Systems of Partial Control: Ethnic Dynamics in Post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia

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Abstract This article offers a theory to capture ethnic dynamics in post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia. It also explores a research question of great interest to political scientists, historians, sociologists, and economists: what accounts for stability in deeply divided societies? Drawing on Ian Lustick's formulation of control, the author suggests that stability in deeply divided societies is a result of conscious efforts made by elites to construct what she calls "systems of partial control." In such systems, the majority ethnic group controls the political sector, but shares control of the economic sector with minority ethnic groups. Economic prosperity derived from dispersed economic control accounts for stability in Estonia and Latvia. The article identifies two conditions that must be satisfied for elites to tolerate partial control. First, elites must reach a threshold of political hegemony at which point they dominate the political sector and second, the respective state must have a flourishing private sector. The article concludes with an assessment of whether or not systems of partial control are likely to be stable, and a reflection on implications of these systems beyond the post-Soviet region.

Introduction

The collapse of communism generated several newly independent states characterized by potentially explosive cleavages. Some of these states fell into civil war or were territorially dismembered because of secession processes, but most—including Estonia and Latvia—have remained stable although their respective societies are deeply divided, or typified by ethnic, religious, or linguistic cleavages that shape group identity, as well as the nature of group demands made on the state.[1] While the debate on causes of stability in such societies offers competing explanations for

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[1]For alternative definitions of a deeply divided society, see Nordlinger (1972) and Lijphart (1977).

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stability in Estonia and Latvia, which I address below, it does not offer a theory to capture adequately ethnic dynamics in these states.

Based on comparative historical analysis, this article advances the debate on causes of stability in deeply divided societies. Key tenets of comparative historical analysis include causal investigation, systematic comparison based on a few cases, and a focus on temporal processes (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). Movement between theories concerning causes of stability in deeply divided societies and historical accounts of the Estonian and Latvian cases permit a deeper understanding of ethnic dynamics in these cases, and suggest a new category of polity called partial control.[2] The analysis is based on primary sources including policies related to language, education, and citizenship, as well as secondary works that indirectly trace the evolution of partial control in Estonia and Latvia. These works also provide a historical context for the analytical narrative presented here, or offer alternative explanations for stability in these cases.

I argue that stability in post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia flows from a conscious effort made by elites to construct a system of partial control in which Estonians and Latvians control the political sector, *but share control of the economic sector with the respective Russian minority*. In both states, political power is centralized and reserved for the majority ethnic group, whereas economic power is decentralized and shared by majority and minority ethnic groups.[3] Dispersed economic control allows Russians in these states to make money in the private sector. Economic prosperity diminishes adverse effects of nationalization policies on Russians, and therefore encourage acceptance of the system.

Although aggressive nationalization policies generate grievances among Russians, Estonia and Latvia have remained stable democratic polities since the Soviet Union collapsed. I begin my exploration of this puzzle with a discussion regarding why stability in these societies is surprising. I then debunk alternative explanations for stability in these cases, discuss various ways to manage ethnonational differences, and elaborate on the concept of partial control. Most of the article is devoted to an application of partial control to the Estonian and Latvian cases. I conclude by identifying conditions that must be satisfied for elites to embrace partial control, assessing whether or not systems of partial control are likely to be stable, and reflecting on implications of partial control beyond the post-Soviet region.

The Relevance of Soviet Legacies

Various factors render stability in post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia surprising, including Russification policies related to settlement, language, and cadre rotation,

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[2] These cases are the focus of analysis because Estonia and Latvia have larger Russian populations than Lithuania. In 1989, the population of the Estonian SSR was 30% Russian; the population of the Latvian SSR was 34% Russian; and the population of the Lithuanian SSR was 9% Russian. See Bremmer and Taras (1993) "Appendix B."

[3] There are many minorities within Estonia and Latvia, but Russians represent the largest minority in each country. In 1989, the Estonian SSR was comprised of Estonians (61.5%), Russians (30.3%), Ukrainians (3.1%), Belorussians (1.8%), and others (3.3%); the Latvian SSR was comprised of Latvians (52%), Russians (34%), Belorussians (4.5%), Ukrainians (3.5%), and others (6%). See Khazanov (1995, p. 248).

which generated resentment among Estonians and Latvians toward Russians. Consider the source of this umbrage:

> ...the Kremlin treated Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania more like colonies than quasi-independent states. It killed or deported suspected oppositionists; decided how the local economy would be organized and what it would produce for the USSR; and proceeded with an intensive campaign of Russification that included not only language training and indoctrination but waves of non-Baltic immigrants who tried to make Russian not just the lingua franca but the dominant tongue (Clemens 1991, p. 57).

Russification policies created a demographic situation in which Estonians and Latvians were a bare majority within their respective republic. Throughout the post-war era, Russians migrated to the Baltic region to find work (military casualties, deportations, out-migration in anticipation of renewed Soviet rule, and rapid industrialization created endemic labor shortages), ensure a brighter future (these were the most prosperous and westernized republics), or fill party vacancies. Between 1959 and 1989, the Russian population in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) increased by 98%; its counterpart in the Latvian SSR increased by 63% (Misiunas 1990, p. 217). By 1989, the population of the Estonian SSR was 61% Estonian and 30% Russian; in the Latvian SSR it was 52% Latvian and 34% Russian (Khazanov 1995, p. 248).

During the same period, Moscow worked arduously to render Russian the language of mobility in these republics, and to ensure that Russians, as well as Estonians and Latvians who had lived in Russia, occupied as many positions in the political and economic sectors as possible. While we can question Moscow's success in institutionalizing Russian as the language of mobility, we know that Moscow's intent offended Estonians and Latvians. In addition, the massive influx of Russians altered local cultures because immigrants were naturally carriers of Russian culture. Moreover, Russification policies compelled Estonians and Latvians to master Russian, but offered Russians no incentive to learn local languages. This incentive structure produced bilingual Estonians and Latvians and monolingual Russians.

During the Soviet period, leadership in the Baltic republics discussed here included Russians, as well as Estonians and Latvians who were prone to advancing Moscow's interests because they grew up in Russia and were thus fairly Russified. Writing about the relationship between the ethnic composition of the political leadership and dissatisfaction among Baltic nationalities in the 1970s, Judith Fleming argues that key positions of power "are held by men who do not necessarily meet the requirements of the indigenous nationality. Wherever there is a leader who wishes to speak primarily for the interests of the Baltic people, he evidently falls under the scrutiny, even the dominance, of someone less representative of these people" (Fleming 1977, p. 125). A fair assessment of how much Russians dominated the economic sector of Baltic society is that "...[in terms of economic status] few would argue that the Slavs on average were worse off than ethnic Estonians and Latvians" (Aasland and Flotten 2001, p. 1024).

Courageous Estonians and Latvians did express grievances, but Moscow suppressed "manifestations of bourgeois nationalism." By the end of the 1980s, Russification policies had spawned a widespread fear of cultural extinction among

Estonians and Latvians that motivated elites to embrace aggressive nationalization policies designed to advance the culture, language, political power, economic prosperity, and demographic preponderance of their state's core nation (Brubaker 1996). Once they had issued declarations of reinstated independence, Baltic elites began to nationalize the newly independent state over which they presided. Their preferred method to manage ethnonational differences is more conducive to control (domination) than consociation (accommodation).

Alternative Explanations for Stability in Post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia

According to a definition of political stability based on system maintenance and civil order, Estonia and Latvia are stable: each regime has a high probability of remaining democratic, and each country has witnessed a low level of civil violence (Lijphart 1977, p. 4).[4] While Russians in both states object to citizenship and language legislation, they do not challenge the democratic system or engage in sustained illegal or violent mobilization.[5] Table 1 depicts four typical explanations for stability in these cases.

   The first explanation is that supranational institutions like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and European Union (EU) persuaded elites to temper respective nationalization projects. Andres Kasekamp (2003, p. 412) argues that the OSCE and EU compelled successive Estonian governments to "water down" citizenship and language legislation, and help Russians integrate into society. These organizations convinced elites to tone down initial manifestations of nationalism, but Baltic elites made only moderate changes. For example, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities persuaded Estonia to amend the Law on Aliens, simplify naturalization procedures, and permit noncitizens to vote in local elections, but failed to stop the introduction of a new restriction requiring candidates running in local elections to possess a "sufficient" level of the state language. Similarly, the High Commissioner convinced Latvia to amend the Law on Citizenship, but elites fought further concessions "despite immense pressure from the OSCE mission and the EU in the run-up to the mission closure in December 2001" (Hughes 2005, p. 754). Supranational institutions emphasized democratic processes over discriminatory practices in their dealings with Estonia and Latvia in the 1900s and, as a result, Baltic resistance to anything beyond moderate change did not block EU accession. Indirect pressure from the US, which fought hard for North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion, resulted in "an equivocal pursuit by the EU of moderation in Estonia and Latvia, which soured its grand declaratory goals of minority protection set out in the early 1990s" (Hughes 2005, p. 751). Limited

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[4] In accordance with Lijphart, who offers a multidimensional definition of political stability, I emphasize system maintenance and civil order more than legitimacy and effectiveness.

[5] Still, Russians have protested: in the early 2000s, they opposed the Latvian government's decision to restrict the percent of classroom hours taught in Russian in state schools with programs for national minorities; in 2007, they opposed the Estonian government's decision to remove a Soviet war memorial from the center of Tallinn. Yet these isolated incidents did not challenge democracy.

Table 1 Alternative explanations for stability in Estonia and Latvia

External actors	Russian population
Supranational institutions	Problems with the Russian minority
Russia	New Russian business elite

pressure exerted by supranational institutions did not prevent elites from implementing policies that could generate instability.

The second explanation is that each state's Russian population is afflicted by problems that prevent it from challenging the majority with vigor. Scholars identify numerous problems plaguing the organizational capacity of the Russian minority in Estonia and Latvia, and rarely attempt to discern which problems are most detrimental to sustained collective action. Triin Vihalemm and Anu Masso (2007, pp. 72–73) argue that Estonia's Russian speakers have not mobilized because they adopt individual adaptation strategies to cope with transition dilemmas. The liberal, individualistic ideology promoted by Estonian elites is a reaction to the collectivist mentality of socialism, and its emphasis on individual rights and obligations does encourage individual coping mechanisms. I return to this valuable insight below, but unfortunately, Vihalemm and Masso (2007, p. 71) focus on structures of collective identities rather than on why "no collective group consciousness and mobilization has occurred in the Russian community, despite significant social deprivation."

Graham Smith (1996) identifies many problems that hinder collective action among Russians. In 1996, Smith identified a weak sense of national identity, a lack of effective political entrepreneurs, and state-created disincentives to mobilize combined with state-created incentives to join the respective polity. Three years later, Smith (1999, p. 517) argued that grievances do not generate collective action because Russians are constrained by "weak communal organization and limited political resources," "limited access points and 'opportunity structures' of the political system," and "limited opportunities and political resources available to the ethnic patron's empire-savers to provide support for diasporic organizations in the Baltic states." Similarly, Smith et al. (2002) claim that Russians do not challenge the system in Estonia because there are divisions within the Russian population, there are few institutions supporting mobilization, and there is political apathy among Russians.

These scholars underestimate Russian representation: Russian political entrepreneurs and Russian organizations with adequate resources exist in both states. Although 21% of Estonian's population and 20% of Latvia's population cannot vote in national elections, political parties representing Russians have done well at the polls since the first post-Soviet parliamentary elections.[6] Our Home is Estonia won six seats in Estonia's 1995 election, while the Equal Rights Party and the Party of National Harmony won 11 seats in Latvia's 1995 election; in 1998, For Human Rights in a United Latvia won 16 seats in Latvia's election, while in 1999, the

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[6] While 7% of Estonia's population has citizenship of another country, 12% has undetermined citizenship status. See Citizenship and Migration Board (2003) and http://www.mig.ee. Similarly, 18% of Latvia's population has noncitizenship status, while 2% has "alien" status. See Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, http://www.np.gov.lv.

United People's Party won six seats in Estonia's election; and although the United People's Party failed to garner enough votes to win a seat in Estonia's 2003 election, For Human Rights in a United Latvia won 25 seats in Latvia's 2002 election. In 2004, a leading representative of Latvia's Russian population won a seat in the European Parliament.

David Laitin (1998, p. 355) argues that assimilation afflicts the organizational capacity of each state's Russian population. According to Laitin, consociation was never possible in Estonia or Latvia because elites rejected the notion, but "a Russian-speaking revival was ruled out because Russian-speakers themselves…began to accommodate themselves privately to the new cultural order." Laitin (1998, p. 356) acknowledges that Russians who assimilate threaten Russians who do not assimilate and that this threat is a potential source of violence, but he argues that "To the extent that assimilationist trends continue…rationalization of an Estonian and a Latvian nation–state rather than a revival of a Russian (or Russian-speaking) cultural zone in Estonia or Latvia is the more likely outcome." Yet recent scholarship indicates that assimilation is *not* a predominant response among young Russians to post-Soviet conditions in the Baltics: Vihalemm (2002, pp. 205–207) finds that Russians seeking career opportunities in Estonia are not motivated to learn Estonian because other alternatives, such as speaking English, are available.

Laitin's study does not consider how Estonians and Latvians react to Russian assimilation. Scholars who do consider this variable disagree, and I do not resolve the dispute here. Some scholars suggest that at the societal level Estonians and Latvians are not eager for Russians to assimilate. Basing his conclusion on 1993 and 1995 survey data, Geoffrey Evans (1998) claims that Estonia is polarized along ethnic lines, Estonians do not accept the notion of Russian assimilation, and Russians do not seek to assimilate into Estonian society. Similarly, Eduard Ponarin (2000, pp. 1538–1539) argues that Russians are less likely to assimilate in the Baltics than in other post-Soviet states because Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians do not welcome assimilation: "…even if the Baltic Russophones are very open to assimilation, focusing on the Russophone side of the process cannot guarantee valid results, as it takes both titulars and Russophones to remove the boundaries that separate them…there is absolutely no evidence that, say, Estonians are ready to recognize bilingual Russophones as Estonians. In fact, there is abundant evidence to the contrary." Yet Vihalemm (2002, p. 214) finds that Estonians possess liberal attitudes and feel "it is important to know the [Estonian] language to be a member of the [Estonian] group, a group you do not have to be born into, but one that should require a little effort to join."

The third explanation is that Russia's mixed signals discourage Russians from promoting ethnic war. Building on Roger Brubaker's analysis of the "triadic configuration," Laitin (1998, pp. 329–331) argues that Russians in Estonia and Latvia have not launched a war because they receive mixed signals from Russia regarding reactions to conflict. Russia's mixed signals influence Estonians and Latvians as well: "Within those new republics, neither titulars nor Russians had sufficient surety (about Russia's probable reaction) to aggress upon the other" (Laitin 1998, p. 330). Later, Laitin (2001, p. 860) argues that under conditions of state breakdown when minorities can demand autonomy in the midst of chaos associated with transition, the level of unambiguous support from the homeland "is the crucial

difference between violent war and low level conflict." Because Laitin's analysis applies to the immediate aftermath of the Union's demise, it does not account for long-term stability.

The fourth explanation, which forms the core of partial control, is that the emergence of a Russian business elite discourages Russian mobilization. Graham Smith and Andrew Wilson identify various problems plaguing the organizational capacity of Russians, including economic prosperity. According to Smith and Wilson, three factors diminish the likelihood of collective action among Russians in Estonia: (1) disagreements between parties and nongovernmental organizations regarding the welfare of local Russians; (2) the fact that most Russians are unfamiliar with their representatives; and (3) the emergence of a new Russian business elite. Though Smith and Wilson (1997, p. 857) fail to note that it was dispersed economic control that enabled the emergence of this elite, they do acknowledge the following: "...rather than struggle to retain or secure their occupational niches within administration, political office or public sector economic management, many [Russians] have moved into the private sector, making up what constitutes one of the fastest growing social groups in Estonia, a new Russian business elite."

This observation is where Vihalemm and Masso's insight comes into play: Russians in the Baltic states have not mobilized because they adopt individual adaptation strategies to cope with transition dilemmas. My argument, which takes into account Smith and Wilson's observation, is that Russians in Estonia and Latvia have not mobilized because they adopt individual economic strategies in the private sector to cope with transition dilemmas.

Means to Manage Ethnic Differences: Consociationalism Versus Control

Strategies for regulating ethnic conflict include methods to eliminate differences (genocide, forced population transfers, partition, secession, integration, and assimilation), and methods to manage differences (control, arbitration, federalism, and consociationalism).[7] Control and consociationalism recommend contrasting means to manage ethnic differences in bi or multiethnic states. Consociational democracy is a response to shortcomings Arend Lijphart found in Gabriel Almond's typology of Western democratic political systems. Lijphart (1969) sought to classify the kind of system found in the Scandinavian and Low Countries, which Almond neglected to describe. The premise of consociationalism is that, under the right conditions, cooperation among leaders of different segments of a plural society will generate political stability (Lijphart 1977). Based on institutionalized power sharing, consociationalism embraces representative government by grand coalition, mutual veto to protect minority interests, proportional representation in government, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public resources, and autonomy for each relevant segment of society to determine its internal affairs. Although the state is

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[7] See McGarry and O'Leary (1993a) and O'Leary (2001) for a discussion of these methods.

representative of all consociated peoples, ethnicity is the primary foundation for the organization of the state:

> In consociational democracies, like Belgium, ethnicity is accepted as a principle for the organization of the state. Individuals are judged on merit and accorded political and civil rights, but ethnic groups are also officially recognized and granted certain rights such as control over education and allocation of public posts. The state is not identified with any of the constituent groups and tries to reconcile the differences between them (Smooha 1990, p. 390).

Consociationalism seeks to preserve freedom, identity, rights, and opportunities for each ethnic segment of the population, and to create institutions that permit equality without forced assimilation (O'Leary 2001, p. 42).

Most scholars contend that consociationalism is more likely to generate long-term stability than control because socioeconomic gaps between ethnic groups narrow in a consociational context, where government by grand coalition, mutual veto, proportional representation, and segmental autonomy work to represent diverse group interests, while socioeconomic gaps between ethnic groups widen in a control context, where the system is built on the foundation of ethnic hierarchy.[8] Widening gaps are likely to further frustrate a disgruntled subordinate group, which increases the probability of conflict. Dominic Lieven and John McGarry (1993, p. 73) have mistakenly applied this logic to Estonia and Latvia "...stability in the Baltic may in the end require a form of power-sharing with guaranteed control over its own affairs devolved to the Russian community." Lieven and McGarry overlook the fact that power sharing is the missing link of politics in these states, where elites *avoid* the distribution of political power to national minorities. Power sharing was never on the Estonian or Latvian agenda; on the contrary, opposition to this notion resulted in a deliberate effort on the part of elites to ensure political hegemony for the respective core nation.

Control, which is Ian Lustick's (1979) response to consociational theory, refers to a relationship in which a superordinate segment of society enforces stability by restricting political opportunities of the subordinate segment(s) of society.[9] Enforced stability is based on coercion or the threat of coercion, as well as certain institutions, legal frameworks, and cultural circumstances. There is no accommodation or power sharing between rival groups: one group dominates the political system at the other's expense. In a consociational context, the regime translates compromises into effective policy; in a control context, the regime acts as a legal and administrative instrument of the superordinate segment of society (Lustick 1979). Control becomes

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[8] See Esman (1987); Hewitt (1977); Lane and Ersson (1990); Rudolph and Thompson (1985); Yiftachel (1992b); and Zariski (1989). Scholars point out that consociationalism *and* control are difficult to stabilize. McGarry and O'Leary argue that consociationalism is easily destabilized because it requires the presence of three demanding conditions: (1) rival segments cannot be committed to immediate integration or assimilation; (2) leaders must have the right motivations to sustain the system; and (3) elites of each ethnic segment must possess sufficient autonomy to compromise without being accused of betrayal. McGarry and O'Leary (1993a) also emphasize that the subordinate group in a control context may seek to internationalize its suffering, which threatens stability.

[9] In Lustick's (1997, p. 90) view, "the success of the consociational research program cannot be explained on the basis of its explanatory power or heuristic value" but by a reliance on the political and rhetorical skills of its "leading practitioner" and "alliances between those practitioners and political interests outside the scientific arena."

"hegemonic" when a violent challenge to acquire state power is unthinkable or unworkable for the subordinate segment(s) of society (McGarry and O'Leary 1993b, p. 109). Hegemonic control is more difficult to achieve in liberal democracies because such polities permit group organization, which renders a challenge to acquire state power thinkable and possibly workable for the subordinate segment(s) of society. Nonetheless, hegemonic control can be institutionalized in liberal democracies if the group seeking control manages to disorganize other group(s) through the monopolization of democratic institutions.

No one argues that Estonia or Latvia are cases of *hegemonic* control, but some scholars claim that they are cases of control. Priit Jarve (2005, pp. 63–64) argues that Estonia established control by denying most Russians full political rights but permitting them to naturalize, and by ensuring the "economic dependence" of the minority on the majority. Stateless residents thus confront a control system that provides an escape: naturalization. But the essence of control is that it does not permit peaceful escape. Moreover, Jarve's interpretation of the relationship between ethnicity and prosperity neglects important opportunities Russians have in Estonia's private sector. Rather than ensure economic dependence of the minority, when the time was right elites opened the private sector to Russians in an effort to ensure stability.

Similarly, Vello Pettai and Klara Hallik (2002, p. 506) argue that "control over the non-Estonian minority by the ethnic Estonian political community" explains stability in Estonia. The claim is that elites institutionalized control by establishing political segmentation of the Russian minority through restrictive citizenship legislation, ensuring economic dependence of the Russian minority on the Estonian majority through the creation of a citizen/noncitizen divide, and co-opting key Russian leaders through the state's integration program. I quibble with the second point—the citizen/noncitizen divide restricts opportunities available to Russians who cannot or do not naturalize, *but the Russian minority is not economically dependent on the Estonian or Latvian majority.*

Pettai, Halik, and Jarve downplay Russian activity in Estonia's private sector. Although Russians are denied access to the public sector, they are active in the private sector where their native language remains a primary means of communication. Russians have been active participants in the Estonian and Latvian private sectors since the early 1990s, precisely because they were ousted from the public sector by citizenship and language policies. Moreover, segregation along ethnic lines in Baltic business communities preserves a Russian presence in the respective private sector because Russians have a tendency to hire other Russians. As a result, Russians are far from reliant on the respective majority population for jobs and other economic resources. The opening of the private sector to Russians is what renders the Estonian and Latvian cases examples of *partial* control.

Means to Manage Ethnic Differences: Ethnic Democracy

In his seminal article on the status of the Arab minority in Israel, Sammy Smooha (1990) argued that ethnic democracies combine legitimate democratic institutions with institutionalized ethnic dominance. Ethnic democracies extend political and

civil rights to individuals, proffer collective rights to minorities, and ensure institutionalized dominance of the state by one ethnic group. Smooha's (2002a) "mini-model" of ethnic democracy contains features of ethnic democracy, such as a state ideology of ethnic nationalism that confers upon the ethnic nation the right to determine policies, laws and symbols, as well as factors conducive to the emergence of ethnic democracy, and conditions of stability. Though the system is democratic because "all permanent residents who so wish are granted citizenship," the state extends rights to individuals, and "the minority is accorded some collective rights and sometimes even granted autonomy with certain limitations," Smooha admits that it is a *diminished* democracy because the state privileges the ethnic nation and denies equal rights to everyone. Thus, "non-members of the ethnic nation enjoy rights that are in some way inferior to the rights of members and endure discrimination by the state" (Smooha 2002a, p. 478). Most important to my analysis is Smooha's (2005, p. 29) assertion that ethnic democracy requires a "subtle, manipulative, selective and hidden" mechanism of control, defined as political and economic regulation to prevent the minority from destabilizing dominance of the majority. This claim paves the way for a better understanding of ethnic dynamics in the Baltic states, where the mechanism of control is not subtle or hidden.

While Israel is a frequently cited example of ethnic democracy, Smooha (2002a) attempts to classify Estonia as an ethnic democracy as well.[10] To do so, he must disaggregate the country's Russian population: Estonia is an ethnic democracy for Russians who are citizens of Estonia, but it is a "non-democracy" for Russians who are not citizens of Estonia (Smooha 2002b, p. 428). Smooha's attempt is misguided—Estonia and Latvia do not belong to the same conceptual category as Israel. There are two differences between the Israeli case, and the Estonian and Latvian cases.

First, in contrast to the Russian minority in Estonia and Latvia, the Arab minority in Israel is granted collective rights that allow it to flourish *as a minority* (Smooha 2002a, pp. 487–489). Arabs are legally entitled to a separate Arabic school system, Arabic mass media, Arabic cultural and religious institutions, and free use of their native language. Russians in Estonia and Latvia do not possess these rights. While Russian is designated a foreign language and prohibited in official transactions, Arabic is Israel's second language and permitted in such dealings. Neither the Estonian nor Latvian government finances Russian education, but the Israeli government at least partially funds Arabic education. Second, in contrast to the Russian minority, the Arab minority is not pressured by the government to assimilate. According to Smooha (1990, p. 405), "...the Arab status as an the ethnic minority is not basically problematic. As a matter of fact, it is as much part of the national consensus to keep Arabs as a non-assimilating minority as it is to keep Jews as a non-assimilating majority." This is not the case in Estonia or Latvia, where elites pressure Russians to assimilate via citizenship and language requirements that restrict certain professions to citizens who have mastered the local language.

Nevertheless, the ethnic democracy concept is important because it captures a system of governance that differs significantly from control. In essence, ethnic democracy is "based on the contradictory combination of democracy for all with

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[10] Yiftachel (1992a) offers a compelling critique of Smooha's classification of Israel as an ethnic democracy.

ethnic ascendancy...a system that falls in between consociational democracy and non-democracy" (Smooha 2002b, p. 425). Whereas ethnic democracies adversely affect subordinate groups but simultaneously provide institutions through which such groups can improve their wellbeing, systems of control reserve democracy for the superordinate group and deny such groups legal opportunities to alter their status.

Most scholars attribute stability in Estonia and Latvia to ethnic democracy rather than control.[11] As stated above, Smooha's (2002a, p. 479) mini-model of ethnic democracy includes conditions of stability: the ethnic nation must remain a numerical and political majority; the ethnic nation must continue to feel threatened; the minority's external homeland must not interfere with minority affairs within the respective ethnic democracy; and the international community must not interfere with domestic politics of the respective ethnic democracy. Smooha rightly asserts that in the absence of one or more of these conditions stability may weaken, but neglects a key aspect of stability in deeply divided societies.

Systems of Partial Control

In a system of partial control, the dominant group maintains control of the political sector, shares control of the economic sector, and generally denies collective rights to minorities. This polity, based on political exclusion combined with economic freedom, is a bargain the majority strikes with the minority to encourage peace. Partial control characterizes pre-1969 Malaysia, when the Malays dominated politics and the Chinese, who were involved in retail or in the professions, were better off than the Malays financially (Mauzy 1993, p. 107).[12] The ethnic dynamics of Estonia and Latvia are best understood in terms of partial control. In both societies, the position of majority and minority ethnic groups varies depending on the domain in question. Control of the political sector is restricted to Estonians and Latvians, but control of the economic sector is shared with Russians.

The international community's recognition of Estonia and Latvia as Western-style democracies encourages elites to rely on nationalization policies, rather than coercion or the threat of coercion, to ensure partial control. Nationalization policies solidify Russian subordination in the public sector, but they do not affect the private sector, where Russians maintain a commanding presence. Estonians and Latvians largely comprise each country's political elite, while Russians comprise a significant portion of each country's economic elite. The political regulation of group identity restricts mobility in the public sector, but not in the private sector. This variable group status generates positive perceptions of socioeconomic opportunity, which encourage Russians to invest in a Baltic future.

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[11] See Smith (1996); Smith and Wilson (1997); Kolsto and Tsilevich (1997); Steen (2000); Smith et al. (2002); and Diatchkova (2005).

[12] Smooha (2005, p. 55) classifies Malaysia as a consociational democracy because its coalition government included representatives of and provided autonomy to all major ethnic groups, but he notes that the Malay majority maintained political power while non-Malay minorities maintained economic power.

Estonia and Latvia: The Political Aspect of Partial Control

Estonian and Latvian societies are characterized by ethnic and linguistic cleavages that divide each society into "natives," who identify as Estonian and Latvian and thereby reserve the right to define the dominant public culture, and "nonnatives," who are forced by dint of nationalization policies to assimilate into the dominant public culture if they wish to enter the official political arena. Whereas Estonians and Latvians are content with the status quo, Russians are dissatisfied with citizenship and language policies.

Elites in Estonia and Latvia established political control for respective group members in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's demise through the implementation of strict citizenship requirements. Both governments passed legislation restricting the citizenry to individuals (and their descendants) who were citizens of the respective interwar republic.[13] Consequently, the initial mechanism for securing political control was a policy that restricts the respective *demos* to individuals deemed loyal to the state by establishing who is entitled to automatic citizenship. Although citizens of interwar Estonia and Latvia (and their descendants) are entitled to automatic citizenship, everyone else must naturalize. Individuals who served in the Soviet armed forces or Soviet security services are permanently banned from the Estonian and Latvian citizenry.

Elites have institutionalized hurdles for naturalization applicants to clear. Since Moscow suppressed the use of Estonian and Latvian during the Soviet era, it is not surprising that elites took advantage of Gorbachev's reforms and, in 1989, designated the respective titular language the republic's sole state language. In the early post-Soviet era, Estonian and Latvian elites passed legislation requiring naturalization applicants to take a state language exam, an exam in that language on the constitution, and an oath of loyalty to the state; applicants in Latvia take a history exam as well.[14]

Many legal differences between citizens and noncitizens aim to promote the respective core nation, but in this context the most critical difference is that noncitizens cannot vote in national elections.[15] Since the Russian populations of newly independent Estonia and Latvia were comprised primarily of post-war immigrants who, as a result of the policy discussed above, were denied automatic citizenship, it was mainly Estonians and Latvians who voted in the first post-Soviet parliamentary elections. Both states passed restrictive citizenship legislation *before* the elections: Latvia did so in September 1991 before the June 1993 elections; Estonia did so in February 1992 before the September 1992 elections. The timing of these policies meant that most Russians did not vote in the first elections. Not surprisingly, citizens of both states voted for candidates affiliated with moderate nationalist parties, such as Fatherland or Latvia's Way.[16]

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[13] For more on Latvia's citizenship regime, see Commercio (2004); for more on Estonia's citizenship regime, see Park (1994) and Feldman (2003).

[14] For Estonia's regulations, see "Citizenship Act," January 19, 1995, http://www.legaltext.ee/indexen. htm; for Latvia's regulations see *Zakon o Grazhdanstve*, (July 22, 1994).

[15] The cases differ in terms of local elections: noncitizens in Latvia cannot vote or run for office, while noncitizens in Estonia can vote but cannot run for office.

[16] Both parties supported moderate nationalism and economic reform. Fatherland commanded 22% of the Estonian vote and acquired 29 of 100 seats, and Latvia's Way commanded 32% of the Latvian vote and acquired 36 of 100 seats.

The elections generated considerable change in the ethnic composition of each parliament. Although data on the ethnic composition of the Estonian and Latvian SSR leadership is hard to come by, "...a substantial ethnic change of top leaders took place [after the elections], and this change was especially dramatic in Estonia and Latvia" (Steen 2000, p. 74). Steen points out that post-Soviet nationalization policies removed Russians from key positions, prevented Russians from entering new institutions, and made public sector positions which were difficult for Estonians and Latvians to obtain available to representatives of the respective core nation. Estonia's first post-Soviet parliament was comprised *solely* of ethnic Estonians (Kolsto and Tsilevich 1997, p. 383). Latvia's first post-Soviet parliament was comprised of 88 Latvians, six Russians, and six individuals who were neither Latvian nor Russian (Kolsto 2000, p. 114). Change in the ethnic composition of each parliament made the implementation of additional policies designed to ensure political control possible. For example, Latvia's 1994 law on citizenship slowed the evolution of a multiethnic citizenry by mandating the creation of a "window" system to limit the number of people eligible to join the citizenry annually, and the creation of a language commission to test the state language skills of naturalization applicants.[17]

Language policies are a secondary mechanism to ensure political control. The 1989 policy discussed above paved the way for policies that widen the sphere of communication in which the respective state language is required, and narrow the sphere of communication in which languages of minorities are permitted. Estonian and Latvian legislation declares all languages other than the respective state language, *including Russian*, foreign.[18] In addition, both states established a testing system in which one's level of proficiency in the state language dictates which professions are accessible, regardless of experience. Finally, knowledge of the state language is a standard requirement for public sector employment, and employees of private institutions must use the state language when their activities affect the public interest.

These policies aim to preserve political control by reserving public sector positions for Estonians and Latvians. By the early 1990s, ethnic majority control of state institutions had been solidified: "In the state bureaucracy and judiciary, the indigenous elite has an overwhelming majority in all three countries [Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania], standing at between 90% and 100% in 1993–1994 and 1997" (Steen 2000, p. 74). A recent Baltic Barometer Survey suggests that less than one third of each state's Russian population is employed in the public sector. According to the survey, 24% of employed Russian respondents worked for state budgetary organizations or state-owned enterprises in Estonia, while 26% of employed Russian respondents worked for state budgetary organizations or state-owned enterprises in Latvia (Rose 2005, p. 39).[19]

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[17] *Zakon o Grazhdanstve* (July 22, 1994). Note that the government abolished the window system in 1998 in response to pressure from the EU to relax naturalization requirements. See *Izmeneniia v Zakone o Grazhdanstve* (1998).

[18] For Estonia's language law see "Language Act," February 21, 1995, http://www.legaltext.ee/indexen. htm; for Latvia's language law see *Zakon o Gosudarstvennom Iazyke* (December 21, 1999).

[19] Respondents were asked "Which of the following best describes your employer? Is it: state budgetary organization, state-owned enterprise, privatized enterprise, mixed state-private, new private enterprise, foreign-owned enterprise/joint venture, or other?" The phrase "state sector" refers to state budgetary organizations and state enterprises.

Estonia and Latvia: The Economic Aspect of Partial Control

Consolidation of political control enabled Estonian and Latvian elites to expand access to the system without opposition. Based on the assumption that economic prosperity would give Russians a stake in the system and discourage conflict, elites opened the private sector to Russians once they had consolidated political control. Excluded from the public sector, Russians established businesses in the secondary sector, where they were concentrated during the Soviet era, and in the tertiary sector. This observation reflects the situation in Estonia and Latvia: "'Russian business' started to develop first in the secondary sector, where the share of Russian-speaking entrepreneurs constituted almost 50% of the starting businesspeople in 1991. Gradually their business activities shifted more into the tertiary sector and the share of Russian-speaking entrepreneurs in it reached one third by 1995" (Pavelson and Luuk 2002, p. 89).

Because Baltic Russians do not confront discriminatory policies in the private sector, they play a prominent role in local business communities. Although citizenship and language restrictions contribute to unemployment among Russians, they generally apply to the public sector. Recent Baltic Barometer Surveys indicate that Russians are active in the private sector. In 2000, 72% of employed Russian respondents (60% of employed Estonian respondents) worked in Estonia's private sector; 64% of employed Russian respondents (55% of employed Latvian respondents) worked in Latvia's private sector.[20] In 2004, 66% of employed Russian respondents (65% of employed Estonian respondents) worked in Estonia's private sector; 56% of employed Russian respondents (59% of employed Latvian respondents) worked in Latvia's private sector.[21]

Private sector development requires commitment to establishing a coherent set of institutions and related legislation. Although Estonian elites began this process in 1990 with the adoption of a property law and various policies related to small enterprise privatization, they did not pass a comprehensive privatization law until 1993. Thus, progress was slow until early 1994—well after the first post-Soviet elections (Shen 1994, pp. 140–148). Latvian elites initiated the process in the early 1990s with the adoption of a series of policies and decrees, but did not pass a comprehensive privatization law until 1994 (Shen 1994, pp. 136–140, 146–147). Privatization lagged until 1994—after the first post-Soviet elections—when the government implemented a privatization law and granted the Privatization Agency extensive control (Mygind 1997, p. 136).

Both countries had privatized most enterprises by the late 1990s: small enterprises were privatized by 1995, and large enterprises were privatized by 1999 (OECD Economic Surveys 2000, p. 120). In addition, new firms and institutions emerged in response to neoliberal reforms, including Estonia's Law on State Aid to Enterprises and Latvia's National Program for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. The private sector share of Estonian gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 55% in 1994 to 80% in 2005; the private sector share of Latvian GDP grew from 55% in 1994 to 70% in 2006.[22]

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[20] These individuals were either self-employed or worked for privatized firms, new private enterprises, or foreign-owned firms. See Rose (2000, p. 5).

[21] The 2004 survey categories changed slightly. Here the private sector refers to a privatized enterprise, a private enterprise that was established after 1990, or a foreign-owned enterprise. See Rose (2005, p. 39).

[22] 1994 figures are from Westin (1998); 2005/2006 figures are from European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Country Factsheets (Estonia and Latvia), www.ebrd.com/economics.

The private sector share in Estonian employment grew from 71% in 2000 to 76% in 2005, while the private sector share in Latvian employment grew from 72% in 2000 to 76% in 2005.[23]

Neither the World Bank nor local institutions like the Bank of Estonia, Bank of Latvia, Estonian Chamber of Commerce, or Latvian Chamber of Commerce collect data on the ethnic composition of public and private sectors, but evidence suggests that Russians are active in the latter. In Estonia, Russians have founded many firms in the capital, where almost half the country's Russian population resides. As early as 1995, the Estonian–Russian Chamber of Entrepreneurs—created in 1992 to unite Russian businessmen—represented 15 domestic firms as well as 90 firms with partners abroad (Smith et al. 2002). According to the 2000 census, 25% of non-Estonians were employed in the secondary sector, while more than 50% were employed in wholesale or retail trade (Voormann and Helemae 2003). Russians are active in Latvia's private sector as well. The Latvian Chamber of Commerce has more than 900 members, and 85% of them are small and medium enterprises (Dana 2005, p. 299). Russians own a considerable portion of these enterprises. Pal Kolsto (2000, p. 120) sums up the situation: "In political and cultural terms, then, we may note a marginalization of the non-Latvian population. In socioeconomic terms, however, no such marginalization seems evident...Whereas the Russians have few opportunities for improving their societal status qua group, they do have considerable possibilities for making careers within private enterprise." While there are more Russians than Latvians in industry and construction, most Russian businesses are in the wholesale and retail sectors of the economy.[24]

Personal networks contribute to the preservation of a Russian presence in each business community. As they try to stay afloat in a political sea characterized by policies that exclude them from the public sector, Russians hire "their own" whenever possible, which facilitates the growth of Russian companies. Two studies confirm the existence of monoethnic companies in Latvia: one finds that there are ethnically mixed *and* monoethnic firms in the private sector, while the other finds that although there are increasing numbers of ethnically mixed companies, ethnic segregation remains prevalent.[25] Ethnic segregation is also present in Estonia's business community because linkages between ethnicity and trust generate a shared understanding regarding the significance of personal ties (Voormann and Helemae 2003). According to one representative of a Russian-owned company in Estonia, "Since there are very few acquaintances among people of differing ethnicity, partners are chosen from people of the same ethnicity" (Voormann and Helemae 2003, p. 520). Though it may be questionable from a financial standpoint, ethnic segregation preserves a strong Russian presence in each country's business community.

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[23] European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2006, pp. 84, 88).

[24] Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (2004).

[25] Pabriks (2002), and Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (2004).

Estonia and Latvia: The Collective Rights Aspect of Partial Control

In an ethnic democracy, minorities have some collective rights and, in certain cases, are granted some autonomy (Smooha 2002a, p. 478). Such rights, like the Arab right to a separate school system in Israel, allow a group to flourish as a distinct minority. In a system of partial control, collective cultural and educational rights are not extended or are extremely limited because the government encourages minorities to assimilate into the dominant culture.

Russians in Estonia and Latvia have limited collective rights. Although they have the right to organize and have access to Russian media, they are not granted free use of their native language because Russian is declared a foreign language. Moreover, they lack a separate school system. For most of the post-Soviet era, Russians had the right to an education in their native language through private schools or through state schools with programs for national minorities. However, the first path is rarely an option because private schools are prohibitively expensive, and the second path was severely curtailed when elites restricted the percent of classroom hours taught in Russian in such state schools to 40%. Estonia and Latvia have amended legislation to ensure that 60% of all classroom hours in state schools with programs for national minorities are taught in the respective state language.[26]

Stability in Systems of Partial Control

Two conditions must be satisfied for elites to embrace partial control. First, elites must reach a threshold of political hegemony where they "own the state," or dominate the public sector. The Estonian and Latvian cases suggest that once elites reach this threshold, they accept minority participation in the private sector *precisely because they have secured domination of the public sector*. Success at the polls during the first parliamentary elections determined this threshold for elites in newly independent Estonia and Latvia. Citizens elected parliaments controlled by members of the respective titular nation who, once in office, implemented policies that extend Baltic ownership of the state. When elites crossed this threshold of political hegemony, the economic flourishing of the core nation was no longer a priority because the core nation had secured domination of the public sector and could afford to relinquish control in other domains. This argument assumes that members of the politically dominant group possess competitive skills required for success under market conditions. As Esman (1994, pp. 229–230) points out,

> If members of the dominant community possess the skills needed to compete successfully under market processes and disciplines, market rules may be allowed to prevail. Members of other ethnic communities may then participate in the competition and acquire a share of the wealth. Despite informal processes of discrimination, this policy has provided opportunities for upward mobility for members of immigrant diasporas in most Western European countries and in North America.

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[26] In 2000 Estonia amended the Law on Basic and Upper Secondary Schools (Hughes 2005); in 2004, Latvia amended the Law on Education (*Zakon ob Obrazovanii* November 17, 1998 c izmeneniuami vnecennymi po sostoianiiu 5 Febralia 2004 goda, Article 9).

Estonians and Latvians possess competitive skills required for success under market conditions: they are highly educated, bilingual, and citizens of their respective state.

Second, the state in question must have a flourishing private sector. If there is no private sector, or if the private sector is in its infancy, elites cannot alter the system without relinquishing political control. Even if elites presiding over a state without a private sector wanted to disperse economic power to the subordinate group to discourage ethnic conflict, doing so would mean handing over control of state enterprises—which necessitates handing over some political control. The existence of a thriving private sector enabled Estonian and Latvian elites to share economic control with Russians once they had crossed a threshold of political hegemony.

A system of partial control will likely be stable over time because it gives each group a stake in the system: the dominant group has a stake in politics and the subordinate group has a stake in economics. Neither group has incentive to upset the ethnic balance of power. A discussion of Estonian, Latvian, and Russian perceptions reveals why stability is both a function of majority political control and divided economic control, rather than just a function of economic prosperity.

Political control is necessary for Estonian and Latvian security. Russification policies generated a fear of cultural extinction, which continues to render preservation of ethnic identity critical to both groups. Political dominance is a powerful means to ensure identity preservation, and elites relied upon it to implement policies dedicated to this objective. Once Estonians and Latvians had achieved victory at the polls, they crossed the political hegemony threshold and opened the private sector to Russians. Partial control contributes to the preservation of Estonian and Latvian identity, appeases the international community, and compels Russians to integrate if they wish to join the public sector. The system eliminates the threat of being overwhelmed by "Russianness."

Similarly, divided economic control is necessary for Russian security. Ousted from the public sector, Russians need to prosper elsewhere so that they will not unconstitutionally oppose the system or migrate *en masse*. Participation in the private sector enables Russians to improve their opportunity structure, which gives them a stake in the system. Pavelson and Luuk's (2002, p. 105) comment refers to Estonia but reflects the situation in Latvia as well: "In a number of professions... Russian-speaking young people can be highly competitive already, making the hidden biased preferences of Estonian managers at the recruitment not only socio-politically, but also economically unjustified." Russians may not be content within the confines of the private sector forever. Since Estonia and Latvia joined the European Union, more Russians are entering the respective local political arena. But they are doing so on Estonian and Latvian terms—they are learning the state language, naturalizing, and integrating into Baltic society.

Another way of looking at how partial control explains stability in deeply divided societies is to explore cases in which the *absence* of partial control contributed to instability, such as pre-genocide Burundi and apartheid South Africa. In Burundi, a lack of partial control generated resentment that contributed to genocide. Once they had colonized the region, Belgian authorities created a system in which the Tutsi minority dominated politics and commerce at the expense of the Hutu majority. This vertical structuring of ethnic differentiation: "...carried within itself the seeds of massive bloodshed...at the heart of the convulsions that followed independence lay a

form of ethnic exclusivism that denied the Hutu majority the right to become full participants in the emergent political system" (Lemarchand 1993, p. 152). Political and economic power were centralized and reserved for the Tutsi, while the Hutu were shut out of both spheres and had no stake in the system. Eventually, the Hutu rose up against the Tutsi; the Tutsi response was genocide.

In South Africa, a lack of partial control generated resentment that contributed to violence, which in conjunction with negotiations led to the demise of apartheid. During apartheid, white Afrikaners dominated politics and commerce at the expense of black South Africans. Afrikaners utilized political power for white economic advancement through the National Party, "a nationalist movement committed to white supremacy, Afrikaner rule, and the cultural and economic advancement of the Afrikaner people" (Esman 1987, p. 408). The National Party government expanded education for Afrikaners in their language, required government employees to speak English and Afrikaans, expanded government employment to the point where 90% of positions were held by Afrikaners, and "fostered the participation of Afrikaners in the private sector of the economy" (Esman 1987, p. 409). Resentment among black South Africans fueled the emergence of the African National Congress, which engaged in anti-regime activities that destabilized the system. Given the understanding of partial control laid out in this article, should we really have been suprised by the collapse of apartheid and the genocide in Burundi?

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