



# Does National Identity have an impact on Gender Equality?

A Feminist-Constructivist analysis of Estonia's identity formation process and its impact on Gender (In-)Equality today

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## Abstract

The shift of mainstream International Relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as societal changes challenged the way we see the world. This research is concerned with the, for the researcher most pressing issue of our social coexistence, (In-)equality. To further narrow down, the author engages with identity formation and the issue of gender in Estonia. After assessing the International Relations relevance of Feminist IR and pointing out Constructivist similarities ontological and epistemological assumptions are presented, where the author shares the Feminist claims of seeing states as the analytical unit in the international system but as a representational conglomeration of a population. Estonia's transformation process, from a oppressed socialist society to economic liberalization will show a deeper connection to the population's national identity. The methodological endeavour takes two indexes the Gender Equality Index and the World Value Survey and cross-analyses opinion with reality and finds correlation in the Socialist past influencing the opinion in Gender Equality. The comparative study with Slovenia shows ineffectiveness of Gender quotas and a general slow progress in terms of Gender Equality. Concluding, that the past and the constructed identity against the former Soviet ideology and the constructed national identity has an influence on Gender Equality.

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## Abbreviations

EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality  
EPRSB – European Parliament Research Service Blog  
EU – European Union  
EUROSTAT – European Statistical Office  
FPA – Foreign Policy Analysis  
GEI – Gender Equality Index  
ILO – International Labour Organization  
IPU – Inter-Parliamentary Union  
IR – International Relations  
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation  
OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development  
SDG(s) – Sustainable Development Goal(s)  
SU – Soviet Union  
UN – United Nations  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programm  
US – United States  
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (see SU)  
WVS – World Value Survey

## Introduction

Why is Estonia performing below average in Gender Equality in comparison to the European average, despite their remarkable economic and democratic, political development? All countries - with Slovenia as the only exception - which joined the European Union (EU) during the 2004 enlargement, have been performing poorly on the Gender Equality Index (Eurostat, 2017). Estonia is having the largest Gender Pay Gap in the European Union with a 26 % difference, and no “affirmative measure” policies such as quotas in place (Eurostat, 2017; Shreeves, 2019). The reason for a weak development in Gender Equality can be expected to lie in the presence or lack of affirmative policies. On the other hand, as other countries have shown, it is possible to increase their share of women in parliamentary position without quotas and others have provided evidence that the share can even decrease with the latter (Brown & Langer, 2015:51; Shreeves, 2019). In the 2019 report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, an international think tank to promote democracy and human rights, the effectiveness of affirmative action policies has been monitored. It has been stated that affirmative action relies on the “quality” of said initiatives and an overall increase of the share of women in representational bodies of government can be observed throughout the world. The slow increase of about 1 percent to last year is a progress but nevertheless, far away from parity (IPU, 2019). Quotas do matter, but this paper will not investigate the effectiveness of those but rather the underlying structural circumstances which might or might not lead to the implication of quotas as a result.

The author assumes that setting quotas is a result of social and political discourse and just the observable so-called “tip of the iceberg”. Trying to find an explanation for a misrepresented and arguably unequal post-soviet society, the explanation needs to be situated in a rather structural, patriarchal setting. Leading the hunch and puzzling question this paper seeks to investigate: Is it possible that the Socialist/Marxist past of the former Republics of the Soviet Union with a self-ascribed class-neutral and gender-friendly understanding of a society, had just the opposite effect on Gender Equality today as the Feminist struggle was falsely incorporated in the class struggle (Hartmann, 1979:1)? Or is the connection to a modern, capitalist society more evident and a feminist struggle not necessary as simply put, there is no need for Feminism in a society as the way it currently is? Meaning the construction of the Estonian self-image does not require change as distancing from the soviet past and progress towards Europe in economical terms, freedom of speech and other areas of life has been made (Fawn 2004:157).

It has been 28 years, since Estonia and 14 other countries of the former Soviet Republics (re-)gained their independence and underwent a massive political, economical and societal

change (Fawn, 2004; Annuk, 2019). From Soviet-governed to independent, from socialist to capitalist and from oppression to freedom. As the aim of this thesis is to investigate the failure of post-soviet states to establish or even get close to Gender Equality and find one of the reasons to lie in the identity formation, the research has to be limited. Due to the extensiveness of possible factors differing in geographical, demographical, socio-economical as well as historical factors, ties and circumstances the choice of dependent and independent variables as well as the sole look on identity formation and its impact on gender is arguably a perspective lacking of wide scope analysis. By taking a more extensive look at Estonia as one example of the former Soviet countries and its identity formation, this thesis attempts to contribute to the existing literature on identity formation and gendered perspectives in the post-soviet space (Gapova, 2008; Helemäe & Saar, 2015; Hopf, 2005). Further motivated by the observation of scholarship in the study of gender and IR through the Western-led Feminist International Relations, the former Second World remains, even though not entirely, an untouched realm of gendered approaches in International Relations (Carpenter 2003, Tickner & Sjöberg 2001).

The purpose is to find confirmation or discover falsification of the hypothesis that Estonia's national identity is inherently connected and constructed against the former Soviet Union and its state-led doctrines and interpretation of Marxism, in order to create a national identity which in return has an influence on performing poorly on the GEI. The assumption of distancing from the past and a connected feeling of oppression is not a new approach and can be observed in a variety of fields such as Psychology (Hogg, 2001:6421) or linguistics (Yuval-Davis et al. 2017:1048). But, in order to fill an existing gap in scholarly literature, the focus on identity and its connection to Gender Equality is chosen.

I argue that Gender Equality as a policy and as a social concept has been dismissed from Estonian political, societal and economical discourse as there is, simply put, no use for it. This claim is supported by scholars, as well as politicians who did not encourage or promote Feminism as it was considered to be backward thinking, a thing from the demonized Soviet Union, and hence the explanation for growing Gender Inequality (Helemäe & Saar 2019). The strong historical ties between Feminism and Socialism and Marxism also come into play rather than the ties between liberalism and Feminism in International Relations theories especially regarding methodological as well as epistemological and ontological starting points (Ackerly et al. 2006:7, Hartmann 1979:2).

After assessing differences and similarities I will define the terms which this paper will stumble upon which is a necessary step for the next part to connect the Soviet era to having an

impact on today's identity and whether the assumed progressive nature of socialist ideology in return fostered a more traditional more conservative stand on gender roles.

This rather extensive introduction is followed by the presentation of the existing literature regarding this paper's ontological and epistemological claims, where the author places himself. The theoretical framework of Marxism and Feminism as well as their shortcomings are presented by using Heidi Hartmann's canonical text from 1979, "The unhappy marriage of Marxism and Feminism", in order to generate a comprehensive image of the issues arising especially in a post-soviet setting. Further, the author seeks to address additional shortcomings within the theoretical framework of Alexander Wendt's (1992) and Onuf's (2003) Social Constructivism and incorporate and criticize it from Feminist IR theory (Carpenter 2003).

Afterwards, perspectives on as well as the connected debate surrounding identity formation and its influences on the Estonian nation are put forward. Lauristin & Vihalemm (2009) as well as Fawn (2003) provide a comprehensive insight on the transformation process, a crucial period when understanding today's situation of Estonian national Identity. Afterwards, the methodology for my own research is introduced. This section elaborates on the motivation for using two different sets of data. In order to find a correlation between the "hard facts" which the Gender Equality Index represents are cross-checked and contrasted by "soft-facts" of the World Value Survey, which measures perceptions and opinions. This approach should enable this research to pinpoint the main juxtaposing points of identity formation, and a country's national identity in connection with Gender Equality. The followed analysis will take the earlier introduced concepts and terms into account and where it's possible, connect it to the provided data.

Before presenting the existing literature and theoretical standpoints, the relevance to International Relations in itself is pointed out.

## International Relations Relevance

The thesis puts the most-northern Baltic country of Estonia in the center of the following case-study. Nevertheless, an extensive and vastly comprehensive introduction of connected concepts of Identity and Ideology, gender in general as well as the approaches of classical Social Constructivism, Feminism and Marxism in International Relations are required. It is necessary to argue for an International Relations relevance as it could be held against the researcher, as other classical research topics such as Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) or the role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the International System are more likely to be studied. The connection is as obvious as the research relevant. First, the academic shift of the early 1990s

and the connected proliferation of Feminist approaches in International Relations (Tickner 1999:4) as well as the academically widely shared theoretical shortcomings of main-stream IR theories during the fall of the Soviet Union. Second, the comprehensiveness and possible advantages of social constructivist, Feminist and Marxist theories lies in their integration of domestic factors such as their possible incorporation of agency and identity formation (Carpenter, 2003; Tickner, 1999; Wendt, 1995). Third, these lenses allow the author to take a normative approach to how states, as the central unit of analysis in IR and societies should act in a regime type structure of universalist laws. Trying to critically examine existing data and further take lenses of critical theories to further encourage the reader to widening the scope of possible fields of study. The Feminist approach might seem apparent as gender policies, political representation of women as well as the discursive nature surrounding power has an impact on the patriarchal power structure in International as well as Domestic Relations. Even though Feminist IR has been mostly concerned with issues of violence and war, it is evident that the vulnerability of women does not stop when a war or conflict is over, or justifies a sole focus on to what extend the world would be a different one when only women were in charge (Locher & Prügl, 2001:114; Tickner, 1999:10; Youngs, 2004:76).

## Defining the Key Terms

In order to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of my research, it is pivotal to define the main terms and underlying concepts of this paper's "raison d'être". Taking Ackerly et al. (2006) as the groundwork, as their feminist scholarship in IR is widely respected and helpful in my own undertaking of Feminist research the term *Epistemology* encompasses the issue of how we can know what we consider as knowledge (Harding 1987b). *Ontology* in that matter refers to what is used in order to make sense of the world, it is thus what makes up the level of analysis and as stated the discursive non-steady nature of the world. The *Method* is the way how the knowledge is produces and will be designated a whole chapter later in this thesis.

## Ontology

Engaging with the traditional ontology in IR which lies in understanding states behaviour in conflicts or international institutions, it is pivotal to take the short comings in the social interplay of actors into consideration. This is where Feminist ontology and epistemology have the potential to gain strength in terms of validity and acceptance in the field. To take mainstream IR assumptions as a groundwork and learn lessons from its lack of explanatory distinctiveness;



class as well as race and most relevant for Feminist IR: Gender is able to provide a crucial understanding of complex and earlier “just as there” taken status quo situations can be revised. As Ackerly et al. (2006) put it:

*“Just as states, conflict, institutions, security, and globalization cannot be studied without analyzing gender, gender cannot be studied without analyzing these subjects and concepts.”*

The role of critical studies in the field of IR has found its way into the study of International Relations since the failure of many of the grand, pre-dominant theories, including Liberalism and Realism to foresee the geopolitical changes of the 1990s (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015:7). This shift in the academic discourse further implied a needed incorporation of new approaches; a turn from the observable, empirical positivist ontology towards a normative, interpretivist approach (Cox 1981:129). The long-time neglected importance of culture, traditions and identity proved itself helpful when identifying driving forces in the social, revolutionary movements during the time of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. This led to the (almost) full acceptance of critical theories such as Social Constructivism, Green-Theory as well as the in this paper considered Feminist scholarship within the field of International Relations (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2015:6).

To point out similarities between Constructivism and Feminist IR in ontology, the transformational and non-steady ontological assumption is shared that both theories are theories of “becoming” (Locher & Prügl 2001; Tickner & Sjoberg 2011). Meaning that they differ in greater detail from classical IR theories which are considered to be static (Ackerly et al. 2006: 8). This notion is interesting when looking at the development of identity and gender construction, as the word construction already implies, some sort of progress or at least change has been or is still taking place. But according to what and whom, in which direction. To further understand its incorporation into the existing theories, a closer examination of how gender has shaped IR theories is required and follows this section.

## Theory

### Feminism

This part of the thesis will explore two different, yet arguably fitting theoretical viewpoints in order to understand constructivism from a gendered perspective. Feminist research in

International Relations has changed the field and allowed other scholars to question its own ontological assumptions (Ackerly et al. 2006:2). The European Institute for Gender Equality established the Gender Equality Index (GEI) which makes it possible to compare the level of development in terms of Gender Equality on a quantitative level amongst and within states.

## Gender in International Relations

Gender is one of the analytical units in Feminist International Relations Scholarship, next to race, ethnicity, socio-economic status etc. (Caprioli, 2004:254). Whereas Feminist IR in itself has been undergoing changes it remains to say that the initial idea of political events can be studied through those lenses and arguably with the most success to make sense of why things (power relations, economic status, time spend at work, access to health e.g.) are the way they are. So, the Feminist Theory in International Relations questions the status quo? When talking about the incorporation of gender into the academic discourse within International Relations, Feminism – or rather Feminisms – need to be located as well. As the plurality already suggests, different subfields of feminist studies in critical theory exist. The normative nature of incorporating gender, as well as feminist thoughts into IR, brings forward shortcomings on its own, as the multi-faceted nature of emancipatory policies are to be studied. Whereas, feminist IR scholars take the stand of seeing gender equal to feminist theory, it has been argued that in order to create a comprehensive emancipatory framework the latter needs to be adjusted in order to make gender accessible to non-feminist IR scholars (Caprioli, 2006:257; Carpenter, 2002:159). To sum up this short endeavour on gender in IR, it can be summoned that Feminism or gender in International Relation Theory is two-fold. It is a way of arguing and emancipating a methodological, epistemological and ontological way of how knowledge is produced and reciprocated and second, the field of studies required revolution (Caprioli, 2006:257). Gaining insights from the ontological changes, the field widened up under which lens issues can be analyzed. Ranging from the role of women in warzones, to Gender Equality measurements and universality of human rights. Mirroring the “learning from each other mentality”, the subfield of International Relation requires a more open inclusive approach to what can, and how can it be studied.

## Gender vs. Sex

In order to study Gender Equality and assess possible shortcomings, it is important to distinguish the often mixed up terms of gender and sex, as this often leads to confusion (Carver, 2003:289). The simple definition is that sex is the bodily, biological feature a person is born with, and gender is dependent on the self-identified. In other words, in a binary world, sex is

man or woman and gender is female or male. But it is not that simple especially when putting on a gendered lens when studying power relations. Keeping this in mind, gender has been defined differently throughout the feminist IR scholarships (Carpenter, 2002:155), with Ann Tickner contributing to the constructivist viewpoint of neglecting male and female as it can be misleading, but more in the attributions of femininity and masculinity. Viewing gender as the analytical unit, the incorporation of this “lens” in IR scholarship brought forward methodological and ontological shifts regarding power relations which International Relations ultimately is about. Taking a step back, Scott defines the term as “[...] a constitutive element of social relationships based on *perceived* differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (1986:1067, italics added). The constructed and needed recognition of another, enables feminist and gender scholars to point out differences in the power structure on a global level as well in the domestic unit of analysis.

Whereas on one hand, Carpenter (2002) distinguishes gender from sex in the sense that sex exists prior to and independently from our knowing. Gender on the other hand requires a collective agreement and recognition and does not exist independently. In the everyday life, man-as-in-male, woman-as-in-female are often mixed up but crucial to be distinguished in gendering policies.

This way it makes sense that it has been argued that the Gramscian tradition of hegemony is mirrored in gender relations which in return is essentially about power being socially constructed and placed in ideology, encompassing values and ideas as well as institutions which have the function of stabilizing the existing system (Locher & Prügl 2001:117). On the other hand, another stream of Feminist IR Scholars, does not see power represented in ideology but rather in identity formation (Locher & Prügl 2001:117). Where a “self” is created through ascribed status-makers such as race, age, gender which in return allows to be contrasted to the “other”. This modernist thinking encompasses a crucial point, which is the acknowledging of intersectionality, of being part of more than just one status ascribed (Further reading on intersectionality see Cho et al. 2013).

## Constructivism

The main argument for the constructivist shifts in International Relations theory is connected to the rising influence of non-state actors, the unforeseen end of the cold war and the arguably important spread of proclaimed universal values, human rights and social norms (Wendt, 1995). Which in return has an influence on how states behave in the global sphere. This change in how

to see the world, has been critically observed by Francis Fukuyama as the “end to history” as the liberal, democratic ideology won over Leninist, Maoist or generally Marxist ideology (Fukuyama, 1989:7). This Hegelian perspective on history as a clash of ideologies comes to an end in his opinion, the liberal-democratic *man* (1989:8, emphasis added) has prevailed. This paper does not go into detail with the possible critique of Fukuyama’s text but further acknowledges short-comings in his assumption that fascism in a materialistic manner is defeated (1989:9), and that he makes no distinction on the level of liberal democracies and possible conflicts amongst them (1989:18).

As mainstream IR theorists failed to foresee this assumed end of history, constructivist thought further emerged into mainstream IR first and foremost with the theoretical debate fostered by the Constructivist critique of (Neo-)Realist and (Neo-)Liberal thought by Alexander Wendt’s “Anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992: 397). Constructivists; in contrast to the earlier presented Feminist IR have a different starting point, or in other words another matter what they are arguing about. The main debate does not surround the methodological difficulties and whether a positivist standpoint or a qualitative research method is more or less appropriate. It is more about what makes up the world in a sense of whether states are self-help driven, agency-structure debate, and what Wendt is promoting most and where Constructivism proves to have the best timing in the debate and importance to this paper, is the importance of behavioral adaptation, interest and identity formation which in return is also shared by Feminist IR scholarship (Wendt 1992: 181). Also, constructivists reconsider the entities on the global level where states have been considered to be the only players but a shift towards national interests, state identities, social movements, and transnational networks are put into focus (Locher & Prügl 2001:114). Further, the acknowledgment of discursive power can explain changes in policy decisions and general strategies. And lastly, the combination and assumption of agency/structure enabled constructivist to understand and explain major shifts in global political status quo changes, such as the end of the cold war (Locher & Prügl 2001:115). The social relations and identities promote a constructed value which gives reason to material capabilities, which makes constructivism that versatile in arguing for changes in the static sphere of classical IR Epistemology (Wendt & Friedmann 1995:691).

A connection to the purpose of this paper, to Estonia and its transformation process pursuing material wealth, naturalized nationalist and value-conservative population can be established. The Estonian neighbourhood policy towards Russia as the legal successor of the Soviet Union was first hostile, but due to the empowerment and pressure of the European Union and first and foremost, the agreement upon that the Soviet Union as well as the US led NATO, no longer

posed a threat to the other states survival hence, it was normalized which “proves” the assumption of a non-static changing nature of the social world (Wendt 1995: 397).

## Constructivism and the transformation process

Societies and the relation amongst them too as well as the situation and positioning in the international system can change. This paper argues that this is what the transformation of Estonia was inherently about. A new state, which had to find its place in the international sphere, based on domestic constructivist factors of discursive identity and political culture and external of which system fits best and “wants” Estonia to be part of. The transition process of Estonia and the factors involved have been part of scholarly research for the past twenty years (Helemäe & Saar 2019; Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009; Smith 2004). The debate emerging from the societal, political and economic change developed around internal and external factors which has been the main focus of the scholar and former Member of the European Parliament for the Social Democratic Party of Estonia, Marju Lauristin. External factors are influences considered to be connected to international, inter-societal and intercultural forces whereas on the other hand internal factors are connected to interrelations of values and social structure, such as for this thesis relevant gender groups (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009:2).

Furthermore, Estonia’s geographical their linguistic proximity to Finland, as well as the availability of Finnish Television in the North of Estonia, where about 50 % of the Estonian population lived (Smith, 2004:156), has been an influence in terms of having access to non-censored press, a glimpse behind the curtain and arguably left the population to develop not entirely based on Soviet propaganda. Additionally, a greater motivation for the business elites for economic reforms after 1991, and the rather small dependency on the Soviet Industrial Military Complex, were identified in previous studies as external factors, fostering fast economic development during the transition period (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2009:3). But on what cost?

The democratic development, a relatively weak civil society in terms of political participation as well as low trust towards the government were to be observed throughout the post-soviet space and has been part of criticism rather than approval. These studies presented by Lauristin & Vihalemm focus on the establishment of a functioning, modern, new democracy. The role of gender in the process towards regaining agency, remained untouched. The juxtapose of economic liberalization on every cost in order to gain material wealth and neglection of democratic, inclusive policies are puzzling. The theoretical viewpoint of constructivism is in that period as important especially when regarding the installment of institutions which are a

process of internationalizing identities (Wendt 1995: 399). This means that the past of Estonia needs to be addressed as the orientation of where to belong to depends on identity which, as previously argued, is deeply connected to the negative memory of political and societal freedoms in the Soviet Union.

## Estonia`s past to understand the present

The transformation or transition process of Estonia needs to be addressed from a rather historical perspective, as transformation inherently is a process with a starting and a possible ending point. Taking different parts of speeches of state officials, higher in hierarchy in a qualitative study, Smith (2004) portrays the aspirations of the political elite and their vision for the future in the early years of independence. It becomes clear, that the political elite as well as the general public of Estonia has an ambivalent relationship to their former occupants of the USSR (Smith 2004:156). Estonia has always been, together with the other countries of the Baltic Region, a type of enclave and window to the West for the USSR. People living in Estonia, had higher wages, more freedoms for the intellectual elite but also for the population in terms of being able to listen and watch Finish Television (Smith 2004:158). Further, as the living standard was already higher than average, the totalitarian ideology of the communist era was replaced by a strong libertarian understanding of how a society should work (Haav, 2018: 71). Underlining the claim of a 180 degree turn against the soviet ideology, Haav (2018) claims that the ideology of communism was abandoned but the authoritarian values remained in place. A “culture” of going in line with the newly, freely elected parliament (despite several corruption allegations and convictions until the present day), the 1992 elections were claimed to be as democratic as possible and accepted in the public (Haav,2018: 71).

The understanding of rebelling and winning over the totalitarian regime, lead to the issue of nationalist ideology and economical inequality and segregation. Who is Estonian and who is Russian? The uprising of nationalist movements was an indecisive force between Estonia and the EU and Russia, as the USSR's legal successor. On one hand Estonia wanted to get rid of its occupants as fast as possible, the elitist structure and the top officials were striving for personal monetary outcomes. On the other hand, the European Union demanded a “mature” handling of a countries` foreign relations with Russia and especially, with its ethnic Russian population without eligibility on citizenship.

## Feminist-Constructivism International Relations

Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening up of the Soviet Bloc, it was harder for a civil society to develop due to the lack of information about the capitalist, liberal Western world and as in the segment stated above, Estonia was in a rather luxurious geographical position. Though, mainstream information available was concentrated and steered by the Politbüro in Moscow. Freedom of speech, an independent press as well as other parties in the political sphere were limited to non-existent. How was it possible then for the universalist approach of international values to penetrate the iron curtain and spark the fire of protests and revolutions and the dominating Western values of, for example, freedom of speech, democratization and Gender Equality? The establishment of approaches in international relations scholarship with a Western idea of universalism, seen empirically in the ratification of the Geneva Conventions, the establishment of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), or more regionally, the success story of the European Union, are just a few examples of the institutionalization of value driven policies.

None of those institutions exists without recognition, institutions would exist if we as a conscious society as well as our elected (or not-elected) leaders would have agreed on transferring sovereignty to them, and in return subscribe to shared beliefs, values and traditions in order to establish a prospering and “good” society with dialogue instead of war in its main center. Also, the criticism towards the Western thought in IR has been prevailing. With topics ranging from promoting democracy, establishing liberal markets in distant countries further on to establishing Gender Equality have been put forward by the Western, first world. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were put into action in 2015 (UNDP, 2019) encompass a wide range of emancipatory policy fields. SDG 5 is labelled “Gender Equality” and has its main purpose in empowering women and girls all around the world to more equality (UN Women, 2019).

As almost all countries of the UN, legally speaking have equality in their legislation, the disparity of men and women remains stunning. In order to counteract those trends of reinforcing patriarchal structures and promote more equality, also in countries with a higher living standard and not necessarily connected to inequalities so-called “affirmative action policies” are introduced. The main purpose of those policies is to encourage, historically less fortunate and marginalized groups, such as People of Colour in the US, lower classes in India, or women in democracies to participate in the political life (Brown & Langer, 2015:49). One of the most spread and also contested policies to be established are quotas. Public debates have

been taken place whether quotas should be implemented in stock companies, in local or national governments (OECD, 2019; Financial Times, 2015).

The effectiveness as well as the universal implementations of those quotas are questioned and whether they are applicable and goal oriented in every nation (Brown & Langer, 2015). Research has shown that affirmative action has had a positive impact on economic equality but not to the expected extend, further, regarding social cohesion quotas have had a rather divisive impact rather than forming a unitary movement (Brown & Langer, 2015:49). The intention of policy makers was the opposite, hoping that a more equal society would decrease ethnic tension, but in return “positive discrimination” was ascribed to those policies, decreasing support of affirmative measure policies. On the other hand, the study concludes that affirmative action can have a positive outcome, when communicated thoroughly and negotiated transparently. This leads to the earlier mentioned impact quotas might have, Slovenia has a quota on the national government with voluntary party quotas. Currently, 22 out of 90 seats are held by women in the national assembly elected in the 2018 election (IDEA, 2019). On the other hand, Estonia does not have any quota system and 27 out of 101 mandates were given to the elected women. So, do quotas actually matter? As this paper is rather interested in the identity formation, this argument about “affirmative action” required to be mentioned but will not be elaborated upon. A lesson to take is, that quotas, whether imposed by the government, or voluntarily implemented by parties or the private sector, empower and foster Gender Equality as the discourse surrounding it implies a neglection of women in politics and economics. Hitherto, the focus is set and action is further required to pursue Gender Equality.

The underlying point, this research tries to make, is that the globalized, interconnected world of today has a stronger framework of checks and balances to hold politicians accountable, social media to show progress or decrease as well as the powerful civil society movements worldwide have been a phenomenon of the past three decades.

After assessing the empirical influences of a “third wave” of Feminism, the focus is redirected to the importance of identity, which both Feminist IR as well as Constructivist IR have in common in ascribing significance to.

## Identity

In constructivist Social Theory, it is possible to connect seemingly distant concepts with each other, not in order to explain or foresee social phenomena, but rather to assess and theorize



about seemingly unrelated matters. This leads to the conceptualization of identity in an IR context through the constructivist lens.

The term *identity* became a concept widely used within the field of International Relations, from post-modern to post-colonial scholars (Onuf, 2003:75). Constructivist argued that identity emerges from social construction which involves the preference or choice selection by themselves (Onuf, 2003:75). It is pointed out and underlined, that in this particular scholarship, of the post-colonial sphere as well as in the post-soviet realm, the self can only be constructed in relation towards the other and of a vague, non-fixed condition for anyone (Onuf, 2003:75). Theoretically and conceptually speaking the term identity remains under scrutiny among constructivist scholars as it is assumed that a degree of self-awareness is present, which can be argued to be incoherent. As the premises of being self-aware of one's identity, and a logical connection to what to make out of it, can not be derived. The issue surrounding this particular concern of agency is addressed by constructivists as laying in the ontological assumption that selves act first and foremost for their own collective. Leaving room to speculate about self-awareness and relevant to the ontology, what makes up a self, a collective and to what extent to those agents have agency and know on which behalf to act.

Nevertheless, I share the constructivist assumption that agents are required to have a certain degree of sense of self to be able to act on preferences or interests (Onuf, 2003:76). In order to do so, the importance of language is evident and requires a closer look as it has been argued that language is a way to create a self, first by Locke in pursuit to understand the formation of a personal identity philosophizing that words can only express what we know (Dawson 2007:185-187). Language makes us distinct from another, everybody speaks a language, a dialect and has an accent which distinguishes us linguistically from someone else. Further, it builds a connectedness to other speakers who speak the same language and additionally, is the building ground of diplomacy. These few situations where the importance of language is pointed out can be further transferred to the words used in order to describe a community, using inclusive, exclusive, friendly or threatening rhetoric can form alliances and enemies alike. The rhetoric of Nazi-Ideologues towards the Jewish population in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century forged a wedge through the society and ended in the worst atrocity of human-kind. On the other hand, signals of opening up, through "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" towards the end of the Soviet Union, made it possible to deconstruct the failures of the Soviet Empire and paved the way towards rather peaceful revolutions.

The last example of the collapse of the Soviet Union underlines common constructivist assumptions of how the world exists. It exists through states, because simply put, we agree on

them. Through the opening policies, the common agreement on the Soviet Union is a superior state crumbled, followed by the assumption on agreeing that independence is better, led to the fall of the Soviet Union.

To further examine what makes up *identity* the contrast of me to the other requires further understanding. Humans, in contrast to other animals, neglecting primates for the simplicity of the argument, have a remarkable understanding and recognizing faces and emotions on them (Onuf, 2003:85). This recognition of the other makes it inevitable to act according to another and that in return forms normative behaviour which is inherently inside of us as Adam Smith elaboration that human passions are mirrored in sentiments and that those sentiments in return have moral properties (Onuf, 2003:86). This process of identity formation can be retreated back to David Hume, who brought in the factor of memory (Hume, 1978:261 in Onuf, 2003: 92). Stating that without a memory there is no possibility of seeing causality, and no learning. This fitting connection is especially obvious and necessary to take into account when talking about modern identity formation in the post soviet realm, as many implications of the national identity are connected to things, events, and memories from the past, in order to distance the nation, from the other and to find uniqueness and legitimacy in the pursuit of sovereignty. To sum up this segment it can be stated that identity is a mix of personal gender, ethnicity, history, language and crucial to point out for this research, constructed against something else. The next segment explains the issue of who is Estonian and empirically elaborates upon the “us” versus “them” dichotomy.

## The citizenship

Why this seemed to be rather difficult, it is crucial to look in the past. The debate around the Treaty of Tartu and the surrounding border disputes have to be considered when thinking about the positioning of Estonia in a new order (Smith 2004:161). On the other hand, the importance of the interwar period of Estonia's independence between the two World Wars. It is indeed a period of time in Estonia which is romanticized but at the same time built up a legacy of well-being, economic prosperity and social freedoms and first and foremost, peace. The latter was the main goal of a newly independent political reality of the 1990s to the aspirations and dreams of the ethnic Estonian population. Whereas the role of the Russian speaking minority is often mentioned and argued to be taken into consideration, a more extensive elaboration upon its role, the villainization of the latter and importance in a “us” and “them” discourse is yet to come.

After that, the EU admission process and Estonia's handling of the minority questions as well as the relations with Russia were under scrutiny. With the end of the EU's observer mission

during this transition process and preparation for joining Western alliances (EU and NATO) it was concluded that no extreme abuse of human rights took place regarding disadvantaging the Russian minority, all three Baltic states joined the EU in 2005. In the end, the role of women is again neglected, the speeches selected by Smith were solely made by men, but at the same time it could be asked whether women were at all visible in public spaces and able to give speeches.

There has been an ongoing debate amongst scholars either neglecting the importance of ideology and culture when it comes to the question what drives a country to navigate in the international sphere and putting external factors in the main focus (Tsygankov & Tsygankov 2006), others have argued for a greater understanding and further studying of ideology, nationalism and connected identity formation processes (Fawn 2004; Smith 2004). After taking a rather constructivist approach to identity formation, citizenship and historical agenda setting, Nira Yuval-Davis' "Gender and Nation" is introduced as it provides a rounding up of the previously argued neglected parts of gender in the constructivist inclination of this research.

## Nation and Gender and Marx

In 1997 Nira Yuval-Davis published her book "Gender & Nation". The first comprehensive book about gender and its relation to the nation and state, cultural and identity processes (1997:4). Her research is conducted using a multifaceted approach, analyzing working papers on international entities, reports of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) through critical discourse analysis. This mixed approach forms an understanding of gender and its relevance to the field. Ranging from the biological sphere of reproductive rights to democratization processes and war and empowerment discourses. A specific focus, relevant to this particular work is the importance on identity building in the Soviet context (Yuval-Davis 1997:13). Asking the question and contributing to the debate of state and citizens, whether the state should be seen as independent from the society (Yuval-Davis 1997:13). Further, the relevance of Marxist approaches seeing the state as a reflection of a "ruling class", and an upcoming disconnection of the ruling elite towards its citizens should be counteracted. The result can be argued to be the establishment of the welfare-state, having a remarkable influence on the role of women in society, the reproduction of labour force, and the emancipation of women in general. As this paper seeks not to determine or argue for or against whether the Soviet Union was a real Marxist-Leninist, Communist, Socialist or Elitist conglomeration of states, it appears though necessary to introduce the relevant connection of Feminism and Marxism. After the introduction of the concept of nationalism, Yuval-Davis starts with disapproving and defining

different approaches. The debate about widening and narrowing down of concepts and terms, words will always go along with the social science, even though the importance of the proper functioning of the terms remains crucial. The dissonance in understanding what culture, what ideology and what identity means bring about many questions. The discourse introduced by Yuval-Davis about reproductive rights shows the importance of the gendering power and politics (1997, chapter 2). An important issue when defining the nation, she acknowledged a forward looking “common destiny” to be crucial to identity construction and further citizenry. The role of women in that reality is obvious as Yuval-Davis correctly assesses that the future of a nation sometimes solely is the responsibility of women (1997:29). In her chapter, “People as Power”, the importance of a growing community is presented, establishing different discourses and introducing different policies from all over the world to highlight the different approaches to “steer” a nation’s future by regulating the woman’s reproductive rights. Using reports from the United Nations Conference on Population and Development Policies 1994, she states that the restriction of women reproductive rights are still apparent, in the North as well as in the South. The Eugenicist Approach which deals with the “quality” of a people, was to be observed most radically in the fascist era of the Third Reich where reproduction of “Lebensunwürdigen Menschen” (“unworthy life”) regarding people with psychological and physical restrictions, was most horrendously restricted in the “Eutanasie-Program”. This principle, not to that horrific extent is picked up by scholars studying and nationalistic politicians in return to ethnic-nationalism where the bloodline determines your belonging to a nation and your citizenship.

## Marxism

As it has been claimed that it was a rather “unhappy marriage of Feminism and Marxism” (Hartmann, 1979: 2). The assumption of a gender-neutral society is not shared by Feminism and Marxist thought, as they either neglect gender as an analytical unit as the class struggle is above feminist struggle, or the unit of class incorporates gender completely and neglects it as a profile in the analysis (Hartmann, 1979: 2). According to the early proponents of Marxism, such as Engels the economic integration of women into the labour force was the way towards independence of women (Hartmann, 1979: 4). Where he argued that gender would not play a role in the working class, as women would be independent of property in contrast to the bourgeoisie where the role of women was to produce heirs in order to pass on property. Making up the calculation of more property more problem for women. The independence of the women in the working class was according to Hartmann just one part where Feminist Theory and

Marxism had different approaches. As Feminists and Marxist do agree on the struggle and the unfair proportion of un-waged housework and labour, which men would not face, not even in the communist society. The ambivalent connection is shortly elaborated upon in the next segment which calls for an explanation of what an ideology is.

## Ideology

The conceptualization of Ideology is a prerequisite to study the it as Ideology in itself is hard to define and harder to recognize (Freeden, 2003:32). Despite the issue of defining the terms ideology, Freedden defines it as a set of political ideas, beliefs, and opinions that are communicable and influential. This definition lacks the aspect of ideology penetrating social as well as economic spheres, nevertheless due to the focus in IR and this paper, the political dimension of ideology shall be sufficing. Additionally, the rather broad definition leaves room for speculations, as widening or restricting the term could also be counterproductive. As it can be argued that not all theories or political approaches which developed throughout the existence of a political life and hence political discourse has the stigma of being an ideology. Having that in mind, rarely people would assume or label *capitalism* as an ideology but rather a way of combining political organization, the economic system. On the other hand, Marxism or the Marxist-Leninist approach of organizing society and economy is often considered to have a strong ideological notion. Why is that the case?

The issue of ideology, what ideology is, how it has been used as a tool for soviet leaders as well as the scholarly discourse is highly contested (Fawn 2004:7). There has been an ongoing debate of classifying Marxism as an ideology (Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:619) in the Marxist-Leninist context or as a practical approach to be mirrored in the everyday life (Fawn 2004:4). Ideology is to be seen in the everyday life, education, science, arts and political life. Official ideology from the Marxist starting point was interpreted and according to the “ideologi” (Russian for ideologist), an intellectual elitist part of the hierarchy, re-interpreted and then put into policies (Fawn 2004:4-5). Having Freedden’s earlier definition in mind, the all-encompassing nature of Marxist theory was to be observed in not only the political but also the social and educational sphere. This would encompass the communicated idea of world-wide socialism, and an international working class, as being classified as ideology. The question of citizenship and hence the right of political participation was also an issue during the transition process from the Soviet Socialist Republic to the Estonian Republic (Smith 2004:158). But to gain a greater understanding of the Socialist in Soviet and the formation of a collective identity

in the Soviet Union, this part of the literature review focuses on the predominant ideology of Marxism-Leninism, what it entailed and what it meant in regards to identity of a soviet citizen and the utopian goal of achieving communism (Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:623).

For many scholars, Marxism-Leninism was deeply connected to the formation of myths (Yuval-Davis 2004:15; Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:609). This formation of relatable myths usually contradicts the self-proclaimed rationality of human beings but at the same time explains and helps us to make sense and give a value to events of the political past and present and justifies behaviour for the future (Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:610). The Scholars Barner-Bary and Hodi (1994) present and analyze the myth formation through discourse analysis in foreign and domestic newspapers.

They come up with an explanation of how myths helped the Communist Party in identity formation. First and foremost, “The Foundation Myth” which portrayed the 1917 revolution as successful and marked “[...] the beginning of the formation of socialist civilization.” (Kas’ianenko 1985:9). Eventhough the Soviet founding father Lenin was Russian and the October Revolution (taking place in Moscow) as well, the formation of a common Soviet identity was doomed to fail as it lacked credit to the minorities in the Soviet Union, hence non-Russian ethnicity (Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:617). Further, the ethnic Russians were a minority itself in the Soviet Union by the time Gorbachev got to the top of the Politbüro, which in return meant that the foundation myth excluded a large amount of its citizens. Another aspect Barner-Bary and Hodi address the point of collective memory. By the time of Gorbachev there was almost no one left who remembered the tsarist rule, which was the enemy of the revolution, hence they argue that there was no appeal to believe in the foundation myth (1994:617). Also, the new socialist civilization and the creation of the working class and their vanguard of the Communist Party, was argued to be a project of an elite rather than a working-class movement. Of course, workers participated in the revolution but the formation of the state, then inherited by Stalin remained detached from the actual working class (Barner-Bary & Hodi 1994:618).

But still, there is a deceptive discrepancy in academia what ideology actually is, nevertheless, a conceptualization through the term political life is helpful. Political life, in contrast to ideology, is carried by the majority of a people instead of an elitist class, the earlier mentioned *ideologi* (Fawn 2004:3). This in return he seeks to determine as the main driving force in the transformation process towards a more democratic understanding of organizing society and hence political life. In the case of Estonia, the existing connection to its northern neighbour, cultural as well as social connection through language and availability of “Western”

Television channels seems to have had an influence of never really subscribing (completely) to Marxist-Leninist ideology (Fawn, 2004:7; Smith, 2004:157).

Additionally, when studying ideology, one stumbles upon the concept and importance of nationalism which, having the earlier debate about identity in mind, is a logical step in order to establish the “self” and “other” dichotomy. Here, again it can be argued that nationalism has similarities and can be seen as an ideology (2004:9). Like ideology, nationalism takes a historical perspective when it underlines its formation process and its point of being seen as a point in a timeline, remembering the past, a presentation of collective values in connection to and its traditions, in order to justify a certain policy outcome. Also, different types of nationalism were presented in order to come to the conclusion, that ethnic nationalism could have been seen as the most simple but convincing motivation (Fawn 2004: 9). Having that in mind and considering the further process of democratization and political emancipation, no “real” national identity, or nationalism prior to 1991 was identified due to the influence of Marxist-Leninist thought (Fawn, 2004:5). Hence, the emergence of contestably extreme forms of nationalism was to be observed as there has not been a slow development of national identity (Fawn 2004:13). So, did the conservative notion of an ethnic nationalism foster stereotypical gender roles?

The different aspects which influence identity formation shall not be placed solely on ideology and indoctrination processes but further needs to be seen on a time span. For 29 years now in which Estonia and other post-soviet states have had for a collective national identity is not a long time in contrast to the identity formation of France or Germany who have been having a formation process for 230 or 150 years respectively. One aspect, Fawn and other scholars are missing when it comes to identity formation is a critical understanding an incorporation of gender. Where they clearly state a difference in ethnicity, an unwanted generalization in gender, class and social standing is presented.

After assessing in a rather long way, how Estonia’s identity has been constructed, through internal as well as external factors, theoretically a turn away from the Soviet past- towards a modern future, an influence of ideology can not be neglected, so the next section shows how this research seeks to narrow down the engaging cross topic to Gender Equality and whether a correlation actually exists in connection to the previously mentioned influences on the Feminist strain of International Relations.

## Methodology

In what follows, I will briefly describe the methodology on how I connect and answer the question of Gender Equality in a post-soviet identity setting. After the earlier presented existing research and the ontological claim of discursive identity formation and that a national identity consists of a heterogeneous group and can be generalized as one voice through for example election results, I briefly elaborate upon my own methodology.

In order to answer the initial question of whether identity has an influence on the different aspects of Gender Equality, I present Estonia's different scores on Gender Equality and connect it to the World Value Survey in an over-time setting (Lamont, 2015:134). As the research is concerned with Feminist research and not connected to a classical field of analysis within the field of International Relations, a transcending approach, incorporation and acceptance of other methodologies is needed (Ackerly et al., 2006: 92). The mixed approach of quantitative data available through the GEI and quantified-qualitative data through the World Value Survey, allow this research to open up the black box of Feminist Research and analyze in an IR methodology a subject of more proximity to classical political science than IR itself.

The choice is motivated by the design for case studies originating by Przekowski and Teune (1970). Which enables the researcher to investigate independent variables and their impact of the dependent one (Lamont, 2015:134). The independent variable in the overall case is a post-soviet identity and investigating its influence on the dependent – Gender Equality.

There will be no in-depth comparison to Slovenia in itself, due to limitations, rather the Slovenia will act as a sort of comparative measure. Why Slovenia? First, the countries do not differ in their shared socialist past, as well as their societal and geographical proximity to their former occupier (Soviet Union or Yugoslavia). Additionally, both countries successfully became members of the European Union in 2004, adopted the Euro as currency and share a small population size (1.3 million in Estonia versus 2.0 million in Slovenia). Their main difference concerning Gender Equality is their Quota System, with Estonia not having implemented one and Slovenia does. This in return will allow to briefly pick up the “affirmative action” debate and show possible confirmation of its effectiveness to encourage women to participate in the political sphere.

The data used is secondary data, provided and researched comprehensively by the European Institute for Gender Equality and provides data from their earliest report in 2005, until their latest report in 2017. Using this data is motivated by the use of the same methodology when collecting the data which makes it comparable to each other. Further the extensive framework encompasses seven sub-domains in which Gender (In-)equality most likely are to be observed.



The seven fields generating the Gender Equality Index are: Work, Money, Knowledge, Time, Power, Health, and Violence. These fields are further divided into subfields specifying the overall terms. Using gender Statistics in general is crucial in assessing and implementing measurements of equality, whether its economical, political-representational, or social injustices (OECD, 2015; EIGE, 2018). Onwards later in the analysis section the individual subdomains will be mentioned and described.

In order to connect the analysis to the claimed connection of a socialist past, a timespan needs to be incorporated in order to see progress or decline in Gender Equality. Therefore, the timespan of 2005 until the newest data from 2017 will be compared and put into perspective. I argue that this relatively short period of time allows a comparison, as the fingerprint of the transition period, and its decision-makers, can be traced back and half a generation later still have an influence. It is crucial to understand and acknowledge a countries demographic structure in order to see causality between the younger generations who grew up in a rather Europeanized context and the implications of the Soviet past on the behaviour and identity of the older generations who where deeply influenced by the Soviet ideology and were able to form the newly established state in the early 1990s.

## The Gender Equality Index

The Gender Equality Index was first established, and published in 2005, which would make it hard to compare to earlier data, as the methodological framework has changed since. The Eurostat statistics hence are the groundwork for the quantitative data analysis is used as a comprehensive and cross-sectional analytical tool. Using gender statistics in general is crucial in assessing and implementing measurements of equality, whether its economical, political-representational, or social injustices (EUROSTAT, 2019). The established Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 5 of Gender Equality, are just one taken step in tackling a wide-ranging and complicated, often intersecting field of studies. The interconnectedness, not only of the different SDGs but also of the term “equality”, seeks to be addressed in this method section. Therefore, it is crucial to dismantle the different indicators used in the quantitative data analysis to provide the groundwork to the later introduced qualitative research where perception will be assessed. The goal is to prove or disprove perception of (in-)equality with statistical data provided by the governments and collected by EUROSTAT. The data collection method is transparent and independent which makes it useful to use in a study like this. Nevertheless, the choice of different indicators focuses on specific sub-sections which are needed for this specific, narrowed down study. Therefore, the main indicators used in the World Value Index in

combination with Gender Equality Index enables to examine a possible correlation between political reality, identity and Gender Equality.

## The World Value Survey

The WVS works with a sample group and pre-defined questions and is a survey which consists of about 250 questions and is more or less the same throughout the World averaging in 80 independent countries (Hurtienne & Kaufmann, 2011: 50). The research has been undertaken since 1981 and its seventh wave is now being conducted (WVS, 2019). The WVS is claiming and claimed to encompass the “values” of 85 % of the World Population by averaging 1330 interviews per country (Hurtienne & Kaufmann, 2011: 51). The used Survey and latest available data of Estonia dates back to 2011 and had a responding rate (N) of 1550, which is about 0.12 percent of the population. The comprehensiveness of the structured interview questions, allow this research to use it as a viable source and the proclaimed comparative nature of the WVS allows foreseeing social change and changes in perception of a public. Due to the limitations it is unfortunately not possible to compare the change on a longitudinal level, but the age of the participants will be reflective of the generations answers and thus allow interpretation.

## Analysis

First this analysis section presents the expectations and possibly my own researcher bias, which is ought to be expected, that there is an increase in equality due to the previously introduced concepts of universality of international norms, where Gender Equality arguably can be counted to. Further, liberal as well as constructivist theory assumes that progress is made in democratic countries as the underlying representational aspects of democracy and changing narratives in public discourse towards a more equal society have prevailed. This can be put into simpler words, which I seek to examine, that it is desirable for states to pursue Gender Equality as it provides information about the stage of development, so does that mean that the more equal, or higher a country score the more advanced or progressive a country can be seen?

As the ratification of several internationally binding treaties, by the United Nations such as the Sustainable Development Goal 5 implicates a certain degree of believing in the universalist manner of Gender Equality not only international tendencies require states to pursue a gender policy but also the ideational factor of self-image needs to be addressed.

Also, a differentiated picture can be expected where for example the Economic integration of women could be more successful than for example the distribution of Time following the

transitional argument of following the logic of the market and implying a western-model of equality on the work space.

Followed by a pure presentation of the available Gender Equality Index data, cross-analyzed with the World Value Survey. Each section has their own space, where after presenting the data, my own analysis and possible reasoning through the earlier introduced constructivist/feminist framework is sought to be connected to. The score chart of the Gender Equality Index (GEI), ranges from 1 to 100 where 1 means full inequality and 100 full equality (EIGE, 2018:1). The overall generated score, is the average, made up from the earlier presented 31 indicators from eight domains. As in the methodology section presented, the GEI consists of 7 subdomains making up the 8<sup>th</sup> section of the overall score. In this overall score earlier mentioned Slovenia scores 68.4 points, in comparison to the 66.2 points of the European Union average, and 56.7 points of Estonia. In order to conceptualize and make sense of this score, the following Analysis is divided into the six main domains leaving out the data on violence, as this number is only available for the latest GEI-report (EIGE, 2018) and lacks the over-time analytical depth.

First of all, Estonia is improving but not fast enough and not in every different subdomain equally. That being said, the Gender Equality Index increased from 2005 to 2017 by 4.5 percent which shows a slight improvement but put into perspective, the increase is slower than the European average. The same goes for the Slovenian improvement of 7.4 percent over the years from 2005 to 2015 (EIGE, 2018).

Pointing out that all different subdomains have increased, showing the possibilities of a capabilities to increase in every ever so small sector. The subdomains of time and health are the ones where the small Baltic country are closer to equality than in every other sector with a score of 74.7 in comparison to 65.7 in the overall EU score. Especially, care activities have improved which allow drawing a connection to enhanced family policies to allocate time to care taking in a more equal manner. This does not mean that it is close to equality, just an indicator for improvement.

## Work

The numbers regarding the Work domain show an increased participation of the overall public (women and men), which in return lead to a higher score in the GEI. The score for Estonia in this field which measures the equal access to good work conditions and employment, score on 72.1 in 2015 (EIGE, 2018). The European average score is 71.5 in 2015 and has been stagnating for Slovenia (71.2 to 71.8).

The total employment rate is at 77 % (EIGE 2018:1), whereas “Statistics Estonia” – the statistical government agency actually states a 67.5 % employment rate. Respectively, when looking through the lens of Gender Equality, the division of employment between women and men show a discrepancy of 73 % of women being employed vs. 81 % of men. To further take the differences in employment into consideration the full-time equivalent (FTE), shows that women work around 50 % compared to 64 % to men. Interesting here is, that the differences increase amongst men and women in the age group 25-49, which is the generation which joined the labour force right after the fall of the SU and their children born in the early 1990s. This can be a showcase for the negative impact of neoliberalism on Gender Equality, rather than their socialist past. To connect that to the theoretical assumption presented earlier, that the communist past had a gender-blind, and more progressive integration of women into the labour market as work-force, is an argument which I think is hard to grasp. Even though, especially the people who have been part of the work force in the older generations (arguably socialized within the Soviet system) work in a more equal setting, regarding work-hours and pay. This is to be observed in the perception of the later that the generation of 50+ agrees or strongly agrees almost entirely that for women to be independent they need to be part of the working force. In contrast to about 80 percent of the generation younger than 25 years (EIGE,2018:2, Inglehart, 2011: 17).

Segregation of labour is also to be observed in the 15 percent of women working part-time in comparison to 7 % of men which allow seeing a vague correlation between time spend at the job and the “traditional” role of spending more time at home for care taking activities. 37 hours is the average women work in contrast to 40 hours of men average.

## Money

The main take away from this subdomain, which encompasses the Gender (In-)equalities in the access to financial resources, is that the score has increased, even though the gender gap in monthly income increased likewise. Due to an overall rise in wages and incomes throughout Europe, women as well as men have been profiting from the economic reforms which have taken place since the early 1990s. Estonia’s score is 66.7, an increase from 58.4 in 2005, in comparison to the EU average a slightly stronger improvement (EIGE,2018: 2).

It remains to say that especially highly educated people as well as foreigners, the earlier mentioned post-1990 generation experience higher gaps in income. Women earn less than men is a statement which is as accurate as it can be. In connection to that, when leaving the labour

force, almost 40 % of women are at risk of poverty in comparison to 18 % of men. Closing this section with the highest number in the EU of Gender Pay Gap of 27 %.

When regarding money question 71 of the WVS assesses the importance of money when asking how important it is to be able to buy expensive things and own a lot of money (Inglehart, 2011: 27-28). The answer surprises in the gender differences as well as the age group setting. Men generally tend to find it more important to own and buy things than women, and the younger generation are more likely as well than the older generations. The reason might lie in the availability of resources, when women earn less they have less to spend which makes them less likely to “waste” money and further women are more likely to give to charity, spend money on their family and children as well as saving (EIGE 2018: 3).

## Knowledge

As in all the other domains improvement is to be observed. The assessment on access to education, gender segregation as well as participation in education is measured and taken into consideration. The score of Estonia in this field of the GEI has been increasing only by roughly 4 points (49.5 to 53.2) which is not much in 10 years. The Slovenian Index score on the other hand also observed an improvement but also very slow and on a low level (52.1 to 55.0). Women have a higher education than men. 41 % have a tertiary education vs. 25 % of men, with an increasing trend. In the overall goal-setting 45 % of the population to have already obtained the tertiary education (EIGE 2018:3). Question number 52 states: "A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl". The Gender Equality Index' findings can be replicated here as 76.8 % of men disagree or strongly disagree with that statement, and 83.9 % of women. The perception that there is a shift towards more women in University hence can be observed in the Index as well in the World Value Survey. It could be far fetched, but education for women has played a vital role in the Soviet Union, and hence was one of the few concepts which got adopted in the new Estonian Republic without hesitation.

The same segregation, which can be observed in the field of employment, sees 41 % of female students in the field of humanities and art as well as education, health and welfare, in contrast to 14 % of men.

## Time

There is an increase to be observed, even though as previously mentioned, not quick enough. The score in Slovenia even dropped from 73.4 to 72.9. In Estonia, stagnation is observed (74.6 to 74.7). There is a more equal division of time allocated to caregiving and social activities, but

gender inequalities persist. The statistics show that 35 % of women spent a minimum of one hour per day on educating their family members (31 % of men). There is an increase of this rate with married couples with kids, where 91 % of the women “are involved in daily care activities” (EIGE, 2018: 3). The suitable question to put these facts into perspective is question number 50 in the World Value Survey: “When a mother works for pay, the children suffer”. 21 % of men agree and 48.3 % disagree with that statement whereas on the other hand, 16.6 % of women agree and 50.2 % disagree. The difference in age group is interesting as the 30-49 year old disagree with that statement in 54.8 % and the younger (up to 29 years old) disagree in 45.3 percent of the cases. Only the older generation of 50+ agree with over 23 percent of the asked people (Inglehart, 2011:27). It allows to see a correlation between different socializations, whereas the older generation has indeed not accepted or incorporated a socialist understanding, a rather traditional gender role is perceived to be right. On the contrary the younger generation slowly opens up towards more gender equality and that there should be no negative impact on the children’s development when the mother is working.

Always interesting to put the level of education in the equation, where it might suggest that higher level of education, might lead to a more conscious understanding and reconsideration of gender roles, the opposite is the case. 76 percent of women do “cooking and house works”, with children the number is 90 % and 51 % (Inglehart 2011:27). Differences in participating in leisure activities are small whereas more women than men participate in voluntary activities with an observable decline for all genders. When taking time spent into consideration, childcare needs to be addressed, and 93 % of children between three and school age are enrolled in Kindergartens or similar institutions.

## Power

Again, the score has increased even though with a slightly slower speed than the other EU states. Estonian women have the lowest participation (28.1 points on the GEI), which allows to be connected to the gaps in economic and social power which this subfield inherently is about, the access to positions in decision making (EIGE,2018:4). Interesting and most likely to be connected to the affirmative action policy in Slovenia the score is 60.6 in 2015, which underlines the influence those policies *can* have. Gender parity in parliament has not been achieved but the progress from 2005 (19 %) to 2019 (27 %) is observable. Question number 51 addresses this issue by asking agreement or disagreement: “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” (Inglehart, 2011:28). Overall, 57.6 % of men strongly agree

or agree with this statement, whereas the percentage adds up to 41.8 % when asking women. The generational difference is marginal where only the older generation, 50+ agree to 54,8 %.

In publicly listed companies the share almost got split in half from 14 % in 2005 to 8 % in 2015. The perception of the image that “men make better business executives than women do” is stated in question 53 of the WVS. Even though, 46.5 % of men disagree or strongly disagree and 64.3 % of women, the lack of women can not be explained, rather than working with laws of the market, where competition and international norms and rules as well as dynamics can not be allocated to a perception in a domestic value context.

As a side note, even in social organizations such as the Olympic sport organization only 11 % of the board members are women (EIGE, 2018:4).

## Health

This subdomain is more or less in stagnation, whereas the health status has gone up, the access to service has declined. A reason can lie in the demographic change as well as moving to cities from rural areas. The gap between men and women concerning perceived health, life expectancy and healthy life years has almost narrowed in. Women live almost 9 years longer than men and have two more healthy years. Couples with children consider their health to be twice as good as couples without children. Interesting fact is that half of men smoke or drink excessively in comparison to 25 percent of women.

After going through the different subdomains and connected value system, the analysis concludes that the image of the population often underlines the “facts” of the Gender Equality Index. The two countries, Estonia and Slovenia, share similarities in development and the overall score in all the different subdomains. The only difference and arguably main difference is the immense difference in the access to political power and decision making. This can be a successful argument for a quota system, at the same time the promised and hoped “spill-over effect” remains to be proven. Further, it is needless to state, that improvement is to be observed but at a much slower speed than necessary and manageable. The shortcomings in assessing and interpreting the World Value Survey and its impact on Gender Equality is just one way to look at the provided data. Information about socio-economic situation of the participants as well as employment, experiences, and political affiliation might provide the reader with a more comprehensive understanding.

## Conclusion

After analyzing the comprehensive framework of the Gender Equality Index, the World Value Survey and the Feminist-Constructivist Theory, the question this paper sought to answer concludes that the overall fast economic opening and establishment of liberal democracy was heavily carried out on the back of the women of the country of Estonia. The non-gendered identity of the Estonian people has its origin in the Soviet era, which is incorporated until now. Additionally, the eagerness for economic reforms after the collapse of the former second world played a more important role, than the emancipation and full incorporation of women in society. Just the opposite was the effect, where old elitist groups, established during the times of Glasnost and Perestroika remained largely in place only with the possibility to now take financial profit from it through the capitalistic system. The internal factors of dismissing the socialist core ideas as something backward, from the “dark past” had the result that the national identity was projected against it and hence had a negative impact on gender issues in Estonian political life. Externally, the framework of the European Union, as an overarching guard of universalist norms, is itself lacking gender equality even though it is eager to advertise itself differently. The academic conclusion is, that Feminist theory with its gendered perspectives on society and its influence on the international sphere needs further attention and the possibility to emancipate itself in response to the rising inequality in our world (UNDP 2019). Not neglecting the fact that there is progress made, through affirmative action policies which have a positive impact on encouraging more women to take the political stage as well as a generational impact, where the younger generations of Malala and Greta Thunberg are role models for women to participate and make their voices heard for issues they are concerned with. Additionally, as the section on Power in the Analysis showed, affirmative action policies can have an impact in that domain, but the overall impact outside the political power sphere remains untouched. The socialist past is for many people of the former SU a red flag neglecting the impact it had on the establishment of welfare states, which arguably are less developed in the poorer Eastern countries than in Western Europe and their longer existing liberal democracies.

So why is Estonia performing below average? The starting point is only 30 years in the past where a strong civil society was not able to be formed as fast. A conservative, nationalist identity fostered patriarchal structures after the collapse of the SU and the encouraging policies of the international structure are a step in the right direction but do not bear many fruits yet. The rather simple explanation that there is no need for Feminism in Estonia, as “that’s just who



we are”, has gained strength but when allowing a prediction, the future will be brighter for women just when does the future start?

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