Advanced Tufts Seminar Conference

Estonia

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Good Afternoon,

We Estonians are delighted to be at the Tufts University Seminar conference on Russia’s Future with Post-Soviet States, discussing the topic of Security. As we all know, Russia is more powerful than the other Post-Soviet States. Some of these states, including Estonia, worry about our security, safety, and ability to stay independent from the Russian government. Estonia has had a complicated past with the Soviet Union and Russia, and has not too long ago gained back our independence. We wish to create an environment where we have a sense of security against invasions and exploitation and that our resources, such as energy, and our economy, are safe and stay under our control, but where structured and fair relations with Russia might be possible. We feel it is essential to discuss our boundaries and the conflicts with security that are now present in Estonia that we want to solve. The points we would most like to focus on are:

* Cyber Terrorism and Security
* Estonia’s membership in the European Union while Ukraine is not a member and the relationship between the two nations
* Estonian view on borders
  + Post Soviet nations should govern themselves independently from Russia
* The effects Russia’s energy deal with China will have on Estonia
* Estonia’s high ranking internet freedom
* Soviet Union weakened the Estonian economy
* Estonia’s prison conditions, police treatment, and child abuse need immediate attention and solutions.

Background of Estonia:

Our homeland of Estonia is in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. It borders the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Sea, Latvia and Russia. Estonia is a parliamentary democracy with fifteen counties. The population is approximately 1.3 million. We are a Finnic people and speak Estonian, a language closely related to Finnish. Our nation has a high-income economy and is known as one of the most wired countries in Europe, meaning we are very updated technologically with Internet and computer software.

As the ice from the last glacial era melted about thirteen thousand years ago, human settlement in Estonia became possible, as the first settlement, the Pulli settlement, resided near the River Parnu. Hunting, fishing and farming have been part of the Estonian way of life since sixty five hundred BC. From the beginning of the nation’s existence, however, Estonia has been vulnerable to attack, by Baltic tribes in the Iron Age to the Danish in the late eleven hundreds. From the beginnings of Estonia’s existence, Russia and Germany have also had interests in Estonia, creating a long and complicated history among the three nations.

After Estonia fell to the Swedish Empire in the 1700’s in the Great Northern War, Sweden lost Estonia to Russia by the Treaty of Nystad. Estonia was controlled by Russia until 1917, when the Bolsheviks took over Russia. Our Committee of Elders of the Maapaev issued the Estonian Declaration of Independence on February 23 and 24 of 1918.

However, after the long Estonian fight for independence, it lasted only for a mere 22 years, at the end of which the Estonian people’s fate was determined by the Soviet Union and Germany in the Soviet-German non-Aggression Pact. The Soviet occupation of Estonia combined with World War II resulted in approximately 90,000 Estonian casualties.

September of 1939 brought warships of the Red Army into the Estonian ports. It also brought Soviet bombers who patrolled over the region of Tallinn and its nearby countryside. Our government was forced into a complete Soviet blockade, with more than 100,000 Soviet Troops stationed on Estonian soil. The Soviet Union formally invaded Estonia on June 16 of 1940. In August, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union, becoming the Estonia SSR. Political leaders and civilians who did not vote to join Estonia with the Soviet Union were condemned to death by the Soviet government.

Hope came to our people in 1941 when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. We primarily saw the German forces as our saver from Soviet occupation. However, we later recognized Germany’s true nature towards us; they were just another occupying country. They exploited our resources for their war effort and murdered thousands of our people for being Jews, setting up multiple Holocaust concentration camps on our soil.

When Estonians were required to join forces with the Nazis to fight against the Soviet Union, many refused and joined the Finnish Army instead. Estonian, able-bodied men only gave in to the German army’s pressure when Soviet occupation of Estonia became a threat again in 1944.

The Red Army conquered us, again, in the fall of 1944 after a long fight. Many Estonians chose to retreat with the Germans or flee to Finland and Sweden, rather than stay under Soviet Control. And they were smart in doing so, because in 1949, all kulaks, or peasants, and the families of nationalists and criminals were deported and forced out of the Baltic States.

All of the invasions and occupations of Estonia by the Soviet Union brought on drastic ‘Rusification’ of Estonia. As Sigrid Rausing puts it in her book *History, Memory, and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia,* during this Communist-era of the Soviet Union, our people, the Estonian population, became “largely Soviet, retaining only fragments of the pre-war urban and intellectual culture, and receiving instead a large dose of objectified folk culture in which to articulate their Estonian identity.” Rausing goes on to explain that this signifies the “connection the nation of Estonia has to the Soviet system of citizenship, nationality and ethnicity.” Unfortunately, this makes our pre-Soviet local history harder to remember and hold on to, and most of it gets lost and forgotten over the years. One main reason for this is the language barrier between Soviets and Estonians. The Soviet regime brought the Russian language in to Estonia and expected the Estonian people to learn it, speak it, and adapt it as their native tongue. This is just one part of the struggle for political power and their own culture that Estonians have been fighting for a long time.

Since our independence from Russia in 1994, Estonia has been working to gain back its original culture and to stay independent from Russian control and influence, keeping in mind the prevalent Russian speaking population that resides in Estonia. The Estonian government has been moving closer to the West, to NATO and the European Union in particular. Estonia joined the European Union in 2004, shortly after becoming a NATO member. In 2011, Estonia started using the Euro as its currency, making it the first ex-Soviet republic to join the Eurozone. Due to all of Estonia’s shifts towards the West and Europe, it is the most integrated in Western European organizations of all Nordic States.

Estonia’s people were destroyed and forced to neglect their lives by the Soviet invasions. They left behind their language, culture, identity, and many family members as well. But the Estonian people are strong and brave, and despite the economic, political and social issues they still face today, they are doing all they can to re-establish the Estonia they knew and loved years ago.

**Issues:**

**Sovereignty**

* The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the restoration of Estonia’s sovereignty. Estonia remained occupied by the Soviet Union until restoration of its independence in 1991 and the 48 years of Soviet occupation and annexation was never recognized as legal by the Western democracies. Being a sovereign nation with an established Estonian Sovereignty Declaration, Estonia values and promotes sovereignty.
* President Ilves and his National Defense Council condemned Russia for what he called “invasion and occupation.” Their main focus was to find a peaceful way to fend off the rising conflict.
* President Ilves informed his people that they need not worry and noted that the more important effect of the event was that “the crisis in question clearly affects relations in Europe, as well as interactions between Russia and the European Union, Russia and NATO, and Russia with the world powers.”
* No, the formerly Russia-controlled nations should govern themselves independently from Russia.
* The fall of the Soviet Union marked the end of Russia’s rule in nations outside of its borders. These nations have established themselves independently and should remain as such. For example, Russian invasion and interference in Ukraine should cease immediately.
* Human rights are valued and respected by the Estonian government. There are legitimate concerns about Estonia’s prison conditions, police treatment, and child abuse, but the nation is raked above average in democracy, press freedom, privacy and human development.
* Estonia is a parliamentary republic, which includes prime minister as the head of the government and a multi-party system. The Government of Estonia, or the executive branch, is formed by the Prime Minister of Estonia, nominated by the president, and approved by the parliament. The government exercises executive power that follows the Constitution of Estonia and the laws of the Republic of Estonia and consists of twelve ministers, including the prime minister.
* Estonia has voting rights in local elections for permanent residents. Politicians from ruling coalition parties tend to regard political participation of immigrants as unimportant or potentially suspect, and are not open towards improving the involvement of permanent residents and non-citizens in decision-making processes even at the local level. Organizations to bring public funding to the integration of these immigrants have been unsuccessful and have merely raised some dialogue on the issue.

**Security and Terrorism**

TWO MAIN POINTS

MAIN POINT: As the Internet and technology become ever more important, protection from cyber terrorism must be strong

MAIN POINT: We must have strong co-operation with Russia about the Russian diaspora in Estonia.

Security

* Russia’s annexation of Crimea has caused security concerns in Estonia. Estonia would like to continue its alliance with NATO. Estonia’s military is currently not strong enough to handle a war and thus organizations like NATO have provided us with assured protection.
* Estonia needs to have meaningful talks with Russia about border security. Estonia was the last Baltic nation to sign a border treaty with Russia. Increasing border relations with Russia is necessary for our security.
* The 2007 cyber attacks against our government have raised security concerns. We believe these attacks were orchestrated by Russia and were in direct response to the relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn. We believe the motive behind these attacks were partly due to the Russian diaspora living in Estonia
* Estonia is a technologically advanced country that offers many governmental services like taxes and voting via the Internet.
* Estonia is increasing its cyber security by hosting the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence.
* Espionage in Estonia has wide implications for the security of Estonia as well as the relationship between NATO and Estonia. The spying accusations between Russia and Estonia have been detrimental to the relations of the two countries.

Terrorism

* Our biggest terrorism threat is a cyber terrorism attack.
* Due to Estonia’s technological advancements, cyber terrorism can have devastating effects on the government
* To combat cyber terrorism attacks, like the 2007 attacks, Estonia has been on the forefront in strengthening cyber security.
* For Estonia, Russia can fund terrorists who would then disrupt Estonian services like voting and paying taxes.
* We think Estonia’s integration with the EU and Europe also worries Russia
* Russia’s recent involvements in Georgia and Ukraine mean that the Baltic nations, and post-Soviet states in general must work together to fight against terrorism. The ideological motives of Russia prove that the post-Soviet states face similar terrorism concerns

**Human Rights**

* Estonia ranks among the top for Internet freedom and ranks 10th place after Canada and Jamaica in the 2015 World Press Freedom Index; Russia ranks 152. This ranking measures overall level of violations of freedom of information
* Following the attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris, Estonians have been able to express their opinions in *Postimees*, an Estonian newspaper; many have publicly said that they also disliked the caricatures published in the journal, but that does not justify killing. In an article published by *Postimees* it says “freedom of expression and religion are foundational values, never to be given up!”
* The Russian-speaking minority faces discrimination; they were denied employment due to official language requirements, however most do not have access to language training that is required for the job
* Estonia’s Equal Treatment Act states that people cannot be discriminated on the basis of race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc.; however law has limited effect with regard to employment because an amendment to the Public Service Act states that unequal treatment of municipal and state officials based on official language requirements is not considered discrimination
* Estonia has its own human rights NGO (Estonia Human Rights Centre); EHRC is dedicated to the protection of human rights in Estonia and abroad
* In 2013 the Chancellor of Justice in Estonia failed to meet the requirements of the Paris Principles for independent national human rights institutions
* Reception conditions for asylum-seekers remain inadequate
* insufficient measures to ensure economic and social integration of refugees
* In 2013 Annual Human Rights Report one of the points was to continue working on media ethics
* Generally, the Estonian government respects freedom of the press
* There was a case in December of 2014 in which the Culture Minister of the Reform Party, Rein Land, resigned amid rumors that he pressured the newspaper *Sirp* to appoint one of his friends as its new editor
* In February and March the Tartu County Court issued jail sentences and long probation terms against individuals who have posted insults against a prominent judge on the internet
* In the past few years there have been occasional problems with corruption in the government; there have been various accusations of money laundering, but not criminal convictions have followed
* Violence against women, especially domestic violence, remains a problem
* Estonia is a destination for women trafficking for the purpose of prostitution
* in 2012 the Justice Ministry released a draft of a law that would allow same sex marriages; the law was met with opposition from the IRL, a conservative political group in Estonia, and some religious groups

**Economics**

2 main summary points:

Resilient Country

* Agriculture Economy pre WWII
* Soviet Union weakened economy
* Economy bounced back somewhat from independence, yet had to wait to join EU until 2011 even though intended to join in 2003 due to inflation of past currency (the kroon) that carried over from Soviet times
* Hit arguably the hardest by recession in the EU
* Lost 1/3 of industrial production (most in EU)
* Economy shrank 18% (more than Greece)

Great Economic potential down the road

How did they reach 7.6% growth (5 times EU average) by 2011 despite being hit so hard by the economic crash?

1. Innovative Politicians

* Flat tax
* Instead of cutting jobs, cut wages and benefits
* Only country in EU with surplus (constitutional requirement to balance budget)

2. Economy built for future (tech)

* Oil/electronics key to economy
* Electronics make up 33% of economy
* Skype was made in this country
* Balance of educated work force with cheap labor
* 90% energy dependent

**Energy**

* Estonia isn’t an energy exporter, but also not really an importer. With one of the world’s largest industry for oil shale (grained rocks from which oil can be extracted), Estonia supplies most of its own electricity needs (electricity it the primarily used energy resource) from locally mined oil shale. In the few scenarios where petroleum products are needed, they are imported from Western Europe/Russia.
* Drop in oil prices is beneficial. Estonia is already one of the most energy independent countries in the EU, and only imports oil-based products. The drop in prices will only these imports cheaper, leaving extra money to be practically spent elsewhere.
* In the final picture, Estonia wants a reliable source of energy for the country, and to provide such energy at the lowest possible cost. (This can be done by improving the efficiency in use of energy, electricity generation and distribution, and attracting investment capital where such capital can help finance needed infrastructure improvements, and allowing competition and diversity into areas where state-owned monopolies exist)
* Energy sector is definitely a source of cooperation. It supplies about 70% of Estonia’s primary energy AND provides jobs to a good portion of the population.
* There is a set foundation of the Baltic Ring, a power grid linking countries in the Baltic Sea region. Energy resources can be exported/imported with ease. Estonia already has a history of exporting electricity: approximately 29% of electricity generated was exported to Finland (a major business partner of Estonia), Latvia, and Lithuania.
* Estonia has been a transit country for Russian oil en route to the Baltic Sea, enjoying fees on Russian exports for a while. However, Russia has recently been cutting off Baltic States from its oil transit business (and the $400 billion deal between Russia and China further suggests separation from its western neighbors, including Estonia). There will be downsides to Estonia’s transit sector, and possibly Russian aggression in the future given Estonia’s alliance with the EU.

**Ukraine**

* Due to the close proximity of Ukraine and Estonia to Russia, both Ukraine and Estonia face the possibility of a Russian invasion.
  + Ukraine contains Russian separatists while Estonia contains Russians who are Soviet-era migrants and therefore did not receive immediate citizenship upon the fall of the Soviet Union. To this day some still have not received citizenship, a policy that is obviously disliked by Russians within Estonia.
  + Russia has already invaded Ukraine and there is a fear that Estonia will be next. Estonia is a Baltic state and a neighbor to Russia and because of this Estonians are afraid that Russia will turn to Estonia.
  + This supports the idea that Russia (Putin) is trying to create a new Russia empire similar to that of the Soviet Union.
* While Estonia is part of the European Union, Ukraine is not.
  + Once the Soviet Union fell Estonia gained its independence and became part of the European Union and NATO. Estonia and Ukraine are both neighbors of Russia, but Estonia is officially part of the EU. Ukraine was supposed to become part of the EU but abandoned its original decision thus sparking protests within Ukraine. This decision also comes in conflict with Estonia, which wanted the integration of Ukraine into the EU.
  + Estonia’s president, Toomas Ilves looks at Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a threat to Estonia as well as Ukraine, however because Ukraine is not a part of NATO he realizes that realistically nothing can be done by other nations, specifically those part of NATO, to protect Ukraine from Russia.
* The Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation signed on May 26, 1992 states the mutual interests between Estonia and Ukraine and their good relationship.
  + This treaty was created because Ukraine and Estonia have similar views on European problems and global security and because these two nations have mutual interests
* Estonia supports reforms in Ukraine and supports the European integration of Ukraine.
  + Estonia supports those in Ukraine that want to join the EU and remain in relations with the EU, but now due to Russia’s involvement in Ukraine, it seems very unlikely that Ukraine will join the EU. In addition Estonia’s largest trading partner is the EU, which Ukraine is not a part of, therefore reducing trade between Ukraine and Estonia.