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**CONFLICTOGENIC FACTORS OF MODERN INTERGATION
PRACTICE: CASE OF ESTONIA**

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Abstract

The article deals with structural factors which impede ethnic minorities integration and also can lead to potential outright ethnic conflicts, through the example of integration of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia.

The main integration practices of the Estonian Republic have been analysed, such as free Estonian language tuition, setting up special information and counselling centres, as well as policy of migration flows selectiveness and closedness.

The study features six major conflictogenic factors, namely, population size, i.e. the ratio of ethnic minorities to titular nation which safeguards the “master” position to the latter; history and ethnosocial memory, ideology of the country, its political system, chosen economic model and welfare of the citizens, as well as interdependence in terms of ethnic group status. In the course of analysis, the conclusion was made about delusiveness of success of the current integration programme in Estonia; about co-existence of Russians and Estonians in two parallel worlds and high conflictogenity of the Estonian society. The following steps are recommended: the thorough monitoring of public moods and labour market for early detection of a problem in the making; correct and shrewd media coverage without enemy image development and intrusion of false stereotypes based on “Russiansdidit” principle; and finally government support of real integration instead of replacing it with assimilationism and “sites cleanup” policy.

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1. Introduction

In view of recent developments related to the growing Europe's migration crisis, the study of the problem of integration and adaptation of newly-arrived migrants with a view to find out working practices and positive decisions in a given field is becoming crucial once again.

Now and then international communities set Estonian Republic as an example owing to the successful integration of Russian-speaking population. Thus, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance adopted integration programme on Citizenship Act liberalization which eased demands on Estonian language proficiency for people over 65. Besides, since 2016, amendments to the law automatically grant Estonian citizenship to people born in the territory of the country in the non-citizen families.

2. Problem Statement

As of today, the Estonian government considers the following actions as its achievements in the area of integration:

2.1. Free Estonian language tuition.

Even the last integration programme "Integration in Estonian society 2000 – 2007" primarily aimed at studying the Estonian language by the ethnic minorities. According to the Estonian authorities, Russian community's sticking only to their native language could lead to their political separation. Thus, good command of the state language became the main requirement for gaining citizenship for the Russians. Here the education system is considered as a key factor of the integration process. On the one hand, integration participants master the language; on the other hand, by means of language learning, socialization is controlled and people get used to co-existence of two cultures.

The ER, however, did not join "Convention against discrimination in education"-UNESCO. As of today, the school curricula in schools for Russian speakers is being translated in the Estonian language despite active protests of locals and teachers in Russian gymnasiums.

According to the research, perception of integration issues among the Russians does vary from those of the Estonians. The Estonians believe language and cultural issues to be of primary concern, which actually implies learning the Estonian language, whereas the Russians consider legal policy along with social and economic issues of integration to be more important, cultural and language rapprochement being less important

2.2. Information and counselling centres were set up in Tallinn and Narva to provide Russian- and English-speaking residents with legal information.

Official site "integratsiooninfo.ee" informs that "counselling centre service involves facilitating smooth integration into the Estonian society". "In the centre, a client is provided with information about integration and then sent to the corresponding department or service provider". Foundation "Our people" (MISA "Meie inimesed") also actively participates in the process, as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), whose last project was named "Public awareness raising in Estonia:

Refugees and migrants (PAREM). It should be mentioned, however, that the Integration and Migration Foundation "Our People" (MISA) is quite often being criticized for bureaucratism and vagueness of the tasks assigned and the work being done (the Foundation belongs to the department of the Ministry of Culture, but at the same time it is in charge of the Estonian language courses organization, which is jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. In this regard a decision was made to move the Foundation to Narva by the 30th of June 2018, since it is the most "Russian-speaking city" and also to rename it to the Integration Foundation).

2.3. Relative closedness and selectiveness of migrants' flows resulted from the top priority issue of preserving the own culture.

Estonia agreed to accept some 500 refugees from Italy, Greece and Turkey within next two years. The ER decisively opposes the quota system suggested by the European Commission claiming that it does not take into account real capability of the country to cope with and assimilate refugees. The ER government claims that forcing people can not be a solution to this problem, and the only way to deal with it is to change the refugees' place of living on a voluntary basis. In accordance with the quotas, Estonia has to accept several thousands of refugees. According to a sociologic survey in June 2015, 32% of Estonian population agreed to accept refugees, while 42% was against it and 26% either stood neuter or were undecided.

In this contest it should be noted that the amount of foreigners who can settle in the ER within a year is limited to 0.1% of the Estonian population. It means that slightly more than 1300 people will be granted the residence permit. Undoubtedly, such restrictions are often criticized, and since labour force mobility in the world constantly increases, they do more harm than good by preventing large companies using international workforce from coming to Estonia.

As a matter of interest, nowadays due to the fear of a potential flow of refugees belonging to other race and faith, sociologists record a tendency among the titular nation to relations warm-up towards the Russian-speaking residents.

So what are the problems to be highlighted proceeding from Estonia's integration practice experience? From the conflict sociology's point of view, at any specific time interest groups compete with each other, including ethnical rivalry. Thus, the conflict is inwardly embedded into society (Bar-Tal, 2000). Ethnic conflict is a multidimensional concept. It is commonly known that many researchers initially negate this phenomenon and replace it with political, social or economic rivalry (Väyrynen, 1998). The author believes that Estonia is a case in point, since adversarial relations between Estonia's titular ethnic group and the Russian-speaking minority is one of the glowing examples of ethnic conflicts in new independent states located in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Difficulties of integration processes, being topical and typical issues for the whole world and for Europe in particular, have apparent signs of assimilationism, ethnic discrimination (both latent and obvious) and create framework for the ethnocratic form of the government.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What specific factors influence modern integration practices in Estonia?

- 3.2. Are these factors conflictogenic in the aspect of two fairly large ethnic groups' coexistence on the same territory?
- 3.3. What recommendations can be made to overcome the conflict potential of the identified factors, if any?

4. Purpose of the Study

As of today, the third state integration programme of “Loimuv Eesti 2020” (“Integrating Estonia”), namely, “Strategy of Integration and Social Cohesion in Estonia 2020”, with a budget of 40 mln. euros, is being implemented in Estonia. According to the Estonian sociologists and political analysts, nowadays the integration policy again emphasizes only official language learning, whereas the declared multiculturalism policy is turning into farce, since the basis of any culture – that is, the education system - is being successively destroyed.

Illusion of successful integration of nations in Estonia created by traditional indicators was broken by recent investigation of places of residence of the Russians and the Estonians showing that they are living in “parallel worlds”. The latest research brought to light segregation of two communities and showed obvious distribution of the Estonian and Russian population not only in the cities (e.g. Narva and Kohtla-Jarve are known to be the cities with the majority of the Russian population) but in the districts as well. For example, in Tallinn the Estonian and Russian population tends to reside in particular districts. Besides, according to the social survey, 24% of Estonian respondents openly express their unwillingness to live next door with representatives of other nationalities (Integration Monitoring in ER).

5. Research Methods

Historical, systemic and structural-functional methods of research were used in the study.

- 5.1. The historical approach allows one to analyse the integration practices in the context of historical development and to reveal its characteristics.
- 5.2. Systemic and structural-functional methods give the possibility to reveal the factors influencing the integration policy of Estonia.

6. Findings

It appears that the following reasons (so called structural explanations) can aggravate integration and adaptation and cause open inter-ethnic clashes as well.

6.1. Population size: chances of emerging ethnical conflicts are directly proportional to the number of ethnic minorities living in a certain area of a certain country, which is related to a potential leverage over the state policy. According to this fact, one can consider Estonia to be an example of demographically conflictogenic society. The Russians had been coming to settle in the lands of contemporary Estonia and gradually increasing their presence ever since; in the middle of the IX century

AD and by 1917, approximately 100 000 people used to live here. (Graf, 2007). After the war, the inflow of the Russian workforce became a significant consequence of industrialization and construction. By 1991, the postwar migration resulted in the growth of the Russian population by 30-60%. Along with the arriving Russians, there were leaving Estonians. A considerable amount of the Estonians migrated to the West after the World War II. After the breakup of the USSR in 1990 – 1998, around 113.000 people (by various estimates) left the country. Most of them were born outside the ER. (Ponarin and Mukhametshina, 2001).

The Baltic States, especially Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Estonia, witnessed the highest rate of the labour outflow among the new EU Member States. According to surveys (Jarv 2007:5), in 2004 - 2007, the average migration flow from Estonia was 5.3%, whereas the peak of activity was observed in 2006 when the total number of emigrants exceeded 6% of the total number of citizens. The main recipient countries were Finland, the UK and Ireland. Economic recession in 2008 led to the emigration increase renewal; although, according to surveys, most of the migrants turned out to be temporary or the “returned” ones.

Currently, in Estonia, apart from the ethnic Estonians, there are 330263 Russians and 68122 representatives of other nationalities (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Finns, Tartars, Latvians, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians and Germans (according to the statistics as of January 1, 2016). As of today, 1.315.944 people are living in Estonia, which is by 2673 people more than it was one year ago. For the first time since 2015, for 25 years in a row, independent Estonia is witnessing the population growth instead of decline. Positive "net migration" caused significant changes when immigration exceeded emigration (mainly due to the EU citizens' migration and, as it was already mentioned, to the returning of those who had gone to work abroad).

6.2. History: many migrant integration issues and ethnical clashes have a long history (Horowitz, 1985), which can be defined as ethnosocial memory. It is a type of collective memory of a particular ethnic community existing along with individual memory and acting as a social experience translation mechanism. Thus, ethnosocial memory, holding in storage some beliefs about the past, is paradoxically future-oriented and, at the same time, it functions at present. E. Kedourie claimed that "nationalists used the past to frustrate the future. (Kedourie, 1974). From this perspective Estonia is no exception. It is especially evident in a totally different approach of two ethnic groups to assessment of historical events (in particular, it concerns the issue of occupation of the country by the Soviet Union) (Aalto, 2001).

The statehood of Estonia emerged in 1920, when it was surrounded by the emerging Soviet Union, hostile Finland and strongly affected by the German minorities in the Baltic States. It is important to point out, that the latter played a significant role in the financial policy (financial capital), in developing industrial production, as well as in latifundia (lands organized according to German agricultural traditions). The policy of the Estonian bourgeoisie as a leading force was aimed at close cooperation with the Nazi Germany. Hatred to the Soviet Union and aggressive fight against it was the basis for such cooperation. Detailed analysis of this aspect of the Estonian political life is given in the book by L. Barkov (1971), where the author goes into detail describing close relations between the pre-war Estonia

and Germany analyzing Estonian connections with German intelligence services, (and later with Abwehr). Its common knowledge that during the World War II, some of the Estonians fought alongside Nazi Germany, whereas others fought on the side of the Soviet Union. Therefore, today's resentment by some Estonians of everything related to the Soviet union, honouring and glorification of the veterans of the 20th Estonian SS Division (Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (Estnische Nr.1)) and rewriting historical events with their false interpretation, using so called "toned down assessment of fascism" and so on, is historically conditioned.

6.3. Ideology: any manifestation of discrimination along with the rise of nationalism aggravates conflict with other ethnic groups (Snyder, 1993). The first ethnic separation infighting in the Baltic States was named "Singing Revolution", since it rested on romantic ideals of national rebirth. That period witnessed the highest political interest among the population.

The ER ideology comprises "a number of aspects, including strict commitment to the West, combating "communism", considering the Soviet period as "invasion" and comparing it to the last occupation of Estonia by the Third Reich, getting rid of everything soviet ("ground cleanup" policy), the theory of reconstruction of the idealized first Estonian Republic. The role of the top rival of all other post-soviet countries is assigned by the right-wing ideology to Russia, the Russians and the Russian-speaking population of these countries (Rozenfeld, 2009). Uneasy relationships between Estonian and Russian communities are caused by the lack of social development of the domestic policy acceptable for both sides, since the Estonians are convinced that the Russian ethnic community poses a threat for Estonia, which is reconstructing its national identity. It is really hard to implement integration mechanisms in a society intimidated by an ethnic minority, be it a woman wearing hijab, a man with a black beard or a Russian "invader".

In fact, until now the Soviet mindset makes a huge impact on the contemporary Estonian culture in two ways. First, it is a family and the mindset of parents who used to live in Soviet times that plays an important role in developing youth culture. Secondly, it is a past experience that strongly influences formation of the person's background. According to the survey, conducted by A. Saar (2006), the Estonians and the non-Estonians are on the opposite sides regarding one specific issue - whether Russians took precedence over the Estonians during the Soviet times. The Estonians tend to think it was really the case (44, 3%). Non-Estonians strongly believe it was not (56, 7%). The majority of the Estonians surveyed believe that the Russians were definitely given priority. However, according to the western sociologists, the Russians in the USSR had no advantages over the titular population of the Baltic States. On the contrary, the union republic status gave certain structural benefits to the indigenous community elite and, at large, social standing of Russians was a good deal worse than that of many other representatives of the titular nations.

6.4. Political system: Development and history of ethnic mobilisation along with chances of successful integration depend largely on political environment in the country, as well as on political opportunities and restrictions (Smith et al., 2000). Consequently, by contrast, the scope and framework of ethnic conflict affect the type of the political system of a country and its institutional system (such as

electoral law, guarantees of political rights implementation, opportunity of autonomy etc.). It should be noted that democratic regime does not always imply successful ethnic problem solving (Wilson, 1996). Rather, it is so called Gini ratio (index of inequality of income and wealth) that can cause relative deprivation and destabilize a political regime. In this aspect, the Estonian Republic has embarked on a course of developing ethno-state, having excluded 30% - 40% of its population from the civil political community. Thus, in 1992, the Estonian leadership announced the citizenship legislation of 1938 to be in force. The result was that all those permanent residents (citizens of the ESSR) who were not citizens of Estonia as of 16 July 1940 (or descendants of such citizens) in no time became foreigners. After obtaining independence, the Russian-speaking population in Estonia was predominantly looked upon not as a historical ethnic minority, but as the Soviet invasion legacy for which the common minority rights approach is unacceptable (Pettai and Hallik, 2002).

Currently Estonia is trying to increase the number of people who acquire the nationality through naturalization largely in order to decrease the amount of people with undetermined citizenship. From 1992 to 2015, in total 158, 532 people acquired Estonian citizenship through naturalization (mainly in 1992 - 2000). Since 2009 less than 200 people have gone through naturalization, so the current immigration programme aims at increasing this number to 5000 per year. To facilitate this initiative, in January 2015, the Estonian government approved a number of amendments in the migration policy. These amendments include granting automatic citizenship to children born in Estonia, to people with undetermined citizenship; they also lower the language requirements for elderly people trying to go through the procedure of naturalization. These amendments also allow children, studying at Estonian schools, to hold exams on the Constitution and Citizenship Acts as a part of school-leaving exams. For those children who have been living in Estonia for at least 8 years, they facilitate the process of acquiring the residents permit. However, despite the comparatively small population, Estonia ranks the 10th place in terms of stateless persons. According to the Estonian Ministry of Home Affairs, as of June 2015, 84068 stateless persons reside in the country (statistically, it is 6,3% of the whole population).

6.5. Economy: during economic prosperity, ethnic tension tends to decrease (Esman, 1991) and integration is carried out successfully. On the contrary, economic recession causes rivalry for limited resources and higher conflictogenity, which leads to the rejection of a current political system and contributes to ethnic mobilization (Cordell, 1999).

After the restoration of independence in 1991 and shift to market relations, the situation on the Estonian labour market changed dramatically. Research has shown that the risks/opportunities ratio for the Russians proved to be more problematic than for the Estonians: the unemployment level and risk of downward mobility among Russians is higher, salary and chances of mobility being lower (Helemäe, 2010). This is due to the choice of the economic model (i.e. reorientation towards the West and rejection of priority industry development), as well as to the enforcement of institutional rules, decreased competitiveness of the Russian-speaking workforce (severe language requirements, difficulties in obtaining citizenship etc.).

According to the statistics, salaries of Estonians are 10 – 30% higher than those of Russians, while unemployment among Russians is twice as large. For example, in Tallinn 60 – 70% of unemployed are

Russians. In the labour market, the Russian-speaking population tend to work primarily in the service sector and blue-collar jobs. Estonians mostly work in white-collar occupations and have up-market jobs. The number of Master's and Doctoral degree holders is decreasing among the Russian-speaking community (as per Department of Statistics data).

6.6. Interdependence: In multi-ethnic society, the social status inequality poses a special problem. From a rational perspective, the privileged access to the state institutions implies substantial material benefits as well as prestige for the titular ethnic group. After the first parliamentary elections in Estonia (1992), all members of the parliament turned out to be Estonians, despite the fact that they represented 65% of the population. Up to the present day, interests of Russian-speaking minorities are not represented by any real political power.

7. Conclusion

To summarize opportunity analysis of successful integration of non-native speakers, one can give the following recommendations:

- 7.1. It is necessary to keep a detailed track of public perception concerning the willingness to accept migrants, i.e. the number of migrants and their status. Thus, society should not emphasize the fear of “migrants’ occupying “our” jobs, bringing their families and making us minority in our own land”.
- 7.2. It is necessary to improve economic performance in the country and extensively reduce unemployment. Obviously, in case of the lack of opportunities to provide for the family, the titular nation will be hostile to accepting additional workforce. This calls for labour market monitoring and accepting as much of work force as it is currently required for the country. Estonia has made this by restricting the number of refugees it was ready to accept.
- 7.3. Correct media coverage of the situation is essential to avoid developing negative enemy image with a view to mobilize the titular ethnic group. The unknown frightens. Thus, to neutralize the fear, the population should receive unbiased information. All too often one observes, as in the case of Estonia, how real socio-economic problem solving is substituted by political rhetoric on the topic of searching a scapegoat and using ethnicity by political establishment as a tool of political consolidation.
- 7.4. Government support should be clearly elaborated and balanced. Obviously, successful integration is impossible without command of language and knowledge of key features of a host ethnic group. However, a state should ensure that migrants are provided with an opportunity to keep their national identity so that integration does not become a synonym of assimilation.

As to Estonia itself, one has to say that integration is a two-sided process. Thus, unless the titular group develops a condoning attitude towards national minorities and treats them as fellow-citizens rather than invaders and unless principles based on humanism rather than ethnocentrism are prioritized, cultural dialogue is unlikely to be successful regardless of all state integration programmes.

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