

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Master's thesis

Kaspar Schultz

**Pragmatism or identity-driven foreign policy? – Russia in Estonian parliamentary  
foreign policy debates between 2004-2020**

Supervisor: Heiko Pääbo, PhD

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources, and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

Kaspar Schultz

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## **Pragmatism or identity-driven foreign policy? – Russia in Estonian parliamentary foreign policy debates between 2004-2020**

**Kaspar Schultz**

### **Abstract**

The objective of this thesis is to analyse Estonian foreign policy discourse on Russia after the accession into the EU, in light of crises in bilateral and multilateral relations. My research questions are, first, how value-driven or pragmatic has the parliamentary discourse on the relations with Russia been, and second, what is the substance of Estonia's normative foreign policy towards Russia. Additionally, I seek to determine the extent to which Europeanization has penetrated national interests and whether national interests are elevated to the EU level, or vice versa. In my thesis, I used the ontological security theory to explain why Estonia has sought conflictual relations with Russia and how such relations are maintained in the discourse. I used the qualitative content analysis to analyse foreign policy debates held annually in the parliament and developed a coding system based on the debates. In the final analysis, I merged the empirical results with ontological security theory to provide answers for the research questions. The main conclusions of the work are that both pragmatism and values are used to justify the lack of relations with Russia – pragmatism is more common in bilateral relations and values are more common to international crises. The main values that frame Estonia's relations with Russia are derived from Russia's breaches of international law that expose Estonia's own physical insecurity. There also exists a high level of implicitness when it comes to the discourse on Russia and its motivations in bilateral and multilateral relations. Finally, the EU framework is mostly used to pursue national interests in relations with Russia and not for adapting Estonia's policy to the EU's policy.

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# Introduction

The Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation are tied together by history and geography, yet nowadays the relations between the two are scarce. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Estonia as well as the other Baltic states chose to break with the past and opted for the integration with the European Union and NATO. Russia, despite some attempts to also cooperate with the West, stayed mostly focused on the domestic situation and the post-Soviet region during the 1990s. Estonia's bilateral relations with Russia became tense quickly due to the legal continuity principle of Estonia's statehood, citizenship policies, and the protracted withdrawal process of Russian troops. Estonia's accession into the EU and NATO was hoped to be a potential remedy to the difficult relations, providing Estonia with the necessary security guarantees to normalize relations. However, this has not been the case, as the years after the accession have also witnessed crises in both bilateral and multilateral relations. The breakdown of the border treaty ratification due to the references made to the Treaty of Tartu and the Soviet occupation, high-profile espionage cases, and the Bronze Night riots have soured bilateral relations, while Russian military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine have caused concerns over a similar military threat facing Estonia. Memory politics has led to an additional front in the rivalry, creating competing claims on the European level regarding the legacy of the Soviet Union and its role in World War 2 as the liberator/occupier. Taken together, the uneasy relations between Estonia and Russia are multi-layered and complex, tackling questions of identity formation and consolidation on multiple levels.

The international dimension of these relations has been thoroughly explored in the existing journalistic and academic literature. However, these debates often put Estonia together with either other Baltic states or Eastern Europe in general. While these countries have many similarities, treating them as the same could create a false premise, whereby the interests of the aforementioned actors are seen as static, and essentially the same across the region. Changes in domestic politics can however have significant effects on the foreign policy priorities of states. For example, after the 2019 parliamentary elections in Estonia, the national conservative EKRE party became a member of the ruling coalition, complicating the otherwise positive discourse on the EU. However, the changes

can also be slow. Europeanization, the socialization process within the EU that can lead to a blurring of national and European interests, is also a factor influencing foreign policy formation at the domestic level. These European interests are based on what can be thought of as European values, as they do not benefit any nation specifically, but the EU as a whole. For Estonia, shared values are of key importance, because they enable making its national interests intelligible for other members of the Union. This in turn leads a habit of protecting interests through the articulation of values in international relations. As a result, these values become embedded into the foreign policy rhetoric, transforming how problems are understood. Domestic processes, therefore, need to be considered to understand how international relations play out.

The objective of this thesis is to examine how Estonia has maintained its relations with Russia after the structural change of joining the EU, in light of crises in bilateral and multilateral relations. My research questions are, first, how value-driven or pragmatic has the parliamentary discourse on the relations with Russia been, and second, what is the substance of Estonia's normative foreign policy towards Russia. Additionally, I will seek to determine the extent to which Europeanization has penetrated nationalist interests, and whether nationalist interest is being elevated to the European level or vice versa. These research questions will help answer the central research problem of how Estonian foreign policy discourse has adjusted to the new geopolitical reality on one of its key external interests and whether there have been significant changes over time.

Mainstream international relations theories offer competing explanations to explain Estonia's foreign policy towards Russia. The realist and liberal schools would explain it through the imbalance of power, concentrating on different aspects, but Estonia's behaviour would still contradict the theory. Realism would predict that Estonia would bandwagon with Russia because its allies would be too far away for effective external balancing. Liberalism could not explain why Estonia would choose to not utilize international organizations for developing relations or would support sanctions against Russia that increased its vulnerability. Instead, I will use the constructivist theory of ontological security to explain how the narratives of Estonia-Russia relations are maintained, and why such a relationship is preferred to other, alternative policy options. While all the theories offer insights into the relations between Estonia and Russia,

constructivism provides the best approach for analysing the domestic level of relations. Liberalist and realist schools incorporate some elements of domestic considerations into the behaviour of states on the international stage but their over-reliance on the international system to explain state behaviour proves to be their main weakness. Additionally, I will use the framework of Europeanization to explain the changes in the discourse that took place after the accession into the EU.

I will conduct the analysis on Estonian foreign policy debates that are held annually in the parliament – a place where the Estonian foreign policy developments and global events are discussed and scrutinized. The debates bring together all members of parliament, creating a diverse discourse of different viewpoints and priorities, which makes it possible for politicians to challenge the existing narrative on relations. Another strength of these debates is that they are accessible to both the public and foreign observers, as the speeches are dispersed to the public and translated into foreign languages. This creates exposure to both the domestic and the international audiences, thereby limiting and framing the discourse in a way that allows for identity issues to surface. While the debates are an excellent choice of data for a longitudinal study, providing reliable data, there are also some caveats. Debates are likely to produce a lot of data irrelevant to my research problem or give superficial data on relations with Russia. However, they do not limit anyone's opportunity to speak about Russia or relations with Russia, therefore not constituting a serious problem for my research. Second, the foreign minister and the chairman of the foreign affairs committee have the longest allocated time to speak, which may skew the results as the representatives of both parliament and the government have additional obligations which other speakers do not have. I will, however, argue that with certain exceptions, speakers face similar pressures due to public exposure.

I will concentrate on the years where significant political developments took place in either bilateral or multilateral relations with Russia. These are the failure to ratify the border treaty in 2005, the Bronze Night riots in 2007, Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the war in Ukraine in 2014, and finally, the state of play in relations in 2020. I decided to focus on the significant developments for two reasons. First, these developments constitute moments in relations where the existing Self-Other relationship is affected, but

it is not certain how the existing narrative will change as a result. Politicians may choose to either fit the development into the existing narrative to make sense of it or change the narrative due to the development. Second, while Russia is certainly an important foreign actor for Estonia, it is not the only one. If there are no significant political developments with a Russian dimension, then the comments regarding Russia may remain rather superficial, and make drawing conclusions difficult. Therefore, concentrating on years with political developments will allow for better discovery of the existing narrative. Choosing the years for analysis will be a subjective decision and the reasons for them will be explained in detail in the methodology chapter. In the empirical chapter, I will conduct qualitative content analysis to provide a detailed overview on the frequency of different narratives and identify the main ideas in them. I will use MAXQDA to code the debates multiple times, developing the codebook from the debates. In the final analysis, I will merge the empirical results from coding with the ontological security theory to explain why certain rhetoric persists over time.

This thesis seeks to fill the gap in the existing literature, which often covers Estonia-Russia relations under a broader scope of Baltic states/Eastern European relations with Russia that can lead to over-generalization. It also means that conclusions beyond Estonia cannot be drawn from this work, although it may be used as a starting point for analysing other countries. By providing a domestic explanation to the bilateral relations, this thesis will also contribute to the research on Europeanization, specifically how the EU may influence the ontological security of states. This research aims to build a solid foundation for future studies in this field. The thesis proceeds as follows. First, I will introduce the main concepts of study and the theoretical expectations to the analytical part, then I will broadly cover the earlier research made in Estonia-Russia relations. The third part will describe the methodology, sampling choices and the method used. Then, I will present the results of the empirical work and the analysis. The last part concludes the thesis.

# 1. Guaranteeing security - different perspectives

The purpose of this chapter is to present the mainstream theories of international relations and how they would explain cooperation and rivalry between states. These theories help explain why states conduct their foreign policies in their particular ways and what interests they pursue in relations. First, I will explain how relations between states take place according to the realist and liberalist theories and explain why these theories cannot fully explain Estonia's complicated relations with Russia. I will then turn to the constructivist theory and seek to explain the relations through identity considerations, employing the theory of ontological security. Furthermore, the framework of europeanization will help to explain how the EU membership frames Estonian foreign policy decisions.

The concept of security has to be elaborated beforehand, as it is an elusive concept, going beyond just physical security considerations. I will adopt a working concept for my thesis, using the definition of Arnold Wolfers' (1957, 484) that refers to security as "some degree of protection of values previously acquired". This definition of security has two benefits. First, as Wolfers points out himself, this necessarily means that security is a matter of degree, rather than a binary phenomenon. It also means that security is rarely ever achieved in fullness; rather, it is a perpetual practice or search. Second, David A. Baldwin (1997, 13-14) argues that the word "values" encompasses more than just "political independence and territorial integrity", but also other aspects that may not be considered existential by actors. This also means that pursuing equally important values may clash and result in compromises in security (Baldwin, 1997, 18-20) – therefore the question of security should be thought of as a balancing act between security and other values. This definition helps to move security away from the purely physical interpretation of security to include other values, like economic welfare and identity.

## 1.1 Balancing against the threat

Realism is based on the idea that states operate in an anarchical international system, which means that there is not a global sovereign to enforce international order. Therefore, the states must fill this gap themselves to feel secure. However, achieving security is not easy, because of the low level of certainty about other actors. As Robert

Jervis (1978, 168) points out, for all actors on the international stage to feel secure, they must trust one another not to threaten each other's survival. If the trust is not there, then it is possible that both parties try to increase their security, consequently decreasing the security of the other (Jervis, 1978, 169-170). This is because the act of increasing security may be interpreted by others as a preparation for an attack, which in turn will lead the other side to act similarly. Actors have subjective interpretations of the threats they face, like the probability of the threat, the optimal level of security and the assessment of the situation (Jervis, 1978, 174-175). At the worst-case scenario, these interpretations of the other's intentions can lead to a situation, where both sides feel that their security is threatened even when both want to maintain it (Glaser, 1997, 182). Therefore, while the actors would want to be able to trust others, they may act based on distrust towards others. As it is not fully possible to know the intentions of the perceived threatening actor, states will therefore search for ways how to ensure their survival against threats.

One of the main ways of overcoming this insecurity is forming alliances with other states. Stephen M. Walt describes alliances as commitments to "security cooperation between two or more states" (Walt, 1997, 157). While they may vary in functions and their level of institutionalization, alliances can generally be regarded to "combine the members' capabilities in a way that furthers their respective interests" (Walt, 1997, 157). Therefore, states form alliances to overcome their relative weakness in relation to their threat and to provide additional security for all of the members in the alliance. Balancing is one of the main motivations behind an alliance, and it involves joining forces with others against a threatening state to reach a balance of power, where neither side would have an incentive for war. States generally prefer a balancing alliance, since trusting the other not to attack can be dangerous (Walt, 1985, 5). This alliance is strengthened by the fact that all members are threatened – the states are thus incentivized to keep an alliance together from self-interest (Walt, 1985, 13). Balancing may however suffer from buck-passing, whereby members shift the responsibility of dealing with the threat away to others while enjoying the benefits of a balancing alliance (Mearsheimer, 2001, 157-158). As a result, the credibility of the alliance to function comes into question, leading to a search for alternatives.

The alternative is bandwagoning, which is premised on the impossibility of balancing against the threatening other, whereby the state instead aligns with them. John

Mearsheimer as the “strategy for the weak” because the weaker state is at the mercy of the stronger to have their security guarantees respected (Mearsheimer, 2001, 163). Despite its inherent drawbacks, there are a few reasons why states may choose bandwagoning. For example, if a small state shares a border with the stronger state and the possible allies are spatially far away, bandwagoning may be unavoidable as the help could not arrive on time (Walt, 1985, 11:17). The strong offensive capabilities of the other further this logic (Walt, 1985,11). If bandwagoning is indeed unavoidable, it may be then thought of as a strategy of loss reduction (Mearsheimer, 2011, 163). It can also serve defensive purposes – maintaining some degree of independence and potentially removing reasons for war (Walt, 1985, 8; Mearsheimer, 2011, 163). However, as the mutual self-interest element is lacking, the continued benevolence of the stronger state cannot be relied upon. If the expansionist intentions of the threatening other are clear, then bandwagoning becomes meaningless, and states are forced to either balance themselves or form a balancing alliance (Walt, 1985, 13). Security is a fundamental concern for the states, which is why they are unlikely to cede sovereignty to threatening others voluntarily. Therefore, the alliances do not provide a clear solution to the issue of uncertainty. The choice of an alliance, balancing or bandwagoning ultimately comes down to geopolitics and the possibilities it makes available for states.

## 1.2 The power of cooperation

Liberalism shares common principles with realism about the nature of the international system yet differs in its interpretation of relations between states. The world is similarly seen as anarchistic, and states are driven by self-interest, rather than some moral value. However, liberalism crucially differs in one aspect – the dependence of actors on one another. To overcome the horrors of anarchy, states need to interact with one another and therefore create institutions to facilitate this process. Without overcoming anarchy, the pursuit of self-interest would become risky, as it would primarily have to rely on state’s power and willingness to assert themselves. Immanuel Kant (2017, 137-138) argued that this situation is similar to overcoming the state of nature within a state – in international relations, the need for institutions is similarly required. The need of states, rather than the option to cooperate, is then what separates liberalism from realism. The cooperation between states also has a side-effect of states becoming interdependent on

one another, as the pursuit of self-interest does not happen in a vacuum. Rather, it happens in relations with other states, where the pursuit of self-interests meet one another. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (2011, 8) contend that interdependence can result in mutual gains or costs, but the latter is always present since interdependence restricts the autonomy of actors. The relative gains and costs lead to another aspect, which is that interdependence is not always balanced, and that imbalance can enable states to have influence over one another (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 9-10). Thus, the tools of pursuing self-interest vis-à-vis others arise from the relations itself, rather than being separate from them.

Dependence imbalance makes it possible for state actors to have power over the other actors. Two indicators help explain the role of power in interdependence relations – sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity refers to the impact that changes can have on states in the existing relations, and they can be political, economic, or social (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 10-11). Sensitivity can be reduced by policy adjustment, but its idea is based on the effect that changes can have if everything else stays equal (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 10). Therefore, it can be argued that sensitivity is a short-term effect, as states are likely to find ways to adjust to the new situation. Vulnerability, on the other hand, refers to the state's options for having a similar, but alternative relations with somebody else (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 11). Therefore, it relates to the ability to resist the strategic pressure exerted by other states. This is why vulnerability is more dangerous, as it refers to the state's possible weakness to defend their self-interest on the international stage (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 13). States may however seek to overcome vulnerability, diminishing the other's ability to use it to their advantage. Military means also exist as a means of exercising power, and while it is arguably an even greater means of domination, Keohane and Nye (2011, 14) contend that its effectiveness at gaining more leverage should not be assumed. While conventional means are suitable for defending the state in case of war, they are not necessarily as useful in defending state's other interests when it comes to non-military interests or may even be counterproductive (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 24). Therefore, while stronger states can have power over the smaller states, there are limits to what can be achieved with power.

The shift from military to non-military tools to pursue self-interest in international relations is predicated on liberal preconditions, namely the democratic institutions of

other states. In fact, democratic/republican governance as the safeguard for global peace can be traced back to the Enlightenment and Immanuel Kant. He believed that if the decision to go to war was overseen by the people, rather than by the sovereign, the likelihood of war would diminish (Kant, 2017, 136). This is because the people would be the ones bearing the costs of the war, which implies that wars serve the interests of the elite, rather than the people. His arguments have been further developed by the proponents of the democratic peace theory, who similarly view democratic institutions making war less likely (Doyle, 1983, 225). However, as democratic states have taken part in warfare regardless of this safeguard, the theory has been modified to contend that states do not engage in war with other democracies, but war with non-democratic is still possible (Layne, 1984, 11). This could be explained by the fact that democratic norms provide democracies assurances of similar decision-making processes in others, thereby giving their interests an aura of legitimacy (Doyle, 1986, 230). The similarities produced by democratic governance also reduce the possibility that the other side would choose differently, that is conflict over dialogue (Layne, 1984, 10). What this means is that both sides recognize the other side as a reasonable partner with reasonable interests. This logic allows democracies to create safe communities of interests with one another but also explains why war with non-democratic countries is possible – similar assumptions of similarity cannot be made about the other side (Layne, 1984, 10).

The international system as a whole also benefits the smaller state's pursuit of self-interest. International organizations level the playing field between small and large states to defend their interests and values, as military and economic strength do not translate automatically to dominance in other issues (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 25-27). As small states tend to have narrower interests, their ability to pursue them is enhanced by the system, while the opposite is true for large states, whose actions are constrained by a multitude of competing interests within their states (Keohane; Nye, 2011, 26). The EU is the best example of the liberal international organization, having a complex interdependence framework, whereby non-state and state actors pursue interests on a wide variety of topics through the use of their power resources. Having eliminated the possibility of war between member states through extensive interdependence and the requirements to democratic norms, this also works as a safeguard towards external threats. Through the integration of its borderlands into its cooperation frameworks, the EU has managed to

increase its influence in the neighbourhood, making conflict there less likely (Hill; Smith, Vanhoonacker, 2017, 89). Interdependence in the EU also protects its smaller members from external states, reducing the dangers of vulnerability. International engagement, therefore, reduces the risks posed by others, overcoming them through ever greater cooperation.

### 1.3 The problems with realism and liberalism

Realism and liberalism have a large explanatory power, but there are also cases that they are unable to explain. These grand IR theories are useful for explaining international relations at a system level, and also include domestic factors, like values, to explain certain choices that states make. In realism, values may lead neighbouring states to engage in alliances with different actors, creating a dividing line between the two. Democratic peace theory explains that bad relations can be caused by different governance systems that cause a lack of trust in others' ability to pursue peaceful conflict resolution. While the general accuracy of such conclusions is not in question, liberalism and realism do not explain why states mix values with foreign policy. Values may increase trust in allies, but they do not seem to benefit relations with the states they see as threatening. Even more, it would be hard to explain why states, in the process of Europeanization, seek to adopt new values that they previously did not espouse. Therefore, while both liberalism and realism do not question the role of values in international relations, they do not sufficiently explain why states support values beyond pragmatic considerations.

States may also choose to maintain hostile relations, rather than change them. Liberalism and realism point to an understanding that hostile relations are the failure in normal relations, and not something that states would actively seek to maintain. For example, realism would explain the failure in bilateral relations through misperceptions between states, whereby the power and actions of the other are seen as threatening and that may lead to a security dilemma. Therefore, maintaining hostile relations can be detrimental to state's primary interest, physical security. The liberal school would explain bad relations through the lack of links between states, as no mutual costs are forcing both sides to cooperate. They would also argue that hostile relations may lead to an increased vulnerability for the state, causing more costs than benefits. Both theories would thus predict that states would seek to overcome hostile relations and return to normalcy

because of mutual self-interest. However, it may also be in the mutual self-interest to maintain abnormal relations if it benefits the identity of the actors, as we will see below. Contradicting the logic of international relations may therefore not be an error, but deliberate action, with no intentions of changing the relations with the other. The need for identity security can override the negative consequences it produces, something realism and liberalism have difficulty accommodating in their explanations.

When it comes to relations between Estonia and Russia, realism cannot explain the hostile relations, even when the balance of power has been achieved. The emphasis is placed too much on military threats to states, while the developments in bilateral relations often play out at a soft security level, involving fields like energy and cybersecurity. Furthermore, Estonia's decision to balance against Russia seems unreasonable, as the allies are far away, and Russia is on the other side of the border. Russia's offensive capabilities are an additional factor that would favour bandwagoning. Liberalism could not explain why Estonia and Russia are content with not constructively engaging one another through shared institutions or why ratifying a border treaty has faced such difficulty. Furthermore, Estonia's support for economic sanctions against Russia, which caused vulnerability for Estonia, also contradicts the logic of interdependence.

## 1.4 The identity factor

Constructivism is different from liberalism and realism, as it does not make any assumptions on how states would act based on the international order in which they are situated. Rather, constructivists see the international order as constructed by the states themselves through their past and present relations with other states. Therefore, the international system in which states operate are constantly being shaped by the states, and not so much by the concept of anarchy. However, this interpretation does not answer why states engage one another in the first place. Constructivism posits that states' relations with others can be explained through their need for distinctiveness i.e., identity. These relations achieve two things. They provide clarity as to who the other state is, but more importantly, who they are themselves. Unlike social groups in a society, states cannot find out who they are domestically, because actions in themselves do not have any normative value. However, once the state enters relations with other states, the actions gain meaning, as they are compared and contrasted with the actions of others. Like the

identity of an individual, a Self requires an Other – and for states, the Others are located in the international system. States of course do not have relations with others just for the sake of having a distinction from them, they also pursue interests, like security, wealth, etc. However, with whom and how these relations are conducted affects the state's self-image of themselves, as a by-product of these relations. As these relations become regular, the role of the Other in Self solidifies – thus the continuation of such relations becomes an important part of what the Self is, and changes in relations can affect the security of the Self.

Ontological security or identity security is a theoretical framework that deals with the stability of relations between states. Although originally emanating from the field of psychology, Anthony Giddens, who is arguably one of the most influential scholars on ontological security, has applied the concept to explain societal processes. He explains that at its most fundamental level, a secure identity is dependent on a basic trust system that allows actors to keep performing their actions with confidence. This trust system is essentially a belief that the outside world and others can be trusted to act in a coherent way (Giddens, 1991, 38:66). The trust system allows the actor to have clear answers to the fundamental questions of life (Giddens, 1991, 47). Giddens compares the basic trust system to a protective cocoon, as it provides protection from the unknowable and uncontrollable aspects of the external world (Giddens, 1991, 39- 40). The basic trust system is maintained through the exercise of routine, whereby the trust of the knowability of the outside world is confirmed to the Self (Giddens, 1991, 38-39). As routines become implemented in the relations with others, it allows the actor not just to define the Other, but also the self as different from the other. In other words, the Other is formed through perceived difference from the Self, rather than through any objective categories (Giddens, 1991, 43). If such routines are stable and the basic trust system is high, it enhances the actors' ability to act based on those routines – there exists a basic trust on the predictability of Other's reactions. The lack of such a stable trust system however leads to anxiety, which leads to the inability to act in new situations (Giddens, 1991, 44-46). Therefore, the ability to confidently conduct one's affairs is predicated on the strength of the basic trust system that protects the actor from the unknowable outside world.

Ontological security can also explain the behaviour of states in international relations. While the theory was initially meant to describe individuals, Jennifer Mitzen

gives two compelling reasons why it can also be applied for states. First, states pursue ontological security, because retaining the ontological distinctiveness of their societies is equally necessary to protecting them from physical attacks (Mitzen, 2006b, 352). Second, despite domestic changes in countries leadership, statesmen show remarkable continuity in their relations with the other countries (Mitzen, 2006b, 352-353). However, while Mitzen explains that statesmen act on behalf of the nation and show continuity in their actions, she does not explain what type of a vision of their nations they represent. Brian J. Steele (2008, 10-11) fills this gap by positing that states have biographical narratives about themselves that they use to justify their actions vis-à-vis other states. While all states justify the actions they make, Steele (2008, 10-11) contends that these narratives are specific in the sense that they link together state action with a distinct justification that is “logically consistent with their identities”. This narrative is both the cause and the result of the relations with the other, also setting the boundaries to what can be done to stay consistent with the narrative, to maintain a stable identity. The word narrative also implies temporal continuity (Steele, 2008, 11) – keeping the past consistent with the present constitutes another limitation to agency. Therefore, the biographical narrative of the state necessarily limits how and what can be done but also gives the action and the actor meaning (Steele, 2008, 71-72).

Shame is another characteristic of identity, which exposes the vulnerability of the Self in international relations. Giddens defines it as an “anxiety about the adequacy of the narrative by means of which the individual sustains a coherent biography” (Giddens, 1991, 65). Such anxiety may occur when the narrative is exposed to an unpredictable situation, where the existing narrative does not immediately provide a suitable course of action (Steele, 2008, 12). In other words, the situation may be seen constitute a threat to the identity itself (Steele, 2008, 12). Therefore, shame results when the (past or present) response to such a situation is not deemed suitable from the standpoint of the identity, as it is not possible to fit the response into the existing narrative (Steele, 2008, 13). While the shame resulting from responses in the present are evident, shame resulting from past decisions may also happen if they contradict the action and the narrative of the state in the present. The past can also be utilized to choose between actions in the present. The use of “chosen” traumas to describe a similar situation that happened in the past can be used to suggest a different course of action in the present (Volkan 1997, 36; Kinnvall,

2004, 755), thereby dealing with both the past shame and possible shame in the present. Past shame can be thus used to avoid certain courses of action from taking place. Similarly, statesmen may employ counter-factual arguments to show why some responses would result in shame in the future (Steele, 2008, 13). In all cases, the shame of policy options not corresponding to the biographical narrative effectively limit the possible options to respond to critical situations. It therefore acts as an identity stabilizer and ensures coherency of the narrative.

States form alliances and the needs of their identities can divide the external world into positive others and negative others, based on ideological considerations. While Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (1985) work concentrated mostly on the domestic political dynamics, their logics of difference and equivalence can be utilized also in international relations. Roughly put, the logic of equivalence creates a community through empty signifiers, while the logic of difference separates this community from the Other(s) on the basis of the empty signifier (Laclau; Mouffe, 1985, 127-129). Empty signifiers are negative and not positive values, allowing to bring together different actors with a common antagonism towards somebody (Laclau, 1996, 40). In international relations, this is the traditional basis for alliances between states and is strengthened through clear borders between states. Therefore, the borders of an alliance are also the borders of the empty signifier, rendering everything outside of them as the Other, possibly even threatening. The differences within the logic of equivalence vary, as states differ from one another on many characteristics. However, the differences between the in-group are tolerated for the sake of maintaining the larger difference with the negative Other. Based on difference and equivalence, it can be assumed that relations within the in-group relations are generally good, as the shared empty signifier helps to unite states and reaffirms their belongingness, making the acceptance of differences elsewhere tolerable. The relations with the different Others are however also necessary, and the stability in those relations affirms their own identity. Therefore, the relations with the external world are fundamentally based on the difference from others.

Liminality exists as a third possibility for the actor's identity location, between the Self and Other. Maria Mälksoo (2009, 67-68), who has written extensively about the topic, defines liminality as a transitional state, where the actor is no longer what it was, but has not yet reached the new status. Unlike the clear dividing lines between the logics

of difference and equivalence described above, liminal actors constitute transitional cases, which have attributes of both the Self and the Other, without necessarily being either. Liminality as a transitional state of being does not describe a stable identity, rather it is perceived as a steppingstone to a stable identity. As identities are relational and depend on recognition, it can be assumed that liminal actors are struggling with having their belongingness accepted by the group they desire to associate with. Mälksoo (2009, 68-69) explains that this reluctance to accept the liminal actors as part of themselves comes down to the fear of losing their distinctiveness, as extending the logic of equivalence blurs the differentiation between the Self and the Other. For the liminal actor, having their identity not recognized by the outside world leads to continuing attempts to overcome it. Since the basic trust system of the liminal actor has been questioned, its ontological security is also threatened. Mitzen (2006b, 350-351) argues that it can lead to doubling down on the routines, whereby routines become a substitute for the goals that are being sought. As a result, any change in the relations is seen as constituting an attack on the identity itself, causing even further ontological insecurity and an inability to respond beyond routines (Mitzen, 2006b, 350). Therefore, the liminal actor remains in pursuit of ontological security without being able to overcome it.

In sum, constructivism provides a different basis to relations between states. Ontological security theory posits that the state is not just interested in their physical security and wealth, but also to keep their identity secure. Ontological security stresses that states are more interested in having stable relations with others, rather than good relations. This is because even negative, but stable relations provide certainty as to how the Other will act, while sporadic good relations do not provide such certainty. As a result, emerging good relations may become seen as bad, if they contradict the existing narrative about the Other. Identity and shame play a key role in how states handle critical situations, where the actorness of the state may be challenged. They also set limits on how relations will be conducted and can thus explain why some states may seem to act irrationally in relation to other states and why such relationships persist over time. I have chosen the ontological security theory as the basis for my research project because it considers identity as an important basis for relations between states. Unlike realism and liberalism, identity reasons can explain the persistence of hostile relations between Estonia and Russia, even despite significant changes in Estonia's global position (like the accession into NATO

and the EU). It takes into account past relations, grounding them in time, rather than treating inter-state relations as something without history. Finally, ontological security puts a deserved emphasis on values, explaining the pursuit of them through identity.

## 1.5 The politics of becoming European

The European Union plays an important role in the identity of its member states. As a community of shared values, it is arguably more influential in terms of affecting state behaviour than other international institutions. The EU also has supranational bodies where the EU, rather than the member states, has exclusive competency. The notable exception is in the field of foreign affairs, where cooperation has resisted further institutionalization, which is why foreign policy is largely conducted by member states themselves. However, it has been observed that the effects of being together in the same union has played a role in policy harmonization already from the 1970s. Then, the meetings between statesmen were unstructured and mostly involved member states simply sharing their positions on foreign affairs, but it resulted in regular consultations, and actors started “thinking in terms of consensus” (Tonra, 2003, 739-740). Such a routine of consultation, Mitzen (2006a, 277) argues, is a manifestation of a “healthy basic trust”, whereby the actors do not see cooperation as a threat to their agency, but as a way of reaffirming their shared identity and belongingness. Over time, the meetings on foreign policy issues became the norm, and the relevancy of cooperation was not questioned, paving the way for a collective identity (Mitzen, 2006a, 277-278). These processes largely coincide with the processes of identity formation in the constructivist sense, as described above.

Following the compatibility of a shared identity with the ontological security theory further, it makes sense to assess what risks may threaten this identity. If the Other for states’ Self is other states, then the same question for a collective identity encompassing a variety of nations is more complicated. After all, this outward identity is decided upon at the elite level, where the compromises regarding the external action are made, and does not involve the wider populations of these countries. Therefore, the Other for the collective identity may be not just external (some country/countries that are outside of the collective identity), but also internal (nationalist pressure in the member states). Mitzen (2006a, 279) contends that in the latter case, there are two ways of dealing with

uncertainties – to renationalize foreign policies or to “cast out the non-European, threatening Other”. Both cases refer to the inadequacy of the routines in adapting to uncertainties. However, this may not be the case in the EU foreign policy cooperation. Many authors (see Mitzen, 2006a, 275-279) contend that separating the European values from the national values has become increasingly difficult, as interests tend to be already formed as European, rather than national. Even setbacks to routines, like Germany unilaterally recognizing Croatia’s independence in the 1990s did not create a relapse but led to a reaffirmation of the foreign policy coordination being the best solution to external crises (Mitzen, 2006a, 279), showing the extent to which member states had come to value joint action. Mitzen thus argues that this identity is not so much based on the effectiveness of the specific policies themselves, rather it is based on the routines of foreign policy deliberation by which member states conduct their external affairs (Mitzen, 2006a, 281:283).

Political scientists have found this phenomenon peculiar, as there are no legal mechanisms that force member states to cooperate on foreign policy. This has since been explained through the socialization process called europeanization, which involves either foreign policy convergence, the elevation of national interests into the European level, and identity reconfiguration (Wong, 2017, 325). The identity reconfiguration is discussed above, as the phenomenon produced in the result of policy convergence and the europeanization of national policies.

The foreign policy convergence of the EU member states is also called downloading. It involves bringing national objectives in line with common foreign policy objectives (Wong, 2017, 326). This is a slow process and takes place as a gradual adaptation since governments are generally reluctant to compromise on nationally important issues. While the national foreign policy priorities continue to stay relevant, they become coordinated and more homogeneous than if such cooperation did not take place. Over time, certain issues of foreign policy, where common interests outweigh singular ones – like trade policy of with third countries – have moved to the exclusive competency of the EU. Common interests leading to an institutionalized policy show that foreign policy coordination does not mean just doing the bare minimum for intra-EU cohesion, but that the value of having one policy over many national one is recognized. The second process is uploading, which refers to elevating national policies to the

European level. It similarly involves blurring the boundaries between national and European interest, yet the benefits of this to the member states are more obvious. First, elevation to the European level makes the particular foreign policy more influential globally (Wong, 2017, 328). Second, it can also protect member states from possible retaliation, as it would no longer be the policy of just one country, but of the entire bloc (Wong, 2017, 328). While the effectiveness of uploading may seem to be contingent on the size of the member state, smaller states also have opportunities to specialize in niche areas or topics (Wong, 2017, 325). The effectiveness of uploading may thus come down more to the ability to portray national policies as European policies, rather than the strength of any individual member state. However, what is common in both of those processes is the link between foreign policy action and European, rather than national values.

In sum, both realism and liberalism have serious limitations in their applicability to Estonia-Russia relations. Ontological security seeks to address such shortcomings. According to the theory, states generally seek stable relations, whereby the intentions of the other are grasped with a sufficient degree of certainty. Therefore, the changes in relations would be avoided to avoid uncertainties about both the Self and the Other. Additionally, the European Union, acting as a group of like-minded states, introduces an element of stability in foreign policy conduct. As a result of the cooperation in the EU, states develop a habit of working and thinking together, blurring the line between national and shared interests. In the end, national interests become European interests and vice versa – becoming intuitively understandable to other members of the Union. This does not mean that interests formed as European will be immediately successful – member states will retain specific national interests and have their own visions of the EU. However, europeanization would manifest itself in both rhetoric and action – stressing the importance of consulting the allies, preferring joint action over unilateral action, etc. While europeanization may change the routines, it logically leads to a question on the substance – is this effect strong enough to overcome the central concerns regarding national identities? Does nationalism make a comeback in times of crises, or do states still stick to routines to find a solution at the European level?

## 2. Uneasy neighbours, despite all odds

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the earlier studies made on Estonia-Russia relations as well as Russia's importance in Estonia's self-image. Admittedly, the literature on exclusively Estonia-Russia relations is lacking, which is why works covering the Baltic-Russia, Eastern Europe/Russia relations will also be used in this section. However, as Estonia forms a significant part of such scholarly work, the research including wider regional relations should not reduce the validity of the conclusions drawn in this part. As much as possible, authors with different viewpoints will be presented. Additionally, studies focusing on Estonia's foreign policy and the effects of Europeanization are examined. First, I will focus on the uploading side of the Estonian foreign policy – presenting the literature on uploading the remembrance of communism and the memory of World War 2 (WW2). Then I will deal with Estonia's activism in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and how it affects Estonia-Russia relations. Finally, I will highlight the question of Estonian physical and ontological security and how the search for security has informed Estonia's integration into the West. I will furthermore show that the concept of security has come to encompass other questions outside of Estonia's hard security concerns. The chapter will conclude with the gaps in the existing literature and demonstrate where my research will fit in.

### 2.1 The fight for the historical memory

The source of the identity conflict goes as far back as WW2 and its immediate aftermath. While the war was one of the defining developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, the interpretations of the war are not shared by everyone. A good example of that is the debate over the winners and losers of the war. Although the Soviet Union was on the side of the winners and Nazi Germany lost, the Eastern European involvement in the war is more ambiguous. For example, Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union on the eve of WW2, but Estonians also fought on the Nazi side – being recruited into both armies at similar rates (Brüggemann; Kasekamp, 2009, 54). A similar ambiguity resulted at the end of the war – while Estonia was technically at the victorious side of the war, its loss of independence became accepted as a result of it. These divergences have given rise

to two very distinct and mutually exclusive narratives – the Russian discourse sees the Soviet Union as the liberator, and the Estonian discourse sees it as the occupier (Brüggemann; Kasekamp, 2009, 51). The debate over the involvement and the aftermath of WW2 did not take place until the restoration of Estonia's independence in 1991, because competing memories to the official narrative were suppressed during the Soviet era. However, with the independence looming, the different interpretations of the past emerged, exposing the false consensus. Brüggemann and Kasekamp (2009, 51) contend that such diametrically opposed interpretations were bound to clash, as “both constructs deny the legitimacy of the other” ((Brüggemann; Kasekamp, 2009, 51). Therefore, the source of disagreement lies at the level of national myths, framing disagreements elsewhere.

Predictably, Estonia's narrative of restoring statehood immediately caused difficulties in relations with the nascent Russian Federation. The key policy of contention was Estonia's decision not to grant automatic citizenship to the Russian-speaking community, which ran against Boris Yeltsin's state-building endeavours (Smith, 2003, 166). This is because in the minds of the Russian government, the independence of Estonia in 1991 constituted a new beginning in relations, rather than a continuation of earlier relations, dismissing Estonia's principle of legal continuity of the state (Smith, 2003, 166). However, this principle found support from the West, into which the integration was the primary foreign policy objective. Since minority rights were given less emphasis than economic reform in the EU accession negotiations, the ethnonationalist tendencies in the new Estonian republic remained unchanged (Smith, 2003, 159:164). Embracing the West was considered “the final act of liberation from the oppressive Russian rule (Morozov; Fofanova, 2009, 24), which is why international considerations likely outweighed the domestic grievances of the Russian-speaking community. Furthermore, with the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1994 and Estonia's continued progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration, the bilateral relations remained largely undeveloped (Smith, 2003, 169), as the topics of mutual interest faded. The success of the integration into the EU and NATO proved that neither the lack of border treaty nor the citizenship policies posed challenges to Estonia's key foreign policy priorities (Smith, 2003, 170-171). Therefore, while the relations with Russia remained

uneasy, it did not impede Estonia's primary foreign policy goals, which were located elsewhere.

The accession into the EU provided Estonia as well as other new Central Eastern European (CEE) member states a new institutional setting to gain recognition to their historical grievances over the Soviet Union, and by extension, Russia. These grievances primarily concentrate on the loss of independence in the aftermath of WW2 and the experience of totalitarianism under communist regimes. The end goal of these initiatives is to make them part of the pan-European mnemopolitics by broadening the understanding of totalitarianisms and condemning them in all their forms (Mälksoo, 2014, 85-86). There have been a few success stories in this regard – the adoption of the 2006 resolution in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on the “Need for international condemnation of the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes” is a prominent and often referenced example. Although the resolution ended up being less strict than intended, it nevertheless challenged the dominant Western-centric narrative of WW2, creating a discussion where it had not existed before (Mälksoo, 2006, 86:91). An additional victory was achieved in the European Parliament – in 2008, the 23rd of August was set as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (Mälksoo, 2014, 95; European Parliament 2009). These activities have the benefit of gaining multilateral backing for one's memory of history, securing its place in the wider discourse on the common European remembrance. They also bolster Estonia's positions in the battle over historical memory, superimposing the differences of values upon the differences in historical memories. The clash of memories, therefore, takes place not between Estonia and Russia, but between the EU and Russia, and within the EU structures and not in relations with Russia.

Despite these successes, the recognition of communist crimes has not reached the same level as the condemnation of the crimes of Nazi Germany. A good example of this is the CEE countries attempt to ban the use of Soviet symbolica at the same time as the ban of Nazi symbolica was discussed in the European Parliament – without an agreement on the former, not banning either was preferred to banning both (Onken, 2009, 48). There are a few reasons for this. One possible reason for this is that expanding the interpretation of WW2 remembrance could also reveal the “West European complicity with the East

European post-war plight under communist rule” (Mälksoo, 2014, 84-85). Such an addition would most likely cause more division than unity, effectively eliminating the word common in the European remembrance project. This possible complicity leads to another possible reason – that the experience of living under a communist regime is exclusive to the countries of Central Eastern Europe (Mälksoo, 2014, 89). Unlike the Holocaust that happened during the war and touched countries from West to East, the aftermath of WW2 divided states into two groups that did not have regular contact with one another. While communism as a political force existed in Western Europe, it never achieved a monopoly over the state power in any of those countries. Therefore, it would be hard to build a unified understanding of totalitarian communist legacy into the common European memory if half of the countries never experienced it or had even favourable views to the ideology.

Arguably one of the biggest reasons is the Holocaust thematic itself and attempts to relativize it. Following Onken (2009, 38), the Western European memory of WW2 is based on the guilt of the Nazis, the Holocaust, “the historical myth of national resistance and victim status of all formerly occupied countries”. Although such an interpretation could assuage some of the grievances of the CEE countries, it leaves out the Soviet responsibility in the war by focusing on Nazi Germany as the sole culprit. Therefore, many CEE countries have called for the crimes of the Soviet Union to be equally condemned as Nazi crimes, without advocating to seek justice in the present (Mälksoo, 2014, 88; Luik, 2008). Critics have seen this as an attempt to relativize the unique nature of Nazi crimes as well as hiding their one’s own complicity in Nazi war crimes (see Mälksoo, 2014, 85:90). There is certainly some truth to such criticisms. As Kasekamp and Brüggemann (2009, 59) see it, the Baltic states are vying for the recognition of their victimhood, without any eagerness to deal with their participation in the Holocaust. However, it can be argued that what characterizes CEE countries attempts at uploading their memory politics to the pan-European level is their desire to be recognized as having a European subjectivity (Mälksoo, 2009, 655), rather than denying the horrors of the Holocaust.

Estonia’s difficulty in dealing with its participation in Nazi war crimes is exemplified by the two monuments issue. In 2004, a monument for Estonia’s freedom

fighters was erected in Lihula, which depicted an Estonian soldier wearing a Nazi uniform (Brüggemann, Kasekamp, 2009, 54). Although the monument was erected to commemorate those who fought against Bolshevism and for Estonia's independence, it drew considerable international backlash. The monument was quickly removed, but this was seen as “sacrificing” national history for the sake of the Government's version of “national security” (Brüggemann; Kasekamp, 2009, 55). Tensions grew because another war monument, commemorating the victory of communism, remained in the centre of the Estonian capital, Tallinn. As Estonian discourse sees the Red Army's liberation as the start of an occupation, it sent a mixed signal about the interpretation of the past – was it an attempt by the Estonian governing elite to disown people who were considered to have been fighting for the independence of Estonia, while leaving the Bronze soldier in place? Although the meaning of that statue was changed at the beginning of the 1990s – from commemorating Soviet heroes to all victims of the war – it did not change the perception of the monument as the lasting legacy of the Soviet rule (Kasekamp; Brüggemann, 2009, 56). Therefore, the debate over the Nazi legacy in Estonia is not as clear-cut – While in the West, the resistance was formed against the Nazis, in Estonia, the Nazis were part of the fight for independence from the Soviet Union.

The Bronze soldier and its relocation also constituted a major milestone in bilateral relations. Although a domestic issue at first, it quickly became an international political confrontation that came to include the participation of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia. In the aftermath of the highly publicized absence of Estonian and Lithuanian presidents in 9th of May celebrations in Russia, these celebrations taking place near the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn also gained prominence (Kasekamp; Brüggemann, 2009, 56-57). As the relocation of the monument happened, Russia and the EU got involved in the affair. The blockade of the Estonian embassy, the involvement of Russian youth organization Nashi and the cyber-attacks against Estonian virtual infrastructure took place in the background, while the head of the Russian Duma delegation to Estonia urged the Estonian government to resign (Kasekamp; Brüggemann, 2009, 58). However, Russia had not considered that Estonia's appeals to the EU and NATO would “produce a common front”, ultimately causing Russia to back down (Kasekamp, Brüggemann, 2009, 58). From a purely international standpoint, it can therefore be considered a victory to Estonia's statehood.

From a domestic standpoint, it can be argued that it constituted a backlash to the Europeanization processes that had happened until then. Martin Ehala (2009, 149:152) finds that although both Estonians and Russians had over time come to view integration and homogenization of values favourably and the confrontational attitude was going out of fashion, it was also the reason for the re-emergence of the conflict (Ehala, 2009, 149:152). With the outward pressure to appear sufficiently European fading, the readiness to revisit previously marginalized identity issues became prevalent again, due to the lack of a different vision for the future (Saarts, 2007). However, it could also be argued that identity issues were becoming popular on both sides in Estonia, spearheaded by radical minorities at first, and gaining popularity among the moderates later (Ehala, 2009, 152-153). The weakening of national identities created a fear of losing one's identity – therefore, a radical reaffirmation of identity was required (Ehala, 2009, 152). While for Estonians, the ontological insecurity was due to over-Europeanization, for Estonian Russians, it was created by integration into the Estonian society (Ehala, 2009, 155). Saarts' (2007) account however puts the willingness to politicize the issue on to the Estonian political elite and saw the crisis bringing along a historicized Estonia-Russia confrontation and a backlash against Europeanization. In his opinion, the historical truth in the events that happened became securitized – no other interpretation of events could be tolerated. This makes the Estonian “win” more significant, as it was essentially a win for the nationalist values through uploading it onto the European level.

## 2.2 Finding foreign policy subjectivity in Europe

The accession not only made possible new foreign policy opportunities but also necessitated them. The fear of becoming a one topic country, concentrating solely on issues with Russia, became apparent. There was also a problem of shallow Europeanization, whereby the reforms and foreign policy decisions like dropping territorial claims against Russia did not necessarily reflect the public opinion but were made solely for the accession (Saarts, 2007; Smith, 2003, 169). Therefore, as further Europeanization of values was no longer necessary or feasible, the need for a new foreign policy objective, tailored to Estonian interests, was necessary. As Jakniunaite (2009, 123) contends, this new goal was quickly found – “to help the eastern [---] neighbours”, the

democracy-minded countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU). The European Neighbourhood Policy, launched in 2003, covers countries neighbouring the EU in the south and east, with the goal of “avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and instead strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all” (European Commission, 2020). However, as the new policy made clear, the former allies of Estonia were not yet considered to have membership potential – thereby delineating who is considered European and what is not. In this light, Estonia’s foreign policy goals can be thought of as – what was possible in the Baltics can be possible in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Estonia, having intimate knowledge of the region, could overcome passiveness in other fields by offering their expertise on the reform policies. Therefore, the active involvement in the ENP became a foreign policy priority, after the primary goal of accession had been accomplished.

Estonia became a strong advocate in the ENP, using it as a mechanism for helping other FSU countries and as a way of further demonstrating their Europeanness. Seeing themselves as the experts of the region and transition reforms, Estonia took to itself the role of the teacher and an example to be followed (Jakniunaite, 2009, 125). Although regarded as a weakness and a reason for one's lack of development at first, the experience in the Soviet Union became a valuable asset in the context of the ENP – allowing the Baltics to “be better teachers than their teachers” (Jakniunaite, 2009, 126). The distinction between the teachers and students brings into light the fundamental inequality between the two sides, which is also evident in the way Estonian politicians have described the situation in these countries (Jakniunaite, 2009, 121). For example, Estonia’s then foreign minister Urmas Paet described helping the less privileged as a moral responsibility (Jakniunaite, 2009, 125-126; Paet, 2006), drawing a sharp line between Estonia and the rest of the FSU. However, as Jakniunaite (2009, 127) also points out, Paet at the same time stood for keeping the further enlargements open, a viewpoint not shared by other new member states in Central Europe (Jakniunaite, 2009, 126-127; Kuus, 2004, 474). This is because Estonia – clearly understanding its status of being small, peripheral, and alien at the same time – saw the ENP as an opportunity to present their Europeanness through participation and thereby position itself “closer to Europe’s centre” (Jakniunaite, 2009, 124:127). Although Estonia could not change their geography through accession, they could europeanise their foreign policy goals – becoming more European as a result.

The ENP provided a possibility of a new foreign policy goal and a role in the EU action, but it also has a Russia dimension, confounding the newness of this direction. Although relations with Russia had not developed far, it did not mean that the security considerations related to Russia had also faded. In fact, the continuing regional security threat posed by Russia might precisely be the reason for active participation in the ENP, as the latter constitutes a counterweight to Russia's near abroad policy, specifically in Eastern Europe (Jakniunaite, 2009, 122: 124). Engaging Russia was therefore not direct but mediated through the borderlands between Russia and the EU, allowing Estonia and the Baltics to distance themselves from that very location. Additionally, as a power magnifier, the ENP could also be used as a way of levelling the playing field, giving the Baltics a more equal standing in relations with Russia as well as placing the Baltics outside of Russia's zone of influence (Jakniunaite, 2009, 125:128). While the physical insecurity of smallness and living next to Russia could not be avoided, the difference in belonging could be made clearer. The ENP is thus utilized in order "to show to the new neighbours and also Russia how authoritative, influential and responsible, and hence more powerful they have become" (Jakniunaite, 2009, 131). Unlike in the bilateral relations with Russia, Estonia could appear successful both as an example of the transition and a model to be followed by other FSU states. Therefore, Estonia would become, equally with Russia, a foreign policy subject, rather than an object, in the overlapping neighbourhood region.

It can be also argued that Estonia's active participation in the ENP policy is not just thinly veiled geopolitics, but an attempt at genuinely shifting foreign policy priorities. Vahur Made (2011, 67-68) argues that the Russia-centric foreign policy is giving way to the EU-centric approach, whereby Eastern Partnership is pursued for "intra-EU visibility". He contends that while the focus on Eastern European countries has been a relatively new phenomenon for Estonia and that Russia does play an important role in Estonian foreign policy it would be reductionist to understand it only through the Estonia-Russia relations (Made, 2011, 69-71). Instead, the EU membership and Estonia's specialized knowledge provided an opportunity for action. The democratic revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia, which were greeted with enthusiasm in Estonia, should have been the domain of great powers in the EU, but became the foreign policy focus instead for Estonia (Made, 2011, 71). While many of the new and old EU countries saw the region

as the Other to be distanced from, Estonian policymakers saw political developments there under a more positive light. For example, then-ambassador Jüri Luik saw the Georgian revolution as a torchbearer in the wider region towards democracy (Luik, 2003). This shows that developments in the FSU countries have heightened visibility for Estonia, due to the shared past and anxieties about the Russian threat to their own country. Additionally, the active participation in the ENP serves as an opportunity to gain new allies in and outside of the EU that it could influence (Made, 2011, 73). Therefore, while Russia is nonetheless an important aspect in Estonia's foreign policy, agency in the EU, as well as close ties to the FSU region, may have a significant role by itself.

## 2.3 The perpetual search for security

The membership in the EU is widely regarded as an important backbone of Estonia's independent statehood, but it alone is not seen as the solution to Estonia's existential security concern. Indeed, when it comes to relations with Russia, Estonia sees the interest divergence within the EU as a limitation to adequately deal with Estonia's national concerns (Raik, 2011, 446). Likewise, the European mild reactions to military interventions by Russia in Georgia and Ukraine have increased the feeling of insecurity for Estonia (Veebel; Ploom 2016, 53-54). In addition to different interests, the EU crucially lacks a European army or defence cooperation that could provide security assurances to its members. The exception here is PESCO, but it does not mandate the participation of all member states and is mostly focused on other tasks than providing conventional security guarantees. Although Estonia has been an active member in these initiatives, NATO continues to occupy a more significant function in terms of safeguarding state security (Jermalavicius; Marmeï, 2018, 31). Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 signifies a breaking point, after which the Baltic states received significant NATO attention in the form of Enhanced Forward Presence (Jermalavicius; Marmeï, 2018, 26). In addition to NATO, Estonia has also significantly contributed to its defence commitments itself. Therefore, it may be argued that when it comes to providing security in the traditional sense, Estonia relies more on NATO structures and independent military capability than the EU.

This does not mean that Estonia would oppose European cooperation in foreign policy and security matters. Raik (2011, 441) explains that while Estonia would not want to lose national control over decision-making in foreign policy, it also desires “a stronger international role of the EU”. What this means is that while the final say in foreign policy would stay in member states, Estonia would prefer “a stronger leadership role and initiative from the EEAS, for example in EU-Russia relations” (Raik, 2019, 444). It could also mean that if there existed a common stance on Russia, Estonia would be far more likely to integrate further in the foreign policy area. The perceived limitations of the EU foreign policy apparatus also do not mean that the existing EU structures are not used by Estonia in its relations with Russia. As a power multiplier, Estonia has, for example, utilized the EU’s delegation to Moscow in 2012 to defend itself against the human rights accusations made by the Russian Duma (Raik, 2019, 450). However, while the use of the EU institutions by Estonia has therefore been somewhat utilized in the relations with Russia, it is hard to say whether European cooperation has affected Estonia’s policy objectives. As Raik (2019, 451-452) contends, there is little evidence to suggest that the EU has managed to shape Estonia’s foreign policy towards Russia, beyond the use of rhetorical devices. Therefore, while the membership has provided Estonia with new tools for engagement, security considerations continue to be the dominant foreign policy objective in relations with Russia.

Paradoxically, while Estonia continues to see Russia as a threat, Estonia and Estonians also consider themselves relatively well defended. Jana Wrangé and Rikard Bengtsson’s (2019, 456) research into external and internal perceptions of security reveal that Estonian officials and experts consider Estonia to be well defended. The multifaceted security concept and comprehensive security framework, encompassing both memberships in NATO and the EU as well as independent military capability, are seen as sufficient for the country’s protection (Wrangé; Bengtsson, 2019, 456). This is echoed by Tomas Jermalavicius and Eerik Marmeï (2018, 29), who point out that the Russian threat has produced a situation, where Estonia’s security has increased and continues increase, rather than decrease. Additionally, research made on public opinion surveys consistently shows that only a fraction of the population considers a large-scale Russian military attack to be plausible, despite Russia’s military interventions abroad (Ploom; Veebel, 2016, 45: 52). It can be thus argued that the perception of security situation has

changed, and for the better. However, the threat posed by Russian cyber-attacks is widely recognized. The public, Estonian officials, and experts from the countries in the Baltic Sea region hint at this as a possibility (Wrangé; Bengtsson, 2019, 456; Ploom; Veebel, 2016, 55-56). The fact that Russia has already used cyber-attacks against Estonia's virtual infrastructure plays a role in this, as well as the fact that Russia has used them in subsequent international conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine (Ploom; Veebel, 2016, 57). Therefore, while Russia still constitutes to be a physical insecurity provider, the nature of that insecurity seems to have shifted from conventional threats to threats of a more hybrid nature.

## 2.4 Estonia at the margins of Europe

While the (more) physical threat posed by Russia is generally recognized, Russia also provides insecurity from an identity perspective. Unlike the physical threat, however, the threat is not so much posed by Russia itself, but the Western/European perception of Estonian selfhood. Mälksoo (2004, 286) explains that only after reconfiguring the *raison d'être* of NATO from "a defensive alliance to the framework of a democratic security community" did accession become possible for the post-Soviet Estonia, without producing an identity conflict within the organization. As Estonia was slowly shifting itself out of Eastern Europe and into the EU, it became unclear as to what will Estonia's identity be, post-accession. Mälksoo (2004, 287) and Kuus (2004, 474:476) argue the label Eastern Europe has logically been the Other for Western Europe, therefore overcoming it would require the East to adapt to the Western standards and Europeanize. As a result of this process, the CEE countries with membership potential pushed the borders of the East away from themselves, from Central Europe to Eastern Europe and from Eastern Europe to Russia (Kuus, 2004, 479). Since Estonia has historically belonged to Eastern Europe in the eyes of the West (Mälksoo, 2004, 287), Russia as the Other for Estonia was further bolstered – the ethnonationalist perspective being reinforced by the European perspective. As discussed previously, Estonia has used strategies like uploading the communist remembrance and participation in the ENP to portray its belongingness to Europe, and consequently the non-belongingness of Russia to Europe (Berg; Ehin, 2009, 11-12). Therefore, the fight for the European identity of Self and the non-European

identity of the Other takes place not so much between themselves, but in the discursive framework of Western European value systems (Haukkala, 2009, 163).

Estonia has been quite successful in proving its Europeanness vis-a-vis Russia, but this Othering has placed Estonia at the margins of Europe. This is because non-Europeanness of Russia would also make Estonia border a non-European country. The imagery of a border is not something imposed from outside but plays a prominent role in the domestic discourse as well. It exists between the West and East, signifying a need to protect something, namely culture and/or civilization (Kuus, 2002a, 306-308). Beyond protecting itself, Estonia protects the Western civilization – this interpretation of the Russian cultural threat forms also the basis for integrating with the West (Kuus, 2002b, 97-98). However, this image is somewhat confounded when Estonian politicians have described the recommendations made by the OSCE and the EU in the field of human rights as favouring Russia's interests over Estonia's (Kuus, 2002b, 99) or if the trade of other European nations with Russia is seen as treacherous towards Estonia (Mälksoo, 2006, 281). Therefore, while in the Estonian narrative, Estonia continues to play the role of protecting the West from the East, it must lead the efforts – without fully grasping the nature of Russia, the EU is susceptible to its propaganda (Kuus, 2002a, 99). The same phenomenon of inherent Russian danger exists at the domestic level as well as “cooperation with Russia easily translates into complicity with Russia” (Kuus, 2002b, 312). This shows that the Estonian interpretation of the EU and the EU itself do not always align – claims made by Estonia refer to Europe not as a geographical area, but as a normative community, which is based on shared political and cultural beliefs than on economic prosperity.

This supposed treachery of European values at the heart of Europe has given rise to the second narrative based on sovereignty. According to this narrative, both the EU and Russia are dangers to Estonian sovereignty, which also explains why Estonia had high levels of euroscepticism before the accession into the EU (Kuus, 2002b, 100). While Russia constituted an already known threat, the European pressure on integration would similarly be seen harming Estonian ethnic nation and its culture, causing its dissolution (Kuus, 2002b, 101). Therefore, the threat posed by the EU would not be different from the threat to nationhood witnessed in the Soviet Union. This also makes the role of the

border even more precarious as both sides would try to make Estonia part of themselves, causing an existential threat to the Estonian distinctiveness in the world. Consequently, this is why the security aspect of the EU was stressed over the economic argumentation before the accession into the EU (Kuus, 2002a, 305), as the survival of the nation trumps economic prosperity. According to this narrative, the reason for joining the EU had nothing to do with values beyond the protection of sovereignty (Kuus, 2002b, 317). Russia simply constituted a greater danger to national sovereignty than the EU.

The liminal position between both Europe and Russia has also produced a phenomenon, where Estonia is both inside Europe but does not feel as fully part of it. As Mälksoo (2009, 656) explains it, some aspects of the identity had to be suppressed during the phase of getting into the EU. As an example, the official rhetoric of multiculturalism and integration was adopted as part of the accession process, while the domestic rhetoric on Russia did not signal any change in the perceived threat assessments (Kuus, 2002b, 313). Although Estonia had expected to become fully European as a result of this process, it was still seen as becoming European by the older member states post-accession (Mälksoo, 2006, 280). Therefore, as the creation of important common policies for Estonia (namely concerning Russia) did not materialize (Mälksoo, 2006, 280), it caused a feeling of irrelevance, rather than inclusion. The perception in the West that CEE countries were “at once both steeped in history and also a blank sheet onto which Europeanness can be inscribed” (Kuus, 2004, 483) ran against the Estonian reasons behind the Western integration because it ignored fundamental reasons behind Estonia’s accession. While the historical memory had become an anachronism in the West, for Estonia it had constituted a guiding light for policies and reform (Haukkala, 2009, 163-164). Therefore, the lack of security concerns in the West and Estonia’s insistence on dealing with security caused misunderstandings about the function of the EU. As liminality can be seen as a stable identity condition (Connolly, 1999, 139), the lack of policy towards Russia would thus constitute an obstacle for the change in Estonia’s self-position towards Europe.

The existing research provides a good overview of Estonia-Russia relations but is lacking for 4 reasons. First, the scholarly work often lumps CEE/Baltic countries together, which is not necessarily wrong, as they share the common security concern in Russia.

However, such an approach can inadvertently see Estonia-Russia relations as static and unchanging, while in reality, discourses are constantly reproduced. Therefore, a domestic analysis of Estonia's discourse can reveal how Russia as the Other is maintained. Second, the existing work often uses a variety of documents, speeches and statements made by different politicians over the country/countries without explaining the role of the texts in the discourse as well as the position of the producers of speech acts within the political system. My analysis of foreign policy debates in the parliament will provide a clearer structure, reducing the dangers of over-emphasizing/under-emphasizing certain narratives. Third, a thorough examination of this topic is needed due to recent changes in Estonia's political landscape. In 2019, the eurosceptic EKRE party became part of the coalition government, which is a relative novelty in Estonian politics. EKRE's leadership is known for their anti-Russian attitudes in both domestic and international politics and having an overtly critical view of the Soviet legacy in Estonia. The same year also saw an attempt at a thaw in relations – Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid visited Moscow on an official visit, and there was a lot of talk on finalizing the border treaty. My thesis will therefore fill the gap in the existing literature by providing an extensive analysis of the domestic dimension of Estonia's foreign policy formulation, which is a crucial aspect in any bilateral relations.

Finally, while it is generally recognized that Estonia faces a security threat from Russia, the narrow focus on military threats does not do justice to the variety of fields in which Estonia sees Russia as a threat. While the military threat certainly forms a large aspect in it, it often neglects the other, soft security threats that are often discussed. As repeatedly shown by public opinion surveys, people generally see security threats not so much in the military sphere, but cyber, environmental, and economic spheres. Therefore, re-evaluating the scholarly work on the security relations between Estonia and Russia is needed to better include these topics. For this purpose, I will use a bottom-up approach to define the main themes in the parliamentary foreign policy debates.

### 3. Parliamentary debates on Russia after the EU accession

This chapter will present the methodological decisions made in the research project. First, I will explain the research design and why I chose Estonia as my case. Then I will explain, why I chose the parliamentary foreign policy debates for the analysis as well as the specific years. Finally, I will explain why qualitative content analysis is particularly suited for my project, and how I conducted the coding.

#### 3.1 Research design and case selection

The research project is a longitudinal single-case study on Estonian foreign policy discourse after the accession into the EU. I will study the effects of Europeanization on a key issue – the relations with Russia – over a period of 16 years. I am also using 5 debates from different years to assess the changes in discourse that have taken place over time.

The choice to examine Estonian-Russian relations came down to several considerations. I narrowed down the choice to the Baltic states based on two considerations. First, I wanted to analyse the effects of Europeanization on the foreign policy discourse, which is why I eliminated the other FSU states. Second, the other post-socialist countries that joined the EU had a looser relationship with the Soviet Union, retaining some elements of their independence. While the level of independence from the Soviet Union varies, these states were, for example, spared of population transfers after WW2. Except for Poland, none of them has a border with Russia, thereby reducing the possibility of a direct security threat. This is well exemplified by the fact that CEE states have varied interests towards Russia, with just Poland sharing the sentiments the Baltics have towards their former patron. The Baltics have, however, had a more homogeneous view towards Russia that can at least partly be explained by their similar historical memories and choices after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Out of the Baltic states, I excluded Lithuania on the basis of having the most homogeneous population and the lack of crises in bilateral relations. Population homogeneity is an important aspect, as I am analysing the domestic level of foreign policy. The relative lack of crises is also the reason for excluding Latvia – although Latvia and Russia have had issues in their relations,

Estonia provides more cases for analysis, like high-profile espionage cases, non-ratified border treaty, domestic ethnic clashes, as well as a recent rise in far-right nationalism. Furthermore, Onken (2009, 45-46) contends that Latvia has tried to have more pragmatic relations with Russia – exemplified by Latvia’s president showing up to the 9<sup>th</sup> of May celebrations in Moscow, while Estonian and Lithuanian presidents declined the offer. The second reason is technical – as an Estonian, I have a better grasp of the domestic situation in Estonia, and the necessary language skills to conduct the empirical part myself.

### 3.2 Sampling decisions

The relations between Estonia and Russia are the focus of many documents relating to Estonian foreign policy, so the parliamentary foreign policy debates are not the only data that I could have used. For example, the foreign ministry has published an annual book on Estonian foreign policy (discontinued after 2012), and foreign policy action plans for the coming decade(s). Similarly, the Estonian foreign intelligence service has published a yearly report titled “Estonia in the international security environment” since 2016. However, I decided to use the parliamentary debates for three reasons. First, none of the alternative documents covers the same time span as I have chosen for my research. Even combined, it would have a four-year gap, which would leave out a crucial year for my research. Additionally, these documents have different styles, unlike the foreign policy debates that are more or less the same for the entire time period (before 2006 there were two foreign policy debates every year). This means that the variation that would come from using different sources is greatly reduced. It should be noted however that the time allocated for speeches and the questions and answers sections have changed over time, therefore some speeches are longer, while other debates have a longer questions and answers segment. Second, foreign policy debates are transcribed verbatim and are therefore good primary sources. While the analyses provided by government agencies would not be a reason to exclude their use for analysing the research problem, these agencies have different focuses due to their institutional requirements. Third, political debates provide an opportunity for new and different ideological viewpoints to emerge – institutional reports do not have this kind of variation. Neither is it likely for these organizations to challenge the dominant narrative on Estonian foreign policy regarding identity and security.

It would have also been possible for me to conduct interviews with foreign policy elites and officials, and it could have given much more precise data for my research. The debates allow speakers to express themselves freely, but the relevant data is not coherently presented to completely satisfy my research questions. However, as I seek to test whether the relations with Russia have changed or stayed the same over the years, using interviews would raise serious questions about the reliability of the gathered data. While I could ask the interviewees about changes over time or about the political climate in 2005, they would most likely have to rely on their memory, rather than any notes made during those crises. There would not be any way to be sure that the answers they gave in 2020 would also be the same as what they would have said in 2005. Transcripts of the foreign policy debates however provide such certainty, as they are not changed to fit the political situation in the present. Therefore, the choice to use transcripts of foreign policy debates came down to the reliability of the data and its standardized format, which make conducting a longitudinal study possible. It should, however, be remembered that since these debates are both followed by the national media as well as international observers, there exist political limits to what is said in these debates. This is because the diplomatic observers will likely report on those debates and send summaries back to their governments, possibly affecting the bilateral relations. While it is hard to measure this effect, but it is also unlikely that the effect would be different across years.

My thesis will use a purposeful sample, whereby the cases are chosen based on the estimated probability of Russian discourse. For this reason, I chose significant events in Estonia-Russia relations that are expected to result in a discussion about Russia. These cases also create an opportunity to examine both the uploading and downloading processes in the discourse. The significant events for Estonia represent an opportunity for the politicians to pursue national interests in the EU framework, yet how and if they will do it is undetermined. For this reason, I chose debates that took place most closely after the main event, which also allows for reflection on how the events were handled by the government. In most cases, it meant choosing debates that took place the year after the event, and not on the same year. The debates are not held specifically for these crises, thereby constituting a loose deliberation on Russia, rather than being the place for choosing concrete policy options. This fact is stated at the beginning of the debate – no political decision is taken as a result of the debate. The debates show how the crises have

changed the approach to relations with Russia, how the positions on Russia are defended and how the crises are absorbed by the narratives. It also enables assessing the success or failure of Estonian Russia policy at the European level, and the changes in it.

The first case I chose is the failure of the Estonia-Russia border treaty in 2005, as it represents the first major crisis between Estonia and Russia after the accession, where the new institutional framework of the EU got tested. Additionally, the agreement to build a German-Russian gas pipeline Nord Stream was also announced that year. The second case is the Bronze Night riots, which represents a major conflict with domestic, bilateral, and multilateral elements. Both the riots and the border treaty have a strong geopolitical dimension. The third case is the Russo-Georgian war in August 2008 and represents an international conflict, where the suspicions of Russia's foreign policy assertiveness were proven for Estonia. The first high-profile Russian espionage case also happened in that year – Estonia ministry of defence official Herman Simm was arrested and sentenced to prison for providing sensitive information to Russia. Additionally, Ukraine and Russia also become embroiled in a dispute over gas that took place in 2009, just before the debate. The next case is Russian military intervention in Ukraine in 2014, which shares all the similarities with the war in Georgia, but also added elements of Russia's direct occupation of Crimea and protracted warfare in Eastern Ukraine. The kidnapping of an Estonian security official Eston Kohver in the same year caused additional tension in bilateral relations. The final case concentrates on the domestic developments – the national conservative EKRE party, known for euroscepticism, joined the governing coalition in Estonia in 2019. The same year, the Estonian president made an official visit to Moscow, while finalizing the border treaty became once again discussed. The 2020 debate in February also provides the most recent foreign policy debate, reflecting the current state of play in the relations.

The debates coincidentally provide a good representation of different parliamentary compositions – one debate comes from 10th parliament (2003-2007), 2 from 11th parliament (2007-2011), 1 from 12th parliament (2011-2015), and 1 from 14th parliament (2019-). While this leaves out the 13th parliament, it still provides a relatively good overview of different parliaments post-accession.

### 3.3 Method

I will use qualitative content analysis (QCA) as my method to analyse the parliamentary foreign policy debates. QCA is well suited for this kind of task. It is primarily used for the interpretation of data, to discover the meaning behind the produced text (Schreier, 2012, 2-3). Written transcripts of the parliamentary debates are therefore suitable, having resemblances to focus group interviews. QCA also stresses the importance of the context in which the debates happen – therefore meaning must be ascribed to speech acts within that context. Beyond this, Schreier offers three advantages of the QCA. First, it also involves a systematic analysis of the data, whereby all data is coded multiple times to generate a coding frame (Schreier, 2012, 5-6). The multiple rounds of coding are used to provide consistency in coding and to ensure that the analysis is reliable (Schreier, 2012, 6). Second, the method is also flexible, as codes in QCA may be solely developed based on data, or data and theory together (Schreier, 2012, 7). Third, coding allows reducing the amount of data by creating abstract codes that reduce the variety within themes (Schreier, 2012, 7). The higher level of abstraction allows for linking with theoretical concepts, thereby enabling to make inferences, and create new data (Schreier, 2012, 8).

I will code the debate in the statistical program MAXQDA, which offers the necessary tools for both coding and analysis. I will begin by coding paragraphs based on their relevancy to my research question, as there are many topics in the debates that are not connected to it. This will help to fragment the abundance of information. I will concentrate on five larger code trees, which were developed from the data. First, I will sketch out Estonian foreign policy objectives and the identity aspects related to it. Second, I will analyse Estonia's policy towards the ENP countries, both within the ENP/EP framework and in bilateral relations. Third, I will concentrate on the pragmatics and values in Estonian-Russian relations and the Estonian narrative on Russia. Fourth, I will look at the EU-Russia relations and how they are handled in the debates. Finally, I will concentrate on the crisis in relations – the border treaty, Nord Stream, Bronze Night, Russo-Georgian war, and the war in Ukraine. A more detailed breakdown of the codebook can be found in the appendix 1 and the results of coding are in appendices 2 and 3. The first round of coding gave a more descriptive analysis of the results – segments were coded under the main themes. After that I moved on to an analysis of the segments under

each code, categorizing them further into smaller sub-codes. This enabled me to identify the main ideas expressed in the discourses better and to analyse them from a theoretical perspective. I decided to use a coding system, where segments could be attributed to multiple codes. This was preferred because paragraphs tend to contain reasoning behind the main ideas expressed in conjunction with the topics – therefore using only a single code would not enable analysis over cases.

The debates have three distinct parts – the speeches of the foreign minister (FM) and the chairman of the foreign policy committee, the questions and answers segment, and short speeches made by the members of parliament (MPs). They are quite different in their form, which is why they could have been treated separately. Unfortunately, the available statistical software did not make such an analysis possible, which is why a large-scale analysis based on speakers was not made. Where it proved relevant, I conducted a manual analysis (like under support/criticism to the EU's Russia policy and the border treaty), considering the FM's and the chairman's speeches as the official/europeanized discourse since they represent the positions of the government and parliament in foreign relations, and they are most exposed to the EU socialization effects. The other speakers are in a less privileged role in the debate and are treated as marginal/nationalist speech, not because of their statements per se, but because of their relative lack of power in initiating foreign policy formulation. Their questions usually refer to points that are left untouched or unclear in the speeches, while their short speeches concentrate on a point or argument that they see as important. The divide between the coalition and opposition members within the speakers could have represented another possibility, but as the initial coding showed, even the MPs of the FM's party frequently criticize the government's actions. Therefore, such an analysis was not done.

## 4. Thematic overview of the debates

This chapter presents the main conclusions of the qualitative content analysis. I opted for thematic analysis, rather than a year-by-year analysis because the ontological security theory would expect stability in relations, rather than significant changes over the years. The thematic analysis also helps to better develop the main ideas within narratives and allow for a deeper look into how Estonia-Russia relations are expressed in the debates. Where significant changes in rhetoric have taken place, particularly with 2020, I have pointed them out separately.

### 4.1 Estonian foreign policy goals

The main goal of Estonian foreign policy is defined consistently over the years, which has been to guarantee the safety of the people/state and increase welfare. This definition is usually provided by the FM, but sometimes also by the chairman and MPs in their short speeches. While the overall definition has stayed roughly the same, the accompanying explanations on achieving these goals have changed. There has been a marked drift from a value-driven foreign policy definition to a more nationalist, security-driven interpretation of the foreign policy. This is exemplified by the prevalence of European values in the definition – while in 2005, European values were mentioned five times in relation to the definition (nationalist explanation appeared once), security and nationalism were tied to the definition eight times in 2020 (European values did not feature in the definition).

This comes down to two factors. The first is that the wars in Ukraine and Georgia are seen as potential warnings to Estonia, prompting even European-minded politicians to talk more about security. In the early 2000s, the threat posed by Russia existed more in the minds of speakers and was not yet possible to “prove”. Second, parliamentary make-up has become more conservative, especially in 2020. In 2005, only the People’s Union was espousing nationalist values, differentiating itself from other parties. Although Pro Patria and Res publica were in the parliament back then too, their approach towards the EU and Russia was less uniform. In 2020, the conservative EKRE and Pro Patria parties were part of the coalition government as well as being generally more active in

the debate. As a result, the EU was more criticized and membership in NATO as an important security guarantee was emphasized.

Both in 2005 and 2020, more politicians were interested in defining the goals of the foreign policy than in the years between. Both debates also featured criticism towards the government with regards to their EU policy and emphasizing stability as one of the fundamental aspects in foreign policy. Stability has been one of the core themes of foreign policy definitions, with speakers frequently emphasizing its importance for the country. Connected to stability has also been projecting reliability. This is best highlighted by the espionage case in the 2009 debate, where an Estonian ministry of defence official Herman Simm was arrested for espionage to Russia. Yet this case was only discussed, neutrally, through the prism of potentially reducing Estonia's reliability in the eyes of the allies, not as a Russian security threat to Estonia. Another facet in both 2005 and 2020 debates was the perceived lack of unity in the external projection – both governments were accused of being fractured internally. This shows that these two years have been transformative from the identity perspective, more so than the others.

NATO is seen as the primary security provider for Estonia, to the point where the EU's developments in the defence cooperation are not supported. While in 2005 and 2008, the speakers emphasized the need to strengthen the EU's civilian missions, these missions took place outside of the EU, in post-conflict countries. When the developments in the EU's internal defence cooperation have risen in the debates, they have been met with disapproval because of their duplication of NATO's function. This was the clearest in 2020, where the FM saw duplication as potentially dangerous to Estonia's existing security guarantees. While this could be explained with the overall rise in euroscepticism that year, the inexpediency of duplicating NATO was mentioned by the FM in 2005 too. Estonia, therefore, sees both NATO and the EU filling specific roles for Estonia, and the EU's attempts to change its position is seen as dangerous to Estonia's relations with the US. What is instead favoured is deeper cooperation between the EU and the US (sometimes also with other democratic countries of the world), based on shared values, on several shared interests and as a counterweight to Russia and China. In 2008, the FM said that these shared interests lie in the Eastern neighbourhood, cybersecurity, and energy security, which are consequently all topics where Russia is considered to be an active player. The importance of cooperation signals that while the EU and NATO are

acknowledged as separate entities, they are also somewhat treated as parts of one Western community. Distancing NATO from the EU would thus only serve to divide the community, because for Estonia both NATO and the EU have their exclusive functions.

## 4.2 Legacy of the Soviet Union

Memory politics has played a crucial role in Estonian foreign policy debate. One of the clearer themes here has been the attempts at uploading the condemnation of communist crimes to the European remembrance. This has been almost exclusively a pet topic of a conservative politician; however, he generally avoided mentioning Russia directly when discussing the need to launch investigations into the crimes. While equal condemnation with the crimes of Nazi Germany was desired, Estonia's involvement in the Holocaust was predictably omitted. Another theme has been the different interpretations of history when it comes to the communist legacy, where Russia's interpretation of the tragedy of the dissolution of the Soviet Union is implicitly contrasted with Estonia's view. Sometimes this difference is made clear by calling the Russian interpretation a false narrative. Except for 2020 when one speaker mentions the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the aftermath of WW2, the substance of this difference is left implicit. Estonia's memory politics in the debates have mostly concentrated on the critical moments around gaining independence, losing independence, and restoring independence. A third trend has been linking memory politics to Soviet imperialism that resulted in the loss of Estonia's independence after the war. This rhetoric was particularly strong in 2015 (due to the war in Ukraine) and 2020 (due the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Tartu). Interestingly, some linkages were made between Crimea and Estonia as well – in 2015, one politician referred to the West's non-recognition of the Baltic states as an example to follow with Crimea, while in 2020, another saw similarities between the occupation of Crimea and the ongoing occupation of Estonian lands in the eastern part of the country.

## 4.3 Relations with the “near abroad”

One of the most consistent themes in the foreign policy debates has been Estonia's support for three countries of the former Soviet Union – Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.

This support divides primarily into two – help given to these countries bilaterally and help given through the framework of the EU.

The main avenue for bilateral relations outside of the EU has been the development aid. Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine (as well as Afghanistan) figure prominently as the main recipients of the aid cooperation, which shows that the interest in these countries precedes Russian military action. Out of the three, relations with Moldova are the most superficial, mostly just mentioning bilateral relations without going into details. The frozen conflicts (before the wars) in these countries are mentioned scarcely, and only once, in 2015, does the FM tie them together into a unified narrative of Russian aggression. The other countries of the Eastern Partnership – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus – are mentioned superficially as countries with whom relations should be developed, in the framework of the EP, but bilateral relations are rarely mentioned. The main exception here is Belarus in the 2009 debate, as there was a brief improvement in relations with the EU the year before. This brief interest in Belarus shows that the discourse is very receptive to the developments in the FSU. Interestingly, Armenia features much less in the debate, albeit being a more democratic country. This may be explained through Armenia's good relations with Russia, or more specifically, its disinterest in joining the transatlantic community. It shows that while democratic credentials of the partner countries are important, their relations with Russia and the EU may be a crucial red line for bilateral cooperation. The Russia element in the ENP was mentioned the most in 2005 when both the FM and the chairman implicitly mentioned Russia benefiting from the EU's negligence in the European eastern neighbourhood.

Similarly to the EU accession, integration into NATO has also been an important theme. This debate reached its high point in the 2008 and 2009 debates, where the necessity to grant Ukraine and Georgia the membership action plan (MAP) was defended, even after the war in Georgia. The wars in Georgia and Ukraine became the focal points of these years in terms of relations with the ENP countries. In 2009, all types of bilateral help and aid were mentioned to help Georgia during and after the war, and in 2015, the same was true for Ukraine. In 2015, even military help to Ukraine was discussed, dismissed largely based on Estonia's insufficient weaponry. In fact, in 2015 the government was being criticized for not doing enough to help Ukraine bilaterally. In this debate, discourse also mentioned the specifics of the war, like the humanitarian suffering

aspect, as the war was still ongoing. In both cases, the focus was on Estonian bilateral help to these countries and support to the restoration of Georgia's and Ukraine's territorial integrity. However, what largely disappeared from the discussion was Ukraine's and Georgia's integration into NATO. Therefore, it is no surprise that while in 2020, the wars in Ukraine and Georgia were mentioned, the bilateral relations with these countries had also faded. The reasons behind NATO's accession dropping from the agenda are not mentioned, although it can be surmised that the frozen conflicts which led to partial losses of sovereignty play a role here. As the impetus behind the engagement faded, so too did the bilateral relations outside of the EU framework. This can also explain why relations with Moldova were the least developed outside of the EU – NATO's accession was never on the table.

The ENP and enlargement have been important aspects of Estonian foreign policy agenda in the EU. Despite being separate types of the EU's external policy, the early debates especially did not see them as mutually exclusive – the ENP countries were considered to have membership potential, provided they did the necessary reforms. As the ENP is also discussed beyond the potential enlargement, it is more discussed in general. Enlargement separately is mentioned only rarely, without going into detail. However, the Estonian interest of giving Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine a membership perspective has not disappeared completely and is mentioned in the conjunction with the Eastern Partnership (EP). The emphasis on the responsibility of ENP countries to do the reforms themselves has been central, but speakers have also stressed the need to help the countries that are willing to reform. For this reason, Estonia has favoured a differentiated approach, where the most successful countries could move on to a deeper level of cooperation. Within the ENP framework, Estonia has advocated that the EU should do more in conflict resolution in Moldova and Georgia in 2008 and to integrate these three countries into the EU energy framework. The creation of the EP in 2009 led to even deeper cooperation with the Eastern European countries, where Estonia saw on itself having the role of a spokesperson for these countries in the EU. Predictably, signing the association agreements with the three was seen as a crucial step in deepening ties. The 2020 debate saw an interesting development whereby the FM defended the close partnership with Georgia despite its dwindling democratic credentials. Therefore, the

relationships with these three countries are not just contingent on their ability to do reforms but on a deeper connection going beyond the potential EU membership.

Estonia has shown active participation in the ENP policy, frequently taking initiative in policies regarding Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Therefore, Estonia's policy could be considered as uploading at the EU level. The extensive bilateral relations also show that the EU framework is not the only avenue for cooperation, especially with Georgia and Ukraine. Based on this discussion, it is however difficult to determine what role does Russia play in choosing to work together with Eastern European countries. The reason for engagement is linked to both the European values of Estonia as well as the possible Russian threat, yet these linkages are infrequent enough that making more definitive conclusions would be difficult. When comparing relations with Belarus to relations with Russia, even a slight improvement in the domestic situation in Belarus triggered the need in the debate to improve relations and increasing presence there. The same tendency is not present in the discourse about Russia, as cooperation there is viewed with suspicion, and the democratic preconditions for relations are stressed. It could be that these countries are seen as examples for Russia to follow, signalling to Russia that if Russia were more like these countries, relations with the EU and Estonia could improve. However, as the reasons for engaging Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are not there in the debates, it is hard to support even the claim that the shared past is the reason for cooperation.

#### 4.4. Russian essentialist spirit

Decoding Russia as an actor is a central theme in the foreign policy debates. Generally speaking, it can be divided into three: discourse on Russia's domestic situation, on Russia's essence and Russia's imperial tendencies.

Russia's domestic political situation is largely seen as unchanging, which is best exemplified by the low expectations to Russia's presidential elections in 2008. Concerns over the situation with democracy and human rights have also been present over the years. Within the human rights discourse, the rights of Finno-Ugric people in Russia are at the centre of it, primarily in 2005 and 2020. In 2005, the lack of action on this issue was a cause for criticism at the government's address, while in 2020, the nationalist sentiments in the parliament and government largely drove the overall discourse. However, the rights

of Finno-Ugric people were only once mentioned in the chairman's speech, meaning that it is a relatively low priority topic in foreign policy discussions. Predictably, the issue was tied to values in relations with Russia – advancing the situation of Finno-Ugric people in Russia, supporting their culture, and keeping the focus on this issue in various international institutions, like the EU or the Arctic Council. The debates reveal that the cooperation with Russia on this question has been scarce – while rhetorically the Finno-Ugric people are important from a shared ethnonationalist perspective, not much can be or is done to make Russia change its behaviour. The domestic situation has also been linked to bilateral relations with Russia and the possible ratifying of the border treaty. This mostly happened in the questions and answers segment, where the Russian domestic situation is used to forecast possible developments in bilateral relations.

The Russian essence often comes to explain why the relations with Russia have not developed anywhere. The main themes here have remained largely unchanged over the years – Russia lacks interest in maintaining relations or deliberately obstructs them through its behaviour, opposes itself to the West and does not wish to take part in international cooperation, has ulterior motives or uses pressuring tactics for self-interest, acts dishonestly and irrationally. Furthermore, Russia only seeks to improve relations when it suits Russia and does not act in a mutually beneficial way. This view of the Russian essence shifts the blame primarily onto Russia as the reason why relations have not developed, becoming a mirror-image of Estonia. There have been very isolated instances of pushback against this discourse. These criticisms share the common trait of urging not to see Russia through the lens of essentialism. This manifested in 2005, where one speaker urged the politicians not to view Russia as an inherently irrational actor, and in 2020, when some speakers started viewing Russian citizens and tourists through the lens of security.

The Russian essence interpretation gave way to a more specific interpretation of Russia, where its actions are seen as imperialist and revisionist. This view did not exist in 2005, but the debate in 2008 already saw inklings of this rhetoric due to the growing hostilities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and Putin's Munich speech. The war in Georgia brought up the Russian imperialism discourse, albeit not strongly. Russia was mostly criticized for breaching international law and destabilizing the region, for its attempts at creating a sphere of influence, and trying to reorganize the security architecture in Europe.

Additionally, the Russian politics of passportization was seen as a potential danger for other countries in the neighbourhood, like Ukraine. This discourse became more prevalent in 2015 as Russia's past actions were reinterpreted to fit a narrative on Russia's eternal imperial ambitions. The FM mentioned Georgia as well as Moldova, while the chairman went as far the Soviet Union to explain Russia's imperialist tendencies. A key part in the narrative is Russia's attempt to reverse the geopolitical catastrophe, as Putin had famously called it, of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Russia's inability to deal with it. Russia would not want peace and is determined to achieve its goals, through destabilizing Ukraine. The conclusion made in the narrative is that Russia had started a new cold war, with the goal of breaking Western unity. Therefore, the forcible change of borders in Ukraine was not limited to just Ukraine but constituted an attack on the Western world. In 2020, this discourse had largely remained, although becoming less frequent – Russia was still exhibiting imperial ambitions through insidious means, like using hybrid warfare to create a sphere of influence, also outside of Europe. While the conflicts themselves were not discussed much, they remained as examples of Russian imperialism.

Naturally, Russia's threat touches upon Estonia as well. However, until the war in Ukraine, the discourse on the threat was vague. In the earlier years, the main source of the threat was related to energy – the fear that Russia could use Estonia's dependency on Russia's gas as means of dominance and a basis for making political demands. The dangers that the Nord Stream project would bring to the Baltic Sea was one of the main themes in the Nord Stream discourse. Violating the Estonian air borders was also mentioned on several years, while the Bronze Night was only mentioned vaguely through the references to propaganda. The rhetoric of Russia being an inherent danger to Estonia was also present, but it was largely underdeveloped and appeared only sporadically. This changed in 2015 when the physical danger to Estonia became a talking point. The change came down largely to the war in Ukraine – however, the speakers also talked of the Russian threat as something that could affect “our region”. Due to NATO's increased presence, many reiterated that Estonia is well defended, despite the increased danger from the East. There was also another development in 2015 – the kidnapping of an Estonian security official on the border with Russia. However, this incident was largely self-contained, with the focus on having him released as soon as possible. In 2020, the rhetoric remained largely the same, with the added element of discussing possible threats posed

by Russian citizens. When a question was asked on granting double citizenship to people, the FM mentioned it as a possible security threat for Estonia (if the Russians applied for it). Additionally, the FM commented on the possibility of having visa-free travel with Russia as having security consideration, dismissing it as a sensible policy.

It is interesting that while the speakers spoke of an eternal Russian imperialist spirit in 2015, arguing that they had been talking about it for years before without the allies taking them seriously, such rhetoric did not feature in the debate during the Russo-Georgian war. Additionally, while in 2015, the FM tied together Ukraine with frozen conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, this did not happen in 2009. Therefore, only in 2015 was the narrative on Russia as the eternal imperialist completed in the discourse, giving the feeling of the threat posed by Russia its substance. It is possible that the FM in the first three debates was more diplomatic, yet the debate format would have allowed such an interpretation to emerge regardless of what the FM said. Therefore, the debate in 2015 signals a change in the discourse on Russia.

#### 4.5 Estonia's relations with Russia

Estonia's relations with Russia can be divided into three distinct categories – values and pragmatism in relations with Russia and criticism to the government in relations with Russia. Criticism to the government on Russia policy as a theme is however too vague to make concrete conclusions, therefore I will not consider it as a separate category. Additionally, there are also a few themes that do not neatly fit into this classification. The main one is that of keeping contacts with the Russian counterparts and having working relations with them. Except for 2015, the MPs asked questions from the chairman and the FM about the state of play in relations and how the relations are developing, with an emphasis on meetings (21 out of 26 codes). This shows that having relations with Russia is seen as a relatively important question that is often omitted from the main speeches. As the answers reveal, the relations are often a work in progress, suffering from frequent breakdowns. While the answers generally point to a need in having contacts and meetings, the high-level meeting between the presidents in 2019 was criticized by the chairman for not being coordinated with regional allies. Other themes have been visa-facilitation schemes between Estonia and Russia which was discussed in 2020, and being more assertive in bilateral relations.

Pragmatic relations mean relations whereby values do not play a decisive role in having relations on the Estonian side. This is best exemplified by the border treaty, where the necessity of getting it ratified has been mentioned in all the years except 2008 and generally favoured by speakers. There exist two exceptions to this – twice, the possibility of concluding the border treaty was deemed unwise due to international conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, and once in 2020 when the FM stressed the need to keep the Estonian historical narrative intact during the ratification process. In the same year, the FM remarked that Russia has set Estonia changing its Russophobic politics as a precondition to ratification. He nonetheless did not advocate changing the already signed border treaty. Curiously, the reasons for the border treaty breakdown have been not developed in the discourse – only two speakers made references to it in 2005, while others left their interpretations of it implicit. In most cases, the reason for the lack of a breakthrough was ascribed to Russia’s lack of initiative or interest in concluding the treaty. In 2005, there was also a discussion over the expediency to upload this issue to the EU level, with the FM defending the decision not to, and the MPs criticizing the decision as being too weak on defending Estonia’s interests. While the original Treaty of Tartu did not feature much in the debate, in 2020, one EKRE politician referred to its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to the land dispute with Russia, based on this treaty.

A second field where pragmatic relations are valued is sectorial cooperation in culture, education, tourism, trade, and cross-border relations. In these fields, the existing cooperation is either regarded as good or necessary to develop. Furthermore, the normative value of deepening relations, having a constructive dialogue, and having high-level political contacts is praised as a good thing. Pragmatic cooperation is also valued in the international setting, like for example in the Atlantic Council, the Baltic Sea Strategy or between NATO and Russia to limit conventional weapons in Europe. Finally, pragmatism also manifests against overly assertive politics that some speakers exhibit in relations with Russia, to avoid worsening relations with Russia. For example, not taking harsh stances regarding Russia’s domestic situation, mixing memory politics with the border treaty, or taking unilateral action against Russia. This serves to de-emphasize the threat that is seen posed by Russia. In general, pragmatic relations are sought in areas that are removed from high politics and where the cooperation is more technical.

The values in relations with Russia divide into two – values specifically related to bilateral relations and those that are related to Russia’s actions in its foreign policy. The democracy and human rights situation in Russia have been important topics over the years – besides Finno-Ugric peoples’ rights, the desire to have a democratic Russia as a cooperation partner has been mentioned. This is seen as a precondition to having good neighbourly relations, as it would then be built on shared values. In the existing relations, Russia is criticized for not living up to the example of Estonia – not acting in mutual interest, thereby derailing cooperation. Additionally, many speakers emphasized the dangers of pragmatic relations with Russia and the need to uphold values in relations. In international relations, the wars in Georgia and Ukraine serve as the primary examples of values, as no speaker supported pragmatism with Russia here. The values primarily relate to Russia’s need to act according to the international obligations it has taken and is criticized for breaching international laws through warfare. For Estonia, its obligation is to stand up against these breaches and uphold international law, without letting the international focus shift from the wrongful actions. The key aspect here is the linkage between values and Russian imperialism, which is what the values are directed against. While in the Russo-Georgian war, the focus was on Russia, the war in Ukraine also featured putting Ukraine’s interest at the centre of conflict resolution, giving it the final say over reconciliation. To pressure Russia to change its behaviour, politicians favoured increasing sanctions on Russia. The restoration of Ukraine’s (and Georgia’s) territories has been the preferred solution. What is similar both in international and bilateral relations is the view that for the relations to improve, Russia must change itself and/or its behaviour.

#### 4.6 Cybersecurity and the Bronze Night

There was a surprising lack of discourse on the Bronze Night, despite being an issue that touched Estonia directly. The few times this topic was mentioned, it was discussed vaguely in relation to war graves, cybersecurity, and international cooperation – only one speaker mentioned a cyber-attack against Estonia’s critical infrastructure in his speech. The FM talked about this topic without referring to Russia specifically, just mentioning the foreign propaganda against Estonia. The same vagueness can be ascribed to the other speakers as well, referring to the crisis as April incidents, worsened relations, and only

once the Bronze night. While the cooperation on cybersecurity in the EU was mentioned and even uploaded once in 2009, the main framework for substantive cooperation was NATO. However, the positive role of the EU in the crisis was mentioned, as the solidarity between member states in relations with Russia held. Edward Lucas's critical article on Estonia's inability to deal with the crisis was also mentioned and scrutinized. What was omitted in the discourse were the riots, the blockade of the Estonian embassy in Moscow, or Russian involvement in the whole affair. While in some cases, Russian involvement could be inferred, the Russian responsibility was left deliberately vague in the discourse. The importance of cybersecurity has been mentioned in debates in the following years – however, it has stayed at the level of just mentioning that it is indeed an important topic. Therefore, the Bronze Night and its consequences have been largely absent in the foreign policy debates.

#### 4.7 Nord Stream and the energy security

Energy security and Nord Stream were unexpectedly important topics, featuring strongly in 2005, 2008 and 2009 debates. It started in 2005 as the Nord Stream pipeline was being developed and continued as a debate about energy security in the EU. Intrinsically linked to the Nord Stream debate was the concern over the environment in the Baltic Sea, to which the gas pipeline was seen as a direct threat. Twice, the pollution caused by gas tankers in the Baltic sea was also mentioned. This is the main threat that has been linked to the Nord Stream – only three times was Estonian energy security linked to the topic and twice the need to reduce gas dependency on Russia was highlighted. This refers to the fact that environmental security in the Baltic Sea became kind of a value through which to explain Estonia's opposition to this project. In 2005, the government was also heavily criticized for its lack of vocal opposition to the project at the European level, while the FM was also critical of the EU's (or Germany, more specifically) Russia policy for not considering Estonia's interests. Additionally, since the same year featured the breakdown in border treaty, changing Estonia's the maritime border in the Baltic sea to block this project was discussed. While criticism towards Germany was generally suppressed, so too was criticism against Russia – only two speakers in the audience directly saw a Russian danger linked to the project. In 2008 and 2009, more criticism is directed towards the EU for lacking unity on this issue and not discussing environmentally

safer alternatives, like building a land pipeline, which Estonia supported. Additionally, the threat of Europe becoming dependent on Russian gas is mentioned. The main conclusion that can be drawn is that Estonia saw itself excluded from Nord Stream process, which was seen as an important topic that involves Estonia's interests, without Germany realizing it.

Estonia's energy security instead became entangled in the debate over the EU's energy security. Two clear interests manifest in the emerging EU energy policy. First was achieving energy security within the EU internal market through better interconnectedness and equality between the EU member states. The need to connect neighbouring European states into the system was also mentioned, especially in the light of Ukraine-Russia gas disputes, but without including Russia. This dispute serves as a link between the need to have interconnected energy markets and the second interest, which is the need to diversify the European energy exports. The unilateralism or possible unilateralism of other member states on energy security was criticized, with clear hints towards gas imports from Russia. Speakers favoured a unified policy with the third parties, which was seen to benefit the EU as a whole – improving the bargaining power of everyone and reducing risks of becoming dependent on one exporter, which could lead to lower energy security. The climate goals were also mentioned, but the Green Party criticized the government for superficiality in this regard for not willing to make any national concessions for that goal. While the Nord Stream issue was not concluded favourably for Estonia, the EU's unified energy market was regarded as good in terms of regional energy security. The energy security represents an interesting aspect of how Estonia pursued its Russia related interests without largely connecting it to Russia at all. While some mentions were made to the threats posed by Russian energy dependence, much of debate included more inclusive language, speaking in the name of European, rather than Estonian interests.

#### 4.8 The EU's foreign policy with Russia

In general, Estonia has been supportive of the EU's foreign and security policy, seeing it as a way of advancing shared interests, based on shared values and solidarity. However, the inability to have equal representation of interests as well as internal divisions are seen as a problem undermining the potential of joint action. It mostly relates

to the differences between member states, whereby larger states tend to pursue their interests over the common good. When it comes to relations with Russia, we can distinguish 2 themes – supporting or criticizing the EU’s policy on Russia and uploading or downloading Russia policy. In any case, the EU serves as an additional arena for developing relations with Russia, beyond individual capabilities. The results show that the politicians overwhelmingly opt to upload, rather than download policy on the EU. Downloading has happened in only two cases. First, in 2005, the FM defended the EU’s agreement with Russia on visa facilitation and dropping double customs taxes because of the direct benefits to Estonia. Doing so, he did not tie this agreement to the collapse of Estonia’s border treaty with Russia – something he was criticized for by the speakers. The second time happened in 2015 when the FM defended the EU’s policy on not giving military aid to Ukraine during the conflict, which was again, criticized by one MP. It can be argued that in both of those cases, Estonia’s possibilities to achieve a different result in bilateral policy was not possible, and the outcomes of the EU were indeed beneficial, if not the most preferred. Therefore, downloading was merely better than the alternative, or not downloading would not have made any difference due to the lack of means.

Uploading has been more varied – getting the support for Estonia’s positions on the border treaty, having a more assertive policy on Russia, raising awareness on communist crimes, raising cooperation on cybersecurity, achieving a legal framework for EU-Russia relations, tackling Russian propaganda, sanctioning Kremlin’s propagandists, demanding the release of Eston Kohver, and restarting EU-Russia relations. Energy security and the war in Ukraine have been the most uploaded topics. In the field of energy security, uploaded topics have been an alternate gas pipeline project to Nord Stream, diversifying energy exports away from Russia, keeping the focus on the environmental dangers of Nord Stream, having unified external relations on energy as well as supporting the EU’s energy policy in general. When it comes to the war in Ukraine, the politicians have supported tougher sanctions on Russia, setting the restoration of Ukraine’s (and Georgia’s) territorial integrity as the basis for normalizing relations, giving more help to Ukraine, labelling Donetsk and Lugansk as terrorist republics, and maintaining unity in the EU against Russia’s influence campaigns.

The criticism and support of the EU’s policies vary year by year, although the criticism usually outweighs the support. This criticism rests primarily on two ideas – the

EU does not consider Estonia's interests in relations with Russia seriously, and that the EU is naïve towards Russia. The first theme touches on the solidarity issue, whereby speakers criticize the fact that the member states prefer bilateral relations with Russia over a unified policy. This goes against Estonia's bottom line of relying on the EU as a power multiplier in relations with Russia. The outwardly imposed liminal position in the EU is also criticized, again primarily concerning the Nord Stream project. The primary issue here is that Estonia's interests and security are neglected, to satisfy the economic interests of larger states. Indeed, the lack of a value-driven approach in relations with Russia has been seen as a problem. The pipeline is also seen as a vulnerability for the EU – allowing Russia to divide the EU internally between the East and the West. While in 2005, the government was criticized for not representing Estonia enough in the EU, this rhetoric largely disappeared in the following years. In other words, the EU's problematic Russia policy is the fault of the EU's other member states and not Estonia.

The second strand in the criticisms is that the EU is naïve towards Russia, unable to fully comprehend Russia's ulterior motives, therefore making it impossible to rely on the EU in times of crisis. In the case of Nord Stream, it was not realizing the dangers of gas supply being used for manipulation. After the Georgian war, the Sarkozy-Medvedev peace treaty was not seen as effective, and the same was seen as the problem with the Minsk agreements (which were ongoing at the time of the debate in 2015). Here, further criticism was made towards playing into Russia's hands by having the heads of France and Germany, instead of the EU's foreign policy chief meet in Minsk. Additionally, speakers criticized not giving Ukraine military aid (sanctions were considered ineffective), forgetting Crimea and not fully understanding the developments in Ukraine, and urging not to repeat the mistakes of restoring relations, like what was done after the war in Georgia. As a result of not understanding Russia, Estonia has sought to upload its policies for relations with Russia that were named above.

The support for the EU on its Russia policy has varied as well, ranging from criticizing Russia on human rights to supporting Estonia's position on the border treaty to the Bronze night riots. The main support for the EU's Russia policy has been on the reaction to the war in Ukraine – praising the EU's unity on values and maintaining the sanctions regime on Russia, as well as supporting German and French leadership in the Minsk agreements. Unsurprisingly, most of the discourse that has been favourable to the

EU's Russia policy over the years has come from the chairman and the FM. However, when it comes to the criticism, the reverse cannot be said – while the MPs have made more criticism, both the chairman and the FM have also been critical over the years.

## 5. Discussion

Estonia's discourse on Russia, as described above, is varied and encompasses many facets of relations. These shed light into Estonia's own self-image, how relations with Russia are presented in the public debate, and how the EU is viewed in the broader debate. Roughly speaking, we can distinguish two different themes – the issues involving Estonia directly (Eston Kohver, espionage, border treaty, Bronze Night) and the issues involving Estonia indirectly (Nord Stream, Ukraine-Russia gas dispute, Russo-Georgian war, the war in Ukraine).

### 5.1 Bilateral stage

The border treaty has been the longest bilateral issue in the relations, and the continued attempts to conclude it show that it falls into the necessary minimum of relations Estonia wants to have with Russia. It is evident that Estonia sees itself as the border, mentioned both in the debates and in the literature, and that has significance to Estonia's self-image in relations as well. While the border treaty is a relatively technical matter, it has symbolism beyond it that comes out in the discourse. Estonia has seemingly done everything it can and is waiting for Russia to do the next necessary steps. However, Russia is for one reason or another not interested in concluding the treaty and deliberately hampering relations. Therefore, the cooperative and pragmatic Estonia is unable to do anything because Russia is uncooperative and guided by goals that are not pragmatic. The lack of a border treaty, however, does not then translate to a lack of difference but exemplifies it – as shown by the attitudes towards having “normal” relations. However, while Russia's precondition to ratifying might be Estonia reversing its Russophobic policy, Estonian politicians have also mentioned preconditions, namely not letting the focus shift from during the wars in Georgia and Ukraine by signing the treaty. It shows that the pragmatism of the border treaty may be outweighed by the values of international law, as choosing to cooperate with Russia could then reflect badly on Estonia's self-image. Likewise, Estonia has expressed its interest in having a democratic Russia as a cooperation partner, based on similar values. Therefore, value conditions exist on both sides, as the border treaty symbolizes more than just a technical matter between the two countries.

The inability to solve this issue despite numerous attempts signify Estonia's failure of having normal relations with Russia. This has resulted in a radical shift in the discourse – in the 2020 debate, the possible warming up of the border treaty was met by a return of history, something that had not existed since 2005. EKRE's politicians urged going back to the Treaty of Tartu, including claims that parts of Estonia are currently occupied by Russia. This has shaken up the existing discourse, as Estonia would no longer appear the pragmatic/cooperative type in the negotiations, as pointed out by some speakers. While the FM agreed to keep the existing border treaty intact, he was cautious to appear overly cooperative – reiterating the need to protect the memory of the first republic. Therefore, the historical turn in the border treaty turned it from a technical matter and a symbol of Estonian cooperative spirit to a political issue laden with memory. In the light of this domestic political change, the presidents' meeting in Moscow was seen rather cautiously and even criticized. While the border treaty is generally seen as something that could be solved between the two countries, the most recent debate cast doubt on that, as Estonia's cooperative ethos has changed to a more historicist one. This lingering issue has become one of the fundamental challenges in bilateral relations, evidenced by the fact that existing relations rarely go beyond mentioning cultural and primarily technical fields and simply having contacts, and more political matters are kept out of relations. Without a breakthrough in the border treaty, much of the rest of the relations cannot develop either.

The near-total absence of the Bronze Night in the discourse is an oddity, as the literature depicted it as a watershed moment in bilateral relations. Even when it was mentioned, the riots, the blockade of the Estonian embassy and Russian involvement were omitted by the speakers, speaking vaguely in terms of an incident and that the EU stood by Estonia. Connected to this crisis was the cybersecurity discourse, which constitutes a larger theme upon which to build international cooperation in the EU and NATO (which was seen as more important), bypassing discussing Russia and the crisis. It is possible that it did not challenge the existing narrative on the relations with Russia, and that an altercation was expected. It is also clear that this incident had already been thoroughly discussed on the domestic level – there was no need to discuss it again. The EU also supported Estonia during the crisis, thus crushing the fears of the EU betrayal. This represents an interesting trend whereby bilateral relations are not discussed on a foreign policy debate, as both the first high-profile espionage case and the abduction of Eston

Kohver were also only briefly mentioned. As the debates are followed by international observers, it could be that Estonia fears being considered overfocused on relations with Russia. It is also likely that the big topics in relations with Russia are dealt on another level – domestic. This is enhanced by the fact that the riots taking place in Estonia were a domestically sensitive issue and the outrage against the relocation of the monument was not purely foreign in origin. As a theme plagued with security considerations, Russia transcends foreign and domestic dimensions of the politics. The discourse on the Bronze Night provides a good example, as the EU's response, cooperation on cybersecurity, and the article written by Edward Lucas' article were talked about more than the blockade in Moscow, a central aspect of the crisis. Based on the debates, it's therefore hard to say whether this crisis produced any change in the rhetoric on its own, beyond cybersecurity becoming a priority.

All this points to the implicitly understood nature of Russia, whereby Russia does not need to be deciphered. Russia is intuitively understood through its depictions – it is not interested in cooperation, and while its motivations may not always be clear, they do not have Estonia's best interests in mind. This is also why the border treaty was almost completely relegated to the questions and answers segment and the short speeches of MPs. The same goes for the Bronze Night, and the espionage and Eston Kohver's cases were barely touched upon at all. Russia is seen as a constant – its motivations have never changed, making it therefore unnecessary to explain them again. While the 2020 debate represents a change in domestic politics and changes in rhetoric, it did not fundamentally how Russia and relations with Russia are seen. The fact that bilateral relations have rarely been linked to the wider EU-Russia relations, with the notable exception of the border treaty in 2005, where not utilizing the EU level was criticized, shows that the bilateral issues are seen to be best managed independently. The absence of the EU in the border treaty discussions may also show that the topic proved domestically more divisive than expected – and the EU's support would not help in overcoming the nationalist opposition to the treaty. In general, the EU's support is considered as sufficient in bilateral relations, but its limits in changing Russia's behaviour are also recognized.

## 5.2 International stage

The international stage of relations does not always mean relations with Russia, but also relations about Russia. One of the most surprising aspects that featured heavily in the debate was the implicit depiction of Russia, especially concerning Nord Stream, the ENP, and memory politics at the European level. These topics appear in the discourse as decoupled from Russia, despite having a Russian element in it. There are two reasons for this. First, as the debate in 2005 showed, the external notion in the EU of Estonia as a “one-issue country” influenced how Estonia would frame issues but did not fundamentally change the issues themselves. To counter the liminal position imposed on Estonia, being seen as being too historical about Russia, more creative ways of discussing their concerns were used. Nord Stream provides a good example of this as Germany is criticized slightly more than Russia, for not sufficiently including Estonia. In the background, the collapse of the border treaty and the subsequent EU-Russia agreement on the four Common Spaces was something that the FM felt the need to explain, as it seemed to go against what the EU was expected to be (supporting Estonia). Estonia’s sense of disillusionment to the decision-making in the EU thus had to adapt to the realities, producing a crisis regarding the EU, not Russia. Therefore, the announcement on the Nord Stream pipeline project in 2005 constituted a breaking point, whereby Estonia could either embrace the EU or cling to the existing routines. The pipeline project was criticized by the FM and the MPs, but the criticism was on the environmental security posed by the pipeline, rather than on Estonia’s threatened energy security. The latter dimension of the debate is only activated later, during the discussion on the EU energy policy. The danger of Russia making the EU dependent on its energy was also mentioned, but not so much in connection to Estonia, but as a threat to the EU as a whole. Russia’s perceived threat to Estonia was therefore articulated through European interests, reconfiguring it as the EU crisis, rather than a crisis in bilateral relations with Russia.

The basis for criticizing the EU and Germany, in particular, rested on Europe not being sufficiently Europe, rather than the EU not accepting Estonia’s concerns on becoming vulnerable to Russian gas dependence. While Estonia could not change Russia’s plans to build the pipeline, it could europeanise its concerns and criticize the EU for living up to its values of dialogue and environmental safety to change how the EU engages Russia. This way, the betrayal of other member states conducting bilateral affairs

with Russia could at least be mitigated in the future through Estonia's input. Estonia's concerns in relations with Russia would then also be mediated through the member states of the EU, namely Germany in the Nord Stream case. As the debates show, negotiations with Russia on the Nord Stream are not entertained – some politicians even discussed Estonia's options of blocking the construction of the pipeline themselves, without involving either the EU or Russia. At the EU level, the alternative land pipeline project was supported, without mentioning Russia, which was considered to be environmentally safer. Only once, the increased energy security aspect of the land pipeline for Estonia was discussed, implicitly through the pipeline to Kaliningrad, which goes through Lithuania. At the same time, the EU energy security framework was gaining steam – the question was no longer about Estonia's energy security, but the EU's energy security, which needed a common framework, as a vulnerable net importer of energy. The crisis and the liminality of Estonia were thus overcome by embracing the European discourse, while the source of the threat is left out. The crisis is almost exclusively seen at the European level. However, its direction – uploading or downloading – is left ambiguous.

Interestingly, Estonia's vulnerability of gas dependency does not translate to overall trade being seen as a source of threat. Overreliance on the trade with Russia was only once mentioned as a possible problem, during the economic crisis, alongside trading too much with the EU countries. In general, trade ties, investments, and tourism were welcomed in bilateral relations. Nord Stream was seen as inherently different, as it was both marginalizing the Baltics in the EU-Russia relations as well as threatening Estonia's gas supply. The EU solution of a unified energy market, with an emphasis on supply diversification and interconnection, provided a sufficient guarantee that in 2009, the Nord Stream issue had virtually faded, and the focus shifted to the EU energy policy and Estonian energy security.

Ukraine and Georgia have occupied a crucial role in the Estonian political imaginary, primarily due to the similar anxieties regarding Russia as well as Euro-Atlantic aspirations. These two factors together bring Ukraine and Georgia closer (than other FSU states) to Estonia – through a similar interpretation of their geopolitical position in Europe. For this reason, Estonia has actively supported their accession into the EU and NATO, with these organizations primarily understood as security guarantees in relations with Russia. The literature on Estonia's Euro-Atlantic accession showed that the

motivations behind joining both of the organizations were security-related – even in the EU, the security outweighed economic benefits. It is likely to assume that similar considerations influenced Estonia’s support for Ukraine and Georgia, essentially seeing them as safeguards against the Russian threat. Viewed in this light, these two can be thought of as could-have-been Estonias or former Self’s if Estonia had not joined the EU and NATO. However, the reasons for supporting Ukraine and Georgia were most mostly left ambiguous in the debates. Only in 2005 was the failure of the EU to engage these countries considered as an opportunity for Russia. Belarus and Armenia also point to the fact that the core countries in the ENP are considered from both their willingness to integrate with the EU and distance themselves from Russia. Despite Belarus being deeply undemocratic, the brief spike in the discourse in 2009 shows that movements of these countries away from Russia are supported. Armenia, despite being relatively democratic, is rarely mentioned separately, as it has close security relations with Russia. Therefore, the main partners in the ENP are chosen more based on their resistance towards Russia, which acts as an empty signifier between the partner countries and Estonia.

When the fears of Russian aggression materialized, it made clear that what happened in Georgia and Ukraine, could also happen to Estonia. This realization became evident in the debates only in 2015 when both wars were linked together into a single narrative of Russian imperialism that could threaten Estonia. Russian military threat to Estonia was still deemed unlikely in the discourse, but Estonia’s security was nevertheless discussed more than before. Therefore, while Estonia was not Georgia or Ukraine, it could have been – narratively justifying all prior decisions taken vis-à-vis Russia, notably joining NATO and the EU. The drop in overall discussion on Russia in 2020 showed the while the overall discourse on Russia had decreased, the threat posed by Russia to Estonia had increased in the discourse, demonstrating that the narrative of Russian aggression had solidified.

International conflicts opened up a possibility to talk about Estonia’s main concern, security, by providing real-world examples of what countries similar to Estonia experienced. As the debates showed, the international conflicts did not bring up anything new in the discourse (as there was no contestation), but rather they provided an opportunity to authoritatively explain these positions to the wider Western world because the previously expressed concerns had become true. The discussion on the border treaty

also showed that Estonia is willing to sacrifice the pragmatism of the border treaty to keep the focus on these examples of Russian aggression. This can be explained by the fact that these conflicts reveal the “true” nature of Russia while concluding a border treaty could show Russia as a normal country with a normal domestic political structure. Seen this way, the wars reveal the Russian nature of an eternal imperialist better than any bilateral dispute. This was exemplified best by the war in Ukraine in 2015, which despite being the shortest debate in length, had the most discourse on Russia. With foreign conflicts, there was also a shift in rhetoric from the Russian essentialism to a Russian imperialism/revisionism and an increased discourse on the threat to Estonia.

The debates showed that the war in Ukraine was different from the Russo-Georgian war not just in the amount of discourse, but also in the level to which the EU was involved. The higher involvement of the EU in the conflict in Ukraine may come down to two factors. First, Russo-Georgian war was considered solved at the European level through the Sarkozy-Medvedev peace agreement, therefore no more policy actions could be pursued. Second, the discussions over the ongoing conflict were taking place in Minsk, prompting questions regarding the possible outcomes. However, the war in Ukraine dominated the debate in 2015, signifying a wider shift in the discourse on Russia. The larger frequency of uploading also shows that the EU’s involvement in the crisis had made it different for Estonia because its interpretation and the approach regarding Russia were being accepted. While after the war in Georgia, the politicians felt a stronger need to “explain” Russia to the allies, in 2015 the focus was on keeping the unity towards Russia, with the main criticism towards the EU not realizing Russia’s “true” nature sooner, like Estonia had suggested. Even if giving military aid to Ukraine to counter Russia did not materialize, sanctions by themselves were seen as a good response to Russian imperialism. Keeping the value-based unity already achieved on Russia was therefore more important than getting maximum results on Russia.

The discourse has also set a high bar for normalizing relations with Russia – status quo antebellum. Furthermore, the preparedness for drawn-out cold war was stressed in the discourse – meaning that having established values in relations with Russia, returning to a pragmatic relationship between the EU and Russia was out of the question. The EU (and also Estonia) could not be sufficiently different from Russia if it pursued pragmatism against Russian imperialism – imperialism was to be met with values and action

demanding the opposite. This new cold war thus achieves an important identity goal for Estonia – transcending the bilateral identity rivalry to the EU-Russia rivalry, where values and not pragmatism guide action. It also differentiates Estonia from those in the EU, who valued pragmatism towards Russia, as a nation standing up for international law. In fact, discourse shows that Estonia frequently criticizes the EU for not doing more for values, rather than supporting its Russia policy. The EU therefore transforms into a tool for criticizing and/or pressuring Russia on international events on a more equal footing, rather than a framework where individual differences of member states could be hammered out. However, while the ENP/EP are utilized to integrate the countries involved better with the EU, helping these countries bilaterally, especially Ukraine and Georgia, was in fact more common. The significant drop off in the discourse on Georgia and Ukraine in 2020 does not mean that these countries have lost their relevance, but it does point to a fact that the initial impetus for supporting them (joining the EU and NATO) has waned after the conflicts, which made achieving these goals harder.

### 5.3 Shifts in ontological security

It would be hard to argue that the discourse on relations with Russia has changed at its core. What has changed is how these relations have been presented. The analysis has shown that bilateral relations are mostly shallow – largely descriptive and explained through the essentialist character of Russia. Issues related to security – the Bronze Night, espionage, and abduction – do not feature much in the debate, whereas the border treaty and having contacts are considered to be good, but do not signal any substantive changes because Russia is depicted as not interested in improved relations. The relations with Russia are more discussed and more value-based when it comes to international issues. It is however clear that the importance of these crises was motivated by domestic concerns, namely the fear of a Russian military attack against Estonia. These values are informed by fears of the Russian threat, and these values serve to distance Russia from Europe, rather than bring it closer. Values, therefore, act as an inverse of having relations – they explain why relations do not take place, derived from Russia's breaches of international laws or values of mutual self-interest. Normalizing relations with Russia has preconditions – mutual reciprocity and democracy at the bilateral level and dropping imperial ambitions at the international level. No change is required on Estonia's or the

EU's side – on the contrary, the similar policy towards Russia must be maintained for a positive outcome for all. Therefore, no shared values are tying Russia and Estonia together. As the chairman remarked in the 2008 debate: [---] “we can never set cordial relations with Russia as our main and only benchmark for the success of our foreign policy”, pointing to limits of what normal relations with Russia could be like, even if the set preconditions were achieved.

The accession into the EU and NATO nevertheless signified a kind of a year 0 in Estonia-Russia relations. This is not because Estonia would not have wished to pursue memory-related relations with Russia, but because memory politics alone could not convince other members of the EU to adopt Estonia's Russia policy. The memory policy pursued at the EU level remained at the marginal discourse, despite having very modest stated goals vis-à-vis Russia. Although Russia's different historical narrative was mentioned, it was mostly a reactive response to Russia's actions. Likewise, with Nord Stream, the discourse concentrated more on the environmental concerns, rather than Russia's motivations. Within the EU energy security debate, the main values were diversification and solidarity, rather than avoiding Russia completely. This does not mean that Russia does not play a significant role in the interest-formulation, yet the choice to express policy desires in a European way shows adaptation to the new cooperation framework. Additionally, the examples of Russia's imperialism were contemporary wars in Georgia and Ukraine. Russia's malignancy is also reproduced through crises thematically, rather than lumping everything together. Border treaty, Bronze Night, Nord Stream, and the international conflicts generally do not collide in the rhetoric. Estonia's relations with Russia are therefore not just bilateral, but also contain a multilateral element, where the image of Russia becomes clearer. The overall Russia policy shows high degrees of Europeanization, yet Estonia's positions on Russia have not changed.

The high level of stability in the relations with Russia shows that the viewpoints are not contested domestically and there exists an overall consensus on the key priorities. The high degree of similarity between the FM's and the chairman's speeches shows that the issue is depoliticized. While the crises are unsolved, the viewpoints of both the Self and the Other are stable. The debates overall have been relatively stable on the EU and Russia, but the 2005 and 2020 debates stand out. In 2005, identity was externally contested due to Estonia's failure to overcome Russia, or more specifically not having its views on

Russia accepted in the EU. As the EU “learned” more about Russia through international conflicts, the liminality disappeared. In 2020, such a need did not exist – Russia did not need to be overcome because the consensus on Russia had been achieved after the war in Ukraine. This could explain the tougher stance on Russia if the debate had not become more critical of the EU as well. This trend harkens back to the moods before Estonia’s accession to the EU, where some saw both the EU and Russia as dangerous to the Estonian nationhood. Crucially, the criticism to the EU is not explainable through the criticism of its Russia policy, but by the same sentiments before the accession – infringements on sovereignty. While criticism of the EU had existed before, it was more concerning its toothless policy towards Russia – for example, on Nord Stream or wars in Ukraine and Georgia. Therefore, although criticism towards the EU has resurfaced, the EU’s Russia policy is more or less accepted.

In conclusion, there are limits to values and pragmatism that are unlikely to be crossed. As criticisms to the government showed, Estonia is unlikely to have a pragmatic political relationship with Russia. At the same time, while historicist claims have resurfaced, they do not go unchallenged, on the basis of not needlessly provoking Russia. Values that are emphasized in relations with Russia are most often liberal, stressing the importance of democracy, cooperation and international laws. The essentialist interpretation of Russia is influenced by memory politics, but memory politics itself is rarely tied to relations with Russia. At the EU level, significant Russia policy is unlikely to be downloaded, as it is seen as a nationally important topic – the costs to identity would be too high. Uploading is however framed by the expediency of what is possible in a compromise between 27 member states. Uploading is most often built on the shared European values, both in relations with Russia and in intra-EU relations about Russia. Estonia sees itself as the liberal nation, which stands in contrast to Russia’s realism. While the 2020 debate indeed shows a shift in the rhetoric towards nationalism, both in relations with Russia and the EU, the criticism of this shift shows that it is still contested. Unlike in 2005, when Estonia’s ontological security was contested from the outside, 2020 shows a domestic contestation to the previous foreign policy direction.

## Conclusions

The objective of this thesis was to analyse Estonian foreign policy discourse on Russia after the EU accession in light of crises in bilateral and multilateral relations. To achieve this objective, I asked how normative or pragmatic was Estonia's foreign policy, and what were the values behind the normative foreign policy. Additionally, I sought to determine the extent to which Europeanization had penetrated national interests, and whether national interest was being elevated to the European level or vice versa. My research was informed by the ontological security theory – identity considerations provided a theoretical explanation as to why certain narratives on Russia would be maintained. I used the qualitative content analysis method, developing a coding system based on texts themselves, and then used theory for analysing the results. Such an approach was validated by the study, as the results could be explained by the theory. I also used previous studies made on the topic of Estonia-Russia relations to develop the analysis further – explaining the similarities and differences between the functionally narrow discourse and broad conclusions of the semantic field. Having completed the empirical research, I made the following conclusions.

Estonia's relations with Russia did not encompass just the direct, bilateral relations, but involved international crises and developments, even more so than bilateral issues. Finalizing the border treaty had been an important topic of discussion since its initial failure in 2005, yet other topics of substance rarely surfaced. The most peculiar omission in the debates was the Bronze Night crisis, which, according to the literature was a pivotal moment in relations. On the other hand, Nord Stream and the wars in Ukraine and Georgia featured more in the debates, despite these events not having a direct effect on Estonia. The relations with Russia were therefore also about Russia and its involvement elsewhere. This was best exemplified by the Nord Stream crisis, where Germany was criticized for not involving Estonia more in the project, rather than criticizing Russia for building the pipeline. The military conflicts in both Georgia and Ukraine highlighted the potential danger to Estonia and served as primary examples of Russia's insidious actions in its neighbourhood. This threat was made clearer through Ukraine's and Georgia's similarities with Estonia – the perception of threat from Russia and Euro-Atlantic

sentiments. The wars in these countries also retroactively justified joining both the EU and NATO as Russia was shown to constitute a threat to others. What the heavier focus on international matters showed is that the discourse on Russia was more indirect, coming from the lack of developments in bilateral relations and the continued security considerations related to Russia that were better exemplified by crises elsewhere.

Pragmatism and values both featured in the relations with Russia. The analysis showed that there are however clear delineations of topics where values and pragmatism apply. Pragmatism served as a function for the Self, showing Estonia as a nation interested in cooperation and dialogue with its less pragmatic and more ideological partner, Russia. Such an interpretation could shift all the blame of not having relations to Russia, which was inherently not interested in having good relations. However, pragmatism did not mean pragmatism in relations in general. It was limited to certain fields of relations, like the border treaty, cultural cooperation, educational cooperation, etc. Having good political relations was not advocated, rather the opposite – values served as the primary reason for not developing political relations. Unlike with pragmatism, the reason for non-relations was no longer Russia but came down to Estonia (and the EU) that had to uphold certain values that Russia had breached. Values were also a manifestation of the Self, but in most cases, they overpowered pragmatism whenever there was a conflict between the two. While the domestic aspects (human rights of the Finno-Ugric people, democracy) were mentioned, they did not constitute a red line in engaging Russia but were more of a wish. Russia's breaches of international law were however considered severe and in need to be addressed. Therefore, the values of international law (rather than historicist claims) were used to highlight Russia's activities that were considered detrimental to Estonia's interests.

The European Union played an ambiguous role in Estonia's foreign policy on Russia. It constituted the main platform for international cooperation on Russia, as all the crises that I analysed had the EU element. The EU's effectiveness was more often questioned than supported, and criticized for not sufficiently backing Estonia or being naïve towards Russia's intentions. Both cases revealed the frustration over the fear that the EU could not be relied on in times of crisis. The EU's naivete was often accompanied by the need to educate the EU on Russia, casting Estonia as the Russia expert. Although

the reaction to the war in Ukraine was also criticized by many, the EU was considered to have sufficiently responded to Russia in this case. The discourse on the war also revealed Estonia's active role in the EU on Russia, advocating even tougher sanctions and stressing the need to keep the unity on this issue. What was clear is that the EU primarily functioned as an arena for policy elevation on Russia – downloading happened in only two cases and were both times supported only by the foreign ministers. Uploading was more varied, demonstrating that the EU was seen as a power multiplier in relations with Russia, through which national interests could be further pursued. Therefore, while the EU was valued as a community itself, its function in relations with Russia was more of an extension of national means rather than an attempt to harmonise Estonia's foreign policy with other member state's policies.

The analysis showed stability in the discourse on Russia, with no major disruptions in the perception of the Other. Two debates – in 2005 and 2020 – showed insecurity in the Self, which arguably related more to the EU than Russia. However, they also had a Russia element. In 2005, this disruption was caused by the lack of a guiding policy post-EU and NATO accession. The inability to voice Estonia's positions at the EU level was criticized, best exemplified by the border treaty and Nord Stream. While the former resulted in the inability to voice one's interests, the latter resulted in Estonia's interests not being considered at all. However, the criticism was largely internalized, seeing the problem caused by the failure of the government to represent Estonia's interests. In 2020, the situation was different as the government was criticized for making hostile remarks towards Russia (regarding the border treaty) and the criticism on the EU was also more widespread. The change towards a more historicist rhetoric regarding the border treaty showed that the Estonian side was similarly guilty from developing normal relations – a fact pointed out by the opposition as dangerous to Estonia's self-image. Furthermore, the criticism towards the EU was no longer connected to the Russia policy but was focused on other issues. This showed that Estonia's Russia policy had gained acceptance in the EU, owing largely to the handling of the war in Ukraine. Another aspect signifying stable relations was the level of implicitness regarding Russia – its actions rarely had to be justified to the audience but were more or less grasped by everyone. This showed the existence of a basic trust system on Russia – and the crises that were analysed in this research project did not show significant changes in the discourse.

This research has dealt extensively on Estonia-Russia relations from the Estonian side. A similar study from the Russian side might be unfeasible due to the diverse interests of Russia, but other Baltic states' and Poland's relations with Russia could be analysed. Similarly, Ukraine's and Georgia's relations with Russia could yield interesting results from the ontological security approach, as these countries have undergone deeper changes in relations due to military conflicts. The europeanization dimension in ontological security could also be interesting in the analysis of other conflicts involving the EU's member states. As a union of countries that was created to prevent a war, it certainly transformed the relations between member states itself. Yet member states continue to have disputes with states outside of the EU, like tensions between Greece and Turkey. Estonia's relations with Russia could be further studied, concentrating specifically on the issues themselves (like the border treaty or the war in Ukraine) and using a different type of data to analyse the rationales of top policymakers. This research project would provide an excellent starting point for such research, sketching out the main themes promulgated by Estonian politicians over the years. Interviews with politicians could help cast further light on Estonia's relations with Russia and the difficulties that exist there.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – codebook

After the first round of coding, I decided that coding for NATO was not necessary. This is because NATO is a security alliance, rather than a foreign policy formulation mechanism – while it influences how politicians think about Estonia’s security, it does not lead to any policy convergence as a result of being in the organization. The effect of the security guarantee is therefore rather static – as it exists, and its credibility is actively questioned, the question of physical security is “solved”.

I also did not code all mentions of certain topics, because they would not give any indication about the substance of them. I coded segments that would give me some substance on the topic at hand.

### 1. Goals of the Estonian foreign policy

- The goal of foreign policy (as defined by the speakers)

Examples: belonging to the EU and NATO, security, public welfare, continuity, sovereignty.

- Identity and values

- Memory politics
- Russia’s differing views on the Soviet legacy
- Unloading the crimes of communist regimes

Examples: Estonian independence, re-independence, loss of independence, linking Soviet imperialism to the contemporary situations.

- Liminality

Examples: not being taken seriously in the EU, not being/acting sufficiently European.

- Europeanness

Examples: stressing belonging to the EU or the actions as being guided by European values.

- Sovereignty, nationalism, and security

Examples: stressing the sovereignty of Estonia, the needs of the people, the primacy of security.

- Domestic opposition to the Russia policy

Examples: Espionage, the ethnic minority in Estonia, criticism of the Centre Party.

## **2. European Neighbourhood Policy and bilateral relations**

- Bilateral relations with the ENP countries

- Georgia
- Ukraine
- Moldova
- Belarus
- Values

Examples: Mentions of development aid in relations to these countries, bilateral relations with these countries, bilateral help to these countries, reasons for helping these countries like supporting Euro-Atlantic integration, Russian influence in these countries.

- ENP/EP/Enlargement + values

Examples: mentioning ENP/EP and the developments/cooperation within frameworks, supporting the EU aspirations of these countries, enlargement discourse, supporting the values of the reforms.

## **3. The EU's policy with Russia**

- Common foreign and security policy

Examples: efforts at creating the CFSP, shared values, problems with the CFSP, internal divisions, solidarity.

- The EU's relations with Russia

- Criticism of the EU's handling of Russia

Examples: the EU is not understanding Russia / being naive, Estonia's problems are not taken seriously, Estonia as the Russia expert in the EU, Russia manipulating the EU, the EU lacking values in Russia policy.

- Support for the EU's handling of Russia

Examples: criticizing Russia on human rights, supporting Estonia's position on the border treaty, supporting during the Bronze Night riots, EU's sanctions against, the EU's unity on values, German and French leadership in the Minsk agreements.

- Downloading

Examples: Doing what the others in the EU are doing, supporting pragmatic relations, not escalating conflicts.

- Uploading

Examples: Elevating national interests to the EU level, tougher sanctions, Nord Stream alternative, more assertive Russia policy, Eston Kohver.

- EU's defence cooperation

Examples: strategic autonomy, PESCO, European Army, not doubling NATO.

#### **4. Russia**

- Russia's internal politics

Examples: describing internal and democratic situations, situations with human rights, and domestic political changes.

- Russia's essence

Examples: explanations to why relations have not developed, lacks interest in maintaining relations, deliberately obstructs relations, opposes itself to the West, does not wish to take part in international cooperation, has ulterior motives, uses pressuring tactics for self-interest, acts dishonestly and irrationally.

- Russian revisionism/imperialism

Examples: Russia breaches international law, aims to create a sphere of influence, occupies other countries, poses a threat to them.

- Russia's danger to Estonia

Examples: direct military threat, Eston Kohver abduction, Nord Stream, propaganda, threats posed by Russian citizens.

- Relations with Russia

Examples: maintaining relations and contacts with Russia.

- Pragmatism in relations with Russia

Examples: border treaty, sectoral cooperation in culture, education, tourism, trade, and cross-border relations, deepening relations, international cooperation.

- Values in relations with Russia

Examples: Human rights, democratic preconditions to relations, mutual benefits of relations, international law, territorial integrity, memory politics.

- Criticism of the government's Russia policy

Examples: The government not being assertive enough, being too pragmatic, being too value-driven.

- Criticism of the Russian discourse

Examples: criticism towards the essentialist arguments on Russia, seeing Russia and Russians as a threat.

## **5. Crises**

- Energy security

- Nord Stream

Examples: mentioning the Nord Stream project, criticism to the project, environmental security, changing Estonia's maritime border, land pipeline, Russia's danger.

- Russia-Ukraine gas dispute

Examples: mentions of the gas dispute, mentions of Russia's motives.

- Estonia's and the EU's energy security

Examples: overcoming dependency on Russian gas, uploading energy security at the EU level, diversifying the EU's gas supply away from Russia, having a common external energy policy, criticizing the EU's pragmatism towards Russia.

- Bronze Night

Examples: indirect mentions of the event, cooperation in NATO and the EU, Edward Lucas' article, war graves, cybersecurity.

- War in Georgia

Examples: mentions of the war, its developments and the end, the aftermath.

- War in Ukraine

Examples: mentions of the war, Minsk agreement, conflict specifics and developments.



### Appendix 3 – Code relations tables

Code System	Estonian foreign policy	The goal of the foreign policy	Domestic opposition	Espionage	Bilateral relations with the ENP	Values	Belarus	Moldova	Ukraine	Georgia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Estonian foreign policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The goal of the foreign policy</li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic opposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Espionage</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ <input type="checkbox"/> Bilateral relations with the ENP</li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Identity and values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sovereignty and nationalism</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Europeanness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Liminality</li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Memory politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Totalitarian crimes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Russia's interpretation of the S</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Russia's domestic politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <input type="checkbox"/> Russia's threat to Estonia</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Russia's revisionism/imperialism</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Russian essence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finno-Ugric rights</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Estonian relations with Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Border treaty</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pragmatics in relations with Russia</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Values in relations with Russia</li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Criticism to the government on Rus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Russian discourse criticism</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Energy security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Estonian energy security</li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Eu energy policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Russia-Ukraine gas dispute</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Nord stream <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Baltic Sea environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>										

Code System	Estonian foreign policy	The goal of the foreign policy	Domestic opposition	Espionage	Bilateral relations with the ENP	Values	Belarus	Moldova	Ukraine	Georgia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Cyber security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> EU cyber security</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bronze Night riots</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> International conflicts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> War in Ukraine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sanctions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minsk agreement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Georgian war</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> The EU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> EU relations with Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uploading</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Downloading</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> EU-Russia relations criticism</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> EU-RUS relations support</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> CFSP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Solidarity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enlargement</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ENP/EP + (values)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <input type="checkbox"/> Defense guarantees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transatlantic cooperation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> EU defense cooperation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>										

Code System	Sovereignty and nationalism	Europeanness	Liminality	Memory politics	Totalitarian crimes	Russia's interpretation of the Soviet legacy	Russia	Russia's domestic politics
▲ ☑️ Estonian foreign policy								
☑️ The goal of the foreign policy	15	8	1					
▲ ☑️ Domestic opposition				1				
☑️ Espionage								
▶ ☑️ Bilateral relations with the ENP		4					3	
▲ ☑️ Identity and values								
☑️ Sovereignty and nationalism				2				
☑️ Europeanness				2				
☑️ Liminality				1				
▲ ☑️ Memory politics	2	2	1					1
☑️ Totalitarian crimes						1		
☑️ Russia's interpretation of the S					1			
▲ ☑️ Russia								1
▲ ☑️ Russia's domestic politics				1			1	
▶ ☑️ Russia's threat to Estonia	2	1		1		1		
☑️ Russia's revisionism/imperialism	2	1		7		2		1
☑️ Russian essence	1	1	1	1	1	2		4
☑️ Finno-Ugric rights	1							1
▲ ☑️ Estonian relations with Russia	2					2		2
☑️ Border treaty	2	1	2	1		1		3
☑️ Pragmatics in relations with Russia	1			2				1
☑️ Values in relations with RUssia	2	5	1	2		2		3
▲ ☑️ Criticism to the government on Rus	2		4	1	1			
☑️ Russian discourse criticism								
▲ ☑️ Crisis								
▲ ☑️ Energy security								
☑️ Estonian energy security		1						
▲ ☑️ Eu energy policy		2	1					
☑️ Russia-Ukraine gas dispute								
▲ ☑️ Nord stream	1	1	7					
☑️ Baltic Sea environment			1					

Code System	Sovereignty and nationalism	Europeanness	Liminality	Memory politics	Totalitarian crimes	Russia's interpretation of the Soviet legacy	Russia	Russia's domestic politics
▲ ☑️ Cyber security								
☑️ EU cyber security								
☑️ Bronze Night riots		1	1				1	1
▲ ☑️ International conflicts								
▲ ☑️ War in Ukraine	1	3		1		1		
☑️ Sanctions		1						
☑️ Minsk agreement								
☑️ Georgian war		1		1				1
▲ ☑️ The EU								
▲ ☑️ EU relations with Russia		1		1				1
☑️ Uploading		1	1	1	1	2		2
☑️ Downloading								
☑️ EU-Russia relations criticism	2	1	9	1				
☑️ EU-RUS relations support		3		2	1	1		1
▲ ☑️ CFSP		6	3					
☑️ Solidarity		6	1	3				
☑️ Enlargement		3	1				1	
☑️ ENP/EP + (values)		5	1				2	
▲ ☑️ Defense guarantees								
☑️ Transatlantic cooperation	2	1	1	1			3	
☑️ EU defense cooperation								

Code System	Russia's threat to Estonia	Propaganda	Physical security	Eston Kohver	Russia's revisionism/imperialism	Russian essence	Finno-Ugric rights	Estonian relations with Russia
▲ ☑️ Estonian foreign policy								
☑️ The goal of the foreign policy			2		1	1		
▲ ☑️ Domestic opposition	2						1	
☑️ Espionage								
▶ ☑️ Bilateral relations with the ENP					6	2		
▲ ☑️ Identity and values								
☑️ Sovereignty and nationalism			2		2	1	1	2
☑️ Europeanness		1			1	1		
☑️ Liminality						1		
▲ ☑️ Memory politics	1				7	1		
☑️ Totalitarian crimes						1		
☑️ Russia's interpretation of the S	1				2	2		2
▲ ☑️ Russia								
▲ ☑️ Russia's domestic politics					1	4	1	2
▶ ☑️ Russia's threat to Estonia	1			1	5	7		3
☑️ Russia's revisionism/imperialism	1		4			1	1	
☑️ Russian essence	6		1		1			5
☑️ Finno-Ugric rights					1			
▲ ☑️ Estonian relations with Russia	2		1			5		
☑️ Border treaty	2					14		1
☑️ Pragmatics in relations with Russia	1		1		1	7		
☑️ Values in relations with Russia	2		1		10	9	9	
▲ ☑️ Criticism to the government on Rus	3			1		3	2	1
☑️ Russian discourse criticism								
▲ ☑️ Crisis								
▲ ☑️ Energy security								
☑️ Estonian energy security	6					2		
▲ ☑️ Eu energy policy	2					4		
☑️ Russia-Ukraine gas dispute	1					2		
▲ ☑️ Nord stream	2					3		
☑️ Baltic Sea environment	4					2		
Code System	Russia's threat to Estonia	Propaganda	Physical security	Eston Kohver	Russia's revisionism/imperialism	Russian essence	Finno-Ugric rights	Estonian relations with Russia
▲ ☑️ Cyber security		1						
☑️ EU cyber security								
☑️ Bronze Night riots						2		1
▲ ☑️ International conflicts								
▲ ☑️ War in Ukraine			3		10	2		
☑️ Sanctions					1			
☑️ Minsk agreement					1			
☑️ Georgian war					14	3		
▲ ☑️ The EU								
▲ ☑️ EU relations with Russia					5	2		
☑️ Uploading	2	1		1	3	3		
☑️ Downloading						2		
☑️ EU-Russia relations criticism	2				7	5		
☑️ EU-RUS relations support					3	3	1	
▲ ☑️ CFSP								
☑️ Solidarity					6	2		
☑️ Enlargement					1			
☑️ ENP/EP + (values)					1	1		1
▲ ☑️ Defense guarantees								
☑️ Transatlantic cooperation					1			
☑️ EU defense cooperation								

Code System	Border treaty	Pragmatics in relations with Russia	Values in relations with RUssia	Criticism to the government on Russia	Russian discourse criticism	Crisis	Energy security
▲  Estonian foreign policy							
The goal of the foreign policy			1				
▲  Domestic opposition	1			2			
Espionage							
▷  Bilateral relations with the ENP			6	2			
▲  Identity and values							
Sovereignty and nationalism	2	1	2	2			
Europeanness	1		5				
Liminality	2		1	4			
▲  Memory politics	1	2	2	1			
Totalitarian crimes				1			
Russia's interpretation of the S	1		2				
▲  Russia							
▲  Russia's domestic politics	3	1	3				
▷  Russia's threat to Estonia	2	2	3	4			
Russia's revisionism/imperialism		1	10				
Russian essence	14	7	9	3			
Finno-Ugric rights			9	2			
▲  Estonian relations with Russia	1			1			
Border treaty		9	3	6	1		
Pragmatics in relations with Russia	9			1	3		
Values in relations with RUssia	3			4			
▲  Criticism to the government on Rus	6	1	4				
Russian discourse criticism	1	3					
▲  Crisis							
▲  Energy security							
Estonian energy security							
▲  Eu energy policy				1			
Russia-Ukraine gas dispute							
▲  Nord stream	2	1		5			
Baltic Sea environment			1	1			

Code System	Border treaty	Pragmatics in relations with Russia	Values in relations with RUssia	Criticism to the government on Russia	Russian discourse criticism	Crisis	Energy security
▲  Cyber security							
EU cyber security							
Bronze Night riots		1	1	1			
▲  International conflicts							
▲  War in Ukraine			7	1			
Sanctions			6				
Minsk agreement			2				
Georgian war			10				
▲  The EU							
▲  EU relations with Russia		3	1		1		
Uploading	1	2	9	1			
Downloading	1	3					
EU-Russia relations criticism	1		5	4			
EU-RUS relations support	2	2	5				
▲  CFSP							
Solidarity			3				
Enlargement							
ENP/EP + (values)							
▲  Defense guarantees							
Transatlantic cooperation		1	1				
EU defense cooperation							

Code System	Estonian energy security	Eu energy policy	Russia-Ukraine gas dispute	Nord stream	Baltic Sea environment	Cyber security	EU cyber security	Bronze Night riots	War in Ukraine
▲ ☑️ Estonian foreign policy									
☑️ The goal of the foreign policy									1
▲ ☑️ Domestic opposition									
☑️ Espionage									
▶ ☑️ Bilateral relations with the ENP									11
▲ ☑️ Identity and values									
☑️ Sovereignty and nationalism				1					1
☑️ Europeaness	1	2		1				1	3
☑️ Liminality		1		7	1			1	
▲ ☑️ Memory politics									1
☑️ Totalitarian crimes									
☑️ Russia's interpretation of the S									1
▲ ☑️ Russia								1	
▲ ☑️ Russia's domestic politics								1	
▶ ☑️ Russia's threat to Estonia	6	2	1	2	4	1			3
☑️ Russia's revisionism/imperialism									10
☑️ Russian essence	2	4	2	3	2			2	2
☑️ Finno-Ugric rights									
▲ ☑️ Estonian relations with Russia								1	
☑️ Border treaty				2					
☑️ Pragmatics in relations with Russia				1				1	
☑️ Values in relations with RUssia					1			1	7
▲ ☑️ Criticism to the government on Rus		1		5	1			1	1
☑️ Russian discourse criticism									
▲ ☑️ Crisis									
▲ ☑️ Energy security									
☑️ Estonian energy security		10	3	3	2				
▲ ☑️ Eu energy policy	10		4	3	2				
☑️ Russia-Ukraine gas dispute	3	4		1					
▲ ☑️ Nord stream	3	3	1		1				
☑️ Baltic Sea environment	2	2		1					

Code System	Estonian energy security	Eu energy policy	Russia-Ukraine gas dispute	Nord stream	Baltic Sea environment	Cyber security	EU cyber security	Bronze Night riots	War in Ukraine
▲ ☑️ Cyber security							1		
☑️ EU cyber security						1			
☑️ Bronze Night riots									
▲ ☑️ International conflicts									
▲ ☑️ War in Ukraine									
☑️ Sanctions									1
☑️ Minsk agreement									
☑️ Georgian war									5
▲ ☑️ The EU									
▲ ☑️ EU relations with Russia									2
☑️ Uploading	2	4	1	2	4	1			4
☑️ Downloading									2
☑️ EU-Russia relations criticism	3	3	1	11	4				3
☑️ EU-RUS relations support		1	1					1	5
▲ ☑️ CFSP		1							
☑️ Solidarity	2	8	1	2	1			2	5
☑️ Enlargement									
☑️ ENP/EP + (values)		1	1						
▲ ☑️ Defense guarantees									
☑️ Transatlantic cooperation	2								1
☑️ EU defense cooperation									



Code System	ENP/EP + (values)	Defense guarantees	Transatlantic cooperation	EU defense cooperation
▲ ☑ Estonian foreign policy				
☑ The goal of the foreign policy	1		2	
▲ ☑ Domestic opposition				
☑ Espionage				
▷ ☑ Bilateral relations with the ENP	15			
▲ ☑ Identity and values				
☑ Sovereignty and nationalism			2	
☑ Europeanness	5		1	
☑ Liminality	1		1	
▲ ☑ Memory politics			1	
☑ Totalitarian crimes				
☑ Russia's interpretation of the S				
▲ ☑ Russia	2		3	
▲ ☑ Russia's domestic politics				
▷ ☑ Russia's threat to Estonia				
☑ Russia's revisionism/imperialism	1		1	
☑ Russian essence	1			
☑ Finno-Ugric rights				
▲ ☑ Estonian relations with Russia	1			
☑ Border treaty				
☑ Pragmatics in relations with Russia			1	
☑ Values in relations with RUssia			1	
▲ ☑ Criticism to the government on Rus				
☑ Russian discourse criticism				
▲ ☑ Crisis				
▲ ☑ Energy security				
☑ Estonian energy security			2	
▲ ☑ Eu energy policy	1			
☑ Russia-Ukraine gas dispute	1			
▲ ☑ Nord stream				
☑ Baltic Sea environment				

Code System	ENP/EP + (values)	Defense guarantees	Transatlantic cooperation	EU defense cooperation
▲ ☑ Cyber security				
☑ EU cyber security				
☑ Bronze Night riots				
▲ ☑ International conflicts				
▲ ☑ War in Ukraine			1	
☑ Sanctions				
☑ Minsk agreement				
☑ Georgian war	1			
▲ ☑ The EU				
▲ ☑ EU relations with Russia			1	
☑ Uploading	1			
☑ Downloading				
☑ EU-Russia relations criticism	1		1	
☑ EU-RUS relations support			1	
▲ ☑ CFSP				
☑ Solidarity	1		3	
☑ Enlargement	8			
☑ ENP/EP + (values)			2	
▲ ☑ Defense guarantees				
☑ Transatlantic cooperation	2			2
☑ EU defense cooperation			2	

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