The Changing Nature of Minority Politics In An Integrated Europe: The Cases of Estonia and Latvia

Christopher Janzen

Queen's University

Canadian Political Science Association

Waterloo, 2011

The democratic transitions in Estonia and Latvia produced regimes which have often been referred to as examples of 'ethnic democracies' (Bernier 2001; Smooha 2002; Dorodnova 2003; Jarve 2005; Diatchkova 2005), 'ethnic constitutional orders' (Peleg 2007) and ethnocratic regimes (Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004). These categories all refer to states that define themselves, in either legal or cultural terms as the domain of a single ethno-cultural group. This group claims ownership and appropriation over the formal and informal institutions of the state (Smooha 2002: 477). The framing of Estonia and Latvia as states dedicated to the preservation of a specific ethno-cultural identity has resulted in contestation over the symbols and legitimacy of the state between the titular majority and the large Russian-speaking minorities present in both Estonia and Latvia.

This paper seeks to explore the consequences of the advent of 'ethnic democracy' on majority-minority relations in Estonia and Latvia. Despite both democratization processes privileging the titular majority, key variations in the nation-building programs of Estonia and Latvia can been seen. These diminutive differences have resulted in different patterns of minority mobilization and also different patterns of engagement with the Russian kin-state. This paper will trace the development of the nation-building programs in Estonia and Latvia and demonstrate how diminutive differences in institutional access during the consolidation of ethnic dominance has resulted in divergent patterns of minority mobilization and also divergent patterns of kin-state activism in each state.

In order to accomplish this task the paper will begin with a theoretical discussion distilling the central tenets of ethnic democracy, kin-states and general nation-building strategies. This section will draw on a theoretical framework posited by Sidney Tarrow in order provide a structure for systematic comparison. Estonia and Latvia will be compared along five main issue areas; access to political participation, shifts in ruling alignments, availability of influential allies, cleavages among political elites and state capacity/ propensity for repression in order to demonstrate different approaches to nation-building. The second section will trace the development and institutionalization of 'ethnic democracy' in Estonia and Latvia beginning with the period of 'restored independence'. The third section will demonstrate how variation in the nation-building strategies of Estonia and Latvia has resulted in different patterns of minority mobilization and kin-activism.

Ethnic Democracy vs. Liberal Democracy: Understanding Nation-building Strategies

In their formative work *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation,* Linz and Stepan (1996) characterize a specific manifestation of democratization which privileges the titular language, symbols, and national myths in legislation and public discourse with the intent of solidifying the dominance of one ethno-cultural group over another (25; see also Marx 2002). They in turn posit the question; can this strategy of nation-building be congruent with the establishment of democratic modes of government? The conflation of this particular nation-building strategy with the advent of procedural elements of democratic governance is what is referred to as ethnic democracy.

Smooha defines ethnic democracy as an "ideology or a movement of ethnic nationalism that declares a certain population as an ethnic nation sharing common descent" (Smooha 2002: 477). The ethnic nation determines the symbols, laws and social

boundaries of the state. The ethnic nation is perceived as a bounded entity in which admission is dependent upon sufficient assimilation into the dominant ethno-cultural group.

Ethnic democracies meet the minimal procedural elements of democratic governance such as elections, rule of law and checks and balances between various branches of government. Minimal guarantees are made to the protection of human, political, social and economic rights. However, individuals outside the ethnic nation "enjoy rights that are in some way inferior to the rights of members and endure discrimination by the state" (Smooha 2002: 478; Peleg 2007: 46).

Ethnic democracy can therefore be characterized by formal adherence to democratic norms and institutions, with an appropriation of the state by a "core" ethno-cultural group. The appropriation of the state in turn becomes institutionalized both formally and informally within societal discourse through legislative acts aimed at preserving or privileging the titular language or religion and also by influencing norms of social interaction. The result being that the "minority cannot fully identify with the state, cannot be completely equal to the majority and cannot confer full legitimacy on the state" (Jarve 2005: 61).

The demographic dominance of the core ethno-cultural group allows it to achieve consolidation and ownership of the state through democratic avenues. By virtue of democratic decision making procedures, majority groups can legitimately exert control over the formal decision making mechanisms of the state. In essence, ethnic democracy allows for the "progressive institutionalization of key elements of control" over the non-dominant minority" (Pettai and Hallik 2002: 506).

Vello Pettai and Klara Hallik highlight three strategies by which a dominant ethno-cultural group can control minority communities under the auspices of an ethnic democracy. By engaging in strategies of segmentation, dependence and co-optation, dominant ethnic groups can exert considerable control over the state and non-core minority groups. Segmentation is practiced by ensuring restrictive citizenship policies which exclude non-core individuals from participating in the social and political life of the state. This ensures the establishment of a social gulf between those who are deemed part of the 'demos' and those who are not. Secondly, dependence is fostered by ensuring that the core group occupy privileged socio-economic positions within society, thereby ensuring that non-core individuals rely on them for employment, thus contributing to the 'ethnicization' of labour. Finally, co-optation is aimed at ensuring that those who are subsequently naturalized into the 'demos' do so under the terms and conditions of the core group. This would entail ensuring language requirements, adherence to certain religious institutions and like (Pettai and Hallik 2002: 506). These strategies ensure the development of a hierarchical relationship between the dominant ethno-cultural core and those who remain outside of this group. Instances of one or more of these strategies can be seen in Israel, Sri Lanka and the Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia.

These strategies of ethno-cultural domination stand in stark contrast to the nation-building strategies noted in liberal democratic states. Will Kymlicka notes that nation-building in liberal democracies is deemed legitimate once having fulfilled three conditions. These being that no "long-term residents" of the state are excluded from membership in the nation; integration should not be understood as complete cultural assimilation, but rather integration into national institutions where plurality may be

exercised; and the aforementioned national minorities should be able to freely engage in their own programs of nation-building in order to maintain themselves as a "distinct society" (Kymlicka 2001: 48).

Nation-building within a liberal democratic context does not assume that the state occupies a space of cultural neutrality, rather the state engages in the promotion of multiple "societal cultures within a single country" (Kymlicka 2001a: 26). However, in order to ensure a degree of social cohesion that is required for regime stability there must be the promotion of what is referred to as "societal culture". Kymlicka defines societal culture as a territorially bounded cultural identity, which is premised upon a "shared language, which is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both private and public life" (2001a: 25).The implementation of a societal culture is an evolving process. The dissemination of a single language or cultural discourse through a set of public and private institutions requires time in order to become salient.

Therefore, the nation-building strategies of ethnic democracies can be distinguished from the strategies of liberal democracies along four primary criteria. These criteria being the degree and circumstance under which an individual may join the 'nation'; the degree to which the nation is perceived as the most salient identity; the degree to which the nation includes (perhaps coercively) or excludes; and the degree to which national minorities are accorded the opportunity to pursue their own forms of cultural reproduction (Kymlicka 2001: 54). To simplify the distinction between ethnic democracy and liberal democracy is to merely examine to degree to which cultural plurality is encouraged or supported by the state.

Ethnic Democracies in Eastern Europe; a Different Path?

The role of 'western' liberal democratic norms in the democratization processes of post-Soviet Europe have been the subject of analyses in many academic studies (Kymlicka and Opalski 2001). Empirical evidence from cases such as Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Romania demonstrate that these norms have not necessarily been internalized by policy-making elites (Kelley 2004; Vachudova 2005; Schulze 2010). However, the most notable omission in studies relating to nation-building in a Central and Eastern European context is the role of kin-states in the process.

Kin-states occupy a central place in the nation-building strategies of CEECs. The most noted example of successful kin activism is that of Hungary. Hungary successfully advocated on behalf of its ethnic kin in the surrounding region, resulting in bilateral treaties with Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine ensuring respect for minority rights in each respective state (Csergo 2007).

A kin-state refers to a country that seeks to promote interaction between a "co-ethnic" community formally separated by territorial borders. This interaction can manifest itself in a variety of ways. If one is to develop a spectrum of kin activism, on the passive end one would see policies such as benefit laws for citizens abroad, opportunities to pursue education in the home state, and cultural bursaries. Conversely, on the active end of the spectrum one would see preferential naturalization and support for irredentist claims.

The mechanisms by which kin-state activism manifest are numerous and dependent in large part upon the context of the situation. However, the effectiveness of a kin-state strategy is ultimately predicated upon the establishment of a coherent cultural canon. A cultural canon is necessary for not only deciding who is and is not part of the

nation, but also for a means of mobilizing and consolidating groups across borders. Invoking cultural symbols and myths acts as a means of symbolically expanding the homeland across present day territorial borders (Pogonyi, Kovacs, Kortvelysi 2010: 4). Cultural affinity between the kin-state and the diaspora minority community represents the necessary condition for successful kin activism.

The effectiveness of kin-state activism is highly dependent on the ability to ensure cultural affinity between the homeland and the diaspora community. Other intervening variables such as the political organization of the kin-state, possession of resources and the avenues for articulating minority demands will have a determinative effect on the utility of kin-states (Csergo 2007).

Within the context of post-Soviet Europe, the avenues for articulating minority demands have dramatically changed over the past two decades. Political, economic and social integration has fundamentally altered the way citizenship is perceived and practiced in a European context. Michael Keating notes that European integration has transformed the state "in both functional and normative dimensions" (Keating 2004: 368). The integration process has created opportunity structures which allow minority groups to petition their cause above the level of the domestic state.

A kin patron represents an avenue of minority petitioning which often goes unexamined. The emergence of salient ethno-cultural identities in Estonia and Latvia is the consequence of the particular nation-building strategies employed during the process of democratization. The establishment of ethnic democracy in these states corresponds to the "compartmentalized" cultural categories available within the state and the institutionalization of the belief that rights protection may be applied differently depending on the hierarchical relations of ethno-cultural groups (Galbreath 2005: 68). In turn this has resulted in minority communities looking outside of the state for assistance and protection.

Sidney Tarrow: Understanding Propensity for Contentious Politics:

The above discussion has focused on providing theoretical context to the key terms and debates present in this paper. The focus will now turn towards examining the nation-building strategies of Estonia and Latvia and the consequences for kin activism in each case study.

Sidney Tarrow provides a comprehensive list of criteria by which to measure the propensity for a given group to engage in mobilization or collective action.
These criteria are: the opening up of access for participation, shifts in ruling assignments, the availability of influential allies (domestic or international), cleavages within and among political elites, and state capacity and propensity for repression (Tarrow 1998:85). Implementing Tarrow's list of criteria, this paper will now turn to a comparative examination of Estonia and Latvia to demonstrate how diminutive differences in nation-building has resulted in different patterns of mobilization and kin-activism.

Both the Estonian and Latvian nation-building programs developed citizenship policies that were based on the principle of continuity. The principle of continuity is premised on the notion that upon the collapse of the Soviet Union Estonia and Latvia were not newly independent states, but rather they merely had independence 'restored'. The independence which had been earned during the interwar period (1920-1939) was renewed and the aberration of independence that was the Soviet occupation ceased to exist.

In Estonia citizenship was granted to those individuals and their descendents whom had been residents in and before June 1940[1], with non-citizens required to pass competency exams in the Estonian language and proof of two years of residency. This 1992 citizenship legislation began the process of establishing Estonia as an 'ethnic democracy'. This configuration limited access to political and electoral participation at the national level to only those who qualified as citizens (Smith and Wilson 1997: 848). By doing so, Estonia developed a large amount of regulatory capacity over the emergence of collective action by curtailing access to key resources.

Those who were denied citizenship under the principle of continuity could become naturalized citizens by completing requirements as dictated by the 1992 citizenship legislation. Naturalization was dependent upon satisfying two years of residency in Estonia, adhering to a loyalty oath and demonstrating competence in the Estonian language. However, due to the historically privileged socio-economic position of Russians in Union Republics, two-thirds of the Russian community could not speak the titular language (Smith and Wilson 1997: 851). Thus, effectively prohibiting them from acquiring naturalized citizenship in Estonia. This citizenship policy created a social gulf between those individuals who could claim citizenship under the premise of continuity and those who had settled in Estonia during the Soviet occupation.

Requirements for naturalization once again provided the state with a set of policy tools that could be used to stymie collective mobilization or perceived threats against the titular culture. However, the Estonian constitution of 1992 stated that all non-citizens could participate in local elections[2]. Any individual, regardless of citizenship status, who had resided in the country for a minimum of five years could participate in municipal politics. Thereby allowing limited access to state institutions and resources.

The relatively liberal nature of the electoral laws became contrasted with increasingly exclusionary legislation in the realm of language laws. Legislative amendments brought forth by the Pro Patria party beginning in 1998 sought to regulate the use of minority languages in the private sphere. The amendments sought to make mandatory the use of the Estonian language by self-employed entrepreneurs, as well as those working in the private sector and those involved in charitable operations (Kelley 2004: 100). The preservation of the Estonian language and culture was seen as a key prerequisite by all policy-making elites for ensuring the continued existence of the Estonian state. Despite factional differences and infighting between political parties, there was a relatively large degree of convergence on the issue of language. The preservation of the Estonian language was a sacrosanct principle within Estonian public discourse.

The most pointed legislative threat levelled against the Russian minority in Estonia came with the passing of the Law on Aliens. This legislative initiative stated that all non-citizens must apply for a residency status in order to remain in the country. This law amounted to public humiliation for many members of the Russian-speaking minority. Applying for a residency permit in the country where one had been born was seen as an act of great humiliation. Mobilized segments of the Russian community threatened to

[1] This dates marks the formal end of interwar independence. The Baltic region was divided in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and eventually was fully consolidated into the USSR after 1945.

[2] The precise caveat is located in article 156.2 of the 1992 Estonian Constitution.

block access to power stations, roads and even take up arms in defence of what they saw as a violation of their birth-right. Despite objections the law was passed in 1993 and all non-citizens were required to apply for a residency permit or be deported after the two year time exemption. The law on Aliens marginalized the Russian-speaking minority by making their continued presence in Estonia conditional upon certain requirements. No familial relation could have served in the Soviet Armed Forces stationed in Estonia. Failure to obtain a permit would mean deportation to Russia, a land many of these individuals had never even visited. As well, loss of income could result in the forfeiture of the residency permit and result in deportation (Kelley 2004: 110-115).

The international reaction to this legislation was relatively muted, it was not until Russia expressed concern that it garnered international attention. Boris Yeltsin responded to the passing of this legislation by stating, "The Estonian government has misjudged Russia's goodwill and, giving way to the pressure of nationalism, has 'forgotten' about certain geopolitical and demographic realities…the Russian side has means at its disposal to remind Estonia about these realities" (Quoted in Kelley 2004: 110). Russia responded by cutting off natural gas supplies to Estonia, citing unpaid debts. In concert with these actions, the town of Narva which is comprised overwhelmingly of Russian-speakers held a referendum on territorial autonomy. Estonia responded by repealing the harshest elements of the law, and granting residency to "any alien who had settled in Estonia before 1 July 1990" (Kelley 2004: 111). However, the consequences of the Law on Aliens amounted to much more than a psychological slight for the Russian-speaking community. Those who could not become naturalized within the two year time period set by the Estonian national government became stateless individuals. The Estonian state offered to provide "Alien Passports" to suffice as sources of identification. Over 90,000 of these 'stateless' individuals opted for Russian citizenship and maintained their residence in Estonia through residency permits (Pettai and Hallik 2002: 513). The advent of a perceive 'fifth column' presented a security concern for the state and strengthened a perceived link between this community and the Russian kin-state.

This brief history of minority rights legislation in Estonia illustrates the institutional challenges and barriers imposed by the state against the Russian-speaking minority.

Latvia:

Latvia, like Estonia, premised citizenship on the principle of continuity. The Latvian Supreme Council enacted citizenship policies on October 15, 1991. Initial citizenship policies developed by Latvia excluded over 600,000 ethnic Russians from participation in the public and social life of the Latvian state. Similar to Estonia, citizenship was granted to all those individuals who had been citizens before the Soviet occupation of June 1940. Naturalization in Latvia consisted of three requirements. The first was competency in the Latvian language. The second clause required residency in Latvia for a minimum of 16 years. The third and final requirement was the renunciation of foreign citizenship (Dreifelds 1996: 97). The law was implemented by the Department of Immigration and was carried out in a rigid and restrictive manner (Muiznieks 2006: 16).

Beginning in 1994, Latvian officials began extensive dialogue with the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The resulting legislation allowed for the fairly rapid naturalization of certain groups and the barring of others from acquiring citizenship. In the former category, "ethnic Latvians,

spouses of citizens and those who had completed Latvian language school" could complete the naturalization application. Conversely, former members of Soviet forces in Latvia and those labelled "pro-Soviet Activists" would be barred from citizenship (Muiznieks 2006: 16). The remaining non-citizens could apply for citizenship following a specific timetable outlined by the Latvian government. These "naturalization windows" gave the Latvian state significant control over who could access resources of the state and other various institutional structures.

Despite consultation with the Council of Europe and the OSCE, the citizenship law outlined in 1994 prevented the EU from opening accession negotiations with Latvia in 1997. Public opinion turned rapidly in favour of liberalizing the citizenship policy, as reflected in the outcomes of a national referendum held in 1998. Naturalization windows were abolished and citizenship was granted to children of non-citizens upon registration with the state (Muiznieks 2006: 17).

Similar to the Estonian example, the increasing liberalization of citizenship policy became contrasted with legislation promoting the use of the titular language. The protection of the Latvian language and culture was viewed as a necessary step in ensuring the continuation of the Latvian state. A 1999 language law sought to protect the Latvian language. The law "reinforced the role of Latvian" in the public sector, however, the law did little to protect its use in the private realm.

The issue of language became most prevalent in a series of education reforms undertaken within Latvia. Beginning in 1991, the Latvian Supreme Court adopted education legislation which guaranteed teaching in the Latvian language. The law also entrenched Latvian as the language of higher education in all state financed institutions. However, there was no clear articulation of what this meant for non-Latvian speakers and the prospects for pursuing an education in a non-titular language. Beginning in 1995 the process of transferring all educational institutes to Latvian was "logistically challenging" due to the simple fact that such a large percentage of school age children did not speak the titular language. The solution to the logistical problem was to amend the law so that it stated that only two courses had to be taught in the Latvian language in all minority schools up to the ninth grade, at which point at least three subjects would need to taught in the titular language (Kelley 2004: 77). This legislation was once again altered in 2004. The 2004 amendment stated that at least 60 per cent of courses in Russian-language schools had to be taught using the Latvian language (Kasekamp 2010: 185). The proposed legislative changes resulted in demonstrations from the Russian community who saw this as a violation of their right to be educated in their own language. Estonia attempted a much more cautious and moderate education reform in 2007, by slowly introducing Estonian language courses into Russian language schools.

The use of Latvian as the sole language of education has gained salience in Latvia. The 2004 amendment stated that 60 per cent of courses in Russian language schools must be taught in Latvian. A recent proposed constitutional amendment once again seeks to establish Latvian as the only language of education. The National Alliance, a right win national party formed in 2010, launched a petition to constitutionally enshrine Latvian as the sole language of educational instruction. This particular movement has not yet resolved itself, but demonstrates the perceived need to protect the Latvian language and education from the Russian speaking minority (Latvians online april11).

The legislation which was enacted in both Estonia and Latvia demonstrates how

the Russian-speaking communities were prevented from full participation in the social and political life of the state. Initial citizenship policies restricted Russian-speakers from becoming formal members of the titular 'demos'. Even after the liberalization of citizenship policies at the bequest of the European Union, restrictive language and education policies prevented the Russian speaking community from engaging with the state. More importantly, restrictive language and education legislation would ensure that the state would not partake in assisting with the reproduction of the Russian language and culture within Estonia or Latvia.

The next section will demonstrate how diminutive differences in nation-building have resulted in different patterns of minority mobilization against the state and different manifestations of kin activism by engaging in comparisons along the five issue areas articulated by Sidney Tarrow.

Access To Participation:

Latvian citizenship policies prevented non-citizens from participating in the public and political life of the state by alienating these individuals from direct access to administrative and institutional resources. The only means of collective action against the state came in the form of Russian cultural associations in the early years of 'restored independence'. However, it should be noted that both the titular majority in Latvia and the Russian speaking minority demonstrate low levels of civic participation in state affairs (Ijabs 2006: 75). Survey data taken in 2004 indicates that only 60% of Latvians and 62% of the Russian speaking community had membership in a "religious, professional, political or cultural organization" (Ijabs 2006: 75).

Despite low levels of civic participation, Russian cultural associations emerged in response to the exclusion of this group from the state. The Russian Community of Latvia was founded in 1991 in an attempt to advocate on behalf of the Russian-speaking minority. The advocacy of the Russian minority was ad hoc due to the fractured nature of the Russian identity at this time. The prevalence of this organization dissipated throughout the 1990s. With the passing of the controversial education reforms, new organizations representing an increasingly unified Russian community emerged. The United Congress of the Russian Community of Latvia (OKROL) emerged as a conduit of mobilization against the proposed education reforms. Although still prevented from direct institutional access to the state, this organization provided a basis of collective action and a means of participation in public discourse[3]. Although, the effectiveness of these organizations was ultimately dependent upon the propensity of titular elites to engage with these organizations, a process which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

While the Latvian case illustrates total formal exclusion of non-citizens from active participation in the public life of the state the Estonian case demonstrates a different approach to allowing access to formal avenues of political participation. The Constitution adopted by Estonia in 1992 maintained a caveat (article 156.2) which allows for non-citizens to participate in municipal politics. Having fulfilled a minimum residency requirement of five years, non-citizens could participate in municipal elections.

The ability to participate in municipal elections, coupled with the particular tasks assigned to municipal government in Estonia allowed for a hierarchical Russian community to develop and organize. This in turn allowed for more systematic demands

[3] Although OKROL is the most influential Russian based association, it only maintains a membership of roughly only 50,000 individuals. See, Ijabs 2006: 81.

for the protection of minority rights, and as will be demonstrated below, a very specific form of kin activism in Estonia.

The municipal elections of October 17 1993 resulted in half of the Tallinn City Council seats being won by candidates affiliated with the Russian-speaking population[4]. Municipal elections held three years later in 1996 witnessed a significant decline in Russian influence over the Tallinn City Council with only ¼ of the seats being won by candidates affiliated with the Russian-speaking community (Maeltsemees 72). Although this temporary decline was reversed over the following four years resulting in the inclusion of Russian based parties in the Tallinn City Council in the 2000 election (Pettai and Hallik 2002: 514). Parties and candidates representing the Russian-speaking community still maintained a 2/3 majority over city councils in the Narva, Kohtla-Jarve and Sillamae regions (Maeltsemees:78).

Russian minority access to municipal political institutions in Estonia is significant due to the administrative responsibilities assigned to these councils. Municipal administrative councils are responsible for education and social services. Municipal councils exert tremendous control over education-preschool, primary and secondary education-as well as social services-nurseries, social housing-and perhaps most importantly cultural associations-theatres, libraries, cultural centres. Although it should be noted that despite a high degree of legislative control of these issue areas, financing is largely provided by the central government, thereby reducing the autonomy of these city councils (67-107). This is notably different than the strategy employed in Latvia. Where organizations such as OKROL were left outside formal governing structures. Article 156.2 of the Estonian constitution which allows for the inclusion of non-citizens into the realm of municipal politics impelled certain organizational structures into the Russian community in Estonia.

The first municipal elections held in Latvia in 1989 allowed all residents of the then Latvian SSR to participate, however, this was reformed and non-citizens could no longer participate (Horvath: 42). Municipal authorities in Latvia are entitled to "set up a standing committee on the affairs of foreigners and non-citizens" if at least one-fourth of the population falls into this category, although discretion lies with municipal authorities (Ibid:42). The consequences of this is the 'ethnicization' of public space and government structures in both states, aside from municipal politics in Estonia .

In brief summation, the institutional access granted the minority community, many of whom were not citizens at the time, allowed the Russian-speaking community in Estonia unprecedented access to state resources and institutional avenues of grievance. This allowed for an internal structure to develop within the minority community. This institutional access allowed for what Yossi Shain and Aahoron Barth refer to as the "core" segment of the diaspora group. According to Shain and Barth the rise of a core is of importance as it is this group that actively seeks to ensure cultural reproduction, and in the case of diaspora communities, it is the core segment that seeks to maintain attachments to the homeland (Shain and Barth 2003: 452).

Alexander Chepurin, the director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's work with compatriots abroad notes how the rise of 'core' group in Estonia has allowed for Russia to not only engage directly within its kin but also exert more influence within the region (Chepurin 2009).

[4] The Estonian United People's Party won a total of 11 seats, while the Russia Party in Estonia won 5.

Access to political institutions differed greatly between Latvia and Estonia. Direct political access for the Russian speaking community in Estonia allowed for legislative influence over issues of cultural reproduction (education, cultural associations), while control over cultural reproduction in the Latvian case was solely the realm of the titular majority. The consequences of this on patterns of kin activism will be demonstrated below.

Cleavages Among Elites:

Shifts in the ruling elite or factional infighting amongst Estonian policymakers was not present throughout the period of 'restored' independence. As previously mentioned, a high degree of convergence around the need to protect the Estonian language prevented the diaspora community from using their institutional base in municipal politics as a means of accentuating rifts amongst the political elite. However, inclusion into the EU has fundamentally altered the way in which grievances are expressed and in turn how minority groups may petition national policy-making elites.

Keating advances the argument that integration has resulted in trans-national "frameworks for social, economic and political change" (Keating 2004: 368). In the most simple of terms, an integrated Europe means a greater opportunity structure for minority groups to express grievances against the state. Integration has allowed for the Russian minority community to bypass the state and advocate their position at a supranational level. However, with the successful entry of Estonia as well as Latvia in to the European Union, the capacity of the EU to enforce legislative change at the domestic level has been eroded. The use of membership conditionality ceases to be relevant and in turn the pendulum has swung back towards continued consolidation of the titular community vis-à-vis the exclusion large Russian-speaking minority.

The EU is plagued by the "external-internal divide", whereby extensive monitoring mechanisms are established during the accession process, however, they cease to be relevant upon accession (Albi 2009). The EU does not have the capacity to 'break' elite consensus in order to allow for expanded minority rights. For example, the Estonian case demonstrates a high degree of elite consensus regarding the protection of the Estonian language and culture. The same sentiments are demonstrated with the Latvian case, however, the degree to which political decision making has been influenced by the minority group is significantly stronger in Latvia.

Despite the initial exclusion from institutional access points, as we saw in Estonia, the rise of Russian associations such as OKROL gave rise to organizational entities that had the capacity to transform into more traditional political parties. For example, the rise of Harmony Centre in Latvia.

In the initial years of 'restored' independence, mainstream political parties in Latvia only saw three options for successfully dealing with the perceived threat posed by the Russian-speaking community. Force this community to migrate to the west, repatriation back to Russia or assimilation into Latvian society. However, with the rise of organizations such as OKROL and the ROL it forced Latvian elites to rethink the exclusionary nation-building program adopted in 1991.

The Harmony Centre party represents a centre-left alliance formed in 2005. The party has polled the highest support of any party in Latvia with 16.5% of respondents stating they would support Harmony Centre in the next election (Angus Reid Public Opinion Polls 01/10). The party boasts a large number of titular Latvians amongst its

supporters. The objective of the party is to push for a more prominent role for the Russian language within public discourse and increased rates of naturalization for the Russian-speaking community.

The rise of Harmony Centre represents two developments within Latvia. First, it demonstrates the degree to which the Russian language has maintained and even gained in importance. This is clearly on display in the desire to see the Russian language protected in the realm of education and the desire to see a more prominent public recognition of its role in the public sphere. The second development points to the acceptance of a Russian minority identity within Latvian public discourse. The ability of Harmony Centre to bridge "ethnic" divides suggest that attitudes among the titular group are changing and accepting of a Russian minority identity within contemporary Latvia.

This is further supported by the election of Harmony Centre leader Nils Usakovs, a member of the Russian community, as mayor of Riga, the capital of Latvia.

Influential Allies/ Kin State:

The geographic proximity of Estonia and Latvia to Russia has ensured that Russia has become an influential player within domestic discourse in both Latvia and Estonia, although in highly contrasting ways.

Russia has attempted to 'reach' out to the Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Latvia attempting to act as a patron. Russia developed legislation that would seek to foster kin-diaspora relations. The 1999 Russian law on 'Compatriots Living Abroad' stipulated that the Russian government would provide support to citizens of the Soviet Union, Russian empire and the Russian Republic of 1917 and their direct descendants who live outside of the territory of the Russian Federation. This support also included financial assistance if repatriation was desired. However, acquiring Russian citizenship was marred by bureaucratic ineffectiveness and ad-hoc decision making processes. The process became more streamlined in 2002, when a simplified application was introduced. The application merely required written confirmation of the desire to gain Russian citizenship. Individuals would then receive proof of their Russian citizenship status (Pogonyi, Kovacs, Kortvelyesi 2010: 9).

This law was amended in 2010 in an attempt to more narrowly define who falls under the auspices of this legislation. The 2010 amendment stated that only Russian citizens who resided outside of Russia could remain party to the financial and cultural benefits of the legislation. However, Estonian and Latvian citizenship policies require the renunciation of all foreign citizenship in order to be eligible for citizenship in these states. Due to the restriction on dual citizenship in the Estonian and Latvian context, those holding Russian citizenship could either remain a foreign national in these states or renounce Russian citizenship in a uncertain bid to acquire Estonian or Latvian citizenship [5].

Differing Manifestations of Kin activism:

The most notable example of Russian activism in Estonia relates to the mobilized Russian opposition in the event known as the "Bronze Solider Riots".This particular episode revolves around a Soviet era war memorial which was located in the centre of Tallinn. The monument had been erected during the period of Soviet occupation, and

[5] Despite Estonian legislation banning dual-citizenship, anyone who acquires Estonian citizenship by birth cannot loose it upon naturalization into another state, unless specifically requested by the individual.

contained the inscription in Estonian and Russian, "TO THE FALLEN OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR". The statue became a source of increasing tension between the titular majority and the large Russian-speaking minority community. The Estonian community voiced concern that the statue represented a legacy of illegal occupation and brutality brought about by the forcible annexation of Estonia into the Soviet Union at the end of WWII. Conversely, the Russian community and the Russian state suggested that this monument represented the sacrifice of individuals from many different ethnic backgrounds in the struggle against Nazi Germany.

Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip initiated a campaign to transfer the monument from its downtown location to a military cemetery, where he deemed it would be more appropriate. The main issue regarding the statue does not lie in its physical location. The debate regarding the monument is a debate about two different interpretations of history in the region. The 'Great Patriotic War' remains a central tenet of Russian national identity, the immense sacrifice of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany is still invoked as a sense of pride and continues to act as a unifying national story. The Estonian removal of the statue represents a challenge to this conception of history. Rather than accentuating the struggle against National Socialism, the Estonian perception is one of occupation by a foreign power.

The Russian speaking minority emerged in large numbers to prevent the transfer of the statue to the military cemetery. The protest resulted in the death of one member of the Russian community and the arrest of nearly 1,000 other protesters. At the outbreak of large scale mobilization, Russia sent a delegation led by former head of the Federal Security Bureau (FSB), Nikolia Kovalyov. The delegation expressed support for the Russian speaking protesters and called for international pressure to bring down the Estonian government. The important note here is the explicit and tacit support of the Russian Federation for the protesters in challenging the legitimacy of the Estonian state[6]. This episode represents the degree to which the identities of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia and the Russian kin-state have converged over the period of 'restored' independence.

The role of the Russian kin-state in Latvia is qualitatively different than the role it plays in Estonia. While the Estonian case demonstrates direct Russian support for mobilization against the state in large part due to the specific structure of the minority community, the Latvian case demonstrates a more nuanced role for the Russian kin-state in ensuring the reproduction of Russian culture, with a specific focus on ensuring the continuation of a public role for the Russian language.

Before the consolidation of the Russian 'idea' within Russia proper[7], there was

---

[6] For journalistic accounts of the event see: "Bronze Solider Installed at Tallinn Military Cemetary" *Ria-Novosti*, April 30,2007 available at http://en.rian.ru/world/20070430/64692507.html. Also, Steven Lee Meyers, "Debate Renewed: Did Moscow Free Estonia or Occupy It?" *New York Times*, January 25, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/world/europe/25tallinn.html. And, David Mardiste, "Russia To Estonia: Don't Move Our Statue", *Washington Post*, January 25,2007http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/25

[7] A 2002 conference commissioned by Vladimir Putin sought to articulate the essence of the Russian 'nation'. A consensus emerged around the notion that to be Russian means using the Russian language as your mother tongue. This idea of 'Russianness' had the greatest potential to symbolically expand the

little to no evidence of Russian assistance to the minority community in Latvia. It was not until the passing of the 1999 'Law on Compatriots Abroad' that there is empirical evidence for kin interaction in Latvia. One of the most prominent modes of kin interaction in Latvia is ensuring cultural reproduction. For example, beginning with the election of Putin, Russia has been active in supplying Russian language institutes and schools with financial assistance, and also Russian language textbooks. Nils Muiznieks notes that the first delivery of Russian language texts numbered 7,000. While only three years later in 2003, 55,000 textbooks were being sent directly to Russian educational institutes in Latvia (Muiznieks 2006: 127). The approach to assisting kin in Latvia is relegated to cultural and linguistic reproduction, rather than supporting direct challenges to the state.

The different manifestation of kin policies in Latvia and Estonia are a consequence of the different organizational structures of the minority communities. A hierarchical minority structure in Estonia and a horizontal minority community in Latvia can be traced back to differing approaches to participation in municipal elections. The Russian-speaking community in Estonia has a clear and identifiable 'core' segment which can constrain and influence minority behaviour. This moreover allows for greater formal dialogue with the kin state and has resulted in active kin interaction particularly in supporting mobilization against the state. The horizontal nature of the minority community in Latvia has resulted in less cohesive collective action and in turn a more passive manifestation of kin activism, primarily concerned with ensuring cultural reproduction.

State Capacity For Repression:

The final variable for comparison relates to the ability of the state to repress threats against the titular language and culture. The Estonian and Latvian states maintain high degrees of institutional capacity, this is clearly demonstrated by the relatively rapid consolidation of electoral reforms and quick accession into the European Union. However, the capacity for the state to engage in violent repression is non-existent due to the presence of constraining international norms against violence and the geo-graphic proximity of an increasingly powerful kin-state on the border of Estonia and Latvia. Rather the state maintains non-violent domination in the form of symbolic violence. The state legitimizes one form of "being" in the world, by privileging certain myths, symbols and languages at the expense of others (Bourdieu 1977: 183)

The constraints brought about by integration into the European Union and the potential recourse from a Russian kin-state has ensured that direct and open violence against the Russian speaking minority did not occur. Moreover, similar demographic numbers suggests that violent opposition to a minority group could easily be countered by violence to the titular majority.

Conclusions:

This paper has attempted to accomplish two primary tasks. The paper attempted to first provide a theoretical introduction to ethnic democracy by engaging in a brief comparison of the nation-building strategies employed by ethnic and liberal democracies. The second task was to engage in a systematic comparison of Estonia and Latvia along four issue areas in order to demonstrate how diminutive differences in nation-building strategies have resulted in very differently structured minority communities and in turn

---

Russian 'nation'

different patterns of kin activism in each case.

The paper demonstrated how participation in municipal politics allowed for the Russian-speaking community in Estonia to develop hierarchical organizational structures that has enabled direct mobilization against the state. This in turn has correlated to much more active manifestations of kin state behaviour in Estonia. This in contrast to the horizontally structured Russian minority community in Latvia where there was formal exclusion from the electoral process at every level and little access to state and institutional resources. The horizontal nature of this community and the willingness of Latvian elites to the presence of the Russian minority has resulted in a much more passive role for the kin state, with a primary focus on assisting this community with cultural reproduction.

Future Projections:

Despite increasing naturalization rates and full integration into the EU, Latvia and Estonia still represent ethnic democracies. EU integration and Russian kin-state activism has not been able to fundamentally alter the political configuration of the state. Within both case studies there still exists a clear demographic majority for the titular nation, a clear desire and intent to continue to protect the titular culture and language in legislation, and a clear ability to resist external pressure for reform in the realm of minority rights.

Many scholars (Jarve 2005, Peleg 2007, Yiftacahel and Ghanem 2004) speak of the inherent instability of ethnic democracies. However, with little propensity for violent repression Estonia and Latvia have been able to develop stability and adhere to Europe Union entry requirements while at the same time preventing a large portion of the population from full and active participation in the state. The continuation of ethnic democracies in Estonia and Latvia seems certain, despite growing naturalization rates a social gulf persists between the state sponsored 'demos' and those who fall outside of this category. The future of these regimes is beyond the scope of this paper, however at the present moment the stability of Latvia and Estonia seems unthreatened by the exclusion of the Russian-speaking minority.

Bibliography:

Albi, Anneli, "Ironies in Human Rights Protection in the EU: Pre-Accession Conditionality and Post-Accession Conundrums", *European Journal of Law*, Vol. 15, No.1 (Jan 2009): 46-69.

Bernier, Julie. "Nationalism In Transition: Nationalizing Impulses and International Counterweights in Latvia and Estonia", in John McGarry and Michael Keating, eds. *Minority Nationalism and The Changing International Order*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline Of A Theory of Practice*. Richard Nice, Translator. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

"Bronze Solider Installed at Tallinn Military Cemetery" *Ria-Novosti*, April 30,2007 Available at http://en.rian.ru/world/20070430/64692507.html

Chepurin, Alexander, "Approaching Far Away" *Russia in Global Affairs*, No 3, July - September 2009.

Csergo, Zsuzsa. *Talk of The Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Dorodnova, Jekaterina, " The Russian-Speaking Identity Under The Latvian Language Policy" in Rainer Munz and Rainer Ohliger, eds. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. London: Frank Cass, 2003.

Dreifelds, Juris. Latvia In Transition . New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Galbreath, David J. *Nation-Building and Minority Politics in Post-Socialist States: Interests, Influence and Identities in Estonia and Latvia*. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2005.

"Harmony Centre is Most Popular Latvian Party", *Angus Reid Public Opinion*, (Jan 27, 2010) http://www.angus-reid.com/polls

Horvath, Tamas, " Directions and Differences of Local Changes" in Tamas Horvath, ed. *Decentralization: Experiments and Reforms.* Open Society Institute, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2000.

Ijabs, Ivars, " Russians and Civil Society", in Nils Muizneiks, ed. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU: Latvijas Universitate, 2006.

Jarve, Priit, " Re-Independent Estonia" in Sammy Smooha and Priit Jarve, eds. *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy In Post-Communist Europe*. Budapest: Open Society Foundation, 2005.

Jenne, Erin. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Kasekamp, Andres. *A History Of The Baltic States*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Keating, Michael, " European Integration and the Nationalities Question", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (September 2004): 367- 388.

Kelley, Judith. *Ethnic Politics in Europe: The Power of Norms and Incentives* .Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Kymlicka, Will, "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe" in Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, eds. *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported: Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Kymlicka, Will (a). *Politics In The Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Linz, Juan and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* .Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Maeltsemees, Sulev, "Local Government in Estonia" in Tamas Horvath, ed. *Decentralization: Experiments and Reforms*. Open Society Institute, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2000.

Mardiste, David "Russia To Estonia: Don't Move Our Statue", *Washington Post*, January 25,2007 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/25

Marx, Anthony, "The Nation State and Its Exclusion", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol 117, No 1 (Spring 2002): 103- 126.

Meyers, Steven Lee. "Debate Renewed: Did Moscow Free Estonia or Occupy It?" *New York Times*, January 25, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/world/europe/25tallinn.html.

Muiznieks, Nils " Government Policy and The Russian Minority" in Nils Muiznieks, ed. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions.* LU: Latvijas Universitate, 2006

Muiznieks, Nils, "Russian Foreign Policy Towards 'Compartiots' in Latvia", in Nils Muizneiks, ed. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU: Latvijas Universitate, 2006.

Peleg, Ilan. *Democratizing The Hegemonic State: Political Transformation In The Age of Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Pettai, Vello and Klara Hallik, " Understanding Processes of Ethnic Control: Segmentation, Dependency and Co-optation In Post-Communist Estonia", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol 8, No 4 (2002): 505-529.

Pogonyi, Szabolcs, Maria M. Kovacs and Zsolt Kortvelyesi. *The Politics of External Kin-State Citizenship in East Central Europe*. Florence: European University Institute EUDO Citizenship Observatory, 2010.

Schulze, Jennie, " Estonia Caught Between East and West: EU Conditionality, Russia's Activism and Minority Integration", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol 38, No. 3 (May 2010): 361-392.

Shain, Yossi and Aharon Barth,"Diasporas and International Relations Theory" *International Organization* Vol 57, （Summer 2003)： 449–479.

Smith, Graham and Andrew Wilson, "Rethinking Russia's Post-Soviet Diaspora: The Potential For Political Mobilization in Eastern Ukraine and North-East Estonia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol 49, No 5 (1997): 845-864.

Smooha, Sammy, " The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol, 8, No 4 (Oct 2002): 475-503.

Straumanis, Andris, "Commission Oks Signature Drive For Amendment On School Language", *Latvians Online* (April 11, 2011). Available at http://latviansonline.com/news/article/7434/

Tarrow, Sidney. *Power In Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics, 2nd edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Vachudova, Milada *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage and Integration After Communism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Vanags, Edvins and Inga Vilka, " Local Government in Latvia" in Tamas Horvath, ed. *Decentralization: Experiments and Reforms*. Open Society Institute, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, 2000.

Yiftachel, Oren and As'ad Ghanem, " Understanding 'Technocratic' Regimes: The Politics of Seizing Contested Territories", *Political Geography*, Vol 23 (2004): 647-676.