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ACROSS THE LINES: NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE BALTIC BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN, GERMAN AND ALLIED CONCEPTIONS

David J Smith

Abstract
This article offers a comparative analysis of how the First World War affected emerging Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nationalisms. There has been a clear tendency to treat the three states declared by these national movements in 1918 as a single 'Baltic' grouping created as a result of common factors and processes. Yet, such a characterisation downplays differences which arise due to the position of the region at the very frontline of the war in the East, which brought a variety of jurisdictions and political contexts. A further tendency has been to retrospectively portray the nation-state framework ultimately created in all three cases as the realisation of the long-cherished goal of the pre-1918 national movements. Such an understanding of national self-determination, however, only emerged much later, and federalist thinking continued to shape both external and internal conceptions of sovereignty during and immediately after the war. How statehood was conceived, moreover, had a lot to do with which side of the line a region was located during the conflict, with key points of difference being discernible between the Estonian and Lithuanian cases in particular.
Key words: Baltic States, federalism, statehood, autonomy, self-determination, national minorities.

Anotacija
Straipsnyje pateikiama lyginamoji analizė, kaip Pirmasis pasaulinis karas paveikė paviršiun iškilusius estų, latvių ir lietuvių nacionalizmus. Būta aiškios tendencijos traktuoti tris valstybes, 1918 m. deklaruotas šių nacionalinių judėjimų, kaip vieną „Baltijos" grupuotę, susikūrusią dėl bendrųjų veiksnių ir procesų. Tačiau tokia charakteristika sumenkina skirtumus, atsiradusius dėl regiono pozicijos pačiame karo fronto linijų Rytuose epicentre, dėl kurio klostėsi pavaldumo ir politinių kontekstų įvairovė. Kita tendencija buvo galiausiai sukurtą nacionalinės valstybės struktūrą visais trim atvejais vaizduoti kaip iki 1918 m. nacionalinių judėjimų ilgai puoselėtų siekių įgyvendinimą. Tačiau toks nacionalinio apsisprendimo suvokimas atsirado gerokai vėliau, o federalistinė galvosena tiek per karą, tiek iškart po jo toliau formavo suverenumo koncepcijas išorėje ir viduje. Maža to, valstybingumo suvokimas smarkiai priklausė nuo to, kurioje fronto linijos pusėje konkretus regionas buvo konflikto metu. Straipsnyje šie skirtumai atskleidžiami, ypač išskiriant estų ir lietuvių atvejus.
Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Baltijos valstybės, federalizmas, valstybingumas, autonomija, apsisprendimo teisė, tautinės mažumos.

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The aim of this article is to offer a comparative analysis of how the First World War affected the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nationalisms that had begun to take shape from the late 19th century. For the emerging Baltic national movements, the war constituted a common external contingency that precipitated the collapse of pre-existing political frameworks, and ultimately brought forth new demands for self-determination outside of Russia.[1] In all three cases, the movements also had to frame their demands in relation to warring Great Powers and their shifting position on the nationality question, while simultaneously reckoning with the claims of other sub-state nationalisms within this most ethnically diverse of regions. Yet, while one can speak of key similarities when discussing the Baltic national movements, there are also important points of difference that arise, due to the position of the region at the very frontline of the war in the east. Of the three nationalities concerned, the Estonians remained outside the zone of German occupation until the end of 1917, and their movement thus continued to evolve mainly within a broader Russian political context. In the Lithuanian case, however, the experience of German occupation already from 1915 was crucial in shaping the emergence of state structures, whilst also meaning that the Lithuanian movement had to operate across military and political boundaries and seek to unite a national activist population dispersed across the territorial homeland, the Russian interior and the émigré communities of Western Europe and North America. The Latvian case, as so often in comparative Baltic history, sits somewhere in between these two experiences. Can one, therefore, speak of a common Baltic pattern in the evolution of national demands and imagined national futures, or are we in fact dealing with three very different cases? In what follows, I will explore this question by briefly discussing changing understandings of self-determination and sovereignty found within the three movements. In so doing, I will also explore the relationship between civic and ethnic components within three nationalisms which by 1918 had become state-*seeking*, if not yet fully state-*building*.

Later national historiographies often portray the Baltic independence declarations of 1918 as 'the culmination of a long [and] conscious striving to fulfil the nation's destiny',[2] the point at which Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians realised the long-cherished ambition of achieving a state 'of their own'. As British historian David Kirby has remarked, however, this claim 'says more about the need to consolidate and unite the people around a set of values and symbols than it reflects the actual reality'.[3] Not least, the claim retroactively projects the ideal of indivisibly sovereign nation-statehood (with its implied congruence between territory, citizenship and culture) to a time when this had

1 ROSHWALD, A. *Ethnic Nationalism & the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia & the Middle East, 1914–1923*. London, New York, 2001, p. 3.

2 KIRBY, D. *The Baltic World 1772–1993. Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change*. London, New York, 1995, p. 288.

3 Ibid.

scarcely begun to take root in a Central and East European context. While such an understanding of national sovereignty did ultimately emerge, it only did so some years after independent states had been established and recognised. At the time war broke out in 1914, one could point in all three cases to established national movements claiming greater rights of self-determination for ethnically defined nations within a territorial framework. These claims, however, did not focus on the creation of independent states, but rather on achieving autonomy within the framework of a reformed, democratic Russia. Until that time, continued belonging to Russia had been scarcely if at all questioned by Estonian and Latvian nationalisms, which were directed primarily at challenging the power of the local ruling German-speaking elite. Indeed, these movements had at times actively sought to enlist the support of centralising Russian state-builders keen to undermine the historic autonomous prerogatives of the Baltic Germans. In the Lithuanian case, there was a far more ambivalent attitude to the Russian state, stemming from the revolts of 1830 and 1863, and the overtly repressive policies pursued during the aftermath of the latter. However, by the early 20th century, the bonds of common religion and shared history previously uniting Lithuanians and Poles had given way to a primarily secular Lithuanian nationalism, constructed in opposition to Polishness, and to any suggestion of restoring the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that had existed until the late 18th century. This project did live on through the activities of the *Krajowcy* movement; however, while the latter still found some adherents during the years of the First World War, it had been largely supplanted by visions of an ethnographically defined Lithuanian autonomy by the time war broke out. At this point, no-one could have anticipated that the Russian state would collapse within four years. The elites therefore hoped that by lending support to a victorious war effort against the Central Powers, they would persuade the tsarist regime to grant the autonomy demands that had been voiced at the time of the 1905 Revolution.

It was, therefore, the upheavals brought about by war, occupation and the Bolshevik assumption of power after October 1917 that removed the basis for an imagined national future within Russia, prompting declarations of independence in all three cases during 1918. Yet, these declarations, however they may have been portrayed retrospectively, did not necessarily imply an intention to create a fully sovereign nation-state. Rather, national sovereignty was still frequently framed in terms of belonging to a wider voluntary 'League of Free Peoples' sitting between the Great Powers of Germany and Russia, and, in the Lithuanian case, also offering protection against the ambitions of a re-emerging Poland.[4] Such a vision was famously articulated by Jaan Tõnisson, who in September 1917 became first Estonian leader to call for separation from Russia and adhesion to a 'Baltoscandian Federation' encompassing the Baltic Provinces,

[4] In this regard, see LEHTI, M. The Baltic League and the Idea of Limited Sovereignty. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Europas*, N.F., 1997, Bd. 45, Hf. 3, S. 450–465; LEHTI, M. *A Baltic League as a Construct of the New Europe*. Frankfurt am Main, 1999.

Finland and the Scandinavian countries. This idea, extended to encompass Poland and transmuted into the form of a 'Baltic League', was later taken up by Tõnisson's compatriots Ants Piip and Karel Pusta, and by the Latvian Zigfrīds Meierovics, who were dispatched to London and Paris during early 1918 to represent the Baltic nations' claims for self-determination before the Western Allies. The idea of regional leagues or federations was consonant with the thinking of many in London and Paris. Despite the understandings retrospectively attributed to Wilsonian understandings of national self-determination, the Allies were not operating according to a clear-cut agenda whereby the old empires were to give way to a patchwork of sovereign nation-states.

Federalist thinking appears rather less prominent in Lithuanian circles, where it could perhaps be all too readily equated with Polish ambitions to subordinate Lithuania within a project of reviving the old Commonwealth. Nevertheless, exile activists such as Kazys Pakštas (who would in later years present his own iteration of the Baltoscandian idea), Jonas Šliūpas, Juozas Gabrys and Stasys Šalkauskis all advanced proposals for a future Latvian-Lithuanian Union in 1916.[5] Prior to the Polish occupation of Vilnius in October 1920, Lithuanian representatives also participated in the initial discussions around a Baltic League. In this regard, Lithuanian thinking at the end of the war can be gleaned from conversations with British officials, in which Smetona and other leaders declared that while they were not open to any suggestion of a full union with Poland, even on federative lines, they did not oppose a military and economic alliance.[6]

The understanding of 'limited sovereignty' held by Baltic leaders was not only external, but also extended to the internal organisation of the emerging Baltic state-territorial formations. In this period, the Baltic States that emerged out of the war were exceptional among the new countries of East-Central Europe in granting extensive rights of cultural self-government to new national minority communities living within their borders. This distinctive, culturally pluralist understanding of the state can be seen already in the Estonian founding declaration of February 1918, which, while it spoke of independence within ethnographic boundaries, was nevertheless addressed to 'all the peoples of Estonia'. The declaration also promised those belonging to non-ethnically Estonian minorities the right to cultural autonomy, something the Republic of Estonia reiterated in its constitution of 1920 and later delivered upon through its 1925 Law on Minority Cultural Self-Government.[7] Similarly, the Latvian independence declaration of November 1918 was addressed to all the citizens of

[5] PAKŠTAS, K. *The Baltoscandian Confederation*. Vilnius, 2005; ŠALKAUSKIS, S. *Sur les confins de deux mondes: essai synthétique sur le problème de la civilisation nationale en Lituanie*. Genève, 1917, p. 231–233.

[6] 'Berne, October 1st. Rumbold to Balfour', *The National Archives* (*Public Record Office*), Kew, FO 371/3302, pp. 285-286. Cited in: *Lietuvos užsienio politikos dokumentai 1918–1940 metai. Lietuva vokiečių okupacijoje Pirmojo pasaulinio karo metais 1915–1918. Lietuvos nepriklausomos valstybės genezė*. Sud. E. GIMŽAUSKAS. Vilnius, 2006, p. 453.

[7] GRAF, M. *Eesti rahvusriik: ideed ja lahendused. Ärkamisajast Eesti Vabariigi sünnini*. Tallinn, 1993, pp. 240-241.

Latvia, and provided for the establishment of a Nationalities Commission to draw up guarantees for the ethnic rights of national minorities. Out of this body came the main lines of Latvia's School Law, which enshrined the right of each pupil to receive education in his or her 'family language', and provided for autonomously run national sections within the Ministry of Education.[8] In the Lithuanian case, the first meeting of the *Taryba* following the November 1918 Armistice emphasised the state's commitment to equal rights for all nationalities and religions. Jewish and Belarusian ministers were appointed to the Provisional Government, and an undertaking to grant Jewish autonomy was given during the year that followed.[9]

Commenting on these broadly similar trends within the new Baltic countries, historian Andrew Ezergailis has spoken of a 'latitudinarianism that was and still is unique in the world, and was peculiar to the constitutions of the three Baltic States'.[10] This 'extended internal autonomy', he claims, 'had no western models'.[11] Certainly one can say that it went far beyond the limited minority rights provisions contained in the Western-brokered treaties that were drawn up for other successor states of the region, which, unlike Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, were created under the auspices of the post-war peace settlements.[12] This phenomenon can be attributed in part to pre-existing understandings which defined nationhood, and, by extension, national sovereignty primarily in cultural terms, and which did not see national and political boundaries as being congruent in the way envisaged by the modern nation-state model. As Kazys Pakštas put it in his writings, the most important task at that time was still to construct a political framework that would allow for the 'vertical development' and deepening of ethnic Lithuanian culture.[13] Moreover, in a pre-1914 environment where ethnic and socio-economic divisions significantly overlapped, and Marxist and Populist thinking was entwined with debates on the national question, many if not most political activists in the Baltic provinces viewed the attainment of national rights not as an end in itself but as a means to the broader end of building a more democratic society within the existing borders of the tsarist empire.[14] In com-

8 See the discussion in GERMANE, M. Latvians as a Civic Nation – An Interwar Experiment. In *Latvia – A Work in Progress? One Hundred Years of State and Nation-Building*. Ed. by D. J. SMITH, M. KOTT. Bern, 2016 (forthcoming).

9 TAUBER, J. "No Allies": The Lithuanian *Taryba* and the National Minorities 1916–1918. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 2007, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 433–444; LIEKIS, Š. *A State within a State? Jewish Autonomy in Lithuania 1918–1925*. Vilnius, 2003, pp. 100–111.

10 EZERGAILIS, A. *The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–1944: the missing centre*. Riga, 1996, p. 3.

11 Ibid.

12 SMITH, D. J.; HIDEN, J. *Ethnic Diversity and the Nation State: National cultural autonomy revisited*. London, New York, 2012, p. xiv.

13 See Remigijus Misiūnas' Preface to PAKŠTAS, K. Op. cit., pp. 15–16. On cultural sovereignty, see LEHTI, M. Sovereignty Redefined: Baltic Cooperation and the Limits of National Self-determination. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 1999, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 413–443.

14 In this regard, see: ROSHWALD, A. Op. cit., pp. 54–55; also AUN, K. *On the Spirit of the Estonian Minorities Law*. Stockholm, 1950; IJABS, I. The Nation of the Socialist Intelligentsia: The National Issue in the Political Thought of Early Latvian Socialism. *East Central Europe*, 2012, vol. 39, no. 2–3, pp. 181–203.

mon with Ezergailis, several other authors maintain that this idealism was carried over from the Empire into the post-war period, and informed the distinctive approach taken by the new Baltic States. In a 2012 article on Estonia, for instance, Kaarel Piirimäe argues that the support for minority autonomy displayed by the country's founding fathers 'challenges the widespread interpretation of interwar East-Central Europe as a hotbed of excessive nationalism'. In so doing, Piirimäe claims that the Estonian model was derived from 'idealist visions about intra and interstate federalism that had been internalised by Estonian statesmen both before *and during* [my italics – *D.S.*] the First World War'.[15]

A very different view is, however, advanced by Joachim Tauber in his 2006 study of Lithuania that examines the relationship between the *Taryba* and national minorities. Here, Tauber reminds us that November 1918 was the first point at which national minority representatives were actually admitted to the body. Prior to this, he argues, the *Taryba* had displayed a 'highly problematic' attitude towards local minorities, which had nourished restrictive tendencies and precluded open contacts across ethnic lines.[16] While Tauber's article deals specifically with Lithuania, it is also interesting to note his concluding assertion that the Lithuanian example cannot be seen as unique in Eastern Europe, and that in this respect the *Taryba* members 'hardly deviated from the trend of their era'.[17]

Tauber's article thus raises a broader question regarding the origins of the Baltic cultural autonomy commitments made at the end of the War: were these, as Tauber implies, merely a pragmatic manoeuvre designed to win the support of minorities in the face of external German, Bolshevik and Polish threats and to reinforce the democratic credentials of the national movements in the eyes of the Western Allies to whom they were looking for recognition? Or, can one speak, as Ezergailis, Piirimäe and others do, of a genuinely idealistic commitment to cultural pluralism growing out of pre-war and wartime debates on the national question, both in Russia and more broadly? The answer, it can be argued, lies somewhere in between these two opposing interpretations: for, while the role of *Realpolitik* seems clear in all three cases, one should not underestimate the importance of multinational legacies carried over from the former empire, especially when it comes to the cases of Estonia and Latvia.

In all three of the cases, movements seeking to promote the cultures of ethnically-defined nations had begun to advance claims for territorial autonomy already before 1914. These claims, however, typically went hand-in-hand with a commitment

[15] PIIRIMÄE, K. Federalism in the Baltic: Interpretations of Self-determination and Sovereignty in Estonia in the First Half of the Twentieth Century. *East Central Europe*, 2012, vol. 39, no. 2–3, p. 237; see also ALENIUS, K. The Birth of Cultural Autonomy in Estonia: How, Why and for Whom? *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 2007, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 445–462.

[16] Tauber, loc cit.

[17] TAUBER, J. Op. cit., p. 433.

to establishing a parallel system of non-territorial autonomy for other ethnic groups living within the territory in question. This reflected the strong ideological influence of the Austrian Social Democrats Karl Renner and Otto Bauer, whose ideas enjoyed a broad reception within the western borderlands of the tsarist empire during the years immediately prior to the First World War.[18] For example, if one looks at the first Latvian-language works on the national question, published in 1913 and 1914 by Marģers Skujenieks and Miķelis Valters respectively, non-territorial cultural autonomy emerges as a central theme.[19] Crucially, Renner and Bauer's ideas also shaped the thinking of Konstantin Päts, one of the authors of the Estonian independence declaration of February 1918, head of the first Provisional Government of Estonia during 1918–1919, and later a staunch supporter of the cultural autonomy law during three terms as prime minister during the early 1920s.[20] In the Lithuanian territories, these same ideas also provided a platform for the Jewish Bund, though of greater long-term significance in this context was the similar model expounded in 1907 by Simon Dubnow, which directly referenced the multicultural traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[21] While space for Polish-Lithuanian coalition-building steadily contracted during the early years of the 20th century, this period did see numerous instances of cooperation between Lithuanian and Jewish activists on both the left and the right of the political spectrum, for instance during the 1905 Revolution and subsequently in the establishment of joint lists for elections to the State Duma. As Tomas Balkelis observes, these 'should be mentioned as ethno-political alternatives to the increasingly hostile and homogenizing Lithuanian and Polish nationalisms'.[22] They suggest that emerging demands for territorial autonomy were founded on a culturally plural rather than exclusively ethnic vision, at least when it came to the smaller, non-Polish nationalities living alongside Lithuanians.

Across the western borderlands of the former tsarist empire, the outbreak of war significantly strengthened, in Balkelis' words, 'the role of ethnicity in determining loyalties, defining identities and creating frameworks for collective action'.[23] This effect was especially marked in the Lithuanian territories, where the large-scale displacement of population following the German invasion meant that national conscio-

18 ROSHWALD, A. Op. cit., pp. 54–55; PIIRIMÄE, K. Op. cit., p. 237.

19 GERMANE, M. Op. cit.

20 See: RAUCH, G. von. *The Baltic States. The Years of Independence 1917–1940*. London, 1995, p. 141; ALENIUS, K. *Ajan ihanteiden ja historian rasitteiden ristipaineissa. Viron etniset suhteet vuosina 1918–1925*. Rovanniemi, 2003, p. 335; KARJAHÄRM, T.; SIRK, V. *Vaim ja võim: Eesti haritlaskond 1917–1940*. Tallinn, 2001, pp. 304–305.

21 LIEKIS, Š. Op. cit., p. 97; DOHRN, V. State and Minorities: The First Lithuanian Republic and S. M. Dubnov's Concept of Cultural Autonomy. In *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews* (On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics, Vol. 1). Ed. by A. NIKŽENTAITIS, S. SCHREINER, D. STALIŪNAS. Amsterdam, New York, 2004, pp. 155–173.

22 BALKELIS, T. *The Making of Modern Lithuania*. London, New York, 2009, p. 56.

23 Ibid., p. 118; see also PRUSIN, A. V. *The Lands Between: Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992*. Oxford, New York, 2010.

usness was deepened within a context of refugee networks formed in the Russian interior. In the occupied territories themselves, meanwhile, the German authorities engaged in a deliberate project of nationalising political space, manipulating competing Polish and Lithuanian claims as part of an agenda of detaching the north-west provinces from Russia, and cementing German power in the region.[24]

In keeping with this policy of 'national in form, Germanic in content',[25] the occupying regime initially envisaged appointing a provincial assembly containing representatives of all local nationalities. Ultimately, though, it was decided that German interests would be better served by acceding to demands for an exclusively Lithuanian organising conference. Although not popularly elected, this conference did include representatives from all of the main Lithuanian political groupings, and it declared the need to take account of other nationalities living alongside Lithuanians. For instance, both the conference and the *Taryba* it appointed promised a future constituent assembly, elected by all inhabitants, which would give representation to national minorities. In the interim, though, it declared that ethnic Lithuanians alone should determine the territorial boundaries and political status of a future Lithuanian state.[26]

This ethnocentrism was primarily a reflection of Lithuanian defensiveness regarding Polish claims to Vilnius. In this respect, there was potential to build a coalition with Jewish and Belarusian activists who held a similar antipathy to Polish nationalism. In the context of 1917, however, these other nationalities did not fully subscribe to the emerging Lithuanian national programme, since they were in many cases reluctant to support full separation from Russia, while also advocating the revival of a larger multinational state along the lines of the old Grand Duchy, rather than the ethnographic conception advanced by Lithuanians. These differences would only be resolved at the end of 1918 following the collapse of German power and the advance of Bolshevik forces, at which point Zionist leaders at least were willing to respond to overtures from the *Taryba* in return for promises of autonomy within an ethnographically drawn Lithuanian state.[27]

The war, of course, also had an ethnicising effect on the Estonian and Latvian movements. In these cases, however, the vision of a national future within Russia lasted longer than it did in the Lithuanian, and this entailed a fuller engagement with continued debates on multinational federalism and autonomy. In his aforementioned article on Estonia, Piirimäe points to a continued strong influence of Austro-Marxist thinking in renewed discussions around the national question that arose in 1915–1916 following the tsarist government's promise to restore Polish statehood.[28] Gro-

[24] ROSHWALD, A. Op. cit., pp. 116–125; PRUSIN, A. V. Op. cit., pp. 60–61.
[25] ROSHWALD, A. Op. cit., p. 119.
[26] TAUBER, J. Op. cit., pp. 434–435.
[27] DOHRN, V. Op. cit., p. 158.
[28] PIIRIMÄE, K. Op. cit., p. 249.

wing claims for Estonian autonomy were then realised during the brief window of opportunity that followed the February Revolution, as the new Russian Provisional Government consented to a redrawing of administrative boundaries along ethnographic lines and the establishment of a new Provincial Assembly.

Unlike the Lithuanian *Taryba*, this assembly (*Maanõukogu*) was created on the basis of democratic elections, and these resulted in a majority for parties of the centre and democratic left well-disposed to non-territorial autonomy for national minorities living within newly-autonomous province of Estland. In July 1917, Jaan Poska, who was appointed Provisional Government Commissar for province, set the *Maanõukogu* the task of reconstituting the Russian order in such a way that 'would enable the exercising of the right of self-determination *of all nations* on the widest possible basis', while ensuring that 'the unity of the whole state and its roots should thereby not be eradicated.'[29] In a similar spirit, several Estonian politicians joined the September 1917 Kiev Congress on the nationalities question, where a redrawing of the state along lines of both territorial and non-territorial national autonomy was advocated. It is hardly coincidental that a number of these delegates would later go on to be staunch advocates of minority cultural autonomy in the parliamentary debates on the question that followed independence.[30] Cultural autonomy for minority nationalities thus remained 'inherent in [the] thinking' of the state founders, and was reflected in the February 1918 manifesto to all the peoples of Estonia.[31]

The Estonian approach undoubtedly rested at least in part on considerations of *Realpolitik*. While the *Maanõukogu* contained one Swedish and one German representative, there were many within the Baltic German elite who resented the abolition of the old provincial boundaries and looked to Germany for support in maintaining their traditionally privileged position within the region. Local Russians also remained ambivalent with regard to the creation of an autonomous Estland.[32] The following year, when German power collapsed and Päts' new Estonian Provisional Government had to assert its sovereignty in the face of invasion from Bolshevik Russia, it was equally important to rally all segments of the population behind the project of independence. Such considerations were even more important for Latvian Provisional Government formed in November 1918, which sought to make good the claim to the territories of Southern Livonia, Courland and Latgale that had been voiced by a Provincial Council in the aftermath of the February Revolution.[33] Here, the particular strength of the Bolshevik challenge made it imperative to mobilise the support of non-Latvians, especially amongst the large Russian population living in Latgale. And

[29] Ibid., p. 250.
[30] SMITH, D. J.; HIDEN, J., Op. cit., p. 16.
[31] PIIRIMÄE, K. Op. cit., p. 251.
[32] GRAF, M. Op. cit., pp. 135-136.
[33] RAUCH, G. von. Op. cit., p. 37.

yet, the continued role of multinational thinking inherited from previous Russian debates was also apparent in the case of Latvia, where key leaders such as Zigfrīds Meierovics (who attended the September 1917 Kiev Congress) continued to support far-reaching minority rights even after the Republic of Latvia had been established and externally recognised. In both the Latvian and Estonian cases, moreover, the provisions that were carried over into the independent states went far beyond the more basic frameworks set by the League of Nations. This suggests that the models adopted were shaped by domestic political factors rather than simply a desire to conform to the external requirements of the Western Powers.[34]

In this regard, one should not discount the influence within Estonia and Latvia of the local minorities themselves. As was the case with Jewish and Belarusian activists in Lithuania, the collapse of German power and the Soviet advance into the Baltic territories following the November 1918 Armistice changed the outlook of the Baltic German community, which could at least make common cause with Estonian and Latvian nationalists against the shared threat of Bolshevism. This was especially so in Estonia, where (in a contrast to the machinations practised by the *Baltische Landeswehr* in Latvia), local Germans formed their own regiment within the fledgling Estonian Army.[35] In this context, less reactionary members of the German elite began to buy into the idea of national-cultural autonomy as a basis for preserving their culture and retaining some measure of influence with the emerging state formations. The ideas of Karl Renner and Otto Bauer were already familiar to figures such as Heinrich Pantenius from Tartu, not to mention Paul Schiemann, who had been one of the rare advocates of Latvian-German reconciliation in the pre-war Baltic and who would later go on to be one of the key champions of cultural autonomy in independent Latvia.[36] Others, such as Werner Hasselblatt in Estonia (one of the key architects of the 1925 autonomy law) had been influenced by the work of Hamburg Law Professor Rudolf Laun (originally from Bohemia), who continued to advocate national cultural autonomy during the war years through his contributions to the Hague-based *L'union pour une paix durable* and who prepared a memorandum arguing that this model should be generally applied as part of the post-war peace settlement.[37] In the final analysis, the concept of corporate organisation along ethnic lines was one

[34] ALENIUS, K. The Birth of Cultural Autonomy..., pp. 450–451, 458.

[35] In the former north-west provinces, Lithuanian and Polish nationalists could of course also make common cause against encroaching Bolshevism after November 1918. However, the territorial dispute over Vilnius ruled out any prospect of a longer-lasting coalition, as was finally proved beyond any doubt in October 1920.

[36] On Schiemann, see HIDEN, J. *Defender of Minorities. Paul Schiemann, 1876–1944*. London, 2004; on Pantenius, see SMITH, D. J.; HIDEN, J., Op. cit., p. 38.

[37] SMITH, D. J. Non-territorial cultural autonomy as a Baltic contribution to Europe between the wars. In *The Baltic States and Their Region: New Europe or Old?* (On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics, Vol. 3). Ed. by D. J. SMITH. Amsterdam, New York, 2005, p. 217.

with which all Baltic Germans, be they conservative or more liberal in outlook, could identify, for it bore a certain resemblance to the estates system that had existed during the previous tsarist period.[38]

As Baltic German demands began to coalesce around the platform of autonomy, this provided the basis (most notably in Estonia) for a coalition with those elements of the majority national elite who were prepared to entertain the use of this model as part of future state-building. This in turn paved the way for the unique system of minority self-government that would endure throughout the years of inter-war democracy. The persistence of autonomy in Estonia and Latvia has been attributed to continued considerations of *Realpolitik* deriving from the post-war international situation. However, as Kari Alenius and others have argued, this does not in itself offer a sufficient explanation.[39] A study of the parliamentary debates of the 1920s shows that these are full of references to the ideas of Renner and Bauer, and to guaranteeing the rights of all nations rather than simply one's own.[40]

In summarising the implications of 1914-1918 for the three Baltic nationalisms, it can be said that these exhibited different points of departure in terms of their pre-war development and the balance of ethnic and civic elements found within them. The war also had a differential impact on the territories and ethno-social formations concerned, which reflected their differing geopolitical circumstances and experiences during the conflict. For all this, the founders of the new Baltic States were in no case initially wedded to a nationalising project, and here one can point to their cultural understanding of nationhood and their prior experiences within the empire as factors that made them inclined to leave space for other cultures within the framework of the state. Granting cultural autonomy, of course, did not amount to power-sharing, since the new states were still dominated politically by the ethnic majority. Indeed, if one looks at the discourse of the national movements during and after the war, support of cultural autonomy often comes across as an egocentric exercise in proving the worthiness and moral superiority of small nations in the eyes of the wider world, a case of 'since only we truly understand what it is to suffer, we will not let others suffer in the way that we did.'[41] In time, this discourse would shift within all three state-building nationalisms, and by the mid-1930s all three Baltic countries had gone down the nationalising state road, employing dominant discourses that emphasised the suffering of the core ethnic nation (both during the war and in a longer historical frame) over that of others. This shift was most rapid in the case of

[38] The same is true of the short-lived system of Jewish cultural self-government that was established in Lithuania from 1920. As Šarunas Liekis has argued, these were inspired more by pre-existing and longstanding Litvak structures than they were by the socialist ideals of Renner and Bauer.

[39] ALENIUS, K. The Birth of Cultural Autonomy..., pp. 450–451. SMITH, D. J.; HIDEN, J., Op. cit.

[40] SMITH, D. J.; HIDEN, J., Op. cit., pp. 34–35.

[41] Ibid.

Lithuania. Here the conflict with Poland over Vilnius, and (as Balkelis has noted) the return from Russia of an exile community mobilised and radicalised by the wartime experience, instilled a greater defensiveness. To quote Joseph Rothschild, this gave politics 'a far more explicitly and shrilly nationalist tinge than in Estonia and Latvia', creating an atmosphere in which democracy (and minority cultural autonomy) was the least well-placed to take root.[42]

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ABIPUS FRONTO LINIJŲ: NACIONALINIS APSISPRENDIMAS BALTIJOS ŠALYSE TARP RUSIJOS, VOKIETIJOS IR SĄJUNGINIŲ KONCEPCIJŲ

David J. Smith

Santrauka

Estija, Latvija ir Lietuva, kurios visos paskutiniais Pirmojo pasaulinio karo metais buvo paskelbtos nepriklausomomis valstybėmis, pašaliečių paprastai yra grupuojamos po vienu „Baltijos valstybių" skėčiu. Daugiau ar mažiau vienalaikis šių trijų šalių sukūrimas savo ruožtu atvedė prie plačiąja prasme panašių „Baltijos nacionalizmų" suvokimo. Jie buvo paveikti identiškų ideologinių ir sociopolitinių srovių ir jiems visiems buvo būdingas tikslas sukurti visiškai suverenias nacionalines valstybes pagal Vakarų Europos modelį.

Tačiau detalesnė analizė rodo, kad nepriklausomybės nuo Rusijos siekis į politinę dienotvarkę buvo įtrauktas tik 1914–1918 m. dėl pražūtingų Rusijos karo siekių, Vokietijos okupacijos, 1917 m. revoliucijų ir bolševikų režimo atėjimo į valdžią. Maža to, 1918-aisiais nacionalinio apsisprendimo doktrina, kurią, kaip dalį savo karo siekių, propagavo visos didžiosios valstybės, Baltijos nacionalinių judėjimų nebūtinai buvo tapatinama su visiškai suverenios ir unitarinės nacionalinės valstybės sukūrimu. Nacionalinis suverenumas vis dar dažnai buvo suvokiamas veikiau priklausomumo vienokiai ar kitokiai federacinei struktūrai rėmuose. Kita alternatyva buvo „laisvųjų žmonių lyga", funkcionuojanti tarp didžiųjų Vokietijos ir Rusijos valstybių, arba, lietuvių atveju, dar ir siūlanti apsaugą prieš atsikuriančios Lenkijos ambicijas įsivyrauti regione.

Įvairūs valstybių ar tautų lygos ar federacijos siūlymai (kurie buvo aktyviai diskutuojami 1917–1920 m. ir tam tikra forma vėliau išliko iki pat 3-iojo dešimtmečio vidurio) leidžia manyti, kad to laiko estų, latvių ir lietuvių lyderiai buvo ištikimi „riboto suverenumo" suvokimui, kurio pagrindas buvo daugiau kultūrinis nei politinis tautiškumo supratimas. Tai buvo susiję ne tik su besiformuojančių teritorinių formacijų išorinės veiklos sfera, bet ir su jų vidine organizacija. Iškart po karo naujosios Baltijos šalys išsiskyrė iš kitų valstybių įpėdinių tuo, kad jose buvo suteiktos plačios kultūrinio savarankiškumo teisės naujoms nacionalinių mažumų bendruomenėms, atsidūrusioms šių šalių ribose. Toks siekis atsiskleidė ir steigiamosiose deklaracijose bei politiniuose veiksmuose, kuriuos visos trys priėmė 1918 m.

Vis dėlto ligšioliniuose tyrimuose iš esmės nesutariama dėl to, kodėl trys šalys rodė tokį aiškiai išreikštą „pažiūrų platumą“ savo nacionalinių mažumų politikoje? Ar tai buvo (kaip teigia Kaarelis Piirimäe ir Kari Alenius Estijos atveju, o Andrew Ezergailis taiko tai visoms trims valstybėms) padarinys demokratinio idealizmo, kuris buvo perkeltas iš laikotarpio išsyk prieš karą, o karo metais ir 1917-ųjų revoliucijų laikotarpiu tik tobulėjo? Ar, kaip Lietuvos atveju teigia (ir potekstėje taiko tai visoms trims valstybėms) Joachimas Tauberis, tai turėtų būti laikoma trumpalaikiu pragmatiniu manevru, atliktu siekiant laimėti mažumų paramą vokiečių, bolševikų ir lenkų grėsmės akivaizdoje bei sustiprinti nacionalinių judėjimų demokratinį mandatą Vakarų sąjungininkų, kurių pripažinimo buvo siekiama, akyse?

Šiame straipsnyje teigiama, kad atsakymo reikia ieškoti kažkur per vidurį tarp šių prieštaraujančių vienas kitam paaiškinimų. Maža to, kiekvienam veiksniui atitinkamą svorį būtina priskirti priklausomai nuo to, apie kurį konkrečiai nacionalinį judėjimą kalbama. Pvz., lietuvių atveju 1915–1918 m. užsitęsusios Vokietijos okupacijos, plačiai pasklidusių lietuvių aktyvistų ir vis labiau ryškėjančių lenkų ambicijų (kurių kulminacija tapo bjaurus ginčas dėl Vilniaus) sąlygos jungėsi, formuodamos labiau etnocentrinę, nacionalizuojančią prieigą prie valstybingumo (ir kartu didesnį rezervuotumą dėl galimų federalinių projektų užsienio santykių srityje priėmimo). Tačiau Estijoje tokia prieiga buvo nelabai ryški, mat Vokietijos okupacija (ir tiesioginė konflikto patirtis) jos nepasiekė iki 1918 m. vasario, o autonomijos statusas Rusijos laikinosios vyriausybės jai buvo suteiktas per „galimybių lango“ laikotarpį išsyk po 1917 m. Vasario revoliucijos. Šiame kontekste diskusijos apie daugiatautį federalizmą, paveiktos autonomijos modelių, kuriuos siūlė, be kitų, Karlas Renneris ir Otto Baueris, toliau darė gerokai didesnį formuojantį poveikį, nusikeldamos į 3-iąjį dešimtmetį ir ryškiai atsiskleisdamos parlamento debatuose dėl garsiojo 1925 m. kultūrinės autonomijos įstatymo. Latvija, kuri didžiąją karo dalį fronto linijos buvo padalyta tarp Vokietijos ir Rusijos zonų, patyrė didelį gyventojų išsisklaidymą ir ypač stiprų bolševizmo iššūkį, gali būti laikoma tarpiniu atveju tarp šių dviejų spektro polių.

Suprantama, stebint šiuo laikotarpiu besiplėtojusias diskusijas dėl tautinio apsisprendimo ir idealaus ateities valstybingumo modelio, būtina atkreipti dėmesį ne vien į nacionalinių judėjimų ar kariaujančių (ir vidujai besitransformuojančių) didžiųjų valstybių darbotvarkes bei vizijas, bet ir į kitų etnonacionalinių grupuočių (vokiečių, rusų, žydų, baltarusių), kurios gyveno kartu su jais, aspiracijas, ir kurios taip pat patyrė reikšmingų permainų, reaguodamos į konkrečius įvykius.