Citizenship Struggles in
Soviet Successor States

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The breakup of the Soviet Union has transformed yesterday's internal migrants, secure in their Soviet citizenship, into today's international migrants of contested legitimacy and uncertain membership. This transformation has touched Russians in particular, of whom some 25 million live in non-Russian successor states. This article examines the politics of citizenship vis-à-vis Russian immigrants in the successor states, focusing on the Baltic states, where citizenship has been a matter of sustained and heated controversy.

The breakdown of the Soviet regime and the breakup of the Soviet state have major implications for international migration. On the one hand, they have strengthened emigration currents, especially east-west flows. On the other hand, they have created an entirely new field of international flows—namely migrations among the incipient successor states to the Soviet Union. The collapse of central authority has “internationalized” what previously counted as “internal” migration. This has implications not only for the future, but also, as it were, for the past. It has transformed yesterday's internal migrants, secure in their Soviet citizenship, into today's international migrants of contested legitimacy and uncertain membership. In so doing, it has made the politics of membership and citizenship one of the most pressing issues confronting the successor states. It is this emerging politics of citizenship that will be addressed in this article. I begin, though, with some remarks about outmigration from the former Soviet Union.

PATTERNS OF OUTMIGRATION

In the last few years, emigration from the Soviet Union and its incipient successor states has been much more limited than one might think from the alarmist rhetoric and sensationalist headlines about the imminent inundation of Western Europe. For the most part, emigration has consisted of movements of ethnic affinity, involving Soviet nationalities who possess

1 The author would like to thank Scott Bruckner for his valuable assistance and suggestions.
immigration and citizenship rights in external homelands—above all Germans and Jews, but also, in smaller numbers, other nationalities. The economic and political dislocations accompanying the breakdown of the regime and the breakup of the state will intensify the demand for such emigrations of ethnic affinity. This will put pressure on other states with substantial numbers of co-ethnics in the former Soviet Union—notably Poland, Greece, Korea, Finland, Hungary, and Bulgaria—to grant “their” people preferential immigration and citizenship status. It will also sharply increase the value, to successor state citizens, of what might be called “most favored nationality” status—an internal nationality (German, Jewish, Greek, etc.) that entitles one to, or at least increases the chances of receiving, immigration and citizenship privileges in an external homeland (Germany, Israel, Greece, etc.). This in turn will induce successor state citizens who do not formally have most favored nationality status, yet who have some connection to an external homeland, to re-identify with one of the favored nationalities. Given high rates of assimilation and intermarriage on the part of most of the Soviet nationalities who have external homelands, the boundaries delimiting these nationalities are by no means sharp; and the number of persons with some connection to the nationality far exceeds the number officially possessing that nationality in their internal passports or officially professing it to a census-taker. There is therefore considerable

2 By calling these “emigrations of ethnic affinity,” I am not saying anything about the motivation of individual emigrants. Individuals may be motivated largely—or even exclusively—by the desire to improve their economic condition or to enjoy the collective good of public order and political stability. Yet to the extent that the movement of such persons depends on and is influenced by the status of their original homeland, then it can be characterized as the movement of “ethnic affinity.” For an extended discussion of this kind of migration, see Brubaker, (1991).

3 Greece has admitted substantial numbers of co-ethnics; Poland, Finland and Hungary are allowing immigration and citizenship rights to their co-ethnics in the former Soviet Union. I have not seen reports of Koreans (most of whom were deported to remote parts of Central Asia, no longer speak Korean) migrating to Korea, or of Soviet Bulgarians migrating to Bulgaria. The 1989 census recorded 2 million Germans, 1.45 million Jews, 1.1 million Poles, 440,000 Koreans, census recorded 2 million Germans, 1.45 million Jews, 1.1 million Poles, 440,000 Koreans, 380,000 Bulgarians, 358,000 Greeks, 170,000 Hungarians, 160,000 Romanians (counted as a separate nationality from Moldovians) and 70,000 Finns (Anderson and Silver, 1989:619–622).

4 The concept of most favored nationality was suggested to me by David Laitin’s (1991:143) notion of “most favored lord,” playing on the category of “most favored nation” in international trade.

5 For example, 58% of Jewish men marrying in 1988 married a woman of another nationality; for German men, the figure was 68% (Journal of Soviet Nationalities, 1(2):171, Summer, 1990, p. 171).

6 Although the 1989 census enumerated 1.1 million Poles in the Soviet Union, Polish

room for re-identification with a most favored nationality for purposes of emigration.

One likely consequence of political and economic dislocation, then, is increasing demand for most favored nationality status and swelling numbers of actual and prospective ethnic resettlers. But we will also see increasing migration, and migratory pressure, outside this system of migrations of ethnic affinity. Up to now, there have been only relatively small outflows outside this system. Poland and Hungary have hosted large numbers of Soviet itinerant traders or "business tourists" who take advantage of price and currency differentials to engage in petty cross-border commerce of the sort extensively practiced by Poles in the late 1980s (Fiedler, 1991). But only modest numbers of Soviets have sought to work temporarily in these or other countries; and even fewer have sought permanent residence or political asylum. Networks linking potential post-Soviet migrants to Western European countries are even less developed. This may change if the economic and political crisis worsens in the wake of regime collapse, as it seems likely to do. Even then, though, much of the displacement is likely to be within the former Soviet Union; and it is the “front-line” states of East Central Europe, not the well-buffered countries of Western Europe, that will bear the brunt of whatever outmigration does occur. This means especially Poland, with its long land border with Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Kaliningrad oblast of Russia.

estimates range from 2 to 4 million (Geevor, 1990:11). Similarly, although the census counted 1.45 million Jews, unofficial estimates run up to four or five times as high. There is of course no “correct” figure. The literature on situational ethnicity has amply shown that the salience and activation of ethnic identity is heavily context-dependent. The contexts have changed as radically as they have in the Soviet Union, the fluctuations in ethnic identification should come as no surprise.

7 Beyond these zones of ambiguous nationality, some seek most favored nationality status through outright fraud, or seek marriages of convenience with persons possessing a favored nationality. On the increasing demand in Byelorussia for Jewish spouses, and for documentation of Jewish roots, see “Belorussian Jews Skeptical about Their New Popularity,” The New York Times, (November 7, 2001).

8 As indicated above, Poland and Hungary are potential countries of destination for migrations of ethnic affinity from the former Soviet Union. Here, however, I am concerned with the fact that, as “front-line” states, they are also countries of destination for increasing numbers of persons other than their own co-ethnics. Although reliable statistics are unavailable, it appears that most Soviet (and now post-Soviet) itinerant traders in Poland and Hungary have not been of Polish or Hungarian nationality. For Polish and Hungarian perspectives on migration in the “New Europe,” see the contributions by Korcelli, Szoke, and Töth in this volume.

9 Far more Yugoslavs than Soviets have been applying for asylum the last few years in Western Europe—both before and after fighting broke out in Croatia. In proportion to population, Yugoslavs filed asylum claims in Germany at rates 1.5 times those of their Soviet counterparts in 1991 (calculated from This Week in Germany, January 17, 1992, p. 1).
The Russian Diaspora

Besides intensifying emigration flows, both within and outside the system of migrations of ethnic affinity, the Soviet collapse has a second set of implications for international migration. The emergence of incipient successor states—enjoying varying, and rapidly changing degrees of de jure recognition and de facto independence—has internationalized previously internal migration. It has transformed what was previously defined (in legal, cultural and political terms) as the internal migration of Soviet citizens into what is now defined (prospectively and, in some cases, retrospectively) as international migration. This transformation has touched Russians in particular, of whom some 25 million live in non-Russian (formerly) Soviet republics.10 There is a substantial Russian presence in every corner of the former Soviet Union. In 1989, they made up 18 percent of the total population of the non-Russian republics. Only in Armenia was the Russian share of the population less than 5 percent. It was 22 percent in Ukraine, 30 percent in Estonia, 54 percent in Latvia, and 38 percent in Kazakhstan (Anderson and Silver, 1989:628). These figures concern only persons identifying themselves as ethnic Russians in the 1989 census. Since Ukrainians and Byelorussians, lacking cultural facilities in their own languages, have tended to assimilate to Russians when they leave their home republics, the Russophone and Russified presence in the peripheral republics is even more weighty than these figures suggest.

If Russians are especially concerned by the internationalization of formerly internal migration, and by the associated challenges to their citizenship status, it is not only because they are the largest, and among the most mobile, of Soviet nationalities—the Soviet Union’s “true nomads,” as they have been called (Carrère d’Encausse, 1978:72). It is also because they have the most to lose. Until recently, Russians in the peripheral republics enjoyed distinct privileges and advantages. These included Russian-language schools, newspapers and other cultural facilities and access to desirable jobs throughout the Soviet Union without having to learn the local language. This kind of institutionalized cultural support was unavailable for members of other nationalities living outside their own republics. Russians also enjoyed less tangible advantages such as the security of belonging to the Soviet Union’s dominant nationality.

As the Soviet Union careened toward disintegration in the last few years, however, the legal, cultural, political and psychological position of the Russian diaspora changed in fundamental ways. What was formerly an advantage—identification with the ruling center and mastery of the state-wide “language of international communication”—is now a liability, as Russians are identified with Soviet misrule and oppression, as the incipient successor states promote their own languages. Schooling in the local language has been expanded at the expense of Russian-language schooling. Knowledge of the local language has been proposed as a requirement for employment and citizenship. Relatively few Russians know the local languages: figures range from less than 5 percent in Central Asia to a high of less than 40 percent in Lithuania (Anderson and Silver, 1989:647). Russian-language street signs have been removed, and local storekeepers and officials may pretend not to understand when addressed in Russian. Voting rights, in some cases, have been restricted to long-term residents, excluding recent immigrants, usually Russians. Anti-Russian sentiments have been openly articulated by some nationalist groups. Russians have come to face the prospect of losing their privileges, their jobs, their right to vote or to own property, their sense of security, and in some instances even their right to reside in the territory.

Immigration and Citizenship Issues in the Successor States

The politics of membership and citizenship in Soviet successor states, as in other settings centrally shaped by the claims of politicized ethnicity, is a large subject. It encompasses a wide range of distinct, though ultimately related, struggles over inclusion and exclusion, over identities and loyalties, over the nature and “ownership” of the state, over the proper relation between culture and politics, the proper boundaries between private and public spheres, the proper bearing of cultural heterogeneity on the organization of public life. These struggles take significantly differing forms in the various successor states. No attempt is made here at a comprehensive sketch of this vast territory. The scope of this article is both geographically and substantively limited. It focuses on the Baltics, referring only in passing to other incipient successor states; and it focuses on formal citizenship, neglecting other dimensions of the politics of membership.

There are several reasons for focusing on the Baltic states. The first is the centrality of migration in the Baltics—particularly in Latvia and Estonia—during the decades of Soviet rule. Other Soviet republics, too, experienced heavy immigration, and the Russian immigrant presence has been challenged throughout the former union. But only in Latvia and Estonia, among Union Republics, did massive immigration and rapid ethnographic change occasion fears of “national extinction.” Latvians’ share in the population of Latvia was reduced from 77 percent in 1939 to 52 percent in 1989, Estonians’ share in Estonia from over 90 percent to 61 percent (Misiunas

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10 To these one might add the 8 million Russians living inside the Russian Republic but in non-Russian autonomous regions; however, I will leave them out of account.
and Taagepera, 1983:272; Anderson and Silver, 1989:628). During the same period, the Russian share rose from about one tenth to about one third of the population in both republics. Doubtless the small size of these nationalities (there are fewer than 1.4 million Latvians in Latvia and fewer than a million Estonians in Estonia), together with their highly developed national consciousness, made them particularly sensitive about immigration, and particularly inclined to view it through the prism of potential denationalization. In the other major regions of Russian migrant settlement—Eastern and Southern Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan—national consciousness was much less developed.

Estonia and Latvia also evince a distinctive trajectory of migration patterns and ethnodemographic change. During the 1970s and 1980s, the movement of Russians into non-Russian republics slowed and, in many cases, was reversed. In the 1980s, there was net Russian outmigration from all Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics and from Moldavia. Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania continued to experience net Russian immigration, but in these republics high rates of natural increase on the part of the titular nationality accounted for most of the population growth. Only in Estonia and Latvia did continued Russian immigration—together with the natural increase of the Russian population (which considerably exceeded that of the titular nationalities)—account for the major part of population growth (Anderson and Silver, 1989:640–644). This declining ethnodemographic gave some credibility and resonance to the hyperbolic and irresponsible rhetoric of some intellectuals and politicians—warning of cultural “extinction,” “annihilation,” even “genocide.”

If migration has been a central catalyst and consistent preoccupation of Baltic independence movements, so, too, has citizenship been distinctively central to Baltic public debate during the last three years. Autonomous republic-level citizenships have been discussed, proposed and instituted in other successor states, but nowhere has citizenship been the object of as much sustained discussion and heated controversy as in the Baltics. In particular, only in Latvia and Estonia has there been sustained and controversial debate over the citizenship status of Russian immigrants.

This does not mean that the Russian immigrant position is more precarious here than elsewhere. Although that position is, at this writing, more fraught with tension in the Baltics than in Byelorussia or Ukraine, it is even more insecure in Central Asia. As a result of the gradual nationalization of life in the Central Asian republics, the increasingly overt informal hostility directed against them as unwanted colonists, and generalized insecurity about the future (aggravated by a number of recent outbreaks of serious ethnic violence, none of which, however, has been directed against Russians), Russian outmigration from Central Asia, which already exceeded immigration during the 1980s (Anderson and Silver, 1989:641), appears to have increased sharply in the last few years. Yet there has been no sustained debate over the citizenship status of Russians in Central Asia. The different migration trajectories of the Baltic and Central Asian Russian communities may help explain this. The Baltic states sought to institute autonomous citizenships partly in order to have a legal basis for controlling immigration, in particular the immigration of Russians. Central Asian elites, in the other hand, far from seeking to prevent the entry of Russians, are concerned with preventing their massive and sudden exit. Because of the sharp ethnic division of labor in the region, Russians virtually monopolize a number of crucial technical skills, and their current emigration, which represents only the beginning of a potentially vastly larger exodus, has already caused significant disruptions in some sectors. National radicals who might prefer to encourage Russian emigration despite its economically disruptive consequences are, at this writing, unrepresented in the Central Asian leaderships.

In Transcaucasia, too, Russian outmigration is a long-term trend. There has been substantial Russian emigration from Azerbaijan and Georgia for more than three decades and from Armenia in the 1979–1989 intercensal period (Anderson and Silver, 1989:641). The Russian communities are relatively small; Russians are not centrally involved in the region’s multiple ethnonational conflicts; and all three states have become steadily more homogeneous over the last 30 years (Silver, 1983:373; Anderson and Silver, 1989:630). For these reasons, the citizenship status of Russians has not been a central issue of debate. Citizenship has been most controversial in Georgia, thanks in large part to various restrictive pronouncements by former President Gamsakhurdia and his supporters (Fuller, 1991a, 1991b), but these appear aimed less at the Russians than at Georgia’s other embattled ethnic minorities. A sustained and focused discussion of citizenship has yet to take place.

In Moldavia, Russian and Ukrainian minorities, about equal in size, jointly comprise more than a quarter of the population, while Moldavians account for 64 percent. Yet while these minority populations have grown through immigration (the Russian share rising from 10% in 1959 to 13% in 1989), and while immigration, as a result, together with the citizenship status of immigrants, has been politicized to some degree, still neither immigrations...
New States and Restored States

The fact that the formal citizenship status of Russian immigrants has been most controversial in Estonia and Latvia does not mean that relations between Russians and titular nationalities are more harmonious elsewhere. It means that the broad question of Russians' place in the successor states—more or less controversial in all successor states except Armenia, where scarcely any Russians remain—has assumed a particular form in Estonia and Latvia. I have suggested several reasons for this, including the small size of the Estonian and Latvian nationalities, their steady weakening ethnodemographic position, and their fears of denationalization engendered by continuing Russian immigration.

Yet to be discussed, however, is what may be the most important reason: the sustained period of Baltic independence in the interwar period. In the chaotic years of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, other regions too—including Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Bessarabia (i.e., the territory of what is now post-Soviet Moldova)—enjoyed brief interludes of independence. However, none of these incipient states managed to consolidate its independent statehood. With the exception of Bessarabia, which was absorbed into Romania during the interwar period, all were reconquered by the Red Army (Motyl, 1990:105ff). The Baltic experience differed sharply. Interwar statehood, and subsequent international refusal to recognize their incorporation into the Soviet Union, has conditioned Baltic nationalism in many respects. Here I want to underscore the bearing of interwar independence on the contemporary politics of citizenship, but this will require a short digression.

In established states, the politics of formal citizenship may concern one or both of two questions. First, what rules and policies should govern naturalization; that is, admission to citizenship on the part of persons, typically immigrants or children of immigrants, who are citizens of some foreign state? Second, what rules should govern the continuous and automatic replenishment of the citizenry through the absorptive assignment of citizenship, usually at birth? New states, too, must resolve these questions. But first they must resolve a prior question: how is the initial body of citizens to be constituted? Existing states do not face this question; their citizenship laws govern the continuous recruitment of new citizens into an already constituted body of citizens. The first task facing new states, however, is to constitute an initial body of citizens.

The initial body of citizens is ordinarily defined by new states in territorial terms. This is the case even when the subsequent recruitment of new citizens will be based, as is customary in continental Europe, on descent (jus sanguinis) rather than on territory (jus soli). It is easy to see why. The ascertainment of
citizenship on the basis of descent works fine as a means of reconstituting and replenishing an existing citizenry, but it cannot serve to constitute the citizenry in the first place, for it presupposes an existing body of citizens. If an infinite regress is to be avoided, citizenship can be ascribed \textit{jure sanguinis}\ to children of citizens only if, at some point, there is an independent basis of citizenship besides the principle of descent. That independent basis is usually territorial.

In theory, an initial definition of the citizenry could be territorial but not fully inclusive. For example, the initial body of citizens could be defined as including all persons born in the territory, but excluding immigrants. Or it could be defined as including all persons residing in the territory for a certain minimum length of time, say ten years. Or it could be defined as including only residents knowing the state language. But most new states define the initial body of citizens in territorially inclusive terms, by basing initial citizenship on residence in the territory at the moment of independence, excluding from citizenship only those who are citizens of other states (not including the state from the territory of which the newly independent state has been formed). By constituting the population of its territory as its citizenry, the new state extends its jurisdiction and asserts its authority evenly throughout its territory. Since a territorially inclusive definition of citizenship is the norm for new states, we should not be surprised that the Soviet successor states that have taken up the issue of citizenship have opted for such inclusive definitions and have not sought to exclude Russian immigrants from formal citizenship.

Interwar independence and international nonrecognition of their incorporation into the Soviet Union, however, place the Baltic states in a different position from other Soviet successor states in the matter of citizenship. Baltic nationalists can argue that these states are not, legally speaking, new states and therefore do not need new citizenships. They can argue that statehood and citizenship have continued to exist all along, de jure if not de facto. In this view, they are successor states not to the Soviet Union but to the interwar republics, which have continued to enjoy a virtual, if not an actual, existence. On the strong interpretation of this continuity thesis, the task facing the Baltic states in the matter of citizenship is not to construct an initial body of citizens; the citizenry already exists. It is rather to restore citizenship to its rightful possessors and to confirm the citizenship status of interwar citizens and their descendants, not to create a new citizenry. The citizenry exists; all residents who do not belong to it are foreigners. They are eligible to become citizens through naturalization, but they should not be automatically defined as citizens. On this view, the question of the citizenship status of Russian immigrants is a question of the terms and conditions on which foreigners should be naturalized; it is not a question of how the initial body of citizens should be defined.

On a weaker interpretation of the continuity thesis, interwar citizens and their descendants are recognized as citizens of the restored republics. However, it is not argued that all others are foreigners, eligible for citizenship only through naturalization. Instead, the remaining population is divided into two groups, one granted optional inclusion in the restored citizenry, the other defined as foreigners, eligible for citizenship only through naturalization. Where the dividing line is drawn between these two groups is variable. At the inclusive end of the spectrum, all current permanent residents would fall into the first group; only future migrants would fall into the second. But there are also more restrictive proposals that would limit the first group—possessing the right to join the citizenry—to persons satisfying certain minimum residence and/or language requirements.

Schematically, we can distinguish three models. The first is the new-state model. The task of the new state is to define an initial body of citizens; this is usually done in a territorially inclusive fashion. The second is the restored-state model. The task of the restored state is to confirm the status of an already existing citizenry and to restore citizenship and statehood to real effectiveness. Persons not belonging to the existing citizenry are to be considered foreigners. The third is a compromise model combining features of the first two. The status of an existing citizenry is to be confirmed but the restored citizenry is not viewed as a sufficiently inclusive civic body for the restored state. This is because the state, restored in new conditions, is inevitably a new state in significant respects. Consequently, it requires a new initial definition of citizenship. The restored citizenry will comprise the core of the newly defined citizenry, but other elements of the population will be incorporated as well.

Most Soviet successor states are new states, lacking sustained histories of independent statehood; consequently, the politics of citizenship approximates the new-state model. In the Baltics, however, interwar statehood and nonrecognition of Soviet annexation permit national radicals to propose a restored-state model of citizenship, while others argue that citizenship must be both restored (as the continuity thesis demands) and newly constructed (to conform to democratic norms of citizenship).

\textit{Citizenship Struggles in the Baltic States}

At this point let us look more closely at the citizenship struggles in the Baltic states. The politics of citizenship has taken sharply differing forms in Lithuania on the one hand and Estonia and Latvia on the other. On November 9, 1989, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to adopt an
autonomous, republic-level citizenship law. This occurred some months before Lithuania proclaimed its independence in the spring of 1990. The law represented an inclusive compromise between the restored-state model and the new-state model. In accordance with the continuity thesis, citizens of interwar Lithuania and their descendants were accorded citizenship automatically, as were persons born and residing permanently in Lithuania and not possessing the citizenship of another state. Others residing permanently in Lithuania on the date of enactment of the law were given two years to "freely declare their citizenship." No conditions of residence or language were stipulated; the person opting for citizenship was, however, required to sign a "commitment to the republic to observe the constitution and the laws of the Lithuanian SSR [as it was still called at the time] and respect its state sovereignty and territorial integrity." Persons not assigned citizenship or "declaring" their citizenship according to these provisions could become citizens through naturalization. This required ten years of residence, knowledge of Lithuanian, permanent employment or legal source of livelihood, knowledge of the Lithuanian constitution, and an oath pledging not only to "observe the constitution and the laws of the republic" and to respect its state sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also to respect "its state language, culture, customs, and traditions, and to make [a] contribution to the cause of the flourishing of the democratic Lithuanian state and the protection of its interests."

The two-year period in which permanent residents were able to acquire citizenship by declaration expired November 3, 1991. According to preliminary Interior Ministry figures, 370,000 permanent residents did not acquire citizenship by this date (JPRS-USR-91-050:24). At this writing, however, data on the ethnic nationality of these nondeclaration, now legally defined as foreigners, are not available. So it is not known to what extent Lithuania's Russian and Polish minorities opted for citizenship.

In Estonia, the introduction of an autonomous Estonian citizenship was proposed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party as early as 1988. It was regarded both as a "sign of national existence" and as an instrument of immigration control. Yet as the national movement gathered momentum, there was no move to follow the Lithuanian example and quickly pass citizenship legislation. Ironically, it was ethnic Russians who

13 The text of the law is printed in FBIS-SOV-90-002:43-47.

14 Indrek Toome, secretary of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party, characterized the establishment of Estonian citizenship as a way of asserting republican control over immigration, heretofore governed by "central ministries which widen the production without the knowledge of the local authorities, without consideration for . . . social, demographic, [or] ecological factors" (quoted in FBIS-SOV-88-204:67).

urged the immediate establishment of Estonian citizenship, while Estonian nationalists argued against defining citizenship during the "transition period" to full independence. Indeed the more radical nationalists—represented in the Congress of Estonia, the alternative parliament elected by interwar citizens and their descendants and claiming to be the legitimate representative organ of the Estonian Republic—made the strongest case for delay, arguing that the Supreme Council, as the organ of an illegitimate regime, lacked the competence to decide the matter of citizenship. Deferring to the influence of the Congress, the Supreme Council's parliamentary commission on citizenship, in early 1991, recommended resolving the citizenship issue only after a new state assembly could be chosen jointly by the Congress of Estonia and by the Popular-Front-dominated Supreme Council (Kionka, 1991a:23).

However, after Estonia proclaimed its independence during the August 1991 coup, the Popular Front apparently decided that the Supreme Council should resolve the citizenship issue at once, rather than leave the matter for a new state assembly to decide. The parliamentary commission on citizenship proposed a draft citizenship law on September 9, 1991. The draft, like the Lithuanian law, was a compromise between the restored-state model proposed by national radicals in the Congress of Estonia and the new-state model favored by the Russian community, only slightly more complicated. It recognized as citizens interwar citizens and their descendants. Others were divided into two groups. Those with permanent residence in Estonia as of March 30, 1990 (when Estonia proclaimed the beginning of a transition period to full independence) could opt for citizenship without having to satisfy language or (additional) residence requirements. All others would be eligible for naturalization after ten or, alternatively, twenty years' residence; candidates for naturalization would have to take an oath of loyalty and speak Estonian (Kionka, 1991b:24).

The proposal triggered a storm of protest from national radicals, objecting to the lack of language or residency requirements for permanent residents choosing to opt for Estonian citizenship. The Congress of Estonia accused the Supreme Council of "national treason." Other nationalist groups and organizations joined the chorus of denunciation. Opposition

15 See, for example, the comments of Estonian Supreme Soviet Deputy S. Sovetnikov (JPRS-UPA-91-016:8): "we must adopt as quickly as possible the basic version of the Law on Citizenship, affording equal rights to all who consider Estonia their native land. State procrassination . . . elicits doubts and worry on the part of the non-Estonian population over their future, and creates additional political and interethnic tension in the republic. . . . Prior to restoring the . . . independent Estonian Republic, 600,000 non-Estonians want to know what 'sort' of citizens they are going to be. . . . In order to eliminate interethnic tension . . . , citizenship (and all its ensuing rights and obligations) should be extended to everyone who expresses the desire and possesses a permanent residence permit here."
appears to have remained at an elite level; a Tallinn protest meeting called by the Congress of Estonia against the draft is reported to have been attended by "hundreds" (RFE/RL Daily Report, September 16, 1991)—unimpressive by comparison with the numerous mass demonstrations earlier mobilized by Estonian nationalists. Yet the vigorous opposition of national radical leaders and organizations—arguing that residency and language requirements were necessary to preserve Estonian culture and nationality—was sufficient to torpedo the draft (Kionka, 1991b:24-25).

Under this pressure from national radicals, the Supreme Council edged closer to the pure restored state model. In November, 1991, it resolved in principle to restore the 1938 Estonian law on citizenship (FBIS-SOV-91-216:41). On February 26, 1992, Estonian citizenship was formally restored to interwar citizens and their descendants (FBIS-USR-92-043:114; FBIS-USR-92-041:109-111). Almost all others—the chief exception being spouses of Estonian citizens—were now formally defined as foreigners. They would be eligible to apply for naturalization after two years' residence; and citizenship would be conferred on them—assuming they possessed the requisite knowledge of Estonian—a year after their application. (Certain persons—notably those who registered as applicants for Estonian citizenship with the Congress of Estonia before February 1990—would be exempt from this additional one-year waiting period.) The "two-plus-one" year residence requirement for naturalization, in itself relatively liberal, was given a sharply restrictive twist by the provision that the two years would be counted only after March 30, 1990—the symbolically resonant date on which the Estonian Supreme Soviet proclaimed the continued de jure existence of the Republic of Estonia, declared Soviet rule in Estonia illegal, and declared a transition period toward full independence (Ilves, 1990:23). This meant that applications for naturalization would be accepted only beginning in April 1992, and that citizenship would be granted only beginning in April 1993, effectively excluding all but interwar citizens and their descendants from participation in the central tasks of political reconstruction: the shaping of a new constitution and the election of a new legislature. Estonian Russians have protested this exclusion, and the Russian government has raised concerns on their behalf (FBIS-USR-92-045:116; FBIS-USR-92-046:110). At the same time, national radicals have criticized the naturalization provisions for being too liberal, opening the door to mass naturalization, and thus retroactively legalizing what they viewed as illegal immigration under an occupying regime.

The Latvian debate on citizenship has paralleled the Estonian in many respects. In Latvia, too, there were calls for an autonomous republic-level citizenship, in conjunction with calls for controls on immigration, as early as 1988. At least one draft citizenship law had been published by July 1989 (JPRS-UPA-89-054:10). Yet as the national movement gained strength, Latvian nationalists, like their Estonian counterparts, did not press for quick legislation on citizenship. As in Estonia, it was the minority communities who demanded an immediate settlement of the citizenship issue (JPRS-UPA-91-025:9), while national radicals argued—only in less temperate terms—that the matter of citizenship could not legitimately be decided by the Supreme Council, which they characterized as a "body of the occupying regime." In March 1991, the Popular Front decided to postpone addressing citizenship until after the de facto restoration of independence (JPRS-UPA-91-025:9).

In the aftermath of the abortive coup of August 1991 and the Latvian proclamation of independence, the Supreme Council—dominated by Popular Front deputies but considerably less radical, in national matters, than the Front itself (Bungs, 1991b)—decided to move ahead on the citizenship issue. The issue has been quite confused, since there are in fact three separate questions: 1) who should have, or be eligible for, citizenship in the restored republic, and on what terms; 2) what body is competent to decide who should have citizenship; and 3) if questions of citizenship (and other fundamental matters) must be decided by a newly elected Sejm (legislative assembly) or by popular referendum, then who should have the right to vote to elect the Sejm or to vote in a referendum. The last question brings out the problems involved in trying to settle the contested question of citizenship through a procedure (electing a parliament or voting in a referendum) that itself presupposes citizenship.

In discussions on these questions, two positions have been clearly staked out. The Citizens' Congress has adopted a pure restored-state position. Citizenship should be reserved solely for interwar citizens and their descendants. Only a newly elected Sejm can legitimately regulate the matter of citizenship, and only interwar citizens and their descendants should be able to take part in elections for a new Sejm. At the other end of the spectrum, the Equal Rights group in the Supreme Council has adopted, in effect, the new-state model, arguing for a definition of citizenship that would include all residents. Caught between the increasingly inflammatory rhetoric of both sides in this debate—both have called, among other things, for civil disobedience—the Popular Front and Supreme Council have gravitated...
toward the restored-state position, although with much internal disagreement.

On October 15, 1991, the Supreme Council adopted a citizenship resolution—not itself a citizenship law, but a resolution setting forth the principles that citizenship law should follow. The resolution adopted a clear restored-state position, beginning by asserting that “the community of citizens of the Republic of Latvia . . . continues to exist.” This community of citizens is sharply distinguished from the “great number of USSR citizens” who took up residence in Latvia “as a result of a protracted annexation.” The citizenship resolution is framed “with a view to eliminating the consequences of the occupation and annexation of Latvia by the USSR.” It proposes strict naturalization requirements for those who are not members of the existing community of citizens: at least sixteen years of residence, renunciation of previous citizenship, mastery of spoken Latvian, a civic oath, and knowledge of the Latvian constitution (FBIS-USR-91-047:14–15). Yet despite the stringency of these requirements, national radicals in the Citizens’ Congress and the National Independence Movement criticized the resolution, arguing that the current Supreme Council is not a legitimate organ of the existing Latvian citizenry and that it therefore lacks the competence to regulate matters of citizenship (FBIS-SOV-91-213:45; Bungs, 1991a). The Citizens’ Congress declared further that granting citizenship to persons with more than sixteen years of residence “legalizes the presence in Latvia of foreign citizens who came as colonists” (JPRS-USR-91-050:15).

Comparative Observations

What accounts for the differing forms assumed by the politics of citizenship in the Baltic states? Why, in particular, was the question of formal citizenship resolved early, in a relatively inclusive fashion, and without great controversy in Lithuania? A key factor is Lithuanians’ comparative ethnodemographic security in their republic. Ethnic Lithuanians’ share in the population of their republic remained roughly constant at about 80 percent from the interwar period through 1989. Massive Russian immigration did not occur; indeed Russians comprise only about half of Lithuania’s minority population, with indigenous Poles comprising the other large group. The main reason for Lithuania’s distinctive ethnodemographic trajectory during the Soviet period lay in its relative underdevelopment. At the time of Soviet annexation, Lithuania had a much less developed industrial infrastructure and a less educated, skilled and urbanized labor force. As a result, it was less attractive for Soviet investment. Moreover, when centrally directed investment did occur, ethnic Lithuanian rural labor reserves could be tapped; hence it was not necessary to import Russian workers on a large scale (Misiunas and Taagepera, 1983:186).18

The lack of heavy Russian immigration meant that the Russians who were living in Lithuania were less likely to be recent immigrants than Russians in Estonia and Latvia, and there is some evidence that Russians in Lithuania were more assimilated to the titular nationality than their counterparts in Estonia and Latvia (Anderson and Silver, 1983:647). Because demographic denationalization was not a threat, ethnodemographic concerns were not central in the national movement. The national movement in Lithuania sought to restore the Lithuanian state, not to save the Lithuanian nation—for the latter was not perceived as endangered in the way that it was in Estonia and Latvia. This was reflected in the politics of citizenship. In Lithuania there was no great tension between the restored-state model and the new-state model. The two were simply combined. Citizenship would be granted (as the restored-state model required) to interwar citizens and their descendants, but it would also be granted (as the new-state-model required) to current permanent residents who chose to opt for it. There was no opposition to this, in part because there was no fertile ethnodemographic terrain for national radical opposition. Granting citizenship automatically to permanent residents could scarcely be construed as a threat to Lithuanian nationhood.

The relative timing of citizenship legislation is a further factor. The question of formal citizenship was resolved early in Lithuania. Nationalists did not urge, as they did in Estonia and Latvia, that action on citizenship be postponed. The early creation of an autonomous, republic-level citizenship was a means of strengthening the national movement. What mattered, in Lithuania in 1989, was not the content of citizenship law but the very fact of instituting an autonomous citizenship. To institute Lithuanian citizenship, in advance of a formal proclamation of independence and well in advance of de facto independence, was to raise a highly visible symbolic claim to independent statehood. Citizenship here functioned as an anticipatory emblem of sovereignty. The symbolic dimension of citizenship was more important here than the practical function of dividing members from nonmembers. Moreover, even if national radicals had favored, at this juncture, a more restrictive definition of Lithuanian citizenship, the timing

18 The relative weakness of Russian immigration to Lithuania undermines the argument that Russian immigration to the Baltics was primarily a deliberate instrument of coloization and denationalization. Even if denationalization were viewed as a welcome consequence of massive Russian immigration to Baltics, it can hardly have been the chief determinant of such migration, for Lithuania largely escaped such migration, and there is no reason to suspect the regime of harboring more tender feelings for Lithuanian than for Latvian or Estonian nationhood.
would have worked against a restrictive definition. At this phase in the national movement, it was important—especially with a symbolically central institution like citizenship—to avoid highly visible national exclusiveness. Two years later, when independence had been secured, it would have been much easier to take a restrictive position.

The postwar ethnodemographic trajectories of Estonia and Latvia differ sharply from that of Lithuania. Estonians, we have seen, were reduced from 90 percent of population in 1939 to 61 percent in 1989, Latvians from 77 percent to 52 percent—very near the symbolically salient 50 percent threshold. Moreover, the declining trend continued in the 1980s. Immigration slowed, but even with no net immigration, the Estonian and Latvian share of population would continue to fall because the Russian population has a higher rate of natural increase than the titular nationalities in both republics. These demographic trajectories engendered fears of “minoritization” and gave some plausibility to the hypernationalist rhetoric of “cultural extinction.” Even if, as I have suggested, the nationalist thesis of deliberate denationalization through state-sponsored immigration cannot account for the very different postwar experience of Lithuania, it nonetheless is plausible and resonant enough, in Estonia and Latvia, to serve as a potent nationalist rallying-cry.

If the politics of citizenship has been especially divisive, and national radicals’ insistence on the restored-state model has been especially uncompromising, in Latvia, this may reflect its particularly dramatic ethnodemographic decline. By 1989, Latvians were a bare majority in the republic as a whole, and a minority in six of the seven largest cities. They comprised only 35.5 percent of the population of Riga, which is not only the capital, but by far the largest city, and they comprised a mere 13 percent of the population of Daugavpils, the second largest city (Dreifelds, 1990:54–55). In Latvian cities, the language of work and of public encounters with strangers was most often Russian. Because of this precarious ethnodemographic and ethnolinguistic situation, national radicals’ equation of Russian immigration with “minoritization” and denationalization had particular resonance and plausibility in Latvia.

CONCLUSION

At this writing, it appears as though a substantial fraction of the Russian immigrant population in Estonia, and an even larger fraction in Latvia, will not—at least initially—be granted automatic citizenship. This does not mean those who choose to remain in these states will not eventually become citizens. If earlier instances of state-creation and political reconfiguration are any guide, citizenship issues are likely to take some time to sort out. Successor states inevitably face complex problems in defining their citizens. Interwar Latvia, for example, required nine years and three laws to delimit its citizenry (Flournoy and Hudson, 1929:405–409). Initially restrictive definitions of the citizenry may be modified subsequently. Alternatively, bilateral agreements with Russia might provide Estonian and Latvian Russians access to citizenship on terms more favorable than those contained in the general citizenship law. Even if large numbers of Russians remain outside the community of formal citizens, they might, as permanent residents, enjoy the same civil, social and economic rights as citizens. Nonetheless, the restrictive politics of citizenship in Estonia and Latvia does raise troubling questions about the tension between nationalism and democracy.

Some years ago, Michael Teitelbaum wrote an article on American immigration and refugee policy entitled “Right vs. Right” (Teitelbaum, 1980). The same title could be applied to the present article. Both sides—disregarding the extreme national radicals, with their irresponsible rhetoric of “cultural genocide” and the extreme internationalists, with their irresponsible rhetoric of “apartheid” and “fascism”—have strong moral and political claims. The case against automatic citizenship for all permanent residents might be put as follows:

“Our country was illegally and unjustly annexed fifty years ago and has been illegally and unjustly occupied ever since. Individual rights of our citizens, as well as our collective national rights, were massively violated. Hundreds of thousands of our citizens were unjustly deported; as many as half may have died (cf. Misunus and Taagepera, 1983:70ff., 96ff). The social substance of our nationhood has been steadily eroded. Even if the regime did not set out deliberately to destroy our nationhood, it pursued its own strategic and economic ends in complete disregard of the wishes of the people of our ostensibly sovereign national republic. It imported a huge, culturally alien labor force to construct and operate huge, centrally directed industrial complexes. We had no say in planning or running these projects, for they were integrated into the all-union economy, not the republican economy. Nor did we benefit from them. Instead, we were harmed by the ecological damage they caused and by the gradual reduction of our urban citizens to minority status in their own cities. The cities became alien cultural environments. Russian displaced our own language as the medium of impersonal public communication. Russian was expanded at the expense of native language instruction in our schools. We were expected to, and did, learn Russian; the immigrants were not expected to, and did not, learn our language.
"Our experience with postwar immigration differs completely from that of Western European labor-importing countries. They actively sought out and recruited migrant workers to fill positions they could not or would not fill themselves. They benefited from the economic contributions made by the migrant workers. We did not invite anyone, nor have we benefited from immigrants’ presence. An implicit social contract requires those who recruited and benefited from immigrant workers to ratify the membership status of the latter. No such implicit contract binds us. The immigrants are unwanted colonists, illegally settled here in violation of international law, which forbids occupying regimes from deliberately altering the ethnic composition of occupied territories. In order to recover our statehood and safeguard our nationhood, we need to be assured of a minimal integration of immigrants into our national life and of a minimal commitment on their part to our national statehood. It is therefore not unreasonable to require residence on our territory and knowledge of our language of those who seek citizenship in our republic."

But the case for the automatic civic incorporation of all permanent residents has its own force. The case might be put by ethnic Russians as follows:

“We are not occupiers; we are not colonists; most of us have never been agents of the Soviet regime. We are ordinary working men and women like yourselves. We are not transients; we have roots here. Many of us were born here and have never lived anywhere else. It is true that many of us were cut off from you, working with other Russians in big all-union enterprises, living with other Russians, socializing with other Russians. This was not our fault; it was the way the system was designed. Even so, our connections with you have been growing. Many of us have married Estonians and Latvians; more will do so in the future. Children of mixed marriages have tended to identify with your nationality (cf. FBIS-USR-91-042:10). We are not Russians in Estonia, Russians in Latvia; we are Russians of Estonia, Russians of Latvia. Our future is here, not in Russia. We have made

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10 According to Juris Dreifelds (1990:68), fully 56% of Latvia’s Russians were born in Latvia, while 43% of Estonia’s Russians were born in Estonia (FBIS-USR-91-049:15).

11 In 1988, 41% of all marriages involving Russians in Estonia, and 54% of all marriages involving Russians in Latvia, were mixed marriages (Journal of Soviet Nationalities, 12(2):163, Summer 1990). What these statistics do not show, unfortunately, is the breakdown by nationality of the non-Russian spouses.

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