

Refugee Quota: Is Estonia Ready to Receive Refugees? A Review of the Literature on Migration and Ethnic Minorities in Estonia

Aminul Islam

Institute of International and Social Studies, Tallinn University
Narva MNT 25, 10120, Tallinn, Estonia

 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5755/j01.eis.0.10.16104>

This study analyzes literature about migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia. Following initial identification and using content analysis process, existing literature were characterized into four major patterns: definition of immigrant population in Estonia, emigration and ethnic return migration in Estonia, formation of ethnic minorities and their structure, and ethnic minorities and integration. Despite of having long historical background of emigration, return migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia; existing literature lacks focusing on refugees and ethnic minorities having background from outside Europe. New question emerged from the reviewed literature, whether Estonia is ready to accept quota refugees under EU quota system?

KEYWORDS: Refugee Quota; Emigration; Return Migration; Immigration; Estonia.

World is changing constantly. Homogeneous societies, which remained unchanged are quickly turning remnant of the past. Societies are becoming more diverse than ever. Social, financial and political conflicts are running on the same side where continuous migration, intercultural communication, agreements, cooperation all testify the fact that societies are going through on an age of diversity (Sharmin 2008). As a result of ever increasing globalization and immigration in decades, researchers and policymakers emphasized a new argument regarding the extent it is possible to ensure immigrants own identify at the same time integrate into their host societies. Countries have been designing specific programs to tackle ever increasing challenges that are emerged out of these multicultural societies to create a cohesive society (Nimmerfeldt, Schulze & Taru 2011).

Studies on immigration in Europe after the Second World War featured diversity from movement of population to the movement of labour. In the recent decades it has changed again as Masso

EIS 10/2016

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Submitted
03/2016

Accepted for
publication
09/2016

Abstract

Introduction



European Integration Studies
No. 10/ 2016

pp. 73–80

DOI 10.5755/j01.eis.0.10.16104

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(2009, p. 253) pointed out that 'aims of immigrants have changed from an individual desire for a better standard of living to the desire that any standard of living is better than none'. However, in the 1990s migration studies in Europe mostly characterized with growing interest in ethnic return migration which was poorly investigated before 1990s (Kulu & Tammaru 2000).

Estonia makes a very interesting context and it is one of those few countries in Europe where emigration, return migration and immigration have varied in different times and in different background (Kulu & Tammaru 2000; Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste 2010; Kulu 1998). By studying the specific setting of studies on migration in Estonia, this study will enhance our understanding of the pattern of migration studies in Estonia. Therefore the objectives of this paper are:

- _ to review the existing major literature on migration and ethnic minorities in Estonia,
- _ to identify any major gaps in the existing literature to be studied in future.

Methodology

Electronic search was carried out through social service abstracts and Google scholar, considering the fact that these databases used to inform social science research and their access is flexible. Analysis mostly focused on manuscripts, and it also includes some other types of literature and reports that might influence researchers and policy makers. This data based search was focused from interdisciplinary perspective. The search was conducted using the terms 'ethnic minorities in Estonia', 'migrants', 'immigrants', and 'refugee'. Search was not restricted by any certain dates or any types of publication but eventually all of them were peer reviewed journal articles. In total 122 publications emerged from the search, after eliminating duplicate abstracts, coming out from both databases, 72 different publications were picked. Of the 72 publications, 25 were finally omitted due to their lack of relevance.

To examine the patterns of existing literatures, content analysis was utilized, as it is a tool that gives the scholars to find out specific concepts within text. (Markoff et al. 1975; Neuendorf 2001; Weber 1990). This is a process which has been utilized by Bradshaw and Graham (2009) to localize relevant literatures. Following this process, existing literature were characterized into four major patterns:

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| 1 | definition of immigrant population in Estonia and to put them into perspective, | 3 | formation of ethnic minorities and their structure, |
| 2 | emigration and ethnic return migration in Estonia, | 4 | ethnic minorities and integration. |

These literatures were reviewed with an intention to identify the major gaps from the existing academic works in order to design and bring up the recent discussion on migration and to make an effective intervention for the current discussion of immigration aspect into the whole perspective.

Definition of Immigrant Population in Estonia

In a study of immigrant population in Estonia; Saar (2009) pointed out that Immigrants are those who are living in Estonia and whose parents were born in a foreign state. In case one parent was born in Estonia and the other not, they are not considered as immigrant population. However, if one non Estonian is known or if parents remained undefined, the potential respondent might fall into immigrant population.

Immigrant population in Estonia in the recent time can be divided into first and second generation immigrants. First generation immigrants are those who along with their parents were born abroad. Second generation immigrants are those who are the descendents of the first generation or to be précised 'people who were born in Estonia but whose parents were born abroad' (Saar 2009, p. 9).

This makes it significant perspective to study Estonian immigrants and ethnic minorities. Ethnic composition in Estonia experienced a drastic change, which was prompted in the years of German and Soviet occupation and Second World War. The last census that was carried out before the war was in 1934, the share of non Estonian in Estonia was around 12 percent. The absolute number was 134, 000 and these non Estonian minorities mostly comprised of Russians, Germans, Swedes, Jews and Latvians. During the period of soviet rule, the share number of non Estonian increased rather considerably up to 25 percent of the total population and the number went high up to 204,000 in 1959 when the first post war census was held. Before soviet collapse, the last census was held in 1989 when the country's non Estonian share was 39 percent and they comprised population from different soviet states mostly from Russia and Ukraine (Tammaru & Kulu 2003, p. 105)

According to the 2000 census, non Estonian consists 31 percent of Estonian total population, Russians being dominated(26%) followed by Ukrainian(2%), Byelorussians(1%) and others(3%) (Van Elsuwege 2004; Ham & Tammaru 2011). However, an important statistics here to be noted that According to the ministry of Interior, as of 1st September 2015; 9.4 percent of total population in Estonia were citizens of other country and persons with undetermined citizenship were of 6.3%. Therefore "Estonia has one of the highest share of ethnic minorities in Europe" (Ham & Tammaru 2011, p. 315). Later parts of this paper would focus on emigration and ethnic minorities in Estonia and the concept of naturalization that arguably makes the entire discussion of Immigrants in Estonia and ethnic minorities into a complex perspective.

Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste (2010) in their study of the formation and development of the Estonian diaspora figured out three major waves of emigration from Estonia. First wave was East ward and took place between mid nineteenth and world war second. It was the period when Estonia was part of Russian Empire. Emigration from Estonia was at its peak in this time and approximately 19 percent of total population of Estonia migrated to Russia. In 1917 the total number of Estonian diaspora was 215,000 people (p. 1159). The formation of this east ward Estonian diaspora was due to demographic transition and population boom in the rural parts of Estonia on one hand (Katus 1989) and on the other hand contemporary politics and the period along with some social and economic factors played a vital role (Jansen 2007). This flow of eastern diaspora begun to decrease after the First World War. (Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste 2010).

The second wave of emigration from Estonia was mostly towards western countries and it took place during the Second World War time in the form of war displaced people. Their major destination was United States, Sweden and Canada. Even though many of them initially left for Germany and from there they resettled to other western countries (Kulu & Tammaru 2000). This was the time when Estonia experienced its second peak of emigration in its size and the total number was around 200000 people. This number remained quite stable for a period of time (Andrae 2005; Reinans 2006; Tammaru, Haukanomm & Anniste 2010). However, the main reason for this was because during the soviet occupation both return migration and migration towards West was almost non existence (Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste 2010).

However, Western diaspora started again when Estonia experienced its third wave of emigration after regaining its independence. Unlike first and second wave, the number was smaller and it took place in the form of ongoing process and its pace has been increased since 2004 when Estonia became a member of the European Union. Germany, Finland and other EU countries are major attraction for the new wave. In the recent times Estonian diaspora forms 12 percent of total Estonian population. Significant aspect is, 'at the beginning of Estonian diaspora it was mostly Eastern or Russian ward but this share has now dropped to 33 percent and

Emigration and Ethnic Return Migration in Estonia

Finland is soon going to replace to host the large number of Estonian community' (Tammaru, Haukanomm, & Anniste 2010, p. 1172).

These waves of emigration lead a phenomenon of return migration. Estonia makes it very unique as it is 'one of those very few countries where migrants have a varied emigration background' (Kulu & Tammaru 2000, p. 349) These return migrants are the one who are the descendents of those who left for Russia during the end of nineteenth and the beginning of 20th century, and those who left during the second world war period to west. As Kulu (1998) pointed out that return migration is by product of emigration.

Two waves of return migration can be pointed out from the existing literature. First wave can be considered between 1940 and 1989 and the second one is when Estonia regained their independence in 1990s. About 52 to 54 thousands of Estonian emigrants returned from the Soviet Union to Estonia in the first wave (Kulu 1997). However, return migration in the 1990s can be characterized as modest, as the numbers are low in compare to the previous wave. During the years following re-independence, about 1100–1200 Estonian diaspora returned voluntarily (Kulu & Tammaru 2000, p. 354). During the first wave it was only the eastern diaspora who returned but in the 1990s emigrants have also returned from the west which formats 29% of the return migrants However still majority of the return migrants came from the former Soviet Union and the neighboring Baltic countries, which forms 71 percent of total return migration.

Among these return migrants who emigrated to Russia, there were no significant differences to select return migration between generation, but considerable differences can be found among those who left to the West during the second world war and their descendents. Therefore majority of return migrants are those who were born and grew up in Estonia (Kulu & Tammaru 2000). This leads to the fact that return migrants might have an age dimension and they might fall into elder generation. It was however evident that those who returned from the West, came alone; on the other hand those who came from Russia, returned with whole family. Estonian identity however played important role to make their journey back to Estonia for both groups.

In 1998, Kulu (1998, p. 313) carried out a study on return migration of West Siberian Estonians from the Omsk province and this study reveals that 'the main career of the migration behavioral norm is generation'. He figured out that return migration over a long period of time perhaps don't depend on monetary term but people's identity, values etc. This follows them even when the generation goes by.

However, while emigration and return migration was common feature of the migration pattern in Estonia, 'immigration begun immediately after Estonia was reincorporated into the Soviet Union in the later 1944' (Ham & Tammaru 2010), which actually made a significant number of ethnic minority in Estonia who does not have Estonian background.

Ethnic Minorities in Estonia

It was not only emigration that took place in Estonia. World war second and the years of and Soviet occupation changed Estonian Ethnic composition (Tammaru & Kulu 2003). After the Second World War when Estonia was incorporated with Soviet Union, immigrants were needed to rebuild destroyed industrial infrastructure and housing sector. During that period "Russification" also took place in the Baltics (Cole & Filatotchev 1992) and many communist party members and military personnel from Soviet army were brought to Estonia (Tiit 1993). However, these immigrants were mainly engaged in the industrial sector (Tammaru 2001, p. 599).

This flow of immigration to Estonia remained consistent and persisted during the post war period. The peak time however was between 1960s and 1970s (Tammaru & Kulu 2003). Even though return migration took place in times, this continuous immigration to Estonian made a stable and

positive net migration during the soviet occupation and the non Estonian share of total population increased considerably, rising from 3 percent of Estonia's total in 1945 to 25 percent in 1959 (Tammaru & Kulu 2003). According to the census which took place in 2000, the Share of non Estonians in Estonia is almost 31 percent of total population (Van Elsuwege 2004; Ham & Tammaru 2011). Most of them are Russians followed by small number of Ukrainian, Belarusians and Finns.

However, in the common traditional sense ethnic Russians are not Immigrants as most of them came in Estonia during the soviet period when Estonia was a part of this union (Nimmerfeldt, Shulze, & Taru 2011). When Estonia regained its independence and Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, these people became minority. In this period many Russians chose to return Russia but at the same time many remained in Estonia. In the Early 90s Estonian government decided to introduce naturalization policy. This policy gave automatic citizenship to 'those persons who held citizenship in 1940 and their descendents'(Schulze 2014). This policy privileged Ethnic Estonians almost in all sectors. This policy gave roughly two-third of the country's residents to its citizenship but huge number of residents who were mostly Russians, forced to naturalization. A process where persons who desires to get the citizenship must pass language and the knowledge of Estonian law and constitution (Nimmerfeldt, Shulze, & Taru 2011). 'Through this process, state hope was either to integrate them or their out migration' (Schulze 2014). However this policy made a number of people as stateless as only a small percentage of Russian were proficient in Estonian to get the citizenship (Park 1994, p. 73). 32 percent of the population turned to stateless right after naturalization policy was introduced. As of April 2012, a significant number of persons remained stateless, which was 6.9 percent of countries total residents, while 7 percent of these ethnic Russian speakers taken Russian citizenship as an alternate of being stateless (Schulze 2014, p. 26). This makes a significant perspective to see how ethnic minorities integrate themselves with the host society.

Research on immigrants in Estonia mostly focused on Russian speaking first or second generation immigrants putting the emphasize on educational level of immigrant population, position of native and immigrants population in the labor market, working life of native and immigrant population, ethnic minority and majority unions, their geographical location, political and civic participation of immigrants etc. To examine the relationship between structural, cultural, social and identificational integration dimensions among second generation Russians in Estonia, Nimmerfeldt (2011) and his colleagues identified that in Estonia, relationship between structural and cultural integration is positive and according to this study higher level of social and identificational integration is not related to higher level of structural integration. Second generation Russian retains a strong ethnic identity and socializes primarily with other Russians. Ham and Tammaru (2011) in their research on ethnic minority and majority unions in Estonia came out with a finding that Russian speaking immigrant women are less likely to make a union with Estonians, which according to them is ultimate evidence of the integration of ethnic minorities into the host societies. In a study of political and civic participation of second generation Russian and Estonian Youth, Schulze (2014, p. 19) pointed out that 'Ethnicity remains a significant predictor of political and civic participation. It is likely that more Estonians vote in municipal elections and participate in a voluntary association than Russian'. However, the percentage of individuals with higher level of education is lower among immigrants than among native population (Saar, 2009) and they have poor Estonian language capacity. Among Ethnic minorities who continue higher education have more tendency to go abroad for their studies than majority Estonians (Pungas etal. 2015). Schulze (2014, p. 22) pointed out that 'Russians with excellent Estonian language skills are more likely to participate in voluntary association than those who don't have the proficiency'. In a study of Ethnic Dimension of suburbanization in Estonia, Tammaru and his colleagues (2011) found that probabilities to suburbanize among ethnic minorities are lower compare to the Estonians.

Ethnic Minorities and Integration

It is less likely that minorities would move to the rural areas. Therefore most of them concentrate to the major cities in Estonia. Leisure activities have been viewed as an important act as this is when majority and minority members meet and undertake similar activities. In a study of ethnic segmentation in leisure activities, Kamenik, Tammaru & Toomet (2014) pointed out that almost in all leisure activities there are important ethnic differences in Estonia, mostly because of their socio-economic status, where Russian speaking minorities are relatively poor. Other reason is residential pattern of ethnic groups which is different and mostly concentrated in large cities that too based on different zone, which makes them feeling being stranger in leisure time places.

Naturalization policy deeply touched ethnic minorities and their identity and value system. After regaining independence, Estonia adopted liberal and free market economy. Ethnic minorities found it difficult to find a job and those who found a job had low salary. 'As a result a large number of non Estonian populations found themselves as socially exclusive' (Leinsalu, Vagero, & Kunst 2003, p. 587). A study was done on ethnic differences in mortality in Estonia before and after the collapse of Soviet Union. The results suggested that overall life expectancy has been increased after the collapse of Soviet Union but Russian speaking ethnic minorities had higher mortality than Estonians mainly because of their poverty, political upheaval and over alcohol consumption (Leinsalu, Vagero, & Kunst 2003). Differences in terms of leisure time activities, civic, political participation, and educational level or mortality rates have been clearly evident from the literatures. However, Varnik & Kolves (2005) pointed out that because of the introduction of naturalization policy, ethnic Russians lost their privileged status that they were receiving during the soviet period and it may have caused stress leading them to commit even suicide. During the soviet period suicide rate was lowest among Russians which has now increased significantly and their suicide rate is very much higher than Estonians.

Migration research in Estonian society has mostly been built on four major dimensions: emigration from Estonia and return migration of Estonian population to Estonia; Immigrant population in Estonian society; characteristics and structure of ethnic minorities and; integration aspect of ethnic minorities in different sectors. None of them particularly focused on refugees or immigrants having ethnic background outside of Europe.

Conclusions

- Scholarly works on migration research in Estonia covered its historical background of emigration and return migration along with immigration to Estonia; its Russian speaking ethnic minorities and their integration aspect in different sectors. However a significant gap can be observed, as very few studies have focused on other groups of migrants in Estonia. Ukrainian, Byelorussians ethnic minorities for example have not been emphasized in the scholarly works. Hyvonen (2008, p. 421) studied Finish immigrant women in Estonia to see their acculturation between two groups, one living in the finish enclave isolated from Estonian society and the other into the Estonian mainland. Any notable difference in terms of interpersonal contacts back their home in Finland between these groups was not found. On the other hand she found respondents, who had weak ties and they don't have any social contacts within Estonian society and they even preferred to use Finish welfare and healthcare services. This was an interesting study that opens up to carry out more future research on immigrants who are relatively less in number but have similar ethnic or language background with Estonia.
- According to the most recent statistics, 3% immigrants in Estonia represent 'other' groups. Who belong to this group and where are they from needs to be studied thoroughly. Refugee studies have been a significant part of migration studies. Existing migration literatures in Estonia do not cover this group of migrant people. Almost as if this country does not have any international refugees. While the discussion on refugees and their resettlement goes on along with hegemonic discourse, the number of refugees has been increasing all over the world. EU countries for instance have re-

ceived more than six hundred thousand asylum seekers in 2014 compared to 2013, when the number was around four hundred thousand (Bourgeois 2015), which makes fourteen percent increase of the evaluation percentage from 2013 to 2014. Estonia joined in the European Union in 2004 and schengen treaty in 2007. In 1997 Estonia ratified the 1951 convention relating to the status of refugees and the corresponding 1967 protocol. Estonia has traditionally been viewed as least attractive country for asylum seekers. According to Inter Press Service, it might be the case that Estonian living standard is lower than those of its neighboring countries (Manni 2013). Estonian Human rights center in their report on refugees addressed that the number of asylum seekers has been quite low and it might be the case that general public is not aware of this issue and unfortunately this topic has not been a priority on the governmental level either (Saar 2013). In this report, Estonian Human rights center actually used their data up to the year 2011. However, in 2009 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 40 and in 2011 it was 67. Most recent data from Eurostat represents a very significant story, as of 2013 the number of asylum seekers in Estonia was 95 and in 2014 it went high up to 155 and the evaluation rate is 63 percent which is even higher than overall EU rate.

- However, all these information and statistics represents before the death of a three year old Syrian boy who washed ashore in turkey while aiming to get a shelter in Europe with his family because of the Syrian war. According to an American news agency, this has changed the entire migration situation in Europe (Clarke & Shoichet 2015). His dead body was found near the sea side in Turkey, this photo went viral on media and this was the time when Europe received high number of migrants and refugees. This influx of migrants and refugees in Europe made it as crisis and to handle this crisis, European Commission president announced the proposal of “120,000 additional asylum seekers will be distributed among EU nations, with binding quotas”. Postimees, an Estonian popular newspaper reports that according to this new proposal, Estonia will have to receive 372 migrants. Estonian Interior minister Hanno Pevkur confirmed that as a part of the quota system, Estonia will receive 150 Refugees very soon in its first phase. (Erllich, Pulver, Toomas 2015)
- It is a significant number for a country which has only 1.3 million populations. Therefore, Estonia as a global society and a part of European Union and its organizations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees might face new challenges. These Quota refugees would probably have non European ethnic background. In a study of readiness to accept immigrants in Europe, Masso(2009) carried out a research asking question, whether they would like to have immigrants of different race and ethnicity and from outside Europe; Estonia placed at the bottom of chart just scoring 22 right after Hungary which scored 23 being the lowest, when Iceland and Sweden were at the top scoring 1 and 2 respectively. This was a scale of 23, where 1 being highest and 23 being lowest. This might reflect to the fire incidence that took place at Vao Center (house of Estonian asylum seekers) in September 2015, while refugee and migration crisis was at its peak in Europe. Later Estonian prime minister informed that ‘An evil person set fire to refugee’s house’. (Erllich, Pulver, Toomas 2015).
- In the globalized world and a part of EU, Estonia will have to face migration and refugees crisis and will have to deal with the new Quota system. It is quite often perceived that humanitarianism is the ideology of hegemonic states in the era of a globalization. Chimni(2000, p. 244) in her study of relationship of globalization and humanitarianism stated that ‘while humanitarianism has always had a presence in the international politics, it has never had the salience it possesses in the recent days’. While there is no significant academic research on existing refugees, Estonia will soon receive Quota refugees. Question can be asked whether Estonia is ready to accept quota refugees under EU quota system which has been introduced recently. Despite of having long historical background of emigration, return migration and ethnic minorities, Estonia have less experience hosting non European ethnic minorities and refugees. Therefore their policy makers, academician and researchers will have to address this aspect to tackle the challenges which are emerging from migration crisis to build up a cohesive society.

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About the author

AMINUL ISLAM

MA in Asian Studies, Lund University, Sweden

PhD Candidate, Tallinn University, Estonia

School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University

Fields of research interests

Refugee settlement, immigrants integration, acculturation, ethnicity etc

Address

Narva MNT 25, 10120, Tallinn, Estonia

Tel. 00372 58220671

E-mail: aminulislam80@yahoo.com