

ABSTRACT

Title: RETURNED DIASPORA, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN LATVIA AND
LITHUANIA

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The dissertation looks at the phenomenon of diaspora political participation in their homelands through focusing on one aspect of diaspora homeland political action: holding political leadership positions in the homeland. Specifically, the research asks: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders? Furthermore, does this hold across countries or are the factors allowing for returned diaspora to become political leaders country-specific? The research focuses on two of the three Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania. Each country has witnessed significant returned diaspora participation in national political leadership as well as share a number of characteristics. In the research, when and how returned diaspora enter political leadership and how they act as political leaders in the countries is investigated through intensive field work and other research, analyzed, and then compared across countries. Characteristics that differentiate returned diaspora individuals from non-returned diaspora, here, “natives,” are highlighted and analyzed.

Overall, the research and analysis yields three important findings. Return diaspora enter homeland political leadership when there are political opportunities to do

so. These opportunities are created by regime change, how political institutions and processes are structured and how national identity is formally and informally defined. Furthermore, returned diaspora political leaders display characteristics and actions that seem to be rooted in both their experience and time abroad as well as rooted in their identity as members of diasporas with strong ties to specific homelands. They also act in the political realm in different ways relative to natives and draw support and information from different national and international networks.

This research adds to the body of knowledge on the institutional and cultural legacies of Sovietization. The research also highlights the importance of how national identity is defined in creating political opportunities for returned diasporans to enter homeland politics. While the case of diaspora impact on postcommunist Baltic politics may be rooted in a specific historical context, the more general impact of diasporas on politics in their homelands is a phenomenon with which not only academia but real politics will need to contend.

RETURNED DIASPORA, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

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To Elias –

Whatever you can dream, you can do.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The Singing Revolutions of 1988 to 1991 in the Baltic states of the Soviet Union were dramatic in both their overall peaceful nature and in their too-much-to-hope-for effects: the re-establishment of independent Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Much like the other revolutions that occurred in communist Europe and Eurasia, these revolutions were mass movements largely led by intellectuals and political elites who had been marginalized by or excluded from the dominant communist establishment. While the events in the Baltics mirrored events further to the west, where reform-minded communists were key to the eventual success of the independence movements and indeed, to the transitions toward democracy and market-based economies, the internal political and economic weaknesses of the Soviet Union along with citizens' increasing support for human rights and economic and political control over one's destiny contributed significantly to the success of the revolutions. A key aspect of the success of the Baltics has not been fully described and analyzed, that is, the contribution of Baltic diasporas on behalf of their native countries.

The Baltic diasporas, largely created as a result of the tumultuous period of the Second World War and, in particular, the inclusion of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, fought to keep their homeland cultures alive outside of their native lands and to push their host governments and the international community to remember and to support the plight for independence of the Baltic states. Very little has been done on this subject, except from the angle of the work of the diaspora themselves in their adopted countries

during the communist period.¹ In addition, the participation of all ethnic Balts² worldwide in the events that resulted in the regaining of independent in the Baltics states has been described, as well as analyzed to a certain extent.³ However, how these diasporas contributed to the political choices available and actions taken during the period from 1988 to full independence in 1991 and in the postcommunist period overall *as former members of the Baltic diasporas*, has not been addressed academically or otherwise. In particular, how these individuals may have or do differ in their political participation from Balts who stayed in the region begs to be documented and analyzed.

To this end, the dissertation looks at the phenomenon of diaspora political participation in their homelands by focusing on one aspect of diaspora homeland political action: returning to the homeland to hold political leadership positions. In other words, the dissertation looks at members of the diaspora who return to their actual (or constructed, in the case of the children and grandchildren of émigrés) home country and are involved in domestic and international politics from the vantage point as citizens of their home country or, in the vocabulary of this dissertation, homeland. In focusing on this phenomenon, I describe returned diaspora political leadership in Latvia and Lithuania (Estonia will be brought into the discussion only for specific examples and comparisons) and begin to analyze this understudied topic.

Furthermore, I analyze how national identity and individual experience interact in forming the basis for the opinions and actions of returned diasporans and what this means

1 Dreifelds, 1996; Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993; and Krickus, 1997, among others. A notable exception is passing mention in Shaw, 1989.

2 Throughout the dissertation, I use the term, “Balts,” as a shorthand way to signify individuals and group that define themselves as belonging to one (or more) of the ethnic groups native to the Baltic region.

3 Lieven, 1994; Karklins, 1994; Pabriks and Purs, 2001; Lane, 2001, among others.

for political leadership. The story of the Baltic diaspora's roles in the movements for independence in their native lands and in particular, the participation of Baltic diaspora in political leadership positions, also presents the opportunity to look at political leadership's relation to national and cultural identities. It is hoped that this research will both describe and explain aspects of the postcommunist political development of Latvia and Lithuania while also providing a better understanding of how, when and why diasporas get involved in the politics of their homelands.

Joining these themes, the research asks: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders ? This research is not looking into how diasporas act politically in their homelands while remaining in their adopted countries, as Lyons (2004), Shain (1999), Demetriou (1999), Anderson-Paul (1998), Winland (1998) and others have written on extensively. Rather, this research looks at the members of the diasporas coming back to rejoin the political communities of their homelands through active political leadership. The research and analysis seeks to isolate – to the extent possible – what factors account for the ability of returned diaspora to enter the political leadership in postcommunist environments and how they act – particularly vis-à-vis non-returned diasporans (or “natives”).

This chapter will lay out background for the central characters of the dissertation: returned diaspora political leadership in Latvia and Lithuania, as well as provide the rationale for the dissertation topic and an explanation of how the research was conducted. Before I launch into how the dissertation will unfold, however, the central players should be introduced and their story sketched out. It is members of the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas whose connections to their homelands were such that they returned to the

homelands after decades of exile to be active participants in the reconstruction of postcommunist politics. Their stories reflect characteristics common to diaspora identity and experience, as well as a connection to the homeland, and it is those commonalities that I discuss below.

The Baltic diasporas – uniquely common

The reasons that members of a diaspora return to their homelands – whether they themselves were born there or they are descendants of those who did – are both numerous and yet fairly easy to narrow down to one broadly generalizable reason. For the most part, members of a diaspora return once the conditions that prompted their departure no longer exist. This is, of course, assuming that the feeling of being tied to the homeland is strong enough that individuals from the homeland did not decide to leave because they no longer want to be an integral part of the country (or nation) in the first place. Additionally, their standard of living in their adopted country and what they can expect when they return to the homeland also has a direct bearing on whether to go back or to stay put.⁴

Maintaining strong connections to the homeland often requires sacrifices on the part of the diaspora, such as living in close-knit communities abroad, forming and maintaining language and cultural school and community organizations and intermarriage within the community (Ghosh, 2000; Kasbarian; 202; Sh uval, 1999; Winland, 1999). Yet, many of these “sacrifices” are also perceived as survival mechanisms (IBID): not only do they provide support and assistance to newcomers and more established

⁴ Ghosh, 2000; 9-18. There is surprisingly little literature on return migration and the book edited by Ghosh seeks to begin to address that gap.

individuals and families in the community but they allow for the community to keep alive their language, culture and everyday customs and keep at least some aspects of the familiar that they left in the homeland. Also, depending on their adopted countries' relationships with their homelands, direct communication may or may not be possible. In addition, having left the homeland at a certain point in time, aspects of culture, language and understanding of politics are held more static than if the individuals had remained in the country. This is true even in countries such as Latvia and Lithuania, where Russification policies sought to marginalize the local native languages.⁵ Even if a diaspora group or individual within the group goes to great lengths to retain many aspects of homeland culture, the very need to make a living in the adopted country takes precious time away from this endeavor.

The nature of the Baltic diaspora identity – especially as it was formed in the communist period – is often quite conservative due to ongoing attempts to retain ethnic traditions and identity outside of the homeland and the very nature of the regimes that “took over” their homelands and caused them to emigrate.⁶ Nonetheless, national identity dynamics within the diaspora can range between completely traditional and completely non-traditional as the diaspora must deal with competing values and practices from their home and adopted countries. In the case of Latvia and Lithuania, what was perceived by the diaspora to be a forced separation between themselves and their homelands because of the Soviet annexation of the countries as well as the very real

5 See Lane, 2001; Vardys and Sedaitis, 1997; Shtromas, in Smith, 1994; Misiunas and Taagapera, 1993; among others.

6 This is very similar to diaspora identity in general but specifically, including strong anti-communist sentiment and a deep sense of romantic-type nationalism.

threat of their homelands' extinction created extra resolve to retain their unique Baltic identities even while acculturating themselves to their adopted countries.

The Latvian and Lithuania diasporas, as stated above, share many characteristics with other diaspora groups worldwide as well as possess some unique qualities that will, of course, be described later in the dissertation. To start, it is important to examine the composition of the diasporas from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union at the end of World War Two. Economic, political, ideological, religious and social factors affected who decided to leave from the late 1930s to 1945 when the war ended. While all of these reasons do explain why such a large group of individuals left the occupied countries during this period, one demographic characteristic looms large: many of the people who left were members of various elites.⁷ This itself is not surprising as regime change – especially of such a dramatic nature as from liberal democracy to National Socialism and later communism and rule by the Soviets – by definition will bring about elite change. However, what is notable in the case of the Baltic diasporas during and immediately following World War Two is the extent to which members of all elites – social, political and economic – left their native lands or, if they did not leave voluntarily, found themselves deported to Siberia or killed by the occupying authorities.

The extreme violence of the war as experienced in the Baltic region saw thousands executed for various crimes against the occupying power – real and imagined (for the sake of instilling fear in the local population). Tens of thousands were deported into the interior of the Soviet Union to work camps (most often in Siberia and northern

⁷ Lane, 2001; Pabriks and Purs, 2001; Latvian Institute, www.latinst.lv; Senn, 1959.

Kazakhstan),⁸ while additional tens of thousands were executed by both the Nazis and the Soviets,⁹ and the once-thriving Jewish populations of the countries were almost completely erased by the occupying Nazis.¹⁰ Many thousands of Jews were also killed by local Balts during the chaotic interludes between occupations in 1941 for actual and wrongly perceived allegiance to the Soviets¹¹ while some actually joined the Soviets in their retreat from the Baltics at the invasion of the Nazis in 1941.¹² In all, from 1939 through the end of World War Two in 1945, the best estimate of the total population losses in Latvia and Lithuania – including emigration – are 30 percent and 15 to 20 percent respectively.¹³

All individuals with political sympathies that clashed with those of the occupying power and, in particular, seemed nationalist in action or even in thought, were targeted. While to the non-Jewish residents of the Baltics, the Nazis left a little more room for cultural and personal expression, both occupying powers looked at the Baltic regions as areas of conquest where the local populations were supposed to serve the larger interests of the occupying powers through providing labor, food and other resources, in particular for the war effort.

8 The Latvian Institute, www.latinst.lv; for Lithuania: best guess estimates in Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 354, as well as Lane, 2001; Pabriks and Purs, 2001; Dreifelds, 1996; Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993.

9 Best guess estimates in Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 354.

10 According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Web site, in 1935, Jews numbered 94,000 and 160,000 in Latvia (<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>) and Lithuania (<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>) respectively out of total country populations of 2,000,000 in Latvia and 2,950,000 in Lithuania as of 1939 (best guess estimates in Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 354) Approximately 90 percent of Jews in Latvia and Lithuania perished in World War Two. For the definitive account on Holocaust history in Latvia, see Ezergailis, Andrew. *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–1944: The Missing Center*. Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia, published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1996.

11 IBID.

12 Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 63. The authors also note a fact that is not well-known: Jews in Latvia and Lithuania were disproportionately affected by the Soviet deportations during the first Soviet occupation vis-à-vis the ethnic Balt groups.

13 Best guess estimates in Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 354

Teachers, professors, engineers, entrepreneurs and business owners, clergy and many other professionals left for fear of being rounded up for deportation to the gulags, to resettlement in the Far East or being killed for political “crimes.”¹⁴ Both occupying powers targeted elites because of the latter’s potential ability to organize the population to resist occupation and retain the experience and historical knowledge crucial to running the Baltic states as independent nation-states. As noted earlier in the chapter, by the close of the war, it is estimated that Latvia had lost between 300,000 and 600,000 people¹⁵ and Lithuania more than 600,000¹⁶ of its interwar population through emigration, deportations and killings. The high level of loss continued up through the death of Stalin in 1953 and into the 1960s.¹⁷

One of the effects of such devastation in terms of human and material resources and infrastructure was to leave the Baltic region with few individuals in the various elite groups that traditionally lead society. While this was not only devastating to the Baltic states in terms of resisting Soviet repression – ideological, political and economic – two large diaspora groups had been formed that now had to seek homes elsewhere and make the choice of whether to assimilate or hold out hope that someday they could return to their homelands.¹⁸

14 Lane, 61-62; Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993; Latvian Occupation Museum, http://www.occupationmuseum.lv/eng/about_us/welcome.html.

15 The Latvian Institute: http://www.latinst.lv/20th_century.htm#decline.

16 Best guess estimates in Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993: 354.

17 Lane, 2001; Plakans, 1995.

18 This is not to say that the mass exodus of elites from the Baltic states meant that all members of the elite left nor that the mass exodus did not allow for new, qualified individuals to rise up into the elite who perhaps would not have had such opportunities to do so previously. The creation of new elites occurred by both vertical promotion within the Baltic ethnic groups and horizontal rearrangement of non-ethnic Baltic elites from elsewhere in the Soviet Union. This latter type of elite change occurred most in Latvia while the former occurred in Lithuania to a greater extent than in either Latvia or Estonia.

Life in the diaspora and return to the homeland

The reality of the Cold War put these diasporas in an important position – at the vanguard of anti-communist sentiment in the West. Their personal experience with the horrors of communism as well the fascism of the German occupation gave them political knowledge that often made them highly patriotic in their adopted countries. The generally high level of education of the Latvian and Lithuanian post-World War Two diasporas meant that they had experience gained in the homeland that they could translate into skills needed in their new host countries or, at the least, prepare their children to not only be well integrated into their adopted host country societies but to excel in any numbers of fields. Last, the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas retained a keen interest in regaining independence for their homelands and from the beginning of their experience in the diaspora worked to keep this dream alive through individual and community activities.¹⁹ The interest in regaining independence for their homelands served as a highly effective unifying force in the diaspora community and was instrumental in helping to build support for many different types of community building initiatives.²⁰

Following the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, however, the clear rationale for presenting a united front against the communists was lost, as was the most persuasive reason against complete acculturation in the adopted country. At this point in time, a choice now faced the Baltic diaspora: return to the homeland, or lose one's unique Baltic identity and adopt that of the adopted country. In reality, however,

19 See Joint Baltic American National Committee, <http://www.jbanc.org/>; Lithuanian American Council, <http://www.altcenter.org/>; American Latvian Association, http://www.alausa.org/E53_History.htm; World Federation of Free Latvians, <http://www.pbla.lv/English.htm>; among others.

20 The various Latvian and Lithuanian associations worked to create language schools and camps, credit unions, lobbying groups, retirement homes and charity foundations, as well as organize cultural activities for the respective communities.

this choice was not as stark as one might assume as diasporas, in particular, are often remarkably adept at holding different and potentially even conflicting identities simultaneously. In the case of the Baltic diasporas, they had held dual/conflicting identities for the preceding 45 plus years and could seemingly continue to do so.

The national identity of diasporas, as will be discussed at length in the following chapter (and, indeed, throughout the dissertation) is closely tied to the hope for return to the homeland and for the reunification of the diaspora with the homeland community. During the time when individuals in the diaspora feel that they cannot return to the homeland, their identity as members of the diaspora is clear; however, when the possibility arises to return to the homeland and renounce one's diasporic identity, one's diasporic identity becomes more complex.

When diasporas return, they bring with them their experience living outside the homeland, including values, skills and relationships. As will be discussed in depth in the dissertation, the experiences and understanding of national identity that diaspora bring with them affect their political leadership. In addition, the specific skills and networks that diaspora often bring back with them as well as how these qualities affect the entrance of returned diaspora into homeland politics will also be described and analyzed.

The importance of the story

At this point, one still may ask how the seemingly narrow topic of diaspora political leadership in the postcommunist Baltic states can be linked with the larger themes of national identity, political opportunities and political leadership, particularly in the postcommunist period. To start, one assumes – and assumes correctly – that the

numbers of returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania and Latvia involved are small. Nevertheless, while the number of cases of in Latvia and Lithuania is rather small, the phenomenon itself is relatively common in many other countries worldwide. More recent examples of countries that have experienced return diaspora political leaders include Georgia, Iraq and Afghanistan among others, while older examples include Israel and Czechoslovakia.²¹

More specifically to the cases at hand, however, this research adds to the base of knowledge and analysis regarding how the political culture of Latvia and Lithuania were affected during the Soviet period. In particular, the dissertation analyzes the legacy of communism on how political leadership is understood by political leaders themselves and by the electorate. Many would agree that analysis of political leadership and postcommunist political development are important in and of themselves; therefore, analysis of diaspora involvement in political leadership can add value through a focused case study of small countries such as Latvia and Lithuania.²²

Second, much more research needs to be done on the legacies of the Sovietization and communization that lasted for 50 years in the Baltic states. One way to get at these legacies is to compare the political leadership of groups that have much in common except for their diaspora or non-diaspora status. In other words, how do returned diaspora political leadership act and what reasons they give for their actions as opposed to political leaders who never left their home countries and thus were never part of the

21 Eduard Shevardnadze, former president of Georgia; Iyad Allawi, current prime minister of Iraq; Hamid Karzai, president of Afghanistan; Menachem Begin, former prime minister of Israel who was born in Poland; and Tomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia.

22 See Higley, Kullberg and Pakulski, 1996; Dogan and Higley, 1998; Yoder, 1999; and Steen and Ruus, 2002, among others.

Baltic diasporas? In addition, there is much academic and public interest in elite continuation and change in the postcommunist period.²³ This dissertation adds data and provides some analysis on this subject.

Furthermore, analyzing the phenomenon of diaspora members returning to participate in the politics of Latvia and Lithuania may help to explain (in part) the success of democratic consolidation in the Baltic states vis-à-vis some other postcommunist states. The Baltic states, much like many other countries with relatively large diaspora populations, had supportive diasporas to help with the struggle to regain independence and then to begin the long process of rebuilding. Other postcommunist countries without significant numbers of diaspora members in their politics who had lived in democratic states are not witnessing the democratic success of the three Baltic states. However, one must assume that diaspora participation can be “good” or “bad” for building democratic institutions and practices, given the absence of research on this subject; therefore, how and when diasporas participate in democratic consolidation in their homelands will be analyzed only briefly.

A third reason that the topic of this dissertation is important is that it may shed light on international networks among political leaders because of the dual- or multinational identities of the political leaders being studied. In particular, the transnational and international networks that can be most helpful to leaders of democratizing countries – that is, multiple local, national, linguistic or religious networks – go beyond the official and therefore are not readily accessible to those who lack significant experience outside their home country. Not surprisingly, these networks are

23 Steen and Ruus, 2002; Gill, ed., 1998; Higley, Pakulski and Wesolowski, eds., 1998; Szelenyi and Szelenyi, 1995; Yoder, 1999; Baylis, 1994; Steen, 1997; among others.

the very ones that almost always stem from the multiple identities held by diaspora members as well as their significant experience. Individuals belonging to diasporas are uniquely situated to hold more than one local, national, linguistic and/or religious identity and thus have access to the networks associated with the identities. Therefore, as political leaders in democratizing homelands, former diaspora can have strong ties not only in their homeland countries and formal ties with international organizations (through their elected positions) but also have important networks at different levels in more established democracies, such as Canada or the U.S., which were often their host countries. These ties may be an advantage when it comes to getting what is needed for their countries in the international arena.

Last, the increasing mobility of individuals all over the world, as well as the increasing complexity of the political identities that individuals hold in many countries worldwide, makes analysis of the political impact of one type of mobile individual, that is, a diasporan, important in itself. While the case of diaspora impact on Baltic postcommunist politics may be rooted in a specific historical context, the more general impact of returned diasporans worldwide on politics in their homelands is a phenomenon with which not only academia but real politics will need to contend.

The research agenda

Now that the reasons buttressing the choice of research topic have been discussed, a more focused discussion of how the research and analysis will ensue is laid out. This research focuses on two of the three Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania, and brings in Estonia for specific comparisons. Estonia was not included as another case study because

after conducting initial research and analysis, it was determined that Estonia shares so many similarities with Latvia in this topic area that inclusion of Estonia in the dissertation would necessitate significant additional research and analysis while adding little additional value in terms of findings. This is not to suggest that the story of returned diaspora political leaders in Estonia does not merit research and analysis; rather, the inclusion of another country in the research and analysis would add more work than value at this point in time. Future research building on that done in this dissertation will most likely include Estonia as well as other postcommunist and potentially other countries outside of the region.

In the present research how and when returned diaspora entered political leadership in the countries is investigated and then compared across countries. Characteristics that differentiate returned diaspora individuals from ‘natives’ (shorthand for political leaders in the Baltic states who did not emigrate and then return) are highlighted and analyzed. In addition to comparing returned diaspora across the countries, the analysis includes an attempt to separate out the personal from the generalizable in the individual characteristics of the returned diaspora as political leaders.

Given the existing literature on postcommunist politics, diaspora political participation and national identity, I propose three hypotheses addressing the who, what, when, how and why questions about returned diaspora political leadership in the homeland. First, I hypothesize that returned diaspora will enter homeland politics when there are formal, institutional opportunities for them to do so. Furthermore, I hypothesize that returned diaspora political leaders combine political leadership skills and experience acquired in the diaspora with understandings of national identity, history and political

opinions learned in the homeland (directly or via the diaspora community). In other words, return diaspora display characteristics and perform actions that seem to be rooted in their experience and time abroad as well as rooted in their identity as members of diasporas with strong ties to specific homelands – those ties being homeland national identity.

Last, returned diaspora will act in the political realm in different ways relative to the non-returned diaspora (here, ‘natives’) and will draw support and information from different national and international networks. Not only will political beliefs, strategies and goals differ in relation to returned diaspora or native status but will differ concerning the “issue” at hand, be it citizenship laws or transparency in government.

These hypotheses stem from secondary research in books and articles as well as discussions with diaspora leaders in the U.S. and interviews with returned diaspora and others in the Baltics and in the U.S. over a two and a half year period. They also stem from certain assumptions that I have established through readings and analysis of postcommunist politics, democratic theory, the literature on elites and diaspora action. First of all, I assume that personal experience makes an impression on your political beliefs, strategies and goals.²⁴ This assumption is well-grounded in the political science and general social science literatures. In addition, I assume that access into the political elite or political leadership (I will use these two phrases interchangeably) is based on a variety of complex factors that include political institutions (e.g., parliament), the

24 See discussion of Hyman, *Political Socialization*; 1959; Bronfenbrenner, “Soviet Methods of Character Education”; 1962; and Volgyes, *Political Socialization in Eastern Europe*; 1975 in the 2002 article by Steen and Ruus for a good summary.

political sociology of the country (e.g., voting habits or media-legislature relationship) and personal factors (e.g., education or charisma).

There are also two main constants undergirding my research. First of all, the postcommunist political system is new to all involved. Even though concerted effort was made to make the postcommunist Lithuanian and Latvian political institutions and practices a continuation of those of the pre-communist independent states, some changes were necessary and unavoidable²⁵ and the existence of a 50+ year hiatus of independent and democratic statehood means that there is only limited experience with the interwar democracies. Second, the election or appointment process for political leaders is the same for diaspora and natives alike. In other words, the access of individuals to the political elites of Latvia and Lithuania is through formal politics (e.g., parliament or personal connections).

In order to address the research question and test the hypotheses that I have stated above, I have conducted research on how national identity and diaspora are defined and what their relationships are vis-à-vis Latvia and Lithuania. This is important because the meanings of national identity and diaspora remain hotly debated within the literature as well as in the political realm. In addition, the concepts need to be as clearly defined as possible to show how they are linked with returned diaspora political participation in the homeland.

Then, the research turns to an analysis of diaspora politicians in the countries, focusing on the factors that influenced their elections or appointments and how their

²⁵ One of the most notable changes is the increase in the threshold for inclusion of political parties in the parliaments. This was done in response to the popular belief that low thresholds during the interwar independence periods contributed significantly to parliamentary instability by including too many parties.

leadership may or may not differ from political leaders who did not come from the diaspora. This analysis stems from interviews conducted in spring and summer 2002, spring 2003 and fall 2004 with diaspora politicians (current and former), political scientists in the two countries and those abroad who are specialists in Baltic politics, members of diaspora political and cultural organizations, and government employees. The interviews were structured by a questionnaire but significant leeway was given to the interviewees to share personal narratives and/or to discuss perceptions concerning returned diaspora involvement in the politics of Latvia and Lithuania. These data were then analyzed and compared across the countries. Finally, I conclude the analysis with a discussion of what can be learned from these country cases and how this may be applied to other postcommunist cases as well as to countries in other regions where returned diaspora political participation in homeland politics is significant.

In conclusion, the main thesis of the research is: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders? Furthermore, do these differences hold across countries or are the factors country-specific, and are these differences important for understanding politics? It is hoped that this research will elucidate aspects of the postcommunist political development of the Baltic states and also provide a better understanding of how, when and why diasporas get involved in the politics of their homelands.

The next chapter discusses the various literatures on diaspora, political leadership in postcommunist politics, and national identity. Then, the research methodology is discussed, paying particular attention to case selection and the choice of interviewees. Then, the actual case studies are presented by drawing on field research and theoretical

analysis to describe each case and then compare them with each other. The two penultimate chapters compare first the return diaspora political leadership with that of native political leadership in each of the case countries. This is followed by a comparison of the returned diaspora across the countries in an attempt to better identify what is unique to the political environments of each country and what is unique to return diaspora/native difference in political leadership. The last chapter revisits what can be theorized about the interaction of diaspora, national identity and political leadership in general and what has been learned from the specific study of returned diaspora political leadership in the postcommunist Baltic states.

CHAPTER 2: Laying the Theoretical and Definitional Foundations

Introduction

One of the starting points of any research project is defining who are the actors, what are they doing and why. For topics that are new – such as the present one – problems of definition not only complicate the basic research design but also complicate how to root the research in the correct literature. In this chapter, the terms ‘diaspora’ and ‘returned diaspora’ will be defined. In addition, the literature that undergirds this research – literature on national identity and postcommunist politics (particularly, postcommunist political participation and leadership) will be discussed. Through this discussion, the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the current literature will be highlighted.

To properly analyze when, how and why individuals from the diaspora return to the homeland to participate in politics at the national level, one first must address how and why diasporas retain their sense of connection to their homelands. To this end, I begin with a discussion of national identity – the key connection linking diaspora and nation – and then follow with a fuller discussion of diaspora. In the social sciences literature, national identity has been defined both as a dynamic entity that is constantly changing and cannot be defined in one way for all people at any one time (Hobsbawm, 1983; Anderson, 1991; A. Smith, 1989; Brass, 1979) and as a concept or set of concepts rooted in a past shared among individuals in a definable group.²⁶ These competing definitions have created much debate in academia that is still unresolved. Of particular

²⁶ For a review of much of the seminal literature on nationalism, and by extension, national identity, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds. (1994) *Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press. For a review of the more recent literature, see Ross Poole. (1999) *Nation and Identity*. New York: Routledge, among others.

importance to this dissertation, however, are two aspects of the national identity debate: 1) the mobilizational potential of national identity and 2) the ability of individuals to hold more than one national identity at the same time.

Prevailing in the literature is the understanding of national identity as comprised of both concrete and intangible components that tie national identity to nationalism but do not make it hostage to the mobilizational challenges faced by the latter.²⁷ In other words, national identity exists passively in the sense that one is almost always “born into it” and actively in the sense that participation within the nation and recognition of membership in it is crucial to ongoing identification with the nation, i.e., continued holding of the national identity (Brass, 1983). National identity also differs in its definition depending on who or what is defining it and for what reason (Gellner, 1983; Lijphart, 1977). Nationalism, by contrast, exists to mobilize a group (or groups) around an existing nation or draws them together to attempt to create one (Kedourie, 1960; Anderson, 1991). In the current analysis of national identity’s relationship to diaspora – particularly in Latvia and Lithuania – analysis of the concrete and less tangible components of the national identity debate should help to elucidate the interplay between diaspora and national identity.

Largely missing from this discussion, however, has been the impact of various external influences, beyond that which comes from outside groups or other nation (-states) on national identity. Specifically, the literature has, on the whole, neglected to

27 Identity – particularly political and civic – is an increasingly salient concept in political discourse that still has not been adequately defined (Anderson, 1991; Demetriou, 1999; among others). International migration, globalization and democratization all impact how identity is defined (Anderson, 1991; King, 1998; Demetriou, 1999; Shuval, 1999; Heisler, 2000). In scholarship on the subject, debates over group, national and state identities are intense (Karklins, 1994; Brubaker 1996; Shain, 1999; Telhami and Barnett, 2002).

discuss and analyze the influence of individuals outside the territorial boundaries of the nation – but emotionally and ethnically within it, that is, the diaspora of a certain nation vis-à-vis the larger national identity construction discussion. The exceptions to this have been descriptions and analyses of specific diasporic groups such as Jews, Armenians, Tibetans and a few other groups that have mobilized through modern state politics to get international recognition and subsequent support for their “national homelands.” However, before I turn to a review of the literature on diaspora and national identity, a more complete review of the literature on national identity is warranted.

The literature now largely agrees that nationalism – and its attendant national identity – is a modern phenomenon that is intricately tied to the development of the modern state (Gellner, 1983), mass literacy (Brass, 1983) and capitalism (Hobsbawm, 1990). While this was not always the case (particularly the 19th but also the first half of the 20th centuries debated the primordial versus the constructed nature of nationalism and national identity) this is not the forum in which to further debate the origins of and, indeed the development of, the concepts of nationalism or national identity. Rather, the following discussion serves to lay out the necessary literature by which to understand the complexity of national identity formation and its perpetuation/reconstruction as well as the important connection of this concept to diaspora, which is itself central to the current study.

As mentioned above, national identity is differentiated from nationalism in that it is focused on the individual and, as such, is a means for the individual to link him- or herself to the nation and to define the nation in more individual terms. This focus on the individual in national identity is key to its relationship with diaspora as individuals in the

diaspora retain membership in – or at the least, connection to – the nation, through national identity as they are, by definition, outside of the spatial confines of the nation and (to a great extent) the reach of their homeland state and its nationalizing characteristics (e.g., national media) (Heisler, 2001). Even more important, individuals in the diaspora are exposed to the nationalizing means of their host/adopted state and, as such, must try to actively retain connections to their homeland state and/or withdraw to as great an extent as possible in order to retain their homeland national identity (Shain, 1999; Winland, 1999; Tölölyan, 2002).

An additional characteristic of nationalism and national identity that needs to be ascertained when discussing Latvia and Lithuania is its liberal or illiberal nature. Drawing on their interwar pasts, the national identities and nationalisms of Latvia and Lithuania exhibit both liberal aspects and illiberal ones. While both have crafted constitutions and other political institutions that are open to all citizens and that have the law as the final arbiter, Latvia and to a lesser extent Lithuania have crafted polities that reflect ethnic-based nation-states rather than liberal civic-states. As discussed elsewhere in the dissertation, Latvia crafted citizenship policies in such a way as to protect the “Latvian-ness” of the state and the country while Lithuania felt little threat to the state’s ethnic identity as Lithuanians are in the overwhelming majority. At the same time, however, both states do enshrine the rights of the individual in their laws and, for the most part, in practice, particularly in protecting the rights of minorities.

An interesting aspect of the literature on national identity construction and perpetuation is the importance of the role played by elites (Kedourie, 1960; Hobsbawm, 1990; Brass, 1983; Gellner, 1983; among others). This is of particular interest for the

current study as the vast majority of the émigrés from the Baltics during and following World War Two were members of the social, political and economic elites of their countries and, as such, could be predicted to be very interested in keeping alive the national identities of their occupied homelands. As Latvian and Lithuanian national identities only really emerged as modern concepts in the late 19th century and were only transformed into aspects of modern nation-states following World War One, the importance of a shared language cannot be underestimated. As Poole notes,

Part of the secret of national identity lies in the emergence of vernacular print languages, their spread through large numbers of the population, and their coming to play a privileged role in public and private life. As these languages formed the identities of those who lived in a particular region, they provided the foundation for a shared sense of belonging to the same community. (Poole, 68)

As the discussion shifts to focus on the diaspora literature, it should be noted that the important roles played by elites in national identity construction and reconstruction is also key to the self-definition and perpetuation of diasporas.

The literature on diaspora – myths, realities and debate

On the one hand, the literature on diaspora is vast and runs through the social sciences and the humanities. On the other hand the very breadth of the literature, nevermind the numerous definitions and uses of the concept of diaspora, as well as the relatively recent attempts to move beyond description to analyze the concept of diaspora itself make any review of “the literature” difficult at best. To start, for lack of a better way to describe the Balts outside of their “homelands,” I have chosen to use the terms diaspora and occasionally, émigré, but exile only a few times. Why I have chosen to do this will be discussed more completely in the methods chapter. However, in using the

concept of diaspora, I am seeking to describe the individuals, here, the ethnic Latvian and Lithuanian ones, who left their homelands – or are descendents of those who did – but retained strong ties to the homeland, particularly a hope to once again return. As such, the Lithuanian and Latvian diasporas are but some of the more recent diasporas in modern history and are not wholly unique. Never the less, they make for a good case study for beginning to analyze the political activity of diasporans who return to their homelands.

Throughout history, groups have left or been forced out of their homelands. For many, the expulsion of the Jewish people from the lands of ancient Israel marked the first such group that could call itself a diaspora. There are a variety of perspectives from which to define diaspora apart from its historic reference to the Jewish people, however. Since the present discussion is focused on diaspora political leadership in the homeland, a clear understanding of diaspora and of a diaspora's ties of national identity is necessary. The following short discussion should help to define these key concepts.

Much has been written debating the appropriate and useful definition(s) of diaspora, resulting in theoretical ambiguity. But, if one understands the concept of “diaspora” as both a dynamic entity and identity, with characteristics that may be evident at one time while not at another, the concept can help to emphasize the effects (in this paper, the political ones) of diasporas, rather than dwell on static – and therefore less helpful for the present discussion – definitional problems.

There are a variety of different characteristics that scholars focus on and a discussion of these is also helpful to the present research. Some scholars downplay the role that nation-states have in the creation or denial of diaspora identity. Shuval writes:

Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland. Diaspora is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements – all of which play a role in establishing a diaspora reality.²⁸

While I would agree with Shuval that from the perspective of members of a particular group, these characteristics (at least most of them) must exist for a diasporic identity to be desired and to take hold in a group – as well as for external individuals and groups to recognize that diasporic identity – her marginalization of the important role of domestic and international politics in the creation and sustenance of diasporas weakens her argument as a whole. Diasporas exist both because of internal group cohesion *and* external identification; to a great extent, one without the other weakens overall claims for diasporic status.

An additional component of diaspora that does seem to be necessary is that somehow, members of the diaspora were “forced” to leave the homeland at some point in time. By “forced,” one can mean as a result of war or impending war, famine, persecution based on ethnicity or religion or grinding poverty – all create conditions where options for survival seem more and more limited and emigration looks best. This is important because it highlights that members of the diaspora did not willingly leave the homeland and that many would like to return. This desire to “return” seems to be an integral component of diaspora, though many would argue that whether or not the desire is grounded in reality is debatable.²⁹

28 Shuval, 25.

29 As Terrence Lyons writes in “Diasporas and Homeland Conflict,” “[h]olding on to the myth of return provides a justification for the perpetuation of the diaspora and its organizational structure and leadership. Without the potential for return questions of assimilation would be more difficult to escape and pressure for institutional change harder to resist.” (Lyons, 8)

To retain group cohesion, diasporas keep alive the story of how and why they had to leave the homeland. While the dynamics involved in how a group of people became a “diaspora” are important, feeding into the dynamics of what diaspora identity means to various people or what diaspora status can or cannot accomplish, this characteristic alone does not separate authentic diasporas from inauthentic ones – or diasporas from ethnic groups or minorities, however. Knowing how a group came to define itself (or be defined by others) as a diaspora can do much to explain a group’s relationship to its homeland and its own identity as a diaspora. But the means and timing of a group’s transformation into a diaspora must be regarded as *a process*, where emphasis is placed on the dynamic, not static, nature of diaspora. In addition, by looking beyond the “expulsion narrative” of a diaspora, attempts by one diaspora to try to out-do the story of another are marginalized.

Diasporas are also defined by their interest in retaining ties to the homeland that go beyond the familial and the sentimental to include politics, culture and economics. Similarly, diasporas are transnational – as opposed to ethnic groups – as they actively seek to maintain relationships with the homeland as well as other parts of the diaspora who reside in other nation-states. Yet, the nature of the ties between the homeland and its diaspora(s) still vary as discussed below by Shain.

States and regimes adopt different postures toward their diasporic communities, which vary significantly according to: the national ethos of the country of origin; official and societal perception of emigration in general; reliance on the economic investments of diaspora members and emigrant remittances; the makeup of the diaspora (emigrants, refugees, or exiles) and its general attitude toward the home regime; the political role assigned by the home regime (or its opposition) to the voice of the diaspora in domestic or international affairs of the home country; citizenship laws (*ius sanguinis* vs. *ius soli*) and especially the possibility of holding dual citizenship. All these factors may be in flux, changing according to the transformation of the home country’s regime, interests, and national self-

perception; the material and political position of the diaspora abroad; the ways the home regime feels it can exploit and mobilize the diaspora's status and organizations; and the availability of symbolic and material means that enable home states to intervene in the life of their overseas population and enforce their will abroad. (Shain, 2000; 662)

To wrap up this brief discussion of how best to define the concept of diaspora, I turn to the work of Tölölyan, a diaspora specialist who is one of the few scholars who has made a clear distinction between what constitutes an “ethnic group” as opposed to a “diaspora.” He defines three differentiating characteristics. First, the group wants to “preserve a collective identity” over an extended period of time (more than two generations, for example) outside of the homeland. Second, “diasporas maintain significant sentimental and material ties with their homelands....Diaspora communities, particularly leadership or representative bodies, look to the building and cultivation of relations with their homeland at a public level, too.”³⁰ Finally, diasporas organize their communities to be able to provide social, economic, cultural and political support to its members, unlike ethnic groups whose collective action is usually limited to (infrequent) social and cultural activities. I think that this is the most helpful definition for the present research because it provides criteria to differentiate diasporas from regular groups of emigrants and helps to put focus on the potential for political action on the part of diasporas.

Tying national identity and diaspora together theoretically

In the 20th century, numerous diasporas have been formed through war, disease, natural disaster and political change. Until fairly recently, however, members of

30 Demetriou, 19.

diasporas have not been able to retain many (if any) formal aspects of their previous political, social and even economic identities. They were either forced to self-segregate in an attempt to retain their linguistic, ethnic/racial, cultural and/or religious uniqueness or were forced to succumb to pressures to assimilate to their adopted homes. Conversely, they were forever labeled as minorities in the host country and were thus unable to either assimilate or forced to self-segregate. The range from self-segregation to assimilation has exhibited itself in different ways at different times worldwide. In addition, “local” beliefs concerning the (im)mutability of cultural/ethnic/racial/religious groups have had direct bearing on how diasporas act and react: in some countries non-titular groups have been marked as permanent visitors with limited rights while in others, assimilation has and still can take place rather quickly through the acquisition of language or religion or, at the least, by following basic cultural norms in public.

At the same time, individuals and groups have ties to their homelands that manifest themselves as language and culture, among others, that they retain through informal family activities and more formal group or community ones. Language can be oral only and used primarily inside the home or it can be a “living” language that is taught to children at “Saturday School” and reinforced by community newspapers, radio and television programming and public gatherings in the language.³¹ Religion has often been a focal point for diaspora communities, as it often incorporates culture, language and history into definable activities and beliefs that translate into recognizable identities.

31 Latvian and Lithuanian “Saturday Schools” as well as camps, much like those of other immigrant and diaspora groups in the U.S. and other host countries, provide for education about the homeland in the groups’ native tongues. In the U.S. and other immigrant nations in the West, holding the school on Saturday reflects a dual interest: allowing for education in the host country system Monday through Friday as well as education about the homeland and its culture on the weekend – in effect, an interest in creating two national identities.

As the strength of both the modern state and the global market increased, there was greater pressure to retain or take on only one national identity that would be both the formal and informal predominant identity of the individual. In this way, which formal identity (or identities) to retain and/or obtain was not often a choice given to many members of diasporas prior to the second half of the 20th century. Indeed, even now, formal political identities of all kinds are not clearly defined for many worldwide or where they are fairly clearly defined local and/or temporal understandings of those formal identities may inhibit or even prevent true choice in retaining and/or obtaining formal political identity. In other words, citizenship and whether linked or not, other sub- or transnational identities, are not as clearly defined worldwide as international relations theory would predict.³² One only needs to look at the case of the Kurds in the Middle East to see that formal citizenship and national identity do not always coincide nor can one be necessarily erased by adoption – forced or voluntary– of another. While a formal Kurdish nation-state has never existed, Kurdish national identity does exist both within countries such as Iraq and Syria as well as across national borders, as seen between Turkey and Syria. The Kurdish people have often defined themselves as separate from their neighbors while at the same time the nation-states in which the Kurds reside have acknowledged their different-ness and sought to erase it.³³ To this end, Kurds have taken

32 Among others, Hosu, in a conference paper titled, “Identity politics and narrativity,” states that “[since] the late 1980s, interest in identity has surged in the field of International Relations (IR)...However, the general focus on identity has not led to an agreement on how it should be approached. The very concept of identity has been contested and different IR theories have featured different arguments with regards to identity. Neo-realists (e.g., Posner, 1993a, 1993b; Van Evera, 1994; Kaufmann, 1996; [and Telhami and Barnett, 2002]) and neo-liberalists (e.g., Keohane, 1989) have aimed at integrating the concept of identity into their explanations of ethnic and nationalist sub-state conflicts and international co-operation, respectively, without revising the idea of the constitutive unit, that is, without theorizing the construction, re-articulation and transformation of identities.” (Hosu, 2003; 3-4)

33 Kurds predominantly live in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Each of these countries has sought different strategies to assimilate the Kurds into the culture of the titular nation of their countries; most of these

on the formal national identities associated with the nation-states in which they reside – whether voluntarily or by force – while at the same time, held onto and fostered separate sub-national and transnational identities based on their Kurdish identity.³⁴

As dual and multiple identities gain legitimacy through formal recognition (e.g., via citizenship or formal minority status) or at least informal acknowledgement that they exist, how to define national identity becomes ever more challenging. In this climate, diasporas can assume greater political impact than they have had previously as they can formally participate in their homeland societies while still retaining other identities.³⁵ In a world that is increasingly characterized by massive voluntary and involuntary international migration and broader – and more fluid – definitions of political participation, the influence of diasporas on the politics of their homelands is growing (King and Melvin, 1998; Demetriou, 1998; Shain, 1999).

Political leadership in postcommunist space

Before launching into a review of the literature on postcommunist political elites, some mention needs to be made of postcommunism itself. The very definition of postcommunist politics is debated, i.e., what it is, its duration, its key characteristics, its legacy are but a few of the main debates.³⁶ For the purposes of this dissertation, the

strategies have been highly coercive. For a general discussion on this issue, see Tim Judah, *Survival*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Winter 2002-03); 39-51. The International Institute for Strategic Studies and, for more in-depth references, see Meho, Lokman I., ed. “The Kurds and Kurdistan: a selective and annotated bibliography” in *Peace Research Abstracts Journal*, Vol. 36; No. 5 (October 1, 1999), at <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp>.

34 IBID.

35 Winland, 1998; Shain, 1989, 1999; Anderson-Paul, 1998, among others.

36 For a good discussion of these and other pertinent analyses of postcommunism, see Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed. (1999) *The Revolutions of 1989*. New York: Routledge, as well as *Beyond Post-*

legacies of communism are the most important to discuss – and to discuss in direct relation to political leadership in the postcommunist Baltic states. In addition, pertinent literature on elite change and continuity will also be discussed.

The legacy of communism can be seen at many levels from the individual and the psychological (Isaac, 1999) to the political and institutional (Crowley, 2004; Kreuzer and Pettai, 2003; Verdery, 1999) and the cultural (Jowitt; 1999; Tamas, 1999). An important aspect of the legacy of communism as well as a key component of the topic of my research is elite change and continuity. The extent of the change varied significantly across Central and Eastern Europe, with the least change occurring where the regime change was built on “roundtable” discussions and societal consensus (e.g., Hungary) and most dramatic where there were strict lustration laws or newly created national boundaries (e.g., the GDR and Latvia). An in between case would be Poland, where the communist party negotiated with the opposition to hold competitive elections and then lost power. There was elite continuity in all the countries affected by the communist collapse but in some countries, notably former Soviet republics in Central Asia and Belarus, elite continuity so overwhelmed any change in political (and other societal) elite circles as to be almost non-existent.

To back up a bit, the literature on political elites is broad and deep. Due to the nature of this research, the literature on elite change and continuity is most appropriate, as well as literature on how values and experience affect political elite behavior. To start, I use the following definition of political elites in this research:

Communist Studies: Political Science and the New Democracies of Europe by Terry D. Clark (2002), among others.

By *political elites* we refer only to holders of strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements, including dissident ones, who are able to affect national political outcomes regularly and significantly. (Higley et al, 15)

This definition does not differ dramatically from those of Pareto, Mill, Mosca and other early theorists of the power hierarchy in the modern age whose work focused on conceptualizing elites and the ruling class(es).³⁷ Of particular interest to the current study, however, Pareto discussed the “circulation of elites,” a concept that has thus far proven true in much of the postcommunist world. The degree to which elites from the communist period have retained their elite status but shifted position within the elite (e.g., from communist *apparachik* to business tycoon) has varied significantly but the very continuity of elites has been notable to say the least.³⁸ However, if one subscribes to Michels (1915) “iron law of oligarchy” then the seeming high level of continuity is not so surprising as it is interesting in how individual members of various elites were successful in retaining their status during the chaos of the collapse of the communist systems and the initial phases of democratization or continued institutional anomie.

Many scholars of elite change claim that crisis precipitates elite change, though the nature of the crisis and its severity, as well as other important factors that will be discussed here, determine its extent. Dogan and Higley, two specialists of elite change, write that in general,

[crises] involve sharp confrontations among political elites, and they often produce changes in elite composition and functioning that are manifested by new or significantly altered regimes. Especially in moments of crisis, political leaders and elites possess significant autonomy and latitude for maneuver. The choices they make at such moments are frequently decisive for the outcomes of crises and for the regimes that follow. (Dogan and Higley, 3)

37 See Shlapentokh and Vanderpool in “Introduction,” *The New Elite in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.; 1999, for a good review of the development of elite theory.
38 IBID as well as Dogan and Higley, 1998, and Steen and Ruus, 2002, among others.

Political leadership in postcommunist politics in Latvia and Lithuania has exhibited characteristics of continuity with communist era politics and elites as well as the expected change throughout the political environment. In terms of continuity, the regaining of independence of Latvia and Lithuania meant that Soviet institutions were done away with virtually overnight. In their place were put largely pre-Soviet Latvian and Lithuanian political institutions for reasons of expediency (neither new nor previous political institutions can be created overnight) and as symbols of national continuity, that is, tangible proof that the individual nation-states had not ceased to exist but rather had been on an externally forced hiatus.³⁹ To staff all of the various sub-units of the newly re-established political institutions meant that trained personnel from the Soviet era had to be retained if they met the new citizenship criteria and as long as they had not been too complicit in the prior Soviet regime.⁴⁰ Given the lack of a definitive answer regarding whether or not what occurred in Eastern Europe in 1989 through 1991 were revolutions,⁴¹ it is difficult to hypothesize how much elite change should or should not have taken place. In addition, as Dogan and Higley note:

The extent of elite replacement depends, additionally, upon similarities and differences between the old and the new regime: if both are authoritarian or both are democratic – what Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) call “within type” regime transitions – the replacement is likely to be less substantial than in “out of type” transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes or vice versa. (Dogan and Higley, 17)

39 For example, the numbering of the Latvian parliament, the *Saiema*, and the Lithuanian national anthem, both reflect a continuation with the independent interwar republics.

40 As of February 2005, there was significant angst in Lithuania regarding the recent discovery by a government-appointed scholar that a number of current Lithuanian political leaders were in the KGB reserves during the communist period. While formal lustration has been rather limited in Lithuania, the question of individual complicity with the Soviet regime is still being debated.

41 See Tismaneanu and Antohi, eds., *The Revolutions of 1989*, for a good discussion of this question and others concerning the events in Eastern Europe in 1989.

The dramatic change that was expected by both the public and intellectuals did occur but was in fact both more and less dramatic than had been expected. The re-establishment of independent nation-states enabled the mass publics and the provisional elites of each country to define who could aspire to elite status in the future. Latvia's strict citizenship law based citizenship on having held citizenship during the independent interwar republic or being a direct descendent of such a person. This effectively barred many communist era political elite from retaining their positions, or indeed, their status as political elite as well as blocked would be political elite who were not to be given citizenship from aspiring to political elite membership. Conversely, Latvia's citizenship law enabled ethnic Latvians outside of the country to gain (or, more rightly, re-establish) Latvian citizenship and thus put themselves in possible contention for membership in the political elite. In addition, the fact that so many of Latvian's communist era political elite were not ethnically Latvian provided a greater political opening for political "outsiders" to attempt entrance into the political elite when Latvia again became an independent, democratic nation-state.⁴²

In Lithuania, the composition of the communist era political elite was somewhat different. Though Communist Party membership was not as high as in Estonia,⁴³ a greater proportion of the political elite was ethnically Lithuanian.⁴⁴ This dynamic, plus the fact that Lithuania established its citizenship law on the basis of *jus solis* (for the most part) meant that there was less change in political elite composition in the early

42 Approximately 39 percent of Communist Party members were ethnic Latvians at the end of the Soviet period (Hoyer and Vihalemm, 1993, in Pabriks and Purs, 2001; 49). This was one of the lowest percentages of titular nationality membership in the republic-level communist parties of the Soviet Union.

43 Steen and Ruus, 2001.

44 Lane, 2001; 102-106.

postcommunist years. While former high level Communist Party political leaders were initially “punished” electorally for their previous status and actions, Lithuania later went on to be the first (soon it would become clear that it was not the last) postcommunist country to vote former Soviet era Communist Party leaders and the party itself back into power in late November 1992.

Also, while the composition of the political elite did undergo significant change at the highest levels in Latvia and Lithuania, at the lower levels and among the administrative and business elite, change was significantly less.⁴⁵ Many think that this is due to citizenship and lustration laws as former political elite members found it most advantageous to move “horizontally” into the administrative and business elite when they could no longer remain part of the political elite and those already part of the business and administrative elites at the end of the communist period found that their skills and experience – particularly networks built up during the communist period – would be helpful in the postcommunist era. In addition, unlike the postcommunist political arena, one’s political past was not of foremost concern and therefore former communist party elite could retain their elite status (Steen and Ruus, 2001). Last, given the relatively old average age of communist political elite, fairly soon after communism collapsed horizontal regime change and the inclusion of new members at the very highest levels was mostly replaced by “vertical continuity” (that is, elite replacement by promotion from within the ranks of elite-creating organizations such as the bureaucracy) as described below.

45 Higley, Kullberg and Pakulski. (1996) “The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites” in *The Journal of Democracy*, 7.2 (1996), 133-147. Also, see Lane; Pabriks and Purs; among others.

One may conclude that, with a few exceptions, “horizontal continuity” never was prominent in the political sector. After a short period of substantial elite change in the post-independence [Estonian] parliament, “vertical continuity” for a period appeared the common pattern. The composition of the last parliament indicates a substantial shift among political generations. (Steen and Ruus, 236)

One of the core issues in the change versus continuity debate is how political socialization figures into political action on the part of political elites. Specifically, when and how does political socialization affect elite political action and can this socialization be changed? If, as this dissertation contends, the political socialization experienced by members of the Baltic diasporas figures prominently in their political beliefs and actions, then members of the communist era political elite also continue to possess political beliefs and to act politically in ways that stem from their political socialization under the communist system. But, some contend that former communist era elites can be resocialized to accept and act on democratic values and, in fact, that this resocialization process is crucial for democratic consolidation to take place.⁴⁶

It is clear that elite change and continuity is a key facet of the larger discussion of returned diaspora political leadership. How returned diaspora political leaders have participated in homeland political elite change and continuity is analyzed further throughout the rest of the dissertation.

Returned diaspora, elites and the postcommunist landscape– bringing it together

As previously discussed, diaspora political participation is based in large part on the retention of the national identity that lies at the root of diasporic identity. In the

⁴⁶ See Yoder, 1999, as well as Steen and Ruus, 2001 for more discussion of this issue.

particular case of postcommunist national identity, the potential political role of the diaspora was heightened as diaspora members gained access to direct political participation in the homeland after the collapse of the communist regimes. However, in the case of dramatic regime change – such as that which occurred in the Baltic states – while the diaspora is welcomed back into the now independent nation-state for their previous commitment to retaining the identity of the home country abroad, democratic experience from some of their adopted countries and relative wealth, the native population may question the commitment of the diaspora to the nation (if they left it to prosper somewhere else) or feel that the diaspora has become too different during their time “among foreigners.” Thus, the dynamics between the diaspora and the native populations are potentially volatile and are marked by periods of agreement and discord due to differing conceptions of their current roles in the nation and what they think those roles should be.⁴⁷

Regime change creates openings for various changes in elites in a society (Burton and Higley, 1987; Szelenyi, Wnuk-Lipinski and Trelman, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Steen and Ruus, 2002). In the case of the collapse of the communist regime in the Baltic states and the crafting of a particular set of laws and social understandings, particular openings were created for members of the diaspora to return to their homelands and try to get back into or join for the first time the political elite. In the absence of such dramatic regime change, the openings for the entrance of returned diaspora on the political scene would have likely been much smaller as the political elite could have adapted over time to change itself and to change its recruitment patterns.

⁴⁷ See Shain, 1989, as well as Anderson-Paul, 1998.

However, political participation is made possible by political actors capitalizing on political opportunities (Tarrow, 1994; Tismaneanu, 1998). In the present cases, the end of communism and the regaining of independence for Latvia and Lithuania created clear political opportunities. Political opportunities are both structural and cultural, thus affecting political actors differently in different contexts (Ibid). Citizenship is often needed for individuals to have the right to formally participate in the politics of a country. While citizens and non-citizens alike hold interests, and seek to create and take advantage of existing political opportunities to further those interests, it is only through such formal rights of citizenship as voting, being able to hold elected office, and the right to own land (a right which is often – though not always – tied to citizenship), among others, that individuals can impact the politics of a country to the greatest extent.

In the past decade and a half, new theories such as those by Higley, Kullberg and Pakulski (1996), Yoder (1999), and Steen and Ruus (2002) discussed here have found that neither early socialization nor institutional design completely determine the outcomes vis-à-vis elites when there is a sudden change of regime. Instead, they have found that while there will be more elite change when there is more radical regime change, overall, elites (as many past elite theorists have concluded) are skilled in retaining their elite status in a variety of ways. Therefore, as analysis of the interviews will show, in the case of postcommunist Latvia and Lithuania, both concepts of change and continuity describe post-Soviet Baltic elite configurations.

An important gap in the literature that remains, however, is concerned with the motivations of individuals in the diaspora to get involved in politics in the homeland. While it is clear that being an active participant in the diaspora means that one has

significant ties to the homeland and its national identity, it is also the case that many in the diaspora hold onto the *myth* of return rather than work towards and plan for *actual* return. Why do some in the diaspora seek to attain political leadership positions in the homeland while most others do not? It is hoped that this dissertation will provide some data and analyses to fill this gap in part.

One of the major thrusts behind my questions of return diaspora political leaders and the others that I interviewed had to do with why and how they had returned to the homeland and become involved with politics at such a high level. While almost uniformly the interviewees cited a feeling of obligation to support and to help to develop “the nation” – especially vis-à-vis creating a vibrant democratic culture and strong democratic institutions – many also saw returning to the homeland and getting involved in political leadership as a (fantastic) professional opportunity for in the first postcommunist political decade. A few return diaspora political leaders themselves came from political families, that is, their fathers, grandfathers, uncles or other relatives were involved in political leadership at various levels in the interwar republics. Other return diaspora political leaders had developed political and/or leadership skills while in the diaspora that they thought would be beneficial to the newly independent countries.

The literature in which diaspora, national identity and postcommunist political elites are rooted is broad and of varying depths. Of particular concern for this project is how these three subjects can best be defined in order to show not only how they interact but to show patterns in the cases of Latvia and Lithuania and hopefully possible patterns for the interaction of diaspora, national identity and political leadership in other settings.

Now the dissertation turns to a discussion of the methodology that undergirds the research before setting the stage for analysis through the laying out of the case studies of Latvia and Lithuania.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Overview

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology of the dissertation. I begin by discussing the phenomena that were observed for which I could not seem to recognize clearly identifiable causes and hence, I decided deserved closer observation, description and analysis. Then, the research question and the rationale for asking such a question are laid out. This is followed by a summarization of the research topic and an explanation of how the research is rooted in the literature of diaspora, political elites and national identity. From this follows my hypotheses and a brief discussion of the assumptions as well as variables that I am attempting to hold constant in order not to bias my research results. Then, the chapter turns to a discussion of the methods used for data collection as well as a description of how the data were interpreted. The chapter concludes with a discussion of possible critiques of the research design and a defense against them.

As discussed in the previous chapters, this research looks at the phenomenon of diaspora political participation in their homelands through focusing on one aspect of diaspora homeland political action, namely: diaspora returning to the homeland to hold political leadership positions. Specifically, the research asks: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders? Furthermore, do returned diaspora act differently or similarly across countries or are their beliefs and actions rooted solely in specific country environments and history?

This research focuses on two of the three Baltics states, Latvia and Lithuania, to analyze the above questions as each country has witnessed significant diaspora participation in national political leadership as well as shares other characteristics that contribute to making the research a similar case design. The decision was made not to include Estonia as one of the cases (as briefly discussed earlier in the dissertation) because its numerous similarities with Latvia meant the significant additional work of including it would not yield significant enough research findings. However, examples from Estonia are included throughout the dissertation when appropriate and valuable. In the research, returned diaspora political leadership in the countries is explored and then compared across countries. This is done through in-depth interviews and secondary source materials.⁴⁸ To facilitate the analysis of when and why returned diaspora political leaders act or hold the opinions that they do in the political realm, returned diaspora individuals are compared with ‘natives’ in an indirect way. Then, the returned diaspora political leaders from each country are compared with each other in an attempt to separate out the personal from the generalizable in the characteristics of the returned diaspora as political leaders.

Genesis of the topic

I arrived at this research topic as a result of observing phenomena for which I did not have – nor could find – full explanations. The clearest example of this was the high number of returned diaspora individuals who have participated in Baltic politics since the

⁴⁸ As a supplement to the information drawn from the interviews and included throughout the dissertation, the biographies of four returned diaspora political leaders – two from each country being studied – can be found following the bibliography. It is hoped that these short bios will give the reader a better grounding in the types of personal histories the returned diaspora bring with them to their political leadership.

late 1980s. The questions that first came to mind were: Why is this the case? Why are these diasporans returning? Why were or are returned diasporans becoming political leaders – and how did this happen? Following these observations, academics and diaspora organization leaders outside of the Baltics told me about the seemingly different political goals and strategies used by returned diaspora as compared to “natives.” While this information was anecdotal, it never the less created a sort of pattern that begged greater attention and analysis.

Last among the factors that led me to conduct research on returned diaspora in Baltic politics is the clear use of adopted country networks by returned diaspora political leaders to attain political ends – networks that are not readily available (if at all) to native political leaders. This knowledge stemmed from my own prior research on diaspora organizations in the U.S. as well as the research of others on topics such as remittances (Labaki, 1989; Shain, 1999; Ghosh, ed., 2000, as well as World Bank and USAID working papers), lobbying for specific foreign policy goals (Shain, 1990, 1999; Paul, 1990; Tölölyan, 1991, 1994), charitable support (Shain, 1989, 2001) and migration networks (Lyons, 2004). However, even this research does not squarely address differences in network access to political leaders in the same country but must be seen as a starting framework for this current research.

I became convinced that the topic of returned diaspora political leadership could be an important area for research when I looked into the literature on related topics. As previously noted, while some work has been done on diasporas and their political activities and beliefs vis-à-vis their homelands while in the diaspora, and significantly more work on political leadership in postcommunist systems and in the broad field of

national identity research, these three areas of inquiry have not been brought together. Nor has much research been done on how individuals who lived for an extended period of time in the diaspora act politically or hold opinions about politics when they “return” to the homeland. This considerable hole undermines generalizations made regarding diaspora political action – whether in the adopted or home countries – because by their very nature, diaspora political action will depend not only on the political system in which they are operating but other political systems that they may have access to (Shain, 1989, 1999; King, 1998; Sheffer, 2003) and in which they have had extended experience. In addition, diaspora political action is strongly and complexly tied to conceptions of national identity as well as the changing relationship between the diaspora and the home country (Shain, 1989).

Political leadership in postcommunist systems has received more and deeper attention than the other topics, as discussed in chapter two. However, comparisons between communist-era leaders that made the transition to democracy and former political outsiders is strengthened by the comparisons made in this research as returned diaspora political leaders seem to exhibit characteristics found in each group, that is, they possess qualities shared both by former members of the interwar elite as well as political outsiders. So, too, is analysis of elite creation overall better informed because, again, returned diaspora political leaders seem to exhibit characteristics of elite continuity (albeit with a one to two generational gap) as well as elite change (i.e., they are coming into political leadership from the “outside”).⁴⁹ The data and analysis gained by this dissertation is particularly beneficial to this area of research.

⁴⁹ See Shlapentokh and Vanderpool, 1999; Gaidys, 1999; Steen and Ruus, 2002; Burton and Higley, 2002; Yoder, 1999, among others.

As has been noted already, the national identity literature is complex and rife with disagreement and contradictions. Further research into when national identity influences political leadership might help to better define the nature of national identity itself. While the concepts of “nested identity”⁵⁰ (more recently, Marks, 1997) and “competing identity” (e.g., Geertz, 1963) have become central to many discussions of national identity, often these discussions focus on different levels or types of identity – national and sub-national, or American and Catholic, e.g. – and not different (and possibly competing) identities of the same type (e.g., French and Moroccan). Even when identities are compared to see which predominates in a given situation, the research often defines these arguably similar type identities differently – for our example, sub-national or ethnic versus national citizenship (Connor, 1978). Probably the most helpful work – for the present research – that has been done is that by Shain (1999) and Demetriou (1998) as well as some others, on diaspora political participation in their *adopted countries in relation to their homelands*. In particular, Shain has written on the growing political voice of Mexican Americans concerning U.S. foreign policy toward Mexico. While the Mexican-American example is of more recent vintage, many academics, policy makers, and most of all, the general U.S. public, have long known that diasporas or immigrant groups are a key constituency as well as a vocal lobby for specific foreign policies regarding their countries of origin. This research therefore has the potential to add knowledge to three areas of current inquiry as well as stake out new research on returned diaspora political leadership.

50 See Juan Diez Medrano and Paula Gutierrez, “Nested identities: National and European Identity in Spain” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*; Vol. 24 No. 5 (September 2001), 753–778, for an overview of the

Research design

The following section brings us back to discussion of the research question itself and the hypotheses and assumptions created to try to answer it. To start, the question for this research is:

When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders?

I have chosen to focus on *when* because of my interest in diasporas interact politically with the homeland as well as how national identity defined diasporas vis-à-vis the homeland to be able to participate in homeland politics. By focusing on “when,” the factors that affect diaspora entry into the homeland political elite can be better isolated and analyzed. Furthermore, the reasons that undergird the desire of some diaspora to return to the homeland can also be made more clear – in particular, national identity. In this way, national identity can be seen as a dynamic concept that not only changes over time but may be dominant or be subordinated among an individual’s multiple identities at any given time. Furthermore, national identity can be seen as something that can be utilized by the individual consciously or unconsciously as well as used by others to frame issues, events and ideas in ways that cater to or conversely, de-emphasize national identity. Focusing on “when,” also allows me to take into account how the political system in which an individual exists impacts individual political opinions and action. By comparing the answers to the same questions asked of the returned diaspora political leaders, regional specialists and diaspora group leaders in Latvia, Lithuania and in the diaspora, I hope to flesh out how similar motivations, opinions and/or actions may manifest themselves in similar or different ways given different political environments.

more recent “nested identities” research.

Finally, by asking the research questions that I have, I hope to make my study's findings comparable to countries in other regions – both in my conclusions and later in my own research and that done by others.

Further building on hypotheses that I articulated earlier in the dissertation, I hypothesize that returned diasporans will act politically and hold opinions about political issues in ways that correlate highly with their former diaspora identity, i.e., on issues tied to national identity (e.g., citizenship laws). On issues not directly related to national identity in their homelands, they will act according to their experience (which is mostly, if not almost completely, from outside the homeland, i.e., in the diaspora). In this way, they will utilize both their national identity and their personal experience. These related hypotheses are grounded in not only the voluminous rhetoric of diasporans themselves concerning national identity but also the substantial research on how national identity issues reduce differences between diasporans as opposed to other issues (Shain, 1989; Safran, 1991; Kasbarian, 2002; Burk 1999). The hypotheses interestingly go against significant literature on the importance of experience in informing the political opinions and actions of leaders, as in the case of returned diaspora political leaders both national identity and experience seem to inform their political opinions as well as actions.

Furthermore, I hypothesize that it does matter why the diaspora was formed, that is, how and why individuals left their homeland. It matters because their “story” goes a long way toward explaining their interest in and ability to return to the homeland and to get involved in politics as well as how they will act once they are in the political elite. In the case of the Baltics, it was the Soviet invasion and the concurrent loss of national independence as well as the institution of communism that directly resulted in so many

individuals leaving their homeland during and immediately following World War Two. Therefore, the Baltic diaspora worked tirelessly to undermine Soviet rule and for the restoration of independence in their homelands.⁵¹

In addition, it matters where the diasporas settled after leaving the homeland. This is important in so far as the experiences of the diasporans in their adopted states will directly inform their later political opinions and actions. In particular, how receptive the adopted state is to diasporans will impact how integrated the diasporans can become as well as how their other – homeland – identity will be regarded. These are important factors for determining how diasporas' view their relationships to their homelands.

Last, for the purposes of this research, I assume that personal experience makes an impression on your political beliefs, strategies and goals. In addition, I assume that access into the political elite is based on a variety of complex factors that include the political institutions, political sociology of the country as well as personal factors. Undergirding these assumptions are the fact that the postcommunist political system is (relatively) new to all involved, whether returned diaspora or native. Also, the election or appointment process for political leaders is the same for diaspora and natives alike.

Case choice

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe created numerous opportunities for political science research. Most important, the very collapse of the formerly incredibly powerful communist ideology and attendant political, economic and social systems begged the question, “How could this happen?” In similar vein, the collapse of

51 See Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 2000, for a discussion of the role of Central and East European and other émigrés from the Soviet Union played in the success of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty during

communism in the Baltic states and the concurrent collapse of Soviet hegemony over the region removed the main obstacles to return cited by many Baltic diasporans. As discussed above, almost all Baltic diasporans who emigrated during and following World War Two did so because of the very same reasons; therefore, when these reasons vanished, the opportunity to return surfaced. Given the fact that prior to the Soviet collapse, returned diasporans largely if not totally did not exist, the phenomenon of a significant number of return diasporans catapulted to political leadership during and following the “Singing Revolutions” begged for analysis.

Given that all of Eastern Europe saw Soviet hegemony collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s, why focus my research only on the Baltics? As of 2003, the populations of the Latvia and Lithuania tally approximately 2,331,500⁵² and 3,462,500⁵³ million people respectively and the titular ethnic populations speak languages that have fewer than six million native speakers worldwide⁵⁴ – what impact can this study have on a better understanding of returned diaspora political participation? Additionally, why choose two countries that to many outside of the region seem quite similar? First of all, small doesn’t not mean not meaningful. Small states, like large ones, can experience phenomena that are either bell weathers for other states or provide generalizable theories about how politics can work. I discuss the choice of Latvia and Lithuania specifically in greater detail in the second half of this section.

the Cold War.

52 According to the Latvia’s Centre for Demography (http://www.popin.lanet.lv/en/index_eng.html).

53 According to <http://www.lietuva.lt/index.php?Lang=5&ItemId=29789> whose data is taken from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics. Note: the statistics provided by both the Latvian and Lithuanian governments seem to be the most accurate currently available.

54 Estimate based on information found at UCLA’s Language Materials Project at <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/profiles/profl01.htm> and <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?LangID=41>

Second, as I will discuss in the methodology section, I have chosen to work with a similar-case design in order to be able to amplify differences in variables and outcomes among the cases.

Similar but not the same

As is discussed in much greater detail in the country review chapter, which follows the current one, the two Baltic nations of Latvia and Lithuania share many similarities and some key differences. During the interwar period, authoritarian governments came to power in each country, negating important components of liberalism in the countries.⁵⁵ From their formal inception, the countries had citizenship policies that were widely viewed as liberal and inclusive and not based solely on ethnic grounds; nevertheless, discrimination against minorities increased during the 1930s when authoritarian-nationalist governments ruled. Both countries were incorporated into the USSR during World War Two and had communist governments up until 1991. During their tenure as Soviet republics, each state was subject to skewed industrialization policies and forced immigration and emigration (to other regions in the USSR or to the west). Education levels remained consistently high, as in the interwar period. Thus, at the time of regained independence in 1991, Latvia and Lithuania shared some important similarities. Both countries have been democratic since the collapse of the communism in the region.

An important shared characteristic of the two countries is that both countries

⁵⁵ For detailed discussions of the authoritarian regimes of interwar Lithuania and Latvia, see Senn (1959) and Plakans (1995). It should be noted here that neither the Latvian nor Lithuanian regimes came close to the severe authoritarian nature of those in interwar Romania or Hungary.

experienced high levels of emigration, forced expulsion and the elimination of their citizens – members of the titular groups as well as minorities – during and in the decade following World War Two. This created large diasporas with searing memories of co-nationals killed or expelled because of their nationality, religion, social status, profession or plain bad luck due to the chaos of war. The diasporas thus felt particularly strong ties to their homelands because of this and what they – and many others worldwide – viewed as the forced incorporation of the three Baltic states into the USSR, which ended the independence periods/statuses of each country.

However, Latvia and Lithuania, though often viewed as “sister” countries, do have differences that have led, in part, to the creation of different opinions and policies regarding national identity and the actual desired roles of the diaspora in the shaping of the newly re-independent countries. First among these differences is the ethnic composition of each country and the tensions and perceived potential conflicts resulting from it. Latvia, due to intensive immigration – planned and unplanned – of largely Russian-speaking factory workers, Communist Party elite and retired Soviet military during the 40 plus years of Soviet rule, became an ethnically mixed state with the titular ethnicity representing barely a majority in the republic in 1989.⁵⁶ Upon regaining their independence, Latvia introduced citizenship policies that were intended to counteract the dramatic demographic changes of the communist period by limiting automatic citizenship to individuals who had been citizens of the interwar republic and their direct descendents. While this did not necessarily exclude non-ethnic Latvians from gaining automatic citizenship (interwar Latvia was a multi-ethnic state that included, among others, ethnic

56 Latvia’s Centre of Demography (http://www.popin.lanet.lv/en/index_eng.html).

Russians who had made their home in the Baltic region over the centuries), it did bar all Soviet-era *non*-ethnic Latvians from gaining citizenship automatically – effectively making the newly re-independent state overwhelmingly “Latvian” (Pabriks and Purs, 2001; Dreifelds, 1996; Plakans, 1997 in Dawisha and Parrott; Barrington, 1995, among others).

The ethnic make-up of Lithuania at the time of regained independence was quite different; ethnic Lithuanians made up a little over 80 percent of the inhabitants of the country. Further, the remaining almost 20 percent were spread among a variety of ethnic groups speaking Polish, Russian, Belorussian, Latvian, Ukrainian and Yiddish.⁵⁷ The relative ethnic homogeneity of the country – when compared to the heterogeneity of Latvia – decreased the perceived threat of dilution of the titular ethnicity by predominantly Russian-speaking peoples and was an important force in pushing for inclusionary citizenship policies that were based on residency and desire for continued residency rather than ethnicity and ties to the interwar republic (Norgaard, 1996; Clark, 1995; Lane, 2001).

The political systems adopted when the countries regained independence largely were continuations of the interwar ones, with the important difference that the authoritarian aspects were removed. While both democracies, the Latvian system is primarily a parliamentary system based on proportional representation while the Lithuanian system is a hybrid parliamentary-presidential system that includes both first-past-the-post, single member districts and proportional representation. The different systems create different political environments that affect when and how as well as why

⁵⁷ Lane, 2001;138.

returned diasporans become involved in political leadership, as will be discussed in the following chapters. The chapter now turns to a discussion of the methodology used for collecting the data.

Last, regarding case selection, Estonia is not included because it was determined that while the country does share a number of characteristics with Latvia and Lithuania vis-à-vis the research topic, its high degree of similarity with Latvia made it likely that inclusion of the additional case would add more work than value. It is hoped that research on the topic of returned diaspora participation in political leadership in Estonia will be done at a later date.

Data collection

Devising and then honing the methodology of a research project is almost always a significant challenge. As briefly discussed in earlier chapters, I have chosen to combine in-depth interviews with country case studies as the means to best discern the data about which I am most interested. To this end, I first discuss the in-depth interviews and then move onto discussion of the country case studies.

The interview method was chosen as the primary research tool because of a variety of reasons, but mostly because of the relatively small universe of returned diaspora political leaders,⁵⁸ the type of data I was looking to find and my belief that interviews enmeshed in country case studies would best address my overall research interests. In addition, the in-depth interview method works well with the country case

⁵⁸ I have been unable to locate a count – accurate or not – of the returned diaspora population, including the returned diaspora political leaders sub-set. This is due to the absence of a working definition of who is a returned diaspora and a means to make an accurate count.

study method – the latter being a key component of any analytical research on national identity in specific situations and in regards to specific issues.

Additionally, using the survey method was not optimal due the small universe of cases, that is, returned diaspora political leaders. The statistical validity of the sample would have been dubious at best. Also, given the relative absence of research on this topic, I, by necessity, have been most interested in describing and analyzing a limited number of phenomena rather than testing the validity of established theories with analysis of new or previously collected data.

I chose interviewees on the basis of two criteria: active or past participation as political leaders in the homeland and returned “diaspora” status. “Active participation as a political leader” is defined as holding or having held: an elected political position, a politically appointed position in a government organization, or a prominent role in a political non-governmental organization (NGO). The scope of participation is necessarily wide because of the limited number of occurrences /subjects but also because of the nature of leadership itself, particularly in a more fluid postcommunist political environment. In other words, leaders in the society who participate in as well as impact the political realm of the country – whether or not they are elected or appointed political leaders – are included in the research due to their ability to impact politics in their respective countries.

The returned diaspora status is more easily defined as the status of an individual who spent considerable time away from his/her country of birth, adopted the citizenship of another country while retaining the language and culture of their homeland and later “repatriated” to the homeland. In addition, those who are the descendents of natives of

the homeland country, learn the language and culture of the “homeland,” and retain and cultivate emotional and physical ties to it, can be considered members of the diaspora. The reasons for leaving the homeland in the first place vary considerably – political, cultural, security and/or economic reasons for the most part – but what is most important is that the emigrant desires to retain, and actively pursues retention of, homeland identity – even if the identity of the host country is adopted.

I compiled the list of individuals who met the criteria by first discussing my research with leaders of Baltic diaspora organizations in the U.S. that were both nationally-based (e.g., the Lithuanian American Council) and internationally-based (e.g., the World Federation of Free Latvians or WFFL). I asked the leadership of these organizations to list all the people who fit my research criteria. Then I asked them whom they thought it was important that I interview. The list that I compiled showed a high degree of consistency, i.e., the same names were brought up again and again, and came to about 20 persons for Latvia and 22 persons for Lithuania. On a preliminary research trip to the Baltics, I discussed these two lists with local academics in political science as well as some of the individuals that were already on my list to check for bias of any type, or for omissions. Again, the degree of consistency in response was high. The biases that I discovered – some of which I had anticipated and others that I had not – were mostly to do with the respondent’s adopted country, i.e., respondents from host country X tended to be most aware of the diaspora who returned “home” from country X. Omissions were rare while recommendations concerning who was “most important” to interview reflected political, generational and other biases.

Something that I had not really foreseen was that the topic of the research is quite politically charged within both Latvia and Lithuania for a variety of reasons. This surprised me despite my knowledge that the concept of national identity is political in and of itself. National identity – because it is constructed out of the history, culture, perceptions and hopes of a people – is constructed consciously and unconsciously; and is both a public and a private construction. It is therefore not easy to “unpack” and discuss without emotion or political meaning. In addition, because of the unfinished – or more aptly, always-under-construction – nature of national identity, the rhetoric used to discuss it is often intense.⁵⁹ Last, discussion of national identity often is a proxy for, or at least intimately tied to, discussion of another topic. For example, the fertility rate of a people is often tied to or used as a measure of the “strength” of the nation (or a people). When it is considered too low, political leaders will often resort to discussion of the “upcoming death” of the nation and the responsibility of patriots and others to save and/or rebuild the nation through having more children.

In the specific cases of Latvia and Lithuania, discussion of national identity raises issues concerning shared and unshared life experiences and culture as well as, specifically, suffering and sacrifice. The Baltic diaspora that resulted from World War Two is viewed ambivalently by the Balts who remained in the homelands. On the one hand, people understand that many left the homelands because they thought their lives were in danger or because they were members of the political, economic and/or cultural elites and knew that they would be targeted by the incoming regime. They are respected for having kept “alive” cultural traditions (particularly religious ones) and the languages while in the diaspora. And, probably most of all, they are respected for the political

59 See Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation* (1998), among others, for numerous examples.

pressure they put on their adopted countries and the international system regarding the lack of freedom and autonomy of the Baltic states.⁶⁰

On the other hand, based on my interviews, diaspora who returned starting in the late 1980s have also been viewed as opportunists – in politics and particularly in business – who left the homelands when the outlook was bad and only returned when the situation had improved. Additionally, some of these returned diaspora earned reputations for being “bossy” and “heavy handed” regarding how the newly re-independent countries should be governed, the economies revamped and “traditional” (read, non-Soviet polluted) Baltic cultures re-emphasized or, in some cases, re-introduced. At its worst, these views of returned diaspora brought allegations that the returned diaspora were no longer really Latvians or Lithuanians but had become “Americans” or “Canadians” – anything except a member of the national community. This type of allegation is highly disconcerting for any member of a diaspora to face when “coming home” never to mind if one is hoping to, or already is, a political leader who is supposed to be representative of all the people of a particular country.

Therefore, in order to obtain interviews with various politicians, aides and others, I had to promise anonymity to some of the interviewees. Furthermore, many individuals in the universe of returned diaspora political leaders only agreed to speak with me when a colleague or friend introduced us or, at the least, could “vouch” for my professional and academic credentials. Because of this, I was able to have significantly greater access than would have otherwise been the case. However, I do realize that having to respect the wishes of some of the interviewees regarding anonymity has affected the presentation of

⁶⁰ For example, protests in Washington, DC, on the anniversaries of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact or consistent pressure by Baltic diaspora constituents on foreign policy legislation in Congress.

my work as the pool of potential interviewees for this topic is rather limited and therefore I must take great care not to make the identity of an informant known if only through the process of elimination. Yet, I also need to share and analyze the data that I collected in order to try to answer my research questions.

In particular, the majority of informants found this topic to be politically charged because of the very real issue of ‘native’ versus ‘returned diaspora’ in each of the countries. The political risk involved in discussing this issue with me were highest for those who were in elected political office or those who worked directly for such persons. However, even those who – though actively involved with the political process because of the nature of their work (NGO activity, higher education, etc.) and the very fact that they are defined as elites – are not directly elected or appointed political figures felt that their status and power could be affected by what opinions and experiences they shared with me and how this may be interpreted by the larger elite and mass publics once I finished and released my study.

Yet, all of those whom I interviewed found the research fascinating because they have found in their own personal experience that there indeed are differences in political values and actions between returned diaspora and ‘natives’. In addition, since all of the informants by definition are involved in – and must be assumed to be interested in to some extent – the political process, all found political analysis about values, strategies and roles to be salient to their work.

While English was spoken by each of the returned diaspora political leaders whom I interviewed, some interviewees spoke English that was not as fluent as others. There are implications from this, though not serious ones, in terms of differences in

meaning. These became more clear to me when I sat down to analyze the interview data and, in trying to explain differences in responses between similar individuals (respondents), different host country background routinely came to the surface as the best explanatory variable. I think that the best explanation for this is that cultural understandings of the key terms of my research, e.g., nation, identity, diaspora, are not only complex and varied in English and in the context of the field of political science in the U.S. but that other cultures understand them differently. Depending on the English-language and American culture fluency of the respondent, their responses could vary quite a bit. I found this interesting in and of itself.

It should come as no surprise that all respondents had agendas for how they wanted me to understand their political opinions, strategies and actions as relating to their national identity, especially the returned diaspora political leaders themselves. This has been one of the most intriguing aspects of analyzing my data because of the need to consider different understandings of concepts, words and references within the political environments of Latvia and Lithuania as well as the diaspora communities of each. I also had to make sure that my research and analysis was not the unwitting mouthpiece of political propaganda. This said, interviewees, of course, have significant power to define the parameters as well as the substance of their interviews. This is even more true when the interviewee is a politician!

At this point, I need to address the concern that my research is biased due to only talking only with returned diaspora politicians, returned diaspora and native academics, NGO heads and diaspora leaders and not non-returned diaspora politicians, i.e., “natives.” In fact, the research question and theory focuses on returned diaspora political leaders

themselves, not returned diaspora political leaders in comparison to another group. When and how returned diasporans are able to enter into the political elite in the homeland is the specific focus of the dissertation and therefore comparisons of the returned diasporans with another group may or may not help to better explain the phenomenon. Nevertheless, it can be argued that interviewing “native” political leaders could broaden as well as potentially deepen understanding of the political actions and opinions of returned diaspora political leaders; however this aspect of the research is secondary. In response to this, I have included interviews with native academics as well as diaspora leaders to add checks on the data obtained from the returned diaspora political leaders themselves. Furthermore, I attempted to find survey and other data concerning comparisons of returned diaspora versus native political leaders but found nothing. A future study directed at differences between returned diaspora and native political leaders would most likely yield interesting and important data.

The interview questions were devised over time and constructed to be rather open-ended to elicit the most information from the interviewees. All interviewees were asked the same questions and were allowed to talk about each to whatever length they desired. The only changes made to the questions from interview to interview regarded the returned diaspora or native status of the interviewee and the country in question.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

WHO are returned-diaspora politicians now? Who have been from this group?

WHAT do they do politically (Committee work? Issues? Choice of political party affiliation? Etc.) Does this differ from non-returned diaspora individuals? Do they utilize connections abroad more substantially than native politicians?

WHY do they return to COUNTRY X and go into politics? What motivates them? (Prestige? Debt to homeland? Business interests? Political/strategic interests, e.g., NATO? Etc.)

WHEN have the returned-diaspora individuals become politicians in X? That is, were there more at one time period than in another? Are they older or younger than their native colleagues when they enter politics?

HOW do they get into politics? (Party lists? Appointments? – local, national, and/or international?) How do natives get into politics?

WHOM ELSE would you recommend that I talk with?

The interviews were structured only in that all questions were asked, largely in the order in which they are written here. Otherwise, interviewees were free to discuss their answers and to ask me questions. Most interviewees ended up telling me longer or shorter versions of their life histories – particularly in regards to how, when and why they made the decision to “return to the homeland”. For the most part, interviews took place in the interviewees’ offices but sometimes in a café or restaurant. Most interviews were conducted in person – a few were conducted by phone or email. The interviews took place in Latvia and Lithuania in April and May 2002, spring 2003, and fall 2004. I constructed the questions and the means by which I asked them in order to gather as much raw data as possible regarding national identity and diaspora ties to the homeland and the ways in which the returned diasporans entered political leadership in the homeland. In each of the interviews, I endeavored to put my respondents at ease and make them feel that they could trust me through making the interviews casual and relatively unstructured. The following section lays out how the data gathered by the interview has been interpreted and secondary source data incorporated in the overall analysis.

Just a few words about data interpretation: By combining in-depth case studies and interviews with returned diaspora political leaders, diaspora leaders and academics, I have been able to address many of the problems associated with a relatively small-n qualitative study. Each interview was analyzed for terms and concepts relating to national identity, political opinions, professional and personal experience and differences between diaspora and “native” political beliefs and actions. Since this research has not been done before, no prior coding rational could have been established before conducting the research. A number of recurring themes became clear and are discussed at length in later analytical chapters.

Possible critiques and responses to them

I see four possible critiques that might be made concerning the present research: 1) choice of case study design, 2) the absence of comparisons with cases where no or few returned diaspora political leaders are present, 3) the absence of interviews with non-returned diaspora political leaders, except for native academics and last, 4) the possible actuality that the chosen interviewees, as experts in politics, intentionally skewed my results to fit their own agenda. I will address each of these potential critiques in turn.

The choice of a case study design is not unusual in comparative politics nor in the analysis of postcommunist political phenomena. However, some might contend that research on opportunities for entering political leadership as well as research into political actions and opinions of political leaders might better be gathered and analyzed via the survey research method. Not only could more specific – and more easily comparable – data on opportunities and reasons for political action and opinions be ascertained but the

nature of the survey research methodology would necessitate increasing the number of interviews (i.e., increasing the sample size) so as to be able to more accurately reflect the entire universe of returned diaspora political leaders.

While the survey research method does have benefits that cannot be had via the case study method and in-depth interviews, surveys themselves have their own challenges. For one, in order to get at the reasons undergirding political action and opinion, questions must be written that can elicit data that adequately measure the complex phenomena through yes/no or a graded scale. Furthermore, questions must be designed that include proxies that aggregately attempt to describe the complex social science concept that the research is about. Often, as this is incredibly difficult to do, survey research studies must settle for results concerning much more limited – and therefore less important to the field – data, leading to more limited analysis and conclusions.

The question concerning when and how returned diasporans enter into political leadership in the homeland – as opposed to how they act once they are in the political leadership – is more amenable to the survey method. Still, the absence of prior research on this topic necessitates that significant description of “when and how” these individuals entered political leadership in order to generate theories that can subsequently be tested through such research methods as surveys. This highlights one of the strengths of the case study method: it allows for significant description – a quality that is particularly helpful when the topic of research is new to the field – and the potential to create nuanced conclusions in which the researcher can have a high degree of certainty. The case study method also allows greater potential for breaking new ground. In the present case, the

merging of three literatures – diaspora, postcommunist leadership and national identity – in order to ground the present research is made easier by using the highly descriptive case study and in-depth interview methods. In similar vein, the significant description and concurrent analysis can allow for inferences about the generalizability of this study to returned diaspora political leadership in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq, among other countries that have experienced returned diaspora political leadership that one might not be able to make in the highly circumscribed experiment structure of a survey.

Last, in direct comparison with the survey research method, the case study method combined with in depth interviews allows complex concepts, such as national identity and diaspora, to be explained in more than one way and so that the interviewee definitely understands them. While this opens the door to greater variability among interviews, it is beneficial not only for really being able to “get at” complex concepts but also to gather significant information for future research.

Regarding the choice of cases, the choice of “successful” cases of returned diaspora political leadership is designed to hold a number of variables constant due to similarity, allowing the researcher to focus in on a variable (or variables) that is different. By holding the type of political system (in this case, democratic) constant, I can worry less about the impact of the political system’s success or failure on returned diaspora political leaders political actions and opinions. Similarly, by comparing two similar political systems, I can better isolate the specific ways in which returned diaspora entered the political elite – irregardless of whether the systems are both democratic or both non-democratic (and furthermore, consolidated or not consolidated democracies). It would be beneficial to include a variety of political systems in future research, in particular because

I believe, as have others,⁶¹ that how political environments are structured directly affects what opportunities are and are not open to political actors.

However, this potential critique brings up a point that is worth noting (though it was brought up elsewhere): regime change – or dramatic change of the political system – created an opportunity for the entrance of returned diaspora political leaders in significant numbers to enter homeland politics. Other regime changes may or may not offer such opportunities to diaspora (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Shain, 1989; Dogan and Higley, 1998).

Regarding the absence of a case in which there are no (or few) no returned diaspora in political leadership: I want to stress that, again, I am not directly comparing returned diaspora with natives – I am looking at political opportunities and political actions and opinions. Therefore, a case without returned diaspora political leaders would leave me with no one or thing to study. I am also not directly analyzing the “impact” of returned diaspora political leaders on their homelands’ political systems.

Last, regarding the political sensitivity vis-à-vis topic makes many returned diaspora answers liable to be more “political rhetoric” than “fact.” While this is indeed a concern (one that I share, by the way), for the most part, the political rhetoric of my interviewees adds an additional dimension to my research while creating only a small (and I would argue insignificant) political effects bias. Almost all interviewees were very careful about the image they want to portray via my research; those that did not seem concerned were either already retired or were soon to be so.⁶² Also, my choice was to

61 Shain, 1989, for example, as well as many in the historical institutionalism school of thought – for a good example, see Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, 1992.

62 For example, Jonas Kronkaitis, Head of the Lithuanian Armed Services; Donaldas Skucas, Advisor to the Head of the Lithuanian Armed Services; and Olgerts Pavlovskis, former Ambassador to Spain and Member of Parliament.

focus on returned diaspora and then “check” their attitudes and behaviors against diaspora leaders, academics and government employees, as discussed above.

Conclusions

This chapter has laid out the research design and the rationale that supports it. In summary, the research question is: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders? The primary research methodology is a combination of the case study and in-depth interview methods. The cases chosen are Latvia and Lithuania, two countries sharing numerous similarities including the presence of a significant number of returned diaspora political leaders in their postcommunist political environments. The chapter concludes with a discussion of possible critiques of the research design and the author’s refutation of them. The next chapter is an in-depth review of the histories of Latvia and Lithuania as they pertain to the development of national identity and the creation of large ethnically-Balt diasporas following World War Two.

CHAPTER 4: Brief country reviews

Romantic nationalism has been a dominant theme of the modern history of the Baltic peoples.⁶³ It was an integral part of the liberation movements in the Baltic Soviet Republics up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The strong ties between the nations and their peoples have affected the development of the political, cultural and economic histories of Lithuania and Latvia in ways that are quite similar to those of other central and eastern European nations. Similarly, the roles of the Baltic diasporas of the two countries has been greatly influenced by the types and evolutionary paths of nationalism and history. It is therefore important to describe the development of Baltic national identities through a discussion of their people's histories as both are integral to how national identity is conceived of and utilized today. Significant differences in history, political culture, and level of modernization, among other areas, do exist, yet the similarities described above make the analysis of the comparison of the World War Two diasporas and their return to their homelands possible.

This chapter contains case studies for Latvia and Lithuania as well as provides information on Estonia where appropriate for emphasis or to highlight contrasts. First, the overall similarities of the countries past and present will be discussed. A basic history of the pre-independence of the Baltics will be described, followed by a more detailed discussion of the similarities and differences in the independence periods of each of the countries. Then, discussion turns to the communist period as well as the events and political currents leading up to and including the break-away of the republics from the Soviet Union and the reinstatement of their respective regaining of independence up to a

63 For a succinct overview of romantic nationalism, see Hutchinson and Smith, 1994; 47-48.

decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The last section concerns a more detailed analysis of the diaspora of these countries than has been yet attempted in this dissertation. In particular, discussion will focus on the roles of the diasporas in the communist period (and, to a lesser extent, the postcommunist period – which will be analyzed in depth in the following chapters), and the characteristics of the diasporas and their activities that influenced and were influenced by the history of the region in the 20th century. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the broad similarities of the two countries and a highlighting of the unique characteristics that separate them.

The pre-independence period

The Baltic region has long been an intersection point between cultures and empires. From the Middle Ages onward, the Baltic region – with the important exception of what would later become Lithuania – was ruled by a series of outsiders: Vikings, Teutonic Knights, Swedes, Germans and the Russians, among others. The geographic location of the settlements of the first ethnic Balts (and their now deceased contemporaries, such as the Prussians) on the northern coast of the Eurasian landmass attracted traders, farmers, other settlers as well as religious fervor. It is interesting to note that Jews from western Europe started settling in what was then the non-Christian region of Europe as the Crusades and other Christian religious fervor undermined their safety and continued livelihood. The Baltic peoples were the last converted to Christianity in Europe – the Lithuanians being the very last in 1386 when Grand Duke Jagaila⁶⁴ converted to Catholicism to merge his kingdom with that of the Poles through the

64 Jagaila is the Lithuanian name for the Grand Duke. He is known as Jagiello in Polish.

marriage of Jadwiga, who was to inherit the Polish throne. The union is notable for many reasons but one of the most important was that it linked the Lithuanian nation to the “Catholic West” as opposed to the “Orthodox East” while allowing Lithuania to retain its own administrative system, code of laws, army and treasury.⁶⁵ The marriage started a Jagiellonian dynasty that at its zenith reached from the Baltic to the Black Seas. The more or less equal partnership of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom lasted until external aggressions, mainly from the Russians to the east, forced a closer relationship that culminated in the creation of the second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Lublin in 1569. The commonwealth lasted until the Partition of the late 18th century.

A non-orthodox Christianity characterized the Baltic region from the late 14th century onward; though it should be noted that pre-Christian pagan traditions predominated among the people and even some of the elite into the 18th century and, indeed, pagan traditions continue to mark both cultures up to this day. The Protestant Reformation brought Evangelical Lutheranism to the Estonian and most of the Latvian lands, but failed to overtake the southeastern part of modern Latvia (Latgale) or Lithuania. In these two latter regions, Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy dominated – and continue to do so. With the continued eastward movement of Europe’s Jewish community into the Pale of Settlement,⁶⁶ Jews came to be a sizable minority in the regions that now comprise Latvia and Lithuania. Indeed, by the dawn of the 20th century, Vilnius (or Vilna in Yiddish) was regarded as the “Jerusalem of the North” because of the hundred plus synagogues in the city and the fact that the city was one of the pre-eminent

65 Lane, *Lithuania Stepping Westward*, xxi.

66 Area of twenty-five provinces of czarist Russia within which Jews were allowed to live, outside of which they could reside only with specific permission. (*Glossary—Israel*. Congressional Research Service; http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/israel/il_glos.html)

sites for Jewish thought and education in Europe. Russians and other Slavs were always also a significant minority in the Baltic lands – a phenomenon that accelerated only with the deliberate immigration policies of the Soviets⁶⁷ when Russians and Russified Slavs became a majority in some cities in Estonia and Latvia and comprised at least 20 percent of the population in Lithuania and up to 30 plus percent of the population in the more northern Baltic republics. The Baltics have been and remain to this day relatively heterogeneous regions. This is an important fact to remember when discussing the ethnic Balt diasporas and their return to their homelands.

Nationalism swept through most of Europe in the mid-19th century but did not fully arrive in the Baltic region until the second half of that century. The late arrival of nationalism to the Baltic groups can be explained by the latter's lack of political and economic power in, what were then, regions of the Russian Empire that were locally lead by ethnically Polish and German landowners. In addition, the enserfment⁶⁸ of much of the ethnic Balt population meant that there the average level of education was low and few lived in the cosmopolitan cities of Riga and Vilnius, where Russians, Germans, Poles (and other non-Russian Slavs) and Jews resided. When the concept finally did arrive, as had been the case with the rise of nationalism in Central Europe, it was the intelligentsia (often foreign educated) of the region that were the crucial crafters of the Estonian, Latvian, and to a lesser extent, the Lithuanian "nations".⁶⁹ In the Latvian regions, the

67 While it was once largely agreed upon by scholars that the Soviet leadership orchestrated a deliberate policy to promote ethnic-Russian emigration to the non-Russian republics, more recent scholarship debates this – some continuing to agree with the older theory others contend that the Soviet policy that resulted in the mass immigration of ethnic Russians into the non-Russian Soviet republics was really focused on industrialization. See Lane, 2001, for a good overview and Vardys, 88; Lieven, 233 -39; and Misiunas and Taagepera, 33, among others for accounts more specific to Latvia and Lithuania.

68 Notably, serfs were emancipated in the Baltic region in the 1860s – the first region in the Russian Empire to experience this dramatic change away from feudalism.

69 Plakans, 1995; Senn, 1959; Raun, 2001; G. Smith, ed., 1994.

role of the Baltic Germans was particularly key to the growth of nationalism as their education and religious beliefs (Protestantism) dictated that all believers should be able to read the Bible for themselves. The fact that non-ethnically Balt elites were largely responsible for spearheading the national awakening of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians is not unusual as non-titular elites were largely responsible for the advent of nationalism in Eastern Europe *writ large*.⁷⁰

While the three major Baltic “nations” had possessed distinct languages and literatures for over a century, it was not until near the mid-19th century that these languages were standardized and began to be accepted as valid cultural and literary mediums, beyond the rural villages where they were most often spoken.⁷¹ The rural nature of the languages and the culture were central to the Baltic identities that were created throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries and marked distinct differences between them and the German, Russian, and Polish “nations.” The nationalism of the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians was focused on defining what was “other” and what was “authentically Balt,” linking the Baltic identities closely to the traditions of the countryside.

An important hallmark of Baltic nationalisms since their inception has been “the folk song.” The Baltic peoples have one of the richest folk song traditions still in existence and it was the desire to preserve these cultural treasures that spurred, in part, the nationalist movement in the Baltics in the mid- to late-19th century. From the 1870’s

70 IBID.

71 Prior to the standardization of the Baltic language, significant variation existed among the regions. The first publication of books in the Baltic vernaculars were in 1525 for Latvian (using Middle Low German morphology and the Gothic script) (Ina Druviete and Baiba Kangere, The Latvian Institute; www.latinst.lv) and 1547 for Lithuanian (Samogitian Cultural Association Editorial Board, <http://postilla.mch.mii.lt/Kalba/kalbarast.en.htm>). Standardization of both languages largely took place in the second half of the 19th century along pace with the national awakenings of the two countries.

onward in Latvia and Lithuania, annual national folk song festivals were held that brought together thousands to hundreds of thousands of ethnic Balts to celebrate their languages, cultures, and unity despite the absence of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian nation-states. Always important for spiritual and cultural reasons, the song festivals had a political message from the very beginning: we (the Baltic peoples) believe in the uniqueness of our “nations” and we will work diligently to preserve them.⁷²

For a variety of reasons, the nationalism found in the Baltic states is closely tied to that found throughout Scandinavia at the turn of the last century. Both types of nationalism revered the independent small farmer, placed significant emphasis on self-education and local, direct democracy, and viewed the existence of a strong state as crucial to helping the individual participate fully in the political, economic, and social life of each nation-state.⁷³ The “social democracy” that became so central to the Scandinavian countries in the 20th century greatly influenced the still nascent nationalist ideology of the Balts and later helped to define the new nations-states when the Balts won their independence following World War One. As would be the case at the close of the next world war, international politics greatly influenced the ability of all three Baltic states to form independent nation-states.

The triumph of the nation

Like their neighbors to the west, the Baltic countries enjoyed short, but significant, periods of liberal democracy and market economy during the interwar period.

72 This is most clear in the title of Anatol Lieven’s acclaimed book, *The Singing Revolutions*, concerning the break away of the three Baltic republics from the Soviet Union, though there are numerous studies of the role of folk songs and folk festivals in the political and cultural development of the Baltic nations.

73 See Plakans, 1995, as well as Senn, 1959.

At that time, the impetus for the three nations to seek independence stemmed in large part from a delayed Romantic nationalism along the lines of the German model (*jus sanguinis*), an interest in democracy and the opportunities presented by the fall of the Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman empires of Central and Eastern Europe. At least for the initial period of independence in the decade that followed the end of World War One, liberal, though flawed, democracy predominated. A theoretically important, but oversimplified, means of describing the line of causation in the initial creation and then continuation of the Baltic states would be to say that nationalism led to liberation, and liberation led to democracy. This oversimplification is most notable vis-à-vis the quality of democracy throughout the interwar period as by the close of the 1920s, liberal democracy had largely been replaced by liberal authoritarian governments.

Nevertheless, the interwar period is often remembered as the “golden age” of the Baltic nations; it was the region’s first experience with freedom and their first attempt at constructing democracy. While the Lithuanians had been able to retain a collective memory of their late medieval empire, the Estonians and Latvians had constructed histories that focused on their opposition to the colonizers of Baltic lands over the preceding four centuries and the Balts’ ability to keep their “nations” alive. Thus, when each Baltic state finally proclaimed its independence at the end of World War One, the sense of triumph and excitement about the future was intense. The time to put their nationalism into practice finally had come.

Due to the limited urbanization of the ethnic Balts (ethnic Balts were a minority in almost all the cities in the Baltics at the beginning of independence), the “liberal-rural conservatism” of pre-independence nationalism was institutionalized in the extremely

(for the time) democratic constitutions.⁷⁴ Indeed, the Latvian and Estonian (and to a lesser extent, the Lithuanian) constitutions included extensive provisions for individual rights and the rights of minority groups. The interwar Baltic republics' treatment of Jews is notable for its tolerance – especially considering the strong legacy of anti-Semitism in the region – but still defined Jews as non-Balts who would in good times be potentially “beneficial” to the nation, and in bad times “harmful” or more benignly, not needed. All three nations enacted laws that sought to increase cultural expression and effect direct democratic participation. The rural small-holder became the ideal political actor in the mindset of the nation, if not the ideal in the political practice.

Another bed rock of the institution of democracy in the interwar Baltic states was successful and peaceful land reform. Foreign (largely German, Russian, and Polish) landowners were forced by the new democratic governments to sell the majority of their land to create independent small farms throughout the countryside. In turn, these new landowners often became ardent supporters of democracy, the market, and a strong state, and wary of communism and extreme laissez-faire capitalism.⁷⁵ Each of the Baltic states worked hard to improve their economies through the modernization of agriculture, and then by subsequently increasing agricultural and industrial exports. To that end, rural and urban co-operatives were created that could provide credit for starting and expanding businesses and farms. A potentially unanticipated result of these cooperatives was the modernization of the economy overall through the institutionalization of saving and borrowing practices throughout each country.

74 Lane, 2001; Eidintas, Zalyis and Senn, 1959; Vardys and Sedaitis, 1997; Pabriks and Purs, 2001.

75 Smith, D., 1994, and Vardys and Misiunas, 1978.

Connected to the modernizing trends in the economy was the emphasis placed on mass literacy and the value of education for all people. These beliefs stemmed not only from the reverence of the Balts for their native languages and cultures, but also from a belief that high rates of literacy and formal education would be the best way of consolidating the independence of their nations, building democracy, and improving their war-torn economies. The three Baltic nations invested heavily in education from the institution of compulsory elementary education to the broadening of university education. Notably, the countries wrote legislation that gave minority groups significant educational and cultural autonomy as well as government subsidies for minority-focused institutions.

The liberal democratic practices and high tolerance for minority rights came to an end for all three countries after only short periods, however. In Lithuania, ideological conflict over what group(s) should wield political power (Catholic, socialist, or nationalist), irredentist claims on its neighbors (most notably, Poland's possession of Vilnius),⁷⁶ and a more culturally and regionally polarized polity made Lithuania less politically and economically stable than Latvia or Estonia in the 1920's. By 1926, Antanas Smetona, an ardent nationalist and authoritarian leader, came to power through a coup and began to mold independent Lithuania into a more nationalist and authoritarian state.⁷⁷

As each of the newly independent countries had to rebuild significant parts of their economies and try to reorient their markets to the west, away from the now defunct Russian Empire and the then inward-looking Soviet Union, and each were small countries, their economies were always defined during the interwar period by their

⁷⁶ Personal discussion with Terry Clark, March 31, 2005.

⁷⁷ Lane 23-29; Lieven, 66.

susceptibility to external economic shocks and the international political situation. The Great Depression was particularly difficult for the Baltic states to manage and many theorize that it was one of the main precipitants of the slow demise of democracy and the rise of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian governments in each of the countries.⁷⁸

Parliamentary democracy continued up until the early 1930's in both Estonia and Latvia, though these countries, too, had their share of parliamentary instability and experienced the steep economic downturn of the Depression. In 1934, coups in both Estonia and Latvia led to the institution of semi-authoritarian (in the case of Estonia) and authoritarian (in the case of Latvia) governments. These coups were the result of a combination of international and domestic factors that are still not clear-cut sixty years later. The breakdown of liberal democracy in these countries, similar to that which occurred in Lithuania, stemmed from inexperience with democratic institutions, the weaknesses inherent in the democratic institutions the countries had crafted, fear of the growing strength of surrounding powers, i.e., Germany and the Soviet Union; a desire to stem the growing political strength of minorities, and cross-cutting through all of these, the desire to decrease political and economic uncertainty. These factors are also reflected in the interwar histories of other European democracies that morphed into semi- or full authoritarian states.⁷⁹

By the time the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August of 1939, Latvia and Lithuania had exhausted their options for retaining

78 Pabriks and Purs, 2001;16-22; Lane, 2001; 19-25; Vardys and Misiunas, 1978.

79 See Rothschild's classic, *Return to Diversity* (1989), as well as Gregory Luebbert. (1991) *Liberalism, Fascism or Social Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens. (1992) *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

independence.⁸⁰ While the three Baltic states had finally come together in a smaller version of the originally planned Baltic Sea League in order to try to not only safeguard their respective independence but to act as a bulwark against either Nazi or Soviet irredentism, the pact effectively rendered null and void the espoused neutrality of Lithuania and Latvia as was made clear by the separate treaties signed between the Soviet Union and Latvia and Lithuania respectively.⁸¹ By October 1939, following the conclusion of the Pacts of Defense and Mutual Assistance, approximately 30,000 Red Army troops were garrisoned in Latvia⁸² and over 20,000 in Lithuania.⁸³ Each nominally independent country now hosted more Red Army troops than each had in their nation's armed forces.

Not wanting to antagonize a potential ally against increasingly strong and aggressive Germany, the Allied Powers did not interfere as the Soviet Union began to increase its power over the Baltic states. During the year that followed – when Nazi Germany would win control of the Baltic states from the Soviet Union – the local populations were subjected to Sovietization, deportations and mass repression.⁸⁴ The Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in 1940 was recognized by Nazi Germany and Sweden, among others, but many countries, including the U.S., Australia, Canada and Great Britain held off on recognition, finally deciding to continue the accreditation of

80 On August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union and German Third Reich signed a treaty of non-aggression, which contained a secret protocol concerning the division of Eastern Europe in to spheres of influence. The treaty is usually referred to as the “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact,” according to the two statesmen who signed it. As a result of this treaty and other documents that were later signed between Moscow and Berlin, the Baltic countries became part of the Soviet sphere of interest. (The Latvian Institute Web site: http://www.latinst.lv/li_eng_facts.htm)

81 See Lane, 2001; 33.

82 The Latvian Institute Web site: http://www.latinst.lv/li_eng_facts.htm, “The Decline, Occupation and Annexation of Independent Latvia”

83 Lane, 2001; 37.

interwar Baltic diplomats indefinitely after the forced inclusion of the Baltic states in the Soviet Union following World War Two.⁸⁵

Many Latvians and Lithuanians were actively involved in a resistance movement against the German occupation regime and later the Soviets. It is incredible even today to recount how many Latvians and Lithuanians continued active, armed resistance to the Soviet authorities into the early 1950s.⁸⁶ The resistance to Soviet rule was particularly strong and lengthy in Lithuania and Lane, among others, contends that the widespread support received by the resistance from Lithuanians from all walks of life but particularly those in the countryside was a major contributing factor to the later intensive industrialization and collectivization policies in Lithuania as opposed to Latvia and Estonia⁸⁷ while others contend that the lengthy and somewhat successful Lithuanian resistance enabled the republic to escape some of the most intense Soviet urbanization and industrialization pressures during the Stalinist period due to the Soviet need to focus on ending the resistance.

Most stunning was the population losses overall in the two countries during the German occupation and then the Soviet one that followed. By the end of the war, the population of Latvia had decreased by half a million (25 percent fewer than in 1939).⁸⁸ In Lithuania: approximately 350,000 were deported by the Nazis and the Soviets between 1944 and 1949,⁸⁹ approximately 175,000 Jewish Lithuanians were murdered, and at least

84 See Lane, 2001; Pabriks and Purs, 2001; Vardys and Misiunas, 1978; Nesaule, 1998 as well as others for more detailed discussion of this period.

85 Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*; 126.

86 Misiunas and Taagepera, 90-94, and Vardys and Sedaitis, 84.

87 Lane, 2001; 59-67.

88 The Latvian Institute Web site: http://www.latinst.lv/li_eng_facts.htm, "The Decline, Occupation and Annexation of Independent Latvia"

89 Lane, 2001; 62.

70,000 Lithuanians emigrated to the west – leaving postwar Lithuania with about 75 to 80 percent of its prewar population.⁹⁰ The war also inflicted heavy losses on the economies of the countries – many historic cities were destroyed, as were industry and infra-structure. While many of the human losses were due to mass deportations and murders, a very high number was due to the mass emigration of ethnic Baltics during and immediately following the war. According to the Latvian Institute, the preeminent public relations organization of Latvia, approximately 150,000 Latvians ended up in exile in the West. Other sources break down the exile community to note that

Within the refugee population were 2,062 teachers, 197 university lecturers, more than half of Latvia's doctors, engineers, architects and Lutheran clergymen. Those that remained were targeted by the Soviet regime for arrest and deportation. (H. Kreicbergs, 1989 and J. Krastins, 1992, as quoted by Pabriks and Purs, 32)

The number of Lithuanians that managed to emigrate to the west was smaller than that of Latvia but the émigrés also had significant political, economic and social elites in their ranks.

Regime change means elite change

Each of the countries lost significant portions of their minority communities leading up to and particularly during World War Two. The centuries old Baltic German community either “returned” voluntarily to Germany in 1939 or was forcibly “repatriated” in 1940 by the occupying Soviets.⁹¹ The Jewish community, which had largely flourished in the Baltic region, was all but destroyed during the Nazi occupation. Unfortunately, ethnic Balts had more than observer roles in the destruction of the

⁹⁰ Lane, 2001; 58 and Norgaard et al, 33. Some others contend that population losses during this period were even higher, approaching 30 percent of the pre-war population.

⁹¹ See Lane, 2001, Plakans, 1995, as well as Dreifelds, 1996.

influential Jewish minority. This erasure of the historically heterogeneous population of the Baltic region was a tremendous human loss to the region and also symbolized the destruction of liberal democracy in a far too tangible way.

The Baltic diasporas that were formed during the period from the first Soviet occupation through to the immediate postwar period were huge in number when you consider the entire populations of the two countries. As noted in the previous section, it is estimated that over two hundred thousand fled Nazi and Soviet controlled Latvia and Lithuania in order to escape persecution, deportation outside Latvia and Lithuania and likely death. The diasporas included a very high number of the former elites of the two countries, that is, interwar politicians, doctors, lawyers, teachers, business owners and the like which meant that the Latvia and Lithuania subsumed into the Soviet Union lacked a significant share of its former political, economic and social elites. While in some ways this made resistance against the Nazi occupation and later, resistance against Soviet incorporation less effective due to lack of indigenous leadership, it also complicated the Nazi and Soviet effective rule of the countries as they lacked elites to co-opt. Many argue, however, that the Soviets engaged in an all-out destruction of political, business and other elites no matter what negative repercussions such action might have on future collectivization or other projects.

During the fifty-year occupation by the Soviets that followed, when the three formerly independent Baltic states were officially annexed to the Soviet Union⁹² (and not incorporated into its “sphere of influence” as was the rest of Central-Eastern Europe), the

92 As of March 2005, the forced incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union remains an issue of contention between Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, and the Baltic states. The current Russian leadership views the assertion that the countries were “forcibly annexed” as revisionist.

ethnic Balts tried to retain the memories of the interwar republics. The significant Baltic diaspora communities worldwide continued to preserve the “nations” while those who had remained in their homelands tried to survive the vagaries of Soviet rule. Mass deportations occurred with which each of the countries has still not fully come to terms.⁹³ Russification was official policy throughout the decades of communist rule but its intensity ebbed and flowed. In the worst period – during the second half of the 1940s up until the death of Stalin – mass deportations occurred, as well as forced collectivization and industrialization, religion was targeted as a bedrock of nationalism and even literature, art and other aspects of the nations’ cultural lives were repressed. As previously noted, guerillas supporting the independence of the Baltic states fought until the early 1950s against immeasurable odds; finally succumbing only in the face of a rural population that had had its spirit and livelihood broken by collectivization, depolitization, deportations and mass arrests of elites and others as well as its religious life crushed.

As will be discussed in much greater detail later in the chapter, the Baltic diasporas were crucial during the communist period in keeping alive the cultures and political aspirations of their nations while their relatives, friends and countrymen languished under the Soviet yoke. Nevertheless, there was some local support for communism and even for the Soviets – who were largely regarded in the region as Russians throughout the independent interwar period and the following Soviet one. Among those who did support communism, both ethnic and non-ethnic Balts took

⁹³ Latvia decided to create the Latvian Occupation Museum in order to address this complex period in Latvian history. The Museum was established in Riga in 1993 by the Occupation Museum Foundation (OMF) to provide information about Latvia and its people under two occupying totalitarian regimes from 1940 to 1991; to remind the world of the wrongdoings committed by foreign powers against the state and the people of Latvia; and to remember those who perished, who suffered, and who fled the terror of the occupying regimes. To date, there is no parallel museum in Lithuania.

leading roles in the “revolutions” – but many of these were later purged by Stalin, Khrushchev, and even later by Brezhnev.⁹⁴ Others, though maybe not converts to communism, saw opportunities for professional and personal gain by espousing the party line, joining the party and moving up the ranks through university attendance, getting hired at the more important jobs, improving their lifestyles and those of their families, as well as other potential benefits. Many of these came from rural and/or lower class backgrounds and for whom the prior independent regimes may or may not have provided such opportunities for rapid advancement.

By the latter half of the 1980s, conditions in the Baltics had become ripe for change particularly as it was becoming increasingly clear that the sclerotic communist regime was less and less able to provide its part of the societal bargain. Much as had the opportunity for independence been presented to the Baltic states in the chaos at the end of World War One, the waning years of the Soviet Union and the reemergence of independent nations in the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe allowed murmurs of autonomy to percolate to the surface in society.

Baltic identity in the face of repression

The Soviet repression in many ways mirrored that of prior foreign occupations and was incorporated into the national myths of Latvia and Lithuania (see Lane, 2001; Senn, 1995; Dreifelds, 1996, among others). This widely held perception allowed Latvians and Lithuanians in the homeland as well as in the diaspora to retool prior

⁹⁴ For more detailed discussion see Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993, regarding the Stalin and later purges and Pabriks and Purs, 63, regarding the Latvian Communist Party purge in the early 1960s.

repertoires for gaining independence and in the meantime to retain their unique cultures and languages.

After the war Latvian émigrés founded numerous Latvian-focused organizations that later gave rise to the World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL) in 1955, which represented the Latvian people to international organizations. Similarly, the Lithuanian diaspora, building on Lithuanian-focused organizations already in existence in the United States and elsewhere, created the Lithuanian World Community in the diaspora. During the period of Soviet occupation the WFFL used a variety of methods to remind the world of the need to end Latvia's occupation. The LWC, via its national-level constituent organizations, also worked to gain world attention on the Soviet occupation of Lithuania as well as to retain strong linguistic and cultural links between the diaspora and its native land.⁹⁵

In addition to the international diaspora organizations, local and national ones were created to educate children in the diaspora, to provide credit to newly arriving or hard-up members of the community through credit unions, to provide care for the elderly and to organize community commemoration of days of religious, cultural and political importance. Summer camps were a key – and popular – means of inculcating strong Baltic identities in subsequent generations. Camps in the diaspora for Latvians include Beverina (Quakertown, Pennsylvania), Saulaine and Sidrabene (both near Toronto, Canada), Tervete (near Montreal, Canada), Garezers (in Michigan) while camps for Lithuanians include Dainava (in Michigan), Neringa (in Vermont) as well as scout camps

⁹⁵ The formation of the Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC) marked the Baltic diaspora's entrance into diaspora group lobbying for foreign policy in the U.S. For more information, see www.jbanc.org.

throughout North America. Later in the chapter and in the chapters that follow, the activities of the diaspora organizations will be discussed in further detail.

Before turning to the fascinating period that led up to independence for Latvia and Lithuania, I would like to note the acts of resistance of Latvians and Lithuanians who remained in the homelands. While necessarily often covert or passive resistance, many participated in numerous ways in trying to resist the incorporation of Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. For the most part, overt resistance was only done by dissidents, some intellectuals and Catholic priests.⁹⁶ *Ausra*, the Chronicles of the Catholic Church and other journals or samizdat were circulated as in other parts of the Soviet Union. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty played a vital role in disseminating information on politics, economics and society in all three Baltic states starting in the mid-1970s as well as acting as a link between the Baltic states and their diasporas.⁹⁷ Overall, the Lithuanian and Latvian diasporas were quite active vis-à-vis their homelands despite their relatively small numbers and the ongoing Cold War. However, by the mid-1980s, their interests in a more open Baltic region, as a starting point, seemed to finally find some traction with the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow.

The movement toward independence

In our view, activism from below, and the rise of myriad informal associations, groups, and movements that have been described as civil society were among the main causes of the breakdown of the authoritarian colossus [the Soviet Bloc]. (Tismaneanu & Turner, 21)

From their beginnings as reactions to Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, social movements in the Baltics were highly concerned with "rescuing" the Baltic

⁹⁶ See Misuinas and Taagepera, 1993, as well as Lane, 2001, and Pabriks and Purs, 2001.

cultures from further marginalization and assimilation. As previously discussed, the song festivals of each of the Baltic peoples provided a forum in which to remember the culture and history of the Balts and to yearn together for the realization of each nation's freedom. But, it was not until the ecological movements of the mid-1980's that another means by which to voice these histories and hopes was created. It was through ecological protests that the Balts discovered they could vent their outrage at their "colonization" and at the colonizer's (Soviet) destruction of the natural environment that played a central role in Baltic nationalism.

The ecological movements focused on individual incidents of environmental degradation around which individuals in each republic rallied. Protests often centered on building proposals that had been designed by "specialists" in the Moscow political bureaucracy with little objective scientific input from either all-Union level or local republic scientists. For example, the planned construction of a massive phosphate mine and processing plant in Estonia raised grave possibilities of massive environmental destruction and a dramatic influx of Russian industrial workers to a region already heavily Russified. Fear of these very real possibilities created a groundswell of protest against the proposed plan. Similarly, the proposed construction of a hydro-electric dam on the Daugava River in Latvia brought out individuals from many societal groups to protest the further pollution of an already badly polluted river. Lastly, Lithuanian scientists, who were later joined by other members of the critical intelligentsia, opposed the planned expansion of the Ignalina nuclear power plant⁹⁸ in southeastern Lithuania on

97 Puddington, 2000.

98 The design of the Ignalina Nuclear Plant is very similar to that of the Chernobyl reactor that experienced a melt-down in 1986 and there have been ongoing discussions about how best to deal with the potential risks of continuing operation of the plant as well as the challenges involved in creating another

valid scientific grounds that nevertheless included fears of increased Russian immigration and the further marginalization of Lithuanian culture.

Thus, the Ignalina issue had a multiple appeal that vastly enhanced its mobilizational potential. For some it was a surrogate for nationalist protest, for others an environmental threat that had to be combated. But for most of society it was simply a way to voice frustration with Moscow's colonial treatment of Lithuania and with the threat of Russia overwhelming what was left of their Lithuanian heritage. It was the first step on the road toward politicization and active participation in the movement, one that would eventually lead to full independence from Moscow and Russia. (Dawson, 52).

The Soviet response to the increasing mobilization occurring in the Baltics was contradictory. On the one hand, given the interests of Gorbachev in pushing his joint *perestroika* and *glasnost*' platforms designed to save the Soviet Union, he – and other reformers in the Baltics and in Moscow – seemed to welcome the potential for real economic reform in a region of the Soviet Union that already enjoyed the highest productivity rates. In addition, the political criticism increasingly voiced in the Baltics could be used to push for potentially beneficial reforms throughout the Soviet Union. However, Gorbachev and other reformers, particularly in Moscow, seriously underestimated the pent up nationalist claims of the Baltics as well as the delayed reactions to decades of political and economic repression. In this way, while the public critiques of Soviet environmental policy (or lack thereof) or local government efficiency could initially be viewed as part of Gorbachev's grand plan of *perestroika* and *glasnost*', they soon became uncontrollable and Gorbachev found himself increasingly pulled between those who would accelerate the forces of change and those who would try to turn back the clock to a more centralized Soviet state. Even then, left out of the equation

source (or sources) of energy for Lithuania. Currently, the vast majority of Lithuania's energy needs are met by the Ignalina plant in the southeastern part of the country. See the International Atomic Energy

for many Communist Party members – again, especially those outside of the Baltics – was the possibility that one or all of the Baltic republics could and would secede. As

Lane quotes Gorbachev in his book, *Lithuania: Stepping Westward*:

Some people have doubts about whether Lithuania is part of the Soviet Union or not. This simply is not serious. (Lane, 110)

What exactly happened to allow the Baltic states to declare their independence after having been constituent republics of the Soviet Union for the preceding 45 years?⁹⁹ Besides the increasing weakness of the center due to the lack of consensus regarding how to fix the dilapidated Soviet Union and the increasingly dire economic indicators as well as future outlooks of the Soviet Union, the Baltic peoples did have quite a long history of resisting foreign oppression and retaining their cultures in order to prevail at some point in the future. The success of the environmental protests to affect Moscow's policies sent a positive message to other would-be activists that a time of opportunity had arrived. As the Baltic republics further embraced Gorbachev's *glasnost*' and *perestroika*, the intelligentsia, the media, and average people began to push dissent into other social movements and more diffuse, but visible, public protest. Some of the most important of the public protests were the "calendar" demonstrations.

On August 23, 1989, between one and one and a half million Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and other Baltic residents (and their supporters) formed a human chain stretching from Vilnius to Tallinn by way of the *Via Baltica*.¹⁰⁰ The occasion for

Association Web site for more information (www.iaea.org).

⁹⁹ Among quite a few excellent descriptions and analyses of the independence movements in the Baltic states at the end of the Soviet period, see Senn (1995), Misiunas and Taagepera (1993), Lieven (1994), Karklins (1994) and Smith (1994).

¹⁰⁰ While the number is notable in and of itself, it is particularly so when put in the perspective that the combined population of the three Baltic states at the time was approximately 7 to 7.5 million.

this mass event was the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; the agreement that marked the end of independence for the Baltic nations, the beginning of war-time occupation, and fated the Balts to Soviet rule. This massive show of quiet protest and solidarity among the Balts made international news and brought to the fore the depth of Baltic grievances against Moscow and the Soviet leadership and the beginnings of their desire for increased respect for the indigenous Baltic cultures, increased autonomy, and greater political input.

The creation of a “Popular Front” in each of the Baltic republics marked a significant turning point in the Baltic liberation struggle. Ethnic Balts went from keeping alive the dream of liberated nation-states to focusing on how they would realize that dream. Non-ethnic Balts, though a much smaller percentage than that of the ethnic Baltic population, also supported the Popular Front movements.¹⁰¹ Members of many of the more diffuse social movements came together to create political forums that would eventually realize the dream of Baltic independence. As was the case in East-Central Europe, members of the intelligentsia figured prominently in the informal leadership of the Popular Fronts in each country. This was largely due to the perceived and actual corruption of the then current political leadership as well as the specific history of the Baltic states in which the cultural intelligentsia best articulated the national aspirations of the Latvians and Lithuanians.

For example, musicologist, Vytautas Landsbergis became an important leader of the peaceful yet powerful *Sajudis* movement. Though he was related to interwar political

101 For more discussion on this issue, see Pabriks and Purs, 58-59, as well as Lane, 100-103. In sum, scholars have explained this phenomenon as due in part to solidarity with ethnic Balts, that is, their neighbors, and in particular, to the Peoples’ Fronts’ stated goals of democracy and economic freedom as well as popular opposition to the Soviets and communism in general.

elites, he himself was not politically involved during the Soviet period. Dr. Landsbergis was born in 1932 in Kaunas, Lithuania. The son of architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis and eye doctor Ona Jablonskytė-Landsbergienė, he pursued an education in music and graduated from the Lithuanian Conservatory in Vilnius in 1955. In 1989, Mr. Landsbergis was elected in the city of Panevėžys to represent Lithuania in the USSR People's Deputies Congress. He later led the Council as its President and head of state, and presided over the session of Parliament which proclaimed the restoration of the independent Republic of Lithuania. His leadership was instrumental in Lithuania's successful resistance of Soviet backlash against Lithuania's call for independence though he is criticized by some for pushing *Sajudis* rightward, effectively lessening the previous diversity of the intellectual movement. After Lithuania regained independence, Dr. Landsbergis served as a Member of Parliament for most of the 1990s.¹⁰²

In Latvia, there was also significant involvement of the intelligentsia, particularly among scientists. Ivars Godmanis, a senior lecturer at the University of Latvia in solid state physics and mathematics, was active in the creation of the Latvian Popular Front from its inception in 1988 and eventually became chairman of its political committee. He was first elected as a deputy to the Soviet Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia on March 18, 1990, as a representative of Kuldīga. He was then elected Chairman of the Popular Front of Latvia majority faction in the Supreme Council. Following the Supreme Council's May 1990 declaration to restore Latvia's independence, the Supreme Council elected Ivars Godmanis to serve as Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia. Godmanis served as Prime Minister until 1993.

102 A Virtual Exhibition of a Millenium of Lithuanian Heritage;
<http://pirmojiknyga.mch.mii.lt/Asmenys/landsberg.en.htm>

The active involvement of relative political “outsiders” does not mean that then current political leaders and other communist elites did not play a roll in the “Third Awakening,” as it has been called in Latvia by Stradins and many others. Most notably, Algirdas Brazauskas, leader of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet and head of the Lithuanian Communist Party was a very popular political figure throughout the end of the Soviet period as well as through the postcommunist period up until today. Importantly, however, he and others made the clear decision to break with Moscow at a crucial point in the late 1980s and to create a separate Lithuanian Communist Party. In doing so, they created an independent left that would continue to play a roll in postcommunist politics in Lithuania.

In Latvia, the Popular Front included a number of reform communists who were helpful in not only keeping Latvia on a more cautious path to regaining independence but also offered the newly re-independent state a wealth of professional and political knowledge that, had they not been included, would have been lost.¹⁰³ However, unlike in Lithuania, Latvia’s Communist Party had experienced a purge in the 1960s that effectively erased a reform communist leadership at the republic level that included ethnic Latvians. While Lithuania had Brazauskas and Prunskiene, Latvia had Eduards Berklavs, who had been purged from the Communist Party leadership and only came back to leadership within the Popular Front movement. This issue of opportunities for political outsiders will resurface throughout the dissertation.

Although discussion will return to the important issue of diaspora involvement in the regaining of independence, it is key to the present discussion to make some general

103 Norgaard, 1999; 62-63.

notes about the Baltic diaspora during the communist period. First, as stated elsewhere in the dissertation, the Baltic diasporas, once settled into their adopted countries,¹⁰⁴ moved quite rapidly to pressure their host country governments about Soviet occupation of their homelands. As Raun (2001), Vardys and Sedaitis (1997), Dreifelds (1996), Plakans (1995), Mišiunas and Taagepera (1993) and numerous others have detailed, Baltic diasporas in the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Australia and Canada were able to push for their adopted country governments not to recognize Soviet incorporation of the Baltic states as well as to push for greater knowledge about conditions in the Baltics under Soviet rule. In addition, throughout the Soviet occupation, the diasporas tried to remain in contact with their relatives who had remained in the homelands. This communication included not only retaining linguistic links but also religious ones (especially in the case of Lithuania) and political knowledge. Communication also came in the form of travel by members of the diaspora to the homeland, as in the case of President Adamkus in the course of his work with the EPA, and travel by Latvians and Lithuanians abroad through artistic and cultural exchange and to visit close relatives.

At the specific point when the promise of regaining independence moved from a dream to a possible reality, some highly involved members of the diaspora decided to return to their homelands to offer their support while others redoubled their lobbying efforts in their adopted countries and increased their direct support of compatriots from abroad. Events moved rapidly after the “Baltic Spring” began in the mid-1980’s and Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania officially regained their independence in 1991 with great

104 The Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas primarily settled in the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany and the UK, as these countries were the most open to immigration in the 1940s and 1950s and there were pre-existing diaspora communities in each of the countries as well. Smaller diaspora communities grew up throughout western Europe as well as in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America.

fanfare and relatively little violence. Independent again, each country faced the challenges of defining the “nation,” constructing a viable state, and building the political, economic, and social institutions necessary to best insure its continued independence. While each of these important challenges had been addressed (at least in part) prior to regaining independence, independent statehood brought greater attention to these challenges and raised the stakes involved if any of the states failed to successfully meet one or more of them.

Nation-states reborn

A notable characteristic of both the revolutions and reconstruction of the nation-states in the Baltics and those in East Central Europe was their focus on legality. This focus resulted from the strong desire of these nations to align themselves with western beliefs in the rule of law and their resolve to prove the illegality of much of the Soviet communist experiment. From the holding of referenda on independence to elections in which communist-era appointees ran for re-election alongside Popular Front members and non-aligned individuals, elites in East Central Europe and the Baltics made a point of scripting, and then following, the new democratic rules of the game.

It was also important to the newly re-independent countries to make clear to their own residents as well as the international community that Latvia and Lithuania were able to re-establish their sovereignty so quickly because they could draw heavily on their interwar past. While the interwar period was not as “golden” as it is sometimes described, both countries did establish liberal, democratic states with functioning market economies. They maintained international relations with their neighbors and sought to

develop into industrialized, well-educated nation-states. The significance of this “usable past” in the reconstitution of independent Latvia and Lithuania cannot be overstated.

At the same time, however, the interwar and World War Two periods included large-scale death and destruction, most notably (particularly in the eyes of the West) the Holocaust. While Latvia and Lithuania fought on the world stage to convince others of their ability to be free, their past participation in or at the least complicity in the events of the Holocaust weighed heavily on the societies and would continue to do so until the official and unofficial histories were re-examined.

The Lithuanian elections of March 1990 marked the first official multi party elections in the Soviet Union. The Lithuanian election was soon followed by others in Latvia and Estonia while elections for Popular Front-led “unofficial” parliaments were being held throughout the three Baltic republics. The different elections and referenda in each republic involved different, but overlapping groups of people: one (that which took place in Lithuania) comprised of all Soviet citizens (including ethnic Balts) and the other, of *only* ethnic Balts (those that took place in Latvia and Estonia). This division highlights one of the central problems that faced the newly independent nations: defining who would comprise the nation?

The competing definitions of who could and could not be a citizen were most extreme in Latvia, mainly due to the perceived threat of the large non-ethnic Balt (read: Russian) populations¹⁰⁵ vis-à-vis Latvian independence, and were resolved relatively quickly in Lithuania, which was approximately 80 percent ethnically Lithuanian.

105 The 1989 Soviet census reported approximately 48 percent of permanent residents in Latvia were non-ethnically Latvian; in Estonia, the percentage was somewhat lower at approximately 38 percent non-ethnically Estonian. (Lieven, 433-434).

Lithuania, due to its greater ethnic homogeneity, was able to forge a nation defined by a “civic” nationalism from the outset and made all permanent residents of Lithuania at the time of independence citizens of the Republic of Lithuania. Latvia largely excluded non-ethnic Balts from membership in the nation-state by crafting laws that extended citizenship only to those who had held citizenship in the interwar republics, or were their direct descendents. This policy effectively disenfranchised a significant part of the non-ethnic Balt population, many of whom had migrated to the region after Soviet annexation.

In addition to the citizenship laws, lustration laws of varying sorts were put in place early in the postcommunist period and, in fact, have continued to be proposed by the most nationalist members of the parliament into the second postcommunist decade.¹⁰⁶ For the most part, the lustration laws implemented in both Lithuania and Latvia sought to bar former KGB¹⁰⁷ and military personnel from holding office or, indeed, leadership positions in the government as a whole. Since citizenship laws effectively kept non-ethnic Latvians out of many of the professions as well as the civil service, the effects of the combined strict citizenship and lustration laws can accurately be described as rather severe. Given Lithuania’s different choice in making practically all residents citizens as well as the different history as well as late Soviet period actions of the Lithuanian Communist Party, lustration has been more limited.

106 “Lithuanian Parliament Amends Lustration Law.” RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vol . 3, No. 79, Part II, 23 April 1999 and The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=3860 regarding Latvia.

107 The KGB is the acronym by which the intelligence and internal security agency of the former Soviet Union is most widely known.

As had been the case throughout the Soviet period, members of the diaspora and diaspora organizations were very active politically, economically and culturally during this crucial period. This participation did not begin in the 1980s however, but was rooted in pre-Soviet and Soviet era initiatives by émigrés to retain multiple ties to their homelands and, in particular, following the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states, the desire to make their homelands independent once again. The following section discusses more deeply diaspora ties to the homeland as seen through political, economic and cultural activity.

Diaspora involvement in the homeland

For the purposes of this study, it is important to explain why the choice was made to focus only of the diasporas of the titular nationalities of Latvia and Lithuania as well as the diasporas created out of the emigration during the war and immediate postwar periods. While other nationalities, or ethnic groups, lived in Latvia and Lithuania for centuries and, indeed, did have citizenship in the interwar democracies, this dissertation is focused on only the ethnic Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas for two main reasons. First, and most important, is that the overwhelming trend in Europe during the 20th century has been for countries to be nation-states. While multinational states have existed and do exist (Belgium and Finland, for example), the rule has been that countries should be linguistically, if not culturally, homogenous in order for the country to be modern and democratic. This has had numerous malign and benign effects, running the gamut from the attempted annihilation of the Jewish population from Eastern Europe to

the imposition of the French language and culture in France on all residents and in all regions of the country.

Second, given the loss of a nation-state that represented their nations' political (and other) aspirations, it is not surprising that ethnic Balts would be at the forefront of the diasporas involved with keeping their culture alive and trying to regain independence for their homelands. Baltic Jews, whose numbers were so seriously diminished due to the Holocaust as to make the community only a fraction of its pre-World War Two strength had the opportunity to engage in their own national aspirations through emigration to or at the least support of Israel. Baltic Germans, "repatriated" to Germany during 1939-40, also had another nation to represent their interests – at least from the standpoint of nationalist aims. The trauma of the forced repatriation and the Holocaust largely precluded any attachment to the Baltic countries despite the Baltic Germans and Jews from the region having won citizenship and other rights during the brief independence periods in Latvia and Lithuania. In the postcommunist era, "return" is precluded not by law, in the cases where the individual was or is the direct descendent of a citizen of the interwar republics but by the construction of much more of a titular nation-focused concept of each of the Baltic countries. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the ethnic returnees – both as an explanation of why "nation-focused" states won out over "civic-focused" states in postcommunist Latvia and Lithuania and as a discussion of who has returned and why they have been able to do so.

While emigrants from the Baltics prior to the mass emigration of the World War Two period were able to retain their culture, language and to a certain extent, their homeland identity from the first waves of emigration in the 19th century and at different

periods in the early 20th century, they did follow the emigration patterns of others worldwide in largely losing their homeland identity over one to two generations in the adopted country. Also, those who left the Baltics during World War Two were not only the largest exodus of individuals from the titular groups but also – and most importantly – overwhelmingly represented the cultural, political, religious and economic elites of Latvia and Lithuania as well as Estonia. This is in stark contrast to emigrants at other periods who were often minorities (e.g., Jews), peasants, or from poor urban populations. However, the Baltic emigration during and after World War Two closely resembled other emigrations of elites during war-time and/or significant regime change in other countries.

The nations reunited? Diaspora return to the homeland

As discussed in the literature review, diaspora political participation is based in large part on the retention of the ethnic/national identity that lies at the root of diasporic identity and is fed through preservation of the group's history and culture. For the Latvian and Lithuanian diaspora groups, the postcommunist period has led to changes in the roles of the diasporas as diaspora members have been able to be in more direct contact with their co-nationals in the homeland. While in the immediate postcommunist moment, many rushed to reinstate multiple connections with their co-nationals “at home,” others retained the more distanced diaspora-homeland relations and remained in their adopted countries.

The Baltic diasporas were largely successful in pushing for their inclusion in the post-Soviet Baltic polities and the exclusion of the many Soviet-era immigrants from it (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Dreifelds, 1996). The only country in which virtually all

residents at the time of the re-establishment of the independent countries were given citizenship was Lithuania.¹⁰⁸ In the other two countries, the predominant understanding of the Estonia and Latvian nation-states was one in which ethnicity, not necessarily including culture but definitely not including location, stood at the forefront of the national identity (Norgaard and Johannsen, 1999; Dreifelds, 1996). This understanding of national identity is the result of many factors, including the relatively small size of the ethnic populations worldwide, the dramatic and tragic circumstances that lead to the creation of large-scale ethnic Estonian and Latvian diaspora, their European identity as compared to a Eurasian or Russian one, the historical baggage from having been occupied and colonized by foreigners for most of their modern history and the political, social and economic importance of the West-East (democratic/capitalist vs. communist) divide during the 40 plus year Cold War.

The identities of the Estonian and Latvian diasporas and even of the Lithuanian diaspora has been significantly affected by the factors listed above. In particular, because of the circumstances under which most of the Baltic diaspora left their homelands, the trauma they had experienced up until that time in the occupations of World War Two and the nature of the Cold War, the self-identity of the Baltic diasporas were concurrently political and mystical; in other words, they were comprised of both concrete and intangible (or discursive) elements. The combination of mystical and political elements, though not unique to the Baltic national identities, has largely served to make the

108 However, this meant that diaspora Lithuanians initially had a more difficult time obtaining Lithuanian citizenship than their northern neighbors. At this time, Lithuanians outside of the homeland may obtain citizenship while retaining other citizenship(s) while Latvians in the diaspora who did not “restore” their citizenship during a period of time in the early 1990s must relinquish all other citizenships in order to obtain the Latvian one, except under special circumstances (see The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia at http://www.np.gov.lv/en/faili_en/Pils_likums.rtf for documents relating to citizenship issues.)

diaspora easily definable as a diaspora externally, as well as a cohesive group internally, and able to hold onto the dream of independent Baltic nation-states once more.

Significant changes occurred in both countries during the 40 years that the regions were part of the Soviet Union. While, the Baltic diasporas were creating lives for themselves in their adopted homelands, in the Latvian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs), considerable demographic shifts and attacks on culture and traditions not sanctioned by the state occurred. By the time independence from the Soviet Union was declared in 1991, ethnic Latvians comprised a weak majority in their republic and knowledge and practice of the titular cultures and traditions that had defined the nation during the short period of its independence had become the tools of defiance (the ‘singing revolution’) but ceased to be part of everyday life (e.g., knowledge of folksongs or high-level literacy in the Latvian and Lithuanian languages).

In Lithuania, meanwhile, the population and the infrastructure of the country had been much less affected by sovietization, keeping the population more ethnically Lithuanian, the Catholic Church more intact and the country overall less damaged from too often misguided industrialization policies and all their intended and unintended repercussions. As will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter that follows, the fact that more communist party leaders were ethnic Lithuanians created a political dynamic in postcommunist Lithuania that has differed from that in neighboring Latvia. Yet, sovietization still had a significant impact on both Latvia and Lithuania in all areas of society. Perhaps most notable, public trust in government, as a direct result of communist rule, was very low. Corruption – in politics, the economy, in education and one might argue even in the society at large – was rampant. Divorce rates in both

countries were among the highest in the world; alcoholism rates were as well. Birth rates were falling rapidly to be among the lowest in world – all indications of “sick” societies. Last, while the Latvian and Lithuanian cultures and languages had been kept alive by committed individuals throughout society, there was a real risk – particularly in Latvia – that Russification would succeed over time.

In the Baltic diasporas, by comparison, the Latvian and Lithuanian cultures had been kept alive but had changed little despite the rather successful adoption of the identities of their host countries.¹⁰⁹ Thus, when the independence of Latvia and Lithuania were regained, the diasporas began to participate directly in the reconstruction of national identities that they had held dear while outside of the homeland, while the natives worked to reconstruct a national identity that may or may not have matched that of the diaspora.

Conclusions

The serious challenge of recreating independent state institutions as well as dismantling Soviet ones did not prevent the Baltic states from winning independence from the Soviet Union and rebuilding their countries. While the Baltic states did have strong memories of their interwar independent states, they faced challenges that their postcommunist neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe, which had been Soviet satellites and not constituent republics of the USSR, did not. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Baltic countries’ success is due to a great degree to the precommunist histories of the Baltic states. Their independent, democratic state histories – though short-lived – left an

¹⁰⁹ This is my opinion given the relative absence of literary and other developments in the diaspora and the need of all diasporas to accommodate themselves to a certain extent to the requirements of their adopted country. The main thrust of this statement is that conceptions of “Latvian-ness” and “Lithuanian-ness” did not really have the opportunity to evolve due to the overwhelming needs for diaspora cohesion.

indelible mark on the national consciousnesses of the countries that later acted as powerful stimuli for the fight to regain independence and then provided on-going support for the rebuilding of their states.

In this chapter, I have provided brief histories of Latvia and Lithuania, paying particular attention to their all too short interwar periods of independence, the war years and the Soviet period that followed. Included throughout is analysis of the role of Latvian and Lithuanian national identity in the respective histories of the two nations as well as discussion of the resistance against occupation and the resistance activities of the diasporas. Then discussion turned to the efforts to and final break from the Soviet Union and the reinstatement of independence up to a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The last section concerns a more detailed analysis of the diaspora of these countries than has been yet attempted in this dissertation. The chapter that follows picks up on discussion of the diaspora and then turns to an analysis of returned diaspora and, specifically, returned diaspora political leaders.

CHAPTER 5: Returned diaspora, political leadership and postcommunist Latvia and Lithuania

The following chapter brings the dissertation to its core analysis of returned diaspora and political leadership in their homelands. The following description and analysis stems directly from interviews conducted from summer 2002 through fall 2004. The chapter begins with a discussion of return diaspora in Latvia and Lithuania and reaction to and perceptions of returned diaspora *writ large* in their homelands. Then, after a brief description of the political environments into which the returned diaspora entered, discussion turns to the perceived differences between the returned diaspora and their native political leader colleagues in addition to the important issues and opinions brought up by the interviewees.

In the final chapter, following comparisons of returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia with those in Lithuania in chapter six, the interview data are grouped according to how they relate to the central question: When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders? This final analysis takes place only after the issues, characteristics and similarities and differences that came out of the interviews with returned diaspora political leaders and others because the difficulty involved in describing and then analyzing the data and then grouping it analytically.

A Few Notes

Before launching into the description and analysis of the interview data, I want to note a few important undercurrents of the interviews and of the research in general. First, the interplay of national identity, diaspora experience and postcommunist politics is

complex and undergirds this entire project. In the immediate postcommunist period, ties linking countries to democratic pasts (actual and embellished) and to national histories “interrupted” by communist rule are sought and returned diaspora can help to provide them. If one understands national identity as closely linking diaspora members and those in the homeland together, a perception in the homeland of continuity in the political history of the country is made possible when members of the diaspora return to the homeland to assume leadership roles in the political arena. In the special case of diaspora groups formed when the communists won control in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, diaspora members often feel that not only were they or their parents and grandparents forced to leave their homelands but the homelands were subsumed into a larger empire that sought to erase much of the former nations’ national identities. They therefore can have an even stronger feeling of homeland national identity and the interest of “restoring” what they perceive as the authentic identity of the homeland itself.

While official communism sought to eradicate nations, in actuality, Soviet communism used small nations and nationalism to further other political goals— in the process, reemphasizing national identities.¹¹⁰ A goal that was achieved – at least during much of the communist period – was to break down networks based on nation (as well as religion and profession) and create a largely but not totally atomized society where individuals could engage with others only through the government and the Party. The atomization of Latvian and Lithuanian societies under the Soviets meant that when communism collapsed, the Latvian and Lithuanian publics craved connections and networks outside of the party. I will argue in this chapter that this situation created

110 Suny, 1993, and Misiunas and Taagepera, 1993.

environments more amenable to defining political opportunities to include returned diaspora in the post-Soviet and postcommunist societies. Still, while their diaspora status enabled the returned diaspora to be able to claim membership in the nation, differences between them and natives were inevitable when the former had created lives outside of the homelands never fully believing that they would definitely be able to return. This dualism of being a part yet also not being a part of the nation came up repeatedly in the interviews¹¹¹

Second, it should also be noted that the returned diaspora views on communism and the recent communist past often differ – sometimes dramatically so – from those of their non-returned diaspora compatriots. Given that the greatest numbers of individuals who left countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia did so when communism won out over democracy and independence, it is not surprising how dramatically opposed many returned diaspora are to communism and any of its vestiges in society. If one also looks at diasporas created because of a dramatic change of regime – aside from the collapse of communism – one will note that many of the diasporans are former members of the political, cultural and/or economic elite of their countries. This makes them interested in restoring the status-quo-ante, particularly if they believe that they cannot adapt and integrate into the elite of the new regime. Interestingly, this opposition seems closely related to age and seems to therefore be a direct result of personal experience with expulsion from the homeland as well as from the experiences that the Baltic diasporan have had in their adopted countries.¹¹² Again, this brings up the complex nature of

111 Personal interviews in May 2002 with Muiznieks; Skucas; Smulkstys; Zemkalnis; Kronkaitis; Pavlovskis; Vaskelis.

112 Since the majority of ethnic Balts who emigrated from their homelands during or at the end of World War Two settled in western democracies opposed to Soviet-style communism, it is not surprising that the

postcommunist reality and serves to highlight the interplay between postcommunism and national identity in the present research.

Third, as noted in the chapter on methodology, no verifiable or even unverifiable estimate of the number of returned diaspora political elite exists. This is due to the difficulty of defining returned diaspora as well as the absence of any central accounting system to count these “returnees.”

Last, these interviews rely heavily on the personal interpretation of the life of the interviewee as well as the interpretation and analysis of the interviewer at a later point in time. This, combined with the topics of the interview questions, that is, national identity and political leadership, as well as the fact that all interviewees are either political leaders or study political leaders, makes the interviews themselves political. Those that were interviewed had political agenda in telling their stories to me and in addressing my questions. This is not to say that the data that I collected through these interviews is unscientific but rather to stress that there are multiple goals and stories involved and I, as the researcher, have needed to be aware of these levels of meaning not only when I analyze the data but also when I explain it to the reader. The chapter now turns to a discussion of the return to the homeland.

Deciding to “Return”

In modern Hebrew, the word *aliya* is used both to describe the going up to the altar in the synagogue as well as the “return” of a Jew from the diaspora to the land of

vast majority would be highly antagonistic to communism in general and the Soviet occupation of their homelands in particular. The strength of opposition did vary among the publics in western democracies throughout the Cold War, with the U.S. strongest in its anti-communist rhetoric as evidence by the

Israel. The word actually means “to go up” and therefore represents in the religious sense both the physical movement up to the altar and everything that is present there as well as in the theoretical sense, the movement to a higher plane of existence through “returning to the homeland.” I think that this complex meaning of the word in ancient and modern Hebrew is a good way to begin the in-depth discussion of diaspora return to Latvia and Lithuania and, by extension, to homelands in general.

The national identity that individuals and groups defined for themselves prior to the reassertion of the independence of the Latvian and Lithuanian states differed due to a variety of reasons. The diasporas have cared about how their national identities would be defined – legally and in the national consciousness – because they strike directly at the crux of their self-identity as members of the each country. How Latvian and Lithuanian national identities are defined defines them (as the diasporas) as members of the nations or outside of them. Therefore, while one member of one of the Baltic diasporas may have largely acculturated himself to his host culture and retained his identity as a member of the diaspora for only sentimental and familial reasons, another member may feel a dual identity and seek to affirm those identities through formal citizenship in both the host and home countries and possibly reside in both or move from the host country *back to* the home one. The important point here is that national identity for diasporans is complex and ever-changing due to competition from other important identities, most notably the national identities of their adopted countries.

McCarthy hearings while other western countries where the Baltic diasporas settled were much more tolerant of communism and/or socialism, for example, Scandinavia.

Shared Returned Diaspora Characteristics

In the interviews that I conducted for this project, it became clear that while there were a variety of characteristics shared by those who chose to “return to the homeland,” they can be grouped into four categories: age, career and connections, wealth and homeland commitment. To start, one of the most obvious of the shared characteristics of returned diaspora is the lack of variety in their ages: returned diaspora tend either to be young (in their twenties) or in their fifties and older at the time of their return. Few seem to be in their thirties and forties and with school-age children. This information, while largely anecdotal because no statistics exist on this very changeable population (for example, when is one considered really a “returned diasporan” or just someone visiting for an extended period?) Of those who come in their fifties, or more often, after they retire from their professions in their adopted countries, they are either looking to live their remaining lives in their homeland, where they can have a higher standard of living than would be possible in their adopted countries or they are interested in going into a second career in Latvia or Lithuania. As Smulkstys, an important advisor to President Adamkus noted: of those who come after they retire – but who are not old – they can remember Lithuania before the Soviet period and would like to take on the “interesting challenges” that can be found for them in the period of rebuilding an independent nation-state. Smulkstys’ comments reveal two interesting points: 1) diasporans who experienced pre-Soviet Lithuania and remember their experiences seem to have an interest in returning to help restore the country and 2) the interesting challenges present in postcommunist Lithuania provide diasporans with opportunities to not only return to the homeland but also to take on interesting work that differs from their prior careers.

Regarding those who returned to Latvia and Lithuania in their twenties, there seem to be two main motivations: to “reconnect” with the culture of their parents and grandparents in a deeper way than is possible in the diaspora and to take advantage of opportunities – often in business – that might not be as readily available to them outside of Lithuania.¹¹³ While these young returned diaspora may not have the Lithuanian and Latvian language skills possessed by the older returnees, they also have a strong commitment to their (ancestral) homelands and skills learned in their adopted countries that might be quite marketable in newly independent Latvia and Lithuania. Furthermore, they, unlike individuals in their thirties, forties and fifties, often do not have familial and professional responsibilities that preclude taking the risk to move to the homeland and create new lives for themselves.

Professional skills and experience gained in the diaspora can lead to certain opportunities that might not be as open to others who lack such skills no matter what one’s age. For example, there are a number of American Lithuanians in the Lithuanian Foreign Service¹¹⁴ A number of high-level positions involving finance have been held by returned diaspora, among them Mr. Vytautas Dudenas, former Minister of Finance and Member of Parliament, who is also a retired banker. In Latvia, individuals with legal backgrounds such as former member of parliament, Inese Birzniece, and political science backgrounds such as former minister for integration, Nils Muiznieks, possessed skills that native Latvians did not have unless they had studied in the west. These skills enabled both Birzniece and especially Muiznieks to attain high positions at relatively young ages. Yet, as Nils Muiznieks noted, there seems to be an increasingly higher threshold for

113 Personal interviews with Smulkstys, 2002; Lukosaitis, 2002; Lopata, 2002.

114 Among them, Ginte Damusis and Romualdas Misiunas.

returned diaspora to get into ‘high positions’ while at the same time the pool of potential returned diaspora is smaller every year as the older and usually more committed diasporans die off and the younger diasporans acculturate to their adopted homelands.¹¹⁵

A key issue in whether or not to return often is wealth – at least relatively speaking. As Donaldas (Don) Skucas noted in his interview (which was seconded by many others), returned diasporans must either be financially independent in order to make the transition between the wealthier west to a postcommunist Latvia or Lithuania or be willing and able to exist on local (meaning, low) wages. For those who returned to Lithuania, many are retired and have Social Security or pensions abroad. Otherwise, it is too difficult to live in Lithuania as a returned diasporan.¹¹⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed vis-à-vis Latvia.

To conclude, despite “returning” to the homeland, quite a few retain property in their adopted countries, especially as entire families rarely “return” together. Also, concerns such as good access to healthcare or a pension¹¹⁷ as well as friends and family, are significant enough to make even the most committed returned diasporan feel that it is necessary to go back to the adopted country for shorter and longer periods of time.

Last, it is worth restating that most returned diaspora do not go into politics but rather pursue other activities, be it retirement, research or business opportunities.¹¹⁸

Whatever the more pragmatic reason given for returning to the homeland, it is clear that the very nature of returning to the homeland connotes a strong commitment to the

115 Personal interview, May 2002.

116 Personal interview, May 2002.

117 Interviewee’s name withheld because of the sensitive nature of criticizing access to quality healthcare in Latvia and Lithuania. This is sure to improve with time but particularly in the immediate postcommunist period, quality healthcare was difficult or impossible to obtain without leaving the Baltic countries. This is despite the Baltics having been the center of medicine in the Soviet Union.

118 Personal interviews with Lopata, 2002; Skucas, 2002; Muiznieks, 2002.

homeland and the belief that one is a member of that homeland – that one shares in the Latvian or Lithuanian national identity.

Characteristics of Returned Diaspora Political Leaders

In the previous chapter on the case studies of Latvia and Lithuania in relation to the subject of returned diaspora political leaders, there was much discussion on the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas, their interaction with their homelands while they were in the diaspora and then the beginnings of the discussion of when and how members of the diaspora decided to return to the homeland. In this section, who decided to return and why they did so will be addressed as well as the discussion of when and how they did so concluded. While clear trends for each country regarding these questions came out of the interviews, there is variation – especially as the numbers of returned diaspora political leaders are not large in either Latvia or Lithuania– both within each country and between them.¹¹⁹

At this point, too, I would like to make clear that in this section I am primarily describing the characteristics of returned diaspora political leaders but, in the course of doing so, I include discussion of return diaspora who did not go into politics. I do this in order to be able to make stronger generalizations – after all the universe of return diasporans is much larger than its subset of return diaspora political leaders. However, it is also important to note because some return diasporans became prominent in non-

¹¹⁹ This was not only borne out by the interviews but was independently commented on by two of the leading political scientists in Lithuania, Jankauskas and Lopata, who noted in their interviews that there are differences in who returns, why they return and how they are received by the native population. This last point will be addressed in the next section.

political arenas in their homelands and they have had an important impact on the postcommunist development of the two countries.¹²⁰

It needs to be re-emphasized that the moniker of “returned diasporan” includes not only individuals who were actually born in the homeland and then emigrated but also those born “in the diaspora” who were given and then developed strong enough ties to the homeland to view themselves as members of the Latvian or Lithuanian diaspora and to understand immigration to the homeland as “returning” to it. Again, like the Hebrew “*aliya*,” the concept of “return” is used in English to describe the general movement of the diaspora to the homeland after a period of absence because it most clearly describes the emotional (and, some primordial nationalists might say, spiritual)¹²¹ relationship between the diaspora and the homeland.

To start, I describe the few characteristics shared widely among the returned diaspora as perceived by the returned diaspora political leaders themselves as well as in the popular press and by regional specialists. Most notable, perhaps, is that of age. The average age of returned diaspora political leaders varied between the countries, with the average age being significantly older in Lithuania and the variation in ages of returned diaspora political leaders less than in Latvia. This is not a surprising finding as it would be expected that the older the age of the individual when she/he left the homeland, the greater the socialization in the home culture and the greater the likelihood that she/he would retain ties to the homeland. By extension, whether or not an individual was born

120 Interview with Lopata, 2002, as well as Zemkalnis, 2002. For wider discussion of this, see Steen and Ruus, 2002; Dogan and Higley, 1998, and Shlapentokh, Vanderpool and Doktorov, 1999.

121 See Anderson, Connor and Gellner for best discussions of “primordial” nationalism in Hutchinson and Smith, 1994.

in the homeland of his/her ancestors as opposed to born “in the diaspora” would seem to correlate with the level of affinity of the individual toward his/her homeland.

For both countries, the younger the age of the returned diasporan, the less likely that she/he would get involved in political leadership and the greater likelihood that she/he would get involved in business. As noted earlier, Smulkstys remarked in our interview in May 2002 that in his opinion, young diasporans who come to Lithuania are more likely to get involved in business because they saw more opportunities in the immediate postcommunist era than were open to them in the diaspora. This reflects both an understanding of the opportunities for rapid advancement in postcommunist environments when systems and people are in flux as well as an understanding that despite high levels of assimilation in their adopted countries, first and second generation immigrants generally have less success breaking into the political, economic or social elites of their adopted countries. In addition, it reflects the realization that they can use skills learned in the diaspora that were not widely available in the immediate postcommunist years to their professional benefit in Lithuania and Latvia. Based on background discussions with various interviewees, strong national identity inculcation in the diaspora led quite a few young diasporans to “return” to their homelands despite having been born elsewhere. Relatively few had the high level language or, more importantly, cultural, skills to adapt and thrive in their homelands, however, particularly in the political realm.¹²²

Yet, Latvia and Lithuania regaining their independence has offered younger diasporans who had the necessary language and cultural skills as well as key professional

122 Nils Muiznieks and Krisjanis Karins, the current Minister for Economics are, of course, two prominent exceptions and there are surely others of whom I am unaware.

skills – such as Muznieks – the opportunity for more rapid professional advancement than would likely have been the case in their adopted countries. This often has more often than not been outside the clearly political realm, however, in NGOs, special government commissions or other high-level positions and, particularly, in private business. This has also been more pronounced in Latvia than in Lithuania. Possible reasons for the difference between the countries will be discussed in the following chapter.

The returned diaspora political leaders also tend to be older than their native colleagues but this is due to many older, native political leaders retiring from politics because of formal and informal lustration and the fact that much of the political leadership in the communist Baltics were non-ethnic Balts– usually Russians or russified Balts who had lived in Russia for some time – and therefore were not able and/or willing to stay in postcommunist politics in independent Latvia and Lithuania.¹²³ Since many non-ethnic Balts did remain in the Baltic states after the countries regained independence, studies have shown that many former communist political leaders moved into private business (often through and as a result of the massive privatization schemes of the early and mid-1990s) or into the bureaucracy where knowledge and experience greatly overshadowed former political allegiances (Higley et al, eds., 1998; Steen and Ruus, 2002; and Shlapentokh, Vanderpool and Doktorov, 1999). Therefore, the native political leaders with whom the returned diaspora share leadership are often younger, communist trained political careerists who have come to political leadership through vertical continuation.¹²⁴

123 Steen and Ruus, 2002.

124 See Steen and Ruus, 2002, for a succinct discussion of “vertical continuation.”

The sense of greater opportunities for high-level participation – be it in business or in political leadership – was also a factor for many of the returned diaspora political leaders in both countries. The rapid rise of Nils Muiznieks in the political arena in Latvia, though he was only in his twenties when he arrived in the country, is a good example of this. The son of Latvian emigrants, Muiznieks was born and brought up in the United States. He earned a Ph.D. in political science at the prestigious University of California, Berkeley, and then won an IREX grant to Latvia in 1993 to further his study of human rights and ethnicity issues in the country.¹²⁵ He ended up staying in Latvia to head up the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies and then more recently, he became the first special minister for social integration. While, given his impressive educational background and clear ambition, there was the possibility that he could have advanced rapidly in the political arena in the United States, it is highly unlikely that he could have advanced as far in the United States as he has in Latvia at such a young age.

In the interview with Muznieks, he noted, however, that there was an increasingly higher threshold to get into ‘high positions’ in any field in Latvia and that he saw the number of individuals in the diaspora willing to return correspondingly decreasing over time because of this, as well as due to other reasons such as the as the generations that remembered and had directly experienced pre-Soviet, independent Latvia were dying off. Muznieks noted that some people still talk of moving ‘back’ despite the general belief of their friends and family that it is unlikely to happen in the future if it did not happen in the early years of the countries’ regaining their independence. Yet, this desire, or indeed need, for members of the diaspora to express an interest in returning to the homeland is

¹²⁵ Personal interview, May 28, 2002 in Riga.

important in that it provides a reassertion of the diasporic identity as was discussed at length in the literature review and country case studies.

Another characteristic shared by a number of returned diaspora political leaders is that many of the returned diaspora political leaders were already retired from their careers in the diaspora prior to their return to their homelands or chose to retire in order to be able to return.¹²⁶ In the case of Lithuania, many of those who went into politics could remember the country before the Soviet period and were committed to taking that knowledge (as well as the knowledge and experience gained in the diaspora) and help the country rebuild its pre-Soviet political, economic and cultural environments.¹²⁷ In addition, many of these retired individuals saw returning to the homeland and entering the political arena as an “interesting challenge” that may or may not have been available to them in the diaspora.¹²⁸ Interviewees noted what they saw as differences between those who stay in the United States or elsewhere and those who return to Lithuania relating to who has professional experience that could be useful in the postcommunist period. A good example of this is Professor Bronius Vaskelis, who returned to Lithuania in 1993 to head up Vytautas Magnus University. The university was first established as the University of Lithuania and then renamed Vytautas Magnus (“Vytautas the Great” after one of the founders of Lithuania) in the independent interwar period when the country’s flagship higher education institution, Vilnius University, was in Polish-controlled Vilnius. Later, the Soviets transformed the leading university into Kaunas

126 List of returned diaspora who had already retired or who took early retirement in order to return to the homeland (based on self-disclosure): Pavlovskis, Viķe-Freiberga, Adamkus, Smulkstys, Zemkalnis, Vaskelis.

127 Smulkstys, 2002; Adamkus, 2003; Zemkalnis, 2002; Vaskelis, 2002.

128 IBID.

Polytechnic and the Kaunas Medical School. Vytautas Magnus was re-opened as an American-style, private institution in 1989, forcing other higher education institutions in the country to compete for the best students.¹²⁹ As a private university, it drew heavily on the expertise and funding of the Lithuanian diaspora, most notably in its choice of rector but also in its educational philosophy.

A key characteristic shared by some of the most self-reflective returned political leaders that I interviewed was an understanding of how to use the media – particularly the international media – to one’s advantage. General Kronkaitis and Nils Muiznieks were most descriptive in how they have sought to use the media as a strategy in attaining political goals. Muiznieks stated that during the period when he began to more publicly criticize the Latvian government’s treatment of the Russian minority, he learned to use the media to situate his opinions and political positions in the midst of prevailing views of human rights in Europe while situating those of the Latvian government’s outside the mainstream of the Europe that Latvia hoped to join in the near future. He learned to cultivate relationships with the media to the extent that after a while, members of the Latvian media and even Latvian political elite asked him to share with them how he seemed to use the media so effectively.¹³⁰

Those who professed to understand and/or expressed a willingness to learn to understand the situation in the country were more likely to return to the homeland in the first place.¹³¹ This is a somewhat difficult characteristic to pin down as it is somewhat “self-serving” to the return diaspora that I interviewed to describe themselves this way

129 For more information on Vytautas Magnus University, go to www.vdu.lt.

130 Personal interview, May 2002.

131 Personal interview with Kestutis Jankauskas, April 2003. Similar sentiments expressed by many of the interviewees.

while it also reflects a bias of those who have stayed (in the homeland) in that they were able to adapt. Nevertheless, the ability to adapt is key to being successful in joining the ranks of the political elite so this characteristic cannot be overlooked. In addition, it is interesting to note that virtually all those interviewed noted the “need to adapt culturally” when they returned to their homelands – they themselves reaffirming that differences do exist between natives and those in the diaspora despite the strong ties of a shared national identity.

Still, there has been ambivalence about returning to the homeland and remaining for the long term among most of those whom I interviewed. Again, it is noteworthy that this sentiment was much more prevalent among returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania than in Latvia. Not only were issues concerning culture at the forefront of this ambivalence, but they seem to have been exacerbated by the challenges of living in a postcommunist country as opposed to “the West” or at least where one had been living for the previous 40-50 years. For example, an interviewee told me that he lives in the Baltics for only half the year because he must continue to live in the United States (where he lived for the forty years prior to his political appointment) for at least half of every year in order to take advantage of his high quality health insurance. He stressed that while he was not currently sick, he hoped to prevent serious illness and did not feel comfortable with the quality of care that he could access in the Baltics.¹³² Many diasporan politicians continue to have homes abroad though they live in Lithuania or, to a lesser extent, Latvia, for at least half of the year in order to retain pension or health

¹³² Interviewee’s name withheld on request.

insurance benefits or more simply because their children and/ or spouse continue to live in the diaspora.¹³³

To wrap up this section, without fail, each person interviewed cited connection to the homeland as a strong motivating factor of all returnees. While this may seem obvious, the degree of identification of returned diaspora political leaders with the national identity of their homelands bears highlighting. Nevertheless, most interviewees also cited varying degrees of ambivalence regarding their identities as former diasporans or felt that they had dual and sometimes competing identities.¹³⁴

Homeland “reaction” to returned diaspora

It is good for [Lithuania] that the émigrés came back with their different ideas [and] democratic experiences.¹³⁵

“The Return” is such an idealized part of the diasporic experience – indeed it lies at the core of the diasporic identity – that nothing in reality could ever hope to match it. Time and the communist experience created a very different Latvia and a very different Lithuania from those which the diasporans left at the end of World War Two. In addition, experience in the diaspora affected émigrés in ways that are easily identifiable as well as ways that are not. Thus, at the point when members of the diaspora returned to the homeland and got involved in political leadership, the stage was set for conflict and continuity as well as an opportunity for political analysis. In particular, the reactions of ‘natives’ in the homelands were both expected and unexpected. Overall, it should be noted that most of the interviewees thought that the media (to their credit) only provided

133 Names withheld to protect interviewees.

134 Names withheld to protect interviewees.

135 Lukosaitis, personal interview on May 22, 2002.

fragments of a broad discussion of (returned) diaspora-native differences and instead focuses on individuals' statements and positions.¹³⁶ In fact, Muiznieks noted that his and his colleagues status as former members of the diaspora was really only brought up politically when all other methods of persuasion or intimidation had failed. He called this the "last resort of cowards."¹³⁷

The contradictions of homecoming

For their part, the publics of the homelands and in particular the 'native' political leaders were welcoming of returned diaspora and elected many to political office, especially in the early postcommunist years. There were definitely some popular perceptions in both Latvian and Lithuanian society that returned diaspora may be better in postcommunist politics, especially because of direct experience with democracy and their educational backgrounds. In addition, there was a widely-held perception that returned diaspora politicians overall were more honest, law-abiding and non-corrupt as they did not have the family and friends network to support that the natives do.¹³⁸ In Latvia, there was initially a very warm welcome to returned diasporans but then the subsequent massive over-representation of individuals who were returned diaspora in *Saiema* helped to create a strong reaction against them as challenging circumstances continued in every aspect of postcommunist Latvian life.¹³⁹

136 Personal interviews with Lukosaitis, May 22, 2002, and Adamkus, May 3, 2003.

137 Personal interview, May 28, 2002, in Riga.

138 Personal interviews with Skucas, 2002; Lukosaitis, 2002; Muznieks, 2002; Berzins, 2004; Paegle, 2004; and Kalnins, 2004, among others.

139 Personal interviews with Muiznieks, 2002; Paegle, 2004; Kalnins, 2004.

Many Balts thought that returned diaspora would be “miracle workers” and did not understand how hard diasporans had worked in their adopted countries to make successful lives for themselves.¹⁴⁰ While part of this stems from the feelings of less than total acceptance and adjustment of the returned diaspora political leaders it also stems from ignorance on the part of the majority of the Latvian and Lithuanian publics on the economic and political realities of Baltic émigrés in their adopted homelands.

However, other interviewees noted that there was no universal ‘welcome mat’ for returned diaspora in Latvia – but largely because there were some incapable or really selfish Latvian émigrés and others who came to Latvia, especially in the early to mid-1990s.¹⁴¹ There was some general resentment directed toward returned diaspora who were appointed or even elected to prominent positions in Latvian and Lithuanian societies. Some questioned why “natives” were not “good enough” to be appointed to such positions and why individuals who had not lived in either country for over forty years were “starting at the top”? While these sentiments were expressed in private and public dialog, for the most part, there was recognition that there were good reasons to put ‘westerners’ in high positions.¹⁴²

140 Personal interviews with Pavlovskis and Muiznieks, 2002.

141 Personal interviews with Pavlovskis, 2002; Kalnins, 2004; and Paegle, 2004.

142 Personal interviews with Pavlovskis, 2002, and Muiznieks, 2002.

“An American in America and an American in Lithuania”¹⁴³

The above quote, from an interviewee in Lithuania, clearly expresses a sentiment that I found shared to varying extents by other returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania but only rarely in Latvia. Due to numerous important domestic and international political challenges and the ongoing challenges inherent in postcommunist political and economic reform, there was eventual disappointment with returned diaspora politicians as a group – though not as individuals – because they seemed to promise much and not deliver all that they had promised while at the same time seemed to continue to lack understanding about day-to-day life for most in Lithuania as well as Latvia.¹⁴⁴ Some questioned publicly why returned diaspora didn’t stay out of fields in which they didn’t have the necessary experience, that is, politics, and instead busy themselves with philanthropy or business.¹⁴⁵

However, despite the “we” and “they” rhetoric that almost all of the interviewees cited as having experienced directly or indirectly through a friend’s experience or criticism in the public media, the perceived differences between natives and returned diasporans have rarely become more than below-the-surface tension. Most of those I interviewed realized that they – as well as other returned diasporans that they knew or knew of – can be predisposed to “lecture” the natives too much on issues relating to integration with western institutions, procedures and opinions. In similar vein, the returned diaspora political leaders

143 Quote from Professo Vaskelis, former Pro-Rector of Vytautas Magnus University.

144 Personal interviews with Lukosaitis, 2002; Adamkus, 2003; Kalnins, 2004; Paegle, 2004.

145 Personal interview with Lukosaitis, 2002. This quote was in specific reference to recurring criticism of President Adamkus in private and public discussion.

that I interviewed understood that natives sometimes believe that returned diasporans in general can and do “take away jobs from others...who have suffered” while those in the diaspora did not and by their presence cause the prices of housing and services to rise.¹⁴⁶ While this may be true to an extent, my interviewees thought that perceptions such as these were reflective of more general discontent with postcommunist economic and political development. Furthermore, many interviewees, particularly those in Lithuania, thought that the tensions that do exist are mainly between the older generations; the younger people are more “open-minded.”¹⁴⁷ Still, most of the interviewees – particularly in Lithuania – felt that, “to your face” natives are only passively friendly while underneath, they seem much less welcoming. Some explained this perceived behavior as a manifestation of cultural differences between Soviet and western mentalities. I would add that it can also be understood as a reflection of the cultural differences that do exist between returned diaspora and natives in Lithuania and Latvia.

Finally, returned diaspora political leaders in both countries remarked that they sought to retain a strong, though informal, network of support with other returned diasporans. They noted that these networks were useful not only for obtaining information in countries in which needed information is still not readily

146 Personal interviews with Smulkstys, 2002, and Skucas, 2002. Each echoed the other in their comments on this subject.

147 Personal interview with Smulkstys, 2002; Adamkus, 2003; and Zemkalnis, 2002.

available but that being part of a network worked as a “coping mechanism” to deal with the cultural challenges of living in a postcommunist environment.¹⁴⁸

Before launching into a description of the interviews in greater detail, the following section provides thumbnail sketches of postcommunist Latvia and Lithuania.

Setting the stage: the political environments of postcommunist Lithuania and Latvia

Clearly, the Lithuania and Latvia to which the diasporans returned were not those which they left at the end of the war or about which they had heard the diaspora mixture of myth and reality. Not only did approximately 50 years separate their departure from their return but the ensuing years witnessed the forced incorporation of their homelands into constituent republics of the Soviet Union. In particular, the communist period as well as the influence of Russia and to a lesser extent the other republics left strong legacies that continue to be felt in the political environments of the two countries. The following is a brief discussion of the political environments of each country.

Lithuania – continuity with all of its pasts?

As previously noted, there was a deliberate continuity built in to the political environment of the newly re-independent Lithuania in the 1990s, starting with the adaptation of the *Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania* by the first freely elected Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. This act

148 Muiznieks, 2002; Skucas, 2002; Kronkaitis, 2002; and Adamkus, 2003 specifically noted this but I assume that many other interviewees also feel similarly – whether consciously or unconsciously.

proclaimed the regaining of independence for Lithuania and tied the newly emerged state to the first independent Lithuania in the modern era. In addition, both the Latvian and Lithuanian embassies in Washington were kept open and not turned over to the Soviets because the United States never recognized the incorporation of the countries into the Soviet Union. Thus, when the countries regained their independence, these embassies were ready immediately.

In the political realm, Lithuania has a mixed system of proportional and first-past-the-post seats in its parliament, the *Seimas*. The president is directly elected by the electorate though his role is more circumscribed than that of an American-style presidency. Furthermore, many former communist party members continue to hold political leadership positions – a very different reality to that of Latvia. Another interesting and related fact on this subject is that Lithuania was the first former communist country in Europe to return the former Communist Party to power via the ballot box. To this day, Algirdas Brazauskas, former general secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, then later, in 1993, the country's first elected President in the postcommunist era, and currently Prime Minister, enjoys significant popularity in Lithuania. He even considered running for president in the 2004 elections but allegedly decided that the presidency did not have enough power and autonomy for him.

This in turn brings up the role of the presidency in Lithuania. By design, the position is supposed to act as both a check on the *Seimas* as well as a stabilizing force on the country through the ability to initiate some legislation, particularly in the foreign policy realm. Therefore, while not quite as strong as

the presidency in France or the United States, the presidency in Lithuania is decidedly stronger than its Latvian and Estonian parallels.

Unlike Latvia, which is discussed below, national identity has not really been contested in the postcommunist era. Soon after the reinstatement of independence, all long-time residents – regardless of ethnicity – were made citizens of Lithuania. Also unlike its northern neighbor, however, Lithuania was and remains a rather homogeneous society with over 80 percent of its population ethnic Lithuanian.

To conclude this brief description of the Lithuanian political environment, lustration was and has continued to be rather weak despite the great enmity of most Lithuanians against the Soviet period. It has been difficult to pass laws on lustration due to the strength of the many former communist party members in government throughout the post-Soviet period. Also, unlike Central Europe, the KGB took many of its collaboration files with it when the Soviet government fell, though Lithuania still has one of the highest numbers of files of any of the Baltic states. Interestingly, Lithuania is currently going through the ordeal of deciding how to address recent research findings that a number of high ranking Lithuanian political leaders are former KGB reservists. As of winter 2005, it is unclear how the Lithuanians will deal with this unpleasant aspect of their country's past.

Latvia – breaking with its past(s)?

Unlike Lithuania, national identity is a strong and ongoing debate in Latvia and one that touches many other issues in society and particularly in the

political arena. From the contested decision to bar all non-ethnically Latvian residents who immigrated to the Latvian SSR during the Soviet period from gaining automatic citizenship when an independent Latvia was reestablished to current debates concerning the official and/or working languages of Latvian government and society, who is a Latvian and what is Latvia is still being defined.

In addition, the recent decision by the *Saeima* to bar high level government leaders (elected and appointed) from holding more than Latvian citizenship potentially reflects a “backlash” of sorts of native political leaders against returned diaspora political leaders – another indication that Latvian national identity is still very much in the process of being defined.

In effect, debates concerning national identity in Latvia and its many repercussions have created a political cleavage based on ethnicity/nationality that is an important mainstay of Latvian politics. The non-ethnic Balts that are Latvian citizens are overwhelmingly affiliated with the left while the right in Latvia is primarily inhabited by ethnic Latvians of liberal and illiberal persuasions. Related to this issue is the external pressure that has been brought to bear on Latvia regarding the integration of non-citizens into the political, economic and social fabrics of the country. This pressure has come from the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as well as Russia and human rights NGOs within the country and outside of it.¹⁴⁹ It is worthwhile to note that the current national identity debate can be

149 See OSCE Web site at www.osce.org, though the OSCE Mission to Latvia was closed at the end of 2001. Ongoing Russian criticism of Latvia’s actual and purported treatment of its Russian minority can be found through a Web search.

seen as a continuation of one of the key interwar debates as well as a debate that was largely won by the authoritarian, nationalist viewpoint rather than the multicultural, democratic one.

On the economic front, Latvia is a little bit more developed than Lithuania and, among other fields, is a banking center for the Baltics as well as for transactions between the former Soviet republics and the West. Despite its ongoing problems with minority integration, to a certain extent, Latvia is more integrated into the West and Scandinavia, in particular, due to a variety of factors including geographical proximity, the shared religious – and largely secular – outlook of Protestantism among others.

Politically, the parliamentary system in Latvia is based solely on proportional representation drawn from party lists; single or multiple-member constituencies do not exist though members of parliament are “tied” to one of the four electoral districts, which are based on the four historical regions of the country. The weaker – or more circumscribed – executive of Latvia also creates a different political dynamic than that which exists in Lithuania. As in Lithuania, special attention was paid to small but symbolically important details such as numbering the parliaments consecutively starting with the first parliament in the first independent Latvia at the end of World War One and then restarting the numbering from where it left off in the interwar period as well as the reclamation of the national flag.

Now we turn to a discussion of the actions and opinions of returned diaspora political leaders that seem to differ from those of their native colleagues

as well as to highlight issues that are important to returned diaspora politicians themselves.

Diversity within the nation

Prior to conducting interviews, I anticipated that I would find a few strong differences that clearly showed the different life experiences and understandings of identity between return diaspora and native political leaders as a means of getting at how returned diaspora political leaders use their personal experience and homeland national identity to inform their political leadership. However, the high number of issues on which returned diaspora political leaders perceived differences between themselves and their native colleagues surprised me. Before launching into in depth discussion of these differences and important issues and opinions, I would like to note that the interviews made clear to me the importance of national identity as well as life experiences to the political beliefs, strategies and actions of the return diaspora political leaders in this study, and perhaps, for most returned diaspora political leaders worldwide. In a nutshell, while the national identity (really, identities, as will be made clear in this chapter) and experiences of the returned diaspora political leaders inform their values, strategies and actions as political leaders, what is clearly at work is a strong *dynamic* between the leaders' identities and their life experiences. As their national identity(ies) continually evolve and manifest themselves differently in different contexts, the current and past life experiences of the leaders reaffirm and also occasionally revise the values, strategies and actions of the return diaspora in their roles as political leaders in their homelands. This is important as much political science research holds that political socialization takes place

for the most part before the age of 30 and that subsequently, little political socialization takes place that fundamentally changes established values and ways of operating.¹⁵⁰ This research on return diaspora political leaders challenges this position.

The following subsections discuss seven categories of difference between returned diaspora political leaders and their native colleagues as perceived by the returned diasporans themselves and native academics. They range from the role of professional knowledge and experience to strategies for attaining political goals. Each category will be supported by interview data and secondary sources and analyzed in light of the second half of the research question of the dissertation: How do they (returned diaspora) act as political leaders?

Different strategies, different goals

A fascinating finding to come out of the interviews – particularly those conducted in summer 2002 in Lithuania and Latvia and in fall 2004 via email – was the differing political strategies and, indeed, goals of returned diaspora political actors and their native colleagues. While I assumed going into the interviews that there would be differences in political skills between the two groups, the importance of the issue of compromise and negotiation to reach compromise – both to the returned diaspora political leaders and its crucial role in a democratic system – overshadowed many other data findings. What was most surprising was the returned diaspora’s interest in acquiring skills to attain compromise in a variety of realms of political activity while their native

150 See discussion of Hyman, *Political Socialization*; 1959; Bronfenbrenner, “Soviet Methods of Character Education”; 1962; and Volgyes, *Political Socialization in Eastern Europe*; 1975 in the 2002 article by

colleagues largely viewed compromise as capitulation of sorts.¹⁵¹ In the words of Donaldas Skucas, an advisor to the head of the Armed Forces, (former U.S. Colonel and now General) Jonas Kronkaitis, regarding how he felt native Lithuanians generally regarded compromise:

“Compromise is not acceptable.”

The most obvious reason for this divergence of opinion on the value of compromise is the returned diaspora’s experience with and acceptance of the role of compromise in the democratic system – i.e., ‘horse trading’ or ‘expanding the pie’ of resources – and the native political actors experience with political action as a winner-take-all activity where only one opinion or group can prevail. While this may be a gross oversimplification, I think that the dichotomy holds:

compromise is viewed very differently by the two groups. In addition to the returned diaspora political leaders’ understanding of the role of negotiation and compromise in democratic systems, it seems from the interviews that their life experiences outside of the homeland where they lived as minorities in nation-states such as Sweden or Germany or immigrant countries such as Canada, Australia or the U.S. has made many keen to not view politics as a “winner-take-all” realm of activity.

A key support of the returned diasporans’ interest in working toward compromise more often than their native colleagues is the former’s seemingly higher level of faith in democracy as a viable system – no matter what their

Steen and Ruus.

151 Personal interviews with Skucas, 2002; Adamkus, 2003; Pavlovskis, 2002; Birzniece, 2002; others did not place as much emphasis on negotiation and compromise though they brought it up in passing.

thoughts on the current quality or workability of the newly instituted postcommunist democratic systems in their homelands. It seems that faith in the democratic process and in the institutions that undergird it gives the returned diaspora an ability to trust more in the longer-term and therefore utilize political strategies that their native colleagues might not.

However, it should be noted that the interest in compromise in the case of the returned diaspora in Latvia and Lithuania may also stem from the political systems in which they find themselves in addition to a better understanding of the need for compromise at all levels in democratic society. In other words, while compromise is indeed important at the national level in parliament, it is also important at the local and regional government levels as well as at individual schools and other organizations. Furthermore, given the parliamentary systems in place in Latvia and Lithuania and the small but important role of the presidencies, compromise and negotiation is necessary in order to implement any number of laws or policies. This view was supported, in part, by Birzniece when she said during our interview that she viewed herself as “an intermediary between the East and the former Soviet system and the West.” Yet, she also noted in her interview that “Latvia is a small country [and] you don’t know who will be ‘top dog’ tomorrow” and therefore you cannot afford to make real enemies. This latter quote shows an understanding of the political need for compromise in light of current political realities and the alternation of political leadership that occurs in democratic politics.

Despite the general strength of orientation toward compromise among the returned diaspora political leaders, the strength of the influence of national identity shows through in their sometimes intransigent opinions and actions vis-à-vis issues concerning national identity, e.g., citizenship or issues relating to communism, which cut straight both to their diasporic identity and to their life experiences lived “outside the homeland.” The vast majority of returned diaspora political leaders affiliate with right wing parties, not only for the market and individual rights that these parties espouse but also because of the nationalist and anti-communist ideology held by the right in Lithuania and Latvia.

Related to the willingness to negotiate and/or compromise is interest in and ability to form alliances. However, despite their seemingly greater willingness to compromise, the opportunities available to form alliances *within* the government or the country as a whole can be compromised by return diasporans’ relative lack of networks. Returned diaspora political leaders have strong networks within their own ranks,¹⁵² but lack the former *nomenklatura* or even dissident networks often available to their native colleagues. Interviews with Kronkaitis, Skucas, Lukosaitis and Lopata, among others, confirmed this.

Last, the use of factual data and/or experts in the formulation of legislation or, earlier in the political process, seems to differ between the returned diaspora and native political leaders, according to Skucas, Muiznieks, Birzniece and Paegle, among others. This is related to negotiation and compromise as well as interests in transparency (the latter will be discussed later in the chapter in the section on corruption) as the inclusion of outside experts or factual information

from reputable sources creates a dynamic where individuals and groups need to agree to decide on the best course of action based on non-partisan, factual information prior to receiving it. This marks an acknowledgement that fact will trump ideology or party.

Despite a professed interest in and propensity toward seeking compromise, the numerous incidences of returned diaspora political leaders “talking down” to native colleagues in effect renders negotiation and compromise much more difficult to attain. While quite a few of those interviewed cited this as a problem about which they had both heard from native colleagues and witnessed themselves, very few confessed to having acted in this way on their own except for Kronkaitis. As noted elsewhere, General Kronkaitis was perhaps the most forthcoming of those I interviewed in that he felt that he had little to lose politically by being honest with me. In addition, he was also among the few who really did feel that he had to change the processes and system of the organization that he headed. In his experience, he found that in the armed forces – if not throughout society – the Soviet way in effect meant that all ideas and initiatives started at the top and were to be implemented below at any cost; efficiency was not important.

Reasons for entering politics

All of the informants noted a strong interest in building stable democratic systems in the Baltic states as an important reason for returning to their homelands and getting directly involved in politics. Recognizing that democratic

politics needs knowledge, independent institutions and processes, they thought they could offer their experience with democratic politics¹⁵³ as well as the personal and professional experience they had gained abroad. As Donaldas Skucas noted in his interview, “I can make an impact” and work to make sure that Lithuania does not “slip to the East.” This sentiment was echoed by many of the interviewees. As a core component of this, many cited the need to root out communist era corruption as key to democratic consolidation in each of the countries.

There seems to be a real desire to share democratic experiences on the part of returned diaspora political actors that should not go un-noted. Inese Birzniece, a lawyer by training, spoke of her desire “to share [her] legal training and Western experiences” though she told me that she tried to impart to native colleagues that there was no “recipe book in the West” for creating a functioning liberal democracy.¹⁵⁴ Few were politicians abroad but had much leadership experience within the business, education and non-profit sectors – particularly in diaspora organizations. Since the returned diaspora who have made it into postcommunist political leadership all came from western-style democracies, their adopted countries seem to have instilled certain ‘civic-mindedness’ values in the returned diaspora who seek to be political leaders in their homelands.¹⁵⁵ This civic-

153 Most interviewees made this point though they admitted that they had little or no formal political leadership experience. Two of the exceptions to this are Adamkus and Pavlovskis, who were both active in Republican Party politics in the United States; other interviewees may have had such experience but did not mention it during the interviews.

154 Personal interview.

155 Personal interviews with Paegle, 2004; Birzniece, 2002; Kalnins, 2004; Pavlovskis, 2002; among others.

mindedness does seem to work well with their strong sense of national identity and commitment to the development of independent Latvia and Lithuania.

In Lithuania, many interviewees perceived that most diasporans either came back to retire (quite a large percentage of the Lithuanian respondents did) where their retirement funds goes farther and they can be surrounded by the language of their youth during their last years) – or came with a purpose such as to get involved in business or enter politics, as noted previously. For example, out of 40 or so appointees in the cabinet of Adamkus’ first administration, about six were American Lithuanians.¹⁵⁶

In Latvia, on the other hand, a greater emphasis was placed on the need to re-establish a strong, Latvian Latvia. While virtually all of the individuals with whom I spoke espoused a liberal conception of Latvian national identity, the commitment to an independent Latvia was very strong. Indeed, in the words of Ojars Kalnins, the first postcommunist ambassador from Latvia to the U.S. and former U.S. citizen:

I am a patriot, an idealist and somewhat of a romantic, and figured if I was fated to live through the restoration of Latvia’s independence, I had an obligation to see it through to the end. I gave up my U.S. citizenship in 1991 because I had made a full commitment to Latvia....If the ship was going to sink, I would go down with it.¹⁵⁷

In sum, returned diaspora really seem to enter political leadership for reasons strongly tied to their national identity. Even for those among the returned diaspora who have entered political leadership after retiring to the homeland, their “return” is an act of support of sorts. The following section elaborates on the

156 Personal interview with Smulkstys, 2002.

157 Written interview, October 2004.

finding that quite a number of interviewees noted that returning to the homeland and entering politics was due, in part, to their interest in new professional challenges.

Professional challenges and new opportunities

Quite a few informants noted that entering the political arena in their native homelands offered intellectual and professional challenges that would likely not have existed in their adopted countries. This was particularly salient among those who had achieved a certain success in their professional lives in their adopted countries and had the resources and time to switch to a new profession. However, the opportunity to become involved at high levels in the political arena was also very attractive to younger diasporans who found that a similar level of engagement would most likely come much further along in their careers in their adopted countries (despite having been born in those countries) and potentially not occur at all. Again, Inese Birzniece was very clear that her decision to return to Latvia stemmed not only from her desire to support and help rebuild her homeland's independent democracy but also because she relished the professional challenge. In fact, she noted in her May 2002 interview that she wanted to be elected to the European Parliament so that she could continue to push for Latvian internalization of European human rights norms as well as educate "western"

Europe about the small nations on their eastern border.¹⁵⁸

Corruption

Discussion of corruption occurred in almost every interview that I conducted. While this should not be surprising to anyone studying postcommunist politics (or politics overall, some might argue), the importance placed on corruption by the interviewees is noteworthy. However, corruption is a very broad concept – as I discovered during the interview process – and surprisingly has both positive and negative attributes in a democratic system. For example, though prevailing wisdom says that the electorates of Latvia and Lithuania viewed returned diaspora political candidates and politicians as less corrupt than native ones – and viewed this a positive characteristic – many also viewed the returned diaspora political actors' lack of understanding of and ability to act in the postcommunist political environments of the Baltic as a primary weakness. In other words, because the returned diaspora had not had the experience – personal and professional – with the communist system that their native colleagues had, they did not understand the informal and often even the formal rules and processes that governed politics, the state bureaucracy, political culture and professional life – that had important legacies in postcommunist space.

What is really being said here? First, one has to define 'corruption'. If one defines it as formal and informal networks that work outside of a transparent and efficient system of political activity and leads to wasted resources and unfair

158 Personal interview.

distribution of resources as well, then the returned diaspora were rightly viewed as less tied in to local, communist era networks of informal and formal patronage than their native counterparts (unless the native counterparts had come into the political arena *only* in the postcommunist era – see Yoder introduction, 1999). But, limited political patronage is also considered an integral part of the democratic process in regards to accountability and representation of constituents and/or citizens of the country. In other words, if a politician is beholden to no one doesn't that open the door to future corruption? Or, at the most benign, is s/he really representing citizens of the country? Before analyzing the interviewees' perceptions, actions and opinions on corruption, let us briefly discuss corruption and how it relates to communism and especially the postcommunist political environments of Lithuania and Latvia.

Postcommunist countries are countries with systems in flux at all levels. The following description of systems where corruption is likely is drawn from Klitgaard's work on corruption for the World Bank (2000). Where legal structures are ill-defined or in the process of being created, discretion is given *de jure*, or *de facto*, to the government employee in performing his/her job. In other words, how an employee performs his/her official job, what "public good" is given, and at what cost to the private individual, are decisions left to the discretion of the government employee. Conversely, in countries where legal structures are better developed and rules regulating the behavior of government employees are clearer, less discretion is left to individual employees in the aforementioned areas.

Low levels of accountability further compound the potential for corruption as they create greater scope for personal discretion, especially in environments in which the employee is not restrained by tradition, there is a low likelihood of discovery, and personal integrity, as well as pay for work done legally, are low. Additionally, in countries where corruption is not an isolated occurrence, there is a much greater likelihood that corrupt government employees have corrupt co-workers and bosses, thus decreasing the possibility of corruption *not* taking place. Corrupt bureaucracies do not have individual or group accountability to follow the official rules, but rather, pressure to conform to their own corrupt norms.

Unfortunately, all the components of Klitgaard's definition of corruption discussed above fit the circumstances found in many post-communist societies, where democratic institutions are newly built, or in the process of being built, the rule of law has not had time enough to become solidly established, and political and (capitalist) market experience is limited. Corruption occurs in environments where these characteristics are present, and perpetuates the environments.

Arguments that seek to explain the prevalence of corruption in many of the post-communist countries as "culturally based" (and therefore, inherently unchangeable, one assumes) are attractive, yet overly simple, ways of legitimating inefficient and societally-harmful practices. The present study of return diaspora political leadership may enable a testing of sorts for this assertion as the return diasporans do share many cultural traits with their non-return diasporan (or native) colleagues but also display cultural traits from their adopted countries' cultures. By pointing to 'culture' as the main component of corruption in a given

society, other historical factors and current contingencies are overlooked. It becomes ‘historically determined’ that a society that has had high levels of corruption in the past will continue to have high levels of corruption in the future. In the case of the Baltics, the civil service was fairly well-respected in the independence period (even if it were far too large and complex)¹⁵⁹ and rather than being corrupt, the electoral system was viewed by many as too open to competition to be stable and most effective. Furthermore, this line of reasoning also can view corruption as potentially helpful, and not harmful, to economic growth. The high growth in southeast Asia in the 1980s and 1990s often was used as an example of how (systemic) corruption and high growth could co-exist, and perhaps even strengthen the economic performance of a country. This has since been revisited in light of the Asian currency crisis.¹⁶⁰

Many scholars, most policy makers, and indeed the publics of Latvia and Lithuania have viewed communism as a system that was corrupt both economically and politically. The virtual totality of the communist state in its control over the political and economic spheres of society has been discussed by many. However, political economists Kornai (1992) and Lavigne (1995) address the omnipresence of the communist state in ways that are particularly useful to the present research. Both scholars discuss, at length, the plethora of economic networks – formal and informal – that rose out of the communist system. As political ideology was inherently tied to economics in the communist system, economic networks reflected the overwhelming presence of politics, and thus, the

159 Lane, 2001; Pabriks and Purs, 2001.

160 See numerous World Bank and IMF studies, among others.

Communist Party, in the economy. From the most simple, local economic relationships or transactions to the economic transactions between different states in the Communist Bloc, the ideology, and therefore, the pressure to conform to it, prevailed throughout.

The prevalence of communist ideology undoubtedly perverted economic relationships by making them subservient to the politics of whoever was currently in power in the Kremlin, or the local Party boss. The hierarchies of power created under the communist system closely resemble patron-client networks of political and economic systems that predate communism. This type of network limits economic efficiency and creates environments susceptible to corruption. What kept corruption within certain limits – limits that since the collapse of communism have been destroyed in many instances?

The strength of communist ideology acted as a restraint on corruption in many ways. First, the fear of being discovered to be involved in corrupt practices outside of the norm of everyday corruption – and the punishment that would result – kept large-scale corruption largely at bay.¹⁶¹ In a system that aimed to be totalitarian, there was limited opportunity to create the dense networks needed for more significant corruption outside of the state or without the state knowing about it.

The communist system, besides inciting fear of punishment in those who were discovered to be involved in corrupt practices, was also a very rigid system in which the gain that corruption yielded could not be so significant as to make

¹⁶¹ There are notable exceptions such as the cotton scandal in Central Asia uncovered during the Andropov era.

the corrupt practice stand out. In other words, while “conspicuous consumption” prevails among the Russian mafia today, for example, under communism, gain from illegal activity had to be largely hidden in the private sphere of the home. The rigidity of the communist system also contributed to the creation of environments open to widespread, yet (relatively) low-level corruption, i.e., it necessitated that many individuals living in a communist system commit corrupt practices in order to obtain what they needed to survive. In this way, cultural invectives against corruption were worn down as everyone seemed to have to participate in some sort of corruption quite frequently.

Lastly, core components of communist ideology – public ownership of the means of production (including land) and the virtual guarantee “of each according to his ability, to each according to his need” – created environments in which individual responsibility and individual initiative decreased over time. Again, while these core aspects of communist ideology did benefit many (education levels and access to health care increased over time), they also set the stage for corruption during the communist era and, almost assuredly, in the post-communist era.

The next question that must be asked about the perception of postcommunist electorates that return diaspora leaders are less corrupt is whether corruption is due to the communist legacy or to the systemic changes occurring in the post-communist transition. It is clear that the transition from communism to post-communist society has created enormous incentives for corruption. The destruction of the seeming omnipotence of the Communist Party and the process

of creating new political and economic structures, while dismantling communist-era institutions, has generated previously unknown levels of corruption (both political and economic). Ironically, this present corruption often includes individuals from the former regime elite, e.g., the *nomenklatura* system, working with members of the new elite. This combination takes advantage of the fluid conditions of new legal structures and the weak institutionalization of democracy to maximize personal gain – perpetuating an environment prone to corruption. Thus, despite the fairly widely-held belief that the communist system was by definition corrupt, the transition to democracy and a market economy seems to have brought corruption in post-communist countries to new levels because of the destruction of former ‘checks and balances’ on corrupt behavior.

Similarly, in many post-communist countries the government is unable to raise public sector employee salaries to market levels or continue to provide work in a public sector that is being privatized, despite the need for individuals to monitor ever more complex government regulations. In these situations, poorly paid public employees may view bribes as “incentive bonuses,” while employees whose job tenure is not secure may view bribes as current perquisites of public sector employment that are not assured in the future. While these scenarios are not unique to post-communist countries, and exist in many developing, and even developed, countries, they may be more commonplace in post-communist environments due to the rapid transitions from command economies and full-employment by the state to volatile capitalist and democratic systems.

The low salaries that characterize most of the public sector jobs in post-communist societies also reflect the largely low status given these jobs by the government and the larger society. Thus, instead of some of the “best and brightest” going to work for the state (as in France or Japan), those who want to avoid more productive work elsewhere in the economy chose to work, or continue working, in the public sector as a means of gaining access to the potentially lucrative benefits of corruption. Working in the public sector is not widely viewed as “public service,” but as a means of making money through contacts and deals, not through production and innovation.

Returning to the discussion of corruption and returned diaspora political leaders, two findings from the interviews and my research overall stand out. First, returned diaspora political leaders often lack the networks that include corruption or open one up to corruption. This is a key perception of the electorate and seems to mirror reality. Second, returned diaspora political leaders often profess an interest in reducing corruption based on their personal experience with, in the case of the adopted countries of most returned diasporans in Lithuania and Latvia, liberal democracies with limited corruption. Therefore, returned diaspora political leaders use fighting against corruption – particularly those linked to the Soviet legacy – as both a strategy and a goal. Furthermore, given the strong homeland national identity of returned diasporans, many seem to view corruption as something that not only undermines democracy and the market but can undermine the health of the nation itself.

In an interesting way, the topic that follows is tied to networks and their use for advantage. As will be discussed in greater detail below, quite a few returned diaspora political leaders actually come from families that were part of the elite and by emigrating, they and their children lost out on many of the components of normal elite continuation – until they returned to the homeland.

Former political elites return

As was discussed in previous chapters, the vast majority of the individuals who emigrated from Latvia and Lithuania from the late 1930s through the early 1950s were members of the political, economic and social elites of these countries.¹⁶² As also has been discussed, Latvian and Lithuanian elites did face the very real threat of deportation or extermination if they remained in their homelands, so emigration seemed to most the only viable option. By emigrating, however, these elites were forced to give up their homeland status and instead assume that of immigrant in their adopted countries, though still educated and with certain transferable skills.

Given the mass exodus and elimination of native elites in the two countries during the period from 1940 through the death of Stalin, interwar cultural, business, political elites needed to be recreated during the communist period. These new elites were in large part Russian or Russified Balts who used the communist system to advance their own interests (understandably). Natives who remained in the countries were largely forced to the margins of society

¹⁶² An example of this is that Kazys Bobelis' father was mayor of Kaunas, the capital of Lithuania during the interwar period. Bobelis has been a member of parliament in Lithuania since 1992.

unless they allowed themselves to be co-opted – though even then, only a minority of native Balts ever achieved significant status during the communist period (Lithuania saw the largest because of the relatively low percentage of non-Lithuanian residents in the country). Former elites who did not emigrate or were not eliminated could not assume their former elite status during most of the communist period. Elites who did emigrate took with them their knowledge of and skills for political, economic and cultural life in Latvia and Lithuania and many chose to try to retain their native identity and to pass it along to their children.

Many in this wave of emigration were quite successful in their adopted countries (much like Central European Jewry in the United States or Cuban émigrés from the period immediately following the revolution in the late 1950s) and outwardly seem quite assimilated in addition to their significant involvement in Baltic diaspora-related organizations and activities. Thus, when conditions for return to the homeland presented themselves with the declaration of independence from the USSR of each of the Baltic republics, the ties between the Baltic émigrés and their homelands allowed them to return and put to use their familial, political, cultural and economic knowledge and skills to reclaiming elite status in the newly re-independent states.

International networks

I expected from the outset of my research that returned diaspora political leaders would bring with them to their work relationships, networks and reference

points that differ from their native colleagues due to their long tenure outside the homeland. For example, President Adamkus brought with him a deep knowledge of a large American bureaucracy, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), while others, such as Olgerts Pavlovskis brought his significant education and his experience with another large American bureaucracy, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Jonas Konkraitis in Lithuania, brought a life-time of experience with the U.S. armed forces.

A fascinating example of both the international networks that returned diaspora political leaders can bring with them to their work as well as the deep understanding of at least two cultures (Latvia or Lithuania and their adopted country), is a story that was told to me by General Kronkaitis. By way of background, Jonas Kronkaitis was a career military man in the U.S. Army for 27 years. He and his family left Lithuania in 1940 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1949. He and his wife made their home in Virginia for most of their adult lives (when they were not moving with the military) and as of 2002, retained a house there – a fact that is important to the story that he shared with me. When I asked General Kronkaitis: Do [returned diaspora political leaders] utilize connections abroad more substantially than native politicians? He answered me by telling me the following story.

The highest priority of Kronkaitis' work as soon as he took on the position of Commander of the Armed Forces of Lithuania was for Lithuania to join NATO. While Lithuania has since joined the organization, at that time, the potential benefits of the country's membership were being debated in the press

and elsewhere. Kronkaitis, drawing both on his experience in the U.S. military and his strong sense of Lithuanian national identity, was a fervent supporter of Lithuanian membership in the transatlantic partnership. To reach his stated goal, General Kronkaitis used his considerable administrative and other professional skills – skills learned in the diaspora – to work to reform the Lithuanian military. What is most interesting for this present discussion, however, is that he also used his significant international networks to lobby strongly on behalf of Lithuania’s entrance into NATO. He told me that he discussed the issue with his old friend from the U.S. Army, former Joint Chief of the Armed Forces and later U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell. He then told me that while at a conference on Baltic military reform in Washington, D.C., Kronkaitis specifically talked to “his” senator, meaning Senator John Warner of Virginia, about the benefits to the U.S. of Lithuanian membership in NATO. Kronkaitis himself noted his use of international networks and his professional and personal experience in the U.S. in order to attain a specific goal of his current professional role, as well as a goal that he felt very strongly about as a Lithuanian, given the country’s tortuous history at the hands of irredentist and expansionist neighbors.

I also expected to hear from the interviewees that they viewed themselves as cultural bridges and translators between their adopted countries and their homelands and in this respect, I was not disappointed. Virtually all of the interviewees, including non-returned diaspora regional specialists, thought that the greatest differences between the returned diaspora political leaders – as well as one of their most important assets – was their possession of international

networks and their ability to act as cultural bridges. In particular, numerous individuals noted that while over time, Latvia and Lithuania would develop their own indigenous regional and other specialists who could create networks and be cultural translators as well as returned diaspora could, in the immediate postcommunist period, these particular skills of the returned diaspora political leaders were invaluable to rebuilding independent nation-states.

Nationalism

The least surprising finding was the high degree of nationalism felt and espoused by the returned diaspora political leaders. This has sometimes been in marked contrast with native colleagues and even Latvian and Lithuanian societies in general. For example, in my interview with Jonas Kronkaitis, he recounted a story to me that while focused on nationalism and, in his words, patriotism, was also indicative of the cultural differences that could often be found between the returned diaspora political leaders and their native colleagues. His story concerned how the Lithuanian flag was treated by the armed forces in general and individual soldiers in particular when he first assumed the position of Commander of the Armed Forces at the invitation of President Adamkus. He was astounded at the nonchalance, at best, and the disrespect, at worst, of the armed forces to the Lithuanian flag. Both as a returned diasporan with a strong sense of Lithuanian national identity and, I argue, a former U.S. career military who fought under the flag of the United States, he was scandalized that the Lithuanian flag was not given “its due respect.” At once, he said, he updated rules governing the flying of

the Lithuanian flag and he made it a point to try to inculcate a sense of pride in the national symbol, much as it is largely regarded in the United States.

Overall, Kronkaitis' story reflects not only a difference in priorities but also different political culture. All interviewees noted that they had experienced conflicts and/or challenges in their professional and personal lives in the homeland due to these cultural differences. Interestingly, it seemed that the Lithuanian interviewees attached greater weight to the challenges and problems stemming from cultural differences than did those in Latvia. Again, however, this seems that it could be explained by the average age differences between the two countries as well as the different political cultures at work in each.

Conclusion

There are numerous examples of important differences as well as important issues and opinions between return diaspora political leaders and native ones be they individual characteristics or differences regarding which issues are important to them. Yet each group is not a homogeneous entity. As will be discussed in the following chapter, return diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania exhibit some striking differences between the two countries as well as similarities. These differences again highlight the important factors of the evolution of the definitions of national identity, political structures and processes and individual experience in the formation of political beliefs, goals and strategies among political leaders.

CHAPTER 6: Returned diaspora political leaders compared across Latvia and Lithuania

As was discussed in the previous chapter, there seem to be numerous differences between returned diaspora and native political leaders that can help to sort out when returned diaspora political leaders draw on their homeland national identity versus their personal experience. However, in an effort to determine which differences as well as issues deemed important by the interviewees might be specific to Latvia or Lithuania rather than generalizable to returned diaspora in most homeland contexts, in this chapter I will compare and contrast returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania with each other. To facilitate this, I start with brief biographies of two highly visible returned diaspora leaders in the countries: the President of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, and the President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus. By describing these two individuals and their lives – as they relate to this research – I will lay out how they are and are not “representative” of returned diaspora political leaders in the Baltics and of each leader’s own country. In addition, I will highlight differences between the two leaders and, by extension, their returned diaspora colleagues in the respective countries.

Following this discussion, I will return to an analysis of returned diaspora political leaders as a whole. The interviews that I conducted – in addition to analysis of the universe of returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania – yielded interesting data concerning how and when returned diaspora political leaders base their political values, strategies and actions on their national identities versus their personal experience. I will discuss this in greater depth in the concluding chapter.

From out of the diaspora: Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia

Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga returned to Latvia to head up the Latvian Institute in Riga in 1998 in the midst of a charged political climate where issues of citizenship, land ownership, language rights, the role of folk culture in the public arena and other topics tied intimately to the definition of national identity were being hotly debated. By agreeing to take the helm of the preeminent public relations organization for Latvia, Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga made the choice that a number of her fellow diaspora members also made: to return to the homeland and participate directly in all aspects of the life of the country. Her decision clearly shows her commitment to continuing her life-long involvement in the worldwide Latvian community that had marked her personal life and professional career, but also showed her willingness to shift her participation from that of a member of the diaspora to that of an active “native” participant in the nation. Her firm support for preserving Latvian culture and her declared interest in helping to build democracy and liberalism are seemingly held side-by side. As she said in an interview with *TIME* magazine in early 2001:

[Latvia] stands for the desire of small nations to have their independence so that they can live their lives by deciding, on their own, how to structure their society by keeping their language, maintaining their own culture, and preserving their heritage and identity.¹⁶³

This professed commitment to the nation is strongly representative of other returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia as well as Lithuania.

Soon after her decision to move to Latvia and head up the Latvian Institute and only days before the presidential election, several well-known artists and intellectuals

163 Chu, Jeff. “The Mark of History. TIME talks with Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, President of Latvia” at the World Economic Forum, Davos 2001, in *TIME*; January 27, 2001, see <http://www.time.com/time/europe/davos2001/intvus/>

suggested Vīķe-Freiberga as a possible candidate for president.¹⁶⁴ However, it was not until the *Saiema* went through more than six better known candidates and could not agree on any of them that she was formally nominated and then won the election by a bare majority of 53 votes out of 100. The new president had little time to savor her victory, however, at the time, the prime minister had just resigned, there was international criticism of the conservative nature of Latvia's proposed language law and the economy had recently been rocked by the massive problems occurring in the Russian economy. While her skills and experience were not unknown in Latvia (after all, she had been elected president of the country), neither was Vīķe-Freiberga experienced in the Latvian (or any other national) political scene and some publicly wondered whether she would be up to the challenges of the presidency.¹⁶⁵ Never the less, Vīķe-Freiberga had been elected to head the country for a variety of reasons. These reasons, as well as an analysis of which reasons may be ascribed to all diaspora members who become political leaders in their homelands and which should be ascribed only to Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga follows in the next section, following a brief biological sketch of her life.

Vaire Vike was born in Riga, Latvia in 1937 and left the country with her parents in 1944 for Germany, before moving to Morocco and then finally to Canada. She earned a Ph.D. in psychology at McGill University in 1965 and then taught at the University of Montreal until her retirement in 1998. While a professor, she was in the leadership of several national and international social science organizations. In 1998, Vīķe-Freiberga

164 The position of president in Latvia – as in many parliamentary systems – is quite circumscribed in comparison to that of the position of president in a more American-style presidential system. Also, in Latvia, this position is one in which elections to the post are via voting in the parliament, not by the electorate at large.

165 Nils Muznieks, July 1999, as quoted in *The Baltics Worldwide* at <http://www.balticsww.com/news/features/mspresident.htm>

returned to Latvia to head up the Latvian Institute, an organization devoted to promoting Latvia abroad.

Transferable Experience

Vīķe-Freiberga's election as President of Latvia did not come from out the blue: her qualifications for the position include having held the presidencies of the Canadian Psychological Association, the Social Science Federation of Canada and the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, among others. At the beginning of her term as president, Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga contended that the many leadership skills that she learned through these experiences would be most helpful to her as president of a country. While the experience of leading large organizations is not unique to diaspora members, leading large voluntary organizations based on democratic rules was not an experience that one could gain in Latvia during the Soviet period. Thus, as a member of the diaspora, she was able to bring to the position of president many skills that an individual who had not been a member of the diaspora could not. In fact, Vīķe-Freiberga remarked in an interview in mid-1999 that "Latvians who lived abroad have often had a rich range of experiences, and many are valuable human resources. If they come here, they help recover part of the human resources that Latvia lost during the war and [Soviet] occupation."¹⁶⁶

The negative side of her leadership experience outside of Latvia has been that she did not have direct experience with Soviet communism and, in particular, how leadership in that environment did and did not work. In this way, Vīķe-Freiberga's experience has

166 Kaza, Juris. "Retired Canadian professor takes Latvia's helm" in the Christian Science Monitor; July 7, 1999, at <http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1999/07/07/p7sl.htm>.

mirrored that of many returned diaspora political leaders. Not only has Vīķe-Freiberga sometimes lacked the networks and/or the ability to form alliances that could further her political goals but her ignorance of those that existed has cost her politically. However, her real – or some allege, feigned – ignorance of political machinations reminiscent of corrupt communist patterns has also played in her favor politically from time to time.

International networks and cultural translations

Many of the president's supporters claimed at the outset of her presidency that foreign affairs would be her strength. One would imagine that this stems from her intimate knowledge of the national and international networks of the Latvian diaspora and academia as well as her fluency in five – English, French, German, Latvian and Spanish – languages. Her ability to communicate directly with numerous other heads of state is a strength that may have helped the president in lobbying for NATO and European Union memberships,¹⁶⁷ promoting Latvia at international venues such as the United Nations and at the World Economic Summit in Davos, among others. While a non-diaspora individual could be multilingual (the former President of Estonia, Lennart Meri, is a good example – he speaks six languages),¹⁶⁸ the languages skills and the cultural skills learned from growing up in and/or living and working in countries other than your homeland can only be gained through spending considerable time away from “home.”

Again, language and cultural skills learned while in the diaspora are clearly characteristics shared by all returned diaspora political leaders in my study. However,

¹⁶⁷ Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO as well as became members of the European Union in 2004.

this need not necessarily be case as the infamous example of Joachim Zigerist, a member of the Latvian diaspora who returned to Latvia and became active politically, illustrates so clearly. Zigerist, a German citizen of Latvian descent who did not speak Latvian or Russian, the primary languages of Latvia (though only Latvian is the official language), was able to garner a significant number of seats in the 1995 parliamentary elections by promising to dramatically increase social welfare and by appealing to populist/nationalist sentiment.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the language and cultural translation skills that most returned diaspora political leaders possess – and the successful ones always do – serve to highlight the ability of returned diaspora political leaders to retain and develop new international networks and relationships as well as to act as bridges between their home and host countries.

On the domestic front, one can hypothesize both that Vīķe-Freiberga might be more able to constructively address the formidable language issues of postcommunist Latvia despite her lack of Russian language skills because of her experiences as an immigrant who had to learn the language of the majority in Canada, i.e., English, while also having to master the language of the minority, i.e., French, because she lived in Montreal. However, at the same time, as a Latvian nationalist, she might be protective of the Latvian language and highly concerned about any potential threats to its continued existence. Her direct experience with the challenges faced by, as well as the benefits of, an officially bilingual society seem to have also made her appreciative of the desirability of speaking more than one language. To this end she pledged at the outset of her

168 *Baltic City Paper* online– <http://www.balticsww.com/vips/vips.htm#Meri>. Interestingly, Meri learned some of the languages he speaks while abroad as his father was a diplomat for independent Estonia.

169 Eksteins, Janis. “Political Parties,” in *Politics in Latvia* at <http://www.politics.lv/en/psistema/4.1/5.htm>.

presidency that she would learn Russian (which approximately 35 to 40 percent of Latvians speak as their first language) and challenged Russian-speakers to learn Latvian at the same time. This was very popular with many inside of Latvia as well as in the international community. To date, she has allegedly not progressed very far with her Russian language ability but many note that this is mostly due to her demanding schedule as president.

At the same time, her ardent support of the Latvian language – professionally and personally – as well as her direct experience living in Quebec, where the official language is French not French and English as is the case in the rest of Canada, has also made her perhaps more intransigent about protecting Latvian, especially from Russian encroachment. One could hypothesize that a non-returned diaspora political leader might have less hostility toward Russian, especially if she/he spoke it fluently. However, in the specific case of Latvia, the severe repression of Latvian culture and language and the significant and rapid decline of the percentage of the residents of Latvia whose native language is Latvian has driven the issue of language to be highly politicized. It is not surprising then that the diaspora has a particularly strong connection to the Latvian language as well as to the culture particularly because they do not live in the country. Similarly, it is unsurprising that returned diaspora would continue to have strong feelings about these types of issues.

Corruption

At the systemic level, as president of a country with a parliamentary system, Vīķe-Freiberga's role has been more circumscribed than that of a president in a

presidential system. While more focused on foreign policy and the responsibility of representing the non-partisan interests of the whole nation in the domestic political arena, President Vīķe-Freiberga is not without the ability to initiate legislation, veto parliamentary bills and to be a voice in any number of national and international debates. Some in the media and in academia have argued that having been a member of the diaspora for the tenure of the Soviet period, Vīķe-Freiberga has the image of being uncorrupted by the prior system. This is a definite strength in a country where politics, economics and society are in flux and many perceive the level of corruption in many areas of society, politics and the economy to be too high.¹⁷⁰

In addition to the general public perception of Vīķe-Freiberga as ‘honest’ or ‘uncorrupted’, how the role of president has been designed in Latvia has enabled her to remain (for the most part) above the fray of day-to-day politics and to increase trust in the political system as a whole over time. This is very important in postcommunist politics because

[p]residents, arguably, have strengthened democratic legitimacy externally because of the prestige and respect most enjoy outside their countries’ borders. This is a vital matter for states heavily dependent on Western economic ties and with previous histories of hostile relations with their neighbors. In most cases, the relative domestic popularity of presidents and their greater continuity in office appear also to have helped sustain the legitimacy of the new systems at home in the face of a general weariness with politics and considerable economic privation.¹⁷¹

As was discussed at length in chapter five, the majority of returned diaspora political leaders is viewed as uncorrupt or much less corrupt than their native colleagues

170 See Transparency International’s most recent report, *Corruption Perceptions Index for 2004*, at <http://www.transparency.org/surveys/index.html#cpi>. Latvia continues to be rated as relatively corrupt, though improvement has been steady.

171 Baylis, Thomas A. “Presidents Versus Prime Ministers: Shaping Executive Authority in Eastern Europe,” in *World Politics*; 48:3 (1996), 297-323.

due to a variety of reasons. The most important seem to be: lack of membership in or access to networks of corruption as well as a strong and vocal commitment to combating corruption. In addition, I argue, the vast majority are also actively committed to improving ethics in the government and society as a whole. In this way, many of the returned diaspora political leaders are similar to native and expatriate dissidents elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe in their desire to “reinvent” politics (Tismaneanu, 1992). I should note, again, that the majority self-identified ethical position does not automatically bestow ideological and political purity of thought and deed but rather – a still important – different orientation from the general “politics as usual” orientation of many postcommunist politicians following the initial democratic ouster of the dissident politicians of the immediate postcommunist era. As for the lack of membership in and access to networks of corruption, one of the most often cited reasons for returned diaspora not seeming to engage as much in corruption networks is because they often do not need the money that is involved. As Paegle noted in her interview, there is pressure on all politicians in Latvia to conform to the status quo. “The problem with émigré politicians [for supporters of the status quo] is that they are clean and attractive to the voter, but financially independent and unable to be controlled by [corrupt elements of the] elite.”¹⁷²

A professional...and a woman

It seems that Viķe-Freiberga’s professional past has also added to the prestige of the role of president in Latvia. As a psychologist and a former member of the diaspora, she is able to be both sympathetic to Latvia’s past but resolute in stating that Latvia’s past

¹⁷² Personal interview, October 2004.

is not uniformly horrible nor was Latvia always a victim. Having grown to adulthood and lived most of her adult life in the diaspora, she has experience with being a member of a minority. At the same time, her professional training enables her to intellectually understand the problems associated with postcommunism as well as the manifestations of diaspora and national identities. Vīķe-Freiberga made clear early in her presidency that she sought through her office to dispel the on-going sense of helplessness and despair felt by many Latvian citizens due to their history.¹⁷³ A comparison of Vīķe-Freiberga's professional experience and her interests in how to use it in Latvia to those of other returned diaspora, especially those who are political leaders, will be done below.

Last, while Vīķe-Freiberga herself downplays her status as the first woman leader of a postcommunist country, it seems that she also see the value of recognizing why and how a woman could attain such a role. She discussed in a speech at *Women and the Dawn of the New Millennium*, a women's political leadership conference in Iceland in October 1999, the particular needs of women in postcommunist Latvia, but also strongly emphasized the national and international contributions already made and that could be made by women from her country. In an interview in late 1999, Vīķe-Freiberga further noted that

I think for Latvia it has been, again, a landmark year in the sense that it was the first country to elect a woman president in this whole part of Europe, certainly one of the few woman presidents in the world. That, I take as a sign of [the] democratic maturity of our country, it's readiness to accept a woman head of state, the deep-rootedness of our understanding of equal rights and equal opportunities."¹⁷⁴

173 Martin, S. "Psychologist elected president of Latvia" in *APA (American Psychological Association) Monitor Online*. Vol. 30, No. 8 (September 1999) at <http://www.apa.org/monitor/sep99/in1.html>.

174 Huang, Mel. "Setting a good example: Interview with Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga," in *Central Europe Review*, Vol. 2, No. 27; 10 July 2000, see http://www.ce-review.org/00/27/interview27_vike.html.

In addition, paralleling international norms, Vīķe-Freiberga herself voices her role as a prominent advocate for societal integration at various levels, integration that includes women into politics and, of course, the integration of Russian-speakers into Latvian society.¹⁷⁵ While, again, individuals who have not had the experience of diaspora may be strong advocates for such causes, it seems highly likely that Vīķe-Freiberga, as an individual from the diaspora, someone who grew up and lived in a liberal democracy and as a woman, advocates these causes because of experiences in her past and because of the values she gained from living in a liberal democracy.

Vīķe-Freiberga as representative of other returned diaspora political leaders?

So how does Vīķe-Freiberga compare with other returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia? As is Vīķe-Freiberga, most are well educated by any standard. Most have professional training in fields that carry prestige in western Europe, North America and Australia but were not available and/or popular in Latvia during the communist era. A good example of this is the field of law. In addition, as noted earlier in the chapter, Vīķe-Freiberga's leadership experience is not unusual for other returned diaspora political leaders to possess. In particular, many returned diaspora political leaders were in the leadership of diaspora organizations abroad. This is not a surprising finding as it reflects the significant dedication of these individuals to their national identity and to its preservation in the diaspora. At the same time, however, in a broader sense, it reflects a strong connection between leadership in diaspora organizations and political leadership in the homeland. Furthermore, this is important also because it potentially helps in our

175 IBID and "Address by Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia" at the Conference on Women and Democracy at the Dawn of the New Millenium, Reykjavik, Iceland, October 8-10, 1999.

analysis of when returned diaspora political leaders draw on their national identity, as opposed to their experiential one, for political opinions and actions.

Like Vīķe-Freiberga, many (but not all) returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia were middle-aged when they returned to the homeland. While there have been older and younger returned diaspora political leaders, the majority seem to have been born in Latvia and then emigrated with their families while young or born in a displaced persons camp prior to reaching their adopted countries. Thus, their experiences were that of immigrants in their host countries yet also as full participants in their adopted countries through education and professional development.

Like many, though definitely not all, of her fellow returned diaspora political leaders in the country, Vīķe-Freiberga returned to Latvia without the express intention of entering the formal political elite though with an interest of participating in society at a high level. While active in the leadership of diaspora organizations throughout her adult life, she returned to Latvia to head the newly created Latvian Institute, as discussed above. This is similar to other returned diaspora political leaders such as Ojars Kalnins, Vīķe-Freiberga's successor as the head of the Latvian Institute and former Ambassador of Latvia to the United States, as well as Nils Muiznieks, former head of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies and, until the collapse of the government in fall 2004, Minister of Social Integration. As will be discussed in the following section, Valdas Adamkus, former high-ranking bureaucrat in the U.S. Environmental Protection Association (EPA) and now president of Lithuania for a second term also largely, but not completely, falls into this category.

How does Vīķe-Freiberga differ from her fellow returned diaspora political leaders? For one, she is female. While there are and have been other female returned diaspora returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia, Vaira Paegle and Inese Birzniece,¹⁷⁶ for example, women have been in the distinct minority. However compared with Lithuania, there are significantly more female returned diaspora political leaders. One could hypothesize that the Latvian diaspora has retained more conservative community values than those that held in current Latvian society and that this has meant that fewer women have seen the opportunity to become involved in diaspora organizational leadership and furthermore, as returned diaspora political leaders. Yet, while this may address the question in part, the seemingly high number of women involved in Latvian diaspora organizations as leaders does not support the “diaspora is conservative” hypothesis. However, if one adds to this hypothesis that Latvian women in the diaspora might be less willing or able to get their families to return to Latvia with them in order for the women to get involved in politics, I think that the large discrepancy between the number of returned diaspora male political leaders versus female is explained more satisfactorily. Unfortunately, I have only anecdotal information to support this. Despite this lack of data, however, this finding is interesting and perhaps should be further researched in the future.

Now discussion turns to a description of President Adamkus’ life history as it pertains to the current research. Unlike the discussion of Vīķe-Freiberga and how she is and is not representative of returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia, the discussion of Adamkus will not be grouped according to issue but rather follow chronologically, with comparisons made throughout.

176 As of spring 2005, only Vaira Paegle is in a formal political leadership position.

A leader longtime in the making – President Valdas Adamkus

There are many similarities between Presidents Vīķe-Freiberga and Adamkus in their stories of forced departure from their homelands at the end of World War Two, their successful adaptation into their host societies, their highly successful professional lives and their life-long participation in their respective diaspora communities (as well as at the pan-Baltic diaspora level). There are nuances in these parallels, however, as well as some differences. President Valdas Adamkus left his native Lithuania as a young man and not as a child as had Vīķe-Freiberga. Prior to his emigration, he was very active in the Lithuanian resistance movement – something that would characterize his entire adult life. Furthermore, Adamkus was born into a “political” family and his family was well-connected to other members of the political elite in independent Lithuania.

Adamkus and his family fled to Germany as the Soviets began their advance into Lithuania in July 1944, but Adamkus soon returned to fight against foreign occupation of Lithuania with the National Defense Force. After fighting in the battle of Seda in western Lithuania, Adamkus was again forced to flee and this time settled in Germany with his family, where he enrolled at the Faculty of Natural Science at the University of Munich. Throughout his time in Germany, Adamkus remained active in the activities of the Lithuanian diaspora through working with the World YMCA on behalf of displaced persons and through his competition and success in the Olympic Games of the Enslaved Nations in 1948.

Adamkus, his parents and his siblings were able to emigrate to the U.S. with the help of the former Lithuanian President, Kazys Grinius, in 1949. Like many of his Lithuanian diaspora compatriots, he worked in blue-collar jobs until he gained

proficiency in English and could improve his education and build a future career. Able to speak five languages, Adamkus was a language trainer in the U.S. Army in the 1950s as well as served in the army's intelligence reserves. Prior to his highly successful tenure at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), he was a consultant for environmental projects. He joined EPA as a civil engineer in the early 1970s and later worked his way up to regional director by the time of his retirement in 1993. His professional service to the U.S. was even recognized by a congratulatory phone call from then President Clinton at the time of his retirement. Though he remained non-partisan in his professional life, he was active in Republican Party politics for over 25 years.

As discussed in prior chapters, the average age of returned diaspora leaders in Lithuania is older than that of their colleagues in Latvia. Also, many more returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania had direct experience with independent Lithuania as young adults. In this way, Adamkus is quite representative of other returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania. This creates a different dynamic than that which has existed in Latvia as the older returned diaspora political leaders may have much greater interest in returning to the status quo ante (that is, democratic interwar Lithuania, not the later authoritarian regime) as opposed to a more general return to liberal democracy.

This point will be analyzed further later in this chapter and in the concluding one.

In regards to Adamkus' immigrant experience, the highest number of Lithuanian diasporans ended up in the U.S. while the Latvian diaspora was split among the U.S., Canada and Germany as well as Sweden and Great Britain. Based on my research, it seems that where the diaspora settled is important in so far as whether the adopted country was a democracy or not as well as the potential for and desirability of adopted

country assimilation. This contention is thus far untested but it does seem to be worthy of note; deeper analysis of this will have to wait for a later date, however.

Adamkus' involvement in the affairs of Lithuania was one of the few constants between his life before the war and his subsequent time in Germany and then the U.S. His involvement ranged from organizing an academic sports club for Lithuanian-Americans, *Lituanica*, in 1951 to being a member of the board of the American-Lithuanian Community in the early 1960s to working with Vilnius University to acquire the latest academic literature on environmental issues in the 1980s. Of particular interest – and a lasting memory among people in Lithuania and in the diaspora – was Adamkus' involvement in basketball, the national sport of Lithuania, throughout the Soviet period. Unlike many other returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania, or Latvia for that matter, Adamkus was involved in Lithuanian affairs during the Soviet period and was thus much better informed, I would argue, about the Soviet system than many other of his returned diaspora political leader colleagues. Still, even with his professional and personal experiences in Soviet Lithuania, critics have alleged throughout his postcommunist political life that “he just doesn't understand.”¹⁷⁷

In 1993, Adamkus was asked to head the presidential campaign of Stasys Lozoraitis in Lithuania – his first formal foray into political life in the country. Later, in 1996, he actively participated in the country's general elections, helping to unify the moderate right-wing. In 1997, the Lithuanian Center Union nominated him for the Siauliai City Council (Siauliai is a major regional city in northern Lithuania). Later that

177 This was not the personal view of those interviewed but was brought up by Lopata and A. Jankauskas, 2002, as well as Lukosaitis, 2002, who are prominent political scientists in Lithuania, in their discussion of criticism of Adamkus based on his returned diaspora status.

same year, the conservatives found that they needed someone who not only shared their right-wing policies but who was also “electable” in the eyes of an electorate weary of a communist-right-wing stalemate in national politics.¹⁷⁸ Given that Adamkus had established a name for himself during his many years with the EPA working with various sectors of Soviet Lithuania, his work in diaspora organizations and his recent political work, he was a potentially attractive choice. In addition, he had a reputation as uncorrupted and someone who was not a “politician” but a real professional with technical skills – both attributes that the Conservatives hoped would attract voters.¹⁷⁹

On January 4, 1998, Valdas Adamkus was voted in as president of Lithuania by a relatively slim margin in a second round of voting. Nevertheless, during his first tenure as president, he achieved a number of the objectives that he had set for himself. European Union (EU) and NATO membership processes took better shape and progressed more rapidly than under the previous president, resulting in both EU and NATO membership by spring 2004. With the skills and support of key returned diaspora military personnel, he worked to modernize the country’s military. Last, he is widely cited for helping to strengthen the role of the presidency in legislative initiatives and, more important, the ability to act as a check on the power of the *Seimas*. Lopata and A. Jankauskas, Lukosaitis and Lane, all argue that this has been good for democratic consolidation and overall stability in the region.¹⁸⁰

Adamkus has dominated the returned diaspora political leadership landscape in

178 Adamkus, 2003; Smulkstys, 2002; and Lopata and A. Jankauskas, 2002, interviews as well as Lane, 2001; 148.

179 IBID.

180 Personal interviews with Lopata and A. Jankauskas, 2002, and Lukosaitis, 2002; as well as; Lane, 2001.

ways that Vīķe-Freiberga has not. Undoubtedly, this is due in part to the greater strength of the presidency in Lithuania as compared to that of the office of the president in Latvia as well as the slightly different parliamentary systems of the countries. It is also due, I argue to the stronger role that personal charisma and one-person leadership has played in postcommunist politics in Lithuania as opposed to Latvia. This will be discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

On a less positive note, Adamkus's first tenure as president did further complicate the diaspora and native relationship through the relatively high number of returned diaspora political appointees and certain political decisions and strategies used by Adamkus that many native Lithuanians viewed at best as naïve or at worst, as ignorant and unsympathetic regarding many of the challenges facing postcommunist Lithuania. Adamkus' first term also may have contributed to Lithuania's weakening relationship with Russia or more benignly, not helped it.

Following Lithuania's successful management of the corruption and other scandals involved with President Paksas' recent tenure, Valdas Adamkus was voted in as the country's president for a second time. While many worried that Lithuania's relatively new democratic institutions and political culture might not be up to the task of the impeachment and other official proceedings involving Paksas, it is generally agreed that the country weathered the storm well. At this point in time, it is too early to determine how the second term of Adamkus will compare with the first.

The average older age of the returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania (as compared to Latvia) in addition to the strong reformed communist influence at all levels of government mean that dramatic changes have been more difficult to make in

Lithuanian politics than in Latvia. Furthermore, the 2004 scandal involving President Paksas and alleged Russian interference in Lithuanian politics¹⁸¹ reveals both a certain fragility of postcommunist political culture – democratic institutions and processes seemed to work well in dealing with the crisis – and a determination to work through the complex legacies of Lithuania’s communist and Soviet past.

How does Adamkus compare overall to his fellow returned diaspora political leaders in Lithuania? At first glance, Adamkus fits many of the attributes that I found again and again in my interviews. He was born and spent his childhood and young adulthood in Lithuania. He was very active in diaspora organizations throughout his life up until his return to Lithuania. He was professionally successful in the diaspora. However, Adamkus – in a similar way to Viķe-Freiberga – has done more vis-à-vis Lithuania than most of his fellow returned diaspora political leaders in so far as his fighting with the partisans and his long-term professional engagement with Soviet Lithuania in particular. In addition, his family’s political background, while a characteristic that he shares with some other returned diaspora political leaders,¹⁸² only adds to his record to make him much more of a returned elite than some others. This point will be taken up in greater depth in the last chapter.

Differences between Latvia and Lithuania

The differences between Viķe-Freiberga and Adamkus largely mirror those between Latvian and Lithuanian returned diaspora political leaders. As each seems quite

181 See Leonidas Doniskis, “Lithuania at the Crossroads: The Autumn of our Discontent”; <http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/dcees/Donskis.pdf>.

182 For example, Kazys Bobelis

“representative” of their co-national colleagues, this is not surprising. First, the different generations that Viķe-Freiberga and Adamkus represent largely mirror the average age of the returned diaspora political leaders in each country. While Latvia has witnessed returned diaspora political leaders from their 20s through their 70s, Lithuania has experienced an older and much less varied average age of returned diaspora political leaders from their late 50s to late 70s. As I argued earlier in the dissertation, the difference in average ages stems from the different national identity debates and the different postcommunist histories of the communist parties and, in particular, the role of reformed communist parties in the political arena.

In Latvia, where the national identity debate is still ongoing, “Latvian-ness” is defined more by ethnicity and therefore Latvian national identity can readily include diaspora and natives alike, particularly when national identity is conceived of in relation to “the other,” that is, non-Latvians. In Lithuania, by comparison, the national identity debate never assumed the importance it did in Latvia and furthermore, was largely made moot by the “zero option” decision on citizenship at the beginning of independence. In fact, the national identity debate only seems to resurface in two noteworthy instances – regarding the Polish minority and regarding returned diaspora political leaders.

As has been discussed elsewhere in the dissertation, the demographics of Lithuania and Latvia have impacted on how the two respective diasporas have conceived their identities and the roles of the diaspora in homeland politics (pre- and post-independence). While I do not want to oversimplify the effect of communist and postcommunist demographics on returned diaspora political leadership – nor draw lines of causation that do not exist – I do want to emphasize how the different political

landscapes in the immediate postcommunist era contributed to making or limiting openings for outsiders to enter politics. How outsiders were to be defined was affected by the challenges to the political elite structure as they unfolded in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The differences in political systems between Latvia and Lithuania also manifested themselves in who returned among the diasporans to become engaged in politics. In Lithuania, the existence of reformers among the ethnic Lithuanian communist era political leadership and the absence of a significant non-ethnic Lithuanian communist era political leadership to blame for the many mistakes and failures of the Soviet period meant that only limited elite change took place. I would argue that this allowed relatively little space for “outsiders,” here, including returned diaspora, to enter onto the political stage and that those “outsiders” were often not true outsiders in that their age, family background and level of lifetime diaspora community participation made them more akin to former insiders from the pre-communist era joining the current political elite.

Latvia, in contrast, had significantly more non-ethnic Latvians in the republic’s communist leadership as well as a much higher percentage of non-ethnic Latvian immigration during the Soviet period overall. These two realities combined to create a dynamic that drove an ethnically-defined post-Soviet Latvia and, in addition, pushed a significant number of communist era political leaders out of the running for the postcommunist political elite. This, in turn, created more openings for “outsiders” (including individuals from the diaspora) to enter postcommunist politics in the country.

Last, while Latvia and Lithuania have experienced corruption similarly and differently, the challenges in dealing with corruption are significant and numerous.

Corruption challenges not only the postcommunist development of democratic institutions and processes in the two countries but impacts the development of postcommunist political cultures that will hopefully become more democratic over time. As discussed at length in chapters five and six, returned diaspora seem to play an important role in challenging postcommunist corruption, not the least is the public perception that the returned diaspora did not participate in the corruption of the communist era. As an environmental NGO in Europe noted about President Adamkus:

The President has much more experience and knowledge in working under the conditions of western-type democracy than Lithuanian political leaders. This may be his strength....The absence of Soviet historical burden is an advantage, for the President appears much cleaner than many politicians who cast shadows of a scandalous or corrupt past. (The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe; <http://www.rec.org/REC/Bulletin/Bull81/Baltic.html>)

Conclusions

The preceding analysis has laid out the important factors of returned diaspora involvement in the politics of their homelands through a comparison of the political leadership of the current president of Latvia, Dr. Vīķe-Freiberga and the President of Lithuania, Mr. Valdas Adamkus. It was found that diaspora members-turned-political leaders in the homeland were more likely than non-diaspora members to have access to multiple international and national networks of knowledge and people because of the significant amount of time that they had lived and worked abroad. The means through which diaspora members are able to access multiple networks is through their past assumption of political and other identities in addition to those of their homeland.

Regarding their professional experience, returned diaspora political leaders often have had professional skills and experience that could be particularly helpful in

postcommunist Lithuania and Latvia (for example, law). Their professional skills and experience dovetails with their access to and membership in international networks in ways that have added to their abilities to be political leaders.

Overall, these returned diaspora leaders can provide much needed legitimacy during a period of substantial political change, such as that which is currently being experienced in postcommunist Latvia and Lithuania, because they may not only possess first-hand knowledge of democratic ideas and practice that are in the process of being institutionalized but have little or no connection to the disavowed prior regime because they were in the “diaspora” at the time. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the returned diaspora political leaders are viewed as uncorrupt and not as susceptible to corruption as native politicians might be.

Research shows that returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania share many characteristics including access to international networks, significant professional experience helpful in postcommunist environments as well as reputations for not being corrupt. Research did reveal differences, however. Most notably, the average age of the returned diaspora political leaders was younger in Latvia than in Lithuania. The reasons for this include formal opportunities available for individuals from the diaspora to return to enter into politics such as preferential citizenship laws and how the political system itself is set up. Additionally, how national identity is defined – whether or not individuals in the diaspora are really seen to be a part of the nation – creates informal opportunities for diaspora to return and become involved in political leadership. These latter reasons will be explored more fully in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusions

This chapter looks to first discuss the themes that ran through most of the interviews. Then, the chapter moves on to summarize the research findings through a discussion of the shared returned diaspora characteristics that come out of this study as well as the notable exceptions. This is followed by a reexamination of the explanations for similarities among and differences between returned diaspora and natives as well as among and between returned diaspora from Latvia and Lithuania. Last, prior to new analysis, I will discuss the political issues most important to the returned diaspora political leaders I interviewed as well as the reasons why the issues are important to them. The initial research hypotheses will be then re-examined – as will my initial assumptions – before discussion turns back to address the original two-step research question:

When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders?

Finally, we will discuss whether or not and, if so, how the research findings can be applied to other country contexts. Before launching into this discussion, however, I want to restate some important points undergirding the research. First, the interview method that was utilized attempted to elicit the maximum amount of information regarding the research questions. It did this by allowing the researcher to ask follow-up questions where necessary (in addition to the standard list of questions) as well as allowing the researcher to give lee-way to the interviewee in how to answer the questions and how much information he or she is willing to give. Furthermore, the relatively small number of in-depth interviews that can be done, combined with the relatively small number of returned diaspora political leaders to be interviewed, makes the choice of such a method much more attractive as it offers the potential for gathering the greatest amount

of data. Last, national identity and the proxies for understanding it are often very academic and therefore may unnecessarily limit interviewee answers. By using the interview method, the researcher was able to spend considerable time making sure each interviewee fully understood the central concept undergirding the research and thus was able to obtain complete data from each subject.

Diaspora, national identity and rebuilding homeland politics – Recurring themes

Throughout the interviews, there were a few themes that came up repeatedly that are directly connected to the research question. Interestingly, all relate to individual experience and networks between individuals. Among the themes that have to do with networks between and among individuals is, unsurprisingly, national identity. Every interviewee spoke strongly and often eloquently about his or her identity as a Latvian or Lithuanian. All told me at least partial life narratives relating to their forced emigration and/or growing up in the diaspora as well as their hopes for returning to the homeland. There were other recurring themes, however, and the following sections include additional discussion and analysis drawn from the interviews.

Personal experience with democratic politics

An important area of perceived difference between returned diaspora politicians and their ‘native’ colleagues are the formers’ experience with democratic politics. The postcommunist electorate has seemed to view the returned diaspora political leaders as more knowledgeable about democracy – both theoretically and experientially. While this has not been a completely

positive characteristic – because direct experience with democracy means that most likely one did not have direct experience with communism and therefore may be ignorant about how it functioned – it has been an oft-cited reason for why electorates have supported returned diaspora as political leaders

Additionally, many returned diaspora political leaders themselves noted during their interviews that their personal experience with democracy – be it only as a citizen in a democratic country or as an elected leader – has given them insight into the democratic political process as well as a variety of skills that their native colleagues generally have not had. Most notable of these skills is the art of compromise and negotiation. As noted repeatedly through the dissertation, an interest in negotiating to reach a political goal and an understanding that compromise is necessary and, indeed, desirable in a democratic system are characteristics – perhaps strategies is a better term – that returned diaspora political leaders seem to have more often than they perceive in their native peers.

International networks – for good and bad

Diasporas are in and of themselves a type of international network due to their transnational links built on their ethnicity, religion, national or regional identity. While it did not seem very important at the outset of my research, why and how the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas came to be is important vis-à-vis the evolution of their diasporic identity and the level of interest in returning to the homeland once conditions permitted them to do so. Due to the overwhelming feeling that they were forced to leave their homelands and that their homelands

were illegally occupied for almost 50 years engendered not only a strong sense of group identity for both the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas but also inculcated in them a drive to work to end the occupations and create independent states once again.

Interviewees routinely cited their significant work with Baltic diaspora organizations throughout their lifetimes. Notably, many of the interviewees said that they held leadership positions in the most prominent organizations at different points. This leadership experience – particularly in diaspora organizations – seems to be a key indicator for later involvement in homeland political leadership.

Returned diaspora political leaders also cited, though less frequently, their membership in or association with non-diaspora organizations that included national and international networks, such as the Roman Catholic Church or professional associations such as the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS). Viķe-Freiberga and Adamkus were both highly active professionally and Adamkus politically and established diverse and numerous networks that undoubtedly helped them not only to attain political leadership positions but also to learn leadership skills.

It is clear from the research that involvement in organizations – those related to the diaspora as well as those not directly related to it – are very important for gaining experience with a variety of organizations and/or causes as well as for creating networks of people and ideas that impact later political leadership. This impact can be determined in both how some diaspora ended up

returning to the homeland as well as among the factors that affect how returned diaspora enter political leadership in the homeland.

How does the international environment – political, economic and social – fit into this analysis? The international environment has certainly had some impact on how, when, why and what diaspora members have been able to return to their homelands but how can these impacts be ascertained? As was discussed in the previous section, the diasporas created during the war period in the Baltics were largely defined by a shared status of being elites of some kind. Given this characteristic, the two Baltic diaspora groups had the education and practical experience to continue their cultures while in the diaspora and often the professional education to adapt to a host country and make a living or move relatively quickly into the middle class. And, as noted above and throughout the dissertation, many of the members of these specific diasporas also had strong feelings relating to the former independence of their countries and were committed to working to regain independence. A significant subset of the diaspora members were children of interwar politicians and civil servants who knew how to operate in a democracy and thus when faced with the political realities of foreign policy creation in their host countries, they worked to keep the plight of the Baltic states in the minds and on the agendas of domestic and international politics.

Absence of local networks – for good and bad

While returned diaspora often enjoy benefits due to membership in international networks, they rarely belong – at least at the outset – to local networks due to their extensive time spent living outside of their homelands. Their lack of membership in or even access to networks in the homeland is compounded by the very repressive nature of the communist regimes in place for decades. While members of other diasporas often do retain significant links with colleagues, friends and family in the homeland, the Cold War (if the diaspora were in the U.S. or western Europe) combined with the repressive Soviet regime minimized contacts between Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas and their co-ethnics at home across the board. Cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and the West was limited during most of the Cold War and visits by diaspora Balts were highly circumscribed.

A notable exception to the limited exchange of information was Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) which, starting in the mid-1970s, gathered and broadcast a variety of information and analysis on Baltic politics, economics and culture as well as information about the Soviet Union and the rest of the world. Not surprisingly, Baltic diasporas played a crucial role in the success of RFE/RL in the Baltics – both through gathering information from the Soviet Union through a variety of contacts and then putting information into context and providing thoughtful analysis. Puddington (2000) writes that the committed and highly professional staff of RFE/RL worked tirelessly – particularly after Gorbachev's ascension to power – in order to provide information that would

“accelerate the freedom process by whatever means prudence allowed.”¹⁸³ In this way, the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas attempted to bridge the political and geographical divide between them during the Soviet occupation.

The absence of clear, intact local networks can mean that return diaspora are not part of corrupt family, business, party or other networks that operated during and intensified after the communist period. More specific to this topic, my research has shown that the electorate cares – for varying reasons such as potential for corruption or desire for change or stability – who is returned diaspora and who is ‘native’ in regards to the politics. This stems from a variety of reasons but has obvious ties to the communist era experience and to the hopes for postcommunist development. However, this is also tied to national identity and how it is perceived by individuals and the societies in general.

On the negative side, particularly in the case of returned diaspora politicians, because they are not part of or do not have ready access to local networks of any sort (other than, perhaps, close family who stayed in the homeland) return diaspora too often do not understand how society works or what individuals and society as a whole want or really need. For example, while many decry the environmental degradation of postcommunist Lithuania, there have been numerous criticisms of President Adamkus’ plans and attempts to improve the environment if they in any way decrease opportunities for employment or other competing social goods.

183 Puddington, 2000; 297.

Answering the Research Question

As in most social science research, the answer to the research question is not completely clear cut. However, I anticipated this in my hypotheses. Thus, as has been made clear by the interviews and the secondary research, return diaspora are able to enter into homeland political leadership when there are opportunities to do so. The most notable opportunities are formal opportunities arising from the political system and citizenship laws as well as less formal opportunities stemming from how the diaspora are perceived by natives vis-à-vis being part of “the nation.” In regards to how returned diaspora act as political leaders in the homeland, they seem to draw on their homeland national identity as well as their personal experience to inform their opinions and actions. This is reflected not only in the stated opinions of the returned diaspora political leaders but also in their political actions and their understanding of the similarities and differences they, as returned diaspora, bring to political leadership in their homelands. The following sections lay out the data gathered from the research to best support these conclusions.

Experience of and in the diaspora

All of the interviewees stressed how their prior experience – professional or personal or both – played an important role in their political leadership. On the one hand, their experience as immigrants outside of their homelands left an indelible mark on almost everyone. From Olgerts Pavlovskis remarking how indebted he is to the United States for all the opportunities that it offered him¹⁸⁴ to Inese Birzniece’s appreciation for her adopted country’s deep respect for human

rights and the law.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, quite a few interviewees did note a certain ambivalence in regards to their feelings of belonging to two cultures. While Jonas Kronkaitis paralleled his loyalty to the U.S. and Lithuania to a child's loyalty to his/her two parents,¹⁸⁶ others noted that they felt compelled to give up their adopted citizenship to hold only the homeland one.¹⁸⁷ In contrast, some actively decided to retain both citizenships in order to be able to return to their adopted countries at sometime in the future because they felt that they really did not "belong" in their homeland anymore.¹⁸⁸

Experience in the diaspora that is viewed as most important to being a political leader seems related to skills, interests and opinions that were or still are not readily available in the homeland. From the perspective of the homeland, certain skills and experience are required for countries to maximize their political potential. Particularly in Latvia and Lithuania, where democratization and marketization are still underway, the goals of the homeland, particularly foreign policy ones, can sometimes best be met by returned diaspora political leaders – or at least that is what many in the electorate seem to think in the Baltics.

Therefore, the potential opportunity for diaspora to return and get involved in political leadership seems highest when the differences in political, social and economic development between homeland and adopted country are highest. To

184 Personal interview, May 2002.

185 Personal interview, May 2002.

186 He said: "It's a matter of values. If the countries share values, [there are] no problem[s]...much like a child can be loyal to two parents." (May 2002)

187 Examples of this are Ojars Kalnins and, of course, Valdas Adamkus and Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who were required by law to renounce any other citizenships. Interestingly, it seems that more returned diaspora political leaders that I interviewed chose either to retain both citizenships – and shared this fact with me – or obfuscated their decision due to the potential for public criticism.

188 Names withheld upon request.

return to the homeland to be a political leader involves many calculations about dedication to the homeland, what will be gained (financially, politically, socially, and professionally) as well as what will be lost by leaving the adopted country.

This is when diaspora experience and the socialization through living in a country and participating in it politically (via citizenship) does have lasting effects. In the case of these two postcommunist countries, experience with democracy was perceived positively by the electorate and was put into practice by the returned diaspora political leaders themselves through the use of negotiation and compromise in trying to attain their political goals.

Role of national identity and the ties of nationalism

To say that national identity is a social construction does not mean that it is manufactured out of nothing. There may be instances in which one can properly speak of an imagined past, invented to buttress a newly formed identity...In most cases, however, the social construction of an identity draws on a variety of authentic elements held in common within a population group....¹⁸⁹

National identity has been key to certain aspects of the political leadership of returned diaspora in Latvia and Lithuania. While all cited their strong national identity as one of the factors that motivated their return to the homeland, many also cited national identity as a basis for formulating political goals such as how citizenship should be defined or how soldiers should regard the national flag.¹⁹⁰

In the present study, one cannot forget the central role played by national identity and how it is defined by both individuals in the diaspora as well as those who remained in the homeland. Strong national identity has linked the diaspora

189 Kelman, 1997; 337.

with their homelands in ways that are obvious and subtle. An important conclusion that can be drawn from the present research is that the greater the debate over defining national identity vis-à-vis ethnicity, the greater the opening for individuals in the diaspora to return and get involved in politics because despite their absence, they are perceived as an integral part of the nation. This is highly important and bears significant further study.

Answering “Why?”

Since the research question has now been addressed, even if in broad strokes, the next question that arises is: Why do the returned diaspora political leaders draw on personal experience and their homeland national identity at different times to inform their political goals, opinions, strategies and actions? And, why are there differences between the Latvian and Lithuanian returned diaspora political leaders? The following subsections seek to answer this question.

Differences rooted in individuals and country

It is clear that the differences between returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania respectively are mostly due to the different histories and current political environments of each country and, to a lesser extent, are rooted in individuals. The different political institutions of each country as well as the different Soviet and communist institutional and human legacies have created different opportunities for returned diaspora political involvement at a high level.

Explanations for the similarities across Latvia and Lithuania

How can these phenomena be explained? Returning to the homeland and becoming involved in political leadership make some shared characteristics inevitable among the returnees themselves. Furthermore, the political opinions that they hold and the actions that they take are rooted in both their homeland national identities and their personal experience at different times. What can be said at this point, however, is that neither homeland national identity nor diaspora experience predicts what beliefs an individual will hold though it does seem to affect how that individual will act on his/her beliefs. These types of cross-cutting cleavages are crucial to regaining stability in countries whose very existence has been put in doubt at points in the past decade. In addition, the process of reconstructing a nation-state will necessitate reconstruction of the concept of 'nation' and diaspora.

I think that it is also worthwhile to hypothesize that close, on-going relationships among the Baltic diasporas – both institutionally through various pan-Baltic organizations and at the personal level – while they lived outside the homeland made for common experiences and a convergence of how they defined their homeland national identity. The fact that all of the returned diaspora political leaders that I interviewed noted networks of friends and colleagues as well as information based on previous diaspora experience buttresses this hypothesis.

Can we generalize from this research?

While the two Baltic cases are undoubtedly quite rooted in a specific historical moment of the collapse of the Soviet empire and the discrediting of communism, there are lessons to be learned from the cases that can be applied in other contexts. First, it seems that returned diaspora are most likely to get involved in homeland politics in political leadership positions when there are ample opportunities for them to do so. By this I mean that citizenship laws and how the homeland national identity itself is defined allow or disallow as well as urge or dissuade returned diaspora to aspire to political leadership. Formal political institutions and procedures are also very important as can be seen in the differences between Latvia's parliamentary system with strict proportional representation versus Lithuania's mixed presidential and parliamentary system with both first-past-the-post single mandate districts and proportional representation via multi-seat districts and national party lists.

The type of regime change is also an important factor in determining whether or not returned diaspora can or aspire to become involved in the political leadership of their homelands. The more dramatic the regime change, the greater the likelihood that diasporans who left because of prior regime change will be interested in returning. However, while regime change does, of course, seem necessary in order for large numbers of diasporans to return and get involved in politics, one can see individuals returning here and there to participate even when there is no large-scale change.

Last, the very conception of returned diaspora and their potential involvement in homeland politics will continue to affect how homeland national identity is defined. As

Demetriou writes:

[D]iaspora groups, as primary forms of transnational political identity, push the limits of territorial politics. Under these circumstances, international relations will find an increasing need to understand and account for the dynamics that mediate the migration of politics from the territorial nation-state into new spaces of transnational or global practice. Diasporic identities situate themselves within the interstitial spaces that lie beyond the territorial state, and this quality of ‘in-between-ness’ – of living neither here nor there, of being neither one nor the other (yet somehow both) – is the defining characteristic of these political identities.¹⁹¹

Additional Noteworthy Findings

Besides conclusions that may be applicable in other contexts, the research and analysis for this dissertation points to two noteworthy findings: the staying power of elites – even in the face of dramatic regime change – and the importance of adopted country socialization and networks. The first, the staying power of elites, supports the theory that while elites may circulate they rarely are replaced on a large scale. The second, concerning the importance of adopted country socialization and networks, supports some current international relations research on transnational politics as well as how political culture can and can not change.

The staying power of elites

While the majority of the literature on elite continuity and change would predict significant elite change when regime change such as that which occurred in the early 1990s when communism collapsed and Latvia and Lithuania regained their independence, the data that was collected for this research seems to contradict this. When elites are forced to leave (or feel that they are forced),

191 Demetriou, 23.

they hope to return to reclaim their “rightful” roles in society – and usually they have the means to do so. While, again, it is worth noting that returned diaspora political leaders in Latvia and Lithuania have found themselves in a specific historical context that most likely is not repeatable, dramatic regime change and the opportunity for diasporans to return to the homeland has occurred (Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine) and will occur elsewhere (perhaps Cuba or Lebanon?). As Dogan and Higley note:

[A] change of political elites is possible only if there is an organized opposition and thus a reservoir of counterelites. A new ruling elite cannot be created *ex nihilo*. When their communist regimes fell between 1989 and 1991, the countries of Eastern Europe were not pluralist societies. Apart from Poland, where the communist regime had always been more authoritarian than totalitarian (Higley and Pakulski, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996), there were no free parties, no free trade unions, and no economic forces independent of the state, and in the Orthodox countries of the region there were no relatively independent church hierarchies. Because of the absence of counterelite power bases under communist rule, it is not surprising that large proportions of postcommunist elites have consisted of persons who were prominent in the communist regimes.¹⁹²

Adopted countries in the diaspora – socialization and connections

In a similar vein, where diasporas settle is very important for their interest in and, more important, their ability to, remain involved in diaspora-homeland political activity and to potentially “return” to the homeland to get directly involved in politics. In the case of the Baltic states, members of the elite who emigrated at the end of World War Two went west while ethnic Balts – elite and non-elite – who were deported were sent east into the interior of the Soviet Union. For the Latvian and Lithuanian diasporas that remain in the countries of the

192 Dogan and Higley, 23.

former Soviet Union, none seems wealthy enough or possesses the requisite skills for their members to attain political leadership positions in independent Latvia and Lithuania. What is important here is that the political and economic systems of western, liberal democracies, for the most part, have a history of accepting immigrants and integrating them (minus Sweden and Germany up until recently). Immigrants to these countries were largely able to acculturate themselves and become active citizens of their host countries while retaining distinct cultural and other ties and aspects of lifestyle of their homelands. When the opportunity came for dedicated diaspora to return to the homeland (and, many would argue that the western diasporas had a role in making that opportunity), they were willing and able to take advantage of the opportunity.

Summary

Drawing on field and other research and analysis, I have sought to answer the question:

When are returned diasporans able to enter into political leadership in their homelands and how do they act as political leaders?

The most important contributions of this dissertation are that returned diaspora are most able to enter political leadership in their homeland when both formal and informal opportunities exist. Specifically, diaspora must be viewed by the majority of the homeland society as being a constituent part of “the nation” and therefore able to represent it in political leadership. Furthermore, the political institutions and rules that exist provide greater or lesser opportunities for the entrance of “outsiders” into political leadership as shown by a comparison of the parliamentary system in use in Latvia

(greater opportunity for diaspora involvement) and the hybrid parliamentary-presidential system in use on Lithuania (lesser opportunity for diaspora involvement).

The research findings also come down squarely in the camp of those who have argued that national identity is not only mutable but a dynamic tool that is used by the individual and by groups in the political realm. In this research, national identity was found to be both a key factor in how formal and informal opportunities for returned diaspora participation in political leadership are structured as well as a basis for informing political opinions and actions.

Of lesser importance in terms of theory building but still interesting to note, from the interviews and other research, I also gathered that, overall, returned diaspora politicians are perceived by themselves and other political and academic elites in their homelands as less corrupt than ‘native’ politicians and less prone to corruption.¹⁹³ This seems to result from a variety of factors, among which are personal ethics, absence or weakness of membership in ‘local networks’ of patronage, not being ‘tainted’ by the communist and/or Soviet period and different reasons for political involvement (a ‘higher calling’ to serve the public, etc.)

In addition, returned diaspora politicians also seem to differ in their career backgrounds from their ‘native’ colleagues. Many returned diaspora politicians have professional backgrounds such as law or military that were undervalued during the Soviet period (as in the case of law, e.g.), or in which many of those in the profession were non-Estonians, non-Latvians or non-Lithuanians or were considered unacceptable to be leaders in the postcommunist countries because of ‘tainted pasts’. The professional skills

193 Though many interviewees and scholars noted this, to date I have not found any surveys substantiating this claim.

and networks that returned diaspora politicians bring with them to their work in Latvia and Lithuania can be instrumental in not only in getting them elected but also in making them perform at a high level once in office.

Additional areas of difference between returned diaspora politicians and their ‘native’ colleagues are the formers’ experience with democratic politics. The electorate has seemed to view the returned diaspora candidates and political leaders as more knowledgeable about democracy – both theoretically and through experience. While this has not been a completely positive characteristic – because direct experience with democracy means that most likely one did not have direct experience with communism – it has been an oft-cited reason for supporting returned diaspora political leaders.

The dramatic collapse of Soviet communism in Latvia and Lithuania in the early 1990s brought both significant changes and unforeseen continuities with both the interwar and communist periods. The ability of homeland national identity to weather the Soviet period inside of the Baltic countries as well as in the diaspora has undoubtedly helped Latvia and Lithuania to re-establish sovereign, democratic states. It is hoped that this dissertation has provided data and analysis regarding the roles played by returned diasporans in the restoration and development of their homeland states.

Appendix I: List of Interviewees

*Interviews took place in May 2002, May 2003 and fall 2004

LATVIA

Nils Muiznieks, Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs
Olgerts Pavlovskis, appointed the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Latvia to Spain resident in Madrid also former MP
Ojars Kalnins, Director of the Latvian Institute
Inese Birzniece, Member of the European Parliament and former MP, Latvia's Way Party
Anita Juberts, American Latvian Association
Raits Eglitis, Executive Director, American Latvian Association
Vaira Paegle, former MP, People's Party
Uldis Klauss, MP, New Era Party
Uldis Grava, General Secretary of Jaunais Laiks grupas loceklis)
Guntis Berzins, MP, New Era Party
Anita Terauds, former head of ALA

LITHUANIA

Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania
Raimundas Lopata, Director of TSPMI at University of Vilnius
Julius Smulkstys, Advisor to President Adamkus
Algimantas Jankauskas, Deputy Director of TSPMI at University of Vilnius
Alvidas Lukosaitis, *Seimas* staff and adjunct professor at TSPMI
Bronius Vaskelis, former Rector of Vytautas Magnus University
Gabrielius Zemkalnis, World Lithuanian Community in Lithuania
Jonas Kronkaitis, Commander-in-Chief, Lithuanian Armed Forces
Donaldas Skucas, Advisor to the Ministry of Defense
Terry Clark, Professor, Creighton University, USA
Kestutis Jankauskas, Minister-Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Political Affairs, Embassy of Lithuania to the United States
Edward Rhodes, Professor, Rutgers University, USA

Appendix II: Brief biographies of Selected Returned Diaspora Political Leaders

President Valdas Adamkus¹⁹⁴

Valdas Adamkus was born into a family of civil servants in Kaunas in 1926. He attended the Jonas Jablonskis elementary school and studied at the *Ausra Gymnasium* in Kaunas.

During World War TWO, he joined the resistance movement for Lithuania's independence. In July 1944, Valdas Adamkus emigrated to Germany to with his parents. Upon graduation from the Lithuanian Gymnasium in Germany, Valdas Adamkus entered the Faculty of Natural Science at the Munich University.

In 1949, Valdas Adamkus emigrated to the United States. In 1951, Valdas Adamkus married Alma Nutautaitė, a fellow Lithuanian American. He later found a blue-collar job with a manufacturer of spare car parts in Chicago and later worked as a draftsman in an engineering firm. In 1960, Adamkus graduated from the Illinois Institute of Technology as a civil engineer.

President Adamkus started working for the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in the early 1970's. He first headed the environment research centre and later was appointed Deputy Administrator at the U.S. EPA Great Lakes Region. He was later promoted to Administrator at the same institution.

Valdas Adamkus fully participated in the public and political activities of the Lithuanian émigré community. From 1958 through 1965, he was Vice-Chairman of the *Santara-Sviesa* (Accord-Light), an organization of liberal (in the European sense) Lithuanian émigrés. He was an active organizer of protest actions against Lithuania's occupation and the initiator of numerous petitions. From 1961 through 1964, Adamkus was a member of the Board of the American-Lithuanian Community (LC), Vice-Chairman of the Centre Board, and a member of the Lithuanian American Council (LAC).

Valdas Adamkus was also an active participant in and organizer of sports events. He won gold and silver medals in track and field events at the Olympic Games of the Enslaved Nations in 1948. In 1951, Valdas Adamkus established an academic sports club for Lithuanian Americans called *Lituanica*. He also was Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the World Lithuanian Games in 1983.

Prior to returning to Lithuania after independence was restored, Valdas Adamkus visited Lithuania once or several times a year starting in 1972. Encouraging and supporting the construction of water treatment facilities and development of environmental monitoring, Valdas Adamkus assisted the environmental institutions of the Baltic States in acquiring academic literature, equipment and software needed for their projects. In the capacity of the coordinator of U.S. aid to the Baltic States in the field of environmental protection, Valdas Adamkus organized study visits for the representatives

194 Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, <http://www.president.lt/other/biography.en.phtml>.

of Lithuania's academic institutions and helped Vilnius University to acquire the latest academic literature.

In 1993, Valdas Adamkus headed the presidential campaign of candidate Stasys Lozoraitis in Lithuania. He actively participated in the campaign of the 1996 Lithuanian general elections, uniting a bloc of moderate right-wing forces. In 1998, Valdas Adamkus was elected President of the Republic of Lithuania. President Adamkus promoted rapid modernisation of Lithuania and consistently worked for the implementation of this goal. On 27 June 2004, Valdas Adamkus was elected President of the Republic of Lithuania for the second time. He assumed the office after the inaugural ceremony on 12 July 2004.

In 1988, Valdas Adamkus was granted an international environmental award for outstanding achievements on the international arena. He has also been granted the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency gold medal for the achievements in service and the award of the U.S. President for outstanding service. President Adamkus has been granted the title of Honorary Doctor of Vilnius University (1989), Indiana St. Joseph's College (1991), Northwestern University (1994), Kaunas Technological University (1998), The Catholic University of America (1998), the University of Agriculture (1999), Illinois Institute of Technology (1999), DePaul University (2001), Law University of Lithuania (2001) and Vytautas Magnus University (2002). He is also the Honorary Professor of Astana University (Kazakhstan, 2000).

President Vīķe-Freiberga¹⁹⁵

“Born in Riga, Latvia, on December 1, 1937, Vaira Vīķe grew up in refugee camps in Germany, went to school in French Morocco and completed university studies in Canada (B.A. and M.A., Univ. of Toronto, Ph.D., McGill University). She retired as professor emerita from the Université de Montreal in 1998, after being a professor of psychology there since 1965. Vīķe married Imants Freibergs, professor of computer science at the University of Quebec in Montreal, in 1960 and they have two children: a son Karlis, who has been living in Latvia since 1989, and a daughter Indra, working in Latvian Development Agency.

Appointed Director of the newly created Latvian Institute in Riga by the Prime Minister of Latvia in fall 1998, Vīķe-Freiberga was soon after elected President of the Republic of Latvia on June 17, 1999. She was re-elected as President of the Republic of Latvia for another four years on June 20, 2003.

President Vīķe-Freiberga's past administrative experience includes having been president of the Canadian Psychological Association, the Social Science Federation of Canada and the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (USA). She also served as Vice-chairman of the Science Council of Canada (a Governor-General-in-council appointment) and chaired the Human Factors Panel of the NATO Science

¹⁹⁵ The following brief biography draws heavily on information provided on the Latvian government's Presidential Web site: <http://www.president.lv/index.php?pid=210>.

programme as its Canadian representative. Currently, she is the President of the Academie des lettres et des sciences humaines of the Royal Society of Canada (Canada's National Academy).

The president is the recipient of numerous honors and distinctions. She was appointed to the Council of Women World Leaders (Harvard University, 1999), elected a Full Member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (1999), received the Grand Medal of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (1997), the Pierre Chauveau medal for distinguished work in the humanities from the Royal Society of Canada (1995), the Latvian Three-Star Order (1995), a Killam Research Fellowship (The Canada Council) 1993-1995, the Marcel-Vincent prize and medal (1992) for distinguished work in the Social Sciences from ACFAS (Association canadienne française pour l'avancement des sciences), an LL.D. (1991) from Queen's University (Canada), the Social Science Prize from the World Association of Free Latvians (Washington, D.C.) (1989), the Anna Abele prize in Latvian philology (1979).

A prolific scholar, Viķe-Freiberga is the author of eight books including *Linguistics and Poetics of Latvian Folk Songs* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), *Latvian Sun-songs* (with Imants Freibergs, 1988). *La fréquence lexicale des mots au Quebec* (1974). In Latvian: *The Warm Sun* (2002), *The Chronological Sun* (1999), *The Cosmological Sun* (1997), *Against the Current* (1995; 1993), *On the Amber Mountain* (1993; 1989) as well as the co-author of several data bases of Latvian folk songs. She has also written over 60 book chapters and articles in English, French and Latvian, some translated into Swedish, Polish, Russian and Lithuanian and over 250 scholarly papers and speeches in English, French and Latvian in Europe, Australia and the Americas.

Last, Viķe-Freiberga has been active in community affairs throughout her life. She is a regular lecturer, director and president of the Board of directors of the Latvian Cultural Heritage Seminars "Divreizdivi" for university level participants (1965-1985) held in Canada, the USA, Venezuela and Brazil. Lecturer and workshop co-leader at Latvian Cultural Heritage Seminars "Trīsreiztrīs" (continuing education for families) since 1989, in Latvia and in the USA.

Major General Jonas Kronkaitis¹⁹⁶

Jonas Kronkaitis was born in 1935 in a small Lithuanian city 35 miles north of Vilnius. During the chaotic years of the first Soviet occupation and the subsequent German occupation, Kronkaitis and his family fought to survive, ultimately deciding to flee their lower-middle-class life in 1944 as the Russian and German fronts converged. Finally, his family found refuge at a displaced persons camp in Germany's Black Forest.

196 The biography for Jonas Kronkaitis draws heavily on a personal interview as well as articles by Adam B. Ellick, "Answering the Call" in *UCONN Traditions*; Volume 3, Number 3 - Fall/Winter 2002 at <http://uconnmagazine.uconn.edu/fwin2002/fwin02f3.html> and "Lithuanian-American Nominated for Army's Leadership" in *BRIDGES – Lithuanian American News Journal*; Volume 23, Issue 5 – June 1999 at <http://lithuanian-american.org/bridges/birz99/armyco.html>.

In 1949, Kronkaitis and his family immigrated to the United States, settling in New Haven, Connecticut, where an aunt had previously settled. In 1954, Kronkaitis entered the University of Connecticut as an industrial management major. He went on to earn a B.S. in Business at the university. In various interviews, Kronkaitis has credited his formal education with giving him skills that have been highly useful in his drive to reform the Lithuanian military. As he noted in the University of Connecticut alumni magazine:

Management is management everywhere. Even here, management is a very big problem going from a Soviet society to a market economy. Inefficiency was the essence of communism. All decisions were made from the top.

“While at the University of Connecticut, he enrolled in the ROTC, where an enthusiastic group of young officers piqued his interest. Kronkaitis's military career was inspired by his uncle, a Lithuanian lieutenant murdered in Siberia, whose photo now hangs in his office. His U.S. Army career included a stint with Colin Powell in 1958, when the two studied at a Ranger school in Georgia. A decade later Kronkaitis served two separate tours in Vietnam, where he won three Bronze Stars for combat. When he retired in 1985, he had managed more than 3,000 employees at the largest government armament manufacturing facility in the United States.

His return to Lithuania came in 1996 when he met a Lithuanian politician in Washington, D.C., who wooed him back home to campaign for the Conservative Party in national elections. His presence helped win the election, and he was offered appointment to the prestigious post of Commander of Armed Forces. It was an offer he quickly declined, instead opting for the less demanding job of vice minister of defense. He and his wife, Ruta, arrived for what they expected to be a one-year mission. But in 1999 he was persuaded to head the armed forces.”¹⁹⁷

Active in the Lithuanian diaspora throughout his lifetime, prior to his appointment as Lithuanian defense vice-minister, Kronkaitis worked with the group of Lithuanian American officers who coordinated a State security plan outlining the creation of efficient military forces brought in line with NATO norms. Kronkaitis also married a fellow member of the Lithuanian diaspora.

While strongly supported by President Adamkus and many others, Kronkaitis faced significant challenges to being confirmed by the *Seimas* in light of his refusal to renounce his U.S. citizenship as a condition for assuming the post of Commander of the Armed Forces. In a historic speech to the parliament, Kronkaitis said:

““When I was 12, we came to America and were accepted and treated as one of them. We were never discriminated against. When we needed help, it was there. We had every opportunity to seek education, while you were occupied by Russians and abused like slaves in your own home. I had all opportunities given to me in a foreign country, and I'll never turn my back on that country.””¹⁹⁸

197 Ellick, 2002; <http://uconnmagazine.uconn.edu/fwin2002/fwin02f3.html>.

198 BRIDGES, 1999; <http://lithuanian-american.org/bridges/birz99/armyco.html>.

After the speech, Kronkaitis received all but three votes. Kronkaitis, a reserve Colonel of the U.S. army, was able to obtain permission from the Pentagon and the U.S. Department of State to serve in a foreign army while retaining his American reserve officer pension. Major General Jonas Kronkaitis stepped down from his position in June 2004 and returned with his wife to Virginia where their children and grandchildren live.

Ambassador Ojars Kalnins

Currently the Director of the Latvian Institute in Riga, Mr. Kalnins' professional and personal lives have been strongly tied to maintaining strong links between the Latvian diaspora and its homeland and publicizing Latvia's history, culture and politics. As noted in the dissertation, the Latvian Institute is a state-funded agency created to provide information about Latvia to the international community and, as such, the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers appointed Kalnins to the position in August 1999, following the election of his predecessor, Dr. Viķe-Freiberga, as president of Latvia.

Prior to assuming the position of director at the Latvian Institute, Mr. Kalnins was Ambassador to the United States and Mexico from Latvia from 1993 to February 2000. While ambassador, Mr. Kalnins followed up on his prior work as Minister Counselor, Deputy Chief of Mission and as Deputy Permanent Representative to the Latvian U.N. Mission in New York to firmly re-establish diplomatic relationships between the U.S. and Latvia as well as between Latvia and the United Nations.

While Latvia was in the process of re-establishing its independence, Mr. Kalnins acted as Public Affairs Liaison, Legation of Latvia, Washington, D.C., from January to September 1991. In this position, he was responsible for press relations prior to the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Latvia and the United States in September 1991.

Similar to many of the returned diaspora political leaders interviewed for this project, Mr. Kalnins was a leader in a prominent diaspora organization, the American Latvian Association (ALA) in the United States. As Director of Public Relations from 1985 to 1990, he was active in highlighting ongoing events in Soviet Latvia to the American public and especially to the American political elite. During this period, he also served as a consultant to the Popular Front of Latvia (1988-1991), an advisor to the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK) 1988-1991, the North American Representative of the Latvian Foreign Ministry (1990-91), a consultant to the World Federation of Free Latvians and Latvian representative (1985-1990) and Chairman (1988) of Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC) in Washington, D.C. From 1981 to 1991 he was the Editor of the *Chicago Latvian Newsletter*.

Prior to his full-time work with diaspora organizations and his eventual return to Latvia, Mr. Kalnins was Creative Director at Semel/Kaye & Co., a Chicago area advertising and marketing firm, from 1979 to 1984. This followed on his work as a copywriter and account manager at Osco Drug, Inc., a drugstore chain.

Ojars Kalnins was born on October 22, 1949 in a Latvian refugee camp in Munich, Germany. He grew up in Chicago from 1951 to 1984 and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1968. Unlike some of his fellow returned diaspora, he gave up U.S. citizenship in 1991 when he assumed diplomatic duties at the Latvian embassy in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Kalnins graduated with a B.A. in Philosophy from Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois, in 1972. Dedicated to promoting knowledge of Latvia and the Baltic states worldwide, he has published numerous articles and stories in: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The American Spectator*, *The World & I*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Forward*, *Orange County Register*, *Manchester Union Leader*, *New York City Tribune*, *The Observer*, *Hanseatic Businessman*, *Northern Enterprise*, *Baltic Outlook*, *Parliament Magazine*, *Ukrainian Weekly*, *Baltic Bulletin*, *Latvian News Digest* and various newspapers and magazines in Latvia.

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