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## VIII. NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITIES: THE VIEW FROM ESTONIA

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### **ESTONIA ON THE BORDER OF TWO WORLDS**

Estonia is situated on the edge of Europe. The political events of history have at times joined Estonian territory to the western sphere of Europe, at times to the eastern side. If someone supposes that the border between East and West is somewhere other than between Narva and Ivangorod, one need only stand on the bridge over the Narva river in Eastern Estonia and witness the confrontation of two ancient cultures. On the Estonian side there is an historic fortress built by the Swedes, Danes and Germans in full accordance with the cultural traditions of Western Europe, on the other side there is an historical fortress that is an exponent of Slavic-Orthodox cultural traditions. The distance between these two fortresses is approximately 1000 meters, but the cultural differences are more particular. Social analysts indicate quite often that the architecture of constructions is in correlation with *identity architecture* - a concept used for the analysis of the integrated phenomenon of ethnic or national identity.

As the famous Estonian writer and Member of Parliament in 1993 Jaan Kaplinski said, Estonia is a borderland, but from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards it has firmly belonged to the West (*Kaplinski, 1994:12*). Actually it is quite difficult to find some different statements. The Estonian past contains plenty that can be presented as common cultural background: Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, the rule of law, constitutionalism, free markets, the separation of church and state. Europe has been a synonym for openness, rationality and modernity. So, there have been traditions of accepted Western values, but there has been also suspicion about the originality of Estonians' identity.

In today's post-industrialism these ideas receive a new chance to join in the conversation in this very quickly developed modern historical mentality, in the national political discourse and in economic matters. All these mental concepts of changing into European are long-lasting and historically perceived. As conservative patterns of cultural perception they have outlived the political myths forced upon Estonians by the totalitarian system.

The significant influence of the literary movement that emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led by the "Young Estonians" was a certain understanding of

the European idea, which Estonia obtained as a value already before gaining national independence. Propagating ideas of social and aesthetic romanticism, this movement aspired towards cultural concentration to European values, which was shown through the popular slogan “Let’s be Estonians, but let’s also become Europeans!” This cultural stream has been important because during the new period of independence (from 1991) these ideas were referred to in several texts and used in modern speculations.

In general this historical movement strove to balance the influence of Russia and the cultural heritage of the local Baltic Germans, making special efforts to get better knowledge about France, Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Distinguished cultural cities like Paris or Rome became the synonym of new Europe for Estonian writers, painters and composers. The openness of culture and society as a natural world of living for the people and therefore as a field for self-realization is, looking from the point of view of the cultural dictatorship, not as important as the problem of making culture, controlling and representing.

In 1991 as well as in the 1920s Estonians began to perceive themselves as an independent self-confident subject of history, as a part of the European community, with promising perspectives for the future. A modern nationalist discourse with its political claims – popular sovereignty, ethnicity as a basis for political independence and a claim for a particular piece of real-estate were just waiting for full articulation. Estonia was reconstituting itself from a “Kulturnation” into a “Staatsnation” (*Ruutsoo 1997:73-100*). No distinguished Estonian researchers, writers or politicians have doubted that Estonia belongs to the Western world. Although, there have been some proposals about tighter connections with Eastern countries or closer communication with Eastern regions.

The Estonian general cultural conception has been considered an inseparable part of European culture. By ethnologists it is described, analyzed and argued in the context of European cross-cultural studies. Professor Ago Künnap did studies into the Estonian ethnogenetic origin (*Künnap 1996:505-513*). Important factors determining Estonians’ self-identification are interpreted in different ways but definitely include the Estonian language, the significance of the territory and the manifold oral folklore. First, this is an acknowledgment of belonging to the unique Finno-Ugric language group. Secondly, Estonian territory has been one of the most immobile settlement regions (stable population). Thirdly, folklore has played a special role in the maintenance of cultural and ethnic identity. For example, almost all Estonians know that in 1870 Dr. Jakob Hurt as an initiator of the huge Estonian folklore archives said his famous words: “If Estonians can’t become a big nation by number of people, it can become big through its spirit and intellectuality.”

This culture-rooted discourse was demolished in 1940 when Russian annexation started. As professor Rein Ruutsoo has analyzed, the old discourse changed step by step. Although, after some years nobody talked about Europeanness as it was absolutely necessary to speak and write only about “Sovietness” (*Ruutsoo 2000:24-62*).

## **THE YEARS OF THE SINGING REVOLUTION, 1988-1989: THE CHANGING OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Years after Gorbachev's perestroika was declared there was still little change in the Baltic states. Only in the late 80s did the Baltic Republics become comparatively more successful in their activities than the other Soviet Republics. A strong national state idea became a determining domestic factor, supported by major social groups. As a favorable external factor the specific status of the Baltic republics in the USSR, as annexed states, was emphasized by a number of the Western countries, in particular by the USA.

The new discourse introduced by the Estonian intelligentsia was spoke of the economic sovereignty of the republic (including separate monetary system). Ideas about Estonian economic independence started as early as 1987 when distinguished economists, journalists and social scientists elaborated the Independent Economy Program (IME) for Estonia. This was an attractive coincidence that the abbreviation of the program name formed the Estonian word IME, which means – a miracle. This program mainly included quite ordinary ideas of economic self-management for this one Soviet republic but very quickly became a first attempt at a manifestation of all Estonians for soft national independence. This was a promising idea - to change the general Soviet discourse into something different.

Immediately after the publication of the IME program in the newspaper "*Edasi*" (*Kallas and other 1967*), the humanitarian intelligentsia started to publish *pro and contra* articles in daily newspapers, broadening the ideas of economic independence with social demands. Publications mainly controlled by the Communist Party were first very suspicious and argued against Estonian separatism. But the public support was obvious. The first public demonstration (the first of May 1997) presented a lot of slogans, which showed the people's overt support for local economical independence. These actions showed the people's free will to initiate quicker and more substantial changes in society, but didn't show a readiness for demands for political independence. The identity change mainly concerned ethnic Estonians and was constructed as an opposition to the Soviet identity. Estonia belonged *de facto* to the Soviet Union – a fact which left a little space for common people for a different national identification. There were maybe only a few people – mainly dissidents - who saw this process in the overall Eastern European context.

How can the development of Estonia be summed up, beginning with the movement to regain independence in 1988-89? Why was this period called the *Singing Revolution*? Most Western analysts know that this was a period of rapid but peaceful development (like the Velvet Revolution in the Czech Republic in 1989) but few analysts know that the singing was in reality a special coherent phenomenon. Ten songs, still quite known and popular from the first national awaking period (1860 – 1880) were used by the composer Alo Mattiisen to create modern songs with a renewed melody on socially acute themes. Other composers,

bands and pop-singers joined with this stream and finally there were several dozens of songs in 1988-1989 that people knew by heart and sang at meetings and demonstrations. Some of these (for example Tõnis Mägi “Sunrise”) are still chrestomatic and performed at gala concerts. These songs affirmed the identity of a small nation, peacefully seeking its own way out of empire towards being a small European state. The Song Festival in Tallinn in September 1989 gathered about 240,000 people and broke all the records of former festivals. This was quite a peculiar episode – hundred-year-old texts became new again and affected people in a new way. This was the turning point in the rebirth of Estonian identity, characterizing a moment when the fusion in society was at its peak.

Rationalism and a flexible identity – the role of the “mediator” between East and West – was propagated this time especially by professor Rein Taagepera, who was (in 1992) one of the main candidates for Estonian president. He mainly argued that Estonian identity was a mixture of different cultural influences, but stressed Europeaness through democratic traditions, rationality and modernity.

Two popular streams stem from this ambiguous situation – *The Estonian Popular Front* - was a the successor of one flow, which joined reform communists together with some groups of the intelligentsia. This Popular Fronts’ “project” could be called the “democratization and modernization of Estonia”. The Popular Front movement promoted the ideas of progress, equality and tolerance. The ideology of the *Popular Front* principally proceeded from the status of Estonia as a new state with a population and territory inherited from the Soviet Estonia. There was a clear understanding that it was impossible to go back to the year 1940 and to continue the peaceful development of the democratic traditions of that time (*Sootla, Maiste 1989*).

Concerning the status of the Estonian language – most people supported the idea of one state language - Estonian but an approach including two equal state languages (Estonian and Russian) was actively discussed (*Hint 1987, Ruutsoo 1988*). People understood spontaneously that the Estonian language would quickly create a new discourse, much different from the former one (*Saar, Kivirähk and Kirch, 1988*).

Simultaneously, in the *Estonian Heritage Society*, the ideas of Estonian full independence and continuity with pre-war statehood were rejuvenated. The Society also gathered tens of thousands members and associates during this period. When leaders of the society demonstrated with the Estonian flag colors in the summer of 1988, the people accepted this action with great respect. This was a new step in re-establishing the national identity – an evaluation of the historical continuity with pre-war Estonian Republic. This flow of civic activity achieved results in 1990 when the first *Congress of Citizens Committees* was held. This was a “project” for the restoration of the ethnic and national identity with a clear reference to the Estonian Republic (1918-1940). A distinct demand of supporters of *Citizens Committees* was a restoration of Estonian citizenry and territory in its pre-occupation shape together with ambition to become an independent state in Europe (*Eesti Komitee...1992:1-11*).

How can the development of Estonia be summed up, beginning with the movement to regain independence in 1988-89? Rein Ruutsoo argues that the “main problem for Estonia (as for most of the other post-communist countries) is the fact that it has to combine a collective identity with pre-modern traits, a modern autonomous subject and a post-modernizing state. The difficulty is that observance of the laws, collective loyalty and individual initiative to a great degree rely on different sources. The existing norms and values originate from diverse eras. Individual generations, geographical regions, ethnic cultures, sectors of activity, etc. bear the stamp of different social paradigms. The result is a weakness of the ties that shape society as a whole, and the emergence of differentiating factors“ (*Ruutsoo 1999:15*).

## **BALTIC CO-OPERATION AND EU INTEGRATION**

When three Baltic Republics were fighting for their sovereignty the concept of Baltic co-operation had had a certain meaning. *The Baltic Chain* created on Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact anniversary in August 1989 was a top event of the Baltic co-operation. As Kristian Gerner and Stefan Hedlund have mentioned – “during the final years of the process of Baltic secession from the Soviet Union, it was rather common for outside observers to view three Baltic Republic as a common entity, as a bloc of countries proceeding jointly towards a common goal. This, indeed was also the impression that Baltic leaders worked hard to put across but historical, cultural and other differences between the three are such that the impression of homogeneity was largely a façade“ (*Gerner, Hedlund 1993:69*).

Some years later Baltic cooperation had changed into a nice slogan reminding the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania of their common fate in the USSR. It is important to mention that a common Baltic identity was actually created by the Soviet regime. *The Baltics* was a certain area in the Soviet Union that marked these three western republics. Geographically the Baltic area includes all states situated on the Baltic Sea. A new dimension of cooperation between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has been achieved through international cooperation within the Council of Baltic Sea States, created in 1992. Now the Baltic cooperation has a new dimension - a security dimension.

The rapid changes in national and regional identity characteristic of the transformation period have been accompanied by an increased feeling of danger since the mid-nineties. This is not a first-time phenomenon, since already in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such a phenomenon was observed in Estonia. The reason for this feeling was a well-perceived unstable position on the border of two civilizations. This has been a characteristic feature for the entire transformation period. One important indicator of this fear has been the great popularity of Samuel Huntington’s ideas about a historical border between two civilizations – Western and Orthodox – which today coincides with the Estonian eastern border with Russia (*Huntington 1993*).

In 1988-1994 - the place of Estonia and the Baltics in Europe, and the development of Europe itself, was still subject to intense discussions. But as argued Rein Ruutsoo " the trend to treat Estonia as a part of Eastern and Central Europe that has been gaining ground in recent years can first and foremost be linked to the paralleling of the transitional processes in those regions. But it must be said that the scholars of Central and Eastern Europe do not see those parallels. The Central and eastern European identity does not include the Baltics. Indeed, including the Baltic into this region is problematic historically, and evidently, will remain so in the future." (*Ruutsoo 1995: 14*).

During the last decade, one of the characteristic traits of Estonian foreign policy has been making fundamental decisions, search for realising the national interests and getting real support in favouring one foreign power against another. New leaders of foreign policy have argued often that Estonian neutrality is under suspicious because of unstable geopolitical situation and Estonia's smallness. Estonian more recent self-definition can be defined mainly by belonging to Europe (West-, East- and Middle-Europe), to the Nordic Countries or to the Baltic States.

In their fundamental treatise on the topic "Changing National Spaces in the Baltic Area", Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm, social scientists at Tartu University, explained how Estonian political leaders and scholars depict Estonia's geopolitical significance on the political map of Europe. Their academic study has shown that for the Estonian political and academic elite, Europe and, more precisely, Northern Europe has become an ideal; belonging to this area is taken for granted. Analyzing the cultural contexts of Estonia, the authors of this study conclude that Estonia belongs rather to the Scandinavian than to the Baltic area. The Nordic identity of Estonians is strengthened through their lingual similarity to Finnish, and their observed traditional cultural customs introduced through the Lutheran Church and treated as objects of contemporary Nordic standards, social guarantees and welfare (*Vihalemm 1997:129-162*).

The term Europe is often additionally used for the geographic unit, meaning a cultural, economical and political construction. The Estonian top-politicians consider Estonia as belonging to Europe in all the formerly mentioned fields. Typical for this are the comments made by the former Estonian prime minister, Mart Siiman: "The participation of Estonia in European integration is a natural process, which results from our centuries-long belonging to the Western-European cultural area. Considering this background, unification with European structures means a restoration of historical, economical, political and cultural ties" (*Siiman 1998*).

However, Estonia has many fundamental reasons for joining European structures (*Ruutsoo, Kirch 1998:158*). *Firstly*, Estonia is in geographical terms on the European periphery and it is actually very complicated to divert new "energies" to Estonia in a natural way or to take part in "waves" of new energies. This problem can be compensated through the development of supra-national structures. *Secondly* Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are a politically unstable (gray) area, as long as they are not finally united with NATO and EU. This is a

hindrance for the Baltic States as an investment area for Western companies and makes manipulations from the East easier. *Thirdly*, Estonia has lost half a century concerning the global process of modernization. Catching up for this the technological, legal, cultural and socio-political backwardness requires extraordinary measures. One of those - and the one with the best perspective - is joining the EU.

The European Union is first and foremost an economic union, applying regulation to the Common Economic Area. This Common Economic Area acts as a tool in transforming of member countries' national identities, generating similarities, but also differences. The same process also applies to accession countries.

What form could the new European statehood take, so that it does not repeat the problems of the classic nation-states concerning the legitimization of power? This is still the subject of theoretical inquiries. Which possibilities exist to realize those - still theoretical - ideas? This is highly dependent on the practical development of the unification with the EU, where - besides economic considerations - security interests are also getting more and more important.

Today, one of the key questions in discussions of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian politicians and the cultural elite is the danger of the imposed shift of ethnic and cultural identity. Stating this fact should be the beginning of an overview of the changes in discussions concerning small state national interests for joining the EU.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia and Mõõdukad (Moderates) leader, Toomas Hendrik Ilves said: "...the EU is a key part of our foreign policy. But it is also a key part of our external identity. Indeed, the European Union has, and will continue to, have a strong impact on how we regard ourselves in relation to the outside world as well as how we are perceived by others. Indeed, the European Union has, and will continue to, have a strong impact on how we regard ourselves in relation to the outside world as well as how we are perceived by others. Our EU prospects have improved our overall status on the international arena. When the Soviet Union imploded, there was a widespread tendency to treat Estonia, and indeed all the countries that had been part of the Soviet Union, as a second tier of post-communist states. Overcoming this prejudice was one of the most difficult challenges that we faced two-three years ago when we set out to be invited to begin accession negotiations with the European Union. Today, member states see us through the 5+1 prism. Indeed, thanks to our close association with the European Union, our status on the international stage has been upgraded from EU applicant to future member. We have also succeeded in shedding the absurd moniker of a 'former Soviet republic.' These changes have, in turn, helped us strengthen our international position. I believe that due to our size, history and geographic location, we are much more concerned with our external identity than most countries. And so we should be. As a small country, we must constantly develop our international image" (*Ilves 1999:60*).

On the other hand, according to the opinion of leading Estonian politicians, there is one way to guarantee Estonian stability and security – joining the EU and



NATO. These are not understood as factors creating new European or global dimensions of the local people's identity. As Andres Tarand, the Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee argued in foreign policy discussion in the Estonian Parliament (November 1999) - the starting points for defining Estonia's foreign policy priorities are the following: globalization as one of the ever deepening processes in the modern world, and three aspects of the Estonian states – as a nation state, small state, and border state. There are a number of conflicts between globalization and the nation state, but also between the internal balance of the recently independent states and European integration. On the other hand, the concurrent status of Estonia as a small state and border state means that these conflicts have to be overcome as a priority in order to maintain sovereignty. Foreign policy priorities that arise from the task of optimization and that have been generally agreed on in Estonia are therefore membership in the EU and NATO. As a third priority, regional cooperation within the Baltic Sea region could be mentioned, stressing also the possibilities of additional positive regulations with Russia “ (*Tarand 2000: 39-43*).

New dimensions to Baltic cooperation emerged together with the increasing possibility to join NATO. If EU Enlargement is related mainly to the cultural independence and political sovereignty of the nation state, then the possible NATO eastward enlargement will bring along discussions related to Estonian territory and geopolitical security. After the last NATO enlargement it became a more realistic perspective for the Baltic States. In this respect Baltic cooperation could be more active and could get new practical content. Baltic States already have joint military units, a military college in Tartu, and other international joint actions. It is a major challenge - the strengthening of a common identity through a global organization.

The question about the future of EU and its new member states situated on the Baltic Sea is also important in the context of EU enlargement. The area around the Baltic Sea—states like Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—is economically and culturally one of the most dynamic regions in Europe, inhabited by a general population of about 50 million people.

Inside this region we can already see new political cooperation. For example, within the political elite of the Solidarnosc camp in Poland (*Brusis 2000:8*) and the right wing politicians of Isamaliit (Pro Patria) in Estonia, there is a certain potential for European enthusiasm, despite opinion polls which register a dramatic decrease in support for the EU. The program of Pro Patria, like that of other East-Central European right-wing parties, concentrates mainly on economic progress and economic rationality.

The eastward enlargement of the EU is an objective process connected to the process of modernization and globalization of the world and to the associated deepening of cooperation between the European people. The incorporation of Estonia and the other Baltic States in a more intense trade, information, financial and labor systems is absolutely inevitable.

## **CHANGES IN THE EU-CONSCIOUSNESS: THE PARADIGM OF INTELLECTUAL SKEPTICISM)**

Since November 1994, EU enlargement has become one of the leading discourses introduced in the daily newspapers. One of the first important texts of this discourse was "A Starting Thesis about Estonia Possibly Joining the EU" which described a vision of the costs and benefits of EU membership for Estonia in all the main fields (economic, environmental, cultural, social problems etc) (*Eesti tee...1994*). Since November 1995, when Estonia made the application for membership in the EU, the words of politicians have indicated that Estonia is definitely considered a potential member of the EU. Public opinion has been more conservative. This discourse has been mainly for politicians, who have been criticized by the skeptical humanitarian intelligentsia and also by more practical ordinary people.

In the years 1995 and 1996, public opinion in Estonia was in a euphoric phase of Euro-consciousness. Criticism against the EU was expressed carefully and neutrality was kept. The number of supporters of accession was steadily over 40%, only every fifth citizen said "No". Because of the lack of objective information every third Estonian was not sure how to vote or did not want to explain his possible point of view.

Since 1997-1998, in the discussions of Estonian politicians and the academic elite, a sharply defined understanding has been reached - Estonia has a chance to become a member state of the EU. Today this topic has the highest priority in the Estonian press and is also an important field of discussion in meetings of high-ranking Estonian politicians with their foreign colleagues. But at the beginning this was like a discovery that Estonia was an equal partner of other East European countries in the line to get a call from Europe, to join in the economic and political structures.

By the end of 1996, the reduced euphoria in discussions concerning EU-topics and in the public opinion had become apparent. The change can be called a breakthrough accompanying the improved distribution of information concerning Europe. This resulted in a sudden reduction of "Yes"-votes in the case of a referendum. The explanation is as following: in the context of an abstract perspective of accession, it was relatively easy to be of a seemingly supporting opinion, but in a more concrete voting situation people hesitated. In many fields a vacuum of information had emerged, due to the acceleration of accession to the EU. Since the need for competent information grew much faster than the ability to supply it, the interviewed people were feeling very insecure, which could be seen especially clearly in November 1998.

There seem to be a noticeable lack of people who are able to deal competently with the topic of the EU. Compared with the so-called "average Estonian", the opinion of the (opinion-making) elite (especially political elite) is mainly pro-EU. There is reason for the prognosis, that they as opinion-makers, as people speaking in the mass media will bring about a more positive attitude towards the EU in the near future.

But for the most part, worries about the lack of information and opinions mean the preservation of social guarantees. Predictions that in Estonia a broad feeling against the EU will arise, especially concerning questions of sovereignty, have also not been fulfilled. The accelerated progress of Estonia in the direction of the EU will quite probably not provoke strong resistance in the near future. A comparison of the findings of numerous sociologists shows that both the interest in the European Union and the spread of information about the EU have improved within the last few years (*Saar 1999:53-57*).

As a consequence, an essential change will probably take place next time both in the Euro-discussion and in the voting behavior of the people. The relatively linear and one-dimensional decision-making schemes of the people will be replaced by multidimensional voting strategies with more unpredictable outcomes. In Estonia, the positive example of Ireland is well-known and very often the maintenance of Ireland's cultural identity and its further development is used as an argument, which could help work out a future perspective of Estonians in the EU and a new collective identity for the Estonian people. It is interesting that the EU-experiences of neighbors – Finland and Sweden – are used less.

There are signs that confirm the existing hard “Euro-doubt“ in Estonia, some people are relatively irresolute about the decision-making concerning the European Union. However, there may be a certain basis for speaking about internal oppositions between generations and various categories of the population and their choice of priority strategies for European integration.

Mart Kivimäe first introduces the history of the Estonian Euro-skepticism. This analysis gives us a direction since the conceptual development of Estonian Euro-skepticism displays traits that qualify the manifestation of ‘Europeanization’ in the further history of Estonianness (*Kivimäe 1998:131-133*).

Euro-skepticism as a keyword has gained a rather ambiguous and contradictory response in the public opinion of the Estonian elite. The magazine of the cultural elite, “Eesti Ekspress” (supplement - “Areen”) has published an idea, which tries to express the attitudes of the elite at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a different light - “we have been Estonians, but we will become Europeans!” This vision expressed by Andres Langemets for the future of losing identity cannot be misunderstood. The gradual change of the national “face” of the Estonians (as the author sees it, an orientation towards others) is described as a national destruction, which would occur over several generations. The author as a skeptic is certain, that “the path chosen by the people is the national path; projected to the future and acceptable” (*Langemets 2000*).

For several other Estonian writers and humanitarians, the EU is also interpreted in skeptical way. It is considered a supreme power from outside having certain negative features. For example, the social geographer Eiki Berg argued on the basis of a critical analysis of discourses that, “there is as yet no consensus on either the significance of a “new“ Estonia or its regional belonging. Both visions, the “old nation state as the frontier of Western civilization“ as well as the “new multinational state in a gateway position“ are almost equally valid but neither has so far been put into use. The current model of a Western-oriented ethnic state with

a divided society is a product of overlapping constructed and real boundaries, constituting in reality a conflicting and contradictory vision “ (*Berg 2000:142*).

The efforts of the group of Estonian Euro-skeptics are directed toward the necessity to change the constitution. Over the period 1998-2000 the Euro-skeptical line gradually became more popular, and the discussion has a serious dimension as skeptics have published good analysis. Although their contribution to the political discussion has been very restrained, they expressed some clear warnings. The minor importance of Estonian national identity will meet with a strengthening of the European identity, propagating the unity of the EU, which should accompany accession to the EU, until the latter will possibly dominate the next generation of Estonians. This has been also rather a political than academic discussion. They have warned also about the huge increase of prices and the low compatibility of Estonian economics (*Leito, Silberg 1998*).

At the same time it is undisputed that the expectations in many fields greatly exceed the real possibilities of the EU and in the Estonian context limit more natural solutions. Setbacks and failures in the field of business are connected - well founded and sometimes even groundless - with Europe. Failures are used to discredit the EU-representatives of a certain policy in election campaigns and private conflicts. Criticism of the EU turns to populism once in a while. This all leaves marks on the image of the EU. The unclear meaning of Euro-skepticism is characterized by the present state of the society, it also mirrors the state of the distorted discussions that were provoked by Estonia's future joining of the European Union (*Kirch and other 1998:35*).

## CONCLUSIONS

Estonia aspires to be a full member of a united Europe and the European image and the real European identity of Estonia can be demonstrated by the general acceptance of the European idea. This is the only way for a small state like Estonia to keep its own identity integrating into the European cultural, political, and security system.

In his New Year's Eve speech in 1996 President Lennart Meri said the following: “We are once again in Europe, where we are defended by its culture, which since antiquity has been also our own culture. Now there is a need to put this process into a juridical shape. This should be clear to us that it is not the European Union coming to Estonia but Estonia joining the EU, and this will increase Estonia's duties as well as rights. And first of all: this is a choice between past and future” (*Meri 1997*).

In Estonia, the people and their President are interested in what the joining of EU-structures will bring about. The Estonians' hopes for security guarantees accompanying accession to the EU are undoubtedly more clearly defined than the attitudes about identity. Estonians see the security guarantees on the part of the EU as a guarantee of the maintenance of national independence. The ethnic

identity of the people of Estonia is seen as being endangered by other social circumstances (for example, de-population) rather than by the European Union.

The stability ensuing from cooperation within the EU reduces the chance of a political or economic crisis in Russia being transferred to Estonia. Estonia's experience in regaining independence and discussions on EU enlargement demonstrate that, in the EU, Estonia has common foreign and security policy interests with the small states of the Baltic Sea region, primarily Finland, Denmark and Sweden. Consequently, the would-be role of small states in the EU decision-making system at the beginning of the third millennium is relevant for Estonia's foreign policy.

There were dozens of those speeches in the last few years and this is also expressed by the words of the Estonian minister of foreign affairs, Toomas Hendrik Ilves – integrating into the European Union represents the culmination of Estonia's road back to Europe and Estonia's road forward to its rightful place as a well-functioning, modern nation-state.

The new discourse about joining Europe has recently been demonstrated by T.H. Ilves. In his speech in Berlin Humboldt University on 5. February 2001 T.H. Ilves argued: "Let's look at that again: people from Central and Eastern Europe are supposed to differ fundamentally from those in the present EU Member States as regards their national emotional traditions, experiences, interests and value judgments? I am sure most historians of Europe would agree that those fundamental democratic values which form the basis of the EU were absent a mere sixty years ago in large parts of what we today have come to call the European Union. Indeed, as Joschka Fischer pointed out here last year, the Union was created to prevent a recurrence of conditions that led to the Second World War. ....I don't wish to cavil here with this concrete example of an attitude toward the candidates from the post-Communist East. I do believe, however, that the subtext of the passage I quote above bodes ill for the success of the Osterweiterung. The subtext suggests that until now, the EU has enlarged to include people like "us," in the classic sense of "us" and "them." But if that has been the case up till now, then with the enlargement now underway, we are taking in some other kinds of strange beings, beings that share our continent but, as the quote says, differ fundamentally as regards their national emotional traditions, experiences, interests and value judgments (*Ilves 2001*).

The political order of power in Estonia, the party programs, state development programs, etc. have begun to follow the rhythm of the states in the European Union and this leads to changes in the shape of the political landscape. By seeing to what extent the importance of the changes accompanying European integration for political life in Estonia increase in the future (at the state level as well as concerning the local authorities) we can measure the depth of the practical political integration.

Joining the European Union is accompanied by the giant stride of Estonia at the institutionalization of European integration. This formerly certain wish also legitimizes the options which line up today. The so-called material considerations or foreign policy agreements, whatever one might like to call them, also make up

part of the accession process. In addition, new social organization models are of importance, since they help define the inner-Estonian and European sense of unity. These models will play a very essential role and might cause people to commit themselves effectively to the renewal of the society and might moreover guarantee stability.

However, viewing it as an attempt to adapt to globalization, giving up the right to make decisions could even reinforce our statehood. It is equally important for a state to be able to decide upon its own affairs as well as influence others. Part of the sovereignty could be exchanged for a more extensive influence, thus improving one's position. Within the EU, Estonia has better opportunities to gain sufficient influence to parry the pressure of globalisation in the defence of our cultural and national autonomy (*Palk 1999:26*).

The timetable of the road back to Europe has been successfully realized. If Estonia has "survived" the change from Euro-euphoria to more rational considerations and doubts in the years 1995 to 1996, then since the summer of 1999 the need for defense and security has convinced Estonians again. Support for a referendum concerning accession to the EU has grown a little bit. Behind this positive trend stands the need to feel safe concerning foreign policy.

The integration of Estonia in the European Union has been dealt with by the representatives of the Estonian elite as a mainly political process. This integration in the EU is accompanied by economic developments as well as the implementation of standards in Estonia that are indispensable for the functioning of the Common Market. A strong argument and logical consequence of the mentioned changes for Estonia as a future member of the EU would be a step by step increase of the security guarantees offered by the EU.

At the same time, an intensified battle with Europe concerning enlargement policy could be one of the most important mechanisms in initiating a real discussion in the society. Very often introducing debates replaces the exchange of ideas of the political groups and also those directly concerning the interests of the people. One thing is clear - because of the lack of concrete information on the economy, the social policy system, the labor market system, etc. of the European Union there are still large parts of the population (especially among young people and pensioners) who cannot decide on their vote and cannot define a position towards the European Union (*Talts 2000:151-162*). This will be serious resistance to carrying out a successful referendum.

In general, one can divide political parties into two groups: parties who support quick integration with the EU, and parties who want to slow down the speed of integration. According to the opinion of Mart Nutt, member of the Riigikogu, geopolitical situation pushes Estonia to quicker integration (*Nutt 2001*). He argues also that EU integration represents rather a process of protection of European and local identity that promotes globalization and a weakening of local and regional identification. Opponents – parties who support slow speed of accession – (small parties, for example the Union People's Party and the Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party) who have recently made common a release about the Nice summit and affirmed that Estonia is not ready to join EU, because economic

circumstances do not guarantee the positive effects of a quick accession. Estonia must wait until the EU will finish its internal reforms (*Toomsalu 2001*).

As we know, older European Union members expect from the new member states stable and predictable behavior. It is possible to describe this behavior, linking from one side economic and social policy realities and from the other side changes in national identity, to forecast general and specific changes in Estonia in the process of accession to the larger European economic and cultural space. However, the future European citizen begins to connect these two issues with his everyday interests and with his future more concretely. Accession to the EU will change Estonia's security policy position in the world, in reality as well as mentally. Accession to the EU will, however, primarily increase Estonia's soft security, but the opinions of the political and academic elite in Estonia come together in the fact, that without a doubt, upon accession to the EU, Estonia will lose part of its sovereignty.

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