned either with 'the return to Europe, relying on foreign aid, trade and investments' or with 'cultural homogenisation to be superimposed by global trends'. In the present article the task is to shed light on prevailing local manifestations in Estonia to resist global forces on the national level. It argues that when Estonia becomes more integrated into the world economy, the Euro-Atlantic security structures and cyber space, there are more people to resist and counter-mobilise. The reasoning behind these new self-identifications continues traditional identity politics of defending the fragile 'us' from the challenging 'other'. However, the latter seems to be not the simply culturally alien ('Russian') but the culturally universal ('globalisation').

Identity prerequisites: territory and culture

Pile (1997) argues that power has control over space, to occupy it and to guarantee that hegemonic ideas about that space coincide with those which maintain power's authority—and this can best be seen in the coincidence of the nation and national

identity. On the other hand, the framing of time and the ordering of space, the struggles to recover an indigenous ensemble of meanings for the territory of the nation, have formed an essential part of post-independence politics in many places in the world (Slater, 1997). Geopolitics can be examined in relation to the territoriality of politics within national boundaries, as well as to the transnational flows and penetrations of different kinds of power, but the first expression of the geopolitical can be defined within the ostensibly inner-bounded realm of the territorial state. Geopolitics provides identity with its prerequisites: territory and culture.

West and East have been antipodes for Estonian self-construction, reflecting the dichotomy of Europeanisation and Russification, goodies *versus* baddies. A view from the 'outside' considers Estonia either as a post-communist reform tiger leaping into the European Union, or as an arrogant deserter from the Soviet past with its burdensome legacy. As a consequence, Estonians often feel themselves victims of geopolitics who return to a timeless Europe and expect to be treated as lost and found family members 60 years later (Aarelaid, 1998). Should then identification with Estonia start with defining 'the other'? Here, Veidemann (1998) seems to be convinced that only after meeting 'the others', understanding them and finding self-confidence do we get to know what 'they' mean for 'us' and who 'we' are in relation to 'them'. He takes his example from Tode (1993), where a young Estonian learns about Estonia only after being face to face with the world, Europe and Paris. The *self* is opened, both to the pains and the joys. As the young Estonian is not able to cross the gap between 'I' and 'the other', he becomes frightened and reverts to being the rebel against 'the other' (Veidemann, 1998).

Estonian identity is often linked with the historical settlement of territory (Berg & Oras, 2000). This relatively steady and permanent settlement dates back some 5000 years, which makes Estonians 'one of the oldest nations in Europe' (Meri, 1998a). Similar lines of thought, such as the 'thousands of years of permanent settlement on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and the north-south trade links described by the Roman politician Tacitus' presented by President Meri on 12 November 1998 to commemorate the first record of Estonia and Estonians 1900 years ago, have become a part of self-evident geopolitical reasoning among the Estonian political elite to promote their Europeaness and to establish new dividing lines in the post-Soviet setting.

Moreover, ethnic Estonians possess a unique relationship with the Estonian territory that supposedly gives them a primordial right to that space. Metaphors of Estonian soil and indigenous culture are evoked to emphasise genealogical rootedness and exclusivity to a place, and traditionally the meaning of being Estonian has been intimately tied to a rural way of life. The ideas about a particular relationship between people and the land were already to find their practical expression in the creation of the landholding system established during the 1920s and 1930s. This was to act also as a central symbol of Estonia's emerging national identity in the 1980s as its people sought to overthrow what they perceived as the Soviet yoke (Unwin, 1999). Following this logic, President Meri relies on the fact that 'the bones of fifty or a hundred previous generations rest in this soil' (Meri, 1996, p. 486) and claims this to be a fundamental aspect of Estonian identity. This stress on the ties of the nation with its land highlights the differences between the indigenous population and the so-called

recent immigrants. It also implies that those who have come relatively recently from far away have less right than the natives to claim Estonia as their home in a deep cultural sense. Non-Estonians are depicted as (urban) transients who cannot establish a steady connection with place/land (Feldman, 2001). Population statistics would appear to prove the argument, the last census showing that 91% of non-Estonians were city dwellers while the corresponding figure for Estonians was only 58% (*Population ...*, 2000). Thus, imaginary community projects sometimes tie Estonians emotionally with the land, where 'our space' is separated from 'their space', and sometimes with time, when the glorious interwar years of nationhood supply more legalist arguments in restorationist geopolitics. None of these community projections can be materialised easily since the most urbanised and the most Russian-populated region (and therefore 'alien' territory) is part of the Estonian state, while legal justifications for 'national' land ('our' territory) remain outside the de facto existing body politic, in neighbouring Russia, and have even less to do with *Blut und Boden*-style geopolitical claims. Nevertheless, there always remains a question of the scope of the socially constructed political space, where 'Estonia' ends and gives way to other identities. For example, the geopolitical imagination visualises the border between Estonia and Russia mainly as a separation line while 'Estonian space' is a distinct territory apart from Russia. At the same time, there is no talk about Estonia's western borders. Mentally they do not exist (Berg & Oras, 2000).

In explaining the survival of Estonian identity, Taagepera (1993, pp. 5–6) has emphasised the difference of the language from most of its neighbours, geographical and political isolation from linguistic kinfolk, and the major religious border, which all reinforce the distinct Estonian identity. The Estonian language and culture have thus been important demarcation lines and elements in nation building. As opposition to alien rule is highly important in uniting people around a single concept of identity, ideas of national identity became much more readily contested once such opposition was removed. As an example, culture and language were more important at the beginning of the 1990s and are now beginning to lose their importance in everyday rhetoric and identity politics. However, Estonia is still singled out as the one and only Estonian-speaking territory in the whole world, which requires special care and protection from foreign cultural influences. State officials and academics often recall that the Estonian language and culture were important tools in the fight against Soviet occupation and for survival during the Soviet period. Language-based community feelings helped Estonians to identify themselves in relation to the rest of the world (Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1997, p. 101). 'Eighty years of statehood of one of the smallest countries in Europe, which has a modern culture and scholarship produced in its own language', is sometimes also expressed in relation to Estonia's recent political and economic success (see Siimann, 1998). This Estonia belongs to the Western cultural sphere. Despite its non-Indo-European, Finno-Ugric language and cultural background, the centuries-old Swedish and German cultural influences, law and administrative system, and Protestant work ethic predominate (see Lauristin & Vihalemm *et al.* 1997; Meri, 1991). Has being European become more important than being Estonian under conditions of free will and the absence of foreign threat?

National community projections and striving for European membership

In a world where geopolitical boundaries are under increasing fire and where the transnational processes underlying these developments are also engendering reformulations of classical configurations concerning political representation, cultural manifestations and national identity formation, the symbolic nature of both of these nexuses is both becoming more apparent and, in addition, is also being reinforced (Hedetoft, 1998). Identity politics has been very important in establishing the constitution of the community and renegotiating state and citizenship boundaries in post-Soviet Estonia. Considering the population losses between 1940 and 1949 due to mass deportations and war casualties, and the subsequent decline of the Estonian majority during the years of Soviet domination, the fear of cultural extinction should not be entirely interpreted as a political device to marginalise ethnic minorities (Feldman, 2000). Here, the formation of statehood has been presented as a revival of historical justice, a return to the roots of the nation-state and a way back to Europe. The Estonian political elite chose a restitutionist interpretation of independence and used historical premises from the end of the 1930s, which easily allowed them to promote the development of Estonian national identity, language and culture under the protection of the Estonian nation-state. Constitutional provisions from 1992 established Estonian as the official state language, guaranteeing Estonian citizenship based only on the rule of *ius sanguis* and limiting jobs in the public service to Estonian citizens (Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1997, p. 101). Estonian nation building became a complicated task—given that in the Estonian context state and nation have never been synonymous. According to this perspective, nationhood turned out to be ethnocultural and not a political fact, which resulted in an ethnocentric model of territorial organisation. Therefore, in many ways Estonia began to resemble more an ethnic state with a divided society than an integrated entity and putative nation-state. However, from the position of Western liberal standards, a state with multiple complementary identities and full political participation for all Russophones had already been recommended by moderate Estonian nationalists at the end of the 1980s, given that in reality Estonians comprised too small a majority in order to convert diverse entities into a unitary internal space and to build a monocultural nation-state.

Recent government documents have also proclaimed that Estonia strives to become a multicultural society or, rather, has come to terms with its multicultural character. In 1998 the new measures were intended to bolster a special strategy, which included a clear orientation towards the integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society. Various international organisations (the OSCE, the Council of Europe) pushed Estonia to soften its national legislation and give automatic citizenship to those stateless children who were born after 26 February 1992. The amendments, approved by parliament in December 1998, applied to some 6500 children already born then, and about 1500 per year subsequently. The 1998 document 'Integrating non-Estonians into Estonian Society: Setting the Course', compiled with the help of UNDP, suggested that '... the state's educational policy should concentrate on the creation of teaching aids in courses which develop the Estonian identity (language, history, culture, heritage studies and civic education courses) and on the education of corresponding teachers. Considering the variety of societal backgrounds of non-Esto-

nians, attention must be given to the adaptation of subject curricula and teaching materials which develop an Estonian mindset for non-Estonian youth'. The Estonian government also took responsibility for aligning the language legislation with international standards and the European Agreement, implementing concrete measures for the integration of non-citizens while including language training and providing necessary financial support.

Similar integrationist issues were by and large again the focus of a government document of March 2000 (*The State Program*, 2000), which now talked explicitly about the preservation of the Estonian nation and culture as well as the stable future and development potential for Estonia in a uniting Europe. Again, rapid modernisation of society had to be ensured in the context of accession to the European Union, while preserving both stability and a commitment to the protection and continued development of Estonian culture. According to the programme, the nature of integration in Estonia was characterised by two parallel processes: the social harmonisation of society, based on knowledge of the Estonian language and possession of Estonian citizenship, and on creating conditions for maintaining ethnic differences based on the recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities. The harmonisation of society itself was clearly perceived as a two-way process—integration of both Estonians and non-Estonians around a strong common core to be formed by linguistic-communication, legal-political and socioeconomic attributes.

Estonia will evidently adjust its laws, attempting to involve non-Estonians in a multicultural society. However, it will not be possible to avoid the transfer and cession of some elements of sovereignty to European institutions. Both Estonians and Russophones appear to be leaning westward to manifest a mutual European orientation (Merritt, 2000). So far, the Russophones have tended to see European institutions as defending their citizenship and language rights in Estonia; Estonians see European institutions as defending them against Russia. In 1998 the UNDP country report revealed that the Russophones considered membership of the European Union an ideal future perspective for Estonia. They perceived the European Union as a factor developing a political regime under which all residents in Estonia could receive equal status via European citizenship, and would consequently be freed from their exclusionary alien status. Estonians, on the other hand, had high expectations regarding the EU role in providing security guarantees, both domestic and foreign (*Estonian ...*, 1998).

Therefore, international ties are crucial both to Russophones and to Estonians, although working in opposite directions. The mutual will points westward, toward Europe, an international environment which has constructively acted as a third party mediating on-going domestic conflicts, making Estonia more 'accessible' to European values and mores and pushing Estonia towards a more inclusive minority policy. This has enabled many Estonian politicians to support their policies on the basis of Brussels' prescriptions. Others have noticed that Russophones are keener on learning English than the local language, which they perceive as rather useless and 'parochial' in the future common labour market of the EU. Seemingly unavoidable sovereignty pooling and dismemberment of the body politic are leading to a new phase in identity construction in which Russophones no longer intend to leave the country but instead tend to advocate possible EU membership more enthusiastically than the titular nation

itself. Recent public opinion surveys, at least, have demonstrated 10–15% higher support rates for European integration among Estonian Russophones (Voog & Liiv, 2000). Estonia has become a ‘laboratory’ which, in spite of all the previous nation-building efforts, is now experiencing Europeanisation in a way that leaves its imprint in the identity shifts among the minority groups. But it also leaves its impact on Estonian minds, which have begun to consider the Russian-speaking population as a valuable human resource potential, compared with the previous threat perception.

In the initial years of independence non-Estonians were viewed with suspicion as a threat to the national identity, the nation state and its territorial integrity. Estonians found it hard to erase the historical events from their collective memory, considering the geographical proximity of Russia as a factor increasing instability. The previous Estonian policy of restricting immigration and encouraging emigration increased the relative proportion of indigenous people and reduced the demographic and political threat of a perceived ‘fifth column’. The main problem now arising on the horizon is a general decrease in population and an ensuing labour shortage. As a result of its long-term integration into Western structures, the Estonian economy is likely to prosper in the decades to come, but the low birth rate during the 1990s will lead to a critical shortage among the younger workforce of 30-year olds. Many experts argue that Estonia will face the possibility of a new massive influx of immigrants from southern countries with higher birth rates but different traditional life styles (*Integrating Non-Estonians*, 1998). The previous influx was Russian-speaking but the new influx will, to a certain extent, be proficient in English. This is definitely a step closer to the globalised world economy, with the attendant risk of influence by international trends and presumed challenges to local distinctiveness, where Estonians and Russophones have a considerable amount in common.

Despite the perceived risks and challenges posed by a globalised world, Estonia does not lack promoters of ‘Europeanness’ and more open economies. Under the influence of Huntington’s (1996) theory of cultural divisions in the post-Cold War world, some Estonian scholars have also tried to argue that, from the cultural point of view, the Baltic countries, and Estonia in particular among them, represent the last outpost of the West European cultural tradition at the border of the Slavic Byzantine (Orthodox) world (Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1997, p. 29). The same authors argue also that Estonians have always identified themselves as belonging to the West, and that this was recognised by other Soviet nations, who regarded the Baltic countries as the ‘Soviet West’ (see Lauristin & Vihalemm, 1993). According to Lagerspetz (1999), ‘Europe’ is a very useful concept in the sense that it can at the same time be used to represent both the glorious past and a prosperous future. By emphasising its inherited ‘Europeanness’, Estonia can legitimise the new aim to join the Western-based political structures, both for the domestic and international audiences. Estonia’s attempt to join the EU and NATO has been presented by the elite as a matter that need not be discussed—as the only alternative to once again becoming part of Russia’s geopolitical sphere of influence (Lagerspetz, 1999). In addition, many who promote Europeanness argue also that Estonia should be opened in all the possible directions, and that integrating with EU and NATO structures should not end up by nailing up Estonia’s eastern window (Ilves, 1998). The Estonian government has put it explicitly in a foreign policy statement: ‘We are convinced that Estonia’s geopolit-

ical location, historical ties and current political situation enable Estonia to become a bridge, or a land of contacts. We believe that previous concepts of cordon sanitaire or containment strategies are no longer valid and not in Estonia's national interests' (Tammer, 1992). This view is supported also by President Meri (1998b), who has given Estonia the role of 'political mediator', a country that identifies itself with Europe but also knows (and remembers) Russia. Therefore Estonia could easily become an interpreter between two rather different worlds, Russia and the West, as well as mediate between risk and opportunity perceptions, if only it were possible to escape from the pooling of sovereignty and the homogenising effects of Europeanisation, and avoid cultural oppression from the West.

Parochial aspirations: a third way?

Various observers have expressed concern about the fate of the Estonian language in a globalising world in which English has become the overwhelmingly dominant means of communication. Whereas ideological pressures and censorship had hindered the development of Estonian culture in Soviet times, now the real danger is seen as coming from the leveling impact of a commercialised and international mass culture. As Estonia became a candidate for membership of the European Union in 1997, some began to see a clear threat to the local language and culture from European integration (Raun, 2001). In Slater's (1997) view there have been examples in a range of peripheral societies of certain kinds of movements that have challenged and continue to challenge established territorial orderings of the state. In some instances such movements have been intimately rooted in ethnic identities, whereas others have been culturally unpredictably heterogeneous and have embraced a highly diverse range of demands. What is still common to these seemingly different movements is the reaction against unfairness and injustice, the desire to survive intolerable conditions, and the sense of remembering and of dreaming of something better (Pile, 1997). To name but a few of these parochial aspirations in post-Soviet Estonia, there are attempts to protect the distinct culture in Setumaa, the southeast of Estonia, and to resist European integration.

Setus form a distinct group whose ethnic self-awareness has grown considerably during the process of Europeanisation, with the rising fear of losing cultural heritage and distinct identity. Today they live on both sides of the existing Estonian–Russian border and arguably suffer the most from the present administrative division. Their cultural contacts as well as infrastructural communication have been badly disrupted. Although culturally the Setus are more similar to Estonians and their language is considered one of the southeastern dialects of Estonian, the Setus have also been deeply influenced by Russian culture and Orthodox religion. Their estimated number is about 10–15 000 people, of whom less than 1000 presently live in Russia. In their position between Estonia and Russia, the Setus have begun to look for their own third way, and as a result a proto-nationalist Setu movement has emerged to express their interests (Jääts, 2000). To promote local culture, they are strong advocates of the establishment of a school system that would use the Setu language as a language of instruction. For that purpose a Setu written language was created in 1995, based on former South Estonian written texts, used mostly in religious literature in the 16th to

19th centuries. Beside the attempts to restore the dialect, Jääts (2000) has pointed to a nostalgic attitude towards local traditional peasant culture and an idealisation of the rural past as most typical of these parochial aspirations. Folk costume, folklore and traditional features of the economy are considered especially important, while cultural promotion as such reaches the target groups with the help of modern technology and via electronic highways.

In the early 1990s the Setu's self-identification became stronger thanks to a cultural movement run by a group of intellectuals. They argued for the need to preserve cultural antiquities, to protect and promote the Setu language and traditional folk culture, and to develop the local economy, education and cultural life, all in the name of ethno-cultural revival of Setumaa. As part of the Setu movement, various organisations were founded, for instance the Union of Rural Municipalities in Setumaa, Petserimaa Union, Setu Congress, a newspaper, *Setumaa*, as well as Setu radio (Lõvi, 1996). The Setu Congress issued a programme for developing the Setu language and culture as early as 1993. Since then, activists have gone so far as to proclaim each year a one-day 'independent Setu Kingdom', in which Setu 'officials' from both sides of the Estonian-Russian border meet to pass laws and show off their symbols as a way of demonstrating their cultural distinctiveness and unity despite the current political divide (Berg, 1999). This quasi-kingdom has its own flag, anthem, customs and other attributes of statehood. Three years later, in 1996, the Setu Congress decided to submit an application to join the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, which, unlike the United Nations Organisation, represents nations without independent statehood: Chechens, Kurds, Uigurs, Tibetans, Tatars and many others (*IV Seto Kongress*, 1997). In 1999 the Setu Congress adopted a resolution according to which Setus formed a distinct ethnic minority with ethnic self-identification in the Estonian-Russian border region, to be counted separately by the official census of 2000 (*V Seto Kongress*, 2000). The Setu movement has also tried to convince Estonian governmental officials responsible for the current administrative-territorial reform scheme that 'one land, one nation, one language and one religion deserve also a separate rural municipality' where cultural distinctiveness is best preserved (Järvelill, 2001). The emotional feelings fed by forced separateness, the new state border between Estonia and Russia, territorial-administrative reform, cultural homogenisation and the import of Schengen regulations have all fostered ethno-cultural and political mobilisation with differentiation from Estonians, as the risk of being assimilated by Estonians is higher on this side of the border, compared with predictable Russian cultural influences on the other side. There are visible attempts to 'draw' the border between Estonian and Setu culture and to 'cross' the Estonian-Russian state border as if it did not exist. While 'Europeanisation' has indirectly favoured the adoption of more inclusionary national integration policies, it has also demanded tighter control on the future EU external eastern border, in the divided Setumaa, and therefore supported the local resistance and counter-mobilisation. Even before the official invitation for accession negotiations, the Setu Congress posed a striking question to the Estonian government: 'We are seeking a public and sincere reply to our question, whether the integration of Estonia into the European Union is possible only at the expense of ruining the Setu people, and destroying their native home, or whether there might exist more ethical alternatives' (*IV Seto*

Kongress, 1997, p. 83). Owing to Estonia's increasing need to harmonise her border practices with future membership of the EU, the Estonian–Russian simplified border-crossing regime, which was meant for the local borderlanders in the northeast and southeast of Estonia, came to an end in September 2000 (Berg, 2000). Estonia introduced a complete visa regime, and in order to compensate for potential disadvantage Estonia and Russia started negotiations over issuing multiple-entry visas to some 4000 people residing on both sides of the still legally non-existing border. Again, Setus resisted because the number of privileged border-crossers diminished considerably while adding another brick to the 'Setu Wall' in the forthcoming Fortress Europe.

Local resistance: our own space?

Newman (2000) argues that the world political map is undergoing a process of re-territorialisation, as some boundaries disappear and others emerge, as rigid territorial fixation may be replaced with virtual spaces of identity, and as new constructions of identity are formed through the diffusion of territorial narratives which focus on symbolic, mythical, physical and abstract homeland spaces. Globalisation weakens the link between national identity and fixed boundaries at one end of the spatial scale, while strengthening local territorial identities at the other end. The effects of globalisation and, through Europeanisation, the bringing into question of national sovereignty, provide an example of an externally generated geopolitical challenge that crucially impinges on the internal society, so that the timing of the anti-EU mobilisation for conservative and traditional values, national culture and sovereignty is intimately linked with the opposition to neo-liberalism and to Brussels' bureaucracy. The reinvigorated belief in the sameness of these 'illnesses' is somewhat contradictory but nevertheless reflects in both cases the defensive, pessimistic, sometimes even apocalyptic spirit with which it is most often being propagated. The sameness becomes evident even more when the present European Union is compared with the past Soviet Union, as both of them were built on similar ideas of 'centralisation' in terms of power (dis)allocation, 'inequality' of federal subjects, in terms of internal colonisation and dependency, and 'melting pot', in terms of mixing and suppressing distinct cultures. Leito (2000, p. 21) is convinced that 'the only efficient cure for global deviations is a healthy and strong nation-state'.

Estonia's return to Europe is geographically and culturally determined—at least this seems to be the prevailing discourse and elitist reasoning which relies on international cooperation and membership of the European Union. Unexpectedly, Estonians have recently come to voice rather pessimistic overtones with respect to European integration. The public opinion poll carried out in June 2000 by EMOR revealed that Estonia's accession to the EU was supported by 49% of Estonians, while 41% were against (Voog & Liiv, 2000). In an organised way, European integration is strongly opposed by eurosceptics and a popular mass movement, 'NO to EU', which has also increased its support base by seven percentage points since 1996, starting from almost zero level (*Euroväätluse*, 2001, p. 140). For them, neither the European Union nor globalisation are imperatives for the exclusive economic and political space where Estonians are masters and should control the national riches and

stand for sovereignty. They worry that Estonians are giving up their spiritual and physical territory too quickly, which causes self-denial, depression, suicide and emigration to the West. They criticise suppression of personality and national identity for the sake of success, consumerism and IMF prescriptions, and believe there is a need for a new way, a new ideology to justify national self-existence and superiority in Estonia (*Euroväätluse*, 2001, p. 119).

Although organisationally varied, the 'NO to EU' movement includes rather small and marginal extra-parliamentary groupings such as the Estonian Christian People's Party, Estonian Republican Party and Estonian Independence Party. What is common to all of them is a perception of an economically self-sufficient and politically non-aligned nation state, which could not be 'one of the many European Union's ethnic territories, an economic bridgehead and new immigration powder keg' (Leito, 1999, p. 82). Here, Estonia with its geostrategic location is seen as an insulating layer (in Estonian '*jahutusvarras*'—literally 'cooling stick') between world geostrategic regions (Leito, 1999, p. 99). According to the new autarchic principles, it is in Estonia's national interests not to join any international organisation or great power structures but instead exist as 'our own space' and offer the world some balance. This product of local resistance denies conventional security guarantees for Estonia except external power balance and internal state control over the economy and resource base. Self-reliance, ecological reproduction, rural life style, national culture and identity are the most obvious key words to characterise living in 'our own space' and resisting global swings (*Euroväätluse*, 2001, p. 111). Eurosceptics tend to believe that Estonia has a unique geoeconomic and geopolitical niche in this part of the world and if it ever were to line up with some state(s), then perhaps Switzerland and Norway provide the best examples to follow.

The EU enlargement is perceived as a threatening expansion of a federal super-state or even a mondialist world conquest. The latter bears a clear warning: 'We are challenged by international financial power, which has moved out of the reach of national control and now is dictating its own rules of the game. This power dominates information channels and attempts to socialise people according to its own interests' (Leito, 2000, p. 42). In this context, Estonia's state identity is perceived as a unique one, and there is fear that it may become contaminated in EU interaction. These fears lead eurosceptics to conclude that Estonia should preserve maximum sovereignty, which is the only means of ensuring the survival of the Estonians and Estonia (Aalto, 2000). According to Leito & Silberg (1998, p. 32), 'There is no such thing as the common destiny of nations. Abolishing borders between nation-states leads to the so-called Americanisation process: whole nations will assimilate into the most expansive-minded group. From our point of view, this is simple: the big nations stay, small ones disappear'. Further fears are related to free movement of people and free acquisition of property, which in the event of mass immigration would change Estonia's ethnic structure in an unfavourable direction and leave Estonians without property and natural resources in their own land (*Euroväätluse*, 2001, p. 68). Estonia supposedly risks becoming one of the biggest enterprises in Europe, inundated with foreign labour. Open markets and the liberal world economy would only serve the interests of US multinationals and prepare Estonia for European economic occupation (Leito, 1999, p. 23). To draw the picture even more drastically, Leito (2000, pp. 35,

38) relies on the day-to-day examples where ‘Finns with the sum of slightly more than three months salary have started to buy up Estonian land and colonise the natural resources’. Although also eurosceptics, the Republicans on the other hand represent a globalist view according to which the goal of Estonian foreign policy should be openness to the whole world. But beside this globalist view, the nationalist worldview must be honoured (*The Platform ...* 1999). More attention has to be paid to the themes of Estonian state affairs and national values in schools, more support to the national youth organisations, physical development of young people and national sports. Estonians must be the main nationality in Estonia, and only Estonian must be the official language in ‘our own space’.

Identity politics and its glocal manifestations

Feldman (2001) argues that Estonia is actively promoting the image of an open and cosmopolitan country, while also seeking to minimise the influence of supranational institutions on its policies of citizenship and minority rights. In her view, European integration is proclaimed to bolster Estonia’s image and identity as a Western country, but on the other hand, it is seen as potentially harmful to the national culture and identity as it would lead to increased immigration and a more prominent position of ethnic minorities in Estonian society (Feldman, 2001). As Estonia becomes more integrated into the world economy, the Euro-Atlantic security structures and cyber space, there are more people to resist and counter-mobilise. Consequently, ‘Europeanisation’ favours both cosmopolitan feelings among Estonian Russophones, the locality building of the Setu cultural elite, and the resistance of those who perceive the European Union as a nightmare and ‘mondialist conspiracy’. Nevertheless, distinct local cultural traditions will continue to coexist with global cultural practices. What is threatened, however, is the idea of an exclusive and virtually self-sufficient national culture, of which individuals are simply sub-parts, sharing a common language, beliefs and activities (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). Complete cultural homogeneity and exclusiveness are less and less possible in the globalised world. Therefore, eurosceptic dreams of a ‘space of our own’ simply deny the global/local (‘glocal’) manifestations of cultural identities while claiming all-pervasive identity and condemning their supporters to social marginality; distinct local cultural traditions will continue to co-exist with global cultural practices.

No matter the geographical scale or people and groups in their national community projections and continuous search for the proper path to follow, I would argue that the reasoning behind these has always tried to emphasise ‘what we are not’ or ‘where do we not belong’, rather than simply giving a clear-cut answer about being and belonging. The options of the Estonian people are as simple ‘as a mathematical equation’ and therefore determine the identity politics. Just as President Meri said in 1999: ‘On one side is Europe, on the other side, Russia. We are on the border and therefore only a small push is needed to make us fall into one side or rise into the other’. Therefore it seems equally valid to say that ‘We don’t want to live in the global world/European Union/multicultural state because this could be a threat to the local culture and national survival’, or ‘We don’t want to live in the old-fashioned nation state because this dream remains far from reality and meets no understanding

from abroad', or 'We don't want to belong to Russia's sphere of interests and therefore must apply for membership of the EU and NATO', or 'We don't want to become isolated because of the former statement and therefore try to play a gateway role', or ...

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