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Estonia Demands 'Annexed' Territory Back From Russia

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Estonia wants Russia to return its territory that it says is annexed by Moscow, its top lawmaker has said as the prospects of a Russian-Estonian border treaty turned grim this year over Tallinn's territorial claims.

Estonia is the only NATO member lacking a ratified border treaty with Russia. The two countries have sparred as recently as this spring over a 1920 treaty establishing a Russian-Estonian border, which Tallinn calls its birth certificate and Moscow considers void.

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"We don't want a square foot of Russian territory. We just want ours back. Russia annexed about 5% of Estonia's territory," Estonian parliament speaker Henn Põlluaas wrote on Facebook.

“The annexation of Estonian territories is no different from the occupation and annexation of Crimea,” Põlluaas said Tuesday.

Põlluaas was responding to Russian Foreign Ministry diplomat Sergei Belyayev’s comments saying that Moscow will only ratify the border treaty if Estonia drops its territorial claims.

The Kremlin called Põlluaas’ remarks unacceptable.

Tallinn is unlikely to ratify the border treaty in the near future because of these disagreements, Estonia’s Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said Tuesday, citing Belyayev’s remarks.

Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas said in May that Estonia must consider the current political realities and the current de-facto border.

“We must, of course, take into consideration the aspects of the Treaty of Tartu, but we must also take into account the real situation we live in in 2019,” Ratas was quoted as saying at the time.

Estonia has had tense relations with Moscow since the Soviet collapse in 1991. Russia shelved a similar agreement in 2005 because Estonian lawmakers added a preamble referring to the Baltic country's independence from 1918 to 1940 and its Soviet occupations in 1940-1941 and 1944-1991. Russia had said that would be unacceptable to its parliament.

Russia has bristled at what it sees as Estonia's unfair treatment of the 25% of its ethnic Russian population, saying that Russian speakers are discriminated against in schools and in acquiring citizenship.

Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid traveled to Russia this spring, ending a nine-year hiatus in high-level meetings between Baltic presidents and Russia’s Vladimir Putin. Then-Prime Minister Putin and then-President Dmitry Medvedev last met Baltic leaders in 2010.

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