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Explaining Variance in Party System Stability in Lithuania and Latvia

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EXPLAINING VARIANCE IN PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY IN LITHUANIA AND
LATVIA

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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TITLE: EXPLAINING VARIANCE IN PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY IN LITHUANIA AND LATVIA

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Stephen R. Bloom

This comparative research contributes to the further understanding of party system stability in ethnically divided societies. It looks at the extent of party system institutionalization in Lithuania and Latvia by paying attention to the variance of party system stability over time. Differences in party system stability over time are a consequence of the extent of the ideological balance within the party system and the success of coalition governments. The salience of ethnicization of the party system and the design of the electoral system matter. This is because both heavily influence the effectiveness of both the existence of ideological balancers and coalition retention over time.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability” (Huntington 1968, 12). While party-system institutionalization is a means of a “commitment to an organization and to some minimal collective goals (especially winning elections); it requires loyalty beyond allegiance to a single leader” (Mainwaring 1998, 70-71). More institutionalized party systems can be defined as having greater party system stability in terms of patterns of competition manifested through regularity (Mainwaring 1998, 69). In addition, they also have stronger roots in society, political actors give legitimacy to the party system, and party organizations acquire independent status and value of their own (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006, 206-207). Within a more institutionalized party system, there is consistency in terms of who the main parties are and how they behave within the political arena. Within a more weakly institutionalized system this becomes less clear.

I seek to explore the extent of party system institutionalization in Lithuania and Latvia by looking at the variance of party system stability over time. The differences in party system stability over time are a consequence of the extent of ideological balance within the party system and the success of coalition governments over time. Both are shaped by the extent of how salient the ethnicization of the party system is and the electoral system, and thus either exacerbate party system instability or make a party system more stable. The extent of ideological balance among the parties within a system is one indicator of party system stability applicable to the party systems of Lithuania and Latvia. I argue that the more the system is likely to have “genuine” ideological balancers within it the more stable the party system is. In addition, the salience of

ethnicization of the party system helps explain party system stability in terms of its effect on the party dispersion within the system and thus the alternatives available to voters. Hence, the more salient the party system ethnicization is within the party system the dispersion of parties is more rigid. Further, the design of the electoral system impacts party system stability when it interacts with the ethnic geography, in the context of ethnically divided societies. Lastly, evidence from my research shows that effective coalition retention, while taking in account party system characteristics of the both countries tends to stabilize the party system. The impact of such stabilization is more pronounced in party systems where the degree and salience of party system ethnicization is greater.

The first section explains the reasons why it is important to compare the party system stability of Lithuania and Latvia. In the second section, I review the various ways scholars have approached party system stability and explore the potential role of ethnicity, electoral design, and cleavage structures in party system stability. Thirdly, I analyze the empirical evidence in light of my hypothesis that the differences in party system stability over time are a consequence of the extent of ideological balance within the party system and the success of coalition governments over time. Both of which are highly impacted by the degree and salience of ethnicization of the party system and the design of the electoral system. Lastly, I conclude my discussion with the implications of this research in the wider context of party system research.

CHAPTER 2

CASE SELECTION

Lithuania and Latvia prove as important comparative research in terms of party system stability in the context of ethnically divided societies. I will begin by outlining the similarities, first, both countries share a recent historical past of being part of the former Soviet Union. Both countries successfully democratized together with Estonia in comparison to other post-Soviet states in the region such as Belarus and Ukraine that still remain problematic. Successful political democratization was also accompanied by successful economic reforms and both states are now members of NATO and the European Union. To compare the party systems of the two countries over time would allow to see the variable nuance of party system stability from entirely its beginning. Nationhood is not new for both of the countries. Lithuanian nationhood has existed historically as a form of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Latvia's first independent statehood experience occurred during the interwar period. The interwar period was an experience of both democracy and dictatorship for both of the countries. In Latvia the relatively short dictatorship of Karlis Ulmanis and in Lithuania the dictatorship of Antanas Smetona that lasted thirteen years. The party system disappeared and the Lithuanian Nationalist Union became the only party allowed in government. For both Lithuania and Latvia dictatorship ended with the incorporation into the Soviet Union. Currently, both countries can be considered relatively new democracies in the post-Soviet period. Together with wholly new party systems. This is because, for example, minor parties that survived in Lithuania such as the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party and the Lithuanian Nationalist Union in the post-Soviet political sphere have not played an important role in the new party system. The

parties and interests of the interwar period for both countries were replaced by new dominant parties and new emergent interests in the post-Soviet period.

Secondly, both countries share another similarity of being ethnically divided societies. This ethnic division is naturally translated into ethnic cleavages whom then are expressed within the party system. In Latvia, ethnic Russians and other Slav Russian speakers constitute the largest minority group and are a relatively important political force among the electorate. The minorities in Latvia, in comparison to Lithuania, tend to be more geographically dispersed across Latvia. In Lithuania, the Poles constitute the largest minority group, but they are strongly concentrated in the southeastern region of Lithuania. The Latgale region of Latvia always had a Russian population, but the Russian influx increased overall during the Soviet period. This allowed for a wider dispersion of the Russian population across Latvia and currently as a greater political force within the current party system. Lithuania is historically a multiethnic state with the Lithuanian-Poles constituting an important minority group.

The third similarity for the both countries is that of the party systems. Aside from being relatively new party systems and ethnically divided societies, both share relatively unstable party systems (Pabriks and Stokenberga 2006 and Ramonaite 2006). The measures of party system instability are discussed at length in the next section, however, both countries tend to see a high number of competitors, high electoral volatility, fragmentation, high party extinction, underdevelopment of organizational structure by the parties within the system. These variables occurring simultaneously tend to impact party system stability. It is thus important to compare the two countries over time in regard to party system stability as to seek the causes of a greater or a lesser extent of party system stability under differing environmental circumstances.

Furthermore, there are different environmental circumstances that have occurred in Lithuania and Latvia under the similar context of both being relatively new party systems, ethnically divided societies, and both being characterized as more or less unstable party systems. These environmental differences include, first, the difference in the degree and salience of the ethnicization of the party system. Second, the difference in the ideological system balance. Third, the difference in the electoral system of the two countries. The difference in the degree and salience of the ethnicization of the party system comes in part from historical events, such as the experience under the Soviet Union. The experience drastically altered Lithuanian and Latvian demographic dynamics. This has left an imprint on the salient societal issues in Latvia especially in terms of the question of ethnic minorities, such as citizenship and language policy. In Lithuania, ethnic minority issues are less salient in terms of having a high impact on the party system as in Latvia. Partly because ethnic minorities in Lithuania constitute less of a population proportion, but also because ethnic minorities have been welcomed in Lithuania as political citizens at the inception of independence in 1991, in contrast to Latvia (Pabriks and Stokenberga 2006, 52-54). This has in a way helped alleviate group tensions in Lithuania.

That is why the salience in terms of ethnic dimensions is important because as Horowitz points out that party systems with ethnic and nonethnic parties indicate a prevalence of more than one issue dimension (Horowitz 1995, 303). For example, the Latvian ethnic dimension of the party system is more salient because the system is mainly based on an ethnicized division of parties. The ethnic societal division hence becomes mediated by politics that then impact the party system stability. The Latvian left is primarily represented by Russian minority parties (Saarts 2011, 93). Leaving the ethnic Latvians to mainly support parties which occupy the centre-right. In Lithuania the salience of the ethnic dimension is less to an extent because the

system includes a variety of ethnic and nonethnic parties spanning the ideological continuum. Another important point is that because of the more salient ethnic effect in Latvia coalition formation for the mostly Russian minority party has been unsuccessful while in Lithuania the party of the Lithuanian-Poles were able to join the governing coalition.

The second difference between the two countries is the difference in ideological balance among the party systems. Because the ethnic salience is less important in Lithuania and the fact that former communist elites were able to retain power post 1990 Supreme Soviet elections, we see a “genuine” ideological divide between the main parties in Lithuania in the 1990’s. This has granted Lithuania a sense of party system stability at that time. The story in Latvia differs, in that because the ethnic divide is much more salient as the division has been rigidly politicized in terms of ideological dimensions, we see no “genuine” ideological divide in Latvia. The divide between the parties is ethnic on what traditionally is understood as in terms of the ideological left-right continuum. Lastly, the third difference is the electoral system that theoretically impacts party system stability. Latvia uses a proportional representation (PR) open-list system while Lithuania uses a mixed (SMD) and closed-list (PR) system. A comparison of the two countries is important in terms of testing the strength of electoral system design on the party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia that share important similarities.

In conclusion, in order to see the variance in party system stability over time in Lithuania and Latvia, it is important to compare the two countries that share important similarities and differences. Both countries are newly emergent party systems, both are ethnically divided societies, and both are relatively unstable party systems. The differences between the two countries come in, in regard to, the degree and salience of the ethnicization of the party system, the difference in ideological balance among the party systems, and the difference in the electoral

system utilized. To see how and why the party system stability varies across the two countries over time, we have a perfect testing ground. This is because such an analysis offers an almost experiment like situation. In which we incubate the two new party systems from inception and analyze it over time. The two systems share an ethnically divided character, but most importantly differ in the extent of degree and salience of the ethnicization of the party system. The two systems are also characterized by party system instability, but at the same time differ in structure of the electoral system.

It is imperative to look at the measures of party system instability in the context of the different degree and salience of the ethnicization of the party system within similarly ethnically divided societies. This is important granted it would theoretically show how powerful is the salience effect of ethnicization in already ethnically divided societies. We look at the differences in the electoral system to see if it has a powerful impact on party system stability, within the context of how salient is the ethnicization of the party system. The two countries also differ in the extent of the ideological balance of the system one, Latvia, being it lacks a “genuine” ideological balance outside of its ethnicized structure, and Lithuania whose system can be characterized as having a “genuine” ideological balance, not distorted by an ethnic divide. All of these variables can help us explain party system stability. This is important granted in order to see how the salience of the ethnic divide, ideological balance, and electoral rules impact the variance of party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia. Such a set up may will contribute toward further understanding of the variables that may cause party system stability or instability in ethnically divided societies.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY AND MEASURES OF PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY

This section overviews the theory and measures used by scholars in regard to party system stability. First, I begin with the ways in which scholars measure party system stability. One such way is in terms of measuring electoral volatility. It is one of the essential measures of party system stability. It is defined as the “net change within the electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers” (Pedersen 1979, 6). Thus, party system stability depends on vote transfers between two consecutive elections. Powell and Tucker make an important distinction between two types of volatility, first being what they call Type B volatility which is the switch of votes between existing parties and, the second one being Type A which is the volatility that occurs due to entry and exit of new parties. They attribute Type A volatility to greater party system instability, while Type B volatility is seen as healthy for a representative democracy (Powell and Tucker 2013, 2). Because a more stable party system is that which has a more consistent stability in terms of who the main political actors are. With new parties coming and leaving the party system, the party system overall tends to be more unstable and hence may constitute a lesser extent of institutionalization.

Similarly, Granberg and Holmberg find that certain levels of volatility are normal for a democracy (1990). They find that in Sweden the changes in voter preference had nothing to do with low voter knowledge, in contrast to the US where low knowledge individuals were more likely to switch votes. Lane and Errson suggest that a moderate level of party system instability, whose key dimensions include volatility and fractionalization, may be an important component for democracies (Lane and Errson 2007, 95). This is because voters may punish incumbents who

have become ineffective as representatives. Furthermore, Lane and Errson conclude when comparing eastern and western volatility that both will continue to experience differing levels of volatility (Lane and Errson 2007). Party system instability is more likely to be higher in post-1978 competitive party systems (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007), such as the post-Soviet and post-Communist states as well as Latin American states. In part due to the newness of the democracies, however, volatility in western democracies may question the strength of such a causal claim as a sole explanation.

Further, I explore the theories of party system instability. I will begin with explaining the sources of party system instability that scholars have set forth as potential explanations as to the causes of party system stability and its possible instability. For example, Mair (2000) explains instability in terms of the openness of the party system. Such as the ease with which new parties may enter the system for competition. On the other hand, Tavits (2008), Bartolini and Mair (1999), and Pedersen (1979) link party system fluidity to the number of parties within the system. Under the assumption that the more parties there are, the greater the choice, and thus the more likely the votes will swing among the parties. This causes party system instability to an extent that shifts in government composition may impact policy choice and policy effectiveness. In contrast, Sikk (2005) finds that party system instability in Eastern Europe exists due to the inner dynamics of incumbents and does not come from the rise of new contenders. This means that actors already within the party system are likely to switch party allegiances or create new parties as an attempt to stay in power. Such actions again shift the votes and voter attention toward new parties creating greater party system instability.

Another explanation for instability is offered by Roberts and Wibbels (1999) and Roberts (2007) who give credence to the argument that economic voting impacts high volatility and thus

overall party system instability in the region. This occurs when the electorate punishes incumbents through economic voting. When the voters are dissatisfied with the economy they are more likely to vote out the incumbent government. Overall, high party system instability is found in the post-communist region as indicated by the volatility measure (Bernhard and Karakoc 2011, Bielasiak 2002, Pettai and Kreuzer 1999). In terms of the Baltics specifically, the length of non-democracy and supply side volatility explains the high party system instability (Kuklys 2013). Partly this goes in hand with the argument set out by Mainwaring and Zoco that new democracies tend to be more volatile. In addition, high supply side volatility comes from new contenders in the political sphere. These new contenders may either be genuinely new to politics or old timers who have changed allegiances or strategy. Such when politicians leave their own parties to join or create entirely new parties.

Scholars also analyze party system institutionalization and the extent of its stability theoretically based on the particular characteristics of the parties in the system. They look at the organizational and the institutional rules of the parties in the system, formation of the party system, and the politicized divisions within the system. Certain types of parties are better for the stabilization of the party system such as programmatic over charismatic or clientelistic (Kitsechelt 1995). Mainly because programmatic parties tend seek organizational structure around the common good of society as whole, rather than depending to gain support by patronage or the focus on the ideology of the leader. Party systems that contain more programmatic parties, are not only able to better organize and sustain societal roots over time, but also strongly contribute to party system stability overall.

Also, parties regardless of organization face differing incentives in terms of different institutional settings Strom (1999). In essence, under different electoral systems parties within

the system will shift their behavior. This is done to maximize their vote potential within the system. To this extent Tavits finds that institutional choices affect party system stability (2005), and that new parties are more likely to enter when costs are low (2008). The ability of new parties to easily enter the party system as relevant contenders means that party system instability may increase. This supports the supply side argument of party system instability. Tavits also finds that survival of the political parties is based on their organizational structure (2013). This is important granted party extinction contributes toward higher party system instability. As parties are unable to find viable organizational structures over time they are more likely to lose support, hence allowing an open window for new parties to enter the party system and try their luck.

Two changes happen in regard to democratization as a party system begins the process of party system institutionalization. First the citizens are included in the selection of leaders second there is an establishment of accountability among the leadership chosen through the democratic mechanism (Birch 2003: 4). Parties then “serve as the procedural and institutional instruments for creating a competitive political environment” (Krupavicius 1998, 6). The stability of the party system then under such conditions depends on the normalization in terms of consistency of party competition as shown by party system stability. This includes stability in regards to who the main contenders are, the occurrence of regular elections, and the general attention to the established electoral rules.

Yet, another way of looking at party system instability is to pay attention to the voter and the impact that the voters may have on the party system overall. Birch suggests that strategic voting should increase as party loyalties increase (Birch 2003, 84). This is because higher levels of system wide instability may indicate competence and the genuine exercise of choice among the voters (Birch 2003, 133). This may occur in the context of economic factors and ethnic

cleavage structures, as well as the choices of parties available. In addition, strategic voting increases as voters become more experienced (Tavits and Annus 2006). In a 1995 study, Reisinger, Miller, and Hesli found that former Soviet citizens were highly participatory. Likewise, this is an important component of civil society for a healthy democracy (Reisinger, Miller, and Hesli 1995, 942). While Dalton notes that in advanced industrial democracies there is a rise in sophisticated individuals lacking party ties (Dalton 1984) this hence has led to greater party system instability. Due to voters more likely shifting their votes to new parties. In the same light interested nonpartisans were found to be overrepresented among intention-behavior changers (Granberg and Holmberg 1990), again promoting system instability. Higher competence, participation, and strategic voting by the electorate garners greater party system instability because the choices of the voters lack consistency. This lack of voter consistency then causes variance in the levels of party system stability.

Theoretically the stability of the party system also depends greatly on the cleavage structures in society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Politization of cleavages beyond the original cleavage structures set out by Lipset and Rokkan in new democracies differs remarkably. Especially in ethnically divided societies such as Lithuania and Latvia. This is because the ethnic structure in such societies can become politicized, the post-communist transition itself provided an opportunity for activation of ethnic conflict (Bochsler 2007, 6). This is important granted that Latvia is more heterogeneous than Lithuania, thus allowing for a differing inception of party system competition to emerge. Ethnic cleavages play an important role in shaping party system stability, but to a different extent due to demographic variation especially as such is mediated by politics. In more heterogeneous countries the salience of ethnic cleavages can be greater, thus causing greater party instability. This is partly because in ethnically divided societies the ethnic

parties tend garner their support from their own group (Horowitz 1985, 344). This impedes natural voter choice based on ideological party stance, as each voter tends to vote for parties that represent their own group. Such is a centrifugal system where floating voters are not situated between parties (Horowitz 1985, 348). Determinant of party support tends to be ones ethnicity (Horowitz 1985, 298). Under different circumstances, especially based on the degree and salience of importance in regard to the ethnicized party system, a party system may become more or less stable. If ethnic minorities tend to vote for their own group party, then the choice for titular citizens ranges in terms of the variety of other available parties within the system. The interplay between the ethnic minority and titular parties, in such a context, impacts party system stability. The degree to which this occurs depends on the extent to which the ethnic cleavage divide is emphasized on the societal level. In short, the salience of the ethnic cleavage matters.

Furthermore, in order to capture the extent of the degree and the salience of the ethnicized party system and its underlying stability, it is important to pay attention to the electoral system simultaneously. For example, a PR system tends to be much more viable for ethnic parties to win seats (Moser 2005, 113). This is because under proportional representation, especially within an open-list system that allows the voter to choose a specific individual within the party, greater system instability, as I will argue, proliferates party system instability. This happens to be especially the case under circumstances of electoral punishment and the availability of new parties as it is easier to get elected under such a system. On the other hand in more homogenous societies, not only is the importance of an ethnicization of the party system less salient impacting party system stability, but at the same type the electoral system combined with the salience effect either exacerbates or calms party system instability. For example, an SMD closed-list system tends to be less viable for ethnic minorities, unless ethnic minorities are

highly concentrated demographically (Moser 2006, 113). So ethnic minorities have a greater chance to win votes in highly concentrated minority regions only. While under a PR open-list system a minority candidate has a greater chance of winning overall, when the two electoral systems are compared.

Ideological cleavage structures within a system have an impact in determining party system stability and how institutionalized the party system is. Zielinski regards a system that is frozen in a sense that it must persist over time and that voting patterns are stable over a sequence of elections (Zielinski 2002, 193). Such can be created by parties in the system that attune the interests of electorate in terms of the societal cleavages available to them by evading party extinction and contributing toward party system stabilization. It means they may lose some seats in parliament or move to become opposition government, but nevertheless, will tend to stay within the political arena over time. Ideological cleavages are just one means of such party system stabilization. For example, a loss of an ideological cleavage can be explained by the theory set forth by Agh (1995) in terms of the occurrence of early freezing, that only later is continued by a long and structural adaptation of emerging interests. This means that newly institutionalizing systems may experience a period of party system stability. Such stability is especially achieved under a centripetal system that in essence mirrors a two-party system (Horowitz 1985, 347). The stability of the party system is not ultimate because as mentioned above due to the growth of strategic voting and the increasing competence of voters allows for the emergence of new cleavages and interests among the electorate. A dealignment in regard to cleavage structures is cause of instability in terms of the whole party system under analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND MEASUREMENT

The election data utilized for my analysis comes from the Central Election Commission of Latvia and Lithuania. The purpose of the measures is to compare and contrast overall party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia. To do this I reject the dichotomous categories used by Sartori of party systems and non-systems (Sartori 1976, 244-8) and instead utilize the assumption set out by Mainwaring and Torcal of institutionalization as a continuum (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006, 205). This will allow to see nuanced variance in terms of changes in regard to party system stability over time. Due to the fluctuations of the two main explanations for party system stability for Lithuania and Latvia – the first being the degree of ideological balance in the party system and the success of coalition governments over time. Overall, I will measure eight predictive variables to look at party system stability over time.

For my measures, I utilized indicators as set out by Lindberg (2007), it is important to include more than one of these indicators to measure the stability of the system granted that these individual indicators cannot give us the whole picture in regard to party system stability. In addition, to Lindberg's measures I added the number of competing parties in each election, this measure is important because it shows the legitimacy of the party system in terms of how many parties are willing to compete come elections. This gives a sense of how open a party system is. The other measures are the number of parties in the legislature, if the number tends to fluctuate it indicates a more so fluid party system. The number of new parties in parliament in essence shows how easy it is for new parties to win, the more likely that new parties come in government, the more so the system is unstable. Then the percentage of the new parties in

parliament is calculated from the number of overall parties in the parliament. I also calculate the number of parties voted out, it is an important measure granted the more parties are voted out the greater the system fluidity. Before calculating seat volatility I will look at the percentage of parliament occupied by the largest party and the runner-up, this is done to ensure that once we take in context that whether or not a new party is able to amass the majority vote, it may then indicate party system fluidity (Lindberg 2007, 224). Lastly I will calculate legislative seat volatility using the Pedersen index.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

This section will incorporate the measures of party system stability into my argument that the differences in party system stability over time are a consequence of the extent of ideological balance within the party system and the success of coalition governments over time. In addition, to the degree and salience of ethnicization of the party system and the design of the electoral system both of which effect the strength of ideological balance and coalition retention. I begin with the first elections in the two countries in order to understand the emergence of what I call a "genuine" ideological cleavage in Lithuania and not in Latvia. This section will show how the occurrence of the ideological balance in Lithuania had stabilized the party system. Once the ideological balance was lost the Lithuanian party system instability increased. In Latvia, the party system was less stable and it lacked and continues to lack a "genuine" ideological balance. Nevertheless, recent retention of coalitions over times have shown increasing party system stability. The essential starting point for the analysis begins with the Supreme Soviet elections of 1990 for the both countries.

The Supreme Soviet elections in Lithuania and Latvia occurred in 1990 with the communist parties competing with the new anti-communists. The main opponents in Lithuania were the independent candidates endorsed by Sajudis and the Communist Party of Lithuania. The new opposition, Sajudis, was successful because of its mass mobilization. Similarly, the Latvian Popular Front in Latvia, was made up of individuals not entirely new to politics. As in Lithuania, sixty percent of the leadership of Sajudis in 1998 were members of the Communist Party of Lithuania, in addition, many communists participated in the activities of Sajudis as well

(Janusauskiene 2002, 232). In fact both sides of the spectrum the KLP and Sajudis were not homogenous in their ideological stance. The LDDP, that later evolved from the communist party within embraced social democratic and liberal positions (Janusauskiene 2002, 232-234). The differences between the KLP and Sajudis became polarized as Sajudis radicalized, while the KPL endorsed a step by step approach toward independence. In this regard, what I call the “genuine” ideological cleavage emerged in Lithuania, because the old communist versus the new liberal dynamic remained, where in Latvia the old communists were defeated and never returned to hold significant power splintering into smaller less significant minority parties. The initial Latvian party system, in contrast to Lithuania, somewhat mirrored the tabula rasa argument (Shabad and Slomczynski 1999) of party system institutionalization. Mainly because of the overall “newness” of the participating parties within the system.

The policies of the KLP under the Soviet Union allowed for an important legacy in Lithuania, a legacy that differed remarkably in terms of comparison with Latvia. The leadership promoted a Lithuanization policy, it first allowed for prestigious but less powerful posts for those emissaries from Moscow and the more important roles to local communists, but most importantly it employed local and rural populations to build industries, thus reducing the flow of Russian population (Janusauskiene 2002, 227). In 1989, native Lithuanians made up 79.4% of total population, in Latvia native Latvians made up 52%, this is in stark contrast to historical numbers in 1939-41 native Lithuanians in Lithuania comprised 69.1-71% and in 1959, 79.3%. While in 1935 native Latvians made up 75.7% (Janusauskiene 2002, 239). At the same time membership of LDDP in terms of Lithuanians in 1989 was at 70.7%. There was in addition compromise and participation among the elites of the communist party and Sajudis (Zeruolis

1998, 122). With the Sajudis members being more radical in terms of the question of independence, while the communists preferred a more moderate approach.

In the 1990 Latvian election the Latvian Popular Front won 68.2% of the votes while the Latvian Communist Party took second place with 21.5% of the vote. Interestingly, demographic determinism did not occur, granted that the minorities in Latvia are proportionally significant, the communist party lost nevertheless. The difference in election outcomes created a pertinent ideological cleavage structure that allowed Lithuania a sense of party system stability in the 1990's. This pertinent ideological divide being a communist versus liberal one. Where the Lithuanian communists were able to organize and remain a viable political force beyond the 1990 election, in Latvia the communists lost any significant political power and fragmented into smaller minority parties.

The elections of 1993 for Latvia and 1992 for Lithuania showed an emergence of a pattern that contributes to the variance of stability for both party systems. The pattern in Latvia is one characterized by the fact that the "new" party is able to attain the largest vote share. The first occurrence was in the 1993 Latvian election, where the Latvian Way took first place. The "new" party was formed by the former activists of the Popular Front. While the Popular Front itself did not even pass the 4% barrier (Karklins and Zepa 2007, 337). This loss was partly accounted for by the deteriorating living standards and increasing economic gap between social groups (Smith-Siversten 1998, 98). Although, in Lithuania Sajudis did lose the second election to the communist offspring – the LDDP, Sajudis remained in opposition, thus establishing a bipolar environment for the next eight years in Lithuanian politics. This to an extent worked to diminish party system fluidity especially in comparison to the Latvian system and create greater societal roots for the parties within the bipolar system. With the creation of such party roots, it naturally

meant that party organizations would become more sophisticated. Evading further possibility of party extinction in the future. This explains why the two main offshoots of the “genuine” ideological divide in the 1990’s still remain to this day as viable political contenders in the form of Homeland Union and the Social Democrats.

Sajudis disintegrated before the 1992 election in Lithuania, this was caused due to the emergence of new groups such as Lithuanian Liberal Union and the Independence Party (Novagrockiene 2001, 145). It was such party fragmentation of the left that also then resulted in a loss for the LDDP party in 1996, in 2000 the LDDP formed a coalition with LSDP, but failed to form a government thus remained in opposition. Novagrockiene attributes organizational failings of Sajudis in the 1992 election, as it was forced into the opposition. She also notes that Sajudis failure in the second election is important in such extent as it created a system marked by “distinct fragmentation of political forces with several parties and movements distributed along the left-right spectrum” (Novagrockiene 2001, 147). This did not occur in Latvia as the initial contenders in the first election were gone by the second and wholly new parties participated in the 1993 election. This novelty of the parties in the system further exacerbates party system fluidity.

Novagrockiene further continues that victory for the LDDP oriented the Lithuanian political parties more toward programmatic and ideological goals, in essence it allowed them to shift concern toward becoming “vote maximizing” parties (Novagrockiene 2001, 147). Because such was not the case in Latvia, the Lithuanian party system had an upper hand in terms of party system stabilization at least initially. Latvia lacked a dichotomy of stable dominant parties. Allowing for newcomers to emerge during each election cycle more frequently and thus allowing them to easier win over the incumbents because of electoral punishment especially because of

economic voting. The lack of stable dominant parties thus increased party system fluidity in such a way as shown by the percentage of new parties in the Saeima in the first four election above the fifty percent mark. Making the overall average for all of the elections ten percent higher than the percentage average of new parties in Lithuania. Indicating greater party system fluidity in Latvia overall.

For the elections of 1996 for Lithuania and 1995 for Latvia, two pertinent issues remained for both of the countries – the economy and its political orientation. The political orientation in terms of the debate between NATO and Russia took second in terms of the concern for the economy in both countries. Disillusionment with the previous government in both countries impacted the voter choices in these elections. The LDDP was blamed for economic stagnation and fiscal scandals lost to the Homeland Union. While in Latvia the parties who took part in the 1995 election were fluid in principles and platforms, nevertheless, “those who could be identified most closely with the perceived failures of government to improve the economic life suffered substantial losses” (Davies and Ozolins 2012, 126). In Latvia for the second election in the row now in 1993 and 1995, the parties that won stressed socioeconomic issues (Smith-Siversten 1998, 98). In terms of the overall winners and losers of this election, the government was formed with over half of deputies who had no experience in government (Davies and Ozolins 2012, 128). This was especially the case since, again, the wholly new Democratic Party Saimnieks won the majority, causing an increase in party system instability. In the Lithuanian case, although, new parties did emerge the “old” parties remained in government successfully. Anchoring greater overall party system stability. This is because legitimate ruling parties emerged in the Lithuanian system (Krupavicius 1997, 548), this was not the case in Latvia, no ruling parties emerged nor did a turnover of power occur.

Table 1: Party System Stability/Fluidity in Latvia

Latvia	Total Competing	In Saeima	New Parties	(%) New Parties Saeima	Parties Voted Out	(%) Voted Out	(%) Saeima Seats by Largest Party	(%) Saeima Seats by runner-up
1993	23	8	8	100	2	100	36	15
1995	19	9	6	66	4	50	18	16
1998	21	6	3	50	6	66	24	21
2002	20	6	4	66	4	66	26	25
2006	19	7	1	14	0	0	23	18
2010	13	5	2	40	5	71	33	29
2011	13	5	1	20	1	20	31	22
2014	13	6	2	33	1	20	24	23
Average	17.6	6.5	3.4	48.6	2.9	49.1	26.9	21.1

In summary, in regard to party system stability in both countries in the 1990's we can see clear similarities such as high number of parties in competition and a high number of new parties in parliament. This is understandable granted the parties within the system lacked organizational roots and stability that would allow to evade party extinction. The percentage of new parties is bigger, granted not significantly bigger, in Latvia partly due to the lack of stable left-right ideological parties that characterized the Lithuanian party system. Thus the “genuine” ideological cleavage in Lithuania allowed for a more stable party system in comparison to Latvia. This is further shown by a higher percentage of parties voted out in Latvia when compared to Lithuania. There is a higher overall difference between the percentages of seats in Lithuania where the winner is most likely to win a majority, while in Latvia the parties are more likely to be evenly spread out. So while seat volatility in Latvia is mainly caused by new parties coming onto the scene and then never returning come next election. In Lithuania greater seat volatility is caused by the turnover of power between the ideological parties.

Table 2: Party System Stability/Fluidity in Lithuania

Lithuania	Total Competing	In Seimas	New Parties	(%) New Parties in Seimas	Parties Voted Out	(%) Voted Out	(%) Seats by Largest Party in Seimas	(%) Seats by runner-up in Seimas
1992	20	8	6	75	4	57	51	21
1996	29	15	7	46	2	25	51	11
2000	15	7	1	14	8	53	24	20
2004	20	7	3	42	1	14	27	17
2008	16	10	4	40	1	14	31	17
2012	18	8	1	12	2	20	27	23
Average	19.7	9.2	3.7	38.2	3	30.5	35.2	18.2

The analysis indicates that system wide fluidity is overall stronger in Latvia because of the lack of anchoring from "genuine" ideological balancers that allowed greater system stability in Lithuania. Hence, the extent of party system balance within the party system impacts its stability. Voters are given less choice. This causes greater stability as power is shared between major known contenders rather than wholly new contenders within the system. It is important to differentiate between overall system stability versus seat volatility, as high seat volatility in Lithuania remained, but the party system as a whole was more stable. Lastly, coalition formation was not as imperative in Lithuania because the two main ideological parties were able to sustain majority between the turnovers. The ability of parties to win majority, due to the existence of a bipolar ideological environment, allowed for the difference in the outcomes of party system stability in Lithuania and the lack of majority parties, within the same context, for Latvia.

Table 3: Seat Volatility in Latvia and Lithuania

Latvia	1995	1998	2002	2006	2010	2011	2014	Average
	49.5	31.5	43.5	32	37	36	26	36.5
Lithuania	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	Average		
	48	60.5	38	35	22.5	40.8		

In contrast, while ideological balancers have stabilized the Lithuanian party system, with the loss of these ideological balancers came greater party system instability. The 2000 election in Lithuania, put an end to dominance of ideologically dominant parties – the fluctuation of power was the main cause for party system instability, especially high seat volatility, in the 1990's, nevertheless, it brought in further instability in the system overall that continues to this day. Clark and Prekevicius (2003) show two key issues were of concern for the parties in this election economic policy and the defense budget. This shows the importance of a socio-economics and geopolitical factors, within the historic context. Granted, that the 1990's voter preferences were dominated not just by economic concerns, as seen above whence incumbent governments were punished for economic performance but also by the communist and anticommunist sentiment between the Homeland Union and the LDDP.

In addition, the election did not produce a majority party for the first time, it allowed the New Politics Bloc made up of New Union, Liberal Union, Center Union, and Modern Christian Democratic Union to win 66 seats (Clark and Prekevicius 2003, 552). The realignment thus proved that the party system is not yet "frozen". The loss of the "genuine" ideological structure in Lithuania following the 2000 election indicates greater system fluidity in Lithuania especially in terms of the diminishing percentage between the majority winner party and the runner up party in terms of seats in Seimas. Creating greater importance for effective coalition governments, and the indication of increasing variance of voter choice. This goes with the theory set out by Agh that newly emerging interests are now being established as the "genuine" ideological cleavage is no longer an important concern. This dealignment hence increases the fluidity of the Lithuanian party system. The Lithuanian case has thus far shown the pertinent

impact of ideological balancers within the party system and its relationship to system wide stability.

Secondly, the variance of party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia is impacted by the salience of ethnicization of the party system and the electoral design. Salience in this context means how strong does the ethnicization of the society impact the party system. The more salient the party system ethnicization within society the more likely the party system overall shows instability. The electoral design may promote either a more stable or a more unstable party system based on the context of how salient the ethnic division within society is. Both, ethnicization of the party system and its salience and electoral design interact with the ideological environment within the party system. In this section, I argue that the lack of ideological balancers in Latvia is a cause of party system instability, further, the impact is exacerbated by the greater salience of ethnicization versus than in Lithuania, and by the form of electoral design that Latvia has adopted for its party system.

In the Latvian election of 1998, the right-wing won with the moderate conservatives People's Party, Latvian Way (an offshoot of the Latvian Popular Front, the biggest winners in the 1993 election), and the most nationalistic party For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Party. Then came the left leaning parties National Harmony Party, which is one of the major Russian minority parties and the Latvian Social Democratic alliance, made of ethnic Latvians. As Pettai (2006) points out that ethnic parties have only been successful in Latvia, in terms of the Baltic States. These Russian minority parties occupy the place of the social democrats in Latvia (Saarts 2011, 93). Thus, the Russian electorate significantly more tends to vote for the left parties made up of Russian minority ethnic parties, while on the very right spectrum is the For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Conservative Party. This is

problematic because it creates a lot of centre-rightist and ethnically moderate parties within the Latvian party system (Nakai 2014, 66). As Nakai has shown that then these moderate parties have been under the pressure to show their loyalty toward the Latvian electorate to gain and retain support in elections in terms of two main issues of contention in Latvia – citizenship law and the language policy (Nakai 2014, 68-72). This then further polarizes the already ethnically divided electorate in terms of the left-right continuum in Latvia and further gives reason for ethnic minority parties to prosper with the Russian-speaking electorate in Latvia. The left-right divide in Latvia is thus not and was never ideological, but rather ethnic.

The same ethnic divide exists in Lithuania, however, it exerts a different impact because of less minorities overall in Lithuania when compared to Latvia, and because of the highly localized small Polish population that have been historically more problematic than the Russian minority. In addition, institutional arrangements can further explain the difference in the proliferation and success of the ethnic parties in Latvia, beyond the demographic character of the countries. The Latvian system uses a PR system that is much more viable for ethnic parties and thus, has given Russian-minority parties greater success overall (Moser 2005, 113). While the Lithuanian system in addition to the PR uses an SMD system, which allows highly concentrated minorities to win seats, nevertheless they will win too few seats to play an important and meaningful role in government (Moser 2006, 113). Thus, the ethnic cleavages play an important role in shaping party system stability, but to a different extent due to demographic variation institutional rules on the other.

The difference in the fates of the communist successor parties in Lithuania and Latvia has led to variations in terms of party system stability. Latvia has experienced greater party system fluidity in the early years of institutionalization without the initial freezing that Lithuania

experienced. The system mirrored a two party system as in the elections of 1990, 1992, and 1998 the votes swung between the Homeland Union (as Sajudis in 1990 elections) and the Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania. This initial freezing of the main contenders within the ideological system balance in Lithuania did not last as Ramonaite in fact calls the post-2000 election a period of the destabilization of the party system as a result parties are much more likely to see themselves as 'centrist' as in the Latvian party system (Ramonaite 2006, 70 and 86). In Lithuania the movement is now inward toward the center as the ideologically "genuine" cleavage less relevant in regard to causing fluidity. In essence the two ideological opposites, the Homeland Union and the Social Democrats (in part a merger of the former LDDP) currently, have not been able to sustain majority votes and now must more heavily rely on coalition governments. The Latvian system has always been dependent on the centre-right parties and was never as ideologically polarized as the Lithuanian system. The Latvian system has always tended to rely to a greater extent than the Lithuanian system on coalition governments.

The trend of party system instability in Lithuania was continued in the 2004 election. With the biggest single winner being the newly established Labour Party taking in 28.4% of the vote, due to its populist and anti-establishment stance it lacked an ideological character (Jurkynas 2005, 773-774). The main issue area concerned again socio-economic concerns especially for the rural electorate that was instrumental in the support of the new Labour Party. The coalition was formed by the leftists the Union of Peasants and New Democracy, Labour Party, Social Democrats, and the Social Liberals (Jurkynas 2005, 775). The election continued to show the importance of effective coalition governments and their retention in Lithuania in the more fluid party system post-2000 elections. By relying more on coalition governments the Lithuanian party system is essentially mirroring the system that Latvia had in the 1990's. This reliance on

coalitions is now especially more important because of now higher fragmentation that was rather moderate in the 1990's in Lithuania (Duvold and Jurkynas 2004, 135-137).

The Latvian election in 2002 was characterized by a similar emergence of a new party at the top of the polls, with high party fragmentation. In Latvia it was the New Era party whose appeal most may have rested in the fact that the party did not have defectors from any other parties in its base. Since concerns of corruption in business and politics were salient issues during the elections (Davies and Ozolins 2004, 836), impacting voter choice in a powerful way. The coalition was formed by Latvia's First, Green and Farmer's Union, and For Fatherland and Freedom in total they controlled 55 seats in Saeima (Davies and Ozolins 2004, 839). This is despite the fact that Union of Political Organizations "For Human Rights in a Unites Latvia," an alliance of Russian minority parties, placed second in the polls. The success of Russian minority parties in this case, further exemplifies the strong influence of the open-list PR system. The Russian minority parties continue to be successful when it comes to the polls, but not successful in being part of coalition government. This is because it is easier for ethnic minorities to be elected under the PR system, especially in part due to the fact that the Russian population is more significant in Latvia. The inability of the Russian parties to join coalition governments exemplifies the salience effect of the ethnicized party system. This is because the ethnic Latvian parties tend to garner their votes from ethnic Latvians, thus distancing themselves from ethnic minority electorate. This makes sense within an ethnically divided society because ones support for a party is based on birth and is only to a lesser degree based on ideology of the party (Horowitz 1985).

Party system instability is also characteristic of the 2008 election in Lithuania which mainly focused on socio-economic issues. It brought victory to the conservative Homeland

Union who had taken in the Lithuanian Nationalist Union earlier in the election year and merged with the Christian Democrats in May of 2008, overall the party retained the most stable electorate (Jurkynas 2009, 330). Jurkynas finds two particular issues that have remained relevant in terms of party system institutionalization these are underdeveloped cleavages and the personalization of politics (Jurkynas 2009, 333). The Latvian parties are even more leader driven and temporary (Pabriks and Stokenberga 2006). This according to Saarts, is due to the fact that Latvia has not introduced state funding, meaning that many Latvian parties have been dominated by business oligarchs (Saarts 2011, 98). This is problematic because it exacerbates instability in terms of party system, however, there was some hope in 2006 Latvian election. The coalition was formed by the People's Party, Union of Greens and Peasant's, Latvia's First Party/Latvian Way, and For Fatherland and Freedom, it was an interesting result in that it was the first coalition to retain power following the previous election.

The lack of ideological balancers in Latvia is a cause of party system instability, further, the impact is exacerbated by the greater salience of ethnicization versus than in Lithuania, and by the form of electoral design that Latvia has adopted for its party system. As we have seen the lack of ideological balancers, or the main contenders, in Latvia has created greater party system instability which is exemplified by a high number of new parties winning elections and then loosing come next elections. In Lithuania there was a turnover between the two contenders, leaving the smaller parties minor roles. Seat volatility itself being caused by the turnovers in Lithuania, rather than the emergence of new contenders as in Latvia. Party system instability is further deepened by the open-list PR electoral system in Latvia, as shown by the data of the high number of parties in competition and a high number of new parties. The high degree and salience of the ethnicization in Latvia of the party system contributes to the party system instability in a

way as to disallow the party system to create a system of “genuine” ideological balance. This is because the divide in the Latvian system is highly salient to such an extent that it is divided ethnically and not ideologically.

Third, the variance of party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia is impacted by the effectiveness of coalition retention over time. This is because when the same parties are able to form coalition governments over time party system stability increases as well. Especially, because the key parties that belong in such coalitions are the same in the current election as in the preceding election. This decreases the rise of new contenders who might then become part of a governing coalition. Coalition retention over time, again, is also impacted by the ethnicization of the party system as well as the electoral design. This section will analyze how coalition retention has impacted party system stability in Lithuania and Latvia. Both countries diverge on the degree of salience of ethnicization of the party system and the electoral design. This section will show that the impact of coalition retention impacts party system stabilization. Such an impact is more pronounced in party systems where the degree and salience of party system ethnicization is greater.

The recent retention of coalition governments over time in Latvia has greatly reduced overall party system instability. The idea that party rootedness in society might be on the increase was shattered in the 2010 Latvian election. Newcomer the Unity party emerged as an electoral alliance of three right-wing parties New Era Party, Civic Union, and Society for Other Politics, with Harmony Centre in second place losing out only by four seats in parliament. Unity further has been able to remain in government for the next two elections in 2011 and 2014. The reason for the early 2011 election was the concern over corruption in terms of Latvian political parties. Harmony Centre took the most seats in this election, by gaining two seats, however was

not part of the coalition government, nor was the party asked to participate in government. Instead Unity, Zatlers Reform Party, and the National Alliance formed the coalition agreement (Pryce 2012, 615). The 2012 Latvian language referendum further strengthened ethnic political divisions, according to Lublin Harmony Centre's support of the referendum will create further distrust for the party and it will unlikely be part of the government coalition in the future (Lublin 2013, 387). The 2014 election, although highly fragmented was won by the Harmony Centre party by one seat and Unity came in second place. Harmony Centre was not part of the coalition, as the Unity, Union of Greens and Farmer's, and the National Alliance formed the coalition government. This again shows how the salience of the ethnicized party system impacts coalition formation itself. The centre-right parties that formed the government sought to disassociate themselves from the Russian minority party, this is a way not to lose titular votes. Hence, the electoral design increases the chances of ethnic party success, but the salience of ethnicization stifles effective coalition retention for minority parties in Latvia.

The last three elections in Latvia can be characterized as stabilizing in terms of lesser extent of fluidity and may indicate a form of "freezing" in terms of coalition retention, that has brought about greater party system stability as the "genuine" ideological divide has in the early Lithuanian elections. The ability of Unity to retain power in form of being part of a government coalition has brought about greater party system stability in the last two elections. In addition, the fact that the coalitions, in the past governments, have been formed by right-wing party – National Alliance and three center-right parties – Unity, Reform, and Union of Green's and Farmer's indicates the high degree and salience of an ethnicized party system. This is because Harmony Centre a leftist party that has been mainly associated with the Russian minority and ethnic issues has won the 2011 and 2014 elections, and was only second place in 2010 failed to

be a part of a coalition government. The high salience of the ethnicization of the party system is shown by the fact that ethnic determinism tends to influence voter choice. As Sikk and Bochslers show, ethnic minority parties and ethnic Latvian parties friendly to the minorities such as Latvia's First Party/Latvia's Way, Harmony Center, and For Human Rights in Latvia hardly get any votes in ethnic Latvian areas (Sikk and Bochslers 2008, 18) while the nationalist parties get the majority of the votes from titular voters. Overall, party system stability is higher in Latvia, in which the salience of party system ethnicization is higher when compared to Lithuania. This is supported by data in that less parties have been in competition for the last three elections when compared to Lithuania, by a lower number overall of new parties in Saeima, and by the lower number of parties voted out during these elections.

Similarly, the 2012 Lithuanian election can be characterized by increasing party system stability with it a lower seat volatility. The Social Democrats in the 2012 Lithuanian election formed the coalition government with the Labour Party, Order and Justice, and the Electoral Coalition of Poles in Lithuania. Homeland Union came in third place. The Liberal Movement retained its general position and only lost one seat when compared to the previous election, while the results of the Liberal and Center Union were so dismal that they failed to gain any seats at all and lost representation, clearly a shift became evident in terms of the two competing parties for liberalism. Overall, the programmatic party characteristics remained among the two balancers – the Homeland Union and the Social Democrats. This makes sense granted they have the history and experience, thus overall are better in party organizational structures. Ideological concerns have shifted into mainly socio-economic concerns, while a similar ethnic division remain in Lithuania as in Latvia, except it is less relevant due to demographic numbers and institutional rules. The salience of the ethnicization of the party system is lesser in Lithuania to an extent as

specifically, although rather controversial in the media, the Poles joined the governing coalition. The success of the Poles is partly due to the electoral design that allows highly concentrated minorities to win seats, Lithuania uses a mixed SMD and closed-list PR system. This election proved to be rather stable as well, but to a different extent. The number of competing parties had risen and while simultaneously the number of parties elected in Seimas had lowered by two. In addition, the number of new parties had fallen by three. Lastly, the difference between the amount of votes by the winner and the runner is as low as in the 2000 election, indicating party system instability. At the same time seat volatility has decreased since the last election.

Fourth, I will now review my argument in the context of my analysis in more general terms in order to highlight the main causes of party system variance in Lithuania and Latvia. The analysis of the party system stability in both Lithuania and Latvia in terms of the main predictors of ideological cleavages and retention of coalition governments share similarities and differences. We can conclude that the Lithuanian party system is more of a “frozen” party system because the two ideological balancers have remained over time. The balance was disturbed in the 2000 election, but the main ideological opponents have remained. The analysis shows that there has been fluidity over time in terms of how stable overall the party system is for both countries. Common issues with party system instability such as seat volatility, party extinction, high fragmentation, lack of ideologically stable parties, personalistic leaders, weak organizational structure, institutional rules, and the ethnic divide impact the party systems at different levels. The important difference between the two countries is the lack of ideological turnover in Latvia that occurred in Lithuania in the 1990's. This led to a different outcome in terms of institutionalization itself. The "genuine" ideological cleavage in Lithuania was not strong enough to be sustained, granted new interests of the voters emerged as a trend post-2000 elections. The

establishment of stable cleavages within a party system moved back to the drawing board. As a result retention of coalitions has increased in importance in recent years. While for Latvia the system was initially very fluid, nevertheless, the results of effective coalition retention have now emerged in the recent elections, in terms of both overall party system stability and individual seat volatility.

The difference in party system stability in Latvia and Lithuania can be explained by the ideological balance of the system and coalition government retention. The need for such parties for the significantly influential Russian population in Latvia has arisen because of the high degree and salience of the ethnicized party system. This is partly because of the rigidity of the ethnically divided societies where one's ethnicity decides one's politics. The reason of Russian minority party success can be attributed partly to the electoral system. As a result, with ethnic minorities voting for the left-Russian parties, the titular citizens tend to vote for the many parties available to them such as nationalist right and centre-right parties. The convergence in terms of centre-right parties vying for voters, hence, contributing to greater seat volatility and system wide fluidity. This exacerbates party system instability. This was especially the case in the early elections, in the last two elections we have seen emergence and continuance of successful coalition partners on both the left-right spectrum, hence, reducing seat volatility. The reduction of seat volatility is not enough as a measure by itself for us to conclude of the stability of the overall party system. That is why we also rely on the other seven measures in the data set that does confirm this for the Latvian case that system wide fluidity has more or less stabilized, with the exception of highly fragmented seats. In Lithuania, ethnic minorities are more likely to vote for the left parties, but so are Lithuanians. This is in part due to the "genuine" ideological cleavage created by the left and right parties within which the interests of the titular citizens were

incorporated. At the same time the fact that there are less ethnic minorities, who are also highly regionally concentrated, in Lithuania creates less salience in regard to the ethnicized party system. Lithuanian electoral design is much more viable for highly concentrated minorities. This explains the success of the Poles in the recent elections, and the lesser extent of salience of the ethnicized system explains why the Poles have been welcomed into the left coalition government in 2012.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I explored the extent of party system institutionalization in Lithuania and Latvia in terms of a continuum of party system stability. I have explained that the reasons for the fluctuations in terms of party system stability are caused by the degree coalitions that are able to retain power over time and the degree to which ideological balancers remain relevant within the party system. Both are shaped by the extent of how salient the ethnicization of the party system is and the electoral system, and thus either exacerbate party system instability or make a party system more stable. The significance of the ethnic divide as a politicized tool is stronger in Latvia because of higher salience of ethnicization and electoral rules that differ from Lithuania. The ethnic minority parties have dominated the left, thus leaving the titular citizens the many available choices within the right and the centre-right. The higher degree of competence in terms of post-Soviet voters, for the ethnic minorities the choice was clear, the Russian-speaking left parties, while for the titular citizens the many parties in the centre-right translated into the ability for the voters to punish the incumbents through economic voting. This led to a lack of party rootedness that then caused party extinction, and hence greater seat volatility. Seat volatility improved in the last election because of the retention of coalitions among the right and the centre-right parties anchoring the as much as powerful Harmony Centre party. Both parties the rightist and the leftists, thus, form an ethnic divide. Seat volatility in Lithuania is high due to the turnover between the two political ideologues initially. Post-2000 elections it began a trend toward a decrease because of a greater usage of coalition governments. If we exclude the seat volatility in Lithuania that occurred because of ideological turnover of parties, Latvia has a greater seat volatility due to greater overall party system instability. When we take in context seat volatility

as a part of measures for party system stability. My research has shown that the degree and salience of ethnicization of a party system and the electoral system matters, for ethnically divided societies, in terms of impacting the party system ideological balance and coalition retention over time, both of which impact party system stability.

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