Introduction[1]

On June 17th, 2014, the Estonian parliament debated a draft bill legalizing same-sex partnerships (though stopping short of granting full marriage equality). In response, the In Defense of Family and Tradition Foundation (*Sihtasutus Perekonna ja Traditsiooni Kaitseks*, SAPTK) delivered to lawmakers nearly 40,000 hand-signed letters expressing "deep disappointment in those Members of Parliament, who, in defiance of the Constitution and against the opposition of tens of thousands of people, are giving their support to the Cohabitation Act".[2] Blaming undemocratic EU-minded elites for championing the bill, signatories demanded a popular referendum to decide on the matter. Protestors held a candlelight vigil in front of the Parliament, indicating that passage of the act represented the "death of democracy".[3] Though SAPTK leaders also rehearsed standard Christian conservative arguments in a series of blog posts and YouTube clips, framing the Cohabitation Act as one step in a "moral revolution" that went against "natural law", the anti-democracy protests drew most media attention.[4] Yet as the cultural theorist Tarmo Jüristo observed, these two positions contradicted each-other: "If someone considers [the cohabitation act] a question of morality, then a referendum would not solve this disagreement – insofar as the laws of morality are absolute […], then they would hold

[1] The author would like to thank Marysia Jonsson, Larry Wolff, Camille Robcis, Marek Tamm, Linda Kaljundi, Uku Lember, and two anonymous reviewers for excellent comments on various drafts of this essay. Talks at Tallinn University and the University of Vienna provided further opportunities for reflection. Funding for research and writing was provided by the Remarque Institute at NYU and a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship administered by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Program and the University of Oxford.

[2] *Ei kooseluseadusele,* Accessed March 27, 2017. *https://saptk.ee/protest/web/et.*

[3] Varro Vooglaid, "Kooseluseaduse läbisurumine on sügavalt ebademokraatlik," ERR uudised, Oct. 2, 2014, accessed April 14, 2017. http://www.err.ee/521337/varro-vooglaid-kooseluseaduse-labisurumine-on-sugavalt-ebademokraatlik.

[4] Markus Järvi, "Protestikirjade üleandmine Riigikogus (17. juuni 2014)", accessed March 27, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXdd5wKnBds;Priit Pullerits, "Homoliikumise taustal toimub moraalirevolutsioon,"*Postimees*, 8 Sept. 2010; Varro Vooglaid, "Kooseluseadusest võidaks homoliikumine," *Õhtuleht,* 2 May 2014.

irrespective of anyone's opinion, including that of the popular majority."[5]

In tracing how conservative intellectuals in Estonia came to interpret reproductive politics as central to the struggle between totalitarian supranational governance and national sovereignty, this essay re-contextualizes the rise of traditionalist, "anti-gender" movements in Europe. It situates them in the history of nationalism emerging from the crucible of supranational experimentation in the age of the late Soviet Union and European integration.[6] Recently, historians such as Joan Scott, Samuel Moyn and Marco Duranti have re-evaluated postwar political thought, from human rights discourses to European unity, arguing for the centrality of Christian ideas, and in particular, the Catholic theory of personalism, as its guiding thread.[7] In this view, Catholic intellectuals saw personalism - the idea of the human being embedded in community, and, in particular, traditional values such as the heterosexual family - as a bulwark against the materialist atomism of both communism and unfettered capitalism.[8] Though now emptied of overtly religious language, such theologically inspired formulations of the human person have propelled anti-gender movements across Europe to great popularity.

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[5] Tarmo Jüristo, "Vox populi, vox dei," *Memokraat,* 11 Aug. 2014, accessed March 27, 2017. http://memokraat.ee/2014/08/vox-populi-vox-dei/.

[6] By „anti-gender" I mean here pan-European movements which oppose a variety of policies ranging from abortion, to gender-neutral education and gay marriage, claiming (fictitiously) that they are part of a concerted effort to overturn the natural gender order and promote unnatural, postmodernist „gender theory". David Patternotte, "Habemus Gender! Autopsie d'une obsession vaticane," *Habemus gender! Déconstruction d'une riposte religieuse*, D. Patternotte, V. Piette, S. Van Der Dussen (eds) (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2016), 7-22; For Eastern Europe, see Richard C. M. Mole, "Nationalism and Homophobia in Central and Eastern Europe," *The EU Enlargement and Gay Politics: The Impact of Eastern Enlargement on Rights, Activism and Prejudice*, K. Slootmaeckers, H. Touquet, P. Vermeersch (eds) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 108.

[7] Marco Duranti, The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Camille Robcis, "Catholics, the "Theory of Gender," and the Turn to the Human in France: A New Dreyfus Affair?" *Journal of Modern History 87(4),* December 2015, 892–923; Joan Wallach Scott, *Sex and Secularism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[8] James Chappel, "The Catholic Origins of Totalitarianism Theory in Interwar Europe," *Modern Intellectual History 8(3),* November 2011, 561-190; Samuel Moyn, "Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights," *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century,* Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 85-106

Studies of anti-gender movements have focused largely on France, Germany and Poland, convincingly demonstrating the powerful influence of Christian theology on seemingly secular political rhetoric. Yet anti-gender discourses have crossed religious boundaries (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) and demonstrated remarkable intellectual flexibility, drawing also from sociology (in Germany), biology (Slovenia), structural anthropology, Lacanian psychoanalysis (France), and geopolitics as well as world systems theories (Russia). The geographic and intellectual reach of anti-gender movements cannot be explained by the sustaining force of Christian political theology alone.[9] Indeed, in the case of Estonia, where religion has historically played a marginal political role, the recent emergence of Catholic anti-gender rhetoric is particularly puzzling.[10] By looking at a case where reproduction was thrust to the center of politics by questions of demography and linguistic nationalism, this essay points towards the deeper stakes of the anti-gender debate across Europe, and explains why Catholic intellectuals have had so much success well beyond their historical spheres of influence. The key concern here lies in tension between transnational governance and national sovereignty, a problem that was renewed by the end of the Cold War order,

Seen from the perspective of Eastern Europe, the emergence of reproductive politics dates to the crises of sovereignty in the 1980s and beyond – the period of *perestroika*, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the European Union. In the mid-1980s, the

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[9] Eszter Kováts, Maari Põim (eds), *Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Far Right and Conservative Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe* (Brussels: FEPS, 2016); Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Camille Robcis, "How the Symbolic Became French: Kinship and Republicanism in the PACS Debates," *Discourse 26(3),* Fall 2004, 110-135; Roman Kuhar, "Playing with science: Sexual citizenship and the Roman Catholic Church counter-narratives in Slovenia and Croatia," *Women's Studies International Forum 49(2),* March-April 2015, 84-92.

[10] Eva-Liisa Jaanus, "Some aspects of religiosity in Estonia," *The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe: Secularization, Individualization and Pluralization,* O. Müller, D. Pollack & G. Pickel (eds) (London: Routledge, 2016), 167–185.

Soviet regime ostensibly liberalized and democratized. Yet for nationalists in Estonia, these reforms did not go far enough, as they did not decentralize power to the ESSR or address the perceived privileges of Russian-speaking immigrants. This essay argues that nationalist intellectuals in the 1980s created an eclectic set of arguments drawn from sociolinguistics and demography, insisting that "natural growth" of the "indigenous people" [*põlisrahvus*] was the best indicator of a truly democratic sovereign state. Theorists contrasted sustainable national sovereignty, evidence by "natural" demographic growth to "utopian" and "experimental" ideologies, such as socialism, which, irrespective of a rhetorical commitment to democracy, were seen to mislead the people in practice. As the demography-sovereignty connection was forged, Estonian nationhood was re-defined both as opposed to mainly Russian-speaking immigrants and as fundamentally heterosexual. Conversely, discussions around reproduction and sexuality were rethought not simply as moral issues, but as problems central to the nation's sovereignty. While this is not a historically unique link in itself (the question of *dénatalité* in France throughout the 19th and 20th centuries offers an instructive comparison), the source of the sovereign threat – an antidemocratic, utopian superstate – stands out as an innovation, and not only in Estonia.[11]

Structuring sovereignty around demographic trends provided intellectuals with a particularly flexible frame.[12] In the 1980s, demography was used to exclude Russian-speaking immigrants from politics and to strive for independence. After 1991, marginalized intellectuals claimed the failure to attend to demography proved the corruption of the political elite and

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[11] Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*: *Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[12] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, Stefanos Geroulanos, Nicole Jerr (eds), *The Scaffolding of Sovereignty: Global and Aesthetic Perspectives on the History of a Concept* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 1-49, particularly 16-17

explained why independence had not brought social harmony and welfare. Finally, in the late 2000s, a new coalition between radical nationalists and Catholic intellectuals attacked gay activists seeking partnership rights on demographic grounds.

Finally, my argument refocuses the conceptual history of Estonian nationalism, which scholars have defined largely through the concept of "history/heritage". Indeed, Marek Tamm has termed the post-Soviet republic "a Republic of Historians".[13] A return to pre-war customs, laws, and social order became the central principle of post-Soviet nation-building, leading to controversial decisions such as the construction of citizenship rights based on historical continuity ("restitution" or "legal restorationism").[14] Yet as Estonian leaders looked to the past to justify their goals, they also read demographic data for signs of their future realization. For nationalist intellectuals, reproduction of the future was as important as restoration of the past.

Demographic Trends between Sovereignty, and Totalitarian Ideology

The few existing studies on the history of demography and nationalism in Estonia indicate that the exclusive focus on the "natural" reproduction of ethnic Estonians is a relatively recent phenomenon. The prewar Republic has been considered something of a model for national diversity. The 1922 Citizenship Law granted Russian minorities (many of them refugees from the Russian Civil War) representation in Parliament, and the 1925 Cultural Autonomy Law empowered minorities to maintain their own schools, cultural councils, and collect taxes for self-

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[13] Marek Tamm, "The republic of historians: historians as nation-builders in Estonia (late 1980s–early 1990s)," *Rethinking History 20(2),* March 2016, 154–171; Marek Tamm, "History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of the Estonian Nation," *Journal of Baltic Studies 39 (4),* 499–516; Mikko Lagerspetz, "Postsocialism as a Return: Notes on a Discursive Strategy." *East European Politics and Societies 13 (2),* Spring 199, 377–390; Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 166; Meike Wulf, *Shadowlands: Memory and History in Post-Soviet Estonia* (New York: Berghahn, 2016).

[14] Tamm, "The republic of historians," 9-11, Margarita Aleksahhina, "Historical Discourse in the Legitimation of Estonian Politics: Principle of Restitution," *Human Affairs 6(1),* 2006, 66–82.

help organizations.[15] The authoritarian regime of Konstantin Päts, however, developed policies intended to "estonianize" the nation in the 1930s, limiting proportional representation of minorities in Parliament.[16] In those years, eugenic movements focused on avoiding the "degeneration of a small nation" by alcoholism and sexually transmitted diseases, with the support of the corporatist-authoritarian regime. In 1937, the Päts government signed into a law a decree mandating sterilization of the mentally handicapped with "sexually abnormal" behavior, representing a culmination of the eugenicist-pronatalist moment.[17] These discourses, focused on the quality of the population and the threats posed by disease and alcoholism, were largely obliterated in World War II and the subsequent annexation of Estonia by the Soviet Union. This version of nationalism, while certainly gendered, was markedly more accepting of a multiethnic society, resembling the *sanacja* regime of Józef Piłsudski in Poland.[18]

The demographic question, with its exclusionist implications for immigration and non-traditional families, is properly situated in the 1980s, when nationalist intellectuals framed the demographic changes in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic in terms of a conscious policy of "russification" pushed by Moscow. In the postwar years Estonia's demographic composition did indeed change remarkably. Immigration from other Soviet Republics into the industrial areas of Narva, Kohtla-Järve and Sillamäe, and into the capital, Tallinn, reduced the proportion of

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15 Wayne C. Thompson, "Citizenship and borders: Legacies of Soviet empire in Estonia," *Journal of Baltic Studies 29(2),* Summer 1998, 110.

16 John Hiden and Patrick Salmon, *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Longman, 1991), 46–47; Helen Rohtmets, "Suletud uksed: Eesti Vabariigi sisserändepoliitika 1920. aastatel," *Ajalooline ajakiri 143(1),* 2013, 55–78.

17 Ken Kalling, "The Application of Eugenics in Estonia 1918-1940," *Baltic Eugenics Bio-Politics, Race and Nation in Interwar Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 1918-1940,* Björn M. Felder & Paul J. Weindling (eds) (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 49-82.

18 Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Pilsudski's Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

Estonians from 97.3% in 1945 to 61.5% in 1989.[19] There is little evidence to show that these processes were deliberately orchestrated. If anything, then the Soviet central authorities attempted unsuccessfully to limit migration and address labor shortage through local means. Inefficient industrial practices and growing energy use combined with wartime losses and deportations sharply increased the demand for labor, leading to immigration.[20]

Conventionally told, the history of 1980s nationalist awakening is dominated by the conflict between moderate reformists in the Estonian People's Front (*Eestimaa Rahvarinne,* RR), and radicals within the Estonian National Independence Party (*Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatuse Partei,* ERSP). Nationalist rhetoric, which emphasized the exclusion of non-Estonians, particularly Russians, from the national body, has been traced to the ERSP's obsession with returning to the pre-war republic and uncovering past Soviet crimes, most notably the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, mass deportations of the 1940s, and the institutionalization and persecution of dissidents in the following decades. For ERSP, anything other than independence based on legal continuity with the *pre-war* republic would amount to legitimizing the Soviet occupation. Scholars see this principle of "legal restorationism" as the primary driver of post-1991 legislation, which excluded many Russian speakers from political participation.[21]

The central role Estonian nationalists ascribed to demographic changes as indicators of sovereignty has been overlooked. Drawing primarily on sociolinguistics and systems theory, Estonian intellectuals across the moderate and radical wings argued that natural reproduction,

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[19] Kalev Katus ja Allan Puur, "Rahvastikuteadus ja Eesti rahvastikuarengu pöördepunktid", *Akadeemia,* 3/2006, 500; Rein Taagepera, "Baltic Population Changes," *Journal of Baltic Studies 12(1),* Spring 1981, 35-57.

[20] Olaf Mertelsmann, "Ida-Virumaale sisserändamise põhjused pärast Teist maailmasõda," *Ajalooline ajakiri 117(1),* 2007, 51-74; David Vseviov, "Endiste narvakate mõistatus", *Tuna* 2/2001, 60−67.

[21] Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States,* 160-168; Vello Andres Pettai, "Framing the Past as Future: The Power of Legal Restorationism in Estonia," Phd. Diss. Columbia University, 2004, particularly 62-161; Lagerspetz, "Postsocialism as a return".

and the organic development of national language within the family were necessary preconditions for harmonious social development and popular sovereignty.

In the 1980s, decreasing use of the Estonian language became the symbol of a variety of social changes which were seen as threatening the sovereignty of the nation, embodying the totalitarian-utopian project of the Soviet state, and requiring primarily demographic solutions. Already in 1980, 40 intellectuals sent an open letter to the major newspapers in Soviet Estonia lamenting "the reduction in proportion of Estonians in society," "limiting the use of the Estonian language in everyday life, official business, and science," "excessive and misguided propagation of Russian in schools and daycares," and "the propagation of bilingualism among Estonians without a corresponding campaign among foreigners."[22] The letter was never published, but circulated widely via *samizdat*.

The ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev to the position of General Secretary of the CPSU and the beginning of the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika* created an opening for discussing the demographic and language problems publicly. Draft bills which, according to nationalist critics, would have mandated acquiring the Russian language for Estonian students without a corresponding requirement for Russian students, and made Russian a *de facto* state language in the country made the matter all the more urgent.[23] The opening salvo of the debate was fired by the linguist Mati Hint, one of the original signatories of the 1980 "letter of 40", on the pages of the communist daily, *Edasi* and the literary magazine *Vikerkaar.* In an article titled "Democracy

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[22] "eesti ühiskonna osakaalu kiire vähenemine", "eesti keele kasutamise piiramine asjaajamises, olmes, teaduses ja mujal," "ülepingutatud ja oskamatu propagandakampaania vene keele õpetamiseks koolides ja lasteaedades," "kakskeelsuse propageerimine ühepoolselt eestlaste hulgas, millele ei vasta midagi samaväärset muulaste seas," "Avalik kiri Eesti NSVst ajalehtedele Pravda, Rahva Hääl ja Sovetskaja Estonija," originally published Oct. 28, 1980, in *Teine Eesti, eeslava: Eesti iseseisvuse taassünd, 1986-1991,* Sirje Endre, Urmas Ott, Mart Laar (eds) (SE&JS: Tallinn, 1996), 371-73.

[23] Interview with Mati Hint, *Teine Eesti,* 117-121.

and Language," Hint argued that the declining health of the Estonian language was a direct product of the totalitarian Soviet system, and actually *caused* many undemocratic practices in the ESSR ranging from the wide use of untruthful euphemisms to the valorization of sham science and ignorance of social problems. True democracy, Hint concluded, would affirm "the right and possibility to live and conduct our affairs and continue to exist in the language, into which we were born and through which we see the world?"[24] Anchoring national sovereignty in language use did not, of course, emerge *ex nihilo*. Language reformers in the early twentieth century had focused on the development of written Estonian in order to rework cultural hierarchies established by the ruling Balto-German nobility and establish the nation as a *kulturvolk*[25]. The importance of monolingualism to state power, however, was an innovation of the 1980s.

This concern with language and demography was remarkably consistent across the moderate RR and the radical ERSP wings, prevalent both among intellectuals, dissidents and mainstream politicians, but perhaps best expressed in the writings of the linguist Hint. In his articles, Hint argued that a healthy national language could only thrive in a society without excess bilingualism, and that only through good linguistic habits could citizens make rational and democratic decisions, retaining the harmony of the social body. Drawing on insights from sociolinguistics, and examples from countries where national languages had become minority languages (specifically Basque and Welsh), Hint argued that bilingualism adversely affected the psychological development of children, who were "genetically programmed to learn one (whichever) language, not two, the same way that 99% of newborns are programmed to be

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[24] "õigus ja võimalus elada ja omi asju ajada keeles, milesse oleme sündinud ja mille kaudu me maailma näeme?" Mati Hint, "Demokraatia ja keel," *Edasi*, April 29, 1987.

[25] Rein Ruutsoo, "Modernisation of the National Public Sphere in the Baltic States in the First Period of Independence," *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 7, 2003, 126−161.

lefthanded or righthanded, but not ambidextrous."[26] Following a kind of sapirian logic, Hint suggested that since bilingual children would have to dedicate more analytic resources to parsing different pronounciation and grammar systems, they would have difficulties in "abstract reasoning", develop stutters, which would in turn lead to "psychic pressure and stress", and feel general insecurity when confronted with terms that had diverging meanings in two languages.[27] For this reason, Hint hinted, multiethnic marriages were more likely to end in divorce and children in those families were more likely to adopt the language of the dominant parent.[28] The resulting insecurities propagated through society, causing broader "psychic distress", "lack of culture" and a sustained danger to "healthy nationhood".[29] Others questioned the very possibility of gaining insight to a different culture via a second language, arguing that it "could only mean the rejection of one's native culture."[30]

Nationalist intellectuals argued that the social and political effects of bilingualism prevented true democracy from emerging. At the Literary Congress of 1988, Estonian cultural figures claimed that demographic and linguistic trends had created two distinct, rarely overlapping linguistic communities, preventing a proper public sphere from emerging.[31] A lack of attention on national culture and language meant that fewer Estonian-language books would be published, prohibiting the free exchange of ideas.[32] Language questions created social tensions, they argued: People who did not talk to each-other, could easily come to resent or even

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[26] Mati Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta I," *Vikerkaar 6/1987*, 53, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2t2Dhdg; see also interview with Hint, *Teine Eesti*, 114.

[27] Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta I," 54-55.

[28] Mati Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta II," *Vikerkaar 7/9187*, 47, accessed June 23, 2017, http://bit.ly/2tWwUVP.

[29] Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta II," 49.

[30] "saab tähendada vaid omaenda kultuurist lahtiütlemist," Kärner, "Haridus ja kultuur," *Arutlusi asja pärast, 22.*

[31] Marju Lauristin, Rein Raud, speeches at the Literary Congress, *ENSV Loominguliste Liitude Juhatuste Ühispleenum, 1-2 Aprill 1988* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1988), 66-71, 115-19.

[32] Paul-Eerik Rummo, *Ühispleenum*, 173-76.

hate each-other.[33] True democratic debate was impossible in a country with two, separate linguistic communities.

Here, we see how the problem of bilingualism seamlessly overlapped with the problem of immigration. Critics who expressed concerns about the effects of bilingualism on democracy also feared that Soviet authorities might decide to resolve the problem in favor of the imperial *lingua franca* – Russian. After all, Soviet leaders could easily claim that the small Estonian language "does not give access to global culture and without knowing Russian, Estonians would not become a cultured people."[34] Nationalist intellectuals across the moderate and radical wings constantly invoked the numerical shortage of Estonian speakers to explain various tensions between ethnic groups. Edgar Savisaar, leader of the RR, argued in the cultural magazine *Vikerkaar* that mass migration which heightened the fragility of the small Estonian language led to linguistic tension and, in turn, caused "resentment and feelings of inferiority," "hindered cooperation between peoples," intensified conflicts between ethnic groups, reduced the productivity of labor, prohibited democratic political participation, created tensions in the cultural sphere, led to social injustice in housing and education policy, and so forth.[35] Others, drawing on systems theory showed how protecting the numerical majority of Estonians was an "ecological imperative" determined by universal laws of nature and proscribed by scientists like Vladimir Vernadsky.[36] The proportion of Estonians in the population – around 60% – and the

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[33] Jevgeni Golikov, *Ühispleenum*, 58-65.

[34] "ei võimalda juurdepääsu maailmakultuurile ning ilma vene keele oskuseta ei saa eestlane kultuurseks," Hint, "Demokraatia ja Keel".

[35] Edgar Savisaar, "Rahvussuhetest Eestis: 70–80ndad aastad I," *Vikerkaar,* 9/1987, 50-56, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2s3axN2; "Rahvussuhetest Eestis: 70–80ndad aastad II," *Vikerkaar,* 10/1987, 62-74, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2sygIMo.

[36] "ökoloogiline imperatiiv", Tiit Kärner, "Rahvusküsimusest: Kommentaar Mihhail Gorbatšovi teleesinemisele," unpublished manuscript (1988), printed in *Arutlusi Asja Pärast* (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2015), 44-47; for a different formulation of this, see Uno Laht, "Sõnavõtt ENSV Kirjanike Liidu kongressilt 1986," *Lisandusi mõtete ja*

"importance of being in a majority in one's native land" were constantly invoked by critics of language policy, from Hint and Savisaar to radical ERSP intellectuals, who spoke of outright colonization.[37] Because of the inherent fragility of the smaller, Estonian language, nationalists argued, a sovereign language policy ineluctably implied limiting migration and improving birthrates.

Finally, for Hint, elites in Moscow and in the Estonian Supreme Soviet exemplified the misguided, utopian thinking of the Soviet experiment, precisely because they refused to acknowledge the importance of the demographic problem and the protection of the nation. Two ideologies in particular were to blame: internationalism, and materialism. Internationalism led Soviet policymakers to think of "migration as an *a priori* positive".[38] Materialism privileged economic production, which necessitated mass migration, over superstructural concerns like language/culture. As nationalist commentators saw it, Soviet authorities dismissed problems with ethnic relations as problems produced by the material qualities of life, and assumed that these problems would disappear as soon living standards improved, more apartments were constructed, and more consumer goods became available. This approach, Mati Hint countered, was nothing more than "a petty bourgeois worldview." After overcoming "lower order problems," Hint argued, "the national problem would only properly begin. […] Only then would it transform into the problem of clear identity/-fication, and into the problem of living-being in a specific language and culture."[39]

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uudiste vabale levikule Eestis. 3. kd. Kogud 20-25 : 1985-1987 (Eesti Vangistatud Vabadusvõitlejate Abistamiskeskus: Stockholm, 1988), 721.

[37] Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta," 52; Savisaar, "Rahvussuhetest Eestis: 70–80ndad aastad I," 51. On the language of colonization, see Reigo Lokk, "Taasiseseisvunud Eesti etnodemograafiline „dekoloniseerimine": diskursusest ja praktikast," *Tuna* 2/2015, 50-70.

[38] Hint, "Kakskeelsusest roosade prillideta II," 49-50;

[39] Mati Hint, "Rahvusküsimus meil ja Moskvas I," *Vikerkaar* 4/1989, 73, accessed June 23, 2017.

In Hint's view, it may have been this very inattention to language that helped sustain the unrealistic expectations of Soviet authorities, enabling generations of apparachiks to grow accustomed to euphemisms (such as "the period between two imperialist wars" to denote the time of the interwar Estonian republic), half-truths and doublespeak. Here, the deeper implications of how the demographic problem was conceptualized become apparent: by defining democracy through the preservation of language and demographic growth, Estonians could claim that the attempts of Soviet central authorities to "democratize" governance in the age of perestroika were, in fact, not truly democratic. "Those who speak of democracy today are the same who spoke of how much democracy we had some years ago […]," Hint wrote. "Those professional speakers do not sound particularly trustworthy to me."[40] He meant, of course, Soviet officials.

The principles of language democracy were written into political documents: The RR "declaration on self-determination", for example, outlined "stabilization of the political and demographic situation" and "legalizing […] the national language" as foundations of "political sovereignty."[41] This valorization of reproduction as an indicator of democracy would be leveraged in the coming decades by a new coalition of critics, who reoriented these ideas from attacking communism and migration, to attacking the EU and gay activists.

Democracy and Demography after 1991

In August of 1991, the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic once again became the Republic of Estonia. The principles of "language democracy", which focused on demographic

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http://bit.ly/2rJNaIR.

40 Hint, "Demokraatia ja keel".

41 "poliitilise ja demograafilise situatsiooni stabiliseerimiseks," riigikeele […] seadustamine", "poliitiline suveräänsus," "Rahvarinde algatuskeskuse seisukoht enesemääramise kohta," originally published July 23, 1988, *Teine Eesti*, 429-430.

growth and limited immigration, were inscribed into the law in contradictory ways. Estonia's constitution was modeled partly on the example of reunified Germany, partly on the 1920 and 1938 constitutions of the pre-war Republic, and partly on contemporary notions of Estonian nationhood, resulting in a mixture of universalist and nationalist principles.[42] The preamble of the document declared "the preservation of the Estonian nation, language, and culture through the ages" as a guiding principle of the state, alongside the protection of "freedom, law, and justice".[43] Other legal innovations, too, empowered the "indigenous nation" at the expense of new and Soviet-era migrants: the citizenship law of 1995 conferred citizenship only on those residents of Estonia who could prove they had ancestry with pre-war citizenship, with all others having to go through a naturalization process, leaving Estonia with a substantial minority (12,4% of the population according to the 2000 census) without voting rights in national elections and, indeed, no legal status in any country of the world (so-called "stateless residents"). The language law of 1995 declared Estonian the only official language, and candidates running for office had to sign affidavits declaring proficiency (1997).[44] Finally, Estonia implemented an extremely tight migration law, which set immigration quotas at between 0,05 and 0,1% of the population, including immigration for family reunification (a condition that was later legally challenged).[45]

At the same time, nationalist intellectuals and former dissidents, who had been at the forefront of the revival movement in the 1980s, quickly lost influence after 1991. The period of shock therapy and rapid privatization in the 1990s led to widespread social discontent,

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[42] Kasekamp, *History of the Baltic States,* 172; Rein Taagepera, "Estonia's constitutional assembly, 1991–1992," *Journal of Baltic Studies 25(3),* Fall 1994, 211–232.

[43] "Eesti vabariigi põhiseadus," *Riigi Teataja,* 1992, 26, 349; amended 2007, 33, 210, accessed May 25, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rZd7Zc,

[44] Vello Pettai and Kristina Kallas, "Estonia: Conditionality amidst a legal straightjacket," Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe (London: Routledge, 2009), 104–118.

[45] Reigo Lokk, "Post-kommunistliku Eesti vabariigi rändepoliitika rahvuskujunduse komponendina," *Ajalooline Ajakiri 148/149(2/3),* 2014, 216–18.

particularly among the elderly and the rural population, while a series of corruption scandals involving arms trading and profiteering from currency changes rocked governing politicians.[46] Meanwhile, EU accession requirements and international pressure forced governments to ease laws that excluded Russian-speakers from the polity.[47] Estonia joined both NATO and the EU in 2004, after a landslide endorsement in a popular referendum, seemingly confirming the victory of liberals and pro-western intellectuals.

In response to these developments, increasingly marginalized moderate and radical nationalists grew sceptical of liberalization and Western integration. Their critiques, again, saw demography as indicator of true sovereignty. The facts on the ground lent themselves easily to such interpretations. Following a baby boom in the 1980s, the number of births in Estonia dropped around from 2.00 births per woman in 1986 to less than 1.25 births by 1995, while the number of deaths rose sharply. Mass emigration that followed the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent economic crisis added to this tally. In five years, from 1991 to 1996, the Estonian population fell from 1,57 million to 1,47 million.[48] For the first time since World War II, the population was declining year-on-year.

This trend raised considerable alarm, particularly among natural scientists, who argued that the objective laws of social processes pointed to national culture as a irreplacable prerequisite for demographic survival. The physicist Tiit Kärner, for instance, argued that the "homeostasis" of humanity was checked by culture, which "determined the direction of human

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[46] See for example Aet Annist, *Otsides kogukonda sotsialismijärgses keskuskülas: arenguantropoloogiline uurimus* (Tallinn: TLU Press, 2011).

[47] Pettai and Kallas, "Estonia: Conditionality amidst a legal straightjacket," 110–114.

[48] Andres Langemets, "Akadeemiline nõukogu ja rahvastikuprobleemid," *Eesti Sõnumid,* March 8, 1995, 2; see also Kalev Katus and Allan Puur (eds), *Population Development in Estonia (*Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre: Tallinn, 2006), on birth rates 126, on mortality rates, 164–67.

activity", keeping a balance between "ecological disaster and a world of egocentric individuals in a state of heat death". In Estonia, the system was out of balance, as national culture was not strong enough to compensate for the influence of individualist freedom.[49]

Nationalist critics tended to avoid placating individual politicians, blaming instead a broader decline of values that accompanied liberalization. Jaak Uibu, head of the National Medical Council demanded in a 1997 article that politicians pay immediate attention to socioeconomic issues, which free-market ideology had, in his view, ignored. He highlighted, in particular, malnutrition and poverty among children, blaming the problem on a crisis of family values: "We are strongly impacted by changes in values, the philosophy of success, and the assault of new idols from the West. People no longer care about their own lives nor the lives of others."[50] Although many of these commentators fashioned themselves as supporters of the free market, they often distanced themselves from actually existing market conditions, declaring them distorted, immature forms of capitalism. The literary figure Andres Langemets compared 1990s Estonia to the "Wild West" populated by "the first businessmen who staked out the spot, more crooks than the real deal."[51] These critics connected demographic decline to bread-and-butter issues such as poverty, which mainstream politicians, lacking sufficiently nationalist spirit, simply ignored.

At the same time, nationalist critics saw the specter of socialism both as the force behind European individualism, which Estonia was adopting, as well as the explanation for why

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49 "homöostaasi," "määrab inimeste tegevuse suuna," "ökokatastroofi ja soojussurmas viibiva üksikindiviidideks pihkunud egotsentrilise maailma piiril," Tiit Kärner, "Miks langeb Eesti rahvaarv," *Sirp,* Jan. 22, 1999, 3, 18.

50 "mõjutavad meid tugevasti muutused väärtushinnangutes, edufilosoofia ja uute iidolite pealetung Läänest. Ei hoolita enam enda ega teiste elust," Jaak Uibu, "Inimene on kõikide asjade mõõt," *Sakala,* Feb 18, 1997, 5.

51 "esimesed ärimehed kellel õnnestub tühja maa peal tegutseda, on ikka sullerid," Andres Langemets, "See mis meist saab see selgub," *Hommikuleht,* Sept. 10, 1994, 12-13. See also Jaan Einasto, "Kas Eesti riigil on tulevikku".

Estonian capitalism had taken such a demographically destructive form. The blind acceptance of crypto-communist European values could, in this view, only happen because the Soviet state had systematically destroyed national culture and the tradition of principled, upstanding citizenry.[52] In an essay in *Vikerkaar,* Langemets lamented the return of "spiritual socialism" which post-independence intellectuals, who lacked the keen nose of "old nationalist bloodhounds" were incapable of recognizing: "All the unfulfilled communist promises are returning […] The new intellectuals defend all sorts of minorities, from gays and lesbians to laplanders, but are unwilling to recognize the nation as a kind of minority within the human population and world society."[53] Such flattening of the social body to mere individual rights and unqualified equality could only lead to a demographic crisis. As the phycisist Kärner put it: "in a society where (out of respect for individual rights) people who abandon their children in favor of hedonist pleasures are not stoned to death or otherwise excluded from society, such a society has no place for children, we should not be surprised that there are no children, and they themselves are better off for not existing."[54] Here, critics contrasted the Soviet/liberal tendency towards relativism, which they characterized as the belief that "[culture] could be changed like a raincoat," to the importance of accepting "rational guidance" and valuing tradition.[55] Again, critics saw the mixing of languages – pidgin-English and Estonian mangled with English loans – as mirroring the Soviet era aspiration to reject national culture and integrate into a rootless internationalism, a tendency which had to be fought through the valorization of Estonian culture, privileging education and

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52 This argument is also made in Tiit Kärner, "Miks langeb Eesti rahvaarv," 18.

53 Andres Langemets, "Foorum," *Vikerkaar 7/1996,* 110, accesed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2sJFrvR.

54 "ühiskonnas, kus elu nautimiseks oma lapsi maha jätvaid või lastekodusse andvaid vanemaid ei pilluta kividega surnuks ega tõugata mingil muul moel ühiskonnast välja (ikka isikuvabaduse austamise nimel), et sellises ühiskonnas ei olegi lastel kohta ja ei tasu imestada, et neid pole, ja neil endilgi on parem, et neid pole," Kärner, "Miks langeb Eesti rahvaarv," 18.

55 "saab seda vahetada nagu mantlit?" "ratsionaalset juhtimist," Kärner, *Arutlusi Asja Pärast,* 104; "Miks langeb Eesti rahvaarv," 18.

high-mindedness (*"vaimsus"*).[56] Language, demography, and sovereignty were once again tied intimately together.

Former dissidents and hard nationalists formed a separate group whose more scathing diagnoses of the demographic problem led to equally radical solutions. Writing largely on the pages of the magazine *Kultuur ja Elu*, speaking at various conservative conferences and organizing within fringe political parties, these intellectuals emphasized the communist background of leading politicians and demanded a nationalist economic program, focusing increasingly on opposing European integration.[57] What was happening was nothing less than the destruction of nation, language, and the physical people, by a group of corrupt leaders whose example led the people to conclude that "this state is not ours, let's wait for a better one."[58] If the leaders of the nation, "the same who brainwashed us with communism and are now busy agitating for capitalism" did not provide a good example for the rest of the people, then it was no wonder that people opted for speaking and writing in English or poor Estonian, and had fewer children. The restoration of Soviet thinking was visible in culture as well, with education and the family, once again proving particularly critical sites of corruption. One writer lamented the fact that a prominent glossy magazine had interviewed the Soviet-era minister of education, Elsa Grechkina, widely remembered as a proponent of "russification", another one called the Bologna reforms in higher education "a return to the Soviet period".[59]

Liberal and moderate intellectuals, too, saw demographic decline as a serious issue. In

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[56] Andres Langemets, "Eestlus ja vaimsus," *Eesti Ekspress,* April 26, 1996, B2.

[57] Andres Kasekamp "Extreme-right parties in contemporary Estonia," *Patterns of Prejudice 37(4),* Winter 2003, 401-414.

[58] Eduard Vääri, "Eesti keele säilimise võimalusi," *Kultuur ja Elu 2/2002,* 32, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2tWR5TA.

[59] Ants Sild, "Millest mõtleb intelligents," *Kultuur ja Elu 3/2002,* 52, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rKilUk, ; "naasmist nõukogude aega," Toomas Liiv, "Kogu meie haridussüsteem on segi aetud," *Postimees,* 28 August 2002.

2002 and 2003, mainstream politicians in the social democratic Moderates Party and the liberal Reform Party proposed "maternity pay" for families up to 18 months after the birth of child. These politicians emphasized the need for a sizeable workforce that could pay for pensions and other welfare services and maintain economic growth alongside more familiar arguments about the survival of the nation.[60] Yet even after the institution of the some of the most generous paid parental leave policies in Europe in 2004, anxieties only increased. Two years on, birth rates had not improved. As the political scientist Rein Taagepera warned in an influential article, with the first generation of post-1991 Estonians nearing adulthood, the country was headed towards a "demographic toilet", since the drop in birth rates would compound which each following generation.[61] Some social scientists and liberal commentators accepted that population growth would come through immigration and proposed educational reforms to ease integration into the national culture.[62]

As demographic anxiety spread to the mainstream, nationalist critics, too, proposed new solutions: one essayist suggested a "national reproductive fund" that would provide capital for large families for educating children and starting small businesses. The historian Lauri Vahtre envisioned a tax on childless families, "a solidarity tax". The conservative politician Mart Helme thought the tax could be used to pay off the mortgages of large families.[63] Radical nationalists demanded banning former communists from political parties, imposing limits to immigration to prevent solving the demographic problem "mechanically", hard-line crime policies, limits on

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[60] Paul-Eerik Rummo, „Vanemahüvitis tuleb," *Postimees*, 21 July 2003.
[61] Rein Taagepera, „Demograafiline vetsupott," *Eesti Päevaleht,* 30 Aug. 2005.
[62] Erik Terk, "Eesti tulevikud. Millest nad sõltuvad ja kuidas neid uurida," paper presented at *Metsaülikool 2006,* 3, accessed Jan. 18, 2018. http://bit.ly/2mQuHdi
[63] "Poolt ja vastu: Kas lastetusmaks tõstaks iivet?" *Eesti Päevaleht,* March 22, 2002, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rZDqi1.

land sales to foreigners, economic autarchy to avoid the influence of foreign banks, and, increasingly, rejected EU accession.[64]

The post-1991 period demonstrated the range of concerns which the demography-sovereignty connection could be mobilized to critique. For some, demographic decline indicated the lack of attention to issues like child poverty, the loosening of ties of solidarity, and the inadequacy of liberal individualist values for national cohesion. Others argued that demographic problems signified the broader alienation of governing elites, and their adherence to a utopian, ideological project under the guise of democracy, drawing an explicit comparison with the elites of the Soviet Union.

"Gender ideology" and the Totalitarian Vision of the EU

After Estonia's accession to the EU in 2004, an unlikely coalition of secular nationalists and Catholic intellectuals reoriented the demographic critique of supranational utopianism towards the "homosexual problem". Growing out from radical nationalist circles, amplified through the talk radio station Nõmme Raadio, the weblog Syndicate of Common Sense (*Terve mõistuse sündikaat*), and organized through the Estonian Nationalist Movement (Eesti Rahvuslik Liikumine, ERL) and its successor party EKRE, radical eurosceptics connected the EU's migration and LGBT policies to the demographic decline of the Estonian nation. At the same time, Varro Vooglaid, a Catholic law student, began publishing anti-abortion articles in Estonian dailies, broadening his reach to eventually include LGBT-issues. Working side by side, these two movements entwined arguments of the global right with the demographic and linguistic fears of Estonian nationalists.

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[64] "Mart Helme toob tagasi aatelisuse," *Kultuur ja Elu 3/2002*, 20; Vääri, "Eesti keele säilimise võimalusi," ; "Eesti iseseisvus ja majandus—Eesti kui uusautarkiline geopoliitiline ruum," 2001, accessed April 5, 2017. http://iseseisvuspartei.ee/pohidokumendid/doktriin/.

Disappointed by the "media's blocade" of eurosceptic nationalist conservatives, Martin Helme, a journalist at the news portal Delfi and son of the conservative politician Mart Helme, started the weblog "Terve Mõistuse Sündikaat" (TMS) in October of 2005. The site was meant to broadcast the views of a self-professed minority of "socially conservative nationalists", who Helme believed were systematically excluded from mainstream media debate.[65] For Helme and his supporters, gay rights represented a perversion of national democracy on the one hand, and a foreign, failing European social experiment on the other. Helme argued that homosexuals constituted only a tiny minority in society, and in pursuing things such as marriage equality, "homo rights activists" were, in fact, demanding special privileges from the "reasonable majority", while having no "real" rights violated.[66] Pride parades represented an affront to democracy, since they focused on the rights of couples who were "naturally infertile", instead of those with the hardest job and the weakest position – multi-child households.[67] They directed attention away from real social issues, which all derived from the problem of demography: the large number of children born out of wedlock, who were therefore more likely to grow up in poverty; generally low birthrates; and a general culture of moral relativism that was eroding values "particularly among the youth and the children."[68] These issues were seen as fundamental to Estonian sovereignty, codified in the preamble of the Constitution, as well as its Article 27,

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65 Martin Helme, interview to Koit Luus, "Luusime ringi," *Nõmme Raadio*, Jan. 5, 2006, accessed April 11, 2017. http://bit.ly/2re4JEl.

66 Martin Helme, "Head homod, halvad homod," Delfi, Dec.18, 2006, accessed April 12, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rxmT3y.

67 Martin Helme, "Elagu pereparaad!", Delfi, August 15, 2006, accessed April 11, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rxs57G.

68 Martin Helme, interview with Mihkel Raud, "Kolmeraudne," TV3, broadcast on Sept. 9, 2010; Martin Helme, "Eestit tuleb kaitsta homopropaganda eest," *Õhtuleht*, May, 19 2009, accessed April 12, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qe2nRE; Eero Laidre, "Homotrumm aina lärmakam," *Delfi*, August 7, 2010, accessed April 12, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qgVE8O.

which defined the family as "fundamental to the preservation and growth of the nation."[69]

ERL activists established a continuity between the demographic problems of the 1980s and the post-2004 era, arguing that Pride parades represented a new wave of "russification". This word was used as a metaphor for "the extinction of Estonians in their ancestral homeland, and the humiliation that goes along with it," and, of course, originally referred to the migration patterns and growing use of the Russian language during the 1980s. Isolationism and euroscepticism, which ERL represented, would empower Estonians to preserve their language and culture, but also to "make decisions based on local interests and peculiarities" – in other words, keep politics close to the people. In such articles, issues like visa-free travel between Europe and Russia, the emigration of Estonians and immigration of foreigners under the Schengen agreement, and overly "tolerant" attitudes towards LGBT-people were all brought together as a threat to demography and democracy. Referring to a NGO-project, which advocated for LGBT rights, promoted tolerance in the workplace, and raised awareness of discrimination issues, Helme wrote: "This is the context in which people's opposition to campaigns like 'Diversity Enriches' should be understood. We see and feel that under the pretext of praising diversity, our national specificity, sovereignty and cultural sustainability are being neutralized. […] The true consequence of tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism is another strong wave of russification in Estonia."[70]

Put differently, gay activism was seen as part of a broader, pan-European ideological project that indoctrinated the youth with eurocommunist values. Here, Helme's nationalist-conservative project borrowed heavily from discourse of the global right, adopting the language

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[69] Virve Rüüt, "Perekond ei ole homodele," Delfi, Oct. 12, 2011, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qdQgUO.

[70] Martin Helme, "Piirideta Euroopas Eestit ei ole," Delfi, Oct. 22, 2010, accessed April 12, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rNi1ot.

of American culture warriors, and republishing news of incidents of "gay EU totalitarianism" from places such as Sweden or Poland. In one such article, Helme listed several international court cases, such as the one against Swedish Lutheran pastor Åke Green, charged with hate speech for comparing homosexuals to cancer. All these cases, Helme argued, revealed the EU's "radical leftist agenda", which, combined with its reliance on "international courts, whose authority comes from no-one" posed a threat to national democracy.[71] These cases were not particularly meaningful in an Estonian context, where courts have done little to intervene in LGBT-related laws. Still, the points these cases made cohered with the central theme of "the demographic question": the conflict between local specificity, the people's sovereignty and alienated ideological projects of transnational elites.

In the 2010s, ERL grew into a nationally represented political party, EKRE, and TMS was rebranded as its media arm, Uued Uudised. They were among the principal groups opposing Estonia's gender-neutral cohabitation act, which the Parliament ultimately passed in 2014. In those years, terminology of the global right became increasingly prevalent in nationalist-conservative texts: EKRE's MP-s and op-ed authors began to speak of "culture wars", "gender ideology" and of "cosmopolitan liberal conspiracies".[72] Uued Uudised eagerly translated news culled from international news agencies, but also from alt-right websites such as Breitbart.com that, in their view, exemplified how liberal elites silenced conservative proponents of family values.[73] Increasingly, critics of the cohabitation act began speaking of "the natural family" and

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71 Martin Helme, "Homolemb Euroopa," Delfi, Aug. 8, 2007, accessed April 12, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qThi4R.

72 Martin Helme, "Eesti päästab kristlus," Delfi, Oct. 4, 2007, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rNpuDO; Laura Mallene, "Martin Helme: Istanbuli konventsiooni ainus efekt on see, et lasteaias õpetatakse poisse kleiti kandma," *Eesti Päevaleht*, May 17, 2016; Mart Helme, speech at the Parliament, Riigikogu Stenogramm, Oct. 12, 2015, 3PM, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qe2eO6.

73 For an overview of the foreign news selection of *Uued uudised*, see Jaanus Vogelberg, "Välisuudised Eesti paremmeedias," *Vikerkaar 10-11*, 2016, 144-153.

of the evils of "moral relativism," again echoing critiques level by the Christian Right in the US and European strongholds such as Poland and France.

The migration of religious, often US-sourced anti-gay arguments to Eastern Europe was a broader phenomenon of the mid-2000s, as conservative-christian NGO-s mobilized to defend "family values" against dangers seen emanating from transnational organizations such as the UN. The Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) and the Howard Center funded World Congress of Families (WCF) have been particularly successful in spreading its arguments in countries where LGBT issues have only recently become topics of political debate.[74]

The Catholic-fundamentalist SAPTK was particularly successful in importing arguments of the global Christian right to Estonian discourse. The movement, led by the lawyer and academic Varro Vooglaid, and journalist-teacher Markus Järvi began in the mid-2000s as a web project focused mostly on anti-abortion advocacy (abortion had been legal in Estonia since the days of the Soviet Union).[75] During the cohabitation act debate, SAPTK's continued to emphasize that homosexuality violated natural law, while at the same time tying it to a broader crusade against "gender ideology" which encompassed everything from contraceptives, to sexual education, again mirroring similar Catholic organizations elsewhere. One representative publication, *How to Recognize of the Homo Movement and Refute Them* blended arguments about a democratic deficit, demography, and Catholic natural law.[76] SAPTK tended to avoid explicit links to Catholicism; the *Lies of the Homo Movement* mentioned Christianity only in

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[74] Doris Buss and Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 100-128; Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36-70.

[75] For rhetoric, see Varro Vooglaid, "Kiri: Ausalt ja avameelselt abordist," *Delfi*, May 15, 2008, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rekcUK. Varro Vooglaid, "Mõrvad maksumaksja raha eest," *Postimees*, May 4, 2006; and Varro Vooglaid's preface to Benjamin Wiker, *Surmakultuuri arhitektid* (Tallinn: Elukultuuri Instituut, 2012).

[76] Varro Vooglaid, *Kuidas tunda ära homoliikumise valed ja need ümber lükata* (Tallinn: SAPTK, 2014), 36-46.

passing. In public discourse, SAPTK pragmatically blended implicit arguments derived from Catholic natural law with arguments about democracy and demography, emphasizing the importance of opposing the cohabitation act "regardless of national or ideological background".[77]

SAPTK's history reveals the importance of transnational Catholic alliances, both in terms of ideology and funding, even if religious doctrine has not played a particularly significant role within Estonia, where Catholicism is a marginal confession. In its first years of operation, the organization received financial contributions from conservative donors in Poland, and Estonian media has written about its members' participation at WCF meetings around the globe.[78] Perhaps most overlooked in this debate has been the group's connection to the radically anti-democratic, monarchist organization Tradition, Family and Property with which SAPTK shares a name, symbolism (the purple lion) and several ideological tenets. TFP began as anti-communist organization in Brazil, under the leadership of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira in the 1960s.[79] Its manifesto, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution,* which SAPTK translated into Estonian in 2012, renders history as a declensionist assault by the forces of secularism and chaos, against which Oliveria proposes a counter-revolution of order, defined as "the peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ, that is, Christian civilization, austere and hierarchical, fundamentally sacral, antiegalitarian, and antiliberal."[80] SAPTK leaders too, subscribe to the idea of the counter-revolution, connecting their fight against redefining the family to a "counter-revolutionary drive

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77 "sõltumata rahvuslikust või ilmavaatelisest taustast," Vooglaid, *Kuidas tunda ära homoliikumise valed,* 5.

78 Joosep Värk, "Kooseluseaduse vastu sõdiva Varro Vooglaiu sihtasutuse nõukogu liikmed istuvad ühes paadis Putini lähikondlase Vladimir Jakuniniga," *Eesti päevaleht,* July 24, 2014.

79 Margaret Power, "Transnational, Conservative, Catholic, and Anti-Communist: Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP)," *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right,* M. Durham & M. Power (eds) (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 85-105.

80 Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Hanover: The American TFP, 2002), 52.

to protect all that is truthful, beautiful and good."[81] Clearly, the transnational right has played a significant role in revitalizing debates around demography in the last decade.

Yet SAPTK did not simply reappropriate TFP's arguments for an Estonian public. The Estonian movement differs in emphasizing national democracy and demography and downplaying the religious dimension of the movement. In this, they share common ground with EKRE. After the passing of the cohabitation act, both groups focused on claiming to be *truly* democratic, lobbying for both an increased use of public referenda in Estonian politics in general, and a referendum on the cohabitation act in particular.[82] Both groups pointed to problems in legislative procedure to further underscore the "deeply undemocratic" process of passing the act.[83] The "lack of a mandate of the people" became a central argument for opposing gender-sensitive training in Estonian schools.[84] SAPTK has also styled itself as one of the few examples of "true civic society", as it is funded by voluntary donations alone and does not depend on government grants.[85] While terms of the transnational right, particularly "gender ideology" and "culture war" did gain purchase in the 2010s, these were largely emptied of overt religious references, and made subservient to arguments of national sovereignty.

In particular, conservative critics tied the alienation of the ruling class and its obsession with "gender ideology" to the elites' communist background. "It is telling," Vooglaid wrote in one op-ed, "that those who most enthusiastically support the passing of the cohabitation act

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[81] Varro Vooglaid, "Võitlev lõvi kui vasturevolutsiooni sümbol," *Objektiiv*, Sept.16, 2016, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qMcaRD.

[82] Vooglaid, "Vassimisest ja valetamisest," *Postimees,* April 21, 2014, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2syDi7F.

[83] Varro Vooglaid, "Kooseluseaduse läbisurumine on sügavalt ebademokraatlik," *ERR uudised,* Oct. 2, 2014, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2rQq96J.

[84] "Juhtkiri: perversse sooideoloogia levitamiseks koolides puudub rahva mandaat," *Objektiiv,* Nov. 3, 2016, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qhi4Xo.

[85] Varro Vooglaid, "Peame muutma Eesti poliitilist kultuuri," *Eesti päevaleht*, Oct 10, 2014, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2tCgl27.

against the will of the people include Valdo Randpere and Rait Maruste, who were eager ideological communists back in the Soviet days and already then opposed our national-cultural traditions and values."[86] Evoking words like "nomeklatura" and "apparachiks", conservative writers drew direct connections between undemocratic Soviet "experimentation" and the politicians engaged in "a colonialist struggle", with only the metropole having moved from Moscow to Brussels.[87]

In early 2017, Mati Hint weighed in on the debate in the cultural weekly *Sirp.* For Hint, the erasure of gender differences represented a return to the same problem he outlined in his essay on "Language and Democracy": the imposition of a utopian ideology that "neutralized the opposition between truth and falsehood, and made human consciousness a great deal more insecure and amorphous". "Even the communists did not that far," Hint added. Rejecting "liberal democratic values" as "a rather uncertain foundation for Estonian identity", Hint encouraged drawing on moral values embedded in national identity to resist the "general attack on human self-actualization", the same way Estonians had done in the 1980s in the battle against russification.[88] Both human and national sovereignty had to be defended – against communist russificiation in the 1980s and against liberal gender ideology in the 2010s.

Conclusion

Seeking to explain the resurgence of traditionalist movements across Europe, scholars

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[86] Varro Vooglaid, "Poliitikud, kes püüavad kooseluseadus vastu rahva tahtmist läbi suruda, on demokraadid vaid sõnades, mitte aga tegudes," *Objektiiv*, Sept. 23, 2014, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2q8undE.

[87] Georg Kirsberg,"Tolerandid kui agressorid," *Uued uudised*, Nov. 27, 2015, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qT5U9n; Peeter Helme, "kooseluseadus ei jaga Eestit põlvkondlikult," *ERR uudised*, Oct., 7, 2014, accessed April 13, 2017. http://bit.ly/2qLSwoY.

[88] Mati Hint, "Eesti identiteet tõejärgses ühiskonnas," *Sirp*, 27 Jan. 27, 2017, accessed June 23, 2017. http://bit.ly/2sZet5n.

have increasingly concluded that Christian conservatism has not returned to the continent; rather, it has never really left. In this interpretation, human rights, anti-totalitarianism, and much of ostensibly secularist political thought all find their roots in Christian theology as attempts to find a non-atomistic, non-materialist alternative to capitalist and communist conceptions of the human. Anti-gender movements, then, appear as merely parts in a longer history of resistance to ideologies that locate sovereignty in politics or the state, attempting instead to reassert traditional hierarchies grounded in the heterosexual family and the local community as the natural ordering principles of society.

Yet while the roots of traditionalist resurgence undoubtedly go deep into European history, Christian political theology alone does not explain the intellectual or geographical range of anti-gender movements, which are now prominent in places where religion has generally been politically marginal: Estonia, but also the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the Scandinavian countries, to name just a few examples. In different places, these movements marshal ideas, which often conflict with Christian natural law, emphasizing instead evolutionary principles, insights from structural anthropology, or, as in the case of Estonia, imperatives derived from demography and linguistic nationalism. To understand the appeal of these movements to such diverse constituents, we must contextualize them in the series of the late twentieth century crises, which have reopened questions of state sovereignty, transferring skepticism about transnational governance and its potential for totalitarianism from the Soviet Union and the communist threat onto the European Union.

Here, the Estonian case highlights how the grounds for locating national sovereignty in heterosexual reproduction did not necessarily have to lie in Christian theology; nor were they

necessarily part and parcel of nationalist discourse since time immemorial. Rather, the particular encounter between late Soviet political reforms and nationalist intellectuals seeking an opening to wrest more power from Moscow in the 1980s created the association between utopian ideology and demographic decline on the one hand, and true national sovereignty and "natural" demographic growth on the other hand. In those years, this ideology was used to exclude Russian speakers from the national body and to delegitimize Soviet central authorities. This connection, where demographic problems became indicators of failed utopianism, proved durable enough to become the groundwork for new alliances, culminating in the unlikely meeting of minds between transnational Catholic activists and local nationalists, both of whom saw EU bureaucrats as posing a critical threat to national and natural sovereignty.

The fear of supranational authority is by no means limited to Estonia. Similar anxieties that connect LGBT rights, demography, and morality to misguided projects of supranational elites can be found in Eurosceptic discourse in Poland, Hungary and elsewhere. But if for Catholics in the CFP tradition, the threat of a moral decline extended back to the times of Jan Hus and Martin Luther, then for their nationalist allies in Eastern Europe the crisis of sovereignty was only as old as post-Soviet Europe itself.