REGION-BUILDING AND NATION-BUILDING: COMPLEMENTARITIES AND CONTRADICTIONS IN THE EASTERN BALTIC

by

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Abstract

Although Baltic region-building has drawn considerable attention from scholars, it has predominantly been analyzed as a western European phenomenon. While western European notions of space, identity and security have undoubtedly inspired Baltic region-building, how these projects are perceived and considered in post-Soviet Baltic countries has received little attention. Drawing emphatically from the Estonian context, this thesis focuses on the interplay of region-building and nation-building, paying particular attention to the debates concerning identity and security. In the Estonian case, these two concepts are especially noteworthy because of their conceptually rigid nature. By focusing specifically on Estonia, I highlight the influence and importance of previously constructed concepts of political space and identity upon Baltic region-building efforts. When compared to the open constructions of security and identity maintained by many of the Baltic’s region-builders, it is apparent that dominant domestic constructions of Estonia’s security and identity are defensively closed. By examining the recent developments and historical evolutions of both Estonian nation-building and Baltic region-building, this thesis offers a more in-depth exploration of the political and societal issues with which region-builders must contend. In this way, I delineate how these divergent constructions of political and social organization and identity interact, influence and continue to overlap and occupy the same political space.
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To my parents
Introduction

It is now a truism that the countries of the Baltic Sea region have undergone tremendous changes to their systems of governance, security agendas, and identity politics over the last two decades. For some actors, western Europe’s retreat from political realism that predominated throughout the twentieth century is regarded as a blessing, allowing for greater transnational cooperation and region-building efforts among all countries on the shores of the Baltic. Those who wish to increase the role of non-state actors within local and regional governance and to build an arena for engaging Russia in a political and economic discussion share this opinion. Some scholars have come to see the Baltic Sea region as a “laboratory of peaceful change in Europe”; a place where the lines dividing Europe’s West, North and East become blurred, creating one region of cooperation.¹ This trend of Baltic region-building can be credited with the foundation of several organizations and initiatives such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI), the Baltic Sea Forum and many others, which build on and perpetuate the notion of Baltic regionalism.

Although there is no shortage of theories and proposals for the construction of a dynamically interconnected and cooperative Baltic Sea region, the practical applicability of these proposals to specific national circumstances remains questionable. This goal of genuinely deepening regional cooperation is a difficult one, as region-building efforts must take into account the array of interests of individual nation-states. In particular, such regionalized visions for the Baltic must work around preexisting concerns of

national sovereignty and security, two interrelated concepts that remain highly sensitive in the Baltic region.

To clarify my terminology, when employing the terms “Baltic countries,” “countries of the Baltic Sea,” “Baltic region,” “Baltic Sea states” or other similar terms, I am referring to the countries which border the Baltic Sea, namely Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In addition to these countries, regardless of their relatively peripheral geography, Norway and Iceland are also included in this grouping of “Baltic countries” because of current political arrangements. In contrast, I only employ the term “Baltic States” in specific reference to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Furthermore, my use of the term “Nordics” or the “Nordic countries” refers to the standard grouping of Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The term “western Baltic” will connote the Baltic countries that did not fall under the Soviet’s Warsaw Pact, including post-unification Germany. Conversely, the term “eastern Baltic” refers to all post-socialist Baltic countries. Similarly, when employing the term “western European,” I am referring to all European countries that did not fall under the Warsaw Pact, including the Nordic countries, while the term “eastern European” to refer to all post-Socialist and post-Soviet European counties.

Although Baltic region-building has drawn considerable attention from scholars, it has predominantly been analyzed as a western European phenomenon. While western European notions of space, identity and security have undoubtedly inspired Baltic region-building, how these projects are perceived and considered in post-Soviet Baltic countries has received little attention. In this thesis, I diverge from the approaches used by most academics by making the exploration of eastern Baltic perceptions a primary concern.
Drawing emphatically from the Estonian context, this thesis focuses on the interplay of region-building and nation-building, paying particular attention to the debates concerning identity and security. In the Estonian context, these two concepts are especially noteworthy because of their conceptually rigid nature. By focusing specifically on Estonia, I highlight the influence and importance of previously constructed concepts of political space and identity upon Baltic region-building efforts.

When compared to the open constructions of security and identity maintained by many of the Baltic’s region-builders, it is apparent that dominant domestic constructions of Estonia’s security and identity are defensively closed. My primary objective here is therefore to explore and examine the post-Soviet development of both Estonian nation-building and Baltic region-building projects. By examining the recent developments and historical evolutions of both Estonian nation-building and Baltic region-building efforts, this thesis offers a more in-depth exploration of the political and societal issues with which region-builders must contend. In this way, I will delineate how these divergent constructions of political and social organization and identity interact, influence and continue to overlap and occupy the same political space.

Exploring issues of identity however, whether they are “Estonian,” “European,” political or cultural, is problematic in and of itself. Although many academics and politicians stress the influence of identity narratives upon current political issues, they tend to presuppose the concept or subject they wish to examine. In this way, the reification of a subject can take place through the scholarly discourse that ostensibly questions it. Severing this cycle is not easy. While some attempt to buffer monolithic constructions of identity by acknowledging their contested nature, they still presuppose
that a uniting core trait exists. They thereby presume the existence of the subject the identity epitomizes. Merje Kuus argues that the predicament of reifying these socially constructed concepts can be overcome by making it clear that in the study of identity politics, there is no “doer behind the deed”, only the deed itself. In this way, concepts like “Western,” or “Eastern” are recognized as ontologically empty but are constantly being formed and reformed through discourse. It therefore should be stressed that I am not concerned with the actual existence of “the Baltic” or “the Estonians”, but rather the perception of these concepts.

The argument will proceed in four chapters. The first chapter explicates the concepts associated with regionalism and region-building in the context of the post-Cold War Baltic Sea region. Concentrating on the recent use of historical and cultural metaphors by Baltic politicians, I foreground the social construction of “the Baltic” as a conceptual space to which social and political meaning is ascribed. As “imagined communities” much like nation-states, theories of regions and region-building have been issued by many academics and politicians, many of whom are region-builders themselves. Applying the work of Iver B. Neumann, I classify these theories and methods of regional delineation as existing on a continuum. At one pole, there is the “inside-out” approach to region-building, which stresses that cultural and societal factors should provide the principal basis for the delineation of a region. At the opposite end of the continuum, an “outside-in” approach to region-building chiefly focuses on geographical and geopolitical concerns for regional delineation, evocative of strategic

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military logic. Similarly, while the "inside-out" approach utilizes the participation of numerous state and non-state actors, the "outside-in" approach is predominately state-driven. Following this, I examine why Baltic region-building projects have surfaced so swiftly after to collapse of Communism. I emphasize the Nordic countries’ role of nurturing regional concepts of governance and identity during the postwar era, giving strength to new post-Cold War projects. I then explore how the rise of Baltic regionalism was new, different and opportune for many western Baltic businesses and politicians, offering a non-Westphalian approach to political space and identity. I also stress that this view of a regionalized Baltic lent itself to the evolving discourse of a federalized Europe or “Europe of Olympic rings” and its distinctly “post-modern” construction of European political space. In this regard, debates concerning sovereignty, security and identity are decidedly different from either those of a centralized “Europe of concentric circles” or a modern nation-state.

In the second chapter, I shift my focus to Estonia and the national-level constructions of political space, identity, and security. Beginning with a brief overview of some of the historical events that have shaped the Estonian national consciousness, I put the Estonian quest for security into a historic perspective. I emphasize the extensive nature of foreign domination and the resulting emphasis on national sovereignty.

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Throughout the thesis, I employ the term “post-modern” to refer to the sociopolitical concept of restructuring societies away from Westphalian or “modern” constructions of political organization and identity. In this context, the term “post-modern” has most often been used to classify political and social models that seek to minimize the influence of nation-states in international politics. In this spirit of moving “beyond” the political and social confines of modern nations, post-modern political projects seek to create informal networks and cooperate across national boundaries. This is done to diffuse political power within the network away from nation-states. See Leena-Kaarina Williams, “Post-Modern and Intergovernmental Paradigms of Baltic Sea Co-operation between 1988 and 1992: The Genesis of the Council of the Baltic Sea States as a Historical Case Study,” *Nordeuropaforum*, 1 (2005): 5-8., Sami Moisio, “Back to Baltoscandia? European Union and Geo-Conceptual Remaking of the European North,” *Geopolitics* 8.1 (spring 2003): 82-84.
Following this, I explore two prominent constructions of Estonian national security. The first frames Estonia as a fundamentally Western society confronted with the looming presence of Russia, an irreconcilable Eastern civilizational threat. This perspective also demands Estonia’s timely and total realignment within the West’s sphere of influence. The second narrative of Estonian security constructs the Estonian nation-state as threatened by not only Russia, but any foreign force that may marginalize its sovereign authority, thus threatening the survival of the Estonian people as well as their state. By concentrating on these two narratives, I emphasize Estonia’s deep-seated concerns of defensively securitizing its historically and ethnically constructed political space.

Building on these arguments about regionalism and nation-building, chapter three gives a narrative account of region-building in the Baltic Sea. I first examine various western Baltic perceptions and strategies of Baltic region-building. In particular, I examine perspectives from Schleswig-Holstein, Finland and Scandinavia. I have done this to expose the variety of regional perceptions, concerns and goals among the western Baltic’s regional actors, helping to dispel constructions of western Baltic region-builders as somehow monolithic in their aims. In this regard, I highlight that while the goals and methods of western Baltic region-builders are similar, their region-building efforts are nevertheless affected by national and provincial variables. Thereafter, I discuss the practical evolution of Baltic region-building from a relatively unstructured initiative for regional governance and cooperation to a decidedly hierarchical project. Through the development of this hierarchical structure, Baltic region-building has become a decidedly western/Nordic European construction of political space. I therefore examine how region-building projects have become a western Baltic instrument for reconstructing the
Baltic’s post-Soviet East in its own image. In this regard, I explore various western initiatives employed to manage and reshape a seemingly disintegrating East. Through this examination, I emphasize the dominant and influential positions western Baltic actors have achieved within Baltic region-building.

In the final chapter, I explore the impact Estonia’s dominant security and identity narratives have had on the implementation of western Baltic region-building projects in Estonia. I first explore the dynamics of some historic region-building projects Estonia participated in during the interwar era. With these precedents established, I examine Estonia’s current involvement in Baltic region-building. Because recent post-modern initiatives have had limited success in the country, I explore the reasons for these difficulties. These are largely due to Estonia’s security concerns. Because Russia has occupied a dominant position in Estonia’s security narratives, I also briefly discuss Western perceptions of Russia’s regional aims in the Baltic. Lastly, I emphasize the unique features, methods and spatial delineations of some of Estonia’s own post-Soviet region-building projects. In this manner, I draw attention to Estonia’s own regional perceptions, which form an integral part of regionalism in the eastern Baltic.
Chapter One

Recalling and Reconceptualizing a Baltic Sea Region

The close ties between the peoples [of the Baltic Sea Region] are bound by the social standards, temperaments and social characteristics which in the last instance stem from the living conditions of the North: The landscape, the climate, the maritime environment and the settlement patterns. We have a stable temperament, we are not gregarious, rather a bit inaccessible, yet reliable... The common background of the Northern European countries covers a broad spectrum and has deep roots. What we need, is a strategy for the future.⁴

Björn Engholm, Minister President of Schleswig-Holstein, 1992

The rhetoric of regions

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union signaled the end of the global bipolarity that confined and defined international relations in the latter half of the 20th century. In the Cold War’s wake numerous cultural and political endeavors have flourished, facilitating the creation or resumption of more “natural” forms of international cooperation and association. The Baltic Sea region is exemplary here because of its ideological fragmentation during the Cold War. The Baltic States, Poland and East Germany had fallen under the Soviet’s Warsaw Pact; West

Germany, Denmark and Norway allied with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with Sweden and Finland becoming “Nordic neutrals.” Although not as dramatically tangible and iconic as the Berlin Wall, the Baltic Sea became a space separating West from East, “us” from “them”, and virtually devoid of interregional contact and cooperation. This situation has certainly changed during the 1990s and 2000s, with the above statement by Engholm serving as an early example of enthusiasm for Baltic regional cooperation and identity formation. Nevertheless, while generalities concerning the social and cultural traits of the Baltic peoples are arguably observable, they are only generalities, and are thus extremely subjective (and perhaps unmeasurable), making their existence an unlikely justification for increased regional ties. A shared history, on the other hand, can have far greater social amalgamative potential and is arguably highly appropriate for healing the Baltic’s post-Soviet wounds. Indeed, there has been a noticeable post-Soviet trend within the region of promoting and celebrating shared “Baltic” historical episodes and events, with the absence of such narratives during the Cold War only serving to accentuate their current existence.  

One of the most popularly advertised historical images associated with the Baltic Sea region is the Hanseatic League or Hansa. Operating between the 13th and 17th centuries with the 14th century marking the height of its power, the Hansa achieved a virtual monopoly on trade in the North and Baltic Seas through an alliance of guild cities. Lübeck functioned as the League’s headquarters. Today the Hansa name can be found throughout the Baltic region in everything from the names of Norwegian breweries

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(Hansa Bryggeri) to Estonian banks (Hansapank) to German football clubs (FC Hansa Rostock), serving as a constant reminder of the League’s regional economic prowess. Reverence for the Hansa is not limited to the region’s business community however, as politicians have also been keen to recognize the Baltic’s Hanseatic history. In this fashion, in 1999 the former Finnish president, Martti Ahtisaari, stated “we need not look very far back through the window of time to find all around the Baltic thriving, multicultural Hanseatic cities that flourished thanks to trade and business. This can also be an image of the future.” Similarly, in 2005 the foreign minister of Estonia, Urmas Paet, emphasized his country’s “European” credentials by declaring “Estonia’s belonging to the European cultural space is as visible and recognizable at present as it was much earlier during the Hanseatic period,” adding, “Isn’t the new actually the forgotten old?”

Such rhetoric is not used to glorify romantic images of bustling marketplaces and graceful Baltic trade cogs simply because they are endearing. Its primary purpose is to use these images to foster a greater regional awareness that can be used to further regional political projects, or to put it simply, region-building. While Ahtisaari’s and Paet’s statements attach importance to the Baltic region’s Hanseatic past, more importantly, they connote that such regional ties and cooperation are seemingly natural phenomena that are neither new nor old, but were somehow predestined, only to be

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interrupted but outside forces. In this fashion, to use Paet’s terms, the new is not necessarily the “forgotten old,” but seeing only the new within the old, conveniently forgetting the rest. Ahtisaari’s statement (given at a Karelian cultural festival in Vaasa), while certainly factual, seems to exhibit this selective approach to history. The Baltic had indeed thrived due to Hanseatic trade; however, modern day Finland’s only connection to the Hansa was the city of Åbo (Turku), which in Hanseatic times was a mere outpost on the northern periphery of their Baltic network. Yet, the former Finnish president’s regionalist rhetoric should not be singled-out as an anomaly within the Baltic political scene. In fact, it exemplifies a larger shift in how political space is becoming conceptualized in the Baltic region and beyond.

In his geo-conceptual approach to region-building in Northern Europe, Sami Moisio has emphasized that regions as geographical ideas are always conceptual, contested and contextual. They are conceptual because they are created through moral language; they are contested because they typically fall into the sphere of the political...[and they] are contextual, since the appearance of particular geographical concepts is historically contingent.

Consequently, the role and influence of political and moral language should not be overlooked in the processes of region-building. Regions, like any other concept, are given their political or cultural significance, and indeed their very being, through

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10 During the 16th century, Åbo’s port hosted approximately a dozen ships a year, which when compared to the hundreds hosted by southern Baltic cities, is relatively insignificant. See Schildhauer, 10-11, 150. Also see W. R. Mead, “Finland in the Sixteenth Century,” Geographical Review 30.3 (1940): 408-411.
11 Moisio, 76.
language. While social group formation and identification are cultural universals, the perceived naturalness of these groupings is linguistically manufactured. Because regions are, as Iver B. Neumann states, “talked and written into existence,” through the examination of the language used by region-builders, the creation and alteration of regionality can be observed. Thus, language should be viewed as an essential component of politics rather than an impartial form of interpersonal communication, without which numerous political actions, and thus politics itself would be impossible. Because of its intrinsic capacity to form and reform conceptions of geographic reality, political and moral language has transformed the Baltic Sea region from, to use Pertti Joenniemi’s terms, “a blank spot on the mental or metaphoric map of Europe”, to a collection of countries whose status as a discernible region appears to be self-evident. In this way, much like postwar conceptions of the Nordic region, the Baltic region’s conceptual existence is advanced by its continued textual existence.

**Conceptualizing the Baltic Sea region**

If region-building projects are initiated through the rhetoric of region-builders, often using history to support their aims, how should regions be conceptualized as evolving from an idea to a reality? The work of Neumann is particularly relevant here because of its application of a region-building methodology to the European North. He builds on contemporary theories of nationalism and nation-building, which question the conceptual status of nation-states as pre-given or natural. Central to this methodology is

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12 Neumann, 59. Also referenced in Moisio, 75.
13 Moisio, 76-77.
15 Neumann, 59., Moisio, 75-76.
the notion that regions, like nations, are necessarily the creations of region-builders who conduct and encourage the growth of specific regional associations for political ends.\textsuperscript{16} Similar to the cultivation of national sentiments that occurred in the region centuries earlier, region-builders are responsible for systematically disclosing what Benedict Anderson describes as “imagined communities”. Like nations and other forms of social affiliation, the imagining of regions does not pertain to the spatial existence of the communities but rather the conceptual construction of the communities. Because physically comprehending and distinguishing the individual members of the community from those outside of it is virtually impossible, the community must be imagined.\textsuperscript{17}

Although members of these communities share particular cultural or social traits, it is the task of region-builders to ascribe importance to these affinities for furthering political projects in which the communities’ self-recognition is a crucial element. It should be noted, however, that while nation-building and region-building share many similarities, it is too simplistic to consider them identical processes preformed on different scales. Indeed, while nation-building projects are greatly concerned with the establishment or control of a sovereign territory within specific boundaries, region-building projects aim to transcend them. This is not to say exclusionary practices are absent from region-building, as they certainly exist, however, this exclusion largely occurs through discourse rather than the erection of physical boundaries. In addition, nation-builders seem to hold the creation of a nation-state or other political body as an ultimate goal, while this tendency is considerably less discernable in the aims of region-builders.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Neumann, 57-58.
\textsuperscript{18} Neumann, 58-59.
The presence of region-builders and region-building rhetoric as the principle catalysts of regional cooperation and identity formation within the Baltic Sea region is widely accepted within the literature. Nevertheless, there is some discrepancy within the academic community regarding how region-building projects are structured and perpetuated. Neumann has conceptualized these differing perspectives as existing on a continuum between an “inside-out” approach and an “outside-in” approach to region-building. Perspectives that wholly embrace an “inside-out” approach perceive regions as forming around and due to cultural and social congruencies such as language or ethnicity. With this emphasis placed on shared culture, taken at face value, political attempts that portray the region as a historical or cultural truth exhibit an “inside-out” methodology. Neumann also argues that “inside-out” approaches tend to construct regional “cores” where the overlap of common cultural attributes is most apparent. For example, an “inside-out” perspective of the Baltic region that held Balto-Finnic culture as paramount would consider Finland, Estonia, Karelia, Ingria and parts of Latvia to be the core, while southern and western Baltic nations would hold peripheral status. Furthermore, “inside-out” approaches to regional governance utilize and encourage the participation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), businesses, universities and other civic actors in addition to national governments. In this way, “inside-out” region-building projects tend to be non-state centric.

On the other end of Neumann’s spectrum, there is the “outside-in” approach to region-building, which in contrast to the “inside-out” approach, is concerned with geopolitical and geographic factors rather than cultural and societal ones. In contrast to

19 See Moisio, 75-78., Neumann, 57-60., Williams, 8., Browning, 46. Lehti (2003), 14-18.
20 Neumann, 54.
non-state centric “inside-out” region-building projects that involve a variety of civic actors, an “outside-in” approach to region-building is primarily state-driven, especially when the state is a traditional great power. Additionally, “outside-in” approaches completely disregard the notion of cultural similarity as an amalgamative factor of region-building. Instead, natural geographic features are used to delineate a region, evocative of strategic military logic. For example, using an “outside-in” methodology to assess Denmark’s status as a “Nordic” country would therefore regard its physical connection to Germany, a traditional great power, considerably more significant than any linguistic or cultural affinities it shares with Norway and Sweden.

These examples of “inside-out” and “outside-in” region-building methodologies, of course, represent the extremes on this conceptual continuum, on which the majority of theories occupy some middle ground. Nevertheless, Neumann’s continuum, although theoretical, is highly applicable in assessing current academic debates on Baltic Sea regionalization because these methodological trends continue to be discernible in the literature. While not exhibiting a hard-line position, the work of Joenniemi, a Nordic peace researcher, seems to demonstrate a noticeably “inside-out” approach. Concerning the involvement and influence of civic actors in the region, Joenniemi states,

the [Baltic] region has rather strong features of a community, a cultural entity, or a pattern or network of contacts that connects people, provinces, towns, universities, peace movements, environmentalists, enterprises, and

21 Ibid, 56.
22 Ibid, 55.
regional formations... This implies that the state actors often are reduced to a position as one political actor among many.\textsuperscript{23}

Similarly, Joenniemi and Marko Lehti stress the weakened role of the nation-state in the region by declaring,

the influence of the traditional logic of \textit{realpolitik}, involving divisive, statist borders clearly indicating who is “inside” and who is “outside”, has declined in importance. The categories of “us” and “them” are no longer as strictly separated from each other as they used to be, and it may also be observed that the needs of the former do not automatically take priority over the latter.\textsuperscript{24}

While the concepts and processes outlined in this statement are arguably observable, they may not be seen as entirely accurate from an “outside-in” perspective. The work of David J. Smith seems to embody elements of such an approach, evaluating Joenniemi and Lehti’s statement above by rebutting,

That Nordic peace researchers in particular express such views is hardly surprising, for this group is inspired by a \textit{normative agenda} that seeks to overcome the divisive power of national boundaries and to forge a new imagined community...[and] has of course also had considerable input into policy discussions surrounding the Baltic Sea Area.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Joenniemi, 166.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Smith (2003), 51. Emphasis added.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Although Smith does not deny that possibilities for region-building and cooperation have increased since the end of the Cold War with the subsequent declining importance of military issues, he nevertheless argues the state maintains a central and authoritative role in the Baltic regionalization process. In this way, the national self-interest of states, although arguably present, are cloaked by a seemingly "altruistic exercise in debordering" the Baltic region. While these brief examples certainly do not represent polarized approaches to Baltic region-building, they do, however, reinforce the applicability of Neumann's continuum as a tool of analysis.

**Why regionalize and why now?**

Given that region-building projects initially exist as objectives of region-builders, which are subsequently realized through rhetoric for the purposes of societal and/or geopolitical unanimity, why has regionalism become a significant form of social and political reorganization among states bordering the Baltic Sea? Unquestionably, without the collapse of global bipolarity at the end of the 1980s, current discussions concerning Baltic regionalization would be an implausibility. In fact, because of its monumental impact, Lehti has fittingly applied Erik Ringmar's characterization of a "formative moment" to this period, depicting it as "a time when the very definition of the meaningful is up for grabs; when old metaphors are replaced by new ones; when new stories are told about these metaphors, new identities established and new social practices initiated." While this certainly applies to many aspects of society during the Soviet Union's final

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26 Ibid, 51.

years, it is particularly relevant to the rise of Baltic regionalist discourse because of the region's ideological and geographic position spanning West and East.

While the formative moment of the late twentieth century provided an opportunity for Baltic regional projects and cooperation to be initiated, it does not explain why a region that had previously been virtually devoid of recent interregional relations has become the focus of numerous regionalization projects. The influence and role of *Norden* or the Nordic states, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland, is essential in this regard. Beginning with the post-war formation of ideological power blocks splitting Europe in half, the Nordics sought to sustain an environment free from the meddling of superpower politics or "Nordic balance" as well as taking an active role in promoting the deceleration of the arms race. Moreover, not only did the Nordic countries distance themselves from the advance of global bipolarity, the growing influence of the European Economic Community (EEC) was also kept at an arms' length. This was done because many in the Nordics equated it with spread of overly conservative and capitalist values. Arising during the Nordics' abstention from global postwar politics, the Nordic welfare model characterized by high levels of taxation and social services became a characteristic of Northern European society that was neither wholly capitalist nor steadfastly communist. Furthermore, with the Nordic Council enacting a common labor market and passport union in 1952, *Norden* exhibited post-sovereign traits before similar actions where taken in continental Europe.\(^\text{28}\) Indeed, as Ole Waever commented, "Nordic identity is about being *better* than Europe."\(^\text{29}\) This shared interest in promoting regional peace and security through nonmilitary means (giving Norway and Denmark the tag of

\(^{28}\) Smith (2003), 57-58.

“reluctant” NATO members) and social welfare was further cemented by the Nordics’ longstanding ties of language, history and culture. These bonds of kinship fostered a shared feeling of “Nordicity” or “Scandinavianism”. This Nordic identity did not supersede the national identities of the Nordic peoples, rather it complemented them, fostering a sense of regionalism that did not emanate from a regional center. Therefore, while Baltic regionalization is largely a post-Cold War development, the postwar Nordic security balance provided an excellent environment for Northern European regionalist concepts to mature.

Although Norden’s regional network was largely able to isolate itself from Europe’s bipolarity, it was also highly dependent on it. In a region that had defined itself as Western, free and peace-loving, measuring itself against what it saw as a socially inferior European “other”, the end of the Cold War fundamentally questioned the uniqueness of Norden and indeed, what is was to be Nordic. With all of Europe enjoying the peace that the Nordic countries had previously advocated for, ironically, Northern Europe soon fell into an identity crisis. The neutrality of Finland and Sweden was now irrelevant in regard to their membership in the European Community (now the EU), both subsequently joining the Union in 1995. Although Denmark had held membership since 1973, the economies of the Nordic countries found themselves increasingly interwoven into the fabric of Continental European capitalism, a concept to which they once defined themselves as being opposed.

Although the end of the Cold War fostered a sense of confusion and nostalgia for a bipolar Europe within the Nordics, it also created new opportunities for the region. If

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Moisio, 80. Smith (2003), 57-58.
Waever (1992), 78-80.
Smith (2003), 58.
the North was to remain a discernable region of Europe, the region itself needed to adapt. It was here when notions of a Baltic Sea or new Hanseatic region began to surface, as the Baltic States and the coastal areas of Poland, a united Germany and Russia, although "underdeveloped" by Nordic standards, were fundamentally Western societies and thus capable of "(re)developing". Why the Baltic region has become a dominant construction of political space in Northern Europe has become analyzed by many academics, however, Waever's argument identifying three main reasons for this development is particularly convincing. The first is the simple fact that the Baltic regional project was new. With the winds of post-Soviet change revealing a new Northern Europe that was no longer exclusively Nordic, Baltic region-building efforts allowed the Nordics to engage with the new European reality they had no choice but to recognize.33 Additionally, this was done not because the initial prospects were great, but as Waever states, "because this cooperation used to be impossible, and therefore it is now interesting."34

The second factor contributing to the rise of Baltic regionalism according to Waever was the perceived sense of urgency in the early 1990s among many business and political leaders in the western Baltic to capitalize on the opportunity to redefine Northern Europe as a growth region. With the more densely populated European economic core region or "booming banana" situated far to the south, there was a possibility, according to Engholm, that "Northern Europe could be in danger of being relegated to the backwaters... [if we don't] concentrate our efforts, cooperate across national boundaries and tap our potential".35 This action, however, had to be taken immediately, as such "formative moments" are rare indeed. Interestingly, this early

33 Waever (1992), 77-78, 96.
34 Ibid, 96.
concentration of efforts to create a Baltic “blue banana” included Copenhagen, Kiel, Göteborg, Stockholm, Oslo and Gdansk, creating a Baltic project that, while undoubtedly justifiable, is rather limited. In this regard, Wæver comments,

This is actually not much of a “Baltic” project – rather an Øresund Strait or West Baltic Project. But maybe it sounds better to talk of a “Baltic” or “Hanseatic” revival, with the connotations of freedom-loving Balts, than plainly stating the concerns of northern German[y] and [the] Swedish capital.36

The final factor Wæver suggests as perpetuating the demand for Baltic regionalism is that it is predominantly non-state based. By engaging with the coastal administrative districts of larger states (i.e. Kaliningrad, Schleswig-Holstein) rather than their national capitals and stressing the active role of NGOs and businesses, this emerging project was evocative of Neumann’s “inside-out” approach to region-building. This approach stood a greater chance of attracting the participation of smaller states like Estonia, which have historically been at the mercy of great powers. In the early 1990s, this non-state based methodology clearly stood apart from that of the Cold War; with no clear boundaries separating “us” from “them”, it represented something that was not only new, but different.37

This notion of a decentralized, non-state based Baltic Sea region is also characteristic of a larger federalizing approach to European political space. Seen as an alternative to the centralization of power and influence within the European Union’s western political and economic core region or “Europe of concentric circles”, a “Europe

36  Wæver (1992), 97.
of the regions” or “Europe of Olympic rings” would disperse European power over an interconnected and interdependent network of regions. Under this federal system, areas that wield little political influence at the national or EU level can become major regional voices, a prime example being Engholm’s “new Hansa” project used to elevate Schleswig-Holstein’s political standing. Although using regional political structures and policies to advance national or local aims certainly occurs, compared to a “Europe of concentric circles”, a “Europe of Olympic rings” is decidedly a post-modern construction of political space. There are several reasons for this; at a conceptual level, a centralized Europe relies on a modern delineation of those “outside” and “inside”. Because there is only one centralized Europe under this framework, rather than many overlapping regional Europes, there must be an external “them” for an internal “us” to exist. This need for a common conceptual European self is accomplished through the admission of states exhibiting “European” credentials into the Union, thus forming a common external European boundary. Through this process, citizens of Union member states are included in the European conceptual self while the borders of their nation-state are used to further physically define the Union, therefore constructing a conceptual and physical boundary between the European “us” and the non-European “them”. Although the EU is undeniably a supranational entity, a “Europe of concentric circles” employs the same modernist methods of inclusion and exclusion used by nation-states; it merely employs them at a supranational level.

In contrast to centralization as a conceptual and physical organizing principle for Europe, the decentralized “Europe of Olympic rings” approach is distinctly less rigid.

38 Moisio, 83.
39 See Lehti (2003), 20.
40 Moisio, 84-85.
Examining the Baltic Sea region as one of the many regional nodes within a greater European framework, regional cooperation would include all states within the region, regardless of their membership status within the Union. This, of course, refers to the equal inclusion of Russia within the regional partnership. Instead of definite external boundaries physically and conceptually separating the Russian "other" from the European "self", like Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, certain oblasts within the Northwestern Federal District of Russia would be fundamental actors within a Baltic Europe. Although the vast majority of the Russian Federation is excluded from Baltic Europe due to its physical geography, as are the southern areas of Germany and Poland, the conceptual exclusion of Russia is far less distinct and is open to interpretation.\(^{41}\)

In addition to the issues of physical and conceptual exclusion/inclusion, centralized and decentralized structural models of European governance also differ in their approaches to security. While the EU views the divided and highly securitized years of the Cold War as a situation that should be avoided in a 21\(^{st}\) century Europe, issues of traditional military or "hard" security remain present.\(^{42}\) This would also be true in a "Europe of concentric circles" because like a modern state, it controls sovereign borders separating "us" from "them".\(^{43}\) In this way, the quest for security becomes self-legitimizing because it is the mechanism maintaining a political unit's sovereignty and thus its existence.\(^{44}\) In Europe's relations with Russia, the continued use of security

\(^{41}\) Ibid, 84-85., Browning, 50-51.
\(^{43}\) Miosio, 84-85.
discourse is embodied in NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and the NATO-Russia Council. To use the logic of the Copenhagen School, although issues of security between the EU/NATO and Russia have taken the form of partnership and cooperation instead of conflict, security remains to be an concern simply because it exists in discourse. Similar to the existence of regions and modern nations, the existence and significance of security is rooted in rhetoric. In this way, the existence of tanks, armies and ballistic missiles, like the existence of linguistic and cultural groups is inconsequential until they are deemed significant in acts of speech. Therefore, while security rhetoric between Europe and an external power may exhibit forms of security cooperation and partnership, the mere use of the term “security” within this discourse signifies the perception of a potential threat from the external “other”, thus limiting the nature of that cooperation.45

The approach to managing issues of security in a “Europe of Olympic rings” differs fundamentally from that of a “Europe of concentric circles” because it purposely ignores all matters pertaining to security. As matters of security are given their existence and significance through discourse, a post-modern Baltic Sea region would not engage in security cooperation, seeking to deepen cooperation in other matters, therefore making security a “non-issue”. Because the Baltic Sea region in a federated Europe would not form a sovereign entity or be delineated by boundaries separating “outsiders” from “insiders”, the need for security discourse vanishes, as a region without sovereignty requires no security.46 Thus, like a “Europe of concentric circles”, the perception and management of security in a “Europe of Olympic rings” is contingent upon the nature of

45 Jæger, 19-20.
46 Browning, 50-51.
its spatial existence, making the security approaches of a centralized and federated Europe modern and post-modern respectively.

In summation, the appearance of Baltic region-building campaigns during the "formative moment" at the end of the Cold War were first and foremost the creations of region-builders strategically seeking to reconstruct and manipulate Europe's new political space. Using historical, cultural and political rhetoric to forge a shared conceptual bond or "imagined community" between the Baltic peoples, the aims of region-builders and the perspectives of interested academics can be perceived as existing along a continuum. With region-building projects exhibiting a cultural and societal focus representing an "inside-out" approach, divergent "outside-in" region-building projects focus on the geographical and geopolitical. Although numerous explanations and theories about the rise of Baltic regionalism exist, the fact that these projects were new and different, provided political and business opportunities for regional elites and were predominantly non-state based is particularly noteworthy. This view of a regionalized Baltic lent itself to the evolving discourse of a federalized Europe and its distinctly post-modern construction of European political space where issues of sovereignty, security and identity are decidedly different than those of a centralized Europe or modern nation-state.

This chapter has explored and illuminated theories and reasons for region-builders' notable presence in the Baltic Sea region in the post-Cold War years. However, although the Baltic Sea region is no longer the site of an ideological clash, it is far from being a tabula rasa. In the countries and provinces they wish to include in their projects, region-builders must contend with previously established constructions of space, identity and security. While some Baltic countries have established traditions of post-modern
regional governance and can adapt easily, in Estonia and other eastern Baltic countries these traditions are strikingly absent. Thus, for an examination of region-building processes in Estonia to be feasible, it is first necessary to examine the country's dominant constructions of political space, identity and security.
Chapter Two
Estonian Space, Identity and Security

The theory on the clash of civilizations...has been very accurate...The way of thinking inherent to the West, including the Baltics, comes from Rome; the Russian from Constantinople, Byzantium.\(^{47}\)

Marko Mihkelson, Estonian foreign affairs minister, 2003

I once saw the words “border state” in a newspaper. That was how they labeled the country from which I came. It was a political term. Very appropriate, by the way. A border state is nonexistent. There is something on one side and something on the other side of the border, but there is no border...it is invisible. And if you should happen to stand on the border, then you too are invisible, from either side.\(^{48}\)

Tõnu Õnepalu, Estonian novelist, 1993

The small nation-state of Estonia is a “border state” in many ways. Not only because its eastern border is perceived to rest on the civilizational fault line between Western Christendom and Orthodoxy, but also because ethnic Estonians see themselves


as having teetered for centuries between independence and dependence, between sovereignty and slavery. With a territory slightly larger than Denmark or Switzerland, it is a country whose very existence is constructed and perceived as constantly threatened by outside forces. Because of this national perception, Estonian sovereignty and identity have become highly securitized or constructed in terms of extinction and survival. This construction has indeed found its way into political rhetoric, as the former President of Estonia Lennart Meri once stated, "Security is like virginity: you are either a virgin or you are not. You either have security or you don’t."\(^49\) The greatest factors contributing to Estonia’s securitized national sovereignty and identity are its recent historical relations and current political disputes with Russia. Though Eastern (Russian/Orthodox) influences are somewhat discernable, Estonian society has undeniably been shaped largely in the image of the West. This however, does not imply threats to the Estonian nation-state are only perceived as arriving from the East. While Estonian society and identity are indeed largely Western, they are also considered uniquely Estonian, exhibiting cultural characteristics that if lost, cannot be recovered or returned via the East or the West. Consequently, securing the Estonian “us” has not only taken the form of a civilizational reassertion of Western credentials in the face of Russia’s political maneuvers, but also a position championing a distinct ethnic Estonian culture against any external marginalizing force.\(^50\) These two prominent Estonian narratives underscore the perception of external forces threatening the existence of Estonia and the country’s deep-


seated concern of defensively securitizing its historically and ethnically constructed political space.

The emergence of the Estonian nation and its state

Like other modern nation-states, the cement that adheres the Estonian "imagined community" together is the importance attributed to a historical, cultural and linguistic past shared by all Estonians. In this way, has become a modern form of, to use Anthony D. Smith's term, *ethnie*, whose shared bonds remain a significant force within Estonia's societal and political arenas. Although imagined, the Estonian nation as a concept remains a highly motivating form of kinship with a unique historical narrative supporting calls for its continued recognition. Archeologists concur that the ancient ancestors of the Estonians inhabited the territory of Estonia since the Late Stone Age (4,000-1,500 B.C.), with inconclusive evidence of human habitation in the area dating from 7,500 B.C., shortly after the recession of the arctic glaciers. Although little is known about this era of Estonian history, within the national consciousness it represents an initial period of ethnic and cultural establishment and growth relatively uninhibited by the presence of foreigners. This conceptually idyllic cultural existence was marginalized and subsequently ended with the coming of the Teutonic Order in the 13th century, marking the beginning of an 800-year period of colonization and foreign rule. Similar to some Estonian perceptions today, the Germanic crusaders saw their newfound societies as representing the periphery of Western values. After this initial period of colonization, the

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51 Smith defines an *ethnie* as "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and sense of solidarity among at least some of its members." See John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 5-7.

territory inhabited by Estonians was fought over and formally ruled by Germans, Poles, Danes, Swedes and Russians, however, at the local level, power was steadfastly wielded by the Baltic German nobility. In contrast to the mythical era of Estonian civilization prior to the 13th century, this period of foreign colonization represents a dark and suffocative age where Estonians were neither autonomous nor valued, but subjects of foreign oppression.

After hundreds of years of domination from abroad, the “national awakening” movement reasserted Estonian national culture during the latter half of the 19th century, ascribing moral and political value to the bonds of Estonian kinship. Like other nation-building movements, the acquisition of an internationally recognized nation-state became an ultimate goal of nationally-minded Estonians. With the Russian Revolution and Germany’s WWI defeat providing a timely rupture of political order in the region, Estonian national forces were able to proclaim and successfully defend an “independent and democratic republic” inside of its “historical and ethnographic borders.” This foundation of a self-governing modern state within the Estonians’ historical area of settlement is important because unlike some post-colonial states, there is recognition of the pre-colonial existence a pre-modern Estonian ethnie. It should be clarified however, it is not Estonia’s pre-modern and early-modern historic events that are important here per se, but their figurative 20th and 21st century cultural resonance. Symbolically, the Estonian Republic of the interwar era became the manifestation of the political and

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53 Ibid, 17-21, 37-38
54 Cited in Ibid, 105.

Throughout this period, the Republic’s primary foreign policy concern was securing its newfound sovereignty.\footnote{Raun, 123.} Although Estonia gained international political recognition and admittance to the League of Nations during the interwar years, it could not escape the realities of European geopolitics. With Scandinavia and Finland refusing to form a Baltic regional alliance with Estonia, and its union with Latvia and Lithuania wielding little influence, the Soviet invasion of 1940 put an end to the country’s newfound independence.\footnote{Ibid, 123-125.} Yet, it was not in 1940 when the fate of Estonia was decided; in 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had already arranged for the latter to seize control of the Baltic States with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Although the Soviets eventually incorporated Estonia into their empire, the legality of this action was denied from the outset by Western nations and institutions\footnote{The countries and institutions that refused to recognize the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union included the following: the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, France, Ireland, Belgium, Norway, Luxembourg and the Council of Europe. Although this is not an exhaustive list, the fact that former Allied, Axis and neutral nations rejected the legality of the Soviet action speaks to its notorious nature. Izidors Vizulis, \textit{The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939: The Baltic Case}, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990, 135-146.}; a viewpoint that did not (and still does not) correspond with Moscow’s.

Soviet \textit{de facto} rule of Estonia lasted for fifty years; however, this transfer of power did not merely exist on a political level, but also a cultural one, with the considerable presence of the Russian language fostering an “asymmetrical bilingualism”
within society. Evocative of the Imperial Russification campaigns of the late 19th century, the Estonian language became increasingly marginalized with Russian becoming the official *lingua franca* of the Soviet sphere, returning Estonian to its status as the peasant vernacular. Moreover, with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of monolingual Russian-speakers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, replacing the tens of thousands of "bourgeois nationalist" Estonians who had been deported to Siberian gulags, the responsibility of becoming bilingual did not belong to the recent settlers, but was the burden of the Estonians. Such Russification policies cannot be dismissed as misguided Stalinist practices however, as these campaigns were intensified in the 1970s, most likely as a reaction to birthrates of ethnic Russians failing to account for 50% of the total population growth within the Soviet Union. In 1934, ethnic Estonians made up 88% of Estonia's population, yet by 1989, this percentage had dropped to approximately 61%. Correspondingly, in 1989, Russian-speakers in Estonia accounted for approximately 35% of the country's total population. Thus, while the Estonian state lost its sovereignty and was occupied by a foreign power during the Soviet era, this was not a passive occupation merely concerned with territorial expansion, but also a cultural subjugation directly threatening the survival of the Estonian people.

61 Taagepera, 100., Ozolins, 10-11.
62 Raun, 247.
63 Estonia's 1934 census established the country's ethnic Russian population at 8.2% with all other ethnic groups besides Estonians and Germans accounting for an additional 2.1%. See Raun, 233, 247., Rasmussen, 157.
In retrospect, the Estonians as well as their modern state have oscillated between autonomy and foreign domination for centuries. This is not to say, however, that these periods of foreign and self-rule should be equated as distinctly and wholly "good" or "evil" epochs in Estonian history, as such dualistic concepts are completely subjective. Illustratively, folk tales about the "good old Swedish times" lasting from 1561 to 1710 spoke of the period's joy and placidity, even though the encumbrances of serfdom had intensified. Nevertheless, the years of the mythological/pre-colonial era, the interwar Republic and the current post-Soviet era have come to embody "Golden Ages" of Estonian society. This is not because of their favorable economic, political and societal conditions or military security, but because they represent the symbolic attainment and continuation of national sovereignty. Indeed, as history reveals, these have been fleeting experiences, thus making them all the more precious within the Estonian national consciousness. Moreover, Estonians have not forgotten these symbolic historical narratives, which continue to fuel Estonian security and identity discourses.

Reassertion, restoration and realignment

Since its restoration of independence in 1991, Estonia has sought to establish itself within the supranational political and security alliances of the West, the foremost being NATO and the EU. The government of Estonia (as well as Latvia and Lithuania) perceives NATO membership as the primary guarantor of national security and

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64 Taagepera, 23., Raun, 30.
65 Rasmussen, 157.
sovereignty, with the EU performing an important, albeit secondary role. Yet, the security functions of these two organizations can also be seen as existing, and to some extent overlapping, on a European security continuum. With NATO firmly anchored at the traditional military or “hard” security pole, the EU functions somewhere between the middle of the spectrum and the opposite “soft” security pole emphasizing economic and political cooperation. Because of their divergent positions on this continuum, NATO and the EU may also be regarded as complementary organizations, which when operational in the same political space, can foster a more complete perspective on issues of security. Nevertheless, because these supranational organizations are exclusively Western in their membership, with the chances of Russia also becoming a member being extremely unlikely if not impossible, Estonia’s membership within NATO and the EU buttresses the conceptual civilizational construction of Russia as an irreconcilable “other”. Therefore, although Western in spirit, because of Estonia’s geographic proximity to Russia and its long history of colonization, the Estonian state must use every possibility to formalize its Western status. Estonia’s EU and NATO membership not only reinforces the country’s Western self-conceptions but also substantiates this claim at the global level. By entrenching itself so deeply and extensively within Western security structures, Estonia’s reputation of existing on the West’s eastern border becomes tangible, making the border between “us” and “them” ever more distinct.


Kuus (2002a), 95-98.
The construction and interpretation of the Russian "other" as a perpetual military threat to Estonia is clearly exhibited in multiple foreign policy statements. In December 2006, Estonian military chief Major-General Ants Laaneots stated, "To put it mildly, we have an unfriendly country as a neighbor. Relations with Russia are truly the biggest security issue [for Estonia]."\(^{69}\) Drawing attention to Estonia's Western identity yet peripheral geography, Laaneots stressed the need for furthering Western integration by adding, "We are a border country of NATO and the European Union, and our security situation cannot be compared to that of Belgium or Denmark."\(^{70}\) In a similar fashion, at a celebration of Estonia's first anniversary of NATO membership in 2005, Foreign Minister Rein Lang employed a stern tone in regards to Russian by asserting,

The developments taking place in Russia during the last few years give cause for concern. They must be dealt with realistically and frankly by both NATO and the European Union.\(^{71}\)

Interestingly, the above statements exhibit a notable contrast to Estonian security rhetoric prior to NATO and EU expansion. Estonia's 2001 National Security Concept frames Estonian-Russian relations positively, stressing "international cooperation is necessary, and is based on a belief in the collective defense of common values."\(^{72}\) Additionally, foreign affairs minister Kristiina Ojuland in a 2003 address establishing Estonia's foreign

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\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) It should be noted that Lang does refer to NATO continuing its cooperation with Russia, however, this is done briefly and in a passing fashion that does not detract the relevancy of the statement above. See Rein Lang, Address, Celebration of the First Anniversary of Estonia's NATO Accession, Tallinn, 4 Apr. 2005, 24 Jan. 2007 <http://www.vm.ee/eng/kat_140/5363.html?arhiiv_kuup=kuup_2005>.

\(^{72}\) Cited in Rasmussen, 163.
policy guidelines also made similar statements regarding Russia. Such cordial political statements are rarely without ulterior motives however, as this pre-NATO/EU enlargement rhetoric was more likely directed at Brussels than Moscow. With Estonia’s position secured within these two Western organizations, its political rhetoric, to some extent, has reverted to the use of civilizational metaphors characteristic of the early to mid-1990s. In this way, Laaneots’ statements bear a striking resemblance to Estonia’s 1996 National Defense Policy Framework, which states, “The main sources of danger threatening state security are aggressive imperial aspirations and political and/or military instability.”

Although the Russian/Soviet state has been perceived by Estonians as the dominant political and military force that has hindered or threatened Estonia’s return to the West, such civilizational threats do not necessarily need to take form of interstate conflict. This is exemplified by the presence of large numbers of Soviet-era Russian-speaking settlers within Estonia, most residing in Tallinn and the eastern border province of Ida-Virumaa. According to the latest Estonian census data (2000), Russian-speakers, a group comprised largely of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians, account for approximately 30% of Estonia’s total population. In fact, some Estonians feel that because the percentage of non-Estonians is so large, it establishes a symbolic Eastern

74 Rasmussen, 163.
presence that lessens or questions Estonia’s Western credentials, drawing the country back into the Russia sphere.\(^{77}\)

Unable to assert their cultural dominance throughout the Soviet period due to the presence of Russian-speaking settlers, soon after Gorbachev’s societal reforms the increasingly empowered Estonians moved to secure themselves from domestic marginalization through a series of language and citizenship laws. This process started in 1989, requiring all state officials in the ESSR to be competent in both Russian and Estonian, a measure that rallied an ill-fated opposition “Interfront” movement among pro-Soviet Russian-speaking setters.\(^{78}\) However, with the restoration of power to the Estonian state in 1991, the concerns of Russia and its “compatriots abroad” were given even less consideration. A new citizenship law passed in 1992 granted Estonian citizenship only to those who had previously held it during the interwar period and their descendants, leaving the approximately half million Russian-speaking settlers without any initial form of citizenship. Following this initial period of renewed independence, the current “Law of the Republic of Estonia on Citizenship”, passed in 1995, established new requirements for non-Estonians wishing to gain citizenship, yet the most significant passages from the 1992 law were retained.\(^{79}\) Although minor amendments have been made to the 1995 law since its implementation\(^{80}\), the law’s essence remains unchanged.

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\(^{77}\) Kuus (2002a), 98.

\(^{78}\) Ozolins, 15., Taagepera, 148.


While Russia has been active in its critique of Estonian policies, the law remains firmly grounded in international law, as Gregory Feldman states,

Russian speakers were not marginalized by state officials' clever manipulations... Rather, marginalization occurs by virtue of the normal principle of state sovereignty underpinning the European interstate system and by the hegemonic understanding that a particular national culture is morally entitled to a privileged relationship with the territorial state.

In this way, the civilizational security narrative present in Estonia is not only a response to the perception of the Russian state as a security threat, but also from the presence of its ethnic and linguistic “compatriots” residing inside Estonia. Not only serving as a constant reminder to Estonians of the “ruthless fact” of Russian cultural and political influence in the region, Russian-speakers in Estonia are seen as numbering too many to negate their potential threat to ethnic Estonians’ survival. Moreover, because of Russia’s close geographic proximity to Estonia and cultural ties to its ethnic/linguistic diaspora, regardless of their civic loyalty, Russian-speakers represent potential channels for Russian political and cultural influence to permeate Estonia. Thus, Estonia’s return to the West and its security institutions is largely a defensive reaction to the perceived

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81 Based on the principle of *ex injuria non oritur jus*, those who settle in an occupied state or territory have no right to automatic citizenship should the occupied state become independent. This was the case after Alsace-Lorraine was recovered by France after being annexed by Germany during the years of 1871-1919. This law also applied to the territories occupied by Germany and Italy during WWII. See Van Elsuwege, Peter. “State Continuity and its Consequences: The Case of the Baltic States.” *Leiden Journal of International Law* 16 (2003): 383. Also see Ozolins, 20, and Gelazis. 232-238.


83 Cited in Kuus (2002a), 98.

civilizational threat of the Russian state and the large presence of its ethnic/linguistic kin within Estonia.

Neither Moscow nor Brussels

Based on Estonian society’s experiences under Soviet rule and the country’s fickle post-Soviet relations with Russia, the Estonian state has come to perceive the civilizational Russian “other” as the principle threat to Estonia’s sovereign position within the Western world. Yet, this West vs. East mentality is not the only narrative that appears in Estonian societal and governmental security discourse, as Estonians have not forgotten that subjugation has arrived from many directions. This has fostered the construction of the Estonian people existing within their “historical and ethnographic borders”, with all non-Estonians representing an external “other”, which under particular circumstances, may threaten the sovereignty and existence of ethnic Estonians. Because the Estonian national consciousness portrays the Estonian people as constantly fighting for their survival, with the country’s 20th century experiences substantiating the continuation of this narrative, an independent nation-state has become the representation and protector of ethnic Estonians. Therefore, any threat to the sovereignty of the Estonian state is a threat to the Estonian people and vice-versa.\(^{85}\) This position is manifested in the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, which declares the state “shall guarantee the preservation of the Estonian nation and culture through the

\(^{85}\) Kuus (2002b), 401-402., Kuus (2002a), 95.
Because threats to the sovereignty of the Estonian state and Estonian people are intertwined, security threats do not necessarily have to arise from interstate conflict.

Although membership in Western supranational institutions offers small states like Estonia the security benefits of belonging to a larger, more powerful political alliance capable of thwarting the advances of a perceived civilizational threat, such membership comes at a price. Becoming a member of a Western club often requires the adoption of the club’s rules and regulations. This scenario is most apparent in Estonia’s accession to the EU, as state laws required harmonization with the acquis communautaire, thus questioning the sovereign legislative authority of the Estonian state. Those expressing reservations towards Estonia’s EU accession have referenced the first article of the first chapter of Estonia’s constitution, which declares, “The independence and sovereignty of the Estonian state are timeless and inalienable” where “the supreme power of the state is vested in the people [of Estonia].” While members of the Estonian political elite generally favored EU accession, large numbers of the general population remained skeptical of the Union, having so recently thrown off the yoke of another political “Union”. This public reluctance toward European integration is particularly discernable in European opinion polls taken during the years immediately preceding accession. In September 2002 (Estonia signed their Draft Treaty in April 2002), Estonian public support for EU accession was the lowest among all applicant states, only reaching 32%. Similarly, the same study reported that out of all the applicant countries, Estonians

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89 European Union, European Commission, Directorate General Press and Communication, Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002, Brussels, November 2002. Fig. 1b.
distrusted the Union the most, distinguishing it as the most Euroskeptic pre-accession candidate state.\textsuperscript{90}

The level of Euroskepticism among the Estonian public during the first few years of the 2000s was most likely not indicative of a general sense of contempt for the Union, but rather a reaction to the EU’s standards and methods of harmonizing Estonia’s domestic laws and policies, specifically those involving issues of national sovereignty and security.\textsuperscript{91} This is particularly evident in the debates over the legal status of Russian-speaking minorities and the official use of the Russian language in Estonia. As previously mentioned, many Estonians view the large population of Russian-speakers in Estonia as fundamentally undermining the purpose of the Estonian state, which is perceived to guarantee the survival of the historically marginalized ethnic Estonian population. In western Europe however, minorities, often immigrants from former overseas European colonies, have been construed as oppressed and impoverished outsiders struggling against an endless tide of discrimination, therefore requiring some form of government compensation or protection. Consequently, by applying this Western construction to the Estonian situation, the goal of protecting the foreign “have-nots” from the discriminatory policies of the native “haves” is taken completely out its western European context. In this regard, Uldis Ozolins comments,

\textquote{There is a basic incompatibility between Baltic views of the essence of the problem being the need to eradicate lingering imperialist practices and using the state to guarantee the development of the national entity and national languages; and European and some international views applying}

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, Fig. 11.  
\textsuperscript{91} Kuus (2002a), 100.
legalistic and constructed views of minorities and linguistic rights
developed in quite different contexts where the concern is to limit the
states in the name of individual rights.  

As outlined in the Europe Agreement signed by Estonia in 1995, the harmonization of
Estonian policies concerning “rights of persons belonging to minorities” with European
standards was to be directed and assessed in part by international organizations, the
foremost being Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).  

Although the European Commission’s 1997 Opinion on Estonian accession to the EU
clearly stated, “the rights of the Russian-speaking minority... are observed and
safeguarded”, amendments to Estonia’s citizenship and language laws continued to be
made until 2002.  

In response to an amendment to Estonia’s Language Law in June 2000, European Commissioner for Enlargement Günter Verheugen joyously welcomed
the decision as “striking the right balance between the legitimate objective of promoting
and protecting the Estonian language with full respect of the international standards on
minorities”.  

However, such jubilation among the Estonian public was noticeably absent
at this time, with approximately 40% of those polled deeming that Estonia would be
better off declining Union membership, with the loss of national sovereignty being the
primary anxiety among those who would cast a vote against membership and those
choosing to abstain.  

In contrast to the Estonian public, governing elites generally

92 Ozolins, 34.
93 Adrey, 456-457.
94 European Union, European Commission, Agenda 2000 – Commission Opinion on Estonia’s
95 “Commission welcomes adoption of new Language law in Estonia: Press Release IP/00/626,”
Europa Rapid Press Releases, 16 Jun. 2000, European Union,
96 Kuus (2002b), 399.
favored Estonia’s EU accession. At the same time however, both the Estonian citizenry and political elite, the vast majority of both groups being ethnic Estonians, perceive the recent amending of Estonian citizenship and language laws as fundamentally foreign obligations incongruous with Estonia’s demographic situation, labeling such ethnic integration schemes an “imported commodity”. Thus, much like the looming presence of Russia on its eastern border, Estonians also perceive the implementation of foreign societal regulations as a threat to the survival of the unique and sovereign ethnic Estonian population, regardless of their Western genesis.

It should be noted that these two perspectives on Estonian security, the sovereignty narrative distinguishing ethnic Estonia from the external “other”, and the civilizational narrative securing Estonia within the West, are not mutually exclusive. This is evident in the case of Russian-speaking minorities, who are perceived in civilizational terms as belonging to the Russian cultural sphere and represent Russia’s intrusion into Estonia’s Western society. While effectively reversing the Soviet era’s Russian cultural dominance in Estonian society through its own devices, the Estonian state’s civilizational intentions of joining the EU and NATO worked against these original aims, granting Western institutions the authority to shape its domestic policies. Thus, while the Russian-speaking “other” represented a marginalized de facto civilizational threat to the Estonian state, its presence in Estonia facilitated a European threat de jure, questioning the sovereignty of the state itself.

Even though Estonia’s hesitance toward European integration has lessened in recent years, giving way to a relatively positive perspective of the EU, the perception of Estonian sovereignty existing under constant threat from external forces has not

vanished. Similarly, just as Estonia’s dual accession into NATO and the EU in 2004 has secured the country into Western security structures, the civilizational tone of Estonia’s foreign policy towards Russia persists. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that while discernable in discourse, these two security narratives do not represent the totality of opinions inside Estonian security debates. Alternative discourses, some advocating anti-NATO/EU positions, do exist, however, their appeal is both limited and marginal. Drawing on the historical experiences that have shaped the Estonian national conscience however, the rationale used by the prominent Western civilizational and Estonian sovereignty narratives highlights Estonia’s strong preoccupation with defensively securitizing its historically and ethnically constructed political space.

The prominent narratives of Estonian space, identity and security presented here are important variables affecting the implementation of Baltic region-building projects in Estonia. However, Estonia is not the only Baltic country with sensitive and nationally specific constructions of space, identity and security. Baltic region-builders are acutely aware of the Baltic’s various national narratives and have had to contend with their divergent political constructions. Nevertheless, region-building projects are not immune to these national narratives, even in the seemingly post-modern Nordics. In fact, some regional projects have become vehicles for national interests, revealing Baltic region-building’s varied nature. Therefore, to understand how conducive the Estonian political environment is to Baltic region-building projects, the nature of the projects themselves should be explored.

Chapter Three

Baltic Region-building – a Project of the West

When your neighbor’s wall breaks, your own is in danger.

- Norse proverb

As explicated in chapter one, the initial impulses for the Baltic region-building projects that gathered momentum and influence during the 1990s and first half of the 2000s were the efforts of region-builders seeking to construct new political and societal arenas in the wake of European bipolarity. Undeniably, the earliest discernible enthusiasm for a regionalized Baltic Sea appeared in the western Baltic counties. Living in a “formative moment”, Western region-builders saw a chance to redefine Northern Europe as a growth region, shed its peripheral status within Europe and engage the eastern Baltic countries in cooperation in a number of areas. Nevertheless, though the construction of a dynamic Baltic Sea region has been a mutual objective for many, the visions of how the region should be delineated and structured, practically and conceptually have been far from harmonious. The present chapter elaborates the motivations, objectives and peculiarities of various region-building schemes, beginning with the earliest proposals for a “new Hansa” to some of the most recent region-building endeavors. Although during this period there has been a notable conceptual shift in how Baltic region-building operations should be structured, moving from a model of an open series of cooperative networks to a hierarchical approach, these regional developments
have largely been determined by Western actors’ conceptions of political and cultural space.

**Drang noch Nordosten**

The collapse of Communism allowed for the realization of a great number of transregional opportunities and projects in the Baltic, however, discussions concerning the nature of a future Baltic Sea region had already begun before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Nowhere was this more evident than in Schleswig-Holstein, where Björn Engholm espoused the creation of a “new Hansa” in 1987, placing it on the federal state’s agenda in 1988 after his election as Minister President.\(^{100}\) Engholm intended to reinvigorate Schleswig-Holstein, which had long been a relatively poor state in the Federal Republic and was largely perceived as a peripheral agrarian region far from Germany’s industrial and metropolitan west and south. Employing rhetoric underscoring the federal state’s historic and cultural ties to Northern Europe, especially Denmark, the Minister President sought to foster a regional awareness that placed importance on Schleswig-Holstein’s “Northernness” rather than its “Germanness”.\(^ {101}\)

To accomplish this aim, in August 1989 Engholm founded the chancellery’s *Denkfabrik*, or state think tank, to research and develop ideas and policies *inter alia* relating to the “new Hansa.” The new organization promptly began organizing a number of conferences aimed at facilitating regional networks and collaborations in areas of Baltic culture, economics and politics.\(^ {102}\) Nongovernmental region-building projects were also launched under Engholm’s administration, with the foundation of Lübeck’s

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\(^ {100}\) Lehti (2003), 18.
\(^ {101}\) Williams, 9., Lehti (2003), 19.
\(^ {102}\) Williams, 9.
Baltic Sea Academy (*Ostsee – Akademie*) in June 1991 serving to study and promote the region’s historical and cultural affinities.\(^{103}\) While Estonia and the other eastern Baltic countries at this time were just beginning to undergo tremendous societal transitions, publications from the Baltic Sea Academy chose to emphasize the East’s shared Hanseatic past with the West, constructing and promoting an identity that was seemingly lost in the fog of the Cold War.\(^{104}\) Similarly, *Ars Baltica*, a forum for promoting Baltic art and culture was established in 1990 in Kiel at the behest of Engholm. In a politically strategic sense, the founding of these projects would enable region-building activity to continue after his inevitable exit from office.

Characteristic of any region-building project, Engholm’s motivation for establishing Baltic regional ties was largely political. As a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), serving as the party Chairman from 1991 to 1993, Engholm greatly admired the social democratic “Nordic model” and perceived Schleswig-Holstein and other Baltic areas as potential export markets. With Nordic social democracy as a political platform, Engholm also challenged the dominant construction of political space, arguing for the creation and inclusion of nongovernmental civic organizations within society. His vision for the region was therefore typical of an “inside-out” approach to governance, stressing the dispersal of power throughout regional networks. In this way, the Minister President perceived the Westphalian construction of the nation-state as confining rather than benefiting society.\(^{105}\) Exercising this view of political space in the context of region-building, in 1990 Engholm declared,

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\(^{104}\) Lehti (2003), 20.

\(^{105}\) Williams, 11.
In a future Europe, the importance of regions will shift. Allow me to risk the following statement: the new European supraregions will not only be defined by national boundaries, and I might add – they shouldn’t be. Through the establishment and cooperation of Baltic NGOs, universities, cultural organizations and other civic actors, Engholm’s vision of Baltic Sea regional governance sought to minimize the influence of the state as well as the European Community, whose brand of capitalism he deemed unfit for a regionalized Northern Europe. In fact, despite Engholm hailing from Lübeck, this desire for a post-modern non-state centric construction of political space was the primary reason the Minister President chose the title “new Hansa” for the project. Although outside of Germany the term Hansa carries heightened connotations of German cultural hegemony, trade monopolies and serfdom, Engholm understood, much like the nation-builders of earlier epochs, that shared elements of history and culture were an invaluable conceptual foundation for constructing a new regional project. Still, the sudden appearance of Baltic regionalist rhetoric in Schleswig-Holstein did not go unquestioned. Reacting to a rather blatant region-building/art exhibition organized by Ars Baltica, Waever remarked, “when Schleswig-Holstein suddenly spends large amounts [of money] on art, this is a trick: it is too clear that this is politics dressed up as culture.” Indeed, while publicly espousing the common values, temperaments and history of the Baltic peoples, and founding civic

106 Cited in Lehti (2003), 46, endnote 57.
institutions to do the same, Engholm’s motives for instigating a Baltic project were chiefly political.

Nordic perceptions

Like those in Northern Germany, visions of Baltic regional cooperation schemes began to surface in the Nordic countries during the early 1990s. Some of the earliest voices wishing to establish and engage in pan-Baltic region-building projects were Nordic peace researchers and academics, most notably representatives of the Copenhagen School. Taking advantage of the recent rupture of guiding political paradigms in the region, prominent scholars like Joenniemi and Wæver sought to influence the formation of post-modern region-building endeavors, which if realized, would grant academics like themselves a considerable voice within the regional projects. By utilizing the resources and networking capabilities of previously established think tanks, such as the Finnish Business and Policy Forum and the Stockholm Institute of Future Studies, regionally-minded researchers found an outlet for their Baltic visions. Much like Engholm’s motivations for a “new Hansa,” the Nordic academics challenged the dominant construction of sovereign nation-states as primary governing actors. Although other scholars have been critical of such assertions, considering them overly idealistic if not inaccurate interpretations guided by vested interests, the early presence and influence of Nordic peace researchers in Baltic region-building efforts should be noted.

The views and ambitions of Nordic peace researchers should not be construed as the characteristic position of Northern Europe in regard to Baltic region-building because

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110 Smith (2003), 51.
111 Lehti (2003), 17, 29.
Nordic governments have notably approached Baltic issues on the side of caution. Because of their geographic proximity to the eastern Baltic countries and their status as nation-states, Finland, Sweden and Denmark on one hand perceived the collapse of Soviet domination as fundamentally positive for the eastern Baltic countries, however, they also saw developments in the region as needing to be managed and contained. In this fashion, the post-Soviet states and oblasts between the Kola Peninsula and Poland were dubbed “neighboring regions” and were constructed as realms of social, economic and environmental deterioration. This “decay of the East” was manifested by the soft security threats of rising organized criminal activity, illegal immigration and other social problems deemed foreign and incongruent with Nordic society. At the same time however, there was recognition that the post-Soviet “neighboring regions”, exhibiting undeniably Western features, did not represent an irreconcilable “other”. 113 Although the Soviet period had left its mark in the eastern Baltic, there was a perception in the Nordics that these societies could rebound and be retaught the ways of the West. If this could be done, Northern Europe could possibly establish a new niche within the European political architecture. 114

The task of reinstilling the “West” within the “East” was not the only impediment the Nordic states faced in the realization of a Baltic regional project; the Nordics themselves would also have to change. Unlike the Baltic region-builders of Schleswig-Holstein who quickly and eagerly asserted the Baltic’s glorious Hanseatic past, Denmark and Sweden were hesitant to adopt and implement such historical metaphors for numerous reasons. Firstly, the early use of the “Hansa” term emanating from Kiel was

113 Lehti (2003), 17, 24-27.
114 Waever (1992), 96-97.
problematic from the Nordic perspective because although the Hanseatic League had
established ties with some Scandinavian cities, the national histories of the Nordics
portrayed the Hansa as an unwanted and distinctly German hegemonic force, historically
fostering division not cooperation.\textsuperscript{115} Secondly, regardless of terminology, the
construction of a Baltic regional identity needed for aspects of region-building seemed to
contradict elements of the previous Nordic identity project. Even though Denmark and
Sweden had previously colonized substantial areas of the eastern Baltic, these historic
imperial links were regarded as shameful and characteristically un-Nordic, if not
disregarded entirely. Instead, Nordic identity narratives were constructed placing value
on the interior countryside rather than peripheral coastal areas, therefore complicating
Baltic identity construction.\textsuperscript{116}

Finland's initial response to Baltic region-building projects was unique among the
Nordics because of its own history as a post-imperial and peripheral European nation-
state. During the Cold War, by maintaining its neutrality, in a political sense Finland
became a characteristically Nordic state; yet, during the interwar years it was common
knowledge that it was indeed the fourth Baltic state, sharing common cultural traits and
political burdens with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This interwar bond was especially
strong between Finland and Estonia, whose official status as nation-states positioned
them as the global flagships of Finno-Ugric language and culture. These political and
cultural bonds however, were virtually impossible to officially recognize during the Cold
War, as Finland's \textit{Realpolitik} with the Soviet Union deterred any mention of the
previously independent Baltic States. In addition, Finland's dominant identity narrative

\textsuperscript{115} Lehti (2003), 18.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 25.
emulated this shifting political focus from Baltic to Nordic, as Finns tended to perceive
themselves as Western and Nordic rather than peripheral and Baltic.\footnote{Ibid, 15-18.}

Nevertheless, these initial Nordic perceptions of the eastern Baltic as a foreign
realm of decay needing to be managed and controlled have largely been reformed in
recent years. In addition to the Baltic States and Poland entering into NATO and the EU,
the Baltic Sea states have become increasingly perceived as having distinct similarities.
This of course, is not an accidental occurrence; numerous recent region-building projects
have emphasized and facilitated the creation of a particular vision of the Baltic. Yet
while boasting similar post-modern objectives and operating through both state and non-
state actors, the more recent Baltic projects accredited with making significant progress
towards Baltic regionalization have employed divergent methods to those used by early
projects like the "new Hansa."

**Creating and managing Baltic space**

One of the most important developments in the Baltic region-building process
was the foundation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) in 1992. Initiated by
German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Danish Foreign Minister Uffe
Ellemann-Jensen, the Council was created to manage the series of regional networks and
associations that had emerged since the late 1980s. During its first three years, the
Council comprised of the Foreign Ministers of Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,
Poland, Finland, Sweden, Russia, Denmark and Germany. In addition, the European
Commission was also granted official representation. In 1995, Iceland joined the
Council, thus fully encompassing the Nordic states. Also in 1995, observer status was
given to the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Ukraine, with the inclusion of Slovakia in 2001.\textsuperscript{118}

As stated in its Copenhagen Declaration, the CBSS was founded “in order to strengthen and put into relief existing cooperation among the Baltic Sea States” and “serve as an overall regional forum to focus on needs for intensified cooperation and coordination”.\textsuperscript{119} Yet, some commentators have speculated that the Council’s creation was part of a larger political power struggle involving Engholm’s post-modern visions for Schleswig-Holstein and state officials seeking to curb his influence and/or the influence of non-state actors within government affairs.\textsuperscript{120} Such ideas of a political “coup” spilling over into the area of Baltic cooperation however, remain purely speculatory, as other observers have stressed that such conflicts of interest in this area are largely unfounded.\textsuperscript{121} Nevertheless, the founding of the CBSS marks a definite shift in how Baltic Sea cooperation functions and is conceptualized. During the late 1980s, when Engholm and Nordic peace researchers voiced the most prominent region-building initiatives and aspirations, the concept of a Baltic club with exclusive membership certainly did not coincide with the post-modern visions for the region. Such an institutionalized method of including and excluding regional actors was perceived as an old and exhausted construction of political space. For example, Joenniemi and Wæver stated in 1991, “to the institutions has to be added the constant reminder, that they are secondary, the networks are the region and thereby it is nonexclusive – just link in!”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120} See Williams, 13-19.
\textsuperscript{121} Smith (2003), 55-56.
\textsuperscript{122} Cited in Williams, 12.
In a stark contrast to (and possibly a reaction against) the rigid boundaries of the Cold War, this initial conception of the Baltic Sea region was indeed anything but rigid.

The framework for regional cooperation adopted by the CBSS is certainly more formalized than the fluid nature of previous region-building initiatives and has been described as “intergovernmental multilateralism”. The Council is intergovernmental because all official decisions are made by consensus, and it is multilateral simply because more than two parties are represented.\(^{123}\) At its first Ministerial Session in Copenhagen in 1992, the Council initially decided upon the following structure for the assembly:

This new Council should not be seen as a new formalized institutional framework with a permanent secretariat. Rather, the envisaged cooperation among the countries in question should be of a traditional intergovernmental nature, where the host country of each session assumes responsibility for providing secretariat services...\(^{124}\)

Despite this early declaration, in 1998 the Council established a permanent secretariat in Stockholm and has subsequently been officially recognized as an international organization, formalizing Baltic regional cooperation well beyond the proposed framework for the “new Hansa.”\(^{125}\)

Is this to say that the post-modern visions of a Baltic Sea region have gone unfulfilled, hijacked by the very state-centric system that the Baltic Sea project once defined itself against? Not at all. Although the CBSS has undeniably formalized and institutionalized Baltic regional cooperation within an intergovernmental and multilateral framework, it retains and continues to operate under largely post-modern principles. In

\(^{123}\) Gänzle and Hubel, 397.
\(^{124}\) Cited in Ibid, 393.
\(^{125}\) Williams, 16-17.
addition to the participation of observer states, “special participant” status has been
granted to several regional and non-state actors who are “encouraged to actively
participate in the work of CBSS structures and working bodies”.

This diverse group of special participants includes the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), the B7 Baltic Islands
Network (B7), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),
the Baltic Sea States Sub-Regional Cooperation (BSSSC), the Baltic Sea Parliamentary
Conference (BSPC), and the Baltic Sea Commission. Furthermore, the Business
Advisory Council (BAC), an autonomous working body within the CBSS representing
the region’s business community, routinely works with the Council’s Working Group for
Economic Cooperation. This characteristically post-modern approach to regional
governance has drawn from the Nordics’ experiences of localized networks contributing
to political processes.

Adding to its diverse operational architecture, the nature of
CBSS operations upholds the vision of the Baltic as a desecuritized arena for soft-
security management on an international level. Unlike the current bilateral relations of
some Baltic countries, the icy relationship between Estonia and Russia being particularly
exemplary, the agenda of the CBSS has purposely avoided issues of traditional state
security. Although controversial issues such as border delineation and NATO’s regional
presence have persisted, these concerns are voiced elsewhere, making them “non-issues”
within the Baltic regional context.

Thus, while national governments have given Baltic
regional cooperation a formal structure in which to operate, this structure is not
exclusively state driven.

127 Ibid., Gänzle and Hubel, 395, 406.
128 Gänzle and Hubel, 397.
In addition to its permanent representation in the CBSS, the European Union has become an increasingly important and influential actor in the Baltic region in its own right. Indeed, aside from Russia’s comparatively small oblasts, the Baltic Sea is now entirely surrounded by EU member states. This development, however, has been relatively recent, with only Denmark and Germany holding EU membership prior to 1995, the Union’s staggered northern expansion has increased the need for specific Baltic policies. The most notable development in this regard has been the Northern Dimension Initiative (NDI). A Finnish initiative, formally presented at the Luxembourg European Council in December 1997 and implemented in 2000, the NDI has perpetuated and contributed to regionally focused soft security management in Northern Europe.¹²⁹

According to its stated objectives, the NDI stands to accomplish the following:

Providing a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development ...[and seeks to] enhance regional cooperation, improving synergies of regional organizations in the North of Europe while avoiding possible duplication and will facilitate people-to-people contacts.¹³⁰

Apart from its own institutions, in implementing this strategy the EU has enlisted the assistance of actors at the international, national, regional and sub-national levels,

including the CBSS, the Nordic, Arctic and Barents Euro-Arctic regional Councils, as well as various financial institutions, NGOs, universities, businesses and other societal actors. Thus, like other Baltic regional projects, the NDI is notable for its utilization and adaptation to Northern Europe’s established system of civic institutions promoting soft security and regional level governance beyond state and EU boundaries.

Although the Northern Dimension and the CBSS have embraced the active participation of local and regional networks and partner organizations as well as promoting soft security through the desecuritization of the Baltic region, their methods for accomplishing these goals diverge with those proposed by the region-builders of the early 1990s. Rather than serving as a social and political arena where the state is but one of many actors, none of which being dominant, the more recent regional initiatives have come to function as instruments of foreign policy for those in a position to use them. This is particularly evident in the policies implemented to manage and contain soft security threats originating from the seemingly backward and volatile East.

In the case of the Northern Dimension Initiative, it should be stressed that although it has taken the form of an EU project, it was initiated with Finnish national interests in mind, thus serving as a regional extension of Finnish state policy. Above all, the rationale for the NDI was Finland’s relationship with Russia, a situation that could be exploited, as Finland was the only EU member state that shared a border with Russia at the time. While the NDI served Finnish business interests by facilitating the extraction

132 Gänzle, 98.
133 Gänzle and Hubel, 394-395.
134 Browning, 52., Lehti (2003), 24-27.
of Russian oil and gas reserves destined for Western markets, some have remarked that it also framed Russia as the inferior participant, needing to be taught the ways of the West. Offically, Russia is a valued and equal actor working within the Initiative’s “spirit of partnership” that seeks to develop the region’s environmental, commercial, social and political standards. However, others have interpreted the NDI as a relationship governed by preset and rigid Western conditions with which Russia must comply. Some critics have suggested that based on a civilizational hierarchy establishing western European values, practices and norms as dominant and ideal, the NDI has framed “Easterness” in all of its societal forms and gradations as something to be combated and reformed in the image of the West. Although Russian diplomatic rhetoric regarding the NDI has been considerably optimistic, sharing the West’s enthusiasm for regional cooperation, this positive tone is principally contingent on the receipt of Western investments and financial assistance. Through this arrangement of “cash for cooperation”, the NDI furthers the creation of Baltic regional space. However, this space is not established through a voluntary and egalitarian cooperative network but through the unilateral orchestration of regional uniformity by way of economic conditionality.

This decidedly hierarchical approach to Baltic region-building is not exclusive to the Northern Dimension Initiative or exclusively directed at Russia. Rather, it is characteristic of a larger trend in which “civilized” European/western Baltic actors seek to counteract and reform perceived soft security threats emanating from the “uncivilized” Eastern Baltic by utilizing the services of both state and non-state actors as a means of societal change. In this fashion, the CBSS has sought to foster “acceptable” forms of

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138 Browning, 52-57., Gänzle and Hubel, 395.
democracy, governance and regional identity within the Baltic States and Russia through a number of regional projects. An interesting example of such efforts was the Council’s 1993 decision for the establishment of “EuroFaculty” within the major eastern Baltic universities: the University of Latvia, Vilnius University and Tartu University. The EuroFaculty program was established to reform the academic curricula in the fields of economics, political science and law up to “internationally accepted academic standards,” retrain local academics to sustain these standards, and develop information resources at each institution. To accomplish this, the project collected funds from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Although its founding statutes state the EuroFaculty shall “operate on a strictly non-political basis” towards “strictly academic objectives,” because the impetus for the EuroFaculty program was to reform inferior and “politicized” academic institutions that “could not provide the knowledge bases needed for governance” in a post-Soviet Europe, the project itself is intrinsically loaded with the Western politics of Baltic region-building. Moreover, like other region-building initiatives, there is an incentive for making this transition from temporary backwardness to civilization appear seamless, fast and natural. Statements in the EuroFaculty Final Report substantiate this covert approach:

The EuroFaculty centers should not be seen as foreign or permanent structures. Instead the centers had to facilitate [the] take over of courses,

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139 An additional EuroFaculty was established at Kaliningrad State University (now Immanuel Kant State University of Russia) in 2000. Unlike the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian EuroFaculties, which were discontinued in 2005, this program is currently operational.


materials and ideas, and at the end of the project they would disappear. To make the facilitation work, the centers had to gain the trust of faculties, and be ready to use leverage as appropriate when change was moving too slowly.¹⁴²

Unlike other Western dominated region-building projects like the Northern Dimension Initiative, where regional cooperation is essentially contingent upon renewing a commitment for mutual financial gain, the EuroFaculty program, through its "take over of courses, materials and ideas," seems to seek to create a self-perpetuating cognitive environment that is receptive to Western ideas. This of course, includes ideas of region-building. It must be noted however, the EuroFaculty program should not be perceived as an Orwellian indoctrination project in which all undesirable methods and ideas are totally expunged from local academia in the name of the West. Such an effort would be expensive, controversial and indeed impossible. Students enrolled in the EuroFaculty program (myself having been one of them) are exposed to a variety of theories, methods and ideas, and are expected to think critically about the information presented to them. Nevertheless, like other CBSS initiatives, the motivation for the EuroFaculty program is hardly wholly altruistic. It rather represents hierarchical Western attempts to foster Baltic cohesion within the region's old East.

In sum, post-Soviet endeavors to foster the growth of a Baltic regional space with its distinctive brand of governance and identity have not been monolithic. These emergent constructions have been both supported and hindered by divergent and preexisting historical, social and geographic perceptions of space and identity within the region. Initiated by Engholm's dream of a "new Hansa", the dominant vision of the

Baltic region has evolved from a fluid and nonexclusive arena for regional cooperation to a project with a formal and hierarchical structure involving a variety of state and non-state actors. Although the ideal of a desecuritized Baltic Sea region has been maintained through various forms of soft security cooperation, the methods employed have not. Rather than handled through multilateral egalitarian cooperation, soft security threats have become matters requiring compliance with a regional ideal. These regional standards are chiefly prescribed by western and Nordic Europe’s socially “superior” civilization, in which a deteriorating East must be controlled and reformed for the sake of regional uniformity.

This chapter has explored the varied nature of many Baltic regional projects, examining their evolutions from concepts to realities. It highlighted that the existing analyses of Baltic region-building focus primarily on western Baltic actors and projects. Indeed, discussions regarding eastern Baltic perceptions and practices of Baltic region-building have been surprisingly absent in academia\(^{143}\). In the next chapter, I will turn to Estonia once again. Through an examination of region-building efforts in Estonia, taking into consideration the country’s dominant constructions of space, identity and security, I will delineate prominent eastern Baltic perceptions of Baltic region-building.

\(^{143}\) Three notable exceptions in this regard are the works of Lehti, Ruutsoo and Made. See Lehti (2003), Lehti (1999), Vahur Made, “A Baltic View of the Northern Dimension,” Presentation given at the UACES Northern Dimension study group meeting, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 7 Dec. 2001. and Ruutsoo.
Chapter Four

Region-building in Estonia

The Eastern intellectual is a severe critic of everything that penetrates to him from the West. He has been deceived so often that he does not want cheap consolation which will eventually prove all the more depressing. The War left him suspicious and highly skilled in unmasking sham and pretense. He has rejected a great many books that he liked before the War, as well as a great many trends in painting or music, because they have not stood the test of experience. The work of human thought should withstand the test of brutal, naked reality. If it cannot, it is worthless. 144

Czesław Miłosz, Polish-Lithuanian poet, 1951

Although the above passage by Miłosz refers to the situation in Eastern Europe during the first years of the postwar era, it remains applicable in a post-Cold War era, with the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe perhaps serving to appreciate its relevancy. In the case of Estonia, as illustrated in chapter two, a prominent security narrative constructs Estonian society as intrinsically Western, yet has been unnaturally dominated by Russia for extensive periods. This narrative stresses Estonia’s need to reestablish itself within exclusive Western security structures (NATO and the EU) to avoid sliding back into the Eastern sphere. An additional narrative however, remains critical of extensive

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Western integration schemes. Although Estonian society is indeed Western, its
governmental system is seen as existing and functioning paramountly for the preservation
of its ethnic Estonian population. As a historically marginalized group, many Estonians
perceive themselves as threatened by the imposition of foreign and incongruent Western
civic standards and regulations. These two security narratives are not mutually exclusive,
however. Estonian anxieties over the large numbers of Soviet era of Russian-speaking
settlers, representing an irreconcilable Eastern “other” within the territorial bounds of the
Estonian state, have been galvanized by Western efforts to reform Estonia’s citizenship
and language laws that had previously been employed to ensure the ethnic survival of the
Estonian population. Thus, to evoke Miłosz, an Estonian remains critical of strategy
dictated from the West because local Estonian experience has gone largely unappreciated
and unrecognized in its formulation. Indeed, from the Estonian’s perspective, it is the
Estonian people’s struggle for independence and survival that has endured and
surmounted the test of “brutal, naked reality.”

This chapter explicates the impact Estonia’s dominant security and identity
narratives have had on the implementation of western Baltic region-building projects in
Estonia. Before examining these post-Soviet developments, Estonia’s participation in
region-building projects during the interwar era is examined. Yet, with recent post-
modern initiatives having limited success in the country, the reasons for these difficulties,
which are largely due to Estonia’s security situation, are explored. Because Russia has
occupied a dominant position in Estonia’s security narratives, Estonian perceptions of
Russia’s regional aims in the Baltic are also examined. Lastly, the unique features,
methods and spatial delineations of some of Estonia’s own post-Soviet region-building projects are emphasized, drawing attention to Estonia’s own regional perceptions.

An Estonian assessment

Although it is impossible to delineate a unanimous “Estonian opinion” of the Baltic region-building process, there are nevertheless discernable tendencies that illuminate predominant local perceptions. These trends are evocative of the previously explicated “civilizational” and “sovereignty” narratives of Estonian national security. In relation to the former narrative, during Estonia’s first years of its return to independence, Baltic region-building initiatives were perceived as an additional means for Estonia to institutionally secure itself within the West. Because these were undeniably Western political projects, Estonia’s participation served to emphasize its realignment with the West, with the hope of easing and naturalizing its primary goals of EU and NATO membership.145 Despite the decidedly post-modern nature of initiatives like the CBSS, Estonia’s tactical participation within these forums was fundamentally driven by the perception of the civilizational Russian threat. Unlike German and Nordic conceptualizations of Baltic region-building, in which the seemingly superior systems and values of the West are inclusively extended to an emerging and deprived East, the Estonian perception was a strategy for returning to an exclusive West.146 In this way, Estonia perceived Baltic region-building projects as a means to distance itself from Russia because Russian membership in NATO and the EU is extremely unlikely (if not politically and economically impossible). Even though Russia was also active within

146 Lehti (2003), 39.
these new political arenas, it could not exert any formal dominance and like the other post-Soviet Baltic countries, it occupied the marginalized role of a decaying East needing to be tamed.\textsuperscript{147} Therefore, it was not the elevated participatory status of non-state actors or the exclusive focus on soft security that necessitated Estonia's involvement in Baltic regional projects. It was rather Estonia's need for symbolic recognition of its place in Western civilization.

While Estonia's participation in Baltic projects helped facilitate its symbolic return to the West, its paramount desires of NATO and EU membership are indicative of its larger quest to fortify its own national security. With NATO serving as a hard security guarantee, the EU and the region-building projects themselves would provide a complementary, although secondary means of soft security. This modern strategy of region-building for the sake of national security is not unique to Estonia's post-Soviet period however, as similar schemes have been proposed and implemented in the country before. The earliest of these was Jaan Tõnisson's August 1917 proposal for a "Baltic League," which was to include the Baltic States, Poland, Finland and Scandinavia in a strategic regional commonwealth to inhibit possible Russian and German hegemonic actions.\textsuperscript{148} Although the First World War had an unprecedented "ice-breaker" effect on European geography, facilitating state sovereignty for small nations like Estonia, security strategies for maintaining this delicate concept had not yet developed. Unlike some region-building initiatives of the late twentieth century, where state sovereignty was seen as something inhibiting regional cooperation that should be overcome, the Baltic League

\textsuperscript{147} Browning, 52.
was perceived as a guarantor of sovereignty, which indeed allowed such cooperation to occur.\textsuperscript{149} While this historic association was realized in the 1920s, becoming the first intentionally and exclusively “Baltic” regional project, the League nevertheless only comprised Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania because the Scandinavian countries and Finland perceived membership as a risk to their own sovereignty, with Poland opting out due to bilateral issues with Lithuania.\textsuperscript{150} Interestingly, if it had encompassed all of the countries originally proposed, this regional configuration might have wielded considerable influence. Not surprisingly, the Soviet Union and Germany took considerable action to derail the Baltic League’s realization.\textsuperscript{151}

Although Tõnisson’s distinctively geostrategic or “outside-in” approach for a Baltic League produced lackluster results, it was not the final Baltic region-building attempt of the interwar era. Inspired by the anthrogeographic theory of “Baltoscandia” produced in 1928 by Swedish geomorphologist Sten De Geer, an Estonian geographer, Edgar Kant, promoted a Baltoscandian regional project that would be a natural expression of the Baltic’s shared cultural space. Much like the idea of a “Fennoscandia,” which rooted Finnish national identity to the European North rather than the Russian Northwest, Baltoscandia was a concept constructed on northern European geography, the prevalence of Lutheranism and the ethnic commonalities of Europe’s northern peoples. It thus comprised Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia and Latvia, excluding Iceland on the grounds of geography, Lithuania due to its Catholicism, and omitting the Soviet Union, Germany and Poland for both geographical and cultural reasons. While

\textsuperscript{149} Lehti (1999), 420-424.  
\textsuperscript{151} Raun, 124.
Kant’s vision for a Baltoscandia stimulated efforts for greater regional cooperation in exclusive ethnographic terms, his motivations were chiefly geopolitical. Kant sought to secure the state-based region from external threats, the Soviet Union specifically. Like the Baltic League’s “outside-in” proposals for the region, Kant’s culturally based or “inside-out” vision of the Baltic, which similarly failed to resonate with the Scandinavian countries, was propelled by Estonia’s marginalized sense of national security.

The preoccupation of Tõnisson’s Baltic League and Kant’s Baltoscandia with securing Estonian national sovereignty is not surprising and is representative of the larger narrative of Estonian history as a small people’s quest for survival. Even though its methods have changed slightly, the primary motivations for Estonia’s interwar regional cooperation efforts and its post-Soviet participation in Baltic Sea regional cooperation are fundamentally the same. In the interwar period, the proposed regional configurations were envisioned as direct guarantors of small-state sovereignty, representing an area committed to collective and cooperative hard security. However, because post-Soviet Baltic projects did not offer hard security protection, only soft security management, regional cooperation schemes were an indirect means for obtaining the hard security guarantees of NATO and EU membership.

Because of this dominant construction of Estonia as a nation-state under constant threat from foreign forces, recent region-building campaigns have been met with a considerable amount of local skepticism and disinterest. This is not to say the concept of Baltic regionalism is generally unpopular in Estonia, as the county’s old Hanseatic and Scandinavian ties are routinely touted and celebrated; rather, it is the specific nature of

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152 Moisio, 72, 79-81.
region-building efforts that discourages a greater Estonian interest. While the Estonian state has taken numerous actions to reassert its national dominance and sovereignty within its historical and ethnographic boundaries, with its citizenship and language policies as well as attempts to restore its interwar borders clearly delineating an internal “us” from an external “them”, region-building efforts have sought to foster a decidedly different conception of social and political space. Contending that the political and social differences of the Baltic societies have actually declined in their prevalence and importance, some region-builders have marketed this contention as affirmation and justification for deepening regional cooperation. This economic, social and political transnational cooperation, administered through non-state actors fundamentally questions the state’s position as the exclusive governing authority within its territory. This post-modern “separation of sovereignty and territoriality” conceptually softens and blurs the previously constructed boundaries used for national governance and identification, therefore holding the potential for redefining the internal “us”. Such a post-modern process is significantly at odds with Estonia’s dominant narratives of identity and sovereignty, which are constructed in opposition to the looming presence of threatening external “others.” Whether embodied by the civilizational threat of Russia and/or its “compatriots abroad” or any factor perceived to be a danger to the survival of Estonia’s indigenous population, national concepts of identity and sovereignty in Estonia are defensively exclusive and thus offer a marked contrast to those of many region-builders.

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154 See Joenniemi and Lehti, 128-129.
155 Lehti (1999), 427.
Because of these deep-seated differences, region-building initiatives are continually viewed by Estonia as strangely foreign notions.156 This conceptual divergence between the aims of region-builders and the dominant constructions of Estonian identity and sovereignty is not merely a theoretical observation but is substantiated by Estonia’s relatively standoffish approach to Baltic regional cooperation. Although Estonia and many of its cities, regions and institutions are participants in numerous forums of Baltic Sea cooperation, this is more representative of the extensive nature of the networks themselves rather than the level of Estonian enthusiasm. This trend is also observable in Latvia, Lithuania and to a lesser extent Finland, as Lehti comments regarding the Baltic States:

    They have mainly remained in the role of passive actors in regard to the new Baltic Sea cooperation; they have taken part in different networks but they have not actively envisioned and put forward projects of their own... They do not endeavor to create a world of their own. Their policies have been dominated by traditional interpretations of security and sovereignty and the Russian dimension 157

From the Estonian perspective, much like the other eastern Baltic countries, one of the largest incentives for engaging in regional cooperation is the receipt of Western financial transfers. This was especially true in the early to mid-1990s when financial resources were scarce, even though western Baltic states were more inclined towards projects that

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157 Lehti (1999), 431.
educated Estonians about the tenants of Western values and democracy. While Estonia’s current economic situation has substantially improved since its return to independence, Baltic regional projects continue to be primarily perceived as arenas for economic cooperation, with Estonians remaining aloof to notions of increased political cooperation and Baltic identity formation. Some commentators have construed Estonia’s participation in Baltic regional projects not only as passive, but effectively “forced”. With Estonia’s EU membership held as a primary goal among Estonian politicians, Dmitri Suslov’s statement regarding Estonia’s official support for Finland’s Northern Dimension Initiative is particularly noteworthy:

The fact that the Baltic States have now approved the Northern Dimension is not surprising at all. It would be strange to anticipate any other result, taking account the fact that, to a large extent, the terms of Estonian EU membership depend on Finland

Estonia’s participation in the Northern Dimension Initiative is, in fact, an excellent example of how the country has attempted to advance its agenda through Baltic regional networks. With Estonia engaged in a politically modern relationship with Russia, the country’s foreign policy elites found the NDI’s post-modern aspects somewhat odd. As Rein Ruutsoo comments, rather than unconditionally supporting the NDI, “[the] Baltic [States’] governments have usually acted as utility maximizers and been willing to co-operate when (regional) co-operation is likely to promote the chances

159 Ruutsoo, 68., Lehti (2003), 40.
160 Cited in Ruutsoo, 70.
161 Ibid, 66.
of achieving their objectives.\textsuperscript{162} In this regard, Estonia has stressed the use of NDI funds for infrastructure development in the Baltic region. Specific projects include the Baltic Electricity Ring, the Nordic Gas Grid project as well as developing information technologies and shared transport networks.\textsuperscript{163} Interestingly, although Russia would also ultimately take part in such projects, Estonia’s proposals have primarily focused on infrastructure development between the Baltic States and the Nordics, minimizing Russia’s importance.\textsuperscript{164}

Russia is not absent from Estonia’s Baltic regional discourse, however. Another example of Estonia’s current participation yet passive attitude toward regional cooperation is its development of cross-border cooperation projects with Russia’s Pskov and Leningrad Oblasts. In this area, a number of projects have been initiated, the first being the Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (Peipsi CTC). Founded in 1993, the Peipsi CTC engages Ida-Viru, Tartu, Jõgeva and Põlva counties in cross-border cooperation with the Russian districts of Gdov, Pskov, Pechory and Kingisepp. In addition to the Peipsi project, the Pskov-Livonia euroregion (formally the Council of Cooperation of Border Regions), initiated in March 1996 during a Baltic cooperation conference in Karlskrona, Sweden, promotes cooperation between Estonia’s Põlva, Võru and Valga counties, Russia’s Palkino, Pechory, Pskov, Pytalovo, Sebezhd districts as well as the city of Pskov, and Latvia’s Alūksne, Balvi, Ludza and Valka districts.\textsuperscript{165} Both

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid, 57.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, 57.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid, 57.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid, 57.
projects are designed to develop local infrastructure, civil society, and environmental protection as well as promoting issues pertaining to education, culture and economics.

Regardless of the efforts of the involved parties however, current cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia remains fairly uninspired. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, despite the significant presence of Russian-speaking settlers in Ida-Viru County, Russian Old Believers on Lake Peipsi and Orthodox Setu Estonians in southeastern Estonia, issues of language and culture are a major impediment to cross-border cooperation. While many Baltic region-building projects have capitalized on various historical and cultural affinities to naturalize their projects’ aims, the shared bonds between Russian and Estonian border dwellers are considerably lacking. Local Estonians largely express civilizational antagonism towards those across the border, while Russians also articulate feelings of hostility toward Estonians. In fact, the former governor of the Pskov Oblast had campaigned for his reelection in 2000 by stating, given the appropriate circumstances, Pskov’s Airborne Assault Troops were capable of capturing Tallinn in less than two days. This indeed sheds a more realistic light on the Peipsi CTC’s slogan, “The Lake That Unites.” In addition to ethnic animosities, with the increased use of the English language, the use of Russian as a means of public communication in Estonia has declined in importance, further complicating cooperation with Russia.

167 Mikenberg, 314.
169 Ibid, 318.
Because shared historical and cultural ties are often weak in the Estonian-Russian borderlands, cross-border cooperation lacks the cultural propellant that has been utilized in other regions to justify and naturalize cooperation projects. Consequently, like Estonian participation in Baltic regional cooperation generally, enthusiasm and available resources for cross-border cooperation are largely contingent upon receipt of foreign aid.\textsuperscript{170} Local governments have allocated funding for the organizations' administrative needs, however, the vast majority of cooperation projects are realized through the aid of foreign donors.\textsuperscript{171} For example, the European Commission, United Nations Development Program, OSCE, Nordic Council of Ministers, the Netherlands, British, U.S. and Norwegian Embassies to Estonia, the Baltic-American Partnership Fund and the Open Estonia Foundation have routinely funded the Peipsi CTC.\textsuperscript{172} Similarly, the Phare CREDO program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other sources, have funded the Pskov-Livonia program.\textsuperscript{173} Although obtaining project funding from abroad does not seem to be an issue, domestic financial commitments for cross-border cooperation are lacking significantly, thus limiting the administrative capacity for project implementation.\textsuperscript{174} While Estonian support for cross-border cooperation with Russia is low, experts from Tartu University have nevertheless remarked that Estonia is seemingly the more organizationally capable partner. This has raised concerns that it could become the project workhorse, granting more benefits to Russia than it receives in return. This of course, may further influence the Estonian cost-

\textsuperscript{170} Scott and Matzeit, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{172} Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation, 6 Feb. 2007, 18 Feb. 2007 <http://www.ctc.ee/>, Path: Peipsi CTC, Supporters.
\textsuperscript{173} Nordic Council, 12-13, Mikenberg, 316
\textsuperscript{174} Scott and Matzeit, 4., Mikenberg, 318.
benefit analyses of cross-border cooperation, granting the impression that government funds are of better use elsewhere.  

Because Estonian cross-border cooperation with Russia is administered in a top-down fashion, with local governments being the chief facilitator what some have called an “elitist project,” formal interstate relations between the two countries are also influential in determining the extent of cooperation efforts. Although post-Soviet relations between Estonia and Russia have always been chilly at best, this tendency shows no signs of stopping, as disputes pertaining to Estonian security and sovereignty continue to define its interstate relations with Russia. The most recent example of this was the Russian Duma’s early 2007 accusation to the Estonian government of “heroizing Nazism” in its attempts to remove the Soviet “Bronze Soldier” memorial from downtown Tallinn, a monument many ethnic Estonians perceive as symbolizing the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Consequently, while cross-border cooperation projects may indeed benefit those living in the borderlands, because sensitive issues of sovereignty and security are relatively omnipresent within Estonian-Russian relations, government support for increased cooperation is extremely tenuous. Because Russia’s looming presence has an enormous influence on Estonia’s foreign policy and thus its participation in Baltic regionalization projects, Western perceptions of Russia’s regional aims should also be discussed.

175 Mikenberg, 318.
176 See Scott and Matzeit, 4., Mikenberg, 319.
Looking West from Ivangoerd

Admittedly, Russia’s relationship with its western neighbors is a complicated one, and clearly cannot be briefly summarized with accuracy. Yet, Russia’s lasting legacy of political and cultural dominance in eastern Europe is undeniably Estonia’s chief security concern and has accordingly defined its participation of Baltic regional projects. Because Russia’s Baltic polices had substantially influenced Estonia’s Baltic endeavors, some particularly pertinent aspects of this relationship need to be illuminated. It should be noted however, it is not Russia’s policies toward Estonia and the Baltic that are important here per se, but how Estonia and western Baltic actors perceive and react to these polices.

As previously mentioned, from a western Baltic perspective Russia is largely perceived as a student of the West; a “locus of chaos and instability” that must be remedied through Europe’s provision of its own enlightened ideals of democracy and society. From Russia’s point of view, indulging the West’s superiority complexes is not necessarily a problem as long as it receives financial assistance from its European and western Baltic partners. Financial interests have even motivated Russia to engage in regional cooperation with Estonia, despite the chilly relations between the countries. This was evidenced in 2001 when the Pskov Oblast’s administration proposed increasing cross-border cooperation in the Estonian-Russian borderlands through the establishment of a euroregion. Yet, as Estonian scholars have noted, this move was hardly fueled by a genuine desire for greater societal and political cooperation, but rather the possible attainment of EU development aid, a luxury for which the oblast was previously ineligible. In this way, although the two countries may not agree on much, Russia’s

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178 Browning, 51.
179 Mikenberg, 313.
primary impulse for participating in Baltic region-building endeavors mirrors Estonia’s own fiscally-minded rationale.

There is however, substantial Western skepticism as to whether Russia can become a full-fledged partner in Baltic Sea cooperation schemes. Like the situation in Estonia, several preexisting political and social factors greatly question the successful implementation of Baltic regional projects in Russia’s Northwest. The first stems from Russia’s conceptualization of itself as a great power and liberator of Europe, distinctly contrasting from its marginalized position in recent Baltic cooperation initiatives as the seemingly most-backward and incompetent Eastern participant. Although Russia has taken part in a number of Baltic cooperation projects that it judged to be financially lucrative, concerning the “knowledge based” reform proposals preferred by western Baltic actors, it is uncertain as to what extent Russia will assume the position of the obedient student of the West.\(^\text{180}\) This concern is particularly relevant to Baltic cooperation because of Russia’s antagonistic relationship with the Baltic States, embracing its own self-glorifying interpretation of 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century history and its 21\(^{\text{st}}\) century social ramifications. From the Russian perspective, the 1940 invasion of the Baltic States was not an invasion at all, but based on mutual agreements for the Soviet expansion into the Baltic, thus making the Baltics’ declarations for a return to independence illegal secessionist movements under Soviet law.\(^\text{181}\) Clinging to this historic interpretation, Russia maintains problematic and politically cumbersome rhetoric in its attempt to rationalize its Stalinist Baltic policies. As Viatcheslav Morozov states,

\(^{180}\) Browning, 57-58, Lehti (2003), 26.
\(^{181}\) Van Elsuwege, 379.
The very fact that the Russian participants in the debate so readily accept this awkward position of having to justify Soviet policies in the Baltics proves that dissociating themselves from the Soviet past is a difficult task for them.\(^{182}\)

Indeed, for Russia to engage in increased levels of genuine, non-financially based cooperation with Estonia (assuming the willingness of the latter), its historical narratives and political rhetoric would have to dramatically shift from portraying Estonia as a hotbed of neo-fascist, anti-Russian activity to that of a valued partner.\(^{183}\) Therefore, while Russia may continue to participate in numerous superficial “cash for cooperation” schemes within the desecuritized Baltic regional arena, Russia’s national narrative as a great power fundamentally limits its deepened cooperation in the Baltic. This narrative is unlikely to be revised for the sake of Baltic regional cooperation.

In addition to some specific trends in Russian nationalism, the political and structural nature of the Russian government may also inhibit the local growth of regionalist activity. Because Baltic regional cooperation projects are decidedly non-state centric, welcoming the input of multiple civic actors in fostering regional bonds, they stand in stark contrast to Russia’s highly centralized state system. The success of deepened regional projects in Russia’s Northwest will involve the ability of Russian actors to interact in the post-modern environment the West has prescribed for the region. Russia achieving such regional links in the Baltic is doubtful because its central government remains incredibly influential in regional affairs as well as considerably wary


\(^{183}\) Ibid, 221-222.
of “separatist” tendencies in its borderlands. For instance, all measures taken in the field of cross-border cooperation require authorization by Russia’s central government. From the Estonian perspective, this not only complicates regional projects but also opens a channel for the Kremlin’s high-political maneuvers. Consequently, Russia’s participation in regional projects with the Baltic countries risks becoming politicized, creating yet another arena for political gridlock rather than cooperation. Furthermore, measures taken in late 2006 by the Kremlin to regulate the influence of foreign NGOs in Russia, an action severely criticized by Western governments, also highlights the centralized nature of Russia’s state system, raising doubts for its successful participation in a decentralized Baltic Sea region.

While Russia’s post-Soviet centralizing tendencies may be representative of the current administration’s style of governing, they are more importantly characteristic of Russia’s larger political legacies. Unlike the Western political environments that originally spawned post-modern Baltic region-building schemes, Russia continues to conceptualize the world as comprised of spheres of political and cultural influence. Moreover, whereas western Baltic region-builders have been eager to curtail the influence of the Baltic’s Western liberal democracies, in favor of the seemingly more democratic non-state-centered approach to governance, Russia has had no experience

185 Scott and Matzeit, 4.
187 Morozov, 240.
with liberal democracy, therefore questioning the applicability Baltic regional
initiatives. Suslov emphasizes this concern in the following comment:

Such properties of the Baltic region as the declining significance of
sovereignty and territoriality, the autonomy of subregional actors, blurring
state borders etc.... are by no means applicable to contemporary Russia
and, moreover, present a danger to her. The theories and models that have
been developed by the west European scholars on the basis of west
European experience and using west European terminological tools...are
extremely dangerous in cases where they are mechanically transferred to
an alien environment that is objectively not ready to receive them.

Because of Russia’s modernist political perceptions, the Baltic regional project has
naturally become a zero-sum situation for advancing Russia’s own national interests.
Rather than an arena for regional cooperation, the Baltic is perceived as an area of “acute
competitive struggle” in which Russia’s chief policy goals are “building up relations on
the basis of observing the country’s national interest” and obtaining “commercial benefit
for Russian exporters”. These regional objectives are particularly apparent in Russia’s
plan for a Baltic Oil Pipeline System (BOPS), a project that would strategically route
state-owned Russian oil pipelines under the Baltic Sea, which, if completed, could fulfill
Russia’s openly acknowledged aims of bolstering its political influence in the Baltic
States.

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188 Browning, 55.
189 Cited in Morozov, 236.
Russia’s modern approach to its foreign policy, its highly centralized state system and its uncompromising historical constructions of itself as a great power with significant interests in, if not “rightful” claims to, the independent Baltic States are of great significance and consequence to Estonia’s security agenda and thus to its participation in Baltic regional projects. Because Estonia’s national narrative has been constructed as a defensive struggle for existence against foreign threats, with the civilizational Russian threat representing the most historically vivid, omnipresent and menacing of all foreign threats to Estonia, Russia’s actions in the Baltic region will continue to influence Estonia’s own actions in the Baltic. Bordered by Russia, which is both hostile to the Baltic States and steadfastly modern in its foreign policy agenda, Estonia has no choice but to uphold its defensive constructions of sovereignty, security and identity because it perceives its very existence to be in question.\textsuperscript{192} Whereas politicians in Finland have habitually romanticized their country’s former status as a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire as a “golden age” with negligible state intervention in society, Estonia’s current relationship with Russia prevents the use of such historical metaphors.\textsuperscript{193} Local efforts to erect a statue of the Russian czar Peter the Great in late 2006 in Narva, a virtually monolingual Russian city on the Estonian-Russian border, are indicative of this tension. As the site of Russia’s bloody and destructive invasion of Swedish-administered Estonia in the early 18\textsuperscript{th} century, this issue prompted legal actions from Tallinn attempting to restrict the construction of controversial monuments\textsuperscript{194}. Although similar glorifications

\textsuperscript{192} Rasmussen, 161., Lehti (2003), 38-39.

\textsuperscript{193} Browning, 52-53.

\textsuperscript{194} In Peter the Great’s conquest of the Baltic, he ordered a scorched earth policy while advancing though Estonia and Livonia, razing Tartu (then Dorpat) to the ground and claiming the Baltic lands for Russia. For many ethnic Estonians, choosing to glorify the Czar on Estonian soil is historically unfounded. For the current debate, see Joel Alas, “Narva statue becomes another monumental dispute,” \textit{The Baltic
of Russia’s historical Baltic presence may be embraced in other Baltic countries, in
Estonia they continue to be highly politicized and controversial because Russia continues
to be perceived as a threat to Estonian security. To put it simply, Estonia’s active
participation in Baltic regional projects is hindered because it perceives Russia as
currently unwilling to renounce or change its modern perceptions of the region.
Therefore, Estonia is obligated to maintain its defensively modern constructions of its
own political space.

“Who are you calling Baltic?”

While Estonia’s participation in Baltic region-building has been characterized as
“passive”, this does not imply that all Estonian actors are completely unwilling or
incapable of forging and embracing regional bonds. In fact, reminiscent of Estonia’s pro­
active interwar attempts of forging regional ties, its post-Soviet constructions of the
region are indicative of its own prominent identity narratives. Although there are those in
Estonia who would like to establish greater ties with Russia, the rationale for doing so is
principally economic, primarily motivated by hopes to achieve increased access to
Russia’s large market. On a cultural level, numerous Estonian efforts have been made
to symbolically link Estonia with its surrounding region in the West. A prominent
example of Estonia’s own post-Soviet attempts of Baltic region-building was a speech
made by Estonia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs (now President of the Republic) Toomas
Hendrik Ilves at the Swedish Institute for International Affairs in December 1999. In his
proposed conceptual delineation of the region, Ilves stated,

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Scott and Matzeit, 4., Lehti (2003), 35.
We live in Yule-land, the area where one and the same word signifies both the birth of Christ as well as the solstice, the return of the sun, one of the two highpoints in the pre-Christian Calendar of the hyperboreans... At Yule-tide, Jultid, Jõuluaeg, we burn the Yule-log, a symbol of warmth and light at the darkest and coldest of times. The Yule-swath that extends from Iceland and Britain through the Scandinavians to the Finnic lands that include Estonia, ends there. In Latvia Yule is Ziemastvetki, in Lithuania Kaledos, in Russia Rozhdestvo.

Ilves’ logic for Yule-land is indeed strange; principally structuring the region on the geographic distribution of the use of one word, rather than the cultural practice the word linguistically conveys. This of course, can be done with any word (or custom, belief, etc.) shared by two or more discernible groups that coincides with the motivations of the person attempting to fortify the relationship in question, thus emphasizing the perceived importance of the relationship rather than the use of the word itself. In the relationship emphasized by Ilves, the word “Yule” stresses both Estonia’s northern and western orientation, minimalizing links with its eastern Baltic neighbors. Moreover, in his statements, Ilves found the very use of the term “Baltic” in identifying or describing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as problematic, declaring,

I think it is time to do away with poorly fitting, externally imposed categories. It is time that we recognize that we are dealing with three very different countries in the Baltic area, with completely different affinities.

There is no Baltic identity with a common culture, language group, religious tradition.\(^{197}\)

Ilves is not alone in his efforts to distance Estonia from its classification as a “Baltic” country however; other Estonians have grown disillusioned with the dominant spatial conceptions of northeastern Europe. In early 2002, the Estonian government founded Enterprise Estonia, a project promoting a revitalized, Western image of Estonia abroad. Through the organization, an initiative was promptly launched branding Estonia as a Nordic country, promoting the adoption of a new national flag in the “Scandinavian cross” design using the colors of its current flag, an altered national anthem and officially changing the country’s English language name from Estonia to Estland.\(^{198}\) Similar to Ilves’ Yule-land, adopting a new national flag would conceptually draw Estonia into the Northern European sphere, while casting off the Latin suffix “-ia” of its English name in favor of the Germanic suffix “-land” would disassociate the country from eastern Europe, where the former suffix is widely employed.\(^{199}\) Eerik-Niiles Kross, the founder of the name change proposal and associate of then Prime Minister Mart Laar, marketed his idea by stating, “The ending -ia signalizes something not-quite-Western. Coincidence or not, but after the first round of enlargening, the English name of no NATO member country ends with an -ia.”\(^{200}\) A similar argument was forwarded regarding the proposed adoption of a new national flag. Prominent journalist Kaarel Tarand, the project’s leader, employed an Olympic sporting scenario as a sales pitch:

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\(^{197}\) Ilves.


Seeing a tricolor flag and the text ‘Estonia’, the Italian thinks: well, somebody from the former Soviet Union, one of Russia’s post-communist daughters. But if there is a banner of the cross and ‘Estland’, the ‘well!’ will sound quite differently. In a Nordic way, as it is wanted by those who are doing PR for Estonia.  

These changes however, although rallying some support, have not found widespread acceptance in Estonia, with 60% of those polled wanting no change to the countries national symbols. Nevertheless, the popular support of Estonia’s government-administered Nordic makeover may be of little importance, with the Estonian government taking action abroad as well as at home. In late 2003, the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs organized an exhibition at the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate of the European Commission in Brussels marketing Estonia as “Nordic with a Twist.” This slogan was in fact, derived from Enterprise Estonia’s “Brand Estonia” project that was initiated two years earlier; a project that sought to market Estonia abroad through “the deployment of targeted, strategic messages communicated using visual and verbal components – in effect, branding the country.” These “strategic messages” were conveyed though use of specifically orchestrated color schemes, photographs, typefaces, logos and designs establishing and naturalizing Estonia’s image as a Nordic country somehow forgotten by the outside world. Illustrative of the project’s aims, and perhaps the accuracy of its portrayals of Estonia, the project’s summary states,

\[201\] Cited in Lagerspetz, 54.
\[202\] Deloy.
The slogans and even the modest and cool Nordic color schemes used have been chosen with the specific audiences in mind, and for this reason might at times seem unusual to Estonians themselves. The photographs, patterns and type design all follow the same style. They are universal and thus familiar and easily understood by foreigners.

The accuracy of these post-Soviet depictions of Estonia however, is not of primary importance here; what is important is the symbolic attempt to conceptually shift foreign perceptions of Estonia as an Eastern European country "somewhere around Russia” to a fundamentally Western and Nordic locale.

Efforts to conceptually transform Estonia from a “Baltic State” to a “Nordic State” are also indicative of prominent Estonian perceptions of the Baltic region as a post-Soviet construction of political space. As Ilves’ rhetoric highlights, some citizens of the Baltic States view their “Baltic” status as something to which they are condemned rather than something they should celebrate and affirm. Prominent Lithuanian politician Vytautas Landsbergis describes this position as the “Baltic ghetto,” a political situation where the Baltic States are acknowledged as Western but exist on “the periphery of the periphery.” As the term “ghetto” implies, it is not the Baltic States’ Western or European credentials that are in question, but their unrestricted ability to determine their own political itinerary in Europe and the world. In this regard, Estonia’s Nordic ambitions and its passive participation in Baltic region-building projects exemplify its political position in the region. Using the example of the Northern Dimension Initiative, Ruutsoo accordingly comments,

205 Ibid, 37.
206 Cited in Ruutsoo, 57.
207 Ruutsoo, 57, 63.
Assuming that Estonia now “almost” belongs to the “Nordic World” indicates a successful escape from the “Baltic ghetto” and that the country now belongs to the “real Europe.” This kind of discourse has little to do with a post-modern democratic approach to region-building. In these terms, the approach of the Estonians does not fit with the idea of the Northern Dimension, which was designed as a “common egalitarian space.” On the contrary, the Estonian discourse signals the fact that hierarchical premises underlying the discourse surrounding the new region-building may be rooted in the post-Soviet environment.208

In this way, for Nordic-minded Estonians, the development of Baltic region-building projects that require Estonia’s increased cooperation with its non-Nordic neighbors represent imposed political obligations, not Estonia’s genuine regional perceptions. Whereas, for many, Estonia’s Nordic transformation attempts epitomize a distinctly Estonian approach to the region’s post-Soviet geography, all-encompassing Baltic region-building projects are perceived as foreign political prescriptions.209

Although Estonia’s initiatives to conceptually realign the country’s spatial identity have employed a variety of new and bold tactics, they bear striking similarities to the region-building efforts of interwar Estonia. Despite the extreme implausibility of Europe’s northern peoples uniting due to their use of the word “Yule,” Ilves’ construction of Northern Europe is evocative of Edgar Kant’s Baltoscandia in its exclusion of Russia and the southern Baltic countries on cultural, religious and linguistic grounds, as well as their geopolitical relationship with Estonia. While departing from Kant’s logic of

208 Ibid, 63.
209 Ibid, 63.
excluding Iceland from the region on the basis of physical geography and his inclusion of Latvia on its dominant religious affiliations, Ilves' Yule-land represents the continuation of a discernable Estonian trend towards a western and northern spatial orientation. The same can be said of the Estonian government’s efforts promoting the country as “Nordic with a Twist,” distancing the country from the seemingly foreign and backward East. Indeed, like the interwar efforts for a Baltoscandia and a Baltic League, the success of Estonia’s post-Soviet region-building projects will largely be contingent upon their favorable reception in the western Baltic.

While there is no quintessentially “Estonian” stance on Baltic region-building projects, there are nevertheless discernable trends indicative of prominent local perceptions. In the case of western Baltic region-building projects like the CBSS, Estonia has remained a passive actor largely because of its longstanding struggle of securing its national sovereignty. As evidenced by its interwar experiences with Baltic regionalism, Estonia has long sought to defensively embed itself in western and northern Europe because it perceives Russia as a looming threat. Because the post-modern western Baltic region-building projects stand in stark contrast to Russia’s own modern administrative style and foreign policy, creating a post-modern eastern Baltic region will remain a western Baltic dream. This has not stopped Estonia from seeking to construct its own visions for the Baltic region however, with many in Estonia striving to transform the country into Europe’s next Nordic state. In this fashion, as Wæver states, Baltic regional cooperation is not problematic for eastern Baltic countries like Estonia, rather it is welcomed, “as long as it pulls you westwards”.

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210 Lehti (2003), 40.
211 Cited in Smith (2003), 63.
Conclusion

This thesis examined Estonian nation-building and Baltic region-building projects in the post-Cold War era. It delineated how different constructions of political and social organization and identity interact, overlap and occupy the same political space. To avoid reifying concepts like “the Baltic,” “Estonian identity,” and “Northern Europe,” I focused on both historical and contemporary perceptions of these concepts. Emphasizing the socially constructed nature of Baltic regionalism, I explored the non-Westphalian character of post-Soviet Baltic region-building projects. I then discussed prominent Estonian narratives of space, identity, and security, which offer a stark contrast to region-building’s narratives. By reviewing pertinent elements of Estonian history and contemporary politics, I explained Estonia’s deep-seated concerns of defensively securitizing its historically and ethnically constructed political space. To dispel overly simplistic characterizations of “modern” Eastern constructions and “post-modern” Western constructions of space and identity, I examined various western Baltic perspectives of Baltic region-building. In doing so, I illuminated the evolution of Baltic region-building projects from proposed informal networks like the “new Hansa” to institutionalized actors like the CBSS. By looking at both historic and contemporary examples of Estonia’s participation in regional projects, I highlighted how the country’s previously constructed narratives of space, identity, and security influence its participation in Baltic region-building.

Western conceptions of space, politics and identity have undeniably structured and propelled many aspects of post-Soviet Baltic region-building. It therefore comes as
little surprise that western Baltic actors have been the primary agents instituting and promoting these new conceptions of political space and identity. With such a concentration of region-building activity centered in the western Baltic, it is understandable why most interested academics focus their energies on the regional actors in Kiel, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Nevertheless, this thesis diverges from the approaches used by most academics by shifting the focus eastwards. While the eastern Baltic countries have not gone unmentioned by scholars of region-building, the attention paid to their perceptions and contributions to regional projects is surprisingly minimal. By making the exploration of these eastern perceptions a primary concern, I discuss issues of region-building often overlooked by many academics. While my decidedly “eastern” approach in the study of Baltic region-building is notable, it has also proved to be a limitation because few scholars have addressed these issues before. In the Estonian case, the work of Lehti, Ruutsoo and Made are significant exceptions212. Like these authors, although I explore eastern Baltic perceptions of Baltic region-building projects, I limit my focus at the national level. By concentrating on a single eastern Baltic country, Estonia, and its unique national constructions of space, identity, and security, I avoid monolithic generalizations of eastern Baltic perceptions of region-building. In this way, I illuminate the influence and importance of previously constructed concepts of national political space and identity upon Baltic region-building efforts.

However, the significance of this thesis extends beyond the Baltic region because it highlights some of region-building’s overarching complexities. While region-builders, regardless of their locality, aim to socially construct new conceptions of space and

212 See Lehti (2003), Lehti (1999), Made (2001) and Ruutsoo.
identity, it is overly simplistic to assume this can be achieved merely through implementing enough region-building projects. This fails to account for possible contradictory narratives within the proposed region. It also supposes that new regional narratives can be constructed successfully without altering or deconstructing existing conceptions of space and identity. Although some scholars argue national constructions of “us” and “them” have become blurred in the post-Cold War era, this thesis demonstrates that national narratives remain highly influential in the regional affairs. As I have explained using the Estonian case, prominent social and political narratives at the national level can influence countries’ participation in region-building projects. Because these narratives can be firmly rooted in specific cultural and historical constructions, they should be considered significant obstacles to region-building efforts, wherever they take place.

There are however, still many questions and issues concerning the interaction of region-building and nation-building that need exploring. National case studies would be highly pertinent in this regard. While it is clear that national narratives of space and identity can influence local perceptions and participation in region-building endeavors, how and to what extent this occurs in other national settings should be examined. Such studies might also explore the potential for region-building projects to become vehicles of national self-interest. Through these studies, it would be possible to explore how particular ideas and forms of regionalism are suited to various national environments. In the case of the Baltic Sea region, an in-depth comparative analysis of Baltic cooperation efforts and perceptions throughout the eastern Baltic would provide an excellent perspective of region-building’s applicability and appeal in post-socialist societies. Such
a study might also incorporate western Baltic views of region-building as a point of comparison. Although I have explicated how Estonia's dominant security and identity constructions are incongruent with those of western Baltic region-building projects, further analyses concerning region-building in specific eastern Baltic countries would be beneficial. If Baltic regional cooperation is to grow and intensify, a better understanding of the region's various political environments will be invaluable.
Works cited


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