

Ex-nomenklatura and Ex-dissidents in the Post-communist Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland

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The article examines the post-communist Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish parliamentary elites and their relations with the Soviet regime. Two dimensions of these relations are highlighted: retrospectively, negative political experience in the former political regime (membership in the Communist Party and the nomenklatura) and positive credentials of being involved in the dissident movement. The study is guided by hypotheses underlying revolutionary nature of post-communist transition and stressing achievements of the electoral politics, market reforms and liberal mass media. Research shows different shares of ex-communist activists and ex-dissidents, as well as their asynchronous changes in the post-communist parliamentary elites. Variations are related to different meta-histories of the nomenklaturas, the communist parties and dissident movement in the country cases and recent experiences of democratization.

Keywords: *post-communism, parliamentary elites, ex-communists, ex-dissidents, party affiliation.*

Raktažodžiai: pokomunistiniai parlamentai, parlamentinis elitas, ekskomunistai, eksdisidentai.

Introduction

Democratization of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland began in 1989-1990, when their parliaments were elected in a semi-free fashion, rather than designated by the dominant communist party. However, the ex-communist dignitaries were still highly visible on the political stage. Not until the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005, did Polish communists begin to lose their grip over the country's political life. In Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas (the last First Secretary of the Communist Party turned into the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party) was the leading figure in political life between 1990 and 2006. In 1990, he served as the first deputy prime minister of the newly restored independent Lithuania, and then he became the first nation-wide democratically elected President, between 1992 and 1997. From the summer of 2000 till the late spring of 2006 he was the Prime Minister, successfully managing various coalition governments). Similarly in Estonia, Arnold Ruutel, the last Chairman of the Supreme

Soviet of the Estonian SSR (serving as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet since 1983), became the first Chairman of the post-communist Estonian parliament in 1990. In the autumn of 2001 he was elected President of the country, a position held until the late 2006. The Latvian political scene does not so vividly display the ex-communist dignitaries, yet the ex-communist and *ex-nomenklatura* people are among those counted as the most influential personalities in the country.

Epitomized in such a spectacular way, the top of the political iceberg might cover revealing and pertinent stories, related to specificities of post-communist democratic consolidation. Our aim is to examine how (or if) the political experience in the Soviet regime shapes the body of the post-communist parliamentary elite. Though the role of the past is by its very nature a transitional phenomenon [3, p. 370] the (recent) past might be successfully employed in the public discourse and political debates shaping electoral outcomes [8, p. 72]. Moral collective identities and organizational networks inherited (or not) from the past might have considerable influence on the emerging political party structures and actions [2; 6]. On the individual level, the personal experiences determine or at least dramatically shape qualifications, values and ambitions of those aspiring to and winning the representative political positions.

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This article examines the post-communist Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish parliamentary elites and their relations to the Soviet regime. In this respect, two dimensions of elite are important; first, its retrospectively *negative* political experience in the former political regime (membership of the Communist Party and the *nomenklatura*), second, its retrospectively *positive* credentials of being involved in the dissident movement. In the post-communist transformation research, the issue of alternative elites, prepared to replace the communist elite, was an important explanatory factor to interpret the speed and success of the change [11]. However, not much has been done to move from this crystal clear conceptualization to its empirical verification.

The first dimension – the reproduction of the *nomenklatura* and members of the Communist Party in the post-communist democracies – has attracted rather voluminous scholarly attention [1; 4; 7; 9; 10; 14; 15; 17-19]. Yet the second dimension – the destinies and the political contributions to the emerging democratic regimes of the ex-dissidents remained feebly perceived. Instead, and rightly so, the emphasis was put on collective actors, i.e. the path-breaking role of Solidarity movement in Poland, and the national awakening movements turned into anti-communist umbrella organizations which soared in the Baltic countries in 1988-1990 [11; 12; 15; 16].

The post-communist reality in the Baltic states was such that the pool of eligible study subjects with the *negative* legacies was very large (the *nomenklatura* lists were long and carefully sustained till the late 1990), while the pool of potential leaders with the *positive*, dissident, legacies, was small (compared to the Central European cases, the dissident movement in the Soviet *Pribaltika* was sparse). In Poland the Solidarity movement was the best-structured dissident organization in the entire communist history. Likewise, it was competing with a very carefully thought-out crafted *nomenklatura* [1; 13].

This study deals with complex empirical data [5]¹. Paradoxically, official statistics on the first, *negative* inheritance (*nomenklatura* and CP membership) from the Soviet regime are rather readily available. Most of them, however, are personal-name-blind, and are suppressed, as a rule, by the applicants

¹ The database of the study stems from the research project *Eurelite* (University of Jena, Germany), <http://www.eurelite.uni-jena.de/eurelite>. The Latvian and the Polish data were kindly provided by the *Eurelite* team researchers, respectively, Mindaugas Kuklys and Jacek Wasilewski. The Lithuanian and Estonian databases have been prepared by the author herself with the help of Juri Ruus, William Crowther and Gintaras Sumskas.

to the post-communist political positions. Meanwhile, there are no reasonable statistics concerning people from the second category with *positive* inheritance (dissident movement) from the Soviet regime. Yet, political candidates gladly display and highlight their former engagement in the anti-communist actions. This methodological difficulty is (partially) remedied by a qualitative examination of the database (country expert knowledge)².

The study³ is led by hypotheses from the research on post-communist transition, underlying revolutionary nature of the changes and highlighting its democratic consolidation. It aims (1) to provide an empirical test of changes in the composition of the parliamentary elites with regard to persistence, reproduction and inclusion of previously known pro-communist activists, former dissidents, and previously politically uninvolved people, and (2) to compare four country cases relating their specificities of the parliamentary elites to diverging destinies of their ex-communists

² In the Polish case over 4 electoral terms under consideration (1991-2001) there are 32 ex-communists who reported being involved in the dissident activities too. The number of such dual-affiliations with the previous regime among the Polish post-communist parliamentarians is decreasing: in 1991 there were 13 cases, in 1993 – 9, in 8 – 8 and in 2001 – 2. In the statistics below these overlapping cases are treated as the ex-communists considering the communist affiliation more important and relevant for the personal political destiny than his/ her alleged involvement into dissident activities, which in several cases was only self-reported and not acknowledged as such by the Polish experts. (Another solution would be to exclude these cases, what would blur analysis not providing for 100 per cent statistics). Interestingly, in the Latvian case there were several ex-communists reported that they have been involved in the anti-communist activities but in very remote way which is to be qualified as details of their electoral campaign (these people underlined in their biographies that they are descendent from the deported families, that their close relatives are known Latvian resistance movement activists, émigrés, etc.). In the statistics below these people are treated as ex-communists (such were 3 cases in 1990, 2 cases in 1993, 3 cases in 1998 and none in 2002). In the Estonian and Lithuanian cases there was no single overlapping case.

³ The study deals with four national (lower) houses of representatives. The data base covers 5 electoral terms in the case of three Baltic states and in the Polish case it covers 4 terms (1991, 1993, 1997 and 2001, the actual Polish parliament *Sejm*, elected in autumn 2005 is not included). All studied Polish and Lithuanian parliaments invariably have respectively 460 and 141 deputies. The Latvian *Saeima*, elected in 1990 had 200 MPs, and since 1993 it has 100. The Estonian *Riigikogu*, elected in 1990 had 105 MPs, and since 1992 it has 101. For a short period in 1990 in Estonia there was a parallel “parliament”, overtly oppositional, however, the study disregards it since it did not legislate.

and ex-dissidents. The study expects that over the years of the democratic process, the shares of *ex-nomenklatura* and ex-dissidents in the parliamentary elites should steadily decrease because of the influx of people uninvolved in the political life in the Soviet regime. From the point of view of electoral politics and voting, the rate of disappearance of *ex-nomenklatura* from the post-communist parliamentary elite should be higher than that of the dissidents, because of respectively *negative* and *positive* connotations attached to these experiences in the post-communist public discourse. From the point of view of party organizations and party recruitment, there could be significant party differences in terms of acceptance of former communists and members of the *nomenklatura* and anti-Soviet dissidents. Parties organizationally related to the Communist Party should retain/recruit more ex-communists than other political parties, organizationally un-related to the CP. Parties stemming from the anti-communist nationalist movements would retain/recruit more ex-dissidents.

Country level analysis of the electoral success of ex-communists, ex-dissidents and previously politically uninvolved people in the Baltic and Polish parliaments

The issue of the first post-communist parliaments in the four countries under investigation deserves some comments. In the three Baltic States, the point of post-communist departure is clear, i.e. elections in the spring of 1990, which did not have any prearranged scheme of distribution of seats by the parties and candidates. As for Poland, the path-breaking Contracted *Sejm* was elected in June 1989; however it was produced by the plainly controlled election agreement that (only) one-third of the seats could be freely contested. Therefore, the point of parliamentary departure from the communist rule in Poland should be set to the first entirely free elections in 1991. Yet, the 1991 *Sejm* in Poland was short lived, since no single party received more than 13 per cent of the total vote. Only in 1993 did Poland democratically elect the first parliament to serve a full term. In this respect the Polish post-communist parliamentary dynamics resemble the pattern observed in three Baltic States with their 1990 elected parliaments performing founding functions of the Constituent assemblies and dissolving themselves. These first post-communist parliaments are suitable to be studied along the lines of the presence of previous pro-communist activists, ex-dissidents and politically uninvolved people (see Table 1). This is the case, because these parliaments largely predetermined the

future rates of parliamentary re-election of the ex-dissidents and ex-communists, by providing them (or not) with parliamentary positions, as well as by setting political and discursive practices and by enacting special laws and regulations in this respect.

Table 1: First parliaments: presence of previously politically un-involved people vs. pro-communist and anti-communist activists in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland

| Country | Not politically involved | | Involved in communist politics | | Involved in dissident activity | | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| Lithuania 1990-1992 | 70 | 52.6 | 55 | 41.4 | 8 | 6 | 133 |
| Latvia 1990-1993 | 123 | 61.2 | 75 | 37.3 | 3 | 1.5 | 201 |
| Estonia 1990-1992 | 71 | 67.6 | 24 | 22.9 | 10 | 9.5 | 105 |
| Poland 1991-1993 | 182 | 39.6 | 114 | 24.8 | 164 | 35.7 | 460 |

Poland is a case apart, with its high share of ex-dissidents in the *Sejm* of 1991 (more than one in three), which is remarkably higher than the share of ex-communist activists (hardly one in four). Poland also stands out with its relatively small proportion of MPs who were politically uninvolved in the previous regime (39.6 per cent). Post-communist Estonia started with the parliament, most resembling a *tabula rasa* and was the country most “purified from the past” at the outset of the transition. Two thirds of its MPs were not politically involved (neither negatively nor positively) in the Soviet period. The frequency of the pro-Soviet regime MP involvement was twice as high as the relatively high frequency (one in ten) of anti-Soviet regime involvement. In 1990 only a half of the Lithuanian MPs were politically un-tainted. Former communist activists accounted for 41.4 per cent of the MPs, and former dissidents composed 6 per cent. Among the Baltic countries, the Latvian case is in-between. Its previously uninvolved MPs are more numerous (61.2 per cent) than in the Lithuanian case. However, the number of pro-Soviet activists is similar to the Lithuanian case. The Latvian case stands out with its notably low rate of the former dissidents’ presence in the first parliament.

In the subsequent fully democratic elections, held in 1992-1994 (see Table 2), only the Lithuanian parliament experienced a decrease in the number

Table 2: First fully democratically elected parliaments, presence of politically uninvolved, pro-regime and anti-regime involved people among the MPs

| Country | Not politically involved | | Involved in communist politics | | Involved in dissident activity | | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| Lithuania 1992-1996 | 60 | 42.6 | 73 | 51.8 | 8 | 5.7 | 141 |
| Latvia 1993-1996 | 62 | 62 | 32 | 32 | 6 | 6 | 100 |
| Estonia 1992-1996 | 71 | 70.3 | 21 | 20.8 | 9 | 8.9 | 101 |
| Poland 1993-1997 | 181 | 39.3 | 213 | 46.3 | 66 | 14.3 | 460 |

of previously politically un-involved people (from 52.6 to 42.6 per cent). The share of the communist

activists increased to 51.8 per cent and the number of ex-dissidents remained stable (5.7 per cent). Thus, more politically experienced former communists replaced less politically experienced amateurs from the national movement *Sajudis*. Similarly, in the 1993 elections the counter-revolution occurred in Poland, bringing electoral success to politicians who were formerly involved in the communist regime. However, in Poland the share of previously politically uninvolved people remained rather low and the share of ex-dissidents dramatically decreased (even though it remained rather high compared to the Baltic countries). Contrary to the Lithuanian and Polish communist “counter-revolutions”, the Estonian and the Latvian parliaments remained stable in terms of their openness to previously politically inexperienced people. However, a rather significant shift occurred in Latvia, where more former dissidents in 1993 were attracted to the *Saiema*, and in this way Latvia continued its belated anti-communist revolution.

Table 3: Third and later post-communist parliaments, presence of politically un-involved, pro-regime and anti-regime involved people among the MPs

| Year | Country | Not politically involved | | Involved in communist politics | | Involved in dissident activity | | Total |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| 1995/1997 | Lithuania | 100 | 73 | 28 | 20.4 | 9 | 6.6 | 141 |
| | Latvia | 69 | 69 | 27 | 27 | 4 | 4 | 100 |
| | Estonia | 81 | 80.2 | 17 | 16.8 | 3 | 3.0 | 101 |
| | Poland | 191 | 41.5 | 152 | 33.0 | 117 | 25.4 | 460 |
| 1998/2001 | Lithuania | 107 | 75.9 | 31 | 22.0 | 3 | 2.1 | 141 |
| | Latvia | 83 | 83 | 16 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| | Estonia | 62 | 61.4 | 39 | 38.6 | 0 | 0 | 101 |
| | Poland | 195 | 42.4 | 209 | 45.4 | 56 | 12.2 | 460 |
| 2002/2004 | Lithuania | 110 | 78 | 27 | 19.1 | 4 | 2.8 | 141 |
| | Latvia | 91 | 91 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 100 |
| | Estonia | 58 | 57.4 | 40 | 39.6 | 3 | 3.0 | 101 |

In the elections in 1997 and 2001 Poland preserved its specificity, with previous political experience being fairly visible among its post-communists parliamentarians, of whom only a minority was not politically related to the previous regime. Some sort of pendulum effect occurred in terms of the relative success of ex-communists vs. ex-dissidents in Poland. In 1997 dissidents regained ground and counted for 25.4 per cent of MPs (ex-communists held 33 per cent). In 2001 ex-dissidents in the *Sejm* were halved, to 12.2 per cent, but ex-communists reached their ever-highest proportion in the post-communist Polish

parliament, 45.4 per cent. Among the four countries under comparison, since the 1997 elections Poland continued displaying the highest rate of re-election of the ex-communists. The Polish pattern of creeping “re-communization” was closely followed in the Estonian parliament, where the share of ex-communists increased to 38.6 per cent in 1999 and to 39.6 per cent in 2003. In parallel, the number of politically “clean” Estonian MPs started to diminish (respectively, to 61.4 and 57.4 per cent) and former Estonian dissidents lost their path-breaking role. Contrary to the Polish case, a dissident in the Estonian parliament

became more akin to a “grain of salt on a plate”, rather than any structuring element.

Since the elections of 1995 and 1996, in Lithuania and Latvia the number of MPs who were politically uninvolved in the communist times began to grow (respectively, from 42.6 per cent to 78 per cent and from 60 to 91 per cent). In Lithuania this change operated at the expense of the former communists, and the share of former dissidents remained significant (by the Baltic standards). In the Latvian parliament, the number of MPs politically inexperienced in the communist regime grew to an even higher degree, while the number of former communists and ex-dissidents in the Latvian parliament decreased simultaneously to practically insignificant shares.

Summing up, the hypothesized decrease in people with some (either positive or negative) experience in the communist regime did not occur in a linear way in any of the parliamentary elites of the examined countries. The most revolutionary start was in Estonia, with high initial recruitment of the former dissidents (around 10 per cent in two first parliaments), and initially politically unengaged MPs into the parliamentary elite. Yet subsequent democratic elections admitted more and more former communist activists into the ranks of MPs (up to 40 per cent in the 2003-2007 *Rigiikogu*), instead of the former dissidents.

Lithuania presents another pattern. The number of previously politically untainted people in the post-communist parliament increased throughout all the elections (from 40 to 80 per cent). The ex-communists after their temporal upsurge in 1992 underwent a downward slope, and the ex-dissidents preserved their significant place in the parliament, although their numbers remained small. Thus Lithuanian trajectory, although in a non-linear manner (with initial accommodation of ex-communists) is the closest to the hypothesized incremental decrease in the number of ex-communist activists and ex-dissidents in the post-communist parliament.

Latvia partially followed the Lithuanian track, as its number of politically unaffected MPs grew by a large degree. However, Latvian parliaments started with a rather high share of the ex-communists, whose number dramatically decreased (from 40 to 8 per cent) while the ex-dissidents did not enjoy any electoral success and started to be visible in the Latvian parliament only somewhat belatedly.

In Poland, the weight of the communist past has the strongest impact on the composition of the post-communist parliaments. Poland, in contrast to the Baltic countries, had two big “pools of eligible

politicians” from the communist regime (ex-communist activists and ex-dissidents). The Polish post-communist trajectory of parliamentary change went (and still goes) through sequencing of revolution vs. counter-revolution (changing shares of ex-dissidents and ex-communists). Unlike the Lithuanian case, where such a pendulum operated only initially, the recruitment of the Polish post-communist parliamentary elites continues to be greatly affected by the communist political experiences and divides, and the number of previously politically unaffected MPs remains low fifteen and more years after the collapse of communism.

Aggregate level analysis of the ex-communists, ex-dissidents and previously politically untainted people MPs in the Baltic and Polish parliaments

Aggregate level analysis of the distribution of politically uninvolved people vs. ex-communist activists and ex-dissidents over five electoral terms in the case of three Baltic States and four terms in Poland allows for a more robust typology. (Only the circulation of the “newcomer” MPs, has been taken into account, with re-elected MPs excluded from the statistics). It is possible to distinguish the Baltic pattern and to contrast it with the Polish pattern.

Two thirds of the Baltic MPs throughout 1990-2004 have had no previous political experience in the communist period vs. every 20 to 25 per cent experienced in communist activities, with a miscellaneous 3-6 per cent holding the ex-dissident record (see Table 1). In the Polish pattern, less than a half of the MPs have been previously politically unaffected, less than a third are former communist activists, compared with one in five having a dissident background. Yet, Poland is similar to the Baltic countries in its level of reproduction of ex-communists over elections till 2005 (around 30 per cent). However, Poland sharply diverges from the Baltic countries, as it has

Table 4: Political activity during non-democratic regime of the MPs (all electoral terms 1990-2004, only “newcomers”)

| Country | Not politically involved | | Involved in communist politics | | Involved in dissident activity | | Total |
|-----------|--------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| Lithuania | 314 | 66.1 | 143 | 30.1 | 18 | 3.8 | 475 |
| Latvia | 315 | 73.3 | 104 | 24.2 | 11 | 2.6 | 430 |
| Estonia | 238 | 67.4 | 95 | 26.9 | 20 | 5.7 | 353 |
| Poland | 614 | 48.6 | 382 | 30.2 | 268 | 21.2 | 1264 |

five-to-ten times more ex-dissidents among the parliamentarians and significantly lower rates of election of people without any political experience under communism. Variations among the three Baltic cases are also worth mentioning: Estonia displays a bias towards ex-dissidents, and Lithuania – towards the ex-communists, while Latvia is the most “neutral” case, and scores highest with previously politically unaffected MPs.

Rates of re-election of previously politically uninvolved people vs. people with ex-communist and ex-dissident background in the post-communist parliamentary elites

Comparison of the rate of re-election of politically uninvolved people vs. people with ex-communist and ex-dissident background in the post-communist parliamentary elites of the four countries provides further relevant insights.

First of all, overall rates of re-election are remarkably low for all three categories in all four countries (see Table 5). In the Baltic countries five parliamentary elections are under consideration,

thus, in theory, each MP from the first parliament could have run in 4 subsequent elections, with the maximum index of re-elections is 5. Failure to be re-elected (or to run) and emergence of newcomer candidates in the next elections, contributed to the decrease of the index of re-election. Actually, after the last elections covered in the study, it stands at 1.83 in Lithuania (2004), 1.86 in Latvia (2002) and 1.56 in Estonia (2003). A sufficiently high total number of politically uninvolved people vs. ex-communist activists allows some generalizations. Invariably, across the three Baltic States ex-communists enjoy higher rates of re-election than people who are without any political experience from the non-democratic regime: in Lithuania the incidence of re-election of ex-communists is 2.19 compared to 1.7 of the uninvolved people; in Latvia respective numbers are 2.5 compared to 1.78 and in Estonia – 1.63 and 1.53. It appears that in Latvia the ex-communists enjoy the greatest electoral advantage, and in Lithuania the ex-communists are the most successful in absolute numbers.

The rate of re-election of the Baltic ex-dissidents is somewhat higher, but their absolute number is low,

Table 5: Re-election of the MPs by their previous political background in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland

| Country and year | Political activity during non-democratic regime | Number of elections where MP stood successfully | | | | | Re-election rate* |
|------------------|---|---|----|----|----|---|-------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Lithuania 2004 | Not politically involved | 59 | 32 | 12 | 7 | 0 | 1.70 |
| | Involved in communist politics | 11 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2.19 |
| | Involved in dissident activity | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3.00 |
| | Total | 70 | 40 | 17 | 13 | 1 | 1.83 |
| Latvia 2002 | Not politically involved | 51 | 25 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1.78 |
| | Involved in communist politics | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2.50 |
| | Involved in dissident activity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4.00 |
| | Total | 53 | 26 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 1.86 |
| Estonia 2003 | Not politically involved | 40 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1.53 |
| | Involved in communist politics | 26 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1.63 |
| | Involved in dissident activity | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.33 |
| | Total | 68 | 17 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 1.56 |
| Poland 2001 | Not politically involved | 142 | 27 | 20 | 6 | - | 1.44 |
| | Involved in communist politics | 88 | 49 | 42 | 30 | - | 2.07 |
| | Involved in dissident activity | 25 | 15 | 14 | 2 | - | 1.88 |
| | Total | 255 | 91 | 76 | 38 | - | 1.78 |

* Maximum possible value for the rate of re-election in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is 5 (5 elections under study) and for Poland – 4 (4 elections under study).

what prevents us from broader generalizations. In Lithuania since elections in 1996, no newcomer ex-dissidents have ever entered the parliament. In Latvia the five-time re-elected MPs are those who were not involved in the politics before the breakdown of communism. Similarly to Lithuania, Latvian dissidents started disappearing from the ranks of the newcomer MPs in the fourth electoral period. In Estonia, dissidents continue to appear as newcomers throughout all democratic elections (and, compared to the other three country cases, the Estonian dissidents have the lowest rate of re-election).

In Poland over the four electoral periods considered, with 4 as a possible maximum index of re-election, the numbers stand at 1.78 (fairly similar to the Baltic rates after four elections) and akin to the Baltic states displays a favourable bias towards the ex-communists (the re-election rate of 2.07) compared to that of the previous politically uninvolved people and ex-dissidents. That finding is contrary to our “revolutionary” hypothesis, claiming that electoral dynamics should be disadvantageous for the ex-communists. The Polish case yields further evidence to dismiss this revolutionary assumption: among the total 38 Polish MPs serving without any interruption in all four terms of the *Sejm* (1991-2005), there were 30 ex-communists, 2 ex-dissidents and 6 previously politically uninvolved persons. Almost twenty years after the breakdown of communism, dissidents continue to come as newcomers to the Polish parliament, and so do ex-communists.

Summing up, in all four post-communist countries ex-communists appear as having an electoral advantage over the previously politically uninvolved people. Even though the shares of the ex-communists in the post-communist parliamentary elites vary greatly in three Baltic countries and Poland, in all four countries the ex-communists outnumber the ex-dissidents in their absolute shares, rates of electoral success, and the strength of their symbolic formative role. The presence and visibility of the ex-communists serving for the consecutive 4 or 5 terms in the democratically elected parliaments is the strongest in Poland, and it is closely followed by Lithuania and Estonia. The Latvian exception (in 2005 the only surviving MP serving in the parliament since 1990 without any interruption is a previously politically uninvolved person) in a way verifies the rule that the ex-dissidents do not enjoy a stronger role in the post-communist parliamentary elite than the ex-communists even in a symbolic, individual way.

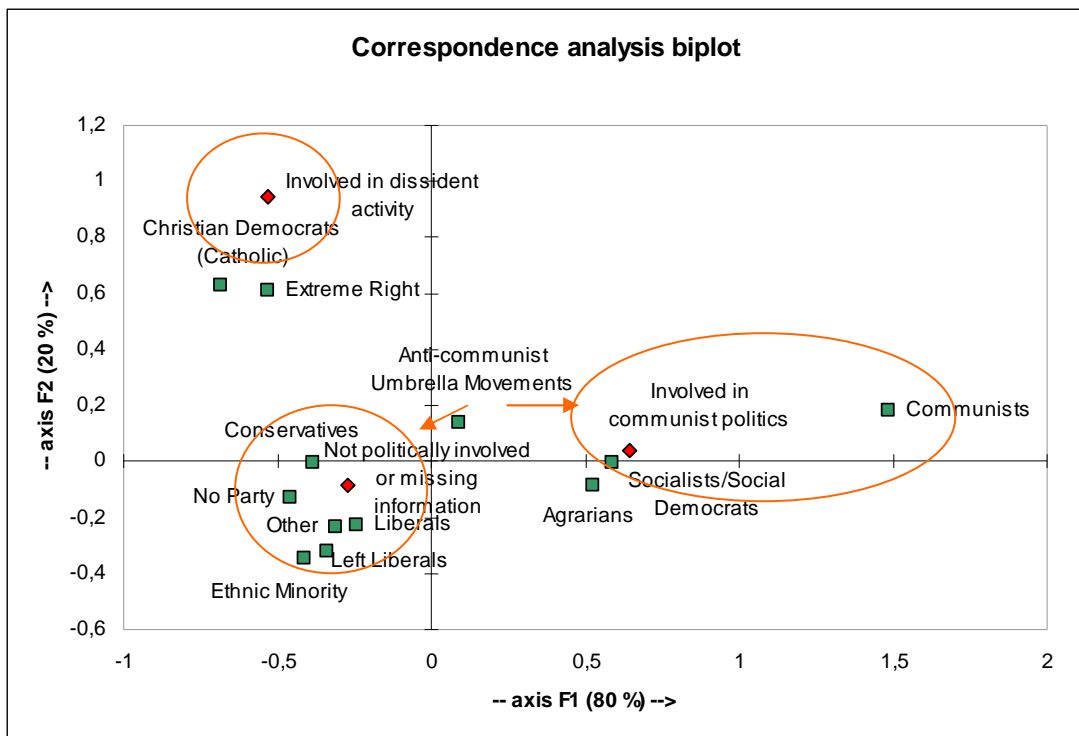
Party affiliations of ex-communist activists, ex-dissidents and previously politically uninvolved MPs

From the point of view of political parties (organizational culture, recruitment patterns, ideology and program) there could be significant party differences in terms of post-communist party unfriendliness to former communist activists, ex-dissidents and previously politically inexperienced people. Parties organizationally related to the Communist party would have and would retain/recruit more ex-communists than other political parties. Parties stemming from the anti-communist nationalist movements would have and retain/recruit more ex-dissidents. Less ideologically distinct parties would rely on previously politically uninvolved people⁴.

As postulated, former communists dominate the socialists/ social democrats in Lithuania, where they compose almost a half (46.3 per cent) of the post-communist left (one of the most successful political forces throughout the whole democratic period). Former dissidents are the most frequent among the right wing and conservative parties (out of total 18 dissidents in the overall parliamentary elite, 7 belong to the Christian democrats and 7 to conservatives). The ex-dissidents form the backbone of around 20 percent in the parliamentary representations of these two parties. Previously politically non-involved people, turned post-communist MPs are – as postulated – most frequent among the centrist forces: they account for the bulk of the left liberals, who emerged in 1996 (32, or 85 per cent out of total 37), liberals (56, or 80 per cent out of total 70) and the populists (appeared in 2000, 49, or 80 per cent out of 59). In Lithuania, only previously politically uninvolved people (9 MPs out of total 10) represent the ethnic minority (Russian and Polish) parties. Correspondence analysis proves that political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of Lithuanian MPs (1990-2004) is statistically significant (see Figure 1).

In Estonia, former communists re-elected to the democratic *Rigiikogu* are concentrated among the (left and right) liberals and conservatives and

⁴ In the statistics on political party affiliations in the parliaments all terms are collapsed together without exclusion of overlapping individual cases. Party affiliation of an individual is established by his (her) affiliation at the beginning of each new parliamentary term, individual shifts in party group affiliation during the parliamentary term, replacements and substitutes (in particular frequent in the Estonian parliament) are not included.



Note: Chi-square observed value (df = 22) = 163,495; P-value = 0,000.

Eigenvalues and explained variance:

| Estimate | F1 | F2 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Eigenvalue | 0,189 | 0,047 |
| Explained variance (%) | 80,2 | 19,8 |
| Cumulated explained variance (%) | 80,2 | 100,0 |

Figure 1: Political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of Lithuanian MPs (1990-2004): results of correspondence analysis

compose a third to a fourth of the parliamentary representations of these most successful Estonian parties, since the beginning of the post-communist transition. Former communists and previously politically uninvolved people represent the ethnic minority (Russian) parties in equal shares (respectively, 5 and 5 for the total number of 10 MPs). In this respect, Estonia diverges from Lithuania, where former communist activists appear to belong solely to the titular nationality. But both countries converge in the fact that ex-dissidents are blatantly absent from the representation of the ethnic minorities. The majority of the post-communist Estonian socialist representation in the parliament derives from previously politically uninvolved people (29 or 70 per cent out of total 42). In addition to that, the post-communist Estonian socialists count in their ranks 3 former dissidents (along with 10 ex-communist activists). Previously politically uninvolved people cluster into the agrarian party (17 out of 24). Invariably, with the ex-communists they are the most frequent among the ever-winning Estonian liberals

and conservatives (respectively, 76 or 63 per cent of the total 117; 48 or 60 per cent of the total 77; and 83 or 75 per cent of the total 111). Former Estonian dissidents (total number 15) are dispersed across all political forces (3 among socialists, 3 agrarians, 2 left liberals and 3 right liberals and 2 conservatives) (see Table 6). Thus in Estonia, there is no perceptible difference in party affiliation along the variable of former un-involvement into communist politics.

The Estonian parliamentary landscape is shaped by a very specific absence of socialist forces and long-lived post-communist domination of centre-right wing parties. Correspondence analysis of the Estonian case shows that there is no statistically significant relation between political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of post-communist Estonian MPs.

As in Estonia, weak post-communist socialist forces in Latvia are mainly constituted by previously politically uninvolved people (64 or 85 per cent out of total 74). In Latvia, relatively strong extreme right forces have parliamentary representation

Table 6: Political activity of Estonian MPs during non-democratic regime by party family (1990-2003)

| Political activity during non-democratic regime | Party family | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|--------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | Com-mu-nists | Social-ists/ So-cial De-mocrats | Gre-ens | Agra-rians | Left Libe-rals | Right Libe-rals | Con-ser-vati-ves | Ethnic Mi-no-rity | Other | Chri-stian Democ-rats | |
| Not politically involved or missing information | 0 (0.0)* | 29 (10.9) | 1 (0.4) | 17 (6.4) | 76 (28.5) | 48 (18.0) | 83 (31.1) | 5 (1.9) | 7 (2.6) | 1 (0.4) | 267 (100.0) |
| Involved in communist politics | 1 (0.9) | 10 (8.6) | 0 (0.0) | 4 (3.4) | 39 (33.6) | 26 (22.4) | 26 (22.4) | 5 (4.3) | 5 (4.3) | 0 (0.0) | 116 (100.0) |
| Involved in dissident activity | 0 (0.0) | 3 (20.0) | 0 (0.0) | 3 (20.0) | 2 (13.3) | 3 (20.0) | 2 (13.3) | 0 (0.0) | 2 (13.3) | 0 (0.0) | 15 (100.0) |
| Total | 1 (0.3) | 42 (10.6) | 1 (0.3) | 24 (6.0) | 117 (29.4) | 77 (19.3) | 111 (27.9) | 10 (2.5) | 14 (3.5) | 1 (0.3) | 398 (100.0) |

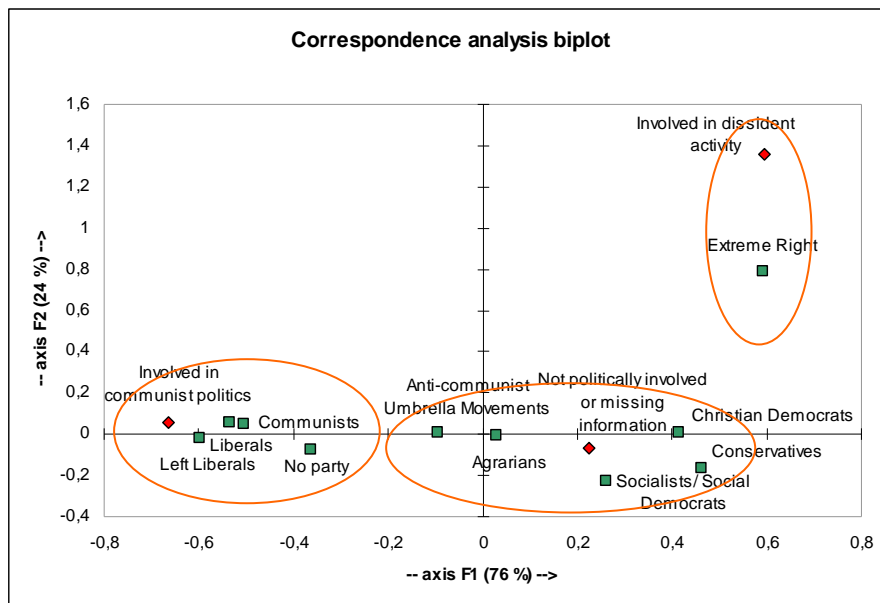
* Percentage in parentheses.

(total 36 MPs). Among them are former dissidents (6 out of 15 total dissidents), however, the bulk of the extreme right is composed of previously politically un-involved people (28). Dissidents are also present among Latvian agrarians, liberals and Christian democrats. Formerly un-involved people are concentrated among Latvian conservatives (109 or 90 per cent of the total 117). As in Estonia, re-elected former Latvian ex-communists mostly compose the liberals (37 or every second MP among 74 liberals in total), the left liberals (12 out of 23 MPs), and agrarians (10 out of 40). They are also rather frequent among those who run as independents (5 out of 12). Thus, as in the Estonian case, the Latvian post-communist parliamentary scene also seems to be little-affected by the ex-dissident vs. ex-communist divide. However, this divide is perceptible: in particular, as postulated – Latvian nationalism is marked by the former dissident experiences. Yet, contrary to theoretical anticipations, in the post-communist Latvia parliamentary liberalism is marked by its proponents' experience in previous communist activities. In general, correspondence analysis shows that there is significant relationship between political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of Latvian MPs (see Figure 2).

In Poland, as in Lithuania and Latvia to lower extent, previous involvement (or not) is an important cleavage in the post-communist political

party landscape (and statistically significant, see Figure 3). With the largest parliament and more numerous ex-dissidents among the post-communist MPs, the Polish case provides an excellent test for the above thesis. The Polish ex-communists exclusively (to a larger extent than in Lithuania) belong to and form the post-communist parliamentary left: 489 former ex-communists (or 71.1 per cent of their total number) belong to the social democrats and 156 (or 22.7 per cent of their total number) are agrarians. To put it another way: former communist activists compose two thirds of the total number of the post-communist social democrats in Poland and a half of the agrarians.

Former Polish dissidents form their own parliamentary camp: they belong to the centrist and the right-wing parties: the left and right liberals, Christian democrats and conservatives. The biggest concentration of ex-dissidents is among the left liberals, where every second member has some dissident record (107 out of 196). But most frequently the ex-dissidents join the Christian democrats (123 or 30.5 per cent out of their total 403). Ex-dissidents also belong to the conservatives (74 MPs) and right liberals (42 MPs). However, previously politically uninvolved people dominate these later political groupings (respectively, the right liberals 71 out of 121 and conservatives 98 out of 178). The most frequent affiliation of the

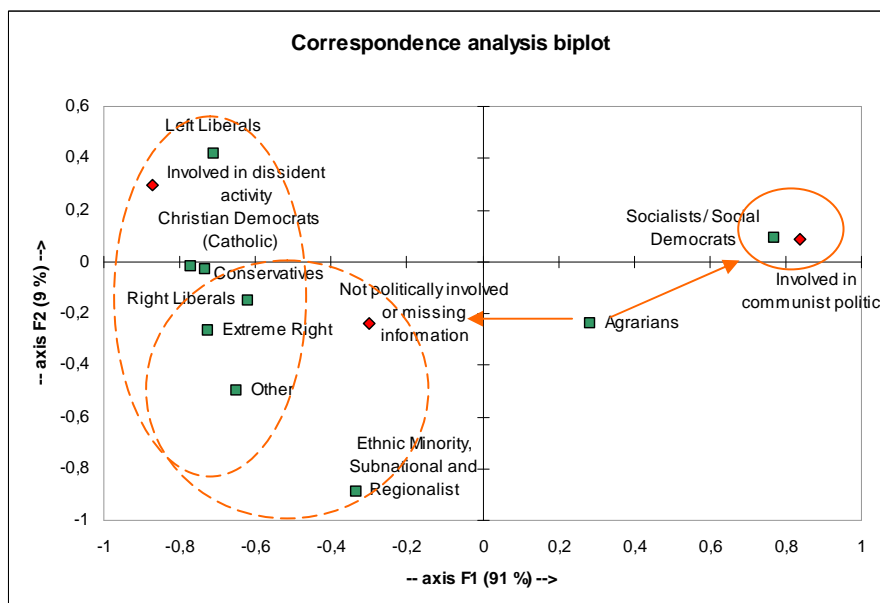


Note: Chi-square observed value (df = 18) = 126,756; P-value = 0,000.

Eigenvalues and explained variance:

| Estimate | F1 | F2 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Eigenvalue | 0,161 | 0,050 |
| Explained variance (%) | 76,3 | 23,7 |
| Cumulated explained variance (%) | 76,3 | 100,0 |

Figure 2: Political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of Latvian MPs (1990-2002): results of correspondence analysis



Note: Chi-square observed value (df = 16) = 940,297; P-value = 0,000.

Eigenvalues and explained variance:

| Estimate | F1 | F2 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Eigenvalue | 0,465 | 0,046 |
| Explained variance (%) | 91,0 | 9,0 |
| Cumulated explained variance (%) | 91,0 | 100,0 |

Figure 3: Political experience during non-democratic regime and present party affiliation of Polish MPs (1991-2001): results of correspondence analysis

previously politically uninvolved people is with the Christian democrats (159 or 21.2 per cent of their total), the social democrats (150 or 20.0 per cent) and agrarians (155 or 20.7 per cent). As in the Baltic countries (with Latvia not having any distinct parliamentary representation of the ethnic parties), previously politically uninvolved people represent ethnic minority (regional) parties in the post-communist Poland (out of the total 24 MPs from these parties 21 are without political experience in the communist period, one is a former dissident and two are former communist activists).

Thus, the Polish pattern is very clear and distinct: ex-communists form the left part of the political spectrum, the ex-dissidents – the centre and the right wing (secular and religious), while the non-involved people are distributed rather evenly across the political spectrum: 40 per cent to the left (social democrats and agrarians), 40 to the right, with the remaining belonging to the centrist forces, ethnic minority parties and the extreme right (where the ex-communists are visibly absent as in the Baltic cases).

Conclusions

In all four parliaments, throughout 4-5 post-communist electoral periods, ex-communists and ex-dissidents managed to survive. The rate of success is greater in the case of ex-communists than in that of ex-dissidents. The share of previously politically uninvolved people grows, but it is significantly affected by enduring electoral success of the former communist activists. In Latvia and Estonia the parliamentary party landscape (with the patently under-developed political left) is little affected by the factor of post-communist MPs' previous involvement in Soviet era politics. In Poland, and to a lesser extent in Lithuania, the parliamentary parties are considerably shaped by their members' political past in the communist times. The Polish parliament almost twenty years after the breakdown of communism remains the most politicized in terms of the shifting shares of ex-dissidents and ex-communist among the MPs. In respect to the eventual inclusion/ exclusion of former ex-communist activists and ex-dissidents in the post-communist parliamentary elite, the Baltic countries have perceptibly dissimilar tracks. In the Estonian parliament, the purification culminated in 1995 (with more than 80 per cent of previously politically uninvolved MPs) following high rates of the former dissidents' recruitment in two first parliaments (around 10 per cent). In the subsequent elections more and more former communist activists entered the Es-

tonian parliament as the voters apparently became less sensitive to the candidates' *negative* political experience gained in the Soviet times.

In the Lithuanian parliament the number of MPs who were politically un-involved in the communist times increased throughout the elections (from 40 to 80 percent). The ex-communists after their temporary upsurge in 1992 underwent a constant decrease, but, along with the ex-dissidents, have preserved their significant place in the parliament. Thus in the Lithuanian parliament, after initial accommodation of ex-communists and ex-dissidents, the step-by-step revision and purification of political experiences from the communist period continues almost twenty years after the breakdown of communist rule.

In the Latvian parliament, through five democratic elections, the number of MPs politically un-tainted from the Soviet period grew (from 60 to 90 per cent). The number of the former communists and dissidents decreased to an astoundingly minimal presence. The Latvian case is an example of a somewhat belated cleansing of both, positive and negative political experiences gained from the communist era, resulting in the post-communist parliamentary elite with an "unbearable lightness of the past".

Different degrees and asynchronous changes in the share of ex-communist activists in the Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian post-communist parliamentary elites are related to their rather different meta-histories of the *nomenklaturas* and Communist Parties. The recent experiences of democratization are also relevant in understanding diverging patterns of the fates and rates of the ex-dissidents in the post-communist parliamentary elites in, on one the hand, former Soviet Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and, on the other hand, in Poland.

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Irmina Matonytė

Eksnomenklatūra ir eksdisidentai pokomunistiniuose Estijos, Latvijos, Lietuvos ir Lenkijos parlamentuose

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamas pokomunistinis Estijos, Latvijos, Lietuvos ir Lenkijos parlamentinis elitas ir jo santykis su sovietiniu režimu. Išskiriami du šių santykių aspektai: neigiama politinė patirtis esant tarybiniam režimui (narysė komunistų partijoje ir nomenklatūroje) ir teigiama politinė patirtis dėl dalyvavimo disidentų judėjime. Tyrimas pagrįstas prielaidomis, pabrėžiančiomis revoliucinę postkomunistinių pokyčių prigimtį ir akcentuojančiomis rinkiminės politikos, lasivosios rinkos ir liberalios žiniasklaidos pasiekimus. Atskleidžiama, kad tiriamąjį parlamentinį elitą sudaro skirtingi ekskomunistų ir eksdisidentų santykiai. Skirtumų atsiranda dėl skirtingos šalių nomenklatūrų, komunistų partijų ir disidentų judėjimų istorijos ir skirtingos šalių demokratizacijos patirties.