

The Russian Minority in Post-Communist Estonia. A Comparison with Czech-Sudeten German Relations between the Wars

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Käesoleva artikli põhieesmärgiks on kahe kultuuriliselt pluralistliku rahvusriigi – postkommunistliku Eesti ja kahe maailmasõja vahelise Tšehhoslovakkia Vabariigi – rahvusprobleemistiku mõningate üldiste ajalooliste sarnasuste lähem vaatlemine. Tšehhoslovakkia loodi Esimese maailmasõja järgsetes relvakokkupõrgetes naabritega ja Pariisi rahukonverentsil liitlasriikide poolt delegeeritud kokkulepete alusel, mis järgis riigi rahvuslikke piire ainult vähesel määral või siis üldse mitte. Esmajoones suurendas multietnilise, ent tšehhide-slovakkide rahvusriigi poliitilist ebastabiilsust asjaolu, et sealsed arvukad rahvusvähemused paiknesid oma etnilise kodumaaga külgnevatel territooriumitel, mistõttu Tšehhoslovakkia piiride julgeolek oli kahe maailmasõja vahel vaenulike naaberriikide tõttu problemaatiline. Saksa rahvusvähemuse ehk nn sudeedisakslaste probleem oli ühtlasi tugevasti seotud 1938. a. Müncheni kriisi ning sellele järgnenud Esimese Vabariigi kollapsiga. Samas on vastava temaatikaga võrdlemisi vähe seostatud ja üleüldse tervikuna uuritud just Ida- ning Kesk-Euroopa lähiajaloo sageli ette tulnud irredentistlike etnilisi konflikte, mida on põhjust mõnevõrra lähemalt käsitleda ka tänapäeva paljurahvuseline Eesti kontekstis. Siinkohal on enam keskendutud erinevate rahvusteooriate suhetele rahvuskonfliktidega, vaadeldud selles raamistikus nii tšehhoslovakkiasakslaste kui vene rahvusvähemuse küsimust Eestis läbi etniliste konfliktide prisma. Seega on alljärgnevalt põgusalt käsitletud ka ühiskonnas laiema etnopolitilise mobilisatsiooni tekkeks vajalikke peamisi teoreetilisi eeltingimusi ning etnilise identiteedi osatähtsust erinevate rahvusgruppide vaheliste vastuolude iseloomu kujundava faktorina.

Sellest lähtuvalt on lahatud Esimese maailmasõja järgse Tšehhoslovakkia näitel kolme tüüpi rahvuluse – riigirahvuse, rahvusvähemuse ning viimase etnilise kodumaa (irredentistliku) natsionalismi – omavahelisi seoseid ja asetatud vastavasse klassikalisse vaatluskonteksti ka taasiseseisvunud Eesti Vabariik. Kuigi enamuse-vähemuse suhted on igas riigis küllaltki eripärgelised, aitab Eesti näide valgust heita mitmetele etnilisusest ja identiteedimuudatustest tulenevatele probleemidele, mis on omased paljudele postimperiaalsetele siirderiikidele. Näiteks endise privilegeeritud dominantrahvuse kohanemisküsimused “teisejärgulise” rahvusvähemuse rolliga uutes rahvusriikides. Sotsiaalse staatuse differentseeritus võib aga omakorda tekitada teatud vähemusgruppi seas tunde tegelikust või tajutud diskrimineerimisest, mis võib esineda nii materiaalsel kui poliitilisel tasandil. Vastust on püütud leida ka küsimusele, millised postimperiaalsest üleminekuperioidist tingitud spetsiifilised nähtused (nt identiteedi- ja lojaalsuskonfliktid) mõjutasid kõnesolevaid rahvusvähemusi uutes “rahvuse-ehitamise” ning konsolideerumisprotsessist haaratud rahvusriikides. Omavahel ühiskondlikult väärtustatud ressursside pärast konkureerivate enamuste ja vähemuste kultuurilis-poliitiline mobilisatsioon etnilisel alusel ei ole pelgalt iseloomulik mitte ainult 1990-ndate aastate Eesti, vaid ka paljude teiste Nõukogude Liidu, endise Jugoslaavia ning Austria-Ungari impeeriumi lagunemisel tekkinud uute riikide kohta. Alljärgnevas artiklis esile toodud mõningatele kahe riigi võrdlemisi analoogilisest poliitilisest ning demograafilisest situatsioonist tulenevatele momentidele veidi suurem tähelepanu pööramine täpsustab ning laiendab loodetavasti sellesisuliste rahvusprobleemide uurimisperspektiive ka edaspidi.



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INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflicts have played a very important role in the multinational state system of eastern and central Europe. As a rule, these conflicts are expressed as collisions of certain military, political or economic interest groups. Less frequently, they are associated with national and juridical issues. At the same time, ethnic conflicts have strongly influenced political developments in many European countries during the 20th century.

The main aim of this chapter is to examine more closely certain general historical similarities in regard to problems of nationality between two culturally plural nation-states – post – Communist Estonia, and the Czechoslovak Republic between the two World Wars. As many national minorities were located in territories adjacent to but outside their ethnic homeland, this rendered problematic the safety of the borders of Czechoslovakia during the period between Wars because of Czechoslovakia's hostile neighbouring states. In particular, the problem of the German national minority (the so-called Sudeten Germans) directly contributed to the collapse of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1938. Nonetheless, the relationship between this problem and those irredentist ethnic conflicts which were a frequent feature of politics in east-central Europe has only rarely been grasped: only to a small extent has this relationship been explored, and more attention needs to be paid to it in regard to the problems facing contemporary Estonia. This chapter will offer a closer comparative analysis of the role of ethnicity in relations between Czechs and Sudeten Germans on the one hand and between Estonians and Estonia's Russophone population, focusing particularly on the reasons for conflict between them. In addition to political, economic and social factors, the problems presented by these minorities will be observed through the prism of ethnic conflict. In the following discussion, attention is also focused on the main theoretical preconditions underpinning the generation of ethnic mobilisation and conflict, and the importance of ethnic identity in promoting this type of conflict.

Although majority-minority relations are unique to every country, comparison between the situation in post-Communist Estonia and that in inter-War Czechoslovakia allows us to identify quite a few problems that need further consideration in the context of research on Estonia's national problem. In brief, we have tried to answer the following questions: to what extent, if at all, is the position of the Russian minority in Estonia comparable to that of Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia? What specific phenomena, thrown up by the post-imperial transition process, surrounded the experiences of these national minorities in the new nation-states now preoccupied with processes of nation-building?

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

Discussions about nations and nationalism have traditionally focussed on particular problems such as the differentiation of so-called *Eastern* and *Western* types of nationalism, or the existence of nations in antiquity or the middle ages. Disputes about these problems have occurred not only among historians but also within the bounds of historical sociology and the other social and political sciences. With this in mind, the following brief overview is offered of the most important contemporary theories of nationalism.

In principle, one can distinguish three different basic ways of approaching nations and nationalism. First, there is the *Idea-historic* or the so-called ideological approach (Elie Kedourie, Liah Greenfeld) which deals with nationalism as a group of 'invented' and agreed categories – one can either accept that one belongs to them or not: particular people and ideas in specific historic situations are observed in order to explain the development and spread of nationalism. The clearest expose of this view is that of E. Kedourie who, in his work entitled *Nationalism*, argues that nationalism is a doctrine, invented by literati in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century.

Second, there is the *Modernistic* approach (for instance, the work of Max Weber, Benedict Anderson, and Ernest Gellner) which contends that the development of nationalism in history and its existence nowadays must be viewed as largely dependent on the great social, political and economical changes of modern times; and which, therefore, pays little attention to describing the concept of national ideology. It is believed that national ideology proper does not explain nationalism but that nationalism is directly connected with the modernisation of society. Anderson explains the beginnings of nationalism through the fatally synchronic influence of the three factors – capitalism, printing and linguistic diversity – at the beginning of the modern era. According to the scheme by Ernest Gellner, nationalism and the birth of nation-states is the consequence of industrialisation with respect to modernisation, and the reasons for the birth of nationalism are at the same time fundamentally economic because there was an objective need in society for cultural homogeneity. Demand for a nation-state is inevitable because only in this way can the educational, linguistic and economic unity, essential for the functioning of the industrial society, be guaranteed. Nonetheless, even Ernest Gellner has to admit that it is far from clear why exactly one ethnic group develops into a modern nation with political ambitions while another does not¹⁴. To balance Gellner's sociological determinism, linguistic-cultural factors and social communication (Karl Deutsch) or real historical characters with their particular interests have been brought forward. Some authors, for example Hans Kohn, limit the spread of corresponding ideas with the Great French Revolution. Sometimes, important emphasis has been laid on the influence of Herder and German romanticism. The above-mentioned authors all hold different views as to why they consider nationalism to be a predominantly political movement.

Third, there is the *Ethnic* or *primordialistic* approach (for example, the writings of John A. Armstrong, Anthony D. Smith), which is supported by some sociobiologists (e.g. Pierre L. van den Berghe), psychologists and linguists, and which distinguishes between premodern ethnoses and modern nations but emphasises ethnic connection both before and after the formation of modern society. Ethnicists also take into account the importance of new influ-

ences resulting from modernisation, but they proceed on the basis of the assumption that ethnicity in itself is a primordial quality of mankind ².

In all these discussions there remain many loose ends and doubts, but there is one common feature which can be identified in the various ideological, modernistic and ethnic approaches: despite their dating of the birth of nations differently, most researchers view nationalism as a mass phenomenon that has developed only under the specific conditions of modern times. Nationalism is also a complicated dynamic phenomenon and this concept can, in different historical and cultural contexts, incorporate very diverse contents with varying degrees of importance. The key term *nation* may also have two very different meanings – either as a community of a state or as a community of culture: the civic nation versus the ethnic nation. In the former case, the nation will be coterminous with the population of a (nation-) state; in the latter case, it may be either larger and smaller than the population in the state in which it resides ³. On the whole, it is nowadays universally agreed that a nation is a group of people who feel themselves to be a community, bound together by ties of history, religion, culture, common ancestry and territory. In specialised literature, different dimensions of nationalism – emotional, cultural and political – or their syntheses have been explored.

Like ‘nation’, the concept of ‘nationalism’ lacks a universally accepted scientific explanation. Nationalism is both an ideology and a form of behaviour. As a rule, the ideology of nationalism raises people’s national self-awareness, and protects and promotes the interests of a particular nation. In general, nationalism is considered to be a modern political doctrine which dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries. According to this idea, a nation is the source of sovereignty and political legitimacy. Nationalists also believe that the boundaries of the state should coincide with ethnic boundaries. Therefore, nationalist ideologies can both build up new states and also undermine existing ones. Right up to the present, the confident predictions of many political theorists that nationalism as a phenomenon would soon disappear have still not been realised. Likewise, although Marxists supposed that the 20th century would be a century full of class conflicts, it actually witnessed many bloody clashes on ethnic grounds: nationalism is showing no tendency towards extinction even at the beginning of the new millennium.

PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNIC CONFLICT

Most of the wars or conditions of belligerence which exist in the world today have their causes in, or are at least influenced by, ethnic differences. In many parts, the two World Wars were indirectly the consequences of ethnic conflicts and nationalistic sentiments. >From a theoretical viewpoint, disagreements and conflicts in society are generated between peoples and groups which have unequal amounts of power. In the different social systems, competing interest groups (including those formed on an ethnic basis) have a heightened visibility, and so these conflicts are encoded in the society. At the same time there is no single and universally accepted theory about the reasons for and the consequences of ethno-political conflict. When seeking for the roots of this problem, researchers mostly have recourse to theories of ethnicity and nationalism ⁴.

Traditionally, there are two ways to approach the origins of ethnic tensions: primordial and instrumental. In the primordialistic perspective, a people's ethnic identity has a deep social, historical and genetic base. According to this approach, the process of modernization poses a threat to ethnic solidarity; in the case of some minorities it is greeted with resistance, and this in turn motivates them to protect their culture and lifestyle. K. Deutsch claims that ethnic conflict is closely tied to social mobility, and national clashes tend to occur first and foremost in the 'modern' sphere of life as people move from a traditional agrarian society to a modern life environment. The feelings of instability that may sometimes accompany this epochal change precipitate attempts to compensate either by invoking one's sense of ethnicity or drawing sustenance from feelings of communal solidarity. The primordialistic school of writers attribute ethnic violence – and social violence in general – to aggressive impulses activated by societal stress, such as rapid urbanization, economic depression, or frustrated expectations⁵. History has shown that democratization, the redistribution of power and resources, economic changes and other factors characteristic of a transition period deepened national tensions in Europe both in the 1920s and the 1990s.

Another argument, supported by Charles Tilly for example, claims that the main interests of a group are of a material and political kind, and that ethnic identity as a tool serves the same purposes. Modernization is accompanied by economic differentiation which promotes feelings of discontent between dominant groups and minorities. When power, prestige and wealth are unequally distributed in a society, groups in different situations may unite in order to increase their share of resources. Political leaders often benefit from ethnic identity, forming ethnically-based political movements and fighting for the economic and political wellbeing of a particular target group or region. The core of the conflict is therefore competition for socially-valued resources and opportunities⁶.

Although the two approaches attribute ethnic mobilisation and conflict to different factors – the first one emphasises the protection of ethnic identity, and the other one the protection of the material and political interests of a group – the two theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Both invoke the same set of circumstances as underpinning ethnic conflict: strong senses of identity and of actual or perceived discrimination. In addition, every national conflict has its own historical and political context. Unfortunately, it is far from clear what conditions cause ethnic conflict to break out. It is also not known why some conflicts are more serious than others. In any case it is evident that when searching for the causes of both contemporary and historical ethnic conflicts, the various strategic, economical, political and socio-psychological factors should not be underestimated. In regard to *domestic factors*, the following preconditions may be highlighted as predominantly favourable to the birth of ethnic conflicts:

a) Population: it is obvious that the larger the size of a minority population in a particular country, the greater is its predisposition towards precipitating ethnic conflicts. Larger population groups also have more opportunity to influence the politics of a country. The more multinational the composition of the population of a particular country – such as Czechoslovakia was – the greater the likelihood of ethnic conflicts. Thus the demographic structure of Estonia, after its return to independence, includes some inherent potential for political instability, and the leaders of the state have continually to take account of this while making political decisions.

b) History: some ethnic antagonisms have a long history. Memories of earlier conflicts might fade over the centuries, but despite this fact, it is possible to revive former antipathies given the right conditions, even in the modern age. So-called “age-old animosities” between nations are often an important qualitative additional factor. Without them, conflicts usually do not break out. It is that simple ⁷. Despite the absence of violence, at present historical memories also tend to divide Estonian society along ethnic lines rather than to provide a source of unity. Reputedly, historical memory exercised a strong influence in exacerbating relationships between Czechs and Sudeten Germans.

c) Ideology: in brief, the intensification of nationalism will most probably deepen conflict with other national groups.

d) Political environment: a necessary condition for the occurrence of ethnic conflict is the coexistence of two culturally differentiated communities under a single political authority. The factors likely to influence the level of ethnic conflict include the institutional forms chosen for the regulation and management of conflict (the type of government and electoral law chosen, the amount of power ceded to sub-national units), and the extent of freedom of action granted to opposition groups. It might be expected that political exclusion might lead to one of two kinds of reactions. One might expect that those who find themselves in an unfavourable position might attempt to ameliorate their socio-political condition. This would manifest itself in some form of reactive-based ethnic mobilisation as the marginalised group – or groups – attempted to compensate for its – or their – exclusion. Indeed, most theories of collective action would predict that under circumstances of political exclusion, ethnic relations would become so strained as to precipitate feelings of frustration or discontent among those marginalised, leading to a sense of “social deprivation”. To a certain extent, this is true for newly-independent Estonia whose exclusive citizenship policy, developed in the early 1990s, with the division into citizens and non-citizens, is seen by the Russian-speaking population as artificial and discriminatory.

e) Economy: as a rule, the role of conflict in society diminishes during a period of economic prosperity. (However, there are contradictory propositions and hypotheses including the possibility that economic growth does not significantly affect underlying ethnic relations as well.) There seems to be some commonsense plausibility in all three possibilities, indicating the need to explore the specific *conditions* under which any of these possibilities is likely to apply. For example, measures that satisfy the demands of immigrant or diaspora communities might not be seen as useful or acceptable by groups that claim native status in territorial homelands ⁸; but conflict might be exacerbated during periods of economic decline, as happened in the 1930s. When people feel that the economic products of a society are unequally distributed, the presumption is that anxieties will increase. In ethnically-divided societies, an obvious potential for the massive mobilisation of minorities will then appear, and economic decline might be an important impulse towards that eventuality. In such a case, nationalists might start attacking existing political structures and campaigning for solutions which reflect greater autonomy or independence.

f) Mutual dependence: this is very problematic in multi-ethnic societies when the various national groups in a particular country do not enjoy the same social status. When a particular ethnic minority group had formerly, in ancien regime societies, dominated the core-nation now “in power”, such problems of nationality may complicate negotiations for a

new political organisation. This type of psychological barrier is clearly visible both in regard to Sudeten Germans between the two World Wars and in regard to the Russian minority in the post-Communist Republic of Estonia.

In addition to the foregoing considerations, it may be presumed that ethnic conflict might be created by various *foreign policy factors*, such as the following:

a) External support: many groups depend on outside help while trying to achieve their aims. For example, forms of assistance might include diplomatic encouragement, arms, military instructors or some other form of active or passive support. Sometimes the participants actively invite sympathetic external intervention in the form of material or diplomatic support so as to strengthen their competitive position. The possibilities for action of smaller ethnic groups often also depend on such factors of foreign policy, which could give rise to both regional crises and internationally co-ordinated interventions.

b) International security plays an important role in both the rise and resolution of conflict. Many ethnic conflicts originate in domestic antagonisms but turn into antagonisms between countries – that is, they become international – when foreign and domestic influences interact.

All in all, both real affective and instrumental motivation must be taken into account when analyzing the behaviour of countries and ethnic groups. These two types of motivation might at times support each other, and at other times cut across each other.

Ethnic conflicts may be characterised in following ways: 1) irredentist; 2) anti-colonial; 3) secessionist; 4) inter-tribal; and 5) religious. It is reasonable to consider the first type of conflict very closely when dealing with the problem of the Sudeten Germans. To a certain extent, theoretical parallels may be drawn between secessionism and irredentism. Arguments surrounding the preconditions for the separation of nations or countries and the justification (or lack of it) for self-determination are, in the main, the same in both cases⁹. The behaviour of that part of Russian minority in Estonia which is dissatisfied with its position has been much more differentiated and ambivalent through the 1990s, when demanding (territorial) autonomy or irredentist secessionism.

The aim of irredentist conflict is to achieve consolidation with some other, usually neighbouring, country. It is a characteristic of ethnic minorities which already have their own nation-state. For when in this case the national minority can count on support by an independent country, the potential for violence in an irredentist conflict can be large¹⁰, and the predisposition to negotiate small. A domestic conflict might develop into an international one. The main aspiration is often ethnic and territorial unity. Such conflict usually occurs in outlying borderlands where there are many people belonging to the same ethnic group as those inhabiting the neighbouring country (for instance, the Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia; the Magyars in Slovakia and Romania; the Slovaks in Hungary; the Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Croats in the latter country; the Swedes in Finland). Of course, each such conflict has its own specific historical background.

THE CONCEPT OF “NATIONALISING STATES”

In 20th-century Europe, one ideal has clearly dominated in the practice of creating states: “one nation, one state”. In actual practice, however, national and ethnic pluralism in the world has been the rule, not the exception. In almost all countries, there are at least some ethnic minorities and such an ethnically homogeneous state as Iceland is quite an extraordinary phenomenon.

Throughout the former Soviet Union (and the first nation-building states of eastern and central Europe in the inter-War period), the new leaders proclaimed their states to be national states or “nation-states”. As Rogers Brubaker has suggested, they might perhaps more appropriately be called “nationalising states”. They are ethnically heterogeneous, “yet conceived as nation-states, whose dominant elites promote (to varying degrees) the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation”¹¹. Even the oldest nation-states in western Europe, such as France, have evolved from ethnic cores. Moreover, the shaping of a national identity is, in a sense, a never-ending process: thus, all nation-states are also nationalising states.

Therefore, the content of the national question in multi-ethnic eastern and central Europe is often regarded as one of dynamic interplay. According to Brubaker, the participants in it are: 1) new or newly reconfigured *nationalising states*, whose population is ethnically heterogeneous but which, despite that, consider themselves to be nation-states in the traditional sense; 2) the numerous, self-aware, and to varying degrees organized and politically-alienated *national minorities* in those states, which offer resistance to either real or imagined processes of assimilation or discrimination, and whose political leaders, accordingly, also demand ethnically-based autonomy; and 3) the *external national “homelands”* of the minorities, whose elites render material and moral assistance to them, pay close attention to their situation, and consider the protection of those sharing their ethnic identity to be their right and even their duty¹².

Such an irredentist or trans-border nationalism is in direct opposition to the aims of nationalising states. At the same time it is in mutual interaction with them. By way of reaction, protest activities, carried out by minorities or their homelands, can lead to the intensification of the nationalising projects of a nation-state. The minority might be accused of disloyalty, the homeland of illegitimate interference in the internal affairs of the nationalising state.

The *locus classicus* of this kind of the triadic nexus, however, is inter-War eastern and central Europe. In this case, it is especially important to bear in mind the very sizeable German national minority in the nationalising states of Poland and Czechoslovakia, which Germany as the external national “homeland” took into account while conducting its foreign policy. Germany’s relations with these states was already deeply conflictual during Weimar period, and became fatal once the Nazis came to power.

The multi-ethnic state of Czechoslovakia was created during the armed clashes with its neighbours after the First World War and at the Paris Peace Conference where the agreements by the delegates of the Allied Powers laid the foundations for that country. Mainly because it aimed at upholding the integrity of the state and guaranteeing its security, it took

fairly little notice of ensuring that territorial and ethnic borders coincided. Many national minorities belonged to the new state; the biggest ones were the Germans (24,7%), the Magyars (5,1%), the Poles (0,8%) and the Ruthenians (0,8%). A further particular problem was created in Czechoslovakia in that there was more than one “state nation” – the Czechs (52,5%) and the Slovaks (15,1%)¹³. Although the principle of building a Slavic nation-state crystallised around the idea of so-called “Czechoslovakism”, it also reflected the nationalising state project of the Czechs as the core nation. Hence, instead of the widespread autonomy that the Pittsburgh contract promised to grant to Slovaks, a centralising policy came into being, which originated with the Czech administration. Roughly speaking, the united state of Czechoslovakia was regarded as a possible future bulwark against German and Hungarian expansion.

In addition to the Slovaks, the Ukrainians of Carpatho-Ruthenia demanded autonomy in 1919; the Teschen region (Polish *Cieszyn*; Czech *Těšín*) was a permanent apple of discord with Poland; and Hungary too raised important territorial claims. Frontier wars, which originated from these national claims, were strategically somewhat less important than a sharp confrontation with the more than three million Sudeten Germans, who made up approximately one third of the whole population. (On the northern, western, and southern perimeter of Bohemia and Moravia they even constituted over 95 per cent of the population.)

Woodrow Wilson’s principle of self-determination for all nations was exercised, for different political reasons, only selectively in the new states that came into being after the First World War. A referendum on the issue was not held in the territory of Czechoslovakia, which greatly disappointed the ethnic minorities living there. In the long run, the Versailles principle – making the borders of a state coincide with the borders of nations and languages – turned out to be clearly impractical. According to Eric Hobsbawm, “most of the new states built on the ruins of the old empires were quite as multinational as the old ‘prisons of nations’ they replaced”¹⁴. The combinations of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia lacked any historical predecessors; these constructions were based on the ideology of nationalism which, at the same time, believed both in the strength of common ethnic origin and that too small a nation-state was undesirable. The situation was made even more complicated by the fact that ethnic minorities were located in territories adjacent to their ethnic homelands. That is why it was impossible to avoid territorial antagonisms. The security of the borders of Czechoslovakia between the two World Wars was problematic because of the annexations and resultant hostile neighbours, and so the predisposition to irredentist conflicts was great. Yet, if one bears in mind the Munich crisis of 1938, the newly-created nation-state had accepted its potential “Trojan Horse”, represented by the discontented Sudeten Germans.

In a sense, an analogous situation – after the collapse of the Soviet Union – can be seen in the case of Russia, the post-Communist countries surrounding it, and the Russophone minorities living there. In other words, it is possible to recognise the same triadic nexus between a *nationalising state*, such as Estonia (and the other two Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania) in the early 1990s especially, a *national minority* like the Estonian Russophone population, and an *external national homeland*, which in strikingly many post-Soviet cases is the present Russian Federation, with 25 million Russians living in various diasporic com-

munities within the territory of the former Soviet Union. This triadic nexus displays why nationalising states in the post-Soviet space become easily vulnerable to pressure from the external national homeland, with the position and rights of the national minority as the main bone of contention.

The Republic of Estonia, proclaimed on 24 February 1918, was recognised by Soviet Russia under the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920. Estonia at that time was practically a mono-ethnic state in which ethnic Estonians made up nearly 90 per cent of the population. During the years after the Second World War, the Soviet authorities started their massive colonising programmes, aimed at sustaining their political presence in the country. Beginning in the 1950s, almost half a million Russian-speaking immigrants were settled or came individually to Estonia. Comparing the number of new immigrants with the one million Estonians, this demographic change has obviously been one of the most drastic examples in the world. Thus the present ethnic problems in Estonia are of recent manufacture, in contrast to some other countries where they go back for many centuries. Accordingly, the majority of the Estonian Russian-speaking population eludes categorisation in many respects as an historical ethnic minority.

During the Soviet period, there was a very rapid increase in the non-Estonian population, from 3% in 1945 to 38.5% in 1989. This meant that the number of non-Estonians increased twenty-six-fold, from 23,000 in 1945 to 602,000 in 1989. At the same time, the number of Estonians decreased from about 1,000,000 in 1940 to 965,000 in 1989. These dramatic demographic changes are due to migration, differences in fertility as well as to Soviet political and military measures¹⁵. The main centres of immigration were Tallinn and the industrial districts of northern Estonia. Today the Estonian language, culture and traditions are not in a strong position in the north-eastern region of Estonia, including the cities of Narva and Kohtla-Järve where Estonians form a small minority. Even in the capital city of Tallinn Estonians have lost majority status. Among Estonians, the demographic shift is perceived as a threat to the survival of the ethnic group. Likewise, the geographical dispersal of the Russian population in the regions bordering Russia is perceived as an additional threat to the integrity of Estonia. In general, the Estonian population has remained just as multi-ethnic as it was before re-establishment of statehood in 1991. This is also a major source of inter-ethnic tensions in present-day Estonia.

The post-communist Republic of Estonia in the early 1990s (as well as Latvia) reacted to the complicated political and demographic situation by constructing a fairly rigid citizenship and demographic policy. In 1992, Estonia restored its old 1938 law on citizenship, enacting with this law naturalisation requirements for all non-citizens. The restoration of an Estonian nation-state is the basis for the ideology of restoring Estonian statehood. According to the law, only residents who were citizens before the Soviet occupation, and their descendants, are defined as citizens. All subsequent legislation that concerns the legal status of the non-Estonian population and their collective rights, is based on the assumption that members of a minority must first become Estonian citizens. The citizenship laws were mainly intended to safeguard the indigenous culture by marginalising the Russophones politically. And this has seemed to work; thus, as a result of the first post-independence national elections in Estonia in 1992, all 101 members of the parliament were ethnic Estonians.

At the same time, the exclusive Estonian language and citizenship policies were balanced by very inclusive social and electoral legislation: non-citizens were granted all social rights on an equal basis with citizens, and they were permitted to vote in local elections, a situation still quite unusual in European countries¹⁶. Various international expert reviews of the legal system of Estonia have found no convincing evidence of systemic persecution of the non-Estonian population since the re-establishment of Estonian independence. In retrospect, the Estonian “nationalising” policy may be seen as having really been fairly successful: it contributed to political stabilisation (especially as a result of the liberal market economy and equal opportunities for employment in the private sector), it provided security during the post-imperial transition phase, and it prevented the development of a bipolar political system. A high probability of inter-ethnic violence had been presumed not only by foreign observers, but also by many local analysts. Yet Estonia did not witness any kind of ethnic-based violent clashes or conflicts in the country during the transformations in the 1990s. In theory at least, a sharp increase in differences in the political and social status of a large part of the population might have been expected to lead to some sort of resistance. Most of the Russian-speaking population do indeed see the division between citizens and non-citizens, with the corresponding restrictions, as artificial and discriminatory: they had arrived in the Republic in accordance with Soviet law and many were even legally invited to work here. Paradoxically, however, the politically marginal position of the Russian minority has precluded their wider political mobilisation on the basis of ethnicity.

At the same time, the uncertainty of Russian policy toward their “compatriots” has played a significant role in preventing political instability. But the evident readiness of the Russian state to stand as defender of the ethnic Russians and the other Russophones in the neighbouring states or the “near abroad” (*blizhnee zarubezh'e*) has still complicated the desired integration of these minorities into their new homelands. The introduction of restrictive citizenship legislation in Estonia precipitated highly emotive accusations in Moscow that the country was guilty of implementing policies of “social apartheid” and “ethnic cleansing”. Estonia has been ranked as one of the greatest enemies of Russia, and political figures there across the spectrum have condemned Estonian national and language policies. The former President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin said the following in a speech on June 24, 1993: “We can remind Estonia of its geopolitical and demographic situation”¹⁷. In April 1995, Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev made a statement in which he did not exclude the possibility of using military force to protect Russians in the ‘near abroad’. So far, however, the threats by Russia to the Baltic States have fortunately remained at the rhetorical level.

Instead, continuous diplomatic pressure and various economic sanctions have been employed, including trade embargoes and double tariffs on imports from Estonia during 1994. The objective of Russia’s ‘near abroad’ policy has, in principle, been to protect the rights of the Russophone minorities, but strategically it is aimed at re-establishing influence in the territories of the former Soviet Union. There have also been forces which are more inclined to exploit the Russian population in the post-Soviet states as a political card and a tool with which to secure Russia’s continuous political presence. At the same time there is also no doubt that, at present, the leverage and capacity of Russia to influence political events in Estonia – thanks to withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic States

in August 1994, and also Estonia's success in reorienting its economy away from the East – is considerably more limited than it was in the 1990s. Despite that, a large proportion of Estonians can sense both the domestic and the foreign danger coming from Russia, and feel that joining NATO and the European Union will provide additional guarantees for the country's security.

All in all, the domestic climate and the policy pursued in regard to minorities in the Republic of Estonia in the first half of the 1990s accorded with the concept of a “nationalising” state described above. Likewise, it was already claimed at that time that Moscow's strategy after 1992 – to use its diasporas as a tool of foreign policy – amounted to a “new Sudeten syndrome”¹⁸. Although this situation was, to some extent, similar to that in inter-War eastern central Europe, all such regional relationships nowadays have a wider international meaning in the new European context.

FROM INTEGRATION TO IRREDENTISM

Despite some difficulties, Sudeten Germans adapted quickly to the Czech Republic, and already during the first few years step-by-step social integration had begun. There were various factors that caused the detente, notably the economic advance of Czechoslovakia; the hope of avoiding Austrian reparations and German inflation; and the consolidation of national security. The period also overlapped with the stabilisation of international relationships and the so-called ghost of Locarno. After the mid-1920s, open ethnic hostility was slowly replaced by economic and political co-operation.

Nonetheless, certain tensions still persisted. State authorities frequently operate – because of the rules they establish or in their actual practices – in ways that are perceived as advantageous to some ethnic groups at the expense of others. Some measures may be overtly preferential and discriminatory while others may be seen by some communities as discriminatory in their effect. The life of a large proportion of Sudeten Germans was fundamentally influenced by the agrarian reform, adopted in 1921. Confiscation of manors and distribution of land meant that the nobility lost all its long-term economic, social and political power. To Czech society and the young state, the expropriation of manors was economically and socially inevitable, and public opinion viewed it as overcoming historical injustice. But it constituted a socio-psychological shock for the Germans and complaints were sent to the League of Nations¹⁹. At once, there occurred a continuous immigration of Czechs to the homogeneous rural areas inhabited by Germans. This movement, which had already begun before the First World War, showed a noticeable increase after 1918. A similar problem was the flow of Czechs to towns, until then mainly inhabited by Germans. Although urbanisation can be viewed as a development which accompanies modernisation processes, Sudeten Germans viewed it as a conspiracy by Czech government to assimilate traditional German areas. Ethnic and linguistic discrimination allegedly also occurred in educational policy and the public service, although present research demonstrates that many accusations and complaints by Sudeten Germans were at least partly exaggerated²⁰. The system of the protection of minorities, created under the auspices of League of Nations, was unable to solve the problem.

The mere presence of two or more ethnic communities in the same state does not necessarily spell conflict; indeed, ethnic communities, for various reasons, may remain passive and unmobilised for long periods of time. The presence of grievances alone does not seem sufficient to precipitate ethnic conflict, as many ethnic groups experience, often over long periods of time, grievances and discontent that do not trigger a political reaction. The most likely cause of ethnic mobilisation is a serious and manifest threat to the collective interests or established expectations of an ethnic community, to its political position, cultural rights, or livelihood. The second very important factor associated with mobilisation is the collective recognition of fresh opportunities.

This opportunity was offered to Sudeten Germans by the National Socialists who came to power in Germany just as the whole world was being shaken by the economic crisis. According to one interpretation, the lurch in the early the 20th century towards chauvinism and Fascism was caused by the massive democratic suffrage whose results, due to economic difficulties, supported primarily the right-wing forces. The so-called Great Depression was grist for the mill of nationalism. Sudeten German regions that exported luxury goods were hit especially badly by it. These were also the regions that suffered most from unemployment. Although the Czech authorities could not be blamed for the problems caused by economic decline, right-wing demagoguery spread quickly among Sudeten Germans. As the relative levels of economic performance and political prestige of neighbouring countries also help to shape the context in which independence is pursued, the increasing economic and political prestige of Germany after the mid-1930s also most probably influenced the choices of Sudeten Germans. As in the years 1918 and 1919²¹, a revanchist mood and separatist demands quickly reappeared.

Despite the consequences of the crisis, Czechoslovakia – unlike the flourishing dictatorships of central and eastern Europe – retained its free press, broad civic rights and democracy until the German occupation. International tensions in the mid-1930s grew significantly stronger, but the interests of Sudeten Germans were represented by six parties and traditionally, there was at least one German minister in the government. The minorities of Czechoslovakia were totally able to maintain their national culture, and there was no direct persecution. Nevertheless, irredentist ideas of joining Germany quickly started to spread among right-wing Sudeten Germans. The term *irredentism* comes from the Italian language (*terra irredenta* meaning “unredeemed land”), and it was used to express the territorial demands of Italian nationalists mainly in Austria and Yugoslavia. Nowadays, the term refers to a spatial process by which a country tries to incorporate a territory which is beyond its border, and where a minority, recognised as “tribal brothers”, lives. At a high emotional level, irredentism is a political philosophy in which a certain country considers the minority of a neighbouring country as its flesh and blood²². The situation of Sudeten Germans, located in the western part of the Czech Republic, was exactly this: as a national minority in Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans could easily become a tool in the hands of a strong neighbouring country for partitioning Czechoslovakia.

Originally, many of the *Staatsvolk* of the Weimar Republic were not very sure whether it was necessary to annex Sudetenland. Before 1918, these territories had belonged not to Germany but to Austria, and “North Germans” were not much interested in their fate. All the same, from the outset the relationship between the two countries was not very rosy. In

March 1923, Czech workers were banished from Germany; soon German citizens were banished from Czechoslovakia. Small-scale frontier conflicts continued. After 1926, Germany also brought economic pressure to bear on its eastern neighbour, for instance by boycotting Czech goods, and inhibiting trade²³. All through the Weimar period, the German government provided Sudeten Germans with financial support, sent through private channels, under the inspection of the sending country, to the accounts of intermediary organisations. Hopes persisted for larger or smaller changes of the borders in favour of Germany.

Although the status of Sudeten Germans was an irritating factor in the relations between the Czech Republic and Germany, these still remained outwardly “correct” at official meetings all through the Weimar Republic (in contrast to the open hostility between Germany and Poland). At the same time, the German government secretly gave subsidies to the organisations of radically-minded Sudeten German emigrants: this move indicates Germany’s interest in exploiting the problem of the Sudeten Germans as a diplomatic card. It hoped to influence the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia in this way, primarily so as to promote the interpenetration of the economies of the two countries, and to increase the economic presence of Germany in central and eastern Europe²⁴. In principle, a certain continuity in the foreign policy of the Weimar Republic and the Nazis can be detected: the main objective remained constant during the inter-War period, the revision of the Versailles territorial agreements.

As the Sudeten Germans were the biggest German ethnic minority group in Europe, they posed a real threat to Czechoslovakia because of their geographical position. The number of Czechoslovakian Germans who were discontented with their position was such that it was thought they would function as a “fifth column”, although such a form of behaviour certainly cannot be ascribed to a whole national group²⁵. By the spring of 1938 at the latest, the Sudeten German political leaders had given the initiative to Germany. Backed by Hitler, the leader of the Sudeten German party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei*), Konrad Henlein, presented the so-called *Karlsbad Programme* to the Czechoslovakian government on 24 April in Prague. The ‘programme’ demanded total autonomy, compensation for the persecution which had begun in 1918, and a change in the direction of Czechoslovakian foreign policy. As foreseen, the Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš rejected the demands. The so-called Munich crisis began; it lasted for the whole summer and culminated in September 1938.

NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES IN A TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY

The two facets of nationhood identified by Ernest Renan – a rich legacy of different memories, and present-day consent to live together – challenge inclusive nation-building in many states in the former Soviet Union. Classic nation-building theories (Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly, Walker Connor) have primarily attempted to describe the processes of national integration and consolidation that lead up to the establishment of the modern nation-state. When the nation-building process occurs mainly in the political sphere, then ethnic consolidation (‘ethnos-building’) – its parallel counterpart – takes place on the cultural level. At the same time, social changes – independent from the strategic intentions of political “entrepreneurs” – also reverberate in this notion.

The nation-building policies of a country might constitute an injustice towards minority groups. Minority groups have usually reacted to the building-up of a national majority by building up their own rival nation. Ordinarily, national minorities have tried to preserve and increase their political autonomy. As well, it is thought that minorities which consider themselves to be clearly differentiated “nations” are disloyal and potentially wish to separate themselves from the state. That is why national minorities are often the first target in campaigns for the consolidation of the national majority. There is empirical evidence to prove that the exertion of strong pressure on national minorities, in order to integrate them into the dominating national group, do not yield the expected results, and the resistance from national minorities in protecting their separate identity has clearly been underestimated. Experiences of western European countries demonstrate that no ethnic group which has persisted to the present century and has also retained its national feeling of identity can be forced to give up its wish for national recognition and autonomy. No matter when or how a national identity has been generated and established, from that point on, it is very difficult or even impossible (in practice it would mean total genocide) to eradicate it: national identity remains a powerful force that often promotes conflicts between countries.

Liberal democratic theories also see an important moral problem in the limitation of the right of national minorities to self-determination. At the same time, different situations in different societies can provide different solutions: there is no one model or scheme by which to regulate the relationships between ethnic minorities and majorities. No generalisations can be made either about Czechoslovakian national policy between 1918 and 1938, because each ethnic group differed from the others in number, social circumstances, level of education, and political and economic activity. For example, whereas conflicts with Ruthenians or Poles were relatively modest, the more numerous German and Hungarian minorities found that Czechoslovakian national policy was far from being liberal: they had been left without the right of self-determination, and they protested against their compulsory incorporation into Czechoslovakia.

Why did the Sudeten Germans feel themselves to be losers, although they were provided with free cultural development in Czechoslovakia? Compared to their ethnic companions, Sudeten Germans were the most politically-alienated minorities in the new countries; their disappointment with the Paris peace treaties and with the fact that their right to self-determination was ignored was great. The intensification of the ideology of nationalism in the whole of Europe, the historical background of the specific region, and the unequal social status of national groups in newly-established nation-states must all be taken into account. During the reign of the Habsburgs, Germans were clearly in a privileged position in both a political and an economic sense: the German language had acquired the status of a “lingua franca”, in that it was the main administrative language. In both Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Germans were now, all of a sudden and against their will, transformed from a privileged *Staatsvolk* into what they perceived as second-class citizens of third-class states. In both countries the Germans, who had dominated for centuries, had to adapt themselves to the role of a normal national minority. Exactly because of their decline in status, the resistance and resentment of the Sudeten Germans were largely hidden ²⁶. To some extent, this factor helps to explain the behaviour of Germans in the Republic of

Czechoslovakia, and their co-operation with the Nazis. Protection against social mobility and preserving the social stratification connected to ethnicity quite often lie at the core of an ethnic conflict. The Sudeten Germans did not consider themselves to be a minority: instead, they thought of themselves as a completely independent national group. Thus, the problem of minorities partly coincides with the problem of defining the original inhabitants. The latter often want to be more than minorities, although they have used the advantages of laws applicable to minorities. In any case, when minorities are not ready to view themselves as citizens rather than members of an ethnic group, there is always a danger for a potential domestic conflict.

It is important to note the structural similarities of these conflicts with those of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. In both cases there is one ethnic group which was in the dominant position in the former multinational state. In the Soviet period, Russian culture, especially the Russian language, certainly enjoyed a privileged position and was forced on non-Russians as well. Also, material advantages were more readily available to the Russian-speaking population. After break-up of the Soviet Union, the recent Russian immigrants formally found themselves in the position of being aliens in Estonia; they had to apply for residence permits and start naturalisation procedures so as legally to remain in the country. In other words, from being members of the leading nation of the empire, they were practically overnight turned into national minorities in small nationalising states. This not only constituted a change in personal legal status but also a social and psychological shock for tens of thousands. At the same time, as in the case of the Sudeten Germans, 'minority status' is relatively alien to the majority of the Russians of Estonia. Nonetheless, as Estonia's political and economical situation has been stabilised, a certain process of adaptation and the formation of a new, 'minority' identity has started ²⁷.

At a psychological level, changes in majority-minority relations can be seen as changes in a people's identity patterns. Actually, irredentist ideas among Sudeten Germans could only have been entrenched so successfully thanks to the diversity of identities and loyalties, characteristic of a multicultural environment. At this point, much more attention should be paid to the identity and loyalty conflicts of certain national groups whose most dramatic self representation is centred on irredentism. Contemporary societies, countries and nations are mostly multicultural, and their members are characterised by a plurality of identities, or multi-identity. A person can live in many societies at the same time (both in substance and in imagination), and belong to various associations; that means he or she can have many collective mutually connected identities. From the dominating collective identities that are historically famous, there are three strong representatives in the contemporary world: ethnic, religious, and social identity (belonging to a class). Compared to social identities, ethnic identity is a relatively stable phenomenon. However, it is never a finished product, and it is always in the process of being constructed and reconstructed. Especially in a multicultural environment, more than one identity can appear as a minority. The naturalised minorities in nation-states, for example, are the bearers of multiple identities and loyalties. In irredentist conflicts, a question may arise: to what degree is it possible to manipulate ethnic or national identities? National identity in outlying borderlands has often been quite amorphous, and ethnic identity is strengthened by geography, for example. (A belief in the natural borders of a territory enables regional identity to crystallise

around certain bodies of water, rivers and mountains; in the case we have considered, around the Sudetes, for example.) In dynamic modern societies, open to many kinds of communication with other groups, a voluntary transnationalisation has been noticed. Giving up one's former ethnic identity is mostly a step-by-step process, occurring under pressure exerted from outside, and always on an individual level. History gives no evidence of some national group that has collectively decided to give up its former identity.

For Russophones living in Estonia, the new situation signified an identity crisis (*identification difficulties* or *fragmented identities*) which spelled out the need to redefine their personal and collective identities. Primarily, it brought great difficulties in trying to unite two realities – Russian cultural identity and Estonian political identity. The results of surveys indicate that at least one-third of the Russians have adopted a different understanding of their ethnic or cultural belonging and homeland in connection with the collapse of the Soviet Union²⁸. As Czech Germans once were, the present Russian-speaking community in Estonia is, in fact, already highly differentiated by their ethnic origin, citizenship status, future aims, social capital, and cultural and political allegiances²⁹. For example, Melvin writes that Russian speakers “still face fundamental questions about whether their identity is primarily Baltic, Slavic, Russian or Russian-speaking”³⁰. The degree to which the post-Soviet Russian minority will be integrated into their new homeland is intimately linked to the question of what kind of collective identity it will develop. Different researchers have pointed out the weakening of a formerly widespread sense of Soviet identity, and the strengthening of a regional identity which is bound to the territory of Estonia³¹. The level of identification with the country of Estonia and its culture is still relatively low. Instead, the majority of Russians identify themselves culturally and emotionally with Russia. A very vivid example of this is the fact that about 100,000 permanent inhabitants of Estonia of Russian origin have taken Russian citizenship; in addition, the number of people with no citizenship in Estonia is still over 165,000. Therefore, it can be said that the Russian minority seems to display a postmodern identity policy of multiple loyalties but one which lacks a clear pattern.

In itself, the presence of a Russian minority in countries that the geopolitics of Russia has, throughout centuries, viewed as its sphere of interest, introduces a political aspect into the attitude towards local Russians. Because of their choice of Russian citizenship, these Russians are left out of the Estonian nation-building project and are included instead in the Russian one. Moreover, a large proportion of them exhibit a strong attraction to Russia. In political terms, there is a fear of the prospect of the formation of a pro-Moscow “fifth column” which would expose the Estonians to an external threat. In 2000 only 37% of Estonians believed in the loyalty of non-Estonians³². Although military aggression by Russia for the restoration of its empire is very unlikely to take place (at least in the near future), it is feared that with the increase in the number of Russian citizens, a Russian state might in practice be built inside the Estonian one. A lot of people are living in Estonia who are not particularly interested in the country, and it would be possible to manipulate them from outside.

First and foremost, this is true for the north-eastern Estonian border region which is often represented as a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Estonia. This is a politically dependent, culturally marginal and economically-depressed industrial area where the

largest part of the non-Estonian community is concentrated. In addition, the population has its own independent media channels (primarily Russian) for communication. There exist at least the preconditions for peripheral political mobilisation (or *ethnonationalism* or *ethnoregionalism*) that aims at a more equal social participation in economic, cultural and political terms. Despite this, the political resources for the birth of a kind of possible irredentist movement have so far not been exploited, and Russian support for regional secession of north-eastern Estonia is weaker than has often been claimed. The local Russian community has also not received potential Russian assistance very enthusiastically because, in their opinion, the living standard in Russia is not very attractive. But as identities may become radicalised and conflicting, as well as possibly disappear or reappear, so the ethnic specificity of the north-eastern Estonian border region makes the social and territorial integration of the region indispensable.

In both inter-war Czechoslovakia and post-Communist Estonia, particular factors, conditioned by the post-imperial situation, play an important role. Both “conflicts in identification” and ethnic problems are partly connected to the overall period of social transition. Several theoretical studies draw attention to periods of *political transition* – such as the dissolution of multinational states or rapid decolonisation – as an immediate cause of ethno-political conflict³³. It is argued that, in societies characterised by sharp pre-existing internal cleavages, such transformations tend to intensify conflict between new regimes and national minorities, and often lead to an exaggerated emphasis on national identity. For example, in many areas of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, national antagonisms escalated to bloody ethno-political conflicts after power shifts. On the other hand, the very process of democratisation itself is likely to influence the level of conflicts in the successor states (free elections and fresh opportunities can exacerbate ethnic conflicts as well as help to contain them).

In the Estonian context this means that inter-ethnic tensions should be seen as a part of the post-Communist transformation, and these include many dimensions: such as privatisation, a new legislative system, and the introduction of market relations. During these times, the problematics of ethnicity are inseparable from other dimensions of the transformation: sometimes it is quite complicated to differentiate between the purely inter-ethnic aspects and issues and other aspects of social transformation. Estonia is also an interesting case because the pace of reform has been unusually fast here. Psychologically, the transition is therefore frequently a period of uncertainty and social and economic disorientation. Uncertainty may create (often well-founded) anxiety over the potential loss of a job, personal position or status in society, and loss of privileges. In response to that, and in certain conditions, both ethnic mobilisation and political alienation might follow among minority groups. Unemployment has remained constantly high in north-eastern Estonia which is, as we have seen, mainly inhabited by non-Estonians. This industrial region has been particularly affected by economic severance from Russia and the other CIS countries where ethnic controversies have been strongly intertwined with the economic issue. The economic hardship of the local Russians, however, should not necessarily be seen as a result of any deliberate anti-Russian policy but more often as an unfortunate side effect of the new orientation of the economy. Political disorientation and confusion, however, have been more common among the Russian minority than has active participation in political life.

This low level of reactive-based ethnic mobilisation might largely, besides other factors, be explained by the identity crisis, originating from the post-colonial reality ³⁴.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Estonian case offers an opportunity for reflection on some more general issues related to changing relations and identities in post-imperial societies. The ethnic-cultural nationalisation policy, including the mutual influences of both majority and minority groups, is, to some degree, characteristic of nation-states arising from the break-up of multinational federations. It is true not only for Estonia, but also for the other nations of the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The presence of a numerous Russian minority in the Baltic States will not necessarily make the domestic situation and security of these countries unstable in the near future. How topical this problem remains in case of some hypothetical political or economic crisis depends primarily on four factors: the activity and attitude of the state authorities and titular nations in the new states, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, the behaviour of the Russian minority itself, and the international climate. All these four factors together will determine whether the Russian minority becomes alienated or integrated in the new conditions of their new homelands ³⁵. In Estonia, the greater part of the Russian minority today accepts the independence of Estonia, and tries to adapt itself to Estonian society. The widespread illusions from the early 1990s (re-unification with Russia, territorial autonomy) have disappeared, as well as illusions among many Estonians concerning, first of all, the mass emigration of Russians to Russia. Obviously, the national consolidation process is itself highly complex, and will take years and years to reach full integration.



NOTES

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- ²⁹ For an example, see D.D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca-New York 1998; D.J. Smith, *Russia, Estonia and the Search for a Stable Ethno-Politics*, "Journal of Baltic Studies", 29, 1998, pp. 3-18.
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- ³¹ P. Kolstø, *Territorialising Diasporas. The case of the Russians in the former Soviet republics*, <http://www.uio.no/~>

- palk/home/Territorialising.htm 1999; J.L. Linz J.L., Stepan A., *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore-London 1996, p. 410.
- ³² Kruusvall J., *Social Perception and Individual Resources of the Integration Process*, in Lauristin M., Heidmets M. (eds.), *The Challenge of the Russian Minority: Emerging Multiculturalism Democracy in Estonia*, Tartu 2002, p. 132.
- ³³ Gurr T.R., *Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System*, "International Studies Quarterly", 38, 1994, pp. 347-377, here p. 363.
- ³⁴ Aasland A., *Russians Outside Russia: The New Russian Diaspora*, in Smith G. (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London-New York 1996, pp. 477-497.
- ³⁵ Kolstø, *Political Construction Sites* cit., p. 82.



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In Estonia a qualitative study was carried out in the beginning of 1999 with the ethnic Russians living here. It generally explored how they position and identify themselves in relation to the processes that took place in the first decade of the transition. Although the processes of identity formation are still in an initial phase, it is possible to sketch some overall trends. Therefore some excerpts from the interviews are presented below to illustrate the existing political and/or cultural identification difficulties among the Russian minority in Estonia. The following statements* characterize the prevalent types of different identity patterns: 1) extraterritorial (diasporic minority) orientation; 2) various, fragmented identities; and 3) Estonian-centered identity.

1) [...] I am more tied to Russia because I'm a Russian. Because I live in a Russian neighborhood, I watch Russian television and read Russian newspapers. I was brought up in the Soviet Union, it was somehow easier for me. Although we used to live in Estonia, I was brought up in different surroundings, somehow separately from Estonian culture [...] of course also from this culture, but Russian culture is closer to me [...] (male, 28 years old).

2) [...] there is no appropriate variant. I even don't know who I am. I can't say, but I think that I feel mostly as an Estonian citizen because I have to live according to the laws; law constitutes other things, life, and so on [...] (female, 40 years old).

3) [...] I think that the system separated these cultures (Estonian and Russian) [...] but not notably. Some things are similar, manners, habits; intellect is already similar [...] people behave somehow in similar ways. I think it is because of the media. I think that the attitude towards the mass media is the same, people read newspapers [...] television, culture and everything [...] (female, 23 years old).

[...] I have a lot of friends among (ethnic) Estonians, I can't point out any differences. Among them, I feel almost as an Estonian when I communicate with them (male, 22 years old).

* From T. Vihalemm, A. Masso, Identity Dynamics of Russian-speakers of Estonia in the Transition Period, "Journal of Baltic Studies", 34, 2003, pp. 106-109.

