

THE ETHNIC-COLONIAL COMMUNIST LEGACY AND THE FORMATION OF THE ESTONIAN AND LATVIAN PARTY SYSTEMS

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Abstract. The Estonian and Latvian party politics stand apart from the Central and Eastern European mainstream for two principal reasons: the peculiar absence of the communist-successor parties and the right-wing-inclined ideologically unbalanced party competition. All these features seem to be framed by unique cleavage constellations in which the ethnic cleavage is effectively merged with the communist-anti-communist cleavage. The article seeks to explain these exceptional features, while applying to the theory formulated by Herbert Kitschelt, in which different types of communist regime legacies are linked with cleavage formation and the evolution of party systems. However, the analysis demonstrates that Kitschelt's original argument on the Latvian and Estonian cases was misleading and therefore a new type of communist legacy was proposed – the ethnic-colonial communism, which enables to provide a more convincing explanation and opens up new research perspectives on the subject.

Keywords: political parties, cleavages, regime legacy, communism, Latvia, Estonia

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1. Introduction

The party systems in the Baltic states are considered to be not very different from other Central and Eastern European (CEE)¹ countries while one looks at the very

¹ In the context of the current study CEE countries are defined as the new EU East-European member states. There are two principal reasons why the CEE countries are chosen as a main reference point for the current article. First, it is more common in the literature that the party systems in the Baltic states are compared with other CEE countries, not with the post-Soviet countries, where political regimes and party systems have been considerably different (Jungerstam-Mulders 2006, Lewis 2000, 2006, Auers 2015, Enyedi 2006). Second, the article is focused on the cleavage and party system formation and there is considerably less information about the party systems in various post-Soviet countries than about the CEE countries (see e.g. Jungerstam-Mulders 2006, Evans and Whitefield 2000, Kitschelt et

general quantitative indicators usually employed for party system comparative analysis (e.g. electoral volatility, fragmentation) (see: Jungerstam-Mulders 2006, Lewis 2006). However, if one goes deeper and explores the structure of the party competition and cleavage constellations, it appears that particularly Latvia and Estonia (but not Lithuania) stand out as special cases for three reasons.

First, Latvia and Estonia are the only countries among the new EU member states, where the communist successor parties did not survive or they are playing an utterly marginal role in today's party politics (Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011, Saarts 2011)

Second, the Estonian and Latvian left-wing parties, especially Social Democrats, have been traditionally quite weak and the party competition shows the strong ideological inclination towards the right (Mikkil 2006, Auers 2013). Notably there have been no left-wing governments in power in Latvia and Estonia since 1992 – all the leading parties of the government coalitions have been right-wing parties (Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011).

How to explain these striking peculiarities? The general evolution of the Baltic party systems has not been remarkably distinct from the rest of CEE (Auers 2015, Jungerstam-Mulders 2006, Cabada, Hloušek, and Jurek 2014) and with their parliamentary institutional design and the PR electoral systems Latvia and Estonia follow the CEE mainstream (Birch 2003, Auers 2015). That largely rules out the institutional and purely party-system-based explanations and leads towards more context-specific explanations in which the social, demographical and historical background of the countries is taken into account. The approach, which concentrates on the social structure of the given society and explores how the social cleavages affect the party competition, is called as “sociological approach” (Ware 1996).

If we observe the cleavage constellations in the Latvian and Estonian party politics, we can notice a peculiar feature: the dominant ethnic cleavage in these countries has been effectively combined with the communist-anti-communist cleavage (the assessment on the communist past) (Duvold 2015, Saarts 2011). It is rather unique in CEE, because the communist-anti-communist cleavage is not usually fused with the ethnic cleavage in the post-communist world (Berglund, Deegan-Krause, and Ekman 2013, Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009).

The underlying hypothesis of the current study is that the idiosyncratic cleavage constellations have been largely responsible of the above-mentioned particular features manifested in the Latvian and Estonian party systems. That is the reason why the current study is predominately focused on cleavages, their formation and adopts the sociological approach.

Probably the most acknowledged theoretical approach on cleavages and party system formation in post-communist countries has been put forward by Herbert Kitschelt and his colleagues (1999). They connect the cleavage formation with different communist regime legacies found in the region. Kitschelt distinguishes

al. 1999, Berglund, Ekman, and Aarebrot 2004). The author only occasionally refers to the post-Soviet countries, but the major reference point will be CEE.

between three kinds of communist regimes: (1) the bureaucratic-authoritarian communism (e.g. Czechoslovakia, East Germany); (2) national accommodative communism (e.g. Poland, Hungary); (3) patrimonial communism (e.g. Romania, Bulgaria). According to Kitschelt the different regime legacies could lead to distinct cleavage configurations (and party systems). For example in the case of national-accommodative communist legacy the socio-cultural divide (conflict between the religious national-authoritarian camp on the one hand and the secular-cosmopolitan-libertarian camp on the other hand) gains prominence, while patrimonial communist legacy promotes the regime-divide (communist-anti-communist cleavage) and the ethnic cleavage.

Kitschelt considers the Baltic states' communist legacies to be a mix of patrimonial communism and national-accommodative communism. At first glance it seems to be correct regarding the cleavages constellations in Latvia and Estonia. However, the more detailed analysis in the current article will demonstrate that the communist legacy in Latvia and Estonia does not bear any resemblance to patrimonial communism and the major features found in the regime legacy rather point towards the blend of national-accommodative and bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. Nevertheless, the author finds out that even in that case some really significant and unique features could be identified for Latvia and Estonia which Kitschelt's initial typology was not able to capture. This leads to the conclusion that there might be a new specific regime legacy, which describes the Baltic experiences much better. The new regime type proposed is called *ethnic-colonial communism*.

Thus, the aim of the article is to provide an explanation to peculiarities in the Estonian and Latvian party politics (the absence of communist-successor parties, weakness of the left wing parties and the idiosyncratic cleavage constellations), while based on the theory outlined by Kitschelt on the post-communist party systems and communist regime legacies. However, the author is going to correct Kitschelt's initial empirical conclusions and will propose a new regime legacy.

It is very important to note that the current article is not going to refute Kitschelt's theory or to disapprove its initial typologies. It will rather demonstrate that while taking Kitschelt's conceptual framework as a point of departure it is possible to construct new relevant types of communist regime legacies and to add some new significant variables into the existing framework and thus enhance the theoretical and empirical scope and applicability of the initial theory. We have to bear in mind that Kitschelt's initial framework was almost exclusively concentrated on the Visegrad countries and the Eastern Balkans – on the countries which are rather mono-ethnic societies (at least the Visegrad countries) and have had slightly different experiences with the communist rule than the Baltic states.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to further clarify the scope and ambition of the current article. First, the current study provides only one possible explanation to the peculiarities in the Latvian and Estonian party systems listed above. The author is fully aware that there could be alternative explanations and will reflect on them briefly in the following article. However, he still suggests that the sociological

approach, while focused on the communist regime legacies and highlights the various aspects related with cleavage formation, enables to offer a relatively compelling explanation to these exceptional features visible in the Baltic party systems. Second, the major body of the article is focused on the Kitschelt's framework: its applicability in the Baltic context and on the need to correct and supplement it. Therefore, due to the limited space of the article, it is impossible to provide a very detailed description of the proposed ethnic-communist regime, to conceptualize the meaning of "ethnicity" and "colonialism" in a very deep-going manner and to examine the impact of the regime legacy on the party systems in a very comprehensive way. The article rather seeks to introduce an idea that there might be a specific regime legacy in the Baltic states, which enables to explain several peculiarities found in the Latvian and Estonian party politics, and proposes an initial and general theoretical model how that regime legacy has worked for the cleavage and party system formation. The author acknowledges the fact that additional research is needed in the future, in order to put more flesh on the bones.

So far we have talked only about Latvia and Estonia, but one can raise the question about the Lithuania. The article is mainly focused on Latvia and Estonia indeed, because Lithuania fits very well with Kitschelt's framework as a mix of national-accommodative and patrimonial communism (see Norkus 2012) and the cleavages constellations and party competition in Lithuania tend to be rather similar to the CEE mainstream (Novagrockien 2001). Thus, only occasional references will be made to the Lithuanian case in the current article.

The structure of the paper will be as follows: in the first section we will focus on the major features that make Latvian and Estonian party systems to stand out from the CEE mainstream. However, we will also demonstrate that while using the very general quantitative indicators, these countries are not very exceptional; in the second section we will concentrate on the theory of communist legacies by Kitschelt and reveal in what way his attempts to classify Latvia and Estonia had many empirical flaws; finally we will propose the new regime type for Latvia and Estonia, called ethnic-colonial communism, point out its major features and demonstrate how these features enable us to understand the peculiarities of Latvian and Estonian party politics and cleavage formation and contribute to our understanding on cleavage formation in a multi-ethnic post-communist societies.

2. Peculiarities of Latvian and Estonian party politics

While looking at the widely used quantitative indicators for the party system analysis, as electoral volatility, fragmentation (effective number of electoral parties – ENEP) and party membership, there is no empirical evidence that Estonian and Latvian party systems stand apart from the CEE mainstream (see Appendix 1). They are perhaps only slightly more fragmented than it is the norm in other CEE countries, but it seems to be the only remarkable feature.

However, if we go beyond the numbers and takes a deeper look at Latvian and Estonian party systems, we will immediately notice the remarkable peculiarities listed earlier: the communist-anti-communist cleavage is effectively merged with the ethnic cleavage, the absence or marginality of the communist-successor parties, the weakness of the left-wing parties, which make the party competition to be ideologically unbalanced and strongly inclined to the right.

The sociological approach we use for the current analysis, concentrates on the social base of party support, putting emphasis on the cleavages and divides in the given society and explores their implications on the party systems (e.g. Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Ware 1996). Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified four major cleavages for Western European counties: class cleavage (also known as socio-economic cleavage), church-state cleavage, centre-periphery cleavage and urban-rural-cleavage. It is logical to assume that if the class cleavage is very pronounced, Social Democratic parties are expected to be quite prominent, if the urban-rural cleavage is central, agrarian parties would assume the leading position, etc. As a result, the cleavages constellations are very much responsible for which types of parties and party families would emerge, what would be the shape of the party system and whether it produces less or more ideologically balanced party competition.

The afore-mentioned considerations make cleavages the central category for our analysis, because we assume that the absence of post-communist parties and the unbalanced party competition would be mainly a by-product of specific cleavage constellations. The research on cleavages also allows us to adopt a more historic approach which is needed for examining the impact of communist regime legacies emphasized by Kitschelt.

However, as it was mentioned in the Introduction, the author of the article had also considered the rival explanations: namely the institutional and party-system centred explanations.

Concerning the institutional explanations, both Latvia and Estonia are using PR electoral system and it is difficult to see how their relatively open electoral systems could disadvantage the communist-successor parties or the left-wing parties in particular (Birch 2003, Auers 2015). The same could be said about the other institutional regulations concerning the party law and party financing (Sikk 2008).

While studying the early formation of Estonian and Latvian party systems, the researchers do not report any peculiar and purely party-system-dynamics-driven features or processes, which had hindered the rise of the communist-successor parties or the left-wing parties (Smith-Sivertsen 2004, Pabriks and Stokenberga 2006, Mikkel 2006, Kreuzer and Pettai 2003). They rather report the prevalent anti-communist sentiments, specific historical context and cleavages that have played a role here. There were no special lustration laws in Estonia and Latvia (like in Poland and Czech Republic), which made it somewhat difficult for former communist elites to run for public office (Pettai and Pettai 2014).

However, even if purely institutional and party-system-based explanations are discarded, it does not mean that there would not be any rival explanations at all. We will briefly consider them in the “Discussion” section.

The question on cleavages in CEE has puzzled many scholars (Kitschelt 1995, Lawson, Römmele, and Karasimeonov 1999, Berglund, Ekman, and Aarebrot 2004, Evans and Whitefield 2000). The broad scholarly consensus is that social cleavages are not rooted in post-communist societies to the same extent as in the West (Deegan-Krause 2007). Furthermore, the class cleavage, the central cleavage in Western European politics, is not so accentuated in post-communist settings and instead value- and identity-based cleavages have gained more importance (Berglund, Deegan-Krause, and Ekman 2013, Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009). Thus, most of the scholars doubt that the classical Lipset and Rokkan (1967) theory on cleavages is fully applicable to CEE countries. However, scholars still argue that cleavages do play an important role in the post-communist party politics, but their nature, types and evolution have been somewhat different from the West (Evans 2006, Evans and Whitefield 2000, Enyedi 2006).

Like in the rest of the CEE, the socio-economic cleavage has not gained the central position in the party competition of the Baltic states (Mikkil 2006, Jurkynas 2004, Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011). What makes Latvia and Estonia more special is not the fact that ethnic cleavage is playing a prominent role in their party politics, but the way ethnic cleavage has been effectively combined with the communist-anti-communist divide. Both in Latvian and Estonian party politics there is an anti-communist, anti-Russian and nationalist camp on the one hand, and rather Russian-friendly and relatively Soviet-nostalgic camp on the other. In other words, ethnic issues are often associated with the communist rule and the Russian-dominance. The study by Duvold (2015) demonstrates convincingly how the assessment on the communist past is strongly correlated with the ethnicity and the communist-anti-communist divide should be treated as an important sub-cleavage of a more encompassing ethnic divide.

Ethnic cleavage is quite salient in several CEE countries (for example in Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania – see (Berglund, Deegan-Krause, and Ekman 2013), but nowhere else has it been so explicitly connected with the communist past as in Latvia and Estonia.

What about Lithuania? The dominant cleavage in Lithuania has been the communist-anti-communist cleavage (Jurkynas 2004, Krupavičius 2005, Ramonaite 2006). But in contrast to Latvia and Estonia, it cannot be associated with the ethnic cleavage or with strong anti-Russian sentiments. The reason for that is that ethnic cleavage has been a second-rank divide in Lithuanian party politics, because the share of the Russian-speaking minority is quite low in comparison with Latvia and Estonia (the percentage of Russian speakers in Lithuania is 8%, in Latvia 37% and in Estonia 30% (Budryte 2005, Population and Housing Census – Estonia 2011, Population Census – Latvia 2011)). Communist-anti-communist divide in Lithuania has been constituted as an intra-elite conflict between the communist-successor party (Social Democrats) and nationalistic-conservative forces (Home-Land Union and other conservative right-wing parties). In Lithuania the anti-communist-anti-communist divide has been also reinforced by the clerical-anti-clerical divide, in which the right-wing anti-communist parties have been usually more church-

inclined than the left-wing communist successor party. Curiously, rather similar cleavage constellations are visible in Hungary and Poland, where the right-wing, anti-communist, clerical and nationalist camp is opposing the left-wing, anti-clerical, rather cosmopolitan and moderately communist-nostalgic camp (Cabada, Hloušek, and Jurek 2014).

In the post-communist settings it is reasonable not only to take a look at the classical ideological party families (liberals, social-democrats, conservatives, etc.), but to examine the historical roots of parties, associated with the process of democratic transition in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

According to Kostelecky (2002), five types of parties could be grouped by their historical roots: (1) communist successor parties, (2) former satellite parties (existed legally during the communist period, though they were absolutely marginal), (3) historical pre-communist parties (banned by communists, but re-established after the fall of the regime), (4) parties that have their roots in dissident movements, (5) new parties (completely new parties).

The rise of a certain type of parties, listed above, could be associated with the cleavage constellations as well: for example, the strong position of successor parties might reinforce the communist-anti-communist cleavage and vice versa, etc.

The most striking difference is the absence of communist successor parties or their utterly marginal position in Latvian and Estonian party politics. It is indeed unique in comparison with the rest of CEE, because in almost every post-communist country the communist parties managed to survive and in many countries they have occupied a central position in contemporary party politics (e.g. Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Lithuania) (Bozóki and Ishiyama 2002).

The Estonian Socialist Labour Party (later called the Leftist Party) managed to get representation in the parliament only with 2% of the seats in 1999 and it was the last time they got any representation in the legislature (Toomla 2005). The Latvian Socialist Party has been slightly more successful, but not very influential either (Runcis 2005). Since the 1993 elections, it has been a part of several wider Russian electoral unions (For Human Rights in United Latvia, Harmony Centre, etc.), but even in those electoral unions it has not played a very outstanding role. In 1995, the Socialist Party was running for elections on its own and managed to get only 5% of votes and it was the last time when the party had a representation in legislature as an independent political force.

In fact, it is problematic to treat these parties as classical successor-parties, they could be considered rather as ethnic parties (Estonian Leftist Party merged with several ethnic Russian parties in 2008, and Latvian Socialist Party has been the party of the Russian-speakers since its beginning). It is an additional nuance, which sets Latvia and Estonia apart from the CEE mainstream: the typical communist successor parties in CEE are either social democrats or nationalists/populist, but they never appeal to voters among the ethnic minority groups predominantly (Bozóki and Ishiyama 2002).

At this point Lithuania is again divergent from its Baltic neighbours. Today's Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (also known as the Democratic Labour Party

of Lithuania 1990–2001), which has its roots in the former Communist Party of Lithuania, has been a principal party in Lithuanian party system since the early 1990s. It has won several elections (1992, 2000, 2013), has been a governmental party many times and the major counterbalance for the right-wing conservative Homeland Union (Krupavičius 2005, Novagrockien 2001, Duvold and Jurkynas 2013).

The virtual absence or marginality of communist successor parties in Estonia and Latvia leads us to another peculiar feature. In most of the CEE countries there is usually at least one relatively well-established left-wing party, typically a social democratic party or socialist party, which has won elections and formed a government at least on one occasion². Curiously, that kind of relatively powerful left-wing party is almost absent in Latvian and Estonian party politics.

In both countries the left-wing and social democratic parties have been rather weak or often perform even as ethnic minority parties (Mikkel 2006, Auers 2013). As a consequence, the whole party system is strongly right-wing-inclined – in other words, dominated by national-conservative or market-liberal parties.

In fact, there is a social-democratic party in Latvia: Harmony Centre (recently renamed Harmony Social Democracy), which has been very successful in all recent elections (won elections 2010, 2011, 2014). However, even if Harmony Centre could be considered as a social democratic party it is often viewed as an ethnic minority party, because the majority of its voters are Russian speakers and it openly stands for the interests of the Russian-speaking minority (Auers 2013).

The Estonian Social Democratic Party has usually obtained only 10%–15% of votes and only recently (since 2011) has gained more popularity (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2015). The major left-wing party in Estonia, the Centre Party, identifies itself rather as a social-liberal party. However, according to The Manifesto Project (2015) database, the Centre Party could be considered clearly as a left-wing party (not as a classical centrist party) and has been even more left-wing than the Estonian Social Democratic Party. Moreover, like in Latvia, an overwhelming majority of the voters of the Centre Party are the Russian speakers (Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011, Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013, Saarts 2011).

Hence, even if the Harmony Centre and the Estonian Centre Party are treated as the major left-wing parties in their countries, they could also be considered as ethnic minority parties: their support among the ethnic Latvians and Estonians is relatively modest and they draw their support primarily from the Russian-speaking minority.

None of the above-mentioned left-wing parties have formed a government and occupied the position of prime minister, even if they have won elections (e.g. the Estonian Centre Party and Harmony Center in Latvia for several times). The Social Democrats and the Centre Party in Estonia have been members of government

² In Poland – Democratic Left Alliance, in Czech Republic – Social Democratic Party, in Hungary – Socialist Party, in Slovakia – Smer, in Slovenia – Social Democrats, in Romania – Social Democratic Party, in Bulgaria – Socialist Party. All these parties have been the leaders of the governmental coalitions at least once (see Berglund, Deegan-Krause, and Ekman 2013).

several times³, but the governmental coalitions have been always led by right-wing parties (Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011). The situation has been even more problematic for the Latvian left-wing: the ethnic cleavage, cross-cutting the normal right-left divide, has generated a peculiar situation, in which almost all ethnic Latvian parties are expected to be on the right wing, while the opposing ethnic Russian parties have seized free niches on the left. The ethnic minority parties or the left-wing parties supported by the Russian electorate (e.g. Harmony Centre) have never been in government in Latvia (Auers 2013, Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011).

Thus the idiosyncratic and rather exceptional cleavage constellations in Latvia and Estonia, where ethnic cleavage is attached to communist-anti-communist cleavage, have led to the party systems with no viable communist-successor parties and consequently the left-wing parties (social democrats) are also relatively weak and the whole party competition ideologically unbalanced. The left-wing ideologies are often associated not only with the communist past, but also with the Russians and the Russian dominance (in particular in Latvia).

The major differences between Latvia and Estonia on the one hand, and the rest of CEE countries (and Lithuania) on the other, are mapped in Table 1.

Table 1. Party system and party competition in Latvian and Estonian – major differences from the CEE mainstream

	Estonia and Latvia	CEE mainstream	Lithuania
Dominant cleavage constellations	Ethnic cleavage fused with communist-anti-communist cleavage. Socio-economic cleavage has a secondary importance.	Various patterns, but no linkage between ethnic and communist-anti-communist cleavages.	Communist-anti-communist cleavage, church-state cleavage, but marginal ethnic cleavage. Socio-economic cleavage has a secondary importance.
Historical roots of the parties	No viable communist-successor parties	Strong or medium strong communist-successor parties in every country.	A strong communist successor party
Ideological party families	Rather weak Social Democratic parties and other more powerful left-wing parties tend to be the Russian minority parties.	Social democrats or socialist parties as the major parties in the party system.	Social democrats as a major party in the party system
Ideological balance between the parties	Party systems strongly dominated by the right-wing parties	Relatively balanced competition between the right-wing and the left-wing	Balanced competition between the right-wing and the left-wing

Source: the author.

³ Estonian Social Democrats were in the government in 1992–1994, 1999–2001, 2007–2009, and now since 2014; Center Party in 1995, 2002–2003, 2005–2007.

3. Providing an explanation – Kitschelt's theory on communist legacies

Kitschelt's (1999) theoretical contribution is the major point of departure for the current study. There are three principal reasons why Kitschelt's theory was chosen: First, until now it is probably the most acknowledged, coherent and comprehensive theoretical account which attempts to explain the evolution of the post-communist party systems and the formation of electoral cleavages (see e.g. Evans and Whitefield 2000, Evans 2006, Enyedi 2006). Second, because the major focus of the current analysis is the evolution of the Baltic party systems and the question why certain type of parties, party families and cleavage configurations did rise (or did not emerge), Kitschelt's theory is probably the best to provide explanation, because it is also predominately concentrated on the question how the emerging post-communist cleavage constellations give rise to specific party systems and types of parties. Third, Kitschelt theory is not only taking into account the developments at the post-communist period (since 1989 or 1991), but encourages to take a longer view and to consider the impact of the communist period. The history seems to be extremely important for analysing the Baltic context in which the profound demographic changes at the Soviet time (the mass immigration of Russian speakers) and the dramatic experiences with foreign political domination have really re-modelled these societies and shaped the perceptions on politics (see e.g. Kasekamp 2010, Auers 2015).

Why does Kitschelt emphasize the role played by the communist regime legacies and the history? He argues that the power relations, resource endowment and institutions of the former communist regimes had a profound impact on the institutions of new democratic regimes, because these choices were endogenously made by the actors emerging from the old pre-democratic systems (Kitschelt et al. 1999, 12–13). These actors had their own values, self-interests and cognitive maps and thus there were always some constraints imposed by the regime legacies which affected the institutional choices made under the new democratic regimes (included the intuitional choices made in the sphere of democratic party politics).

Kitschelt came out with a three-fold typology of communist regime legacies in which he distinguishes between patrimonial, national-accommodative and bureaucratic-authoritarian communism.

Patrimonial communism. In the case of patrimonial communism the communist rule was installed in predominately agrarian countries (employment in agriculture higher than 60%) with a low level of industrialization and urbanization. There was no viable urban middle class mobilization at the inter-war period needed for the democratic drive. So the authoritarian regime was relatively well-established even before the communist rule. That is the reason why countries with patrimonial communism had virtually no experience with democracy before 1989. The power relations during the communist period and even before were rather based on personal domination, buttressed by the clientelistic ties. Due to the low level of professionalization of bureaucracy, corruption and patronage were almost omnipresent in the political and administrative system. While promoting the rapid

industrialization and modernization, the communist elites were able to gain substantial legitimacy and therefore had enough power resources and symbolic capital to survive the transition. They reacted to the Velvet Revolutions with pre-emptive reforms, which allowed them to retain their power position even under the new democratic regime. According to Kitschelt, classic examples of patrimonial communism were Romania and Bulgaria.

In case of patrimonial communism ethnic divisions and the regime cleavage (communist-anti-communist) becomes dominant. But ethnic divisions are rather promoted by the former communist elite, which attempts to gain additional legitimacy while playing the ethnic card. Socio-economic cleavage occupies a fairly marginal position, because these countries had never experienced a powerful socio-economic mobilization according to models of modern class politics.

Because the former communist elite retains its power, it still commands the old clientelist networks. Clientelist, not programmatic parties, therefore tend to evolve under the patrimonial communist legacy.

Concerning the institutional engineering, the former communist elite prefers to introduce a candidate-oriented electoral system (majoritarian electoral system) and directly elected executive (presidential or semi-presidential system).

National-accommodative communism prevailed in fairly modernized countries, which were already moderately urbanized and industrialized (employment in agriculture 40%–60%). At the interwar period the urban middle-class was quite numerous and politically well mobilized, while the urban working class remained rather unorganized and passive. Since the countries largely retained their agrarian nature, there was a widespread agrarian mobilization and urban-rural was the most salient cleavage in party politics. National-accommodative communism emerged in countries with semi-authoritarian or semi-democratic regimes, which makes it distinct from patrimonial communism with a highly authoritarian personalistic leadership. While countries which adopted the national-accommodative communism were already relatively modernized before the communists came to power, the communist elite had never an opportunity to assert their legitimacy in modernizing the country in full scale. Rather, they faced a widespread resistance and had to make compromises with several dissatisfied elite groups. By making reasonable concessions, they were able to gain at least some support among the wider population. At the beginning of transition the communist elites were already weakened, but had strong organizational recourses at their disposal and they enjoyed a moderate public support. It allowed them to initiate the protracted negotiations with dissidents. After the negotiated regime change the former communists embraced the new democratic order, changed their imago and electoral appeal, founded a new party (communist successor party) and started to challenge the dissident parties. Hungary and Slovenia and to some extent Poland were the principal examples of the regime type described.

In countries with the national-accommodative communist legacy it was a socio-cultural divide that became essential (a conflict between religious-national-authoritarian camp on the one hand and secular-cosmopolitan-libertarian camp on the other hand). The former could crosscut the socio-economic divide, which was

rather weakly accentuated. If the former communist elite regains prominence and the communist successor-parties make a successful comeback, the communist-anti-communist cleavage could become prominent.

The national-accommodative communist legacy favours the rise of the programmatic, not the clientelist parties. Usually the mixed electoral system and semi-presidential (but parliamentary-inclined) government is introduced.

Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism was characteristic for industrialized and modernized countries (less than 40% employed in the agriculture) with considerable democratic experience in the inter-war years. Both the urban bourgeoisie and proletariat was politically mobilized and clustered around political parties. The communist party, after seizing the power, became a highly bureaucratic, hierarchical and disciplined political force, which followed the orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideology. It built its legitimacy on a large section of the working class, effectively indoctrinated by communist ideology. Communist regime itself was repressive and did not tolerate any opposition – any reform movements inside the party and in society were mercilessly eradicated. Because its narrow base of social support (only the working class was willing to be faithful) the regime was quite easily overturned by the short sharp protest wave in 1989. “The implosion of the old order”, was what happened in Kitschelt’s terms. Due to its feeble legitimacy, the old communist party was not able to transform itself to a “normal” democratic left-wing party, as was the case under national-accommodative communism. East Germany and the Czech Republic have been the only cases representing the bureaucratic-authoritarian communist legacy according to Kitschelt.

Taking into account the high level of socio-economic development, it was almost inevitable that socio-economic cleavage became dominant in the countries with bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. For the same reasons the Western-style programmatic parties are proliferating. In the institutional architecture rather proportional electoral system (PR system) and parliamentary government with a weak presidency is preferred.

While elaborating his theory, Kitschelt was not paying much attention to the Baltic states. He predominately focused on the Visegrad countries and on the Balkans (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria). Nevertheless, he puts forward an argument that all three Baltic countries could be classified as mixed types, encompassing the features of both patrimonial and national-accommodative communism (see Table 2).

Table 2. Communist regime legacies according to Kitschelt

Bureaucratic-authoritarian	Mixed	National-accommodative	Mixed	Patrimonial
Czech Republic	Poland	Hungary	Slovakia	Romania
East Germany		Slovenia	<i>Estonia</i>	Bulgaria
		Croatia	<i>Latvia</i>	Albania
			Lithuania	Macedonia
			Serbia	Ukraine, Russia and republics of former USSR (except the Baltic states)

Source: Kitschelt, et al. 1998, p. 39

4. The revision of Kitschelt's theory and the basic features of the ethnic-colonial communist legacy

Although Kitschelt's theory seems to be very elegant and highly elaborated, there could be several problems and flaws if we try to apply it to the Latvian and Estonian cases (see Appendix 2).

First, we have to consider the level of socio-economic development in pre-communist time. Latvia and Estonia were not economically so advanced and industrialized as the Czech Republic and Germany at the end of the 1930s. However, the employment in agriculture was around 60%, which was just slightly higher than in Hungary (51%), but lower than in Poland (65% – a country classified by Kitschelt as a mixed type, encompassing some features of bureaucratic-authoritarian communism) (Janos 2000, Kahk and Tarvel 1997). At the interwar period both Baltic countries' GDP was comparable with Hungary and they were economically more advanced than Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, which remained more backward agricultural economies (Valge 2003). So the evidence questions the argument that Latvia and Estonia resembled the patrimonial communism regimes. Perhaps they could be rather associated with the national-accommodative communism.

Second, both Latvia and Estonia experienced parliamentary democratic regime for a relatively long period (1918–1934) in the inter-war years. Of course, both countries' democratic experience was not comparable with Czechoslovakia, however it was even longer than in Weimar Germany (1918–1933) and much longer than in CEE in general (Kasekamp 2010). It raises doubts, whether Estonia and Latvia could be really associated with patrimonial communism or even with national-accommodative communism – with the countries lacking any democratic experience or had a very short-lived democratic government prior to the communist rule.

Third, concerning the methods how the Communist Party reinforced its dominance, Latvia and Estonia were not fully comparable with East Germany and Czechoslovakia, where the Communist Party was supported by the wide sections of working class. But at the same time repressions were relatively intense (Kasekamp 2010), which brings these countries closer to bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. The local communist parties were not allowed to make some liberal reforms as under national-accommodative regimes, nor they did rely on the extensive clientelist networks and could not act as the major modernizers of the countries, as in the case of patrimonial communism.

Fourth, contrary to the Balkan countries, the administrative culture of the Baltic states was strongly influenced by the German administrative traditions and easily met the criteria for Weberian technocratic bureaucratic rationalism (Norkus 2012). It was particularly true for Latvia and Estonia, where the Baltic German heritage and Protestantism made these countries more similar to the Nordic countries than to the Balkan. Although Latvia and Estonia had been incorporated into the Russian Empire since the 18th century, the administration of the Baltic provinces remained

in hands of the Baltic German nobility until the early 20th century, which affected the administrative cultures and traditions of these countries to quite a large extent (Kasekamp 2010). Even if clientelist ties and corruption permeated the communist party machinery during the Soviet times, their level and intensity was never comparable with the Caucasian and the Central Asian republics (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993). Hence, Estonia and Latvia could be treated as the intermediate cases between the bureaucratic-authoritarian and the national-accommodative communism, in which they had quite an advanced level of professional bureaucratization, but because of the strong Soviet impact they could not be considered as full-scale bureaucratic-authoritarian communist regimes either.

Fifth, patrimonial communism presumes the pre-emptive reforms introduced by the incumbent communist elites at the beginning of transition, while national-accommodative communism usually leads to the negotiated transition between the old communist elite and dissidents. Neither of the scenarios happened in Latvia and Estonia. The transition in these countries could be described rather as an implosion of the old regime: the old communist elite lost its legitimacy very rapidly in 1988–1989 and any attempts to rehabilitate the old communist party in the newly emerged democratic system failed (Lane et al. 2002, Pettai 2012). So the transition in Latvia and Estonia resembled very much the countries with bureaucratic-authoritarian communism.

Sixth, in Estonia rather programmatic parties evolved with some clientelist ties in the 1990s (Mikkel 2006). In Latvia, clientelism and corruption have been a more serious problem and therefore the emergence of the programmatic parties took longer than in Estonia (Auers 2013, 2015). However, neither of the countries fulfils the criteria of patrimonial communist legacy, where clientelism is usually much more pervasive.

Seventh, in the institutional sphere both countries adopted the PR electoral system and parliamentary system with weak presidency as in countries with the bureaucratic-communist legacy (Nørgaard 1999).

Concerning the cleavages, Estonia and Latvia seem to correspond to the patterns of patrimonial communism where both ethnic and communist-anti-communist cleavages are salient. Yet, as it was mentioned earlier, under the patrimonial communist legacy the ethnic divisions are deliberately promoted by the former communist elites. But in Latvia and Estonia communist successor parties became extinct. Thus both countries' cleavage constellations, in which ethnic and communist-anti-communist cleavage are effectively merged, constitute a rather unique case. Such patterns of cleavages fit neither with national-accommodative nor bureaucratic-authoritarian communist legacies.

The weaknesses of Kitschelt's arguments were also pointed out by Lithuanian political scientist Z. Norkus (2012). Norkus argues that Latvia and Estonia belonged to the same family with the bureaucratic-authoritarian communist regimes, while Lithuania was indeed a mix of patrimonial and national-accommodative communism.

According to Norkus the communist regime in Lithuania was principally national-accommodative, however it did assume some features of patrimonial communism: the level of socio-economic development of the country was rather poor prior to the communist rule (quite comparable with the Balkan countries), the democratic experience was very short (1918–1926), the apparatus of the Communist Party was penetrated by the clientelist networks and often the personalistic style of leadership was exercised. Due to economic backwardness of the country, the Lithuanian communists had an opportunity to further modernize the country (the major surge in urbanization and industrialization did happen during the communist time) and while doing so, they were able to gain some extra legitimacy. It was an option denied for the Latvian and Estonian communist elites, because these countries were already sufficiently modernized and the communist rule was considered to be a national disaster promoting de-modernization (see Ruutsoo 1995).

One could point out even some additional features, which allow Lithuania to be classified rather as national-accommodative communism: negotiated transition, in which a communist-successor party survived (but did lose the power), socio-cultural divide and communist-anti-communist divide as dominant cleavages, mixed electoral system and semi-presidential but parliamentary-inclined political system (Norkus 2012, Pettai, Auers, and Ramonaitė 2011, Auers 2015).

However, the current analysis demonstrates that Norkus was only partly correct about the Latvian and Estonian cases. The current analysis reveals that these countries could be classified rather as a mixed regime, embracing the features of both bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communism.

Nevertheless, several problems emerge if we classify Latvia and Estonia as countries with national-accommodative communist legacy. Even if a number of features of the regime legacy were evident, some very crucial aspects were missing: particularly negotiated transition and survival of the communist successor parties, which seems to be a hallmark for that regime legacy. Furthermore, even a more fundamental question could be raised: whether the communist rule in Latvia and Estonia was really “national”?

The reason why the communist successor parties failed to be successful in Latvia/Estonia and were wiped out by the regime implosion, is not only because the communist elites’ inability to gain any additional legitimacy by further modernizing the country, but we have to look at the national composition of the Latvian and Estonian communist parties. Here an astonishing fact is revealed: in the 1980s, ethnic Latvians made up only 43% of the Latvian Communist Party, while in Estonia the corresponding number was barely above 50% (52% in fact) (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993). It is also worth to note that many top functionaries of the party were ethnic Estonians/Latvians, but born in Russia and therefore not regarded as “genuine” ethnic Latvians or Estonians by the indigenous population (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993). The party leaders in the 1980s did not even speak fluent Latvian or Estonian and gave their speeches predominately in Russian (Kasekamp 2010). It was not a unique situation for some other former USSR republics (e.g. Ukraine, Belarus), but in CEE it was exceptional. Even in

Lithuania the share of the ethnic Lithuanians in the local Communist Party was 69%. In the Visegrad and in the Balkans the local communist parties were predominately staffed by the titular nations (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007).

Concerning the communist regime in the Baltic states we have to take into account a simple fact that the Baltic republics, after incorporation into the USSR in 1940, were no longer sovereign countries (Mälksoo 2002, Misiunas and Taagepera 1993). That is distinct from other CEE countries (the Visegrad countries and the Balkans) which retained a limited sovereignty under the communist domination (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007). Probably the best demonstration of lack of sovereignty is the fact that the Baltic countries did not control their borders and the flows of migration. Especially Latvia and Estonia saw a massive influx of the Russian-speaking immigrants in Soviet time. The scale immigration was so extensive that by the end of the 1980s the ethnic Latvians made up only 52% of population of Latvia, while in Estonia the corresponding number of Estonians was 62% (Kasekamp 2010). There was a realistic prospect that the indigenous population would become a minority in their own country. Lithuania was largely spared from mass immigration⁴.

Hence, how could the communist rule in Latvia and Estonia be called “national” if the local communist parties were dominated by the non-titular nationalities, these countries lacked even a basic sovereignty and the (immigration) policies of the communist regime posed a threat to a very existence of titular nations? The label “national communism” just does not fit at all.

Regarding the fact that it is extremely difficult to fit the Latvian and Estonian cases into the existing regime typology proposed by Kitschelt and these countries’ historical and demographic background seem to be quite special, the author suggests a new regime type for Latvia and Estonia, named *ethnic-colonial communism*.

Ethnic-colonial communism could be treated as an intermediate type between the bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communism, although it has its own unique features, which allow to treat it as a separate regime type.

What are these unique features and why do we call it *ethnic-colonial communism*?

Ethnic-colonial communism could be properly defined as a special variety of communist rule, which encompassed several semi-colonial features, where the military occupation accompanied with the mass immigration of the new settlers and the local communist parties were under the control of non-titular nations, which in turn heightened the ethnic tensions prior to and after the regime collapse. The former communist elites did not manage to retain the power after transition, because they were regarded as “alien” or just as “occupants” by the titular nation and therefore their attempts to establish successful communist-successor parties

⁴ The Russian-speaking immigrants who arrived in the Baltic states settled mostly in cities and were usually employed in industry. This is the reason why more modernized and industrialized Estonia and Latvia were more affected by the immigration than the less modernized and rural Lithuania (Misiunas and Taagepera 1993, Nørgaard 1999).

(unless they turn to be the ethnic minority parties for the Soviet time immigration minorities) prove to be futile.

Thus, shortly, the definitive and unique features of the ethnic-colonial communist regime are its semi-colonial character and heightened attention to ethnic issues.

We call the regime “ethnic”, not because the communist authorities themselves were particularly focused on ethnic issues or promoted some particular ethnic identities, but they encouraged mass-immigration into occupied territories which did cause ethnic tensions (at least in a hidden way) and increased concerns among the titular nations that in the future they would be a minority in their own country. There is no doubt that the ethnic issues and concerns about the Russian-speaking minority have also shaped the communist regime legacies in Latvia and Estonia to quite a large extent and motivated many important political decisions (e.g. citizenship policy, language policy, etc.) after transition (Budryte 2005, Galbreath 2005). Hence, ethnic issues seem to be extremely significant for the essence of that regime legacy.

“Colonial” is a more contested label for the proposed regime type. There is an on-going debate whether it is right to call the Soviet rule in the Baltic states (especially in Latvia and Estonia) colonial in its character (Annus 2012, Kelertas 2006, Račevskis 2002, Moore 2001). However, one could point out four major features rather typical for colonial rule: (1) the military occupation, (2) the exploitation of local natural resources and reconstruction of economy in order to serve the needs of the colonizers, (3) the arrival of new settlers, (4) the government is subordinated to the control of the foreign powers, staffed with the persons loyal to the new regime or even belonging to the colonizing nation.

On the other hand, there were some traits, which did not fit with the colonial model: (1) the Baltic states were not colonies *de jure*, but just annexed and incorporated into the USSR, (2) they were not geographically distant from the “mother country”, (3) they were even more modernized than the “mother country” and therefore the Soviet domination in the Baltic states lacked the justification as a “civilizing mission”.

Nevertheless, even if the communist rule in the Baltic states was not a full-fledged colonial regime in the classic sense, most authors still admit that many features referring to semi-colonial character of the regime were in place and they could not be ignored (especially the mass immigration of Russian speakers, total subordination of the local communist parties under the control of Moscow, while they were predominately staffed by the loyal non-titular nationalities). Due to the limited length of the article it is not possible to go into lengthy theoretical debates over colonialism and semi-colonialism in the post-Soviet settings, but the major argument is that the communist rule in Estonia and Latvia assumed some unique colonial-like features not found in other CEE countries and these features did affect the party system formation and many other aspects of transition in these countries.⁵

The main features of the ethnic-colonial communism are listed in Table 3.

⁵ The author also considered calling the new regime type the “foreign-hegemonic communism”, but ultimately decided to discard it as a too vague term, which does not really capture the essence and distinctiveness of the regime legacy.

Table 3. The Ethnic-colonial communism in a comparative perspective

	Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism	Ethnic-colonial communism	National-accommodative communism
The level of socio-economic modernization before the communism	Modernized countries (less than 40% employed in agriculture)	Fairly modernized countries (employment in agriculture 40–60%)	Fairly modernized countries (employment in agriculture 40–60%)
Pre-communist political regime	Predominantly democratic	Predominantly democratic	Semi-authoritarian
Colonial or semi-colonial character of the communist rule	Not accentuated	Accentuated	Not accentuated (or mildly accentuated)
The prevailing ways to reinforce the dominance of the communist party	Supported by the wide sections of the working class, intense repressions	Promotion of the more loyal non-titular nationalities in the ranks of the communist party, intense repressions	Reforms and reasonable concessions to dissatisfied elite groups, the image of “our own national communism”
Ethnic composition of the communist party	The titular nation assumes dominance	Non-titular nationalities tend to be dominant	The titular nation assumes dominance
Formal bureaucratization of the state apparatus and corruption under communism	Professional bureaucracy and minimal corruption	Rather professional bureaucracy and low-medium corruption	Intermediate levels of professionalization of bureaucracy and low-medium corruption
Ethnic tensions due the mass immigration with colonial character	No	Yes	No
Transition process and the fate of former communist elite	Regime implosion, former communist elite loses the power and the successor-parties do not survive.	Regime implosion, former communist elite loses the power and the successor-parties do not survive.	Negotiated transition, former communist elite loses the power but can make a comeback in the ranks of communist-successor parties
Dominant party type	Programmic parties	Programmic parties, weaker clientelist tendencies	Programmic parties, weaker clientelist tendencies
Dominant cleavages after regime change	Socio-economic divide	Ethnic divide effectively merged with communist-anti-communist divide	Socio-cultural divide, communist-anti-communist divide
Institutional choices after regime change	PR electoral system and parliamentary system with a weak presidency	PR electoral system and parliamentary system with a weak presidency	Mixed electoral system, semi-presidential but parliamentary-inclined system
Prime examples	Czech Republic, East Germany	Latvia, Estonia	Poland, Hungary

Sources: Kitschelt 2001, the author.

One can notice that the author has added only three genuinely new features into the existing framework outlined by Kitschelt: (1) colonial or semi-colonial character of the communist rule, (2) ethnic composition of the Communist Party, (3) ethnic tensions due mass immigration. As it was explained before, all these new features are too substantial and critical to be just ignored or treated as minor supplementary aspects of the existing regime types already identified by Kitschelt. The fact that only a limited set of new features were added, proves the point made earlier in the introductory chapter of the article: the aim of the study is not to refute the Kitschelt's original theory or to demonstrate that it is completely invalid for the analysis of the Baltic cases, but to extend the original framework and to enhance its empirical scope. Thus the author's intention is not to make the major revisions in the original Kitschelt's framework, but to supplement it with some new critical features which allow to take into account a wider variety of experiences with the communist rule and to study their implications.

While adding the new relevant feature into the typology, the author has followed three principal criteria: (1) sufficiency, (2) parsimony and (3) generality. The same criteria were suggested by Kitschelt in a more explicit or implicit way, while he was constructing his own typologies of the communist regime legacies. First, the new regime-specific characteristics added into typology has to be sufficiently relevant in order to provide feasible explanations to the peculiar features manifested in the Estonian and Latvian party systems and cleavage constellations under scrutiny. Second, for the reason that the article seeks to explain the specific evolutionary trajectories of the Latvian and Estonian party systems, the description of a new regime type is rather parsimonious and not very detailed and sufficiently elaborated from a purely historical point of view. Hence, the new regime type and the features constituting it are presented in a sufficiently parsimonious manner in order to answer to research questions in the first place. Third, although the new proposed regime legacy seems to be very specific and idiosyncratic at first glance, it is not so. While we examines the post-communist societies in a wider geographical area than in CEE, we notice that the communist regime legacies with some specific post-colonial features have been not only manifested in the Baltic states, but also in Central Asia and even to some extent in Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus (Kuzio 2002, Shahrani 1993, Moore 2001). Many post-communist societies could be considered as multi ethnic societies in which ethnic tensions and ethnic issues have played an important role in shaping the institutions, party systems and cleavages, etc. (Brubaker 1996, Berglund, Ekman, and Aarebrot 2004). These ethnic tensions usually have their roots in the pre-communist period, but sometimes the communist rule has further exacerbated the situation by forced and voluntary population movements (like in the Baltic States). Hence, the regime legacy proposed for Latvia and Estonia is indeed quite specific, but one can see relevant parallels in some other post-communist societies and therefore some generalization is possible.

5. The cleavage formation and party systems under the ethnic-colonial communist legacy

As it was noted earlier the communist elite was not able to attain much legitimacy under the ethnic-colonial communism: first, because the illegitimate and semi-colonial character of the regime; second, due to its inability to carry out the further modernization project; and third, because the large sections of the elite were considered to be not a part of the titular nation. When transition began the former communist elites had few options left: either to get wiped out or to join the dissident movements. Because the wider population associated the communist party with illegitimate foreign (Russian) domination and most of the party members were indeed hard-liners with anti-independence and anti-democratic attitudes, it was almost impossible to convert the party to the successful left-wing communist successor party (Taagepera 1993). Ultimately the only reasonable strategy available was to constitute the party as an ethnic minority party for the Russian-speakers, but even in that case it proved to be difficult for the ethnic parties to mobilize large sections of the Russian voters (at least in the 1990s) (Pettai and Hallik 2002).

The worsening demographic situation (with a real threat for the titular nations to become a minority in their own country) pushed the ethnic cleavage into the centre of political struggle. The persistent associations between the communist rule on the one hand and the foreign ethnic domination on the other, enabled to emerge a linkage between the ethnic cleavage and communist-anti-communist cleavage, producing a major divide for the Baltic party politics.

Since communism could be easily associated with socialism and even with social democracy, it allowed the right-wing nationalists to exploit that perceived connection and to demonstrate that all left-wing ideologies could be associated with foreign domination and communism and therefore they would be against the national interests (anti-Estonian and anti-Latvian and pro-Russian in the Baltic context). It was relatively common in CEE in the 1990s to link the communist ideology to other left-wing ideologies and thus to stigmatize it (Lewis 2000). But it appears to be a special feature of Estonia and Latvia that communist domination was so strongly connected with the ethnic issues as well (Galbreath 2005).

The described association was an additional factor that made the rise of strong left-wing parties quite difficult in the settings of ethnic-colonial communist legacy. However, the major factor contributing to the weakness of the left-wing parties was the failure and marginalization of the communist-successor parties. Social democrats and socialists in Latvia and Estonia lacked the organizational structures and the basic legitimacy – all that was accessible for the left-wing parties in CEE, as most of them could be treated as the communist successor parties. Thus the left-wing parties in Latvia and Estonia started to build up their party organizations virtually from scratch.

The linkage between the Russians and the left-wing ideologies has been particularly pronounced in Latvia, where it has inhibited the rise of an ideo-

logically balanced party competition (Pabriks and Stokenberga 2006, Smith-Sivertsen 2004). In Estonia the situation has been less problematic, because the Estonian Social Democrats have never been associated with the pro-Russian attitudes and Soviet nostalgia. However, as it was noted earlier, the party itself has been organizationally quite weak and their electoral success has never been very remarkable (except in recent elections in 2011 and 2015).

The major left-wing party in Estonia, the Estonian Centre Party, has been constantly accused of being Russian-friendly and favourable towards the communist past (Mikkel 2006). The Harmony Centre in Latvia has been haunted by the same accusations and has an image of a Russian minority party, not an ethnic-neutral Social-Democratic party as it often attempts to represent itself (Auers 2013, 2015). Thus the more prominent left-wing parties are rather defending the interests of the Russian minority, representing a nostalgic view to the communist past and therefore keeping the dominant ethnic/communist-anti-communist cleavage still alive. To some extent they play a role usually reserved for the communist-successor parties in other post-communist countries.

The cleavage formation under the ethnic-colonial communist legacy is shown at the Figure 1.

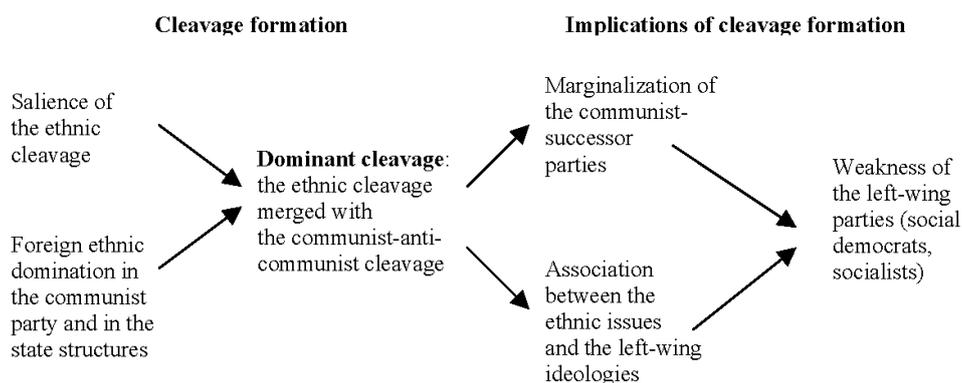


Figure 1. Cleavage formation and its implications under the ethnic-colonial communist legacy.

Source: the author.

6. Discussion

The current article has proposed a new communist regime legacy for Latvia and Estonia, while relying on Kitschelt's influential theory on regime legacies and their impact on the cleavage and party system formation in post-communist countries. At first glance it appears that the author has made only a modest contribution, because the new regime type proposed is only fully applicable to two small CEE countries and the article does not put forward a major revision of Kitschelt's original theory. In the following section the author will demonstrate

that the empirical and theoretical contribution made by the article is still more substantial one. Additionally the author considers briefly the alternative explanations to the exceptional features found in the Baltic party systems.

As mentioned earlier, the former theories focused on cleavages and the subsequent party system formation have been predominately concentrated on the Visegrad countries (as mostly mono-ethnic societies) and have therefore largely neglected the ethnic dimension on the matter. Even Kitschelt's own study mostly ignores the ethnic tensions and issues. But the current analysis demonstrates not only the significance of the ethnic dimensions in the post-communist party politics, but urges us to explore how the ethnic issues have really shaped the post-communist party systems, the underlying cleavage configurations and what have been the major mechanisms behind these processes (see Figure 1). In addition to the ethnic dimension, the post-colonial aspects were also considered by the current study. Even if the question of "colonialism" is still a hotly debated issue in the Baltic context, there are several indications that some other former Soviet republics (e.g. Ukraine, Moldova) have been also confronted to the regime legacy with several colonial (or semi-colonial) features (see e.g. Kuzio 2002). So, even if the current study makes references to CEE countries, the approach adopted could further contribute to the field of post-Soviet studies as well.

Hence, the current study can open up some new research perspectives both for the post-Soviet studies and the post-communist studies in general. There is also a need to go beyond "the Visegrad bias" while theorizing on cleavages and party formation in the post-communist societies and to study societies which are rather multi-ethnic and have distinct regime legacies.

Kitschelt (2001) has argued that his parsimonious typology of the communist regime legacies was not complete and there could be always exceptions and historical contingencies, which allow to modify the existing classification. Thus, finally, the current study does not only open up some new research perspectives, but further develops one of the most acknowledged theories in the field while extending its empirical applicability and adding substantial new analytical dimensions into the existing framework.

Nevertheless, the author does not argue that the current regime-legacy-centred explanation would be the only feasible explanation to the peculiarities found in the Latvian and Estonian party systems. One can also consider the organizational aspects and the poor leadership which have also probably played a role in a meagre performance of the communist successor parties and several left-wing parties. For example Pettai (2012) refers to these issues while talking about the Estonian Communist Party and its opportunities to make a successful come-back in the early 1990s. One must also consider the ideological appeal of these parties, especially to the Russian minority, for whom it was very difficult to construct any attractive and encompassing ideological formulas in the 1990s (see Pettai and Hallik 2002). There is also no doubt that the exclusive citizenship laws (which did not grant citizenship automatically to all permanent residents of Estonia and Latvia and denied citizenship to the Soviet-era immigrants – most of the Russian speakers

(see Budryte 2005)) affected the opportunities for the Russian minority to get politically organized and to found the powerful ethnic parties in a form of communist successor parties or the left-wing parties already in the early 1990s. However, it is important to note that the exclusive citizenship laws were largely the product of the peculiar ethnic-colonial regime legacy described in the current article, so we have to treat it as an additional variable embedded largely into existing framework.

7. Conclusion

The paper was seeking explanation for several exceptional features that made the Latvian and Estonian party politics stand apart from the CEE mainstream. These peculiar features were: (1) the marginalized position or virtual absence of communist successor-parties; (2) weakness of the left-wing parties (social democrats and socialists) and ideologically unbalanced party competition, in which the right-wing parties have assumed a very dominant position; (3) the cleavage constellation in which ethnic cleavage is effectively merged with the communist-anti-communist cleavage constituting a unique combination for CEE countries. It appeared that both the institutional and the party-system-centred approaches were insufficient to providing an adequate explanation to these peculiarities. Therefore the remaining part of the study was focused on the sociological approach, more precisely on cleavages. The author turned to an elaborated theory proposed by Herbert Kitschelt which concentrated on the cleavage formation in the post-communist party systems while linking it with the impact of communist regime legacies. The regime legacies and the history seem to be highly relevant for the Baltic states, because their dramatic experiences with the Soviet rule and the profound demographic changes they witnessed at that time. However, Kitschelt's original contribution where he classified the communist regimes in Latvia and Estonia as a mix of bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communism, proved to be misleading. Therefore a new type of communist legacy was proposed, called *ethnic-colonial communism*. Ethnic-colonial communism encompassed both the characteristics of bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communism, but has its own unique traits related to the saliency of ethnic issues and colonial or semi-colonial character of the communist rule: the local communist parties were rather dominated by the non-titular nationalities (the Russian-speakers) and the demographic situation was exacerbated by the mass immigration of the new settlers ultimately threatening the very existence of the indigenous population. That was the reason why the association between the communist rule and ethnic issues was born and ethnic cleavage was smoothly interlinked with communist-anti-communist cleavage. Further implications of the regime type were that the communist party associated with the Russians (often considered as former "occupants" and "colonizers" by the indigenous population) lacked any legitimacy in order to transform itself to the normal left-wing successor

party and consequently the whole left wing lacked organizational and symbolic resources usually available for the communist successor parties in most of the CEE countries. Furthermore, the left-wing ideologies were not only associated with communism, but also with the pro-Russian attitudes, which made it difficult for the social-democratic and the other left-wing parties to rise to prominence in the Latvian and Estonian party systems.

The major contribution of the article was not simply to put forward a revision of Kitschelt's theory while extending its empirical and theoretical scope, but also to open up the new research perspectives. The former theories on the post-communist party systems and the cleavage formation have not sufficiently paid attention to the ethnic issues, because they have been predominately focused on the Visegrad countries, which are mostly mono-ethnic societies. Likewise the colonial (and post-colonial) aspect of the communist rule has remained under-explored and under-theorized in that context, even if the "colonialism" is still a contested issue in the post-communist settings. Thus the main contribution of the article is to reassert the importance of the ethnic dimension in the evolution of the post-communist party systems and to demonstrate the underlying mechanisms how the ethnic aspects come to play in the settings in which the regime legacy also contains some specific post-colonial features. This would widen our theoretical and empirical horizon and enables to go beyond "the Visegrad bias", so common in the previous studies on the post-communist party systems.

APPENDIX I

Electoral volatility, party system fragmentation (ENEP) and party membership in the Baltic states and in other CEE countries

Country	Electoral volatility 1990–2012	Effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) 1990–2011	Party membership in the end of the 2000s (% of electorate)
Estonia	24.4	6.2	4.87
Latvia	34.4	6.6	0.74
Lithuania	43.1	6.4	2.66
Mean (Latvia and Estonia)	29.4	6.4	2.81
Mean (the Baltic states, Lithuania included)	33.9	6.4	2.76
Poland	32.0	6.5	0.98
Czech Republic	28.7	5.2	1.99
Slovakia	38.9	6.1	2.02
Hungary	29.2	4.2	1.54
Slovenia	27.8	6.5	6.26
Bulgaria	34.2	4.0	4.57
Romania	30.2	4.8	3.66
Mean (the rest of CEE, the Baltic states excluded)	31.6	5.3	3.0

Sources: (Dassonneville and Hooghe 2011, Caramani and Biezen 2007, Gallagher 2012, Biezen, Mair, and Poguntke 2012) and the author's calculations.

APPENDIX 2

The communist legacies according to Kitschelt and the Latvian and Estonian cases – corresponding and non-corresponding features

	Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism	National-accommodative communism	Patrimonial communism
The level of socio-economic modernization before the communism	Modernized countries (less than 40% employed in agriculture) (-)	Fairly modernized countries (employment in agriculture 40%-60%) (+)	Weakly modernized agrarian countries (employment in agriculture higher than 60%) (-)
Pre-communist political regime	Predominately democratic (+)	Semi-authoritarian (-)	Traditional authoritarian regime (-)
The prevailing ways to reinforce the dominance of the communist party	Supported by the wide sections of the working class, extensive repressions (+-)	Reforms and reasonable concessions to dissatisfied elite groups, the image of “our own national communism” (-)	Clientelist networks, and communists as the major modernizers of the country (-)
Formal bureaucratization of the state apparatus and corruption under communism	Professional bureaucracy and minimal corruption (+-)	Intermediate levels of professionalization of bureaucracy and low-medium corruption (+-)	Low level of professionalization of bureaucracy and high corruption (-)
Transition process and the fate of former communist elite	Regime implosion, former communist elite loses the power and the successor-parties do not survive (+)	Negotiated transition, former communist elite loses the power but can make a comeback in the ranks of communist-successor parties (-)	Pre-emptive reforms, former communist elite manages to stay in power (-)
Dominant party type	Programmic parties (-)	Programmic parties, weaker clientelist tendencies (+)	Clientelist parties (-)
Dominant cleavages after regime change	Socio-economic divide (-)	Socio-cultural divide, communist-anti-communist divide (-)	Communist-anti-communist divide reinforced by ethnic divide (+-)
Institutional choices after regime change	PR electoral system and parliamentary system with a weak presidency (+)	Mixed electoral system, semi-presidential but parliamentary- inclined system (-)	Majoritarian electoral system, strong presidency (-)

Notes: “+” corresponds to the Latvian/Estonian experiences; “-” do not correspond to the to the Latvian/Estonian experiences; “+-“ only party corresponds to the Latvian/Estonian experiences.

Sources: Kitschelt 2001, author.

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