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Airat Aklaev

From Confrontation to Integration

The Evolution of Ethnopolitics in the Baltic States

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Address of the Author:

PRIF · Leimenrode 29 · D – 60322 Frankfurt/Main

Telephone: +49 (0)69/95 91 04-0 · Fax: +49 (0)69/55 84 81

Email: aklaev@hsfk.de · web: <http://www.hsfk.de>

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Summary

This report focuses on two Baltic states – Estonia and Latvia – that have proved of particular concern to European policy-makers on account of the intense ethnopolitical tensions to which their policies on citizenship have given rise – tensions that reached crisis-point in 1993/94. The report argues that we are currently witnessing a new stage in ethnopolitical developments in the Baltics, shaped by a series of important new factors that emerged in the late 1990s. Those factors are: the stabilization of independent statehood; a relatively successful transition to functioning market-economies; the institutionalization of democratic political competition; the process of EU accession; and the re-emergence and development of civil-society institutions. In combination, these factors have tended to attenuate ethnopolitical attitudes and promote integrationist discourses which accord priority to inter-ethnic coexistence and constructive patterns of ethnic conflict management.

Following the introduction provided in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reviews the sources, patterns of manifestation, and evolution of ethnopolitical problems in Estonia and Latvia during the 1990s, and outlines the changes in the approaches used to resolve them.

The entire dynamics of ethnic relations in Estonia and Latvia during the Soviet period was shaped by rapid and dramatic ethnodemographic changes, and by the creation of an ethnic divide between the Balts and the Russian-speaking migrants, manifested in language barrier, differences in occupational structure, distinct political orientations. This helped ensure that strict legislation on official languages (first adopted in the late 1980s) and exclusionist citizenship-policies won a high political profile when state independence was regained in 1991. Moreover, the simultaneous transition to democracy and independence has itself generated its own legacies, which, in their turn, have rendered post-communist ethnopolitics even more complex, superimposing the citizen/non-citizen divide onto the ethnic divisions.

Since 1991, ethnopolitical developments in Estonia and Latvia have passed through three major stages. These are distinguishable by the changes that have occurred in the dynamics of ethnic conflict and in the approaches adopted to its management. The stages concerned are: 1) post-transitional confrontation resulting from the institutionalization of hegemonic control and ethnic dominance and entailing escalation to ethnopolitical crisis (August 1991–spring 1993 in Estonia, August 1991–spring 1994 in Latvia); 2) transition to de-escalation, a ‘wait-and-see’ period followed by exploration of alternative strategies of conflict management through political and societal integration (1994–early 1998 in Estonia, 1994–1999 in Latvia); 3) initial attenuation of ethnic tensions and start of conflict transformation in conjunction with implementation of integrationist strategies of ethnic peace-building (early 1998 onwards in Estonia, late 1999 onwards in Latvia).

Chapter 3 outlines various crucial new factors that have helped shape contemporary Baltic ethnopolitics. With the stabilization of independent statehood, a feeling of security has been created among the Balts, and the integration of

Russian-speakers has come to be viewed as an increasingly sensible option. The proficient way in which the Baltic states have managed the transition to functioning market economies both serves as impressive proof of their determination to move away from the communist past and gives ground for optimism in regard to their future performance. At the same time, regions which, during the Soviet period, had been highly industrialized and had attracted Russian-speaking immigrants fell into a state of stagnation as a result of market reform, causing serious social dislocation. The institutionalization of democratic political competition has permitted the parties of the centre to gain the upper hand over the nationalist right. It also encouraged the adoption of a conciliatory and accommodating stance on ethnic policies as votes were sought among newly naturalized Russian-speaking citizens. The progress of naturalization has prepared the ground for the emergence and development of inter-ethnic political coalitions. European integration and the prospect of Baltic accession to the EU has moved to the forefront of both domestic and foreign policy. In their attempts to meet the requirements for EU membership, Baltic decision-makers have had to: take into account the European Commission's recommendations on the issue of the resident Russian-speaking population; adhere to the norms of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; and accelerate naturalization procedures and the integration of Russian-speakers into their respective societies. The re-emergence of civil-society institutions and the gradual development of the third sector has produced a new set of actors on the ethnopolitical scene in Estonia and Latvia. Since the mid-1990s, NGOs have assumed an increasingly significant role in the processes whereby non-Estonians and non-Latvians are integrated into respective national societies. Their activities have included: efforts to improve intercultural dialogue and understanding; language-teaching for non-Balts; influencing public opinion to accept multiculturalism; and promoting patterns of civic, non-ethnically based, co-operation.

Chapter 4 discusses the impact which new factors in Baltic political life have had on aspects of the ethnopolitical scene such as inter-ethnic attitudes and public discourses on ethnic issues. The chapter goes on to detail the results of recently conducted research into the various mindsets and motivations of different subgroups of political actors who share integrationist discourses at the state level (domestically centred pragmatists and European-oriented realists) and at the societal level (human-rights activists, civic partners, and minority-culture activists). It concludes by contrasting the conservative motives of those who propagate a 'core nation' discourse with the pragmatic and reciprocal-partnership motives that inspire those engaging in integrationist discourses. Pragmatic motives are to be found 1) at the state level, among holders of the utilitarian perspective, both in the European-realist and domestic-pragmatist subgroup, and 2) at the societal level, among holders of the multiculturalist perspective. The subgroups in question continue to perceive the conflict in interests among ethnic groups as acute but seek to change the pattern of inter-ethnic relations through orientation to superordinate, non-ethnic goals (such as realistically framed national-security interests, party-political expedience, or job – or even financial – opportunities for societal groups engaged in state-sponsored integration-activities). Such a position generally allows scope for inter-ethnic bargaining and compromise and, in some spheres, inter-ethnic co-operation. Pluralist partnership motives may be observed 1) at the state

level, among holders of the modernizing/liberal perspective (the modernizer and liberal subgroups), and 2) at the societal level, among holders of human-rights and civic-partnership perspectives (the human-rights and civic-partner subgroups). These actors have developed an interest in transforming the structure of inter-ethnic relations in order to realize, in the first instance, their mutual interest in the country's long-term development (modernizers and liberals) or, in the second instance, some shared non-ethnic (civic) interest. All this prepares the ground for long-term peaceful co-operation between differing ethnic groups that perceive each other as civilized partners solving the same mutually important problem.

Chapter 5 traces the implications that the knowledge obtained on attitudinal change and differences in discourse within subgroups of domestic political actors may have in helping European policy-makers to craft more effective policies for promoting sustainable ethnic peace (more effective in the sense that they take into account the specific mindsets and motivations of these subgroups). Previous Western policies designed to put pressure on the Baltic governments – which, in the early phase of re-independence, were dominated by right-wing nationalist coalitions – proved successful and produced major changes on the domestic ethnopolitical scene. Centrist coalitions which tend to espouse ethnopolitical moderation and adopt accommodating stances on ethnic issues have now come to the fore. Constructive policies aimed at the pluralist inclusion of non-Balts through state and societal integration have taken root and have replaced ethnonational exclusivism. Pressure to adhere to European standards in protecting minority rights should be maintained, in order to ensure the continued marginalization of radical nationalist groups and preclude the establishment of illiberal 'ethnic democracies' in eastern European countries seeking to form part of an enlarged EU. At the current stage of ethnopolitical development in the Baltics, when the influence of nationalist politicians on domestic politics is on the decline, new target-groups of political actors require the attention of European policy-makers. The institutions and instruments of preventive conflict-management should be reviewed and expanded accordingly. Policies of clear, systematic pressure on propagators of the 'core nation' discourse need to be supplemented with increased, prioritized support for political actors who engage in integrationist discourses. To be effective, such support not only needs to be tailored to the level (state or societal) at which the integrationists in question are operating; it also needs to take into account the differences in mindset and motive between the various subgroups within each of these levels.

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1 Introduction

The problem of how to build lasting ethnic peace in eastern Europe is one of the most pressing questions currently facing European policy-makers. By the end of the 1990s, there was growing awareness of the need to abandon 'crisis perspectives' and accord much higher priority to crafting effective policies of long-term conflict-prevention in those areas previously characterized by serious but generally non-violent forms of ethnopolitical conflict. The broadening of proposed Western European involvement to include the promotion of long-term ethnic peace in the eastern part of the continent acquires even greater significance in view of the fact that many of the new eastern European democracies selected as candidates for EU enlargement still face a host of serious problems relating to ethnic minorities. Carefully crafted European third-party policies can help sustain de-escalatory dynamics already operating in intra-national conflicts in these areas. At the same time, for such an undertaking to succeed, a new set of tools is urgently required – one that will help trigger effective self-sustaining conflict-management processes appropriate to the specific ethnopolitical situations in the various candidate countries. Promoting peaceful ethnopolitical attitudes and discourses amongst the populations and political actors of the countries concerned is an essential prerequisite to getting constructive patterns of ethnic conflict management translated into institutional form and established on a lasting footing.

This report focuses on the Baltic states, which number amongst the most promising candidates for EU enlargement. Compared with other eastern European countries, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have managed both the transition to smoothly functioning democratic political institutions and the implementation of market reforms with some success. Relations with the EU developed rapidly from 1991, and by the end of the 1990s all three countries had secured a place on the list of prospective beneficiaries of enlargement.

Two of the Baltic candidates, Estonia and Latvia, have proved major 'hot spots' for European policy-makers because of the marked domestic ethnopolitical tensions resulting from their citizenship policies. In Lithuania, by contrast, the high proportion of ethnic Lithuanians (80 per cent) and low level of ethnic tension helped create a situation in which it was easy for the re-independent state to adopt a 'zero option' on citizenship: all inhabitants of Lithuania were automatically recognized as citizens of the independent state that re-emerged after the Soviet collapse in 1991. Post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia, meanwhile, restored their statehood and citizenry as they had existed prior to the Second World War. This precluded large numbers of non-Estonian and non-Latvian residents from becoming citizens of the re-independent states, creating a large body of stateless individuals and aggravating the ethnopolitical tensions that had already been evident in the late 1980s. Though never actually turning violent, either in Estonia or in Latvia, the ethnic dissension became extremely intense. Against this background, it is on the ethnopolitical conditions in these two latter countries that this report focuses in its examination of peace-building issues.

One notable feature of the Baltic cases is the prior existence of constructive patterns of co-operation between domestic and European actors in securing and promoting intra-national peace between the different identity-groups. In the

immediate aftermath of Baltic independence, ethnic conflict reached crisis-point (in Estonia this occurred in 1993, and in Latvia in 1994), and relations with Russia suffered further serious deterioration. However, the crisis was successfully managed thanks to timely and spectacularly efficient mediation by third parties (the OSCE, the Council of Europe (CoE), and several key western and northern European governments). When the crisis was over, the strategic alliance that had been forged by domestic and European actors to promote lasting ethnic peace assumed a much lower profile. In today's context, when integration of these two Baltic countries into the EU has become a focal point of their foreign and domestic politics, and has the potential to become a crucial factor in ensuring the continuous (re)production of substantive democracy and lasting intra-national peace, there is a clear need for that profile to be enhanced – and a very favourable set of circumstances for doing so.

This report argues that we are today witnessing a new stage in ethnopolitical developments in the Baltic – one that has been shaped by a series of important new factors that emerged in the late 1990s. Overall, these factors have tended to attenuate ethnopolitical attitudes and promote integrationist discourses that favour inter-ethnic coexistence and constructive patterns of ethnic conflict management. If European policy-makers are to craft more effective policies for promoting lasting ethnic peace in the new Baltic democracies, they need to be informed about the structure and variety of discourses and motivations prevalent amongst the different subgroups of political actors who advocate integration as the contemporary route to ethnopolitical conflict management in Estonia and Latvia. With this in mind, the present report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 reviews the sources, patterns of manifestation, and evolution of ethnopolitical problems in Estonia and Latvia during the 1990s, and outlines the changes in the approaches used to resolve them. Chapter 3 outlines various crucial new factors that have begun to influence contemporary Baltic ethnopolitics: stabilization of independent statehood, successful transition to functioning market economies, institutionalization of democratic political competition, European integration, and (re)emergence of civil-society institutions. Chapter 4 discusses the impact which new factors in Baltic political life have had on aspects of the ethnopolitical scene such as inter-ethnic attitudes and public discourses on ethnic issues. The chapter goes on to detail the results of recently conducted research¹ into the various mindsets and motivations of different subgroups of political actors who share integrationist discourses. Chapter 5 traces the implications that the knowledge obtained on attitudinal change and differences in discourse within subgroups of domestic political actors may have in helping European policy-makers to craft more efficient policies for promoting sustainable ethnic peace in the Baltic group of EU candidates. Such policies can be significantly enhanced by taking into account the specific mindsets and motivations of these subgroups.

¹ The research in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was conducted in Oct.–Nov. 2000 as part of the project 'Democratic consolidation, peace constituencies, and ethnopolitics of institutional readjustment in third-wave democracies: The Baltic cases', supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in 2000.

2 Ethnopolitical Change and Choice in Estonia and Latvia During the 1990s

The substance of the contemporary political dissension between the various ethnic groups in Estonia and Latvia, and the tasks to be addressed in any attempt at ethnic conflict management in the region, have been determined by the extremely rapid and complex process of ethnopolitical change that has taken place in the Baltic region in the post-communist period. That change has created a number of difficult policy-choices in the realm of inter-ethnic relations.

2.1. Sources of Contemporary Ethnic Conflict

Contemporary political conflict between ethnic groups in Estonia and Latvia derives from two kinds of legacy with which inter-ethnic relations in these countries have had to grapple since the restoration of Baltic independence: a rooted kind, relating to the fifty years of Soviet domination (1940–1991); and a new kind, generated by ethnically relevant choices made during, and in the immediate aftermath of, these states' transition to democracy and independence in the early 1990s.

2.1.1 Rooted Legacies

The dramatic history of the incorporation of Estonia and Latvia into the Soviet Union in 1940, and their subsequent development under Soviet rule, have been of great significance in shaping political relations between the ethnic majority and minority groups in these countries. The evolution of inter-ethnic conflict, and the collective memories and intergroup attitudes associated with this, have tended to translate into ideologies that have lent themselves to ethnic mobilization, both before and after the Soviet collapse and the ensuing transition to independence and democracy.

The entire dynamics of ethnic relations in Estonia and Latvia during the Soviet period was shaped by the rapid and dramatic ethnodemographic changes that took place in the period from 1940 until the 1980s. The most important factor here was the settlement, in Estonia and Latvia, of large groups of migrants from Russia, Ukraine, and other parts of the USSR, in line with the centrally planned, geographically far-flung Soviet industrialization of the post-war period. The huge influx of Russian-speaking immigrants, the Estonian and Latvian losses suffered during the war, various post-war deportations and purges, and low sets of birth-rates resulted in the indigenous share of the population in Estonia falling from 88 per cent in 1934 to 61.5 per cent in 1989, and in Latvia from 77 per cent in 1935 to 52 per cent in 1989. (*See Tables 1 and 2*)

Table 1: Dynamics of Estonia's Ethnic Composition, 1934–1999

	1934		1959		1970	
	1000s	%	1000s	%	1000s	%
<i>Estonians</i>	993.5	88.2	892.6	74.6	925.1	68.2
<i>Russians</i>	92.7	8.2	240.2	20.1	334.6	24.6
<i>Ukrainians</i>	–	–	15.8	1.3	28.1	2.1
<i>Belarussians</i>	–	–	10.9	0.9	18.7	1.4
<i>Finns</i>	1.1	0.1	16.7	1.4	18.5	1.4
<i>Jews</i>	4.4	0.4	5.4	0.4	5.3	0.4
<i>Germans</i>	16.3	1.5	0.7	0.1	7.9	0.6
<i>Latvians</i>	5.4	0.5	2.9	0.2	3.3	0.2
<i>Swedes</i>	7.6	0.6	–	–	–	–
<i>Others</i>	5.4	0.5	11.5	1.0	14.6	1.1
Total	1,126.4	100	1,196.8	100	1,356.1	100

	1979		1989		1999	
	1000s	%	1000s	%	1000s	%
<i>Estonians</i>	947.8	64.7	963.3	61.5	942.5	65.2
<i>Russians</i>	408.8	27.9	474.8	30.3	406.0	28.1
<i>Ukrainians</i>	36.0	2.5	48.3	3.1	36.6	2.5
<i>Belarussians</i>	23.5	1.6	27.7	1.8	21.4	1.5
<i>Finns</i>	17.6	1.2	16.6	1.1	13.0	0.9
<i>Jews</i>	5.0	0.3	4.6	0.3	2.3	0.2
<i>Germans</i>	3.9	0.3	3.5	0.2	1.2	0.1
<i>Latvians</i>	4.0	0.3	3.1	0.2	2.6	0.2
<i>Swedes</i>	–	–	–	–	–	–
<i>Others</i>	17.9	1.2	23.8	1.5	19.9	1.4
Total	1,126.4	100	1,565.6	100	1,445.5	100

Sources: 1989 USSR census-data as given in *Demographic Data Collection of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, 1998); estimates for 1999 based on *Eesti Statistika Aastaraamat 1999* (Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia), 33.

Table 2: Dynamics of Latvia's Ethnic Composition, 1935–1999

	1935		1959		1979	
	1,000s	%	1,000s	%	1,000s	%
<i>Latvians</i>	1467.0	77.0	1297.9	62.0	1344.1	53.7
<i>Russians</i>	168.3	8.8	556.4	26.6	821.5	32.8
<i>Belarussians</i>	26.8	1.4	61.6	2.9	111.5	4.5
<i>Ukrainians</i>	1.8	0.1	29.4	1.4	66.7	2.7
<i>Poles</i>	48.6	2.5	59.8	2.9	62.7	2.5
<i>Lithuanians</i>	22.8	1.2	32.4	1.5	37.8	1.5
<i>Jews</i>	93.4	4.9	36.6	1.7	28.3	1.1
<i>Roma</i>	3.8	0.2	4.3	0.2	6.1	0.2
<i>Estonians</i>	6.9	0.4	4.6	0.2	3.7	0.1
<i>Germans</i>	62.1	3.3	1.6	0.1	3.3	0.1
<i>Others</i>	4.4	0.2	8.9	0.5	17.1	0.8
Total	1,905.9	100	2,093.5	100	2,502.8	100

	1989		1999	
	1,000s	%	1,000s	%
<i>Latvians</i>	1387.8	52.0	1,357.8	55.7
<i>Russians</i>	905.5	34.0	788.4	32.3
<i>Belarussians</i>	119.7	4.5	95.6	3.9
<i>Ukrainians</i>	92.1	3.5	70.8	2.9
<i>Poles</i>	60.4	2.3	53.1	2.2
<i>Lithuanians</i>	34.6	1.3	31.1	1.3
<i>Jews</i>	22.9	0.9	8.5	0.3
<i>Roma</i>	7.0	0.3	7.8	0.3
<i>Estonians</i>	3.3	0.1	2.7	0.1
<i>Germans</i>	3.8	0.1	1.5	0.06
<i>Others</i>	29.5	1.0	21.9	0.9
Total	2,666.6	100	2,439.4	100

Sources: 1989 USSR census, as quoted in E. Vebers and R. Karklina (eds.), *National Politics in the Baltic States* (Riga: Zinatne Publishers, 1995), 225; data for 1999 based on *Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 1999* (Riga: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 1999), 37.

One of the hallmarks of Estonia and Latvia in the Soviet years, particularly in the 1980s, was the emergence, within them, of ethnically divided societies.² The overwhelming majority of immigrants were either ethnic Russians or other Eastern Slavs (so-called ‘Russian-speakers’, or ‘Russophones’) and differed from the indigenous population in several important respects. Religious differences between, on the one hand, the titular nationalities of Estonia and Latvia, who were largely (though not exclusively) Lutheran, and the predominantly Orthodox migrants of Slav origin did not play a major role at this time. It was other aspects of cultural distance, particularly language, that figured most prominently. As a rule, Soviet-era newcomers neither acquired the local language nor familiarized themselves with the local culture. In 1989 the proportion of non-Estonians with knowledge of Estonian was 14 per cent, and in Latvia the corresponding figure was 22 per cent (owing to the larger historical Russian community).³

The ethnically based pattern of geographic and economic concentration fostered the emergence of separate societies in which either Balts or Russian-speakers dominated.⁴ Geographically, the immigrant population tended to cluster in large cities where there was industrial growth. As a result, around 80 per cent of all non-Balts were to be found living in the respective capitals or in other industrial centres,⁵ whereas the rural population was almost exclusively Estonian or Latvian. Despite the highly mixed composition in the metropolitan areas, jobs, housing, and occupational structures have tended to be segregated. The entire Soviet period was characterized by a discourse on how to maintain the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’.⁶

The feeling that ‘foreigners’ enjoyed a privileged position in ‘our country’, and also the widespread cultural and social segregation between titular nationalities and Russophones, promoted the emergence and persistence of historically conditioned prejudices between the groups. Attitudes towards non-Balts at the beginning of the 1990 were determined chiefly by the one-sided demographic development that had

² C. Kaplan, ‘Estonia: A Plural Society on the Road to Independence’, in: I. Bremmer and R. Taras (eds.), *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), 206–21, at 208; O. Norgaard, *The Baltic States after Independence* (Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, 1996), ch. 5.

³ T. Raun, ‘Estonia: Independence Redefined’, in: I. Bremmer and R. Taras (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 405–6, 419; N. Muiznieks, ‘Latvia: Restoring a State, Rebuilding a Nation’, *ibid.* 380.

⁴ Here and elsewhere in this report ‘Balts’ denotes the titular nationalities, i.e. Estonians in Estonia and Latvians in Latvia, and ‘non-Balts’ denotes the Russian-speaking population, i.e. non-Estonians in Estonia and non-Latvians in Latvia, as the minorities often use Russian as a means of communication.

⁵ Kohtla-Järve, Sillamäe, Narva in Ida-Virumaa (north-east Estonia); Liepāja, Ventspils, Daugavpils, Rezekne, Jelgava in Latvia. In the capital cities of Tallinn (Estonia) and Riga (Latvia), the proportion of Russophones among the population is 50 % or greater than that of the Balts.

⁶ In many instances the Balts drew on pre-Soviet identity-components and non-Soviet influences. See Norgaard, *The Baltic States after Independence*, 16.

taken place in the Soviet period. Most Balts tended to view Russian residents as settlers who had been transported there by the Soviet state to 'consolidate the conquest'. Estonians and Latvians, saddled with low birth-rates and an ageing population, were afraid of becoming a minority in their own countries.

Another significant factor in shaping the attitudes of the titular Balts, in the sense of enhancing their perception of Russian-speakers as a threat, was the outcome of the referendums on independence held in spring 1991 (in what was still the USSR). These revealed considerable divergences in views and loyalties. Analyses of voting patterns by locality and constituency (which tended to be ethnically segregated), and also sociological surveys from that period, indicate that, whereas most Estonians and Latvians (between 90 and 95 per cent) were clearly in favour of independence, only 25 to 30 per cent of non-Estonians, and 38 to 45 per cent of non-Latvians, supported it.⁷ This helped ensure that exclusionist citizenship-policies and strict legislation on official languages won a high political profile when state independence was regained in 1991.

Besides having their own specific ethnodemographic patterns and historical grievances, the Baltic states share a number of typical legacies, such as an underdeveloped civil society, with other post-communist countries. Students of eastern European ethnopolitics are essentially agreed, firstly, that nationhood and the values on which it is founded (*viz.* ethnic or civic) are key factors when it comes to the proper functioning of the new political systems, and, secondly, that it is, by and large, the weakness of civic politics that accounts for the overemphasis on ethnicity which has characterized post-communist development.⁸

It was largely as a result of the more deeply rooted legacies that ethnic agendas in the Baltic states did not coincide during the Soviet past, and continued to diverge during the triple transition – to independence, political democracy, and a market-based economy – that occurred in the late eighties and early nineties. Moreover,

⁷ For analysis of Estonian voting-patterns, see R. Vetik, 'Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation in Post-Communist Estonia', *Journal of Peace Research*, 30 (1993), 3: 271, and R. Taagepera, 'Ethnic Relations in Estonia, 1991', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 23 (1992), 2: 126. For analysis of Latvian voting-patterns, see I. Mezs, *Latviesi Latviā: Etnodemografisks Aspektas* (Kalamazoo, MI: LSC Apgads, 1992), 49–50. For survey data on Estonia, see A. Saar, 'What Did the Plebiscite and Referendum in Estonia Reveal about the Statehood of Estonia and the Soviet Union', *Monthly Survey of Estonian and Soviet Politics*, (1991), 13; on Latvia, see B. Zepa, 'Sabiedriskā Doma Parejas Perioda Latvija: Latviesu un Cittadiesu Uzskatu Dinamika (1989–1992)', *Latvijas Zinatnu Akademijas Vestis*, Part A, no. 10 (1992), 23. Outcomes such as these, at such critical moments for the Baltic countries, were perceived by many Balts as a threat to their future.

⁸ For one of most thorough and penetrating analyses, see G. Schöpflin, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity in Europe, East and West', in: C. A. Kupchan (ed.), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1995), 37–65. See also, among others: D. Chirot, 'National Liberation and Nationalist Nightmares: The Consequences of the End of Empires in Eastern Europe in the 20th century', in: B. Crawford (ed.), *Markets, States, and Democracy: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformation* (Westview: Boulder, 1995), 43–71; B. Geddes, 'A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, 28 (1995), 2: 239–74; R. Brubaker, 'Aftermaths of Empire and the Unmixing of Peoples: Historical and Comparative Perspectives', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18 (1995), 2: 189–218.

the transition process itself generated its own legacies, which, in their turn, have rendered post-transitional ethnopolitics even more complex.

2.1.2 *New Legacies*

The Baltic transition to democracy and the market economy coincided chronologically with the restoration of independent statehood and the subsequent attempt to define national identity. As a result, the issue of nationhood, and ethnopolitical dissension over citizenship, figured prominently in the process. Policies of state- and nation-building in Estonia and Latvia after the Soviet collapse were shaped by features of the discourse about statehood and sovereignty peculiar to these post-reindependent countries. Unlike most of the other post-Soviet states,⁹ the Baltic countries regarded themselves officially as ‘restored’ rather than ‘new’ sovereignties, and emphasis was therefore placed on legal continuity with their inter-war statehood. One of the most important institutional factors that has helped shape post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia has been the establishment of boundaries for political participation, notably in the form of citizenship laws and voting rights.

Because Estonia and Latvia opted legally for restoration of their former statehood, the citizenship they instituted in 1991 automatically linked back into that of the pre-war period. Those who had been citizens in 1940 retained that citizenship, as did their descendants. As a result, a large number of Soviet-era migrants, mostly Russian-speakers, found themselves outside the citizenship community. The number of non-Estonians who automatically and unconditionally became citizens of the Republic of Estonia in 1992 because they or their parents or grandparents had held Estonian citizenship prior to 1940 was a mere 75,000 (c. 10 per cent of the resident Russian-speaking population in 1989).¹⁰ The corresponding figure in Latvia was somewhat greater because of the higher proportion of non-Latvians among ‘historic citizens’: around 360,000 Russian-speakers (c.30 per cent of the resident non-Latvian population) got ‘automatic’ citizenship in 1992. At the same time, in 1992 and 1994 respectively, about 494,000 non-Estonians in Estonia and almost 700,000 non-Latvians in Latvia failed to qualify for restored citizenship and thus became stateless.

Although all these latter groups (excepting Soviet ex-military personnel) could become citizens through naturalization, the established procedure for securing this was quite complex. Under the laws on citizenship, an applicant for naturalization had to pass a language-test¹¹ and also a ‘citizenship-test’ assessing their knowledge

⁹ With certain exceptions, like Georgia, the other states that gained independence as a result of the Soviet break-up defined themselves as ‘new’ rather than ‘restored’ states. Hence, in 1991, these new states used one or other variety of the ‘zero option’ in defining citizenship: all those legally resident in the country at the time of independence were considered citizens.

¹⁰ Integrating Estonia, 1997–2000, Estonian Government Report (Tallinn: Government of the Republic of Estonia Press, 2000), 8. For the dynamics of the legal status of the population of Estonia and Latvia during the 1990s, see also Tables 4 and 5.

¹¹ The language requirement has proved the main obstacle to naturalization, since between a quarter and a third of the Russians living in Estonia and Latvia do not speak Estonian or Latvian. This is a

of the country's history, constitution, and citizenship-laws, and swear an oath of loyalty to the state. Until 'non-historic' citizens had successfully completed the naturalization procedure, they were obliged either to retain the status of 'resident aliens' or, if they so wished, to apply for citizenship of a third state.¹²

Strictly speaking, the initial definition of nationhood was not exclusionary. It was couched not in ethnic but in civic terms, in the sense that the core of the nation (the citizens of pre-1940 Estonia and Latvia and their descendants) was defined on the basis of civic criteria and included both ethnic Balts and non-Balts. (Had independent statehood not been forcibly interrupted by Soviet rule, this group of individuals would have constituted the citizenry of the individual states.) Despite this, the process has proved only partially inclusive. Although this policy was justified by reference to legal continuity, it effectively excluded the larger part of the non-titular population from participation in the political process that set the initial course of the state. Many observers agree that the 'restored-state' approach to nationhood has had clear ethnic implications and has served the political interests of the titular nationality.¹³

The rapid and radical shift in the collective perceptions and political status of ethnic groups that occurred in 1992 has probably been the key factor in determining inter-ethnic relations in the new Baltic democracies. Two distinct sets of public responses were evoked – one among the ethnic Estonian and Latvian populations and one among the ethnic Slavic populations. For the majority of Balts, the restoration of independence and the concomitant institution of democracy and a market economy meant, above all, the attainment of historical justice.¹⁴ These developments also enabled them to reassert their historical identity and to eliminate the need, for the great majority of them, to live a dual existence – a public, Soviet one, and a private, Estonian or Latvian one.¹⁵ In the case of the non-Balts, by

legacy of the Soviet period, when it was considered unimportant for Russians to be taught local languages and the necessary motivation was lacking. Since Russian residents' poor command of Baltic languages was a well-known fact, critics of citizenship legislation have claimed that the real aim of the language requirements was to exclude as many Russian-speakers as possible, for as long as possible, from politics and large-scale privatization.

¹² Meaning primarily Russia, who, as the legal heir of the USSR, granted automatic citizenship to all former Soviet citizens applying for it.

¹³ The problem has been highlighted by J. Chinn and L. A. Truex, 'The Question of Citizenship in the Baltics', *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (1996), 1: 133–47; see M. H. Wiegant, 'The Russian Minority in Estonia', *International Journal on Group Rights*, 3 (1995), 1: 109–143 for a similar interpretation.

¹⁴ Recent area-studies suggest the coexistence of two subcultures within the increasingly heterogeneous political culture of today's Baltics: on the one hand the waning of Sovietism, on the other the emergence of the Estonian (or Latvian) identity as a foundation for a new set of attitudes, orientations, and values regarding democratic institutions and their meaning. See e.g. C. Kaplan, 'Political Culture in Estonia: The Impact of Two Traditions on Political Development', in: V. Tismaneanu (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (M. E. Sharpe: Armonk, 1997), 227–67.

¹⁵ R. Ruutsoo, 'The Perception of Historical Identity and the Restoration of Estonian Independence', *Nationalities Papers*, 23 (1995), 167–79, at 177.

contrast, the major shift that had occurred in their legal and political status created greater uncertainty and threw them into an 'identity crisis'. Until the restoration of Baltic independence in 1991, Russian-speakers felt they were the majority everywhere in the Soviet Union. The loss of empire deprived Russian-speakers in the successor states of the advantages associated with their role as the leading element and was a powerful blow to their self-image.¹⁶ Psychologically, this reversal in role and status represented a painful shift from a position as the dominant local representatives of a central authority (a so-called 'imperial minority'¹⁷) to that of unwanted, ethnically alien, and, it may be presumed, frequently disaffected subjects of newly independent states.

2.2 The Evolution of Ethnopolitical Conflict and Its Management 1991–2000

Since 1991, ethnopolitical developments in Estonia and Latvia have passed through three major stages. These are distinguishable by the changes that have occurred in the dynamics of ethnic conflict and in the approaches adopted to its management. The stages concerned are: 1) post-transitional confrontation resulting from the institutionalization of hegemonic control and ethnic dominance and entailing escalation to ethnopolitical crisis (August 1991–spring 1993 in Estonia, August 1991–spring 1994 in Latvia); 2) transition to de-escalation, a 'wait-and-see' period followed by exploration of alternative strategies of conflict management through political and societal integration (1994–early 1998 in Estonia, 1994–1999 in Latvia); 3) initial attenuation of ethnic tensions and start of conflict transformation in conjunction with implementation of integrationist strategies of ethnic peace-building (early 1998 onwards in Estonia, late 1999 onwards in Latvia). The content of each of these stages is summarized in Table 3.

¹⁶ The issues relating to the new Russian diaspora have been well researched. See e.g. P. Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); also: R. Brubacker, 'Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account', *Theory and Society*, 23 (1995), 1: 47–58; N. Melvin, *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs Press, 1995); J. Chinn and R. Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, CA: Westview Press, 1996); G. Smith, V. Law, A. Wilson, A. Bohr, and E. Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ This term was suggested by Payin in 'The Disintegration of the Empire and the Fate of the "Imperial Minority"', in: V. Schlapentokh, M. Sendich, and E. Payin (eds.), *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics* (M. E. Sharpe: Armonk, 1994), 21–36.

Table 3: Stages in the Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict and Its Management

<i>Timing in Estonia</i>	<i>Timing in Latvia</i>	<i>Stage in Ethnic Conflict Dynamics</i>	<i>Stage in Process/Patterns of Conflict Management</i>
1991–summer 1993	1991–summer 1994	Confrontation and escalation to crisis	Hegemonic control and ethnic dominance
1993–1998	1993–1999	‘Wait-and-see’ period, followed by onset of de-escalatory processes	Exploration of choices in ethnic conflict management, transition from control model to integration policies as the core strategy of ethnic peace-building
1998 onwards	2000 onwards	Evolving de-escalation, attenuation of ethnic tensions	Conflict transformation through integrationist policies, advancing integration from state to societal level

2.2.1 Escalation to Ethnopolitical Crisis

This stage is delimited on the one hand by the failed coup of August 1991 in the USSR, after which the Baltic states regained their independence, and on the other by the sharp confrontational activism reflecting the ‘citizen versus non-citizen’ split over the adoption of the Law on Aliens in Estonia in June 1993 and over the legislation on citizenship-quotas in Latvia in July 1994.

The new citizenship-legislation excluded the majority of non-titular residents from participation in politics and put the issues of ethnic exclusion/inclusion and societal integration onto the agenda. Reinstatement of the citizenship law of 1938 in Estonia in 1991 (followed by the enactment of enabling legislation in February 1992) and the adoption of the provisional citizenship-law in Latvia on 15 October 1991 (followed by the Citizenship Act in July 1994) left around 400,000 inhabitants of Estonia and some 700,000 inhabitants of Latvia without citizenship. The new legislation espoused a restrictive definition of minorities¹⁸ and, moreover,

¹⁸ Though having quite liberal legislation on minorities (restoring the tradition of the 1920s to the 1940s), both Estonia and Latvia have adopted a restrictive definition of the latter. Ethnic and cultural minorities are recognized only with the citizen-body, no such definition apparently being possible for aliens or non-citizens. The bulk of non-Estonians and non-Latvians who are not citizens are therefore automatically excluded from the state policies affording support and protection to minorities.

stipulated that the organization of political parties was a privilege reserved to citizens. This meant that approximately 30 per cent of residents in Estonia and 40 per cent in Latvia were deprived of the right to belong to a political party.¹⁹

From the perspective of the titular Baltic groups, the resulting citizenship-legislation was a hard-won compromise between two seemingly conflicting goals. First, the lawmakers had sought to assure the survival of the Estonian and Latvian nations by limiting citizenship to those who understood the countries' language and culture. Non-Balts felt threatened and discriminated against by this approach, which they alleged amounted to a regime of ethnic dominance or an 'ethnocracy'. They had come to perceive themselves as second-class subjects of the independent states of Estonia and Latvia, deprived of political rights, facing an uncertain cultural and political future – indeed, at risk from alleged deportation-plans. The introduction of state languages, exacerbated by language-proficiency requirements in all spheres of life, including the private sector, significantly curtailed the job opportunities open to monolingual non-citizens, thus creating a motive for repatriation.

Fearful of committing themselves to a long-term policy, the provisional governments that ruled until the holding of post-reindependence elections (in 1992 in Estonia and in 1993 in Latvia) put off consideration of the question of citizenship-through-naturalization for Soviet-period immigrants. Needless to say, this merely exacerbated the tensions and collective anxieties among Russian-speakers not eligible for 'restored' citizenship. This uncertain situation persisted for almost two years in Estonia (until the 1993 Law on Aliens) and for almost four in Latvia (until the 1995 the Law on the Status of Former USSR Citizens).

Ethnic outflanking was a prominent feature of political life in the period immediately following the restoration of independence. During the early 1990s, the range of ethnopolitically moderate élite-groups was very restricted. Popular Front intellectuals who proposed moderation in citizenship policies were ousted from the first post-reindependence governments, dominated by rightist nationalist coalitions. The main policies pursued at this time were sometimes merely permutations of hegemonic control. Appeals for an attitude of 'principled coherence' to decolonization and an uncompromising stance on the legacies of the Soviet period became handy tools in power struggles between rival titular Estonian and Latvian élites.²⁰

¹⁹ R. Ruutsoo and M. Siisiäinen, 'Restoring Civil Society in the Baltic States, 1988–1994', *European Studies. The Challenge of Europeanization of the Region of East Central Europe* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1996).

²⁰ Both the dynamics of the radicalization of Baltic élites on issues of citizenship and the competition between radicalist and moderate discourses are well documented. See e.g.: L. K. Metcalf, 'Outbidding to Radical Nationalists: Minority Policy in Estonia, 1988–1993', *Nations and Nationalism*, 2 (1996), 2: 213–34; A. Steen, 'Consolidation and Competence: Research on the Politics of Recruiting Political Elites in the Baltic States', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 27 (1996), 2: 143–56.

The Crisis in Estonia

From the moment the Estonian parliament began debating the Law on Aliens in early June 1993, the latter met with fierce condemnation from the Russian-speaking community, particularly in Ida-Virumaa (north-east Estonia). On 19 June, over 10,000 supporters of the radical Russophone 'Russian Obshina' marched through the streets of Narva, proclaiming that approval of the Law on Aliens would be taken by them to be tantamount to a declaration of war against the Russian-speaking community.²¹

The initial version of the Law on Aliens passed by the Riigikogu (Estonian parliament) on 21 June 1993 termed all non-citizens residing in Estonia as of 1 July 1990 aliens (foreigners) and deemed them to be illegal immigrants with no official right of abode. With a view to arriving as soon as possible at a situation where the status of every individual living in Estonia was regularized, the law set a two-year term for obtaining right of abode. Those applying for a temporary residence-permit had to decide whether they wished to request Estonian citizenship, take out Russian or other non-Estonian citizenship, or apply for an alien's passport.²² Residence permits were to be renewed every five years, on the basis of the applicant's having a 'lawful income' in Estonia – a term that was very imprecisely defined.

Local governments in the predominantly Russian-populated cities of Narva and Sillamäe led the protest against a law that was seen as turning non-citizens into illegal immigrants, particularly in regard to the provisions establishing lawful income as a precondition for obtaining a residence permit. Loss of a job (and hence of lawful income) would entail loss of the right of abode, and this could obviously be perceived as creating conditions favouring the legal ejection of non-residents from Estonia as part of the upheavals associated with the transition to a market economy.²³ Harsh criticism of the Law on Aliens also emanated from Moscow.²⁴

At the end of June, the city councils of Narva and Sillamäe decided to call a local referendum on 'national-territorial autonomy within Estonia', to be held on 16 and 17 July.²⁵ These developments were particularly threatening given the occurrence of similar events in the Moldova–Trans-Dniester conflict, where

²¹ A. Sheehy, "Estonian Law on Aliens", RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 2, no. 28, pp. 115-27; P. Hanson, 'Estonia's Narva Problem, Narva's Estonia Problem', RFE/RL Report, 2 (1993), 18: 17–23.

²² Estonia newspaper. (hereafter 'ES'), 22 June 1993.

²³ ES, 30 June 1993.

²⁴ In a special statement made on 24 June, Russia's President Boris Yeltsin accused Estonia of unfriendly actions and charged that 'there is ethnic cleansing similar to apartheid going on in Estonia'. Stressing that he would not tolerate infringement of the legitimate rights of ethnic Russians in Estonia, Yeltsin said that appropriate measures would be taken 'to protect the honour, dignity, and legitimate rights of our compatriots'. See RFE/RL Daily Report, 30 June 1993; ITAR-TASS, 23 June 1993; Rossijskaya Gazeta, 25 June 1993.

²⁵ ES, 30 June 1993; RFE/RL Daily Report, 7 July 1993; Izvestiya, 8 July 1993.

spiralling confrontation between local and central authorities in 1991/92 had resulted in escalation to inter-ethnic warfare.

The uproar and sharp escalation of inter-ethnic tensions met with immediate and effective crisis-management measures both from the Estonian authorities and from various European third parties. Meeting in extraordinary session, the Estonian government declared the upcoming local referendums illegal and invalid; at the same time, however, it stated that the Estonian authorities would not use force to prevent the vote taking place.²⁶ The terms of the Law on Aliens were a contentious issue even among the Estonians. On 30 June, a group of Estonian intellectuals addressed the Estonian nation in an Open Letter criticizing the policies adopted in relation to the Russian-speaking community, calling for measures to prevent further escalation of inter-ethnic tension, and demanding that the Law on Aliens be repealed.²⁷ Instead of promulgating the law, on 30 June Estonia's President Lennart Meri submitted the text to the CSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, and to experts at the Council of Europe, pending re-examination by Estonian MPs.²⁸

The Council of Europe's panel of experts found the provisions of the Law on Aliens perfectly acceptable in relation to anyone outside Estonia who might wish to live or work in the country in the future. However, they expressed the view that laws must recognize acquired rights and that it was wrong to equate the status of those already resident in Estonia with that of non-citizens not currently residing there. The panel found the wording of the law imprecise and open to arbitrary interpretation by the authorities. Max van der Stoel, for his part, and Catherine Lalumiere, secretary-general of the Council of Europe, declared that, by and large, the law's provisions did not differ significantly from legislation in other states. The points of which they were critical were essentially the same, their major concern being the vagueness of some of the language, which allowed the authorities too much discretion in deciding on applications for resident permits.²⁹

On 8 July, a special session of the Estonian parliament approved a series of amendments to the Law on Aliens as recommended by the CSCE and Council of Europe. One important change was the removal of the requirement for registered residents to repeat the registration process every five years. The Estonian parliament also voted to include a new article retaining for non-citizens who had arrived before 1 July 1990 all the rights and responsibilities laid down in previous laws, and guaranteeing them residence-permits and work-permits provided their status as aliens satisfied all the other requirements of the law. The amendments also

²⁶ RFE/RL Daily Report, 4 July 1994.

²⁷ ES, 1 July 1993.

²⁸ RFE/RL Daily Report, 5 July 1993.

²⁹ Sheehy, A. "Estonian Law...", p. 9; Chinn and Truex, 'Question of Citizenship', 136.

spelled out what was meant by ‘lawful income’ and stipulated that those refused residence-permits or work-permits had the right to appeal to the courts.³⁰

The fact that the Estonian president consulted the Council of Europe and the CSCE about the Law on Aliens, and that the Estonian parliament acted on most of the recommendations of these bodies, reduced the level of hostile rhetoric emanating from Russia. CSCE High Commissioner for Minorities van der Stoel commented that Estonia had taken a ‘major step’ forward by revising the law and noted that a number of old formulations that might have led to arbitrary decisions had been removed. Even after the law had been amended, third-party activities continued to play an important stabilizing role in regard to the impending local referendums, the results of which could have provoked an upsurge in ethnoterritorial separatism in north-east Estonia.³¹ On 11 July, during a third visit to Estonia in the space of two weeks, Max van der Stoel was reassured by the Estonian government that it would not use force to halt the referendums in the north-east. Visiting Narva, van der Stoel also held talks with the mayors of Narva and Sillamae, and with the leaders of the Representative Assembly. As a result of these talks, the mayors called on the Estonian authorities not to interfere with the referendums but said that the cities would respect the ‘territorial integrity’ of Estonia and comply with any rulings which the Estonian Supreme Court might make on the ballots.³² On 15 July, the city council of Kohtla-Järve (another predominantly Russian-populated city in north-east Estonia) decided not to follow the example of its neighbours, Narva and Sillamäe, and voted against holding a poll on local autonomy, arguing that it would be a violation of the Estonian constitution.³³

The turn-out in the referendums in both Narva and Sillamäe was much lower than the organizers had hoped. Moreover, since the chairmen of the Narva and Sillamäe city councils had agreed beforehand that they would abide by the ruling of the Supreme Court, the referendums appeared to have been primarily an exercise in letting off steam. On 18 July, premier Mart Laar thanked the predominantly Russian residents of the two towns for maintaining calm and promised that the

³⁰ RFE/RL Daily Report, 9 July 1993.

³¹ For detail on CSCE activities, see F. Lange, ‘The Baltic States and the CSCE’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 25 (1994), 3: 233–47; H.-M. Birckenbach, *Preventive Diplomacy through Fact-Finding: How International Organizations Review the Conflict over Citizenship in Estonia and Latvia* (Lit Verlag: Hamburg, 1997); R. Zagman, *Conflict Prevention in the Baltic States: The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (ECMI Monograph No. 1; Flensburg, 1999), available at www.ecmi.de; H.-M. Birckenbach, *Half Full or Half Empty: The OSCE Mission to Estonia and Its Balance Sheet, 1993–1999* (ECMI Working Paper, No.6; Flensburg, 2000), available at www.ecmi.de

³² RFE/RL Daily Report, 12 July 1993.

³³ *Ibid.* 16 July 1993.

government would strive to improve the economic situation, particularly as both towns had been heavily hit by unemployment.³⁴

The Crisis in Latvia

In Latvia, a similar crisis over citizenship-quotas blew up in June 1994 when the Saeima (the Latvian parliament) passed a highly controversial Law on Citizenship and Naturalization (by a vote of 66 for, 11 against, and 3 abstentions). The law was based on a draft proposal submitted by the ruling coalition. This stipulated preferential naturalization for certain groups of individuals: persons of whom at least one parent was an ethnic Latvian; persons who had taken up residence in Latvia prior to 17 June 1940; Lithuanian and Estonian ethnic minorities; and persons who had been married to Latvian citizens for at least ten years. All groups were required to know the Latvian language. Citizenship would not be granted either to persons whom a court had recognized as having propagated chauvinism, nationalism, or fascism or of having worked against Latvian independence, or to retired Soviet military personnel unless they were ethnic Latvians or spouses of Latvian citizens. Other groups of people would be able to apply for naturalization from 1 January 1996, with preference being given to those born in Latvia. From the year 2000, persons in other categories would be able to be naturalized, up to a quota of 0.1 per cent of Latvian citizens per year. Although some advocated eliminating naturalization quotas entirely, as suggested by the Council of Europe, by the CSCE specialists, and by Latvia's state minister for human rights, Olafs Bruvers, the majority of the lawmakers rejected this option.³⁵

The same day the Latvian citizenship-law was passed, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Krylov was reported to have described the law – particularly the naturalization quotas – as inhuman and to have claimed that it was directed against Russian-speaking residents of Latvia.³⁶ The subsequent declaration by the Russian government that it would not withdraw its troops from Latvia complicated the situation even more. These developments suggested that the CSCE might still fail to prevent escalation, and that high-level diplomatic intervention and bargaining would be needed to resolve the situation. After two months, the crisis was eventually defused – following a visit by President Clinton to Riga, a US–Russian summit, telephone talks between the US President, the German chancellor and the Russian president, agreement by Russia to withdraw its troops, and Western pressure on Latvia to revise its citizenship-quotas. All this prompted the Latvian president, G. Ulmanis, to veto the bill pending reconsideration by parliament, which was expected to amend it taking into account the comments of the Council of Europe and the CSCE.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid. 19 July 1993.

³⁵ Ibid. 22 June 1994.

³⁶ Ibid. 23 June 1994.

³⁷ Ibid. 6, 7 July, 1994.

On 22 July, the Saeima passed a revised bill from which the quota system had been eliminated. Residents were eligible to become naturalized citizens if they had resided in Latvia for at least five years, had a reasonable command of the Latvian language, and renounced any previous citizenship. Applicants must pass a Latvian-language test, demonstrate knowledge of the country's history and constitution, and pay a registration fee of LVL30 (\$US60) – half the average monthly salary in Latvia. Despite the modifications, the law remained quite restrictive. Instead of quotas, the new version stipulated what was termed 'naturalization windows', meaning categories of non-citizens who could be naturalized in stages up to the year 2003: in 1996, only young persons between the ages of 16 and 20, persons married to Latvian citizens for at least ten years, ethnic Lithuanians, and ethnic Estonians would be eligible for naturalization; in 1997, naturalization would be offered to persons aged 20 to 25; other age-cohorts and those born outside Latvia would only be able to apply for citizenship from the year 2000. It was envisaged that most permanent residents would be naturalized by the year 2003.

On 29 July, the EU congratulated Latvia on its adoption of the revised citizenship-bill.³⁸ Following a US–Russian summit, Russia agreed not to link the withdrawal of its troops, scheduled for 31 August 1994, to any subsequent debate on the status of Russian-speakers in Latvia.

2.2.2 Conflict De-escalation:

Exploring Alternative Strategies of Conflict Management

This stage is delimited on the one hand by the defusion of the ethnopolitical crises in Estonia and Latvia and on the other by the adoption, by the respective governments, of the principles of nation-wide integration in regard to non-Balts (early 1998 in Estonia, 1999 in Latvia).

The strategy of integration had its origins in the events of 1993, when UN High Commissioner Max van der Stoel made his initial visits to the Baltic states and subsequently issued a series of recommendations, all aimed at a fair and impartial application of the relevant laws. In his most direct letter to the Estonian foreign minister, Trivimi Velliste, written on 6 April 1993 (and in a similar letter to the Latvian government), van der Stoel suggested an alternative policy which would aim at the integration of the non-Estonian population by a deliberate policy of facilitating the chances of acquiring Estonian citizenship for those who express such a wish, and of assuring them full equality with Estonian citizens. In my view, such a policy would greatly reduce the danger of destabilization, because it would considerably enhance the chances of the non-Estonian population developing a sense of loyalty towards Estonia.³⁹

In essence, van der Stoel was saying that, since it was unrealistic to suppose that most non-citizens wanted to leave Estonia or Latvia, it would be wise to try to

³⁸ Ibid. 23, 30 July, 1994.

³⁹ From Birckenbach, Preventive Diplomacy.

integrate them by making it easier for them to get citizenship. It was similarly acknowledged that it was up to non-Balts to adapt to the new realities and learn the respective country's official language and that matters would also be helped by the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltics.

The years 1995 to 1997 may be seen as a preparatory to the adoption of integrationist policies. Though not very spectacular, this was an important period of adaptation and change during which the strategy of ethnic peace-building through integration took shape under dual domestic and international influence. The key contextual event in the constructive redirection of ethnopolitical processes was the final withdrawal of all ex-USSR troops from the Baltics in August 1994, alleviating Baltic anxieties about security. Another external factor that contributed to the attenuation of ethnic tensions was the systematic way in which issues relating to non-citizens in the Baltics were monitored by European organizations, including the OSCE High Commissioner for Minorities, various long-term OSCE missions, the Council of Europe, and a number of transnational human-rights NGOs.

On the domestic side, the most important factor contributing to change was the virtual cessation of outward migration. During the early 1990s, when large numbers of non-Estonians and non-Latvians were emigrating from the country, many local politicians assumed the ethnic problem would solve itself through mass exodus. By the middle of the 1990s, however, this repatriation, or 'velvet deportation', had come to an end, and it became clear that nearly all remaining Russian-speakers would be staying on. Because of its continuing economic problems, the Russian Federation was not an attractive destination for potential migrants – despite the family ties that existed in many cases. In the latter part of the 1990s, the Estonian and Latvian authorities, and the citizenship communities as a whole, increasingly recognized that a more viable *modus vivendi* with the non-Balts was needed. In place of the chimera of mass emigration and the *de facto* segregation of Balts from non-Balts, the governments sought alternative policies of integration. These were aimed at the creation of a multicultural state in which members of each ethnic group retained their cultural identity but also acquired a civic identity based on a working knowledge of the state language.⁴⁰ Another important factor that tended to lessen the tension was the change of actors on the ethnopolitical scene, both in Estonia and in Latvia. The *élite* groups that advocated ethnic moderation and accommodation gained in prominence after the new parliamentary elections (held in 1995 in Estonia and in 1996 in Latvia). The smooth functioning of the new democratic institutions, and the relative success of market reforms (particularly noticeable in the mid-1990s), tended to promote the growth of institutionalized forms of civil society (interest groups and NGOs). Many of these new civic initiatives developed an interest in promoting ethnic

⁴⁰ As stressed by various observers, assimilation – i.e. cultural Estonianization or Latvianization – was not an acceptable policy-option, particularly for countries seeking to become part of pan-European organizations that stressed the value of tolerance. That said, some absorption into the Estonian or Latvian cultural world was taking place spontaneously (e.g., T. Raun, 'Estonia in the 1990s', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 32 (2001), 1: 19–43).

accommodation and co-operation, thus enlarging the constituency of the moderate élites.

Overall, since 1993 ethno-political developments in both Estonia and Latvia have been characterized by increasing political participation on the part of Russian-speakers, and by a growth in the proportion of the latter within the citizenry, as a result of naturalization. The rate and degree of progress has not been uniform: Estonia appears to be a few steps closer to the resolution of these problems than Latvia.

Estonia

After the crisis of mid-1993, the Estonian government adopted a conciliatory stance towards non-Estonians, and, as a first step, on 6 July 1993, it officially instituted the Representative Assembly, the more liberal of the two organizations representing Estonia's Russian-speaking community. The government announced that it planned to involve the assembly in the drafting of supplements to the Law on Aliens and of other legislation affecting the Russian-speakers.⁴¹ At about the same time, President Meri announced the establishment of a Roundtable of Non-citizens and Ethnic Minorities, to operate under his auspices. This began to meet on a quite regular basis and appeared to be an effective forum for discussing urgent issues associated with inter-ethnic relations.

In addition, in the local elections of 1993 in Estonia, voting rights were extended to 170,865 non-citizens, representing 19.6 per cent of the electorate. This seems to support the contention that the Estonian government's position on the status of resident non-Estonians has been relatively accommodating compared with the more restrictive Latvian laws, which limit voting rights at both national and local level to citizens only.

Initially, the majority of non-Estonians, including those for whom the language-test presented no obstacle, feared the consequences of making a choice and adopted a wait-and-see position. Although many requested residence-permits, the number of applicants for citizenship was not very high.⁴² By February 1995, only about 40,000 persons had become naturalized, while another 60,000 or so opted had for Russian citizenship.⁴³

The 1995 elections revealed increased participation by Russophones. The number of eligible voters rose from 661,074 in 1992 to 766,626 in 1995, an

⁴¹ ES, 7 July 1993.

⁴² By 12 July 1995 (the deadline for registration of non-citizens stipulated in the 1993 Law on Aliens), some 324,000 non-Estonians had reportedly applied for residence-permits and work-permits in Estonia. Given that, in all, there were around 380,000 non-citizens living in Estonia, this meant 80% of them had applied for legal permission to remain in the country. See RFE/RL Daily Report, 13 July 1995.

⁴³ RFE/RL Daily Report, 7 Feb. 1995.

increase of 16 per cent.⁴⁴ This change reflected the growth in the number of non-Estonians acquiring citizenship. The Russophone share of eligible voters rose to just over 10 per cent, and it was clearly this which made possible the electoral success (6 seats) gained in 1995 by the group 'Our Home Is Estonia', a Russian-based alliance. The Russian presence in the Riigikogu acted as an attenuating factor. Another important outcome of the 1995 elections in Estonia was the ousting of the rightist government from office and the shift of the radical nationalist parties into opposition.

In the period 1995–97, many of the concerns of non-Estonians in regard to the allegedly arbitrary implementation of the new legislation were defused by the steady and impartial application of the naturalization procedures. The growth in the number of those applying for Estonian citizenship reflected the increasing acceptance by non-citizens of the change in the politics of nationhood. By February 1998, approximately 97,000 non-Estonians had applied for, and received, Estonian citizenship by naturalization.⁴⁵

In January 1997, nearly 120,000 people in Estonia held Russian citizenship. The large contingent of Russian citizens within the Estonian population was a cause of concern, given that they were highly unlikely to have any interest in Estonian affairs. At the same time, many of the residents of north-east Estonia who held Russian citizenship had acquired it primarily for pragmatic reasons, in order to facilitate travel to and from Russia. Estonian leaders expressed concern at the large number of Russian citizens on Estonian territory, claiming that they posed a potential threat to the country's security. At the national level, it had become clear that to attain the standard of life that was the norm in Europe would be impossible unless the non-Estonian population was integrated into every sphere of life.⁴⁶ Clearly, these factors were perceived as additional reasons for going ahead with integrationist policies.

New modifications were therefore made to the Law on Aliens, simplifying the procedure for applying for citizenship. On 1 July 1997, the Riigikogu passed amendments granting those aliens who had applied for a temporary residence-

⁴⁴ T. Raun, "Democratization and political development in Estonia, 1987-96", in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds), *The Consolidation of Democracy in east-Central Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 355.

⁴⁵ Estonian Statistical Yearbook for 1998, Tallinn, 1998. An estimated 80,000 non-ethnic Estonians already hold Estonian citizenship by birth.

⁴⁶ M. Lauristin and P. Vihalem, *Return to the Western World. Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transformation* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 1997); A. Kirch (ed), *The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: History, Problems, and Trends* (Tallinn: Estonian Academy Publishers, 1997); T. Vihalemm, 'Group Identity Formation Process among Russian-speaking Settlers of Estonia: A Linguistic Perspective', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 30 (1999), 1: 18–39.

permit before 12 July 1995 the right now to apply for a permanent residence-permit.⁴⁷

On 2 February 1995, the Republic of Estonia signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which was ratified by the Riigikogu on 11 November 1996 and entered into force on 1 February 1998. In 1997, the UN Development Programme began energetically lobbying the governments of Estonia and Latvia to adopt a strategy of national integration, at the same time helping them to draw up the initial documents needed for this.⁴⁸ The European Commission's declaration of July 1997 that Estonia could now begin negotiations on accession to the EU was both a sign of the times and an endorsement of the Estonian approach of systematic naturalization.

On 16 July 1997, the Estonian Government appointed an expert committee to examine issues relating to demography and the integration of ethnic minorities into Estonian society. By the end of 1997, the committee had produced a draft report on the 'Bases of Estonian Policy on the Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society'. One of the report's main conclusions was that progress in the integration of non-Estonians was now not only possible but also necessary. Integration was needed, it said, to counter the clear negative tendency towards the development of two separate societies (language communities) within a single state. Continued enclosure of non-Estonians within their own linguistic world and world of ideas, tending as it did to transform them into a separate 'sub-society', needed be overcome by integrating them into society at large.

Latvia

During the period 1995–1997, integration policies in Latvia were still in their latent phase. The process of naturalization did not begin until February 1995, almost three years later than in Estonia. Unlike Estonia, Latvia institutionalized ethnicity by requiring that ethnic origin be recorded in the passports of both citizens and non-citizens. Again, compared with its Estonian counterpart, the Latvian law on citizenship established much more stringent criteria for naturalization. Although the final version of the law did not contain numerical quotas for naturalization (these were removed at the urging of the Council of Europe experts), it still provided for 'naturalization windows' imposing age and birth-place restrictions on candidates by delimiting specific periods during which non-citizens could apply for citizenship. Whereas in Estonia almost half the initial number of aliens (187,000 out of estimated 380,000) had already obtained citizenship by 1998, the naturalization process in Latvia at this time was still only limping along.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The amendment is estimated to have applied to some 200,000 aliens: RFE/RL Daily, 2 July 1997.

⁴⁸ Integrating Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: Setting the Course, UN Development Program Report (Tallinn, 1997).

⁴⁹ Of the 2,856 applications for citizenship submitted in 1995 (the year in which naturalization began), only 984 were approved. Of the 33,000 non-citizens eligible for naturalization in 1996, only 450 acquired it. In the four years between 1 Feb. 1995, when the naturalization process began, and

On the positive side, several important advances were made in the legislative sphere. On 12 April 1995, the Latvian parliament adopted the 'Law on the Status of Former USSR Citizens Who Are not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other State'. The law established a legal status for non-citizens equivalent to that of permanently resident aliens. Until the adoption of the law, this category of persons had been in legal limbo: they were neither Latvian citizens nor Russian citizens, nor were they recognized as stateless persons. The law stated that non-citizens would now benefit from certain rights – including, for example, all those contained in the 'Law on the Rights and Obligations of a Citizen and a Person'. Non-citizens would now also have the right freely to choose their residence, and to leave and re-enter the country. Most importantly, the law provided for the issue of non-citizens' passports. In March 1995 the Saeima approved the amendments to citizenship legislation, liberalizing the law somewhat by granting language certificates to persons who had been educated in schools where Latvian was the language of instruction or had had attended Latvian-language classes in mixed schools. Persons with such certificates would receive automatic citizenship upon registration. In 1996 the wording of the Law on Civil Service, which would have barred non-citizens from holding public posts, was amended.

The same year, the Latvian government began to work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement a long-term nationwide Latvian-language teaching programme for adults and children in non-Latvian schools. In December 1997, the government passed regulations to lower the naturalization fee for low-income applicants. Despite these measures, the pace of naturalization was very slow: approximately 650,000 of Latvia's 2.5 million inhabitants were still non-citizens in December 1997. A real breakthrough came in 1998 when a popular referendum introduced amendments to the Law on Citizenship which dramatically accelerated the naturalization process.

Earlier that year, Max van der Stoep, the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, recommended amendments granting citizenship to children born to non-citizen parents in Latvia after 21 August 1991 and removing the 'naturalization windows' restrictions. The US Department of State, the EU, the OSCE, the Nordic Council, and the Council of Baltic Sea States also urged Latvian MPs to approve the amendments. Latvia endeavoured to act on these recommendations but was prevented from doing so by the political impasse in which it found itself domestically.

On 22 April 1998, the cabinet submitted to the Saeima a draft amendment abolishing the system of 'naturalization windows', and in early May it followed this up with the amendments providing for children born in Latvia after 21 August 1991 (the date on which Latvia gained independence from the USSR) to be granted

the Oct. 1998 referendum on amendments to the citizenship law, just over 12,000 people acquired citizenship through naturalization. See the official data of the Latvian Naturalization Board, available at www.np.gov.lv

citizenship at their parents' request and without a Latvian-language test.⁵⁰ The overall goal of the proposed amendments was to boost the very slow pace of naturalization: only a small proportion of those eligible to register for naturalization under the existing law had done so. Although the majority of parties in parliament seemed supportive of the proposed amendments – as a means of facilitating admission to the EU and of improving relations with Russia – the backing of all the government's ruling factions was needed to get them accepted, and one of these factions was strongly opposed to the proposed changes. The ensuing parliamentary debates revived the discourses about, on the one side, the survival of Latvian language and culture, and, on the other, the denial of the 'human rights' of the non-citizen population of Latvia. Eventually, the Saeima did pass the amendments, but their implementation was blocked by the rightist Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK party. Invoking a provision of the Latvian constitution, the party collected the required number of signatures to get the question of the proposed revisions to the citizenship law voted on in a national referendum, to take place that October.

The results of the referendum of 3 October brought about a major change in Latvia's ethnopolitical scene. The electorate, highly polarized by the preceding campaign, ratified the liberal amendments to the citizenship law by a very narrow margin, at 52.5 per cent, thus also rendering it compliant with OSCE standards.⁵¹ The amendments significantly eased naturalization requirements for children who had been born to non-citizen parents after independence. They also abolished the 'windows' system restricting eligibility for naturalization to designated age-groups. The results of the referendum were interpreted as evidence of an attitude of trust towards persons who were not yet citizens of Latvia, and the reduction in mistrust in its turn paved the way for the further integration of society. Estimates by the Naturalization Department indicated that between 20,000 and 25,000 people could be expected to become citizens each year under the new legislation.

The number of non-citizens applying for citizenship increased dramatically. In 1999, the number of applicants (15,170) and the number of those granted citizenship (12,427) almost tripled compared with 1998. From the start of naturalization, on 1 February 1995, until 30 November 2000, the Latvian Naturalization Board accepted 40,963 applications and granted citizenship to 38,108 individuals.⁵²

Throughout 1998, and particularly after the referendum, the government of Latvia made concerted efforts to work out a programme of broader integration at

⁵⁰ If the parents do not request it, the child may apply for citizenship upon reaching the age of 16, provided that he or she has completed his or her education at a school with Latvian as the language of study or has passed a language test.

⁵¹ On 15 Oct., the Saeima added a new chapter to the constitution outlining 27 generally recognized human rights which until then had been protected by provisions contained in an interim Constitutional Law.

⁵² Data from the Latvian Naturalization Board, available at www.np.gov.lv

the national level. In July 1998, the Cabinet of Ministers considered a 'Summary of the Conception of the National Programme of Societal Integration in Latvia', and in September of the same year it approved a 'Preparatory Plan'.

2.2.3 The Start of Conflict Transformation Through Integration

The start of this stage, still ongoing, was marked by the official adoption of integrationist principles by the governments of Estonia and Latvia (in early 1998 in Estonia, and in early 1999 in Latvia). This stage was characterized by an overall change in inter-ethnic attitudes (discussed in greater detail in Section 4) and by a broadening of the range of moderate centrist forces at both state and societal level.

Estonia

The draft 'Bases of the Estonian State Integration Policy for the Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society' (approved by the Riigikogu on 10 June 1998) defined a number of crucial goals, including: orientation towards the future and focus on children and youth; envisaging integration as an opportunity for development, promoting feeling of security and tolerance throughout society, and changing attitudes; developing the Estonian education-system into the main actor in integration policy and achieving a significant increase in Estonian-language proficiency among non-Estonians; ensuring adaptation of non-Estonians to the Estonian cultural space, reducing their regional isolation, and settling the question of their citizenship.

Since the draft was approved, Estonia has successfully begun the process of implementing its programme of integration. On 31 March 1998, the Estonian government set up the Integration Foundation, the purpose of which is to initiate and support integration-related projects.⁵³ In December 1999 a draft state programme was submitted for public discussion,⁵⁴ and on 14 March 2000, after the incorporation of additional proposals, the State Programme of Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society 2000-2007 was approved by the Estonian government. The task of implementing it was entrusted to the ministries of education, culture, internal affairs, and social affairs, and the Integration Foundation.

⁵³ The sums from the state budget which the Estonian Government has channelled into pro-integration activities through the Integration Foundation over recent years were as follows: 6 million kroons (about \$US 411,000) in 1998, 5.7 million kroons (about \$US 394,000) in 1999, and 5.7 million kroons (about \$US 394,000) in 2000. Besides managing the activities funded from the national budget, the Estonian Integration Foundation also took on the administration of two large-scale international programmes: the Nordic countries/UN Development Programme Project Support to the Estonian State Integration Programme (with a total budget in 1998-2000 of 19 million EEK [about \$US 1.5 million]) and the EU PHARE Estonian Language Training Programme (with a total budget in 1998-2000 of 22 million EEK [about \$US 1.6 million]).

⁵⁴ In total over 100 written proposals were submitted to the expert committee from the time the State Programme began to be drafted in June 1999. The drafting was done by various institutions, including state agencies, local governments, the President's Round Table, non-profit organizations, cultural societies of ethnic minorities, and international organizations.

In the programme as adopted, the ultimate goal of integration is to ensure lasting stability and peaceful change. The programme sees the integration of Estonian society as entailing two processes: the social harmonization of society on the basis of knowledge of the Estonian language and possession of Estonian citizenship; the preservation of ethnic differences based on a recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities. Three key areas of integration are defined:

- *Linguistic-communicative integration* meaning the re-establishment, in Estonian society, of a common sphere of information and of an Estonian-language environment, in conditions of cultural diversity and mutual tolerance.
- *Legal-political integration* meaning the formation of a population loyal to the state of Estonia and a reduction in the number of persons without Estonian citizenship.
- *Socio-economic integration* meaning the achievement of greater competitiveness and social mobility in society, regardless of ethnic or linguistic attributes.

The focal points of the Estonian programme of integration are: education, language, civil society, and the mass media. The programme states that one of the key objectives of the integration process is for prevailing attitudes in society to become more open and tolerant. Integration is seen as a bilateral process, in which changes in attitudes must be mutual. It is envisaged that, as a result of integration, the widespread attitude of alienation and passivity among non-Estonians will be replaced by an understanding of the fact that the opportunities open to each person in Estonian society depend mainly on the individual. Non-Estonians should start to feel responsibility for the well-being of the state of Estonia. As for the Estonians, their reserved attitude towards the ethnic minorities must be replaced by acceptance of a multicultural model of society – in other words, the habit of seeing non-Estonians as a problem must be superseded by a view of non-Estonians as a potential well-spring of development and as participants in Estonian progress.

During the 1990s, attitudes in different areas of integration did indeed undergo significant change. A new Integration Report unveiled by Estonia's population-affairs minister, Katrin Saks, in October 2000, reveals that 84 per cent of non-ethnic Estonians living in Estonia viewed Estonia as their home, and 79.3 per cent claimed loyalty to the Estonian state. Estonians, for their part, have accepted the idea of a multicultural Estonia: only a small proportion (10 per cent) are directly opposed to the development of a multicultural society in Estonia, while 86 per cent say they believe that people of many nationalities can work and live together in one country, and 75 per cent hold that diversity of language and culture enriches society.⁵⁵

Further important changes were made to the Estonian citizenship-legislation between 1998 and 2000. On 8 December 1998, the Riigikogu approved amendments which strengthened the civic principles governing the acquisition of

⁵⁵ Integrating Estonia 1997-2000, Report of the Government of Estonia (Tallinn: Government of Estonia Press, 2000), 14–15. The report is also available at www.meis.ee

citizenship: under the new provisions, stateless children under 15 who were born after 26 February 1992 (the date on which the country's 1938 citizenship-law was reinstated) were granted a virtually automatic right to citizenship, without a mandatory language-proficiency test.⁵⁶

At the same time as the integration process has evolved, naturalization has swollen the ranks of the Estonian citizenry. It is estimated that at the end of 1999 almost 80 per cent of Estonia's population held Estonian citizenship, 13 per cent (mostly Russian-speakers) were stateless persons, and some 7 per cent were citizens of other states, mainly Russia. This means that, of the citizens of Estonia, about 205,000, or 18 per cent, are not ethnic Estonians. Approximately half of this number have acquired citizenship through naturalization.⁵⁷

Latvia

Following a decree issued by the Latvian prime minister on 18 February 1999, a Management Working Group was set up to draft a framework programme for 'The Integration of Society in Latvia', in collaboration with various state ministries and representatives of international organizations (the Soros Foundation Latvia, the United Nations Development Programme). In March 1999, the framework document 'The Integration of Society in Latvia' was submitted for public discussion – a process in which about 25,000 people were actively involved. In December 1999, the framework document was discussed by the Cabinet of Ministers, and in July 2000 the final version was approved.⁵⁸

One of the main ideas underlying the Latvian conception of integration has to do with the linkage between state and society. Naturalization has often been misinterpreted and misperceived as a formal event and has not been linked with the overall process of developing an integrated society. The framework document 'The Integration of Society in Latvia' sees 'a willingness to accept Latvian as the state language, and respect for Latvian as well as minority languages and cultures' (p. 6) as the foundation for the integration of society. Integration is understood as a multifaceted process:

Non-Latvians will be learning the Latvian language and overcoming their alienation from Latvian culture, but also Latvians will develop an attitude of 'receptiveness' towards non-Latvians. Up till now a point of view has predominated that integration is a concern primarily for non-Latvians. To implement a program for [the] integration of society, Latvian attitudes and understanding should also change. [The] integration of society in Latvia is a partnership between persons belonging to different social groups, Latvians and

⁵⁶ RFE/RL Daily Report, 9 Dec. 1998.

⁵⁷ In the period 1992–2000, the number of persons with indeterminate citizenship has fallen from 494,000 to 175,000, i.e. almost threefold. The dynamics of change in the legal status of Estonia's residents between 1992 and 2000 is summarized in Table 4.

⁵⁸ The Integration of Society in Latvia: A Framework Document (Riga: Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, 1999). Also available at www.np.gov.lv/en/fjas/integracija.htm

non-Latvians, citizens and non-citizens, a process in which each side is actively involved. (p.7)

The Latvian programme focuses primarily on the social and regional integration of society (and secondly practical action in the fields of education, culture, and the media). This approach distinguishes it from its Estonian counterpart, in which pride of place is given to education and language-competence (and secondly to practical action designed to develop social competence and foster civil society). The goal of integration is defined as the formation of a democratic, properly consolidated civil society founded on shared basic values. Social integration and civic participation are considered important parts of this process:

A successful outcome for integration efforts in Latvia depends on public support, on teachers, cultural leaders, religious representatives, and the full range of the intelligentsia. Social integration is unthinkable without the support and active participation of the political forces in Latvia. The idea of [the] integration of society will become a social force when a majority of Latvian residents acknowledge its necessity and participate in the process. (p.5)

A number of different institutions are envisaged as channels through which to implement the Latvian programme. In November 2000, the ministry of justice established the Department of Social Integration, the job of which is to act as co-ordinator in implementing integration-policy and executing the state programme and also to work out criteria and guidelines for project evaluation, to follow projects through, and to establish a database. It also has to co-operate with NGOs, municipalities, state institutions, foreign embassies, and international organizations, and to participate in the drafting of relevant international agreements. The minister of justice has also created a consultative council to deliberate on matters relating to social integration. The council consists of representatives of the presidential chancellery, the municipalities, and various NGOs, together with observers from the UNDP and from a number of OSCE missions.⁵⁹

Following the Estonian example, it was also decided that a Latvian Foundation of Social Integration (LFSI) should be created, to act as a nationwide funding-centre for the implementation of integration-related activities. In July 2000, the Latvian cabinet instructed the ministry of justice to draft appropriate legislation. The foundation is to take the form of a state-owned joint-stock company operating under the supervision of the ministry of justice and endowed with equity capital of LVL 25,000 (c.\$US 51,000), to be increased in stages by allocations from the state budget. Originally, the cabinet had proposed a sum of LVL 200,000 (c. \$US 5410,000) to support the enterprise. The foundation was due to start operating in the first half of 2001. Significantly, although the decision to set up the foundation was taken in 1999, by the end of 2000 it had still not begun either its funding or its

⁵⁹ Report by the Latvian minister of justice, I. Labucka, at the ECMI Baltic Seminar 2000 (Toender, Denmark, 7–10 Dec. 2000), summarized in V. Poleschuk, *Accession to the EU and National Integration in Estonia and Latvia* (ECMI Report No. 8; Flensburg, 2000); also available at www.ecmi.de

co-ordinating activities. This may be one of the reasons why Latvia continues to lag behind Estonia in the implementation of integration policies at state level.

The Current Situation

Although the situation in both Estonia and Latvia has radically improved (as compared with the first years of re-independence), a number of major problems persist in the sphere of integration and ethno-political relations. Chief amongst these is that of boosting the level of participation by getting the naturalization process completed. To date, naturalization has not solved the problem of statelessness among minorities. Stateless residents, together with the estimated contingent of illegal residents, still number around 180,000, almost 15 per cent of the total population, in Estonia, and over 550,000, almost 20 per cent of the population, in Latvia. Changes in legal status among the Estonian and Latvian populations during the 1990s are summarized in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Changes in Legal Status among Estonia's Population, 1992–2000

	1992		2000	
Total population	c. 1,544,000	100 %	1,445,000	100 %
Total citizens of the Republic of Estonia	c. 1,050,000	68	c. 1,115,000	77
<i>Including:</i>				
- 'Historic citizens' among Estonians	c. 975,000	63.7	c. 975,000	67.5
- 'Historic citizens' among non-Estonians	c. 75,000		c. 75,000	5.2
- Naturalized citizens	n/a	4.9	115,000	7.6
Total aliens	c. 494,000	32	315,000–325,000	23
<i>Including:</i>				
- Aliens with residence permits	n/a		285,000	20
- Aliens with indeterminate citizenship	c.494,000	32	175,000	12
- Citizens of other countries, mainly Russia	n/a		110,000	8
- Estimated illegal aliens	n/a		30,000–40,000	3

Source: *Integrating Estonia 1997–2000, Report of the Government of Estonia* (Tallinn: government of Estonia Press, 2000), 7–8.

Overall, the most obvious difference between Estonia and Latvia is the speed at which the policies of integration have been formulated and implemented at state level: Estonia leads Latvia by several years in achieving consensus among the relevant élites at the political level, in instituting a swifter and less restrictive form of naturalization, in mobilizing material resources (Estonian Integration Foundation), and in initiating integration activities at the societal level. This lead is attributable in large measure to the following factors: 1) the institutional structure of political competition (narrower, less fragmented spectrum of political parties, élites that are more proficient at coalition-building in government and at dealing with tactical issues); 2) ideal conditions for economic reform (small geographical size, shock-therapy transition to a market economy, much higher foreign investment, particularly from Finland and Sweden), securing Estonia a place on the list of first-round candidates for EU extension; 3) greater openness to European influence in general, including in the sphere of minority rights, and a resultant tendency on the part of the political élites to adopt ethnopolitically accommodating and moderate stances, justifying these by reference to European priorities. In Latvia, élite consensus on ethnopolitical moderation has been much weaker because of the more pronounced inter-élite rivalry.⁶⁰ The rate at which

Table 5: Changes in Legal Status among Latvia's Population, 1992–2000

	1994		2000	
Total population	c. 2,410,763	100 %	c. 2,731,333	100 %
Total citizens of the Republic of Latvia <i>Including:</i>	c. 1,720,302	71.4	c. 1,776,004	74.8
- 'Historic citizens' among Latvians	c. 1,355,259	56.2	n/a	n/a
- 'Historic citizens' among non-Latvians	c. 365,043	15.1	38,108	1.6
- Naturalized citizens	n/a			
Total non-citizens <i>Including:</i>	c. 1,362,754	38.6	c. 568,195	24.1
Aliens (citizens of other states),	n/a		27,134	1.1

Source: Department of Citizenship and Immigration, data on 1994 (Diena, 26 Jan. 1994), Board for Citizenship and Migration, data as at 30 Nov. 2000, available at <http://www.np.gov.lv> (Note: The data on 1994 reflect the situation before the start of the naturalization process in 1995.)

⁶⁰ The extremely small margin in the 1998 Latvian referendum on the amendments to the citizenship law shows that it was impossible to reach any consensus either within parliament or within the legislature, the cabinet, or the presidency. It may reflect, amongst other things, the fact that Latvia did not appear on the list of EU extension candidates until 3 years later, and also the fact that it lacked the kind of strong overarching consensus responsible for the moderation among the political forces in the Estonian parliament.

applications for naturalization are currently being processed in Latvia is 20,000 per year. If this does not improve, the process of naturalization could take decades to complete.

The documents on national integration adopted by the various governments have so far failed to win the unanimous support either of the titular élites or of the representatives of the minorities. While the titular groups stress the importance of learning the state language as a means to integration and inclusive participation (language and integration for participation), the Russian-speakers emphasize the need to begin by improving their legal status (integration through participation). The level of knowledge of the state language required for passing the citizenship exam remains a very hotly debated issue in both Estonia and Latvia. Another such issue is the future of Russian-language state schools where the state language is to become the language of instruction at the higher level (grades 10–12), starting in 2004 in Latvia and 2007 in Estonia. Other key tasks include correcting regional imbalances, particularly in areas populated predominantly by the minorities, and reversing the processes of societal division into two isolated ethnic communities.

Despite all these concerns, it has to be said that, both in Estonia and in Latvia, the late 1990s have seen profound ethnopolitical changes that have set the processes of constructive conflict-transformation in motion. The overall context within which ethnopolitical dissension is located has thus changed, and some important preconditions for sustaining peaceful ethnopolitics have been established. The next section of this report examines some of the new factors that have recently been shaping the content and trend of contemporary Baltic ethnopolitics.

3 New Factors in Contemporary Baltic Ethnopolitics

The ethnopolitical changes of the 1990s produced five major new factors that came to the fore in domestic political life in both Estonia and Latvia at the end of that decade: stabilization of independent statehood; successful transition to a market economy; institutionalization of democratic political competition; European integration; and the (re)-emergence of civil-society institutions.

3.1 Stabilization of Independent Statehood

During the first decade of their post-Soviet existence, Estonia and Latvia succeeded in stabilizing their independent statehood, both in terms of affirming its redefined identity and, to a large extent, in terms of assuring its effective functioning as an institution of governance. The key event in bringing about a reduction in the perceived threat to national security was the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltics in August 1994.

In this context, integration has come to be seen as an increasingly sensible option. Stabilized statehood has created a feeling of security among the Balts. Granting citizenship was a difficult task in a state that had inherited large numbers

of immigrants of questionable loyalty, particularly if the state itself was not yet properly formed. In the years since the restoration of independence, the Estonian and Latvian states have stabilized. So too has the population: a sizeable portion of the non-Balts have left, but the majority have stayed and do not plan to go, so it is now wise to try to get along with them. Furthermore, there is a widespread conviction that the vital goals of the Estonian and Latvian states cannot be achieved in a situation where hundreds of thousands of people have no solid status of prospects. Amongst Balts, there is now a deeper understanding of the need for integration, and of the fact that finding a civilized solution to the problem of the aliens is in their own best interest.

3.2 Successful Transition to Market Economies

Like the central eastern European countries, Estonia and Latvia are examples of post-communist states that have been relatively successful in their pursuit of both democratic and market reforms. The proficient way in which they have managed the transition to functioning market economies both serves as impressive proof of their determination to move away from the communist past and gives ground for optimism in regard to their future performance.

By 1995, both Estonia and Latvia had achieved macroeconomic stability and brought inflation and budget deficits under control. Privatization (based on the successful East German Treuhand model) proceeded rapidly and, for the most part, effectively, being largely completed by 1997 in Estonia and 1998 in Latvia.⁶¹ Except for a temporary downturn during the first half of 1999, occasioned in large part by the lingering impact of the Russian financial crisis of August 1998, the economy in Latvia, and even more so in Estonia, underwent vigorous growth from 1995 through to the end of the decade. In Estonia, the pace of economic development was spectacular: real GDP growth attained 4 per cent in 1995–1996, rising to over 10 per cent in 1997, then slowing again to 4.7 per cent in 1998 and about 1.7 per cent in 1999, only to rise again to 5 per cent in 2000. Real GDP growth in Latvia slowed from 6 per cent in 1997 to 3.5 per cent in 1998 and to 0.1 per cent in 1999 but was projected to reach 3.5 per cent in 2000.⁶²

The introduction of national currencies (in 1992 in Estonia and in 1995 in Latvia) also fostered the diversification of foreign trade, enabling both countries to move quickly away from dependence on Russia for markets and raw materials. Whereas in 1991 the republics of the Soviet Union (first and foremost Russia) took 94 per cent of Estonia's exports and supplied 84 per cent of its imports, after just one year these figures had declined to 34.7 per cent and 40.1 per cent respectively. As early as the end of 1992, Finland had replaced Russia as Estonia's leading

⁶¹ With regard to agriculture and housing, the situation is more complicated, but it is the industrial sector which is relevant for ethnopolitical developments, because neither Estonia nor Latvia have a significant proportion of Russian-speakers among their rural populations.

⁶² World Bank Country Data, available at www.worldbank.org

commercial partner, and during the 1990s a number of EU countries, notably Sweden and Germany, markedly increased their trade with Estonia, helping to reduce Russia's share even further (by 1998 the latter had declined to 13.3 per cent of exports and 11.1 per cent of imports).⁶³ In the case of Latvia, 1998 saw Germany replace Russia as its leading trading partner. In less than a decade, the Baltics achieved significant trade-integration with the EU: at the beginning of the 1990s, only a few per cent of Baltic exports went to Western Europe; by 1998, however, Estonian exports to the EU accounted for 55 per cent of all exports (rising to 65 per cent in 1999), the corresponding figure for Latvia being 57 per cent.⁶⁴ Economic development in Latvia, and more particularly in Estonia, was underpinned by high inflows of Western and Northern European investment which contributed to a growth in exports and enhanced productivity.

By the end of the 1990s, both Estonia and Latvia were classified by the World Bank and the European Commission as functioning market economies. Because of the speed with which Estonia implemented economic reform, it acquired a distinctly positive reputation among international agencies and observers, who viewed it as a leader in the post-communist economic transition. In 1997, it was the only Baltic country to be invited, along with the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Greek portion of Cyprus, to become a candidate for admission to the EU during the latter's first round of expansion.⁶⁵ In the European Commission's annual Progress-Report on applicant countries, Estonia has always ranked high, alongside Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, as one of the best-performing prospective members. In the commission's 1999 Report, Latvia was also promoted to this group.⁶⁶

During the transition from the Soviet system to market-oriented capitalism, the structure of the Baltic economies underwent a number of major changes. Some of these changes had ethnically relevant repercussions. For example, one of the leading industrial branches of the Soviet era, the fuel and energy sector, fell on increasingly hard times, mainly because it was no longer required to gear production to the all-Union demands set by the command economy and because, in the conditions of the free market, oil-shale was a very inefficient source of fuel.⁶⁷ The Russians and other non-Balts, who, in Soviet times, had been employed in the mining, energy, and transport sectors, and in large-scale industry as a whole, found the economic transition particularly difficult, since these sectors experienced

⁶³ Eesti Statistika Aastaraamat 1999 (Tallinn: State Committee for Statistics, 2000), 207–17.

⁶⁴ S. Lainela, 'Baltic Accession to the EU', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 31 (2000), 2: 204–17, at 209.

⁶⁵ *Baltic Times* 17–23 July 1997, 1, 8.

⁶⁶ It is the only 'second-wave' country to gain such a distinction, thanks to its considerable progress during the past couple of years.

⁶⁷ From a peak of 31 million tons of oil-shale mined in 1980, the total had declined to 22.5 million tons by 1990, before falling even further, to about 10 million tons, at the end of the 1990s. See *Estonia Statistika Aastaraamat 1995*, 207.

higher-than-average levels of unemployment.⁶⁸ In the conditions of the market economy, regions which, during the Soviet period, had been highly industrialized (and had attracted Russian-speaking immigrants) fell into a state of stagnation, causing serious social dislocation. This was the case in Ida-Virumaa (north-east Estonia), for example, and in predominantly Russian-populated industrial centres in Latvia (Daugavpils, Rzekne, Liepaja, Jelgava).

3.3 The Institutionalization of Democratic Political Competition

After 1991, Estonia and Latvia returned to the traditions of the 1920s and reinstated parliamentary republics, assigning supreme authority to parliament (the Riigikogu in Estonia and the Saeima in Latvia). Since the mid-1990s, both countries have invariably been characterized by outside observers as having succeeded in establishing: representative institutions and democratic political structures that are recognized as legitimate by all political actors, party systems which, though still evolving, are more or less stable; and a free press.⁶⁹ Since 1996–7, Freedom House has classified the Baltics states as consolidated democracies,⁷⁰ based on its own indicators of the level of political rights and civil liberties achieved.

The new context created by the institutional consolidation of democratic politics in Estonia and Latvia has brought with it new rules of political game, and these are influencing the behaviour of the various actors. The key stakes in this game are the enlargement of support-bases and the recruitment of new voters. The ongoing process of naturalization in Estonia (from 1993) and in Latvia (from 1995, but particularly from 1998) has increased the number of citizens from the Russian-speaking community. This has created a strong incentive for centrist political parties⁷¹ to try to secure votes by adopting conciliatory stances on ethnic policies.

Analysis of election data suggests that splits between Balts and Russian-speakers and ethnically dominated patterns of voting have largely been avoided. Naturalization has actually prepared the ground for the emergence and development of inter-ethnic political coalitions. In 1995, ethnic Russians formed almost 15 per cent of the electorate but the joint Russian list 'Our Home Is Estonia' secured only 5.9 per cent of the votes. In 1999, the Russian party of Estonia sought

⁶⁸ A. Puur, 'Economic Transition in Estonia: Experience across Population Groups', in: *Society, Parliament and Legislation* (Tallinn: Chancellery of the Riigikogu Press, 1999), 198.

⁶⁹ See e.g. B. Parrott, 'Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization', in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds.), *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), 1–39, J. Rupnik, 'Eastern Europe a Decade Later: The Post-communist Divide', *Journal of Democracy*, 10 (1999), 1: 57–63. The level of relative stabilization of party systems, and the resulting stability of governing coalitions, has been significantly higher in Estonia than in Latvia.

⁷⁰ See www.freedomhouse.org

⁷¹ The left, no matter how restricted its scope in the Baltics, has tended to favour non-Balts.

to play on the ethnic issue but had no success: although Russians made up nearly 20 per cent of the electorate, it obtained only 2 per cent of the vote, and the Russian-Estonian United People's Party 6.1 per cent. Russians have increasingly voted for non-ethnic parties, especially the Centre Party. Developments have been similar in regard to Estonian parties: in 1995, a number of them tried, unsuccessfully, to feed on strong nationalistic feelings, with the result that, in the 1999 elections, radical pro-Estonian actors were almost totally absent.⁷² In Latvia too, those opposition parties that have met with electoral success (e.g. Saimnieks, Harmony for Latvia) have been of multi-ethnic composition.⁷³ Radical nationalists among the titular groups, and 'neo-Soviet' nostalgics among the Russian-speakers, have passed into opposition and been left on the margins of political activity. Their place in the forefront of domestic politics has been taken by ethnopolitically moderate élite-groups. In the new conditions, ethnopolitical moderation has begun to pay off. Those who endorsed accommodation find themselves on the winning side.

3.4 European Integration

In the second half of the 1990s, Baltic foreign policy focused increasingly on closer integration with the West, and in particular on candidacy for membership of the EU. By the end of the decade, the goals of European integration had made their way to the forefront not only of foreign but also of domestic politics, both in Estonia and in Latvia. Relations between the Baltic states and the EU have, overall, developed rapidly since independence. In 1992 Estonia and Latvia each concluded treaties on trade and commercial and economic co-operation with the EU. In 1994, Estonia and Latvia signed free-trade agreements with the EU and responded very actively to the EU pre-accession strategy launched at the Essen European Council in December of that year.

The two countries subsequently submitted formal applications for full membership of the EU (in November 1995 in the case of Estonia, and in October 1995 in the case of Latvia) and concluded Association Agreements ('Europe Agreements') with the EU.⁷⁴ The aim of these Europe Agreements is to enhance integration between the EU and the applicant countries and prepare them for EU membership. They provide a gradually expanding framework for co-operation, which, together with the concomitant technical and financial assistance from the EU, have helped tie Baltic reforms to the EU model of the market economy.

⁷² B. Grofman, E. Mikkel, and R. Taagepera, 'Fission and Fusion of Parties in Estonia, 1987–1999', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 31 (2000), 4: 329–57, at 350.

⁷³ A. Plakans, 'Democratization and Political Participation in Postcommunist Societies: The Case of Latvia', in: K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds.), *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1997), 245–89.

⁷⁴ Uniquely among east central European states, Estonia did not have a transition period stipulated in its agreement.

Estonia was one of the six 'first-round' candidate countries with which the European Commission recommended (in its Opinion of July 1997) the EU should start enlargement negotiations.⁷⁵ In line with the decision of the Luxembourg Council in December 1997, the EU opened accession negotiations with Estonia on 31 March 1998, and the first phase of these – the screening process – was essentially complete by summer 1999. Since 2000, analogous negotiations have been under way with Latvia, in its capacity as a 'second-round' candidate. So far the negotiations have proceeded smoothly. In early 2001, Estonia had 31 chapters of *acquis* under discussion, and Latvia was engaged in discussions on 16 chapters. Since then, Estonia has already closed 16 chapters and become one of the frontrunners of the 'Luxembourg group'.⁷⁶

Overall, the 'European' dimension of domestic politics has enhanced the quality and stability of ethnic peace in the Baltics. The admission of Estonia and Latvia to the Council of Europe in 1994 entailed, *inter alia*, adherence to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The overwhelming majority of Baltic political élites have striven to effect their respective country's accession to the EU as swiftly as possible, and in their attempts to meet the requirements for such membership, Baltic decision-makers have had to take into account the European Commission's recommendations on the issue of the resident Russian-speaking population. Membership of the EU implies implementation of the Copenhagen criteria in regard to respect for, and protection of, minorities. When discussing the political criteria for EU membership, first in relation to Estonia (1997) and later in relation to Latvia (1999), the European Commission stated clearly (e.g. in its Opinion) that these countries needed to take measures to accelerate naturalization procedures and to facilitate the integration of Russian-speaking non-citizens into their respective societies. The commission's regular reports of 1998, 1999, and 2000 on Estonian and Latvian progress towards accession also explicitly referred to the problems associated with the integration of Russian-speakers. One of the outcomes of these observations was the enactment of moderated amendments to the previously adopted overrestrictive legislation on citizenship and language in both Estonia and Latvia between 1998 and 2000.

3.5 The (Re)-emergence of Civil-Society Institutions

The political and economic progress that took place in the Baltics as part of the process of reform fostered the emergence, in those countries, of the kind of interest-group politics typical of Western civic democracies. A major outcome of these changes has therefore been the development of civil society and its institutions. The shift in quality undergone by these have, in their turn, had a decisive impact on the development of inter-ethnic attitudes and relations.

⁷⁵ Estonia's candidacy was undoubtedly boosted by its vigorous economic development and the strong support of neighbouring EU members—Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.

⁷⁶ The Estonian government has set 1 Jan. 2003 as a target-date. By that time all the work at home has to be completed and Estonia has to be ready to join the Union.

Since re-independence, the re-emergence of pre-1940 patterns of association and the growth of new civic initiatives have gained pace in both Estonia and Latvia. The development of civic associations indicates that a modern style of social organization is taking root in these countries. NGO involvement is extremely important in areas where state institutions lack resources or established systems and where the private sector is not yet active: adult education; environmental protection; human rights; social welfare, including the protection of vulnerable groups; and the popularization of cultural values. NGOs often provide these services more cheaply than do state institutions, and are able to draw on resources not available to the state: donations, grants from foundations, and volunteer manpower.

Having initially been slow, NGO activity began to gain momentum in the mid-1990s, when volunteer-based NGOs tailored to the needs of the transition period began to emerge.⁷⁷ The number of NGOs has grown considerably: in the period 1995–1999 the total of registered NGOs increased almost twofold, from 5,954 to 8,524 in Estonia, and from 1,676 to 3,922 in Latvia.⁷⁸ By the mid-1990s, the process of NGO consolidation was under way, and NGO Forums (Centres) were beginning to emerge.⁷⁹ Important links began to be formed between civic interest-groups and political parties.⁸⁰

At the same time, as shown by recent surveys, the number of functioning associations is significantly lower than the number of associations registered. These others are either inactive or ineffectual.⁸¹ Only a small segment of the population is involved in NGOs, and an even smaller segment in non-trade-union-style NGOs. Surveys show that only between 2 per cent and 9 per cent of Latvians and between 5 per cent and 13 per cent of Estonians can be regarded as belonging to NGOs⁸². By comparison with the old European democracies, especially the

⁷⁷ As major motives for participation in social activities, people mentioned: the opportunity of being with other people, a sense of duty, the possibility of gaining new experiences, sympathy with those who live in poverty, and a desire to help solve problems in their neighbourhood. Survey data by Baltic House: see B. Zepa, *Conditions of Enhancement of Civic Participation* (Baltic Data House: Riga, 1998).

⁷⁸ *Eesti Maakonnad Arvudes 1993–1998* (Statistikaamet: Tallinn, 1998; *Eesti Statistika 1999*, no. 6 (90). *Latvian Human Development Report 1995* (UNDP: Riga); Data from the Latvian ministry of justice 1999.

⁷⁹ In 1996 in Latvia and in 1997 in Estonia. Their establishment was assisted by three core donors—the government of Denmark, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Soros Foundation.

⁸⁰ In 1999 in Estonia, the Consultative Council of the Non-Profit Associations was formed, consisting of representatives of 10 umbrella organizations of non-profit associations and political parties.

⁸¹ See *Latvian Human Development Report 1998* (UNDP: Riga) and *Estonian Human Development Report 1999* (Tallinn: UNDP Estonia: Tallinn), both available at www.undp.org

⁸² This includes all kinds of NGOs registered at the respective ministries of justice—mostly neighbourhood organizations, house-building co-operatives, sports associations, etc. The proportion

Nordic countries, the extent of this mode of organization within Baltic societies is quite modest. The number of civil associations, and the degree of activity by participating citizens, is much lower in the Baltics than in neighbouring developed countries such as Finland and Sweden. In Finland, for example, 77 per cent of the adult population was affiliated to at least one NGO in 1996.⁸³

Overall, the tendency to join in organizations in order to realize particular interests has been greater among citizens than among non-citizens. According to a survey by the Baltic Barometer, whereas 13 per cent of Estonians are members of NGOs, this is true of only 5 per cent of non-Estonians. In Latvia, meanwhile, 9 per cent of Latvians but only 2 per cent of non-Latvians are recorded as belonging to NGOs.⁸⁴ Overall, this indicates very low levels of participation in public life. It implies that people essentially maintain contact with their own family, friends, and colleagues, and tend not to extend their social network beyond this, in a way that would promote their integration into society.

As regards involvement in the ethno-political sphere, the third sector can be divided into two large groups. The first comprises NGOs formed to bring people together to achieve common objectives, create common values, and facilitate co-operation between members, irrespective of their origin and social status. Participation in these 'service-providing' NGOs by people of different ethnic identities has tended to promote patterns of civic solidarity, underpinned by a desire to help people with similar problems. Organizations of this kind are active in fields such as social security, health protection, human rights, integration, environmental protection, education, entrepreneurship, and sports and recreation.⁸⁵

The second group consists of traditional voluntary minority-associations dedicated in most cases to safeguarding ethnic identity and minority culture. The aim of such groups, of which there are many different kinds, is to familiarize members with their cultural roots, pass on cultural values to future generations, and, by virtue of the latter, to reduce the risk of assimilation. In Latvia, there are associations of this kind for Russians, Belarussians, Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Estonians, Lithuanians, and others. More than 150 ethnic cultural societies are united under the umbrella of the 'Association of National Cultural Societies'. In Estonia, the number of ethnic cultural societies recorded in 1999 was over 120, aggregated into four associations.⁸⁶ A number of ethnic groups (Byelorussians,

of ethnocultural, civic, or political NGOs among them is very low, approximately 2 % to 5 % (ministry of justice data).

⁸³ Ruutsoo and Siisianen, 'Restoring Civil Society in the Baltic States.'

⁸⁴ R. Rose, *Baltic Barometer-III Survey* (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1996); id., *Baltic Barometer-IV Survey* (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde: Glasgow, 2000).

⁸⁵ Associations of hunters, fisherman, and vehicle-owners, and associations of entrepreneurs and other professionals are included here.

⁸⁶ e.g. the Estonian Federation of Associations of Ethnic Cultural Societies 'Lüüra' (31 societies), the Association of Estonian National Minorities (20 societies), the Slavic Educational and Charitable

Koreans, Tatars, etc.) have three or four parallel societies. In 1999, there were about 30 Russian-speaking NGOs in Latvia and over 50 in Estonia.⁸⁷

The (re)-emergence and development of civil-society institutions in the Baltics has resulted in the appearance of a completely new set of actors on the ethnopolitical scene. Since the mid-1990s, NGOs have started to play a prominent role in the integration of non-Estonians and non-Latvians into the national societies in question. Their activities include: attempts to improve mutual knowledge of cultures; organization of Estonian- and Latvian-language courses for non-Balts; and reshaping of public opinion and alteration of attitudes. Even before the state had developed any kind of integration programme, NGOs had recognized the need for action to overcome the isolation and separateness of the two communities, to make good non-Balts' scant knowledge of the official languages and remove the barriers blocking their way to information, and to allay the fears associated with this situation. The members of the various civil associations were the first both to realize that future development of the state was impossible unless the problems associated with integration were resolved, and to perceive the indubitable fact of Estonian and Latvian multiculturality.

The activities of civic initiatives and non-profit associations complement integration policies pursued at the state level. The major potential for societal integration resides in ethnically neutral public associations that pursue common interests (civil associations). These are the NGOs formed to bring people together to pursue common objectives, create common values, and facilitate co-operation between members, irrespective of their origin or social status. One of the most prominent example of an interethnic NGO which operates transnationally is *The Lake Peipsi Project on Trans-border Co-operation* which is based in Tartu (Estonia), but operates also in Latvia and the Pskov Region of the Russian Federation. Recent research in Estonia suggests that, although Estonians and Russians both prefer to have members of their own nationality as their neighbours, co-workers, and bosses, one cannot really speak of a lack of trust between the two nationalities, or an unwillingness to co-operate with each other.⁸⁸ The results of a survey conducted by the Latvian NGO Centre in 1998 indicate that the NGO environment in Latvia is tolerant and open: 75 per cent of those polled agree that co-operation between organizations in which the majority speak Latvian and organizations composed of minorities is desirable; 53 per cent of members of Latvian-speaking NGOs say they would be willing, in an educational context, to

Federation in Estonia (42 societies and 33 collectives) and the Round Table of Ethnic Cultural Societies of Ida-Viru County (18 societies), which is an umbrella organization for the ethnic cultural societies operating in Ida-Viru County.

⁸⁷ P. Lavrinets, 'Activities of Russian Organizations in Lithuania', Russian Citizens of Lithuania (Vilmorus: Vilnius, 1999), 45.

⁸⁸ According to data from the Ethnic Relations Survey (Mar. 2000), roughly 38% of Estonians and 46% of non-Estonians found that they had had positive experience of co-operation with representatives of the other nationality (help when in need, sharing common troubles, etc.). Roughly half of the non-Estonians were prepared to work in an Estonian working-environment given appropriate conditions.

give assistance to those not yet able to speak Latvian, and 65 per cent do not object to using Russian occasionally in educational seminars for NGOs.⁸⁹

NGOs organized on the principle of ethnicity (e.g. societies promoting minority cultures) also promote integration, by creating an environment where the specific cultural needs of minorities are recognized and their interests heeded. A clear definition of self by minorities does not conflict with loyalty to the Estonian or Latvian state; and the state, for its part, provides financial support for societies promoting minority cultures.

Another component of civil society that exerts an integrating force is local government. Co-operation increases where there are shared territorial, economic, or other interests. Local-government activities foster the dialogue between different ethnolinguistic groups and help prepare the latter's leaders for national-scale co-operation at the parliamentary level.

Finally, another important dimension of integration is constituted by the activities of human-rights groups and federations of minority-culture associations that consciously aim to develop a dialogue between minorities and the state. Championing as they do the interests of minorities, such groups are trusted by the latter to set forth their problems effectively, and, conversely, they are in a particularly good position to explain state policy. Functions such as these have been performed since as far back as 1989 by the Association of Estonian/Latvian National Minorities, the President's Round Table, various collaborative minority-based associations operating at regional level (e.g. in Ida-Viru county in Estonia and in Ventspils in Latvia), and others. The most important non-profit associations and foundations concerned with integration matters are: the Open Estonia Foundation, 'Caritas' Estonia, the Open Education Union, the Estonian Open Society Institute, the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, the Integration Foundation, the Jaan Tõnisson Institute, the Lake Peipsi Project, and the Socio-economic Development Institute. In Latvia, a particularly important role in the processes of integration has been played by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (directed by N. Muiznieks), which received an international Democracy and Civil Society Award from the US and the EU in 1998 in recognition of its activities as a leading advocate of human-rights education and of the peaceful settlement of social conflicts in Latvia.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Baltic Data House survey findings, as in *The Integration of Society in Latvia: A Framework Document*, at 12.

⁹⁰ In 1998 the centre focused on the issue of citizenship for children born to non-citizens in Latvia after 1991 and was spectacularly active in the liberal campaign during the 1998 referendum on amendments to the citizenship law in Latvia.

4 New Attitudes and Discourses in Ethnopolitics in the Late 1990s

The combined effect of the new factors in Baltic political life described above has been to help attenuate inter-ethnic attitudes and to promote the emergence of new ethnopolitical discourses and new, more nuanced mindsets among political actors espousing integrationist approaches.

4.1 The Attenuation of Inter-ethnic Attitudes and the Emergence of New Ethnopolitical Discourses

The rapid development of state and society that has taken place in the Baltics since the mid-1990s has wrought important changes in attitudes. Balts and non-Balts alike are increasingly coming to value the cultural plurality of their countries. Most Balts are of the opinion that citizenship among non-Balts should increase.⁹¹ The evolving pragmatization of inter-group attitudes that is resulting from the incentives provided by civic and market-oriented development is producing a visible reduction in ethnic tensions. These new attitudes form the basis for a gradual spread of inter-group tolerance and a readiness to accept compromise. Pragmatically, differences between cultures are also being seen as resulting in direct gains: most Balts now believe that the presence of a variety of nationalities in their country boosts the supply of qualified labour, promotes the formation of business links between East and West, and helps improve relations with Russia.

That said, a breaking-down of ethnic barriers and a development towards openness and tolerance in a multi-ethnic society can only take place in a situation where all identity-groups feel confident and safe. For the Balts, this means, above all, having confidence in the survival and development of their own languages and cultures, and this is seen as a precondition for more tolerant and open attitude towards other groups. Knowledge of Estonian or Latvian among non-Balts is not merely a means to a more successful life for them; it is an existential category that signals their overriding loyalty to the restored states.⁹²

For non-Balts, feeling safe implies having confidence that state policy is not aimed at their exclusion or assimilation. If it were, this would have a significant

⁹¹ According to the Ethnic Relations Survey carried out by the Institute of International and Social Studies at the Tallinn Pedagogical University in Mar. 2000, only 2 % of ethnic Estonians are against such an increase. The data relating to this survey quoted here and below are taken from *Integrating Estonia, 1997-2000*, 14–16.

⁹² E.g. in the Ethnic Relations Survey, when asked what the result would be of granting Estonian citizenship without an Estonian-language test, 60 per cent of Estonians found this would constitute a threat to the survival of the Estonian nation, 68 % considered it a threat to the survival of the Estonian language, and roughly a half considered it also to be a threat to the survival of the Estonian state. This shows that Balts associate national identity with language and are unwilling to abandon this stance in the future. Similar results were obtained in Baltic Data House surveys in Latvia.

influence on their loyalty to the Estonian or Latvian state. Non-Balts are adjusting to the requirements in regard to citizenship and language, and are coming to value their status as citizens of Estonia or Latvia. Surveys show that non-Balts as a whole rate the Estonian/Latvian system of government much higher than the Russian system, and believe it will have retained this position five years from now. This suggests that particular preconditions obtain which strengthen their political loyalty to the state.⁹³

In the late 1990s, important changes occurred in the realm of public discourse. Public discourses on nationhood multiplied and diversified. Ethnically based nationalist discourses concerning identity were transformed and rendered irrelevant by the plurality of non-ethnically based, integrationist discourses focusing increasingly on civic identities and interests. The previous clash between the ethnonationalist discourse (predominant among the titular ethnicity) and the 'neo-Soviet' discourse (predominant among Russian-speakers) was superseded and no longer defines the parameters of today's ethnopolitical debates, either in Estonia or in Latvia.

In the late 1990s, two new sets of discourses competed for the public mind: the 'core nation' kind and the 'integrationist' kind. Radical nationalist discourse was largely marginalized, or transformed itself into a more moderate 'core nation' discourse'. This latter discourse took as its prime objective the preservation of patterns of ethnic dominance in the re-independent nation-state but differed from the exclusionary ethnonationalist discourse of the previous period in that it accepted (albeit reluctantly) the imperative of inclusion in regard to Soviet-era migrants. However, inclusion meant the partial, cautious, conditional, and gradual naturalization of residents, without any extension of integration to the societal realm. In principle, the policies advocated favoured re-settler migration (in the unlikely event this would continue) and expected those who entered the citizen-body to become part of a 'one-community nation-state' – meaning a nation-state in which the cultural and linguistic attributes of the core nation became those of its citizenry. This conception of identity-politics no longer has official status and is now associated only with right-of-centre political parties. On the side of the Russian-speakers, the 'core nation' discourse is reciprocated by a discourse of 'opportunistic adaptation', by the segregated community of ethnic subordinates, to the exclusionary policies of the 'ethnocratic state'.

The discourses that have gained currency more recently are integrationist. They accept the shared homeland, created through integration – which is increasingly

⁹³ Surveys indicate that Russians living in Estonia are becoming more reconciled to the existence of an independent Estonia (A. Kirch (ed.), *The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: History, Problems, and Trends* (Estonian Academy Publishers, Tallinn, 1997), 37). According to the Ethnic Relations Survey (2000), the order of importance of answers to the question 'For what reasons is it important for you personally to possess/acquire Estonian citizenship?' was as follows: the desire to feel more secure about living in Estonia (86.1 %), the desire to determine one's legal status in Estonia (84.8 %), the possibility of finding work more easily (76.9 %), the desire to secure a better future for one's children in Estonia (69.4 %), the opportunity to improve one's economic situation (60.5 %), to achieve success in political life (19 %).

perceived as the only reasonable option when it comes to finding a civilized solution to current ethnic problems – as a common value. On the whole, ‘integrationist’ discourse is ‘modern’ and based on ‘enlightened self-interest’. It is rooted in acceptance of diversity and advocates a transition from patterns of dominance to patterns of co-operation. It therefore represents a broader approach – one that allows for the integration of resident non-citizens into both state and society. On the side of Russian-speakers, the integrationist discourse represents the idea of the ‘multiculturalist adaptation’ of newly naturalized citizens loyal to the shared state and prepared to integrate into society, thus increasing its diversity.

Overall, integrationist discourses are discourses predicated on peaceful ethnopolitics and inter-ethnic coexistence through co-operation. In today’s Baltics, it is the integrationist discourses that structure the behaviour and policy-choices of the centrist forces – encompassing both Balts and Russian-speakers alike – that have come to dominate the political scene. At the same time, it must be noted that these discourses by no means constitute a uniform whole: they reflect a variety of perspectives, each with different ideas as to the specific tasks of integration and the methods to be used to attain it. In terms of policy-oriented analysis, it is important to be aware of these variations in perspective, and of the way they relate to the motives of the different subgroups of political actors.

4.2 Variations in Perspective Within the Integrationist Discourse

This subsection describes the findings of recent field-research in Estonia aimed at identifying and assessing the major types of perspectives that characterize the various subgroups espousing integrationist discourses at state and societal level.⁹⁴ Data from detailed interviews was analysed with a view to identifying subgroups of political actors on the basis of: 1) shared discourses predicated either on ethnic politics (state actors) or inter-ethnic co-existence through co-operation (civil-society actors); 2) differences in perspective (mindset) within one or other type of discourse.⁹⁵

The ‘state actor’ group comprises those government officials, civil servants, members of parliament, and leaders of political parties who promote ethnic peace through consistent policies aimed at the integration of non-titular groups into state

⁹⁴The research in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was conducted in Oct.–Nov. 2000 as part of the project ‘Democratic consolidation, peace constituencies, and ethnopolitics of institutional readjustment in third-wave democracies: The Baltic cases’, supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in 2000.

⁹⁵ These allowed us to draw conclusions as to the motives driving different subgroups of peace actors to work for peace. Identification of discourses proceeded through clustering of interrelated ethnopolitical codes which reflected beliefs, opinions, and evaluations by the respondents of the changes, current status and conceptions of the future desired for inter-ethnic relations and for the country as a whole. Identification of differences in perspective was based on clustering comments of respondents in relation to the perceived goals, methods, and problems of realization of ethnic peace-building strategies such as integration and multiculturalism.

and society in Estonia and Latvia. These actors belong to élite groups of both titular and non-titular ethnicities who, for various reasons, have developed an interest in reducing ethnic tensions and promoting the institutionalized management of ethnic disputes. They tend to adopt a moderate and accommodating stance on issues concerning inter-ethnic relations. Their integrationist activities have included lobbying in favour of liberal amendments to the initially over-restrictive legislation on citizenship and language (particularly in 1993–1997), drafting the state programmes of integration (1998), and working to build inter-ethnic political coalitions at national, regional, and local level (particularly in 1999–2000). These activities are motivated by a variety of mindsets (perspectives) on peaceful (symbolic and organizational) ethnic politics at the state level.

The ‘societal actor’ group is exemplified by the newly emerged NGOs and interest-groups that either work for substantial ethnic peace at the societal or cultural level or form the constituencies that support the peaceful ethnopolitics pursued by élite groups at the state level. These bodies can be either predominately mono-ethnic or inter-ethnic in their composition. What unites them as a group is the fact that, for various reasons, they have developed an interest in overcoming the ethnic divide in society and promoting patterns of intercultural understanding and inter-ethnic co-operation as a means of achieving civic integration. They approach issues concerning inter-ethnic relations from a position of shared human values, intergroup tolerance, and respect for diversity. Their work for integration has included such activities as: promoting tolerant and pluralistic attitudes; promoting inter-cultural understanding and dialogue; stimulating societal discussion on issues relating to the integration of non-citizens; fostering societal support for liberal amendments to legislation; and enhancing the effectiveness of state policies of integration by supplementing them with integration work at community level. These activities are motivated by a variety of perspectives on inter-ethnic co-existence through co-operation at the societal level.

4.2.1 Perspectives Among State Actors

All those engaging in integrationist discourses are united by an avowed dissatisfaction with the current state of ethnopolitical arrangements and by a disposition to accept changes designed to increase political participation by non-titulars in state affairs. In general, such actors espouse codes in which ethnonationalist values are perceived not as ‘existential’ but as subordinate to considerations such as political competition, national security, modernization, and liberalism. They are aware that the problem of the divide between citizens and non-citizens needs somehow to be resolved in a civilized way, through political, socio-economic, and cultural integration. Rather than being dismissed or merely tolerated, resident non-citizens are viewed as potential loyal fellow-citizens of the shared homeland, who show their respect for the latter by learning its language – a language distinct from their ethnic mother-tongue.

The resultant conceptions of identity-politics are based on a liberal (or liberalized) foundation of inclusive pluralism. Holders of ‘integrationist’ discourses belonging to centre, centre-left, and centre-right political parties, who have already learned the positive results of coalition-building in domestic politics, are strongly

motivated by the idea of a ‘return to Europe’ via integration into European structures. As a consequence, they appreciate the need to adhere to European standards in dealing with minority issues.

At the same time, these actors display variations, not only in their expectations of what needs to be changed and how, but also, and primarily, in their readiness to be proactive in bringing about the changes (*see Table 6*). Two basic perspectives are discernible among ‘integrationists’ at the state level: the utilitarian and the modernizing/liberal.

Table 6: Integrationist Perspectives among Political Actors at the State Level

<i>Shared discourse</i>	<i>Perspective on integrationist policies</i>	<i>Political subgroup</i>	<i>Motives for promoting integration</i>
Integrationist Discourse Predicated on Peaceful Ethnopolitics	Utilitarian	Domestically centred pragmatists	Pragmatic
		European-oriented realists	
	Modernizing/liberal	Modernizers/Liberals	Pro-pluralist-partnership

The Utilitarian Perspective:

Domestically Centred Pragmatists and European-oriented Realists

The utilitarian perspective is common to two subgroups which may be described, respectively, as domestically centred pragmatists and European-oriented realists. Domestically centred pragmatists embrace the discourse of accommodation and moderation in ethnic issues because they believe it to be electorally expedient. Where the proportion of Russian-speakers in the electorate increases, this group becomes an attractive ‘commodity’ on the democratized ‘market’ because it offers a means of enlarging a constituency. Pragmatist support for policies of integration is motivated by the prospect of recruiting additional voters from among these naturalized citizens.⁹⁶ Pragmatists also understand that, ten years after re-

⁹⁶ A typical response in this regard is: ‘If the growing Russian-based electorate sees that they and their rights are being respected and defended by a strong Estonia-wide centrist party, they are likely to support the latter, and their support will not dissipate quickly. This is the group of people our party [The Centrist Party of Estonia] is fighting to win over, and we are ready to support reasonable amendments to the citizenship legislation....’ (Estonian sample, response from an MP. This quotation and subsequent ones are taken from face-to-face interviews conducted by the author and his associates in the Baltics in Nov. 2000.

independence, both state and ethnic expectations have stabilized and it is not only sensible but also mutually advantageous for the two identity-groups to learn to live together and accept compromise.⁹⁷

European-oriented realists, meanwhile, approach integration as a necessity, dictated primarily by third parties. Integration is viewed as a sensible option, to be followed to the extent that is necessary to satisfy the requirements for a country hoping to be part of EU extension. Underlying this stance is a concern with national security – more specifically, deeply felt anxieties about the threat emanating from Russia – and the notion that such anxieties can be dealt with most effectively by joining European institutions and security alliances.⁹⁸ The great majority of Estonian and Latvian political élites have striven to ensure their countries become fully fledged members of the EU. In this connection Baltic decision-makers are aware that, in attempting to meet the requirements for membership, one of the factors they must take into account is the Council of Europe's opinion on the issue of the resident Russian-speaking population – in other words, they must take measures to accelerate naturalization-procedures and facilitate the integration of Russian-speaking non-citizens into the respective societies.⁹⁹ Although recognizing the need to ensure equal political rights for Balts and non-Balts, however, this subgroup of peace actors is generally of the view that no substantial material support can be provided for minority cultures out of public funds: once the citizenship-status of the different identity-groups has been equalized, so it believes, cultural and linguistic measures to safeguard ethnic and cultural identities must be financed by the groups themselves.¹⁰⁰ One of the obvious outcomes of the European-oriented realists' stance has been the enactment of more moderate legislation on citizenship and language in Estonia and Latvia, and this is now viewed as already quite sufficient. The objective for the future is tolerant acceptance of non-titulars into the citizen-body on a conditional (by no means automatic) basis.

⁹⁷ 'We Estonians should also change our minds and understand that all those who wanted to leave have already left, that no new massive outward migration is likely, and that we have no other option but to accept those who have stayed' (Estonian sample, government official).

⁹⁸ 'Latvia is going to join the EU, and the most important goal and this will provide a better guarantee of our independence than we could do alone, face-to-face with Russia' (Latvian sample, MP).

⁹⁹ 'Membership of the EU is a political priority in Latvia at the moment. This means we have to think about internal political stability' (Latvian sample, MP); 'I think that being in the EU, we should take into account the rules of EU. After all, except for some quite reasonable requirements, the EU does not interfere in the domestic affairs of its member-states' (Estonian sample, MP).

¹⁰⁰ 'I understand that the state doesn't have enough money to provide financial support for all the minorities here, but I am also concerned about Latvians, because current Latvian policy does not provide support for Latvians culture either' (Latvian sample, response from a government official); 'The state must provide a small amount of money for minority-culture associations, but in co-operation with the embassies of the respective ethnicities. Only small nationalities that don't have mother-states or embassies can claim any substantial money from the state (...) the liberal concept does not obligate us to finance the minorities' (Estonian sample, an MP).

The Modernizing/Liberal Perspective and Its Adherents

Corresponding to the modernizing/liberal perspective is the subgroup of modernizers and liberals operating at state level. It is part of this group's ethno-political code to treat integration as a necessity deriving not just from security concerns, but also, and primarily, from an internal need to modernize/liberalize as befits a modern democracy. Integration, so it believes, needs to be broad in scope, embracing not just the state level, but the societal level as well. The tasks, in terms of integration, are therefore viewed as two-fold: to promote the conditions that will ensure the loyalty of naturalized citizens to the re-independent state and to sustain that loyalty through deeper, societally grounded integration. In this way, it believes, the polity can be transformed into an 'intra-national' security-community.¹⁰¹ Official programmes of integration are thought of only as the starting-point in a longer-term process of peaceful change, and there is an appreciation of the fact that ethnically related institutions and legislation need not be fixed outcomes, and can instead take the form of ongoing solutions, flexible enough to accommodate the proliferation of identities within the citizenry. The objective for the future is inter-ethnic co-operation and inclusive pluralism among citizens of a modern European state. Naturalized citizens are viewed as a potential well-spring of national development.¹⁰² Representatives of the modernizing/liberal subgroup generally subscribe to a broader definition of minority groups and are prepared to be more generous in supporting minority cultures.¹⁰³

The modernizing/liberal code of peaceful ethnopolitics correlates with the vigorous European discourse triggered by the Baltic countries' application for entry to Europe: it is interested in modernization (European-oriented modernizers) and it assumes a common set of liberal values upon which modern democracy is founded.

The differing perspectives on peaceful ethnopolitics at state level give rise to differing sets of motives in regard to peace-work through integration: whereas

¹⁰¹ 'I am not satisfied with the progress of our integration and with what the state is doing. We are talking about abstract integration, usually to please some angry human-rights group from Denmark or some official from Brussels. For most of our government officials, the main component of integration is language learning. It is important, but it is only one of many more component problems of today, we need to create the conditions for a real mixing-up of people in society, to make the Russophones fully fledged members and not to let them live in abnormal self-segregated enclaves' (Estonian sample, government official).

¹⁰² 'Estonia's future depends mostly on the competitiveness of the Estonian people in the global economic context – how smart, educated, and hard-working we are. But our potential would be increased if not just ethnic Estonians but all Estonian citizens united their forces on the world market. I think, we (people from Estonia) have proved that we can manage and can win in some competitions. In the West as well as in the East. But we must be an open society, otherwise we may lose all our assets within one generation after joining the EU (when the young, especially young Russians, will want to go and work somewhere else in Europe because they do not like the way they are treated here' (Estonian sample, a MP).

¹⁰³ 'The problems associated with state support for the minorities have to do with our definition of what a minority is (...) We should contribute some money, of course, more than now. Minority groups are tax-payers like we are and have every right to it. The amount at the moment is quite small, but Estonia's budget is also small. This money will not be cut in the future, it will certainly rise' (Estonian sample, MP).

realists and pragmatists engage in short-term lobbying in favour of ethnic peace, modernizers and liberals opt for peace-work with a longer-term perspective. Realists and pragmatists play a passive role as regards the transformation process, in the sense that they will only accept change for which there is an immediate need. Modernizers and liberals, on the other hand, are prepared to be proactive in promoting the peaceful management of social and ethnopolitical transformation.

4.2.2 Perspectives Among Societal Actors

The integrationist discourses engaged in by civil-society actors are predicated on inter-ethnic coexistence. Those who propagate them accept the complex reality of ethnic tensions and contradictions as they exist at the present time and do not dismiss their political component. They are not satisfied with the existing situation, would like to change it, and are ready to promote this change. They admit that the transition to re-independence has revealed a latent distrust and dissension between the two ethnolinguistic groups, and that this can and must be changed now that independent statehood has been secured. A significant proportion of non-titulars have left, they say, but the majority have stayed and do not plan to go, so it is both sensible and useful to try to get on with them. The ethnic divide in society needs to be overcome through integration, and this requires a significant increase in mutual trust and tolerance, and in the recognition of diversity. The numbers of Soviet-era immigrants and their descendants obtaining naturalization should be increased, and there should be only one simple condition for securing it: knowledge of the official language of the country concerned. This knowledge is deemed indispensable not so much as proof of the basic loyalty of non-titulars but primarily as a means of overcoming the self-imposed isolation of non-titulars from society at large. The difficulties which adults encounter in learning a language are acknowledged, but coupled with this recognition is a resolve to assist Russian-speakers in the endeavour.

As in the case of the moderate élites, the integrationist discourses engaged in by civil-society peace-actors are not uniform, and analysis of them reveals a range of underlying motives. Three major perspectives can be identified: the human-rights perspective, the civic-partnership perspective, and the multiculturalist perspective. Corresponding to these three perspectives are three subgroups of actors: human-rights activists, civic partners, and minority-culture activists (*see Table 7*).

The Human-Rights Perspective and Its Adherents

The human-rights perspective is grounded in a deeply held normative belief that the promotion of human rights forms the bedrock of inter-ethnic civic coexistence. Human-rights activists view political integration as insufficient per se; they understand the need to promote integration at the societal level and regard human rights and liberal values as fundamental parameters in this enterprise.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ 'Protection of minorities' rights is similar to the situation with protection of citizens' rights in general—if a person knows his rights, he/she will put them into practice' (Latvian sample, NGO activist); 'I think the main issue for all the population is protection of human rights, and not so much

The human-rights group is the most active of those operating at the societal level. Its activities include careful monitoring of state policies and of the way in which these are implemented, and keeping the public aware of the need for liberalization through joint efforts.¹⁰⁵ Ethnic divisions persist within this group: human-rights NGOs are predominantly mono-ethnic (mostly titular or mostly

Table 7: Integrationist Perspectives among Actors at the Societal Level

<i>Shared discourse</i>	<i>Perspective on integrationist policies</i>	<i>Political subgroup</i>	<i>Motives for promoting integration</i>
Integrationist Discourse Predicated on Peaceful Inter-Ethnic Coexistence	Human-rights	Human-rights activists	Pro-pluralist-partnership
	Civil-society	Civic partners	
	Multiculturalist	Minority-culture activists	Pragmatic

Russophone), and this lends a degree of partisanship to their discourses and activities. In principle, however, all members of this group share the same humanistic and liberal values.

The Civil-Society Perspective: Civic Partners

The civic-partnership perspective appears to be emerging naturally, as a concomitant of the growth of the third sector in the new Baltic democracies. Corresponding to it is the subgroup of ‘civic partners’. The civic-partnership perspective is one typically held by NGOs that have ethnically mixed memberships and are actively engaged in community work or service-provision (e.g. associations working in the environmental or charitable sphere or in child care, professional associations, and other bodies pursuing shared interests). Language proficiency and identity are not paramount factors when it comes to working in NGOs.¹⁰⁶ Civic

of group (ethnic) rights. The ethnic identity issue is a private issue of a person, while human rights are a widely accepted approach in most Western countries, and we have to follow this direction’ (Estonian sample, NGO activist).

¹⁰⁵ ‘The state just cannot force integration, even though almost all those guys in Toompea [the Estonian parliament] want Estonia to join EU as soon as possible. The laws are OK now, and more and more money is spent, but the state officials just don’t know where and how to spend it effectively. Society knows better (...) The state must be continuously monitored in its spending of money on integration. We need a new Popular Front against corruption’ (Estonian sample, NGO activist).

¹⁰⁶ ‘I think tolerance towards differences is the normal product of any joint work. In our NGOs we have never had any problems with the choice of language. What matters to us is if the new member

partners advocate inter-ethnic co-operation, mutual tolerance, respect for diversity, and responsiveness to intercultural communication. These patterns are promoted and reinforced through civic partnerships forged in pursuit of common objectives.¹⁰⁷

These actors understand the need for integration in their societies; they are not satisfied with the way integration policies are being implemented and would like to help promote the process.¹⁰⁸ Though limited in scope, the civic-partner group is growing and may be viewed as the naturally generated societal constituency to which state policies of integration can look for support.

The Multiculturalist Perspective: 'Minority-culture Activists'

The 'multiculturalist' perspective is shared by cultural and educational NGOs whose membership is composed mostly of Russian-speakers loyal to their respective Baltic states. These NGOs are becoming increasingly involved in integration-work through their promotion of intercultural dialogue. As government and third-party funds for language-training and multicultural activities have increased – thanks to the newly adopted state integration-programmes – so the number of these NGOs has risen.¹⁰⁹ Though their motives are more narrowly interest-based than those of civic partners, and although they do not rely on the kinds of intrinsic values appealed to by human-rights activists, minority-culture activists make important contributions to peace-work. They tend to view the agreed programmes of integration as inadequate – not so much in terms of content as in terms of the size of the funds allocated for language-training and for the development of minority cultures.¹¹⁰ Integration-related cultural activities are seen

can contribute to our joint work and interests, that is what important' (Latvian sample, NGO activist); 'It is difficult to define which are Latvian NGOs and which are non-Latvian, because NGOs join people together independently of their ethnic origin and are guided by the commonality of their interests. Even the language issue is not important. I have watched how people switch from Latvian to Russian if somebody doesn't understand. The main subject of work is the realization of their concrete goal. The other issues are not important' (Latvian sample, NGO activist).

¹⁰⁷ 'NGOs are not interested in nationalist rhetoric, other groups do that work better. We are interested in other concerns, like charity, sport, culture, education, fishing and hunting, or whatever. And we are also interested in seeing our organizations grow in number, because the number of our members and their wide social range, ultimately, are the main factors which bring success to our work. That's why we never have problems with non-Estonian members; they are welcome, and many of them work effectively in our association' (Estonian sample, NGO activist); 'We must learn reconciliation step by step, and joint work is the best opportunity for this undertaking (...) Overall, the level of stability in inter-ethnic relations will grow along with the change of attitudes. The more people stop seeing threats in other ethnic groups, the better will be our relations. NGOs are exactly the place where this sort of positive change is occurring every day' (Estonia sample, NGO activist).

¹⁰⁸ 'NGOs are more cost-effective in spending their limited funds, and there is also much broader control of the purposes for which their members spend money' (Estonian sample, NGO activist).

¹⁰⁹ 'Many problems arise just because we are simply unaware of the cultural differences, because we know little about the different ways of looking at things among different ethnic groups. NGO work promotes such dialogues between cultures, and this is their main positive role in improving ethnic relations' (Estonian sample, an NGO activist).

as the most important prerequisite in bringing about an improvement in ethnic relations, and the highest priority is accorded to group-based minority-rights.

4.2.3 Differing Perspectives and Motives of Political Actors at the State and the Societal Level: an Assessment

The majority of state-level actors who participate in integrationist discourses accept integration for utilitarian reasons. The groups in question here are the European-oriented realists and the domestically motivated pragmatists. They do so either because of the need to comply with EU recommendations in the sphere of minority rights or for tactical reasons. They tend to promote integration on a short-term basis and will accept further change only to the extent that this is dictated by external factors (the international environment or electoral expedience). Those propagating modernizing/liberal discourses (the subgroup of modernizers and liberals) who have strong internal motives for engaging in peace-work on a longer-term basis are in the minority, but their political weight is growing as the transformation process evolves towards democratic deepening and socio-economic reform. Success in rendering ethnic peace sustainable hinges on enlarging the range and political weight of this subgroup.

By comparison with political élites, societies are less well prepared for systematic integration: civil-society institutions (NGOs and interest groups) represent only a small fraction of society. Policies of integration pursued at the state level cannot be successful unless they are supported by a broad-based constituency within society. The crucial challenge faced by the new Baltic democracies is that of progressing to deeper, societally based integration (transcending the pattern of ethnically divided societies comprising two isolated and mutually suspicious ethnolinguistic communities).

The prominence of the various subgroups of society-level actors varies. Human-rights groups, for example, are very active and serve as effective watchdogs, monitoring the state bureaucracies that implement government decisions; in numerical terms, however, they are insignificant. Minority-culture associations (mostly mono-ethnic in composition) can perform important integration-related tasks (such as language-training and the organization of cultural festivals), but this does not of itself ensure that integration extends down to the lowest levels of societal interaction and induces the kind of mass-level change in ethnic attitudes, perceptions, and orientations that is needed for a change in political culture in both identity-groups. A growth in the numbers engaging in civic-partnership discourses (NGOs with multi-ethnic membership which are engaged in day-to-day activities aimed at fulfilling non-ethnically conceived interests) would be needed to bring about such a change.

¹¹⁰ 'I think that in Estonia the state must give much more money for minorities' cultural life out of the state budget. We cannot say that ethnic problems are acute in our country, but another question is: Is there a resource-grounded system to ensure our peaceful coexistence and knowledge of each other' (Estonian sample, NGO activist).

All the groups and subgroups engaging in integrationist discourses together form a counter to the right-wing nationalist groups that propagate a 'core nation' discourse and are fired by similar conservative motives. In their political action, these latter groups continue to be motivated by the perceived threats to their vital interests from other ethnic groups, and, in principle, view any compromise as a sign of weakness. They reluctantly accept integration as a 'necessary evil' dictated by third parties and geopolitical circumstances, and they seek to preserve the existing patterns of ethnic dominance.

Unlike these groups, the groups of actors that espouse integrationist discourses are not satisfied with the existing status quo and believe that the patterns of ethnic dominance which emerged in the aftermath of re-independence need to be changed through policies of integration. Their actions and political choices are shaped by a desire to promote ethnopolitical change. This desire is not uniform across all the groups. It falls into two basic types: pragmatic and pro-pluralist-partnership.

Pragmatic motives are to be found 1) at the state level, among holders of the utilitarian perspective, both in the European-realist and domestic-pragmatist subgroup, and 2) at the societal level, among holders of the multiculturalist perspective. The subgroups in question continue to perceive the conflict in interests among ethnic groups as acute but seek to change the pattern of inter-ethnic relations through orientation to superordinate, non-ethnic goals (such as realistically framed national-security interests, party-political expedience, or job – or even financial – opportunities for societal groups engaged in state-sponsored integration-activities). Such a position generally allows scope for inter-ethnic bargaining and compromise and, in some spheres, inter-ethnic co-operation. Integration is accepted as a sensible policy that will necessitate short-term adjustments. In terms of ethnic policies, this implies cautious, conditional inclusion of non-titular groups through gradual naturalization, with low levels of state support for minority-culture development.

Motives of this kind predominate among today's political élites but are in a minority among emergent civil-society actors (NGOs and interest groups). Elite actors in this group are prepared to lobby for further amendments to restrictive citizenship and language legislation, and for a larger share of public funds for use in integration (conceived of chiefly as political rather than societal), but only on a short-term basis and only for as long as this is absolutely necessary in order to meet external pressures. They can be proactive in the cause of sustainable ethnic peace, but their capacity to ensure such peace in the long-term is limited.

Pluralist partnership motives may be observed 1) at the state level, among holders of the modernizing/liberal perspective (the modernizer and liberal subgroups), and 2) at the societal level, among holders of human-rights and civic-partnership perspectives (the human-rights and civic-partner subgroups). These actors have developed an interest in transforming the structure of inter-ethnic relations in order to realize, in the first instance, their mutual interest in the country's long-term development (modernizers and liberals) or, in the second instance, some shared non-ethnic (civic) interest. Their experience of joint endeavour has already enabled them to acquire a measure of mutual trust, to overcome ethnic prejudices, and to engage in pluralist cross-cultural dialogue and

understanding. All this prepares the ground for long-term peaceful co-operation between differing ethnic groups that perceive each other as civilized partners solving the same mutually important problem. At both the state and the societal level, integration is seen as a shared need and as an indispensable factor in securing the future that is desired for the political community. Whilst they predominate amongst emergent civic initiatives, motivations of this kind have also begun to emerge among élite groups (notably when the 1997 decision on EU enlargement opened up the prospect of a ‘return to Europe’, not just for security reasons but also, and primarily, for the sake of democracy and development).

Members of the political élite motivated by concerns such as this are prepared to lobby for substantial amendments to ethnically relevant legislation in order to promote inclusive pluralism within society and to create institutionalized solutions that will ensure the long-term sustainability of ethnic peace. Civic partners from both identity-groups form the naturally generated societal support-base of the inter-ethnic coalitions formed by these political élites – a ‘grass-root’ constituency for ethnic peace. Those motivated by a desire for pluralist partnerships are still in a minority among politicians and their societal constituencies, but the ground for the formation of a strategic alliance between these state-level and society-level actors has already been laid. Well-informed, discriminating, and properly targeted third-party support can make all the difference in getting aspirations in this area transformed into reality.

5 Implications for European Actors Promoting Sustainable Ethnic Peace in the New Baltic Democracies

The above discussion on the mindsets and motives of those domestic political actors on the Baltic scene who engage in integrationist discourses raises a number of points that might usefully inform the attempts made by European policy-makers to craft more effective policies for promoting sustainable ethnic peace in the new Baltic democracies.

Previous Western policies designed to put pressure on the Baltic governments – which, in the early phase of re-independence, were dominated by right-wing nationalist coalitions – proved successful and produced major changes on the domestic ethnopolitical scene. Centrist coalitions which tend to espouse ethnopolitical moderation and adopt accommodating stances on ethnic issues have now come to the fore. Constructive policies aimed at the pluralist inclusion of non-Balts through state and societal integration have taken root and have replaced ethnonational exclusivism. Pressure to adhere to European standards in protecting minority rights should be maintained, in order to ensure the continued marginalization of radical nationalist groups and preclude the establishment of illiberal ‘ethnic democracies’ in eastern European countries seeking to form part of an enlarged EU. At the current stage of ethnopolitical development in the Baltics, when the influence of nationalist politicians on domestic politics is on the decline, new target-groups of political actors require the attention of European policy-makers. The institutions and instruments of preventive conflict-management should

be reviewed and expanded. Policies of clear, systematic pressure on propagators of the 'core nation' discourse need to be supplemented with increased, prioritized support for political actors who engage in integrationist discourses. To be effective, such support not only needs to be tailored to the level (state or societal) at which the integrationists in question are operating; it also needs to take into account the differences in mindset and motive between the various subgroups within each of these levels.

First: support needs to be adjusted in favour of the societal level. The success both of the process of consolidation of the new Baltic democracies and of attempts to create the conditions necessary for sustainable ethnic peace hinges on integration being extended from the surface, state, level to a deeper, societal, level. This does not imply denying support to state-level actors, but it does mean that, alongside the continued support to centrist politicians who champion accommodation through inter-ethnic coalition-building and compromise, there must be a major adjustment in the inflow of support, in a way that favours civil-society institutions.

European third parties played a highly constructive role in conflict intervention and crisis prevention in Estonia in 1993 and in Latvia in 1994. Their involvement in the promotion of ethnic peace in subsequent, non-crisis periods was less high-profile – and ultimately ran counter to the strategic decision on EU extension. One of the reasons for this was the prolonged disregard of the needs of the third sector and of the vital importance of re-emergent civil society in promoting substantive (rather than merely formal) democracy in eastern Europe. For a very long time, the bulk of EU aid flowed almost exclusively to government bureaucracies and away from society. And for a long time, private donors made up the majority of the Western donors supporting the civic initiatives under discussion here. The Soros Foundation is a case in point: its activities were highly impressive, constructive, and cost-effective, but it obviously could not match the aid – much-needed – which could be provided by the democratic states of Europe acting in concert. To name but one example of the dilatory attitude: it was not until 1998 that the EU PHARE/TACIS scheme was adjusted to support civil society in the new eastern European democracies.

Second: support for groups of political actors who espouse integrationist discourses also needs to be differentiated within both the state and the society level, offering a range of incentives and aid that match the motives and utilize the capacities of the different subgroups at each level. For state-level political actors who espouse integrationist discourses, the following may serve as guidelines:

- Make clear to the European-centred realists seeking integration into European institutions: that the process of EU accession implies a commitment to deal with minority issues according to civilized norms; that this is an irreducible requisite; that it cannot be taken for granted but needs to be elaborated into legislation and concrete policies at home. Political criteria of European enlargement must be continuously stressed, on an equal footing with the economic aspects of accession.
- Disseminate information on the benefits of inter-ethnic coalition-building among the subgroup of domestically oriented pragmatists, in order to promote political learning among them. This could be done through specially designed

study-visits for Baltic MPs and civil servants, and through training seminars with Western counterparts.

- Provide sustained support to modernizers/liberals (who have broader, long-term interests in both European integration and domestic intra-national peace-building), in order to enhance their political profile at home.

For societal-level political actors espousing integrationist discourses, the following may serve as guidelines:

- Continue to promote the transnational dimension of the growth in civil-society institutions in the region, by fostering existing links between domestic and transnational NGOs working in the field of human rights and ethnopolitical conflict-management.
- Significantly increase support designed to promote the growth of the third sector, particularly non-ethnically based NGOs ('civic partners'), which represent core, grass-roots, issue-oriented forces interested in constructive conflict-transformation through societal integration. As part of this increased support, more effort should be put into promoting the as yet underdeveloped transnational links between issue-oriented and service-providing NGOs and their European counterparts, particularly in such fields as environmental protection, education, and culture. One of the ways in which this could be done is through joint transnational civic-initiative projects.
- Maintain what has been shown to be a positive pattern of fostering intra-national integration, by assisting the development of minority cultures – not via government structures, but through specialized national funding agencies of a mixed public nature, such as the Estonian National Integration Foundation.

Third: support for domestic peace-actors needs to be tailored to motives. The pragmatic motives of state-level actors can be exploited as short-term tactical incentives to encourage both the toning-down of ethnically relevant legislation and the transformation of conflict through political integration. That said, it is the pluralist-partnership motives, which promote conflict transformation through societal integration, that need to be nurtured and made the prime focus of the policy-agenda if lasting ethnic peace is to be achieved. Modernizers/liberals (at state level) and civic partners (at civil-society level) need to become the new target of carefully thought out, sympathetic support, given their role as intrinsically motivated actors and as the cornerstone of a long-term, self-sustaining domestic alliance that is currently emerging in the Baltics and that seeks to establish intra-national peace through deeper, political and societal, integration.