

THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL-CULTURE ON DIVERGENT PATTERNS OF POST-SOVIET POLITICAL-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: A COMPARISON OF THE EXPERIENCES OF LATVIA AND BELARUS SINCE 1991

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
August 2012

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Dated: August 21, 2012

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DATE: August 21, 2012

AUTHOR: David James Meadows

TITLE: The Effects of Political-Culture on Divergent Patterns of Post-Soviet
Political-Economic Transformation: A Comparison of the Experiences of
Latvia and Belarus since 1991

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: Department of Political Science

DEGREE: PhD CONVOCATION: October YEAR: 2012

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DEDICATION

To my parents Kathryn Ann and Lawrence, I cannot thank you enough for your constant encouragement and unreserved generous support

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ABSTRACT

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, many predicted there would be economic policy convergence, where it was assumed that the post-Soviet states would all transition into liberal-capitalist economies. Over twenty years later, these forecasts have been confounded by the wide divergence in the political-economic policy practices of the post-Soviet states, which has been particularly apparent between Latvia and Belarus. In terms of policy, Latvia made comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe and away from Russia. Conversely, Belarus has taken a completely divergent path from Latvia, and has followed a consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to political-economic affairs, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian in orientation. Comparing Latvia and Belarus provides an excellent case study to build on International Relations, International Political Economy and Comparative Politics literature, because traditional theories have difficulty in explaining these states divergent policies. This dissertation uses political-cultural theoretical arguments to explain the divergent patterns of political-economic development between both countries, and builds on the rich body of multidisciplinary literature on cultural studies found within Social Constructivism to help understand the political-cultural context in which Latvia's and Belarus's policies were chosen. Specifically, this dissertation highlights that the predominant political-cultural worldviews in Latvia and Belarus, were shaped by the historic religious-cultural environment in which these states were situated, which have had a central influence on the patterns of domestic political-economic development chosen by each country since 1991. Additionally, this dissertation also shows that such worldviews had important implications for international relations, in that Latvia being historically situated in the sphere of Western Christian culture gravitated towards the West and away from the Russia, while Belarus being historically situated predominantly in the cultural sphere of Russian Orthodox Christianity was more naturally prone to gravitate towards closer relations with Russia, and away from Western Europe. This is important in pointing to the prime influence of religious-cultural worldviews in shaping political-economic behavior. In doing so my work addresses many gaps left by previous theoretical explanations on post-Soviet transformation. In terms of policy implications, the findings will have a wider applicability in helping to understand the types of political-economic development policies that are chosen by other states in post-Communist, post-authoritarian, and post-colonial contexts, which are experiencing extensive transformation and integration into the global economy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

Belarusian Communist Party (BCP)
Belarusian Democratic Republic (BDR)
Belarusian Popular Front (BPF)
Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR)
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)
Consumer Price Index (CPI)
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
European Union (EU)
Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
German Democratic Republic (GDR)
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS)
International Monetary Fund (IMF)
International Political Economy (IPE)
International Relations (IR)
Latvian Communist Party (LCP)
Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK)
Latvian Privatization Agency (LPA)
Latvian Popular Front (LPF)
Multinational Corporations (MNCs)
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Rest of the World (ROW)
World Trade Organization (WTO)
World War Two (WWII)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of completing a PhD dissertation, there are many people who deserve acknowledgement and thanks for their support. First, I would like to thank my Supervisor, Brian Bow. Brian was always spot on with his critiques, and always gave praise in the right amounts when needed. His office door was always open if I had a pressing question, or needed to discuss new ideas. Brian's grasp and command of the literature never ceased to amaze me, and his intellectual achievements are an inspiration for young scholars like myself. Not only has he been my supervisor, but he has been an intellectual mentor and friend, and has fully supported me throughout my intellectual development.

I would also like to thank the other two members of my committee. Finn Laursen has always been of great support. He is a wealth of knowledge on the European Union and EU integration. He has always been there to discuss new ideas, and in offering support and encouragement. Additionally, I would like to thank David Black for his insightful advice, support and constant encouragement. I would also like to thank others in the Department of Political Science for their support throughout my time as doctoral student at Dalhousie. These include Frank Harvey, Gil Winham, Robert Boardman, Louise Carbert, Bob Finbow, Florian Bail, and Karen Watts. I would also like to thank Barry Lesser in the Department of Economics at Dalhousie.

There are several thanks I would like to give to those who gave assistance to me while I was conducting field research in Latvia and Belarus. For Latvia, I would like to thank Nils Muižnieks at the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute at the University of Latvia, former Latvian President Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, as well as the cooperation of those at the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bank of Latvia, the Latvian Ministry of Economics, the Latvian Ministry of Finance, the Latvian Privatization Agency, the Financial and Capital Market Commission, the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia, and the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga. For Belarus I would like to thank those at the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of German Studies and Center for International Studies in Minsk, Nasha Niva, as well as the many other Belarusian officials, and non-governmental elites who were of

great assistance during my research in Belarus. I would also like to thank David Marples in Canada for his assistance in helping find research contacts.

My field research was generously funded by a Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Grant and a European Union Centre of Excellence Graduate Fellowship, both at Dalhousie University. Throughout my years as a doctoral student at Dalhousie, I have also been affiliated as a Doctoral Fellow with the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, and as a Graduate Fellow with the European Union Centre of Excellence. Both centre's are vital academic assets to Dalhousie, and have enriched my academic experience while completing my doctoral studies. While at Dalhousie, I was also the recipient of the Dalhousie President's Award in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010, and received other scholarships from the Faculty of Graduate Studies at Dalhousie. The above affiliations and awards have been essential to the development of my thesis and research program.

I would also like to thank several of my doctoral colleagues and close friends who I have been privileged to meet during my years at Dalhousie, including Sean, Sabrina, David, Anita, Eric, Alex and Cameron.

To my parents Kathryn Ann and Lawrence, I cannot thank you enough for your constant encouragement and unreserved generous support throughout my years at Dalhousie. I would say that my interests and passion for politics was sparked as a kid by the many conversations we had, and open discussion that was encouraged during many debates about politics and current events that occurred around the family dinner table. In addition, Mom and Dad could always be counted on to send me great care packages during my time in Halifax. It is to my parents that I dedicate my dissertation. I would also like to thank my two older sisters, Emily and Carey, and their families for their support, encouragement, and for always having an open door.

Most of all, I would like to thank my beautiful wife and best friend, Ólöf, who has stuck with me throughout my highs and lows, who has engaged in many interesting intellectual debates with me, and who has been a constant source of unwavering support and encouragement. Ólöf, you have been my rock during this long journey. You are strong woman, beautiful, and a determined scholar. To you I also dedicate my dissertation. Finally, I dedicate this to my daughters Una Márgret and Bára, who have brought me immeasurable joy and happiness.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, many predicted there would be economic policy convergence, where it was assumed that with the collapse of Communism, the post-Soviet states would all transition into liberal-capitalist economies.¹ Over twenty years later, however, these early forecasts have been confounded by the wide divergence in the political-economic policy practices of the post-Soviet states, which has been particularly apparent between Latvia and Belarus. Comparing Latvia and Belarus provides an excellent case study to build on International Relations (IR), International Political Economy (IPE) and Comparative Politics literature, because traditional theories have difficulty in explaining these states' divergent policies.

In terms of policy, Latvia made comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe and away from Russia. In terms of monetary policy, Latvia removed itself from the Soviet ruble-zone, adopting its own independent currency the Latvian lats, as well as following neo-liberal reforms, which included a strongly independent central bank, and strict anti-inflationary policies of having a tight control over the money supply, in order to promote currency stability. Also, the commercial banking sector was privatized and subject to extensive liberalization. Other areas included extensive structural reforms, with an emphasis placed on the restoration of private property for land and real-estate, the rapid privatization of

¹ Fukuyama, Francis. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Simon and Schuster; Bierstecker, Thomas J. (1992). "The 'Triumph of Neoclassical Economics in the Developing World: Policy Convergence and Bases of Governance in the International Economic Order.'" Ch. 4. In *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 102-131. Further evidence of the widespread assumption of capitalist transformation was seen in the debate between "shock-therapists" and "gradualists" in the early 1990s over the pattern the speed transition policies should take. For "shock-therapists," see David Lipton and Jeffrey D. Sachs. (1990). "Creating a Market in Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland." *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 20, 1: 75-147; Jeffrey D. Sachs and David Lipton. (1990). "Poland's Economic Reform." *Foreign Affairs* 63, 3: 47-66; Leszek Balcerowicz. (1994). "Understanding Postcommunist Transitions." *Journal of Democracy* 5, 4: 75-89; J. Winiecki. (1990). *Resistance to Change in the Soviet Economic System*. New York: Routledge. For "gradualists," see Adam Przeworski. (1993). "Economic Reforms, Public Opinion, and Political Institutions: Poland and Eastern Europe in Comparative Perspective." In *Economic Reforms in New Democracies: A Social Democratic Approach*, ed. Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, José María Maravall, and Adam Przeworski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Adam Przeworski. (1995). *Sustainable Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Kazimierz Z. Poznanski. (2002). "The Crisis of Transition as a State Crisis." ch. 3. In *Postcommunist Transformation and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frank Bönker, Klaus Müller, and Andreas Pickel. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

small and medium enterprises, as well as privatization of large-scale enterprises. Establishing adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property rights was also given priority. Additionally, markets and competition were emphasized, via deregulation, removing price controls, cutting government subsidies to inefficient industries, and lowering taxes. At the international level, Latvia promoted greater amounts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and removed barriers to liberalize trade. The all-encompassing and comprehensive nature of these reforms can be seen in that such reforms were intricately connected in facilitating Latvia's transformation into a liberal-democratic-capitalist economy, and return to the West.

Conversely, Belarus has taken a completely divergent path from that carried out in Latvia. Overall, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to political-economic affairs, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian in orientation, where the state controls almost all the economy and reforms have been largely nonexistent. In terms of monetary policy, the central bank in Belarus has been repeatedly subject to intense political interference, where political authorities placed far less emphasis on anti-inflationary monetarist policies, such as limiting the supply of money, which has resulted in problems of higher inflation and far-less currency stability relative to Latvia. A liberalized private commercial banking sector is also non-existent, as banks are largely owned and controlled by the state. Structural reforms have also largely been absent, which can be seen with the continued extensive state control over agricultural land and real-estate, and the general lack of privatization of small, medium and large enterprises. Additionally, markets and competition are not prioritized, and the state continues to play a strong role in most political-economic matters, in the form of maintaining extensive regulations, price controls, subsidization of industry, high taxes, and arbitrary decisions that flout the rule of law. Finally, at the international level, Belarus has taken an anti-liberal approach in regards to free trade and FDI, as Belarusian authorities continue to uphold significant barriers to trade and foreign investment. As a result, there has been little transformation from a state controlled command economy in Belarus, and political-economic practices have continued to remain stuck in Soviet-era statist methods, which tend to be illiberal, authoritarian, arbitrary, and lacking in respect of the rule of law. These command and

control methods of state centralization of the political-economy have been increasingly strengthened since 1994, under President Alexander Lukashenko.

If one were to look back to 1991, such divergence would have appeared strange, considering that Latvia and Belarus had many things in common at the time. As will be discussed below, from a material and structural analysis of the geo-strategic, security and economic environment in which both states were located, neither Latvia nor Belarus was in a position to radically alter each one's respective relationship vis-à-vis Russia, in regards to decreasing dependence, increasing autonomy and forming new alliances. In terms of security environments, both Latvia and Belarus had large numbers of Russian troops stationed in their respective countries, and were located in precarious geo-strategic positions. Economically, neither Latvia nor Belarus was situated in relatively better positions to radically reorient their macroeconomic and foreign economic policies away from Russia, as both were heavily dependent on the former Soviet market for trade, export markets, and the import of raw materials and energy. Furthermore, many economic commentators in the West and in liberally minded international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were advising the Baltic States against reform measures which might take them out of Russia's economic orbit.²

My dissertation focuses on divergent patterns of political-economic transformation of post-Soviet states since 1991, with specific emphasis on a comparative study of Latvia and Belarus. The objective is to understand the factors accounting for why two post-Soviet states facing similar geo-strategic and political-economic challenges chose to pursue divergent political-economic policy orientations. Specifically, the comparative case study of Latvia and Belarus focuses on the differing historical legacies and political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories of both countries to account for their divergent policy behavior.

² See for example, Hansson, Ardo and Jeffrey Sachs. (1992). "Crowning the Estonian Kroon." *Transition*, 9 (October): 1-3; Slay, Ben. (1992). "Introducing National Currencies: Causes and Consequences." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report* 1, 30: 49-52; Bungis, Dzintra. (1993c). "The Lats Returns to Latvia." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, 2, 16: 33-38., p. 34; Girnius, Salius. (1993). "Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, 2, 22: 35-39; Legrain, Philipp. (1993). "Estonia Proudly wears its Kroon of Thorns." *Financial Times*, June 23, 4; Economist. (1993). "Baltic States: Kroons, Lats, Litas." *The Economist*, July 3, 50; Michaels, Daniel. (1993). "Focus on Estonia – Baltic Success: Estonia Defies Advice in Creating Currency that Boosts Economy." *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, August 30, 1.

To explain the divergent political-economic policy practices between Latvia and Belarus, *my first hypothesis is that the divergence in economic policies between Latvia and Belarus is driven by each states' different political-cultural worldviews, which inform Latvians and Belarusians ideas, beliefs and preferences about modes of living, in regards to what constitutes proper political-economic organization of society and the legitimate role of the state in the economy.* Moreover, without these distinctive political-cultural worldviews, these policy differences would not have occurred. Thus, Latvia's comprehensive reforms were driven by the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and exhibit a reformist sentiment. Conversely, it is hypothesized that Belarus's lack of liberal reform is attributable to the historically rooted political-cultural worldviews that are found in Belarus, which favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership.

To understand the causal characteristics played by political-cultural worldviews it is important to trace their historical origins. Thus, *my second hypothesis is that Latvia's and Belarus's divergent political-cultural worldviews are conditioned by each state's differing historical legacies in terms of ways of life relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and economics.* It is hypothesized that the key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Latvian political-culture was Latvia's conversion into Western Christian and exposure to the subsequent Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism. Belarus's definitive moment was its original conversion into Orthodox Christianity. Overall, these differing religious foundations were the crucial definitive influences informing and setting Latvia's and Belarus's political-cultural worldviews and ways of life down unique and differing evolutionary paths.

Religiously, most Latvians converted to Lutheranism, which encouraged literacy, individualism, individual equality, private property, and reformism, while Belarus remained under the Russian Orthodox Church, which promoted values of collectivism/communalism, paternalism, absolutism and strong state rule. Politically, Russian Tsars ruled Latvia in a more hands-off manner, allowing more openness, while Tsars ruled Belarus in an absolutist fashion. Throughout history there was also a

persistent pattern of Latvian resistance against authoritarian encroachments to personal freedom, while in Belarus a far greater passivity towards authoritarian governance appears to be the norm. Economically, Latvians had longer experience with private property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads, while Belarusians historically had next to no experience with individual private property, and instead adhered to a political-cultural way of life characterized by a tradition of collectivist/communal control of property under the village commune.

Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-culture thrived during interwar independence, 1918-1940, the foundations of which were built on the historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers. Latvia was forcefully annexed into the Soviet Union, and Communist ideas never widely credible amongst ethnic-Latvians, and *alien* to Latvia's liberal historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. This resulted in a clash of cultures between Latvians and Russians, seen with a great deal of anti-Soviet resistance throughout the period of Soviet/Russian occupation, and subsequent strong will after 1991 to de-Sovietize and liberalize political-economic relations via comprehensive reforms and a return to Europe. In contrast, Belarus gained its first modern tangible experience with statehood under the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), where state-building and political-economic development built on the collectivist, communal and paternalistic cultural worldviews already historically prevalent amongst Belarusians. As a result, Belarusians were not prepared to seriously consider liberal-democratic and economic reform after 1991, because the predominant political-culture worldviews predominant in Belarus continued to favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership.

Comparing Latvia and Belarus provides an excellent case study to build on IR, IPE and Comparative Politics literature, because traditional theories have difficulty in explaining these states' divergent policies. This will open promising avenues of research into the importance of ideational factors influencing political behavior. Theoretically, my study will build on the rich body of multidisciplinary literature on cultural studies to help understand the political-cultural context in which Latvia's and Belarus's policies were chosen, and give new insight into the connection between ideas and policies. This is

important because not much is known about the role of historic political-cultural worldviews in determining the political-economic policies chosen by post-Communist states. Furthermore, there have been calls that it is essential to develop new theories about ideas to better understand why states' adopt differing economic policies.³ Ross has gone further to argue that "political economy might be an area that would benefit from more explicit attention to cultural questions," and specifically that "a more profound analysis would inquire into cultural conceptions of...the relationship between the individual and the collectivity."⁴ To address this theoretical and empirical gap, my work will generate new data on the policies adopted in Latvia and Belarus, the ideational cultural context in which those policies were chosen, and give new insight into the connection between political-cultural worldviews and these policy programs. A key focus will centre on understanding how differing political-cultural worldviews conceive of the individual and collectivity in divergent ways, and how this directly affects the types of political-economic governance that are permitted in a given society.

My work also contributes important insights into how political-cultural worldviews regarding the individual and collective are intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the historic religious context within which they are situated. Thus, the conception of political-culture presented here, takes the view that historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life are intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the religious context within which they are situated, even long after these values and norms have been secularized and taken for granted. This is important because religion has tended to remain understudied in explaining political action by theorists of IR, IPE, and Comparative Politics.⁵ My work is expected to address many of these gaps, and have a

³ Kirshner, Jonathan. (2003b). "Explaining Choices about Money: Disentangling Power, Ideas, and Conflict." In *Monetary Orders: Ambiguous Economics, Ubiquitous Politics*, ed. J. Kirshner. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 280; Helleiner, Eric. (2005). "Conclusion: The Meaning and Contemporary significance of Economic Nationalism." In *Economic Nationalism in a Globalizing World*, ed. E. Helleiner and A. Pickel. Ithaca: Cornell, p. 234; Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein. (1996). "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security." Ch. 2. In *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 64-65.

⁴ Ross, Marc Howard. (1997). "Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis." Ch. 3. In *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zucherman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 74.

⁵ Fox, Jonathan and Shmuel Sandler. (2004). *Bringing Religion into International Relations*. New York: Palgrave.

wider applicability to other post-Communist and post-authoritarian states' experiencing extensive political-economic transformation and democratization.

Problems for Theories of IR and IPE

The problem of accounting for the wide divergence between Latvia and Belarus is as much a problem for theories of IR and IPE, as it is for theories of Comparative Politics. This is because the choices of Latvia's and Belarus's policy-makers in regards to the patterns and strategies of post-1991 political-economic transformation had implications both for the domestic and international realms, which were often closely interrelated, which meant that possible explanations for both countries choices could be found in both IR/IPE and Comparative theories. This is illustrated by the example of Latvia, where comprehensive reforms not only set in motion the domestic transformation of Latvia into a liberal-capitalist economy, but also had significant implications for the international realm, as such liberal transformation was crucial for Latvia's two major foreign policy goals in joining the EU and NATO. Overall, in reviewing the IR and IPE explanations of post-Soviet political-economic transformation, it will be demonstrated that theories of Realism, Liberalism, Neo-liberal Institutionalism, critical theories focusing on the effects of globalization, and Systemic versions of Constructivism do not adequately account for the wide divergence in reform trajectories between Latvia and Belarus. The main problem with much of the IR and IPE theories inability to solve Latvia's and Belarus's divergent behavior is that this literature does not adequately take account of the important independent influence that domestic political-cultural ideas play in shaping states' policies.

Realist Theories

Realist theories of IR are confounded on several fronts and do not adequately account for the divergent policies of Latvia and Belarus. In general, Realist theories place particular emphasis on anarchic interstate relations, security, self-help, national self-interest, the relative distribution of material capabilities and power, and argue that states'

rationally seek to enhance their autonomy and lessen dependant relationships.⁶ Because Latvia and Belarus were in similar geographic positions, had similar power resources, and faced similar strategic incentives and constraints, such Realist arguments might have predicted that both would have followed similar patterns and immediately sought to distance themselves from Russia on strategic grounds in order to lessen Latvia's and Belarus's dependence on Russia. Overall, however, Realists tend to be ambiguous on this, since Realists expect either balancing or 'bandwagoning,' and usually do not have a good argument about why it will be one option or the other in specific cases,⁷ such as the foreign economic policy orientations of the post-Soviet states.

Realists also face challenges from the fact that Latvia's and Belarus's behavior completely diverge in relation to issues of membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). From the outset, Latvia sought to actively distance itself from Russia and rejected membership in the CIS, while Belarus chose not to radically depart from Moscow's orbit, and enthusiastically joined the CIS. Therefore, by viewing states as rational unitary actors and downplaying domestic political-cultural ideas, and treating norms and values as merely reinforcing existing power structures, such Realist theories are unable to adequately capture why Latvia perceived Russia to be a key security threat, while Belarus viewed Russia as a friend and ally.

Realist theories of alliance formation, such as Walt's arguments that states typically "balance against threats," which are based on a state's perception of threats, offer better accounts of alliance formation than the previous realist arguments that focus on structures of material power. While it is argued that balancing against a perceived threat tends to be the norm in International Relations, Walt also adds the caveat that one should not rule out "bandwagoning" from occurring.⁸ First, in terms of "proximate power," and "spheres of influence," "small states bordering a great power may be so

⁶ See for example, Waltz, Kenneth N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill., p. 105-107, 154-155, 157; Gilpin, Robert. (1987). *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 31-34; Krasner, Stephen D. (1978). *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 37-39; Grieco, Joseph M. (1990). *Cooperation Among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 2-4, 10; Mearsheimer, John. (1990). "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War." *International Security* 15, 1: 5-56.

⁷ Christensen, Thomas J., and Jack Snyder. (1990). : Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity." *International Organization*, 44, 2: 137-168., p. 138, 167-168.

⁸ Walt, Stephen M. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 5, 17.

vulnerable that they choose to bandwagon rather than balance, especially if their powerful neighbor has demonstrated its ability to compel obedience.” Second, when “offensive power permits rapid conquest, vulnerable states may see little hope in resisting,” and “balancing may seem unwise because one’s allies may not be able to provide assistance quick enough.”⁹ Both Latvia and Belarus fit Walt’s characteristics of small states that would be prone to “bandwagon,” particularly Walt’s example of the case of Finland. Here it should be noted that Latvia adopted a policy of neutrality during the interwar period, precisely because of a similar precarious geo-strategic position, and prominent Latvians after 1945 even envisioned a similar policy of neutrality for Latvia if it regained independence.¹⁰

However, the puzzle remains because these arguments alone do not capture enough important aspects of the situation, and do not adequately account for why only Belarus “bandwagoned” with Russia, and why Latvia actively sought to enhance its autonomy, orienting its policy towards Europe. This is apparent from an analysis of the geo-strategic, security and economic environment in which both states were located, as neither Latvia nor Belarus was in a position to radically alter each one’s respective relationship vis-à-vis Russia in regards to decreasing dependence, increasing autonomy and forming new alliances. Indeed, both Latvia and Belarus not only faced relatively similar economic impediments, but they were also equally faced with overarching geo-strategic and security threats from Moscow.

In terms of military and security environments, during the Cold War, and in the immediate years following the Soviet collapse, both Latvia and Belarus were heavily militarized, had large numbers of Russian troops stationed in their respective countries, and both were located in precarious geo-strategic positions. Latvia’s capital, Riga, was the headquarters of the Baltic Military District, where there were some 500 to 600

⁹ For two above quotations, see Walt, Stephen M. (1985). “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power.” *International Security* 9, 4: 3-43., p. 11; Walt. (1987). *The Origins of Alliances.*, p. 24-25.

¹⁰ On neutrality resulting from Latvia’s precarious geo-political situation, see Bilmanis, Alfred. (1928). *Latvia in the Making, 1918-1928: Ten Years of Independence.* Riga: Latvian Farmers Union., p. 136; Plakans, Andrejs. (1995). *The Latvians: A Short History.* Stanford: Hoover Institution Press., p. 138-139; Hiden, John, and Patrick Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States and Europe. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century, Revised Edition.* New York: Longman., p. 59-75. For prominent Latvians that speculated on possible future neutrality, see Bilmanis, Alfred. (1945). *Baltic Essays.* Washington: Latvian Legation., p. 208-210; Dreifelds, Juris. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.” *Problems of Communism*, 4 (July-August): 77-94., p. 87.

military installations, with between 70,000 to 80,000 Russian troops stationed on Latvian soil in 1991.¹¹ Similarly, there were between 140,000 and 400,000 Soviet troops stationed in Belarus, and close to 50% of all Soviet Military Bases.¹² While this might seem like a huge difference in numbers, per capita the numbers were greater in Latvia, and in both cases the large numbers would have been overwhelming to the host country in a time of hostilities. Additionally, Latvia contained a huge ethnic-Russian/Slavic minority that had settled there after 1945, and were closely connected to Soviet industrial enterprises and security organizations. Since regaining independence, Latvia has repeatedly faced relatively significant amounts of attempted coercion from Russia in regards to these issues. For example, Russia made repeated coercive threats, seen with delaying tactics in regards the closure of military bases and troop withdrawal from Latvia, stalling on ratifying official border agreements with Latvia, threats over the treatment of ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, and economic sanctions against Latvia for not conceding privileged access to Russian oil and gas interests.¹³ In regards to threats related to ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, and other historical disputes,

¹¹ See Muiznieks, Nils. (1997). "Latvia: Restoring a State, Rebuilding a Nation." In *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, ed. I. Bremmer and R. Taras. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 391; Pabriks, Artis and Aldis Purs. (2002). *Latvia: The Challenges of Change*. New York: Routledge., p. 123; I. Faurby. (1993). "Baltic Security: Problems and Policies Since Independence." In *The Baltic States in International Politics*, ed. N. Petersen. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies., p. 71; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 193-194; Bleiere, Daina, Ilgvars Butulis, Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga and Antonijs Zunda. (2006). *History of Latvia: The 20th Century*. Riga: Jumava., p. 347.

¹² See Zaprudnik, Jan. (1993). *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History*. Boulder: Westview., p. 207-208; Zaprudnik, Jan. (1994). "Development of Belarusian National Identity and its Influence on Belarusian Foreign Policy." In *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. R. Szporluk. London: M.E. Sharpe., p. 136; Mihalisko, Kathleen J. (1997). "Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism." In *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. K. Dawisha and B. Parrott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 250. However, as will be discussed in chapter 6, Belarus had the advantage in that many of the officers and regular members of these Soviet units were comprised of ethnic-Belarusians. In contrast, Latvians rarely served as high-ranking officers, and Latvian conscripts to the Soviet armed forces were often dispersed to far off regions of the USSR.

¹³ See Drezner, Daniel. (1997). "Allies, Adversaries, and Economic Coercion: Russian Foreign Economic Policy Since 1991." *Security Studies* 6, 3: 65-111; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 133-137; Faurby. (1993). "Baltic Security.," p. 71. In regards to threats related to ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, see Karklins, Rasma. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy: The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia*. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press., p. 122; Nørgaard, Ole, Lars Johannsen, Mette Skak and René Hauge Sorensen. (1999). *The Baltic States after Independence, Second Edition*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar., p. 185; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 510; Rislakki, Jukka. (2008). *The Case for Latvia: Disinformation Campaigns Against a Small Nation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi., p. 40, 35-52.

Russian officials and other non-governmental elites have even resorted to baseless propaganda in calling Latvia ‘fascist.’¹⁴

Latvia and Belarus are also located in a historically contested and recurring conflict zone, between Western Europe and Russia. More importantly, much of Latvia is located geographically to the east like Belarus, and is virtually surrounded along with the other two Baltic States by Russia to the east, and the heavily militarized Russian enclave of Kaliningrad to the west. This makes Latvia hard to defend from a potential Russian ground offensive. As a result, in the early 1990s, some theorists coming from a rationalist and game-theoretic framework prematurely argued that “Latvia [would] probably be drawn into a future Latvian-Russian condominium, playing the role of Russia’s window towards the West.”¹⁵ Some even were quick to call Latvia a ‘client state’ of Russia, due its precarious security situation, and the perceived ability of Moscow to affect domestic developments in Latvia directly through its military occupation, and indirectly because of the huge ethnic-Russian minority living in Latvia.¹⁶ To illustrate, even by 1997, it was reported by Colin S. Grey, former assistant director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, that ““for the time being at least, the Baltics...must be regarded within Russia’s security space, or sphere of concern.””¹⁷

While Latvia is now a full member of NATO, the initial prospects of gaining membership were not bright, and guarantees of Latvia’s security against threats of Russian aggression were marginal for many years after 1991, before the prospects of membership became more certain.¹⁸ To illustrate, it was reported that at an EU meeting

¹⁴ As Rislakki points out, “appealing to ‘oppression,’ Russia has waged a propaganda war against Latvia and Estonia during the entire period of their new independence.” Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 40, 37-39. On Russia calling Latvia ‘fascist’ and ‘neo-fascist,’ see Denis, Solvita. (2008). “The Story with History.” In *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, ed. Nils Muižnieks. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia., p. 83, 88-89; Petrenko, Dmitrijs. (2008). “How Does the Russian Community Live in Latvia?” In *Manufacturing Enemy Images*, ed. Nils Muižnieks. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia., p. 68.

¹⁵ Gerner, Kristian, and Stefan Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States and the end of the Soviet Empire*. London: Routledge., p. 173.

¹⁶ Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 134.

¹⁷ Quote found in Lejiņš, Atis. (2008). “US Policy Towards the Baltic States During Three Presidencies: An Essay.” Ch. 6. In *Latvia and the USA: From Captive Nation to Strategic Partner*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 92, n. 12.

¹⁸ See Wall Street Journal Europe. (1995). “Baltic Matters: Review and Outlook.” *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, February 15, 8; Economist. (1998). “Club or be Clubbed.” *The Economist*, January 17, 46; Nørgaard et al. (1999). *The Baltic States after Independence.*, p. 165, 191-192; Economist. (2001). “Special Report: Knocking at the Clubhouse Door – The Baltic States.” *The Economist*, September 1, 23; Pabriks

in 1994, former British Foreign Minister, Sir Douglas Hurd implied that membership was unlikely, where he stated that “we all have great sympathy for the Baltic states, not only in word. But we do not know how the security arrangement will be solved.”¹⁹ Not only were the Baltic States considered a “security challenge,” it was also a fact that for many years Moscow put up a fierce resistance to the prospects of Baltic membership in NATO.

As a result, many Western officials were split on the issue, which is strikingly similar to the recent debates surrounding whether Ukraine and Georgia should be admitted to NATO. Indeed, “the ‘old Europeans’, had it not been for Washington’s insistence in the initial phase of NATO enlargement, would have preferred to accommodate Russia rather than fight for their central and eastern European cousins.”²⁰ Additionally, former U.S. Ambassador to Latvia, Ints Siliņš observed at the time that “one can sense a natural tendency among Western policymakers to lean on the Balts in order to placate the Russians.”²¹ This sentiment was echoed by former Latvian President Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, where she pointed out that, “we heard the same argument when we wanted to enter into NATO, that we would make Russia unhappy.”²² Overall, Latvia was not given a formal invitation of NATO membership until late 2002. Finally, as will be outline in chapter 3 and 5, Latvia largely opted to implement comprehensive reforms, and reorient itself away from Russia long before the EU states’ had warmed to the prospect of Latvia’s membership.

and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 139-141; Economist. (2002). “Europe: Welcome Aboard!; The Balts and the European Union.” *The Economist*, December 14, 38; Lieven, Anatol. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence*. New Haven: Yale University Press., p. 375.

¹⁹ Quote of Sir Douglas Hurd, found in Lejiņš. (2008). “US Policy Towards the Baltic States.” p. 88; See also Kalniņš, Ojārs. (2008). “Latvians and Americans.” Ch. 13. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 145.

²⁰ Lejiņš. (2008). “US Policy Towards the Baltic States.” p. 88; Lejiņš also notes that “George Kennan, the father of America’s containment policy...argued that the Baltic States should not become members of NATO because they had been ‘part of Russia longer than they were part of anything else’” (p. 90).

²¹ Siliņš, Ints. (2008). “Riga Journal.” Ch. 14. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 153. See also Kalniņš. (2008). “Latvians and Americans”; Asmus, Ron, and Māris Riekstiņš. (2008). “The Baltic Model.” Ch. 11. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia. [Originally published in *Wall Street Journal Europe* (January 16, 2008)], p. 131; [Former Deputy Secretary of State under Clinton Administration] Talbott, Strobe. (2008). “The Jūrmala Opening.” Ch. 12. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 135; Ozoliņa, Žaneta. (2008). “The United States and Latvia: Standing Shoulder to Shoulder in International Organizations.” Ch. 5. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 82.

²² Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

Economically, neither Latvia nor Belarus was situated in relatively better positions to radically reorient their macroeconomic and foreign economic policies away from Russia. This is because both Latvia and Belarus were comparatively similar in terms of the structural distribution of gross domestic product (GDP), and both were ranked amongst the top of the ex-Soviet Republics in terms of having high rates industrialization. To illustrate, in 1990, industrial production as a percentage of GDP made up 37.1% of the total Latvian economy, while Belarusian industrial production equaled 40.0%.²³ Moreover, both were heavily dependent on the former Soviet/Russian market for trade, export markets, and the import of raw materials and energy, which were essential for Latvian and Belarusian industry. For instance, in 1990, 88.6% of Latvia's overall trade and 86.8% of Belarus's overall trade was directed towards the Soviet market.²⁴ Overall, the dependence on Russia was most apparent in terms of energy imports of Russian oil and natural gas. Indeed, Latvia and Belarus are still almost completely dependent on Russia for energy imports, which continue to account for upwards of 90% of both countries imports of oil and natural gas.²⁵ From a purely strategic standpoint, this would have been seen as seriously inhibiting for Latvian and Belarusian chances to break away from Russian economic dominance.

While it appears that both Latvia and Belarus definitely had differing threat perceptions of Russia, however, it is also apparent that Realist formulations that offer materialist accounts of threat perceptions do not adequately account for Latvia's and Belarus's divergent behavior. This is because, state perceptions and beliefs cannot simply be reduced to material factors, because such explanations do little to account for why Latvia viewed Russia as a threat, nor why Belarus did not perceive Russia as threat. Instead, it seems better to argue that the reason for the different perceptions of threat in Latvia and Belarus had more to do with each country's differing political-cultural worldviews about the proper modes of political-economic management and security, and whether they viewed Russia as opposed or akin to their political-cultural way of life.

²³ World Bank. (1994). *Statistical Handbook 1994: States of the Former USSR*. Washington: World Bank., p. 354 for Latvia, and p. 124 for Belarus.

²⁴ Michalopoulos, Constantine and David Tarr. (1992). *Trade Payments and Arrangements for the Former USSR*. Washington: World Bank., p. 39.

²⁵ See for example, Svedberg, Marcus. (2007). "Energy in Eurasia: The Dependency Game." *Transition Studies Review* 14, 1: 195-202; Energy Information Administration (EIA). (2006). "Baltic Sea Regional Factsheet." *Country Analysis Briefs*. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Baltic/pdf.pdf>.

Thus, while NATO and EU membership were definitely desired by Latvia as a means of guaranteeing security, there was also an overriding cultural component involved here, in that Latvia viewed membership in both organizations as part of their overall goal to ‘return to Europe,’ in other words to return to their Western political-cultural roots and away from the captivity of Soviet (Russian) political-culture. In Belarus the opposite occurred, as Belarusians did not see close cooperation with Russia as being problematic or a threat, since Belarusians viewed Russia as akin and historically linked to Belarus’s political-cultural way of life.

Liberal Theories

Similar to Realist accounts, Liberal theories also view states as rational actors that respond rationally to material factors. Liberalism, which argues that states act rationally and follow objective incentives and constraints, and seek to maximize absolute economic gains,²⁶ is unable to anticipate or account for domestic cultural and ideational factors overriding material interests and the quest for absolute economic gains. As mentioned above, both Latvia and Belarus were almost completely dependent economically on the Russian market upon gaining independence. Thus, from a Liberal viewpoint, both Latvia and Belarus could have achieved strong absolute gains by keeping their policies oriented towards Russia and the former Soviet market. While pursuing reform is not inconsistent with the expectations of Liberalism, Latvia’s reorientation away from Russia is strange for Liberals, since Latvia risked a great deal in absolute economic terms by distancing itself from its established markets in Russia. This is illustrated by the fact that many Liberals in the West, and in liberally minded international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank, were advising Latvia and the Baltic States against reforms which might take them out of Russia’s economic orbit, such as adopting independent currencies. Specifically, the Bank of Latvia defied the advice of these international bodies against

²⁶ Frieden, Jeffrey, and Ronald Rogowski. (1996). “The Impact of the International Economy on National Politics.” In *Internationalization and Domestic Politics*, ed. Helen V. Milner and Robert O. Keohane. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 25-47.

Latvia breaking away from the Soviet ruble zone and establishing its own national currency.²⁷

Neoliberal Institutional theories, which argue that international institutions and regimes facilitate cooperation by reducing transaction costs,²⁸ are unable to explain the breakdown of the former macroeconomic regimes and institutions, which intricately tied virtually every aspect of both Latvia's and Belarus's economies (monetary, trade, production, energy) to Russia. This is because, Neoliberal Institutionalists would have taken the post-Soviet states interest as given, and viewed the extensive institutional connections between them as helping to facilitate future cooperation, while at the same time discouraging them from adopting radically divergent policy behavior. However, such assumptions could not account for Latvia's political-economic transformation and transition away from Russia. While Belarus opted to join the newly formed institutions of the CIS, and even opted for a future possible macroeconomic union with Russia, Latvia flatly rejected this alternative, opting only for a Western orientation, and comprehensive political-economic reform.

Thus, the problem with Neo-Liberal explanations in regards to the post-Soviet context is that these tend to focus on institutions, and on the rational and instrumental interests that give rise to them. Specifically, Neoliberals tend to view states as rational self-interested actors, and the norms, laws, rules, and contracts of institutions, as primarily functioning to reduce costs and facilitate cooperation.²⁹ In particular, Neoliberals tend to emphasize the creation and functioning of institutions and regimes as being built on rational calculations, while ignoring the cultural and ideational factors that help to explain why particular institutions emerge, and why regime rules and values are

²⁷ See, Hansson and Sachs. (1992). "Crowning the Estonian Kroon"; Slay. (1992). "Introducing National Currencies"; Bungs. (1993c). "The Lats Returns to Latvia"; Girnius. (1993). "Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States"; Economist. (1993). "Baltic States." This will be discussed more fully in chapter 3 and 5.

²⁸ See for example, Keohane, Robert O. (1984). *After Hegemony*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Keohane, Robert O. (1989). *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Westview; Axelrod, Robert. (1986). "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms." *American Political Science Review* 80, 4: 1095-1111; Oye, Kenneth A. (1986). *Cooperation Under Anarchy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Stein, Arthur A. (1990). *Why Nations Cooperate: Circumstance and Choice in International Relations*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Young, Oran R. (1989). *International Cooperation: Building Regimes for Natural Resources and the Environment*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Jervis, Robert. (1999). "Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate." *International Security* 24, 1: 42-63.

²⁹ Keohane. (1984). *After Hegemony*; Oye. (1986). *Cooperation Under Anarchy*; Keohane. (1989). *International Institutions and State Power*; Axelrod. (1986). "An Evolutionary Approach to Norms."

followed. As Katzenstein points out, “institutions do not merely create efficiencies. They also express identities.”³⁰ As a result, Neo-Liberal theories treat culture and ideas as mostly secondary to material factors, and do not properly take into account differing cultural conceptions of norms and values.

Critical Theories of IPE focused on Globalization

Critical theories that point to policy convergence via globalization, are also confounded by the divergence of Latvian and Belarusian political-economic policy behaviors. In general, critical theories of IPE argue that globalization has significantly decreased the power and authority of nation-states. For instance, Strange argued that there was a “hollowing of state authority,” which has resulted in the decreasing power of nation-states relative to the increasing power of non-state actors, such as Multinational Corporations (MNCs).³¹ As a result of the increased power of non-state actors, it has been argued that in an increasingly globalized world, this will lead to heightened competition between nation-states in the form of policy convergence, which will drive countries to continually decrease regulations and standards in a “race to the bottom.” This is illustrated by Gray who argued that “social market systems will be compelled progressively to dismantle themselves, so that they can compete on more equal terms with economies in which environmental, social and labour costs are lowest.”³² Similarly, Strange argued further that this will “have an eroding effect on two important sources of state authority: the power to tax and the power to regulate markets.”³³

In relation to the post-Soviet realm, such arguments view globalization and transnational actors as driving post-Communist transformation and argue that states’ sovereignty power over macroeconomic matters is substantially weakened. Specifically,

³⁰ Katzenstein, Peter J. (1996a). “Conclusion: National Security in a Changing World.” Ch. 13. In *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein. New York: Columbia University Press., p. 518. See also, Risse-Kappen, Thomas. (1996). “Collective Identity in a Democratic Community: The Case of NATO.” Ch. 10. In *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein. New York: Columbia University Press; Hopf, Ted. (1998). “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations.” *International Security* 23, 1: 171-200., p. 189-190; Kratochwil, Friedrich V. (1991). *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³¹ Strange, Susan. (1995). “The Defective State.” *Daedalus*, 124 (Spring), p. 56-57.

³² Gray, John. (1998). *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. New York: The New Press., p. 92.

³³ Strange. (1995). “The Defective State.” p. 60.

these critical theories have argued that political-economic transformation is externally driven by the dictates of Western dominated international organizations, such as the IMF, World Bank, and EU, in order to promote the spread of liberal capitalism and expand opportunities for trade and investment.³⁴

Overall, however, empirical evidence illustrates that globalization has not gone as far as some claim, that policy convergence and a “race to the bottom” is not necessarily occurring, that national differences are still important, and that nation-states still maintain a significant amount of power and policy autonomy over political-economic affairs.³⁵ Moreover, in the post-Soviet context, arguments about policy convergence fostered the general impression and misunderstanding that comprehensive reforms were widespread and being conducted in most post-Soviet states. However, it is a fact that only a minority of the post-Communist states, including Latvia, have transformed to become liberal-capitalist economies. With both Latvia and Belarus being heavily industrialized, in need of extensive reform, and situated in relatively similar positions in the global economy in 1991, Belarus’s almost complete lack of reform stands as the polar opposite of Latvia’s transformation. Additionally, it is also apparent that comprehensive reforms in many of the other post-Soviet states, such as Russia, have tended to be marginal and half-way at best.³⁶ Furthermore, in regards to the influence of international organizations, it was

³⁴ See for example, Stiglitz, Joseph E. (2002). *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: W. W. Norton, specifically ch. 5 “Who Lost Russia.” p. 133-165; Gray. (1998). *False Dawn.*, specifically ch. 6.

³⁵ See for example, Gilpin, Robert. (2001). *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 368; Garrett, Geoffrey. (1998). “Global Markets and National Politics: Collision Course Virtuous Circle?” *International Organization*, 52, 4: 787-824; Garrett, Geoffrey. (1998). *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Weiss, Linda. (1998). *The Myth of the Powerless State*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Berger, Suzanne, and Ronald Dore, ed. (1996). *National Diversity and Global Capitalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

³⁶ This is a criticism that can be leveled at Stiglitz. (2002). *Globalization and its Discontents*, for his primary focus on Russia, which actually lagged continually behind rapid reformers, such as the Baltic States. While many proclaimed that Russia was experiencing extensive ‘shock therapy,’ evidence suggests that comprehensive reforms in Russia were marginal and not even half-way at best (see comparative figures in chapter 3). Indeed, many of the business practices from Soviet times continued on as usual in Russia after 1991. See Drezner. (1997). “Allies, Adversaries, and Economic Coercion.” p. 79; Rutland, Peter. (1996). “Russia’s Gas Leviathan.” *Transition* 2, 9: 12-13., p. 12. While some critics might view the increasing power of oligarchs as a consequence of pushing capitalism too soon, it is important to realize that “the operation of clans and mafia groups within the political system” is nothing new, because “the Communist Party of the Soviet Union supported regional and family clans through its system of patronage,” and these even existed in Tsarist times. Diuk, Nadia. 2001. “Sovereignty and Uncertainty in Ukraine: Ten Years After the Breakup.” *Journal of Democracy* 12, 4: 57-64., p. 61. See also, Harasymiw, Bohdan. 2002. *Post-Communist Ukraine*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies., p. 387-388;

mentioned above that the Bank of Latvia defied these organizations advice against Latvia breaking away from the Soviet ruble zone and establishing their own national currency. Therefore, such critical theories fail to adequately capture neither the domestic factors that were driving Latvian policy towards comprehensive reform, nor the factors accounting for Belarus's consistent pattern of upholding strong state controls over all the economy.

Systemic and Elite-level Constructivist Theories

One of the most promising aspects of constructivist theories is that these provide strong alternative explanatory frameworks to that of rationalist explanations that view ideas operating instrumentally to affect elite behavior. While it is the position in this dissertation that Social Constructivist theories focusing on the formation of cultural worldviews at the domestic level of comparison is the most fruitful for understanding post-Soviet change, an elaboration of these will be returned to in chapter 2. Thus, the purpose of this section will be to only examine Systemic Constructivist theories, which utilize variables such as the spread and diffusion of ideas, values and norms at the structural and elite-level in the international system, to describe state behavior in world politics.

Elite level Systemic Constructive theories that analyze the spread of norms amongst global elites, have also illustrated the importance of ideas in shaping international political-economic relations. For instance, Ruggie showed that post-1945 economic relations, such as Bretton Woods, were based on the consensus of “embedded liberalism” and favouritism of Keynesian economic policy management amongst Western policy makers.³⁷ Others, such as Haas, have pointed to the important role of ideas in guiding policy of tight-knit elite specialist groups, called “epistemic

Braudel, Fernand. (1992). *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, Volume III: The Perspective of the World*. Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 444.

³⁷ Ruggie, John G. (1982). “International Regimes, Transactions and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order.” *International Organization* 36: 379-415.

communities,” which share common outlooks and worldviews of how certain policy matters should be organized, such as central bankers in guiding monetary policy.³⁸

Another set of elite-level Systemic Constructivist theorists focus on the possibility of a “world culture” developing, and also on the potential for international norms to transform and reshape states identities and interests.³⁹ Such theories focus on the spread of Western liberal norms and ideas. In regards to the cases involved here, one could argue along similar lines as Fukuyama, that the fall of the Soviet Union signaled a triumph of the ideas and values of liberal democracy and liberal capitalism.⁴⁰ A similar, but more critical analysis along this line is done by neo-Gramscian Marxists, such as Cox, and Gill, who look at the spread of Western liberal norms and ideas, which these theorists perceive to be negatively promoting Western style “consumer cultures.”⁴¹ Similar to the critical arguments of globalization, these theories would assume that macroeconomic transformation in the post-Soviet realm would have been facilitated by the spread of ideas amongst elite at the systemic level of international politics, especially those that resonated from the ‘Washington Consensus,’ in the U.S., Western dominated international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, and EU, and non-state actors such as MNC’s.

However, both the Fukuyama-style and the neo-Gramscian arguments are inadequate in explaining the differing political-economic policy practices and behavior of Latvia and Belarus. In fact, there is much evidence that points against the development of a “world culture.”⁴² Moreover, the “triumph” of liberalism has proved to be illusory, as

³⁸ Haas, Peter. (1992). “Introduction to Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination.” *International Organization*. 46: 1-35. See also, Helleiner, Eric. (1994). *States and the Reemergence of Global Finance: From Bretton Woods to the 1990s*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 198-201.

³⁹ See for example, Jeffrey Legro. (1995). *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Martha Finnemore. (1996). “Norms, Culture and World Politics: Insights from Sociology’s Institutionalism.” *International Organization* 50, 2: 325-347; Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. (1998). *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

⁴⁰ Fukuyama. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. For an example of such an argument on the triumph of liberal ideology allegedly “liberalizing” Russian foreign policy after 1991, see McFaul, Michael. (1995). “Revolutionary Ideas, States Interests, and Russian Foreign Policy.” Ch. 2. In *Political Culture and Civil Society in the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu. London: M. E. Sharpe.

⁴¹ Cox, Robert. (2003). *The Political Economy of a Plural World*. London: Routledge; Gill, Stephen. (2003). *Power and Resistance in the New World Order*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

⁴² See for example, Haas, Ernst B. (1970). *Human Rights and International Action: The Case of Freedom of Association*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Huntington, Samuel P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster; Gilpin. (2001). *Global*

only a small portion of the post-Communist/Soviet states have actually transitioned to become liberal-capitalist economies, which consistently adhere to protecting individual rights, property rights, and the rule of law. As well, both sets of assumptions fail to explain why in two countries so closely located in geographic proximity to one another that liberal ideas resonated broadly in Latvia, and failed to gain traction in Belarus. Certainly, Latvia was more receptive to policies emanating from liberal bodies such as the IMF, World Bank and EU. However, this had more to do with the fact that such liberal ideas favouring reform were already widely visible and historically preexisting in Latvian society, where political-cultural worldviews converged in favour of liberalization and a 'return to Europe.' Additionally, as noted above and will be discussed in chapter 3 and 5, the Bank of Latvia defied the advice of these organizations against Latvia breaking away from the Soviet ruble zone and establishing its own currency. Therefore, by downplaying important domestic political and societal factors, as well as overly focusing on norms of elites at the systemic-level, these theories fail to adequately capture neither the domestic ideational factors that were at play in influencing Latvia's consistent pattern of comprehensive reform, nor the ideational factors that account for Belarus's lack of reform and continued state control.

Overall, elite-level Systemic Constructivist theories are problematic in explaining the political-economic policy practices and behavior of the post-Soviet states, because such theories focus overly on the structural formation of ideas at the international level amongst elites. This lack of adequately accounting for the key influence of domestic cultural and ideational variables is problematic, as Weldes points out, because "officials do not approach international politics with a blank slate onto which meanings are written as a result of interactions among states...their appreciation of the world, of international politics, and of the place of their states within the international system, is necessarily rooted in collective meanings already produced in part...in domestic political and cultural contexts."⁴³ Thus, Systemic Constructivist theories tend to ignore the importance of the

Political Economy, p. 397; Bull, Hedley. (2002). *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. 3rd Edition. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁴³ Weldes, Jutta. (1999). *Constructing National Interests: The US and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press., p. 9. See also Hopf, Ted. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 290.

domestic level, and fail to fully examine how ideas are embedded in the broader political-culture of the domestic societies in which they are situated. Moreover, in not adequately addressing the domestic political-cultural context, these theories do not pay enough attention to the fact that cultural ideas are historically rooted and slow to change. Thus, it is essential to develop new theories about ideational factors to better understand why states' adopt differing economic policies.⁴⁴

Overall, the main problem with much of the IR and IPE theories inability to solve Latvia's and Belarus's divergent behavior is that this literature does not adequately take account of the important independent influence that domestic political-cultural ideas play in shaping states' policies. This is problematic because the choices of Latvia's and Belarus's policy-makers, in regards to the patterns of post-1991 political-economic transformation had implications for both the domestic and international realms, and were often closely interrelated. Therefore, in order to fully understand the divergence of Latvia's and Belarus's post-Soviet transformation, it is necessary that one does not privilege the theoretical realms of IR and IPE over Comparative Politics. This follows the earlier advice of other prominent political scientists, who "welcomed the blurring of distinctions...between comparative and international politics,"⁴⁵ in order to give fuller understanding of the factors influence actors political behavior. Thus, it is important to incorporate domestic level theoretical explanations of ideas and culture, in order to understand the determinants of reform.

Problems for Theoretical Explanations from Comparative Politics

In regards to theories from Comparative Politics, important steps have been made by proponents of Historical Institutionalists and Rational Institutionalists in incorporating ideas, as well as Social Constructivist ideational approaches focus on the elite-level, and especially those utilizing National Identity frameworks to account for differences in change amongst post-Soviet/Communist states. However, while opening promising avenues of research into the importance of ideational factors, it will be argued below that

⁴⁴ Kirshner. (2003b). "Explaining Choices about Money.," p. 280; Helleiner. (2005). "Conclusion.," p. 234;

⁴⁵ Peter J. Katzenstein, in Kohli, Atul, Peter Evans, Peter J. Katzenstein, Adam Przeworski, Susanne Hoebler Rudolph, James C. Scott, and Theda Skocpol. (1996). "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium." *World Politics*, 48, 1: 1-49., p. 9.

methodological issues arise with these frameworks, and evidence from Latvia and Belarus also poses problems for these theoretical explanations. Another problem with these frameworks is that evidence pointing towards the salience of political-cultural variables at play has been largely underutilized and overlooked.

Historical Institutional Theories

Historical Institutional theories that incorporate ideas to account for capitalist economic transformation appear to fit as explanations in some post-Soviet/Communist states, and not in others. In contrast to Rationalists, Historical Institutional theories, while arguing that institutions “structure choices,” do not view institutions and ideas as instrumental tools. Instead, institutions are viewed as “historical products which exist anterior and *a priori* to any agent who happens to operate within them at a given moment in time,” which creates a level of contingency and path dependence that constrain and structure actors choices, because “the institutions of the...state make it difficult for new administrations to even think, let alone act, all that differently from previous ones.”⁴⁶

Such Historical Institutional arguments could follow along the lines of Hall (1989), and Sikkink (1991), whose books both similarly argue that the institutional context mattered if particular sets of new ideas were to be successfully adopted. In examining the spread of Keynesian ideas, Hall points to differing historical institutional contexts, which made Keynesian macroeconomic ideas more favourable in the Anglo-American countries, than in the states of mainland Europe. Overall, Hall makes the conclusion that while “ideas have real power in the political world, however, it also confirms that they do not acquire political force independent of the constellation of institutions and interests already present there.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Sikkink incorporates ideas to

⁴⁶ See, Blyth, Mark. (2002). “Institutions and Ideas.” Ch. 14. In *Theory and Methods In Political Science: Second Edition*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker. New York: Palgrave MacMillan., p. 300; Hall, Peter, and Rosemary Taylor. (1996). “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms.” *Political Studies* 44, 5: 936-957; Hay, Colin, and Daniel Wincott. (1998). “Structure, Agency and Historical Institutional.” *Political Studies* 46, 5: 951-957; Immergut, Ellen M. (1998). “The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism.” *Politics and Society* 26, 1: 5-34. For key Historical Institutional works, see Moore, Barrington. (1966). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press; Skocpol, Theda. (1979). *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France Russia and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁷ Hall, Peter. (1989). *The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism across Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 390.

explain why in the 1950s, Brazil implemented policies of Import-Substituting Industrialization more successfully than Argentina, and points to key differences in the historic institutional structures of both countries to explain their divergence. As Sikkink points out, “new ideas do not enter an ideological vacuum...they are inserted into a political space already occupied by historically formed ideologies,” which these ideas must fit with.⁴⁸ Thus, for both Hall and Sikkink, a critical factor determining the success of ideas in driving policy change was the historic institutional context of each state. In doing so, both authors help to illustrate the importance of domestic political contexts. However, in both frameworks, ideas ultimately remain a secondary source of explanation, subordinate to the primary independent variable of explanation which remains historic institutional structures.

Using similar Historical Institutionalist frameworks, arguments pointing to historic institutions as impediments to change have also been made to explain why transformation has not been forthcoming in Belarus. For example, Korosteleva et al, argues that “structural legacies, especially a weak state, fully exploited by the *nomenklatura*, ineffective law, a system of patronage, and structural dependence on Russia remain the principle obstacles.”⁴⁹ In other words, the crux of these arguments is that the Communist system and institutional structures were more entrenched and/or hard-line in some of the post-Soviet countries than in others, which has inhibited pro-reform forces and facilitated the old *nomenklatura* to continue to wield significant control over the levers of power, thus stymieing attempts at reform. Here, ultimately, ideas would take a secondary role to institutional explanations.

⁴⁸ Sikkink, Kathryn. (1991). *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 2. See also, Hall. (1989). *The Political Power of Economic Ideas.*, p. 383.

⁴⁹ Korosteleva, Elena A., Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. (2003a). “Introduction: Paradoxes of Democratization in Post-Communist Belarus.” In *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, ed. Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. New York: Routledge Curzon., p. 7; See also Korosteleva, Elena A. (2003). “Party System Development in Post-Communist Belarus.” Ch. 5. In *Contemporary Belarus*, ed. Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. New York: Routledge Curzon. Similar arguments have also been made in the case of Ukraine. For example, Prizel points out that political-economic reform lagged behind and not much had changed in Ukraine by 1997, because “independence left the Brezhnevite morass in place.” Prizel, Ilya. (1997). “Ukraine Between Proto-Democracy and ‘Soft’ Authoritarianism.” In *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 345.

One could also argue along Historical Institutional lines that in Latvia, ideas favouring reform were implemented successfully, because it had the experience of being an independent state during the interwar period. However, as will be discussed in chapter 4, this argument is questionable because once forcefully incorporated into the USSR, these formal institutional structures were completely dismantled, with Latvia being fully incorporated into the Soviet all-Union administrative and institutional structure. As a result, both Latvia and Belarus were similar in terms of having the same institutional structures, and being heavily integrated into the central institutional command structure of the Soviet political-economy. Moreover, as will be discussed in chapters 4 and 6, there is also evidence to suggest that Belarus retained greater institutional decision-making autonomy from Moscow, during its existence as the BSSR, than did Latvia. For instance, it will be pointed out that Belarus enjoyed a much more privileged position vis-à-vis Russia, compared to other Soviet republics, which can be seen in that Belarus tended to have more decision-making autonomy and was given more leeway within administrative and political-economic affairs, in that the BSSR was designated as its own administrative district, and had much of a national economic infrastructure put into place. This stands in contrast to other Soviet republics that were more likely to be divided regionally, or form parts of a larger regional political-economic unit, such as the Baltic States.⁵⁰ Additionally, Belarus was the only Soviet republic, other than Ukraine, to be given a seat in the United Nations General Assembly, and thus had its own foreign ministry. As will be discussed in chapter 6, Belarus also enjoyed a more trusted position in defence matters, forming one single military district of Belarusian military units within the Soviet armed forces.

Overall, Historical Institutional arguments incorporating ideas as secondary variables are inadequate to account for comprehensive reform in Latvia, and the failure to reform in Belarus. Methodologically, significant problems exist with Historical Institutional explanations, because these do not adequately account for why Communists in Latvia were more effectively purged from key positions, while in Belarus,

⁵⁰ As will be noted in chapter 6, this was mentioned by a several Belarusian elite. Similar consensus is also offered by Zaprudnik, Jan, and Michael Urban. (1997). "Belarus: From Statehood to Empire." Ch. 7. In *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, eds. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 285; Urban, Michael E. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power: Elite Circulation in the Belorussian Republic, 1966-86*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 50-57.

local Communists initially retained a significant hold over the levers of power, nor why an apparent outsider like Lukashenko was able to gain power and effectively consolidate an authoritarian regime which has retained an aura of legitimacy.

Additionally, such theories have difficulty in accounting for the lack of change in Belarus, when it appears that large segments of Belarusian society remained heavily Sovietized in their cultural worldviews, habits, and historical memories. This is because Historical Institutional arguments point primarily to the longevity of historical institutions to explain the lack of change in Belarus, and thus treat ideational variables with secondary importance. In doing so such theories overlook the cultural worldviews that such institutions are historically rooted in and legitimized by in society, which will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 6, which trace the historic political-cultural worldviews of Latvia and Belarus. In terms of other methods, Historical Institutional explanations would face obvious problems if one were to find evidence giving strong inference that the predominant worldviews of large segments of Belarusian society and most elites did not view the Soviet system as broken and retained strong attitudes, which acted independently of institutions, favouring collectivism, the communal ownership of property, and paternalism in the form of a penchant for statist solutions and authoritarian leadership to solve pressing political-economic problems. This can be done via an examination of historical memories related to the BSSR, through an analysis of public opinion polls, examining observations given by Belarusian elites during interviews, and through an analysis of first-hand reports and secondary commentary on contemporary politics in Belarus.

Rational Institutional Theories

Rational Institutionalists have also incorporated ideational arguments, in order to explain political outcomes when a focus on institutional structures alone would not suffice. In doing so, Rational Institutionalists view ideas as secondary forces that serve instrumental and functional purposes, particularly in being used by rational political actors as “roadmaps,” “focal points,” and “flashlights” to help give guidance to policy in

troubled times, usually when old ideas have been discredited, and to help actors maximize their interests and utility.⁵¹

Rationalist arguments in relation to old ideas being discredited have been made in regards to Latvia and the Baltic States, and have taken an outlook similar to those mentioned above, which view ideas as “roadmaps” in times of crisis, and to help actors maximize their interests and utility. These explanations have argued that a new group of elites in the Baltic States adopted liberal economic policy ideas to solve the economic crisis caused by the failure of Communist policies. Moreover, these argued that the new elites in Latvia and the Baltic States were able to successfully drive ahead with their liberal policy agenda by playing on a general disfavour in these societies towards Communism. As Feldmann and Sally have argued, because “‘command and control’ economics had been discredited, the economic crisis provided a rare ‘window of opportunity’ for policymakers to push through their reforms.”⁵² In other words, since interest groups favouring command style policies were marginalized in the initial years following independence, this allowed a small group of new political elites with new ideas to be able to instrumentally drive forward their preferred liberal policy prescriptions.

Similarly, Nissinen’s study of Latvian transition utilizes a Pluralist framework exploring group conflict in the party system as a key route for directing political influence, while at the same time incorporating an important role for exogenous ideologies to explain why pro-reform political groups were able to gain the upper hand in Latvian politics after 1991. In doing so, Nissinen shows that a consensus developed in favour of liberal-market reform amongst the leading political parties, which were situated to the centre-right of the political spectrum. In helping to build this liberal consensus, Nissinen places important emphasis on the role of exogenous ideas in influencing policy makers, which included the triumph of liberalism in Eastern Europe “not as an economic

⁵¹ See for example, Goldstein, Judith, and Robert O. Keohane. (1993). “Introduction.” In *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, ed. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Garrett, Geoffrey, and Barry R. Weingast. (1993). “Ideas, Interests, and Institutions: Constructing the European Community’s Internal Market.” Ch.7. In *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, ed. Goldstein and Keohane. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; McNamara, Kathleen R. (1998). *The Currency of Ideas*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 58.

⁵² Feldmann, Magnus and Razeen Sally. (2002). “From the Soviet Union to the European Union: Estonian Trade Policy, 1991-2000.” *The World Economy* 25, 1: 79-106, p. 87. See also, Feldmann, Magnus. (2001). “The Fast Track from the Soviet Union to the World Economy: External Liberalization in Estonia and Latvia.” *Government and Opposition* 36, 4: 537-558.

science, but as a political ideology.”⁵³ With the simultaneous discrediting of Soviet command policies, this helped to give great credibility to policies espoused by the ‘Washington Consensus,’ and advocated by the IMF. Thus, Nissinen argued that although “the knowledge of market economy and Western economics was virtually nil at the outset of transition,” Latvia’s “strong antipathy toward all things Soviet,” and desire to Westernize allowed “complete belief systems” to be “transferred to a fertile, receptive soil which found itself in a virginal state after the demise of Communism.”⁵⁴ Nissinen also gives brief mention to nationalist ideas being used instrumentally, in that “the salesmen of reform marketed their ‘product’ to people who lacked the cognitive capacities to assess the byproducts of transition but who were very receptive to any anti-Soviet ideas owing to strong currents of national enthusiasm.”⁵⁵

Nissinen’s study is important in its analysis of the privatization process and in depth understanding of policy platforms of the various political parties, and in pointing to the importance that politics and ideas are key drivers of economic transformation. However, Nissinen’s explanation of the transformation process falls short in predominantly focusing on exogenous ideologies and does not explore adequately the many important endogenous ideological and historical-cultural factors for why the major political parties in the Latvian Saeima coalesced in favour of rapid liberal reform, nor why most Latvian voters supported such pro-reform parties. Moreover, when applied to Belarus, such arguments are inadequate, because as the discussion in chapter 7 will point out, proponents of the ‘Washington Consensus,’ such as the IMF and the World Bank were trying to sell their prescriptions for reform in Belarus, which were largely rejected and/or ignored by elites, and not supported by the populace. As will be discussed in chapters 4 to 7, it was not because Latvia was more nationalist, or simply anti-Soviet, but due to the fact that Latvia had strong historically pre-existing liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, while Belarusian worldviews historically were more collectivist/communal, favourable towards higher amounts of statist solutions.

⁵³ Nissinen, Marja. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy: Political Determinants of Economic Reform Policy*. New York: St. Martin’s Press., p. 211.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 269, 6, 257, 246-247.

Overall, Nissinen's uses ideational variables in an ad hoc and cursory manner to supplement her pluralist explanation of policy reform. Methodologically, Nissinen's single case study faces problems, because one would also expect that such arguments would also apply to Belarus. However, the fact that liberal ideas were actually nil in Belarus, and that Belarusians did not follow the same path as Latvia points clearly to that there is something else at play. In general, too much emphasis is also placed on the exogenous ideologies promoted by the IMF and 'Washington Consensus.' As previously mentioned, and will be discussed in chapters 3 and 5, Latvian policy-makers willfully ignored the advice of IMF advisors, specifically in regards to adopting an independent currency. Methodologically, if one were to find greater inference to endogenous ideational variables such as identity or historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories at play, and evidence that such liberal values and habits were historically rooted, this would significantly dampen support for Nissinen's claims that such ideas were new to Latvia. In doing so, this would better explain why Latvians were open to such ideas from the IMF in the first place.

Significant problems also arise with Nissinen's brief and ad hoc explanation that the Latvians had an "antipathy toward all things Soviet," and a desire to Westernize, because it does not attempt to adequately examine, detail or trace the historical cultural factors for why this antipathy was so strong, nor that it was not so much a goal of 'Westernizing,' but actually an idea of returning to Europe and the West, which Latvians were historically part of, and cut off from during the years of Soviet occupation. A further contention can be made with Nissinen's argument that Latvians "knowledge of the market economy and Western economics was nil." Indeed, if credible historical evidence and consensus reveals Western liberal worldviews, ways of life, habits and traditions characterizing Latvians political-economic behavior in various periods throughout history, especially in Latvia's first period of independence, seen with the presence of market capitalism, and individual private property, this would point to the inadequacy of such arguments by Nissinen. Such comparative historical analysis detailing such patterns, as well as an explanation of evidence also suggesting that Soviet rule failed to extinguish many of Latvia's historically liberal-individualist traditions, will be conducted in chapter 4.

Rational Institutional theories have also adopted ad hoc ideational explanations to explain Belarus's divergent political-economic behavior. For example, in contrast to Latvia where there was significant support for liberal ideas, some have offered the explanation that in Belarus there was simply a dearth of ideology. This explanation that Belarus had "no sense of ideology" is exemplified by Åslund's argument that "when society has no clear purpose, all that is left is interests in a society dominated by a small elite, rendering dictatorship and...rent seeking the natural outcome."⁵⁶ However, this is inadequate to explain Belarus's divergence, because while there was likely an absence of *liberal* ideology in Belarus, it also seems apparent that there was a strong presence of ideologies, both amongst elites and society, favouring collectivist, communal, statist, paternalistic, and authoritarian methods for managing political-economic relations, which will be inferred in chapter 7 through an examination of public opinion polls, and analysis of the observations from interviews of Belarusian elites, and news reports and contemporary accounts on Belarusian politics. Methodologically, to counter such rationalist claims, it is important to highlight that non-liberal ideologies were at play in Belarus and predominant in the worldviews and habits of both elites and society. This will be done in chapter 7, where public opinion polls and elite testimony will be utilized to trace the presence of such illiberal ideologies. Moreover, evidence from contemporary accounts since 1991 will also be utilized to infer that most Belarusian political elites ideologically "remain[ed] committed to Soviet-style planning and production targets."⁵⁷

Furthermore, since most of the Rationalist explanations utilize such factors as the dominant position of oligarchs to bolster their rationalist explanations, such arguments would be seriously challenged if it could be shown that Belarus has had far fewer

⁵⁶ Åslund, Anders. (2002). *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc*. Cambridge: Cambridge., p. 393. See also Eke, Steven M., and Taras Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus." *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, 3: 523-547., p. 538. Another book that predicates lack of reform on oligarchs that are more interested in delaying reform to allow for "state capture" and rent-seeking, which is a primary motive for the lack of reform, includes Havrykyshyn, Oleh. (2006). *Divergent Paths in Post-Communist Transformation*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan., p. 245, 272; Havrykyshyn, Oleh. (2007). "Fifteen Years of Transformation in the Post-Communist World: Rapid Performers Outperformed by Gradualists." *Development Policy Analysis*, no.4 (November 9): 1-17., p. 12, 13.

⁵⁷ Kuzio, Taras. (2001). "Belarus and Ukraine: Democracy Building in the Gray Zone." In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe, Volume 2: International and Transnational Factors*, ed. Jan Zielonka and Alex Pravda. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 482. For a similar assessment, see de Weydenthal, Jan. (1998). "Belarus: Government Lauds Economic Growth, But Future Uncertain." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. March 9. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1088196.html>.

problems with oligarchs than other similar countries which have chosen not to pursue liberalizing reforms, such as Russia, largely due to the sheer dominance of Aleksander Lukashenko. For instance, Zlotnikov has noted that “Lukashenko...has impinged upon the interests of adherents to the ‘oligarchic’ model and even against the interests of the ‘nomenklatura’ entrepreneurs.”⁵⁸ As a result, “criminality – economic and its other forms – has been kept in check, as a by-product of a zero-tolerance approach.”⁵⁹ Such evidence is important for casting doubt on Rationalist arguments regarding the ‘rent-seeking’ motives of Belarusian officials, since Lukashenko’s decisions were not in the interest of self-aggrandizing bureaucrats. Methodologically, Rationalist theories would also face problems if one were to find evidence that Belarusian elites and society were motivated more in their policy preferences and behavior by ideational variables such as political-cultural worldviews characterized by preferences favouring collectivist, communal, statist, paternalistic and authoritarian methods for managing political-economic relations, rather than being influenced by rationalist motives.

Rationalist Institutional arguments that incorporate ideas are problematic in explaining Latvia’s and Belarus’s differing political-economic records for several reasons. First, Rationalist arguments’ top-down level of analysis, and their deductive “methodological individualism,” reduces political behavior and ideas to instrumental calculations of rational self-interest and utility maximization.⁶⁰ As March and Olsen point out, “although self-interest undoubtedly permeates politics, action is often based more on discovering the normatively appropriate behavior than on calculating the return expected from alternative choices.”⁶¹ Consequently, as Gabriel Almond argues, “rational choice analysis may lead to empirical and normative distortions, unless it is used in

⁵⁸ Zlotnikov, Leonid. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector and a Middle Class as a Source of Political Change in Belarus.” Ch. 5, in *Independent Belarus: Domestic Determinants, Regional Dynamic, and Implications for the West*, eds. Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 152, 138.

⁵⁹ Nuti, Mario D. (2005). “The Belarusian Economy: Suspended Animation between State and Markets.” In *Postcommunist Belarus*, eds. Stephen White, Elena Korosteleva, and John Löwenhardt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., p. 98. See also, International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2010a). *Republic of Belarus: Selected Issues*. IMF Country Report No. 10/16. January. Washington: IMF., p. 14. As will be discussed in chapter 7, similar sentiments were also mentioned by several Belarusian elites.

⁶⁰ See for example, Hall and Taylor. (1996). “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms.,” p. 944-945; Hay and Wincott. (1998). “Structure, Agency and Historical Institutional.,” p. 951-957; Blyth. (2002). “Institutions and Ideas.,” p. 300.

⁶¹ March, James G., and Johan P. Olsen. (1984). “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life.” *American Political Science Review* 78, 3: 734-749, p. 744.

combination with the historical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological sciences, which deal with the values and utilities of people, cross-culturally, cross-nationally.”⁶² Alone, Rationalist arguments do not explain why some countries like Latvia successfully implemented neoliberal policy ideas, and why other states like Belarus did not.

Problems with Rationalist conceptions of ideas are especially apparent in the arguments that ideas acted as “flashlights” in Latvia by helping its government to find new policy solutions to solve the immediate problems that were occurring after the fall of Communism. One place where this is apparent is where some have argued that in Latvia, Communist institutions and ideas were simply discredited because of poor economic performance. For instance, Savchenko argued that Communist ideas were discredited because “unlike other Soviet republics, the Baltics did not experience tangible benefits from the Soviet-style industrialization.”⁶³ However, these arguments are contradicted when examining empirical evidence, particularly when directly comparing the relative rates of Latvian and Belarusian economic development. For instance, both Latvia and Belarus experienced significant industrialization after 1945, under the Soviet command-economy, and both were relatively equal, and ranked amongst the top of the ex-Soviet Republics in terms of having high socio-economic modernization (per-capita income, education, health, urbanization, and welfare), with Latvia often ranking the highest.⁶⁴

⁶² Almond, Gabriel A. (1991). *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*. London: Sage., p. 121. Moreover, as Dobbin points out, “the cultural approach... suggests that the rationalized, universal, Laws that purportedly constitute modern social practice are in fact *derived from* modern social practice.” Dobbin, Frank R. (1994). “Cultural Models of Organization: The Social Construction of Rational Organizing Principles.” Ch. 5, in *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Diana Crane. Cambridge: Blackwell., p.141. See also, Thompson, Michael, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky. (1990). *Cultural Theory*. Boulder: Westview., 22-23.

⁶³ Savchenko, Andrew. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations: A Comparative Analysis of Belarus, Poland and the Baltic States*. Aldershot: Ashgate., p. 90.

⁶⁴ For evidence on extensive rates of industrialization, development and modernization, see Bilinsky, Yaroslav. (1973). “The Background of Contemporary Politics in the Baltic Republics and the Ukraine: Comparisons and Contrasts.” in *Problems of Mininations: Baltic Perspectives*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., R. Taagepera and M. Valgemäe. San Jose: AABS., p. 91, 114; Dreifelds, Juris. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 111-113; Ioffe, Grigory. (2004). “Understanding Belarus: Economy and Political Landscape.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, 1: 85-89; Kirby, David. (1995). *The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe’s Northern Periphery in an Age of Change*. London: Longman., p. 420; Koropecyj, I. S. (1981). “Growth and Productivity.” Ch. 3. In *Economics of Soviet Regions*, eds., I. S. Koropecyj and G. E. Schroeder. New York: Praeger., p. 95; Küng, Andres. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom: Four Decades of National Survival Versus Russian Imperialism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 1940-1980*. Cardiff: Boreas Publishing House., p. 116, 120; Marples, David R. (1996). *Belarus: From Soviet*

Moreover, in the immediate post-independence period, both Latvia and Belarus faced similar economic situations, had similar levels of development, were heavily industrialized, and intricately tied into the Soviet command economy. As a result, Rationalist conceptions of ideas miss the point that ideas have deeper roots than simply spawning from previous ideas being discredited, and that the adoption of ideas might go beyond rational material calculations. It is hypothesized that although Latvians and Belarusians did receive some tangible material benefits during Communism, Latvian worldviews abhorred Soviet-Communist policy methods, while Belarusian worldviews favoured such command-style policies. Methodologically, evidence in support of such a hypothesis would serve to undermine Rationalist explanations in regards to post-Soviet economic policy behavior.

In arguing that Communist ideas were “discredited,” Rationalist explanations also create the impression that such ideas were at one time credible with a sizeable portion of the Latvian population. However, arguments implying that Communist ideas once achieved wide popularity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were forcefully incorporated into the Soviet sphere after 1945 are contradicted by historical evidence to the contrary. For instance, studies conducted during the Cold War showed that “the political-cultures of the Eastern European countries demonstrate the extraordinary staying power of nationalist and liberal tendencies, and traditional ethnic and religious propensities in the face of the most penetrative efforts to eliminate them or incorporate them into the Communist system.”⁶⁵ Moreover, during the 1970s, scholars studying Communist politics found that there was “no evidence to suggest that the new socialist man was developing.”⁶⁶

Rule to Nuclear Catastrophe. New York: St. Martin's., p. 21-23; Marples, David R. (1999a). *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation*. Amsterdam: Harwood, p. 19-23; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 38, 48-50; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 162, 163-165; Plakans, Andrejs, ed. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism: The Invasion and Occupation of Latvia by the USSR and Nazi Germany 1939-1991: A Documentary History*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse., p. 145; Schroeder, Gertrude E. (1981). “Regional Living Standards.” Ch. 4. In *Economics of Soviet Regions*, eds., I. S. Koropecykj and G. E. Schroeder. New York: Praeger., p. 141.

⁶⁵ Almond. (1991). *A Discipline Divided.*, p. 78. See also, Archie Brown, ed. (1984). *Political Culture and Communist Countries*. New York: M. E. Sharpe; Stephen White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*. New York: MacMillan.

⁶⁶ Gray, Jack. (1979). “Conclusions.” Ch. 9. In *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, eds., Archie Brown and Jack Gray. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers., p. 264.

Therefore, in making such arguments, Rationalists overlook the possibility that the Latvians historically liberal political-culture was the driving force behind Latvia's policies of comprehensive political-economic reform and transformation away from Communism, while the Belarusians collectivist political-cultural worldviews were primary cause of Belarus's complete lack of reform. In chapter 5, which examines the historical roots of Latvian political-culture, historical evidence will be presented inferring that Communist ideas were never widely credible to begin with in Latvia, and were antithetical to Latvia's historically rooted liberal-individualist political-culture. Methodologically, to counter Rationalist arguments in regards to Belarus, it is necessary to gather comparative historical evidence detailing the presence of illiberal worldviews and ways of life, thus inferring the predominant patterns of collectivism, communalism, paternalism and statism.

Rationalist theories have also incorporated ideas of Nationalism and National Identity to buttress their explanations. In doing so, these frameworks have taken the view of ideas of Nationalism as serving instrumental ends. For instance, some have been explicit in arguing that nationalist ideas were used instrumentally by Latvian elites, in the form of restrictive citizenship and language laws, in order to exclude political opponents. Specifically, it was argued that nationalist ideas worked as an "exclusionary ideology," utilized in the self-interest of "political entrepreneurs of the Baltic republics," who "had a special incentive to mobilize ethnic resources," because "independence and ethnic domination became the best guarantee for their careers."⁶⁷ In other words, such explanations argue that these laws acted instrumentally to exclude large numbers of potential ethnic-Russian/Slavic opponents, while at the same time materially benefiting local national-elites.

However, while it might be accurate that ethnic-Latvians gained a dominant position in the administrative apparatus of the Latvian government after independence, it is far from conclusive that the sole motivating reason for such a change resulted from

⁶⁷ Steen, Anton. (2000). "Ethnic Relations, Elite and Democracy in the Baltic States." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, 4: 68-87., p. 70. See also Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan. (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; David D. Laitin. (1991). "National Uprisings in the Soviet Union." *World Politics* 44, 1: 139-177; Feldmann. (2001). "The Fast Track from the Soviet Union to the World Economy."

purely instrumental and materialistic calculations. In other words, Rationalist theories of Nationalism miss the point that such laws might have been more than just crass nationalist responses used for material gain. Methodologically, if one were to find the lack of presence of such explicitly nationalist ‘exclusionary’ preferences in polling responses to questions asking whether ethnic-nationals should be favoured for jobs over minorities, this would pose significant problems for such Rationalist explanations. Also, one could analyze elite observations regarding reform motivations in order to understand the goals at play.

Additionally, significant flaws exist with the argument that such a change in personnel resulted from the motivation to gain rent-seeking opportunities. This is because the increasing reform occurring in Latvia throughout the 1990s, and the steady dismantling of the structures of the Soviet command economy, removed many of the old Soviet-era mechanisms and opportunities that government elites could use for rent-seeking. Moreover, if such policies were motivated purely by instrumental motivations alone, it seems more likely that non-core political institutions, where opportunities for rent-seeking are more readily available, would have seen extensive personnel changes as well. Methodologically, the presentation of evidence indicating that the dominance of ethnic-Latvians was most concentrated in the core institutions of government decision-making, as opposed to lesser institutional apparatuses of government, would pose problems for such rationalist arguments. Here, evidence showing that the large Soviet era state-owned enterprises were heavily staffed and predominantly managed by ethnic-Russians/Slavs during Soviet rule and in the immediate period after regaining independence, as well as evidence that there was significant resistance from this group to early attempts at privatization, would pose significant problems of these rationalist oriented theories. Methodologically, it will be important to analyze the statements of elites that had a role in the reform process to gauge motivations, and also news reports and commentary from the time. Indeed, evidence indicating the presence of strong ideological goals more than the utilization of nationalism for instrumental purposes would pose problems for such rationalist theories.

Overall, the main problem of Rationalist arguments that incorporate ideas of Nationalism is that these explanations tend to overemphasize that ideas are used

instrumentally in the “self-interest” of individual actors. As DiMaggio and Powell point out, “most...theorists assume that actors construct institutions that achieve the outcomes they desire, rarely asking where preferences come from or considering feedback mechanisms between interests and institutions.”⁶⁸ It is the position here that rather than simply being predicated on rationalist assumptions, these institutional changes had clear connotations relating to the Latvians political-cultural worldviews.

Specifically, as will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 detailing Latvia’s historical and contemporary political-cultural worldviews, Latvians viewed the Soviet political-economic system as alien to their political-cultural way of life, and had a strong desire to promptly de-Sovietize the Latvian political-economy upon regaining independence. Part of this de-Sovietization meant excluding ethnic-Russians/Slavs that had dominated the Soviet political-economic apparatus, whom ethnic-Latvians viewed as ideologically Soviet and loyal to Russia, and essentially as a ‘fifth column.’⁶⁹ Methodologically, an examination of public opinion polls, observations from elites during interviews, and analysis from contemporary commentary at the time, will be important here to infer that a sizeable portion of ethnic-Latvians continued to view the ethnic-Russian/Slavic population in Latvia as a threat and ‘fifth column,’ that would subvert the goals of de-Sovietization, liberalization, and a return to Europe. Also, in the historical discussion in chapter 4, it is necessary to present evidence inferring that ethnic-Latvians generally loathed the Soviet political-economy, and the connected migration of ethnic-Russians/Slavs to work in the Soviet industrial enterprises, and that Latvians viewed this as a threat to their cultural well-being.

As will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5, tracing the historical and contemporary Latvian political-cultural worldviews, such views of Latvians were not entirely unfounded, and were shaped by their historical memories of ethnic-Russians/Slavs dominating the Soviet administrative apparatus, and being loyal Soviet citizens. Methodologically, one will need to find evidence inferring that in the lead up to independence, and even after 1991, many ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers’ attitudes

⁶⁸ DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter W. Powell. (1991). “Introduction.” In *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, eds. W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago: University of Chicago., p. 9.

⁶⁹ For views of ethnic-Russians/Slavs as being a ‘fifth column,’ see Nørgaard et al. (1999) *The Baltic States after Independence*, p. 184, 158; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 77, 80. The influence of political-culture on such perceptions will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

remained highly pro-Soviet, illiberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian. Moreover, in regards to the elites, it will be important to present evidence inferring that the ethnic-Russian/Slavic elite managers actively opposed the Latvian government's liberal reforms. Overall, first-hand accounts from Latvian elites, contemporary reports from the time, and especially public opinion polls that ask respondents to rate the former Soviet regime, measure attitudes towards reforms, threat perceptions of Russia, and questions regarding identity will be beneficial here.

Indeed, it will be argued in chapter 5 that the exclusive citizenship policy of Latvia could be seen as a solution to solve the huge obstacle posed to the desire of Latvians to de-Sovietize, resulting from the fact that ethnic-Russian/Slavs dominated the political-economic decision-making apparatus in Latvia during Soviet times, and tended to be the biggest supporters of the Soviet regime. From a political-cultural standpoint, these laws have had significant consequences influencing the shape and transformation of Latvia's political-economic policy behavior since 1991, by excluding those most likely to oppose de-Sovietization and liberal reform, because the vast majority of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers that came after 1945 did not qualify for automatic citizenship, which meant that they were not allowed to vote or hold state jobs. More precisely, the citizenship policy acted in a very similar way to the Czech lustrations laws. This has meant that Latvian politics, in the crucial transformative years after regaining independence, has been dominated primarily by Latvians and their liberal political-cultural worldviews. As a result, the restrictive citizenship regime meant that Latvians were in firm control their political destiny, which has allowed Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews to shine through in regards to political-economic policy patterns and behavior.

Overall, Rationalist conceptions do not properly acknowledge that the adoption of ideas might go beyond simple rational material calculations. In many cases, the incorporation of ideas of national identity is often done in an ad hoc manner near the end, and act more as filler in order to shore up flaws with solely rationalist explanations. Most problematic, as will be discussed in chapters 5 and 7, is that such theories are actually contradicted by empirical evidence that shows that instrumental material calculations

were not the primary goals of policy-makers, and that cultural worldviews trumped what might have been viewed by some observers as rational.

Social Constructivist Ideational Theories

More recently, Social Constructivist theorists have shifted their attention from elites at the international systemic level, as discussed in the section on IR and IPE, and have increasingly focused a great deal on ideas operating at the domestic level, which has opened up promising avenues of research into more purely ideational approaches. Before getting to the most commonly used approaches focusing on National Identity, it is important to look at recent constructivist accounts operating at the elite-level of analysis. These approaches have offered the explanation that elite-level ideas have been important in shaping the types of international organizations that the post-Soviet states have chosen to join. Specifically, Darden categorizes the Baltic States as containing elites who adopted liberal ideas, which helped enable these countries accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). On the other hand, Belarusian elites are categorized as having ideational preferences that favour continued ties with Russia and Eurasia, which has enabled policies of closer links with international groupings, such as the CIS.⁷⁰

However, several key problems stem from significant methodological problems within Darden's analysis. First, Darden runs into problems specifically because much of his analysis in tracing the ideas is done by examining "key economic policy areas," to "derive further indication that a government employs a particular set of economic ideas."⁷¹ This is problematic because it falls into the trap of making circular arguments, and inferring ideas from current policy patterns. As McAuley noted, it is not enough for the researcher to "simply run off attitudes and values from the existing political institutions and practice."⁷² Even if such a process of tracing ideas was sound, Darden's

⁷⁰ Here, Darden also categorizes Georgia, Armenia as 'liberal,' as well as Kyrgyzstan, as a result of these countries gaining accession to the WTO. Darden, Keith A. (2009). *Economic Liberalism and Its Rivals: The Formation of International Institutions among the Post-Soviet States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 14-15, 305.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷² McAuley, Mary. (1984). "Political Culture and Communist Politics: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back." Ch. 2, in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed. Archie Brown. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 18-19. On the need of avoiding circular arguments, see Miller, John. (1984). "Political Culture: Some

analysis would have trouble in explaining why countries that he labels as ‘liberal’ because they gained WTO membership, such as Georgia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, are also ranked as far from being liberal in other key political-economic policy areas by international organizations, such as European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, and NGO observers, such as Freedom House.

Methodologically, problems result from Darden’s focus on ideas at the elite-level, because the importance that domestic societal influences have in shaping elite ideas is ignored. This is problematic because elites do not operate in a vacuum when formulating policy, and are informed and influenced by the political-cultural worldviews that are historically predominant in their respective society. Moreover, evidence that would point to ideational variables operating more at the broader societal level of cultural worldviews, such as extensive public opinion polling conducted since the early 1990s is largely ignored.

Additional methodological problems result from Darden’s large-N comparison of fifteen of the post-Soviet states, which leaves little room for a rich comparative historical analysis of the contingency of the ideas at play. Thus, while Darden importantly argues that elite ideational preferences result from contingent historical circumstances,⁷³ only a cursory treatment is given to undertaking a proper comparative historical understanding of where such ideas originated in order to account for contingency. For example, when dealing with Latvia and Belarus, such ideational preferences are taken for granted and assumed as given, and next to no comparative historical analysis (i.e. only examining policy actions in the 1990s),⁷⁴ is conducted to search for the roots of these ideas. Where some attempt at historical explanation is given in the case of Estonia, Darden argues that these ideas were contingent on economic reform experiments that occurred in Estonia in the 1970s.⁷⁵ While Darden is right to categorize Estonia as having liberal ideas at the elite-level in the post-Soviet era, it is hardly adequate enough to explain the historical roots of these as being contingent on reform experiments that occurred under Soviet officials. It is the position of this dissertation that the high prevalence of liberal ideas

Perennial Questions Reopened.” Ch. 3, in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed. Archie Brown. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 44.

⁷³ Darden. (2009). *Economic Liberalism and Its Rivals.*, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.135-139, 161-166.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

amongst Estonian elites resulted from reasons similar to Latvia, namely that Estonia also has historically liberal political-cultural worldviews, which have their historical roots centuries preceding the 1970s.

Finally, little treatment of the historical roots of Belarusian elites' integrationist preferences are given, and there is only a little blurb pointing to other possible explanations, such as that Belarus had a 'weak' national identity.⁷⁶ Moreover, the elite ideas at play in Belarus are described with rationalist undertones, which makes such ideas appear as serving instrumental ends.⁷⁷ Thus, the importance that domestic societal influences have in shaping elite ideas in both Latvia and Belarus is largely ignored. Methodologically, it would be important to provide evidence that such ideas were present in large segments of society and elites, and influenced policy decisions, well prior to the influence of international organizations. This can be inferred through an analysis of elite observations during interviews, examining public opinion polls, and through an analysis of first-hand commentaries and reports from the time. Overall, it is the position here that Latvian society had strong Western liberal political-cultural roots, whereas Belarusian society's collectivist historical political-cultural did not view cooperation with Russia as being problematic, since Belarusians viewed Russia as culturally akin and historically linked to Belarus.

Similarly, Epstein highlights international institutions such as the EU as guiding post-Communist transformation and helping to foster domestic support for ideas favouring of liberal reforms.⁷⁸ However, problems arise for several reasons. First, as will be discussed in chapter 3, and parts of chapter 5, Latvia largely opted to implement comprehensive reforms long before the EU had warmed to the prospect of Latvia's membership. Moreover, it will also be pointed out that Latvia had implemented such extensive liberal reforms in certain areas that often went beyond liberalization found in the EU, which resulted in Latvia having to implement greater amounts of regulation once acceding to the EU.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6. In the sections below, this dissertation finds many problems also with national identity explanations.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161-166.

⁷⁸ Epstein, Rachel B. (2008). *In Pursuit of Liberalism: International Institutions in Postcommunist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Epstein's arguments are also contradicted by her own acknowledgement that many of these countries under comparison in her study (e.g. Poland and Hungary), which are relevant to the case of Latvia, had a prior interest in "returning to Europe."⁷⁹ In sticking to argument about the primary role of the EU in promoting the spread of ideas, the influence of ideational factors emanating from the domestic societal level is largely overlooked and dismissed. Moreover, when applied to Belarus, such arguments fall short as the EU has had quite marginal influence there. Additionally, in giving primary importance to international institutions, only a cursory treatment is given to undertaking a proper comparative historical understanding of where such ideas originated, or in accounting for the importance of examining historical contingency. Therefore, instead of merely resulting from the influence of international institutions, it is hypothesized that in countries such as Latvia, there was also an overriding political-cultural component involved that acted prior to the influence of international bodies. Specifically, it is hypothesized that Latvia viewed membership in organizations such as the EU and NATO as part of its overall goal to 'return to Europe,' in the form of returning to their Western cultural roots, and away from Soviet/Russian culture. Whereas, in Belarus the opposite occurred, as Belarusians did not perceive close cooperation with Russia as being problematic or a threat, since Belarusians viewed Russia as culturally akin and historically linked to Belarus.

Overall, the elite-level Constructivist frameworks mentioned above are problematic in explaining the political-economic behavior of the post-Soviet states because such theories focus overly on the structural formation of ideas at the international level amongst elites. This is problematic as Hopf points out because "what is mostly missing from social constructivism, paradoxically enough, is society...the public at large...has been mostly ignored."⁸⁰ Thus, these elite-level Constructivist frameworks fail to fully examine how ideas are embedded in the broader political-culture of the society in which they are situated.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁰ Hopf, Ted. (2009). "Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split." Ch. 10. In *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, eds. Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 294-295. See also Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 290; Weldes. (1999). *Constructing National Interests.*, p. 9

Social Constructivist Theories of Nationalism and National Identity

More recently, there was a shift to more substantial and historically rooted ideational frameworks, which took the form of explaining the divergent macroeconomic policies amongst post-Communist countries by pointing to variations in the strength of Nationalism and National Identity between these states,⁸¹ which had a direct bearing on whether these states were successful in implementing liberal political-economic reform. To illustrate, Savchenko incorporated Nationalist ideas in comparing the Baltic States and Belarus, by arguing that “in the Baltics...market reforms were legitimized in Nationalist terms,” while “in Belarus...politicians, bureaucrats, and the general public all possessed rather weak national consciousness, and...positive orientations toward Russia.”⁸² Other theorists have similarly expanded on conceptions of National Identity, in order to explain differing patterns of foreign economic policy behavior amongst various post-Soviet states. For example, Abdelal argued that...“national identities influence how societies interpret the material facts of their foreign economic relations,” and that “nationalists of newly independent states almost invariably proposed the former metropole of the empire as the most threatening ‘other’ against which identity was defined and the state from which economic autonomy must be pursued.”⁸³

In general, such accounts have argued that certain post-Soviet states exhibited more cohesive levels of Nationalism, which directly facilitated these states successful implementation of policy reforms to move their foreign economic policy away from Russia. To illustrate, Abdelal argued that the Baltic States, particularly Lithuania

⁸¹ For an in depth discussion on the ideas of Nationalism, see, Benedict Anderson. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition. New York: Verso.

⁸² Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 147, 3-4, 39, Savchenko argues “nationalism combined with rejection of communist ideology.” p. 6. Similar arguments in relation to trade policy were made by Tsygankov, Andrei P. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire: National Identity, Domestic Structures and foreign Trade Policies of Latvia and Belarus.” *Review of International Political Economy*, 7, 1: 101-137. However, maybe this was just a rejection of Communist ideology, resulting from political-cultural worldviews.

⁸³ Abdelal, Rawi. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States in Comparative Perspective*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 151. Similar arguments are made also by Abdelal, Rawi. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” Ch. 1. In *Economic Nationalism in a Globalizing World*, ed. Eric Helleiner and Andreas Pickel. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire,” p. 105, 107. For an examination of issues of national identity, nation-building, and the integration of ethnic minorities in Latvia, see Kolstø, Pål, ed. (1999). *Nation Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*. Boulder: Westview Press.

exhibited high levels of a strong and cohesive national identity. This “clear national identity...caused Lithuania’s post-Soviet foreign economic policy to be coherent, purposive, and single-minded,” which “gave both government and society the political will to endure the economic sacrifice of reorienting toward Europe,” because this “was the best path to wealth.”⁸⁴ Similarly, Lieven argued that “nationalism alone can awaken cynical and disillusioned peoples to a spirit of sacrifice and common purpose.”⁸⁵ In contrast, National Identity explanations have argued that Belarus’s inability to reform and transform political-economic policy practices, high-levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia, and close orientation towards Russia resulted from a general lack of a cohesive national identity amongst Belarusians, with the view that Belarus is simply a “denationalized nation.”⁸⁶ Thus, Abdelal and others maintain that since “Belarusians...national identity was both ambiguous and ambivalent,” and “did not share a coherent sense of their nation,” this resulted in “no national purpose underl[ying] the governments foreign economic policy,” because society and “the government did not interpret economic dependence on Russia as a problem.”⁸⁷

However, arguments of National Identity are inadequate to properly explain the vast differences in political-economic behavior and divergent rates of reform amongst post-Soviet states. Methodologically, issues arise because the primacy of nationalist ideas is brought into question by the instrumental actions of political actors. For example, Abdelal’s arguments take on Rationalist formulations similar to those mentioned above, such as Åslund and Savchenko, in that Belarusian policies lacked “purpose,” and were driven by the self-interest and materialistic ends of political leaders, as “economic

⁸⁴ Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 37.

⁸⁵ Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. xlvi.

⁸⁶ See for example, Marples. (1999a). *Belarus: A Denationalized Nation*; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 39; Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy*; Burant, Stephen R. (1995). “Foreign Policy and National Identity: A Comparison of Ukraine and Belarus.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, 7: 1125-1144; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 224; Kuzio, Taras, and Marc Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building, Historical Legacies and National Identities in Belarus and Ukraine: A Comparative Analysis.” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 26: 69-90; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe”; Kuzio. (2001). “Belarus and Ukraine.” p. 462; Silitiski, Vitali. (2006). “Still Soviet? Why Dictatorship Persists in Belarus.” *Harvard International Review* (Spring): 46-54., p. 47. Ioffe argued that Belarus is a “cleft” country. Ioffe, Grigory. (2008). *Understanding Belarus and How Western Foreign Policy Misses the Mark*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield., p. 235. Another view portrays Belarusian Nationalism as Westernized, and under pressure, see Zuprudnik. (1993). *Belarus*. For a country overview, see Szporluk, Roman, ed. (1994). *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

⁸⁷ Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 127-128. See also footnote no. 87 above.

relations with Russia were interpreted as mutually beneficial exchange.”⁸⁸ In other words, by following their short term material interests, Abdelal assumes that Belarus was acting against its long-term national interests, and as a result lacked a coherent sense of national identity. Even in the case of Lithuania, materialist goals were important motivators in Abdelal’s explanation of the Lithuania’s return to Europe. Furthermore, Abdelal’s arguments normatively imply that “nationalism” should only be associated with a policy behavior that is “purposive” in the form of being “liberal,” oriented towards Europe, and away from Russia. These normative assertions when combined with the Rationalist undertones of the explanations are problematic. As Ted Hopf notes, this is because “individuals always operate according to their interests – but those interests do not always correspond to the ones assigned by the omniscient observer.”⁸⁹ Moreover, Hopf also importantly notes that while “identities are always relational,” they are “only sometimes oppositional.”⁹⁰ Thus, while it is not wrong to assume that Belarusians did not interpret closer relations with Russia as a problem, it is also important to acknowledge that there is more to the story here than just simply explaining Belarus’s behavior on the lack of National Identity.

National identity explanations often characterized Belarusian policies, such as the lack of political-economic reforms, and continuing cooperation with Russia, in the form of receiving cheap oil and gas, and the potential customs union with Russia as primary examples of a lack of national identity resulting often in rent-seeking. For example, Savchenko and others argued that “oil supplies at relatively low prices were actively and successfully used to influence internal political processes,” where, “Russia was able to use oil as a means of...inducement (in the case of Belarus) for the purposes of foreign policy.”⁹¹ In doing so, such arguments imply that this structurally worked against reform

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128. Another example that blurs the explanatory variables between national identity and rationalist explanations, as well as exogenous structural variables is found in Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 528, 530-531.

⁸⁹ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 18.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7. See also Dobbin, who points out that “rationally purposeful action is easily understood not because it is oriented to an objective standard of rationality, but because the actor “tries to achieve certain ends by choosing appropriate means on the basis of facts of the situation, *as experience has accustomed [actors] to interpret them.*” Quoting Weber 1978a., p. 5), in Dobbin. (1994). “Cultural Models of Organization.” p.118.

⁹¹ Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 102; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 31-32; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 530-531.

since Belarus's heavily industrialized economy was dependent on Russian oil. Additionally, several commentators even made doom and gloom predictions about the prospects for Belarus's long-term sovereignty as a result of Minsk's close relations with Moscow.⁹²

However, several substantial counterpoints can be raised to such forecasts. First, it should be pointed out that countries that were categorized as having strong national identities, such as Latvia and the Baltic States, which commentators argued were purposively moving away from Russia, nevertheless remained dependent on energy imports in the form of Russian oil and gas. Not only does this fact make problematic national identity explanations, since countries like Latvia and the other Baltic States remain dependent on Russian oil and gas imports, but it also casts serious doubt especially on many of the other connected premises, such as that Russian oil and gas dependence is a serious inhibitor of Belarusian reform. Methodologically, if one could also find evidence, through an analysis of elite observations during interviews, that Latvia is not necessarily averse to trade with Russia and even possibly open to more liberal trade, so long as this does not require negative political concessions from Riga to Moscow, this would also pose problems for National Identity observations.

Secondly, as will be discussed in chapter 7, evidence suggests that Belarusian political-economic cooperation with Russia has been moving at an exceedingly slow pace since the mid-1990s, and more often than not, President Lukashenko has extracted significant gains from Moscow, without conceding much from Belarus to Moscow in return. Methodologically, such National Identity claims about the influence of Russia would face serious problems if one could find evidence pointing to consensus that Lukashenko has been a strong defender of Belarusian national interests and sovereignty, and has gained popular favour for defending Belarusian sovereignty. Such inferences that Lukashenko has acted as a protector of Belarusian national independence can be gained from an analysis of comments given by Belarusian elites during interviews, and also from secondary commentary on Lukashenko's behavior. Additionally, such a fact has even been widely acknowledged, sometimes grudgingly, by several national identity theorists

⁹² See Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 274-275; Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). "Nation and State Building.," p. 75, 84; Tsygankov. (2000). "Defining State Interests after Empire.," p. 116, 118; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe"; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 110.

and other commentators.⁹³ This increasingly signals that a more strongly robust national identity had existed in Belarus than many National Identity commentators gave credit. Indeed, this also points to other explanatory variables at play, namely the need to examine political-cultural worldviews in regards to political-economic organization and transformation. Thus, rather than simply acting as a means to maintain power for powers sake, it is hypothesized that Lukashenko and other Belarusian elite view Russian oil and gas as a means in order to maintain the neo-Soviet, collectivist, and highly statist command political-economic policy practices, which are in accordance with their political-cultural worldviews of what constitutes the ‘best’ and ‘right’ policies. This will be examined in chapter 7 on Belarusian contemporary political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories.

In addition to the methodological criticism above that National Identity explanations sometimes tend to take on rationalist formulations, there are other examples where such arguments implicitly overlap into the realm of political-culture. For example, while explicitly naming National Identity as the key causal variable, Tsygankov argued that his “study adds support to the Weberian insight that cultural, idea-based influences should be treated as significant in their own right and not merely as residuals subordinated to interest-based thinking.”⁹⁴ While both national identity and political-cultural explanations share with each other a focus on ideational variables to explain political outcomes, it is the contention of this dissertation that political-cultural worldviews stand prior to, and inform the content of ideas of national identity.

⁹³ See Sahm, Astrid. (1999). “Political Culture and National Symbols; Their Impact on the Belarusian Nation-Building Process.” *Nationalities Papers*, 27, 4: 649-660., p. 658; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 530; Drakokhrust, Yuri and Dmitri Furman. (2002). “Belarus and Russia: The Game of Virtual Integration.” Ch. 9, in *Independent Belarust*, eds. Margarita M. Balmaceda, James I. Clem and Lisbeth L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 239, 253; Silitski, Vitali. (2003). “Explaining post-Communist Authoritarianism in Belarus.” Ch. 3. In *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, ed. Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. New York: Routledge Curzon., p. 43; Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet.” p. 50; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 93, 170; Snyder, Timothy. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, 1569-1999*. New Haven: Yale University Press., p. 284; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 118; Marples, David R. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus.” *Problems of Post-Communism* 51, 1: 31-42., p. 40; Rontoyanni, Clelia. (2005). “Belarus and the East.” Ch. 7. In *Postcommunist Belarus*, eds. Stephen White, Elena Korosteleva, and John Löwenhardt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., p. 132; Maksymiuk, Jan. (2008). “Commentary: Is the Belarusian Opposition Losing the Battle for Young Minds?” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 10. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1144587.html>.

⁹⁴ Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.” p. 101, 128.

Further significant methodological problems exist with explanations arguing that Belarusian national identity is “contested” and “ambiguous.” First, Belarusian policies actually failed to meet the assumed outcome of National Identity explanations, namely that instead of the assumed outcome of policy being incoherent and inconsistent,⁹⁵ Belarusian political-economic policy practices have actually shown high levels of consistency since 1991, as the tables and figures measuring policy reforms in chapter 3 will illustrate.

Secondly, and more problematic, the claim that Belarusian identity is “contested” and “ambiguous” is far from conclusive, and it creates the impression that Belarus lacks an identity and has no coherent worldviews. For instance, methodological problems arise as a result of the normative bias in terms of how national identity is categorized (i.e. ‘purposive’ policy behavior that is ‘liberal,’ oriented towards Western Europe, and away from Russia), and how this definition is subsequently measured in the methods. Such impressions are revealed if one looks at the methodological statement for indicating the presence of a strong national identity, namely that “if all political parties share the foreign policy goals of the nationalists, it is a reliable indicator that a consensual, shared national identity frames policy debate and influences the preference of the government.”⁹⁶ In fact, if one were to drop the emphasis on the normative definitions categorizing ‘strong’ national identities, it is possible to apply this argument to Belarus. Of critical importance, is the fact that most Belarusians have never offered much support for the political groups, which have been designated by many commentators as being ‘nationalists.’ This fact is even noted by many that utilize National Identity explanations, whom acknowledge the

⁹⁵ Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 40.

⁹⁶ Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 43. It is possible that the normative bias in categorizing strong national identity has resulted in Abdelal and others incorrectly and prematurely labeling the wrong groups ‘nationalist’ in Belarus. In addition to critiquing this normative bias, it is also possible to make a substantial methodological critique that National Identity arguments appear circular at times. For instance, such explanations assert that ‘strong nationalism’ drives policy away from Russia, but their gauge for judging high rates of ‘nationalism’ many times appears to ultimately fall back on the dependent variable. Thus, many of these accounts allude that Latvia has a strong national identity, because its policies are directed away from Russia, which is why Latvia has a strong national identity, while Belarus has weak national identity, and in foreign policy has close relations with Russia, which is a detriment to its sovereignty and shows a lack of national identity (e.g. Abdelal 2001: 116, 118; Savchenko 2000; Eke and Kuzio 2000: 536).

fact that in Belarus such “nationalist groups were *largely rejected* by most other societal actors.”⁹⁷

As will be discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 7, which trace Belarus’s historic political-cultural worldviews to the contemporary period, the ‘nationalists’ versions of history and ideologies presented were out of touch with the attitudes of most Belarusians, which viewed these groups to be of an extremist nature. Such evidence that the worldviews of the ‘nationalists’ like the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) did not resonate widely with the broad political-cultural worldviews of most Belarusian society to which such groups were alienated from, will be inferred from comparative historical analysis, polling data, analysis of news reports, contradictory statements given in National Identity accounts, and through examining elite observations from interviews.

Furthermore, evidence also points to a great deal of policy consensus at the elite level. As Abdelal points out, “in contrast to the [‘nationalist’] BPF’s pro-European and anti-Russian foreign policy stance, *all major* Belarusian political parties emphasized in their platforms that they did not oppose close economic integration and political cooperation with Russia.”⁹⁸ Obviously, there is a huge divide between Belarusian “nationalist” elites and the majority of Belarusian society and elites. Thus, it seems inaccurate to apply the label “contested” to Belarus, when very little contestation actually took place. Indeed, the fact that these groups only received minute support and were “*largely rejected*” by the populace, contradicts claims that Belarusian Identity is “contested” and “ambiguous.” As will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, which trace Belarus’s historic cultural worldviews to the contemporary period, it is hypothesized that

⁹⁷ Abdelal, Rawi. (2003) “National Strategy and National Money: Politics and the End of the Ruble Zone, 1991-1994.” Ch. 5. In *Monetary Orders: Ambiguous Economics, Ubiquitous Politics*, ed. Jonathan Kirshner. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 117. See also, Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 134, 138-139; Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 40-41; Beissinger, Mark R. (1996). “How Nationalisms Spread: Eastern Europe Adrift the Tides and Cycles of Nationalist Contention.” *Social Research*, 63, 1: 97-146; Marples. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus.”

⁹⁸ Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 140 [italics mine]. See also, Bugrova, Irina, and Svetlana Naumova. (1996). “Parliamentary Elections and Foreign Policy Orientations of Belarus.” *Vector*, 1, 1:4-9; Maisenya, Anatol. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes: A Portrait of Time and a Portrait of Man*. Minsk: National Centre for Strategic Initiatives ‘East – West,’ p. 270, 282-283; Zaprudnik, Jan. (1998). “Political Parties in Belarus: An Overview.” *Belarusian Review*, 10, 4: 2-6. Additionally, one should also note that most of the opposition and ‘nationalist’ forces are predominantly located in Minsk, many of whose members also use Russian as their first language. Furman, Dmitrii. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries’: The Political Systems of the Three East Slavic Republics.” *Russian Social Science Review*, 40, 6: 28-47., p. 38.

Belarusians do have a clear and coherent identity which is informed by their political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, which can be characterized as being collectivist, communal, paternalistic, and oriented towards statist preferences in regards to the organization of political-economic relations. Methods utilized for inferring such worldviews will be elaborated in the methods sections in chapter 2.

Methodologically, many national identity explanations do not incorporate relevant public opinion polls to support their claims. Most problematic, specifically, is evidence from public opinion polls, conducted during the 1990s and 2000s, which shows that National Identity explanations of post-Soviet political-economic policy behavior are far from conclusive. As will be illustrated in chapters 5 and 7 the results of these polls illustrate that while countries that were labeled as having strong national identities, such as Latvia and the Baltic States, regularly polled higher than Belarus in questions about identity, the results were far from being the polar opposite of one another, and Belarus actually polled a great deal closer than one would expect, if one were to conclusively accept National Identity explanations. Explanations on the methodology involved in examine these public opinion polls will be elaborated on more fully in the section on methods in chapter 2.

Overall, a central problem lies in the black and white definition of how national identity definitions are constructed, as being either strong or ambivalent. In reality, what these arguments miss is that Belarus has its own coherent and unique national identity, which simply contains different ideas, contrary to normative definitions of National Identity constructed by many observers. For instance, a former prominent Belarusian journalist during the 1990s, Anatol Maisenya, reported that “Belarus stood out against the background of the former USSR republics for the fact that there were no signs of national discord.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, it should be noted that many advocates of national identity explanations have even acknowledged that Belarusian identity, “Russified or not,... remains distinctively Belarusian.”¹⁰⁰ It is the position here that these contextually unique ideas regarding Belarusian national identity and interests are ultimately informed and dependent on the political-cultural worldviews predominant in Belarus.

⁹⁹ Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 254.

¹⁰⁰ Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 123.

Methodologically, inferences to a robust national identity being present in Belarus can be inferred from public opinion polls, as well as elite interviews, political commentary, and news reports from the time, to infer that Belarusians do have a strong identity and are quite secure in terms of knowing who they are as a people, and knowing that they are Belarusian. Specifically, National Identity arguments would face problems if one were to find historical consensus in the comparative historical analysis in chapter 6 that Belarus had strong national patriotism towards the BSSR. Specifically, here, one would look at pride towards the BSSR and its symbols.

When polling data or electoral results are utilized by Abdelal and other National Identity scholars, there appears to be problems of selection bias as certain polls and electoral results are grabbed upon while others dealing with explicit identity questions are ignored. As will be discussed in chapter 7, this is apparent where the referendum results of 1995 are cited, where the vast majority of Belarusians voting, supported making Russian an official language equal to Belarusian, supported the creation of a new flag which was reminiscent of the flag of the BSSR, and most importantly, voted in favour of the President to bring closer economic integration with Russia.¹⁰¹ While these results are cited as evidence of Belarus lacking a ‘strong’ and ‘cohesive’ national identity, such evidence is rarely put into context, and no attempt is made to understand the deeper meaning of what these preferences of the people indicate.

Take for instance the issue regarding the fact that many Belarusians list Russian as their first choice of language. Too often, national identity explanations cite this as evidence of Belarusian having an ambiguous and weak national identity.¹⁰² However, one should not associate a persons language choice with a lack of national identity. Methodologically, such claims regarding language use would be seriously compromised if one were to present evidence that Russian-speaking Belarusians actually have strong

¹⁰¹ For those citing these numbers as an example of Belarus’s lack of national identity, see Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 141; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 279.

¹⁰² Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 125-128; Burant. (1995). “Foreign Policy and National Identity.” p. 1133; Marples. (1996). *Belarus.*, p. 31; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 50-52; Marples, David R. (2003). “History and Politics in post-Soviet Belarus.” Ch. 2. In *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, ed. Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. New York: Routledge Curzon., p. 27; Goujon, Alexandra. (1999). “Language, Nationalism, and Populism in Belarus.” *Nationalities Papers*, 27, 4: 661-677., p. 668; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 525.

Belarusian identities, and that just because they speak Russian, does not mean that they identify themselves as Russian nationals. This can be done through an analysis of comments given by elites during interviews. Moreover, one needs to examine public opinion polls measuring national pride, to see if that most Russian-speaking Belarusians identify first with Belarus, as well as polls measuring levels of national pride amongst both Belarusian-speaking and Russian-speaking Belarusians. If the results were positive and similar to responses for questions of national pride in Latvia, this would pose significant problems for National Identity explanations.

Belarusian worldviews also predominantly favour close and friendly relations with Russia, which is hypothesized here to result from shared historic religious-cultural links. However, such friendliness should not be confused with Belarus lacking a national identity. Methodologically, National Identity explanations would be challenged if one were to present polling evidence on questions regarding the types of Belarusian-Russian relations favoured by Belarusians that showed that the vast majority favoured the options of two independent sovereign states, with only a minority supporting the full political-economic integration of Belarus into Russia. Such polling evidence could be further buttressed by supporting observations from Belarusian elites given during interviews. If such responses, both in the polls and interviews, illustrate that Belarusians value their national sovereignty this would point to serious deficiencies with National Identity explanations. Moreover, it is the position here that if such responses are present, these should not be viewed as being that different from Latvian views towards integration with the EU, only that a significant normative bias is placed by National Identity explanations against Belarusian support for more friendly relations with Russia. Thus, it is hypothesized that just as the Latvians prefer being in the same group as their cultural brethren in Western Europe, so too does Belarus feel closer to its historical cultural grouping in preferring closer relations with Russia.

Analysis of public opinion surveys is a core part in addressing the study's main questions. In doing so, it is also important to compare responses to questions regarding national identity, in order to understand the salience of national identity in Belarus. Overall, as will be discussed in the methods section in chapter 2, one could infer serious problems with National Identity explanations if public opinion polling of Belarusians

indicated high positive responses in regards to questions related to national pride, national identification, patriotism, perceptions on statehood, and preferred relations with Russia being based on Belarus retaining its sovereignty.

Despite the flaws mentioned above, one important aspect of theories of National Identity is that they place key importance on ideational variables in shaping the patterns political-economic transformation and political behavior in general, and highlight the importance of examining differing historical contexts. One of the better examples in the post-Soviet literature utilizing National Identity is done by Ioffe, who begins to incorporate other variables such as history, geography, culture, ethnicity, language, authoritarianism, and geopolitics into his framework to trace the roots of national identity. In his earlier work, Ioffe et al suggest the strong influence of rural socio-cultural influences on politics in Russia, as being structurally rooted in the geographic nature of Russia with its vast open spaces, which necessitated peasants to band together into collectives for personal survival, which historically also helped lead to support for Communism from the majority rural populace.¹⁰³ Ioffe builds on his work on Russia, arguing that this geographic explanation is directly applicable to Belarusian politics, particularly why democracy failed.¹⁰⁴ In the final analysis, however, ideas remain a secondary variable to that of historic geographic circumstances. However, problems exist with this geographic explanation, in that prominent authors have shown that geographic determinism is not a strong enough variable to explain cross-cultural differences and cultural uniqueness.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, when applied to Latvia, which is of similar close geographic proximity and terrain to Belarus, such explanations of geography driving ideational outlooks and identity does not suffice. Finally, important cultural variables such as religious worldviews are only passed over briefly.

Overall, National Identity is too mis-specified of a conception to work from, thus leaving unanswered questions as to the reasons for how and why particular policy methods of political economic planning came into being and were legitimated in the first

¹⁰³ Ioffe, Grigory, Tatyana Nefedova, and Illya Zaslavsky. (2006). *The End of Peasantry? The Disintegration of Rural Russia*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press., p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 137, 235.

¹⁰⁵ Deutsch, Karl W. (1981). "On Nationalism, World Regions and the Nature of the West." In *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building: A Volume in Commemoration of Stein Rokkan*, ed. Per Torsvik. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget., p. 89-90.

place. As Bunce argues, “while it is true that nationalism is an ideology...it is also true it is an extraordinarily flexible one with respect to issues of regime, state, and economy,” which makes it “wrong to associate nationalism...with certain kinds of political projects.”¹⁰⁶ This is echoed by Duffield, who argued that the concept of “national character...is excessively expansive.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, one can agree that nationalism is “complex...[and] has varying historical and value connotations in different societies.”¹⁰⁸ This is problematic because far too often, as Helleiner notes, many National Identity arguments “take national identities as given” and “do not attempt to analyze the source of these identities.”¹⁰⁹ As a result, National Identity explanations are too ad hoc in nature and do not tell enough of why liberal ideas enjoyed widespread support in Latvia, and failed to appeal to the majority of Belarusians.

Additionally, while many point importantly to historical factors shaping these identities, much of the historical analysis is problematic in being cursory, having problems with selection bias, and not looking in depth enough at the historical roots, which leaves many questions unanswered and/or ignores important contrary evidence. Here, selection bias occurs first, because such a small time frame is examined, where most National Identity explanations go little beyond examining the experience during interwar independence in the case of Latvia, or the lack of ever having gained independence prior to 1991 in the case of Belarus.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, many of these explanations took a short-term view and essentially grabbed on to National Identity because in the cases of the Baltic States this seemed obvious and to be literally staring the observer in the face. However, this is problematic because it does not do a thorough enough survey of the historic religious-cultural roots of national identity, thus ignoring more robust explanations that cultural worldviews may be acting as the key variables of explanation.

¹⁰⁶ Bunce, Valerie. (1999). *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ Duffield, John S. (1999). “Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism.” *International Organization* 53, 4: 765-803., p.776.

¹⁰⁸ Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Helleiner. (2005). “Conclusion.” p. 231.

¹¹⁰ See for example, Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy*; Tsygankov, (2000). “Defining State Interests.”; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations*.

There is also selection bias in the sense that such explanations do not do adequate amounts of historiographic research, the results of which might provide contradictory evidence to National Identity theories, and/or point to other variables at play. Specifically, as will be discussed more in depth in chapters 6 and 7, many National Identity arguments were often quick to play down, negate, and/or ignore the positive feelings and affirmations that Belarusians held towards the BSSR, instead of acknowledging or seeking to better understand how these positive historical memories of state-building in Belarus during the Soviet-era BSSR form a key component of the worldviews and historical memories informing the content of Belarusian identity. Therefore, the best remedy to help more comprehensively understand patterns of post-Soviet political-economic transformation is to incorporate explicitly ideational arguments that focus on political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories.

A good example of the examination of the effect of political-culture on worldviews towards national symbols in Belarus was done by Sahn, who importantly points to political-culture in helping to understand choices in national symbols. In doing so, Sahn implies that political-culture is key in informing national identity. For instance, Sahn argues that “national state ideology will be successful only if it is based on strong historical points of reference capable of integrating the overwhelming majority of the population.”¹¹¹ However, Sahn does not offer much analysis into the roots of such political-cultural ideas, or examine public opinion through polls or elite attitudes. Finally, Sahn also presents a view of Belarusian identity as being equally contested between pro-nationalist and pro-Soviet forces, even though the former increasingly failed to find mass appeal, which will be illustrated in chapter 7.

It is the position here that political-cultural precedes national identity and is a primary influence in the shape and form that national identity takes. Take for instance the emphasis that many National Identity explanations place on the Baltic States reorientation and ‘return to the West,’ as evidence of a strong national identity. However, it is hypothesized that it was not simply a ‘return to the West’ resulting from a strong

¹¹¹ Sahn. (1999). “Political Culture and National Symbols.,” p. 649. Recent identity work on Baltic-Russian foreign relations that points to significant ideational difference in worldviews relating to foreign policy, and interpretations of past historical events such as World War Two, includes Berg, Eiki, and Piret Ehin, ed. (2009). *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*. Farnham: Ashgate.

national identity, but instead Latvia's desire to return to Western culture, because Latvians saw themselves as historically part of the Western cultural fold. Everything the Latvians did from domestic policy to foreign policy was to highlight their return to the Western cultural realm, and make a clear statement that they were not part of the Russian cultural realm. In contrast, it is hypothesized that Belarusians took a divergent view, as Belarusian political-cultural worldviews saw themselves as historically linked culturally to Russia, Eurasia and Orthodoxy. This resulted in an attitude of friendliness towards close relations with Russia, due to their common historic religious-cultural links, which made the tendency to want to be friends and cooperative with Russia only natural. This does not mean that Belarusians lacked a cohesive national identity, but instead that their historical political-cultural worldviews did not deem it necessary, nor expedient to move away or break off from Belarus's traditional cultural realm. As will be explained in chapters 6 and 7 on Belarus, the contingent evolutionary path of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories simply ruled out a more 'Western' orientation.

Chapter Outline

The rest of the dissertation is divided into seven chapters that follow. Given that the literature review above has shown that serious deficiencies exist with the theories of IR, IPE and Comparative Politics in regards to these theories inability to explain the divergence of post-Soviet political-economic between Latvian and Belarus, it is now necessary to fill the explanatory void with an alternative theoretical explanation that builds on cultural theories of Social Constructivism. This will be done next in chapter 2, which will set out a detailed description of the theoretical foundations informing the conceptualization of historic political-culture used in the main hypothesis of this dissertation to explain the divergence in political-economic transformation between Latvia and Belarus. Additionally, this also contains a section that provides a detailed description of the five qualitative methods that form the core methodologies of this paired comparison of Latvia and Belarus.

Chapter 3 will set about providing analysis of the dependent variable, specifically the differing policy trajectories of Latvia and Belarus. Specific policy areas that will be

explored, includes comparing: 1) levels of central bank independence (e.g. degree of politicization); 2) monetary policy and stability (e.g. rates of inflation, exchange rate policy, and liberalization of the banking sector); 3) privatization rates in regards to land, real-estate, and the structural privatization of small, medium and large scale enterprises; 4) government subsidization rates for industry; 5) rates of regulation over the economy (e.g. price controls, foreign exchange controls, competition, and trade openness), and; 6) individual freedoms, property rights, and rule of law. This is needed in order to establish that significant divergence exists in the policy behavior between Latvia (reform) and Belarus (non-reform) in regards to differing rates of transformation in the policy areas listed above.

Each case study will be divided into two chapters tracing the historical roots of each countries unique historical political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories to the contemporary period, to highlight how such worldviews have influenced policy in the present era. Chapter 4 will involve an in depth comparative historical analysis tracing the evolutionary patterns of Latvia's historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. This will be followed by chapter 5, which involves an in depth analysis and explanation tracing how the historic political-cultural worldviews are linked to the contemporary patterns of political-cultural worldviews and public attitudes favouring comprehensive reforms in Latvia. For Belarus, chapter 6 will then conduct a thorough historical analysis tracing the historic evolutionary patterns of Belarus's predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories. This will be followed by chapter 7, which involves an in depth analysis to understand how these historic political-cultural worldviews are linked to the contemporary patterns of worldviews of Belarusians, whose preferences and attitudes were averse to reforms. The above four case study chapters will follow the methodological steps listed above in this chapter, as well as those outlined in the methods section in chapter 2. Finally, chapter 8 will offer final thoughts and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: CULTURAL THEORY AND METHODS

The review of the theoretical literature in chapter 1, illustrated that serious deficiencies exist with the theories of IR, IPE and Comparative Politics in regards to these theories inability to explain the divergence of post-Soviet political-economic between Latvian and Belarus. Therefore, it is necessary now to fill the explanatory void with an alternative theoretical explanation. Theoretically, the core political-cultural theoretical arguments of this dissertation that are used to explain the divergent patterns of post-Soviet political-economic development between Latvia and Belarus are rooted in the rich body of cultural theory found within Social Constructivism. The purpose of this chapter will set out a detailed description of the theoretical foundations informing the conceptualization of historic political-culture used in the main hypothesis of this dissertation. Additionally, the second core part of this chapter will provide a detailed description of the five qualitative methods that form the core methodologies of this paired comparison of Latvia and Belarus.

When one thinks about political-cultural analysis, what often comes to mind are studies of civic culture, particularly those following in the tradition of Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture*.¹ In the political-cultural explanations offered by the civic culture explanations, many of the proponents of such theories also viewed modernization as an important component in facilitating the building of a democratic civic political-culture. Thus, a relaxed version of culture was envisioned, where civic culture could be shaped by structural circumstances. Such theories predicted that industrialization and socio-economic development in non-democratic countries would ultimately result in the convergence of political-cultural and ideational attitudes in favour of liberal democracy and liberal capitalism.² Similar optimistic assessments also characterized the limited

¹ See, Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Inglehart, Ronald. (1988). "The Renaissance of Political Culture." *American Political Science Review* 82, 4 (December 1988): 1203-30; Inglehart, Ronald. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Putnam, Robert D. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

² Such theorists of Modernization, would have seen changes in structural factors as promoting changes in political-culture, which are treated more as dependent variables. Lipset, Seymour Martin. (1959). "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53, 1: 69-105; Deutsch, Karl. (1961). "Social Mobilization and Political Development." *American Political Science Review* 55, 3: 493-515; Coleman, James. (1960). "Conclusions: The Political Systems of the Developing Areas." In *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, ed. Gabriel A. Almond and

amount of political-cultural explanations that did surface after the fall of Communism, which largely followed this relaxed civic-cultural line of reasoning.³

However, such assessments faced significant problems from the outset. As Weber importantly notes in his critique of material factors, “the realization of [liberal-democratic] values must not be left to ‘economic development’...[because] ‘democracy’ and ‘individualism’ would stand little chance today if we were to rely for their development on the automatic effect of material interests.”⁴ As a result, such relaxed versions of political-culture were ultimately confounded by the divergent patterns of transitions of various post-Soviet states. This is apparent with the two countries compared in this study, because both Latvia and Belarus were relatively equal, and ranked amongst the top of the ex-Soviet Republics in terms of having high socio-economic modernization (per-capita income, industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, technology, education, health, and welfare).⁵ Moreover, already in the 1970s, more robust conceptions that took a ‘strong’ view of political-culture were already casting significant doubt on assumptions that socioeconomic development would foster more pluralism and democracy within Communist states.⁶

In contrast to the civic culture versions that offered a relaxed conception of political-culture, these scholars studying the politics of Communist countries in the 1970s were utilizing a ‘strong’ conception of political-culture. For example, Brown, offered the

James Coleman. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Another more recent theorist who followed in such civic cultural traditions, which view culture and ideas from a functionalist perspective is Inglehart, who pointed to shifts in cultural values, from materialist to post-materialist values, as states develop from industrial to post-industrial economies. Inglehart. (1997). *Modernization and Postmodernization*., p. 4.

³ See for example, Tismaneanu, Vladimir, ed. (1995). *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. London: M. E. Sharpe.

⁴ Weber, Max. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions*, Translated and Edited by Gordon C. Wells and Peter Baehr. Cambridge: Polity Press., p. 108.

⁵ While education, health and welfare indicators were historically higher in Latvia, these numbers became more relatively equal as huge advancements were also made in Belarus after 1945. For evidence of high rates of industrial development and modernization, see Bilinsky. (1973). “The Background of Contemporary Politics.” p. 91, 114; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*., p. 111-113; Ioffe. (2004). “Understanding Belarus.” p. 85-89; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 420; Koropecy. (1981). “Growth and Productivity.” p. 95; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom*., p. 116, 120; Marples. (1996). *Belarus*., p. 21-23; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*., p. 19-23; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*., p. 38, 48-50; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*., p. 162, 163-165; Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism*., p. 145; Schroeder. (1981). “Regional Living Standards.” p. 141.

⁶ White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*., p. 173-175. Additionally, other political-cultural theorists when examining variations in political behavior between Communist states found serious doubt that these divergences could be explained by differing levels of socio-economic development amongst these states. Gray. (1979). “Conclusions.” p. 253.

definition that political-culture was “closely related to cultural values and orientations more generally,” and “understood as the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups.”⁷ Additionally, White brought in the concept of way of life, in that “political-culture is not simply the collective orientation towards politics; it also embraces the regular and expected forms of interaction within a society, its political ‘way of life’ as well as its political psychology.”⁸

The conceptions of political-culture brought forward in this dissertation follow in these traditions in taking a ‘strong’ view of cultures as distinctive and autonomous from one another, where cultures are historically slow to change, and relatively stable to that of institutional and material conditions. In doing so, the position here will argue that in order to give a fuller understanding of the political factors shaping the post-Soviet policy behavior of both countries, it is necessary to examine the differing historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories that separate Latvia and Belarus, in terms of these countries’ divergent ideas about the proper role of the state in the economy.

Such theoretical conceptions of political-culture build on the work pioneered by Max Weber, who saw culture as a key determinant of political, social and economic action, and crucial in helping to explain political authority and legitimacy. Indeed, Weber saw culture as being rooted in local historical contexts. According to Weber, such cultural worldviews define interests, because these “‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has

⁷ Brown, Archie. (1979). “Introduction.” Ch.1. In *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, eds., Archie Brown & Jack Gray. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers., p. 1, 10.

⁸ White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 164. One criticism of early political-cultural studies was that these studies treated political-cultural in the USSR as monolithic, in the sense that there was little acknowledgement or detail provided for the possibility that many divergent political-cultures existed in the USSR in each of the various republics. Thus, what was often privileged was actually Russian historic political-culture, at the expense of possible divergent historic political-cultures in the various other republics. See for example, Brown and Gray, eds. (1979). *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*. This ignorance of divergent political-cultures in the non-Russian Soviet republics was probably a main contributor to many theorists’ failure to predict the eventual breakup of the USSR.

been pushed.”⁹ In particular, Weber pointed to the primary importance of the ideas of Protestantism in helping to spawn, and give life to capitalism. To illustrate, Weber argued that “the inner-worldly asceticism of Protestantism produced capitalist ethics...for it opened the way to a career in business, especially for the most devout and ethically rigorous.”¹⁰ More specifically, Protestant values made it ethical for an individual to accumulate wealth. This is because under the Protestant worldview it was viewed that “when success crowns rational, sober, purposive behavior...such success is construed as a sign that God’s blessing rests upon such behavior.”¹¹ Weber also took the conception of culture as a way of life, in that he understood the “capitalist spirit” of Protestantism, as simply existing “not in isolated individuals, but as a way of life common to whole groups of men.”¹²

Weber also portends to a problem with rationalist theories that reduce political action to the assumption that actors adhere to concepts of ‘universal’ objective rationality. This is because “in no case does [the meaning of an act] refer to an objectively ‘correct’ meaning or one which is ‘true’ in some metaphysical sense.”¹³ In doing so, Weber highlights a key component of cultural assumptions, which stand in contrast to rationalist assumptions that view ideas as reducible to individual actor’s rational utilitarian calculations. Thus, political-cultural theories take a divergent outlook from rationalists, and view it as not enough to simply categorize and speak of what is rational or irrational when seeking to explain political behavior. This is because “what is rational depends on the social setting within which the act is embedded,” and “acts that are rational from the perspective of one way of life may be the height of irrationality from the perspective of a competing way of life.”¹⁴

It is also the position here that certain historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life do not predominate as a result of material structures of power within a

⁹ Weber, Max. (1975). “The Social Psychology of the World Religions.” Ch. 11. In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Translated by H. H. Gerth & C. W. Mills. New York: Oxford University., p. 280.

¹⁰ Weber, Max. (1978a). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Volume 1*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 587-588.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

¹² Weber, Max. (1992). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons, with introduction by Anthony Giddens. New York: Routledge., p. 55.

¹³ Weber. (1978a). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Thomson, Michael, Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky. (1990). *Cultural Theory*. Boulder: Westview., p. 22-23. See also, Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.” p. 296.

specific cultural context. In this regard it is much more than a Gramscian or Coxian version of simply a predominant hegemonic discourse or prevailing class structure acting to sustain the elite group's ideological hegemony over competing alternative ideologies.¹⁵ Instead, while not arguing that culture is homogeneous, nor denying that alternative versions and competing cultural outlooks exist, it is the position here that such cultural worldviews that are the most widespread and predominant can be seen as being much more organically and historically rooted within the context where these are found and shared amongst both the elites and society, and thus not simply predicated on materialist structures of power.

In addition to following Weber, such a view of political-culture follows in the traditions of other pioneering studies that focused on the cultural habits and the taken for granted ideas of everyday life affecting social behavior, including Berger and Luckmann's "social stock of knowledge" and "symbolic universe," Geertz's "web of meaning," Bourdieu's "habitus," Wittgenstein's "form of life," Putnam's "civic community," and Hopf's "logic of habit."¹⁶ In doing so, the arguments here will emphasize the importance of historic contextual legacies in shaping political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, and distinguishing them from other cultural contexts. Such a view of political-culture can agree with the statement that "culture is a worldview offering a shared account of action and its meaning and providing people with social and political identities; it is manifested in a way of life transmitted...overtime, and embodied in a community's institutions, values, and behavioral regularities."¹⁷ This takes a 'strong' view of culture, seeing cultures as

¹⁵ For other's that agree that culture not an outgrowth of existing material structure of power, see Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 2, 3; Thelen, Kathleen. (2003). How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis." Ch. 6. In *Comparative Historical Analysis and the Social Sciences*, eds., J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 217.

¹⁶ Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday & Company., p. 40-41, 92; Geertz, Clifford. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books; Bourdieu, Pierre. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by R. Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press., p. 52-65; Wittgenstein, Ludwig. (1958). *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Company; Putnam, Robert D. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Hopf. (2009). "Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.," p. 280.

¹⁷ Ross. (1997). "Culture and Identity.," p. 72. On culture as a way of life, see also Geertz. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures.*, p. 89; Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality* [see ch. 1: "The Foundation of Knowledge in Everyday Life."]; Braudel. (1992). *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century.*, p. 65-67; White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 164.

distinctive and autonomous, which helps distinguish one political-cultural context from another, and also makes cultures slow to change and relatively stable to that of institutional and material conditions.¹⁸

Theoretical arguments that are guided by such premises view political-cultural worldviews, as highly important in shaping what sociological institutionalists refer to as the intangible institutions of society. This involves the influence of political-cultural worldviews, which includes such things as the “practices, symbols, norms, grammars, models, and identities *through which people interpret their world.*”¹⁹ In addition to worldviews, political-culture also involves ways of life (micro and macro everyday habits), which includes the “taken-for-granted scripts, rules and classifications [that] are the stuff of which institutions are made.”²⁰ In this view, political-cultural worldviews (norms, rules and values), and ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs) are largely taken for granted within the societal context these are situated. Finally, such worldviews and ways of life (habits) are reinforced by a third component of political-culture, namely historical memories, which will be described, along with the above two components, in the sections below.

Political-culture can thus be seen as highly influential on intangible institutions in helping to legitimate and rule out certain types of behavior. This is because these political-cultural worldviews (norms, rules and values) and ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs) “operate largely beneath the level of conscious, a routine and conventional ‘practical reason’ governed by ‘rules’ that are recognized only when

¹⁸ Elkins, David J., and Richard E. B. Simeon. (1979). “A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?” *Comparative Politics*, 11, 2: 127-45., p. 130; Pye, Lucien W. (1985). *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority*. Cambridge: Belknap Press; Eckstein, Harry. (1988). A Culturalist Theory of Political Change. *American Political Science Review*, 82, 3: 789-804., p. 792; Almond. (1991). *A Discipline Divided.*, p. 150; Risse-Kappen, Thomas. (1994). “Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War.” *International Organization* 48, 2: 185-214, p. 209; Katzenstein, ed. (1996). *The Culture of National Security*; Braudel, Fernand. (1993). *A History Of Civilizations*. New York: Penguin; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*.

¹⁹ Parsons, Craig. (2007). *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 100. See also, DiMaggio and Powell. (1991). “Introduction”; Dobbin, Frank. (1994). *Forging Industrial Policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the Railway Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Katzenstein, ed. (1996). *The Culture of National Security*; Geertz. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

²⁰ Parsons. (2007). *How to Map Arguments in Political Science.*, p. 75. See also, DiMaggio and Powell. (1991). “Introduction.”, p. 12-15; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*.

breached.”²¹ Moreover, political-culture causes intangible “institutions [to] becom[e] cognitively ‘rule like,’” where “people maintain such patterns not because it is just less costly to do so...but because they have difficulty imagining other behaviors or...they see other behaviors as being illegitimate.”²² As Bourdieu notes, other ideas and patterns of behavior remain “unthinkable.”²³ This will have important implications and influence over institutional and legal structures of a society. As Weber points out, this “adherence to what has become customary is such a strong component of all conduct and...of all social action, that legal coercion, where it transforms a custom into a legal obligation (by invocation of the ‘usual’) often adds practically nothing to its effectiveness, and, where it opposes custom, frequently fails in the attempt to influence actual conduct.”²⁴

Therefore, depending on the cultural context in which one is situated, the predominant political-cultural worldviews of that society will result in “a social definition of reality” where “certain ways of action are taken for granted as the ‘right’ if not only way to do things.”²⁵ Furthermore, in regards to influencing political action, it is important to note that members of a particular political culture “do certain things not because they work, but because they are right – right...in terms of the ultimate definitions of reality” of what is normal, legitimate, and natural.²⁶ As a result, political-culture can be seen as the taken for granted worldviews and ways of life that shape the intangible institutions of society, and act to limit certain forms of behavior, shape preferences, narrow policy options, and enforce continuity.

²¹ DiMaggio and Powell. (1991). “Introduction,,” p. 20. See also, Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 41; Garfinkel, Harold. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*, p. 10-12.

²² Parsons. (2007). *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*, p. 75-76. See also, DiMaggio and Powell. (1991). “Introduction,,” p. 9; Elkins and Simeon. (1979). “A Cause in Search of Its Effect,,” p. 131; Thomson et al. (1990). *Cultural Theory*, p. 272; Katzenstein, Peter J. (1996b). *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 19.

²³ Bourdieu, Pierre. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 18, 21, 77, 177.

²⁴ Weber. (1978a). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*, p. 320. See also, Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*, p. 14.

²⁵ Scott, W. Richard and John W. Meyer. (1994). “The Rise of Training Programs in Firms and Agencies.” In *Institutional Environments and Organizations: Structural Complexity and Individualism*, eds., W. R. Scott and J. W. Meyer. Thousand Oaks: Sage., p. 234. See also Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 23.

²⁶ Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*, p. 109; Powell, W. W. (1991). “Expanding the Scope of Institutional Analysis.” Ch. 8. In *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, eds., W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago: University of Chicago., p. 192.

Political-Culture: Worldviews, Ways of Life and Historical Memories

More recently, Hopf's seminal study of identity and culture placed particular emphasis on habits, which includes significant focus on "the routine, repetitive, habitual, customary, and everyday,"²⁷ in order to understand the factors that give people meaning in the world and affect their political behavior and decisions. However, in Hopf's primary focus on habits (herein referred to as ways of life),²⁸ less emphasis is placed on the normative (worldviews) aspects of culture. While ways of life (habits) are definitely of crucial importance in any understanding of culture, it is also important to examine two other intricately related components of political-culture, and thereby not privilege one component over another. Along with examining ways of life, it is also crucial to analyze the predominant worldviews, and prevailing historical memories. These three core components of political-culture, worldviews (norms, rules, values, and beliefs), way of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs), and historical memories work together to project political-culture as an important determinant of political action.

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, the first core component of political-culture includes worldviews (norms, rules, values and beliefs), which influence ideas about the proper modes of living, social organization and ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs), and essentially inform the normative views regarding the way how political-economic relations 'should' and 'ought' to be managed in society. Therefore, in the conception offered here, political-cultural worldviews operate and are projected to "reflect shared cultural understandings of what is efficient or moral or legitimate or 'modern.'"²⁹ Thus, political-cultural worldviews influence what is seen as the 'right,' 'best,' 'natural' and 'normal' policy practices and behaviors. In a general sense, therefore, political-cultural worldviews result in certain policy prescriptions being viewed as 'right' and 'best' in terms of being the most effective means to organize the political-

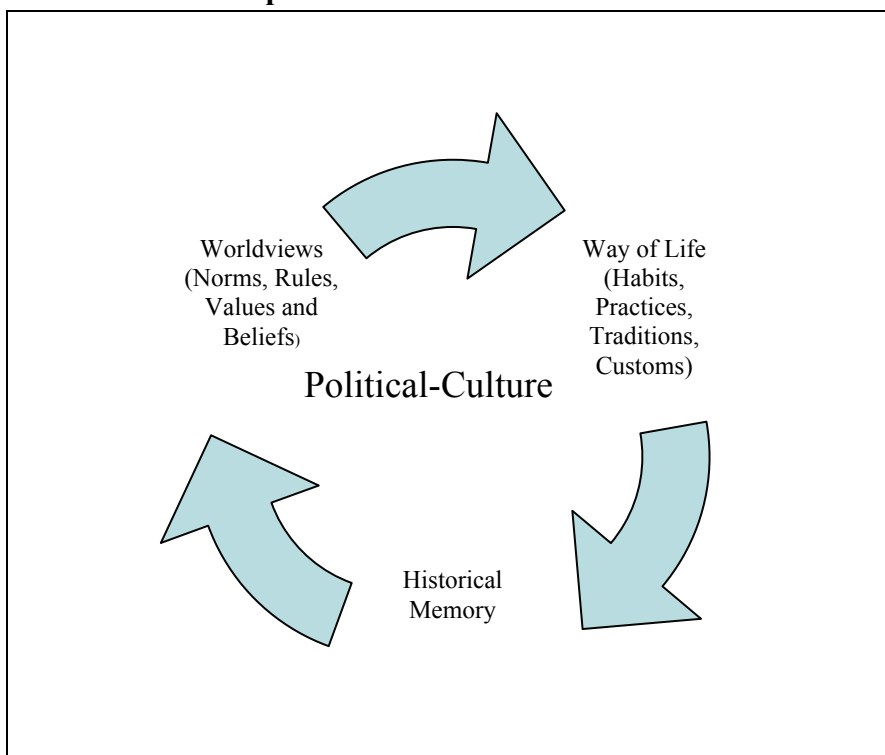
²⁷ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 3. For other key works that emphasized the importance of everyday habits, and practice in shaping political action, see also Bourdieu. (1990). *The Logic of Practice.*, p. 52-65; Bourdieu. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Adler, Emanuel. (2005). *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*. New York: Routledge; Wenger, Etienne. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Pouliot, Vincent. (2008). "The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities." *International Organization* 62 (Spring): 257-288.

²⁸ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 10.

²⁹ Thelen, (2003). How Institutions Evolve.," p. 217. See also Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 2, 3.

economic affairs of society, and thus most the ‘rational’ in order to promote economic growth and overall development. Additionally, such worldviews regarding appropriate policy practices and behavior are taken for granted and legitimized in that these are seen as ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ which also contributes to alternative ideas being either ruled-out, and becoming ‘un-thinkable,’ as noted in the section above.

Figure 2.1: Three Core Components of Political-Culture



The second interrelated core component of political-culture includes the ways of life, which are the predominant habits, practices, traditions and customs in regards to conduct of political-economic behaviors and social organization (e.g. such as how property relations are historically managed). As Figure 2.1 illustrates, ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs) are not only influenced by worldviews, but they can also work to shape worldviews, via historical memories, in the sense that long-term historical ways of life can also harden into worldviews. This builds on Berger and Luckmann’s idea of habitualization, where “any action that is repeated frequently,” that is in accordance with what is viewed as legitimate, will “become cast into a pattern,” a

taken for granted worldview of the proper patterned action that is viewed to work best.³⁰ Here, the hardening of such ways of life into worldviews occurs via the third component of political-culture, historical memory, which helps to reinforce and sustain the continuity of those ways of life.

Thus, the third component of political-culture, historical memory helps shape worldviews, particularly following key historical junctures and events, as well as after antagonistic encounters with opposing cultures. Additionally, the hardening of worldviews occurs via the persistence and continuity of historical ways of life (habits, practices, traditions, and customs), where historical memories of the longevity of such patterns of behavior serves to harden into worldviews legitimating such behavior, where these are viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ modes to organize the political-economic relations of society. This builds on Kirshner’s argument that “ideas...can be self-confirming.”³¹ Indeed, if such policy behaviors appear to continue to work, this will only serve to help keep on reinforcing the predominance of such political-cultural worldviews that regard such policies as the most effective and correct way to organize the political-economic relations of a society.

While all three components make political-culture slow to change, historical memory is important because it helps to reinforce the longevity of existing political-cultural worldviews and ways of life. As Smith points out, “the subjective perception and understanding of the communal past by each generation...is a defining element in the concept of [political]-cultural identity.”³² In addition, historical memory also signifies the historical and evolutionary aspect that political-culture is constantly in motion throughout history, and has the ability to potentially change and evolve over the long-term to take on possibly new and different shapes, as a result of new memories developing following future key events. Nevertheless, the expected norm is that political-culture is slow to change, which results from important critical historical junctures, and definitive cultural moments, where specific influences set a political-culture down a particular historic

³⁰ Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality.*, p. 50, 110.

³¹ Kirshner, Jonathan. (2003a). “The Inescapable Politics of Money.” Ch. 1. In *Monetary Orders: Ambiguous Economics, Ubiquitous Politics*, ed. J. Kirshner. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 15.

³² Smith, Anthony D. (1992). “National Identity and the Idea of European Unity.” *International Affairs*, 68, 1: 55-76., p. 58.

evolutionary path, resulting in path dependence and self-reinforcing tendencies.³³ Therefore, when thinking about historic political-cultural it is important to understand how the worldviews and historical memories of the people help to reinforce their historic ways of life, such as their habits, practices, traditions and customs.

In the definition offered here, political-cultural worldviews and ways of life are conceptualized in the long-term and thus viewed as being slow to change in terms of societies historically predominant modes of political-economic behavior and organization. This signals a necessity to examine long-term historical processes, or what Braudel called the *longue durée*.³⁴ Hence, the emphasis on *historic* political-culture, with the viewpoint that old ingrained worldviews and ways of life, in regards to methods of political-economic decision-making, organization, and allocation are slow to change and persistent over time. Indeed, due to the long-term historical evolution of political-culture and path-dependence, one can expect to see similar or predictable responses in the form of continuity in political behavior and decision-making elicited from specific political-cultures at key events throughout history. Moreover, it is expected that one will find responses to similar events to vary and differ when comparing two divergent political-cultures situated on different evolutionary historical trajectories, as a result of path dependence set in motion at earlier critical historical junctures.³⁵

Applying such a conception of historic political-culture as formulated above, promises to give a fuller understanding of the political factors shaping Latvia's and Belarus's divergent policy behavior. In explaining the divergent patterns of post-Soviet political-economic policy practices between Latvia and Belarus, this dissertation focuses on two key hypotheses. My first hypothesis is that the divergence in economic policies

³³ See, Pierson, Paul. (2003). "Big, Slow-Moving, and...Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the study of Comparative Politics." Ch. 5. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 195, 196; Pierson, Paul. (2000). "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review*, 94, 2: 251-267; Mahoney, James. (2000). "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology." *Theory and Society*, 29, 4: 507-548; Kirshner. (2003a). "The Inescapable Politics of Money." p. 15.

³⁴ Braudel. (1993). *A History Of Civilizations*. See also Pierson. (2003). "Big, Slow-Moving, and...Invisible." p. 192.

³⁵ For discussion on path-dependence, see Pierson. (2003). "Big, Slow-Moving, and...Invisible." p. 195; Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. (1991). *Shaping the Political Arena*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Hall, Peter A. (2003). "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research." Ch. 11. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 385.

between Latvia and Belarus is driven by each states' different political-cultural worldviews, which inform Latvians and Belarusians ideas, beliefs and preferences about modes of living, in regards to what constitutes proper political-economic organization of society and the legitimate role of the state in the economy. Latvia's comprehensive reforms were driven by the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and exhibit a reformist sentiment. Conversely, it is hypothesized that Belarus's lack of liberal reform is attributable to the historically rooted political-cultural worldviews that are found in Belarus, which favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership.

To understand the causal characteristics played by political-cultural worldviews it is important to trace their historical origins. Thus, my second hypothesis is that Latvia's and Belarus's divergent political-cultural worldviews are conditioned by each state's differing historical legacies in terms of ways of life relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and economics. It is hypothesized that the key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Latvian political-culture was Latvia's conversion into Western Christianity and exposure to the subsequent Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism. Belarus's definitive moment was its original conversion into Orthodox Christianity. Overall, these differing religious foundations were the crucial definitive influences informing and setting Latvia's and Belarus's political-cultural worldviews and ways of life down unique and differing evolutionary paths.

Religiously, most Latvians converted to Lutheranism, which encouraged literacy, individualism, individual equality, private property, and reformism, while Belarus remained under the Russian Orthodox Church, which promoted values of collectivism/communalism, paternalism, absolutism and strong state rule. Politically, Russian Tsars ruled Latvia in a more hands-off manner, allowing more openness, while Tsars ruled Belarus in an absolutist fashion. Throughout history there was also a persistent pattern of Latvian resistance against authoritarian encroachments to personal freedom, while in Belarus a far greater passivity towards authoritarian governance appears to be the norm. Economically, Latvians had longer experience with private

property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads, while Belarusians historically had next to no experience with individual private property, and instead adhered to a political-cultural way of life characterized by a tradition of collectivist/communal control of property under the village commune.

Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-culture thrived during its interwar independence, the foundations of which were built on the historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers. Latvia was forcefully annexed into the Soviet Union, and Communist ideas were never widely credible amongst ethnic-Latvians, and alien to Latvia's liberal historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. This resulted in a clash of cultures between Latvians and Russians, seen with a great deal of anti-Soviet resistance throughout the period of Soviet/Russian occupation, and subsequent strong will after 1991 to de-Sovietize and liberalize political-economic relations via comprehensive reforms and a return to Europe. In contrast, Belarus gained its first modern tangible experience with statehood under the BSSR, where state-building and political-economic development built on and reinforced the collectivist, communal and paternalistic cultural worldviews already historically prevalent amongst Belarusians. As a result, it is hypothesized that not only did Belarusians hold positive historical memories of state-building and development under the BSSR, but also that the collapse of the Soviet Union did not signal that collectively oriented command-style policy ideas were discredited amongst Belarusians. Thus, Belarusians were not prepared to seriously consider liberal-democratic and economic reform after 1991, because the predominant political-culture worldviews predominant in Belarus continued to favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership.

It is argued here that a key time to observe political-culture in action is during times of crisis, and in doing so observing the normative debates over which policies should be chosen, and the justifications given for policies which are eventually chosen. This is when historic-political-cultural worldviews will shine through and guide preferences in regards to choosing culturally appropriate modes of political-economic organization to resolve the crisis at hand. Such views build on the assumption that "in times of crisis (and not only in times of crisis) people search for new, old, 'better' ways

of organizing society based on their beliefs, hopes and assumptions.”³⁶ Thus, even when freedoms were opened up, and old repressive structures were temporarily removed, as occurred throughout the former Soviet Union in the immediate period after 1991 to approximately 1994, there was a certain limit to the reforms that could happen in many of these countries when things changed and people were given the freedom to choose. This was due to the finiteness of the ideas and habits that a given society could draw upon for policy inspiration, which depended largely on the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories in the context of a given country.

Thus, when it came to political-economic transformation in Latvia and Belarus, both countries chose what was culturally ‘known’ to them over what was ‘unknown’ or culturally alien, which was in accordance with and supported by the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories found within both countries. Moreover, it is hypothesized that these political-cultural worldviews influenced what was seen as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ policies in both countries. In a general sense, these worldviews resulted in a wide series of policy prescriptions being viewed as ‘right’ in terms of being seen as the most effective means to organize the political-economic affairs of society, and thus the ‘best’ in order to promote economic growth and development. Therefore, depending on the historic political-cultural context, whether in Latvia or Belarus, certain policy prescriptions were deemed to be the ‘best’ and ‘right’ ones, while others were automatically ruled out because these policies ideas were not in sync with what was viewed to culturally ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ according to the political-cultural worldviews informing the underlying norms and value preferences that were predominant amongst both elites and society.

Such a conceptualization of culture will help explain and provide important understanding for why President Lukashenko, and much of the Belarusian elite prefer the current neo-soviet, collectivist, communal, and command-style statist mode of political-economic management, since they are not only unaccustomed to anything different, but their worldviews and historical memories also tend to be normatively loathsome towards Western liberal political-cultural ideas. Thus, it is hypothesized that such policy patterns actually follow more closely motivations deriving from the worldviews, ways of life, and

³⁶ McAuley. (1984). “Political Culture and Communist Politics.,” p. 26.

historical memories historically predominant in Belarusian political-culture, where such policies are viewed by many Belarusians, both elites and those in society, as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ courses of action. Indeed, it is hypothesized that since such policies appeared to continue to be working, the historical memories of this helped to keep on reinforcing the predominance of such worldviews and beliefs that such policy behaviors are the most effective and correct way to organize the political-economic relations of Belarusian society.

In regards to political-cultural worldviews and ways of life informing the predominant ideational preferences and behavioral habits regarding the appropriate forms of political-economic organization, it is also apparent that such ideas and habits, while historically persistent, are largely taken for granted by most of society, and thus viewed as ‘normal’ and ‘natural.’ Therefore, in this conception, worldviews are seen as “beliefs that are held as articles of faith and thus resistant to change.”³⁷ Such taken for granted worldviews in Belarus include the political-cultural emphasis placed upon collective social-welfare, while in Latvia, such taken for granted political-cultural worldviews place and emphasis on individual freedoms, private property, and the market.

Overall, my work will build on the rich body of multidisciplinary literature on cultural studies to help understand the political-cultural context in which Latvia’s and Belarus’s policies were chosen, and give new insight into the connection between ideational preferences and policies. This is important because not much is known about the role of historic political-cultural worldviews in determining the political-economic policies chosen by post-Communist states. Furthermore, there have been calls that it is essential to develop new theories about ideas to better understand why states’ adopt differing economic policies.³⁸ To address this theoretical and empirical gap, my work generates new data on the policies adopted in Latvia and Belarus, the ideational cultural context in which those policies were chosen, and gives new insight into the connection between political-cultural worldviews and these policy programs. Here, a key focus of this study will centre attention on the hypothesis that differing political-cultural

³⁷ Kirshner. (2003a). “The Inescapable Politics of Money.,” p. 14.

³⁸ See for example, Kirshner. (2003b). “Explaining Choices about Money.,” p. 280; Helleiner. (2005). “Conclusion.,” p. 234; Jepperson et al. (1996). “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security.,” p. 64-65; Ross. (1997). “Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis.” p. 74.

worldviews will conceive of the individual and collectivity in vastly divergent ways, which will directly affect the types of political-economic governance that are permitted in a society, depending on the cultural context one is situated.

My work also contributes important insights into how political-cultural worldviews regarding the individual and collective are intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the historic religious context within which they are situated. Thus, the conception of political-culture presented here, takes the view that historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life are intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the religious context within which they are situated, even long after these religious values and norms have been secularized and taken for granted. As Braudel notes,

*religion is the strongest feature of civilizations [cultures], at the heart of both present and their past...Christianity is an essential reality in Western life: it even marks atheists, whether they know it or not...Ethical rules, attitudes to life and death, the concept of work, the value of effort, the role of women and children, [individualism, private property] – these may seem to have nothing to do with Christian feeling: yet all derive from it...all civilizations [cultures] are pervaded or submerged by religion.*³⁹

While other prominent studies have shown the prime influence of religion in shaping politics and social behavior,⁴⁰ this study is important because religion has tended to remain understudied in explaining political action by theorists of IR, IPE, and

³⁹ Braudel. (1993). *A History Of Civilizations.*, p. 22-23 [*Italics mine*].

⁴⁰ For others who point to the importance of religion in shaping culture and politics, see also Braudel. (1992). *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century.*, p. 65-67; Weber. (1975). “The Social Psychology of the World Religions”; Weber. (1978a). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*; Weber, Max. (1978b). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology, Volume 2*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press; Weber. (1992). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; Weber. (1993). *The Sociology of Religion*; Huntington. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations.*, p. 70; Tocqueville, Alexis De. (2000). *Democracy in America*. Translated by Henry Reeve. Toronto: Bantam Books., p. 351-354, 530; J. P. Nettle and Roland Robertson. (1968). *International Systems and the Modernization of Societies: The Formation of National Goals and Attitudes*. London: Faber and Faber., p. 152-155; Smith, Anthony D. (1991). *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press., p. 6-7, 27-28, 62; Robertson, Roland. (1992). *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage Publications., p. 42-43, 85-96; Wuthnow, R. (1993). *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 104; Clark, Peter D. (1999). *How Religious, Political and Emotional Predispositions Affect the Prospects for Civil Society in Post-Soviet Belarus*. Doctoral Dissertation. Cornell University; Seul, Jeffrey R. (1999). “‘Ours Is the Way of God’: Religion, Identity and Intergroup Conflict.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 36, 5: 553-569; Casanova, J. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press., p. 66.

Comparative Politics.⁴¹ This dismissal of religion is problematic as Casanova points out, because...

despite all the structural forces, the legitimate pressures, and the many valid reasons pushing religion in the modern secular world into the private sphere, religion continues to have and will likely continue to have a public dimension. Theories of modernity, theories of modern politics, and theories of collective action which systematically ignore this public dimension of modern religion are necessarily incomplete theories.⁴²

Thus, my work is expected to address many of these gaps, and have a wider applicability to other post-Communist and post-authoritarian states experiencing extensive political-economic transformation and democratization. A key aspect that make religion a prime influence over culture involves the conceptions of natural law derived from and rooted in religious beliefs. Such conceptions of natural law as espoused in political-cultural worldviews (norms, values and beliefs), help to define what is perceived as the 'best,' 'right,' 'natural' and 'normal' political behavior, actions, and modes of organization. Thus, highlighting the core foundations and definitions of natural law, will help one to understand the important roots linking religious belief to political-cultural worldviews and ways of life, even after much of the religious aspects have become secularized and taken for granted. As Weber noted,

Natural law is...all those norms which are valid independent of, and superior to, any positive law and which...provide the very legitimation for the binding force of positive law. Natural law has thus been...those norms which owe their legitimacy not to their origin from a legitimate lawgiver, but to their immanent and teleological qualities. It is the specific and only consistent type of legitimacy of a legal order which can remain once religious revelation and the sacredness of a tradition have lost their force. The invocation of natural law has repeatedly been the method by which [peoples]...have legitimated their aspirations.⁴³

It is hypothesized that the roots of Latvia's liberal individualist worldviews informing Latvian natural law conceptions result from Latvia's cultural rootedness in

⁴¹ Fox and Sandler. (2004). *Bringing Religion into International Relations*.

⁴² Casanova. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World.*, p. 66.

⁴³ Weber. (1978b). *Economy and Society, Volume 2.*, p. 867.

Western Christianity and the Protestant influences of Lutheranism. In this liberal individualist variant of natural law, Weber points out that...

the essential elements...are “freedoms,” and...“freedom of contract,” ...property and the freedom to dispose of property...[and] freedom of competition....Freedom of contract has formal limits only to the extent that contracts and social conduct...must neither infringe upon the natural law by which they are legitimated nor impair inalienable freedoms. This principle applies to both private...individuals and the official actions of the organs of society...[where] nobody may validly surrender himself into political or private slavery, [and] no enactment can validly limit the free disposition of the individual over his property and his working power.⁴⁴

Alternatively, it is hypothesized that Belarusian conceptions of natural law correspond to collectivist variant as discussed by Weber. According to Weber, a collectivist variant contains the “the doctrine that land is not produced by anybody’s labor and that it is thus incapable at being appropriated at all, [which] constitutes a protest against the closedness of...landowners.”⁴⁵

Although both Latvia and Belarus are situated closely in terms of geographic proximity, a significant divide separates both states in terms of both being situated in differing historic religious-cultural contexts, with Latvia being firmly in the cultural realm of Western Christianity and Protestantism, and Belarus in the realm of Orthodox Christianity. Here it is also important to refer to maps showing Western civilizations cultural boundary to the east, where the dividing line runs down the political border between Latvia and Belarus.⁴⁶ It will be argued in the chapters below that both Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity offer differing conceptions of natural law and natural rights, with the former offering liberal-individualist notions of natural rights and the latter following collective and communal notions of natural rights. Since both countries stand on opposite sides of differing historic political-cultural ways of life, this will help make it possible to view and understand how Latvia’s and Belarus’s differing

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 869.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 871.

⁴⁶ See maps in Huntington. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations.*, p. 159; Eberhardt, Piotr. (2004). “The Concept of Boundary between Latin and Byzantine Civilization in Europe.” *Przegląd Geograficzny*, 76, 2: 169-188, p. 184. For others who have offered evidence of significant cultural differences between the West and other cultures, see Haas. (1970). *Human Rights and International Action.*, p. 14-15; Deutsch. (1981). “On Nationalism, World Regions and the Nature of the West.” p. 57.

political-cultural worldviews, in regards to the individual and collective, has led to divergent policy outcomes in both states.

Another important aspect of political-culture that cannot be overlooked considering that a cultural borderline runs between Latvia and Belarus, is the idea that interactions between the domestic and international environments can act to contribute to historic political-cultures and their external environment being mutually constituted, as a result of the potential for cultural conflict between antagonistic cultures. As Huntington points out, greater cultural awareness and sensitivities are heightened in cultural border areas because of the contact and visibility of opposing cultural ways of life. This importance of conflicting cultures acting in an oppositional manner has also been recognized by other prominent cultural theorists including Wildavsky who noted that “conflict among cultures is a precondition of cultural identity” and that it is “differences and distances from others that define one’s own cultural identity.”⁴⁷ In addition to helping to lead to greater cultural awareness, continued hostile contact with antagonistic cultures throughout history would serve to create negative historical memories of the opposing culture, which could serve to further harden into worldviews. It is hypothesized that parts of this analogy about cultural awareness being increasingly sensitive in cultural border areas could be used to describe the differing historic evolutionary paths of political-culture in Latvia and Belarus, and thus both states divergent patterns of political-economic transformation following 1991, especially in regards to both having vastly divergent political-cultural historical memories in regards to relations with Russia and the West.

Historic political-cultures can thus be seen as evolving in interaction with other competing and antagonistic political-cultures, particularly when states, such as Latvia and Belarus are situated on a cultural/civilizational border zone. Consequently, it is hypothesized that this cultural divide also has important implications for international relations, in that Latvia being situated in the sphere of Western Christian culture would gravitate towards the West and away from the Russia, while Belarus being situated

⁴⁷ Wildavsky, Aaron. (1987). “Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation.” *American Political Science Review* 81, 1: 3-20., p. 7. See also, Thomson et al. (1990). *Cultural Theory.*, p. 4, 269; Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality.*, p. 98; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 7.

predominantly in the cultural sphere of Russian Orthodox Christianity would be naturally more prone in its worldviews to gravitate towards closer relations with Russia, and also be more antagonistic to Western Europe.

This signals an importance to utilize comparative historical methods, which examine path dependence and contingency, in order to more fully understand the historical roots of political-cultural worldviews and ways of life in regards to the organization of political-economic relations. Comparative historical analysis can help show the autonomy of ideas and the causal characteristics of political-cultural worldviews by highlighting their historical origins. Such methods will highlight the autonomous causality of cultural variables, by showing that particular actions are representative and reflective of specific historic political-cultural worldviews.

Methodological Issues

There have been several criticisms and concerns with problems in how traditional versions of political-culture have been employed, particularly in the relaxed versions of civic-culture studies, and political-cultural studies in general. Political-cultural studies have been criticized for ambiguity in neglecting to illustrate ideational factors as autonomous causal variables. As a result, some have voiced the criticism that those such as Almond and Verba, who take a relaxed version of culture, thus treat political-culture as both an independent and dependent variable, because culture is seen as derived from behavior, and behavior derived from structures.⁴⁸ Others have argued that political-culture explanations are speculative, and not based on hard facts, in particular that it is not an explanation, but an interpretation, and a residual category used when all other theories fail.⁴⁹ Another big criticism includes that difficulties arise with the vague and

⁴⁸ See for example, Pateman, Carole. (1980). "The Civic Culture: A Philosophical Critique." In *The Civic Culture Revisited*, ed. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba. London: Sage; Rogowski, Ronald. (1974). *Rational Legitimacy: A Theory of Political Support*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴⁹ See for example, Verba, Sidney. (1965). "Comparative Political Culture." In *Political Culture and Political Development*, ed. Lucien W. Pye and Sidney Verba. Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 513-517; Pye, Lucien W. (1972). "Culture and Political Science: Some Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture." *Social Sciences Quarterly* 53, 2: 285-96., p. 287; Kupchan, Charles A. (1994). *The Vulnerability of Empire*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 26.

ambiguous definitions, which makes categorizing, and measuring cultural variables slippery and hard to test and refute.⁵⁰

Even more recent prominent cultural studies have not been immune from various methodological criticisms. This includes Putnam's (1993) examination of differing civic cultures in Northern and Southern Italy, which is an excellent example that shows that "the civic community has deep historical roots," and in doing so offers a strong challenge to institutionalist's claims that "view institutional reform as a strategy for political change."⁵¹ However, even Putnam's study could be criticized for the historical analysis for not providing adequate links that connect such cultural attributes between various historical eras, and how these were translated to the contemporary period. Additionally, other prominent cultural studies, such as Huntington's (1996) *Clash of Civilizations* also faced significant criticisms based on the lack of empirical evidence provided to back up his main thesis.

Regardless of these criticisms, it is the position here that political-cultural variables of explanation cannot be ignored if one wants to more fully understand the determinants of political action. Even an esteemed non-adherent to cultural explanations, Barrington Moore importantly acknowledged that "still the residue of truth in the cultural explanation is that what looks like an opportunity or temptation to one group of people will not necessarily seem so to another group with a different historical experience and living in a different form of society."⁵² It is the position here that political-culture worldviews are not any more difficult to test than material, structural and institutional variables. This is because structural and more purely institutionalist arguments also rely on intangibles. As Parsons notes,

The evolving material constraints and incentives invoked by Marxism, liberal economic theory, or realism are not visible as though we were watching the physical operation of a bicycle...Each of these theoretical traditions points to variety of incomplete bits of observable evidence of the presence of its larger

⁵⁰ See, Elkins and Simeon. (1979). "A Cause in Search of Its Effect.," p. 137; Kupchan. (1994). *The Vulnerability of Empire.*, p. 26; Inkleles, A. (1996). *National Character: A Psycho-Social Perspective.* New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers; Desch, Michael C. (1998). "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies." *International Security* 23, 1: 141-170., p. 150-152.

⁵¹ Putnam. (1993). *Making Democracy Work.*, p. 183.

⁵² Moore. (1966). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy.*, p. 485.

construct, and fills in gaps by appealing to a styled model... This is all the more true of the man-made constraints and incentives invoked by institutionalist[s].⁵³

However, to avoid making political-cultural worldviews appear as a residual category, it is important to seek to understand the origin of where these values come from, why they are adhered to and how they are reproduced. In other words, “people’s continued adherence to certain doctrines and habits must themselves be explained.”⁵⁴ Methodologically, it is necessary to move away from quantitative methods, which tend to ignore political-cultural worldviews and ideas. While not arguing that there is no way to quantify ideational variables, it is the position here that one needs to have so much information about each case for the question at hand that it would be impossible to get enough cases for a proper quantitative study. Overall, examining a small number of cases, which is conducted here with the dual comparison of Latvia and Belarus, can be useful and of an advantage to help provide a fuller understanding of the determinants of political processes. As Mahoney and Rueschemeyer point out, “because comparative historical investigators usually know each of their cases well, they can measure variables in light of the broad context of each particular case, thereby achieving a higher level of contextual and measurement validity than is often possible when a large number of cases are selected.”⁵⁵ This signals an importance to utilize qualitative comparative historical methods, which examine path dependence and contingency, in order to more fully understand the historical roots and continuity of political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, in regards to the organization of political-economic relations.

⁵³ Parsons. (2007). *How to Map Arguments in Political Science.*, p. 114.

⁵⁴ Thomson et al. (1990). *Cultural Theory.*, p. 218. On need for the origins of cultural attitudes, see also Hall, Peter. (1986). *Governing the Economy: The Politics of Intervention in Britain and France.* Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 34.

⁵⁵ Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. (2003). “Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas.” Ch. 1. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 13, 18. See also, Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. (2003). “Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?” ch. 9. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 318; George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.* Cambridge: MIT Press., p. 19.

Methodology

This study uses several specific research methods in combination, in order to understand the factors accounting for why two post-Soviet states facing similar geo-strategic and political-economic challenges chose to pursue divergent political-economic policy orientations. As previously mentioned, it is hypothesized that Latvia's comprehensive reforms were driven by the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and exhibit a reformist sentiment. Conversely, it is hypothesized that Belarus's lack of liberal reform is attributable to the historically rooted political-cultural worldviews that are found in Belarus, which favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership. However, to understand the causal characteristics played by political-cultural worldviews it is important to trace their historical origins. Thus, it is also hypothesized that Latvia's and Belarus's divergent political-cultural worldviews are conditioned by each state's differing historical legacies in terms of ways of life relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and economics.

Thus, part one of the methods utilized comparative historical analysis, which examined path dependence and contingency, in order to understand the historical roots of political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories in regards to the organization of political-economic relations. Overall, comparative historical analysis is important to address the two core questions of the study, and also crucial to test previous theoretical explanations of the cases involved because comparative historical analysis allows one "to test, challenge, and shift prior beliefs about the cases under examination."⁵⁶

Comparative historical analysis is essential in order to gain understanding into how Latvia's and Belarus's political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories were conditioned by the specific historical legacies of both countries. Methodologically, it is necessary to find evidence inferring the historic existence and

⁵⁶ Goldstone, Jack A. (2003). "Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions." Ch. 2. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 51.

continuity of contemporary political-cultural worldviews through the examination and tracing of historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and patterns of behavior. As Kavanagh points out, it can be necessary and appropriate to “infer beliefs from behavior during a certain time period and draw on these beliefs to explain behavior in subsequent periods.”⁵⁷ Therefore, in conducting comparative historical analysis, it is important to identify commonalities and dominant themes linking various historiographic schools. Specifically, the goal of this exercise is to identify the cultural attributes that “predominate” across numerous historiographic accounts.⁵⁸ This is important to avoid selection bias, as Lustick notes, because “the work of historians is not...an unproblematic background narrative from which theoretically neutral data can be elicited for the framing of problems and the testing of theories.”⁵⁹ Moreover, Lustick points to Cantor’s argument that “historians...work [re]presents a picture of ‘what happened’ that is just as much a function of his or her personal commitments, the contemporary political issues with which s/he was engaged, and the methodological choices governing his or her work, as of available source materials.”⁶⁰

Taking such advice into account, I followed several techniques, as recommended by Lustick, in order to avoid charges of selection bias. For example, Lustick argues that scholars utilizing comparative historical methods should: 1) consider a wide range of historiography on the subject, and point out the historiographical schools which one finds best and why, including their specific theories and biases; 2) draw from many sources and “explain variance in historiography,” but also note the regularities that appear, convergences and divergences in accounts for specific periods, as well as justifying why certain sources are not just convenient but “excellent” and “influential;” 3) “quasi-triangulation,” by noting significant overlap between various sources, and; 4) “explicit triage,” by pointing out the “qualitative judgments that led to choices of particular sources for constructing different parts of the background narrative,” which would be “supplemented by discursive footnotes that alert the reader to alternative versions, briefly

⁵⁷ Dennis Kavanagh. (1972). *Political Culture*. London: MacMillan., p. 49. See also, Brown. (1979). “Introduction.,” p. 9; McAuley. (1984). “Political Culture and Communist Politics.,” p. 23; Hopf, (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.,” p. 287.

⁵⁸ Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.,” p. 285-286, 291.

⁵⁹ Lustick, Ian S. (1996). “History Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias.” *American Political Science Review* 90, 3: 605-618., p. 605.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 606. See also, George and Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development.*, p. 95.

explain[ing] the reasoning that led to the rejection of these accounts,” thus “demonstrating awareness of alternative views.”⁶¹ In regards to the last point of alerting the reader to alternative accounts, it is important in the footnotes to be “very explicit in reporting how [one] arrived at particular conclusions (e.g. examining the use of sources and documentation in the conflicting secondary works).”⁶²

Thus, a necessary step is to consult widely from a diverse set of sources from numerous historiographic schools to ensure a sample that is representative. This involved reviewing a wide number of histories of Latvia and Belarus to identify historical descriptions of what it culturally means to be Latvian/Belarusian. In the process of conducting comparative historical analysis, 138 sources were consulted for Belarus, and 195 were consulted for Latvia. In terms of the types of sources, these included numerous histories, historical memoirs, first-hand historical accounts, secondary histories, archival documents, speeches, and articles. This thorough selection of sources was important because it allowed “in effect [one to] examine the full ‘population’ of sources, obviating any bias associated with non-random selection.”⁶³ A key reason for my exhaustive sampling of sources, relates to two of this study’s methodological goals to avoid any criticisms of selection bias, and to set a methodological standard for comparative historical analysis in tracing political-cultural worldviews. Moreover, it has been noted that the “subjectivity of this textual analysis can be an advantage, since subjectivity here is not necessarily a question of doing as we please, but of making full use of our skill as cultural subjects,” in order to interpret and deepen one’s understanding of cultural differences.⁶⁴

Overall, comparative historical methods are necessary to highlight continuity in historic political-cultural worldviews (norms, rules, values and beliefs), ways of life (habits, patterns, customs and traditions), and to understand the core historical memories across extended time periods and during and after key historical events. Utilizing comparative historical analysis is a sound and tested methodological tool to trace the

⁶¹ Lustick. (1996). “History Historiography, and Political Science.” p. 615-616.

⁶² Mahoney and Rueschemeyer. (2003). “Comparative Historical Analysis.” p. 18, no. 40. See also, George and Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development.*, p. 91, 95.

⁶³ Mahoney and Rueschemeyer. (2003). “Comparative Historical Analysis.” p. 18, no. 40. On need to consult numerous sources, see Hopf. (2009). “Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.” p. 286, 290.

⁶⁴ Lewis, Justin. (2008). “Thinking by Numbers: Cultural Analysis and the Use of Data.” In Tony Bennett and John Frow, ed. *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis*. London: Sage., p. 667.

predominant historic political-cultural patterns, because it allows one to “uncover what [was] repressed [in the past] giv[ing] us clues as to what may become predominant from [1991] onward.”⁶⁵ Moreover, as Brown points out,

where hard information on subjective perception of recent and more distant history (for example, in the form of survey data) is missing, historical interpretation...becomes all the more important. In so far as data can be obtained, however, greater attention is paid to popular perception of previous political experience since this is not only a component of political culture but...likely to have a bearing on subsequent political behavior.⁶⁶

In order to best understand the essential and defining characteristics of the historic political-cultures under observation, it is necessary when conducting the research to follow steps similar to Hopf and focus on each societies “habits, customs, and traditions,” which include the historically “observable regular patterns of social conduct,” to “find the natural, unquestioned, mundane daily practices that constitute everyday life and commonsense lived reality,”⁶⁷ throughout the study of the historical evolution of political-cultures under question. This is an important step in establishing that culture is important through the detection of key cultural attributes, characteristics, and values found historically in each society. However, the problem with Hopf was that there was little sense given for where the cultural identities of 1955 came from.

Thus, the arguments here agree with Pierson’s recommendation on the “need to look at extended periods of time,” and the necessity “for social scientists to be attentive to the Braudelian focus on the *longue durée*...because they wish to consider the role of factors that change only gradually.”⁶⁸ Since historic political-cultural worldviews are long lasting and slow to change, this allows observable recognized patterns of behavior to be adequately theorized about over extended periods of time under study. This has important implications for researchers attempting to explain political action, as Hall points out, since “current outcomes can rarely be explained by reference to the present or

⁶⁵ Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.” p. 299.

⁶⁶ Brown. (1979). “Introduction.” p. 16-17.

⁶⁷ Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.” p. 282-283; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Pierson. (2003). “Big, Slow-Moving, and...Invisible.” p. 193.

the immediate past.”⁶⁹ However, in Braudel’s *longue durée*, there was not a tight connection between the vast information given in regards to each cultural civilization. Thus, it is necessary to provide tight connections to facilitating the tracing of the predominant political-cultural worldviews at play in various eras, in order to understand the origins and to understand how the historical presence and continuity of distinct political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories shape current attitudes and policy preferences.

Thus, this study builds on these two different styles of studying the effects of culture, as represented by both Hopf and Braudel, and will make an important methodological contribution by providing an exhaustive means of historical sampling to adequately trace the historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories of both societies, and showing how these were connected to various historical eras. In doing so, and formulating the comparative historical narrative, I utilize “thick description,”⁷⁰ in order to understand and trace the key characteristics of both countries predominant historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories.

Hence the emphasis on historic political-culture, with the viewpoint that old ingrained habits of political-economic decision-making, organization, and allocation are slow to change and persistent over time, where one can expect to see similar or predictable responses in the form of continuity in political ideas, behavior and decision-making elicited from specific political-cultures at key events throughout history. Moreover, it is expected that one will find responses to similar events to vary and differ when comparing two divergent political-cultures situated on different evolutionary historical trajectories, as a result of path dependence set in motion at earlier critical historical junctures.⁷¹ Thus, in focusing on the *longue durée* as emphasized by Braudel, the timeline under focus for the comparative historical research will stretch back over a millennium, with a narrative that is chronological in format that focuses on key events and themes throughout the historical evolution of both Latvia and Belarus. This is necessary as it is hypothesized that the key critical historical juncture that was definitive

⁶⁹ Hall. (2003). “Aligning Ontology and Methodology.” p. 385.

⁷⁰ Geertz. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures* [see ch. 1, “Thick Description”].

⁷¹ See for example, Pierson. (2003). “Big, Slow-Moving, and...Invisible.” p. 195; Collier and Collier. (1991). *Shaping the Political Arena*; Hall. (2003). “Aligning Ontology and Methodology.” p. 385.

in the historical evolution of Latvian political-culture was Latvia's original conversion into Western Christianity and exposure to the Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism, whereas Belarus's definitive moment was its earlier original conversion into Orthodox Christianity.

Overall, comparative historical analysis can help highlight the autonomy of ideas and the causal characteristics of political-cultural worldviews by highlighting their historical origins. Here, process-tracing is a good way "to get closer to the mechanisms or microfoundations behind observed phenomena."⁷² As Goldstone points out, it is imperative for the researcher "to demonstrate the impact of contingency or path dependence in producing divergent or unexpected outcomes," so that the "narrative marshals evidence that particular sequences or patterns unfolded in a particular way, for particular reasons."⁷³ In doing so, it is necessary to paint a "backstory" of why some cultural ideas rose to prominence and others did not, tracing ideas origins, and revealing "previous events that gave rise to the ideas and then placed them in a position to influence politics."⁷⁴ Thus, it was necessary to search for the historic rootedness, source and meanings of the political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories in each context, and utilize process-tracing to link these historic political-cultures from the past to present.

In doing so, one needs to uncover the strength and consistency of political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories at various key stages throughout history. Thus, in tracing the evolutionary path of the historic political-cultures, it is necessary to also "trace the process by which perceptions are transmitted overtime."⁷⁵ This involves searching for key agents of socialization in this evolutionary process helping to transmit political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories from one generation to the next. In both cases of Latvia and Belarus, it is hypothesized that the family acted as key agents in this socializing process. Here it is also

⁷² George and Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development.*, p. 147, 30, 212.

⁷³ Goldstone. (2003). "Comparative Historical Analysis," p. 51. See also, Goldstone, Jack A. (1999). "Initial Conditions, General Laws, Path Dependence, and Explanations in Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 3: 829-845; Mahoney. (2000). "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology"; George and Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development.*, p. 212.

⁷⁴ Berman, Sheri. 2001. "Ideas, Norms, and Culture in Political Analysis: Review Article." *Comparative Politics* 33, 2: 231-250., p. 233.

⁷⁵ McAuley. (1984). "Political Culture and Communist Politics., p. 23.

essential to examine how the predominant political-culture and identities are constructed against possible rival political-cultural competitors and how this shapes historical memories.

The comparative historical analysis tracing the predominant political-cultural patterns will be conducted in chapters 4 and 6. Some of the key stages and historical patterns where inferences will need to be found include finding historical consensus that Latvian culture fits firmly into the cultural realm of Western civilization, that this was brought about as a result of Latvia's conversion into Western Christianity and exposure to the Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism. Additionally, it will also be necessary to find evidence that the religious teachings of Lutheranism encouraged values in the people favouring literacy, individualism, individual equality, private property, and reformism, as well as the channels through which such values were conveyed to the Latvian peasants. For Belarus it will be necessary to find evidence and consensus that Belarus's original conversion into Orthodox Christianity, served to place Belarus firmly in the realm of Russian Orthodox Culture. In terms of Religious values, it will be necessary to show that the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus was hierarchical, and promoted values of collectivism/communalism, passivity, paternalism, absolutism, strong state rule, and authoritarian leadership.

This also involves examining the importance that historians place on the explanatory variable of nationalism and national identity, which involves using various steps as noted in the methodological critiques of national identity given in chapter 1. Specifically, this involves finding consensus that political-cultural worldviews stand prior to, and inform the content of ideas of nationalism and national identity. For Belarus, it also necessary to show that while Belarus did have historical links also to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, it was Belarus's strong eastern cultural connections intricately tying average Belarusians to Russia and Russian Orthodoxy which had predominant long-lasting effects influencing the shape and pattern of political-cultural worldviews unique to Belarusians.

Politically, it will be necessary establish that while being formally ruled over politically by Russian Tsars from 1795 onwards, Russia's rule over Latvia was done in a more hands-off manner than Belarus, which allowed more openness, and specifically

cultural autonomy in the form of allowing for the retention of Latvians historically Western liberal-individualist cultural way of life during this time. In contrast, for Belarus it is necessary to establish that from 1795 onwards, Russian Tsars, which had strong direct connections to the Orthodox Church, ruled Belarus in an absolutist and authoritarian fashion, which allowed the religious-cultural influences of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy to have cultural hegemony in lands of Belarus.

Economically, it is necessary to find historical evidence and consensus that the majority of ethnic-Latvians remained rural until the mid-Twentieth century, and that Latvians had long experience with private property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads. In terms of worldviews and historical memories, it is also necessary to establish that rural Latvians historically placed a high normative value on the individual acquisition of private property and individual farming. Conversely, while also showing that Belarusians remained predominantly rural up until the mid-Twentieth century, it is also necessary to find evidence and consensus that Belarusians historically had next to no experience with individual private property, and held normative values that were loathe to private property, and instead adhered to a political-cultural way of life characterized by a tradition of collectivist/communal control of property under the village commune. Additionally, it is also important to establish that if there was some limited private property ownership existing historically in Belarus, that such private holdings were largely controlled by non-Belarusians.

Additionally, it will also be necessary to examine if throughout history there was a persistent pattern of Latvian resistance against authoritarian encroachments to personal freedom and private property, which can be inferred from evidence showing that there was numerous rural uprisings over the centuries, and especially during Russian rule, and that such actions were largely driven in most instances by liberal-individualist worldviews. Specific periods and events that will need to be examined include the peasant uprisings from the Eighteenth century onwards, the period of the national awakening, the period of Russification, the failed revolution of 1905, the Russian Revolution, and the Latvian War of Independence (1918-1920). In contrast, for Belarus it will be necessary to establish that throughout history there was a persistent pattern of

Belarusian passivity and acquiescence to authoritarian rule, as well as a rural way of life promoting collective/communal rights over that of individual personal freedoms.

It is also necessary to examine whether Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-culture thrived during the period of interwar independence, 1918-1940, and to understand whether the values and historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers played a significant role over Latvian politics during the interwar. Here, it is of crucial importance to examine whether Latvians held positive historical memories of Latvia's first period of independence. For Belarus, it is also important to establish that Belarus gained its first modern tangible experience with statehood under the BSSR. Moreover, it is crucial to examine whether the state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR built on and reinforced the preexisting collectivist, communal and paternalistic cultural worldviews that were already historically prevalent amongst Belarusians, and in doing so establish that Belarusians had positive historical memories of this period. Additionally, since the western lands of Belarus were ruled by Poland during the interwar period, it is also necessary to examine whether Belarusians share negative historical memories in regards to the experience of life under Polish dominion.

Another key period to examine is in regards to the events and interpretations of the Second World War. For Latvia, it is necessary to establish historical consensus that in 1940, Latvia was forcefully and illegally incorporated into USSR. In doing so, it is necessary to examine Latvians motives for actively resisting Soviet forces, in the first case by grudgingly donning German uniforms to fight the Soviet occupation, and then as guerilla fighters from 1945 to the mid-1950s. In each act of armed resistance, it is necessary to establish consensus that Latvians historically liberal-individualist worldviews were key in informing the actions of resistors, and also that such actions were supported at the grass-roots level by a large majority of rural Latvian society. In terms of historical memories, it is also necessary to establish that Latvians viewed the Soviet victory as the return of an oppressive occupation regime. For Belarus, it is necessary to show that Belarusians also have differing political-cultural worldviews and historical memories in regards to the Second World War. First, it is necessary to examine if Belarusians hold positive historical memories towards the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact since

this ended Polish domination over the western lands of Belarus, and resulted in the reunification of the historic cultural lands of Belarus into one single political entity under the BSSR. Moreover, since there was a great deal of anti-German, pro-Soviet guerilla activity in the lands of Belarus during WWII, it is necessary to establish that it was local Belarusians that formed the core of these pro-Soviet guerilla forces, and that these also received mass popular support from the populace. In doing so, it is also necessary to establish if Belarusian historical memories in regards to the end of WWII differ from those of Latvians. Specifically, it will be necessary to show that for Belarusians, the end of WWII was seen as liberation and victory.

In terms of life in the post-1945 era, it is necessary to establish that both Latvia and Belarus remained predominately rural up until the early-1950s, and then subsequently also experienced significant Soviet-style industrial development during this period, with both becoming leading 'industrial engines' of Soviet economy. However, it is necessary to establish that Latvians viewed Soviet rule as a forced occupation, and thus viewed such development as negative in their worldviews and historical memories. Here it is necessary to establish that political-economic decision-making was largely controlled by ethnic-Russians/Slavs and Russified Latvians that were beholden to Moscow. Moreover, it is also necessary to examine Latvians worldviews and historical memories towards the forced collectivization of agricultural and destruction of individual private farming, the subsequent movement to heavy industrialization, and the connected environmental degradation of rural Latvia, the mass immigration of ethnic-Russians/Slavs into Latvia, and the policies of Russification, to establish whether a clash of cultures was occurring between ethnic-Latvians and the Soviet/Russian authorities. To infer that a clash of cultures was occurring, it will be necessary to establish that there were many acts of resistance throughout the period, both violent and passive, from Latvians towards Soviet/Russian rule. In tracing the motives of Latvian resistance in key instances throughout Soviet rule, it will be necessary to show that Communist ideas were never widely credible amongst ethnic-Latvians, and alien to Latvians historically liberal political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories.

In regards to the mass resistance that emerged during glasnost and perestroika, it is necessary to establish that this resistance was not a new phenomenon, but rooted in the

liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories that were long historically predominant in Latvia, which Soviet authorities had failed to destroy. Thus, on the eve of gaining re-independence, and the period of comprehensive reforms, it is necessary to establish that even after suffering nearly fifty years of being forcefully held against their will under Soviet/Russian domination, ethnic-Latvians continued shared an intense yearning and desire for the restoration of individual freedom and the right to own private property.

In contrast to Latvians, it will be necessary to show that Belarusian worldviews and historical memories largely viewed Soviet economic industrial development and modernization under the BSSR as positive progress. In doing so, it will be necessary to establish that during this time Belarusian leaders of the BSSR enjoyed a great deal of political capital and legitimacy amongst the people. Moreover, it will be necessary to find evidence confirming that the BSSR enjoyed much greater decision-making autonomy relative to Latvia and other Soviet Republics. Here, it will also be necessary to establish that in the worldviews and historical memories of Belarusians, that Soviet rule was not seen as foreign or culturally alien, as well as that the political-economic practices found in the BSSR built on and reinforced Belarusians historically pre-existing collectivist, communal and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews. Additionally, it will be necessary to establish that compared to Latvia, there was very little relative mass grass-roots resistance to Soviet rule in Belarus, which needs to be shown to be apparent in all periods, and especially during the period of glasnost and perestroika. Thus, on the eve of gaining formal independence, it is necessary to show that Belarusian worldviews and historical memories continued to view positively the state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR, and also continued to share political-cultural worldviews that were highly collectivist, communal, paternalist, and statist in their outlook, and therefore resistant to calls for reform.

The above historical focus will be narrated in chapter 4 for Latvia, and chapter 6 for Belarus. Indeed, such a process will help to “uncover what was repressed” before 1991, and thus “give us clues what may be predominant” after 1991.⁷⁶ Once the historic evolutionary pattern of political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical

⁷⁶ Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split,” p. 299.

memories are mapped out, this will facilitate an understanding into how such political-cultural worldviews are transmitted during the contemporary period after 1991. This measurement of contemporary political-cultural worldviews will be conducted in chapter 5 for Latvia, and chapter 7 for Belarus.

For Latvia it will be specifically necessary to establish that there were strong normative views favouring the dismantling of the Soviet system, and desires for the reestablishment of individual freedoms and the right to own property, coupled with anti-statist views favouring a limited role for the state, and views favouring market solutions. In terms of normative viewpoints, it will be necessary to establish that Latvians widely shared political-cultural worldviews that normatively viewed a regime of individual freedoms, market economy, private property, and limited government as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ way to effectively organize the political-economic affairs of society in order to promote overall growth and overall development.

Conversely, it is necessary to establish that Belarusians were not prepared to even seriously consider liberal reform after 1991, by showing that Belarusians did not view the system under the BSSR as broken, and that such outlooks resulted from the predominant political-cultural worldviews shared by Belarusians which were oriented towards collectivism, communalism, paternalism, and statist solutions, which had little preference for comprehensive market transformation, nor desire to radically de-Sovietize. Moreover, it is necessary to show that Belarusians continued to share significant nostalgia for Soviet political-economic life under the BSSR, which is seen in significant patriotism for the BSSR in the historical memories of Belarusians. Additionally, it is necessary to establish that Belarusians also felt no expediency to move towards Western Europe, and also expressed desires to maintain close ties with Russia, not because they lacked a national identity, but because of the predominant feeling that a close orientation towards Russia was ‘right’ and ‘natural,’ due to Belarus’s close cultural links with Russia. Finally, it is necessary to establish that President Lukashenko’s worldviews are rooted in traditional Belarusian political-culture, and that he has been able to consolidate and legitimize his rule by playing on these predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories widely shared by Belarusians.

The core methodological step of this process will involve an examination of public opinion surveys conducted since 1991. Here, extensive polling data is available on important questions of identity from the Centre for the Study of Public Policy, which conducted numerous surveys including the *Baltic Barometer* and *New Democracies Barometers*. What is useful about these polls is that they breakdown the polling numbers into ethnic groups in both countries. In the case of Latvia this is important considering that there is a large ethnic-Russian/Slavic minority living in Latvia. Additionally, survey results from various other independent public opinion polls were analyzed, to gauge sentiments to other relevant questions, and in order to verify the consistency of responses. This included analyzing World Values Surveys that conducted three separate surveys from 1990 to 2000, and gathered data on questions of identity and political-economic preferences in both countries. Additionally, *Eurobarometer Reports* conducted during the 1990s were also analyzed. Finally, I also examined polling data from the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS), which is a private Belarusian think-tank, previously located in Minsk, but now located in Vilnius, Lithuania. When combined, these polls examine many pertinent questions regarding Latvian and Belarusian societies worldviews in regards to value preferences related to political-economic issues, societal matters, governance, historical memory, identity issues, nationalism, and relations with Russia and the West.

Overall, there are several positives to using surveys. First, surveys offer the ability to get a large number of responses.⁷⁷ Moreover, each one of the polls listed above consistently asked the same questions using the same wording for Latvian and Belarusian respondents, in each year throughout the study. This helps to facilitate comparison across time, which will “allow...a way of understanding the extent and ideological specificities of cultural practices and understandings.”⁷⁸ Such steps are important because it is necessary to analyze these findings in order to understand whether these numbers substantiate and adhere to the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories identified in the comparative historical analysis.

⁷⁷ Sylvan and Metskas. (2009). “Tradeoffs in Measuring Identities.” p. 75.

⁷⁸ Lewis. (2008). “Thinking by Numbers.” p. 669. See also, Sylvan and Metskas. “Tradeoffs in Measuring Identities.” p. 82.

Analysis of public opinion surveys is a core part in addressing the study's main questions. In doing so, it was also important to compare responses to questions regarding national identity, in order to understand the salience of national identity in both countries. For example, it was important to examine whether the national identity rankings of Belarusians show similar consistencies to Latvians. Additionally, it was important to examine not only questions of national identity, but also ones that gauge other important issues. Specific questions that needed to be examined included ones that addressed levels of "pride" for the nation and country, feelings toward national symbols, levels of patriotism, and also the preferred relations with Russia.⁷⁹ Here it was also important to examine polls that ask people to evaluate their impressions of and whether they identify with other cultural and societal groups, both domestically and internationally, as mentioned in the methodological critique of National Identity given in chapter 1. Furthermore, it was also fruitful to examine questions regarding language use, specifically questions that also asked whom the respondent identifies with. Particularly in the case of Belarus, "this will help determine whether ones "identity is linked to language knowledge and usage at home."⁸⁰ Additionally, it was important to gauge the salience of possible rationalist oriented nationalist explanations, as discussed in the methodological critique given in chapter 1, in order to examine whether or not question responses might adhere to the instrumental calculations of respondents (e.g. 'when times are tough, jobs should only be given to ethnic Latvians/Belarusians). Indeed, one could infer serious problems with National Identity explanations, if available public opinion polling of Belarusians indicated high levels of positivity in their responses in regards to questions related to national pride, national identification, perceptions on statehood, high patriotism, and the preferred relations with Russian being based on Belarus retaining its sovereignty.

Overall, surveys are an important method to gauge the predominant political-cultural worldviews of each society, and to understand whether significant divergence in worldviews and value preferences exists between Latvia and Belarus, when it comes to

⁷⁹ Citrin, Jack, and David O. Sears. (2009). "Balancing National and Ethnic Identities: The Psychology of *E Pluribus Unum*." Ch. 5. In *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, eds., R. Abdelal, Y. M. Herrera, A. I. Johnston, and R. McDermott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 162.

⁸⁰ Brady and Kaplan. (2009). "Conceptualizing and Measuring Ethnic Identity.," p. 39.

questions addressing value preferences and attitudes towards issues of political-economic organization and governance. Specific questions that needed to be examined include the extent of pro-Communist attitudes, and attitudes related to the prospect of returning to Communism. Additionally, because reforms are a work in progress, it is necessary to examine questions related to whether attitudes are pro in favour of the future political regime or pro in favour of the future economy. It is also necessary to gauge questions related towards individualism and collectivism, whether responses place an emphasis on the individual or equality, attitudes towards basic liberal freedoms, and attitudes towards wealth and private property. In regards to reform, it is necessary to examine questions related to attitudes towards privatization, normative preferences for private or state-run enterprises, and attitudes towards state control of prices, etc. Gauging attitudes towards liberal-democracy and dictatorship are also important. Additionally, analyzing questions regarding trust was also crucial, in order to infer legitimacy (e.g. trust in the President, in the case of Lukashenko, and trust that elections were ‘free and fair’). Furthermore, it is also necessary to measure surveys on media usage as well as trust in media. This is important to infer political-cultural worldviews at play, because “the media that individuals seek out usually reflects their interests and preferences.”⁸¹ Examining public opinion data will help gain knowledge and understanding into the predominant political-cultural worldviews and political environment present in Latvia and Belarus in the period since 1991, and will also help to explain and provide clues into the potential problem that might have been encountered in implementing liberal reform in transforming from a command economy into a market economy.

A second core step of the methods for measuring contemporary political-culture will involve examining government policy documents, announcements, speeches, and news media reports and quotes from public officials, as well as secondary sources, analysis and commentary on contemporary politics in Latvia and Belarus since 1991. First, policy documents and speeches offered as public information represent the public face of the key organizations involved in political-economic policy development and implementation. When combined with the additional analysis of news media reports and quotes from key public officials, as well as secondary sources and analysis on

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59, 39.

contemporary politics in both countries, this is an important first step in gaining contextual understanding and insights into the political visions and motivations behind post-Soviet transformation. Analysis was done based on the political issues identified as central through the review of literature, as well as based on important historical events, and predominant cultural attributes and characteristics identified during the comparative historical analysis.

Specifically, it will be necessary to see if inferences can be made to liberal-individualist themes being promoted in Latvia, while collectivist, communal and statist orientations are promoted in Belarus. Additionally, this is also a key step to test other theoretical explanations mentioned in the literature review, where inferences will be gained from the various steps noted in the methodological critiques given for theories, such as National Identity, in chapter 1. Here, it was also important to re-examine contemporary accounts given by National Identity theorists, in order to find evidence in these accounts that actually prove contradictory to these explanations.

This step is essential in helping to substantiate the earlier findings from the section of comparative historical analysis. Here it is important when analyzing such sources to “consider *who* is speaking to whom, for what purpose and under what circumstances.”⁸² Specifically, in assessing policy documents, announcements and speeches, as well as news media reports and quotes from public officials, it was necessary to analyze whether the government and political elites appealed to the mass public through the use of rhetoric that utilizes cultural ideas and cultural frames in the form of “metaphors, exemplars...from which lessons are drawn, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images.”⁸³ Such methods have been used effectively by others studying political issues involving culture, identity, and ideational explanations, with the rationale being that the “stories...that people use to explain the world are key to understanding their [political-cultural worldviews].”⁸⁴

⁸² George and Bennett. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development.*, p. 100.

⁸³ Gamson and Modigliani. (1989). “Media Discourse and Public Opinion.” p. 3-4; Brady and Kaplan. (2009). “Conceptualizing and Measuring Ethnic Identity.” p. 43.

⁸⁴ Sylvan, Donald A. and Amanda K. Metskas. (2009). “Tradeoffs in Measuring Identities: A Comparison of Five Approaches.” Ch. 3. In *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, eds., R. Abdelal, Y. M. Herrera, A. I. Johnston, and R. McDermott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 90. See also, Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*.

Finally, the methods also made use of open-ended, semi-structured interviews of current and former government officials, policy-makers, and non-governmental elites in Latvia and Belarus,⁸⁵ to discuss the political challenges of post-Soviet transformation and gain understanding into the visions, motivations, and ideas behind political-economic policy, as well as the possibilities for reform. Overall, the key advantage of using open-ended interviews, as Sylvan and Metskas point out, “is that subjects are able to talk about their identity [political-culture] in their own words, rather than being forced to select from alternatives that they might not feel describe them accurately.”⁸⁶ Indeed, such “responsive interviewing” techniques have been extensively utilized, and are recognized as a methodology that is favourable for giving valuable description for the analysis of political-economic processes.⁸⁷ Moreover, the combined rigor and flexibility in data collection that is offered by using semi-structured interviews, also permits emerging information to be attained within a coherent research framework.⁸⁸

Several steps were taken in order to help draw inferences from the interviews. First, it was important to ask elites specific factual questions about when and how decisions were made, the challenges, and under what circumstances, as a check on the secondary source research (e.g. see Interview Questions 1 to 12, in Appendix). Second, I also asked interviewee’s general “attitude” questions, to try to get a sense of what kinds of culturally grounded ideas might have been guiding decision-making. This included questions about elites’ own values (e.g. see Interview Questions 13 to 20, in Appendix), perceptions of popular values in society (e.g. see Interview Question 21 to 22, in Appendix), and attitudes towards the proper place of those values – personal and popular

⁸⁵ The information and data for the elite interviews was collected over a two month period in Latvia and Belarus. Approximately 60 possible recruits were approached, which resulted in 21 (13 Latvian and 8 Belarusian) participants being recruited. This representative sample included 1-2 elite policy-makers, former government officials and non-governmental elites from the most relevant government ministries and non-governmental bodies. This sample size was appropriate and important to capture and highlight similarities and differences in visions and actions between organizations that had roles to play in formulating and implementing policy. This sample size was the maximum number that the Principal Investigator could do given time constraints and resources. Most importantly, this sample size is large enough to provide a diverse sample and to mitigate concerns regarding selection bias.

⁸⁶ Sylvan and Metskas. (2009). “Tradeoffs in Measuring Identities,” p. 83.

⁸⁷ Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. (2005). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Second Edition. London. Sage., p. 15.

⁸⁸ Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative Research Methods Found in the Social Sciences*. Fifth Edition. Montreal: Pearson.

– in process of political-economic governance and policy-making (e.g. see Interview Question 23 to 24, in Appendix).

Overall, the rationale behind the political-cultural assumptions here, is that elite decision-makers do not operate in a vacuum when formulating policy, and are informed and influenced by the political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories that are historically predominant in their respective society. This even applies to Belarus, where President Lukashenko plays a dominant role over political-economic policy, because political-culture exerts significant influence over the policy process even in authoritarian contexts. Such a position is supported by Hopf, where he found that “even a semitotalitarian, authoritarian elite is...subject to the influence of [political-cultural] identities that operate in a presumably subordinated, repressed society.”⁸⁹ This is because “these leaders [are] be[ing] socialized by the prevailing social structure with its collection of taken-for-granted knowledge about the world.”⁹⁰ Thus, it is the position here that political-culture exerts significant influence over the policy process even in authoritarian contexts.

Additionally, in reviewing the transcripts, it was important to analyze whether references to culture and political-cultural worldviews were outweighed instead by responses that described the policy motivations as adhering more to other explanations, such as those proposed by rational institutionalist, historic institutionalist or national identity arguments. Such methodological steps were described in the methodological critiques given for the various theories discussed in chapter 1. Overall, such analysis of interview transcripts has been demonstrated to be very useful because it will help facilitate “tracing the logic of the theory” and refinement of the theory” should new information present itself.⁹¹

The above methodological parts of analysis form the core of the qualitative paired-cases comparison of Latvia and Belarus and will provide the insights, background and context, which are essential to help address the two key questions and hypotheses of this dissertation, by providing an empirical basis from which to analyze and understand the political vision and motivations of post-Soviet political-economic policies and

⁸⁹ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 32-33.

⁹⁰ Hopf. (2009).” Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split.” p. 284.

⁹¹ Sylvan and Metskas. “Tradeoffs in Measuring Identities.” p. 85.

transformation. In the case study chapters that follow (chapters 4 and 5 for Latvia, and chapters 6 and 7 for Belarus), I will apply the methods listed above, as well as those in the methodological critiques given in chapter 1, to help explain and understand the influential role of political-cultural variables in shaping the divergent patterns of post-Soviet political-economic transformation in both Latvia and Belarus.

In conducting such methods as listed above, one must also set out the criteria in terms of evidence, observations and outcomes that would lead to the falsification of the political-cultural arguments postulated in the main hypothesis of this dissertation. In other words, what factors would consistently have to happen if the main political-cultural argument here were to be proven wrong. In general terms, the political-cultural arguments here would face problems across both cases if Latvia did something that was more collectivist than Belarus in several areas, or vice-versa if Belarus acted more individualistically oriented in key cases. Within cases, several factors similar to the methodological criteria laid out for each theory, which were critiqued in chapter 1, would prove problematic for the political-cultural arguments made here. First, if an emphasis was to be found to be placed on nationalism in Latvia in various periods and the contemporary period outweighing culture, while in Belarus it was found that national identity was seriously lacking, with little national pride, and a willingness to surrender sovereignty to Russia, this would pose challenges for cultural theories. In Rationalistic terms, if it was found that Latvians desire to join the EU and transform into a liberal market economy, were driven more by rational materialistic motivations of Latvians seeking material benefits from the economic spoils of accession, rather than by normative judgments that such behavior was viewed as 'right' and 'natural,' this would also pose problems for cultural theories. Also, in regards to rationalist arguments that nationalist ideas were used instrumentally, cultural theories would face problems if it was shown that the sole motivating reason for such a change resulted from purely rational, instrumental and materialistic calculations, in order to gain the trappings of power. Additionally, in regards to policies such as privatization, if it was found that claims to restore property were driven by materialistic motives to gain wealth from newly privatized assets, or for the government to simply gain quick cash infusions from the sale of privatized enterprises, this would also pose problems for cultural theories. Finally, for Belarus, if it was shown that the motives of Lukashenko and other Belarusian elites were simply to maintain power for powers sake, in order to

facilitate rent-seeking to increase personal economic material gain, or that the phenomenon of oligarchs was a serious problem in Belarus, this would also pose problems for cultural theories.

However, before moving to the individual case studies, chapter 3 will set about providing analysis of the dependent variable, specifically the differing policy trajectories of Latvia and Belarus. This is important in order to illustrate that Latvia's comprehensive reforms, and Belarus's lack of reform touched on all areas of micro and macroeconomic policy. Specific policy areas that will be explored, includes comparing: 1) levels of central bank independence (e.g. degree of politicization); 2) monetary policy and stability (e.g. rates of inflation, exchange rate policy, and liberalization of the banking sector); 3) privatization rates in regards to land, real-estate, and the structural privatization of small, medium and large scale enterprises; 4) government subsidization rates for industry; 5) rates of regulation over the economy (e.g. price controls, foreign exchange controls, competition, and trade openness), and; 6) individual freedoms, property rights, and rule of law. Overall, this is needed in order to establish that significant divergence exists in the policy behavior (dependent variable) between Latvia (reform) and Belarus (non-reform), in regards to differing rates of transformation in the policy areas listed above.

In terms of methods here, analysis will be conducted of reports, rankings, and statistical surveys on political-economic transformation and democratic reforms from international bodies such as the EU, IMF, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal, and Freedom House. Reports and surveys to assess the levels of reform and transformation were available on the websites of the organizations mentioned above. In all cases, these organizations offer important independent insights to highlight differences in economic performance, and divergences in political-economic policy patterns and behavior between Latvia and Belarus. Additionally, any relevant policy observations given by knowledgeable Latvian and Belarusian elites during interviews is also relevant.

In regards to Latvia, chapter 3 will show that the comprehensive changes that have been implemented in all sectors of the Latvian economy serves to highlight how many aspects of the policy reforms are interconnected and complimentary to one another

in promoting the overall process of transformation, since the exclusion of one area of reform could have derailed or undermined the policy goals of other reform initiatives in other areas. Additionally, in regards to Belarus, chapter 3 will show that while lacking in reform, Belarusian policies have followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to its political-economic affairs, where the state controls almost all the economy, and reforms have been largely non-existent. This is important to reveal the serious issues with just how out of step conventional wisdom was with what is actually happening on ground in Belarus.

CHAPTER 3: DIVERGENT PATTERNS OF POLITICAL-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

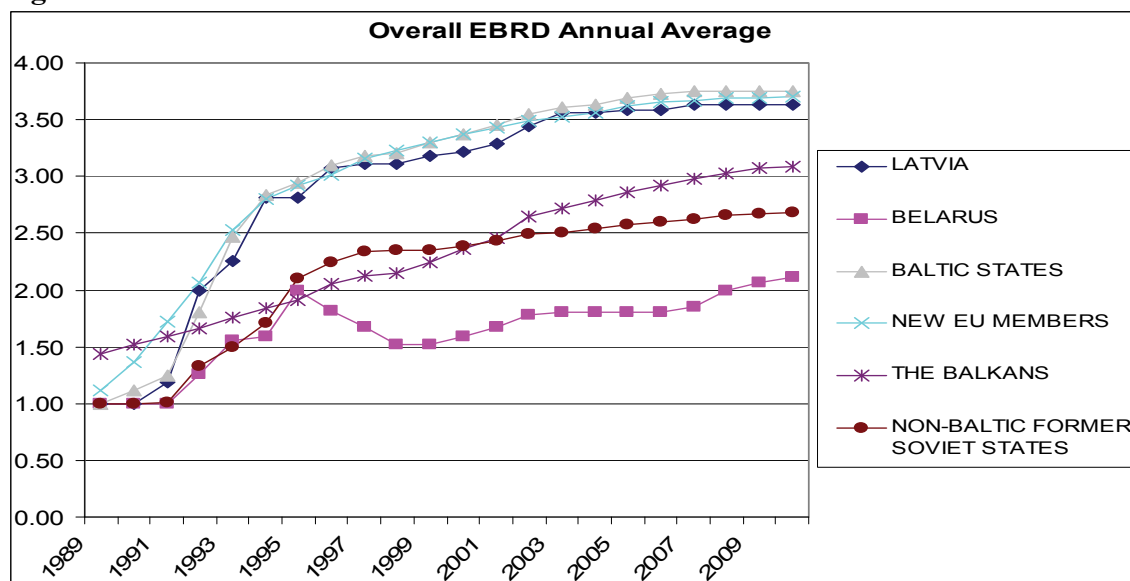
Since 1991, there has been wide divergence in the political-economic policy practices between Latvia and Belarus. At the outset of regaining independence, Latvia made comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe. In doing so, Latvia went through disengagement with the rest of the Soviet Union, as Latvia's economy was completely linked to the all-Union system. In terms of monetary policy, Latvia removed itself from the Soviet ruble-zone, and adopted its own currency, the Latvian lats, and also implemented other key reforms, which included reestablishing a strong independent central bank, and running strict anti-inflationary monetarist policies of having tight control over the money supply, in order to promote currency and price stability. Also, the commercial banking sector was privatized and subject to extensive liberalization. Other areas included extensive structural reforms, with an emphasis placed on the restoration of private property for land and real-estate, the rapid privatization of small and medium enterprises, as well as the privatization of large-scale enterprises. Establishing adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property rights was also given priority. Additionally markets and competition were emphasized, via deregulation, removing price controls, cutting government subsidies to inefficient industries, and lowering taxes. At the international level, Latvia promoted greater amounts of FDI, and removed barriers in order to liberalize trade. The all-encompassing and comprehensive nature of these reforms can be seen in that such reforms were intricately connected in facilitating Latvia's transformation into a liberal-democratic-capitalist economy, and return to the West.

Conversely, Belarus has taken a completely divergent path from that of Latvia. Overall, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to its political-economic affairs, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian, where the state controls almost all the economy, and reforms have been largely non-existent. In terms of monetary policy, the central bank in Belarus has been repeatedly subject to intense political interference, where political authorities placed far less emphasis on anti-inflationary monetarist policies, such as limiting the supply of money, which has resulted in problems of higher inflation and far-

less currency stability relative to Latvia. Also, a liberalized private commercial banking sector is non-existent, as banks are largely owned and controlled by the state. Structural reforms have also largely been absent, which can be seen with the continued extensive state control over agricultural land and real-estate, and the general lack of privatization of small, medium and large-scale enterprises. Even where some small amounts of privatization have occurred, establishing adequate rule of law to protect individual property rights has largely been absent. Additionally, markets and competition are not prioritized, and the state continues to play a strong role in most political-economic matters, in the form of maintaining extensive regulations, price controls, subsidization of industry, high taxes, and arbitrary decisions that flout rule of law. Indeed, such policy measures have been important in inhibiting the growth of FDI in Belarus. Finally, at the international level, Belarus has taken an anti-liberal approach, as Belarusian authorities continue to uphold significant barriers to trade and FDI.

Overall, such large divergent rates of political-economic transformation between Latvia and Belarus are evident when one examines the annual average of transformation scores given by the EBRD (see Figure 3.1), the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal's annual average ranking economic freedom (see Figure 3.2), and Freedom House's annual average ranking of overall democratic freedom scores (see Figure 3.3).

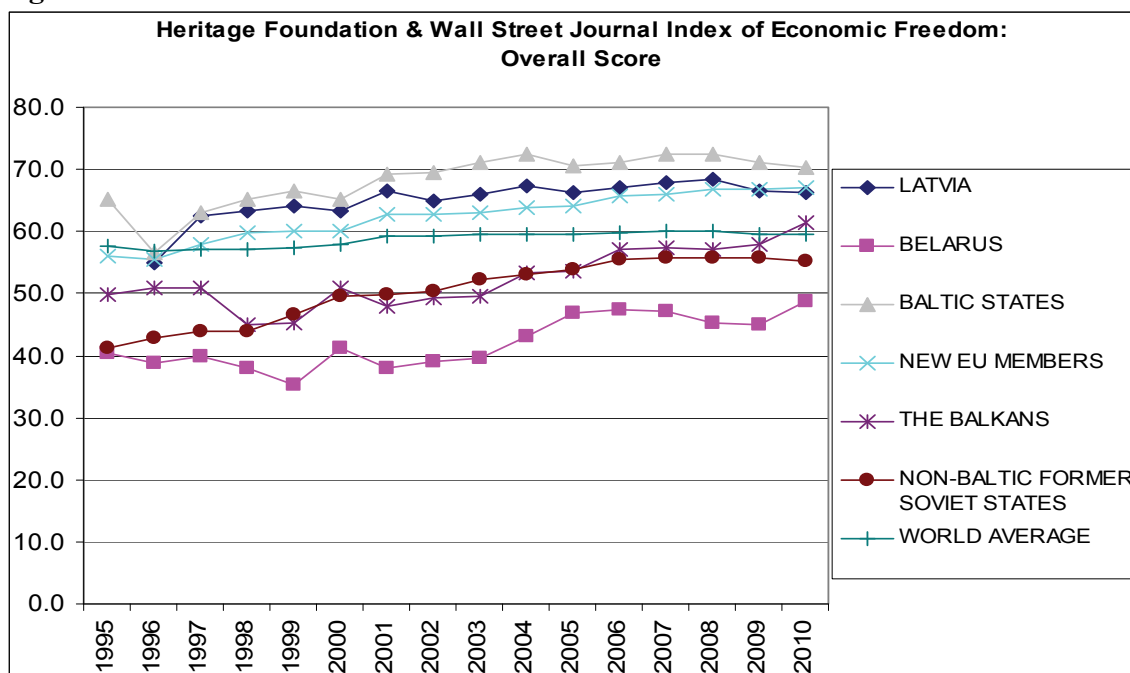
Figure 3.1



Scores: Transition Indicator Ratings, range from 1 (least progress) to 4.33 (Most Progress).

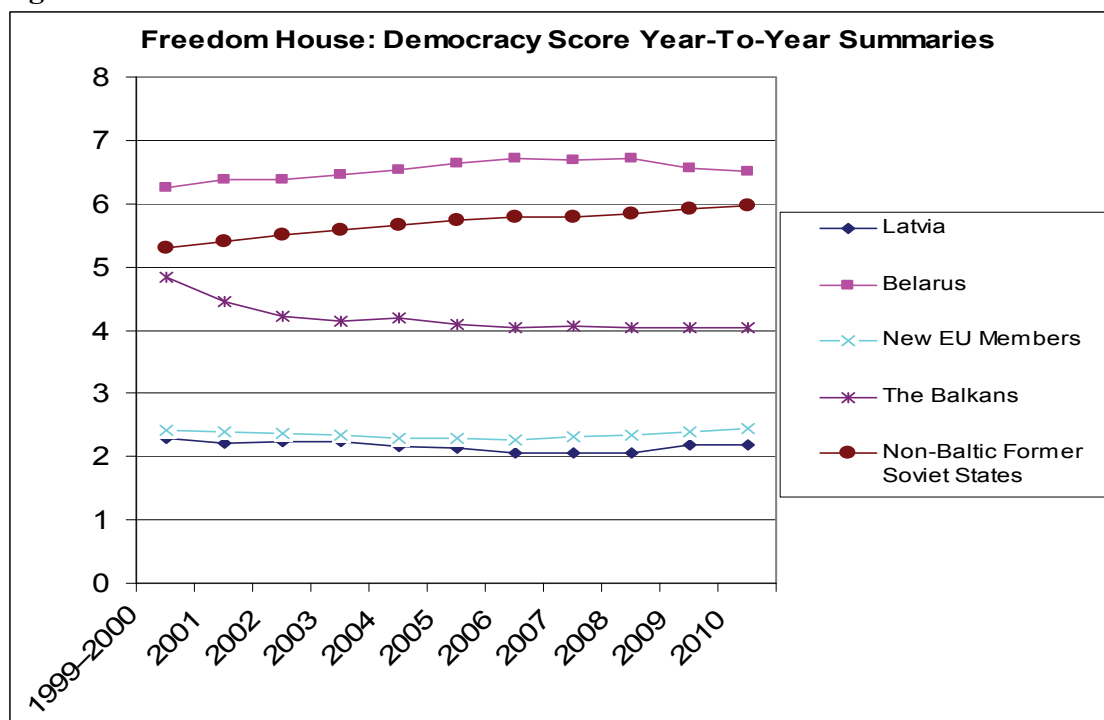
Source: (EBRD 2010a).

Figure 3.2



Scores: Free 100-80; Mostly free 79.9-70; Moderately free 69.9-60; Mostly un-free; 59.9-50; Un-free 49-0.
 Source: (Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal 2010).

Figure 3.3



Scores: Consolidated democracy (1.00–2.99); Semi-consolidated democracy (3.00–3.99); Transitional government or hybrid regime (4.00–4.99); Semi-consolidated authoritarian regime (5.00–5.99); Consolidated authoritarian regimes (6.00–7.00).

Source(s): (Freedom House 2005; Freedom House 2008; Freedom House 2010).

Monetary Policy

Latvia

From the outset of regaining independence, Latvian authorities have consistently made comprehensive reforms to liberalize their monetary policies. One of the first key policy steps initiated by Latvia was to implement the legal provisions to re-establish the institutional foundations of an independent central bank. This process began almost immediately, when on September 3, 1991 that Bank of Latvia was officially re-created as the central bank with the ability to issue currency. This was followed less than a year after regaining independence by additional legal mechanisms designed to strengthen the institutional autonomy and independence of the Bank of Latvia from political interference, namely through the *Law “On the Bank of Latvia”* (1992), which was passed on May 19, 1992.¹ In terms of key influences on the legal design of the central bank, it was mentioned by knowledgeable elites that the re-establishment of the Bank of Latvia came with advice from influential Latvian émigrés in the United States, such as Georgetown Economics Professor George (Juris) Vīksniņš whose advisory role helped “create a very independent central bank, one that looks very much like the European Central Bank.”² In addition to mentioning the role of Latvian émigrés, like Vīksniņš, several Latvian elites also noted that a great deal of institutional inspiration came from the model of the German Bundesbank, which resulted in the *Law “On the Bank of Latvia”* looking similar and even stronger than the Bundesbank Law, and was crucial in making the Bank of Latvia extremely independent.³

As a result of these legislative acts, the Bank of Latvia enjoys a very high degree of independence from the government, and is free from potentially harmful political interference in the realm of monetary policy. In particular, legal restrictions in the *Law*

¹ Law “On the Bank of Latvia.” (1992). Latvijas Banka [Bank of Latvia]. Riga, Latvia. <http://www.bank.lv/en/about-the-bank-of-latvia/law-on-the-bank-of-latvia>.

² Here it should be noted that Bank of Latvia’s first Governor, Einars Repše, and his successor Ilmārs Rimševičs both studied under Professor Vīksniņš. Mentioned by a Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). See also, Vīksniņš who mentions the important roles played not only by himself, but also by other Latvian-American economists, such as Juris Neimanis, Gundars Kings, Uldis Klauss, and Latvian-Canadian Bruno Rebess. Vīksniņš, George J. (2008). “The Georgetown University Syndrome and Latvian Economic Reforms.” Ch. 8. In *Latvia and the USA: From Captive Nation to Strategic Partner*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 110-111.

³ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

“*On the Bank of Latvia*” (1992) prohibit the Bank of Latvia from printing money and lending to the government to finance government debt. In this regard, the Bank of Latvia enjoys significant independence from the government and has stood firm in resisting any calls to print money or buy government debt. Indeed, this has remained “rule number one” in monetary policy, as several knowledgeable Latvian elites’ noted.⁴ Overall, in the monetary policy realm, the Bank of Latvia “is one of the most independent central banks in the world, and it is very hard...to force the Bank of Latvia to do something, which they might not want to.”⁵

With such strong institutional independence and exclusive control over monetary policy, this resulted in the Bank of Latvia becoming a major player in the transformation process. As one Latvian Economist pointed out, the Bank of Latvia “became an important force for the economy...and has been very powerful in setting goals that are very much in the mould of Western economics.”⁶ Indeed, the Bank of Latvia has consistently sought to implement monetary policies similar to those found within the Economic and Monetary Union of the EU. This occurred right from the beginning, where the Bank of Latvia has consistently been aiming for low inflation, fixing the exchange rate, and later on in aiming for *Euro* adoption. Here, it should be noted that Latvia largely opted to implement these comprehensive monetary reforms long before the states of the EU had warmed to the prospect of Latvia gaining membership. As one Latvian Senior Economist pointed

⁴ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

⁵ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by several other elites, in addition to those noted in footnote no. 4. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). The Bank of Latvia’s independence was lauded regularly by the EU and other bodies. European Commission. (1999). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress Towards Accession.” Brussels: European Commission. October 13. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/1999/latvia_en.pdf, p. 37; European Commission. (2000). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress Towards Accession.” Brussels: European Commission. November 8. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2000/lv_en.pdf, p. 59; European Commission. (2001). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress Towards Accession.” Brussels: European Commission. November 11. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2001/lv_en.pdf, p. 68; European Commission. (2002). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress Towards Accession.” Brussels: European Commission. October 9. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2002/lv_en.pdf, p. 79-80; OECD. (2000). “The Baltic States: A Regional Assessment: 1999-2000.” OECD Economic Surveys. February. OECD., p. 58.

⁶ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

out, “the EU was not as welcoming as the Latvians had hoped for...and they [the Latvians] were pressing harder than the EU was trying to pull them.”⁷

Overall, the overriding objective of the Bank of Latvia since being re-created has been to provide stable prices.⁸ Here, the Bank of Latvia has consistently followed strict anti-inflationary monetarist policies of maintaining a stable currency and exchange rate, and keeping tight control of the money supply. In regards to managing currency stability, the first crucial steps taken by the newly recreated Bank of Latvia was removing Latvia from the old Soviet ruble-zone, and the eventual reintroduction of the Latvian lats. This had a highly symbolic value in sending the message that Latvia was actively seeking to break away from Russia’s political-economic orbit. This is because national currency is “a powerful source of revenue to underwrite public expenditure...a possible instrument to manage macroeconomic performance...and a practical means to insulate the nation from foreign influence or constraint.”⁹ As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, it should be mentioned that in the early stages, Latvia faced resistance to its monetary reforms from many of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers of the large Soviet-era state-owned enterprises, whom were opposed to an independent Latvian currency, and the policy of keeping a tight control on the money supply.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Bank of Latvia continued with its policies of reintroducing the Latvian lats and tackling inflation.

The withdrawal from the old Soviet ruble-zone and reintroduction of the lats involved a two-step process, which first consisted in the introduction of an interim currency, the Latvian ruble on May 7, 1992. A key reason given for opting for the interim

⁷ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). Similar observations were given by a Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

⁸ The key objective of price stability was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). See also, Repše, Einars. (2000). “Latvia: Focus on Country Development.” *Finance and Development*, 37, 3: 17-19., p. 17; OECD. (2000). “The Baltic States.” p. 58; Vīksniņš (2008). “The Georgetown University Syndrome.” p. 115.

⁹ Cohen, B. J. (1998). *The Geography of Money*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 2-6. See also, Girmius. (1993). “Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States.” p. 37; Slay. (1992). “Introducing National Currencies.” p. 40; Repše. (2000). “Latvia.” p. 17.

¹⁰ See for example, quote from Uldis Osis, found in Vīksniņš. (2008). “The Georgetown University Syndrome.” p. 116. The “initial antagonism of various groups,” is also hinted at by Repše. (2000). “Latvia.” p. 17. See also, Bungš. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia.” p. 36. This was also mentioned by one Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

Latvian ruble before moving to the Latvian lats resulted from the goal to foster long-term monetary stability. Also, due to the high inflation that was occurring in the first year of independence, one Latvian elite noted that “it was dangerous to go directly from the Soviet ruble to lats, because the high inflation might affect the trustability of the new currency.”¹¹ While this two step approach at the time might have appeared more cautious and conservative than the one-step process that neighboring Estonia took in moving to the Estonian kroon, Latvia was one of the leading post-Soviet republics to remove itself from the Soviet ruble-zone, coming only second to Estonia. Moreover, it should be noted that the Bank of Latvia defied the advice of liberal minds within international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank that were advising against Latvia breaking away from the Soviet ruble-zone and establishing its own national currency.¹²

In the immediate period after May 7, 1992, the Latvian ruble was allowed to be used along with the Soviet ruble, which initially had an equal exchange value of 1:1. Overall, many of the policies in place took a liberal approach, in that there were few restrictions placed on the market for private individuals and companies to make their business in the hard currency of the Latvian ruble, except that it was the only legal tender allowed in salaries and tax payments, and had to be accepted as hard-currency by all stores as payment for goods by customers.¹³ Other than this, currency markets were open and people were allowed to decide freely which currency they would use when purchasing goods. However, in its focus on creating currency stability, the Bank of Latvia strictly controlled the emission of the Latvia ruble, compared to the old Soviet ruble which still had high levels in circulation. Thus, in a very short time the Latvian ruble began to gradually appreciate in value over the Soviet ruble, so that by July 20, 1992, the Latvian ruble was declared to be the only legal currency, which officially removed Latvia from the old Soviet ruble-zone. Following the naming of the Latvian ruble as the sole legal currency, the Bank of Latvia, under its Governor, Einars Repše, continued with its

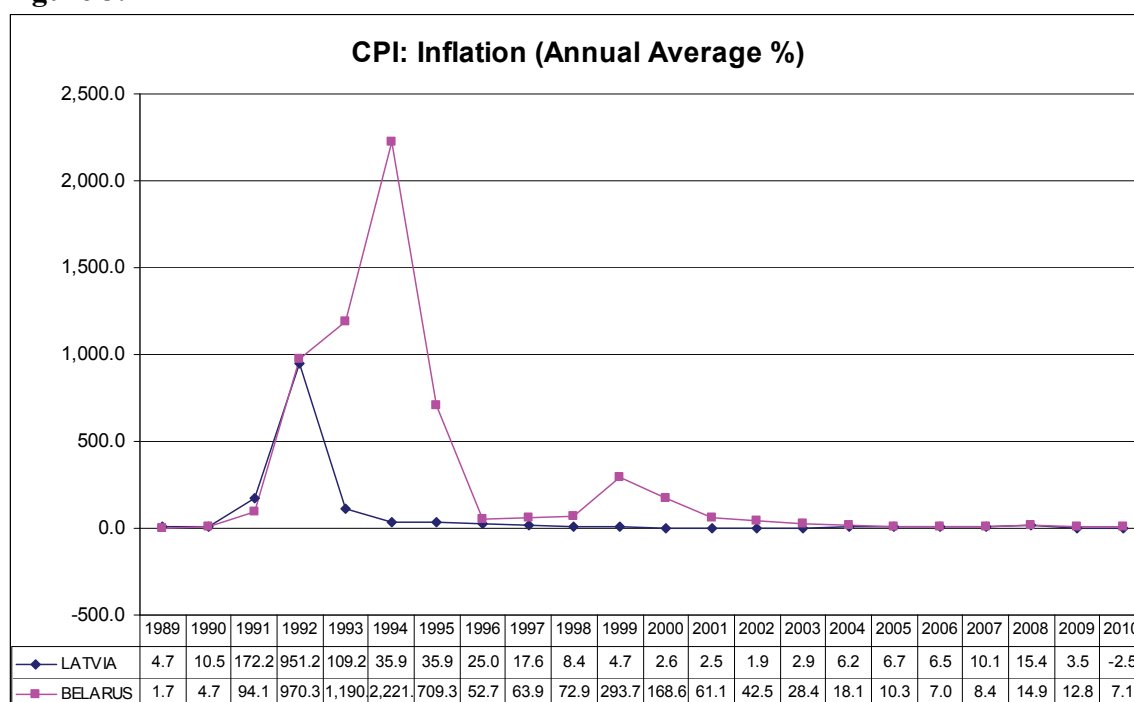
¹¹ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

¹² This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). See also, Hansson and Sachs. (1992). “Crowning the Estonian Kroon”; Slay. (1992). “Introducing National Currencies”; Bungs. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia.,” p. 34; Girnius. (1993). “Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States”; Economist. (1993). “Baltic States.”

¹³ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). See also Bungs. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia.,” p. 35; Girnius. (1993). “Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States.,” p. 37.

program of strictly limiting the output of Latvian rubles, and the value of the interim currency continued to appreciate, rising from a value of 170 to the U.S. dollar in 1992, and increasing to 130-120 to the U.S. dollar by mid-1993, when the lats was formally introduced.¹⁴ Additionally, the advent of the Latvian ruble, and the Bank of Latvia's simultaneous policy of restricting the output of money supply, also served to help tackle a pressing concern of the time, namely the triple digit inflation that began to steadily decline from an annual average rate of 951.2% in 1992 to 109.2% in 1993, and 35.9% by 1994 (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4



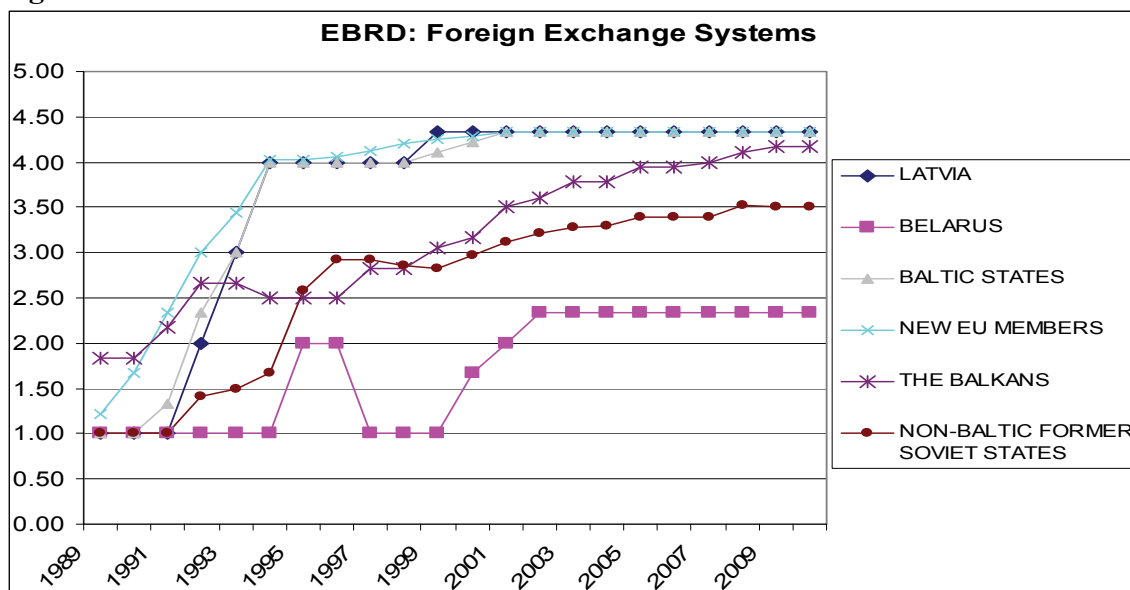
Source: (EBRD 2010b).

Less than a year after the Latvian ruble was introduced, the Latvian lats, starting with the 5-lats note, was formally released for public circulation on March 5, 1993, where the value of one lats was set at 200 Latvian rubles. From this date onwards, it took only around three more months to fully changeover from Latvian rubles to Latvian lats, which

¹⁴ The above information was gathered from observations given by several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). See also, Girmius. (1993). "Establishing Currencies in the Baltic States.," p. 37. It should be noted that simultaneously, the Russian ruble also decreased in value to around 20% of the value of the Latvian ruble. Bungis. (1993c). "The Lats Returns to Latvia.," p. 37.

occurred without problems during Latvia's national holidays from June 23-24, 1993.¹⁵ Initially the Bank of Latvia allowed for an open floating exchange regime which was regulated by the market. However, in adherence with its policy of ensuring exchange rate stability, the Bank of Latvia dropped this open exchange regime by mid-February 1994, and has since been operating on a fixed exchange regime, first pegging the lats to the IMF's Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket of currencies until 2004, after which the lats was pegged to the *Euro*. While the exchange rate has remained fixed by the Bank of Latvia since February 1994, the lats has always remained fully convertible for individuals, and there has also been no restrictions limiting current account and capital account transactions.¹⁶ Such liberalization of foreign exchange convertibility can be seen when examining EBRD rankings of transition toward removing barriers on foreign exchange, which places Latvia at the forefront of liberalization, where full foreign exchange convertibility was achieved as early as 1994 (see Figure 3.5 below).

Figure 3.5



Scores: (1) Very limited legitimate access to foreign exchange; (2) Almost full current account convertibility in principle, but with foreign exchange regime that is not fully transparent (possibly with

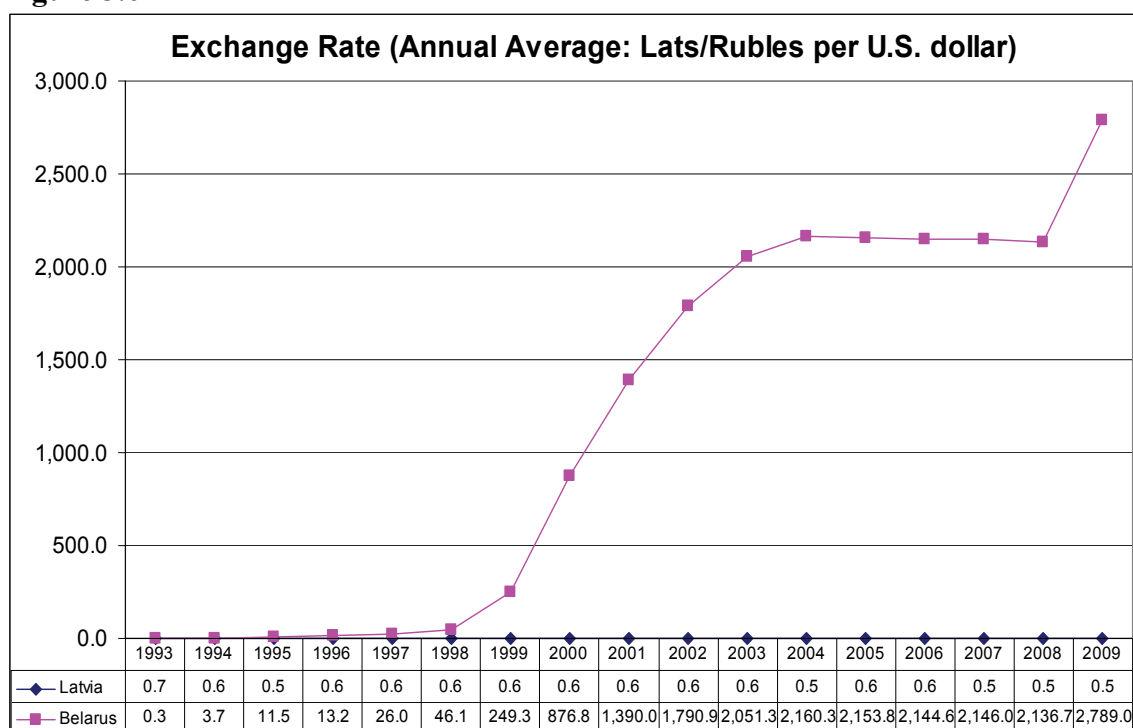
¹⁵ This point about the relatively speedy and flawless introduction of the lats was mentioned by several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

¹⁶ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Repše. (2000). "Latvia: Focus on Country Development.," p. 17; International Monetary Fund. (1994). *Latvia*. IMF Economic Reviews, no. 10. Washington: IMF., p. 21.

multiple exchange rates); (3) Almost full current account convertibility; (4) Full and current account convertibility; (4+) Standards and performance norms of advanced industrial economies.
Source: (EBRD 2010a).

Since the introduction of the pegged exchange rate in 1994, the Bank of Latvia has successfully kept the exchange of the lats stable, even during the severe economic downturn in Latvia during 2008-2009. In order to back-up the value of the lats, which is fully convertible, the Bank of Latvia has pursued a diligent policy of maintaining strong foreign currency reserves, so that all money in circulation was covered by the Bank of Latvia's foreign assets.¹⁷ Overall, Latvia has achieved far greater success in achieving exchange rate stability in the period since 1991, compared to monetary developments in neighboring Belarus (see Figure 3.6 below).

Figure 3.6



Source: (EBRD 2010b).

¹⁷ Described by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). See also, Repše. (2000). "Latvia.," p. 18. Additionally, the Bank of Latvia was assisted also with the repatriation of gold reserves from interwar Latvia, in the range of over \$100 million that was safely stored following the Soviet invasion in banks in Switzerland and other Western states. Bungš. (1993c). "The Lats Returns to Latvia.," p. 37. In terms of weight in gold, the figure was given that the 10.6 tonnes of gold deposited in Western banks before 1940, was returned to Latvia after 1991. Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 123.

A key reason for the Bank of Latvia's success in enhancing the credibility of the lats and providing for long term exchange rate and monetary stability, resulted from the success of the Bank of Latvia in sticking to its primary objective, namely in tackling inflation and ensuring price stability. Central to its success are the original legal provisions found in the *Law "On the Bank of Latvia"* (1992), establishing the strong independence of the Bank of Latvia, which has freed it from potentially harmful political interference. In doing so, the Bank of Latvia has enjoyed significant independence from the government and has firmly resisted any calls to print money or buy government debt. Obviously this would also implicitly work to assist other important areas of political-economic transformation, such as structural reforms, by giving incentives to cut government subsidies to inefficient industries. Overall, this high degree of independence has been lauded by both Latvian elites and authorities of international organizations.¹⁸

The political freedom that has been granted to central bank authorities, has allowed the Bank of Latvia to be highly successful in running tight monetary policies to combat inflation. The prime reason for instituting these policies was to bring inflation under control, which was extremely high and potentially destabilizing, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Overall, the Bank of Latvia was successful in reducing inflation and promoting price stability early on in the transition period. While inflation initially rose to 951% in 1992, it has decreased steadily in the years since, reaching single digit levels by 1998, and standing at -2.5% in 2010 (see Figure 3.4 above). This stands in contrast to Belarus, which has tended to have more problems in reducing overall inflation in the period since 1991.

¹⁸ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); For international organizations, see European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress Towards Accession.," p. 37; European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 59; European Commission. (2001). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 68; European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 79-80; OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States.," p. 58.

Belarus

Since 1991, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior, where the Belarusian government controls virtually all aspects of the political-economy, and monetary reform has been virtually non-existent. Consequently, Belarusian monetary policy has continued to remain stuck in Soviet-era methods, which tend to be illiberal, authoritarian, arbitrary, and generally lacking in respect of the rule of law. The absence of significant monetary reform has been characteristic of the entire political-economic situation where reform has been non-existent and the Belarusian economy largely resembles the command-type political-economy characteristic of Soviet times.¹⁹ These command and control methods of state centralization of the Belarusian political-economy have been increasingly strengthened since 1994, under President Lukashenko. Moreover, as reported by the IMF, Belarus has repeatedly “pursued a strategy based on re-establishing centralized state control over the economy, and restoring some of the requisite economic institutions,” in what has been described as a “socially-oriented market economy model.”²⁰ While their might be a social-orientation to this model, however, the Belarusian political-economy hardly fits the description of being called a ‘market.’ This is indicated where Belarus regularly scores at the bottom of the transition ratings from the EBRD, Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal, and Freedom House, in regards to overall political-economic transformation as shown in Figures 3.1-3.3 above).

In terms of monetary policy, Belarus’s central bank, the National Bank of Belarus has been repeatedly subject to intense political interference, where political authorities have placed far less emphasis on anti-inflationary monetarist policies, such as limiting the supply of money, which has resulted in problems of higher inflation and far-less currency stability relative to Latvia (see Figure 3.4 above). While the National Bank of Belarus, on paper, was supposed to be independent, as stated in the *Belarus Central Bank Act* of 1994, these rules have been largely disregarded and subsequently changed, as the central

¹⁹ Some have even described this highly centralized political-economic environment as being neo-Soviet. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also, Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 39.

²⁰ IMF. (2005a). *Republic of Belarus: Selected Issues*. IMF Country Report no. 5/217. June. Washington: IMF., p. 2, 5.

bank has been repeatedly subject to extensive political interference and remained effectively subservient to the President. Consequently, the National Bank of Belarus has been subject to increasing political interference in the form of authoritarian decrees from the Belarusian government issued by President Lukashenko. In this regard, the president has final say on the policies of the central bank, because Lukashenko can replace the head of the National Bank of Belarus at his discretion, particularly if the head is not in concert with the government's official policy.²¹ Here it should be noted that any rudimentary steps to increase the operational independence of the National Bank of Belarus had only begun to be discussed and put into the preliminary stages by 2009/2010, and little has progressed beyond the talking stage since.²²

Immediately following 1991, the Belarusian government sought to remain in the former Soviet ruble-zone. When such an option became increasingly untenable, Belarus introduced the Belarusian ruble in May 1992, which acted as type of supplement to the Soviet ruble. However, such a step was not as decisive a move as Latvia's introduction of the Latvian ruble and break with the Soviet ruble-zone in 1992. This is because it took Belarusian authorities two years longer to completely break from the former Soviet ruble-zone, which the National Bank of Belarus did by declaring the Belarusian ruble the sole legal currency of Belarus in May 1994. Under increasing political directives, the National Bank of Belarus has worked to establish tight currency controls in the Belarusian economy. Overall, there are tight controls on converting and exchanging currency relative to Latvia, which has an extensively liberal foreign exchange regime (see Figure 3.5 above). Moreover, under the guidance of Presidential decrees, the National Bank of Belarus has established official exchange rates for the Belarusian ruble that are tied to the Russian ruble. However, the National Bank of Belarus has had far greater difficulty in

²¹ See for example, IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus: Recent Economic Developments*. IMF Staff Country Report No. 98/108. October. Washington: IMF., p. 41; Freedom House. (2001). *Nations in Transit, 1999-2000: Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States*. London. Transaction Publishers., p. 131. Similar sentiments were also mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

²² Even then, these preliminary steps only occurred following a Presidential decree. IMF. (2010b). *Republic of Belarus: Third Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement—Staff Report; Staff Statement; Press Release on the Executive Board Discussion; Statement by the Executive Director*. IMF Country Report No. 10/31. February. Washington: IMF., p. 14, 38-39; IMF. (2010c). *Republic of Belarus: Fourth Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement*. IMF Country Report No. 10/89. April. Washington: IMF., p. 36, 37, 42.

maintaining stable currency exchange rates, when compared to the consistency found in Latvia (see Figure 3.6 above).

Since the National Bank of Belarus lacks the political independence that its counterpart in Latvia enjoys, Belarusian central bank authorities have been unable to resist calls to print money to cover government spending, or from buying government debt. As will be discussed in the section detailing structural reforms, large-scale privatizations have remained non-existent in Belarus, and the Belarusian government continues to use monetary policy in an expansionary way to help fund government fiscal spending, and also to direct credit subsidies to the many state-owned Soviet-era heavy industries and collective farms. In doing so, the Belarusian government pays for this spending largely by directing the National Bank of Belarus to run an expansionary credit policy, where it essentially prints new money to make up for government cash short-falls. In general, the expansionary credit policy of the National Bank of Belarus was implemented following authoritarian decrees issued under the directive of President Lukashenko.²³ Overall, this highlights the lack of central bank independence from political interference, because the National Bank of Belarus is powerless to stop the government's ability to borrow and its preference to pay for fiscal spending by using monetary policy in an expansionary way.

In maintaining such command-style monetary policies that are lax on keeping a tight control over the money-supply, this has inhibited efforts to reform other areas of the Belarusian political-economy. Moreover, these lax monetary policies of the National Bank of Belarus have also contributed to higher rates of inflation in Belarus,²⁴ relative to Latvia which had stringent monetary policies. As Figure 3.4 illustrates, Belarus experienced severe hyper-inflation from 1993 to 1995, and also from 1999 to 2000, and was not able to move into the single digits of inflation until 2006, which stands in

²³ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 32; Freedom House. (2001). *Nations in Transit, 1999-2000.*, p. 130-131; Economist Intelligence Unit. (2000). *EIU Country Report: Belarus, Moldova* (August): p. 17. This was also mentioned by one knowledgeable Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). To illustrate the extent of Presidential decrees in regards to issuing expansionary credits, the IMF reported that in the late 1990s these included: "(1) No. 346, September 2, 1996; (2) No. 358, September 10, 1996; (3) No. 483, November 21, 1996; (4) No. 555, December 17, 1996; (5) No. 148, November 2, 1997; (6) No. 52, February 4, 1998; (7) No. 95, March 3, 1998; (8) No. 96, March 3, 1998; (9) No. 98, March 3, 1998; (10) No. 169, March 31, 1998; and (11) No. 191, March 31, 1998." IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 32, 36, no. 25.

²⁴ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 32; Freedom House. (2001). *Nations in Transit.*, p. 112.

contrast to the Bank of Latvia's success in tackling inflation in Latvia, and bringing it down to single digit levels by 1998.

In contrast to Latvia's policy goal of eventually adopting the *Euro*, Belarus has also taken rudimentary steps to achieve monetary integration with Russia. This first began before 1994 under Prime Minister Viacheslau Kebich, and was continued since then under President Lukashenko. Belarus and Russia have both signed repeated agreements on eventual monetary integration, the latest signed in 2000, which if fully implemented would likely see Belarusian monetary policy decision making ability surrendered to Moscow. In terms of policy goals, it will be discussed in chapter 7 that Lukashenko and other Belarusian elite initially viewed such cooperation as a means to maintain the preferred neo-soviet, collectivist command style political-economic practices and policies without having to reform.²⁵

Although the governments of Belarus and Russia have signed multiple agreements on eventual monetary union, none of these have yet come to fruition. A large reason for this is that the Belarusian government was unwilling to surrender the powers of monetary control over to Moscow, since this would end Minsk's powers of seignorage through its control of the National Bank of Belarus. To illustrate, Moscow was already demanding by 2000 "that Belarus reform its financial system and monetary policy, reduce the budget deficit and inflation and stabilize the economy."²⁶ This would have meant that the Belarusian government would have to give up significant leverage in regards to sovereignty over monetary policy, and thus could no longer use the powers of monetary expansion to fuel its high budgetary expenditures, and preference for issuing credits to fund the social-oriented economy and to subsidize Soviet-era enterprises. As a result, the Belarusian government has chosen to opt for preserving its sovereignty, and continues to maintain its independence in regards to monetary policy. Overall, monetary integration between Belarus and Russia has stalled and increasingly appears less and less likely. Moreover, as will be discussed in chapter 7, political-economic cooperation with

²⁵ As pointed out in *The Economist*, Belarus appeared "to look on economic integration with Russia as a substitute for reform." *Economist*. (1995). "In the Slav Shadowlands." *The Economist*, May 20, 47-49., p. 47. The ideological motivations for this will be further discussed in chapter 7.

²⁶ Nesvetailova, Anastasia. (2003). "Russia and Belarus: The Quest for the Union; Or who will pay for Belarus's Path to Recovery." In *Contemporary Belarus: Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, eds. Elena A. Korosteleva, Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. London: RoutledgeCurzon., p. 161.

Russia has been moving at an exceedingly slow pace since 2000, and more often than not, President Lukashenko has extracted significant gains from Moscow without conceding much to Moscow in return, where Lukashenko can be increasingly seen as a strong defender of Belarusian sovereignty.²⁷ As will be shown in chapter 7, the ideological motives behind Belarus's reluctance to transition to monetary integration with Russia was driven by worldviews favouring authoritarian collectivism, rather than just a blind attachment to Russia.

Banking Sector Liberalization

Latvia

The liberalization of the commercial banking sector in Latvia has occurred steadily from 1993/1994 onwards, when the Bank of Latvia was limited to only central bank functions and removed from any commercial activities when its branches were privatized. These branches of the Bank of Latvia at that time were privatized either by establishing a new independent private bank, or these branches were sold to existing commercial banks, usually to foreign buyers. As a result, state ownership of assets in the ten largest commercial banks decreased to 32% by 1996, which has continued to decrease so that by 1998, the vast majority of assets in the Latvian commercial banking sector were privately held, with state-owned assets in commercial banks further decreasing to a minimal 2%, while private foreign capital accounted for 68% of control of commercial banks.²⁸ Additionally, Latvia opted for very liberal provisions in regards to the establishment of new private commercial banks. For example, when it came to

²⁷ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also, Sahm. (1999). "Political Culture and National Symbols," p. 658; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe," p. 530; Drakokhrust and Furman. (2002). "Belarus and Russia," p. 239, 253; Silitski. (2003). "Explaining post-Communist Authoritarianism," p. 43; Silitski. (2006). "Still Soviet," p. 50; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus*, p. 93, 170; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations*, p. 284; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*, p. 118; Marples. (2004). "The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus," p. 40; Rontoyanni. (2005). "Belarus and the East," p. 132; Maksymiuk. (2008). "Commentary."

²⁸ OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States," p. 31. See also, European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress," p. 29; European Commission. (2001). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress," p. 34; European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress," p. 42. This foreign control of commercial banks has remained steady, with primary foreign owners coming from parent banks in Sweden, Germany, and Finland. IMF. (2006). *Republic of Latvia: Selected Issues*. IMF Country Report No. 06/354. October. Washington: IMF., p. 56.

establishing a new private bank at that time, an investor only required minimal capital backing in order to receive a banking license, which helped to rapidly increase the number of commercial banks in Latvia up to sixty-three.²⁹ This number decreased by 2008, where there were twenty banks in the Latvian banking sector, of which half were foreign owned subsidiaries, which made up 73% of total commercial banking assets.³⁰

From the very beginning, Latvia also sought to follow EU regulations in the banking and credit institution area. Here it should be emphasized that these reforms of following EU regulations started ten years before Latvia would become a member of the EU.³¹ This success of Latvia in implementing a regime of liberalized banking regulations was regularly mentioned in the European Commission's reports on Latvia's progress towards accession, so that by 1998, it was already reported that Latvia's "banking supervision and prudential regulations are generally of a high quality."³² Moreover, by 2000, the European Commission positively reported that in regards to "financial services, alignment with the *acquis* in the *banking* sector has reached an advanced stage."³³ The supervision of the capitalization of private commercial banks in Latvia was also given positive appraisal, as a result of the capital adequacy ratio reaching 16% by 2000, which was well above the Law on Credit Institutions' requirement of 10%.³⁴ Furthermore, in 2001, liberalized regulatory supervision of the private commercial banking sector was further strengthened with the establishment of the Latvian Financial and Capital Market Commission as the key regulatory and oversight body.

²⁹ This information came from one knowledgeable Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). See also, OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States.," p. 35. These rules were later strengthened on January 1, 1994, when the minimum share of capital required to establish a new bank rose from 500,000 lats to 3 Million lats (5.4 million U.S.). Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 123.

³⁰ EBRD. (2008). *Transition Report 2008: Growth in Transition.* London: EBRD., p. 144.

³¹ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). The motivations and goals influencing these policies will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

³² European Commission. (1998). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress Towards Accession." Brussels: European Commission.

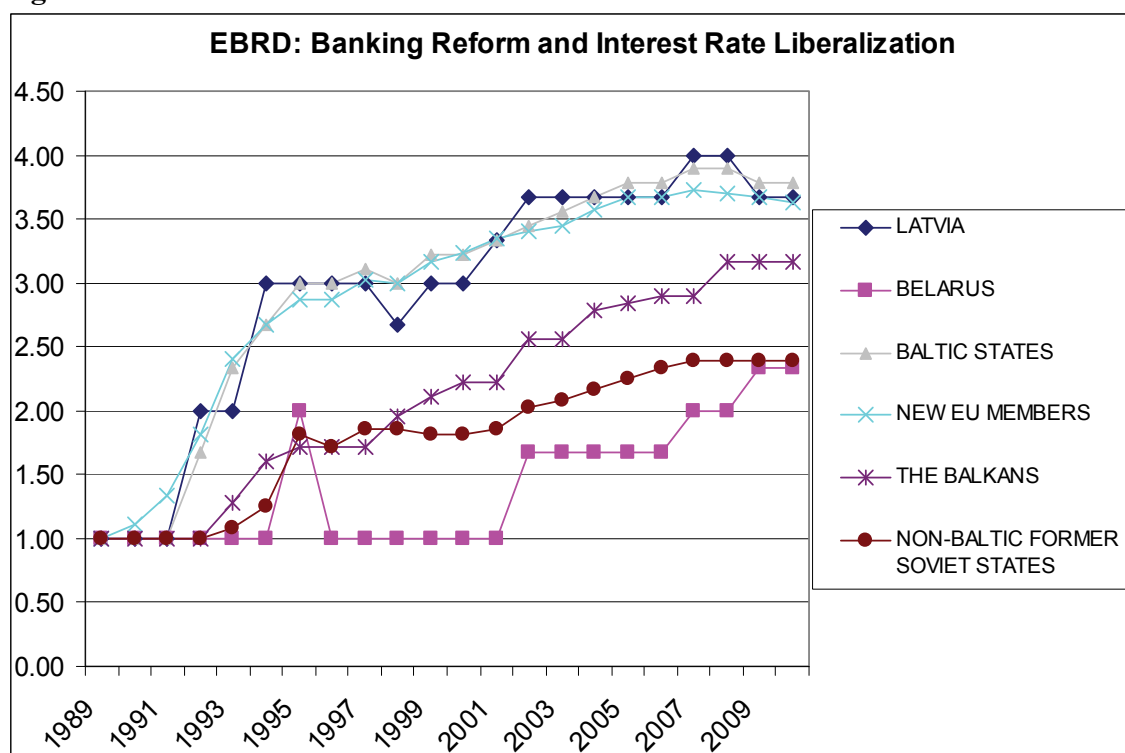
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/1998/latvia_en.pdf, p. 20, 42. See also, European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 25, 29; European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 31.

³³ European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 40. In 2001, it was further reported that Latvian Banking regulations were largely in line with those of the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and those of the EC. European Commission. (2001). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 46; European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 57. See also, IMF. (2006). *Republic of Latvia.*, p. 62, no. 47.

³⁴ European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 31.

In addition to establishing a liberalized regulatory regime for commercial banking sector, Latvia also took steps to liberalize interest rates, and make substantial reforms to securities markets and non-bank financial institutions. Overall, this strong performance of Latvia in liberalizing its commercial banking system, interest rates, and securities markets and non-bank financial sector has been acknowledge in the annual rankings of reform of the financial sector in reports by both the EBRD and the Heritage Foundation Wall-Street Journal (see Figures 3.7, 3.8, 3.9 below).

Figure 3.7



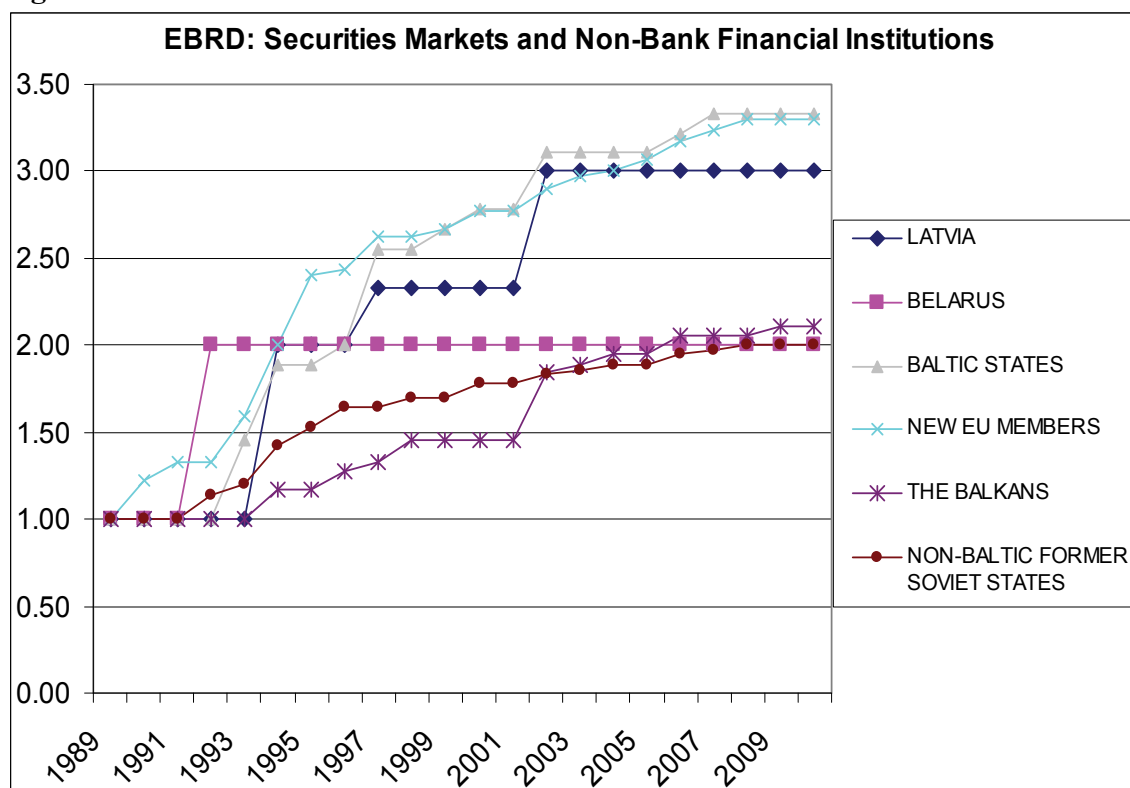
Scores: (1) Little progress beyond establishment of two-tier system; (2) Significant liberalization of interest rates and credit allocation, limited use of directed credit or interest rate ceilings; (3) Substantial progress in establishment of bank solvency and framework for prudential supervision and regulation; full interest rate liberalization with little preferential access to cheap refinancing; significant lending to private enterprises and presence of private banks; (4) Significant movement of banking laws and regulations towards BIS standards; well-functioning banking competition and effective prudential supervision; significant term lending to private enterprises; substantial financial deepening; (4+) Standards and performance norms of advanced industrial economies: full convergence of banking laws and regulations with BIS.

Source: (EBRD 2010a).

As Figure 3.7 illustrates, Latvia took steps early in the 1990s to implement significant banking reform and interest rate liberalization, and has been at the forefront of transition compared to Belarus and other post-Communist states. While reform moved

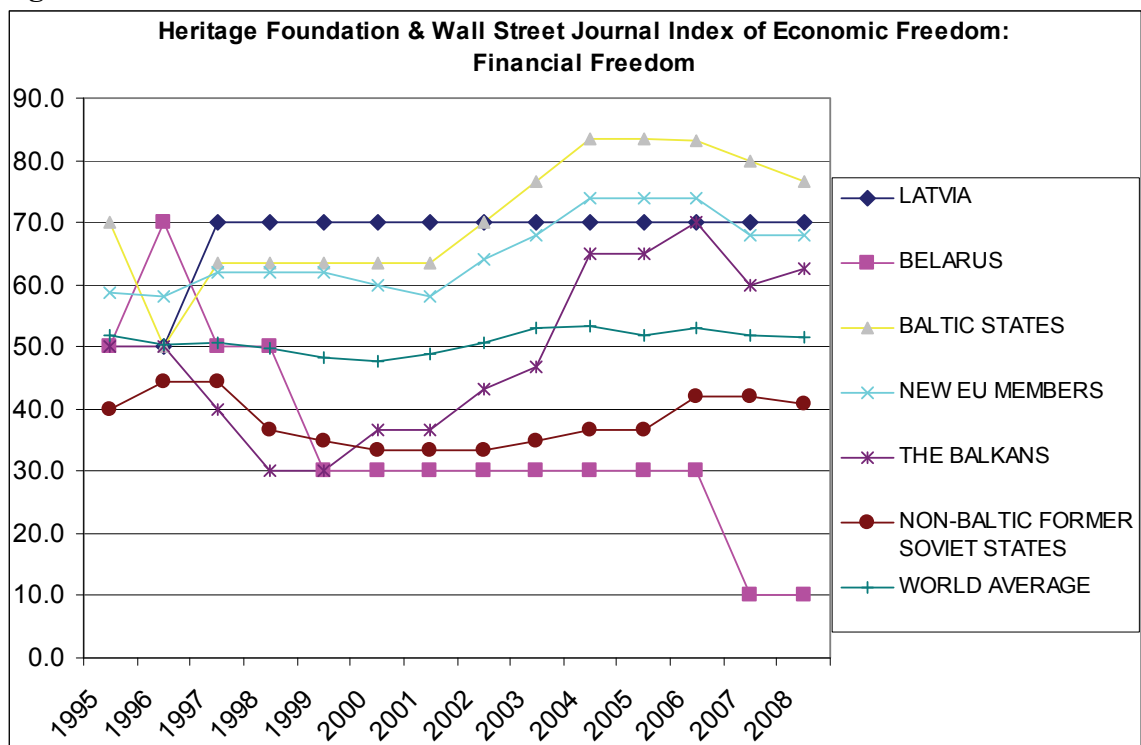
slower in the securities markets and non-bank financial sector, as Figure 3.8 points out, Latvia has made significant progress here and has remained close to rates of reform found amongst other post-Communist states that are now members of the EU, and well ahead of reform in Belarus. Finally, the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal's annual rankings of economic freedoms has also given high marks to the levels of financial freedom found in Latvia, which stands in contrast to Belarus's low rankings (see Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.8



Scores: (1) Little progress; (2) Formation of securities exchanges, market-makers and brokers; some trading in government paper and/or securities; rudimentary legal and regulatory framework for the issuance and trading of securities; (3) Substantial issuance of securities by private enterprises; establishment of independent share registries, secure clearance and settlement procedures, and some protection of minority shareholders; emergence of non-bank financial institutions (e.g. investment funds, private insurance and pension funds, leasing companies) and associated regulatory framework; (4) Securities laws and regulations approaching IOSCO standards; substantial market liquidity and capitalization; well-functioning non-bank financial institutions and effective regulation; (4+) Standards and performance norms of advanced industrial economies: full convergence of securities laws and regulations with IOSCO standards; fully developed non-bank intermediation.

Source: (EBRD 2010a).

Figure 3.9

Scores: (free 100-80; mostly free 79.9-70; moderately free 69.9-60; mostly un-free; 59.9-50; un-free 49-0).
Source: (Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal 2010).

The changes that have been implemented in the Latvian banking and financial sectors also serves to highlight how many aspects of the reforms are interconnected and complimentary to one another in promoting the overall process of transformation. For example, the liberalization of the regulatory regime for commercial banking, financial markets and interests rates, has also been attributed to assisting in the policy of promoting FDI. As will be discussed in the section below, the strength of Latvia's commercial banking sector has been important in attracting the confidence from investors located in other post-Soviet states where banking and financial reforms have been less robust.³⁵ Finally, the high rates of foreign ownership within the commercial banking sector, as noted above, also signifies that foreign banks have confidence in the liberal rules regulating the Latvian banking system.

³⁵ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). The ability of the reformed commercial banking sector and financial sector to attract FDI was also noted by the European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress," p. 91.

Belarus

As Figures 3.7 to 3.9 reveal, there has been very little liberalization of the commercial banking sector in Belarus. In contrast to Latvia, where the Bank of Latvia was removed from commercial bank activities and limited only to central bank functions, the National Bank of Belarus, under the directives of the Belarusian government, has retained effective control over the activities of most of the commercial banking sector. Overall, very little banking privatization has occurred, as the Belarusian banking sector has remained majority state owned right up until the present time. Thus, by 2005, the Belarusian state, via the National Bank of Belarus owned 80% of the assets in the banking sector, which included majority control over four of the six biggest banks, and minority asset control over the other two.³⁶ Moreover, not until 2008 did moves take place to sell minority assets in the two minority controlled banks. However, such reforms and decentralization are piecemeal, as the state continues to control the major banks that make up over 60% of the Belarusian banking system.³⁷

In addition to a lack of reform in not liberalizing the regulatory regime for commercial banking, Belarus has also moved relatively slower in liberalizing interest rates, as well as in making substantial reforms to securities markets and non-bank financial institutions. This lack of reform in these sectors has been acknowledge in the annual rankings of financial sector reforms in reports issued by both the EBRD and the Heritage Foundation Wall-Street Journal. As Figures 3.7 and 3.8 reveal, very little progress has been achieved in terms of liberalizing the regulatory regime for banking, interest rates and non-banking financial sectors. Moreover, in both EBRD rankings, Belarus lagged far behind the extensive transition found in Latvia and other post-Communist states. Additionally, the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal's annual rankings of economic freedoms has also given low marks to the levels of financial freedom found in Belarus (see Figure 3.9 above).

As a result of this domination by the state over the banking sector, vis-à-vis the National Bank of Belarus, this has allowed the Belarusian government to retain and wield extensive control over virtually all macro and microeconomic matters. As will be

³⁶ IMF. (2005a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 15.

³⁷ EBRD. (2008). *Transition Report 2008.*, p. 104. For more examples of continued state domination of the banking sector, see EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009: Transition in Crisis.* London: EBRD., p. 144.

discussed below in the section detailing structural reforms, large-scale privatizations have remained non-existent in Belarus, and the Belarusian government continues to use monetary policy in an expansionary way to help fund government fiscal spending and also to direct credit subsidies to the many state-owned industries and collective farms. The Belarusian government pays for this spending largely by directing the National Bank of Belarus and/or the state-controlled commercial banks to extend expansionary credits. In general, these expansionary credits issued by the National Bank of Belarus and the state-owned banks were implemented largely similar to the expansionary credit policies of Belarusian monetary policy mentioned above, which resulted from authoritarian decrees from the government issued under the directive of President Lukashenko. To illustrate, in 2005, the IMF estimated that these government directed credits and loans from banks, often at below market value, to various enterprises and projects favoured by Lukashenko, amounted to around 25% of the entire bank lending, which made up close to 3.4% of overall GDP.³⁸ Thus, the lack of changes to the Belarusian banking and financial sectors also serves to highlight how various policy sectors are interconnected and complementary, in that the continuation of command-style policies in the banking sector has helped facilitate strong state involvement in other political-economic sectors.

Structural Reform and Privatization

Latvia

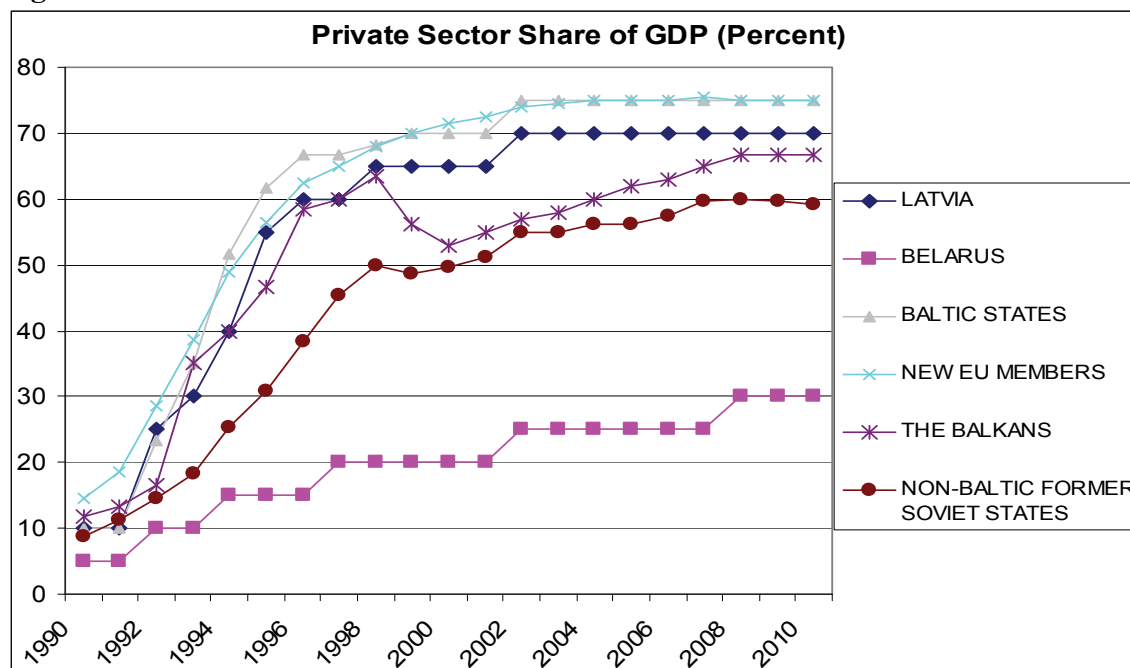
Latvia's policies of instituting comprehensive political-economic transformation, also involved implementing deep structural reform in the form of wide-scale privatizations. Indeed, from the beginning there was strong political will to implement rapid privatization in order to transform into a market economy.³⁹ Here, emphasis was placed on the restoration of private property for agricultural land and real-estate, the rapid privatization of small and medium enterprises, as well as extensive privatization of large-

³⁸ IMF. (2005a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14-15.

³⁹ This political will was mentioned in discussions with several Latvian elites who had a first hand view of the early transformation process. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). See also, Neimanis, George J. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire: A View from Riga*. Westport: Praeger., p. 69. Neimanis can be considered a first hand observer of immediate changes, as he was an economic advisor to economics committee of the Latvian Saeima in 1991, and Professor of Economics at Riga Business School.

scale enterprises. Additionally, establishing adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property rights was also given priority.

Figure 3.10



Source(s): 1990-1998: (EBRD 1999). 1999-2003: (EBRD 2005). 2004-2010: (EBRD 2010c).

Overall, the extent of Latvia's strong efforts to privatize broad sections of economic activity is revealed in Figure 3.10 above, which highlights the annual private sector share of GDP. This shows that Latvia placed near the top of post-Communist countries in expanding the private sectors share in the overall economy, reaching 60% in 1996 and remaining at 70% from 2002 onwards, which was well above the low of 30% found currently in Belarus.

From early on, Latvia placed an emphasis on private property, and was quite successful in moving quickly to restore individual private property in agricultural land and real-estate. Here, one of the first steps in this process included a law on property restitution, where those who had previously owned property before 1940, or their heirs, were entitled to claim it back, starting with agriculture land, buildings, and other real-estate. Here it should be noted that land and property restitution was dealt with by the Latvian Ministry of Justice, and that it is acknowledged to be one of the policy areas that

was done most smoothly, rapidly, successfully, and least corruptly.⁴⁰ Moreover, significant demand existed in the Latvian public for restoring historic land-ownership for private individuals, as there were close to around 300,000 claims for property restoration registered by the end of 1994.⁴¹

Restoring private agricultural land holdings involved nearly the complete dismantling of the Soviet-era state-owned collective farms, and moving to a renewed focus on individual private farmsteads. As Table 3.1, reveals, the privatization of Latvian agricultural land proceeded rapidly in the first years after regaining independence, which was seen in the large increase of the number of private farms, which exploded from a 1989 level of 3,931 to 57,510 in 1993, as well as in the total area of hectares of land under private ownership. Here it should also be noted that particular emphasis in the privatization process was placed on small independent farmers, where the majority of agricultural land following restoration was held by small private farms, whose size averaged in the range of 19 hectares.⁴²

Table 3.1: Private Farm Development in Latvia, 1989-1993

Latvia: Private Farm Development	1989	1991	1992	1993
Number of Private Farms	3,931	17,538	52,279	57,510
Total Area (in Thousand hectares)	65.6	186.2	872.9	1,108.4

Source: (IMF 1994: 73).

The breakup of collectivized farms and privatization of agricultural land continued on a consistent and steady pace in the following years. As a result, 80% of all agricultural land had been privatized by 1998, which increased to 90% during the following year.⁴³ This rapid progress in privatizing farms makes Latvia one of the most aggressive privatizers of agricultural land amongst post-Communist states in the region.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ This was mentioned by several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

⁴¹ This included claims for restoration of both agriculture and urban real-estate. IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 26; EBRD. (1995). *Transition Report 1995: Investment and Enterprise Development*. London: EBRD., p. 49.

⁴² IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 25.

⁴³ European Commission. (1998). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 31; European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 25.

⁴⁴ Meyers, William H., and Natalija Katzlauskene. (1998). "Land Reform in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: A Comparative Analysis." In *Land Reform in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. S. K. Wegren. London: Routledge., p. 90-93, 98; Schwartz, Katrina Z. S. (2006). *Nature and National Identity after Communism: Globalizing the Ethnoscape*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press., p. 83.

In addition to the vast privatization of agricultural land, the Latvian government also moved early to remove most protections for farmers, such as trade restrictions, controlled agricultural prices, marketing controls and subsidies. Moreover, there was also an initial lack of adequate infrastructure established to assist these new restored private farms.⁴⁵ As a result of there being practically no state support and few trade restrictions, most of these newly independent farmers were left to compete for themselves in a highly liberalized environment that was vastly more deregulated, open, and market oriented, than that found in the extensively regulated Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU. In fact, Latvia's agriculture sector had been so liberalized that in the immediate years right before Latvia's accession to the EU, and since becoming a member, Latvia has had to retract some of these liberalizations and introduce increased regulations and subsidies similar to those found in the EU's CAP.⁴⁶ This is important for illustrating that the initial liberalization was obviously not an agricultural policy determined by farmers acting in their own short-term interests, but instead was likely driven by liberal ideas.

Latvia followed on its swift progress in restoring private ownership in agricultural land by taking concrete steps to privatize and restore ownership rights for urban real-estate. As noted above, the demand from the Latvian public for restoration of historic ownership rights was pressing, and there was strong political will for returning to a regime of individual private ownership as a means to organize economic relations in regards to real-estate land. As a result, by 1994, around 40% of the housing units in Latvia had been privatized.⁴⁷ The consistent pace of real-estate privatization continued in the following years, so that by the end of 2001, 77% of all apartments in Latvia had been privatized to individual owners.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See for example, Berengaut, Julian and Augusto Lopez-Claros. (1998). "Overview of Recent Macroeconomic and Structural Adjustment Policies." ch. 2, in J. Berengaut, A. Lopez-Claros, F. Le Gall, D. Jones, R. Stern, A.-M. Westin, E. Psalida, and P. Garibaldi. In *The Baltic Countries: From Economic Stabilization to EU Accession*. Washington: IMF, 1998., p. 7. This was also mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

⁴⁶ This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

⁴⁷ EBRD. (1995). *Transition Report 1995.*, p. 49.

⁴⁸ European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 41.

In conducting the privatization of urban real-estate, a key step included making average people directly involved in the process, through the issuance of a privatization voucher scheme. Such privatization vouchers played a positive role in acting as a mechanism that enabled most people to acquire their own homes by using the certificates to purchase them from the state or municipalities which had previous control. Moreover, such real-estate privatization was done with very little corruption occurring during the process.⁴⁹ Further additional legislative acts that were instrumental in restoring property rights more generally included enactments establishing the tradability of land, making it easier for owners to sell and mortgage property in 1993, making the right to buy and own land for foreigners more accessible in 1994, as well as creating a national land registry and further liberalizing the trade of land in 1997.⁵⁰ Overall, Latvia's consistent efforts to privatize and implement the necessary regulatory provisions establishing a liberal legal regime for the maintenance of property and real-estate markets, stands in contrast to Belarus. Finally, it should be pointed out that in its general orientation towards liberal marketization, the Latvian government further liberalized the private land market by instituting a very low tax regime on property taxes, as well as little to no capital gains taxes on the sale of real-estate assets. As the IMF reported in 2006, capital gains on the sale of real-estate were only taxed if the property was resold before the first year anniversary of when the property was purchased.⁵¹

As mentioned above at the beginning of this section, there was strong political will from the Latvian Saeima, from the outset in 1991, to transform into market economy with private ownership as the bases of the political-economy and society.⁵² As a result, the Latvian government implemented rapid privatization of small to medium sized businesses from the very beginning of the transformation process. In doing so, much of the early process in privatizing small and smaller-medium sized businesses was largely done in a decentralized manner through the state and municipal governments, or through

⁴⁹ Mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

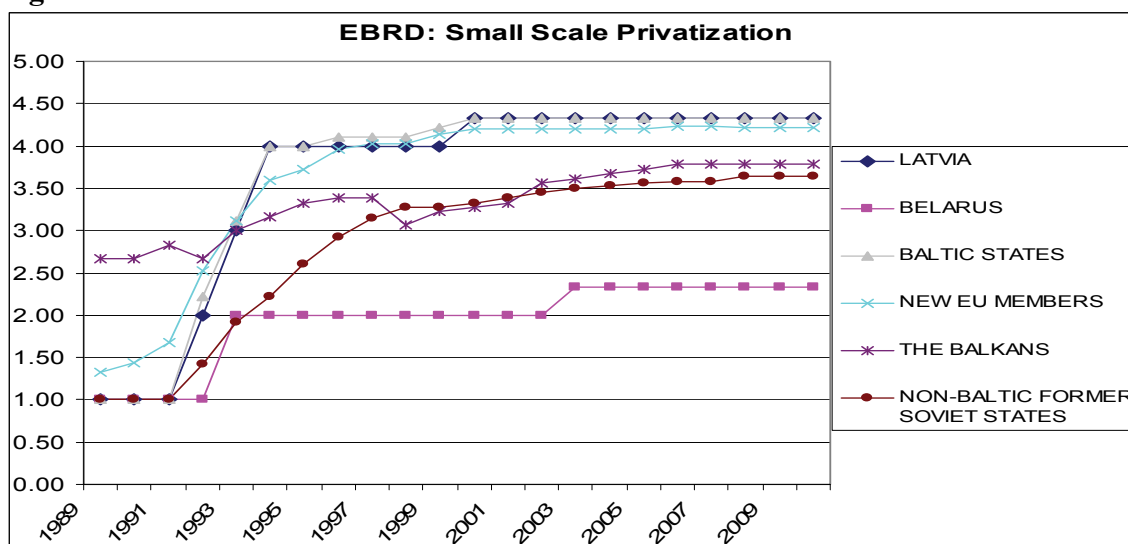
⁵⁰ OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States.," p. 31. See also, IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 25.

⁵¹ IMF. (2006). *Republic of Latvia.*, p. 61. This was also mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

⁵² See footnote no. 39 above.

individual branch ministries. Overall, the goal of such privatization was quite liberal, in the sense that it opened the fruits of private ownership to most residents of Latvia, regardless of nationality. Moreover, in order to rapidly speed up the process of small business privatization and small business creation, it was the decision of the government to put these enterprises up immediately for auction, in order to simply change ownership from the state to individuals as quickly and thoroughly as possible, and in the shortest amount of time in order to facilitate market activity.⁵³ Thus, by April 1994, it was reported that over 2/3's of Latvian small businesses had been privatized.⁵⁴ Additionally, Figure 3.11 illustrates that the privatization of small businesses was so rapid that it was largely completed by the end of the 1990s. Indeed, it is also apparent from Figure 3.11 that Latvia has been in the lead in the EBRD rankings of small-scale privatization, scoring 4.33 since 2001, and standing well above Belarus, which has yet to score above 2.33 in the rankings.

Figure 3.11



Scores: (1) Little progress; (2) Substantial share privatized; (3) Comprehensive programme almost ready for implementation; (4) Complete privatization of small companies with tradable ownership rights; (4+) Standards and performance typical of advanced industrial economies: no state ownership of small enterprises; effective tradability of land.

Source: (EBRD 2010a).

⁵³ This was mentioned by a knowledgeable Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). In regards to the auction process, it should be noted that the only restrictions on bidders for privatized small business (less than 10 employees), was a rule that the bidder must have 16 years residency in Latvia. Additionally, 85% of the small businesses privatized were acquired by former managers, with some also by employees. OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States.," p. 120.

⁵⁴ IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 26.

The privatization of medium sized enterprises was not as rapid as that of small businesses, but nevertheless proceeded at a brisk pace, so that by 1998 this process was largely complete.⁵⁵ However, in regards to the privatization of large-scale enterprises, this process took longer. In the early stages, from 1991 to the election of the 5th Saeima in 1993, much of the early process in privatizing medium to large-scale enterprises was largely done in a decentralized manner through individual branch ministries. Consequently, before 1993 there was a situation of far less coordination in privatization, and decentralization where each ministry, managed by its minister, had their own ideas of what to do, which led to an absence of concrete policy measures to implement the overall goal of mass privatization for large-scale enterprises. One ministry acknowledge to have some semblance of structure in this regard, was found in the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture, which between 1991 and 1993 managed to send to the Latvian Saeima for approval specific laws to privatize bread-making companies, milk producing companies, and other food production enterprises. However, the progress found within agriculture contrasted sharply compared with that of heavy industry where there was an absence of coordinated policy in the early years.⁵⁶ Moreover, it should also be noted that there was more problems with small corruption in the early stages of reform, before the 5th Saeima's election in 1993 and the creation of the Latvian Privatization Agency (LPA) in 1994, largely because rules were opaque, which allowed some influential figures in certain ministries, such as Agriculture to acquire these newly privatized enterprises.⁵⁷

Overall, initial challenges were also connected to the privatization process of state monopoly-enterprises. Specifically, in regards to large-scale heavy industries, such as the former Soviet enterprises that were directly linked into the Soviet military-industrial complex and controlled from Moscow, significant problems in trying to facilitate early

⁵⁵ See European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 26.

⁵⁶ This information was garnered in conversation with several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Former Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

⁵⁷ This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). However, the IMF in 1994 noted that 60% of these newly privatized medium-sized food related industries tended to have new owners made up from produces, managers, and also employees. IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 27.

privatization were caused by strong resistance to the goals of reform and privatization from managers within these enterprises. Indeed, many of these Soviet-era enterprises were predominantly staffed and managed by ethnic-Russians/Slavs during Soviet rule and in the immediate period after regaining independence. As will be discussed in chapter 5, this group of ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers offered significant resistance to early attempts at privatization, retained significant loyalties towards Moscow, and remained oriented towards strong statist solutions. Indeed, as one knowledgeable Latvian elite pointed out, there were “a lot of hidden schemes used by these managers,” which “took time and also political will to break.”⁵⁸

A key reason for the difficulties, when it came to privatizing large-scale enterprises, resulted from the decentralized administrative environment found in the first years after regaining independence. This was especially apparent in the fact that the Latvian government did not initially create one uniform legal structure for privatization under the management of one central administrative body, as found in the LPA, which was not established until 1994.⁵⁹ While this might lead some to assume a great deal of confusion in the overall goals of privatization, it should be noted that the liberal goals of pushing for wide-scale privatizations was never in question. Largely, a great deal of this administrative confusion, of having multiple legal mechanisms and administrative bodies dealing with privatization, had to do with a general aversion within governing and policy-making circles at the early stages of regaining independence before 1993, against extensive government planning and centralized control. To illustrate, former “Prime Minister Godmanis decided to split these functions between branch ministries because there were worries about an excessive concentration of power,” and “it was feared that a small circle of people would take over all decision-making power,” because “a

⁵⁸ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers also offered resistance to the liberal monetary policies emanating from the Bank of Latvia. See quote from Uldis Osis, found in Vīksniņš. (2008). “The *Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 116. See also, Bungš. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia,” p. 36; Repše. (2000). “Latvia,” p. 17.

⁵⁹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). See also, IMF. (1994). *Latvia*, p. 25-27.

centralized privatization agency was conceived of corresponding to a huge ministry.”⁶⁰ Thus, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5, this early administrative mess and failure to create the LPA until 1994, resulted largely from very liberal worldviews found amongst Latvian decision-makers at the time, which were loathe towards seemingly centralized big-government solutions.

The administrative process of privatization was streamlined significantly in February 1994, when the Saeima passed the law, *On the Privatization of State and Municipal Asset Units*, which resulted in the establishment of the LPA as the main executor of the privatization of state-owned enterprises in Latvia. In terms of policy inspiration for the LPA, Latvian authorities looked to Estonia where this model was already established by 1992, which was similar to the model found in privatizations done in eastern Germany, where companies were privatized by one institution, which held all the decision-making power to decide on key matters such as internal restructuring, and how the potential ownership structure would look like after privatization.⁶¹ Overall, following the establishment of the LPA, the process of privatizing large-scale enterprises has proceeded at a steady pace (see Figure 3.12), as such institutions and legal structures greatly helped assist in the process of privatization.

Initially, under the guidance of the LPA, a privatization voucher scheme, similar to that used for land and real-estate, was utilized for the remainder of 1994, in order to privatize a number of medium and large enterprises. A key goal with the vouchers involved the desire to make average people directly involved in the process, through the issuance of a privatization vouchers to allow the general public to participate in the tenders by using these vouchers which could be exchanged for minority shares in the privatized companies.⁶² While the voucher system worked well in regards to privatizing land and real-estate, it did not work as well as intended in privatizing medium to large-scale industries. This is because most people thought these privatization vouchers were

⁶⁰ Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 92. Similar observation were also mentioned by knowledgeable elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Former Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

⁶¹ This information was garnered in conversation with several knowledgeable Latvian elites. Former Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2b, 2010).

⁶² This description of privatization vouchers was mentioned by a Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Overall, 2.9 billion privatization vouchers were distributed to 2.4 million residents, or 97% of the population. OECD. (2000). “The Baltic States.,” p. 120.

not really worth anything, and sold them. However, there was a market for them, and the vouchers that were sold, were bought up very cheaply by influential people who knew what was happening, and knew that they would be able to use these to acquire more state assets in a perfectly legal way.⁶³ Nevertheless, the vast majority of medium to large-scale enterprises had not yet been privatized by the end of 1994 (see Figure 3.12), which meant that less seemingly rationalist acquisitions occurred in later stages after the voucher system was removed in favour of direct sales under the guidance of the LPA.

In the years following the end of the voucher program in 1994, the LPA moved to the direct sale of remaining state-owned enterprises to majority investors, with a large focus on attracting competitive foreign investors.⁶⁴ In terms of actual progress, 1,097 medium and large state-owned enterprises had been slated for privatization in 1994 by the LPA, of which 1,056 had been privatized with majority private ownership by the end of 1998.⁶⁵ In percentage figures, it was reported that privatization of large-scale industry in Latvia had been nearly completed by the end of the 1990s, with the private sector share of industrial production accounting for 75% in 1998, 81.5% in 1999, and rising to 90% by 2000.⁶⁶ While not moving as rapidly as Latvia's progress in privatizing small businesses (see Figure 3.11), Latvia has made significant long-term achievements in privatizing the vast majority of medium to large-scale enterprises since the establishment of the LPA. As Figure 3.12 illustrates, the EBRD rankings of the privatization of large-scale enterprises placed Latvia consistently above the performance of most other post-Communist countries, and well above the lack of reform characteristic of Belarus.

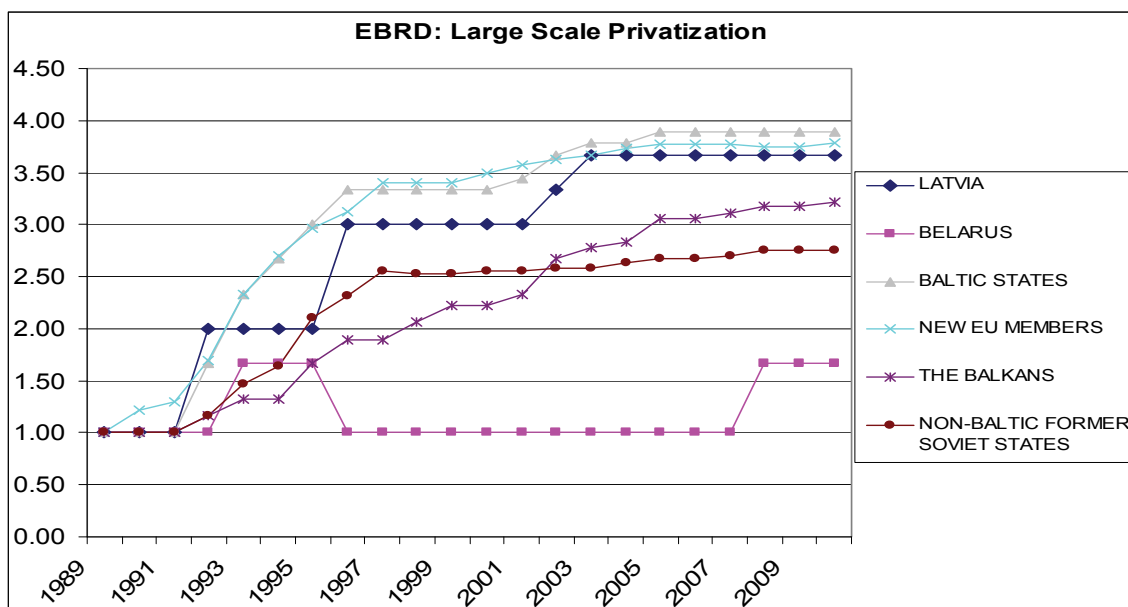
⁶³ This information was pointed out by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

⁶⁴ It should be noted that a key goal in this move involved not simply privatization for the sake of privatization, but to stimulate new private initiative by creating vibrant open markets. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Additionally it should be noted that each remaining state owned enterprise from 1995 onward, was privatized in this manner on a case by case basis. EBRD. (1995). *Transition Report 1995.*, p. 49; EBRD. (1998). *Transition Report 1998: Financial Sector in Transition.* London: EBRD., p. 176.

⁶⁵ European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 22.

⁶⁶ European Commission. (2000). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 67; European Commission. (2001). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 77.

Figure 3.12



Scores: (1) Little private ownership; (2) Comprehensive scheme almost ready for implementation; some sales completed; (3) More than 25% of large-scale enterprise assets in private hands or in the process of privatization (with process reaching a stage at which the state has effectively ceded its ownership rights), but possibly major unresolved issues regarding corporate governance; (4) More than 50% of state-owned enterprise and farm assets in private ownership and significant progress with corporate governance of these enterprises; (4+) Standards and performance typical of advanced industrial economies: more than 75% of enterprise assets in private ownership with effective corporate governance.

Source: (EBRD 2010a).

Latvia complemented its policies of wide-scale privatizations by also implementing other intricately connected structural reforms, such as enterprise restructuring to improve overall corporate governance. As mentioned above, a key step in this process involved moving to the direct sale of remaining state-owned enterprises to majority investors, with a focus on attracting competitive foreign investors.⁶⁷ Additionally, through implementing vast privatization, Latvia was implicitly taking important steps to remove the possibility that these enterprises would still receive government subsidizations. However, it should be noted that the Latvian government took explicit simultaneous steps to limit state subsidization, as there was a general anti-statist attitude amongst elites' favouring a limited role for the state in the economy.⁶⁸ Consequently, government subsidization was cut to wide sectors of the Latvian economy

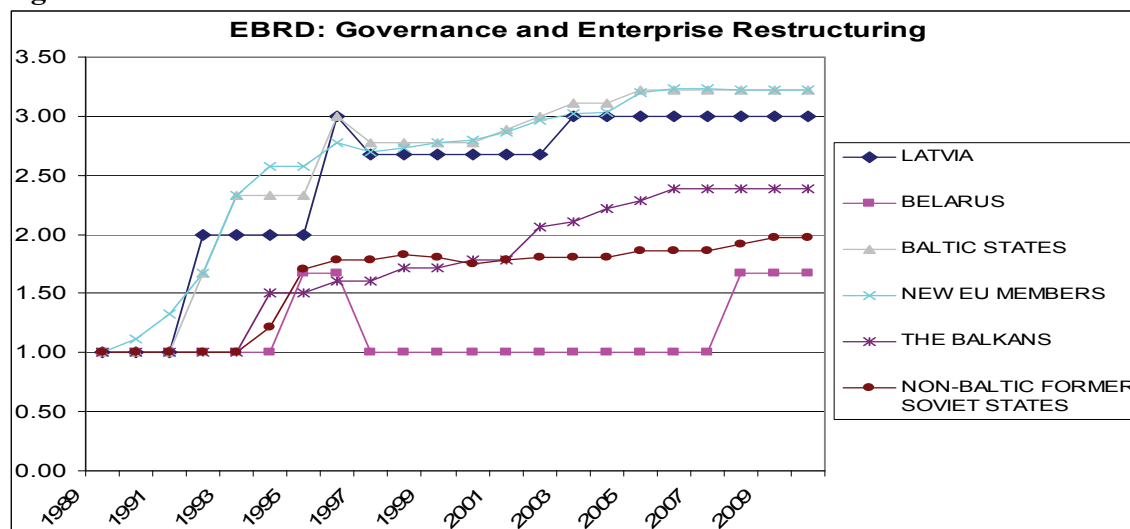
⁶⁷ See footnote no. 64 above.

⁶⁸ This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

that were formerly under state control.⁶⁹ For example, Figure 3.17 reveals that government subsidization of economic sectors has remained relatively low in Latvia and has consistently hovered around the range of just below 5% of GDP since the economy began to recover and grow during the late 1990s. Moreover, Latvia's low rates of economic subsidization stands in contrast to Belarus, where the government continued to emit subsidies to preferred economic sectors in the range of close to 20% during the same period (see Figure 3.17 below).

Additionally, Latvia has made extensive reforms to restructure enterprises and improve corporate governance. As Figure 3.13 illustrates, EBRD rankings of governance and enterprise restructuring has placed Latvia consistently above the performance of most other post-Communist countries, and well above the lack of reform that has been found in Belarus. Through the implementation of vast privatizations and enterprise restructuring, Latvia removed any possibility that these enterprises would still receive subsidizations, thus removing a possible major hindrance to fiscal discipline, and also serving to complement other structural reforms such as increasing overall market competition.

Figure 3.13



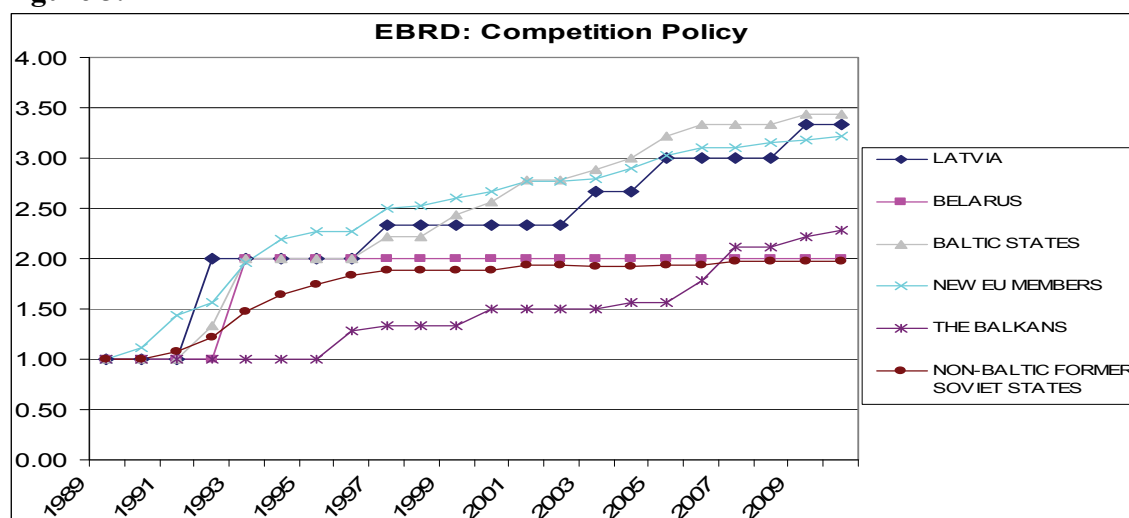
Scores: (1) Soft budget constraints (lax credit and subsidy policies weakening financial discipline at the

⁶⁹ This was especially the case in regards to agriculture. See for example, Berengaut and Lopez-Claros. (1998). "Overview of Recent Macroeconomic and Structural Adjustment Policies.," p. 7. Mentioned also by one Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). In regards to old Soviet-era enterprises, after government subsidization was cut in the 1990s, some managed to eke out an existence, such as the Riga Railway Carriage Plant, but most like the Minibus plant and the radio-electronics firm VEF went out of business or were broken up. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

enterprise level); few other reforms to promote corporate governance; (2) Moderately tight credit and subsidy policy, but weak enforcement of bankruptcy legislation and little action taken to strengthen competition and corporate governance; (3) Significant and sustained actions to harden budget constraints and promote corporate governance (e.g. privatization combined with tight credit and subsidy policies and/or enforcement of bankruptcy legislation); (4) Substantial improvement in corporate governance and significant new investment at enterprise level, including minority holdings by financial investors; (4+) Standards and performance typical of advanced industrial economies: effective corporate control exercised through domestic financial institutions and markets, fostering market-driven restructuring.
Source: (EBRD 2010).

Overall, these extensive structural reforms, as indicated above, were also intricately linked and complementary to other areas of policy transformation. For instance, these structural reforms also involved policy steps to foster increased market competition in Latvia. Such competition reforms have included policies designed to ease entry for businesses and investors into the market, measures to curtail predatory behavior by firms that have a dominant position in certain sectors, and the ability to potentially break up monopoly firms. As Figure 3.14 illustrates, Latvia has made significant progress in liberalizing competition policy, and has received positive scores from the EBRD annual rankings that are similar to other post-Communist reform leaders, and consistently higher than the lack of reform in Belarus.

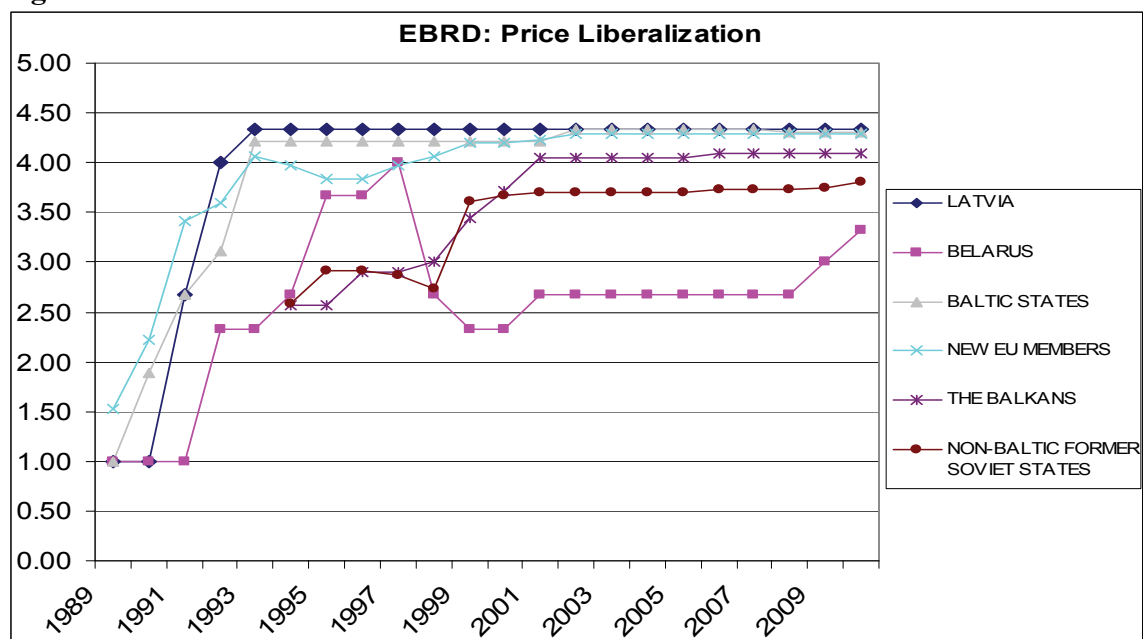
Figure 3.14



Scores: (1) No competition legislation and institutions; (2) Competition policy legislation and institutions set up; some reduction of entry restrictions or enforcement action on dominant firms; (3) Some enforcement actions to reduce abuse of market power and promote competitive environment, including break-ups of dominant conglomerates; substantial reduction of entry restrictions; (4) Significant enforcement actions to reduce abuse of market power and promote a competitive environment; (4+) Standards and performance typical of advanced industrial economies: effective enforcement of competition policy; unrestricted entry to most markets.
Source: (EBRD 2010a).

In the early 1990s, the Latvian government also made significant steps to jumpstart the structural reform process to reduce state interference in broad segments of economic activity by removing the vast majority of price controls. As Figure 3.15 reveals, Latvia was one of the most rapid reformers, and well ahead of Belarus, when it came to price liberalization, which was largely completed by 1993 when Latvia received its first score of 4.33 in the annual rankings from the EBRD. Additionally, Figure 3.16 illustrates that Latvia has administered a much lower percentage of prices, numbering 13.0% of all overall prices in 2009, which was well below Belarus's 30% in 2008. This extensive price liberalization was important in complementing the overall structural reform process and enhancing market competitiveness, by giving investors and business enterprises significant freedom to maneuver in the economy. Overall, Latvia's structural reforms were so rapid and extensive by 1999 that the European Commission was already reporting that "*Latvia can be regarded as a functioning market economy.*"⁷⁰ Finally, as will be discussed below, Latvia's extensive structural reforms and promotion of competition complemented transformation in other policy areas, such as in relation to reforms aimed at increasing FDI.

Figure 3.15

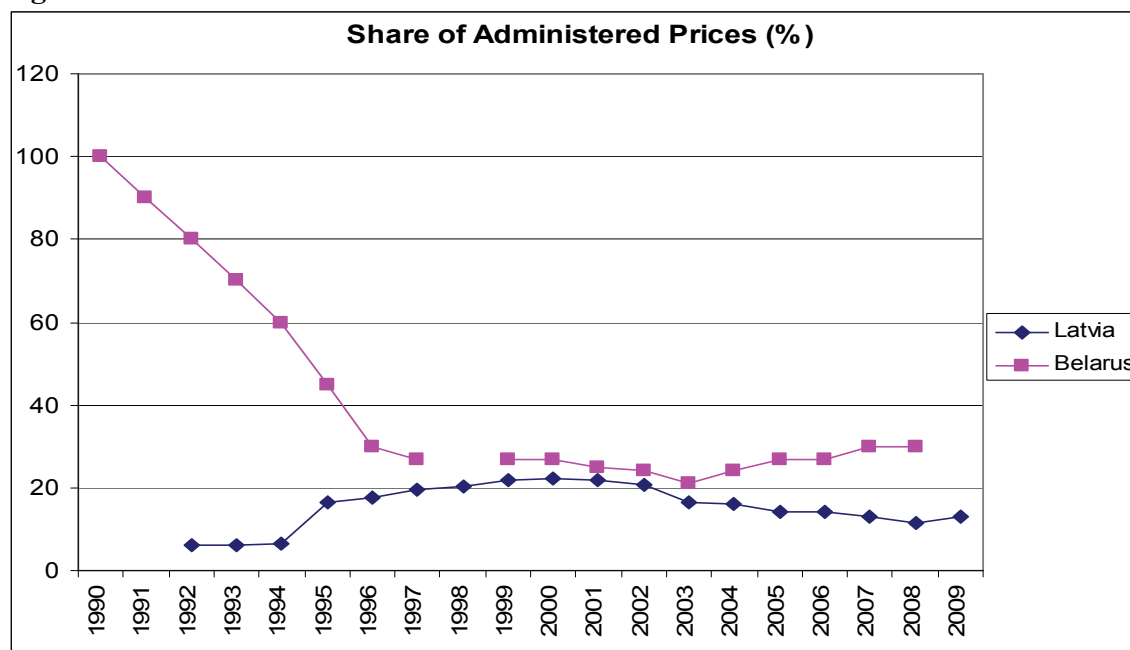


Scores: (1) Most prices controlled by the government; (2) Some lifting of price administration, state procurement at non-market prices for majority of products; (3) Significant progress on price liberalization,

⁷⁰ European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 25.

but state procurement at non-market prices substantial; (4) Comprehensive price liberalization; state procurement at non-market prices largely phased out; only a small number of administered prices; (4+) Standards and performance typical of advanced industrial economies: complete price liberalization with no price control outside housing, transport and natural monopolies.
Source: (EBRD 2010a).

Figure 3.16



Source(s): 1990-1998: (EBRD 1999: 196, 240). 1999-2003: (EBRD 2005: 108, 152). 2004-2010: (EBRD 2010c).

Belarus

Latvia's policies of implementing deep structural reform in the form of wide-scale privatizations were largely not followed by Belarus, where the state controls almost all the economy. The lack of extensive structural reforms, privatization, and the state's continued dominance over broad sections the economy in Belarus is revealed in Figure 3.10 above, where the private sector share of GDP in the Belarusian economy stands only at 30%, which is located near the bottom amongst most post-Communist states, and well below the high of 70% that has been achieved in Latvia.

Overall, there was little political will in Belarus to implement rapid and comprehensive privatization in order to transform into a market economy. However, while it is apparent that Latvia chose a clear path in terms of comprehensive structural reforms and privatization, it can also be argued that Belarus followed a clear policy direction of non-reform, and exhibited a strong political will for maintaining a system of

centralized state control over most segments of the broader political-economy. As a result, structural reforms have largely been absent, which can be seen with the continued extensive state control over agricultural land and real-estate, and the general lack of privatization of small, medium and large enterprises. Even where some small amounts of privatization have occurred there is a general absence of any adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property rights from arbitrary interference from the state. Additionally, government subsidization to broad sectors of the Belarusian economy under state control remains pervasive. Thus, Belarus is not a normally functioning market economy, but a planned economy which still functions on a level not according to market rules. This clear path of highly centralized state control over the political-economy, in the form of extensive planning and massive support for state-owned enterprises, and the direct government involvement in agriculture, lends credence to characterization of Belarus as being neo-Soviet.⁷¹

Compared to Latvia, very little emphasis was placed on private property in Belarus, and there has been very little done in terms of either restoring or instituting a regime of individual private ownership in agricultural land and real-estate. Restoring private agricultural land holdings, such as occurred in Latvia, was also difficult because there were not historic traditions of wide-scale individual private land-ownership in Belarus. Moreover, there also was not much significant demand that existed in the public for instituting a regime of private land-ownership, as there were very few claims for acquiring additional pieces of property, even when limited opportunities temporarily existed in the early 1990s.⁷²

Overall, there was very little dismantling of the Soviet era state-owned collective farms, which only began to see some restructuring after 2000 when collective farms were repackaged into newer formats. However, this restructuring remained quite limited and was merely like putting old wine in new bottles, as the state continued to largely own and control the newly restructured agricultural cooperatives, organizations and joint stock

⁷¹ This was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also, Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 39.

⁷² This was mentioned by a Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

companies that grew out of the collective farm restructuring.⁷³ As a result, state-ownership of agricultural land, and state control over the agricultural sector, in general, has remained pervasive. A brief overview of Table 3.2 reveals the lack of privatization and continued collectivization of Belarusian agricultural land, which was seen in the large area of hectares of land remaining under state collective ownership well into the late 1990s and early 2000s. As Table 3.2 illustrates, the percentage of individual ownership of agricultural land stood only at 20% by 2003, with private farms only accounting for 0.6% of that number by 1998, while state ownership of agricultural land continued to remain high at 80%. Furthermore by 2000, it was reported that there was less than 3,000 independent family farms (averaging 25 hectares), which still only accounted for 0.6% of all agricultural land in Belarus.⁷⁴ The continued significant state control of agricultural land in Belarus stands in contrast to Latvia's rapid reforms mentioned above, where 90% of agricultural land was privatized by 1999 (see Table 3.1 above).

Table 3.2: Distribution of Agricultural Land Ownership in Belarus (Percent)

	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003
State/Collective & State-owned Cooperatives/Organizations*	92.6	83.2	82.7	82.6	82.7	82.7	82.8	84	84	83	80
Individual Land Plots, Private Farms & Other	7.1	16	16.5	16.6	16.4	16.4	16.3	16	16	17	20
- Private farms	0.0	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	-	-	-	-

Source(s): 1990-1996: (IMF 1997: 74). 1996-1998: (IMF 1999b: 48). 2000-2003: (World Bank 2005: 184).

Even where there is some semblance of private ownership of agricultural land in Belarus, this remains limited, as there is a general absence of well defined property rights. Moreover, the vast majority of the property accounting for privately controlled lands consist predominantly small garden plots of land, which average around one hectare or less.⁷⁵ These small garden plots are primarily used by families and individuals

⁷³ See for example, World Bank. (2005). *Belarus: Window of Opportunity to Enhance Competitiveness and Sustain Growth*. November 8. Washington: World Bank., p. 183, 177; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus: Recent Economic Developments and Selected Issues*. IMF Staff Country Report No. 00/153. November. Washington: IMF., p. 53.

⁷⁴ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 55. The World Bank put the number of private farms in Belarus at 2,525 by 2000, which decreased further to 2,493 (averaging 72 hectares each) by 2003. World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 184.

⁷⁵ See for example, IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14-15; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 55.

at their country dachas to grow vegetables for personal consumption. In general, the state places many restrictions on these small plots, which limit property freedoms as individuals can rent the land for years but never own or sell it. Consequently, there is not 100% private property in Belarus, and most of the private farmland that is utilized by Belarusians as small garden plots (1 hectare or less) is not really owned by the individuals which utilize it. For example, it was estimated that only about 3% of these small plots are actually under the formal ownership of private individuals.⁷⁶ In reality these plots are leased to individuals for 100 years, which can be passed down to younger generations but cannot be sold or mortgaged, because the state retains ultimate final control over land distribution.⁷⁷ As one Belarusian elite mentioned, the usage of this land operates as a result of “the grace of the government...in not limiting a person’s ability to use it, to plant it, and cultivate it.”⁷⁸ Consequently, such land remains effectively owned by the state, with the government acting as the supreme landlord.

Much of the same rules also apply to the small number of larger farms operated by private farmers, which account for less than 1% of agricultural land in Belarus (see Table 3.2). Once again, these private farmers can pass the land down to future generations, and generally are granted long-term usage guarantees over the land under their stewardship. However, there are very limited property rights, and these farmers cannot mortgage the property or sell the land, and face very real prospects of having the land seized if they discontinue working the land.⁷⁹ Furthermore, in regards to mortgaging land, it is necessary to point out the description given by the IMF that “using land as collateral is *virtually unknown*” in Belarus.⁸⁰ As a result, it seems a far stretch to describe the management of agricultural land in Belarus as constituting any semblance of an individual private property regime similar to that found across the border in Latvia and

⁷⁶ International Monetary Fund. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 55

⁷⁷ Such observations were also mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010). Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also, IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010).

⁷⁹ See for example, Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 140-141. See also, World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 184. This situation was also mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

⁸⁰ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 15.

commonly found throughout Western Europe. As will be discussed below, FDI in agriculture has also been generally inhibited by the fact that foreigners are restricted from purchasing agriculture land in Belarus.

With the continued state ownership of the vast majority of agricultural land, this has allowed the command system of state control over the agricultural sector to remain extensive. For instance, the state still retains extensive control via procurement quotas that obligates all producers to deliver a percentage of their crops and livestock production to the state.⁸¹ As mentioned above, while many state-owned collective agricultural enterprises were restructured after 2000, this was merely like putting old wine in new bottles, as the state continued to largely own and control the newly restructured organizations.⁸² Consequently this ‘restructuring’ remained quite limited and was characteristic of the lack of reform in regards to improving corporate governance and enterprise restructuring more generally in the political-economy (see Figure 3.13 above).

This heavy state involvement in planning and production has also resulted in large government subsidies to the agricultural sector. Overall, the vast majority of these subsidies benefit state-owned enterprises such as the agricultural cooperatives, joint stock companies and the remaining collective farms.⁸³ Obviously, such favouritism in the form of large government subsidies to state-owned enterprises would generally work to limit competition (see Figure 3.14 above), and have a detrimental effect on the small number of private producers trying to eke out an existence in Belarus. Finally, the government continues to mandate high price controls on the agricultural sector,⁸⁴ which serves to inhibit overall competition and disadvantages private producers that cannot sell their produce at real market value.

Privatization of urban real-estate, in the form of individual housing units, has seen higher rates than those found in privatizing agricultural land. However, Belarus’s progress in privatizing housing units followed a slower pace than that of Latvia, as mentioned above, which achieved a rate of close to 40% of housing units privatized by 1994, something which Belarus came close to equaling only at the beginning of 1997

⁸¹ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 54.

⁸² See for example, World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 183, 177; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 53.

⁸³ For example, in 1998 around 2% of GDP went towards subsidizing Belarusian agricultural production. IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 13. See also World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 177.

⁸⁴ World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 177.

with 39% privatized.⁸⁵ While Belarus has seen some more recent progress in efforts to privatize individual dwellings, there is a general lack of adequate legal protections, which stands in contrast to Latvia's consistent efforts to privatize and implement the regulatory provisions for establishing a liberal legal regime for the maintenance of property and real-estate markets.

Similar problems that limit private property in agricultural land, also pose significant challenges for urban real-estate. Overall, there remains a general absence of well defined property rights, and the state places many restrictions on private holdings, which limit the property freedoms of individuals. Moreover, there is not 100% private property in real-estate, as individuals cannot mortgage their own private holdings, and face a restrictive regulatory environment when selling. In regards to mortgaging property real-estate, this is impossible for a person owning their own personal dwelling, since no bank would give them a mortgage because their dwelling would be worthless as collateral, as a result of laws that make it virtually impossible to throw a person out of their house, even if they were to default on the loan. As a result, most private real-estate remains largely static as an asset. Furthermore, because there are very limited property rights, individual real-estate owners have very few protections against the prospect of their property being seized, should the government desire the land.⁸⁶ In such instances of property seizure by state authorities, very little recourse to challenge and appeal such decisions exists,⁸⁷ as the court system lacks judicial independence (see Figure 3.19).

In terms of other restrictions placed on private land tradability and usability, the Belarusian state also levies significant taxes on land. Such property taxes were significantly increased after 2003, with the passage of new amendments to the law on

⁸⁵ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 60.

⁸⁶ Such observations on these above restrictions on property were described by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also, IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 15, 60.

⁸⁷ To illustrate, when I was conducting research in Minsk during March/April 2010, one could see historic individual houses that the government was trying to push aside for the expansion of the Minsk Metro system. Through conversations with various elites, it was made aware that while some had willingly taken the government's compensation offer of a flat in a new communal apartment bloc, others had rejected this offer, as a house cannot be compared to a flat, and challenged the government in court, which was not successful. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

land taxes.⁸⁸ These restrictive land regulations also inhibited the general business environment in Belarus, as small businesses, and foreign investors attempting to start up face significant difficulties in being granted land usage rights, and also problems in obtaining permits allowing construction on the land even after it has been obtained.⁸⁹ Finally, while foreign investors have been able to acquire some pieces of urban land, not only do these foreign businesses face similar regulatory restrictions as noted above, but they also face very real prospects that the property being used could be seized by the government if these investors fall out of grace with the government.⁹⁰ As will be discussed below in the section on the business environment and FDI, earning the wrath of state authorities is not difficult in Belarus considering the many other restrictive political and social obligations that the government places on foreign investors.

Additionally, the general absence of structural reforms can also be seen with the lack of privatization of small, medium and large enterprises. As Figure 3.11 above illustrates, while a substantial share of small private enterprises have been privatized in Belarus, this number still ranks below Latvia's score of 4.33, as Belarus's most recent EBRD ranking score of 2.33 signifies that comprehensive small-scale privatization has yet to be extensively implemented. Moreover, even where some amounts of privatization have occurred with small-scale enterprises, there still remains a general absence of any adequate rule of law in order to protect the property rights of small business owners from arbitrary interference from the state.

Furthermore, reforms to the business environment might be instituted one day and gone the next. This tentativeness of reforms is illustrated in a quote from A. Patupa, Vice Chairman of the Belarusian Union of Entrepreneurs, in February 1998, where he stated that Belarus has ““returned to a command-administrative system,’ and ‘market structures existing at the present moment are, in fact, decorative and can be destroyed at any

⁸⁸ EBRD. (2003). *Transition Report 2003: Integration and Regional Cooperation*. London: EBRD., p. 121.

⁸⁹ See for example, World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 167. Similar observations on the restrictions on property for businesses were also mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010). Additionally, one Latvian elite with specified knowledge of political-economic relations in Belarus, also mentioned such regulatory restrictions faced by foreign investors. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26, 2010).

⁹⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

time.”⁹¹ As well, business rules are constantly in flux, and there is no uniform code for private business or foreign investors operating small enterprises. In general, most regulations and laws are very arbitrary and often designed in a way that allows authorities to have a multitude of ways of interpreting them.⁹² This is highlighted by the example of the many decrees that President Lukashenko issues to interfere in all spheres of political-economic activity. Essentially, these decrees act basically on the same level as the law, even though these often contradict existing legal acts already in place.⁹³ Moreover, if such decrees do contradict existing laws, it is hard for aggrieved parties to challenge the validity of such decrees, due to the lack of independence in the Belarusians judicial systems (see Figure 3.19 below).

Small and medium enterprises face a complicated business environment containing a multitude of red-tape that makes it hard for independent entrepreneurs to succeed. Specifically, it is generally hard to register and re-register a small business enterprise, which results from the many numerous decrees from Lukashenko since 1996, which have made the business registration process increasingly more arbitrary and difficult. Many of these have been increasingly harsher, seen with the Presidential decree issued on March 16, 1999, which according to the lofty explanations given by Belarusian authorities, was established to set “strict rules of behavior in the domestic economy,” and make responsible private “businesses that ‘have done harm to state and public interests.”⁹⁴ In reality, such decrees served to strengthen state controls over extended

⁹¹ A. Patupa, quoted from *Belorusskaia delovaia gazeta* (23 February 1998), in Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 135. One elite also mentioned that “it would be really enough of just one movement of Lukashenko’s pen to eradicate the whole sphere” of small businesses. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010).

⁹² Such observations were mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also, EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106; EBRD. (2007). *Transition Report 2007: People in Transition.* London: EBRD., p. 106; Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 314; EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144. Similar observations were also recorded in the observation of one Latvian Government Official with policy knowledge in the business and investment environment in Belarus. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010).

⁹³ Mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). See also, EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106; Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 132.

⁹⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. (1999). “Lukashenka Decrees ‘Strict Rules’ for Businesses in Belarus.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. March 18. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1141866.html>.

areas of economic activity and make it increasingly harder for small independent businesses to operate in Belarus.

Following the decree of 1999, there were numerous other subsequent Presidential decrees issued on registering business enterprises in the following years, which continued the clampdown on small businesses. Consequently, the predictions made by Uladzimir Karahin, head the organization of Belarusian private entrepreneurs, were increasingly ringing true, in that the 1999 decree would result in a “colossal change in ownership,” with large numbers of business owners “find[ing] themselves on a ‘black list.’”⁹⁵ This became apparent with the low numbers of private enterprises that had been re-registered by November 2000, which numbered only 15% out of the total before the decree.⁹⁶ Indeed, similar problems in licensing and registering private businesses have continued to make it difficult for owners of small enterprises to operate in Belarus.⁹⁷

Additionally, there are several additional obstacles that further complicate the actions of small and medium enterprises, which includes non-uniform tax laws that contain a great deal of red-tape and place high tax burdens on individual enterprises. To illustrate, not only are taxes on small business very high, Belarusian tax laws also require that business owners complete the burdensome and highly intrusive task of having to submit 22 tax reports annually to state revenue authorities.⁹⁸ Also, because the state has a monopoly in real-estate, the property rental fees that have to be paid by small and medium sized business owners is high, and business investors attempting to start up face significant difficulties in being granted land usage rights, and obstacles in obtaining permits for construction on the land even after it has been obtained.⁹⁹

For discussion of the 1996 decree on business registration, see Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 314.

⁹⁵ Uladzimir Karahin quoted in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. (1999). “Lukashenka Decrees ‘Strict Rules’ for Businesses in Belarus.”

⁹⁶ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 46. Zlotnikov put the number of those enterprises re-registered in Minsk at only 2% by April 2000. Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.” p. 132.

⁹⁷ EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144.

⁹⁸ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 46. See also, EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106. EBRD. (2007). *Transition Report 2007.*, p. 106. Additionally, it should be noted that the number of tax rules and government red-tape increases with the higher numbers of employees that a business employs. This was pointed out by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). See also, EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144.

⁹⁹ See for example, World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 167. Similar observations on the restrictions on property for private businesses were mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist.

Another obstacle includes the large amounts of red-tape and restrictive regulations that allow government inspectors to shut a business down, often under dubious circumstances. For example, business must undergo inspections frequently, anywhere from between 10 to 20 per year, depending on the firm.¹⁰⁰ Thus, it is common to see a successful enterprise operating one day, and shut down the next. This is because there are very limited property rights in Belarus, and individual business owners have very few protections if the state chooses to shut down a private enterprise that has gained the authorities' disfavor.¹⁰¹ In such instances, the aggrieved private business owners have very little recourse to challenge and appeal such decisions, as the court system in Belarus lacks judicial independence (see Figure 3.19 below). Thus, one can argue that a command structure of collectively oriented state control permeates almost every aspect of political-economic relations in Belarus when it comes to operating a small business.

As will be discussed in chapter 7, small businesses owners are seen by Lukashenko and state authorities as a threat to the existing order, because they are independent from the preferred statist norm, and represent a potential opposition and an alternative path to collective state control that others in Belarusian society could emulate in the future. Overall, this unfriendly and illiberal business environment, seen with the many regulatory obstacles faced by the tiny minority of small business operators, are a key reason why Belarus has never scored higher than 2.33 and continues to rank near the bottom of EBRD rankings for small-scale privatization (see Figure 3.11 above).

The lack of structural reforms in Belarus can also be seen with the near absence in privatizing medium and large-scale state-owned large enterprises. While Belarus never established a central institution similar to the LPA, the inability of Belarus to not implement mass privatization can hardly be placed on the absence of such an institutional

Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010). Additionally, one Latvian Governmental Official with specified knowledge on political-economic relations in Belarus, also mentioned such regulatory restrictions. Latvian Governmental Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26, 2010).

¹⁰⁰ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 46.

¹⁰¹ Such observations of these restrictions on property were mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 60.

apparatus. Overall, the formation of a body similar to the LPA was difficult from the outset as there was a general lack of political will from elites and society in favour of mass privatization of large state-owned enterprises.

In addition to there being a lack of any definite moves to implement mass privatization, there was also an attempt on the part of Belarusian policy-makers to maintain key structures of the collectively oriented command and control statist apparatus over the political-economy. This occurred even before President Lukashenko came to power in 1994, where the preceding governing administration of former Prime Minister Kebich did not really take many concrete steps to implement significant reform, nor implement much in terms of liberalized privatization. Instead of privatizing large state enterprises, Kebich wanted to retain state ownership and merely reform the state-owned enterprises through emulating an old policy model from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) that had been utilized by East German authorities in the 1960s.¹⁰² This signals that the reform envisioned by the Kebich administration was not that radical in terms of limiting state control, since such policies would have entailed extensive continued state control over the economy. Moreover, such policies would not have even been considered as liberal by Western observers and rapid post-Communist reformers such as Latvia, which would have viewed such policies as totally defunct, discredited and outdated by the early 1990s, following the collapse of the GDR in 1989. Obviously, such reform endeavours were not really focused on limiting state control in the economy, but merely on improving state enterprise efficiency, which would have contrasted sharply with the comprehensive reforms in Latvia aiming for extensive market liberalization.

Although there were some tentative amounts of restructuring and small privatization of some medium sized state-owned enterprises, such restructuring did not evolve much from the repackaging of these enterprises, similar to that which occurred within the agricultural sector, as mentioned above. Moreover, any restructuring has remained quite limited under President Lukashenko, as the state continued to largely own and control these newly restructured medium-sized enterprises that were repackaged as

¹⁰² This was mentioned by one knowledgeable Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Kebich's opposition to liberal reforms and proclivities towards retaining illiberal command and control structures of vast areas of political-economic relations in Belarus was also mentioned by another Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010).

cooperatives, ‘collective’ enterprises, joint stock companies, and/or corporatized enterprises, where the state tended to retain over 50% ownership of the shares in these enterprises.¹⁰³ Overall, these restructured enterprises do not sound that liberal or market oriented. Moreover, in Latvia, such forms of cooperative, ‘collective’ or corporatized enterprises were explicitly avoided by policy-makers because these forms of organizations were seen as too “socialistic,” and reminiscent of political-economic institutional structures found under the Soviet regime.¹⁰⁴

Additionally, the Belarusian state was able to retain extensive control even in the small number of cases where privatization went beyond 50% of an enterprise’s assets. This is because private control over corporate operations was severely circumscribed as a result of the ‘golden share’ clause, which was decreed by President Lukashenko at the end of 1997 and came into legal effect in January 1998. This ‘golden share’ clause essentially gave the Belarusian government effective veto over major decisions, day-to-day operations and the appointment of management, even within majority held private enterprises, as well as granting the ability to the state to re-nationalize these privatized enterprises.¹⁰⁵ Overall, the ‘golden share’ rule proved problematic for local privatization, as well as private enterprises either privatized or started by foreign investors, because nothing could stop the state if it decided to arbitrarily renationalize a recently privatized company, or just simply to nationalize a new company started by foreign investors. Such threats to investors were pervasive in Belarusian political-economic relations until the ‘golden share’ rule was abolished by the government in March 2008.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See for example, EBRD. (2004). *Transition Report 2004: Infrastructure*. London: EBRD., p. 102; IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus*., p. 60. Additionally, the extent of Belarusian accounting of the non-state sector percentage of overall economic activity might be skewed, due to dubious accounting practices where the state-owned cooperatives, ‘collectives’ and corporatized enterprises are counted as the ‘non-state’ sector. Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 139, 141.

¹⁰⁴ As will be discussed in chapter 5, there was a general aversion within elite circles in Latvia against most forms of government planning and centralized control. This was mentioned by several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Former Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus*., p. 57; EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005*., p. 102.

¹⁰⁶ EBRD. (2002). *Transition Report 2002: Agricultural and Rural Transition*. London: EBRD., p. 123; EBRD. (2003). *Transition Report 2003*., p. 121; EBRD. (2004). *Transition Report 2004*., p. 102; EBRD. (2008). *Transition Report 2008*., p. 104. This was also described by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Also mentioned one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26, 2010).

With the continued state ownership of the vast majority of medium and large scale enterprises, and administrative tools such as the only recently abolished ‘golden share’ rule, this has allowed the collectively oriented command system of state control in major sectors of the Belarusian economy and industry to remain extensive. Moreover, the abolishment of the ‘golden share’ rule has not meant a reversal in the overall trend of statist, command and control, collectively oriented political-economic decision-making, because there remains a multitude of other additional administrative tools that allow state authorities to control an enterprise’s behaviour. As a result, there has been virtually no privatization of large-scale enterprises. Indeed, factors such as these are a major reason why Belarus consistently receives low scores, never reaching the score of 2 in the annual EBRD rankings for large-scale privatization, which stands and in stark contrast compared to the steady rates that had been witnessed in Latvia, as seen in Figure 3.12 above.

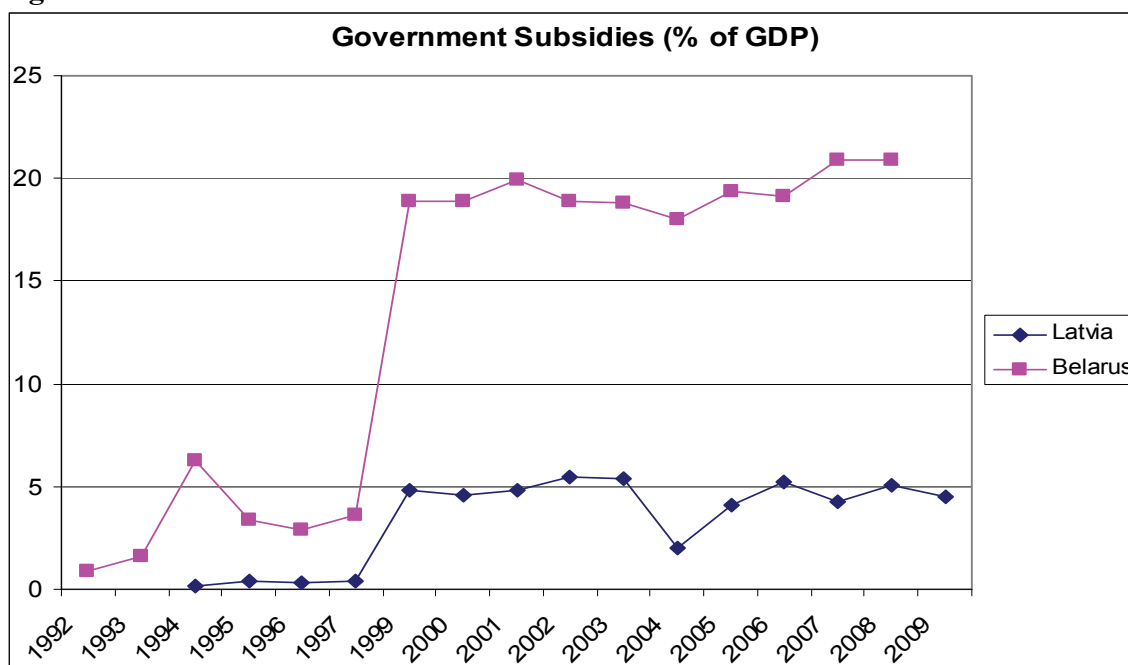
Furthermore, the state still retains extensive control via state mandated production objectives, uncompetitive government mandated wage scales that limit the ability to reward the most productive employees, state mandated social obligations, as well as price controls for numerous products, which limits producers’ freedom to maneuver in the market.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, as Figures, 3.15 and 3.16 illustrate, Belarus has administered a much greater percentage of prices, which numbered 30% of all overall prices in 2008, and was well above Latvia’s 13.0% in 2009. Indeed, Belarus has repeatedly scored far below Latvia in the EBRD rankings on the liberalization of prices and removal of price controls (see Figure 3.15 above).

This heavy state involvement in large-scale industrial planning and production has also resulted in large government subsidies to medium and large industries in Belarus. For example, Figure 3.17 reveals that government subsidization has remained relatively high and consistently hovered around the range of close to 20% of GDP, since the economy began to recover and grow during the late 1990s. Moreover, Belarus’s high rates of subsidization stands in contrast to Latvia where state interference in political-economic relations has remained limited with significantly low levels of subsidy emissions during the same period never going higher than the range of 5% of GDP (see

¹⁰⁷ See for example, EBRD. (2004). *Transition Report 2004.*, p. 102; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 45; de Weydenthal. (1998). “Belarus”; IMF. (2005a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14; IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 62.

Figure 3.17). Obviously, such large government subsidies to state-owned enterprises would generally work to limit reform progress in other areas such as competition policy, which Belarus regularly receives low scores in the EBRD's competition reform rankings (see Figure 3.14 above). Moreover, overall 'restructuring' has remained quite limited, which has resulted in Belarus consistently receiving low annual scores from the EBRD, never reaching the level of 2, for having a chronic lack of reform in improving the corporate governance of enterprises (see Figure 3.13 above).

Figure 3.17



Source(s): 1990-1998: (EBRD 1999: 196, 240). 1999-2003: (EBRD 2005: 108, 152). 2004-2010: (EBRD 2010c).

One of the side-effects of Belarus having so little privatization of large-scale enterprises and industries is that Belarus has had far fewer problems with the phenomenon of oligarchs accumulating major former state assets for their own profit, than Russia and other countries in the CIS. This has largely occurred, as a result of the sheer dominance of President Lukashenko, who "has impinged upon the interests of adherents to the 'oligarchic' model and even against the interests of the 'nomenklatura'"

entrepreneurs.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, “criminality – economic and its other forms – has been kept in check, as a by-product of a zero-tolerance approach.”¹⁰⁹ While Belarus has avoided such explicitly conspicuous corruption as seen with oligarchs stealing state assets, this has not meant that corruption is absent from political-economic relations in Belarus. The fact that the state plays such a pervasive role in the overall political-economy has probably contributed to greater opportunities for corruption to take place. Overall, Belarus has received higher ratings in regards to corruption from Freedom House’s annual rankings, and has scored relatively higher for corruption compared to the low scores received by leading post-Communist reformers such as Latvia (see Figure 3.20 below). Obviously, these higher levels of corruption would have negative repercussions on the overall business environment in Belarus, which would inhibit both domestic sources of investment and also foreign investors.

Business Environment and Foreign Direct Investment

Latvia

Latvia’s comprehensive liberal reforms were also directly complementary to Latvia’s simultaneous policy goal of attracting increased FDI. Indeed, Latvia’s emphasis on monetary reforms that included establishing a strongly independent central bank and maintaining strict anti-inflationary monetary policies to ensure currency and price stability, and the liberalization of the commercial banking sector played an important part in increasing the attractiveness of Latvia as a preferred destination for foreign investment. Moreover, the liberalization of the regulatory regime for commercial banking, financial markets and interests rates, have also been attributed to assisting in the policy of promoting FDI.¹¹⁰

Additionally, as mentioned above, the strength of Latvia’s commercial banking sector has been important in attracting the confidence from investors located in other post-Soviet states where banking and financial reforms have been less robust. As one

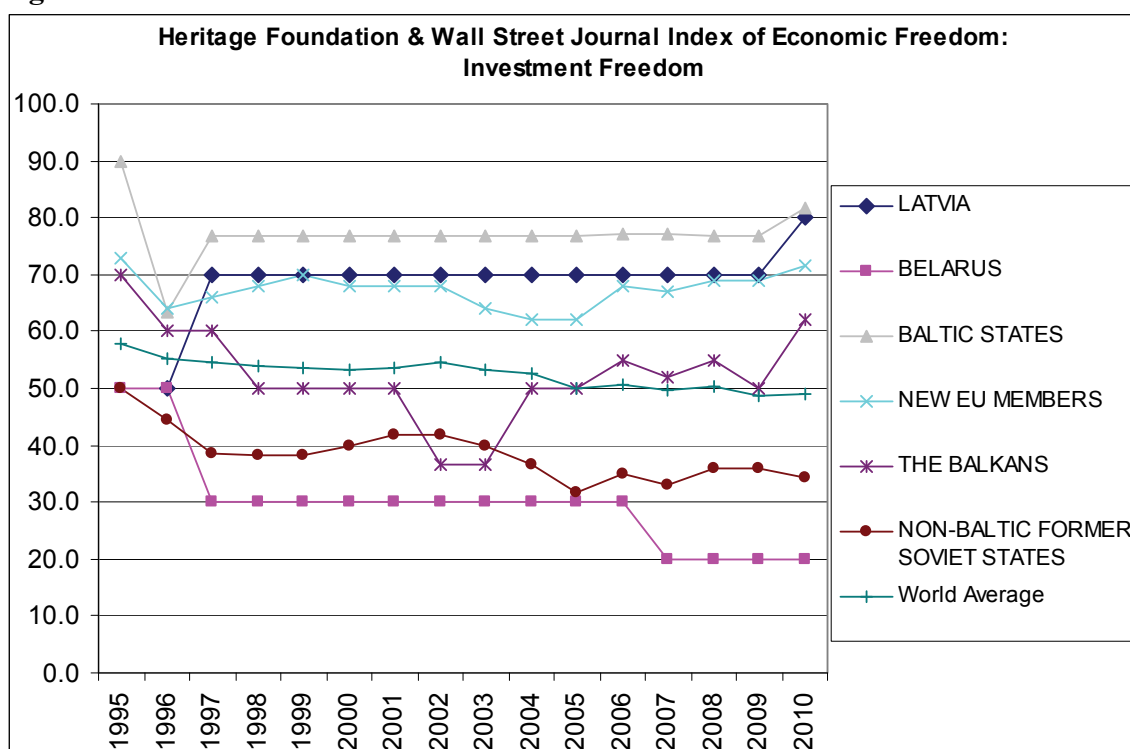
¹⁰⁸ Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 152, 138. This was also mentioned by a Belarusian elite. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). See also, IMF. (2010a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Nuti. (2005). “The Belarusian Economy.,” p. 98.

¹¹⁰ European Commission. (2002). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress.,” p. 91.

Latvian elite pointed out, “compared to Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, this is a very safe, clean, fair, fine country where you can park your money,...[and] where it’s trusted that people will get it back, and the government will not confiscate it.”¹¹¹ Moreover, the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal’s annual rankings of economic freedoms have also given high marks to the levels of investment freedom found in Latvia, which stand in contrast to the low ranking given to Belarus (see Figure 3.18). Finally, as noted above, the high rates of foreign ownership within the commercial banking sector signifies that foreign banks have confidence in the rules regulating the Latvian banking system.

Figure 3.18



Scores: (free 100-80; mostly free 79.9-70; moderately free 69.9-60; mostly un-free; 59.9-50; un-free 49-0).
Source: (Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal 2010).

¹¹¹ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). The ability of the reformed commercial banking sector to attract FDI was also noted by the European Commission. (2002). “Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia’s Progress,” p. 91. Such sentiments about the Latvian Banking sector as a sound place to deposit money for wealthy Russians, has been reported in studies that point out that the Russian media has surprisingly reported positively that “Latvia was an economic success story,” where “Latvia... was portrayed as an island of calm and quiet – an excellent locale for keeping one’s money.” Muižnieks, Nils. (2008a). “The Latvian Economy – the Offshore Next Door.” In *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, ed. Nils Muižnieks. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia., p. 159.

A large reason for Latvia's success at attracting greater amounts of FDI than Belarus, had a great deal to do with the will of Latvian policy officials to establish a liberal legal and regulatory regime in order to provide for market stability and to enhance the overall business environment. Indeed, the extensive structural reforms mentioned above that included the restoration of private property, mass privatizations, improving competition through deregulation, cutting government subsidies, liberalizing prices, lowering taxes, and enhancing rule of law, were a boon in attracting FDI. In regards to establishing a liberal market regime for trading private property, Latvia took key steps early on to attract foreign investors, making the right to buy and own land for foreigners more accessible by 1994. Additionally, the Latvian government further liberalized the private land market in Latvia by instituting a very low tax regime on property taxes, as well as little to no capital gains taxes on the sale of real-estate assets. A key step in this process was in improving regulations to allow for the possibility for foreign investors to buy land and real-estate, where today the only restrictions for foreign investors remains limited to the finiteness of land that is available on the market.¹¹² As the IMF reported in 2006, capital gains on the sale of real-estate were only taxed if the property was resold before the first year anniversary of when the property was purchased.¹¹³ Certainly, such a liberal investment climate with few restrictions on the sale of property would serve to act as a major draw for foreign investors interested in property investment.

In regards to the privatization of medium and large-scale enterprises, it was mentioned above that after 1994, Latvia moved to a system of the direct sales of the remaining state-owned enterprises to majority investors, with a focus on attracting competitive foreign investors.¹¹⁴ Additionally, in implementing vast enterprise restructuring (see Figure 3.13 above), and taking firm steps to cut government subsidies

¹¹² See for example, OECD. (2000). "The Baltic States.," p. 31. This was also mentioned by one Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

¹¹³ IMF. (2006). *Republic of Latvia.*, p. 61. Also mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). More generally, capital gains taxes stand at only 15%. Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal. (2012). "Latvia.," <http://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2012/countries/latvia.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Increased FDI was deemed by Latvian officials to be essential in helping to increase the speed and assist the success of Latvia's efforts at privatization. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). See also, EBRD. (1998). *Transition Report 1998.*, p. 176.

(see Figure 3.17 above), repeated Latvian governments were actively serving to increase overall market competition, which would be a major draw for potential FDI. Moreover, Latvia took concrete steps to enhance the overall business environment by liberalizing prices (see Figure 3.15 above) and strengthening competition laws (see Figure 3.14 above), which were also important complementary steps to attract FDI. Indeed, the European Commission has credited Latvia's extensive structural reforms as being a major boon in drawing significant amounts of FDI into Latvia.¹¹⁵

Institutionally, the Latvian government established the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia as a joint stock company that works in close cooperation under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economics in order to promote increased FDI. Overall, the Investment and Development Agency has been active in promoting policies designed to increase FDI, and also in promoting the exports of Latvian companies. In these realms there was a great deal of coordination between the Investment and Development Agency and other ministries, such as the Ministry of Economics and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where the Investment and Development Agency would play a consultancy role in helping to formulate proposals or policy ideas to promote FDI or increased exports from Latvian companies.¹¹⁶

In general, much of Latvia's policies towards foreign investors followed from a liberal idea that foreign investors should be treated as equals of domestic businesses in Latvia. In doing so, the business environment has been streamlined through the huge reduction of administrative red-tape, de-regulation, and through establishing clear rules of the game that provide a uniform regulatory code for private businesses or foreign investors operating in Latvia. This includes uniform tax laws that contain little red-tape, and place a relatively low tax burden on private individuals, investors and enterprises. Early on, income tax was set at a flat rate of just 25%. As previously mentioned capital gains taxes on the sale of land, real-estate and investments was pretty much made completely free of taxes. Thus, until Latvia's recent economic recession, there has been no capital gains tax, no tax on interest income, and no serious tax on land, meaning

¹¹⁵ European Commission. (1998). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 15; European Commission. (1999). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress.," p. 26; This was also noted by a key Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

¹¹⁶ Described by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010).

everything that benefits high income or high wealth has not been taxed. Today the general capital gains tax on financial investments stands at 15%.¹¹⁷ As will be discussed in chapter 5, this tax regime was designed back in the early 1990s, and the main reason was to make a system that would be more conducive to growth of the private sector, entrepreneurship, business and the market.¹¹⁸

In regards to liberalizing the tax regime for business operators in Latvia, there have been several initiatives implemented since the early 1990s. In fact, the Investment and Development Agency, as early as 1994, began to assist foreign investors by giving FDI preferential treatment under Latvian tax laws, with few restrictions on foreign investors when it came to repatriating assets and profits from investments.¹¹⁹ One initiative to attract FDI was through the establishment of Special Economic Zones where there were special taxation regimes for business operating in these areas, which operated both for foreign investors and domestic investors in Latvia beginning in the mid-1990s. In 1998 the Investment and Development Agency also submitted a proposal to the government, which was later approved by the Saeima, on establishing tax concessions for large investment projects, which was a tax-grant/credit in the amount of 40% of the invested amount, which did not exceed 10 years in duration. This tax concession program was operational until around 2004. Additionally, the tax regime was made clear and transparent for all investors and any businesses coming into Latvia, which also included special tax incentives to special sectors with high value-added potential.¹²⁰

The Latvian government also took strong steps to protect the property rights of foreign investors operating in Latvia by strengthening the rule of law. Here, emphasis placed on improving rule of law and making the legal system the basis for economic activity occurred early in the transformation process, which was started in Latvia already

¹¹⁷ Heritage Foundation & Wall Street Journal. (2012). "Latvia."

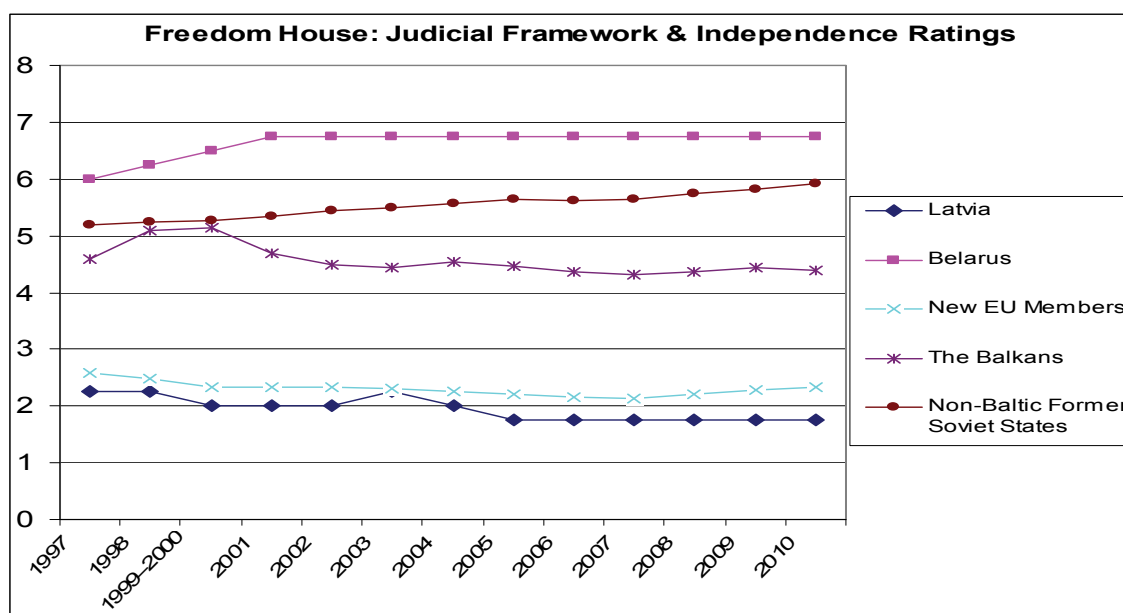
¹¹⁸ Such observations were mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

¹¹⁹ IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 29, 37. This was also mentioned by several knowledgeable elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2b, 2010).

¹²⁰ On Latvian tax initiatives to attract FDI, as listed above, were mentioned by several elites knowledgeable in FDI promotion. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010).

in 1992.¹²¹ Overall, the strength of protections given to investors can be seen in the rankings of investment freedom from the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal's annual rankings, which have placed Latvia near the top compared to other post-Communist countries, and significantly higher than Belarus which ranks as un-free (see Figure 3.18 above). Additionally, Latvia's strong performance in ensuring rule of law can also be seen from examining the positive scores Latvia has received from the annual Freedom House rankings in regards to increasing judicial independence. This stands in contrast to Belarus where property rights are virtually absent, and foreign investors have very few protections against any predatory and arbitrary decisions made by the state, with very little recourse to challenge and appeal any adverse decisions, due to a general inadequate rule of law and lack of judicial independence in Belarus (see Figure 3.19).

Figure 3.19



Scores: Ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest progress and 7 the lowest.
Source(s): (Freedom House 2005; Freedom House 2008; Freedom House 2010).

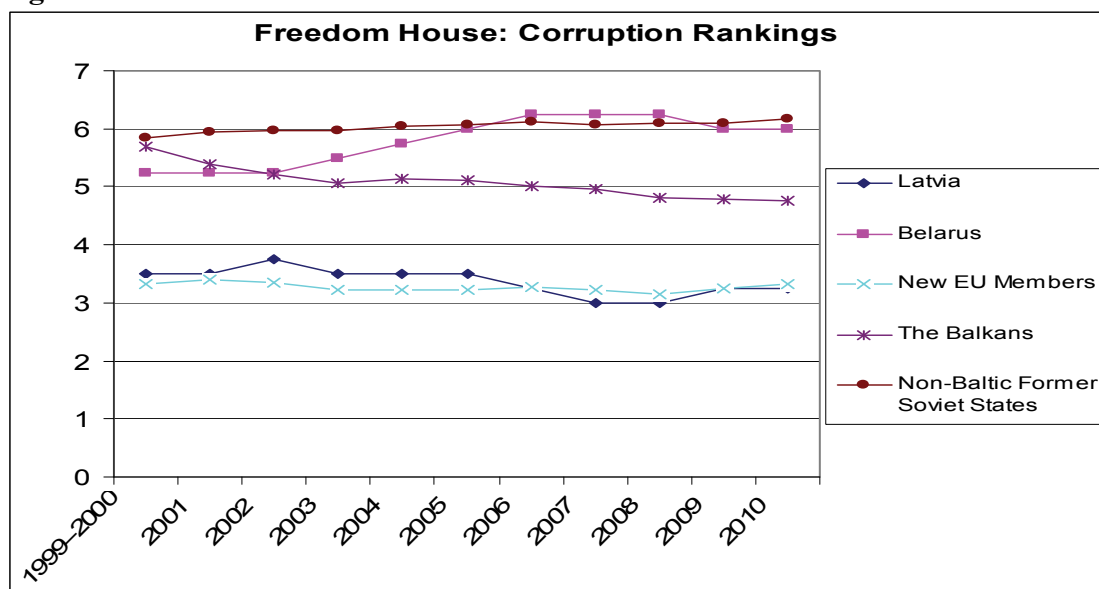
In terms of improving the business environment, corruption has also been greatly reduced and is not widespread, as it is possible for foreign investors to operate freely throughout the economy without having to resort to bribes to corrupt officials.¹²²

¹²¹ Described by one Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

¹²² Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010). See also Figure 3.20 on Corruption Rankings.

Moreover, while there is certainly still a small level of corruption, it is not extremely widespread, which is illustrated by Freedom House's annual rankings on corruption that place Latvia near the top of post-Communist reform leaders when it comes to reducing overall corruption, which also contrasted significantly compared to the poor rankings that Belarus has received in terms of reducing corruption (see Figure 3.20). Certainly, these lower levels of corruption would have a positive influence on the overall business environment, which would help promote both domestic sources of investment and FDI.

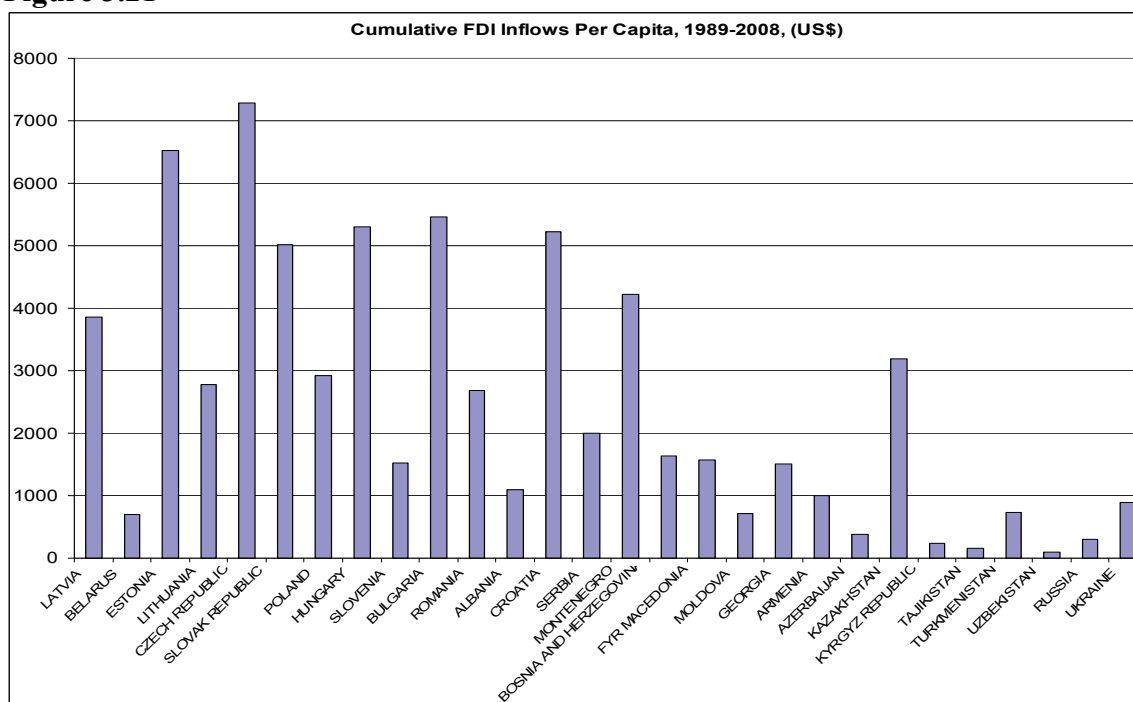
Figure 3.20



Scores: Ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest progress and 7 the lowest.
 Source(s): (Freedom House 2005; Freedom House 2008; Freedom House 2010).

Overall, Latvia's massive reduction of state interference in the economy through comprehensive structural reforms has been important in attracting significant amounts of FDI into Latvia. Indeed, Latvia's liberalized business environment has been noted by several international organizations as being a major drawing point for FDI, which have reported that "the business environment in Latvia is among the best in the transition region."¹²³ This is illustrated from examining the numbers on Figure 3.21, which highlights that Latvia has ranked in the top eight of all post-Communist countries for receiving far greater amounts of FDI per capita from 1989 to 2008, compared to non-reformers such as Belarus.

¹²³ EBRD. (2006). *Transition Report 2006: Finance in Transition*. London: EBRD., p. 138. See also, European Commission. (2002). "Regular Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress," p. 91.

Figure 3.21

Source: (EBRD 2009: 27).

Belarus

Belarus's general lack of comprehensive structural reforms has inhibited FDI, which has been relatively low in Belarus compared to leading liberal reformers like Latvia. Many of the restrictive obstacles are caused by pervasive government involvement in almost every sphere of economic activity, which have greatly inhibited the ability to attract FDI into Belarus. Overall, reforms to the business environment have tended to be tentative at best. Indeed, one of the biggest problems for foreign investors in Belarus is the changing administrative regime which lacks adequate rules of the game, where investors and business people do not know what type of regulations will be in place from one day to the next, as government regulations are constantly in flux. Another connected problem for investors is that nothing is clear or transparent in regard to regulatory rules, as it is very difficult for potential investors to find the necessary information on government websites or documents in order to navigate through all the government red-tape.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ This lack of transparency was mentioned by one Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar observations were noted by knowledgeable

Foreign investors also face a complicated business environment containing a multitude of red-tape that makes it hard for independent entrepreneurs to succeed. In general, there is no uniform code for private business or foreign investors operating in Belarus, as most regulations and laws are very arbitrary and often designed in a way that allows authorities to have a multitude of ways of interpreting them.¹²⁵ This is highlighted by the example of the many decrees issued by President Lukashenko to interfere in all spheres of political-economic activity, which included the notorious decrees on business registration for small and medium businesses, and the decree instituting the ‘golden share’ rule for privatized medium and large-scale enterprises. Essentially, these Presidential decrees act basically on the same level as the law, even if these often contradict existing legal acts already in place.¹²⁶ Moreover, it is hard for aggrieved parties to challenge the validity of such decrees, due the general absence of rule of law, and the resulting lack of independence in the Belarusian judicial system (see Figure 3.19 above).

As previously mentioned, the ‘golden share’ clause essentially gave the Belarusian government effective veto over major decisions, day-to-day operations and the appointment of management, even within private enterprises established by foreign investors. Indeed, the ‘golden share’ rule proved problematic for private enterprises privatized to, or started by foreign investors, because nothing could stop the state if it decided to re-nationalize a recently privatized company, or just simply to nationalize or shut-down a new company started by foreign investors.¹²⁷ Moreover, there was little that aggrieved foreign investors could do to challenge the validity of such laws and decrees, if the state decided to confiscate the assets of foreign investors, due to the general absence

Latvian elites. Latvian Government Official Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010). Latvian Government Official Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

¹²⁵ Such observations were mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also, EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106; EBRD. (2007). *Transition Report 2007.*, p. 106; EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 46. Similar observations were mentioned by one Latvian Official with policy knowledge of the investment climate in Belarus. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010).

¹²⁶ Mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). See also, EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106; Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.” p. 132.

¹²⁷ IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 57; EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 102.

of rule of law and lack of independence in the Belarusian judicial system, since more than half of the judges of the Constitutional Court are appointed by the President. Such threats to foreign investors were pervasive until the ‘golden share’ rule was abolished by the Belarusian government in 2008.¹²⁸

However, the abolishment of the ‘golden share’ rule has not meant that the business environment for FDI has been significantly improved. Indeed, there continues to be an overall trend of the state causing problems for foreign investors through additional administrative tools that allow state authorities to further complicate and control the actions of FDI. This includes non-uniform tax laws that contain a great deal of red-tape, and place high tax burdens on private enterprises.¹²⁹ Additionally, the state also still retains extensive control via uncompetitive government mandated wage scales that limit the ability to reward the most productive employees, as well as socially sensitive price controls for numerous products.¹³⁰ Overall, the command structure of collectively oriented state control permeates almost every aspect of political-economic relations in Belarus when it comes to operating a business, which certainly limits the freedom of foreign investors to manoeuvre in the market. This lack of investor freedom is highlighted by the Heritage Foundation-Wall Street Journal’s annual rankings of economic freedoms, which has given low marks in ranking the lack of investment freedom found in Belarus, which often ranked as un-free (see Figure 3.18 above).

Additionally, it is not an easy path for a foreign investor operating in Belarus to be successful because there are extensive state mandated social obligations that foreign investors operating medium to large-scale enterprises must keep in order to stay in business. Often these social obligations include not only provisions that ensure that a

¹²⁸ EBRD. (2002). *Transition Report 2002.*, p. 123; EBRD. (2003). *Transition Report 2003.*, p. 121; EBRD. (2004). *Transition Report 2004.*, p. 102; EBRD. (2008). *Transition Report 2008.*, p. 104. Such observations were also mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Also mentioned by a knowledgeable Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

¹²⁹ IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 46; EBRD. (2005). *Transition Report 2005.*, p. 106; EBRD. (2007). *Transition Report 2007.*, p. 106; EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144.

¹³⁰ See for example, EBRD. (2009). *Transition Report 2009.*, p. 144. EBRD. (2004). *Transition Report 2004.*, p. 102; IMF. (2000b). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 45; IMF. (2005a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14; IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 62. Such extensive government control was also described by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010).

foreign investor does not come in and fire half of the staff, but also that the investors maintains things like a kindergarten that is located next to the factory, or covers the expense of a stadium or sports club, which is connected to the enterprise. In general, many foreign investors find it difficult to function in such an illiberal business environment because such restrictions severely limit the ability for investors to cut costs and maximize operating efficiency.¹³¹ Thus, even if the workforce will not be that expensive relative to other jurisdictions, such savings will be eradicated by the many social obligations that foreign investors will be forced to pay. More often than not, foreign investors just simply decide against investing in Belarus altogether because there are very few chances for being competitive or successful in the long-run.

Another obstacle includes the large amounts of red-tape and restrictive regulations that allow government inspectors to shut a business down, often under dubious circumstances. Thus, it is common to see a successful enterprise operating one day, and either shut down or seized by the state the next day.¹³² As mentioned above, the aggrieved foreign investors have very little recourse to challenge and appeal such decisions, since there is a general lack of rule of law, as the court system lacks judicial independence (see Figure 3.19 above).

Overall, there have been several reported prominent cases where large foreign investors have made substantial investments in Belarus, only later to be forced out and taken over via the ‘golden share’ rule, or just simply forced to close down operations because of un-resolvable disagreements with Belarusian authorities. Probably the most widely known examples included what happened to the Ford production plant in Belarus that was forced to close down after substantial investments in building a new

¹³¹ Such observations on state mandated social obligations that foreign investors must pay was described by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar observations on obstacles were mentioned by a knowledgeable Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26, 2010).

¹³² Mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also, IMF. (1998). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 60.

manufacturing facility in the early 1990s. Another prominent example, although lesser known to observers in the West, where a large foreign investors had assets seized, as a result of the ‘golden share’ rule, included the Russian Brewing company Baltika, which bought a stake locally in the Belarusian Krynitsa brewery, but reportedly ran into disagreements over production targets and the payment of social fees, where Baltika argued these were not in the contract, which resulted in it being eventually forced out by the government.¹³³ Additionally, well know Swedish firm IKEA pulled out of a potential \$25 million (US) investment in the privatization of a Belarusian sawmill as result of the inability to come to adequate terms during negotiations with Belarusian officials.¹³⁴ In general, Belarus’s illiberal business environment has meant that most foreign investors have followed the actions of IKEA and simply avoided investing in Belarus altogether, as a result of extensive state control over almost all aspects of economic activity.

Additionally, because the state has a monopoly in real-estate, the property rental fees that have to be paid by foreign investors is high. It was also previously mentioned that restrictive land regulations also inhibits foreign investors attempting to start up a business venture, as a result of the significant difficulties in being granted land usage rights, and problems in obtaining permits allowing construction on the land even after it has been obtained. This is especially the case even in new operations where foreign investors choose to invest in new ‘green-field’ endeavors, such as building a factory where the government provides some land, and does not mandate extensive social obligations. This is because of the great difficulty that investors face in being granted construction permits to physically construct the necessary infrastructure on the sight without additional hidden costs.¹³⁵ Also, as previously mentioned, there was also the risk that these ‘green-field’ start-up enterprises could have been seized by the state, as a result of the ‘golden-share’ rule.

¹³³ Described by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). On lengthy negotiations on investment conditions and unwillingness of Belarusian authorities to release majority asset control of Krynitsa to Baltika, see EBRD. (2002). *Transition Report 2002.*, p. 122

¹³⁴ See for example, EBRD. (2002). *Transition Report 2002.*, p. 123.

¹³⁵ See World Bank. (2005). *Belarus.*, p. 167. Similar observations on the restrictions on property for foreign investors was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). One Latvian Official with specified knowledge on Belarus, also mentioned such regulatory restrictions. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

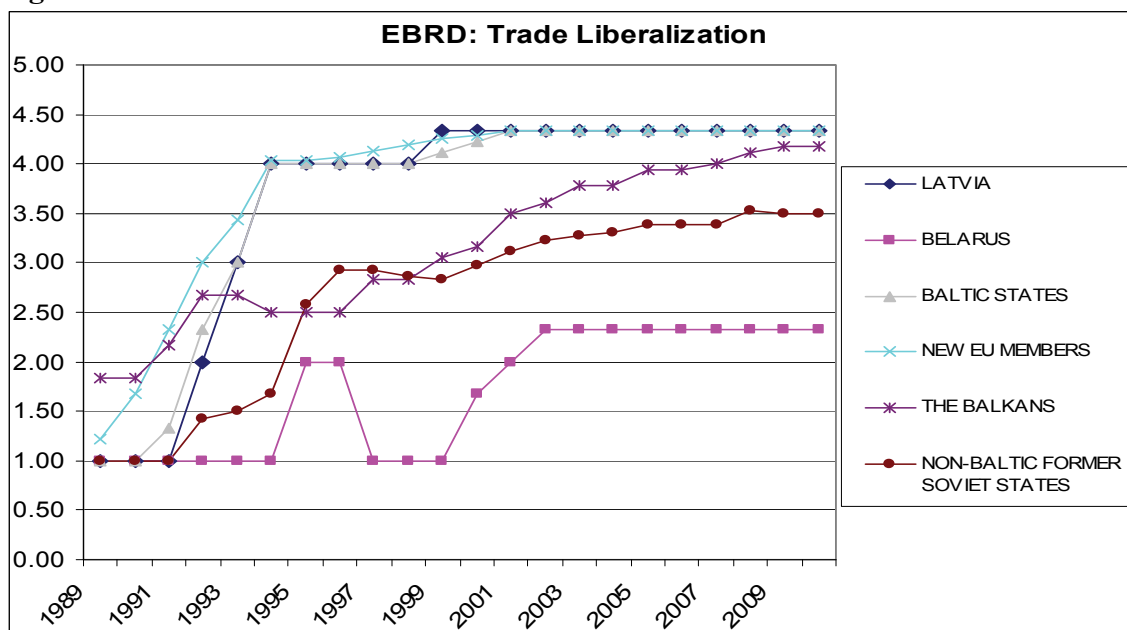
In general, Belarus's illiberal business environment has meant that most foreign direct investment has simply avoided investing in Belarus altogether, as a result of extensive state control over all aspects of economic activity, and the constantly real threat of having one's assets seized by the state for not following some arbitrary rules and/or regulations. This is illustrated from examining the numbers on Figure 3.21 above, which highlights that Belarus has received far less FDI per capita from 1989 to 2008, compared to liberal reform leaders such as Latvia.

Trade Liberalization

Latvia

Since 1991, Latvia has also followed a consistent policy of trade liberalization, which has made Latvia's economy increasingly open to the global market. Overall, Latvia has repeatedly ranked near the top of post-Communist reform leaders in regards to liberalizing its trade regime, and much higher than the performance of Belarus where significant trade protections continue to be maintained (see Figure 3.22).

Figure 3.22

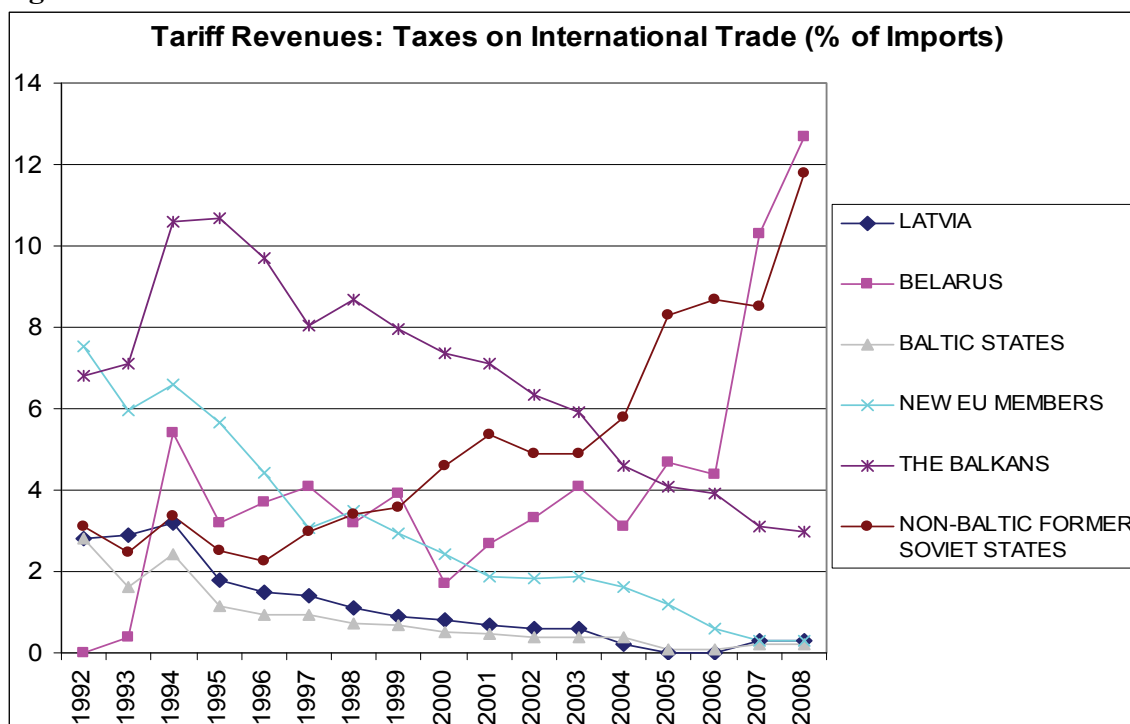


Scores: (1) Widespread import/export controls; (2) Some liberalization of import/export controls; (3) Removal of almost all quantitative and administrative import and export restrictions; (4) Removal of all quantitative and administrative import/export restrictions (apart from agriculture) and all significant export tariffs; insignificant direct involvement in exports/imports by ministries or state-owned trading companies;

no major non-uniformity of customs duties for non-agricultural goods/services; (4+) Standards and performance norms of advanced industrial economies: removal of most tariff barriers; WTO membership.
Source: (EBRD 2010a).

In doing so, Latvia has cut virtually all its trade restrictions to make its economy very open. This is apparent from viewing Figure 3.23, which illustrates that Latvia consistently made progress in cutting its tariff barriers to trade, as there was a steady decline in tariff revenues from imports, from the early 1990s to the present time.

Figure 3.23



Source(s): 1992-1998: (EBRD 1999). 1999-2003: (EBRD 2005). 2004-2009: (EBRD 2010c).

Thus, most sectors of the Latvian economy were opened to global trade competition from the mid-1990s onwards. As previously mentioned, this was especially the case in the agricultural sector, where the Latvian government moved early to remove most protections for farmers, such as trade restrictions, marketing and price controls, and subsidies (see Figure 3.22 above).¹³⁶ As a result, most of these newly independent private

¹³⁶ See for example, Berengaut and Lopez-Claros. (1998). "Overview of Recent Macroeconomic and Structural Adjustment Policies.," p. 7. This was also mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

farmers were left to compete for themselves in a highly liberalized environment that was vastly more deregulated, open and market oriented, than that found in the extensively regulated CAP of the EU. In fact, Latvia's agriculture sector had been so liberalized that in the immediate years right before Latvia's accession to the EU and once becoming a member, Latvia has had to retract some of these liberalizations and introduce increased trade restrictions and subsidies similar to those found in the EU's CAP.¹³⁷

In general, acting as a promoter of free trade has been one of the key mandates of the foreign economic policy that repeated Latvian governments have instructed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement, which involved not only a bilateral agenda with many post-Soviet countries, but also a multilateral agenda of adopting many of the *acqui* requirements of the EU, as well as implementing the liberal requirements to become part of the WTO, which Latvia became a member of in October 1998. In promoting its broader goal of increased liberalized global trade, Latvia has taken an active approach of promoting such goals multilaterally through the WTO.¹³⁸

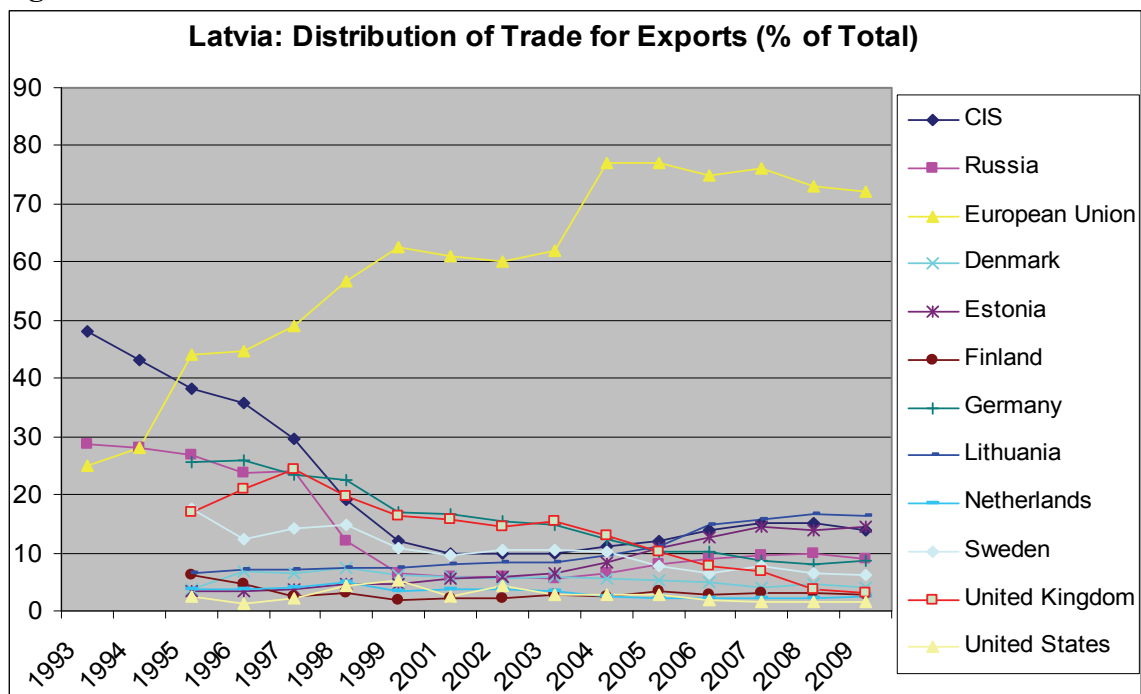
Additionally, Latvia's exports and imports have largely reoriented away from Russia, and towards the West from the mid-1990s onwards (see Figures 3.24 and 3.25 below). This was significant, considering that Latvia was heavily dependent on the former Soviet market for trade, export markets, and the import of raw materials and energy, which were essential for Latvian heavy industry. For instance, in 1990, 88.6% of Latvia's overall trade was directed towards the Soviet market.¹³⁹ To illustrate, Figure 3.24 shows that while 48% of all Latvian exports went to the countries of the CIS in 1994, with 28.6% going to Russia, and only 25% going to EU countries, by 2009 only 14% of exports went to the CIS, with 8.8% to Russia, while the EU increased to 72% of all Latvian exports. Similarly on the import side, Figure 3.25 shows that while 38% of all Latvian imports came from the CIS in 1994, with 28.1% coming from Russia, and only 17% originating in the EU, by 2009 only 16% of imports came from the CIS, 10.7% from Russia, while the EU increased to 75% of all Latvian imports.

¹³⁷ This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

¹³⁸ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010).

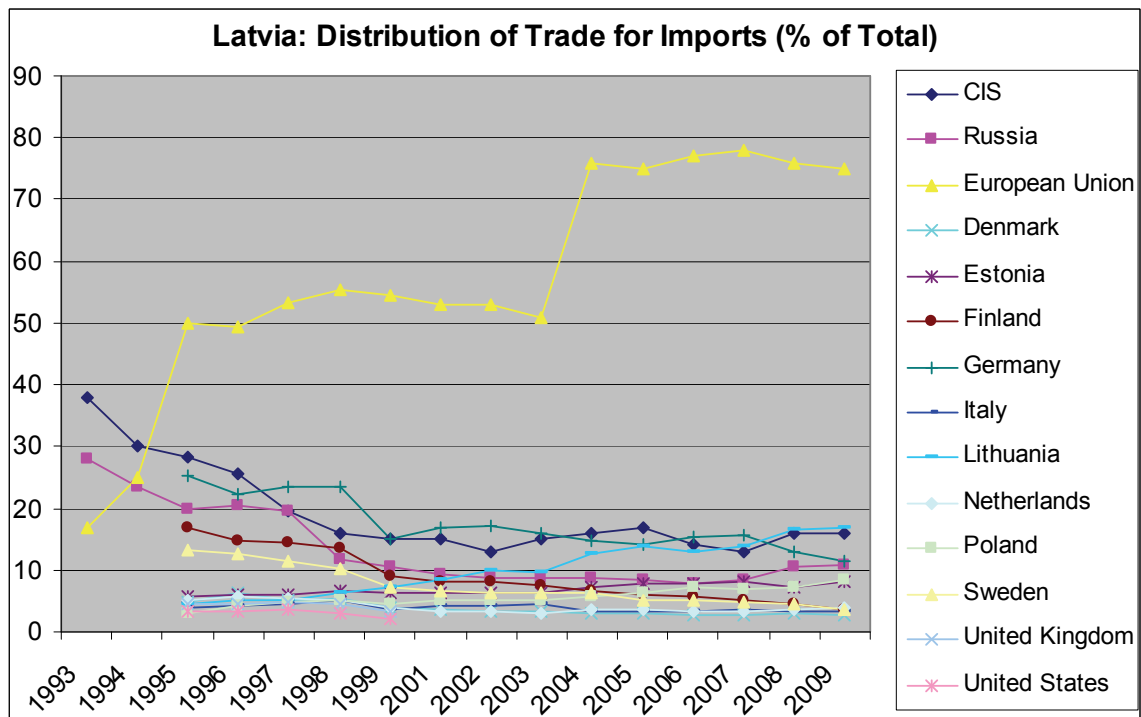
¹³⁹ Michalopoulos and Tarr. (1992). *Trade Payments and Arrangements for the Former USSR.*, p. 39.

Figure 3.24



Source(s): (IMF 1999a: 8-9; IMF 2000a: 85; Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia: Foreign Trade Statistics Section 2010).

Figure 3.25



Source(s): (IMF 1999a: 8-9; IMF 2000a: 85; Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia: Foreign Trade Statistics Section 2010).

Finally, it should be noted that Latvia is not necessarily averse to trade with Russia, as it is still almost completely dependent on Russian energy imports, and is also even possibly open to more liberal trade, so long as this does not require negative political concessions from Riga to Moscow that would be adverse to Latvian worldviews.¹⁴⁰ Such prospects for increased liberalized trade with Russia have been limited by the fact that “Russia never pursued its economic interests in isolation from broader political goals in the Baltic States.”¹⁴¹

Belarus

Since 1991, Belarus has taken an anti-liberal approach in regards to trade, as Belarusian authorities continue to uphold significant trade barriers. Overall, Belarus has consistently ranked near the bottom of post-Communist countries when it comes to liberalizing its trade regime, and well below the reform leaders such as Latvia (see Figure 3.22 above). For example, many trade restrictions continue to exist, especially for those looking to import goods into Belarus, as there are many problems involved in the process of obtaining preliminary import permits and customs clearance.¹⁴² Furthermore, Belarus still utilizes extensive tariff duties in order to restrict trade, which is apparent from viewing Figure 3.23, which illustrates that Belarus continues to collect increased tariff revenues on the imports of goods, which compares negatively to the progress made by Latvia in cutting tariff barriers to trade.

In general, virtually all sectors of the Belarusian economy remain heavily protected by the state, which is especially the case in both the agricultural and industrial sectors, where the government continues to utilize many trade restrictions, as well as other non-tariff barriers such controlled prices, marketing controls and subsidies. Overall, Belarus’s illiberal trade regime contrasts sharply with Latvia’s liberal approach in removing trade barriers. At the present time, Belarus is still not a member of the WTO.

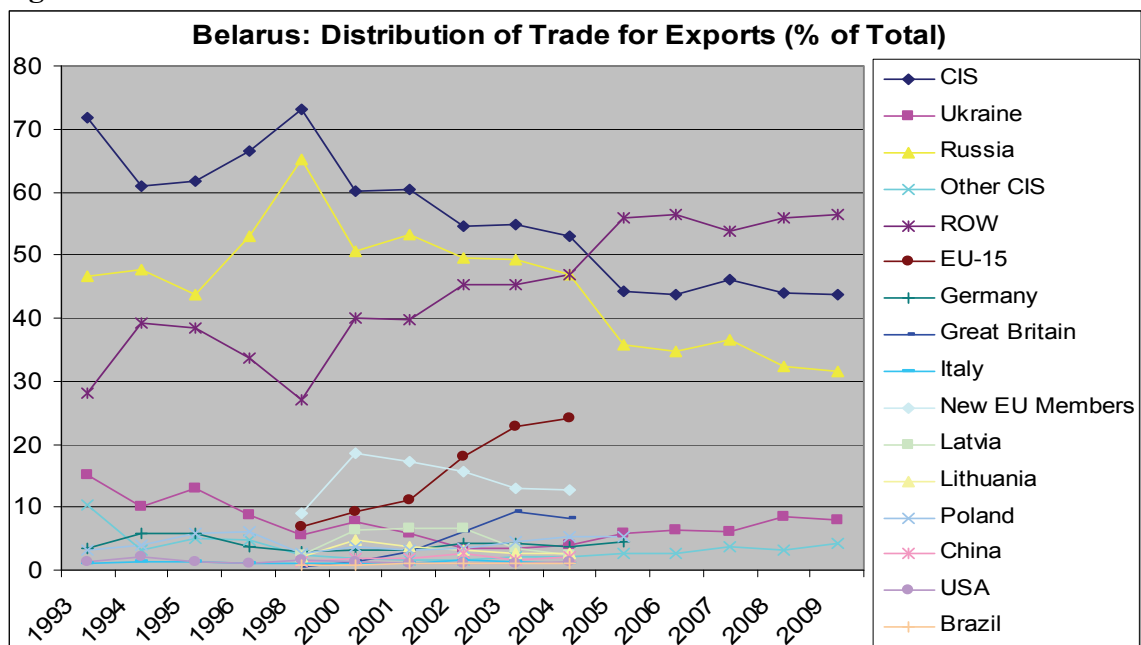
¹⁴⁰ Such sentiments were given by several Latvian elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

¹⁴¹ Doroņenkova, Kristīne. (2008). “Latvia’s Image in Russia: The Legacy of the 1990s.” In *Manufacturing Enemy Images*, ed. Nils Muižnieks. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia., p. 29.

¹⁴² World Bank. (2005). *Belarus*, p. 167.

Belarus's trade orientation has also tended to remain predominantly oriented towards Russia and the CIS countries. Compared to Latvia which has reoriented the majority of trade towards the West, this is significant considering that both Latvia and Belarus were heavily dependent on the former Soviet market for trade, export markets, and the import of raw materials and energy. For instance, in 1990, 86.8% of Belarus's overall trade was directed towards the Soviet market.¹⁴³ Belarus's continued trade orientation to its historic markets in Russia and Eurasia can be seen in Figures 3.26 and 3.27. In terms of exports, Figure 3.26 shows that 71.9% of all Belarusian exports went to the countries of the CIS in 1994, with 46.5% going to Russia, and only 28.1% going to the rest of the world (ROW), whereby 2009, 43% of exports went to the CIS, with 31.5% to Russia, and exports to the ROW increasing to 56.3% of all Belarusian exports. Similarly, Figure 3.27 shows that 71% of all Belarusian imports came from the CIS in 1994, with 55.7% of this coming from Russia, and only 30.0% of imports originating in the ROW, whereby 2009, 63.8% of imports continued to come from the CIS, with 58.5% of this coming from Russia, while imports from the ROW only increased to 36.2%.

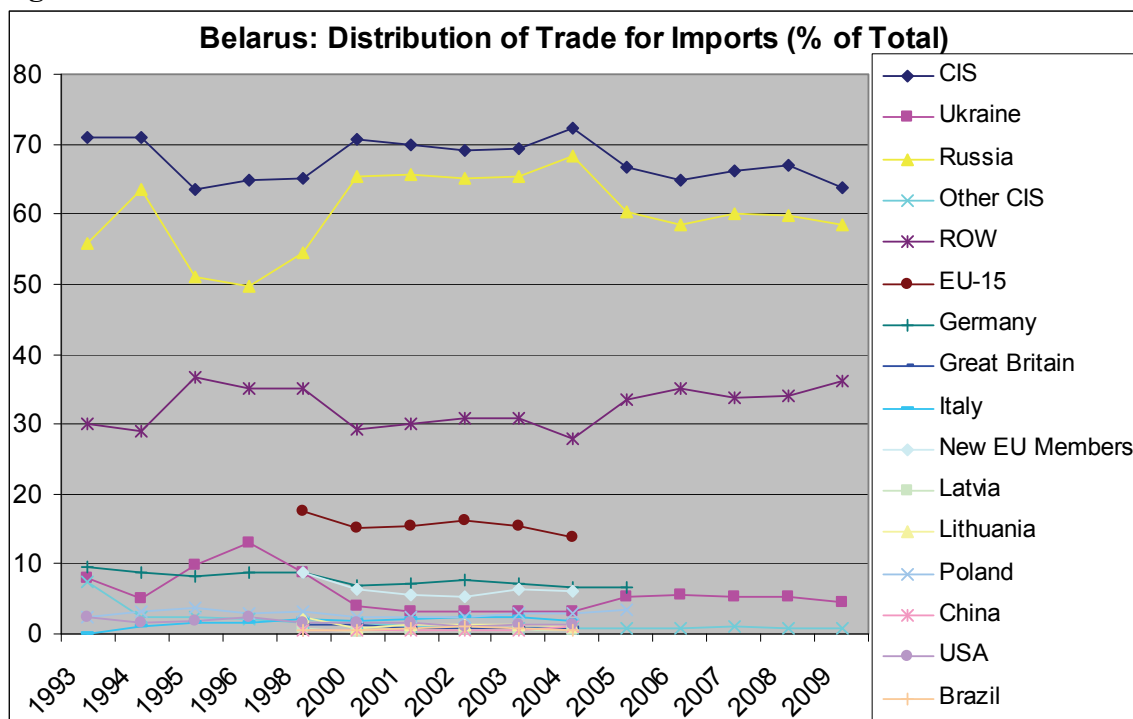
Figure 3.26



Source(s): 1993-1996: (IMF 1997: 115). 1997-2004: (World Bank 2005: 104). 2005: (IMF 2005b: 35). 2006-2009: (National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2010).

¹⁴³ Michalopoulos and Tarr. (1992). *Trade Payments and Arrangements for the Former USSR.*, p. 39.

Figure 3.27



Source(s): 1993-1996: (IMF 1997: 115). 1997-2004: (World Bank 2005: 104). 2005: (IMF 2005b: 35). 2006-2009: (National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Belarus 2010).

Summary

This chapter has illustrated that in terms of the dependent variable, there has been wide divergence in the political-economic policy practices between Latvia and Belarus since 1991, which was seen in Latvia's program of comprehensive reforms, and Belarus's virtual lack of reforms. In pursuing rapid transformation, Latvia made comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe. In terms of monetary policy, Latvia removed itself from the Soviet ruble-zone, and adopted its own currency, the Latvian lats, and also implemented other key reforms, which included reestablishing a strong independent central bank, and running strict anti-inflationary monetarist policies of having tight control over the money supply, in order to promote currency and price stability. Also, the commercial banking sector was privatized and subject to extensive liberalization. Other areas included extensive structural reforms, with an emphasis placed on the restoration of private property for land and real-estate, the rapid privatization of small and medium enterprises, as well as the privatization of large-scale enterprises. Establishing adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property

rights was also given priority. Additionally markets and competition were emphasized, via deregulation, removing price controls, cutting government subsidies to inefficient industries, and lowering taxes. Finally, at the international level, Latvia promoted greater amounts of FDI, and removed barriers in order to liberalize trade.

Overall, all of these policies that composed Latvia's pattern of comprehensive reform were all intricately linked and complementary to one another. Thus, the reforms adopted in Latvia needed to be comprehensive, across the board, and covering wide policy areas, because all these policies were symbiotic and intricately tied to one another, since the exclusion of one these areas of reform could have derailed or undermined the goals of reform initiatives in other areas. For these reasons, Latvia's reforms can be classified as comprehensive reforms. The all-encompassing and comprehensive nature of these reforms can be seen in that such reforms were intricately connected in facilitating Latvia's transformation into a liberal-democratic-capitalist economy, and return to the West. Thus, it seems clear that Latvia's policies were driven by a deep commitment to liberal ideas, since some reforms (e.g. initial land reforms) did not much benefit either government or economic elites, and may have actually been bad for the national economy, at least in the short run. As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 below, Latvia's success in implementing rapid comprehensive liberal reforms resulted from a strong political will both amongst elites and in society in favour of de-Sovietization of the political-economy, transformation into a liberal market economy, and the goal of Latvia returning to Europe via gaining accession to the EU. This strong political will was driven by the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and exhibit a reformist sentiment.

Conversely, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to its political-economic affairs, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian, where the state controls almost all the economy, and reforms have been largely non-existent. In terms of monetary policy, the central bank in Belarus has been repeatedly subject to intense political interference, where political authorities placed far less emphasis on anti-inflationary monetarist policies, such as limiting the supply of money, which has resulted in problems of higher

inflation and far-less currency stability relative to Latvia. Also, a liberalized private commercial banking sector is non-existent, as banks are largely owned and controlled by the state. Structural reforms have also largely been absent, which can be seen with the continued extensive state control over agricultural land and real-estate, and the general lack of privatization of small, medium and large-scale enterprises. Even where some small amounts of privatization have occurred, establishing adequate rule of law to protect individual property rights has largely been absent. Additionally, markets and competition are not prioritized, and the state continues to play a strong role in most political-economic matters, in the form of maintaining extensive regulations, price controls, subsidization of industry, high taxes, and arbitrary decisions that flout rule of law. Finally, at the international level, Belarus has taken an anti-liberal approach, as Belarusian authorities continue to uphold significant barriers to trade and FDI. As will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7 below, it is hypothesized that Belarus's lack of liberal reform is attributable to the historically rooted political-cultural worldviews that are found in Belarus, which favour collectivism, communal property, statist solutions, paternalism, and authoritarian leadership.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL ROOTS OF LATVIAN POLITICAL-CULTURE

From the outset of regaining independence in 1991, Latvia remained completely linked to the Soviet political-economic institutional apparatus, which meant that Latvia had to go through disengagement with the rest of the Soviet Union. As shown in chapter, 3, Latvia made comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe and away from Russia. Latvia's success in implementing rapid comprehensive liberal reforms was influenced by a strong political will both amongst elites and in society in favour of de-Sovietization and transformation into a market economy with private ownership and minimal state regulation forming the foundation of Latvia's political-economy and society. The strong political-will of Latvians to return to Europe, de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy via comprehensive liberal political-economic reforms was driven by Latvia's predominantly liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and also exhibit a reformist sentiments.

Overall, Latvia's strong political will to de-Sovietize, tear down all traces of Soviet command economy, and transform into a market economy were intricately connected and part of a broader goal ensuring Latvia's independence, freedom and return to Europe. Latvian people, both elites and masses believed that Soviet command policies were not only a failure, but also political-culturally alien and imposed forcefully on Latvia by the Russian dominated Soviet Union. Thus, a key emphasis was placed on an overall pattern of de-Sovietization of the political-economy, which resulted from the Latvian view of the Soviet system as antithetical and harmful to Latvian political-cultural interests. Moreover, after suffering nearly fifty years of being forcefully held against their will under Soviet/Russian domination, there was an immense yearning for freedom found amongst ethnic-Latvians, which involved an intense desire for both individual freedom and the right to own private property.

Such desires for individual freedom and the right to own property, coupled with anti-statist views favouring a limited role for the state, entailed an immense faith in the market, and a cult of private property being widely shared both amongst most Latvian elites and members of society, which viewed private property as being sacred, and

generally loathed and distrusted government planning. Moreover, these worldviews resulted in the normative view that the market economy was the ‘best’ and ‘right’ way to effectively organize the political-economic affairs of society in order to promote economic growth and overall development. This immense faith in the market and cult of private property lead to all-things that were seemingly Soviet to be rejected, with a general view favouring ultra-liberal marketization, which was seen as the antithesis of Soviet political-economic practices. These worldviews came into practice in the policy goals of getting the state out of role of business management, and substantially removing government planning from all parts of the economy. Additionally, while there were certainly hard times in the initial years after regaining independence, this did not lessen the Latvians intense liberal worldviews. Indeed, most Latvians were ready to press on through any difficulties during the transformation process, which most Latvians considered light in comparison to the historical memories they remembered of the many hardships endured during Soviet rule, and nothing could be as worse as those times. Overall, most Latvians generally viewed transformation to a liberal market economy as essential in Latvia’s quest to de-Sovietize, ensure freedom, return to the West, and return to normalcy.

To understand the roots of such ideas, it is necessary to trace the origins of Latvia’s historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, which place Latvia firmly in the realm of Western Civilization and help to explain Latvians preferences during the post-Soviet period to break free from Moscow’s shackles and return to Europe, via de-Sovietization and transformation to a liberal market economy. However, it is not simply enough to only go back and examine the interwar period of independence and subsequent period of Soviet rule. This is because it would result in an insufficient understanding of the historical roots of Latvia’s political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, historical memories, which played important roles in shaping both the politics of the first independent Republic of Latvia, Latvian responses to Soviet rule, as well as worldviews and political behavior after regaining independence in 1991.

This leads back to the core hypothesis that Latvia’s political-cultural worldviews are conditioned by Latvia’s unique historical legacies in terms of its ways of life and historical memories relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and

economics. Thus, several core themes will be examined in the historical chapter that follows, which involves a comparative historical analysis that takes a chronological format to trace the roots and historical evolution of Latvia's historic political-cultural worldviews, way of life, and historical memories throughout various key stages of Latvia's history. Religiously, Latvia belongs historically to Western Christianity, and most Latvians converted to Lutheranism, which encouraged literacy, individualism, individual equality, private property, and reformism, and was largely influenced by the pietism made popular to Latvians by the Moravian Brethren. Politically, Latvia had been ruled over by German nobility, Sweden, and Russian Tsars, beginning in 1795, which ruled Latvia in a more hands-off manner, allowing more openness and cultural autonomy, due to the strength of the Baltic German nobility that had ruled over Latvia for centuries. Economically, the majority of ethnic-Latvians remained rural until the mid-Twentieth century, and Latvians had long experience with private property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads. For rural Latvians, private property was often held at the level of being sacred in worldviews and historical memories of Latvians.

Throughout history there was also a persistent pattern of Latvian resistance against authoritarian encroachments to personal freedom and private property, which was seen in numerous rural uprisings over the centuries, seen during Russian rule, and was largely driven in most instances by a constant hunger for land amongst rural Latvians. Latvia's historic individualist worldviews and ways of life were evident during the failed revolution of 1905, during the Russian Revolution, and Latvian war of independence (1918-1920). Furthermore, Latvia's historically liberal political-culture thrived during interwar independence, 1918-1940, the foundations of which were built on the historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers. Moreover, Latvia was forcefully and illegally incorporated into the USSR. As a result Latvian views of the Second World War are thus uniquely shaped by its position of being literally stuck between a rock and hard place, being first occupied by the Soviet Union, then by Germany, followed again by the Soviet Union.

Overall, the majority of Latvians were rural until 1945. This change under Soviet rule, as Latvia experienced significant Soviet-style industrial development after 1945, becoming one of the leading 'industrial engines' of the Soviet economy. However, since

political-economic decision-making was largely controlled by ethnic-Russians and Russified Latvians that were beholden to Moscow, most ethnic-Latvians viewed Soviet economic industrial development negatively. This resulted from the forced collectivization of agricultural and destruction of individual private farms, and the subsequent movement to heavy industrialization, which resulted in environmental degradation of rural Latvia, mass immigration of non-Latvians into Latvia causing ethnic-Latvians to become nearly a minority, forced Russification, and constant attacks on religion and culture. Indeed, there was a distinct clash of cultures occurring in Soviet Latvia, seen with the many acts of resistance throughout the period, both violent and passive, from ethnic-Latvians to Soviet Russian rule. In tracing the motives of Latvian resistance in key instances throughout Soviet rule, it will be highlighted that Communist ideas never widely credible amongst ethnic-Latvians, and alien to Latvia's historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. Finally, it is one of the hypotheses that Latvia's predominantly liberal-individualist historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life were not swept away during the era of Soviet rule.

Such a comparative historical analysis examining key periods of Latvian history is essential to trace the roots of Latvia's liberal-individualist historic political-cultural worldviews, way of life, and historical memories that are predominantly found in Latvian society. This is a valuable exercise because it will give insight to help understand how Latvians historically rooted political-cultural worldviews shaped preferences in the post-Soviet period to break free from Moscow's shackles and return to Europe, via de-Sovietization and transformation to a liberal market economy, which will be discussed in the following chapter on Latvia's contemporary political-cultural worldviews.

German Teutonic Knights and Conversion to Western Christianity

Latvia is historically connected to the cultural sphere of Western civilization. Here, the key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Latvia's liberal individualist political-culture was Latvia's original conversion into Western Christianity and exposure to the subsequent Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism, which placed Latvia firmly in the realm of Western Culture. Certainly, a key moment in the historical evolution of Latvia's Western liberal political-culture was

the conquest of the Baltic region and the lands of Latvia in the thirteenth century, by the German Teutonic Knights, whose crusades brought Western Christianity, to which the local inhabitants eventually converted. This period was of crucial importance in the historical evolution of Latvia's historic political-culture, and also highlights how religious-cultural variables precede competing concepts of national identity and historic institutionalism. As Vardys and Misiunas point out, Latvian "peoples were absorbed into the world of Western Christendom before they could develop a native political system...thus establishing the northeastern frontier of the Latin Christian world."¹

Overall, the religious foundations of Western Christianity and subsequent conversion to the Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism were the crucial definitive influences informing and setting Latvia's political-cultural worldviews and ways of life down a unique and differing evolutionary path that was distinct from that of Belarus and Russia which belonged to the cultural realm of Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, there is wide academic consensus that Latvia firmly belongs in the Western Christian cultural realm and remains distinct from Russian Orthodox culture. To illustrate, it was argued by Latvian historian Alfreds Bilmanis that the "Baltic States are, ethnographically, entirely different from Russia...Latvians...speak their own national tongue, have different creeds and an entirely different cultural and social mode of life from the Russians."² Additionally, Bilmanis further argued that in regards to Russia, "Latvia and the other Baltic States are the easternmost guardians of occidental culture," and that "the ethical codes of the two cultures [Latvia and Russia], expressed in terms of their religion, are sharply distinct."³ Similarly, Rutkis argued that "the three Baltic provinces remained non-Russian in the languages (Latvian, Estonian and German); in religion (Lutheran and Roman Catholic); in the farm pattern (detached homestead as opposed to the Russian village community), and in customs of life and world outlook."⁴ Finally, it is also important to refer specifically to maps showing Western Civilizations eastern cultural

¹ Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. (1978). "Introduction: The Baltic Peoples in Historical Perspective." In *The Baltic States in Peace and War: 1917-1945*, eds. Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 2.

² Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 139.

³ Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 39.

⁴ Rutkis, J., ed. (1967). *Latvia: Country and its People.* Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation., p. 217.

boundary.⁵ These maps divide Latvia and Belarus down their political border, which places Latvia firmly in the cultural realm of Western Christianity, and distinct from Belarus and Russia, which are placed in the realm of Orthodox Christianity.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the Baltic Germans put down firm roots in the Baltic region and would become the dominant group in the lands of Latvia until 1918, and would have significant influence over all matters in regards to religion, culture, politics and economics, and serve to help firmly root Latvian political-culture in Western culture. Certainly, not all the influences the Baltic German barons brought was of a positive nature, since from the thirteenth century onwards, until the advent of Swedish rule in the 1600s, Baltic German barons also repeatedly subverted the rights of the native Latvians and increasingly subjected them to greater levels of serfdom. However, while Baltic German barons were increasing their dominance negatively towards the native Latvians in the realm of political-economic relations, the Baltic Germans were nonetheless having significant cultural influences over the local population. Moreover, the spread of Christianity continued its unabated advance amongst the local inhabitants, which further worked to solidify Latvians belonging to Western culture.⁶

⁵ See Huntington. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations.*, p. 159; Eberhardt. (2004). "The Concept of Boundary.," p. 184. For wide consensus on Latvia belonging to the cultural realm of Western Christianity and being distinct from Russian culture, see Schwabe, Arved. (1947). *The Story of Latvia and Her Neighbours: A Historical Survey*. Edinburgh: The Scottish League for European Freedom., p. 3-6, 11; Halecki, Oscar. (1952). *Borderlands of Western Civilization: A History of East Central Europe*. New York: The Ronald Press Company., p. 234; Lābsvirs, Janis. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic States: Collectivization of Latvian Agriculture, 1944-1956*. [PhD Dissertation, Indiana University]., p. 14; Blodnieks, Adolfs. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation*. New York: Robert Speller & Sons., p. 267, 309; Berzins, Alfreds. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime*. New York: Robert Speller & Sons., p. 1, 55; Watson, Herbert A. Grant. (1965). *The Latvian Republic: The Struggle for Freedom*. London: Herbert Allen & Unwin., p. 26; Dunn, Stephen P. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area Under Soviet Rule*. Research Series, No. 11. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley., p. 1; Taagepera, Rein. (1973). "Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics." In *Problems of Mininations: Baltic Perspectives*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., R. Taagepera and M. Valgemāe. San Jose: AABS., p. 71, 82-83; Von Rauch, Georg. (1974). *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: 1917-1940*. Berkeley: University of California., p. 239-240; Prazauskas, Algimantas. (1994). "The Influence of ethnicity on the Foreign Policies of the Western Littoral States." Ch. 7. In *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. R. Szporluk. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe., p. 161; Bilmanis, Alfred. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. Westport: Greenwood Publishers., p. 17, 21; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 27, 29; "Western Press, Public Opinion and Policy: Discussion." (1991). Ch. 11. In *Toward Independence: The Baltic Popular Movements*, ed. Jan Arved. Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 141; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 31; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 24; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 177.

⁶ For example, Plakans notes that by the sixteenth century, "The institutions of the Christian church in the littoral seemed permanently established." Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 30. Bleiere et al also note that "By 1555, the Reformation was completely victorious." Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 23.

Even as the formal political rulers of the Baltic regions changed between various competing powers, the Baltic German nobility remained dominant in the region throughout the subsequent periods of rule under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Sweden, and the Russian Empire.⁷ Thus, although Latvians certainly suffered under the increased feudalization brought by the ever-dominant Baltic German barons, there was nonetheless a great deal of cultural learning from the German overlords to the native Latvian population in regards to religion, culture, political-economic habits and practices, and legal traditions.⁸ The sections that follow will trace the Western Christian and Protestant Lutheran roots informing Latvia's historic cultural evolution that have resulted in the predominantly liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, which are characterized by strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, a view of private property as being sacred, a favouritism towards a limited role for the state in the economy, and behavior exhibiting a strongly reformist sentiment.

Protestant Reformation and Spread of the Lutheran Faith to Latvia

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the increasing Christian faith held amongst native Latvians was uniquely shaped by the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation and the rapid spread of Lutheranism to the Baltic regions, which the majority of ethnic-Latvians would eventually come to subscribe. Overall, there is wide consensus that the Protestant Reformation and spread of the Lutheran faith to the regions of Latvia helped to firmly plant Latvia within the cultural realm of Western Christianity, which made

⁷ The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would have sovereign control, yet ruled in a hands-off manner over the Latvian regions of Livonia and Zemgale from 1569 to 1629. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was also sovereign over the autonomous Duchy of Courland from 1569-1795, and also ruled more directly over the Latvian region of Latgale until Russia annexed the region in 1772. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth surrendered control to Sweden over the regions of Livonia, Zemgale and parts of Courland, which Sweden would rule over from 1629-1721. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also ruled directly over the Latvian region of Latgale until it was annexed by Russia in 1772.

⁸ For additional consensus on the importance of cultural influences from Baltic Germans, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 6; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic States.*, p. 17; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 18; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 53; Ezergailis, Andrew. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.* Boulder: East European Monographs., p. 1; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 2; Prazauskas. (1994). "The Influence of ethnicity," p. 161; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 24; Strods, Heinrihs. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia (1945-1985)." Part II. In *Regaining Independence: Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia 1945-1991*, eds. Valdis Blūzma, Tālav Jundzis, Jānis Riekstiņš, Gene Sharp, Heinrihs Strods. Riga: Latvia Academy of Sciences., p. 77. Similar sentiments were given by one Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

Latvians culturally distinct from Russian Orthodox culture. To illustrate, Clemens points out that the “acceptance [of] Lutheranism in the sixteenth century...started a qualitative shift in the mentality of Estonian and Latvian peasants...Western forms of Christianity...Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Moravian Brethren influences there helped to create a theology of individual responsibility and freedom relative to the world views inculcated elsewhere by Russian Orthodoxy.”⁹ Only in Latgale, which was directly controlled by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, until 1772, did the majority of the population remain Catholic.

The Lutheran faith brought a new sense of heightened liberalism, which placed an important emphasis on the individual freedom, literacy, property, and reform. Specifically, in *Christian Liberty [1520]*, Martin Luther detailed his belief in “Christian man’s” right to personal liberty and freedom, the right to accumulate property, the individual’s right to voluntary service and cooperation, and the necessity of free men to think individually, speak truth to power, and perform dissidence in the face of tyranny.¹⁰ Indeed, the ideas of individual freedom, individual equality and promotion of literacy rights came significantly to Latvia as a result of the values spread by Lutheran Protestantism. This is because Lutheranism emphasized that individuals should have direct access to the word of God, which therefore meant that one needed to be able to read the Bible. In addition to values promoting literacy, was the Protestant idea of the pastor serving only as a shepherd to his congregation, who was not superior to the rest of his believers, which not only stood in contrast to Roman Catholicism where priests were

⁹ Clemens, Walter C., Jr. (1991). *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*. New York: St. Martin’s., p. 21-22, 7-8, 113. Clemens also recently noted that “the Estonian scholar-politician Rein Taagepera told me (via e-mail, 2004) that ‘if you want to explain Estonia [Latvia] in one word, it would be “Luther.”’” Clemens, Walter C., Jr. (2009). “Culture and Symbols as Tools of Resistance.” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 40, 2: 169-177., p. 169-171. For similar consensus on the crucial importance of the Reformation on Latvian culture, see Thaden, Edward C., ed. (1981). *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*.

Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 5, 19; Halecki. (1952). *Borderlands of Western Civilization.*, p. 234; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 4; Goeckel, Robert, F. (1995). “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process.” Ch. 10. In *The Politics of Religion in Russian and the New States of Eurasia*, ed., Michael Bourdeaux. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 219; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Martin Luther detailed his belief in “Christian man’s” right to personal liberty and freedom (p. 24, 26, 27), the right to accumulate property (p. 38), the individual’s right to voluntary service and cooperation (p. 38, 47), and the necessity of free men to think individually, speak truth to power, and perform dissidence in the face of tyranny [e.g. freedom, reform and resistance] (45, 51, 52-53). In Luther, Martin. (1957). *Christian Liberty [1520]*. Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House. For Protestantism promoting such ideas and favouring the rule of law, see Max Weber. (1964). *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press., p. 179, 198-199. Similar consensus can also be found in Troeltsch, Ernst. (1931). *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches: Volume Two*. London: George Allen & Unwin., p. 560.

a privileged class, but also helped instill and spread individualist egalitarian values and liberal-democratic ideals of freedom. This is because “if everyone, male and female, could be his or her own agent before God, every person had a right to self-expression and a vote in how things happened in society.”¹¹ Thus, in promoting values of individual freedom, individual equality and literacy, Protestantism helped in the long-run to also promote many liberal-democratic sentiments.

Certainly, a key aspect assisting in this was the big emphasis of Lutheranism on teaching the religion in the native language of the peasants. This was of great importance because “Protestant pastors, usually Germans, contributed to the survival of the native Baltic languages.”¹² Therefore, in the long-run, it can be argued that Lutheranism was also of central importance in raising the national conscious of Latvians, which was particularly the case under the teachings of the Moravian Brethren, as it emphasized literacy of the individual. Specifically, Reformation ideas which promoted individual literacy resulted in bibles and other religious material being translated into the Latvian language, which resulted in vast portions of rural Latvians becoming literate and able to individually access the word of God.

During the Reformation schools began to be established for Latvian peasants. This meant that Latvian territories would eventually become one of the regions of Europe where more people were literate than in other parts of the continent. Moreover, once the people started reading the Bible, they also started reading other sources such as newspapers, calendars, almanacs, and literature containing farming methods. Overall, a highly literate society began to develop as a result of Reformation ideas, so that by the beginning of the Twentieth century, literacy rates in the predominantly Protestant regions

¹¹ Clemens. (2009). “Culture and Symbols as Tools of Resistance,” p. 171, 169. For similar consensus on the importance of Lutheranism promoting ideas of individual equality and literacy, see Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 22; Grudule, Māra. (2003). “German Parsons and the Latvian Peasant Enlightenment between the 18th and the 19th Century.” In *Religion and Political Change in Europe: Past and Present*, ed., Ausma Cimdina. Pisa: Edizioni Plus – Università di Pisa., p. 128; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 40, 66; Arnolds Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia: An Outline.* Stockholm: M. Goppers., p. 280-281; Taagepera. (1973). “Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics,” p. 71; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 178; Gray. (1979). “Conclusions,” p. 255; Thaden. (1981). *Russification in the Baltic Provinces.*, p. 5, 19; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 23; Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007); Raun, Toivu U. (1973). “Modernization and the Estonians.” In *Baltic History*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., W. L. Winter and M. Valgemäe. Columbus: AABS., p. 138.

¹² Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 29. For similar consensus, see Thaden. (1981). *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland.*, p. 5, 19; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 32

stood at 95% in Livonia, and 88% in Courland, while only 50% in Latgale, which was predominantly Roman Catholic and had been rule directly by Russian Tsars.¹³

Lutheranism also brought ideas promoting the rights of individuals to own private property and rule of law. This is because “the founders of Protestantism went beyond the Catholic Church’s tolerance of property: both Luther and Calvin emphatically endorsed it, linking it with labor, which they regarded as a Christian duty.”¹⁴ Specifically, in *Christian Liberty [1520]*, Martin Luther argued “it is the part of Christian man to take care of his own body for the very purpose that, by its soundness and well-being, he may be enabled to labour, and to acquire and preserve property.”¹⁵ Additionally, Ernst Troeltsch points out that Lutheranism subscribes to the view that “private property, which is the product of labour, is also ordained by God.”¹⁶ Moreover, as Taagepera points out, the spread of the Protestant Reformation, “apart from purely religious aspects...also meant...in the case of Lutheran Latvia and Estonia, adherence to the Protestant norms of literacy and hard work.”¹⁷ Indeed, many of the philosophical tenants of Lutheranism were in sync with the predominantly rural character of the majority of native Latvian peasants, and thus had a key influence in shaping Latvians liberal worldviews and mindset favoring individual freedoms, habits of hard work, and view of private property as being sacred.

Overall, the liberal values of Lutheranism fit nicely with the Latvian peasants’ independent character, and historical memories that are reported to have already have been passed down by previous generations of native Latvians, which told a story of Latvians individual freedoms and property being increasingly subverted by the Baltic German barons. However, while subject to the increasing whims of Baltic German

¹³ See, Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 23, 95; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 48.

¹⁴ Richard Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.* New York: Vintage Books., p. 17. Additionally, Gray also noted that one can find significant support existing in the Christian scriptures, amongst pre-Reformation Western Christian thought, for a long tradition which supports private property. Gray, Alexander. (1947). *The Socialist Tradition: Moses to Lenin.* New York: Longmans, Green and Co., ch. 2, p. 32-60.

¹⁵ Luther. (1957). *Christian Liberty [1520]*., p. 38.

¹⁶ Troeltsch also importantly notes that “in the view of Luther, “the standard of private property ought not to exceed the requirements of one’s rank, yet pleasure in possessions, even in gold and silver, is allowed within limits of a grateful frugality without any scrupulous consideration of the measure of one’s needs.” Troeltsch. (1931). *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches.*, p. 555. Similar consensus on such values is also give by Richard Schlater. (1973). *Private Property: The History of an Idea.* New York: Russell and Russell., p. 87, 90-92.

¹⁷ Taagepera. (1973). “Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.,” p. 71.

barons, it should be noted that the serfdom experienced by Latvian peasants still remained limited and was only beginning to fully infringe on Latvian peasant freedoms. Moreover, for a long time the Latvian peasant farmers, even when living under serfdom, continued to retain their own individual plots of land for their own use, which contained the historic cultural institution of the family farmstead, and which afforded peasants significant freedom to maneuver. To illustrate, it has been pointed out that “though bound by tribute and labor-duty charges to the manor-lords, they were allowed to preserve their keenly valued property rights, which they considered God-given.”¹⁸ However, these rights were gradually reduced from the thirteenth century onwards, until the advent of Swedish rule in the 1600s, when Baltic German barons repeatedly subverted the rights of the native Latvians and increasingly subjected them to greater levels of serfdom.

Historical memories of early Baltic German rule portrayed in various historical narratives describe a gradual and sustained advance of restrictions placed on the native Latvian population, and one where the previously free peasants had their individual freedoms and natural rights to property gradually diminished. For instance, a predominant historical memory held amongst most peasants would describe the past when Latvians were free, and “the country belonged to them, and...they were the masters, and that the Germans had seized it from them, and had pressed them into serfdom and slavery.”¹⁹ Essentially, the historical memories of the period of consolidation of Baltic German domination are described in many histories, as a time when the German overlords were stealing the rightful land of the native Latvians. Additionally, it has been argued that since Latvian peasants had gradually been losing their traditional land rights up to this point, it was “for this reason [that] they supported the Reformation.”²⁰

This infringement on the individual rights and property of the native Latvians was simultaneously met by the responses of Latvians revolting in the rural regions, as their individual rights and property were being diminished. To illustrate, Bilmanis notes that “Baltic yeomen did not take their plunge into servitude without protest...[and] bloody

¹⁸ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 92. See also, Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 94.

¹⁹ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 171.

²⁰ Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 75. Similarly, Plakans notes that “Luther’s challenge to authority appealed too many in Livonia.” Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 31.

revolts flared up.”²¹ Additionally, Schwabe points out that “the reason for these revolts was always the same — the German disregard for...the peasants personal liberty and property rights.”²² Indeed, such behavior appears logical, as Latvian people were already being described at this time as exhibiting a “spirit of independence and somewhat stubborn individualism.”²³ As will be discussed below, Latvia’s historic liberal political-culture had a reformist bent that could be seen in acts of peasant resistance to the rule of the Baltic German barons, and later to Russian Tsars, and the Soviet Union. Specifically, many of these reformist beliefs and acts of resistance had their historical origins in the ideas passed on to Latvians from the Reformation and particularly ideas brought by the Moravian Brethren, as discussed below, which were key in instilling this reformist attitude favouring individual freedom that was resistant to oppressive centralized authority.

Although it is true it was Baltic Germans who played a leading role in the initial conversion of Latvians to Christianity and also to Lutheran faith, one should not merely look at this as simply the transfusion of German ideas to Latvia. For instance, Plakans points out that while many Lutheran clergy in the seventeenth century would still remain Baltic German, “peasant parishioners accepted this situation far more frequently than rejecting it.”²⁴ Instead, Latvians took the liberal ideas found in Lutheranism and adapted them to fit their own unique contextual situation, where the Latvians took the faith of Luther and made it their own. Consequently, Plakans points out that by the eighteenth

²¹ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 94, 87. For similar consensus, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 26, 34.

²² Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 13. See also Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 333.

²³ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 11. See also Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 6.

²⁴ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 58. For dissenting views that allude to a Latvian distrust of the Lutheran Church due to its domination by the Baltic German barons and German clergy, see Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area.*, p. 8; Misiunas, Romuald, and Rein Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990.* Updated Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 124; Eglitis, Daina Stukuls. (2002). *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 1; Dreifelds, Juris. (2003). “Religion in Latvia: From Atrophy to Rebirth.” In *Religion and Political Change in Europe*, ed., Ausma Cimdiņa. Pisa: Edizioni Plus – Università di Pisa., p. 242-243; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 9; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 152, 153. However, many of the above skeptics on the importance of Lutheranism and Christianity, appear contradictory at times similar to Kolstø, who noted that “religion leaves behind an important cultural imprint on a community, also when people no longer believe in it.” Kolstø, Pål. (1999a). “Bipolar Societies?” ch. 2. In *Nation Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Pål Kolstø. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 20. Thus, while there may have been distrust and a gap between Baltic German clergy and Latvians, this should be viewed more as a distrust of the authority of the German clergy, and not a distrust in the ideas embodied in Lutheranism and those spread later by the Moravians.

century, “the institutions of the Christian church were as traditional as any non-Christian beliefs because the oral and the Christian traditions had coexisted for some six hundred years.”²⁵ Thus, in only a short time, the Lutheran faith would become the dominant religion for the majority of the population in the Latvian regions of Livonia, Zemgale, and Courland. As Bilmanis points out, “for ages the Latvians have been a God-fearing people, whose religious proclivity is conducive to sectarianism.”²⁶ Moreover, as will be discussed below, during the eighteenth century, Latvians were extremely influenced by the spread of Pietism within Protestantism, which was taught by the Moravian Brethren.

Although controlled by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1569-1629, the Latvian regions of Livonia and Zemgale were predominantly Lutheran, as was the Duchy of Courland which was autonomous under the sovereign control of Polish-Lithuanian until 1795. Overall, the period of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s rule over Livonia and Zemgale is described as not being regarded rather positively in the historical memories of Latvians because it was a time when the rigors of serfdom became stronger for Latvian peasants. Moreover, many histories of this period also describe peasant resistance to increasing serfdom and Polish-Lithuanian attempts in promoting Catholic counter-Reformation movements. For example, peasant actions of disobedience to repressiveness from Polish-Lithuanian authorities has been noted in stories from the period that as “the Livonian peasant only felt burden of devastation lying heavily on his shoulders, [and] he protected himself to the best of his ability by taking his possessions into forests and by hitting back when ever the occasion offered itself.”²⁷ Indeed, these histories of resistance are strikingly similar to Latvian acts of resistance against authoritarian encroachments found in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which will be detailed below.

Finally, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also ruled more directly over the Latvian region of Latgale until Russia annexed the region in 1772. In Latgale, during the period of Polish-Lithuanian rule in the seventeenth century, “peasants were worse of than

²⁵ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 11.

²⁶ Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 14. See also, Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 39. Additionally, by the nineteenth century “Baltic Christians...were either staunchly Lutheran or Catholic.” Plakans, Andrejs. (1981). “The Latvians.” Part Three in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden. Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 235.

²⁷ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 204.

those in Courland and Livland.”²⁸ This is important to show that conditions of serfdom varied by region in Latvia, and as will be discussed in chapter 6, to show that Polish-Lithuanian rule over Belarus might not have been all that great as some portray.

Duchy of Courland – 1569-1795

Occupying a large portion of the Latvian region of Courland, existed the Duchy of Courland, which enjoyed significant political autonomy under the sovereignty of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1569-1795. In its short history of existence, the Duchy of Courland was also similar to the Latvian regions of Livonia and Zemgale, in being dominated religiously, culturally, politically, and economically by the Baltic-German nobility. Additionally, it is also of interest to note that the Duchy of Courland, during its short period existence, was able to acquire two colonial possessions in Gambia and Tobago during the seventeenth century.

Religiously, the Duchy of Courland became a strong bastion for the Lutheran faith which spread widely both amongst Baltic German elite and native Latvian inhabitants. Additionally, the Duchy of Courland also experienced increased economic growth, and peasants had increased opportunity for freedom, upward mobility, and there were signals that the individualist cultural values of Protestantism emphasizing individual hard-work were coming to the fore.²⁹ However, and similar to the other regions of Latvia, the majority of Latvian inhabitants living in Courland also remained predominantly rural peasants, and were subject to varying degrees of feudalism practiced by the Baltic German barons. While harsh for many peasants, some peasant families still retained significant autonomy on the small portions of land which formed the individual family farmstead.³⁰ Overall, the serfdom that existed under the Baltic German barons, while harsh, differed substantially from the harsher conditions of feudalism and collectivist traditions and habits of land governance that existed in the Russian Empire and Belarus. Following the total defeat of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire also incorporated the Latvian region of Courland in 1795.

²⁸ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 55.

²⁹ See for example, Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia*., p. 250.

³⁰ To illustrate the variety in degrees of serfdom, one should note that “on the extensive ducal domains...conditions tended to be less harsh.” Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*., p. 54, 55, 34. See also, Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making*., p. 76-77; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 25.

Swedish Rule – 1629-1721

Following shortly on the heels of the spread of Lutheranism to Baltic region, the Latvian regions of Livonia, Zemgale, and parts of Courland came under the direct control of Sweden in 1629. Under the rule of the Swedes, who also converted to Lutheran Protestantism, the Lutheran faith took increasing hold and planted firm roots in Latvia. Also, during this time, the Bible was translated into the Latvian language for the first time.³¹ Additionally, this period was one where individual freedoms were increasingly promoted through various reforms enacted by Swedish Kings, which began to reduce many of the feudal rights of the Baltic German barons, and placed increased emphasis on the rights and freedoms of individual peasants. Although temporary, these reforms meant that the situation of individual peasants was greatly improved for the better under Swedish rule. Overall, the period of Swedish rule is regarded by most historical sources as an extremely positive time in the historical memories of Latvians, and one of the best periods of Latvian history prior to the first period of independence from 1918-1940. Indeed, many have referred to this period as the “good Swedish times,” and the “Swedish golden age.”³²

In terms of political-economic relations, before the lands of Latvia came under Russian rule, serfdom was more limited in Latvia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moreover, before the Swedish era, and even following, Latvian peasants were permitted autonomous use of a small portion of land on which the peasants lived. However, under Swedish rule, such traditions were recognized, and there were significant reforms that allowed for more individual autonomy, freedom of movement for peasants, as well some semblance of rule of law, where peasants had some ability to seek redress in cases of injustice. Moreover, *corvee* labour and payments by peasants were significantly reduced. Therefore, even though the peasants had to pay high taxes to the Baltic German

³¹ For consensus on Lutheranism taking hold, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 16; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 29-30; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 178; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 56; Mežaks, Jānis. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” In *Unpunished Crimes: Latvia Under Three Occupations*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 19.

³² For consensus on positive historical memories towards Swedish rule, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 16; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 170; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 169; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 29; Vardys and Misiunas. (1978). “Introduction.” p. 4; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 49; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 4; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” p. 19; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 27.

barons, and had to go to the manor to do some labour duties, when peasants went back home they were generally left alone, and able to live their own lives with independence and a sense of pride. Certainly, living under such historic conditions, one can agree with Dunn who argued that “it is natural to assume...that when a population has lived for several centuries in isolated farmsteads, where a person will normally see no one but members of his own family, certain culturally expressed habits and attitudes will be built up.”³³ Going back to the conception of culture in chapter 2, this highlights that ways of life (habits, traditions and customs) are not only influenced by worldviews, but they can also work to shape norms and values in the sense that long-term historical ways of life can also harden into worldviews (norms and values).³⁴

Overall, there was a strong individualist spirit evident amongst Latvian peasants. Indeed, most rural Latvians lived on individual farms, except for the very eastern part of Latvia in the region of Latgale that had been under the direct rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and then the Russia Empire.³⁵ Moreover, the large distance separating individual farm houses, meant that individual families had a lot of room to remain independent in most everyday affairs, which allowed the individual Latvian family to develop into a close tight-knit unit that was loathsome to outside interference. Indeed, Latvian peasants developed a spirit that was very strongly individualistic. As Bilmanis points out, “the entire Latvian social organization rested exactly on the small peasant family unit,” where “farm families were self-reliant, jealous of their independence, and governed by a set of mores which assured the security of family

³³ Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area.*, p. 16, 5. For similar consensus, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 16; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 175-178; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 35, 42, 48, 54-55; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 27.

³⁴ This builds on Berger and Luckmann’s idea of habitualization, where “any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern,” a taken for granted worldview of the proper patterned action that is viewed to work best. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality.*, p. 50, 110.

³⁵ It should be noted that it was only in Latgale where one could find communal-type farming villages, similar to Russia and Belarus. Moreover, Latgale was not touched by the Protestant Reformation. Additionally, some have argued that the collective village, *mir*, probably was “artificially introduced into Latgale by the Tsarist government after the emancipation of the serfs...in 1861,” and “that Latgale... had been partially settled by Russian refugees, who...brought the *mir* and other typical Russian institutions with them.” Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area.*, p. 6-7. See also, Rūsis, Armins. (1959b). “Latvia.” Ch. 60, in *Government, Law and courts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Volume 2*, eds., Vladimir Gsovski and Kazimierz Grzybowski. London: Stevens & Sons Limited., p. 1676; Rutkis, ed. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 153; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 12; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 263; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 38.

property and self-respect.”³⁶ Certainly, this helped to develop not only a strong sense of individualism, but also a tightly knit independent family, that while interdependent with others in society, remained independent in everyday affairs. This stands in contrast to the collectivist values, habits and rural traditions predominant in Belarus, where the village commune played a predominant role in the everyday life of Belarusian peasants.

Life under the Russian Empire – 1721-1917

Following the Treaty of Nystadt in 1721, Swedish rule over the Latvian lands was replaced by the rule of the Russian Empire. From 1795 onwards with the incorporation of the Courland and Latgale, Russia would rule over all the lands of Latvia until 1918, when Latvia declared its independence. Under Russian rule, Russian Tsars ruled the Latvian territories in a more hands-off manner, ceding large amounts of de facto control in all matters relating to political-economic relations, religion and culture to the Baltic German nobility, which retained their predominantly powerful political position in Latvia.

Overall, the Baltic German barons had played an important role in siding with Russia to undermine Swedish rule in the Baltic region during the Great Northern War, and the loyalty of the Baltic German barons was rewarded with not only more politically autonomy, but also a strengthening of Baltic German feudal powers and reversal of many of reforms promoting individual rights and freedoms that were instituted under Swedish rule. Needless to say, the Baltic German barons were hostile to most of the Swedish reforms, as the increased individual freedoms that were granted to Latvian peasants greatly reduced the feudal powers of the German landlords and challenged the existing feudal order. However, because Baltic Germans were given considerable independence and autonomy in the religious, cultural, administrative, and political-economic affairs of Latvia and the Baltic region, this allowed Latvia to maintain close and open cultural

³⁶ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 46-47, 11. For similar consensus on the historically individualist mentality of the Latvian peasant family, and lack of communal and collectivist traditions, see Ruis. (1959b). “Latvia.,” p. 1676; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic States.*, p. 11; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 217; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area.*, p. 16; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 153; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 155-156; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity after Communism.*, p. 43; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 38. Similar sentiments were also offered by Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

connections to Western Europe, which would serve to make the Latvians highly resistant to future Russian attempts to Russify Latvia during the late nineteenth century.³⁷

While subject to the increasing whims of Baltic German overlords as a result of the reversal of Sweden's liberal reforms, it should be noted that the serfdom experienced by Latvian peasants, while often brutal, has been characterized as varying in intensity depending on situational context, and also quite different from the bitterly harsh conditions found in the rest of the Russian Empire, and Belarus, which was directly under Russian political-economic control. Moreover, it should also be noted that the structure of serfdom, as well as traditions and habits of land control differed significantly in Latvia from that of Belarus, especially in regards to organization of land and property.

In contrast to large portions of Belarus and the Russian Empire where land holdings were controlled and organized collectively under the historic village commune, property organization in the regions of Latvia was managed under a burgeoning system of individual private property. Indeed, Baltic German barons, while practicing feudalism, fervently held up and protected their rights as individual property owners. Moreover, the Latvian peasant farmers, even when living under serfdom, continued to retain their own individual plots of land for their own use, which contained the historic cultural institution of the family farmstead. Consequently, by allowing significant amounts of autonomy to the Baltic German nobility, Russian authorities inadvertently allowed the continuing traditional practice of permitting Latvian peasants the autonomous use of a small portion of land on which the peasants lived. Thus, even though Latvians hated the Baltic German barons, whom were often viewed as oppressors, Latvians nevertheless had an immense yearning for private land, and shared with the Baltic Germans many of these political-cultural traditions, due to centuries of contact of being influenced by the cultural heritage and legal traditions of the Baltic German barons which were quite firm on private property. As Labsvirs points out, "the domination of the German-Balts in Latvian

³⁷ For consensus on the importance of Baltic Germans being granted wide-scale autonomy in regards to culture, religion, and political-economic governance, which helped maintain and strengthen strong traditions of self-governance and worldviews favouring autonomy, see Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 171, 216-217; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 60. Moreover, any attempt to challenge the dominance of the Lutheran Church in Latvia and the Baltic would have resulted in serious political repercussions for Russian authorities. See for example, Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 7.

agriculture is mainly responsible for those features in Latvian agriculture up to 1918 which differed from those in Russia prior to the Revolution.”³⁸

While the conditions of serfdom varied in the Baltic region and were generally less intense than in Belarus and the Russian Empire, conditions for the masses of rural Latvian peasants nonetheless remained extremely burdensome as serfdom continued to strengthen its hold over Latvian peasants after 1721 to a greater extent compared to the periods before Russian rule. Indeed, the feudal controls exercised by Baltic German barons continued to further increase following the start of Russian rule in 1721, which was seen with increasing encroachments on individual freedoms and the land of Latvian peasants. Often, historical memories portray the onset of Russian rule as a time that “Latvians remember as the darkest in their history.”³⁹

Protestant Influences of Pietism from Morvian Brethren on Latvian Peasant Resitance to Increasing Authoritarian Encroachments

Overall, the predominantly rural Latvians reacted negatively to such encroachments on personal freedom. Here, values promoted by the Protestant teachings of the Moravian Brethren and the burgeoning Lutheran faith amongst Latvians was important in promoting worldviews and desires amongst Latvians pushing for more individual freedoms, reforms, and property rights. Indeed, one can infer religiously inspired notions of natural law at play, as “the Latvian and Estonian peasants were never spiritual slaves [because] they never recognized serfdom as legal and corresponding to natural and divine laws.”⁴⁰ Moreover, such values were heightened by historical memories shared by Latvian peasants about times when freedoms previously existed, as well as the recent memory of the nascent freedoms that occurred during the liberal reforms under the previous period of Swedish rule.

³⁸ Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic States.*, p. 17. For similar consensus, see Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 24.

³⁹ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 269. For similar consensus, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 18; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 5; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 216; Vardys and Misiunas. (1978). “Introduction.” p. 4. By the end of the eighteenth century the total numbers of Latvian peasants put into serfdom included 78.9% in Livland, 87.7% in Courland, and 93.8% in Latgallia. Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 63, 65.

⁴⁰ Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 17.

Crucially important in sharpening Latvian peasants' bent for individual freedom, property rights, and reform came from the branch of Lutheran pietism that was spread amongst native Latvians during the eighteenth century by the Moravian Brethren, who had immense influence over the historical worldviews of the Latvians. The Moravian Brethren took the gospel of Luther directly to the masses, and were key in helping to solidify Lutheranism amongst the Latvian peasants. In doing so, the Moravian Brethren also helped spread democratic sentiments to Latvia, which helped spread individualist and egalitarian values. This is because the Moravian Brethren "stressed the importance of personal religious experience and an individualist interpretation of the scriptures."⁴¹ Indeed, the Protestant message taught by the Moravian Brethren insisted on individual equality, because it was considered that all were equal before god, and therefore every individual should be equal amongst society.

Overall, the liberal values of the Lutheranism taught by the Moravian Brethren fit nicely with the Latvian peasants' independent character, and historical memories that are reported to have already have been passed down by previous generations of native Latvians, and spoke to the conditions of Latvians of having their individual freedoms and property being increasingly subverted by the Baltic German barons. As a result, religion was becoming increasingly important in the everyday lives of peasants and the ideas of Pietism taught by the Moravian Brethren were having such a strong effect by the eighteenth century that this period has been described in histories as being "marked by...pietism among the peasants."⁴² This was important in resisting future attempts of Russian authorities to Russify the lands of Latvia during the late-eighteenth century.

⁴¹ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 66. For similar consensus on promoting individual freedom and liberal-democratic values, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia*., p. 280-281; Nodel, Emanuel. (1963). *Estonia: Nation on the Anvil*. New York: Bookman Associates., 26 [Nodel importantly discusses Moravian activities in Livonia, the south of which is in Latvia]; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*., p. 235-236; Grudule. (2003). "German Parsons and the Latvian Peasant Enlightenment.," p. 128; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 28; Clemens. (2009). "Culture and Symbols as Tools of Resistance.," p. 171; Dr. Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007); Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 157-158; White, James D. (1994). "Nationalism and Socialism in Historical Perspective." Ch. 1. In *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press., p. 19.

⁴² Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 60. For similar assessments on increased Pietism and importance of religion in everyday lives of Latvians, see Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation*., p. 6-7; Halecki. (1952). *Borderlands of Western Civilization*., p. 234.

In terms of political-economic values, the Moravian Brethren took the teachings of Luther one step further, and explicitly emphasized values promoting individual freedoms and property rights, anti-authoritarianism, which heightened Latvian peasants' expectations for increased reforms and freedoms. This is because the worldviews of the Moravian Brethren "felt closer affinity to Calvinism than with Lutheranism."⁴³ The Protestant Lutheran ideas taught by the Moravian Brethren emphasizing individual freedoms also helped promote reformist sentiments and a culture of resistance amongst Latvians against authoritarianism. Specifically, many of these beliefs and ideas brought by the Moravian Brethren were key in instilling this reformist attitude favouring individual freedom, which was seen in behaviors of resistance to oppressive centralized authority. As Spekke points out, Protestantism, not only promoted ideas of individualism and freedom, but also "increased hopes of certain social reforms" amongst rural inhabitants.⁴⁴ Indeed, many of the philosophical tenants of Lutheranism jived and were in sync with the predominantly rural character of the majority of native Latvian peasants, and had a key influence in shaping Latvians evolving liberal political-cultural worldviews and mindset favoring individual freedoms, habits of individual hard work, and view of private property as being sacred. As will be discussed below, it is apparent that there was continuity in the liberal-individualist beliefs from one historical period to the next, in that Latvia's historic political-cultural bent for reformism could be seen in repeated acts of peasant resistance to the rule of the Baltic German barons, Russia Tsars, and the USSR.

Overall, the historical influences of the Moravian Brethren were crucial in solidifying Lutheranism and in defining the individualist foundations of Latvian political-cultural worldviews. Moreover, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the political-cultural values of individual freedom and enlightenment taught by the Moravian Brethren would help begin to spur the occurrence of a national awakening in Latvia. To illustrate the importance of the Moravian Brethren playing a seminal role in shaping Latvia's

⁴³ Such values promoted a "successful business life, characterized by integrity and frugality." Troeltsch. (1931). *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches.*, p. 720.

⁴⁴ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 178. Additionally, it has been argued that the Latvians "strong religious faith helped them to bear their plight," against the oppression of Baltic German barons, and Russian Tsarist authorities. Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 14. For similar consensus, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 4, 17, 19; Tawney, R. H. (1936). *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study.* London: John Murray., p. 93. Others have pointed to Latvians "stoicism, capacity for enduring oppression without completely surrendering to it, and stubborn resistance." Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 19; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 72-73.

historic political-cultural worldviews, Spekke argues that “the pure words of Christ touched the souls of the Latvians deeply...the movement’s...Christian teaching did much to unite the Latvian people.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Plakans also notes that when even after being banned by Russian authorities, “the pietistic spirit had become deeply embedded in the folk memory of the mid-Livland Latvian peasant.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Nodel has argued that in Livonia, “the Moravians promoted...cultural growth and...the Brethren were raising the suppressed social and national consciousness of the [people].”⁴⁷

The wide acknowledgement that the cultural values of individual freedom and enlightenment taught by the Moravian Brethren would help begin to spur the Latvian national awakening is important for pointing to the historical antecedents of national identity as originating in the historic political-cultural milieu, and also for showing the importance of religious worldviews in this mixture. In other words, not only does this show the importance of Moravian teachings on the evolutionary development of Latvia’s historic political-cultural worldviews, but it also highlights key inferences of political-culture preceding and primarily informing national identity.

Overall, the heightened demand for individual freedom, property and reforms touched off by the Moravian teachings were highly influential in spurring ever-growing peasant revolts in Latvia against authoritarian encroachments and the increased oppression of serfdom. For example, when the obligations of serfdom increased with the onset of Russian rule, there is evidence that this did not sit well with the individualist sensibilities of Latvian peasants, as there were a string of revolts in the eighteenth century by Latvian peasants pushing against such measures, and for more individual freedoms and increased property rights. Thus, repeatedly Latvia experienced increasing peasant revolts in 1771, 1784, 1802 that were largely inspired by the teachings of the Moravian Brethren, where the peasant uprisings were sparked by a common attitude favouring increased individual freedoms and rights to private property. To illustrate, it has been

⁴⁵ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 281.

⁴⁶ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 66-67.

⁴⁷ Nodel. (1963). *Estonia.*, p. 26. [While Nodel’s book is on Estonia, his chapters on the early history are easily applicable to Latvia, as he generally discusses the Moravians influence in the region of Livonia, where today the south is in Latvia, and the North is in Estonia]. For a similar consensus on the importance of Moravian teachings in promoting the national awakening, see Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 136-137; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 235-236; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 617; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 219-220; White. (1994). “Nationalism and Socialism in Historical Perspective,” p. 19; Grudule. (2003). “German Parsons and the Latvian Peasant Enlightenment,” p. 120, 128.

pointed out that the large peasant revolt at Kauguri in Livonia in 1802, “was in the center of the area where the pietistic movement had flourished in Livonia.”⁴⁸ The fact that the Moravian Brethren had such a key influence in driving these revolts of Latvian peasants in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century points to the importance of political-cultural worldviews in spurring political action as opposed to other variables such as class or national identity.⁴⁹

Alarmed by such revolts, Russian Tsar’s during the early nineteenth century began to institute reforms in Latvia and the Baltic region to try and appease rural Latvians heightened sentiments for individual freedoms and reforms. Overall, these early Russian reforms, which began in 1804, were merely restoring similar liberal measures that had been implemented earlier by Swedish rulers. Not only did this reform re-instate more limited freedoms for individuals, and increased property rights upon the small portion of land that peasants occupied, but it also recreated a system of courts, which brought the ability for peasants to challenge authorities if laws were being violated, and also placed more restrictions on the system of *corvee* labour. However, these laws took long to implement and Baltic German nobles still continued to control most of the land.⁵⁰ Regardless of these setbacks, it can be argued that these reforms were in tune with the liberal, reformist and anti-authoritarian attitudes held amongst Latvians.

Further reforms followed in 1817 in Courland, and 1819 in Livonia and Zemgale, when serfdom was abolished and Latvian peasants were given their individual freedoms. However, the Latvian region of Latgale was excluded from such reforms, as this region

⁴⁸ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 78.

⁴⁹ To illustrate, Plakans argues that “above all, peasant unrest during this period was not a process of ever increasing ‘class warfare.’” Plakans, Andrejs. (1973). “Modernization and the Latvians in Nineteenth-Century Baltikum.” In *Baltic History*, eds. Arvids Ziedonis, Jr., William L. Winter and Mardi Valgemäe. Columbus: AABS., p. 125. Additionally, Plakans argued that “approaches which characterize these conflicts as either ‘national struggles’ or ‘class struggles’ must be viewed with great caution.” Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 213. For consensus on the Moravian teachings helping to spur calls for freedom, increased property, and acts of resistance to authoritarian encroachments, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 19; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 178; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 75; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p.76; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 72, 156. Here it is also important to note that Latvian peasants rebelled against Russia when Napoleon’s French armies invaded. Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 69. Latvian peasant’s behavior stands in contrast to Belarusians whom did not rebel against Russia during Napoleon’s invasion.

⁵⁰ Spekke also notes that under the law of 1804, Latvian peasants “were no longer serfs who could be sold and bartered without the land to which they were attached...but now considered a person.” Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 277, 289. For further information on 1804 reforms, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 78-79; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 20; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 77; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 233; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 29-30.

was under the direct control of the Russian Empire. In terms of increasing individual freedom and strengthening rule of law, these laws “changed peasants and their families from serfs into free persons,” and enhanced rule of law by strengthening the “peasant courts in which free persons would have a voice,” and by “requiring the now-free peasants to contract with owners for the use of farmland.”⁵¹ This is significant because the abolition of serfdom in most of Latvia occurred nearly forty years ahead of the abolition of serfdom for Belarusian peasants and the rest of the Russian Empire.

However, these laws were slowly implemented, and although granting Latvian peasants their individual freedom through the abolishment of serfdom, the reforms of 1817 and 1819 came at a more significant price and failed to meet major demands of the masses of rural Latvians. This is because these reforms only granted what has been characterized as “bird’s freedom,” since land rights for peasants was not granted, and land property continued to be controlled by the Baltic Germans who’s property rights were strengthened.⁵² In other words, peasants were free but unable to acquire land, as the land of rural Latvia was still under the control of the Baltic German property owners.

Consequently, rural peasant revolts continued to explode across Latvia in 1823, 1830, 1844, 1863, as peasants continued to make demands calling for more freedom and private property. Throughout this period there was literally an overwhelming hunger for land shared amongst rural Latvians. In regards to historical memories, “folk poetry portrayed the owner of the manor (*moisa, muiza*) as a foreign invader who had seized the land, driving the indigenous people into subservience...[and] the peasants believed that they had forcibly been deprived of their land.”⁵³ Interestingly, such historical memories, actually sound quite similar to more recent Latvian views about the nature of Soviet rule during the twentieth century, and how the Soviets deprived the Latvian people of their right to the their land, something which speaks of Latvians individualist ethos and desire for private property. During this time, Latvian peasants desire for private property began

⁵¹ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 81; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia*., p. 290.

⁵² See for example, Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia*., p. 308; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*., p. 225; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia*., p. 20; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States*., p. 5; Page, Stanley W. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States: A Study of the Effects of Great Power Politics upon the Emergence of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia*. New York: Howard Fertig., p. 13; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic*., p. 19; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution*., p. 50; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 62; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” p. 21.

⁵³ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 64, 65.

to be heightened to such an extent, that a small minority even converted to Russian Orthodoxy. A key reason involved here was that the Baltic Germans had been influential in helping to drive out clergy practicing the pietism and teachings of the Moravian Brethren. Most importantly, the small minority of Latvian peasants that did convert to Orthodoxy were driven by their high hopes of being granted their own plots of individual property. However, such hopes proved false and many of these Latvian converts to Orthodoxy ended up converting back to the Lutheran faith upon realization that their hunger for land would not be satisfied by Russian authorities.⁵⁴

By 1849, more significant reforms were instituted in the Latvian regions of Courland, Livonia, and Zemgale, which allowed peasants to finally acquire their own individual property, twenty years before such rights were granted in Belarus when serfdom was abolished in 1861. Following the reforms of 1849, which granted the ability of peasants to acquire their own land, an important portion of native Latvians began to increasingly acquire larger portions of land and became successful private farmers. Thus, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the percentage of rural lands owned by individual Latvian farmers increased by large numbers in each of the Latvian provinces. For example, by 1877, rates of peasant ownership reached 41.4% in Livland, 36.9% in Kurland, and 38.6% in Latgale.⁵⁵ By 1861, these rights of individuals to acquire property were further strengthened with the abolition of serfdom in the rest of the Russian Empire and the Latvian province of Latgale, which had been excluded from the earlier reforms.

These reforms were important because it gave Latvians earlier concrete experience with individual private property management. As Schwabe notes, “this law became the foundation on which a prosperous class of Latvian smallholders grew up.”⁵⁶ However, it was not simply the institution of these laws that created a pattern of private ownership, as this tradition of small individual family farmsteads had long been present

⁵⁴ See for example, Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 21; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 227; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 86; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 101-102; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic Area.*, p. 11; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 8; Haltzel, Michael H. (1973). “The Russification of the Baltic Germans: A Dysfunctional Aspect of Imperial Modernization.” In *Baltic History*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., W. L. Winter and M. Valgemäe. Columbus: AABS., p. 147-148.

⁵⁵ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 87. By 1914, 39.5% of agricultural land was in the hands of Latvian peasants. *Ibid.*, p. 113; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 97. By 1918, Von Rauch puts the number at 63.5%. Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 21; see also Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 32.

in Latvia. Instead, these reforms were merely in tune with, and reinforced the individualist attitudes and hunger for land already widely held amongst Latvian peasants. As Bilmanis points out, “since their liberation from serfdom...the Latvian farmers have preferred the isolated, privately owned holding which recalled the self-sufficient farms of early medieval times.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Rūsis argued that “the Latvian farmer always preserved his individuality, [and] any form of a communal land tenure typical...of Russia [or Belarus]...was alien to Latvian farmers.”⁵⁸ Overall, the historical pattern shows the trend in Latvia was towards a tradition of individual private-freehold farmsteads as opposed to communal/collective control of land which was predominant in Belarus.

Riga and Urban Latvia

From its days as a key Hanseatic city, Riga had for centuries been an important commercial and trading city on the Baltic, and was a crucial economic centre both during Swedish rule and subsequently in the Russian Empire. Riga had also enjoyed the status of being autonomous and self-governing from Hanseatic times, through Swedish rule, until being taken over by the Russian Empire. During this time, Riga, like much of the rest of Latvia, tended to be dominated culturally, religiously, political, and economically by Baltic Germans. As such, Riga was always a bastion of Western liberal culture and the Protestant Lutheran faith. Even by the early twentieth century, Riga was described as an “*always God-fearing city*.”⁵⁹ In addition to be a central hub for culture and religion in the Baltic and Latvia, Riga was an ever increasing economic powerhouse. During the nineteenth century, Riga, as well as smaller Latvian cities, began to expand rapidly, both

⁵⁷ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*, p. 12, 42. Plakans also notes that already by this time, the individual “farmstead [way of life] “on landed estates” was “the dominant organizational form of Baltic rural society.” Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*, p. 89, 155-156; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays*, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Furthermore, in regards to inheritance traditions and habits, “farms, in Latvia, were handed down from father to son for generations, thus establishing unbreakable ties between the tiller and the soil without any interference of the commune.” Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia,” p. 1676. For consensus on widespread individualist traditions and habits of private farm ownership, see footnote no. 57 above, and also Labšvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic*, p. 11; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime*, p. 217; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic*, p. 16; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia*, p. 153; Plakans. (1973). “Modernization and the Latvians,” p. 132; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 263; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History,” p. 21; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity*, p. 43; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*, p. 38. Similar sentiments on the historically individualist character of the Latvian peasant family were offered by Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

⁵⁹ Popoff, George. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague: Soviet Rule in a Baltic Town*, Translated by Robin John. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., p. 272.

in terms of population and also economic growth. Overall, Riga experienced impressive industrialization, and became a key economic and commercial trading hub in the Russian Empire. The fact that Riga was a key centre of Western liberal culture and Lutheranism in the Baltic, in addition to the massive economic growth of Riga, lead many to characterize the city as the “pearl of the Baltic.”⁶⁰

While there was also certainly an increasing Latvian middle-class that began grow in Riga and other Latvian cities, it should be noted that the vast majority of native Latvians remained largely situated in rural Latvia, and Latvians remained a minority in Riga (see Figures A.1 and A.2 in Appendix). Overall, the impressive level of industry in Riga in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, was largely financed by German capital, and was German owned. Moreover, even by 1914 most industry and commercial interests in Riga remained controlled and owned by Baltic Germans, Jewish people, and some Russian interests.⁶¹ This fact is important to note in order to show not only that industry in Latvia was historically controlled by outsiders, and that Latvians were predominantly agriculturally based, but also good to counteract arguments about past industrialization as being key for Latvia’s current success, since industry historically was dominated at all levels by non-Latvians. Furthermore, much of the large population growth that occurred in Riga during the nineteenth century resulted from the influx of non-Latvian migrant workers from the Russian Empire that fed the large factories operating in Riga.⁶² Indeed, Latvians only made up 23.6% of the population Riga in 1867, which had only grown to 39.6% by 1913 (see Figure A.2 in Appendix). Thus, at the turn of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the ethnic-Latvian population remained primarily located in rural Latvia (see Figure A.1 in Appendix). This is important to emphasize the predominantly rural character of the Latvian political-cultural way of life, and to show that it was not merely a lopsided transfusion of cultural worldviews, habits and traditions to Latvians from the Baltic Germans. Additionally, this

⁶⁰ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 239-241. On Riga’s dynamism, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 109; Ruhl, Arthur. (1921). *New Masters of the Baltic.* New York: E. P. Dutton & Company., p. 162-163.

⁶¹ Banks were largely controlled by Baltic Germans, whom also dominated heavy industry, and commerce. Russian State Banks also played important roles and had controlling interests in heavy enterprises. Latvians were more involved in small trading companies. See Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 45-47, 51.

⁶² See Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians.” p. 261; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 14; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 4; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 210.

is important to counter arguments that Latvians acquired such liberal political-cultural worldviews, because they were involved in industry or foreign trade, since such fields were predominantly occupied by Baltic Germans, as native Latvians remained rural.

Protestant Influences on the National Awakening

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the values of individual freedom and enlightenment that had been taught by the Moravian Brethren began to spur a national awakening in Latvia. This was seen during the late-nineteenth century with the growth of a sizeable local Latvian intellectual elite and middle-class, which took on a largely rural character in its worldviews and message since most of the leaders of the national awakening, and those whom were newly educated, came from predominantly rural peasant farming backgrounds.⁶³ Overall, the historical antecedents of ideas promoted by the national awakening came from the cultural worldviews of newly educated Latvians who had strong rural peasant roots, and were explicitly or implicitly influenced by the Pietist ideas that had been previously taught by the Moravian Brethren. As Plakans importantly notes, “the pietistic spirit gave Latvian thought a cultural stance that surfaced repeatedly in the nineteenth century, as Latvians developed a literature and began to identify the unique characteristics of their national culture.”⁶⁴ Additionally, one can see the importance of religion at play, where Kirby points out that “the search for the kingdom of God...still directed the spiritual, moral and intellectual life of the people as they entered the last three decades of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁵ Moreover, during the national awakening the Latvians made advancements in high culture, literature, and education, which was greatly influenced by Western liberal philosophical ideas.

In addition to the Moravian Brethren, there were other German intellectuals and clergy connected to the Lutheran church, during the late eighteenth and nineteenth

⁶³ On peasant roots of new intelligentsia during the national awakening, see Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 22-23; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 19; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 19; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 136-137.

⁶⁴ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 66-67.

⁶⁵ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 136-137. White also notes that “the intellectual underpinnings of the Baltic national movements,” included “pietist overtones to folk culture.” White. (1994). “Nationalism and Socialism in Historical Perspective,” p. 19. For consensus on importance of Moravians in spurring the national awakening, see Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 235-236; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 281; Nodel. (1963). *Estonia.*, p. 26; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 617; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 219-220; Grudule. (2003). “German Parsons,” p. 120, 128.

century, whom took a vested interest in and played a key role in supporting the rights and freedoms of Latvians, and in doing so contributed to the Latvian national awakening. For example, it has also been noted that that Lutheran German parsons, notably Johann Gottfried Herder and Garlieb Merkel, played a key role contributing to the thought of the Latvian national awakening because these figures “promoted the idea of the enlightenment, standing up for the natural rights of the Latvian people and advocating the abolition of serfdom.”⁶⁶ Moreover, because the Baltic Germans were able to maintain considerable independence and autonomy in the religious, cultural, administrative, and political-economic affairs of Latvia over many centuries, this resulted in a strong flow of ideas, and a positive cultural learning effect, in values, worldviews, habits, and ways of life, from the Baltic Germans. This cultural interaction occurred over many centuries, which was a significant amount of time for the process of cultural-learning to take firm hold over the historic evolution of Latvia’s political-culture. This resulted in the widespread transfer of these political-cultural values, habits, traditions and intangible institutions from the Baltic Germans to the native Latvian population, whom in turn made these into uniquely Latvian values, habits, traditions and intangible institutions.⁶⁷

As a result, even if Latvians then hated the Baltic German barons, whom were often viewed as oppressors, Latvians nevertheless had an immense yearning for private land, and shared with the Baltic Germans many of these political-cultural traditions, due to centuries of contact of being influenced by the cultural heritage and legal traditions of the Baltic Germans, which were pretty firm on private property. This was seen with “their apparent willingness to continue working under the stewardship of Baltic German organizations and individuals signaled their acceptance of the old course of upward mobility.”⁶⁸ Thus, while Latvians felt historically oppressed by the Baltic Germans, there

⁶⁶ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 28. Garlieb Merkel is famous for writing *Die Letten* (1796). Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 244. See also, Grudule. (2003). “German Parsons,” p. 120, 128; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 68, 160; Hanovs, Deniss. (2003). “The National Movement in Latvia in the 19th Century: The Nation as a Quasi-Religion.” In *Religion and Political Change in Europe*, ed., A. Cimdiņa. Pisa: Edizioni Plus – Università di Pisa., p. 135. Also, there were many important Baltic Germans who would work to protect Latvians from attempts at Russification. Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 18.

⁶⁷ For consensus on the importance of cultural influences from Baltic Germans, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 6; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 53; Ezergailis. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.*, p. 1; Prazauskas. (1994). “The Influence of ethnicity,” p. 161. Similar sentiments were given by one Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

⁶⁸ Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 217.

was nevertheless strongly shared Western political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and habits that had been rooted firmly in Latvian culture as a result of the shared Lutheran faith, which made Latvian political-cultural worldview's highly resistant and hostile to Russian attempts at Russification. As Hiden and Salmon point out, "Lutheranism, a religion embracing both the Baltic Germans and their native subjects, helped to frustrate the attempts of the Tsarist government to drive a wedge between them."⁶⁹

The wide acknowledgement that the political-cultural values of individual freedom and enlightenment taught by the Moravian Brethren and other German intellectuals with close ties to the Lutheran church would help begin to spur the Latvian national awakening is important for pointing to the historical antecedents of national identity as originating in the historic political-cultural milieu, and also for showing the importance of religious worldviews in this mixture. In other words, not only does this show the importance of Moravian teachings on historical evolutionary development of Latvia's historic political-cultural ideas, but it also highlights important evidence of political-culture preceding and primarily informing the national identity that was evolving during the Latvian national awakening.

Culturally, this helps explain why there was a predominant individualist ethos emphasized, as many writers helped give voice to the peasants' ever-present demands for individual freedom and desire for private property, and also made many calls for increasing social reforms. Specifically, one of the strong themes that were emphasized repeatedly by the national awakening was to highlight the intense hunger for land shared amongst the masses of rural Latvia. Indeed, many of the themes took a "dominantly agrarian aspect," where much emphasis was placed "upon ownership of and loyalty to the land."⁷⁰ Moreover, in describing the rural character, one can also infer a seeming Protestant ethic, where Bilmanis argue that...

in their respect for private property, civil rights, liberty of the individual...equality of the individual...[and] sense of individual responsibility,...Latvia's intelligentsia, stemming from peasant stock, never

⁶⁹ Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States and Europe.*, p. 18. Others have noted the importance of religion in the everyday lives of peasants, during the last stages of Russian rule from the late-1880s to 1917. Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 6-7.

⁷⁰ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 233. On playing on such themes, see Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 136-137.

lost sight of...the pride which all Latvians took in the prosperity of their land...[and] deep conviction of the moral value of labor.⁷¹

Additionally, in terms of political-cultural ways of life and habits, it is important to note that during this time, a large independent Latvian middle-class had developed, which espoused a Western liberal entrepreneurial spirit. As Clemens points out, Latvians “seemed to embody the protestant work ethic.”⁷²

The new burgeoning group of intellectual leaders that would play a key role in the Latvian national awakening were called the Young Latvians, and included important figures such as Krišjānis Valdemārs (1825-1891), Krišjānis Barons (1835-1923), and Atis Kronvalds (1837-1875). Overall, the worldviews projected in the messages produced in the intellectual writings of the Young Latvians conveyed a cultural tone that was liberal and democratic in character. To get a glimpse into the burgeoning worldview of the time, it is important to note one of the spiritual leaders of Latvia’s national movement during this time was Krišjānis Valdemārs, whose writings are quite telling in their liberalism, in regards to the relation between property, labour and individual freedom. To illustrate, Valdemārs emphasized that individuals should acquire property and become self-reliant, as a means to for self advancement and overall national emancipation and development. As Spekke notes, Valdemārs “urged the peasants to buy land and thus gain financial independence.”⁷³ Moreover, as Schwartz points out, “Valdemārs saw agrarian reform as a necessary step toward political emancipation and defended small landownership as ‘freedom’s buttress.’”⁷⁴ Additionally, Valdemārs also encouraged self-sufficiency and

⁷¹ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 22-23.

⁷² Clemens, Walter C., Jr. (1994). “Baltic Identities in the 1990s: Renewed Fitness.” Ch. 8. In *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. R. Szporluk. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe., p. 190.

⁷³ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 306, 311.

⁷⁴ Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 37. For further examples of consensus on liberal themes promoted by the Young Latvians, and Valdemārs emphasizing that peasants acquire property as a means to individual freedom, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 22; Ģermanis, Uldis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia and its Development in 1917.” In *Res Baltica: A Collection of Essays in Honour of the Memory of Dr. Alfred Bilmanis*, ed. Adolf Sprudz and Armins Rūsis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 29-38; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians.” p. 217; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 4; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 32-33.

self-ownership for Latvian fishermen. Finally, Valdemārs also actively promoted values and ideas for Latvians to become active in international trading and commerce.⁷⁵

Additionally, the historical memories portrayed in much of the literature of the national awakening that are portrayed in various literature works describe a sustained advance of restrictions placed on the native Latvian population through the hardships of serfdom, and one where the previously free Latvian peasants had their individual freedoms and natural rights to property taken by the Baltic German barons. Specifically, the story of *Lāčplēsis* (the *Bear-slayer*), written by Andrejs Pumpurs in 1888, tells the story of Lāčplēsis, representing the Latvian people, whom fought against the injustices of the Black Knights (German Barons) to liberate his people. In doing so, such works as *Lāčplēsis*, promoted such themes as resistance to oppressive alien rule and for Latvians to reclaim their natural rights to freedom and property, as well as promoting liberal-democratic values such as rule of law.⁷⁶

Not only did the national awakening movement continue to promote the freedom Latvians from the control of the Baltic German nobility, but it was also now outspoken against the increasing political control, absolutism, and authoritarianism from Russian authorities. Indeed, another contributing factor to the Latvians restlessness resulted from Russia gradually trying to gain increased control over Latvia during the closing decades of the Russian Empire. This is because Russia Tsars began trying to check the religious, cultural, and political-economic dominance of the Baltic Germans, which involved a concerted policy of Russification from the 1880s onwards. These attempts included such policies as forced Russification in religion, culture, language and education. For instance, Russian authorities directly challenged the predominance of the Lutheran church in Latvia though various restrictions. In regards to education, Russian authorities forced Latvian students to study in Russian. Additionally, Russian authorities also implemented significant restrictions on the press via strict censorship. Increasingly, Russian Tsarist authorities enforced such policies of Russification against the objections of Latvians, with

⁷⁵ On Valdemārs emphasis on Latvian peasants acquiring self-ownership for Latvian fisherman, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 306; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 243; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 100. On promotion of ideas of international trading, see Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 128; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 37

⁷⁶ See Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 127-128; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 17; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 44, 237; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 122; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 106-107.

increasingly absolutist and authoritarian methods. For example, Spekke notes that “Russian police and officials were imported to put down any manifestations of Latvian spirit.”⁷⁷ As a result, Latvians were fighting both the Baltic Germans and the authoritarian encroachments of the Russians during the national awakening period.

Overall, the policies of Russification were a failure and viewed largely with hostility by native Latvians. Indeed, such policies went against Latvian liberal political-cultural worldviews, which favored individual freedom, rule of law, and which were resistant to authoritarian encroachments to freedom. This was apparent in the large responses of criticism and words of protest to Russian rule, which was seen in the liberal themes in the literature of Latvian cultural elites during this time.⁷⁸ For example, the story of *Lāčplēsis*, as mentioned above, would also provide the inspiration for the famous Latvian poet, Jānis Rainis’s play *Fire and Night* (1905), which played on similar themes of the hero Lāčplēsis fighting for freedom against the injustices of alien rule as portrayed by the Black Knight (interpreted as both German Barons and Russian autocracy).⁷⁹ As will be discussed below, many of the liberal themes and historical memories portrayed in such literary works would actually sound a lot similar to how Soviet Russian rule was viewed and portrayed by Latvians in the second half of the twentieth century. To

⁷⁷ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 310. On strengthening of the Russian secret police’s [Ochraņa] activities in Latvia to assist in Russification, and key examples of Russification of religion and restrictions on the Lutheran church, as well as in education, see *Ibid.*, p. 309-310; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 230, 248-250; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 235; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 100-101; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 32; Haltzel. (1973). “The Russification of the Baltic Germans,” p. 144-147; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 8-9, 20; Ģerģmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia,” p. 29-38; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 177; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 23; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 217; Page. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States.*, p. 16; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History,” p. 22.

⁷⁸ For consensus on liberal themes and failure of Russification, see Ģerģmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia,” p. 29-38. Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 259, 260; Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 273; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 94, 111; Graham, Malbone W., Jr. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.* New York: Henry Holt & Co., p. 319; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 32; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 51; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 23; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History,” p. 22.

⁷⁹ As Gāters points out, the “Black Knight is a complex, diachronically perceivable figure: first he is a German enemy, but later – an enemy from the East...denoting Russian power.” Gāters, Alfreds. (1986). “Introduction to *Fire and Night* by Janis Rainis.” In *Fire and Night: Five Baltic Plays*, ed., Alfreds Straumanis. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press., p. 8. See also Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 106-107. While it is true that Rainis was a member of the intellectual circle called the New Current, during the 1890s, which took on a more leftist tone and found inspiration in German Marxist philosophy, it should be noted that Rainis himself remained more of a moderate social democrat and did not adhere to Bolshevism. Additionally, Rainis, also coming from a rural background espoused seemingly liberal values in that he “insisted on the right of the Latvians to their own land and the free election of their government.” Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 266. See also, Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 255, 257.

illustrate, Bilmanis argues that during the national awakening “the two facets of the oppression from which the Latvian people sought liberation were foreign dominion and oligarchical rule.”⁸⁰ Indeed, many of the historical memories mentioned actually give a foretaste to similar themes that would be found in future Latvian calls for freedom and reform in the fight for regaining independence in the late-1980s.

Finally, it should be noted that the close-knit independent Latvian family, found in rural Latvia, played an important role in serving as bulwark of resistance against the cultural Russification efforts, and in helping to spread historical memories.⁸¹ As will be discussed below, this was similar to the situation under Soviet rule, where the Latvian family acted as a key agent of political-cultural socialization in spreading important historical memories and acting as a buttress in resisting cultural Russification.

Further Unrest and Resistance in 1905

Although liberal individual freedoms experienced by Latvians were tentatively increasing from the 1860s to the last stages of the Russian Empire, it is also apparent that many rural Latvians were also becoming restless during this period because these allowances in freedom did not go far enough to satisfy their individualist sensibilities. Moreover, the increased absolutism and authoritarianism exacted by Russian Tsarist authorities, as seen with the determined policies of Russification in the later part of the nineteenth century, meant that many of the earlier reforms still remained piecemeal and often precarious. Thus, changes were slow to come, and did not always meet the expectations and political-cultural worldviews of the Latvian rural masses that had a heightened sense of individual freedoms and yearning for private property. Overall, while the lot of rural Latvian peasants was definitely improving compared to the earlier hardships of serfdom, many of the old grievances and demands had not been adequately dealt with, and demands for increased freedoms and rights to private property via land reform grew ever louder. While peasants now owned 39% of the agricultural land, averaging 27 hectares per farm at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was still a fact that 600,000 peasants remained landless, about 55% of all peasants.⁸² As a result, the

⁸⁰ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 232.

⁸¹ Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,,” p. 256.

⁸² Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 37.

desire for private property remained strong, and the potential for unrest exploding in rural Latvia remained ever-present at the outset of the twentieth century.

These underlying sentiments of grievances would explode in rural Latvia during the attempted revolution of 1905. It is important to note that in the lead up to 1905, the Social Democrats were one of the fastest growing parties in Latvia at this time and attracted many followers both in urban and rural Latvia by playing on many of the old historical grievances of Latvians, such as the peasants enduring hunger for land. Thus, in the initial stages of the 1905 revolt, the Social Democrats, which were largely predominant in urban areas, were able to help catalyze the initial open revolts in Riga that were largely made up of striking industrial workers.⁸³ However, while starting with urban-industrial protests in Riga following the massacre of protesters in Russia, the events of 1905 quickly spread to rural Latvia. According to historical estimates, the mass popular action in 1905 contained some 316,000 people in rural Livonia and Courland.⁸⁴

Certainly, in their calls for reform, the Social Democrats were able to gain sympathetic ears from aggrieved Latvians. As Schwabe argues that “the main grievance that had aroused the spirit of the peasants was the disproportionate distribution of land.”⁸⁵ However, while some might be tempted to seek to explain such revolts by pointing to class, such class based explanations are inadequate to explain the motivations and goals of the peasant uprisings. This is because “there was no wide gap between [Latvian] farmers and the landless peasants,” and the “revolution had the character of the age-old peasant rebellions.”⁸⁶ Moreover, while masterful in playing on the Latvian peasants historical grievances and desire for individual property, it is also true that Social Democratic, were in reality quite vague on their real intentions and actually did not have any coherent agricultural policy of their own. Indeed, urban revolutionaries had divergent goals and worldviews from those of the rural Latvian revolutionaries. As Kirby points out, “social democracy's popularity owed little to Marxist ideology or declared policies, which were in any case often contradictory and unclear in certain crucial areas, such as

⁸³ However, it should be pointed out that most of the industrial workers striking in Latvia in 1905 were non-Latvians, largely migrant workers from the Russian Empire that fed the large factories operating in Riga. See for example, Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians.,” p. 261; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 14; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 4; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 210.

⁸⁴ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 104-105.

⁸⁵ Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 23. see also, Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 312.

the land and national questions.”⁸⁷ Thus, Marxism had little to do with attraction of the message, compared to the fact that Socialists took advantage by playing on problems prevalent in rural areas.

Overall, when the revolution of 1905 quickly spread to rural Latvia, it exploded to take on a life of its own, which had a uniquely liberal-individualist character. In addition to the rural and liberal character of the uprisings in the Latvian countryside in 1905, the rural revolutionary’s goals diverged significantly from that of the Social Democrat revolutionaries in Riga. Indeed, many of these right leaning revolutionaries views on land reform and property diverged significantly from that of the more radical Social Democratic views. To illustrate, Plakans’ concludes that in “spreading quickly to the countryside, these actions came to involve persons who did not adhere to a social democratic ideology.”⁸⁸ Moreover, many of the leaders in the rural areas were actually ordinary farmers and their sons, and the remaining leaders that had any affiliation with the Social Democrats, were actually on the on the right-wing of the party, many of whom would leave the Social Democrats and later come over to right-wing and liberal Latvian political parties in the years following 1905.⁸⁹

Overall, the rural uprisings that spread rapidly across rural Latvia in 1905 largely took on a uniquely liberal character, in that the land hungry peasants wanted a redistribution of land away from Baltic-German barons, in order to facilitate increased

⁸⁷ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 237. For similar consensus, see Ezergailis. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.*, p. 7; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 61. For examples of explicitly class based assessment, see Page. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States.*, p. 18-21. Page not only seems to exaggerate the strength of the Socialist forces, but also attributes 1905 in Latvia to a class struggle, and gives significant credit to the role played by Bolsheviks like Pēteris Stučka. Also, most of Page’s sources here are Soviet, or leftist. More problematic, Page gives little assessment to the fact that it was predominantly a rural revolt, and fails to consult any Baltic academic literature.

⁸⁸ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 105. For similar consensus on rural revolutionary’s goals diverging significantly from the Social Democrats, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 23; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 312; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation.*, p. 66-67; Ezergailis. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.*, p. 7; Raun, Toivu U. (1984). “The Revolution of 1905 in the Baltic Provinces and Finland.” *Slavic Review*, 43, 3: 453-467., p. 461; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 65.

⁸⁹ Moreover, many of these rural revolutionaries from 1905 would go on to play prominent political roles in the Republic of Latvia during its first period of independence, such as its first President, and first Prime Minister, and other prominent figures such as Mikelis Valters who along with Karlis Ulmanis would become a key member of the Latvian Farmers Union. See Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation.*, p. 66-67 [Blodnieks’ himself was also active in the 1905 revolution, and was also leader of the New Farmers party and Prime Minister of Latvia]. See also Ģērmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia.” p. 29; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 265; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 235; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 71; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 312.

individual private landownership, and were opposed to any movement towards collective ownership. To illustrate, Pabriks and Purs argue that the peasants “did not want state or collective ownership of property...they wanted to seize the considerable remaining land holdings of the Baltic German aristocracy and divide it among themselves,” and “once divided, land would become private property.”⁹⁰ Additionally, Bleiere et al argued that not only was there a liberal-democratic character exhibited, but also that “the revolutionaries did not urge the abolition of private property, cardinal changes in the agrarian system or the establishment of a dictatorship.”⁹¹ Moreover, as one prominent participant in the revolt of 1905 pointed out, “this movement advocated not only personal and national freedom, but also the right to land ownership.”⁹² Obviously the goals of the Latvian rural revolutionaries appear more liberal than socialist in nature. Indeed, one could see inspiration from the old teachings of the Moravian Brethren, in that the demands of the rural uprisings echoed the sentiments predominant in the worldviews of rural Latvian peasants, which had a yearning for freedom and desire for individual property, and favoured liberal-democratic reforms of self-governance. Similar, liberal ideas and themes would play prominently in Latvian politics in the following years, such as during the first period of independence from 1918-1940, and would characterize demands in the late-1980s, and in the political-economic reforms upon regaining independence in 1991.

Finally, Latvia’s mass rural uprising were significant in that peasants took a leading role in the countryside, which stands in contrast to rural peasants in Belarus and most of Russia, whom largely remained passive during the events of 1905. In the end, the Russian and Baltic German clampdown on the Revolution of 1905 was severe in the rural areas of Latvia.

⁹⁰ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 9-10.

⁹¹ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 64, 63, 71.

⁹² Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 193, 9, 51, 65-67. For similar consensus on private property goals, and liberal-democratic character, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 23-24; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 312; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 263, 267; Hanchett, Walter S. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside, 1919-1949.” In *Res Baltica*, ed. Adolf Sprudz and Armins Ruis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 88; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” p. 23; Ezergailis, Andrew. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution: The First Phase: September 1917 to April 1918.* Boulder: East European Monographs., p. 17; Vinogradoff, Eugene D. (1979). “The Russian Peasantry and the Elections to the Fourth State Duma.” In *The Politics of Rural Russia, 1905-1914*, ed. Leopold H. Haimson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press., p. 227.

Russian Revolution and War of Independence

In the years following 1905, while the lot rural Latvian peasants was definitely improving compared to the earlier hardships of serfdom, many of the old grievances and demands had not been dealt with. Overall, a large reason for such grievances was the continued widespread hunger for land amongst Latvian peasants. This is because a small concentration of Baltic German barons still continued to control 48% of the agricultural land in Latvia by 1914.⁹³ As a result, the demands for increased freedoms and rights to private property via land reform continued to be ever-present. To illustrate, Plakans points out that “from the Latvian viewpoint, the continuation of this state of affairs was clearly unsatisfactory, and the desire to own rather than rent from others remained a powerful theme in all Latvian discussions of agrarian matters.”⁹⁴

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, Latvians viewed fighting with the Russian armies as a means to rid Latvia of Baltic German domination, and to help gain their long sought after freedom. In addition to serving as a means to free themselves from Baltic German domination, Latvian cooperation in the armies of the Russian Empire during World War One were driven by seemingly liberal-democratic worldviews and values of freedom, reform and self-governance. Because Russia was allied with the Western Democracies, many saw this as a means to spur liberal reform within the Russian Empire, which would then translate into reforms in Latvia. As Bilmanis points out “the Baltic peoples had hoped that a democratized Russian Government, with the ministers responsible to the Duma, would reward their loyalty and military feats with self government.”⁹⁵ Tens of thousands of Latvians would fight, and the Latvian Rifle Regiment was formed within the Russian Army in 1915. Fighting under often poor command from Russian generals, the Latvian units suffered large amounts of casualties, with close to 20,000 killed.⁹⁶

Owing to the predominantly rural character during this time, the largest party in Latvia by 1917 was the Latvian Peasant Union, under the leadership of key figures like

⁹³ Plakans. (1981). “The Latvians,” p. 271-272.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271-272.

⁹⁵ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 277, 280. See also Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 150; Gērmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia,” p. 38; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 76-77; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 89.

⁹⁶ See for example, Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 113-115.

Kārlis Ulmanis and also Mikelis Valters. In general, the platform of the Latvian Peasant Union favoured agricultural land reform in order to cure rural Latvians hunger for land, by dividing up the estates of Baltic German barons and giving the property to individual Latvian peasant farmers.⁹⁷ Additionally, it is also important to note that at the outset of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Social Democrats were also one of the largest parties in Latvia and continued to attract many sympathizers both in urban and rural Latvia by playing on many of the old historical grievances of Latvians, such as the desire for private property. However, the Socialists were far from united, and there was a significant split in the party between moderates and radical Bolsheviks under the leadership of Pēteris Stučka.⁹⁸

Indeed, it is also true that at the outset of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks could find significant amounts of support also amongst Latvians. For example, large support was found amongst the Latvian Riflemen units serving in the Russian Army, which eventually split with significant amounts forming key fighting units in the Red Army. Some even noted that these Red Riflemen units played an important in facilitating the success of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁹⁹ In reality, most historians agree today that the Latvian Riflemen did not play as key a role in aiding the overall success of the Bolsheviks as some claim. For instance, many of these claims were more fiction than fact, where much of which was actually “a myth created by Latvian communists.”¹⁰⁰ Overall, there was a split in the Latvian Riflemen with some going to support the Soviet Red Army, while the others were loyal to the nascent Latvian state formed in 1918. Moreover, many early sympathizers were drawn to the Bolsheviks not out of ideological

⁹⁷ See for example, Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 69-70.

⁹⁸ See for example, Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 117.

⁹⁹ For example, Page argues that the riflemen played a big role in “the foundation” of Red Army, and were “decisive factor in Bolshevik triumph.” Page. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States.*, p. 84-85. However, most of Page’s sources are Soviet, particularly citing Latvian Bolshevik Pēteris Stučka. Others are more reserved in their acknowledgement of the Latvian Riflemen playing and important role in the Bolshevik Revolution. See Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 254-255; Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 69-70.

¹⁰⁰ For example, “during the civil war there were about a million soldiers in the Red Army, and among them only one divisions strength of Latvian soldiers.” Regardless of these small numbers, “Soviet rule approved this myth and spread it effectively.” Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 89. For further consensus disputing the claim of Latvians playing a big role in the Russian Revolution, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 336; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 314. On large splits in Latvian Riflemen, see also Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 323; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 33; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 93-95; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 117.

affinity, but because disenchantment with severe losses suffered under the poor leadership of generals of the Russian army. Here the Bolsheviks had the advantage of being an early agitator amongst units in the Russian Army. In reality, not only were many fed up with losses on the battlefield, but many also believed the Bolsheviks were the best route for helping Latvia to gain its freedom and independence because of the Soviet decree on national self-determination.¹⁰¹

The first attempt of Bolsheviks to seize control was in the part of the Livonia region of Vidzeme, where there was essentially a power vacuum because the German lines did not reach that far, and the general chaos that was present as a result of being on the front line of the war. In this region, there was formed the short lived Iskolat Republic, which was largely a Bolshevik creation, which only lasted a couple of months, from Autumn 1917 to February 1918. Initially, the Bolsheviks were able to find some support and sympathies amongst the general Latvian population in the immediate stages of the Russian Revolution, by largely playing on historical grievances like the Latvian peasants' incessant hunger for land, and also by taking advantage of the hardships caused by the fact that Latvia was situated on the front lines of battle throughout World War One.¹⁰² While the rule of Iskolat would not be as severe as the Bolshevik rule in Northern Latvia and Latgale, from December 1918 to May 1919, there were nonetheless many non-democratic and illiberal tendencies that began to be exhibited by the Bolshevik rulers, which did not sit well with sentiments and political-cultural worldviews of most Latvians. This included what many called overt coercion, terror, lack of rule of law, arbitrary

¹⁰¹ For consensus on the above rationale and not ideological affinity of the Latvian Riflemen who joined the Red Army, see Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 323; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 109; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 33; Ģērmanis. (1968). "The Idea of an Independent Latvia.," p. 49, 61, 62; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 33; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 115; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 86, 93-94; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 81, 84.

¹⁰² For consensus that it was not ideological affinity, but more the Bolshevik's taking advantage of the situation, see Ģērmanis. (1968). "The Idea of an Independent Latvia.," p. 71; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.* p. 24; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 87; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 90, 240, n. 7; Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 92; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 249, 269. A differing assessment is given by Stanley Page (1970) who called the events in Latvia a "class struggle." Overall, Page exaggerates the strength of the Latvian Bolsheviks, while at the same time downplaying the strength of liberal 'bourgeois' forces. Moreover, Page confuses good organizational strength and coherence of the Bolsheviks with that of mass popularity. Also, his high assessment of the levels of pure Bolshevik spirit amongst Latvian Riflemen is contradicted by other historical assessments. Additionally, Page also contradicts his claims about the movement's popularity in pointing to evidence of terror, in that "arrests and death sentences became the order of the day" (p. 67). Page. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States.*, p. 62-68.

arrests, banning of political opponents, attacks on private property, and a general lack of civil liberties including no freedom of the press.¹⁰³ As a result of such actions, the Bolsheviks governing the Iskolat quickly saw initial popular sympathies disappear.

In general, the actions of the Bolsheviks in the Iskolat were not in sync with the political-cultural worldviews, values and habits of Latvians, the majority of which were rural peasant farmers. Especially in regards to agrarian reform and the Latvians long-burning desire for individual property, the policies of the Iskolat proved contradictory to the preferences of the masses of landless Latvian peasants. This is because the Iskolat would not permit the individual ownership of agricultural land, and had policies with the long-term goal of nationalization and collectivization of agriculture, even though this went against the inclinations of the majority of Latvian peasants. Similar to past events, there was a continuity in political-cultural worldviews, as the land hungry peasants wanted a redistribution of land away from Baltic-German barons, in order to facilitate increased individual private landownership, and did not favour a movement towards collective ownership. Needless to say, such liberal attitudes were translated into resistance to Iskolat policies from Latvian peasants in the countryside. As one Latvian Bolshevik in the Iskolat was quoted as stating at the time, “we always arrived at a dark doorway: it is the age-old idea of ‘to every man his own plot of land’...it is the curse from which the landless cannot rid themselves.”¹⁰⁴ Similar assessments were offered by Ezergailis, where he points out that many Bolsheviks in the Iskolat voiced the “concern that the Latvian landless Peasant was still strongly motivated by proprietary instincts.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, even after just a few months of being ruled by the Bolsheviks under the Iskolat, it was reported that many Latvians were happy when the Bolsheviks were driven

¹⁰³ See for example, Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 100-101, 152, 160; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 39; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 92; Ezergailis. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.*, p. 71-72.

¹⁰⁴ Ģērmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia.” p. 65.

¹⁰⁵ Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 145, 103. In terms of resistance, Ezergailis points out that “the Iskolat officials at the center complained bitterly on occasion about their inability to control the localities who were either ignoring the decrees or were engaging in wild improvisations” (p. 99). Moreover, in order to curb such individual peasant resistance and force property nationalization, “the socialists would impose on them taxes and other labor conditions, such as the eight-hour day, that would ultimately coerce the recalcitrant farmers to abandon the family proprietary farms” (p. 141). Overall, “Latvian SD’s agrarian program proved disastrous to the Bolsheviks in the long run.” Ezergailis. (1974). *The 1917 Revolution in Latvia.*, p. 71-72, 217. On Bolsheviks going against worldviews and preferences of the majority, see also Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 39.

out by German forces in February 1918.¹⁰⁶ As a result, it was not affinity for Bolshevik ideology that drew Latvian sympathies towards the Soviets initially, since the Bolsheviks running the Iskolat were not able to hold and consolidate this support.

On November, 18, 1918, the independent Republic of Latvia was declared with a provisional government under the leadership of Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis, head of the Latvian Agrarian Union. Ulmanis's new government stay in Riga was short-lived, however, following the surrender of Germany in November of 1918, and the subsequent reoccupation of Riga, large parts of Vidzeme and Latgale by the Bolsheviks and Red Army in December 1918. This forced the provisional government of the Republic of Latvia to seek refuge in Courland which was then occupied by German forces. Bolshevik rule would last in Northern Latvia and Latgale from December 1918 to May 1919.

While, the Iskolat certainly espoused many non-democratic and illiberal tendencies, the new group of Bolshevik rulers that came at the end of 1918, under the leadership of Latvian Bolshevik Pēteris Stučka, was even more draconian, and began to quickly implement a radical agenda that did not sit well with sentiments and political-cultural worldviews of most Latvians. This has often been described as a period of Red Terror, which included forced coercion, lack of rule of law, arbitrary arrests, killings, banning of political opponents, full-scale attacks on private property, arbitrarily high taxation, forced labour, attacks on religion, and a complete lack of civil liberties including no freedom of the press. Indeed, there was so much "terror, hunger, sickness and death" in Riga under Bolshevik rule that it was called "the city of the Red Plague."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ This joy was short-lived though. Ezergailis. (1983). *The Latvian Impact on the Bolshevik Revolution.*, p. 166; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 297; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 44, 46.

¹⁰⁷ This is the title of an often-cited first hand account of one survivor of this short period of Bolshevik rule. Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 149-164. Popoff gives first hand details of the Red Terror in the form of executions, often without any real cause, and large numbers of arrests that were generally lacking in the rule of law (p. 87-98). Moreover, nobody was immune to the terror, and Popoff notes that its arbitrary and destructive nature struck fear in the people of Riga (p. 149-153, 162-163). In terms of killings, it was reported that from March 11 to April 3, 1919, 350-400 people were killed by the Bolsheviks, merely out of retaliation, which included the massacre of prisoners at Bickern Wood outside Riga, with an additional 2,000 reported shot, 7,000 in prison, and 20,000 in the Dvina concentration camps (p. 208-221). Additionally, Lutheran and Catholic clergy were also routinely persecuted (p. 279). Estimates of the total number of people executed in Latvia during Bolshevik rule was 5,000, with 8,590 dying of starvation in Riga, which put the death toll caused by Bolshevik Terror at around 13,500 victims (p. 337). Finally, the descriptions of Bolshevik rule seemed almost neo-feudal as Bolsheviks were described as living like kings off of the stolen property they had plundered while the rest of the population starved (p. 160-161). For similar assessments on Red Terror, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 347-348; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 180; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 59; Kirby.

As a result, if there had been any segments of support remaining at the beginning of this second period of Bolshevik occupation, this quickly evaporated when the Bolsheviks forces put their actual plan into practice, which caused any nascent support amongst Latvians to turn into outright hostility. Thus, “‘Latvian Bolshevism’ was only an ephemeral phenomenon which thrived on the unsettled agrarian and social conditions in Latvia.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the Bolsheviks under Pēteris Stučka were so unpopular, and largely sustained only by the force of the occupying Red Army that many would correctly label this short-lived regime as a puppet of Moscow. Not only was this a puppet regime, but as one first hand account of the events in Riga observed, “a ‘Bolshevist revolution,’ a spontaneous rising of the people, had never taken place at all.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, long term and rooted support for Communist ideas were never able to gain much traction amongst the Latvian population, during Latvia’s original fight for independence.

One could even view this as a direct clash of cultures occurring between the liberally minded political-culture predominant amongst Latvians and that of the Russian dominated and collectivistic Latvian Bolsheviks. First, Latvian Bolsheviks like Pēteris Stučka seemed to have already gone through a political-cultural conversion, in that they viewed themselves as Communist first and Latvian second, especially in their goals to push the spread of Bolshevism over all of Europe. Moreover, most Latvian Bolsheviks like Pēteris Stučka were so ideologically committed that they stayed in the Soviet Union

(1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 269; Eksteins, Modris. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak: A Story of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the Heart of Our Century.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company., p. 67-68.

¹⁰⁸ Ģērmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia.” p. 71.

¹⁰⁹ Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 59, 52. For consensus on lack of support and being a puppet regime, see Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 31; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 162; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 306, 320, 328; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 165-167; Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.” p. 88-90. A differing assessment is given by Page (1970). Page bases such incorrect assumptions on support received from industrial workers within urban Riga. Two points should be noted, which cast doubt on Page’s assertions. First, industrial workers were only a minority in Latvian society, as the vast majority of ethnic-Latvians worked in agriculture and lived in rural areas. Second, as noted above in the discussion about Riga and other urban areas, industrial workers were composed of diverse groups, where non-Latvians formed the majority. Additionally, Page predominantly cites Soviet sources as evidence, such as *Izvestia*, *Nasha Pravda*, and chief Bolshevik leader Pēteris Stučka. Furthermore, Page’s claim about the “popular foundations” are contradicted by evidence of the Bolshevik’s having to resort to terror – killings, forced labour, seizure of property, something which Page himself acknowledges (p. 139-140). Page. (1970). *The Formation of the Baltic States.* Overall, Page’s assertions leaves the reader skeptical and wanting to offer the question, if there was such ‘mass appeal’ for the Communists, then why was such widespread terror by the Bolsheviks against the Latvians necessary? In general, Page ignores evidence of testimonies from locals, about “the feeling of overwhelming joy with which the people of Riga and Latvians...greeted the capital's liberation from the Bolshevik regime.” (Blodnieks 1960: 180); (Popoff 1932: 297, 304, 329-332).

after the Bolsheviks were defeated in Latvia. As Plakans points out, “a large proportion of the early adherents remained faithful to Bolshevism,” and for “intellectually inclined activists such as Pēteris Stučka, ideological conviction was probably paramount.”¹¹⁰ Thus, the Latvian Bolsheviks seemed to have converted totally to the Bolshevik faith, world revolution, and the interests of Moscow.

Furthermore, the Bolsheviks launched an outright attack on Latvian religious and cultural institutions. Religious teachings in prayers in school were banned, and all religious icons were also removed from schools. Bolsheviks also strictly prohibited free church worship, and church property was nationalized and turned into Bolshevik clubs. Additionally, most clergy members were also imprisoned. Such persecutions seem logical from clash of cultures perspective. As one first hand account of a survivor from Riga points out, “the Reds...doctrine was itself really a kind of religion, [and] did not intend to recognize any other faith except that of orthodox Bolshevism.”¹¹¹ Another aspect of the clash of culture was seen in the Bolsheviks open attack on the historic Latvian political-cultural way of life and habits of the individual private family farm that had long been historically predominant in Latvia. Overall, Bolshevik policies flew in the face of the Latvians long held liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and habits that cherished and upheld “the inviolability of the domestic hearth and the freedom of the individual,” which “were ideas completely unknown to [Bolsheviks].”¹¹² As one survivor to this period of Red Terror points out, it was the case that under the attempted “Bolshevist experiment...we [Latvians] were ordered to alter our entire existence from

¹¹⁰ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 120-121. In general, Stučka, like other Soviet Bolsheviks, viewed Latvia and the Baltic region as a means to further the wider revolution, since it was stated that “Latvia is the gateway through which the Russian Revolution must invade Western Europe.” Such views were in total congruence with Bolshevik leaders in Moscow. To illustrate, *Izvestiya* [December 25, 1918] stated that “‘Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are directly on the road from Russia to Western Europe and are therefore a hindrance to our revolution.... The conquest of the Baltic Sea would make it possible for Soviet Russia to agitate in favor of the social revolution in the Scandinavian countries, thus transforming the Baltic Sea into the Sea of the Social Revolution.’” Cited in Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague*., p. 241-242. For similar consensus, see Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*., p. 312, 314; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia*., p. 40; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia*., p. 347; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation*., p. 167; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States*., p. 51-52; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak*., p. 61.

¹¹¹ Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague*., p. 103-104. On the attack on religion, see also Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak*., p. 68.

¹¹² Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague*., p. 73.

top to bottom and from beginning to end.”¹¹³ Quite simply, the Bolsheviks were trying to change the historic political-cultural way of life of the Latvian people.

The extreme form of collectivist and communal values promoted by the Bolsheviks were an affront to Latvia’s historic liberal political-cultural worldview and way of life favoring individual freedoms, and private property. A key issue here involved the control and management of land, because the historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories predominant amongst the majority of rural Latvian peasants diverged significantly from that of the preferences of the Latvian Bolsheviks. As Hanchett points out, the Latvian peasants wanted their own land, and the Bolsheviks policies “ignored the land hunger of the Latvian countryside,” where “virtually all the...program went against he wishes of the peasants” to live on independent private family farms.¹¹⁴ Additionally, a prominent figure of the Latvian Communist Party, Linards Laicens, offered the assessment after the defeat of Bolshevik forces in Latvia that the prime reasons for their low support was the use of “unnecessary terror, forced communization, the complication of the agrarian question, bureaucratization [authoritarianism], appropriation of privileges [individual freedoms], [and the] unnecessarily rapid nationalization of trifles [private property].”¹¹⁵ Overall, when it came time to decide, Latvians preferred the liberal approach of independent private ownership to solve their hunger for land, and rejected the collectivist option espoused and promoted by the Bolsheviks, whose policies would not permit the individual ownership of private property, and in fact openly attacked all forms of private property.

The brutal policies of Red Terror inflicted against the population, and the forced seizure of private property, flew in the face Latvians predominantly liberal political-cultural worldviews, values and habits, and served to increase local Latvian hostility and resistance towards the nascent Communist forces. As a result, Latvian peasants shared deeply anti-Bolshevik sentiments, which at times verged on visceral hatred. Such

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 52-53.

¹¹⁴ This was especially the case when “the former small land-owners were converted...into lessees of the very land that had previously belonged to them.” Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.” p. 88-89.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*. p. 25. For further consensus on ignoring Latvians desire for private property, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 347; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 118; Ģērmanis. (1968). “The Idea of an Independent Latvia.” p. 61-73; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 15; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 67; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 40; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 131.

hostility is illustrated by a quote from a Bolshevik party worker in the Latvian countryside who offered his personal observation that “the peasantry of Latvia which had expected to secure land...did not receive it,” and that “the participants at one meeting were so enraged that they wanted to beat me unmercifully when I raised the question of collectivization of the livestock of the [peasant] laborers.”¹¹⁶ Quite simply there was so much anti-Bolshevik sentiment brewing in the Latvian countryside that the Latvian “[peasants] hated the Bolsheviks.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, such negative views were well known to the Latvian Bolshevik leader, Pēteris Stučka, who observed in late March 1919 that “the [Latvian] peasant looks upon the Communist as his enemy who intends to take the land from him.”¹¹⁸ The fact that it has been acknowledged by Latvian Bolsheviks, illustrates that there was indeed a clash of cultures occurring in Latvia between the predominantly liberal-individualist political-cultural of Latvians, with that of the radical collectivistic worldviews of the Latvian Bolsheviks.

The hatred towards the Bolsheviks resulted in strong resistance and open hostility being seen across wide parts of Latvia, both in urban areas and especially in the Latvian countryside, where peasant farmers’ actions were openly subversive to Bolshevik attempts to force nationalization and collectivization. Quite simply, the extreme form of collectivist and communal values promoted by the Bolsheviks were an affront to Latvia’s historic liberal political-cultural worldview and way of life favoring individual freedoms, and private property. As one British observer of the War of Independence observed, the “sturdy peasants intended to defend their land and their individual rights and those of their nation...rejected the Communist doctrines and were prepared to organize an army to fight the Bolshevik army.”¹¹⁹ Where armed resistance was not feasible, others turned to non-violent resistance to Bolshevik rule, in the form of spiritual resistance, where

¹¹⁶ It also would not have helped matters that most rural party workers were actually from the cities. Quoted in Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside,” p. 89.

¹¹⁷ Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 243. For consensus on high anti-Bolshevik sentiment, see Crowe, David M. Jr. (1975). *The Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, 1938-1939* [Dissertation]. Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms., p. 14; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 318, 326.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside,” p. 89, 90. On Stučka’s observation of Latvians rejection of Soviet Bolshevism, see Kalnbērziņš, J. (1951). *Ten Years of Soviet Latvia.* Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House., p. 99; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 269.

¹¹⁹ Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 41-42. In November 1919, the Latvian Army contained 36,000 men. Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 83. By end of War of Independence the Latvian Army contained 76,000 men in August 1920. Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 92.

Latvians sought sustenance from the word of God, especially those whom were persecuted and imprisoned by the Bolsheviks.¹²⁰

During the War of Independence, the newly formed Republic of Latvia was caught between the Bolsheviks and the Germans, which were both against Latvian independence. Additionally, Latvian forces had to contend also with White Russian forces under Bermond, whom favoured restoration of the Tsarist Empire. Also, the German forces under General Von der Goltz still had imperial ambitions in the Baltic and repeatedly harassed the inhabitants and nascent Latvian government, and even attempted the overthrow of legal Latvian government on April 16, 1919, when German forces' attempted to install Andrievs Niedra as leader. Moreover, the forces of the Latvian Republic fought with much determination, as allied support was not always readily forthcoming and ambiguous at many times, since White Russian and German Freikorps regularly received more aid than the newly formed Baltic governments of Latvia and Estonia.¹²¹ Overall, the forces of the newly formed Republic of Latvia fought with much tenacity and great effort, and enjoyed popular support amongst the Latvian masses, in contributing to the fight to gain Latvia's independence.¹²²

¹²⁰ Even though most of clergy were imprisoned, average Latvian parishioners' took it upon themselves to conduct church services. See Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 276-280. Additionally, Bilmanis notes that through the times of oppression, "Latvians strong religious faith helped them to bear their plight." Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 38. For consensus on widespread resistance and rejection of Communism, see Vardys, V. Stanley. (1978). "The Rise of Authoritarian Rule in the Baltic States." In *The Baltic States in Peace and War*, eds. Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 65; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 80. Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 243; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 89; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 328; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 131.

¹²¹ For more information, see Ruhl. (1921). *New Masters of the Baltic.*, p. 153; Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 331-332; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 32-33; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 315-331; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation.*, p. 144-145; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 37; Sullivan, Charles L. (1978). "The 1919 German Campaign in the Baltic: The Final Phase." In *The Baltic States in Peace and War*, eds. Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 31, 40-41; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 60-61, 68-69; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 278-279; Mežaks. (2003). "Latvia Throughout History.," p. 25; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 74, 90.

¹²² For consensus on widespread resistance and popularity, see Popoff. (1932). *The City of the Red Plague.*, p. 243, 297; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation.*, p. 170; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 7; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 41-42, 56; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 60-69; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 324, 326-328; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 33; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 119-120; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 89; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 127, 131-32, 145. A differing assessment is given by Page, who claims that Ulmanis and others in the National Council "represented a minority of the population," and were bourgeoisie in their interests only (p. 115-123, 144). Additionally, Page also gives more credit to the intervention of France, Britain and America, than to what he calls "the Baltic peoples'

Independence: Republic of Latvia – 1918 to 1940

The War of Independence concluded following the peace treaty signed between the Latvian government and Soviet Union in 1920. Overall, Latvia's historically liberal individualist political-culture thrived during the period of interwar independence from 1918-1940, the foundations of which were built on the historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers. Additionally, Latvia was endowed with a liberal constitution that epitomized Western legal traditions in promoting individual freedoms.¹²³ In terms of political-economic practices, government policy was of a liberal standard relative to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar period.

Agrarian Land Reform of 1920

Similar to the recent period after regaining independence, Latvia's first democratically elected government implemented significant policies of reform, which were designed in order to promote liberal goals. One of the main policies areas where one could witness Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews favoring individual freedom and private ownership of property in action, was in the extensive agrarian reforms conducted by the Latvian Government beginning on September 16, 1920. This saw the redistribution of land from Baltic German Barons to Latvian small private farmers. Such policies were important because during this period agriculture formed a key part of the interwar economy, and the majority of ethnic-Latvians and total population lived in rural

feeble efforts to win their nations a short-lived independence" (p. 184). In general, Page ignores evidence pointing to the progress that Latvia made during the interwar. Moreover, in citing predominantly Latvian Bolshevik figures and other Soviet sources, Page appears to accept much of the official Soviet propaganda about Latvia. As Blūzma points out, "Soviet history books depicted the creation of the independent Republic of Latvia during the inter-war years as the result of an international imperialist conspiracy against the Latvian people which allowed the "reactionary" Latvian bourgeoisie to usurp power in Latvia."

Blūzma, Valdis. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening and Non-Violent Resistance (1918 – 4 May 1920)." Part IV. In *Regaining Independence: Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia 1918-1920*, eds. Valdis Blūzma, Tālav Jundzis, Jānis Riekstiņš, Gene Sharp, Heinrihs Strods. Riga: Latvia Academy of Sciences., p. 247.

¹²³ On liberalness and Western legal traditions protecting individual freedoms in Latvia's constitution, see Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 536, 695-705; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 190; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 336; Vardys. (1978). "The Rise of Authoritarian Rule.," p. 66.

areas.¹²⁴ As a result of such policies, individual Latvian landownership increased from its level of 39.3% in 1920 to 76.8% by 1930, so that by the late 1930s the vast majority of Latvians were landowners, and the problem of rural landlessness was largely resolved.¹²⁵ Indeed, the 1920 land reforms were so effective in fulfilling the demands of Latvian peasant farmers that many credit such reforms with promoting a stable political environment devoid of radicalism, decreased social tensions, and helping to build a prosperous economy that was characteristic of the interwar Republic of Latvia.¹²⁶

These policies to officially increase formal individual private land ownership were not only immensely popular with the Latvian public, due to the historic hunger for land by peasants, but also viewed as way of righting past historical injustices where Latvian peasants were deprived of their land by the Baltic German barons. As Rutkis argues, “the reform was considered by most Latvians to be an act of historical justice, one which returned to them the land that the German barons had taken over in the course of centuries.”¹²⁷ While one might be tempted to describe such actions as being predicated simply on nationalist backlash or class revolt by Latvians against the powerful Baltic German minority, such explanations are inadequate to understand these reforms. First, if such policies were simply based on nationalist backlash from the Latvians towards Baltic

¹²⁴ In terms of the urban population, only 32.8% of Latvia’s population lived in cities and towns in 1925, which had decreased to 32.2% by 1940 (see Figure 4.1 in Appendix).

¹²⁵ See Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 334-336, 342; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 198; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 79; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 20; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 113; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 87.

¹²⁶ For consensus, see Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 334, 540; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 334-335; Information Department of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (IDRIIA). (1938). *The Baltic States: A Survey of the Political and Economic Structure and Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.* London: Oxford University Press., p. 29, 44; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 33, 35; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 364-366; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 21, 57-58; Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia.” p. 1679; King, Gundar Julian. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia: A Manpower Management Study.* Tacoma: Pacific Lutheran University Press., p. 40; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 239; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 87, 90; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 299-300; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 125; “Latvia’s Achievements, 1918-1940.” (2003). In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 34-36; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 194-195.

¹²⁷ Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 239, 334. This also sounds similar to recent reforms where Soviet collective ‘estates’ were incompatible with peoples worldviews. Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 299. For consensus on land (private property) being returned to the Latvian peasants being seen as ‘an act of historical justice,’ see Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 79; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 35; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 362-367; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 57; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 194; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 39; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 87; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 124-126; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 195; Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 334.

Germans, it seems unlikely that they would have allowed the Baltic German landholders to retain 50 hectares of their land, which was much larger than the majority of Latvian farms, which averaged 30 hectares (74 acres) or less by 1935.¹²⁸ In response to class based arguments, it is important to note that other types of failed land reform, including the confiscation, nationalization and collectivization were attempted by the nascent Bolshevik regime that occupied parts of Latvia during the Bolshevik Revolution and Latvian War of Independence. As mentioned above, the land confiscation and collectivization by Bolshevik forces was largely greeted by a hostile response from the majority of the rural Latvian population. Thus, the agrarian land reforms of 1920 were not simply based on the negative whims of nationalisms or reactionary class revolt, or for materialistic gain as rationalists would argue, but instead supported by a solid-vision grounded in the predominant political-cultural worldviews found in Latvia.

Although the policy reforms were important in increasing the number of individual Latvian private farmers and social contentment, such actions should not be viewed simply as government institutions and policies serving to create such worldviews and habits. For instance, while only a minority of Latvian peasants (39.3%) had acquired sizeable plots of land by 1920, the majority of Latvian peasants still remained independent proprietors. This is because the historical pattern in Latvia was towards a tradition and habit of individual private family farmsteads that were disconnected from neighbouring farmsteads, a custom that persisted throughout the period of serfdom, as opposed to the way of life of communal and collective control of land that was predominant in Belarus. As Bilmanis points out, “the independent, isolated, self-sufficient farm of early tribal times...survived as an ideal throughout the centuries of dispossession...[where] Latvian families...upheld the early respect for private property, independence of action.”¹²⁹ Thus, such reforms were informed and influenced by the historically preexisting liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories that were predominant within Latvian society during the interwar period.

¹²⁸ See Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 334-335; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 125.

¹²⁹ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 20. On individual private farmsteads as being the prevailing pattern in rural Latvia, see also footnotes no. 57-58 above, and also Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.” p. 90.

The agrarian land reforms of 1920 areas were largely influenced by liberalist ideals oriented towards the goal of promoting individual economic initiative and supporting the advancement and interests of Latvia's private family farms. As Hanchett points out, "the land program of the independent Latvian state hewed to the ideal of the compact, separated farmstead."¹³⁰ Additionally, Kirby points out that "a strong 'peasantist' ethos, which sought to create a nation of small farmers imbued with...a strong sense of attachment to the land, to the farmstead as a family concern...[and] impervious to the siren songs of deracinated Reds...pervaded much of the debate on land reform."¹³¹ Here, one can infer that the values described above that were promoted by the Protestant values, found in the teachings of Luther and the Moravian Brethren, as informing the content of worldviews exemplified in the individualist ethos predominant amongst Latvian peasants and many political elites, and thus acting as a driving force behind content and goals of such reform policies.

Overall, the policies of land reform in 1920 were in tune with Latvians liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, and historical memories which viewed the rightful return of their property as a just act and private land ownership as a natural right. To illustrate such sentiment, one former Latvian Prime Minister Adolfs Blodnieks argued, the "demand that farm laborers who constituted 60% of the farming population be made landowners was just and natural," because it "gave land to those who tilled it, who loved it and desired to own it."¹³² Indeed, the agrarian reforms were highly popular with the majority of Latvians, which was seen with the Latvian peasants' strong demand for private land ownership. As Bilmanis points out "the consensus of opinion favored the retention of private property and enterprise as the foundations of Latvia's economy," because this was "in conformity with the [Latvians] time-honored tradition of self-sufficiency."¹³³ Indeed, when people were free to choose, they preferred an individualist

¹³⁰ Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 91

¹³¹ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 299-301. On liberal-individualist ethos motivating the goals of the 1920 land reforms, see Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 540; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 134-135; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 366; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 125; Hope, Nicholas. (1994). "Interwar Statehood: Symbol and Reality." Ch. 2. In *The Baltic States*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press., p. 59.

¹³² Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 193.

¹³³ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 12, 334. For similar consensus, see Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 134-135; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 30.

way of life as opposed to a collectivist. Thus, the 1920 policy of agrarian land reform largely resulted from Latvia's predominant liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories that viewed individual private property ownership as the right, normal, and natural form of land organization.

Liberal-Individualist Ethos in Political-Economic Relations

Throughout the development of interwar Latvia, a liberal-individualist ethos and cult of private property reigned supreme, which was characterized by the prosperous Latvian private family farmstead. As Bilmanis points out, "the Latvian...rejected the socialist creed, claimed his private property and civil rights, cherished the spirit of individual initiative...[and] desired...above all mastery in his own land."¹³⁴ It can be argued that in Latvia there was strong normative desires for individual private property, where Latvian peasant farmers had an intense yearning to own and farm their ancestral property, even if at the beginning of reforms it was uncertain whether such actions would be economically viable in the long-run. Indeed, throughout Latvia's first period of independence, the ideal of private property was held at the level of being sacred.

One can see the values described above that were promoted by the teachings of Luther and those of the Moravian Brethren as informing most of the content of the predominant political-cultural worldviews and ways of life of Latvians during this period. Certainly, religion was important in interwar Latvia. As Bilmanis pointed out in his observations of Latvians during the interwar period, "their character is tempered by religion."¹³⁵ Indeed, it is fair to describe Latvians of the time, especially Latvian private farmers as displaying habits and a way of life that epitomized the Protestant work ethic, which was seen in the industriousness, hard work and sacrifice of Latvia's individual private farmers which helped lead to increasing levels of prosperity being seen during

¹³⁴ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 369. For further consensus on the individualistic private family farm as being a key characterization of the Latvian way of life during the first period of independence, see Rūsis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1680; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia*., p. 45; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays*., p. 36, 49-50.

¹³⁵ Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays*., p. 36, 14. By 1938, Lutherans constituted 56.15% of the population (overwhelmingly predominant in the regions of Courland, Livonia and Zemgale), Roman Catholics 24.45%, and Russian Orthodox 8.94% (both predominant in Letgallia). Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 377. For similar assessments on the importance of religion in Latvians everyday lives during the interwar, see Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making*., p. 134-135; Hope. (1994). "Interwar Statehood.," p. 60; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation*., p. 111; Dreifelds. (2003). "Religion in Latvia.," p. 243.

Latvia's first period of independence. As, Blodnieks points out "the Latvian peasant's attachment to land, his desire to call a piece of land his own, his determination to make himself or his children economically independent were so strong that in many cases he overcame all difficulties."¹³⁶ Additional evidence of habits of a protestant work ethic existing amongst Latvia's private farmers can be seen in the observations of Labsvirs, who described much of interwar Latvia's success and prosperity as resulting from the "the zeal and industry of the Latvian farmers."¹³⁷ Thus, one can infer that such political-cultural worldviews and habits in placing a significant importance on individual freedoms, individual initiative, hard-work, and private property, as being predominant amongst large segments of the Latvian population during the interwar period.

Since Latvia remained predominantly rural, seen with the majority of its population living in the countryside, and with agriculture dominating economic activity during the interwar period, Latvia's private farmers formed the backbone of the Republic of Latvia during this time. As Bilmanis points out, the "historical rural communities, and...th[e] privately-owned separate farms...constituted the ultimate social and economic units upon which the structure of the republic rested."¹³⁸ Moreover, Latvia's independent private farmers were held in high esteem in Latvian culture. As Schwartz points out, "the hardworking family farmer as the quintessential Latvian citizen and the dispersed solitary homestead as a quintessential feature of the Latvian landscape were celebrated in the arts, in museums and monuments, and in public spectacles."¹³⁹ Similar sentiments are echoed by Bleiere et al, whom argued that Latvia's individual private farmers "were the pride of Latvia, and the new farmers were patriots of the new Republic."¹⁴⁰ As will be discussed in the chapter on contemporary political-culture, one can see many of these same themes

¹³⁶ Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 195. Clemens also argued that "before 1940...Latvians seemed to embody the Protestant work ethic." Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 190.

¹³⁷ Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 58. For additional evidence inferring the existence of habits characteristic of a protestant work-ethic in the industriousness of Latvia's independent farmers, see Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 334; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 33; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 366; Ruis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1679; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 242; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 90; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 22-23, 354; "Latvia's Achievements." (2003). In *Unpunished Crimes.*, p. 34-36.

¹³⁸ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 16.

¹³⁹ Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 198. For similar consensus on the private family farm as being a key socio-cultural unit, see also IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 30; Smith, Graham. (1994a). "Introduction: The Baltic Nations and National Self-Determination." In *The Baltic States*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press., p. 8; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 11

still played on in the post-1991 re-independence period, when it seems that many of these ideas, especially ones extolling the virtues of private individual farmer, came to the fore.

When such predominant cultural trends were translated in political allegiances, the majority of the rural populace predominantly supported the right-of-centre agrarian parties, which played a crucial and dominant role in shaping Latvia's interwar politics. Thus, although there was a highly liberal electoral law and system of proportional representation that caused there to be fourteen governments formed during the period of democratic rule from 1920-1934, there was nonetheless a great deal of stability in Latvian politics, in that the Latvian farmers parties tended to dominate the official seats of power. This was seen in the consistency of the political-economic practices carried out by numerous government administrations during the period of democratic governance and period of authoritarian rule under President Kārlis Ulmanis, where government activity tended to promote the interest of Latvia's private farmers. This is because many politicians also had rural peasant farming roots and the majority of the Latvian population lived in rural areas. Moreover, as Kirby points out, "the dominant role of the farmers' parties reflected not only the strongly agrarian character of the country, but also the fact that they represented or epitomized popular sentiment."¹⁴¹ As a result, this meant that Latvian interwar politics were largely shaped by the historical political-cultural worldviews, habits, ways of life and historical memories that were predominant amongst the majority of the population that inhabited the Latvian countryside.

While there was also a strong Latvian Social Democratic party during the interwar period, much of its support remained located in urban centers where ethnic-Latvians made up a much smaller percentage of the population. During this period, the Latvian Social Democrats remained committed to the Republic of Latvia. Nevertheless, the Social Democrats do not hold a positive place in Latvian historical memories. A large reason for this is that the Social Democrats were viewed as un-cooperative, in that they generally refused to enter into governing coalitions. More importantly, and similar to

¹⁴¹ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 319. Two out of four of Latvia's Presidents during the interwar period were connected to the Agrarian Union, including Alberts Kviesis and Kārlis Ulmanis. Additionally, five out of nine of Latvia's Prime Ministers also belonged to the Agrarian Union. For similar consensus on peasant roots of Latvia's key political leaders, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 127, 132; Ruhl. (1921). *New Masters of the Baltic.*, p. 156-157, 173; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 54, 80, 92-93; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*

Social Democratic parties in other Central and Eastern Europe countries at the time, the Latvian Social Democrats have been described as being “infected with Marxist dogma,” which lead to strong historical memories developing, where “Social Democrats were seen as Marxists whose loyalty to their ideology was greater than their loyalty to Latvia.”¹⁴² Moreover, Pabriks and Purs offer a recent assessment and view into Latvian historical memories, in pointing out that “the Social Democrats were seen almost as traitors because of...their stated long-term goal of socialism.”¹⁴³ Certainly, the cooperation of some Social Democrats with Soviet Communists after 1940, did nothing to help counter the negative historical memories that were forming and becoming predominant in the political-cultural worldviews of Latvians.

As for the small amounts of radical Communist support that remained in Latvia, this was limited to small pockets largely in urban areas and the border areas of Latgale, where non-Latvians were predominant. Indeed, radical Communist and leftist political parties were virtually extinguished in Latvia. Membership in the party remained miniscule, numbering only 1,000 members in 1930, which had shrunk to 400 by 1939 (see Figure A.3 in Appendix). When Communists did face voters in elections they only received 8% in 1928, and 7.4% in 1931, which was largely concentrated in urban areas.¹⁴⁴ Overall, ethnic-Latvians largely rejected Communist appeals promoting radical collectivism, which owed a great deal to the their liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews. As Bilmanis points out, “the [Latvian and] Baltic peoples, being deeply individualistic concerning their economic life and agrarian property, never accepted the doctrine of communism or socialistic state enterprise, socialistic property and trade as a state monopoly.”¹⁴⁵ One can also see the effects of recent historical memories helping to

¹⁴² Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 159, 168.

¹⁴³ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 151, 20-21. Similar negative portrayals of the Latvian Social Democrats from those with first hand experience during this time, and which likely had some influence in informing émigré historical memories, are described by Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 344.

¹⁴⁴ Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 35. On the predominant non-Latvian support for Communist and Socialist parties, it has been noted that many national minority parties also sided with the left. For example, Russian minorities were noted for particular unreliability and being either Communist or pro-Russian. This also included segments of the Baltic German and Jewish populations. See Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 342-344. Indeed, historical memories of such behavior, can no doubt be inferred as being an important influence on the restrictive citizenship laws found after 1991.

¹⁴⁵ Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 210-211. For evidence of lack of Communist support resulting from individualistic spirit, see Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 134-135; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 22-23, 369; IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 30, 44; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic*

reinforce the predominant liberalist political-cultural worldviews of Latvians, as part of this had resulted from the negative historical memories of Bolshevik actions during the War of Independence, and due to the fact that Latvian Communist remained subversive and directly under the influence and control of Moscow. Here, it should be pointed out that the Communist Party was banned in Latvia after 1934, following the Latvian Communist's failed attempted coup in 1933.¹⁴⁶

Additionally, liberal-individualist values promoting the ideal of private property and individual economic behavior could also be seen following 1920, as forming the ideological backbone influencing most other political-economic policy activity during Latvia's first period of independence. For example, monetary policy was characterized by the Bank of Latvia, established in November 1922, having a strong semblance of independence relative for the time period. Similar to the recent period after 1991, Latvia had to establish its own currency, and did so by first introducing the interim Latvian ruble, and then moving to the Latvian lats. Also similar to current practices, the Latvian lats was also pegged during this time, first to the Gold Standard, and then to the British Pound Sterling at a rate of 15.5 lats per Pound. The Bank of Latvia, also followed anti-inflationary policies by keeping a tight control over the supply of money in order to keep the value of the lats stable. Indeed, the ideas informing such policies "considered the stability of the lat to be paramount."¹⁴⁷ The ideas behind such policies were informed by a liberal-individualist outlook, where the goal of providing monetary stability was designed to achieve a business environment conducive to individual economic initiative and prosperity, which ideally meant keeping the currency stable to allow farmers to

States., p. 80; Mežaks. (2003). "Latvia Throughout History.," p. 26; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 198; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 40; Hope. (1994). "Interwar Statehood.," p. 59.

¹⁴⁶ On negative historical memories of Communists, and views associating them with subversion and Soviet/Russian domination, see Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 90; IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 44; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 386; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 112, 122; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 358; Vardys. (1978). "The Rise of Authoritarian Rule.," p. 75, 78; Šneidere, Irēne. (2005b). "The Occupation of Latvia in 1940: A Few Aspects of the Technology of Soviet Aggression." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 49-51; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 160; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 96. See also document no. 126, "Resolution entitled 'Charges Against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Affiliate in Latvia, the Communist Party of Latvia, for Crimes Committed against Humanity, the Nation of Latvia, and its Land' issued by the scholarly conference on 'The Practice of Communist Totalitarianism and Genocide in Latvia' [June 13,1991]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370.

¹⁴⁷ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 205.

adequately compete in exporting their produce. Overall, such anti-inflationary measures were successful, as “the lat quickly became know for its stability even outside Latvia.”¹⁴⁸

Latvian trade laws were also relatively liberal for the time period, and were designed with the goal of promoting Latvian agricultural exports. Indeed, during this period, agricultural commodities made up the largest balance of traded goods.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the majority of Latvian trade was oriented towards Western markets, particularly in Britain and Germany. This Western orientation of Latvian exports and imports during the interwar period can be seen in Figures A.4 and A.5 in the Appendix. In order to gauge the effects of political-cultural worldviews on the Western orientation of Latvia’s trade policy, it is important to note that during the interwar period “the Latvian government, even in the treaty years, was more interested in economic relationships with the West and after 1932 did not pursue the eastern connection with any great vigor.”¹⁵⁰ Additionally, it is also important to note that foreign direct investment laws were also relatively quite liberal for the time period, in that Western foreign investors faced a relatively liberal tax and regulatory regime.¹⁵¹

While it is true that industry thrived in Latvia during the interwar period, however, the industrial sector largely took a back-seat to Latvian agriculture during the first period of Latvian independence. Although Riga historically had a strong industrial base, the structure of industry changed in Latvia during the first period of independence, with most pre-1914 heavy industry either being destroyed or moved to Russia during World War One. Moreover, owing to the predominantly rural character of most Latvian politicians and public during this time, where the majority had farming backgrounds, there was a general attitude of hostility shared amongst many Latvians towards heavy industry. This resulted from historical memories of foreign domination of heavy industry

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160, 201, 205. For similar consensus on success of monetary stability and promoting individual business initiative, see IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 109, 173-175; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 491; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 337, 367; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 112-113. Many of these policy goals sound similar to description of currency reforms in the 1990s. As will be discussed below, the Bank of Latvia was not necessarily starting from scratch nor adopting entirely new ideas in 1991, and there actually appears to be significant historical continuity in policy decisions.

¹⁴⁹ On agriculture dominating trade, see IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 123-160-161; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 11; Ruisis. (1959b). “Latvia.,” p. 1679-1680; Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 334; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 125.

¹⁵⁰ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 139.

¹⁵¹ Foreign investment was big in Latvia’s banking sectors, and industry. See Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 98, 127, 129; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 40-41.

in Latvian urban areas, both in terms of capital and workforce, and also due to the shared attitude that the growth of heavy industry encouraged Communist radicalization of labour, which the majority of rural Latvians had grown averse and hostile.¹⁵²

As a result, most industrial growth in Latvia during the interwar period tended to be towards supporting the agricultural sector and farmers in areas such as food processing. Moreover, as a percentage of the total economy, agricultural production formed a crucial mainstay and made up an impressive amount of the Latvian economy. To illustrate, 60% of the Latvian working population were employed in agricultural sectors by 1939, and 40% of Latvia's GDP, as well as the majority of Latvian exports were produced by the agricultural sector.¹⁵³ This meant that not only did Latvia remain largely rural prior to 1945, but also that Latvia's independent farmers and rural population made up the predominant socio-political-cultural grouping in Latvian society during the interwar period.

In terms of government involvement in the economy, there was also increased corporatist activity in the management of the remaining sectors of Latvian heavy industry, on the part of the government, particularly after the advent of authoritarian rule in 1934. Also, the Latvianization of certain industries was encouraged, in that private ownership was maintained but shifted to Latvian owners. Additionally, some state nationalization did occur also, particularly in public utility sectors, such as hydro-electricity, railroads and other transport infrastructure such as ports and roads. However, one should note that this did not differ from activities at the time found in other Western liberal countries. Overall, private property was generally well protected throughout this period. Moreover, such state investment and ownership was predicated on the goal that such activity would assist the overall growth of private economic initiatives. As a result,

¹⁵² See Smith. (1994a). "Introduction.," p. 8; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 293; Vardys and Misiunas. (1978). "Introduction.," p. 10.

¹⁵³ Rūsis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1680. Employment in industry only constituted approximately 13% of Latvia's working population by 1939, of which the majority of industries tended to be small enterprises. Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 364. The top three manufacturing sectors included forestry products, food processing, and chemicals. Also successful was the Latvian electronics firm VEF. See for example, Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 201; Lābsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 13; Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 75.

much of this state involvement was utilized to directly assist in the production and export of the produce of Latvia's private farmers and independent farmer's cooperatives.¹⁵⁴

On this note, although it is true that Latvia's farmers teamed together in establishing independent cooperatives to assist in the marketing and processing of agricultural produce, such cooperative endeavors should not cast doubt on Latvia being understood as an historically liberal-individualist political-culture. This is because membership in such cooperatives was voluntary, and adhered to individualist traditions where the Latvian farmer would remain master of their own land. Moreover, not only was membership voluntary, but the cooperatives operated largely to assist the independent farms through mechanisms such as credit lending. Overall, such cooperative traditions of behavior had long been present amongst Latvia's independent farmers, and adhered to traditions of individual self-help. Indeed, such traditions of cooperation were no different than other forms of individualist cooperative initiatives found in other Western countries. This is because "the Latvian small farmers successfully followed the same path of self-help and co-operation which the co-operators of England, Denmark, Sweden...Germany [and Canada] had trod before them."¹⁵⁵ Certainly, such traditions of individualist oriented cooperative initiatives could even be viewed as being in sync with many of the self-help traditions and values taught by the Lutheran Protestantism. Finally, it should be noted that all of Latvia's cooperatives were destroyed or nationalized by the Soviet authorities.

Ulmanis Authoritarian Rule: 1934-1940

While some might point to the collapse of Latvian democracy and the following period of dictatorship under President Kārlis Ulmanis, from 1934 to 1940, as being antithetical to liberalism, several points should be noted. First, as Pabriks and Purs argue, "most every defining aspect of political, economic and social life in Latvia was passed by

¹⁵⁴ For consensus, see Bilmanis. (1928). *Latvia in the Making.*, p. 132-134; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 335; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 24; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 45-47, 51; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 203.

¹⁵⁵ Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 315-316. For consensus on long history of traditions of cooperation based on individual initiative and self-help, see Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 350; Bilmanis (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 49-50; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 365; IDRIIA. (1938). *The Baltic States.*, p. 109; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 33; Ruisis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1679.

the Saeima, and was not a product of the Ulmanis dictatorship of 1930s.”¹⁵⁶ Second, it should be noted that Ulmanis’s rule was quite mild relative to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which had also seen a collapse of their democratic regimes during the 1930s. Overall, Ulmanis never suspended Latvia’s constitution, and while political rights were curtailed, there was never any widespread repression of political opponents, nor mass imprisonment or the formation of concentration camps. In general, the main groups that were targeted was the Communist Party, which were beholden to Moscow and banned in 1934, as well as far-right groups. In terms of political-economic activity, the Latvian government under Ulmanis, while taking a more corporatist stance and Latvianizing certain key industries, nevertheless maintained a liberal-capitalist economic environment where private property was generally well protected. During the period of Ulmanis rule, Latvia achieved impressive economic growth and prosperity. Indeed, most historical assessments agree that Ulmanis’s rule was quite mild, and have characterized it as period of liberal-democratic authoritarianism, and national unity.¹⁵⁷

Overall, there is also widespread consensus that not only was the period of Ulmanis’s rule mild, but also that there was also little political opposition to Ulmanis and his regime, which enjoyed wide popularity amongst the Latvian populace, and was especially high amongst the rural population of Latvia’s private farmers. Indeed, much of Ulmanis’s popularity resulted due to the fact that many of the leadership qualities found under his rule did not deviate a great deal from the historically liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews predominantly found in interwar Latvia’s largely rural population. As Bilmanis points out, the regime took a “middle way,” achieving “a delicate balance of individual and public interest, initiative and orderliness, adjust[ing]

¹⁵⁶ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 19. See also Vardys. (1978). “The Rise of Authoritarian Rule,” p. 67; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 130; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History,” p. 28-29.

¹⁵⁷ Von Rauch has described Ulmanis’s rule as “authoritarian democracy.” Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 154-161. For consensus on moderateness, mildness, liberalism, conservatism and unifying nature of the Ulmanis regime, see Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 359-362-371; Vardys. (1978). “The Rise of Authoritarian Rule,” p. 77-78; Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States.*, p. 53, 55; Hope. (1994). “Interwar Statehood,” p. 62-63; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 133; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 30; Muiznieks. (1997). “Latvia,” p. 377; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 34; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 20; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 12, 173; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 217-218; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 13, 33; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 376; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 45-48, 51; “Latvia’s Achievements.” (2003). In *Unpunished Crimes.*, p. 38-39.

the nation's essentially liberal spirit to an authoritarian regime.”¹⁵⁸ To further illustrate the connection between Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-culture and Ulmanis's style of rule, Plakans' has argued that “national unity, hard work, rural virtues, [and] the belief that farming was the occupation closest to the Latvian soul...all formed the basis of Ulmanis's pragmatic political philosophy.”¹⁵⁹ Nor were religious themes absent from this political-cultural dialogue as “official propaganda attempted to portray him as a leader given to the Latvian people by God himself.”¹⁶⁰ Even today, the predominant historical memories of Latvian political-culture view this period with much nostalgia, as one that was a golden age of freedom and growth of the Latvian people, which was generally democratic, prosperous and one where individual rights and freedoms were upheld.¹⁶¹

The development of interwar Latvia, where an individualist ethos and private property reigned supreme, characterized by the prosperous Latvian private family farmstead, stands in stark contrast to the practices and traditions characterized by Latvia's

¹⁵⁸ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 369.

¹⁵⁹ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*., p. 133-134. For consensus on widespread popularity and lack of real opposition to Ulmanis, see King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia*., p. 45; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States*., p. 159-160; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States*., p. 13; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution*., p. 70; Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States*., p. 53; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*., p. 133-134,141; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 326; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*., p. 30; Bassler, Gerhard P. (2000). *Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press., p. 21; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*., p. 20; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 174, 176-177. In terms of public opinion, around 55-65% of the population would have supported Ulmanis in 1940. Ezergailis, Andrew. (1996). *Holocaust in Latvia 1941-1944: The Missing Center*. Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia., p. 45; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia*., p. 97.

¹⁶⁰ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 180. For examples of Ulmanis regime promoting the Lutheran Church, see also Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation*., p. 111.

¹⁶¹ Indeed, “when...the Balts look back to their first period of independence as an idyllic time, there is a good deal of truth to their view.” Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution*., p. 64. For further consensus on positive assessments, and positive historical memories of the first period of independence, see Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 22-23; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*., p. 141; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*., p. 31; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*., p. 23; Sprudz, Adolf. (2001). “Rebuilding Democracy in Latvia: Overcoming a Dual Legacy.” Ch. 5. In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe, Volume 1*, ed. Jan Zielonka. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 139-140; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 176-177; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity*., p. 52; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 248. Similar sentiments were conveyed by several elites. Dr. Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

neighbours to the east in the Soviet Union, such as the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic where collectivist and communal practices were continuing to role along at full pace. Moreover, Communists enjoyed little to no support amongst most ethnic-Latvians during the interwar period. Thus, when the Soviet Union forcefully invaded Latvia in 1940, and illegally forced it to join the USSR, there was a direct clash of political-cultural worldviews and ways of life between the ethnic-Latvians and the invading Soviet/Russian authorities. This is because everything that was contained in Soviet policy completely contradicted the Latvians political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and habits favouring individual freedom and private property, seen historically in the Latvians hunger for land and almost faith-like cult of private property. As will be discussed below, the Soviet policies of forced collectivization over Latvia's political-economy would be met by high levels of Latvian resistance to the increasingly suffocating grip of Soviet rule and collectivization. Similar to other periods, the socio-cultural unit of the Latvian individual family would be key during the dark period of Soviet rule in acting as a conduit passing on liberal-individualist values, worldviews, ways of life and historical memories in the cultural socialization of future generations born under Soviet rule.

World War Two

First Soviet Occupation, 1940-1941

Latvia lost its freedom when it was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. Today most historical accounts concur that imperialistic goals involving ideological, political, and economic expansion were the prime motivators of Moscow's actions towards Latvia and the other Baltic states. This was apparent even before Moscow forcefully coerced Riga to sign a mutual assistance pact with the Soviet Union in 1939, as Moscow had made threatening statements and displayed increasingly aggressive acts which showed that Joseph Stalin and other Soviet leaders did not respect Latvian sovereignty and repeated declarations of neutrality. For example, throughout the 1930s, Moscow committed many hostile economic actions towards Riga, and promoted economic boycotts against Latvia in the hopes of facilitating economic upheaval. The Soviets also conducted many hostile military actions, including airspace infringements,

border violations, kidnappings, and massing of large concentrations of military formations on the Latvian border to intimidate Riga. Overall, Stalin and other Soviet leaders shared many of the long held Russian/Soviet imperialistic views towards Latvia and the Baltic states, and viewed the region as a key strategic stepping stone in the goal of spreading Soviet Communism to the rest of Western Europe.¹⁶²

By the Autumn of 1939, with the fall of Poland to joint German and Soviet aggression, Moscow essentially coerced Latvia and the other Baltic states into a mutual assistance pact on October 5, 1939. This pact was unnecessary since Latvia had already signed a non-aggression pact with the USSR dating from July 1932, as well as due to the fact that Latvia and the other Baltic states had repeatedly declared a foreign policy of official neutrality. Indeed, Latvian President Ulmanis explicitly declared neutrality again on September 1, 1939, which makes it not really logical for the USSR to have claimed that Latvia was threat.¹⁶³ Although the original mutual assistance pacts still granted operational freedom and sovereignty to the Latvian government, such pacts largely went against the defensive interests of Latvia, and were overwhelmingly in favour of Moscow's long term imperialistic aims, as it granted the movement of over 25,000 Soviet military personnel to be based in Latvia. In addition to military personnel, Moscow also

¹⁶² For historical consensus on imperialistic motives of using the Baltic States to help facilitate the push of Communism into Western Europe, and prior hostile acts and statements, see Dallin, David J. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy: 1939-1942*, translated by Leon Dennen. New Haven: Yale University Press., p. 81, 108-109; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 11, 26, 37, 40; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 42, 64; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 88-91; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 280; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 404; Meissner, Boris. (1978). "The Baltic Question in World Politics." In *The Baltic States in Peace and War*, eds. Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 144-145; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 191-195; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 109; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 75, 78; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 120; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 202-203; Šneidere. (2005b). "The Occupation of Latvia." p. 49; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 100.

¹⁶³ See documents, "Latvia's Declaration of Neutrality," and also "Report of Mr. V. Munters, Latvian Foreign Minister, About the Conversations in the Kremlin Previous to Signing the Mutual Assistance Treaty [October 2-3, 1939]", in Bilmanis, Alfred. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations: Documents.* Washington: The Latvian Legation., p. 191-198. For further consensus on Latvia being coerced into mutual assistance pact, see Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 1; Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 82; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 41; Ruis, Armins. (1959a). "Latvia." Ch. 4, in *Government, Law and courts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Volume 1*, eds., Vladimir Gsovski and Kazimierz Grzybowski. London: Stevens & Sons Limited., p. 116; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 227; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 48-49; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 92; Anderson, Edgar. (1973). "The Pacts of Mutual Assistance between the U.S.S.R. and the Baltic States." In *Baltic History*, eds. Arvids Ziedonis, Jr., William L. Winter and Mardi Valgemäe. Columbus: AABS., p. 240-248; Meissner. (1978). "The Baltic Question." p. 144-145; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 143; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 351; Šneidere. (2005b). "The Occupation of Latvia." p. 43.

imported large numbers of Communist saboteurs and agitators to help undermine the Latvian state, which had already assembled and entered Latvia in May of 1940, before the full occupation, and is how most members of the Latvian Communist Party actually entered Latvia.¹⁶⁴ Thus, while these mutual assistance pacts proclaimed Moscow's intentions to uphold and respect Latvian sovereignty, Stalin never had any real intentions of respecting, nor honouring such basic guarantees. As documentary evidence points out, Soviet leaders had long planned to ferment a Communist takeover of Latvia. This is seen with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed on August 23, 1939, which divided the Baltic States into the Soviet sphere of influence, something that the Soviets denied existed for over fifty years.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, days after the signing of the mutual assistance pact, Soviet authorities had already begun to make plans for conducting mass deportations in Latvia and the Baltic states.¹⁶⁶ Thus, from the beginning, Moscow sought to facilitate the

¹⁶⁴ See documents no. 13, "Proclamation entitled 'Oppressors!' by the Latvian Communist Party, including a call to overthrow the existing government by means of revolution" [May 1940], and no. 19, "From a hand-written autobiography of a former staff member on special assignment from the USSR's Peoples Commissariat of the Interior. He was assigned to the Latvian Army Staff in 1940 and wrote about his arrival in Latvia in the summer of 1940," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 21-22, 29-30. For further examples of Soviet subversion, see Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 229; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 52-54; Anderson. (1973). "The Pacts of Mutual Assistance.," p. 247; Šneidere. (2005b). "The Occupation of Latvia.," p. 50-51; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 244; Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁵ For Soviet promises to respect Latvian sovereignty, see documents, "Latvia Sustains Full Sovereignty: Declaration of the U.S.S.R. Government of March 28, 1939, Assuring Its Sincere Benevolence Toward the Latvian People, and Interest in Preserving Independent Existence etc. For the Republic of Latvia," "Pact of Mutual Assistance Between Latvia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, signed by V. Munters and V. Molotov [October 5, 1939]," "Soviet Communique Regarding Latvian-Soviet Mutual Assistance Pact," in *Pravda* [October 6, 1939]," "Foreign Commissar Molotov's Statement Regarding Mutual Assistance Pacts with Baltic States," citing speech of Molotov from [October 31, 1939], in *Pravda* [November 1, 1939].," and, "Foreign Commissar Molotov's Speech Supporting Baltic Independence [March 29, 1940]," in *Pravda* [March 30, 1940], in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 188-189, 198-201. See documents no. 1 "Secret Protocol of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty of August 23, 1939 [August 23, 1939]," and no. 4, "Mutual Assistance Pact between Latvia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [October 5, 1939]" in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 3, 6-7.

¹⁶⁶ This included order no. 001223 "On the Operative Accounting of the Anti-Soviet and Socially Alien Elements," which was issued 8 months before Latvia was formally taken over. Shtromas, Aleksandras. (1994). "The Baltic States as Soviet Republics: Tensions and Contradictions." Ch. 4. In *The Baltic States*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press., p. 86. Also, by September 1939, the Soviet General Staff were using maps that including the Baltic States as Soviet republics. Anderson. (1973). "The Pacts of Mutual Assistance.," p. 245; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 389-390, 392; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 142, 144; Balodis, Agnis. (2003). "Soviet Military bases in the Baltic States." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 46-47; Crowe. (1975). *The Foreign Relations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.*, p. 288; Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 109; Bilmanis (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 174-175; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 384.

process of promoting an illegal Communist takeover and subsequent Sovietization in Latvia.

In June 1940, the Soviet government issued an ultimatum to Latvia's government demanding the establishment of a pro-Soviet government or face military invasion and mass bombings of Latvian cities, which broke the USSR's pledge not to break the sovereignty or interfere internally in the domestic politics of Latvia. In its ultimatum, Moscow demanded the entry of additional numbers of Soviet troops into the country, which would be placed in key centers to ensure that the pact was fulfilled. It has been estimated that Latvia was occupied by over 200,000 Soviet soldiers, making up ten to twelve infantry divisions.¹⁶⁷ Thus, by June 16, 1940, Moscow had broken international law by illegally removing the legitimate Latvian government headed by President Ulmanis, and immediately installed its own Communist regime.¹⁶⁸ In doing so, illegal elections were quickly held on July 14-15, 1940, where non-Communist political forces were banned and persecuted. Indeed, not only were such elections, held under the guns of an occupying army, illegal by international law, these also broke the Latvian Constitutional laws in terms of electoral procedures. Indeed, these elections were conducted in a fraudulent and illegal manner, not only in banning anti-Communist

¹⁶⁷ For evidence of Soviet military threats used as intimidation, see documents "Soviet Russia's Ultimatum to Latvia [June 16, 1940], Predicated on 'Military alliance' between Estonia and Latvia from 1923," ultimatum given by Molotov, and "Latvia – A Victim of Unprovoked Aggression of Soviet Russia: Statement by Dr. Alfred Bilmanis, Latvian Minister in Washington" [July 21, 1940], in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 202-206. See also documents no. 15, "Telephonogram, number A 11- 851, sent by Captain Holanders, Latvia's Border Guard Brigade, to the Border Guard Brigade Commander, General Holsteins, about armed provocation by the USSR on Latvia's borders [June 15, 1940, 12:45]," and no. 16, "Communication by the government of the USSR to the Government of Latvia, with the demand that the government be changed and that the entrance of Soviet armed forces into the territory of Latvia be guaranteed [June 16, 1940]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 24-26. See also Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 80; Pētersons, Aivars. (2003). "How the Red Army Occupied Latvia." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 51-62. Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 244.

¹⁶⁸ Also, the Soviet takeover was illegal since right before, the Latvian government granted emergency powers to its diplomats in the West. See document, "Extraordinary Emergency Powers of Latvian State Authority Abroad Granted to the Latvian Minister in London, K. Zarins and his Substitute A Bilmanis, Latvian Minister in Washington [May 18, 1940]," in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 201-202. See document no. 14, "Report of the State Chancellery to Latvia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, V. Munters, concerning the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to grant emergency powers to Latvia's ambassador in London, K. Zariņš [May 18, 1940]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 23-24. On breaking international law, see Ruis. (1959a). "Latvia.," p. 117; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 213; Sprudz, Adolf. (1968). "Dr. Alfred Bilmanis and his Struggle for Freedom of the Baltic States." In *Res Baltica*, ed. A. Sprudz and A. Ruis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 21; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 234; Meissner. (1978). "The Baltic Question.," p. 145; Šneidere. (2005b). "The Occupation of Latvia.," p. 45; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 509.

political parties, but also in allowing non-Latvian citizens and Red Army personnel to vote.¹⁶⁹

With the installation of the Soviet backed and controlled Communist regime in Riga, the new Communist government quickly moved to press for full incorporation of Latvia as a republic in the Soviet Union. Such an act was illegal by international law, was not recognized by most Western governments, including the United States and Canada, and also broke the sovereign laws of the Latvian Constitution as no referendum was held to consult the Latvian people on such an important matter.¹⁷⁰

Incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union went against the wishes of the vast majority of Latvians. This is illustrated by the fact that little Communist support existed in Latvia prior to 1940, which was seen especially in rural Latvia where the lack of Communist support was most pronounced and where the majority of the ethnic-Latvian population lived. Indeed, the Latvian Communist Party (LCP) was small, and had only

¹⁶⁹ See documents no. 8, “Excerpts from the minutes of the conference of Regional Secretaries of the Riga Municipal committee of the Latvian Communist Party about preparations for the Saeima elections [July 4, 1940],” no. 11, “The minutes of the interrogation of H. Celmiņš, imprisoned by the NKVD, about the attempted creation of the “Democratic Latvian Electorate” bloc before the elections to the *Saeima* in July of 1940 [November 11, 1940: Completely Secret],” no. 12, “From the minutes of the interrogation of A. Ansulis about collecting signatures for the candidate list ‘Democratic Latvian Electorate’ bloc [July 11, 1940 in Liepāja],” no. 14, “The Central Electoral Commission’s instructions to the Provincial Electoral Commissions [July 14, 1940],” no. 15, “From the minutes of the Aizviķa election post electoral commission of Liepāja district in the Kurzeme electoral province, about the participation of Red Army representatives in supervising the election process [July 14, 1940],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 42-50. See also document, “Statement of Dr. Alfred Bilmanis, Latvian Minister, About not Recognizing the Saeima Elections in Latvia to be Held on July 14-15, 1940, as Being Illegal and Unconstitutional” [July 13, 1940], in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 203-204. For consensus on fraudulent and illegal elections, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 390; Rūsis. (1959a). “Latvia.” p. 119, 121-128; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 234-235; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 82-87; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 94; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 250; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 225; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 395-399; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 356; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 116; Šneidere. (2005b). “The Occupation of Latvia.” p. 47; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 245-246.

¹⁷⁰ On illegality of the forced Soviet takeover, see documents, “Latvia – A Victim of Unprovoked Aggression of Soviet Russia: Statement by Dr. Alfred Bilmanis, Latvian Minister in Washington” [July 21, 1940], “Note of K. Zarins, Latvian Envoy in London, Protesting Against the Incorporation of Latvia into the U.S.S.R. as being Unconstitutional and Illegal [July 23, 1940],” “The Latvian Minister in Washington does not Recognize Incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union [August 6, 1940],” and “United States Government Condemns Devious Processes: Statement of Undersecretary of State, The Hon. Sumner Welles [July 23, 1940],” in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 205-206, 209-211. For further consensus on the illegality, see footnote no. 169 above, and Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 28-29; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” p. 31; Pavlovičs, Juris. (2005). “Change of Occupation Powers in Latvia in Summer 1941: Experience of Small Communities.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia.* Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 97; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 25; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 145.

numbered between 400 members in 1939, which grew to around 1,000 by the time of the Soviet invasion in 1940 (see Figure A.3 in Appendix). In addition, most members of the LCP were outsiders imported from the Soviet Union, either ethnic-Russians or Russified Latvians that were no longer able to speak a word of Latvian, and had lived most of their lives up until 1940 in Soviet Russia. To illustrate, one eye-witness reporting for the *Chicago Tribune* in Riga in 1940, observed that “on June 17 there was a mob at the railway station, waving red rags and screaming in hysterical joy about the arrival of the Russians...Latvian could not be heard...The speeches, the shouts, the screams were all in Russian or Yiddish.”¹⁷¹ Overall, Communist authorities operating in Latvia under Soviet appointed Prime Minister Augusts Kirchenšteins were largely subservient to the orders and whims of Moscow, and can be characterized as a Soviet puppet-government with Andrei Vishinsky in the Soviet Embassy in Riga pulling the strings.¹⁷²

The collectivist worldviews informing the actions and policy goals supported by the Moscow backed Latvian Soviet government were culturally alien to the liberal-individualist political-culture worldviews that were predominantly shared by most Latvians. Thus, while official Soviet propaganda portrayed this illegal act as a “peoples’ revolution,” nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, there is wide historical consensus that such acts went completely against the broad wishes and sentiments of the Latvian populace, and that there was certainly no “socialist revolution” in Latvia in 1940-41.¹⁷³ Soviet forces moved relatively quickly to Sovietize broad segments of Latvian

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 115-116. For consensus on non-Latvian outsiders making up a majority of the Latvian Communist Party, see Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 227; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 20-24; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 85; Riekstiņš, Jānis. (2003). “The Dictatorship of the Russian Language.” In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., T. Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 80-81; Strods, Heinrichs. (2003a). “First Groups of Civilian Occupiers, 1941-1946.” In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., T. Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 63-66; Pavlovičs. (2005). “Change of Occupation Powers.” p. 95.

¹⁷² For consensus on Latvian Communists being a puppet-government or quislings of Moscow, see Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 242, 253, 258; Schwabe. (1947). *The Story of Latvia.*, p. 45; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 386; Rūsis. (1959a). “Latvia.” p. 118, 121; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 232-233; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 72; Watson. (1965). *The Latvian Republic.*, p. 93; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 249-250; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 395-399; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 146-148; Šneidere. (2005b). “The Occupation of Latvia.” p. 46-47, 52; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 244, 256-257. See also documents no. 33-34 in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 68-72.

¹⁷³ For description of the “alien ethos” of the Communists, and that there was no “socialist revolution,” see Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 232-233; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 22; Trapans, Jan Arveds. (1991a). “Introduction.” In *Toward Independence*, ed. Jan Arveds Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 4; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 54; Neimanis. (1997). *The*

political-economic life, via collectivization and state nationalization. Often, Soviet authorities had to resort to acts of political terror to forcefully coerce Latvians into a culturally alien collectivized way of life. To assist in the repression of Latvians, Soviet authorities unjustly retroactively applied the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic's Criminal Code, which was not only alien to Latvians, but also made acts that were completely legal under the Latvian constitution now illegal under Soviet law. As Küng points out, through the use of force “[Latvians] had to be taught to obey their new masters.”¹⁷⁴ Moreover, Latvians who objected were arrested, killed or deported. Indeed, the first period of Soviet rule from 1940-1941 is described by most historians and remembered in the historical memories of most Latvians as being the *Year of Terror*.¹⁷⁵

The new Soviet governments first moves of political-economic terror in the form of Sovietization occurred in urban areas, where real-estate, small businesses, cooperatives, industry, banks and financial institutions were all nationalized. Soviet authorities also attacked the wealth of individual Latvians, both formally by outright confiscation of peoples' savings over 1,000, and informally via inflation by willfully destroying the stability of the lats by placing it on par with the weaker Soviet ruble.¹⁷⁶

Collapse of the Soviet Empire., p. 33; Muiznieks. (1997). “Latvia.,” p. 378; Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. xi; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 107.

¹⁷⁴ Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 16. See documents no. 40, “Announcement about the standardization of RSFSR Codes of Criminal Law and Criminal Trials, Civil Law and Civil Trials, Labor Law, and Marriage, Family, and Guardian Law in the territory of the Latvian SSR [November 25, 1940],” and no. 41, “Appeal of the Former Minister of Justice of the Republic of Latvia, H. Apsītis, to the Justice Collegium of the Supreme Court of the RSFSR, about his illegal trial” [October 17, 1941],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 80-82. See also Vīksne, Rudīte. (2005). “Soviet Repressions against Residents of Latvia in 1940-1941: Typical Trends.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 59-61; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 258.

¹⁷⁵ On historical memories of *year of terror* or *dire year*, known in Latvian as *Bagdais gads*, see Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 239-242; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 252; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 148-149; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 178-180; Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 393.

¹⁷⁶ See Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 49; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 173; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 53-58; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 401; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 32-34; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 249-252. See documents no.25, “Declaration of the nationalization of banks and large enterprises [July 22, 1940],” no. 35, “Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR about the confiscation of apartments and their use in municipalities [September 12, 1940; Prof. Dr. A. Kirchenšteins, Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Chair, and P. Blaus Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Secretary],” no. 36, “Decision Number 1756 - 716 CS of the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party about the transition to Soviet currency in the Latvian SSR [September 21, 1940; V. Molotov, J. Stalin],” and no. 43, “The Plan for the use of the property of the inhabitants deported from Latvia on June 14, 1941 [Not later than June 17, 1941],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 61-62, 73-76, 84.

Overall, the Soviet's goals were aimed at the destruction of the liberal-capitalist economy, and making Latvia's political-economy totally subservient to Moscow.

Soviet forces moved slower to collectivize rural areas, as this was where the majority of the Latvian population was situated, most of which were individual private farmers. Moreover, Soviet authorities were aware that anti-Communist sentiment was ripe amongst rural Latvians. This acknowledgement of high amounts of anti-Communist sentiment and opposition to collectivized farming has been noted by several Latvian Soviet authorities, as a key reason for why large-scale collectivization did not begin until the end of the first period of Soviet rule in 1941. As Labsvirs points out, "Latvian farmers had always preferred individually located farms," and "Russian Communists knew the sentiments of the Latvian farmer...[and] realized that a formerly independent farmer could not be satisfied with life on kolkhozes or sovkhoses."¹⁷⁷ Aware of such sentiments, Soviet authorities initially lied to the people, telling them that collectivization would not occur. Such lies were necessary according to the People's Agriculture Minister J. Vanags, at the time, "because the new power understands the Latvian farmer well and knows his psychology."¹⁷⁸ While moving cautiously, there is no doubt that the Soviet's long-term intentions were to completely collectivize Latvian agriculture, destroying the centuries-old political-cultural way of life of individual private farmsteads. Thus, in the initial stages of collectivization, Soviet authorities confiscated the property of all farms over 30 hectares and designated it for future collective farms. For the remaining farmers that still remained in control of their land, Soviet authorities implemented policies of excessive taxation and crop delivery obligations to attack farmers' livelihood, and eventually force them to give up their individual property and collectivize.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic States.*, p. 51, 53.

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 252, 246. For similar consensus on Latvian sentiments being opposed to collectivization, see Ruis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1680-1681; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 96; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 402; Senn, Alfred Erich. (2005). "Baltic Battleground." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia.* Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ On Soviet plans for implementing collectivization, see Ruis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1681-1685; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 34, 41-47, 50-53, 58; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 55; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 94-96; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 254. See document no. 26, "The Latvian SSR government's law about the creation of the State Land Fund and the rules for its distribution [July 29, 1940] [Dr. A. Kirchenšteins]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 62-63.

Thus, during the first short period of Soviet rule, many acts of political-economic terror were inflicted on the Latvian people reducing them to the equality of collective poverty, which some have called the forced proletarianization or pauperization of Latvia.¹⁸⁰ Increasingly, such acts were met by wide resistance from Latvia's rural population, which were strongly opposed to the Soviet goals of collectivization. As Bilmanis points out, the "most surly opponents were bred in the ranks of the peasants, who could no longer think of their beloved soil and their difficult toil as their own."¹⁸¹ Moreover, as one Soviet source, E. A. Zhagar, later complained, "a significant part of the population, especially the peasantry, was still in great measure held captive by private capitalist ideology."¹⁸² What is important to note is that even when the Soviet authorities made it economically rational to collectivize, via economic favorable incentives where the only economical choice left was to collectivize or go bust, most Latvian farmers found collectivization unthinkable, and still resisted to the bitter end.

Overall, the forceful Soviet takeover of Latvia, and subsequent policy actions of collectivization taken by Soviet authorities were a total attack on the predominantly liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and ways of life historically shared by most Latvians. As Pabriks and Purs point out, Soviet policies of collectivization were an "attack on the social fabric of the Latvian state."¹⁸³ Moreover, as Balabkins argues, "these mass crimes were perpetrated in the name of ideology," because "Stalin thought that these people had no right to live in their own land...[and] the hegemony of Communist ideology dictated that...the extermination of these victims was considered to be 'necessary for the building of socialism.'"¹⁸⁴ As a result, such acts can be seen to have

¹⁸⁰ See for example, Swettenham, John Alexander. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States: A Report Compiled from Official Documents and Eyewitnesses' Stories*. London: Hollis & Carter., p. 79; Rūsis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1680; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 239-240; Balabkins, Nikolajs. (2003). "The Destruction of Latvia's Economy, 1940-1941." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas., p. 72-79.

¹⁸¹ Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 403.

¹⁸² Quoted in Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 97-98, 91-94. Many farmers also destroyed crops and livestock rather than surrendering these to Soviet authorities. On high resistance to collectivization, see also Viksne. (2005). "Soviet Repressions against Residents of Latvia.," p. 53, 54-61; Dallin. (1942). *Soviet Foreign Policy.*, p. 257; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 145-146.

¹⁸³ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 26.

¹⁸⁴ Balabkins. (2003). "The Destruction of Latvia's Economy.," p. 77. On Soviet ideological motivations and need for repression to facilitate collectivization, see Bleiere, Daina. (2005). "Repressions against Farmers in Latvia in 1944-1953." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia.* Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 243; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 53.

been precipitating a clash between two opposing political-cultural worldviews and ways of life, seen in Latvian resistance to increased Soviet/Russian policies of forced Sovietization and collectivization.

In attacking Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-cultural way of life, Soviet authorities also saw it as necessary to attack Latvian religious institutions. Church property was destroyed and confiscated, strict censorship on religious worship and literature were imposed, religious education in schools was banned, and many Lutheran and Roman Catholic clergy were killed, arrested or deported. The political-cultural implications of such acts are clear, as Soviet authorities viewed Latvia's long historic roots in Western Christianity as a direct ideological threat to the worldviews and ways of life supported and promoted by Soviet Communism.¹⁸⁵

In a final act of terror to coerce the population, Soviet authorities in Latvia acting under directives from Moscow, resorted to the mass deportation of approximately 15,424 Latvians on June 13-14, 1941. Not only did this include Latvian farmers, but also most of Latvia's political leaders, including President Ulmanis and most of his cabinet, as well as military officers, and many of Latvia's professional class, most of whom perished in Soviet concentration camps in Siberia. In addition to those deported in June 1941, thousands others were arrested, killed or deported, approximately 35,000 altogether during the *Year of Terror* under the first period of Soviet rule. As noted above, such mass deportations were planned well in advance.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, such evidence is important to

¹⁸⁵ For consensus, see Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 179; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 103-109; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 109; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 623; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.* p. 403; Dunn, Dennis J. (1978). "The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government in the Baltic States, 1940-1941." In *The Baltic States in Peace and War: 1917-1945*, eds. Vardys, V. Stanley and Romuald J. Misiunas. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press., p. 151; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 117; Rūsis, Armins. (2003). "Church and State in Soviet Latvia." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 164-166. See also documents 30-32, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 65-67.

¹⁸⁶ See also footnote no. 166. See also copy of document, Instruction # 2192 "Regarding the Procedure for carrying out the Deportation of the Anti-Soviet Element from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia," signed by Serov [January 21, 1941], found in Puisāns, Tadeušs, ed. (2003). *Unpunished Crimes*. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 264-270; "Instructions Regarding the Manner of Conducting the Deportation of the Anti-Soviet Element from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia," in Bilmanis. (1944). *Latvian-Russian Relations.*, p. 227-231; Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 57-58, 86-87. For other details and numbers deported, see Riekstiņš, Jānis. (2005a). "The 14 June 1941 Deportation in Latvia." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 67, 62-74; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 248-253; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 253; Latvian National Foundation (1982). *These Names Accuse: Nominal List of Latvians Deported to Soviet Russia in 1940-1941*. Stockholm; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 147; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 358;

acknowledge that resistance to the Soviets was not just brought about in response to Soviet actions, but instead that Soviet intelligence predicted opposition beforehand, implicitly saying that Latvians worldviews did not jive with the long-term plans of Soviet authorities. Overall, such acts, along with the outright assault on the liberal-individualist political-cultural way of life shared by most Latvians, seen with Soviet goals to collectivize agriculture via the destruction of the historic traditions of individual private farming could be viewed as an outright attack on Latvian culture. Some have even described such acts inflicted by Soviet authorities as cultural genocide.¹⁸⁷

German Occupation, 1941-1944

Even prior to the rapid advancement of German forces following the start of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, increasingly open and mass resistance to Soviet forces in Latvia was already readily apparent. Such acts of defiance to the Soviet occupation included both passive and armed resistance.¹⁸⁸ After the horrible *Year of Terror* under the onslaught of full-scale Sovietization, the majority of Latvians welcomed German forces as liberators from the alien Soviet/Russian occupiers, and many expected

Dimanta, Sindija and Indulis Zālīte. (2003). "Structural Analysis of the Deportations of the 1940s." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., T. Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 101; Riekstiņš, Jānis. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia 1940-1989." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 228; Vīksne. (2005). "Soviet Repressions against Residents of Latvia.," p. 53-61; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 259

¹⁸⁷ See Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 402. For those calling the actions of Soviet authorities, from 1940-1941, crimes against humanity see Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 4; Mežaks. (2003). "Latvia Throughout History.," p. 31; Šneidere, Irēne. (2005a). "The First Soviet Occupation Period in Latvia: 1940-1941." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 33, 40; Riekstiņš. (2005a). "The 14 June 1941 Deportation in Latvia.," p. 74.

¹⁸⁸ For examples of passive and armed resistance, see documents no. 38, "The Rīga student and youth underground organization "Latvia's Liberators" appeal entitled "Never Forget!" [September-December 1940]," and no. 39, "Report of police official E. Spilners, of the Cēsis section of the police board of the People's Commissariat of the Interior of the Latvian SSR, about the inhabitants' behavior at cemeteries and their attempts to put flowers [on graves] [November 17, 1940]," and no. 44, "The informative report of the Secretary of the Daugavpils Communist Party Municipal Committee, Treimanis, to the Central Committee of Latvia's Communist Party about occurrences of armed resistance in Daugavpils district during the deporting of inhabitants on June 14, 1941 [June 18, 1941]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 78-79, 85. See also Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 23; Šilde, Ādolfs. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., T. Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 174; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 43; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 180-181; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia*. p. 403; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 143; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 251-252, 260; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 93-94; Shtromas. (1994). "The Baltic States as Soviet Republics.," p. 87-90; Pavlovičs. (2005). "Change of Occupation Powers in Latvia.," p. 97-100; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 264-265.

a great deal of normalcy to return to Latvian life. As Bilmanis notes, “the deeply religious peoples of [Latvia and] the Baltic countries were...genuinely glad to be rid of the godless propaganda of the Bolsheviks.”¹⁸⁹ Moreover, many Latvians also wrongly assumed that Latvia would once again be granted its sovereignty by Germany. While it is true that some normalcy did return, as full-scale Sovietization was temporarily halted and churches were once again reopened, Hitler’s Germany had long-term intentions for Latvia that were equally detrimental to Latvia’s long-term political-cultural interests. Here, Germany had many long-term imperialistic goals, one where Germans would be masters over the Baltic lands and its people. In fact, Germany renamed the region Ostland, and planned eventually to fully annex and Germanize Latvia. Moreover, during the period of German rule, Nazi authorities found it advantageous to keep many of the larger industries and lands that were nationalized by the Soviets under state control, and also to conscript Latvians into the Reich Labour Service, in order to aid the war effort.¹⁹⁰

Due to increasing military setbacks on the Eastern Front, however, German authorities had to put many of their long-term ideological goals for Latvia on hold, and became increasing conciliatory to the Latvians during the later stages of German rule. This even resulted in reversing many of the Soviet policies of Sovietization and returning

¹⁸⁹ Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 185. For consensus on treating the Germans as liberators and expectations of a return to normality, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 397; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 144; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 250, 255; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 228; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 67-68; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 359; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 149-150; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 131-132; Aizsilnieks, Arnolds. (2003). “The Exploitation of Latvia’s Economy During the German Occupation, 1941-1945.” In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., T. Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 110; Šneidere. (2005a). “The First Soviet Occupation Period.” p. 42; Feldmanis, Inesis. (2005a). “Latvia under the Occupation of National Socialist Germany 1941-1945.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 77-78; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 260; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 112.

¹⁹⁰ For evidence on German goals, see documents no. 1, “Instructions to the Ostland *Reichskommissar* about the goals of his work in the Baltic States and Belarus [May 8, 1941],” no. 3, “From the order of Colonel Petersen, Commandant of Rīga, concerning the prohibition against the renewal of the institutions of independent Latvia [July 9, 1941],” no. 11, “Instruction about confiscating state farms and placing them under the army’s control [beginning of July 1941],” no. 38, “Information about the creation of labor camps for violators of labor discipline [March 20, 1942],” no. 39, “Instructions by the *Reichsminister* of the Eastern Occupied Provinces, A. Rosenberg, concerning the registration of local population for fulfilling the assignments of total war [March 29, 1943],” and no. 40, “Instructions of the Chief *Generaldirektor*, O. Dankers, concerning the involvement of workers in business enterprises in constructing fortifications [August 17, 1944],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 93-95, 104, 130-133. For other details exploitation, see Aizsilnieks. (2003). “The Exploitation of Latvia’s Economy.” 110-120; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 255-256; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 144-149; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 182-184; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 149-151.

some of the confiscated property to that of its rightful Latvian owners.¹⁹¹ While Latvians did not overly favour the Germans and no longer viewed them as liberators, it was obvious to many Latvians as time went on that Latvia was between a rock and a hard place, as Soviet forces increasingly began to push German forces back towards the Latvian border. For example, one Latvian refugee in Sweden in 1943 was quoted as saying that ““deep in our souls we hate the Germans, but at the same time we must deal with them with a smile, for we understand that...they still help us keep the Bolsheviks from crossing our borders.””¹⁹² Indeed, with German military setbacks becoming increasingly clear, many Latvians began to view in complete horror the future prospects of a Soviet reoccupation. Therefore, as a result of the fear of Soviet occupation and the fact that the treatment of ethnic-Latvians by the German authorities was far more mild relative to the severe repression found under Soviet rule, there was never any widespread anti-German resistance organized by Latvians.

When German authorities instituted conscription drives for Latvian ‘volunteers’ for German military units, many Latvians willingly took up the fight against Soviet forces. A large number of Latvian volunteers were obligated to serve in Waffen-SS combat units, namely the 15th and 19th Latvian SS Divisions (Latvian Legion). Altogether, it is estimated that some 57,000 personnel served in the Latvian Legion, as well as between 100,000-150,000 mobilized altogether in German military units combined.¹⁹³ In terms of fighting conviction and effectiveness, it has been reported that the two SS divisions of the Latvian Legion “were among the most distinguished among

¹⁹¹ However, farmers only were able to gain back around 25% of their former land before the Soviet’s re-occupation (p. 91). See also document no. 13, “Directive of A. Rosenberg, Reich Minister of the occupied Eastern Province, about the renewal of private property in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania [Berlin, February 18, 1943],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 106-107.

¹⁹² Quoted in Bilmanis, Alfred. (1943). *Latvia under German Occupation*. Washington: The Latvian Legation., p. 24. See also Bassler. (2000). *Alfred Valdmanis.*, p. 164; Bergmanis, Aldis, Ritvars Jansons, Indilus Zālīte. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks of the Latvian SSR Agencies of National Security 1944-1956.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 273-274; Strods, Heinrihs. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia, 1944-1991.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 290; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 295, 301-302.

¹⁹³ See document no. 44 in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 139. See also Feldmanis, Inesis. (2005b). “Waffen-SS Units of Latvians and Other Non-Germanic Peoples in World War II: Methods of Formation, Ideology and Goals.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 126-127; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 265; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 59; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.”, p. 32; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 287-288, 293; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 129..

non-German Waffen SS units.”¹⁹⁴ Members of the Latvian Legion forming the 19th Latvian SS-Division would continue to fight with German forces until May 8, 1945, in the cut-off pocket of Courland.

Overall, it is unfair to call members of the Latvian Legion as active collaborators, as most only started to ‘volunteer’ reluctantly when Soviet invasion was imminent in 1944, and active mobilization actually took the form of conscription.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, contrary to Soviet propaganda, the members of these Latvian SS units, known as the Latvian Legion, were not fascists or rabid Nazis, and did not share any ideological proclivities with those of ardent Nazis, with the exception of halting the spread of Soviet Communism to Latvia. Also contrary to Soviet claims, while it is true that the Latvian Legionnaires were members of the notorious SS, the members of these units were not war criminals, and served in active combat units of the Waffen-SS. Indeed, the Latvian Legion was formed over a year after the massacre of Latvia’s Jewish population, and no actions were taken by the Latvian Legion against civilians. While there were members that had prior blood on their hands from activities while serving in German Police Battalions, most members were innocent and no war crimes charges have ever been brought for actions of the Latvian Legion. This fact has been acknowledged by the Western Allied governments and documented by international tribunal bodies.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Feldmanis. (2005b). “Waffen-SS Units of Latvians,” p. 127. See also Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 261-265; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 288-289.

¹⁹⁵ On call-up information regarding the formation of the Latvian Legion and evidence pointing to induced mobilization on the part of the Germans rather than outright ‘volunteerism’ from Latvians, see documents no. 35, “Instruction of the General Inspector of the Latvian Legion concerning the call-up into the Latvian Legion of men born in 1924, 1923, 1922 and 1918 [December 1, 1943, General Inspector of the Latvian Legion, General R. Bangerskis],” no. 36, “Information in the newspaper Tēvijā about the warning of the Rīga Prefect, R. Stieglitz, regarding avoidance of the call-up to the Legion [February 26, 1944],” and no. 37, “Top Secret Report of the People’s Commissar of State Security of the USSR, V. Merkulov, to the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee about the Latvian Legion [July 24, 1943, Sent to Comrade Kalnbērziņš and Comrade Lācis], in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 126-129.

¹⁹⁶ For example, Harry N. Rosenfield, Commissioner of the U.S. Displaced Persons Commission, where he made the distinction ““that the Baltic Waffen SS Units (Baltic Legions) are to be considered as separate and distinct in terms of purpose, ideology, activities, and qualifications for membership from the German SS.”” See documents no. 45, “Reply of H.N. Rosenfield to J. Feldmanis [September 12, 1950],” and no. 44, “Letter of the Latvian charge d’affaires in Washington, J. Feldmanis, to a member of the USA’s Displaced Persons (refugees) Commission, N. Rosenfield, concerning the differences between the *Waffen* SS and Latvian Legion [August 2, 1950],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 138-139. See also, Feldmanis. (2005a). “Latvia under the Occupation of National Socialist Germany,” p. 86-88; Feldmanis. (2005b). “Waffen-SS Units of Latvians,” p. 123-124, 131; Ezergailis. (1996). *Holocaust in Latvia.*, p. 42-43, 321; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 158; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 293; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 130-133, 136-142.

Latvian Legionnaires were driven by convictions of not only fighting to halt the return of Soviet Communism to Latvia, but also to help regain Latvia's freedom and sovereignty, and defend their traditional cultural way of life. Many members of the Latvian Legions had rural backgrounds and had witnessed the direct assault of Soviet authorities to force them off their ancestral land and destroy their way of life of individual private farming. Additionally, many also had connections via family or friends to someone, who had been directly arrested, killed or deported by the Soviets, or had been witness to other acts of Soviet brutality. Moreover, many in Latvia, misjudging the strength of the Soviets and the lack of will of the Western Allies to preserve Baltic freedom, had hoped that the members of the Latvian Legion would serve as the nucleus of a new Latvian Army if sovereignty was restored. Overall, most Legionnaires were driven by convictions informed by the historically liberal-individualist worldviews of Latvians. As Rutkis points out, Latvian Legionnaires' "basic purpose was to fight against [the Soviet] regime that had deprived their nation of freedom and had imposed on them a way of life alien to their tradition and mentality."¹⁹⁷ In contemporary Latvian historical memories, veterans of the Latvian Legion are considered by many to be freedom fighters fighting for Latvia's freedom against Soviet Communism. As a result, Latvians had a far different historical interpretation of the Second World War, and never viewed kindly the official Soviet/Russian historical version that the Soviets "liberated" Latvia.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 275. For similar consensus, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 411-412; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 150; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undeclared Nation.*, p. 263-264; Feldmanis. (2005a). "Latvia under the Occupation of National Socialist Germany.," p. 87; Neiburgs, Uldis. (2005). "Western Allies in Latvian Public Opinion and Nazi Propaganda during the German Occupation 1941-1945." In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia.* Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 132-147; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 293. Additionally, when former veterans were polled, "100% of Latvians admitted their anti-Communist sentiments as the main reason for their fighting on the German side." Feldmanis. (2005b). "Waffen-SS Units of Latvians.," p. 128-131. Here, it is also important to note the observations of one Russian journalist in Latvia speaking on anonymity, who pointed out these were "people who were young, they burned their whole farm down, shot their family... and he ran off and joined the legion, and not the Red Army, which is logical, and went to fight the Russians." Quoted in Petrenko and Denis. (2008). "The Editorial Policy of Russia's Media.," p. 41.

¹⁹⁸ On clashing political-cultural historical memories regarding WWII, between Latvia and Russia, it is important to note the observations of one Latvian elite, who mentioned, "they [ethnic-Russians] are allowed to commemorate the 9th of May, but that is done on the other side of the river, where there is a big Russian/Soviet monument. But it's not something that Latvians will go to. No way, it's a purely Russian thing. And we cannot discuss the 9th of May with Russians, its religion to Russians, this commemoration that they were heroes, at least in their own perception. For Latvians that was just another occupation starting again...when oppression started again. On the 16th of March here, it is the so-called Legionnaires Day...All the ethnic-Russians hate it, but also many people in Western Europe don't understand it. And I

Soviet Reoccupation of Latvia, 1944-1991

Reoccupation, Resistance and Collectivization

When Soviet forces defeated German forces in Latvia, the Soviet Union was not 'liberating' Latvia, but instead forcing Latvians into a second prolonged period of occupation. From the outset of the re-occupation in 1944, it did not take long before Soviet authorities began using heavy handed policies towards the Latvians. These were witnessed in the form of the repression of culture and religion, forced collectivization, cultural Sovietization/Russification, as well as deportations and killings. For example, it is estimated that there were around 70,000 Latvians that were executed or deported from 1944 to 1946 by Soviet forces in the immediate years following reoccupation.¹⁹⁹

The re-incorporation into the Soviet Union was against the wishes of the vast majority of Latvians. This was seen with the weak organization and next to no support for Communists existing in Latvian rural areas. As Bleiere points out, "the Soviet regime's social and political bases were narrow, whereas anti-Soviet sentiments were

think that's unfair, because what do you do? You had the Germans and you had the Russians, and you couldn't really be like, 'I'll be neutral.' This small country didn't have a chance. You had to look at the two and say which one was the lesser evil. And I don't mind that some people chose to say 'we hate the Russians more than we hate the Germans.' But it's not understood well...and the choice here was very tough." Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). See also, Denis. (2008). "The Story with History.," p. 83, 87-88; Karklins, Rasma. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR: The Perspective from Below*. Boston: Allen & Unwin., p. 53; Petrenko and Denis. (2008). "The Editorial Policy of Russia's Media.," p. 41; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 144; Siliņš. (2008). "Riga Journal.," p. 160; Onken, Eva-Clarita. (2009). "Commemorating 9 May: The Baltic States and European Memory Politics." Ch. 3. In *Identity and Foreign Policy*, eds., Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin. Franham: Ashgate., p. 41. See document no. 37, "Secret report of the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, L. Avdlukevics, to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party about politically harmful tendencies among young persons [March 24, 1978]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 216-219.

¹⁹⁹ See Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 71-73; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 154. The brutality of Soviet re-occupation has been described as being similar to the fate experienced by civilians in other areas of Central and Eastern Europe occupied by Soviet forces, where there were large amounts of looting, robbery, murder and rape. See Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 99; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 155; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 188; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 107; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 332-334. See also documents no. 2, "Excerpts from a secret report by V. Lācis, Chair of Council of Peoples' Commissars of the Latvian SSR, to USSR Marshal L. Govorov, military commander of the Leningrad Front, about the conduct of Red Army soldiers in various districts of Kurzeme [May 1945]," no. 3, "Report of K. Novikov, Secretary of the Riga City Committee of Latvia's Communist (Bolshevik) Party, to N. Bulganin, USSR People's Deputy Commissar of Defense, about 'marauderism' [May 14, 1945]," and no. 4, "Information about the conditions in the municipalities and rural districts of Kurzeme after the entry of the Soviet army, compiled on the basis of local Party and local soviet reports [May 21, 1945]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 151-153.

widespread.”²⁰⁰ Thus, when the Soviet forces reentered Latvia near the end of the war, there was a glaring lack of Communist support within rural Latvia. To illustrate, in 1945, only 100 communists worked in the rural areas of Latvia.²⁰¹ Certainly, the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and ways of life that were historically found in Latvia played a significant role in informing the content of anti-Soviet sentiment amongst the Latvian populace. This is because “the Soviet system, imposed by force, contain[ed] norms that were alien to the Latvian and conflict[ed] with their moral principles.”²⁰²

In consolidating their domination over Latvian cultural life, Soviet authorities once again launched a full scale attack on Latvian religious institutions, by confiscating and destroying church property, and also killing, arresting or deporting Lutheran and Roman Catholic clergy. As mentioned previously, Latvia’s Western Christian traditions and values were viewed by Soviet authorities as a direct ideological threat to Soviet worldviews. To illustrate, “the Church, as a pillar of national identity for many Balts and an apologist for a world view irreconcilable with Soviet ideology, stood in the way of a rapid, successful integration of the Baltic republics.”²⁰³ Indeed, the “ruthless fight against

²⁰⁰ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*, p. 362, 242. For similar consensus on widespread anti-Soviet sentiment, see Strods, Heinrihs. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia 1944-1991.” In *The Hidden and Forbidden History of Latvia*. Riga: Institute of the History of Latvia., p. 217; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia*, p. 19-21.

²⁰¹ See Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia*, p. 347; Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside,” p. 101. For nation-wide numbers for members in the LCP, see Figure A.3 in the Appendix.

²⁰² Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia*, p. 30. For further consensus that Soviet rule was alien, unpopular and imposed by force, see Meissner. (1978). “The Baltic Question,” p. 145; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia*, p. 244; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,” p. 210, 226; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States*, p. 191; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation*, p. 280; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime*, p. 297; Šilde. (2003). “Passive Resistance in Latvia,” p. 178.

²⁰³ Dunn. (1978). “The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government,” p. 155-156. Not only is this quote good to infer that a clash of cultures was occurring, but also that culture and religious worldviews precede and inform the content of national identity. For documentary evidence on attacks against religion, see documents no. 62, “Report of V. Seskens, the authorized agent in the Latvian SSR of the Religious Cult Affairs Council of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars, about the anti-Soviet attitudes of K. Irbe, the provisional Archbishop of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, and his activities as reflected in an NKVD investigations [October 5, 1945],” no. 63, “Secret correspondence between, V. Šeškens, the authorized agent in the Latvian SSR of the Religious Cult Affairs Council of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars, and I. Polanski, the Chair of the USSR Council of Religious Cult Affairs, about the situation in specific confessions [December 31, 1945],” no. 64, “Excerpt from the top secret decision of the Latvian SSR State Security Ministry about the recruitment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church pastor, A. Siļķe, and the impossibility of using him as an agent [June 26, 1946],” no. 65, “Excerpt from a top secret report of the Latvian SSR Ministry of State Security about the anti-Soviet activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church pastor P. Rozenbergs, now under arrest [July 1, 1946],” no. 68, “Decision No. 288 of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR concerning the liquidation of monasteries in the territory of the Latvian SSR [May 20, 1959],” no. 73, “Excerpts from the decision of the Riga Municipal Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, entitled ‘Concerning the strengthening of atheistic training’ [October 10, 1982],” and no.

everything that had to do with the church and religion,” stemmed from the Soviet “desire to remove the Latvian people from the sphere of Western culture,” in order to create a new Soviet man.²⁰⁴ Thus, from political-cultural standpoint, the Soviet attack on religion in Latvia was driven by the goal to “dissolve the rather deeply reaching Western influences that have been intensely fostered by the Baltic churches.”²⁰⁵ Such acts constituted an attack on culture, as the Russian Orthodox Church was not subjected to the same forms of persecution that the Westernized Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches were subjected.²⁰⁶ Indeed, one can infer from this privileging of Orthodoxy over Western Christianity in Latvia that a clash of cultures was occurring. Moreover, the fact that the Soviets found it necessary to launch such a planned and concerted attack against the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches signals that religion must have been important amongst Latvians.

Overall, Stalin and other Soviet leaders shared many of the previously long held Russian/Soviet imperialistic views towards Latvia and the other Baltic states, and set about implementing policies that were an outright attack on the liberal-individualist political-cultural way of life shared by most Latvians. Such policies of Soviet/Russian cultural imperialism were seen with Soviet goals to collectivize agriculture via the

75, “Report of E. Kokars-Trops, authorized agent in Latvia of the Council of Religious Affairs of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to the Council of Religious Affairs about the use of cult buildings [March 20, 1986],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 282-293, 297-299, 301, 143.

²⁰⁴ Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 622. Rutkis has also noted (p. 624-625) that the Soviet’s banned many religious hymns, specifically banning last two verses of the favorite Lutheran Hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” which were deemed to be too subversive. To illustrate, these verses read, “Though hordes of devils fill the land all threatening to devour us. We Tremble not, unmoved we stand; they cannot overpower us. Let this world’s tyrant rage; In Battle we’ll engage! His might is doomed to fail; God’s judgment must prevail! One little word subdues him.” And “God’s Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes, who fear it; For god himself fights by our side with weapons of the spirit. Were they to take our house, goods, honour, child, or spouse, though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The Kingdom’s ours forever!” In *Lutheran Book of Worship.* (1978). Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House., Hymn no. 229.

²⁰⁵ Vardys, V. Stanley. (1968). “Soviet Nationality Policy as Instrument of Political Socialization.” In *Res Baltica*, ed. Adolf Sprudz and Armins Rūsis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 121-122. For similar consensus on ideological motives for attacking religion, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 393; Swettenham. (1952). *The Tragedy of the Baltic States.*, p. 103-115; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 248-249, 251; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 91-92; Rūsis. (2003). “Church and State in Soviet Latvia.” p. 169-170; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia.” p. 223; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia.” p. 294; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 417; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 94-95. See also document no. 126, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370.

²⁰⁶ As Küng points out “the Orthodox Church is considered to be, originally, a Russian community...[and] are not suspected of hidden loyalties,...nor of ‘nationalism,’ as are the Baltic Christians.” Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 96.

destruction of the historic traditions of individual private farming, mass deportations, cultural Russification/Sovietization and persecution of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches. Indeed, Moscow was bent on a policy “aimed at the political, economic and spiritual subjugation of Latvia to the totalitarian dictatorship of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union... with a special focus on...the destruction of the European-style socio-political structure that had developed in Latvia in the course of centuries.”²⁰⁷ This entailed a clash of historic political-cultural worldviews since “Sovietization totally rejected private property, private initiative, religion, as well as Western cultural and spiritual values that had existed in Latvia for centuries.”²⁰⁸

A large number of Latvians resisted Soviet oppression by fleeing westward as refugees with the retreating German armies, or by seeking safe haven across the Baltic Sea in Sweden. In total it is estimated that between 120,000 to 150,000 Latvian fled to the West after 1944.²⁰⁹ Overall, Latvian émigrés in North America and other Western countries would play an important role in countering Soviet propaganda about the conditions in the Baltic countries, helping to preserve historical memories of Latvia’s first period of independence, and by passing on liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews to younger generations within the Latvian émigré communities.

In Latvia itself, mass anti-Soviet resistance continued long after the Germans had retreated, as many Latvian Legionnaires who happened to remain in Latvia shed their SS-uniforms and moved into the vast Latvian forests, fighting alongside other rural Latvians who continued to fight fierce armed resistance in the form of guerilla warfare against the occupying Soviet forces. As will be discussed below, the group of Latvian freedom fighters, known as the Forest Brethren, would number in the tens of thousands and

²⁰⁷ Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia.” p. 212, 217.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 211. For further consensus on goals of implementing a policy of Soviet/Russian cultural imperialism, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 392; Vardys. (1968). “Soviet Nationality Policy.” p. 117, 123-127; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 332; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 12, 405; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 155; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 78; Riekstiņš, Jānis. (2009). “The Struggle by Latvian National Communists Against the Colonisation and Russification of Latvia (1956-1972).” Part III. In *Regaining Independence*, eds. V. Blūzma, T. Jundzis, J. Riekstiņš, G. Sharp, H. Strods. Riga: Latvia Academy of Sciences., p. 169; Kolstø, Pål. (1999b). “Nation-Building and Social Integration Theory.” ch. 3. In *Nation Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Pål Kolstø. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 57-58. See also documents no. 92-94 in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 326-328; and *Letter of Seventeen Communists in Šilde.* (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 34-47.

²⁰⁹ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 152; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History.” p. 32. Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 424.

continue to wage a bloody struggle of resistance against Soviet forces lasting until the mid-1950s. Thus, as Moscow tried to consolidate its authority in Latvia after 1944, Soviet forces were met with intense resistance both in urban areas and especially in the Latvian countryside, much of which was not in the firm control of Soviet authorities for several years up until the late-1940s.²¹⁰

A large reason for this resistance resulted from the fact that Soviet authorities remained committed to fulfilling their goal of forcefully collectivizing agriculture and destroying the Latvian way of life of individual private farming. However, since attempts to eradicate Latvia's individual private farmers via collectivization were prematurely cut short by the German invasion in 1941, this meant that Latvia's historically liberal-individualist way of life remained intact and that anti-Communist worldviews remained high in the countryside by 1945. As a result, there was no voluntary movement of Latvia's farmers to collectivize, which was seen in the high amounts of violent and non-violent resistance from 1944-1949. In general, Latvians actively resisted the initial Soviet attempts to exert control over the Latvian countryside and policies of agricultural collectivization. Overall, while the Soviets remained bent on fulfilling agricultural collectivization, such efforts were largely a failure up until 1949 because of widespread armed and passive resistance from Latvia's private farmers and rural populace.

In the early stages of Soviet re-occupation, this armed and passive resistance went hand in hand, to fight against the repeated attempts to Sovietize and collectivize all aspects of political-cultural life in Latvia. This was apparent with the Forest Brethren guerilla forces, which were actively aided by the majority of the rural population and enjoyed wide popular, material, logistical and spiritual support from all Latvians, and also controlled large areas of the countryside during the late 1940s. Moreover, Latvian resistance fighters received little support from abroad, so their longevity stems a great

²¹⁰ Some have placed the number of *Forest Brethren* at 20,000 during its high point from 1944-1946. Strods, Heinrichs. (2003c). "Latvia's National Partisan War 1944-1956." In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 207-208, 211. In terms of numbers for the entire period of armed resistance, recent estimates put the number of 20,000 to 40,000 fighters involved, with the support of from 80,000 to 100,000 rural residents. In terms of casualties, it has been reported that 3,000 Latvian partisans were killed, 5,000 deported along with tens of thousands of non-combatant supporters to Siberia. Additionally, it is reported that Soviet's suffered 3,243 killed in action. See Strods. (2005b). "Resistance in Latvia.," p. 290; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 83, 86; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 160. For in depth descriptions of tactics, strategy, battles, weaponry, popular support and other details, see Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 4-23.

deal from the mass popular support they received from the local populace. As Šilde points out, the fact that there was wide popular support for “the fight of the Latvian...guerillas is *the* proof that this [Soviet annexation] had been done against the will of the population...[and that] Communist ideas were not popular in free Latvia.”²¹¹ Indeed, such facts regarding the mass support and popularity of Latvian guerilla forces by the Latvian populace are even acknowledged in the documents of Soviet Communists which had to resort to huge amounts of force in order to put down the Latvian armed resistance and their supporters.²¹²

In addition to the armed resistance, many Latvians also resisted in other ways, in order to deprive the Soviet authorities of their property in fighting against the Soviet goal of collectivization. Such passive resistance largely proved effective at stymieing Soviet acts of excessive taxation, crop confiscation and other acts of economic coercion. When combined with acts of armed resistance, this helped to forestall Soviet policies of collectivization. Thus, until March 1949 only 10% of Latvia’s private farms had been

²¹¹ Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 4, 7. On widespread popular support for the Latvian armed resistance from all segments of society, and control of the Latvian countryside by the Latvian armed resistance movements, see map in *Ibid.*, p. 8, 17. See also, Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside,” p. 99-100; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 86, 90; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics,” p. 93; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks of the Latvian SSR,” p. 277; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia,” p. 287-290; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 364-365. On the small amounts of foreign support that the Latvian resistance received from the British secret service, however, this largely served to be detrimental resistance efforts. This is because the Latvian resistance was sold out by British traitors in MI5 that were actually Soviet spies, such as Kim Philby, whom sent all the names and information of resistance fighters to the KGB, which Soviet authorities used out resistance fighters by going after their immediate family. This was mentioned in a discussion with Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

²¹² For example, see quote from former First Party Secretary of Latvian August Voss describing the “ferocious opposition,” in Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 43. For documentary evidence illuminating the Soviet’s perceived seriousness of the situation in the late-1940s, the lack of Soviet preparation to deal with such massive resistance, and huge amounts of force used to put down resistance, see documents no. 30, “Top secret decision of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party, from the special file about activities in the struggle against national partisans [May 28, 1945; J. Kalnbērziņš],” no. 31, “Top secret decision from the special file of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party about additional activities in the struggle against national partisans and the strengthening of the seek-and-destroy battalions [June 15, 1945; Kalnbērziņš],” and no. 106, “Top secret report by A. Eglītis, the Minister of the Interior of the Latvian SSR, to the Chair of the Council of Ministers, V. Lācis, about the work of the Interior Ministry in preparation for the elections to the Supreme Council and during the elections [March 4, 1947],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 200-203, 341-343. See also Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 7, 19-21; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 90-91; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks,” p. 276-277; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia,” p. 289-290; Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia,” p. 1693.

collectivized.²¹³ Overall this failure to collectivize, as a result of the lack of Communist support and high amounts of coordinated armed and passive resistance was acknowledged openly in documents of Soviet authorities at the time.²¹⁴

While Soviet authorities portrayed this resistance during the early part of Soviet re-occupation as being ‘fascists’ and ‘bandits,’ such characterizations are false. Nor were Latvian farmers ‘kulaks’ as negatively portrayed in Soviet propaganda. Many of the Latvian Forest Brethren had farming backgrounds, and had witnessed the direct assault of Soviet authorities to force them off their ancestral land and destroy their way of life of private farming. Additionally, many also had been victims of political terror, or had family and friends who had been directly arrested, killed or deported by the Soviets.²¹⁵ Indeed, historically liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, habits and historical memories played a key role in shaping Latvian resistance to collectivization. This is because “the Soviet power represented a political ideology and government system...that was unacceptable to members of the resistance movement,” because it “brought the loss of human rights and individual freedom.”²¹⁶ Moreover, Strods’ points out that the armed resistance and their supporters fought because they “understood that

²¹³ Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 141. For information on coercive measures employed by the Soviets, see Spekke. (1951). *History of Latvia.*, p. 390-391; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 74-77; 204-205; Ruis. (1959b). “Latvia.” p. 1688-2689; Berzins (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 221, 228-232; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 252-255; Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.” p. 103; Bleiere. (2005). “Repressions against Farmers.” p. 244-245, 251-253. See also documents no. 15, “Decision Number 761 of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR entitled ‘About characteristics of *budžu* [bourgeois] farms and the manner of imposing taxes on them.’ August 27, 1947,” no. 16, “Excerpts from a secret report of the Prosecutor of the Latvian SSR, A. Misutin, about severe violations in the implementation of the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR entitled ‘About characteristics of *budžu* [bourgeois] farms and the manner of imposing taxes on them.’ [August 7, 1948],” and no. 86, “Decision No. 52 of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR and the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, entitled ‘About the obligatory supply of milk to the state in the Latvian SSR’ [April 2, 1946; V. Lācis, J. Kalnbērziņš],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 173-176; 318.

²¹⁴ For examples of the Soviet acknowledgment of the serious problem posed by the widespread Latvian resistance, see footnote no. 213 above, and Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.” p. 99-100, 103; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 87; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 221-222; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 155-156.

²¹⁵ The majority of Latvia’s armed resistance fighters of the *Forest Brethren* were farmers or had a farming background. Bleiere. (2005). “Repressions against Farmers in Latvia.” p. 249. See also, Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 84; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 25.

²¹⁶ Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 8-9.

the occupying forces had to be destroyed, for otherwise the Soviet dictatorship that would be established would take away democratic freedoms and property.”²¹⁷

However, such resistance to the loss of property resulted from more than simply rationalist materialistic motives on the part of Latvian farmers, and had much deeper meaning, in that the motivations were rooted in the historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life of Latvians. In general, Communist ideas were never widely credible to begin with in Latvia, and were antithetical to Latvia’s historically rooted liberal-individualist political-culture. To illustrate, this deeper historic political-cultural meaning behind Latvian resistance to collectivization can be inferred where Šilde points out that...

throughout the centuries the Latvian farmer had clung to his plot of land [which]...meant to him much more than an object of economic value. It gave meaning to his life, being an inseparable part of age-old rural traditions and moral values. When his farm was taken away...it meant to him not the loss of ‘private property’ in the Marxist sense, but a grievous encroachment upon his personality and the destruction of his natural environment.²¹⁸

Indeed, most historical accounts portray the mass Latvian armed and passive resistance as fighting for Latvian freedom and being driven by motives largely to protect their political-cultural way of life of individual freedom and private farming against Soviet attempts to forcefully impose collectivization which went directly against the historic liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews ways of life, habits and historical memories shared by most Latvians. As Plakans points out, “the tradition of separate and individual farmsteads...was deeply ingrained, having continued to exist even during centuries of serfdom,” and under Soviet imposed collectivization “the Latvian population would have to adapt to a way of living and thinking that played no

²¹⁷ Strods. (2003c). “Latvia’s National Partisan War.,” p. 207, 211. For similar consensus inferring such worldviews and motives, see Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia.,” p. 288-289; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance .,” p. 68; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks.,” p. 274. See documents no. 32, “Excerpts from the minutes of the interrogation of A. Klibiķis, accused by the People’s Commissariat of State Security of the Latvian SSR, about the goals of the Latvia’s Central Council [December 7, 1945],” and no. 33, “Top secret report of the Secretary of the Latvian Komsomol, V. Krūmiņš, to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party, F. Titov, about the struggle against resistance organizations and groupings in educational institutions. [June 1949],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 204-206.

²¹⁸ Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 7.

role in its folkways.”²¹⁹ This is because the forced collectivization of agriculture meant the “transfer of farmers to Russian-type villages,” and “the abolition of individual farmsteads” characterized by “the European-style agriculture of Latvia,” which was “rooted in individual farmsteads, private property and private initiative.”²²⁰ Overall, evidence suggests that Latvians deeply resisted Soviet policies, and there was no voluntary movement to collectivize. Consequently, under collectivized farms, “Latvians were forced into style of life foreign to their traditions.”²²¹

Thus, such Soviet acts could be seen as precipitating a clash between two opposing political-cultural worldviews and ways of life, seen in Latvian resistance to increasing policies of forced Sovietization and collectivization. This is because the Western “well-established Baltic traditional respect for individual freedom and individual responsibility for actions was replaced...by an enforced collective responsibility, based on well-established Russian...collective economic and cultural values.”²²² Overall there was no economic rationale for implementing a policy of collectivization of agriculture. Such policies to destroy individual farming in Latvia were merely based on the political-cultural worldviews shared by Soviet/Russian authorities which preferred such collectivistic modes of organization and saw them as the ‘best’ and ‘normal’ way to conduct political-economic affairs. In such a political-cultural environment, collaboration with the Soviets would have been unheard of and seen as traitorous by the vast majority of Latvians. This is because collaboration with the Soviets was considered to be

²¹⁹ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 155-156.

²²⁰ Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,” p. 218.

²²¹ From document no. 126, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism*., p. 369. Additionally, former Latvian President Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, also mentioned that “Latvians never even lived in [communal] villages, so you can imagine how unhappy they would have been to go into collective farms...they [Latvian farmers] hated the idea, but were forced into it.” Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview on behalf of *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007). For similar consensus, see Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic*., p. 84-86, 88, 109; Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia,” p. 1693-1694; Krivickas, Domas, Vaino J. Riismandel and Armins Rūsis. (1959). “The Baltic States: A General Survey.” Ch. 16, in *Government, Law and Courts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Volume 1*, eds., Vladimir Gsovski and Kazimierz Grzybowski. London: Stevens & Sons Limited., p. 602; Conquest, Robert. (1967). *Soviet Nationalities Policy in Practice*. London: The Bodley Head; 94, 98, 108; Berzins (1963). *The Unpunished Crime*., p. 220; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic*., p. 64; Mežaks. (2003). “Latvia Throughout History,” p. 32.

²²² Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 79. On ideology being prime motivator of Soviet policies and collectivization having no economic rationale, see footnote no. 208 and Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic*., p. 253-256, 287; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*., p. 412.

“rebellion against one’s own society’s established values.”²²³ Moreover as Bleiere et al point out, “the regime was [so] unpopular among the citizens [that] anyone involved in the party could be ostracized by other Latvians and their lives could be threatened.”²²⁴

Additionally, religious faith also seems to have been important in helping to maintain moral conviction amongst both violent and non-violent resistance. In regards to armed resistance, Šilde notes that Latvia’s guerilla warriors would take a religious oath stating that “‘before God and my people I swear to devote all my efforts and all my strength to the fight for my people,’” as well as that “divine services were sometimes held before major guerilla operations.” Additionally, Šilde points out that “clergymen would be invited to perform funeral rites at the grave of a fallen partisan...[and that] those partisans who fell into the hands of the Soviet police were denied a Christian burial and their graves were kept secret by the Soviet authorities.”²²⁵ Obviously from such behavior on the part of the Soviets, one can infer that religion had serious meaning here for Latvians, as the Soviets would probably not have gone to such trouble to deny such culturally symbolic rights to Latvians if they had no meaning to the parties involved.

Faced with such resistance, Soviet authorities resorted to mass deportations of Latvia’s rural populace and other forms of coercive violence in order to break the back of armed and passive resistance, instill fear in the population, and forcefully coerce the people into collective farms against their wishes.²²⁶ The most prominent of these deportations occurred during the Soviet’s *Operation Coastal Storm [Priboi]* from March 24 to 27, 1949, and included the forced deportations of approximately 43,231 Latvians, a large number of which were women and children. If one includes the March 1949

²²³ Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 85.

²²⁴ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 341.

²²⁵ Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 16.

²²⁶ For consensus on Soviet tactics of mass deportations to break Latvian resistance and force the people to collectivize, see Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia,” p. 1693-1694; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 14; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 91-92, 105; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics,” p. 93; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 31; Strods, Heinrichs. (2003b). “Operation «Coastal Storm» (Priboi): The Deportation of the Baltic Peoples 1949.” In *Unpunished Crimes*, ed., Tadeušs Puisāns. Stockholm: Momento – Daugavas Vanagi., p. 96; Strods. (2003c). “Latvia’s National Partisan War,” p. 209; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks,” p. 277-278; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia,” p. 290. For documentary evidence that these deportations were planned well in advance, see documents no. 18, “Top secret decision of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, number 282-cs, about the deportation of ‘kulak’ families from the Latvian SSR [March 17, 1949; V. Lācis, I. Bastin],” and no. 19 “Top secret decision No. 297-ps of the Council of Ministers about the confiscation and use of the possessions of deportees [March 24, 1949; V. Lācis, I. Bastin],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 178-179.

deportations (43,231) with those deported between 1944-1946 (70,000), and those deported in June 1941 (15,000), in addition to those that were killed and arrested, approximately 190,000 were victims of Soviet repression (killings, arrests, and deportations) during this time.²²⁷ The fact that the Soviets had to resort to such brutal tactics of mass deportations of the rural populations illustrates precisely that the Latvian armed resistance enjoyed much popular appeal and support. Such brutal policies worked in forcing the Latvians to collectivize, as most who remained after the deportations were so scared by what had happened that they moved on to the collective farms in the immediate months following the deportations in June 1949. To illustrate the fear, in March 1949, the Soviets were only able to collectivize 10% of Latvian farms, which jumped to 80% in July 1949 after the mass deportations were completed.²²⁸

Overall, the Soviet policies of forced collectivization were a total attack on the predominant liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and ways of life historically shared by most Latvians. As Schwartz argues, the “Soviet campaign to eliminate Latvian farmsteads was a campaign against Latvianness itself.”²²⁹ This is because “the Latvian nation developed on the basis of the farming population [whose]

²²⁷ Approximately 200,000 were listed as repressed in document no. 126, “Resolution entitled ‘Charges Against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Affiliate in Latvia, the Communist Party of Latvia, for Crimes Committed against Humanity, the Nation of Latvia, and its Land,’” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370. For consensus on the numbers of deportees in March 1949 and those throughout the 1940s, see Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 260-261, 355; Hanchett. (1968). “The Communists and the Latvian Countryside,” p. 109; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.* p. 120-145; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 99; Dimanta and Zālīte. (2003). “Structural Analysis of the Deportations,” p. 101; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,” p. 217; Strods. (2003b). “Operation «Coastal Storm»,” p. 87-96; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks,” p. 271-285; Senn. (2005). “Baltic Battleground,” p. 29; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia,” p. 290-291; Bleiere, (2005). “Repressions against Farmers,” p. 245, 251; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 349-350; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 79; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 83, 86.

²²⁸ See Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 141; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 156; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 108; Bleiere, (2005). “Repressions against Farmers in Latvia,” p. 250. See also documents no. 20, “Top secret decision from the special file of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party about the results of the deportation operation [March 29, 1949],” no. 21, “Top secret report of the Deputy Section Leader of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, A. Drozdov, and Deputy Section Leader, P. Ninov, to the Secretaries of the Central Committee...Kalnbērziņš, F. Titov, P. Litvinov, and A. Peļše about the political mood of the population of Riga following the mass deportations of March 24/25, 1949 [March 26, 1949],” and no. 23, “Muceniēks, Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party Riga District Committee, [reports] secret information to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, J. Kalnbērziņš, about the process of the mass deportations in the Riga district [March 31, 1949],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 179-185.

²²⁹ Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 67.

life-style and culture was...a cohesive element of national self-awareness” for Latvians.²³⁰ Consequently, one can agree with Kirby that the Soviets “destruction of the land owning peasantry was more than the final phase of class struggle...it was intended to obliterate the social, economic and ideological foundations upon which the prewar independent republics had rested.”²³¹ As a result of Soviet attacks on religion, the destruction of private farms via forced collectivization, and the mass deportations of Latvians, many have argued that the concerted nature of all of these policies in directly attacking Latvia’s cultural well-being constituted acts of outright cultural genocide by Moscow.²³²

Latvian Culture Under Siege: Soviet Industrialization and Latvian Resistance

Under Soviet rule, Latvia was forced to experience significant Soviet-style industrialization after 1949. Thus, following the destruction of private farming and full-scale collectivization of agriculture, Soviet authorities subsequently moved next to promote a regime of massive Soviet industrial development in Latvia. During this time, Latvia moved rapidly from being predominantly rural in both its population and economic orientation, to being heavily industrialized where the majority of the population lived in urban areas. Here it is important to note that Latvia experienced significant industrialization, where Latvia went from its GDP being dominated by agriculture, to having its economic production dominated by industry. Moreover, Latvia was ranked

²³⁰ Bleiere. (2005). “Repressions against Farmers in Latvia,,” p. 255.

²³¹ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 412. Similarly Pabriks and Purs point out, Soviet policies of collectivization were an “attack on the social fabric of the Latvian state.” Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 26. Additionally, Eksteins argues that “the Baltic farmers, the backbone of the culture.” Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 108. This is a prime example pointing to political-cultural worldviews and ways of life being prior and directly informing the content of national identity.

²³² See Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 273; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 146-159; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 274; Bilmanis. (1977). *A History of Latvia.*, p. 402, 408; Canadian Committee for Human Rights in Latvia (CCHRL). (1983). *Genocide? Destruction? Annihilation? Time is Running Out for the Threatened Latvian Nation.* Toronto: Canadian Committee for Human Rights in Latvia., p. 3, 6, 10; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics,,” p. 93-94; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 126; Eksteins. (1999). *Walking Since Daybreak.*, p. 108; Balabkins. (2003). “The Destruction of Latvia’s Economy,,” p. 77-79; Dimanta and Zālīte. (2003). “Structural Analysis of the Deportations,,” p. 102; Strods. (2003b). “Operation «Coastal Storm»,,” p. 87-96; Strods. (2003c). “Latvia’s National Partisan War,,” p. 211; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,,” p. 226; Riekstiņš. (2005a). “The 14 June 1941 Deportation,,” p. 74; Bergmanis et al. (2005). “The Activities and the Main Repressive Tasks,,” p. 282; Bleiere, (2005). “Repressions against Farmers,,” p. 255; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 12. See also document no. 126, in Plakans, ed. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370.

amongst the top of the ex-Soviet Republics in terms of having high socio-economic modernization (per-capita income, education, health, urbanization, and welfare), with Latvia often ranking the highest.²³³

While this was often extolled by Soviet authorities in Moscow as significant achievements and ‘progress,’ Latvians did not share similar views. Throughout this process, all political-economic decisions were controlled by Russians, and the Latvian Communist Party was dominated by ethnic-Russians, which was subservient to Moscow.²³⁴ Moreover, Soviet heavy industries were culturally dominated by ethnic-Russians/Slavs, which was apparent in the overall structure of management and labour workforce, where non-Latvians were a majority, and in language use, where Russian was the language of everyday business. As Neimanis observed, Soviet industrial enterprises can be characterized as “places of Russian language and culture.”²³⁵ In terms of ethnic-structure and distortion of economic sectors in 1989, on the eve of the Soviet collapse, ethnic-Latvians made up 49% of the total employed, 40.6% of industry, 71.5% of agriculture, 37.2% of the strategically vital transportation sector, 69.2% in culture and arts, and only 31.5% of the government administration apparatus of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.²³⁶ Certainly, the fact that the Soviet administrative apparatus was

²³³ It should also be noted that in the whole USSR, Latvia produced 29% of all passenger railway cars, close to 50% of telephone receivers, nearly 25% of all radios, 22% of Trolley-cars, 10% of synthetic fibre, and 12% of washing machines. Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 38, 48-50. For more information on extensive Soviet industrialization and development, see Bilinsky. (1973). “The Background of Contemporary Politics in the Baltic Republics,” p. 91, 94, 114; Koropecykj. (1981). “Growth and Productivity,” p. 95; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 26, 116, 120; Schroeder. (1981). “Regional Living Standards,” p. 141, 143, 146-147; Muižnieks, Nils. (1993). “Latvia: Origins, Evolution, and Triumph.” Ch. 8. In *Nation and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, eds. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 185; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 420; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 145, 162, 163-165; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, pp. 111-113.

²³⁴ On subservience to Moscow, see Ruis. (1959b). “Latvia,” p. 1702; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 299; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 11, 184; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 60, 70, 287; Kolstø. (1999b). “Nation-Building and Social Integration Theory,” p. 57-58; Gerner and Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 6; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,” p. 214-216. Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 111.

²³⁵ Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 41. Figures cited in Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 133. On dominance of Russians in administration and workforce of Soviet industry, see Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 159-160; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 48; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia 1944-1991,” p. 219; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 377 See also footnote no. 258 above and no. 293-294 below.

²³⁶ Figures cited in Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 133. On dominance of Russians in administration and workforce of Soviet industry, see also Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 159-160; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 48; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of

disproportionately non-Latvian and the fact that Russian was the primary language used by the Soviets both officially and in everyday working communication, this would have only reinforced Latvian views that the Soviet regime and its policies were culturally alien.

Although Latvia did experience much industrial development, modernization and urbanization after 1945, ethnic-Latvians did not view this as ‘progress,’ but instead saw such developments in a highly negative light. Not only did this industry pollute the Latvian environment, such policies promoting the development of large-scale heavy industry resulted in large numbers of non-Latvian, predominantly ethnic-Russian/Slavic workers being brought into Latvia to work in these Soviet industries. In doing so, Communist authorities changed the demographic situation in Latvia by promoting the immigration of large numbers of Russian/Slavic settlers into Latvia in order to feed Soviet industrialization. As a result, these policies almost reduced Latvians to minority status within their own country. This was seen with the Latvian proportion of the population being reduced from its pre-1940 numbers of 75.5% to 52% by 1989, relative to ethnic-Russian/Slavic peoples, whom had grown to a combined 41.8% by 1989 (see Figure A.6 in Appendix). Moreover, as Figure A.7 in the Appendix reveals, by 1989, Latvia was only second to Kazakhstan in terms of the titular nationality making up such a low percentage of the overall population in their native republic.

Often such policies had little economic rationale, and did not take into account the local economic needs and demands of Latvians. Instead, Soviet industrialization was used more as a means to bring in ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers to transform the political-cultural make-up to make Latvia increasingly Russified/Sovietized and loyal to the Soviet Union, rather than for simply feeding industrialization itself. Here, one should also note that Moscow was importing loyal Russian/Slavic settlers at the same time it was deporting Latvians to the far reaches of the Soviet Union, or in later years sending skilled ethnic-Latvian workers to ‘voluntary’ work assignments in other Soviet republics.²³⁷

Latvia.,” p. 219; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 377. It should also be pointed out that in Riga, 87% of the police was Russian speaking before 1991. See Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 322.

²³⁷ For consensus on Soviet cultural imperialism via the deliberate colonization of Latvia with the migration of loyal Soviet/Russian/Slavic settlers being the primary end goal, with the pretext of increased industrial production serving merely as a tool of Soviet Russification, see Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 190-192; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 204; Vardys. (1968). “Soviet Nationality

Moreover, the Soviet government was also trying to Russify the population in that the people of Latvia were forced to learn the Russian language in school, and use it in places of work.²³⁸ As will be detailed below, most Latvians viewed the destruction of Latvia's private farms, and the subsequent heavy Soviet industrial development, deliberate mass inflow of Russian/Slavic settlers into Latvia, Russification of almost every sphere of political-economic life, and environmental degradation of the beloved Latvian countryside, as a concerted and direct attack on Latvia's cultural way of life. Indeed, such worldviews and historical memories would play an important role in shaping post-1991 policies, especially in regards to privatization and citizenship.

Continued Resistance to Soviet Rule

In spite of being massively oppressed through killings, arrests, mass deportations, and the increased threats posed by continued Soviet heavy industrialization, Latvians were never completely subdued and continued to resist throughout the entire period of Soviet rule. This was often in the form of non-violent resistance protesting key features of the illegitimate Soviet political-economic apparatus. Indeed, Latvia would have one of

Policy.," p. 130; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 115, 185; Zaslavsky, Victor. (1982). *The Neo-Stalinist State: Class, Ethnicity, and Consensus in Soviet Society.* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 101, 117-118; CCHRL. (1983). *Genocide? Destruction? Annihilation.*, p. 6, 21; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 108, 194; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 184; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 157; Sprudz. (2001). "Rebuilding Democracy in Latvia.," p. 146; Strods. (2005a). "Sovietization of Latvia.," p. 220, 226; Riekstiņš. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia.," p. 239-240; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 12, 374, 418-419; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 185-186; Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 89-90; Riekstiņš. (2009). "The Struggle by Latvian National Communists.," p. 170, 179. For documentary evidence, see document no. 126, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370.

²³⁸ For consensus on concerted policies of Russification of language in education and all spheres of political-economic activity, see Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 39-40; CCHRL. (1983). *Genocide? Destruction? Annihilation?*, p. 19; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 195, 212; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 151; Strods. (2005a). "Sovietization of Latvia.," p. 222; Riekstiņš. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia.," p. 240-241; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 243-244. See also documents no. 47, "Top secret special report by J. Ziediņš, Deputy Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers, to the Chair of the Council of Ministers, V. Lacis, about the results of an investigation into a letter from a school child in Zosna school [September 29, 1954]," and no. 48, "The decision of the Riga Municipal Committee of the Bureau of the Latvian Communist Party, concerning the conditions of the teaching of the Latvian language in the schools where Russian is the language of instruction [1956]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 237-239.

the biggest documented cases of resistance to Soviet rule in all the USSR, which was far greater compared to the relatively small amounts of resistance found in Belarus.²³⁹

Overall, a common theme influencing all areas of resistance from the 1950s onwards revolved around a protest against the perceived attack on the Latvian cultural values and way of life, seen first via the Soviets crushing of Latvian freedom, the destruction of private farming via the collectivization of agriculture, and then through the subsequent policies of Soviet heavy industrial development. Indeed, Latvians abhorred Soviet command-style policy methods, which Latvians political-cultural worldviews viewed as alien. Latvian people, both elites and masses believed that the Soviet's collectivistic policies were not only wrong, but also culturally alien and imposed forcefully on Latvia by the Russian dominated Soviet Union. Here one can infer a clash of cultures occurring between the Western liberal political-cultural worldviews of Latvians, with those of the Russian/Soviet political-cultural worldviews. As Strods points out, "irreconcilable differences in the world outlook were at the heart of this opposition...[because] the communist regime forced the Latvian people to deny their origin and [cultural] values."²⁴⁰ Often the protests against the destructive policies of forced Sovietization and heavy industrial development would also be contrasted by themes that simultaneously played on liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of Latvia's first period of independence as being free, democratic, economically liberal and prosperous.

Outside Latvia, the Latvian émigré communities in Western Europe and North America, which refused to be subject to Soviet rule, continued resistance by promoting the cause of Latvian independence, and by conducting repeated information campaigns informing governments and populaces of Western states about the illegality of Soviet rule and the plight of the Latvians at home. Overall, Latvian émigrés' political-cultural

²³⁹ For acknowledgement of significantly higher rates of resistance in Latvia than in Belarus and other Soviet republics, see for example, Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 55; Taagepera. (1973). "Dissimilarities between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.," p. 81.

²⁴⁰ Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 78. For consensus on Soviet system being seen as culturally alien, and descriptions that infer clashing cultural worldviews being at the heart of resistance, see King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 182; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 23; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 10; Prazauskas. (1994). "The Influence of Ethnicity.," p. 155; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 12; Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 174.

worldviews can be described as containing “very strong anti-Communist feelings.”²⁴¹ Latvian émigrés would help to preserve historical memories of Latvia’s first period of independence, and pass on liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews to younger generations within the émigré communities. Latvian émigrés would also be important in helping to continue to keep Western cultural-linkages and contacts with those in Latvia itself, as many Latvians had some family or friends that had fled to the West.²⁴²

Overall, Latvian émigrés’ in the North America and other Western countries played an important role in countering Soviet propaganda about the conditions in the Baltic countries, by showing that Soviet rule was viewed as culturally alien and intensely disliked by most Latvians. Indeed, Latvian scholar/diplomats in the Latvian Legation in Washington, D.C., starting with Alfreds Bilmanis, would play an important role in publishing material, and presenting a political-cultural image that American policy-makers and public would find most appealing. Specifically, the image of Latvia being “a bastion of democratic and Christian values with unwavering commitment to private property and capitalism,” which now suffered under Soviet oppression were played-up. Often such images, as events after 1991 illustrate, were not that far from reality.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Celle, Ojārs. (2008). “The Latvian Exile Community and US-Latvia Relations.” Ch. 4. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 62. On strong anti-Communist views of the émigré communities, see Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 276-284, 289-298; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 280-293; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 54. Also, émigrés in the U.S. tended to vote overwhelmingly for Republicans. Kalniņš. (2008). “Latvians and Americans.” p. 138.

²⁴² See Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 134. Similar observations were also mentioned by a Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). In regards to disseminating information about the *Letter of Seventeen Communists*, which will be discussed below, émigrés played an important role in helping to smuggle this important piece of anti-Soviet dissidence out of Latvia to be published and broadcast in anti-Soviet media sources in the West. Riekstiņš. (2009). “The Struggle by Latvian National Communists.” p. 207-209. See also, Taagepera. (1973). “Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.” p. 76; Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.” p. 92; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 179, 241; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p.163; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 140-141.

²⁴³ For those in agreement and attesting to the validity of Latvian émigré sources such as Bilmanis and others in the West, Dunn observed that “we can conclude from Vardys evidence and that of émigré sources...that the Soviet regime was...regarded with hostility by a substantial section of the population, if not the majority.” Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 26. For similar consensus on validity, see Henderson, Loy W. (1968). “Preface.” In *Res Baltica*, ed. Adolf Sprudz and Armins Ruis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 8-9; Raudseps, Pauls. (2008). “The Long Vigil: US-Latvian Relations, 1940-1991.” Ch. 2. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 34. However, what was often omitted and played down were references to the period of authoritarian rule under Ulmanis, and events during the Holocaust. See Purs, Aldis. (2008). “‘Weak and Half-Starved Peoples’ meet ‘Vodka, Champagne, Gypsies and Drozki’: Relations between the Republic of Latvia and the USA from 1918 to 1940.” Ch. 1. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia.,

Certainly, Latvian émigré efforts in this regard would have played a key role in helping to successfully lobby Western governments to preserve the policies of non-recognition of the Soviet takeover of Latvia and the other Baltic states.

Additionally, Latvian émigrés also importantly espoused a liberal vision in terms of future policy goals for Latvia, in the event that it ever regained its independence. To illustrate, one of Latvia's former Prime Ministers living in the West, Adolfs Blodnieks wrote in 1960 that in a newly liberated Latvia, "freedom of the individual will be respected, the rights of private property, freedom of the press and speech...will be recognized," and also that "*kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* [collective and state farms] created by the Communist regime shall be disbanded and all the land must be distributed among the peasants."²⁴⁴ As documents reveal Soviet authorities took Latvian émigré groups in the West seriously, and viewed the contest in countering the information campaign launched by émigré groups as an "ideological war."²⁴⁵ Such evidence allows one to infer that not only was there a clash of cultural worldviews occurring, but also that Soviet officials were implicitly admitting that Soviet values were not rooted or strong in the political-cultural worldviews of Latvians, since they felt it necessary to aggressively

p. 31; Auers, Daunis. (2008). "Salmon, Rissoles and Smoked Eel: The Latvian Legation in the Cold War." Ch. 3. In *Latvia and the USA*, ed. Daunis Auers. Riga: University of Latvia., p. 53-59.

²⁴⁴ Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 289-290. Indeed, such policies, including the break-up of collective farms and re-distribution of property to farmers was carried out in the post-1991 period.

²⁴⁵ See documents no. 110, "Secret decision of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia, entitled 'About the anti-social and nationalistic events in Riga on August 23' [August 24, 1987]," no. 37, "Secret report of the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, L. Avdlukevics, to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party about politically harmful tendencies among young persons [March 24, 1978]," no. 54, "Excerpts from the top secret report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, A. Pelše, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the necessity of strengthening the struggle against anti-Soviet activities and sentiment." [August 1961]," no. 56, "Report of L. Veselov, Head of the Propaganda and Agitation Section of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee, about organizing propaganda against the Western countries [1959]," (which even mentions the Canadian Communist Party as being used by Moscow to try to discredit émigrés in Canada), no. 59, "Top secret decision by the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, from a special file concerning the improvement of counter-propaganda efforts aimed at Latvian émigrés [May 12, 1959; Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party Krūmiņš]," no. 77, "Top secret decision of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, from the special folder entitled 'Improving counter-propaganda initiatives among Latvian émigrés' [December 2, 1958]," no. 79, "Top secret report of L. Avdjukevics, the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party about the activities of Latvian émigré centers [May 5, 1980]," and no. 101, "Report of B. Pugo, Deputy Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, about the spread of western music in youth discotheques and the necessity of controlling the contents of programs [October 24, 1980]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 347, 216-219; 255-258, 262-266, 272-274, 303-305, 307-309, 336-337.

counter information sources emanating from Latvian émigré communities in the West. As will be discussed below, the cultural contacts between Latvian émigrés in the West and Latvians in Latvia were also crucial in the spread of ideas and important in aiding independence movements in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

Inside Latvia, significant examples of non-violent resistance continued to be found in rural areas even after Latvian farmers had had their traditions of private farming destroyed and were forced by Soviet authorities to work on to state-run collective farms. However, even while forced to work on collective farms, many people continued to live independently for a long time because the historic individual farmstead houses remained for many years as the only means of housing for rural families. On these individual farmsteads, Latvian farmers were also allowed to maintain a small garden plot for their own use. In clear acts of non-violent resistance, one could observe individualist habits persisting where farmers put less effort into their duties on the collective farms, and instead put increasing effort into their small individual plots. Often, the combined efforts of these individual farmers on their individual plots, regularly out-produced the collectivized sectors which had consistent productivity problems. One should also note that private work was given no special privileges or time saving equipment which were lavished on collective farms, so the work by individuals on their small private plots must have been significant.²⁴⁶

Overall, liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and habits can be inferred as being key in motivating Latvian farmers' slack work on collective farms, because low productivity can be linked to a "symptom of low morale and

²⁴⁶ On slack effort in collective duties and diligence in working individual plots, as well as low productivity problems found on collective farms, see King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 111-114; Ruis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1701-1702; Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 167, 219-223, 269; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 373; Hanchett. (1968). "The Communists and the Latvian Countryside.," p. 109; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 30; Kung. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 147-148; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 106-107, 231; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 164; Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 179; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 391-392. There was also a high incidence of reported arson fires destroying collective farm buildings. See document no. 54, "Excerpts from the top secret report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, A. Pelše, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the necessity of strengthening the struggle against anti-Soviet activities and sentiment." [August 1961], in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 255-259.

dissatisfaction”²⁴⁷ with the collective system, which was viewed as culturally alien to most Latvians. Moreover, higher productivity, individual hard work and diligence on small private garden plots can be viewed as an important form of resistance in expressing liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews against Soviet collectivism. This is because the “garden plot” is an important cultural “symbol of private property.”²⁴⁸ Additionally, it is important to note that many of these farmers that diligently tended to their own individual plots also remained entrepreneurial in their habits by selling their individually produced produce at local markets, and even developing other entrepreneurial activities when the opportunity presented itself.²⁴⁹

The continuance of such liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and habits of behavior did not escape the attention of Soviet authorities either, which was seen often in complaints about such anti-Soviet behavior. Indeed, Soviet policies of forced collectivization were failing to make a ‘new Soviet-man’ out of Latvians. To illustrate, it has been noted that the Twelfth Congress of the LCP, in 1952, passed the resolution calling for the “increasing struggle against capitalistic tendencies and bourgeois nationalism which is still alive.”²⁵⁰ Overall, productivity suffered as a result of the simple fact that Latvians political-cultural worldviews did not jive with the Soviet collectivistic cultural way of life and mode of political-economic organization.

Latvia’s liberal-individualist political-cultural spirit was able to survive through the long dark period of the second Soviet occupation, because Soviet forces were never able to break the key cultural institution of the close-knit Latvian family. Similar to

²⁴⁷ King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 77, 74. (p. 111-114). Similarly, Berzins’ noted that this passive resistance “is mostly the natural result of dissatisfaction and hatred against the occupation power.” Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 268-269, 270.

²⁴⁸ King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 119.

²⁴⁹ High levels of resistance and persistence of individual entrepreneurial habits and activity, even though illegal, persisting during Soviet times, was mentioned by several Latvian elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). For evidence where individual entrepreneurialism can also be inferred, see Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 266; Kung. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 146; Dombrovsky, V. and F. Welter (2006), “The role of personal and family background in making entrepreneurs in Post-Socialist Environment.” *Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies (BICEPS) Occasional Papers.* Riga: BICEPS; Vyacheslav Dombrovsky, Mark Chandler, Kārlis Krēsliņš. (2005). *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 2005 Latvia Report.* Riga: BICEPS.

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Labsvirs. (1959). *A Case Study in the Sovietization of the Baltic.*, p. 112-113. For further Soviet acknowledgment and lamentations about the continuance of individualistic worldviews and lifestyles that were inhibiting the full potential of collectivized agriculture, see Rūsis. (1959b). “Latvia.” p. 1694, 1698; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 30; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 164.

previous periods of Latvian history, the family would remain a key actor of political-cultural socialization spreading liberal-individualist worldviews and historical memories amongst both rural and urban Latvians. In doing so, the Latvian family was a big thorn in the side of Soviet authorities and their attempts to Russify and Sovietize the political-cultural worldviews and habits of future generations of Latvians that were born under Soviet rule, or were too young to remember Latvia's first period of independence. Here, Latvia's Western Christian cultural heritage played a significant role in influencing the high persistence of anti-Soviet worldviews shared amongst Latvian families. As Von Rauch observed during the 1970s, "[Latvian] peoples are aware of this close affinity, which they are determined to preserve at all costs."²⁵¹

Especially important was the strong bravado shown by Latvian mothers, grandparents, and particularly grandmothers who would resist Sovietization efforts by passing on historical memories of the freedom and prosperity enjoyed during Latvia's first period of independence. Indeed, Latvian grandmothers played a key role in resisting Sovietization efforts, as they were often left with the job of providing child-care, as both parents were often away during the work day. While religion was suppressed by Soviet authorities, many older generations remained ambivalent and defiantly continued to worship. Often Latvian grandmothers would take their grandchildren to church for worship. As Vardys pointed out, "the school and the Communist organizations f[ound] a real ideological competition in the grandmother who seem[ed] to have become a political-cultural institution in the Baltic family structure."²⁵² Certainly, such acts were important in helping to promote an alternative worldview and history to that portrayed by Soviet propaganda, and also crucial for ensuring that liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and habits were passed on to younger generations of Latvians. As one Latvian elite government official mentioned, "what was important, is that there has been direct contact between generations, which have lived in free, democratic Baltic

²⁵¹ Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 239-240.

²⁵² Vardys. (1968). "Soviet Nationality Policy as Instrument of Political Socialization." p. 120-121. For consensus on importance of Latvian grandmothers and mothers in helping to preserve political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, see also Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 237-238; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 199.

States, and who remembered that system, which could be transferred as direct memories, stories and so on to children or grandchildren.”²⁵³

The narratives of the alternative Latvian histories passed down through Latvian families directly countered Soviet propaganda, and built on the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories that Latvians held of Latvia during the first period of independence, as well as the memories of Latvia having its independence extinguished by Soviet/Russian aggression and having Communism forcefully imposed without their consent. This ideal of freedom was passed down in the historical memories that were conveyed in Latvian families from generation to generation in the form of idyllic stories of the first period of independence as being a time of individual freedoms, private property, democracy, entrepreneurialism and economic prosperity. As one Latvian elite pointed out “Latvia had this collective memory of the first independent stage, where people could do their business and could succeed, and then all was just basically shut down by the USSR.”²⁵⁴ As a result, this socialization of political-cultural worldviews and spreading of historical memories between generations in Latvian families helped foster in

²⁵³ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). Several other elites also mentioned the key importance of the family in being a major force in anti-Soviet socialization, and in passing on liberal-individualist worldviews and historical memories to younger generations. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). For evidence inferring the importance of families in helping to preserve political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 159; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.* p. 10; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). “Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration.” p. 138; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 26, 29.

²⁵⁴ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). To illustrate further, it was mentioned by Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia that “there were feelings [historical memories] of resentment over the Soviet Union marching in...and destroying all that the Latvians had built up. Latvians had been building their country and making it quite prosperous in a very short period...[and] the Baltic countries had democracies during the interwar period. This influence left very big traces in the population, and in spite of the repressions they [the Soviets] did not manage to wipe out these convictions, these democratic convictions, which people had real experience, had lived through, or their parents or grandparents had lived through. Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007). Sometimes Latvian teachers would resist, and be complicit in helping families spread these alternative anti-Soviet historical memories. To illustrate, one Soviet-era Latvian teacher was quoted as saying that “I can always tell my pupils that the history course is too extensive...[and] have no time to deal with everything in class. You can read about the 1939-40 events for yourselves and ask your parents to help you check that you’ve understood it all.” Quoted in Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 51.

large parts of Latvian society “a mental resistance to the Soviet regime.”²⁵⁵ This importance of Latvian families in promoting the spread of anti-Soviet political-cultural worldviews and historical memories in younger generations was also documented in Soviet reports, where Soviet officials voiced their complaints about this phenomenon. To illustrate, A. Pelše, former Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, complained in one report that the older generations...

‘encourage anti-Soviet/Russian attitudes and have an unhealthy influence on a portion of Latvian youth. They use as a pretext their own and their families’ anniversaries and other family celebrations, organize meetings at home, reminisce about their earlier privileged position, and long for this “lost paradise,” all the time deriding and belittling all that is Soviet and Communist, thus distorting our reality. All of this goes on with young people in attendance and, not infrequently, with their active participation, which keeps these beliefs alive and spreads them further.’²⁵⁶

Overall, Soviet authorities largely failed in trying to socialize Latvians to become “new Soviet” citizens. Thus, even with all the severe repressions, Latvians were never ideologically subdued by the Soviets, and continued to hold on to many of their political-cultural worldviews that sustained Latvians strong alienation and mental resistance for all things Soviet. Moreover, the historical memories of such traumatic events as having Latvia’s independence extinguished and having individual freedoms and private property rights trampled on, would solidify into highly anti-Soviet historical memories informing Latvian political-cultural worldviews. To illustrate, Shtromas points out that the “profound alienation of most individual [Latvians] from the official society in which they had to live...as time went by, only deepened [and]...acquired an absolute and universal dimension,” so that there was a “total rejection of [Soviet Communism] within the moral and political consciousness of the Baltic [Latvian] peoples.”²⁵⁷ Similarly, King observed,

²⁵⁵ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

²⁵⁶ Quoted in document no. 54, “Excerpts from the top secret report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, A. Pelše, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the necessity of strengthening the struggle against anti-Soviet activities and sentiment.” [August 1961],” (p. 255-256) in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 255-259.

²⁵⁷ Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics,” p. 98. Additionally, Shtromas points out that even when Latvians might have been seemingly complying with the Soviets, “the enforced outward compliance [was] complemented by an equally total inward dissent” toward Soviet rule (p. 101). For similar consensus on the failure of Soviet authorities to socialize Latvians and evidence inferring the preservation of Latvians liberal political-cultural worldviews, see Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the*

there was a noticeable “contempt for collective or state property.”²⁵⁸ Even Soviet authorities admitted that Latvians had different worldviews and were not readily becoming socialized into ‘new Soviet’ citizens.²⁵⁹

Additionally, while maintaining a strong alienation for all things Soviet, Strods also points out that simultaneously amongst Latvians, there was a “worship of Western life-style, consumer goods, music and ideas and facts disseminated by radio broadcasts.”²⁶⁰ This preferred cultural orientation towards the West and the rejection of the collectivist values of Soviet Communism were not necessarily new as Latvian political-cultural was historically rooted in Western liberal-individualist traditions. Certainly, such political-cultural worldviews and historical memories would play a vital role in informing future policy preferences of Latvian elites and voting public when Latvia regained its independence in 1991.

It can be argued that such socialization via the political-cultural resistance shown by close-knit Latvian families and particularly by Latvian mothers and grandmothers was a key factor influencing the many examples of resistance to Soviet rule from Latvian youth, most of which largely remained a non-violent type, although some verged on violent. Non-violent acts were prominent by youth, and included openly questioning the Soviet ‘official’ versions of history in classrooms, not joining Communist youth clubs, refusing to speak Russian, and mass acts of open protest such as booing Russian and Soviet sports teams at sporting events in Latvia. Sometimes, youthful acts of resistance

Baltic., p. 82; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 309. Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 52-53; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 233, 239; White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 153; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia.” p. 224-226; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 325; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 76-79, 163-164.

²⁵⁸ King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 77.

²⁵⁹ See document no. 52, “Top secret decision of the 7th [closed] Plenary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, entitled ‘Concerning serious shortcomings and mistakes in work with cadres and in the practice of nationality policy in the Republic’ [July 8, 1959],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 247-253.

²⁶⁰ Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia.” p. 224. While Latvians largely rejected the Soviet way of life, it should be pointed out that some negative cultural residues did get passed along to Latvians, which Strods argues was “based on immigrant Russian social culture and the naïve trust that everyone’s personal problems would be solved up there, ‘in the...government.” (p. 224-225). Such observations about such negative cultural residues were also mentioned by Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

would turn violent, seen with fights and brawls between ethnic-Latvian and Russian/Slavic youths.²⁶¹

Many other acts of cultural resistance also occurred from Latvians young and old. For example, numerous acts of resistance included placing the Latvian flag at key cultural locations, laying flowers on national graves, the freedom monument and other key historic sites on key cultural, religious and national dates. Many Latvians also signed petitions and wrote letters. Additionally, cultural resistance took the form of desecrating Soviet symbols, as well as many examples of anti-Soviet graffiti, literature and artistic endeavors. Overall, such acts of resistance whether organized or spontaneous “revealed that the people at large had not forgotten their lost independence or their hatred of Soviet rule.”²⁶² Furthermore, Latvia’s annual singing festivals were also used by Latvians as a place of resistance. This was seen with low attendance when Soviet authorities overly tried to Sovietize many of the themes at these festivals. Latter, when Soviet authorities

²⁶¹ On consistent antagonism of Latvian youth towards the Soviet regime, failure to socialize younger generations, and examples of outburst of youth resistance, see Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 241-242, 263-266; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 23, 26, 52; Mažeika, Povilas A. (1973). “Russian Objectives in the Baltic Countries.” in *Problems of Mininations*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., R. Taagepera and M. Valgemäe. San Jose: AABS., p. 123; Dunn. (1966). *Cultural Processes in the Baltic.*, p. 82; Karklins. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR.*, p. 107; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 209, 245, 263, 303; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics.” p. 104; Šilde. (2003). “Passive Resistance.” p. 176; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p.104-105. It is evident also that Soviet authorities took the high amounts of youth anti-Soviet activity seriously. See documents no. 36, “Secret report of the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, L. Avdjukevičs, to the Central Committee of the LCP, about the discovery of a youthful underground group in Riga.” [November 10, 1977], no. 37, “Secret report of the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, L. Avdlukevics, to the Central Committee of the LCP about politically harmful tendencies among young persons [March 24, 1978],” and no. 95, “Secret report of the Chief of the School Department of the Central Committee of the LCP, A. Andriksons, about anti-Soviet activity among school youth and about the shortcomings in the learning process [April 5, 1954],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 215-219, 329-330. See also Furtado, Charles F., Jr., and Andrea Chandler, eds. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics: Documents on the National Question.* Boulder: Westview., p. 584, 590.

²⁶² Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 103. See also, Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 24, 49-50; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 225-227; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 251-253, 260-265; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics.” p. 104-105; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 164, 169; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia.” p. 292-293; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 115-118, 152, 107-162; Smith, Graham. (1994b). “The Resurgence of Nationalism.” Ch. 5. In *The Baltic States*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin’s Press., p. 121-122. See also documents no. 35, “Excerpts from the minutes of the Limbaži Region Party meeting, featuring a speech on anti-Soviet activity by Rullis, the Limbaži region authorized agent of the Committee of State Security of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers [July 18, 1959],” no. 38, “Excerpts from the criminal accusation No. 26 against Gunnars Astra for anti-Soviet activities” [November 11, 1983; E. Bērziņš, S. Bravackis, B. Pugo], and no. 54, “Excerpts from the top secret report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP, A. Pelše, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the necessity of strengthening the struggle against anti-Soviet activities and sentiment.” [August 1961],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 210-214, 220-225, 255-259.

allowed for some small amounts of artistic freedom, Latvian organizers would often include songs and themes that implicitly took on increasing anti-Soviet undertones. Additionally, acts of protests at the singing festivals could be seen in the lack of applause for Red Army Choirs and pro-Soviet songs.²⁶³

For those ethnic-Latvians that worked in Soviet industry, resistance was seen on the factory floor in the form of slack work, works stoppages, ruining machine tools, damaging machines, producing spoiled goods, and strikes which all took a negative toll on productivity. Another example included workers skipping the work day on traditional holidays, such as on Midsummer's (St. John's) Day.²⁶⁴ Additional acts of non-violent resistance by Latvians could be seen at the ballot box. While votes were not free and unfair in the LSSR, Latvians nevertheless voiced their protest in the form of non-voting, spoiling ballots, purposely coming in drunk to vote, slipping in a negative caricature in the ballot box, and leaving anti-Soviet leaflets around the voting stations. Here, one can infer political-culture worldviews at play due to the fact that Latvian non-voting and negative voting was not only higher than in other parts of the Soviet Union, but also since these patterns of resistance were also significantly higher in rural areas than in urban areas of Latvia.²⁶⁵ This divide is important to note because it illustrates that there was political-cultural divide between rural and urban areas, because rural Latvia's population was overwhelmingly ethnic-Latvian, whereas in urban areas ethnic-Russian/Slavic people formed a majority of the population.

Throughout Soviet rule, the Latvian language was held in low regard by Soviet authorities, as Russian became the working language of all administrative and everyday

²⁶³ Here one can infer that such acts were symbolic of the broader clash of cultural worldviews and ways of life that was occurring as "a number of Baltic folksongs [were] about the simple peasant who defies the foreign landowner," and "express[es] dissatisfaction with [cultural] Russification." Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 220-222. See also, Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 547; Vardys. (1968). "Soviet Nationality Policy," p. 122; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 177-179; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 111; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 43; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 407; Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 91.

²⁶⁴ See Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 271-274; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 233-237; Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance.," p.119. See also document no. 53, "Informational report of L. Himelreihs, the Secretary of the Riga Municipal Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, about the situation in the city on the day of the national festival (St. John's day) [June 24, 1961]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 254.

²⁶⁵ Maggs, Peter B. (1968). "Negative Votes in Soviet Elections." In *Res Baltica*, ed. A. Sprudz and A. Ruis. Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden., p. 148-149. See also Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 103.

political-economic activity in Latvia. This was especially noticeable as Latvians became a minority in Riga, going from 63% in 1940 to 36.5% by 1989 (see Figure A.8 in Appendix), as well as close to minority status within their own country, making up only 52% overall by 1989 (see Figure A.6 in Appendix). The Russian language also became privileged in Latvian education, and Latvian children were forced to learn Russian. During the era of the second Soviet occupation, large numbers of Latvians would resist this form of Soviet-Russian cultural domination by refusing to speak Russian and pretending at times to only know Latvian when being addressed in Russian.²⁶⁶

Religion was also persecuted severely throughout the period of Soviet rule, and probably suffered the most of all Latvian cultural institutions, which can be seen with steady decline of church attendance, and decline of individual Lutheran and Roman Catholic congregations. While being persecuted, however, many acts of religious resistance to Soviet rule still occurred throughout this period. For example, such religious resistance occurred often at the individual level, as many still continued to worship either openly, as noted with the case of Latvian seniors and grandparents, or in secret, and also utilize the services of the church for key religious milestones, such as baptisms confirmations, weddings and funerals. Other acts of resistance included laying flowers on graves during the Lutheran all-souls day, and other important religious dates. Many Latvian parents and grandparents also continued to teach their children religious habits, traditions and ethics.²⁶⁷ Additionally, many brave Lutheran and Roman Catholic clergy, as well as lay parishioners, continued to resist by supporting the Latvian faithful, by

²⁶⁶ Karklins also points out that “typically the native will say something to the effect that [‘in Latvia you should speak Latvian.’]” Karklins. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR.*, p. 57. See also, Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 264-266; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 177, 251.

²⁶⁷ For example, Strods’ points out that “one of the forms of Church resistance was the institution of underground Sunday schools (usually in family circle).” Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia,” p. 97, 92. For other examples of religious resistance and the continued strength of Lutheran values in spite of Soviet repressions, see Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 241-247; Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 622; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 25, 28-29; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 111, 210-212; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 263; Dreifelds. (2003). “Religion in Latvia,” p. 251; Šilde. (2003). “Passive Resistance in Latvia,” p. 174-178; Strods. (2005a). “Sovietization of Latvia,” p. 224; Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia,” p. 294. The importance of Lutheran values was also mentioned by Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia [1999-2007]. Interview, on behalf of the *Dalhousie News*. Halifax, Nova Scotia (October 20, 2007).

spreading anti-Soviet messages in sermons, or by actively taking part in clandestinely helping to produce and distribute religious literature.²⁶⁸

Overall, Soviet authorities were never able to break the religious convictions of Latvians, and religion would be one important factor of resistance against the Soviet regime. As Strods points out, even with the intense repression of religion in Latvia, the “Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist parishes were an important factor in safeguarding the Latvian mentality, culture and language as well as encouraging their development.”²⁶⁹ The Latvian churches also reinforced values that directly contradicted the class-based and collectivist ideologies promoted by Soviet authorities.²⁷⁰ This important role of Latvian churches in promoting and reinforcing anti-Soviet attitudes and encouraging resistance was also acknowledged by Soviet authorities. To illustrate, A. Peļše, former Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP was quoted as stating that ““a large role in the creation of hostile attitudes is played by persons association with the church.”²⁷¹ Thus, in terms of the Soviet policies promoting the official state-sponsored religion of secular atheism, and the eradication of religious belief, these policies largely failed and religious faith endured in Latvia. As will be mentioned below, young Lutheran clergy led by Modris Plate, and the resistance organization Rebirth and Renewal would play a key influential part in the

²⁶⁸ See for example, Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.,” p. 96, 98; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 99-100; Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.,” p. 92.

²⁶⁹ Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia.,” p. 95. Strods’ also argues that “church resistance... effectively had a significant political impact, since the Church was able to limit acceptance of communist ideas” (p. 101). Vardys also argued that “the churches are ‘deeply rooted in national tradition and provide rallying points for the maintenance and furthering of these traditions.’” Vardys, V. Stanley. (1990). “The Role of the Churches in the Maintenance of Regional and National Identity in the Baltic Republics.” In *Regional Identity Under Soviet Rule: The Case of the Baltic States*, ed. Dietrich Andre Loefer et al. Hackettstown: Institute for the Study of Law, Politics and Society of Socialist States, University of Kiel., p. 151-152. For similar consensus, see Goeckel. (1995). “The Baltic Churches.,” p. 207; Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States.*, p. 135-136; Blodnieks. (1960). *The Undefeated Nation.*, p. 300-301; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 29; Šilde. (2003). “Passive Resistance in Latvia.,” p. 178. On failure of Soviet anti-religious policies throughout the USSR, see Froese, Paul. (2008). *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁷⁰ This is because “the churches proclaimed to importance of love in human relations, independent of their social origins, and in this way contradicted communist dogma about class struggle and...refused to condemn the capitalist system in Western democracies.” Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.,” p. 97.

²⁷¹ See documents no. 37, “Secret report of the Chair of the State Security Committee of the Latvian SSR, L. Avdlukevics, to the Central Committee of the LCP about politically harmful tendencies among young persons [March 24, 1978],” and no. 54, “Excerpts from the top secret report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP, A. Peļše, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about the necessity of strengthening the struggle against anti-Soviet activities and sentiment.” [August 1961],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 216-219, 255-259.

mass Latvian peoples' movements fighting against Soviet rule that occurred in Latvia from the mid-1980s to the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Another prominent example of resistance to Soviet rule was seen with Latvians simply refusing to join the Latvian Communist Party, which had some of the lowest numbers of titular ethnic-nationals of all the local Communist parties in the various republics that made up the Soviet Union. Overall, the LCP was dominated throughout this period by ethnic-Russians transplanted by Moscow. In terms of actual proportions, ethnic-Latvians averaged only in the range of 35% to 39% of the members of the LCP from 1959 onwards (see Figure A.9 in Appendix). When it came to key decision-making and administrative positions within the LCP, the percentage of ethnic-Latvians was even lower, with only 28% of the administration, and only 30% making up the Central Committee of the of LSSR.²⁷² Additionally, one can also view the number of ethnic-Latvians given as being inflated as this number also included Russified Latvians that had lived many years of their lives in Russia, most of whom could also barely speak the Latvian language, and had little in common with the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, habits and historical memories shared by most Latvians.

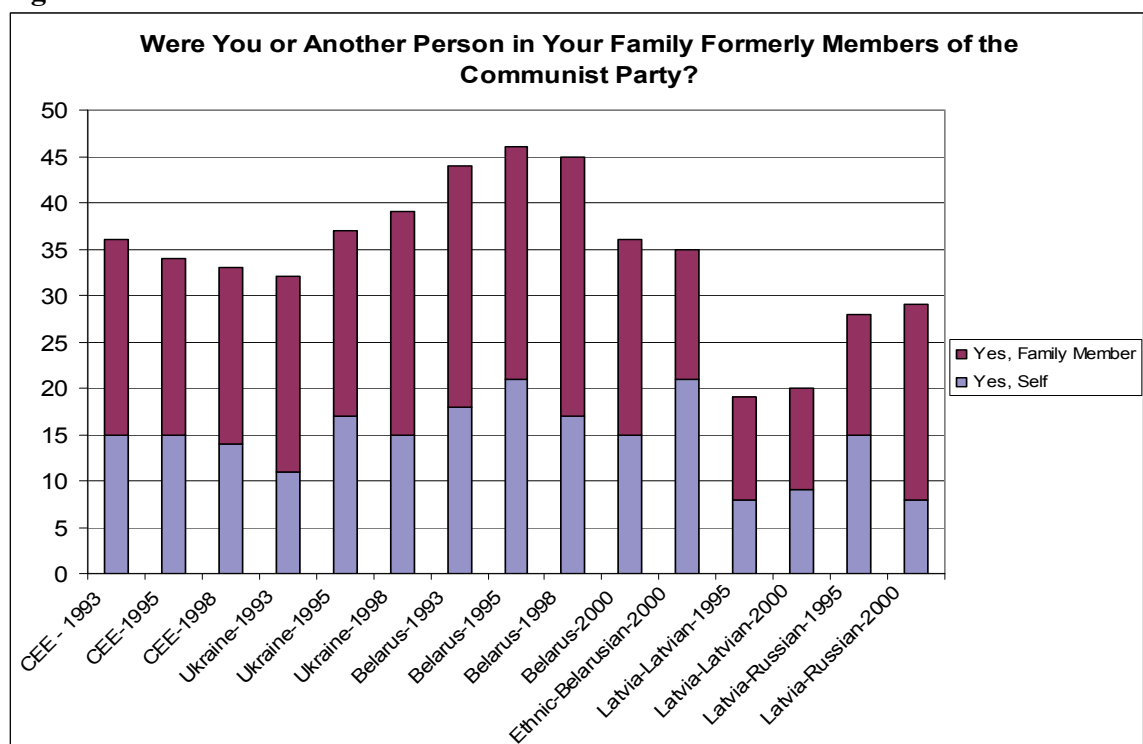
Thus, ethnic-Russians had in large numbers played a dominant and disproportionate role in administering the political-economic command structure in the LSSR. As a result, Latvians were a minority when it came to the political-economic administration and decision-making. Moreover, official party business and administrative activities were largely conducted in Russian, and ethnic-Russian LCP members largely exhibited a colonial attitude towards ethnic-Latvians and viewed any suggestions at the need to learn Latvian with contempt.²⁷³ Certainly, the fact that the Soviet administrative

²⁷² Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 48-49; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 206. Per-capita membership in the Communist party was amongst the lowest in the USSR for titular-ethnic groups, including 3.5% of Latvians compared to 4.3% Soviet average. Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 272-273.

²⁷³ On Russian domination of LCP apparatus and domination of Russian as working language, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 161-163; Riekstiņš. (2009). "The Struggle by Latvian National Communists.," p. 181-183, 215; Vardys. (1968). "Soviet Nationality Policy.," p. 127; Taagepera. (1973). "Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.," p. 79-80; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 150-156; Riekstiņš. (2003). "The Dictatorship of the Russian Language.," p. 80-86; Strods. (2005a). "Sovietization of Latvia.," p. 222. See also documents no. 46, "Excerpts from a speech of Secretary of the Riga Municipal Committee of the LCP, E. Berklavs, at the Plenary of the LCP Central Committee of June 22-23, 1953 [June 23, 1953]," and no. 50, "Secret decision of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the LCP, entitled 'About shortcomings in the political work and in the direction of economic and cultural construction in the

apparatus was disproportionately non-Latvian and the fact that Russian was the primary language of Soviet official and working communication would have only reinforced Latvians views that the Soviet regime and its policies were culturally alien. Such a situation stands in contrast to Belarus where the titular ethnic group, Belarusians took an active role and formed a majority of the Communist party and administration in the BSSR. To illustrate, in polls conducted in the post-1991 period, asking Latvia residents of post-Communist countries whether they or their family members had been members of the Communist party, ethnic-Latvians polled substantially lower in yes responses than both ethnic-Russians living in Latvia, Belarusians, as well as lower than responses found in Ukraine and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (see Figure 4.1 below).

Figure 4.1



Source(s): 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 77). 1995: (Rose 1995: 60; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 88). 1998: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 67-68). 2000: (Rose 2000: 62; White & Rose 2001: 56).

A large reason for Latvians resistance to join the Latvian Communist Party resulted from the view that the Soviet system was culturally alien. As mentioned above, the majority of the LCP leadership and the administrative apparatus of the LSSR were

republic' [June 23, 1953, Kalnbērziņš]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 236, 241-245. See also *Letter of Seventeen Communists* [1971] Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 190.

dominated by ethnic-Russians and Russified Latvians that had lived previously for long periods in the Russia regions of the Soviet Union, and who could barely speak the Latvian language. Overall, one can also infer a clash in the political-cultural worldviews shared by the ethnic-Latvians and the majority of Russians and Russified Latvians in the LCP, as Moscow regularly appointed many Russian-Soviet outsiders to key positions in the LCP and administrative structure of the LSSR, since Soviet leaders simply tended not to trust Latvians.²⁷⁴ Indeed, there was a large political-cultural divide in worldviews between those cultural outsiders in the LCP and the majority of the Latvian populace. To illustrate, Berzins pointed out at the time, most members of the LCP “speak different languages, their customs differ, and so do their historical backgrounds, their religions, their whole outlook on life.”²⁷⁵ As a result, resistance to join the LCP stemmed from Latvians political-cultural worldviews that abhorred Soviet policy methods, which Latvians political-cultural worldviews viewed as culturally alien. In such a political-cultural environment, collaboration with the Soviets by joining the LCP would have been unthinkable and unheard of, and seen as traitorous by most ethnic-Latvians.²⁷⁶

What did not also help in lessening the majority of Latvians negative perceptions of the LCP as being a foreign and alien entity, was the poor treatment of the minority of ethnic-Latvian members within the LCP, which were purged from the party in 1959 because of their attempts to promote decentralized political-economic reform. To illustrate, resistance to Soviet industrialization’s attack on Latvia’s cultural way of life was seen in higher circles of political power, in the form of open and vocal dissent voiced

²⁷⁴ On Moscow’s lack of trust for ethnic-Latvian leaders and perception of political [ideological] unreliability of Latvians, see King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 162; Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth,” p. 78; Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 84.

²⁷⁵ Additionally, Dreifelds offers the observation that “the bearers [Soviets/Russians] of this new ideology were traditionally seen as ‘uncouth barbarians.’” Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 12; Berzins. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 297, 262-263. For consensus on LCP being seen as culturally alien, see Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 273; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 78; Von Rauch. (1974). *The Baltic States.*, p. 227, 232; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States,” p. 96; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 154; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 37; Riekstiņš. (2003). “The Dictatorship of the Russian Language,” p. 80-81; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 340-341.

²⁷⁶ To illustrate, Dreifelds observed that “many Latvians had a low regard for the Communist Party and viewed party members as traitors.” Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth,” p. 78. Karklins also pointed out that “Latvians who are in the government are called toadies.” Karklins. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR.*, p. 85. See also, Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 105; Taagepera. (1973). “Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics,” p. 81; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 83; Kolstø. (1999a). “Bipolar Societies?” p. 30; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 245-246.

from the minority of ethnic-Latvian members within the Communist party, most noticeably Eduards Berklavs, whom at great personal risk made open calls to halt further Soviet industrialization and stop the migration of Russian/Slavic settlers into Latvia during the late-1950s. Moreover, such dissident members of the LCP also made increasing liberal calls for reform in order to lessen political-economic control from Moscow, which they viewed as an attack on Latvia's cultural well-being, and instead advocated reverting to more decentralized control, with a focus on serving local cultural needs and economic strengths. In terms of political-cultural worldviews influencing Eduards Berklavs and other ethnic-Latvian dissident LCP members' calls for reforms, Bleiere et al point out that a "liberal spirit was fairly powerful among party functionaries."²⁷⁷ However, such reformist sentiments were directly crushed by Moscow and Soviet Premier Khrushchev in the large-scale purge of prominent ethnic-Latvian figures in the LCP in 1959, where close to 2,000 ethnic-Latvian LCP members were purged, including the prominent reform advocate Eduards Berklavs.²⁷⁸

However, such dissidence could not be silenced, as several of these members led by Eduards Berklavs, during August 1971, would send an open *Letter of Seventeen Communists* detailing how Soviet policies of heavy industrial development and the connected influx of Russian/Slavic settlers and Russification of all spheres of political-economic activity was directly attacking and threatening the health and well-being of Latvian culture. Once again, calls would be made for further policy reforms via decentralization from Moscow, the halt of massive Soviet industrialization, and for a stop to the migration of Russian/Slavic workers into Latvia.²⁷⁹ Prominent leaders of these

²⁷⁷ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 396.

²⁷⁸ On goals of ethnic-Latvian reformers such as Berklavs and details of 1959 purge of the LCP, see document no. 51, "Top secret decision of the 7th [closed] Plenary of the Central Committee of the LCP, entitled 'Concerning serious shortcomings and mistakes in work with cadres and in the practice of nationality policy in the Republic' [July 8, 1959]," signed by J. Kalnbērziņš, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 247-253. See also Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 276; King. (1965). *Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia.*, p. 188-193; Dreifelds, Juris. (1981). "Belorussia and Baltics." Ch. 10. In *Economics of Soviet Regions*, eds., I. S. Koropecj and Gertrude E. Schroeder. New York: Praeger., p. 361; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 157-158; Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 27, 43-44; Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 176-177; 183-190; Riekstiņš. (2009). "The Struggle by Latvian National Communists.," p. 175, 214, 225-226; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 163.

²⁷⁹ For a copy of the text explaining the goals of the *Letter of Seventeen Communists*, see Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 34-47; Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 180-193; Riekstiņš. (2009). "The Struggle by Latvian National Communists.," p. 198-212, 217-228. See also Bilinsky. (1973). "The Background of Contemporary Politics in the Baltic Republics.," p. 97-109.

dissidents within the LCP, such as Eduards Berklavs would later play important roles again during the 1980s, as a key figures in the Latvian independence movement.

Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Continued Fight for the Renewal of Independence

Similar themes advocating for liberal decentralization, and protests against the attack on the Latvian cultural way of life from Soviet industrialization policy would continue to be ever-present themes of Latvian dissidents and resistance movements through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.²⁸⁰ This was especially the case when more freedoms for political action and reform were opened following Soviet President Gorbachev's implementation of glasnost and perestroika, after which resistance protests playing on liberal themes exploded. However, Gorbachev's actions can hardly be cited as a primary factor for the explosion of dissident groups in Latvia. Certainly, glasnost and perestroika removed the climate of fear that had pervaded the psychology of Latvian society prior to such reforms, which in the past might have lead to less open dissidence and more seeming outward compliance. As previously mentioned, fear was the main factor leading most past forms of compliance, and Soviet ideas were not readily accepted by most ethnic-Latvians.²⁸¹ Moreover, anti-Soviet resistance had a long history in Latvia whose experience and ideological foundations many of the younger dissidents in the perestroika and glasnost era of the late-1980s built on.

Here it should also be noted that such resistance movements were not based simply on higher levels of nationalism in Latvia contributing as the primary force influencing such anti-Soviet behavior. While nationalism was certainly strong, such anti-Soviet behavior had more to do with the historically liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories that Latvian nationalist sentiments and national identity was derived from and immersed in. This can be inferred from the description of one observer, who noted that the articulation of national identity, and "the

²⁸⁰ On continuity of ideas and themes shared by various resistance groups in various decades, see Shtromas. (1994). "The Baltic States as Soviet Republics.," p. 105-106; Smith. (1994b). "The Resurgence of Nationalism.," p. 121. In terms of numbers, it was reported that from 1967-1971, 3,096 organized opposition groups were discovered, with members totaling 13,602, according to the KGB. Strods. (2009). "Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia.," p. 152.

²⁸¹ On removal of psychology of fear, see Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 84-85, 108; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 13.

creation of the nation, and its defence, was articulated above all in terms of culture.”²⁸² As previously illustrated, the historical antecedents of national identity originated in the historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories that preceded and informed the heightened nationalist sentiment exhibited by Latvians during this time.

Overall, Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders were largely caught off guard by the high levels of anti-Soviet worldviews and sentiments that were pervasive amongst the Latvian anti-Soviet dissident movements during the late-1980s, which did not share Gorbachev’s goals of simply wanting to reform the Soviet system.²⁸³ Indeed, there was a long existing rejection of Soviet rule existing in Latvia that was pent-up and brewing even under high levels of Soviet repression, where Latvians continued to yearn for their freedom and restoration of private property. To illustrate such political-cultural worldviews, Eglitis points out that “there was a potent sense that the Soviet order was not normal, that it was illegitimate, illegal, artificially imposed, and contrary to the national ‘way of life.’”²⁸⁴ As a result of such underlying sentiments, it only took a short time for many new dissident political groups to begin to suddenly emerge following the implementation of glasnost and perestroika. These included Helsinki ’86, the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK), Rebirth and Renewal, and the Latvian

²⁸² Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. xxxvi. While many focus primarily on national identity, many of these accounts also implicitly suggest that there was something definitely cultural preceding and informing national identity, and even hint at the prospects of historic cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, but in the end leave these largely unexamined as the primary source of explanation for Latvian anti-Soviet behavior from the mid-1980s to 1991. See Smith, who notes that such nationalism was “embedded in century-long national cultures.” Smith. (1994b). “The Resurgence of Nationalism.” p. 121; See also, Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth”; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 170.

²⁸³ Gorbachev merely wanted to reform the Soviet system to make it stronger, and took it for granted that non-Russian national groups, such as the Latvians, simply had grown to accept the Soviet system. After all, Gorbachev was a protégé of Andropov, and viewed reform of the Soviet system as necessary to make it stronger in the long run. This is illustrated by Blūzma who points out that for Gorbachev “perestroika in no way represented a departure from socialism, as some in the West perceived it, but meant more socialism.” Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening.” p. 257. For similar consensus, see Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 226-227; Trapans, Jan Arveds. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement.” Ch. 3. In *Toward Independence*, ed. Jan Arveds Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 38; Smith. (1994b). “The Resurgence of Nationalism.” p. 139; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 169-170; [Former Deputy U.S. Secretary of State] Strobe Talbott. (2008). “The Jūrmala Opening.” p. 133-134; [former Latvian Ambassador to the U.S.] Kalniņš. (2008). “Latvians and Americans.” p. 140.

²⁸⁴ Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 13. See also Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement.” p. 39.

Popular Front (LPF). Overall, Latvia was a leader amongst Soviet republics in terms of the growth of explicitly anti-Soviet dissident groups.²⁸⁵

In general, there was also a great deal of continuity in ideas, as there was much inspiration from past resistance movements to Soviet rule, which shared similar liberal worldviews and goals and were committed to Latvia regaining independence. To illustrate such political-cultural themes, Strods points out, there was a “hope to bring about conditions where state authorities would respect individual human rights, freedom of speech and religion, with access to a free press and a real right of assembly.”²⁸⁶ Moreover, a common theme influencing all areas of resistance from the 1980s onwards revolved around a protest against the perceived attack on Latvian culture seen first via the Soviets crushing of Latvian independence, the destruction of private farming via collectivization of agriculture, and then through the subsequent harmful policies of Soviet heavy industrial development. Often the protests against the destructive policies of forced Sovietization and heavy industrial development would be contrasted by themes that simultaneously played on liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of Latvia’s first period of independence as being free, democratic, economically liberal and prosperous.

Key in igniting the furor behind such resistance were protests against further industrial development projects, such as the building of a new hydro dam on the Daugava River, and the proposed construction of an underground metro in Riga. One concern was related to the environmental degradation to the land caused by such projects. Indeed, such green-environmental protests were influenced by political-cultural themes, as the countryside was often revered in Latvian political-culture and historical memories.²⁸⁷ Moreover, Latvians worldviews and historical memories fostered an intense love and respect for the land, and desire for the individual right to live independently on the land. Overall, the Soviet system simply inhibited such independent ways of life preferred by

²⁸⁵ On Latvia being a leader in anti-Soviet protests, see Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 304-309; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 221; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 55.

²⁸⁶ Strods. (2009). “Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 166; Shtromas. (1994). “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics.” p. 105-106; Smith. (1994b). “The Resurgence of Nationalism.” p. 121.

²⁸⁷ Latvian green movements and green parties were typically on the centre-right of the political spectrum. See Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 220; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 36.

Latvians, and were potentially destroying any future options of doing so, should these ever come to exist, due to the environmental degradation caused by Soviet industry.

One of the more predominant concerns voiced where one can see these environmental protests being spurred on by political-cultural themes was that these protests highlighted the perception of Latvians that Latvian culture was under siege by constant Russification since these projects would have resulted in more Russian/Slavic settlers being brought into work in Latvia. The fact that Latvians were already becoming close to minority status and subjected to increased Russification only served to heighten Latvian opposition to further Soviet industrialization projects that would have seen an influx of increased Russian/Slavic migration into Latvia. As Schwartz points out, “industrialization was resented not only for its own sake, but also as the engine of Russification.”²⁸⁸ As a result, Soviet industrialization was perceived as a direct threat to the vitality of Latvia’s cultural well-being.

These political-cultural themes influencing such protests are important for inferring an overall rejection of the Soviet political-economic system, since Latvian dissidents favoured a complete dismantling of the Soviet industrial complex. Moreover, not only was there increasingly a rejection “of socialism and state ownership,” but there was also “an attendant idealization of the effects of economic competition, free enterprise and the ‘western style’ of doing things.”²⁸⁹ Certainly, such political-cultural worldviews would play a vital role in informing future policy preferences of comprehensive reforms favoured by Latvian elites and the voting public when Latvia regained its independence in 1991. Moreover, one can infer that such viewpoints about Soviet industrialization being seen as a threat to Latvian culture were shared by large numbers of ethnic-Latvians due to the fact that such protests had originated at the grass-roots level and grown into mass movements. Here it is important to note that in a public opinion poll conducted in September 1990, 77% of ethnic-Latvians supported the goals of environmental movements, such as the Environmental Protection Club, while only a minority, 46% of

²⁸⁸ Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity*, p. 70. For consensus on protests being related to cultural concerns of increased migration of Russian/Slavic workers, see Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World*, p. 430-431; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation*, p. 42; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*, p. 52; Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia*, p. 186; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 242, 302-303.

²⁸⁹ Dreifelds. (2003). “Religion in Latvia,” p. 141. To illustrate liberalist and anti-statist political-cultural worldviews at play, many of the demands “insisted that bureaucracy must be vanquished in order to ensure that ecological problems might be solved.” Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 290.

ethnic-Russian/Slavic residents living in Latvia responded that they support the activities of such groups, thus inferring a clash of political-cultural worldviews at work.²⁹⁰

Other prominent dissident groups such as Helisinki-86, also demanded a halt to the migration of Russian/Slavic settlers migrating into Latvia. Helisinki-86 also demanded Latvian autonomy, increased individual freedoms, freedom of speech, private property, freedom of religion, making Latvian the sole official language, and a halt to cultural Russification.²⁹¹ Moreover, Helisinki-86 was openly anti-Soviet in their advocacy of increasing truth and transparency in the telling of Latvian history, and in promoting the message that Latvia was forcefully annexed by the USSR, against the will of the Latvian people. Such anti-Soviet behavior was openly visible in the increasing mass calendar demonstrations commemorating key dates in history where Soviet authorities had committed acts that were viewed as an attack on the Latvian cultural way of life. The first calendar demonstration was held by Helisinki-86 on June 14, 1987, where flowers were laid at the Freedom Monument in Riga in commemoration of the anniversary of the first Soviet mass deportations of Latvians in 1941. Similar calendar demonstrations would also be held on August 23, the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and on November 18, commemorating the anniversary of Latvian independence.

These calendar demonstrations and other protests had deep political-cultural significance for Latvians because these actions represented an overall rejection of the Soviet system. This is because “symbolic demands, like those related to environmental protection, or symbolic deeds, such as commemorating the Stalinist mass deportations of Balts, were important because they laid bare problems widely believed to be symptomatic of a larger problem, the Soviet regime itself.”²⁹² Overall, there was a clash of political-

²⁹⁰ Cited in Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 82. Also, it has been noted that 700 people sent letters, 30,000 signed petitions and 10,000 had openly protested in opposition to such new industrial projects. Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 52, 53. See also Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.” p. 81-82; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 169; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 432; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening.” p. 312-313. For documentary evidence, see Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 592, 594.

²⁹¹ On halting further migration and the other demands of Helisinki-86, see Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement.” p. 27; Muiznieks. (1997). “Latvia.” p. 384; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening.” p. 287-288. See also document no. 108, “Announcement of the founding in Latvia of the human rights group ‘HELSINKI- 86’ Liepāja, July 1986 [Grantiņš, Linards, Biteniēks, Raimonds, Bariss, Mārtiņš],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 345.

²⁹² Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 37. On significance of *calendar demonstrations*, see also Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.” p. 82-83. See document no. 109, “An appeal by Latvia’s

cultural historical memories occurring, as Helsinki-86 openly challenged Soviet ideological falsification of Latvian history, by promoting themes predominantly shared in the historical memories of most ethnic-ethnic Latvians. Indeed, one can infer a clash of cultures occurring, due to the fact that Soviet authorities viewed such groups as Helsinki-86 as a serious problem, and described the contest against them as an ‘ideological war.’²⁹³

In this ‘ideological war,’ Soviet authorities never stood a legitimate chance, as the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories promoted by Latvian dissidents were in sync with the predominant historical memories passed down through generations and shared by most Latvians. One can also infer that political-culture played an important role and that most ethnic-Latvians shared similar political-cultural worldviews and historical memories to Helsinki-86 and other groups, due to the fact that such groups had originated at the grass roots level, and also because of the increasing mass attendance of Latvians seen at each subsequent calendar demonstration, which were later continued by the Latvian Popular Front. To illustrate, it was estimated that 5,000 attended the first calendar demonstration on June 14, 1987, which grew to around 10,000 at both the following protests on August 23 and November 18, 1987. During the following year in 1988, such calendar demonstrations would grow to close to 100,000 on June 14, 60,000 on August 23 and 200,000 on November 18.²⁹⁴

The Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK), which was formed in 1988, also played on similar themes as those promoted by Latvian environmental

Human Rights Defense Group ‘HELSINKI- 86’ in connection with the anniversary of the persons deported on June 14, 1941 [May 1987; Grantiņš, Linards; Silaraups, Rolands; Biteniēks, Raimonds; Andersons, Guntis; Bariss, Mārtiņš],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 345.

²⁹³ For inferences to a clash of cultures from Soviet authorities describing such actions as an ‘ideological war,’ see document no. 110, “Secret decision of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia, entitled ‘About the anti-social and nationalistic events in Riga on August 23’ [August 24, 1987],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 347-348.

²⁹⁴ On grass-roots formation and increased mass attendance at the calendar demonstrations, see Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth,” p. 82-83; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 307-308, 311, 316; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 93, 110; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 221; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 169-170; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 312-313. See document no. 108, “Announcement of the founding in Latvia of the human rights group ‘HELSINKI- 86’ Liepāja, July 1986,” and no. 111, “Letter of the human rights defense group, ‘HELSINKI – 86’ to the governments of the signatories of the Concluding Act of the European Security and Cooperation Conference in Helsinki [August 24, 1987],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 345, 349-350. See also Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 594, 600, 608.

dissidents and Helesinki-86. Led by the prominent former-Communist dissident Eduards Berklaivs, and young up and coming leaders such as Einars Repše, the LNNK called for complete Latvian independence. Such beliefs favouring independence took on religious connotations, in that the LNNK was quoted as stating in their opening declaration that ““We believe that the Latvian nation’s demands for a sovereign state is *just and holy*.””²⁹⁵ Similar to other dissident groups, the LNNK also had strong grass-roots foundations. Moreover, the LNNK had high membership from rural areas and blue-collar ethnic-Latvians, as well as fewer intellectuals that had connections to the Soviet establishment. Overall, the LNNK could also be characterized as a mass popular movement in that its membership grew from 600 at its founding in July 1988, to 11,000 by November 1989.²⁹⁶

Indeed, one can infer that the LNNK had mass appeal amongst ethnic-Latvians from three separate polls conducted between 1990 to 1991, which illustrated that large numbers of ethnic-Latvians supported the activities of the LNNK, where 55% in September 1990, 56% in June 1991, and 33% in September 1991, answered yes that they support the LNNK. Additionally, one can also infer a clash of cultural worldviews from these polls, which was seen in the low support for the LNNK from ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents, where yes responses only numbered 10% in September 1990, 13% in June 1991, and 3% in September 1991 (see Figure A.10 in the Appendix). Since the LNNK was more strident in its nationalism than the more liberal groups like the LPF, it can be inferred that liberal-political cultural worldviews were strong motivators in behavior, as the LPF enjoyed more public support from ethnic-Latvians.

The LNNK were openly vocal in advocating for significant political-economic reforms. Such anti-Soviet demands promoted by the LNNK called for a halt to Soviet industrialization, stopping the migration of ethnic-Russian/Slavic workers, and for the de-Sovietization of political-economic relations. For the LNNK, the continued expansion of Soviet industrialization was considered to be ““worthless,”” and a threat to Latvian cultural well-being, due to the mass-migration of Russian/Slavic workers into Latvia and connected Russification, as well as the ecological destruction of the Latvian countryside.

²⁹⁵ Document no. 112, “Declaration of the Council of the National Independence Movement of Latvia concerning the Movement’s goals [July 10, 1988],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 351-352.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 353. For numbers and other descriptions of LNNK, see Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement,” p. 29; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 75.

Moreover, for the LNNK, there was the shared belief that “the Communists had destroyed or befouled everything in Latvian life.”²⁹⁷ De-Sovietization would be followed by liberal reforms advocated by the LNNK, which would promote the normalization of Latvian political-economic relations via the return to rural traditions, promotion of individual freedoms, privatization, establishing private property rights, restoration of individual family farms, the decollectivization of agriculture, and the marketization of economic commerce. The LNNK was also openly anti-Soviet in their advocacy of increasing truth and transparency in the telling of history and promoting the message that Latvia was forcefully taken-over by the USSR against the will of the Latvian people. Moreover, the LNNK made calls increased religious freedoms. Finally, the LNNK made calls for strict citizenship rules should Latvia become independent again. As LNNK vice-chairperson Mirdza Vitola declared at the time, “the main objective of our program is to create a Latvia in which the Latvian people will be masters on their own soil.”²⁹⁸

The fact that groups like the LNNK were making vocal calls for reform is important for inferring that worldviews favouring reform and de-Sovietization were readily present in Latvia prior to 1991. Moreover, while some might view the LNNK’s calls for stopping ethnic-Russian/Slavic migration to Latvia as simply influenced by strong nationalist sentiment, such calls cannot be separated from the Latvian political-cultural worldviews about the negativity of Soviet industrialization, since migration and industrialization were viewed as intricately related issues. No doubt, such views about Russian/Slavic migrants and the view that their presence resulted from forced Soviet migrations were important in shaping the LNNK’s views on favouring strict citizenship. In other words, the goal of halting migration for the LNNK stemmed directly from

²⁹⁷ Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement,” p. 39. Eduards Berklavs was quoted in Trapans (1991b) as stating that “there must be an end to a worthless, ecologically damaging expansion of industry” (p. 34). For LNNK’s negative views of Soviet industrializations, see also document no. 112, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 351-352.

²⁹⁸ Quoted in Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). “Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration,” p. 81. For documentary evidence on anti-Soviet sentiments and calls for reforms, see document no. 112, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 351-352; and document “Announcement from the Initiative Group of the Latvian National Independence Movement – July 1988,” in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 114-117, 121. For additional consensus on LNNK’s calls for liberal reform, see Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement,” p. 34; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 74-76; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 278, 288-289; Jundzis, Tālavs. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance in the Struggle to Achieve Full Independence (4 May 1990 – 21 August 1991).” Part V. In *Regaining Independence*, eds. V. Blūzma, T. Jundzis, J. Riekstiņš, G. Sharp, H. Strods. Riga: Latvia Academy of Sciences., p. 440.

worldviews that disliked Soviet industrial activity. Certainly, such views would play an important role in influencing government policy in the post independence period, as the LNNK would become an elected party to the Latvian Saeima.

Also of central importance in these dissident movements, was the religious protests led by young dissident Lutheran clergy who formed the group ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ under the leadership of Juris Rubenis and Modris Plate. Overall, ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ played a ‘catalytic role’ in contributing to the push for democratic freedoms, political-economic reforms and Latvian independence.²⁹⁹ In doing so, ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ would act as a key rallying point and influencer of the various national freedom movements. As Dreifelds points out, not only were “the independence minded Helsinki ‘86 group guided...by the reformist clergymen, [but] several of the luminaries of the ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ movement became prominent in the conception of the idea of a Latvian Popular Front in 1988 and later active participants in the organization of the Front and in its accession to political power.”³⁰⁰ Here it should be noted that opening ceremonies of the founding congress of the Latvian Popular Front was conducted in the form of a church service in Riga’s Dome Cathedral, which was officiated by Rebirth and Renewal’s young leaders Juris Rubenis and Modris Plate.³⁰¹

While Soviet repression of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches had negative repercussions on organized religion in Latvia, ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ was able to play a central role in lending a moral voice to the Latvian independence movement, due to the primary position of the Lutheran church as a key Latvian historical-cultural institution. This is because the Lutheran church remained “one of the few distinctly Latvian institutions,” and was able to play a key role in promoting change because the church helped “reinforce Western cultural traditions that supported alternative values, such as an emphasis on individual rights, and provided a basis for a restrained,

²⁹⁹ This ‘catalytic role’ in promoting change has been described by Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 70-71. Dreifelds. (2003). “Religion in Latvia.” p. 256; Goeckel. (1995). “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process.” p. 211-212, 218. On key role of ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ and its leaders Modris Plate and Juris Rubenis in the events of the late 1980s, see Sapiets, Marite. (1988). “‘Rebirth and Renewal’ in the Latvian Lutheran Church.” *Religion in Communist Lands*, 16: 237-249; Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement.” p. 30

³⁰⁰ Additionally, several clergy and also the Archbishop of the church also became prominent members of the LNNK. Dreifelds. (2003). “Religion in Latvia.” p. 256.

³⁰¹ Dreifelds. (1989). “Latvian National Rebirth.” p. 85.

democratic challenge to Soviet control.”³⁰² Thus, Latvia’s Western Christian heritage and traditions played a key role in making Latvian political-cultural worldviews distinct from the more pro-Soviet political-cultural values present in Belarus, and were important in informing and defining the content of Latvian national identity. As Goeckel points out,...

the institutional churches...do represent components of the broader culture and did support the strengthening of national consciousness....Western Christianity in no small measure created a political culture in the Baltics very different from that obtaining in other parts of the former Soviet Union. It fostered values of individual responsibility and freedom and promoted high levels of literacy and cultural expression, dimensions quite manifest in the...persistent drive for independence.³⁰³

Thus, Latvia’s Western Christian heritage had an important influence on liberal-individualist character informing Latvia’s historic political-cultural worldviews. These liberal values were apparent from the outset in the goals promoted by ‘Rebirth and Renewal,’ which “constantly stressed their support for ‘openness,’ ‘restructuring’ and ‘democratization’ as a justification for their actions.”³⁰⁴ Overall, such policy ideas and goals for change and reform not only played a key role influencing the goals of the Latvian Popular Front, but would also have had a key role in influencing the ideas and goals of future government actions.

From 1985 onward Latvia’s dissident movements would grow increasingly in popularity and confidence, so that by October 1988 these groups had grown into a cohesive movement for Latvian freedom that would converge under the mass umbrella

³⁰² Goeckel. (1995). “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process.,” p. 213.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 219. Overall, quotes such as this are important for inferring that religion and culture precede and inform the content of national identity. For similar consensus on importance of Western Christianity, and Protestant Lutheranism on the formation of Latvia’s political-cultural worldviews and way of life, see footnotes no. 1-5, 9 above. This even applies in Latvia after years of Soviet persecutions, which lead to increased rates of secularism in society. This is because the residues of historically rooted religious beliefs could still be seen as having a large influence on Latvian culture. To illustrate, on the eve of glasnost and perestroika, after years of Soviet domination, Miller described the persistence of a highly “Protestant and individualistic culture of the [Latvians] Balts.” Miller, John. (1984). “Political Culture: some Perennial Questions Reopened.” Ch. 3, in *Political Culture and Communist Studies*, ed. Archie Brown. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 53. Additionally, Kolstø notes that “religion leaves behind an important cultural imprint on a community, also when people no longer believe in it.” Kolstø. (1999a). “Bipolar Societies?” p. 20, 40.

³⁰⁴ Sapiets. (1988). “‘Rebirth and Renewal.’” p. 247. Additionally, ‘Rebirth and Renewal’ and the Latvian Lutheran Church opposed both universal citizenship for all residents living in Latvia, and the automatic granting of citizenship to ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers that had come to Latvia during the period of Soviet occupations after 1940. Dreifelds. (2003). “Religion in Latvia.,” p. 256; Goeckel. (1995). “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process.,” p. 214.

organization of the Latvian Popular Front (LPF). The formation of the LPF was inspired by events that transpired under the initiatives proposed by increasingly dissident intelligentsia at the meeting of Latvia's Writers Union. In the most famous speech given at this meeting from June 1-2, 1988, Mavriks Vulfsons, a well-known establishment insider and media journalist, declared that as a first-hand witness and participant in the events of 1940-1941 that "no socialist revolution had taken place in Latvia"; "I was there, I know."³⁰⁵ Additionally, the resolution produced by the Latvian Writer's Union at the end of the meeting would also make calls for individual freedoms, human rights, de-Sovietization, and a halt to migration of Russian/Slavic workers into Latvia, and economic decentralization and reform.³⁰⁶ Such anti-Soviet outburst from high-ranking establishment ethnic-Latvian intellectuals was a significant step in stimulating the formation of the LPF because it confirmed what was already believed about the negative, unnatural and illegal nature of Soviet regime found in the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by most Latvians.

Overall, the LPF linked the various popular resistance groups, including the Environmental Protection Club, Helsinki-86, 'Rebirth and Renewal,' and the LNNK. Prominent leaders of the LPF from the various dissident groups included Dainas Ivans, Juris Rubenis, Modris Plate, and Eduards Berklavs. What is important to note about all of these resistance groups that formed under the rubric of the LPF, which were fighting for Latvia's freedom, was their grass-roots connections to Latvian society, often seen with members that were often un-connected to Communist circles, and the youthfulness of many of these groups' leaders and members. For example, the LPF numbered approximately 110,000 members by October 1998, with the vast majority of members being ethnic-Latvians, and only one-third of those being members of the LCP. By mid-

³⁰⁵ See for example, Trapans. (1991b). "The Sources of Latvia's Popular Movement.," p. 32; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 222; Vulfsons, Mavriks. (1998). *Nationality Latvian? No, Jewish. Cards on the Table.* Riga: Jumava., p. 81-83. The significance of Vulfsons declaration was also noted by prominent members of the LCP, such as Boriss Pugo, who "angrily told Vulfsons, 'You have killed Soviet Latvia with your speech!'" Quoted in Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 325, 379.

³⁰⁶ See document, "Resolution of the Board of the Latvian SSR Writer's Association -2 June 1988," in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 111-114. For significance of Latvian Writer's Union meeting in formation of the LPF, see also, Dreifelds. (1989). "Latvian National Rebirth.," p. 84; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 171, 175; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 315-316, 327; Trapans. (1991b). "The Sources of Latvia's Popular Movement.," p. 39; Smith. (1994b). "The Resurgence of Nationalism.," p. 132-133.

1989, the LPF would number close to 300,000 registered members, and claimed to have the popular support of 1.3 million Latvians by the end of 1989, which eclipsed overall membership in the LCP that numbered only 184,000 members.³⁰⁷

The fact that the ethnic composition of the LPF was overwhelmingly composed of ethnic-Latvians allows one to infer that a clash of political-cultural worldviews was occurring, since the vast majority of the LPF's members consisted of ethnic-Latvians. Additionally, the LPF and other prominent Latvian dissident groups would use petitions to voice dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime. Overall, large numbers of ethnic-Latvians participated in signing these anti-Soviet petitions, such as was the case in the Autumn of 1990, when over one million signature were given against Gorbachev's attempts to establish a new Union Treaty for the USSR.³⁰⁸ One can infer that most of these signature were given by ethnic-Latvians from the fact that polls during this time indicated that ethnic-Latvians signed petitions in far greater numbers than ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia. For example, in a World Values Survey conducted in 1990, 83.1% of Protestant ethnic-Latvian respondents and 74.20% of Roman Catholic ethnic-Latvian respondents said they had signed a petition, which was much higher than the 49.2% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) respondents living in Latvia, and the 27.0% of Belarusians in Belarus that said they had done similar behavior (see Figure A.11 in Appendix). Moreover, a poll conducted in November 1990 indicated that 90% of Latvian respondents were opposed to Gorbachev's new treaty proposal.³⁰⁹

Similar numbers inferring a cultural divide in attitudes can also be seen in polling numbers showing that ethnic-Latvians outnumbered ethnic-Russian/Slavic people in participating in political protests during this time. For example, in a World Values Survey conducted in 1990, 50.0% of Protestant ethnic-Latvian respondents and 39.1% of Roman Catholic ethnic-Latvian respondents said they had participated in lawful demonstrations.

³⁰⁷ For numbers and grass-roots orientation, see Dreifelds. (1989). "Latvian National Rebirth.," p. 84-86; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 59-60; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 204; Trapans. (1991b). "The Sources of Latvia's Popular Movement.," p. 36; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 174; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 54; Smith. (1994b). "The Resurgence of Nationalism.," p. 131, 139; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 68, 79; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 313. For LCP numbers see Figure 4.3 in Appendix.

³⁰⁸ See Jundzis. (2009). "The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 432; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 96; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 298-299.

³⁰⁹ Poll number cited in Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 178.

Indeed, this was much higher than the 12.1% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) respondents living in Latvia, and the 18.1% of Belarusians that said they had done similar behavior (see Figure A.12 in Appendix). Furthermore, the fact that significant numbers of Latvians signed such polls and participated in protests organized by prominent Latvian dissident groups such as the LPF, and the others mentioned above, illustrates that large numbers of Latvians agreed with the goals of these anti-Soviet groups.

Finally, public opinion polls conducted at that time also illustrated the cultural divide present in Latvia when it came to support for the LPF. This was seen in a poll conducted in 1988 which showed that the LPF had the support of 74% of ethnic-Latvians, and only 10% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people within Latvia.³¹⁰ Moreover, the vast majority of ethnic-Latvian respondents in three separate public opinion polls conducted over a year, from 1990 to 1991, voiced their strong support for the LPF, where 84% in September 1990, 83% in June 1991, and 76% in September 1991, gave yes responses in support. These high responses of ethnic-Latvians stood in sharp contrast to the low support for the LPF voiced from ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents, where only 42% in September 1990, 43% in June 1991, and 24% in September 1991, gave yes responses in support (see Figure A.13 in Appendix). Additionally, since the more liberal LPF enjoyed far greater support than the more stridently nationalist LNNK, it can be inferred that liberal-political cultural worldviews were strong motivators in behavior as opposed to behavior during this time being simply motivated by nationalist sentiments.

Overall, the Latvian Popular Front stayed true to its name and grew into an ever-increasing mass popular movement of the Latvian people. This was witnessed in the ever-increasing attendance at the calendar demonstrations that were carried forward by the LPF after its formation in October 1988. For instance, on November 18, 1988, in demonstrations celebrating the anniversary of Latvia's first independence, it was estimated that 500,000 Latvians participated. Again, significant calendar demonstrations were held on March 25, 1989, commemorating the 1949 deportations, where an estimated number of over 500,000 participated.³¹¹ These numbers were impressive considering that

³¹⁰ Dreifelds. (1989). "Latvian National Rebirth," p. 86.

³¹¹ For numbers and information on protests, see Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 327; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 192, no. 4; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 94; Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 604.

Latvia's overall population was only 2.6 million at the time. The calendar demonstrations climaxed in Latvia, and the Baltic region, on August 23, 1989, the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, when a human chain of approximately two million people from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, joined hands linking the Baltic capitals of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. In Latvia alone, some one million people had signed a petition in support of such actions.³¹²

Another area where the cultural split between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russian/Slavic people in Latvia could be found was in the formation of pro-Soviet oppositional groups to the LPF, notably the Interfront, which were primarily composed of members comprising an ethnic-Russian/Slavic background. To illustrate, Figure A.14 in the Appendix reveals that while a majority of ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers did not voice support for the Interfront, a significant and vocal minority, in the range of 27% in September 1990, and 22% in June 1991, did voice strong support for the Interfront. Indeed, a clash of cultural worldviews can be inferred here, as ethnic-Russian/Slavic numbers stands in contrast to the low single digit support for the Interfront voiced by ethnic-Latvian respondents in the same polls, which numbered only 3% in both polls conducted in September 1990, and June 1991 (see Figure A.14 in Appendix).

Here it should be noted that such behavior was not un-characteristic of the pro-Soviet political-cultural worldviews displayed by ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers throughout the Soviet occupation. Indeed, many of those situated in ethnic-Russian/Slavic society living in Latvia occupied a separate political-cultural realm from those of ethnic-Latvians. Throughout Soviet rule, ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers enjoyed a privileged position, and behaved in a culturally imperialistic fashion in refusing to assimilate to Latvian culture and refusing to learn the Latvian language. As Figure A.15 in the Appendix illustrates, a large majority (68% in 1989) of ethnic-Latvians became fluent in Russian, while only a small minority (21% in 1989) of ethnic-Russian/Slavic peoples became fluent in Latvian. Such numbers are corroborated by more recent polls,

³¹² See Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 72; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 124; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 219; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 174. For documentary evidence see "Statement by Baltic Mass Movements [23 August 1989]," in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 199-200.

where high numbers, over 80% of ethnic-Latvians expressed that they were fluent in Russian (see Figure A.16 in Appendix).

Furthermore, most ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers living in Latvia also remained ignorant of Latvia's rich cultural history, and held worldviews and historical memories similar to that promoted by the official Soviet line of history, which proclaimed that Russian/Soviet culture had brought great advancements and 'progress' to Latvia. Additionally, many ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers would find it contemptuous when Latvians would voice opinions that contradicted such pro-Soviet worldviews. Overall, ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers' political-cultural worldviews and historical memories about the USSR and Soviet development tended to mirror more closely those of Belarusians, which they shared more cultural affinities with. This included divergent political-cultural worldviews with ethnic-Latvians in regards to Soviet industrial development and other topics such as historical memories related to WWII.³¹³

Clashing cultural worldviews can be inferred, rather than simply Russian nationalist pride on the part of members, since Intergroup rhetoric often played-up all things Soviet, and extolled the positive virtues of Soviet political-economic development, while at the same time criticizing calls for liberal reforms. Additionally, the ethnic-Russian/Slavic management that dominated decision-making in Soviet industry remained fiercely pro-Soviet in their worldviews and habits, were opposed to liberal reforms, and actively supported pro-Soviet groups like the Interfront, and 'Equal Rights.'³¹⁴

³¹³ To illustrate divergent historical memories, in a poll from October 1990, 91% of Latvians and only 41% of non-Latvian said yes to a question that asked "Do you agree with the statement that, in 1940, the USSR occupied and annexed the Baltic states, incorporating them into the USSR forcibly?" Quoted in Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 120. On cultural imperialistic attitudes of ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers towards Latvian culture and history, see Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 42; Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 149-151, 172; Trapans. (1991a). "Introduction.", p. 6; Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 114-118; Clemens. (1994). "Baltic Identities.", p. 196; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 186-187, 309; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 419; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). "Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration.", p. 138; Šneiderė. (2005a). "The First Soviet Occupation Period.", p. 42; Riekstiņš. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia.", p. 241; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 406; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.", p. 243, 247-248.

³¹⁴ The Interfront was heavily pro-Soviet in that it was "dedicated to the defence of socialism and the unity of the USSR." Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 80. For reference to Intergroup playing on pro-Soviet values, and also pro-Soviet views of ethnic-Russian/Slavic managerial elite, see Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 170; Trapans. (1991a). "Introduction.", p. 6; "Discussion." (1991). Ch. 4. In *Toward Independence*, ed. Jan Arveds Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 44; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 192, 291; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). "Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration.", p. 142; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 57; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.", p. 279-281, 372-376; Jundzis. (2009). "The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.", p. 471.

Often the formation of such pro-Soviet groups as the Interfront, which had strong connections to the LCP, combined with its pronounced outward ethnic-Russian/Slavic appearance spurred many ordinary Latvians particularly in rural areas to throw their support increasingly behind the LPF and other Latvian dissident groups. Moreover, the pro-Soviet behavior on the part of ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers throughout Soviet rule, also resulted in many of the rank and file members of the LPF sharing sentiments similar to those found in the LNNK, in that most supported calls for strict citizenship rules should Latvia become independent.³¹⁵ This helps to understand why the Latvians would choose more restrictive citizenship policies after 1991, since they wanted badly to exit Russia's orbit, and many in the ethnic-Russian/Slavic community would have been opposed to such goals, because they had vastly divergent political-cultural worldviews and historical memories from Latvians.

While some might view sentiment favouring calls for stopping ethnic-Russian/Slavic migration into Latvia and strict citizenship laws as simply influenced by strong nationalist sentiment, such ideas cannot be separated from the Latvians political-cultural worldviews about the negativity of Soviet industrialization, since migration and industrialization were viewed as intricately interconnected issues. Explanations that rely on a national identity framework of understanding fail to delve into the underlying political-cultural content informing such ideas, especially that such preferences were a continuity of those found with earlier Latvian dissidents' demands for economic autonomy in order to counter cultural Russification. Thus, it is important to understand the view shared by Latvians that regarded the policies of cultural Russification and Soviet industrialization as not being separate, since these interconnected policies swamped the country with vast numbers of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people and almost made Latvians a minority in their own country.

Overall, Latvian worldviews abhorred Soviet command-style policy methods, which Latvians viewed as culturally alien. Increasingly, most Latvians viewed the destruction of Latvia's private farms, and the subsequent heavy Soviet industrial development and its direct connection to the mass inflow of Russian/Slavic settlers into

³¹⁵ See Trapans. (1991b). "The Sources of Latvia's Popular Movement.," p. 34; Muiznieks. (1997). "Latvia.," p. 387; Dreifelds. (2003). "Religion in Latvia.," p. 256.

Latvia, Russification of almost every sphere of political-economic life, and the environmental degradation of the beloved Latvian countryside, as a concerted and direct attack on Latvia's cultural way of life. Such perceptions are not necessarily far off, as many have argued that the concerted nature of all of these policies in directly attacking the well-being of Latvia's cultural way of life constituted outright cultural genocide on the part of Moscow.³¹⁶ Certainly, the fact that the administrative apparatus and workforce of Soviet industry was disproportionately non-Latvian and the fact that Russian was the primary language of working communication in Soviet enterprises would have also only served to reinforce Latvians' views that such enterprises were culturally alien.

No doubt, such views about the alien nature of Soviet industry would have resulted in views increasingly favourable to privatization. Moreover, it should be noted that such views about Russian/Slavic migrants as being loyal Soviet citizens, and the view that their presence resulted from forced Soviet migrations were important in shaping average LPF's members' views on favouring strict citizenship policies. Such an outcome in preferences can be inferred from the description given by Dreifelds where he points out that "the legacy of the reality and perceptions of the USSR as a Russian power structure or empire has left many of the people in the Baltic states identifying 'Soviet' with 'Russian.'" ³¹⁷ In other words, privatization, as well as the goal of halting migration and strict citizenship stemmed directly from worldviews that disliked Soviet industrial activity and viewed Soviet rule as un-natural, alien and illegal.

Clashing cultural worldviews can also be inferred from the fact that many ethnic-Latvian members of the LCP would soon also voice their open support and commitment to the goals of the Popular Front. Moreover, as time went on, the LCP would largely split in two with a major rift occurring along ethno-cultural lines between the majority ethnic-

³¹⁶ See Rutkis. (1967). *Latvia.*, p. 274; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 188-189, 162, 165; Bilinsky. (1999). *Endgame in NATO's Enlargement.*, p. 9; Strods. (2005a). "Sovietization of Latvia.," p. 226; CCHRL. (1983). *Genocide? Destruction? Annihilation?;* Document no. 126, in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 366-370; Trapans. (1991b). "The Sources of Latvia's Popular Movement.," p. 39. For consensus on Latvians perceived threat to Latvian cultural well-being from mass-migration of ethnic-Russian/Slavic workers, and overall negative views of Soviet industrialization, see Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 27, 34; Dreifelds. (1981). "Belorussia and Baltics.," p. 369-370; Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 26; Pettai. (2001b). "Estonia and Latvia.," p. 265; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 50-51; Šilde. (2003). "Passive Resistance in Latvia.," p. 176-177.

³¹⁷ Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 10. At a more extreme, clashing cultures can be inferred where Küng notes that "the Russians [were] often regarded by the native population merely as symbols of an occupying power and not as ordinary human beings." Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 223.

Russian/Slavic members whom remained hard-line in their orientation to Moscow, and the minority of ethnic-Latvian members that increasingly defected to join the mass LPF. Here it should be noted that many of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic members of the LCP not only remained loyal to the Soviet Union, but increasingly became critical of Gorbachev and his reforms. Additionally, ethnic-Latvian youths also left the Young Communist League in increasingly pronounced numbers by the beginning of 1988.³¹⁸

Increasingly, the more right-wing ideological groups of the LPF, including the LNNK and Helisinki-86 which shared liberal-individualist worldviews in regards to the patterns of reform, began to gain predominance over the anti-Soviet orientation of the LPF. One can infer that such policy ideas sprang from worldviews shared at the grass-roots level since the LPF, and the groups making up its formation had strong grass-roots foundations, were decentralized and had strong local chapters, especially at the rural level. Moreover, it was at these local chapters, especially those connected to the LNNK at the rural level, where sentiments for radical changes were most pronounced and served to influence overall LPF policy a great deal. As Trapans observed, “radical proposals have seeped upwards from their rural roots to the intellectual leaves, feeding the moderate leadership with vigorous and determined sap.”³¹⁹ Indeed, such a grass-roots nature infers mass popularity, and the important rural influences of Latvia’s historic political-cultural.

It should be noted here that Latvian independence movements, also benefited from the cultural contacts with Latvian émigrés in the West. These cultural contacts were important in aiding the independence movements in the late-1980s early-1990s. While primary credit for achieving the goals of independence, de-Sovietization and liberal-market reform should be given primarily to Latvians located within Latvia, Latvian émigrés in the West nevertheless were a strong asset in support of Latvian dissident

³¹⁸ For more details, see Trapans. (1991a). “Introduction,” p. 5; Girnius, Kestutis. (1991). “The Party and Popular Movements in the Baltic.” Ch. 5. In *Toward Independence*, ed. Jan Arveds Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., p. 59, 68-69; Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy*., p. 27; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*., p. 63; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening,” p. 376. For documentary evidence inferring the presence of liberal worldviews amongst ethnic-Latvian defectors from the LCP, see “Draft Program of the Independent Communist Party of Latvia – February 24, 1990,” in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics*., p. 138-139.

³¹⁹ Trapans. (1991b). “The Sources of Latvia’s Popular Movement,” p. 40, 38-40. See also views of Eduards Berklavs in “Discussion.” (1991)., p. 47. For similar consensus on grass-roots and rural influence, and on important influence of right-wing factions over LPF’s proposals, see above, and Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 476-477; Muiznieks. (1997). “Latvia.” p. 389; Blūzma. (2009). “The Period of the Awakening.” p. 278, 347-348

groups back home. As previously mentioned, Latvian émigré groups played an important role in waging an information war against Soviet propaganda in the West, and were important in keeping the story of Latvian suffering on the foreign policy radar in the West.³²⁰ Moreover, while many of the anti-Soviet and liberal-individualist worldviews favouring ideas of liberal reform were already readily present within Latvia, Latvian émigré professionals in the West were nevertheless vital in taking on an advisory role in helping to pass on knowledge about some of the finer technical policy details that would be vital in helping to design certain policy to achieve comprehensive market reforms.³²¹

Overall, Gorbachev was largely unprepared for such high levels of dissidence as seen in mass popular growth of societal groups forming the LPF. Indeed, most Latvian dissident groups did not share Gorbachev's wish to simply reform the Soviet system, because the Latvians wanted out via regaining full independence. As was noted above, Latvians never accepted the Soviet system, which meant that Latvian goals were not in tune with those of Gorbachev's, since reform of the USSR and a light-version of Communism was not a suitable option for the Latvians. Indeed, for Latvians, it was a "struggle to gain independence from a Soviet Union they never wished to be part of in the first place."³²² Thus, there was a clash in cultural values, as the worldviews of the LPF and other prominent dissident groups of the late-1980s totally clashed with the ethnic-Russian rulers of the Soviet Union, since the only suitable option for Latvians was thus destruction of the Soviet system, regaining independence and a return to normalcy.

³²⁰ Such efforts not only helped in the eventual recognition of Latvian re-independence, but also helped play a role in helping eventually open up willingness for membership of Latvia into the EU and NATO. Purs. (2008). "Weak and Half-Starved Peoples.," p. 31. For further consensus on important role of émigrés, see Auers. (2008). "Salmon, Rissoles and Smoked Eel.," p. 53-59; Dreifelds. (1989). "Latvian National Rebirth.," p. 92; Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening.," p. 310-311, 344-345, 397; Jundzis. (2009). "The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 504-505, 512, 520-523.

³²¹ As will be discussed below, this included vital monetary policy knowledge that was passed on by Latvian émigré economists in the West. One of the most prominent included Georgetown Economics Professor George (Juris) Vīksniņš. This was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). See also Vīksniņš (2008). "The Georgetown University Syndrome.," p. 110-111; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire*; Trapans. (1991a). "Introduction.," p. 8; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 71.

³²² Gerner and Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 1. Clemens puts the seeming clash of cultures in more blunter terms, where he observed that "[Latvians] were in no mood to create values with the Russians," and where "some Russians perceived this as failed marriage from which the [Latvians] wanted out," many "[Latvians] saw it as the aftermath of rape." Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 226. See also footnotes no. 283 and 384 above.

Often such goals for full independence which was adopted formally by the LPF in 1989 were couched in often religious connotations. To illustrate, the LPF's call for complete independence in November 1989 ended with the statement, "OUR HEARTS BEAT FOR LATVIA. MAY GOD HELP US!"³²³ Obviously one can infer the importance of historic religious values informing Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews, and being important in the psyche and historical memories of the Latvian masses, due to the fact that calls for independence were justified with references to God.

Simultaneously these calls for independence were matched by interconnected and equally strong calls for liberal political-economic reform. Moreover, calls for independence were increasingly voiced in tones that displayed sentiments containing the high presence of liberal political-cultural worldviews. For instance, major themes increasingly common in the demands of these resistance groups were calls for decentralization and liberalization via de-Sovietization of the Latvian political-economy, with increased marketization and individual private property freedoms, with the goal of once again making Latvians masters of their own land via renewed Latvian sovereignty. In other words, Latvian elites and much of ethnic-Latvian society did not want a light-version of Communism exemplified in Gorbachev's vision of a reformed USSR, but instead wanted individual freedoms, private property, and overall Latvian independence.³²⁴ Often such groups took a stance that was opposed to Gorbachev's goals, as political groups such as LNNK and LPF increasingly took a liberalist stance on many issues calling for religious freedoms and political-economic reforms that were outright anti-Soviet in nature, which demanded a halt to cultural Russification, stopping the migration of ethnic-Russian/Slavic workers into Latvia, radical decentralization, and total de-Sovietization and normalization of Latvian political-economic relations. Indeed, the predominant political-cultural worldviews displayed during this time were not

³²³ See document no. 117, "A call by the Council of Latvia's Popular Front to the nation on the eve of November 18, 1989 [November 13, 1989]," in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 357-358. See also document no. 116, "Call by the Board of the Council of Latvia's Popular Front to all members of the LPF concerning the question of the involvement of the Front in the struggle for Latvia's complete political and economic independence [May 31, 1989]," in *Ibid.*, p. 356-357.

³²⁴ To show the linkage between the rejection of communism, independence and calls for marketization and private property, one Latvian elite noted that "it was not possible for real reform in Gorbachev's time. You needed to change the whole situation in the entire country. It could not really work if you had no private ownership. You need a market economy to develop all these things." Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

accepting of Soviet rule, and shared an “ambition for normality and for the fundamental transformation of an order that was widely regarded as illegitimate, uncivilized, uncultured, and undemocratic to its foundations.”³²⁵

In this political environment, the goals of independence and liberal political-economic reform could not be separated from one another but were intricately linked. As Karklins points out “in Latvia...transition from Soviet rule meant both the construction of an alternative politics and a liberation from foreign dominance.”³²⁶ This stands in contrast to developments in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine where there was less anti-Soviet sentiments towards Soviet political-economic development. Indeed, all of these issues including the perception of Soviet/Russian threats to Latvia’s cultural well-being, the desire for independence, and the demands for de-Sovietization of industry, halting Russian/Slavic migration, ecological protections, de-Russification, and liberal market reforms were interlinked and influenced by Latvian’s predominant anti-Soviet and liberalist political-cultural worldviews.

Overall, the highly anti-Soviet sentiments and demands for liberal reforms exploding in Latvia during the late-1980s were greatly influenced by the Latvians historically rooted liberalist political-cultural worldviews, way of life, and historical memories that were predominant in Latvian society. Several quotes help to sum up the political-cultural worldviews influencing behavior of high levels of anti-Soviet dissidence during the late-1980s. To illustrate, Pabriks and Purs observed that the “attitude of Latvians, and the Balts at large, can be described as a social and psychological rejection of everything Russian and consequently of everything Soviet.”³²⁷ More importantly, Strods points out that Latvian “resistance was the struggle of the Latvian people against

³²⁵ Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 61. For documentary evidence on the above anti-Soviet sentiments and demands calling for reforms in fostering normality, see documents no. 117, “A call by the Council of Latvia’s Popular Front to the nation on the eve of November 18, 1989,” no. 118, “An open letter of the nation of Latvia to the President of the USSR, M. Gorbachev, and to the President of the USA, G. Bush, with an invitation that they resolve the question of the renewal of the independence of the Baltic States,” and no. 121, “The election platform of Latvia’s Popular Front in the Supreme Council election of 1990 [March 18, 1990],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 357-358, 361; documents in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 134-135, 624. See also, Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 449-450; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 177.

³²⁶ Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 111-112. For further consensus on independence and liberal political-economic reform being linked for Latvians, see Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States.*, p. 168; Smith. (1994b). “The Resurgence of Nationalism,” p. 134; Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance,” p. 475.

³²⁷ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 48.

occupation; against the pressure and propaganda on the part of the occupant country; for democracy and free economic, political and spiritual development; for European culture and traditions, under whose influence Latvia had developed for centuries.”³²⁸

These sentiments combining liberal and anti-Soviet political-cultural worldviews and historical memories lead to widespread beliefs that viewed both Europe and the market economy in almost mythical proportions. Such views were highly representative of the clash of cultures that was occurring in Latvia, where Latvians were fighting to rid themselves of the oppressive, illegal, alien and unnatural Soviet regime. As a result, for most Latvians, the predominant view held that “the Communist ideology and the Soviet political system reflected Russian political culture and Russian views,” where “Russia and the Soviet Union came to stand for all things evil, [and] Europe for everything that was good and worth striving for.”³²⁹ Often anti-Soviet demands for de-Sovietization would be contrasted by idyllic themes that simultaneously played on positive worldviews and historical memories of Latvia’s first period of independence as being free, democratic, economically liberal and prosperous.³³⁰ As a result, a clash of political-cultural worldviews could be seen in that “most [Latvians] except for some Russian settlers rejected not only Moscow but Marx...they favored not just national self-determination and democratic politics but free enterprise.”³³¹ As will be discussed in the Belarus chapters, this high level of anti-Soviet sentiment and desire to do away with all things Soviet, contrasted sharply with predominant worldviews of Belarusians that viewed Soviet political-economic development as positive.

Overall, the worldviews displayed during this time largely took on liberalist orientation in calling for individual freedoms, rule of law and democracy. More importantly this included demands for liberal political-economic reform via normalizing individual rights to own private property, de-collectivization of Latvian agriculture, breaking up the state’s monopolistic control over all aspects of political-economic

³²⁸ Strods. (2005b). “Resistance in Latvia.” p. 298.

³²⁹ Gerner and Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 67-68.

³³⁰ Many also believed that Latvia would have been “like Finland” had it been left to develop under its own direction rather than forcefully controlled by Moscow. Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 176. On importance of positive historical memories of interwar independence informing the views of dissidents, see Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 70; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. xxxvi.

³³¹ Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 215. On rejection of all things Soviet, see also Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 111-112.

relations, and moving to a capitalist market economy where the rights of individuals reigned supreme. To illustrate the presence of such prominent liberal political-cultural worldviews, the programme of the LPF's 3rd Congress in October 1990, pledged "to support radical economic reforms and their rapid implementation," where "a market economy was to be established in place of the socialist command economy," and where "the fundamental principle...declared to underpin the future Latvian economy was respect for private property."³³² Overall, this stands in stark contrast to the situation in Belarus where there was not much talk about any significant liberal economic reform programs let alone decentralization or privatization of property, which was largely unheard of for most Belarusians.

In this political-cultural environment, the goals of independence and liberal economic reform could not be separated but were intricately linked to the broader Latvian desire for de-Sovietization and normalization of all aspects of political-economic relations in Latvia. Overall, there was a desire by Latvians to regain their freedom of control over the political-economic levers of power, which they essentially had no meaningful control and input over during Soviet times. While some have incorrectly linked this connection between independence and economic reform to rationalist economic imperatives,³³³ often such calls for liberal economic reform had little to do with economic rationality. Instead, the freedom of control over the political-economic decision making apparatus had clear political-cultural imperatives, because this would allow Latvians to implement policies and the mode of political-economic organization that they viewed as normal, natural, right and morally good. In doing so, this would allow Latvians to reverse the perceived moral evils, unnaturalness and culturally alien nature of the Soviet regime, which brought collectivization, mass industrialization, environmental

³³² There were also continued demands in the programme for agricultural reforms, creating a private banking system and also for creating a common Baltic market, which infers that these ideas were not just proposed from outside sources such as the EU. See Jundzis. (2009). "The Role of Non-Violent Resistance," p. 437-439, 476-477. For more detailed descriptions of LPF's liberalist and anti-Soviet political-economic orientation in its worldviews and goals, see the LPF's electoral platform in early 1990, see document, "Election Program of the Popular Front of Latvia – 12 February 1990," in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 136-138. See also descriptions of the LPF's platform in Blūzma. (2009). "The Period of the Awakening," p. 342, 332. See also, Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 315-316; Gerner and Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 98; Smith. (1994b). "The Resurgence of Nationalism," p. 133-134; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 181, 186-187; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 69-71

³³³ Hiden and Salmon. (1994). *The Baltic States.*, p. 168.

degradation and the influx of ethnic-Russian/Slavic migrants that nearly made Latvians a minority in their own country, which Latvians viewed as a willful process on the part of Soviet authorities to slowly smother and destroy the Latvian cultural way of life. As a result, those striving for Latvian regaining its independence and transformation were fighting “to maintain their [cultural] way of life and basic values.”³³⁴

Often calls for independence and liberal economic reforms would be justified by references to idyllic themes that simultaneously by played on positive historical memories of Latvia’s first period of independence, as one that was free, democratic, economically liberal, and prosperous. Moreover, many Latvians shared an increasingly strong faith in the market. As one Latvian émigré advisor working in Riga at the time observed, “the market economy was held up as the promise of the future.”³³⁵ As a result of such historical memories, everything related to the promotion of an orientation towards Western Europe, the liberal market and free enterprise were held up in an almost faith-like status as being the only morally right way for Latvia to proceed. Indeed, such political-cultural worldviews would continue to play an important role in shaping the pattern of Latvia’s comprehensive reforms throughout the post-1991 period. Additionally, the fact that such worldviews favouring liberal reform were already present indicates that the worldviews informing these policies also had long historical antecedents, which is important to counter rationalist arguments that such policy ideas were ‘new’ to Latvians, or liberal-institutionalist arguments that international organizations, like the EU and IMF were key in promoting these reforms amongst elites.

With the open elections for the Latvian Supreme Soviet held in early 1990, pro-independence and pro-liberal reform political forces under the common banner of the Latvian Popular Front came to dominate the Latvian Supreme Soviet in Riga. Indeed, one can infer that ethnic-Latvians came to overwhelmingly support the LPF, since the LPF was elected to hold the positions of 131 deputies out of 201, with 11 independents and 59 for the pro-Soviet/Russian ‘Equal Rights’ faction³³⁶ In a short-time, the LPF dominated

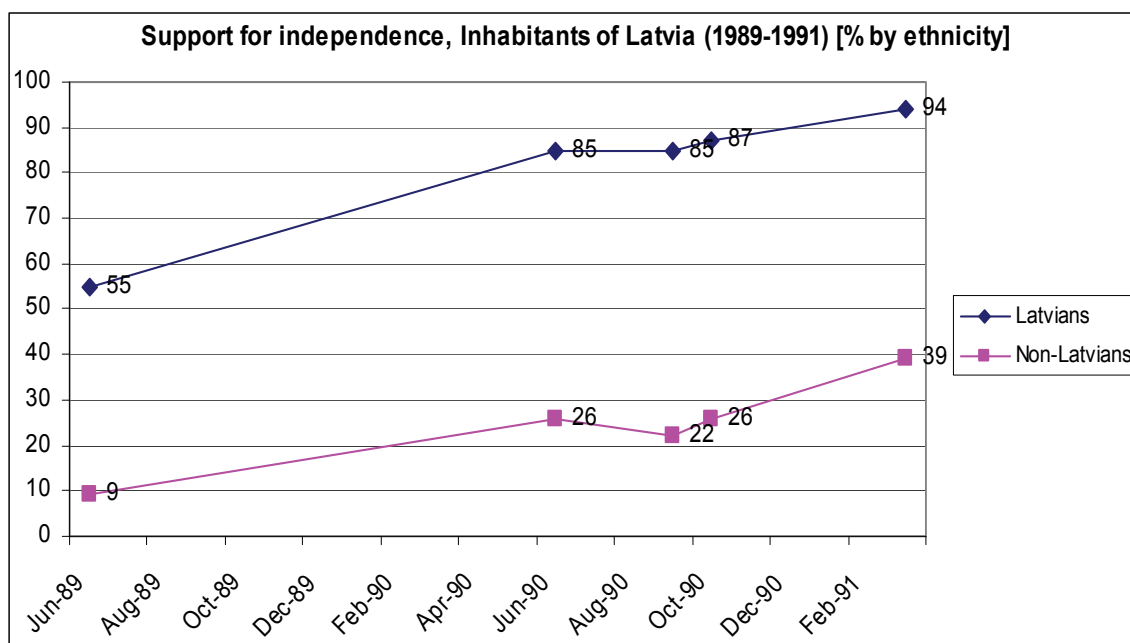
³³⁴ Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 5, 6; Karklins. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR.*, p. 51.

³³⁵ Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 70. As will be discussed in chapter 5, many Latvian elites repeatedly mentioned that this intense market orientation was shared by both elites and large segments of ethnic-Latvian society.

³³⁶ Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 439; Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 417.

Latvian Supreme Soviet would move to declare the reinstatement of Latvian independence, which was enacted on May 4, 1990.³³⁷ One can infer a split in cultural values, and that the vast majority of ethnic-Latvians supported renewed Latvian independence from the results of public opinion polls that were conducted in April 1990, following the call for renewed independence, where 92% of ethnic-Latvians supported these decisions, while only 45% of non-Latvians were in favour.³³⁸ Additionally, in another poll, one can see a clash in political-cultural worldviews between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russian/Slavic residents living in Latvia, from Figure 4.2 below, which illustrates that while the vast majority of ethnic-Latvians supported independence, such goals were only supported by a minority of ethnic-Russian/Slavic residents.

Figure 4.2



Source: Numbers from Social Research Center of Latvia, cited in (Karklins 1994: 50); * September 1990 cited in (Jundzis 2009: 406).

Almost simultaneously the LPF dominated Latvian Supreme Soviet moved to implement the first steps towards de-Sovietization and liberal market reform. For

³³⁷ For text of the declaration of re-independence, see “Declaration of the Latvian Supreme Soviet on the Restoration of State Independence [May 4, 1990],” in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 139-140, 630; document no. 122, “Declaration of the Supreme Council of the LSSR concerning the renewal of the Republic of Latvia [May 4, 1990],” in Plakans. (2007). *Experiencing Totalitarianism.*, p. 362-363.

³³⁸ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 177.

example, on July 3, 1990 the Latvian Supreme Soviet (Saeima) even “adopt[ed] a resolution...declar[ing] the collectivization of land to have been a mistake,” which also “provide[d] for the restoration of private ownership of agricultural land.”³³⁹ This also included laws protecting private property passed in October 1990, and the beginnings of reform and de-collectivization of the agricultural sector, as well as price liberalization, as was mentioned in chapter 3 on policy reforms. While it would be imprudent and circular to infer liberal political-cultural worldviews from the implementation of such reforms, one can nonetheless readily infer that favourable worldviews were present in the preferences of Latvians. As Jundzis points out, these reforms “encountered no significant political opposition...the primary positive contributing factor was that ethnic-Latvians formed a substantial majority of the population in the [rural] regions.”³⁴⁰

Additionally, support for such reforms and the presence of liberalist political-cultural worldviews can be inferred from polls conducted by the World Values Survey in 1990 that showed that a vast majority of ethnic-Latvians favoured significant reform to the political-economy. This was seen where an overwhelming majority of Latvians polled, 82.9% thought that more individual freedoms should be allowed, 92.8% agreed that the system should be much more open, 98.5% completely agreed that the economic system needed to be fundamentally changed, and 62.7% agreed that private ownership should be increased.³⁴¹ Indeed, in 1990, on the eve of the breakup of the USSR, Latvia was ripe for reform. From such a political-cultural perspective, one can understand more clearly Latvia’s post-1991 political-economic reform, and the goal surrounding it.

However, these moves conducted by the LPF dominated Latvian Supreme Soviet did not sit well with pro-Soviet/Russian forces both within Latvia and in Moscow. Increasingly, Moscow backed hardliners moved to attempt to forcefully coerce the elected governments of Latvia, and the other Baltic States in an effort to halt moves towards independence. Such coercive measure from Moscow and pro-Soviet forces in Latvia began to become pronounced in the late-Autumn of 1990, and heightened to

³³⁹ See Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 632.

³⁴⁰ Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance,,” p. 477.

³⁴¹ See “Rule of Government” and “Attitudes Concerning Society” section(s) within the Politics and Society Section of the World Values Survey. (1990) <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>. A lack of opposition to such reforms was also noted by one Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

alarming proportions in January 1991, when special forces of the Soviet Interior Ministry, OMON troops (Black Berets) seized the Interior Ministry of the LSSR and also moved to shut down most media publications in Latvia.³⁴² Overall, one can sense a clash of cultures occurring, as most Soviet military, KGB, and special forces security personnel of the Soviet Interior Ministry, stationed in Latvia, “did not speak Latvian and not a few displayed a complete lack of loyalty towards the country, and [also had] very little enthusiasm for Latvian independence.”³⁴³

In response, ethnic-Latvians showed their anti-Soviet resolve by spilling out into the streets to form barricades around key government buildings in Riga. Overall, an estimated number of 700,000 Latvians helped form these anti-Soviet barricades, which were organized under the leadership of the LPF. This also included large numbers of ethnic-Latvians from rural regions, which travelled to Riga to man the barricades.³⁴⁴ The fact that such a large number of Latvians willingly put themselves in physical harm to stymie Soviet aggression, infers strong popular support for the LPF and for the goal of Latvia regaining its independence. Additionally, the importance of religious faith also seems to have been a form of spiritual sustenance for those Latvians manning the barricades, which was observed with the many religious services and sermons that were delivered at the Riga Dome Cathedral and other churches across Riga.³⁴⁵ Overall, such actions highlight the strength of the convictions informing Latvia’s anti-Soviet and liberalist political-cultural worldviews. As Jundzis points out “the barricades were in fact in the front lines in the people’s minds and hearts, the front lines in the struggle with a

³⁴² For evidence of Soviet crackdown to suppress Latvia’s goals to regain its independence, even before the attempted coup on Gorbachev, see document “Decree of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia About the Unacceptable Criminal Activity of Special Forces Militia Units and USSR Armed Forces in the Territory of the Republic of Latvia-14 November 1990,” in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 141-142, 635, 638. For further details on Soviet crack-down and threats, which started as early as late-1989, see Clemens. (1991). *Baltic Independence.*, p. 229-234, 244-247, 251-259. Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 412, 463-469, 533-535.

³⁴³ Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 463.

³⁴⁴ For consensus on numbers, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 179; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 59; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 444. For grass-roots nature of barricades and that most participating were average Latvians, and large rural representation, see Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 570-577; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 65.

³⁴⁵ On the importance of religion, see by Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 582.

totalitarian regime, with communist ideology.”³⁴⁶ Such sentiments were echoed in a vote for Latvia’s independence on March 3, 1991, where 95% voted ‘yes’ to independence.³⁴⁷

Overall, the moves for Latvia to regain its independence on the part the LPF and their allies in the Latvian Supreme Soviet (Saeima) became effective following the failed coup by Soviet hardliners in August 1991. The events of August 1991 in Latvia were a last ditch attempt to suppress the Latvians desire for regaining independence. Hardliners of the LCP, Interfront, and the pro-Soviet “Equal Rights” faction in the Latvian Supreme Soviet largely supported the attempted coup, many of whom were later arrested. Once again, Soviet forces and OMON troops were confronted by large numbers of Latvians that once again formed barricades to stymie Soviet efforts. A clash of cultures can largely be inferred from such events because of the largely ethnic-Russian make-up of these hard-line pro-Soviet groups, and also from the reactions to the following outcomes which highlight Latvians contempt and hatred for Soviet rule. For example, in description of Latvians reactions to the suicide of Latvian hard-line coup leader, USSR Interior Minister and former First Secretary of the LCP, Boriss Pugo, a first-hand observer to these events, observed that “those who talked about his suicide – almost everybody in Riga – hardly managed to suppress a smile, and some did not even bother to do that.”³⁴⁸ With the formal recognition of Latvia’s sovereignty by Russia under President Yeltsin, and by other nations, the Latvian government would move quickly in fulfilling its goals to comprehensively reform and de-Sovietize the Latvian political-economy.

With the historic evolutionary pattern of Latvian political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories being successfully mapped out above, this will facilitate an understanding into how such historic political-cultural worldviews were transmitted into policy reforms during the contemporary period after 1991. This measurement of Latvian contemporary political-cultural worldviews will be conducted next in chapter 5.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 594, 431-432. For similar consensus, see also Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 179-180.

³⁴⁷ Additionally, it should be noted that an estimated 47% of non-Latvians voted ‘no.’ See Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 102.

³⁴⁸ See Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 97, see also 89-100. For more in depth details of events of August 1991, see also Jundzis. (2009). “The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.” p. 418, 599-611. See also Lejiņš. (2008). “US Policy Towards the Baltic States.” p. 91.

CHAPTER 5: POST-1991 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL-CULTURE IN LATVIA

From the outset of regaining independence Latvia moved to make comprehensive liberal reforms to become a market economy and orient its policies close to Europe and away from Russia. In terms of monetary policy, Latvia removed itself from the Soviet ruble-zone, adopting its own independent currency the Latvian lats, as well as following neo-liberal reforms, which included a strongly independent central bank, and strict anti-inflationary policies of having a tight control over the money supply, in order to promote currency stability. Also, the commercial banking sector was privatized and subject to extensive liberalization. Other areas included extensive structural reforms, with an emphasis placed on the restoration of private property for land and real-estate, the rapid privatization of small and medium enterprises, as well as privatization of large-scale enterprises. Establishing adequate rule of law in order to protect individual property rights was also given priority. Additionally, markets and competition were emphasized, via deregulation, removing price controls, cutting government subsidies to inefficient industries, and lowering taxes. At the international level, Latvia promoted greater amounts of FDI, and removed barriers to liberalize trade. The all-encompassing and comprehensive nature of these reforms can be seen in that such reforms were intricately connected in facilitating Latvia's transformation into a liberal-democratic-capitalist economy, and return to the West.

Latvia's success in implementing rapid comprehensive liberal reforms was influenced by a strong political will both amongst elites and in society in favour of de-Sovietization of the political-economy and transforming into a market economy with private ownership and minimal state regulation as the foundation of Latvia's political-economy and society. Overall, the strong political-will of Latvians to return to Europe, de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy was driven by Latvia's predominantly liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and also exhibit a reformist sentiment. Indeed, liberal policy ideas held amongst elites, as well as preferences and pressure from the Latvian public in support of such liberal policies were present from the beginning and

were apparent even before Latvia regained independence, which stands in contrast to Belarus where such ideas amongst elite groups and amongst society were lacking.

Overall, the primary goal of Latvians was to tear down all traces of Soviet command economy via de-Sovietization. Latvia's strong political will to de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy were intricately connected with broader goals of ensuring Latvia's independence, freedom, and its return to Europe and its Western cultural heritage. To illustrate, one elite pointed out that "the majority of the population, when they thought about independence, they were at the same time thinking about market economy, so it was not something divided from the independence."¹ Indeed, both Latvian elites and the mass public rejected the old-Soviet command policies and believed that these were not only a failure,² but also political-culturally alien, unnatural, and imposed forcefully on Latvia by the Russian dominated Soviet Union. As mentioned above, there was clash of cultures, where Latvian worldviews regarded the Soviet regime as unnatural and culturally alien. This is because the Soviet system "embraced political, social, and cultural traditions widely held to conflict with the national [cultural] 'way of life.'"³ As a result, all-things seemingly Soviet were rejected, and there was a general view favouring ultra-liberal marketization, which was seen as the antithesis of Soviet political-economic practices, "and therefore a 'natural' alternative to it."⁴

A key emphasis was placed on a focused pattern of de-Sovietization of the Soviet command political-economy, which resulted from the Latvian view of Soviet command-style industrialization as antithetical and harmful to Latvian political-cultural interests. As one Latvian elite noted, "there was this idea from the [Latvians] of breaking with the

¹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). This view of equating independence and freedom with a simultaneous movement towards the market economy (ie. Independence=Freedom=Market Economy) was also mentioned by other elites. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

² This widespread rejection of Soviet command policies and view of these as being a failure, was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

³ Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 12. For further consensus on Soviet system being viewed as culturally alien, see Karklins. (1986). *Ethnic Relations in the USSR.*, p. 51; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). "Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Latvia.," p. 138.

⁴ See for example, Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 71. One problem with Eglitis is that she describes many of these values as being newly formed following regaining independence and does not delve deeper into the historical antecedents of such worldviews and preferences that would point to the more organic nature and historical rootedness of these political-cultural worldviews and ways of life.

[Soviet] past...with this idea of no gradual reforms...hard-core, right from the beginning...market economy as fast as possible... sharp radical reforms, very tough...I mean ultra-gung-ho.”⁵ Thus, after suffering nearly fifty years of being forcefully held against their will under Soviet Russian domination, there was an immense yearning and normative desire amongst ethnic-Latvians for the restoration of individual freedoms and right to own private property.

This resulted in a strong faith in the market and a cult of private property characterizing Latvian political-cultural worldviews, which shared a view of private property as being sacred, and resulted in a general loathing for, and distrust of government planning both amongst elites and the general public. To illustrate, one Latvian elite made the observation that “what drove the radical free market society, this sprint to a free market society in Latvia...was this blind faith in the ability of the markets to resolve everything, and the need for government not to plan anything anymore.”⁶ Indeed, there was a widely held view in Latvian society and amongst elites that the market economy was the ‘best’ and ‘right’ way to effectively organize the political-economic affairs of society in order to promote economic growth and overall development. Such sentiments lead to a strong political will in favour of rapid comprehensive reforms, where most Latvian elites and members of society viewed swift transformation to a liberal market economy as essential in Latvia’s quest to de-Sovietize, ensure freedom, return to Western Europe, and return to normalcy.

The all-encompassing and comprehensive nature of these reforms can be seen in that such reforms were intricately connected in facilitating Latvia’s transformation into a liberal-democratic-capitalist economy, and return to the West. Certainly, it is true that many Western economic advisors from the EU, international organizations and other Western states came to Latvia after 1991. Indeed, Western advisors provided valuable

⁵ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

⁶ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). In addition, the “belief that the market would solve all problems” shared by both Latvian elites and public was either mentioned explicitly or inferred implicitly in the observations given by several Latvian elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

assistance in assisting Latvian elites, when Latvians might not have known all the finer technical details about the precise aspects of actually implementing the goals of liberal market reform into a coherent and effective policy. However, credit for the success of Latvia's comprehensive reforms should not simply be inferred to the influence of advisors from the West, the EU, or other international organizations such as the IMF.

Therefore, although Western advisors provided valuable assistance, primary credit should be given where credit is due, which is to the Latvians themselves, both elites and the general public whose liberal political-cultural worldviews shared a vision of comprehensive liberal transformation of all aspects of Latvia's political-economy. Overall, this process remained a mutual exchange of ideas since there was widespread support both amongst Latvian elites and society in favour of the goal of transforming into a liberal-market economy. Moreover, one can see how the advice from the Western advisors would have been welcomed by the fact that all things Soviet were seemingly rejected.⁷ Furthermore, while such assistance was valuable, many of these advisors were not necessarily alien or outsiders to Latvian political-cultural worldviews, since the most influential Western advisors were actually Latvian émigrés that had returned to Latvia. Namely, this included Georgetown Economics Professor George (Juris) Vīksniņš, whose free-market conservative ideas had an important influence on various aspects of reform, specifically in regards to technical issues of monetary policy implementation.⁸

In regards to the influence of Latvian émigré advisors from the West, such as Vīksniņš, such expert advisors were not necessarily outsiders to Latvian political-cultural worldviews and historical memories. As a result, their ideas on reform would not have been seen by ethnic-Latvians in Latvia as being advocated by cultural outsiders. As was

⁷ This is illustrated by the fact that the first Governor of the Bank of Latvia, Einars Repše, while only being around 25 at the time of his appointment, had received training under George (Juris) Vīksniņš at Georgetown. Indeed, as several Latvian elites pointed out, such Western credentials were viewed as 'better.' Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

⁸ The important role of Vīksniņš was mentioned also by a Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Vīksniņš also mentions the important roles not only played by himself, but also by other Latvian-American economists such as Juris Neimanis, Gundars Kings, Uldis Klauss, and Latvian-Canadian Bruno Rebess. Vīksniņš (2008). "The *Georgetown University Syndrome*," p. 110-111.

mentioned above, many Latvians had strong personal links to the West, as many had family that had emigrated to Western countries after 1944. Indeed, as public opinion polls highlight a significant number of Latvians, 28% had close relatives living in the West in 1993.⁹ For comparative purposes, one should contrast Latvia's supporting network of expert Latvian émigré advisors from the West with Belarus's relative lack of close Western cultural networks at the outset of independence in 1991.

As will be discussed in more detail below, Vīksniņš was credited by several elites as having an important influence over the institutional re-constitution of the Bank of Latvia, and in helping to shape its monetary policy programs, as a result of being a key advisor, and because the first Bank of Latvia Governor, Einars Repše and also his successor Ilmārs Rimševičs studied under Vīksniņš. Additionally, Vīksniņš was noted as having influence in other areas outside the monetary policy realm, as a result that several key Ministers in the cabinet of Valdis Berkavs Latvia's Way government had also studied under him. These influential figures, which became known as the 'Georgetown Gang,' included Ojārs Kehris, Minister of Economics, Uldis Osis, Minister of Finance, and Jānis Platais, Finance Deputy in charge of revenue. The first Latvia's Way government also included several other well-educated Latvian émigrés that had returned to Latvia, and was elected on a clear policy plan, entitled "Latvia 2000," which laid out a clear policy platform and vision for implementing comprehensive market reforms, which emphasized market freedoms, private property, increased privatization, general overall de-regulation, market competition, and the goal of accession to the European Union. Indeed, Vīksniņš and another Latvian émigré, Juris Neimanis importantly contributed to this document. However, important input was also given by Latvian co-authors and future Bank Latvia Governor Ilmārs Rimševičs, with additional input given by other members of the 'Georgetown Gang' named above and other non-émigré members of Latvia's Way.¹⁰

⁹ Rose and Maley. (1994). *Nationalities in the Baltic States.*, p. 64. It should also be noted that when the EU and NATO were initially cool to Latvian membership, there was important assistance from Latvia's neighbours across the Baltic in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and to a lesser extent Germany, which helped in relaying the message from Riga to other Western European states that Latvia and the Baltic states wanted in. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

¹⁰ This information was described in interviews with several elite. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). For a more

This process remained a mutual exchange of ideas since there was widespread support both amongst Latvian elites and society in favour of the goal of transforming into a liberal-market economy. Indeed, one of the key points emphasized in the drafting of the program “Latvia 2000” was that it must be transparent to the people in laying out a clear vision of the future. As Vīksniņš points out, “in the presentation of the program, great emphasis was placed on popular participation – ‘the citizens of Latvia have to be well-informed about each step of the economic reform,’” and that “‘the reform has to continue despite changes in government.’”¹¹ Moreover, in pointing to the presence of liberal worldviews favouring market reform being shared amongst Latvian elites to counter claims that such influence came merely from international organizations such as the IMF and EU, “Latvia 2000” also “pointed out that Latvia does not need external pressure...from the IMF, but can be trusted ‘to do the right things.’”¹²

Overall, Latvian émigré advisors played more of a key supporting role, since many of the pro-liberal market ideas, traditions and historical memories had been retained throughout the period of Soviet rule. Indeed, émigrés such as Vīksniņš were important in the process of implementing the finer technical details of policy reform through the translation of society’s broad sentiment in favour of liberal-market transformation into concrete policies. As a result, while the ideas on the specific technical aspects of policy implementation might not have been as detailed, the general thrust of these liberal worldviews in favour of de-Sovietization, liberal marketization and a return to Europe were explicit, since on these goals there was no disagreement. Indeed, a strong political will in favour of de-Sovietization, liberal market reform and reorientation towards the West was already present well before these advisors arrived. As one Latvian

detailed description of events in 1993, the “Georgetown Gang,” Latvia’s Way, high education levels of Latvia’s Ways members, and expanded detail of the policy document “Latvia 2000,” see Vīksniņš (2008). “The *Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 110-117. For further details, see also Bungs, Dzintra. (1993a). “The Shifting Political Landscape in Latvia.” *RFE/RL Report*, 2, 12: 28-34; Bungs, Dzintra. (1993b). “The New Latvian Government.” *RFE/RL Report*, 2, 33: 14-17; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*, p. 88.

¹¹ Vīksniņš (2008). “The *Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 111. Indeed, the “program was to be a work in progress – like Rīga itself, no completion date was envisaged (to foil the devil)” (p. 113).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 111. Vīksniņš also notes that while the policy goals and specific means of implantation contained in “Latvia 2000” certainly jived with the ‘Washington Consensus’ held in the IMF and World Bank, it is important to realize that “every country is unique in its own way, and the particular path of transition of Latvia is as much a product of path dependency as it is a product of the particular circle of policy-makers” (p. 113). Similar sentiments were also given by one Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

elite mentioned, the “political will was present since the very beginning, because [even before regaining independence] the first freely elected parliament which was at that time called the Supreme Soviet Council, approved in 1991 the main concept of turning into the market economy and stating that private ownership is the basis of society, and on these main issues there was no discussions.”¹³ Thus, primary credit for the goals of comprehensive liberal market reform should be given to Latvians in Latvia themselves.

Elite Worldviews

At the elite level, Latvia’s predominant liberal political-cultural worldviews resulted in the vast majority of Latvian policy-makers sharing a faith in the market and cult of private property, with the view that market mechanisms and private property were the best, proper and right way to regulate and organize political-economic relations, and promote economic development. As one Latvian elite mentioned, most government elites, including this individual, shared the view that “the market economy would put everything in the place where it should be.”¹⁴ Similar to many in society this immense faith in the market lead to all-things that were seemingly Soviet to be rejected, with a general view favouring anything associated with ultra-liberal marketization. Such policy

¹³ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). See also footnotes no. 11 and 12 above.

¹⁴ This Latvian elite quoted above also offered their opinion that “we are not liberal enough.” Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). During interviews in Latvia, many other elites in addition to those quoted above were quite clear in their own statements inferring clear value judgments that they preferred and viewed the market and a regime of individual private property to be the right, best and most efficient mode in order to organize political-economic relations and to promote long-term economic growth and the well-being of society. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). For the purpose of comparison, it is important to note that several elites exhibited strong liberal-market preference in offering their own criticisms of Belarusian political-economic practices. For example, one elite offered liberal sentiments in regards to Belarus’s lack of openness and restrictive trade policies, and stated that their “philosophy would prefer that the Belarusian economy is more open, more transparent for business, and have less government involvement in regulating...because it’s just too much at the moment in Belarus.” Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). In addition to criticizing Belarusian political-economic practices, others made the liberal preferences open in offering their opinions on the events in Greece following the start of the debt-crisis, and criticized Greece for being too “*socialist*,” whereas Latvia was liberal. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). The revelation of such sentiments is important to infer the high presence of pro-liberal worldviews amongst elites, because it highlights elites’ normative liberal ideational views towards the political-system in Belarus and Greece, and that elites’ prefer limited government interference in the market economy and rule of law in order to promote a friendly business environment.

worldviews came into practice in the policy goals of getting the state out of the role of business management, and substantially removing government planning from all parts of the economy. As one Latvian elite pointed out, “there was very little long term planning within this mindset of the market being regulator which would set everything straight.”¹⁵ Moreover, negative historical memories held by Latvian society and by elites about Soviet times lead policy-makers to show way more liberalism at the time, almost to a hyper extent, in the form that they were more liberal than thou. As will be discussed below, there was a general aversion shared by Latvian elites to any forms of government planning and overt regulation as these would have been viewed to be ‘too Soviet.’

Overall, liberal marketization and integration in Western supranational bodies such as the European Union, and international organizations such as NATO were given top-priority by Latvian elites from the outset upon regaining independence in 1991. Indeed, these goals were intricately connected and part of Latvia’s broader goals of ensuring Latvia’s independence, freedom and its return to Europe. As one Latvian Government Official mentioned, such strong coordination and policy emulation of the necessary *acquis* requirements occurred in Latvia, because “we believed that sooner or later we would become members of the European Union.”¹⁶ Certainly, there was strong influence of Latvia’s historically liberal political-cultural worldviews at play in informing the content of such policies pushing for re-orientation towards Europe. Indeed, such cultural worldviews can be inferred from the comments of former Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Artis Pabriks, who argued that “it is not Latvia that returned to Europe,

¹⁵ This faith in the market and aversion to government planning was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). Additionally as Pabriks and Purs pointed out, “almost every major political party supports the move towards a market economy.” Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 89.

¹⁶ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). Moreover, in reaching the goal of accession to the EU there was quite a strong coordination between all the government ministries and agencies, and the Bank of Latvia. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). For consensus that these were key goals of the Latvian government from the outset, with domestic and foreign policy goals being inter-connected, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 186-187; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 95, 120.

but in fact, Europe that has returned to Latvia...Our accession to the EU and NATO has renewed our historical ties and place in European culture.”¹⁷

Societal Worldviews

However, such policy goals should not also be simply inferred as resulting only from the pro-liberal market and pro-European preferences of Latvian elites. While the liberal political-cultural worldviews of elites were certainly important, such elite preferences cannot be separated from the political-cultural environment in which Latvian elites were situated, where the broad majority of society also shared predominantly liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews favouring reforms. As mentioned above, liberal worldviews favouring market reforms and a return to Europe were present even before Latvia regained its independence, and were widely shared not only amongst Latvian elites but also amongst most of ethnic-Latvian society. Indeed, the goal was clear for a long time, and widely supported by the Latvian public, where de-Sovietization and marketization entailed not just a reintegration with Western Europe, but also a movement away from Russia. Thus, while it is readily apparent that the people who were making decisions had a strong liberal vision of what they wanted, it can also be inferred that most ethnic-Latvians shared similar liberal political-cultural worldviews favouring market reform and that these influenced elites.

Additionally, Latvians desire to join the EU and transform into a liberal market economy, were driven more by political-cultural ideas that judged this to be the ‘right’ and ‘natural’ course for Latvia, rather than by rational materialistic motivations of Latvians seeking material benefits from the economic spoils of accession. Such motivations were inferred in the observations given by several Latvian elites when discussing Latvian motives for EU integration and transforming into a liberal-market economy. To illustrate, one elite noted that “there was always the idea to create the market economy here, and...the feeling that we want to go into NATO and the European Union...I think everybody will say that the EU was inevitable...it was just natural to be

¹⁷ Quote from Pabriks in ‘Forward’ to Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 5, 510. Additionally, a former Latvian diplomat, Ojārs Kalniņš offered as similar cultural assessment where he stated that “‘I never say that Latvia returned to Europe, since we never left Europe. Europe, which abandoned and forgot us in 1940, has returned to us.’” Quote in Rislakki. (2008). *The Case for Latvia.*, p. 16.

there.”¹⁸ Similarly another Latvian elite mentioned that “this country [Latvia] has been so keen to join the European Union and NATO...without really any second thoughts...it was just clear...the natural solution would be the EU, so it was pretty straightforward.”¹⁹ Additionally, in regards to EU integration, another Latvian elite mentioned that a common view shared amongst elites and the Latvian public at the time was that “Latvia was returning to its rightful place as a European country.”²⁰ Overall, political-cultural worldviews can be inferred to be in play here since such policy ideas and goals were seen to be the *inevitable*, *natural*, and *rightful* course of action.

Similar comments were also made by other Latvian elites to the effect that there was always a long-term outlook that Latvia would be a democracy, market and moving towards eventual membership in the EU, and that such goals were generally supported with little opposition within ethnic-Latvian society. As one Latvian elite pointed out, “in 1990, the people were positively for the free market, and there was widespread support for doing that.”²¹ Similarly, another Latvian elite observed that “on the whole since 1991, I don’t think there has been any serious opposition to the market economy...no, definitely not.”²² Thus, while it is readily apparent that the people who were making decisions had

¹⁸ Additionally, one could infer a clash of cultural worldviews when it came to situating Latvia and Russia, as this same elite offered their opinion that “Russia is a strange place, Russia is not Europe. The Baltic’s, that’s Europe.” Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

¹⁹ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

²⁰ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). For Latvian companies and entrepreneurs establishing trade links with Western markets, while such behavior at first glance appears to be based simply on economic rationality, one could also argue that political-cultural worldviews were also shaping what was seen as rational, since it can be argued that Latvian businesses were gravitating to political-economic environments that they culturally knew how to best operate in. This is because Latvia was transforming into an liberalized market economy similar in openness to the EU common market, which made Western Europe appear as a *natural* market, while at the same time, many Latvian business and individual economic actors found it quite difficult and *unnatural* to operate in the cultural alien political-economic environment of Russia with its continuing abundance of regulatory restrictions. As the above noted elite pointed out, “there was a *natural reorientation* from the Soviet Union/Russia to the West in the Baltic countries.” *Ibid.* Similar observations were mentioned by another Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

²¹ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

²² Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar consensus on there being widespread support for reforms and “no big opposition,” was given by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). The popular support for reforms

a strong liberal vision of what they wanted, it was the people that ultimately had to elect these parties, which infers that there was similar attitudes shared by elites and the public, especially in regards to thinking about the general goal about moving to a market economy and membership in the European Union. To illustrate, *Eurobarometer* surveys conducted during the early 1990s show that a large majority of Latvians consistently supported the goal of membership in the EU, where yes responses to membership number 78% in 1991, 72% in 1992, and 80% in 1995.²³ Such pro-Western, pro-European and pro-market worldviews can also be inferred when examining various public opinion, which will be discussed in the sections below.

Furthermore, even if the Latvian public did not know all the finer details of market capitalism, there was nonetheless a general shared faith in the market and cult of private property, as most in society favoured the general ideal of the market as symbolizing freedom. As mentioned above, the widespread idea in favour of pursuing the general push of moving to a market economy was generally supported with little opposition within ethnic-Latvian society. Overall, the core of this sentiment was influenced by Latvia's predominantly liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involved strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, private property, and a limited role for the state in the economy.

The strong individualist ethos characterizing Latvian political-cultural worldviews played a big role in influencing Latvian preferences for liberal-market reform, increasing individual freedoms, and reducing the role for the state. To illustrate this strong willed individual ethos permeating Latvian political-cultural worldviews, it was mentioned by one Latvian that in regards to Latvians individualist ethos, "you can see that the people don't wait for the state to do that much...it's true, one of the liberal characteristics is that the people stay on their own."²⁴ At a basic level, Latvians liberal-individualist political-

was also mentioned by Viksniņš (2008). "The *Georgetown University Syndrome*," p. 117; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*, p. 89.

²³ Commission of the European Communities. (1992). *Central and Eastern European Barometer: Ten Countries Survey*. Public Opinion about the European Community, No. 2. Commission of the EC., p. 44; Commission of the EC. (1993). *Central and Eastern European Barometer: Eighteen Countries Survey*. Public Opinion about the European Community, No. 3. Commission of the EC., p. 49; Commission of the EC. (1995). *Central and Eastern European Barometer: Eighteen Countries Survey*. Public Opinion about the European Community, No. 5. Commission of the EC., p. 56.

²⁴ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010). Inferences to a strong individualist ethos influencing Latvian preferences was also given by other elites. Latvian Former Senior

cultural worldviews can be seen in that Latvians are strong supports of individual rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of conscious, freedom of opinion, freedom of choice, and freedom of association.²⁵ Such observations are corroborated by public opinion data, where a large majority of ethnic-Latvians placed significant emphasis of the necessity of individual freedom, which was much higher relative to responses given by Belarusians. For instance, far fewer Belarusians responded in the poll that one of the most basic fundamental individual freedoms, namely that of freedom of speech is absolutely necessary, with only 25% of Belarusians overall, and 18% of Belarusian-Belarusians giving an unconditional yes response. This stood in contrast compared to the large majority of 60% of ethnic-Latvians that unconditionally said yes to the necessity of having such individual freedoms (see Figure A.17 in the Appendix).

Latvians liberal-individualist worldviews can also be seen in the anti-statist attitudes of Latvians, and their general loathing of big-government. For instance, such an individualist and anti-statist mindset of Latvians, can be inferred from where one Latvian elite observed that “Latvians definitely don’t like paying taxes, and they don’t want bureaucratic interference... it has to do with the belief that the money you pay on your taxes is not well spent.”²⁶ Similarly, another Latvian elite candidly remarked that “there is this huge skepticism in this country about government control...because they mistrust the state.” When this Latvian elite elaborated on these anti-statist attitudes, it was pointed out that Latvians are...

economically conservative [liberal] in the sense that we don’t believe in the state. It’s yourself you can be most reliant on...You believe in yourself, your family, your friends, and so on...[with the view that] big government is bad...and the state only creates trouble. It doesn’t really help you with much...but creates trouble, and it takes some of your money, that’s taxes.²⁷

Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

²⁵ Such values were mentioned by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

²⁶ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

²⁷ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). A strong individualist ethos and anti-statist mindset was also mentioned by another elite. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

This liberal-individualist mindset was further reinforced by the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories that Latvians held of the first period of Latvian independence from 1918-1940, and the memory of having this independence extinguished by Soviet/Russian aggression and having Communism forcefully imposed without the peoples' consent. As previously mentioned, such historical memories were conveyed and passed down in Latvian families from generation to generation in the form of idyllic stories of the first period of Latvian independence, as a time where Latvia was free, democratic, individualistic, capitalist and prosperous. These worldviews and historical memories were core components informing the preferences and policy goals of both Latvian elites and those in general society. To illustrate, one Latvian elite mentioned...

before the Second World War, Latvia was a really successfully developed country, under democracy and private initiatives, with agriculture really on a high level...people remember this time.... And this [historical memory] helped us to go further in the future,...we wanted to create this same democracy and this same country as in our minds.²⁸

Indeed, positive historical memories and the desire to re-establish as many continuities and connections with the first period of independence was an important reference point informing and strengthening the robustness of Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews favouring liberal market reform. Thus, even though the times had change dramatically, there was a strong mood in post-1991 Latvia that desired to recreate and reestablish continuity with the freedom idealized in the historical memories of the first period of independence, since this time period independence was viewed all that was right, moral and good. Indeed, many viewed de-Sovietization and reforms towards a liberal market economy as simply the right way to live. This was apparent in the visions informing the goals of reform, which were influenced by worldviews and historical memories of Latvians that desired to return to, and reestablish a vision of how Latvia was perceived in the past when it was untainted by Soviet rule. As a result, it can be inferred that many of these political-cultural worldviews exemplified in the strong faith in the

²⁸ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). Similar observations were also given by other Latvian elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

market and cult of private property were informed by cultural themes playing on nostalgic historical memories of the first era of independence, especially those of the independent and prosperous Latvian farmers during this period. Overall, such positive historical memories and a desire to reestablish firm connections and continuity with the first period of independence, not only influenced policies like the re-establishment of the Latvian Constitution and civil law, but also had an influence on liberal market reforms, with the re-establishment of the similar institutional structures in the Bank of Latvia, privatization, land restitution, and also in regards to citizenship laws.

Clash of Cultures and Citizenship

While one might find it difficult at first glance to draw a correlation between citizenship laws and liberal market transformations, the re-adoption of citizenship laws designed to re-establish continuity with the interwar republic, whereby only those and their descendents who could trace their residence in Latvia to before 1940 were granted automatic citizenship, had significant impact related to political-economic reforms. Indeed, these citizenship laws were important and had immense political-cultural repercussions, because the 1940-clause restricted from citizenship the vast majority of ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers that had been moved into Latvia by the Soviet regime after 1945, and thus quite literally made ethnic-Latvians masters of their own political domain, since Latvians were the overwhelming majority of citizens and voters.

While some might view sentiments favouring calls for stopping ethnic-Russian/Slavic migration into Latvia and strict citizenship laws as simply influenced by strong nationalist sentiment, it would be incorrect to argue that such laws were primarily adopted as a result of strong-nationalism that simply desired to act as payback or “correctives” for the previous “Soviet ‘equality’ that had privileged ethnic-Russian in terms of housing, jobs, language and power.”²⁹ This is because ethnic-Latvian society was not simply thinking along those lines. For instance, if one examines polling data from 1993, 1995, and 1996, which asked ethnic-Latvians if they agree with the statement that ‘when jobs are scarce, employers should give jobs to ethnic-Latvians,’ those who

²⁹ While it is correct to argue that citizenship laws were “correctives’ to distortions caused by [Latvians] political powerlessness” under Soviet rule, it is unlikely that such motives were based on nationalism with the goals of material gain and/or revenge as Eglitis infers. Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 115.

agreed only numbered 39% in 1993, 49% in 1995, and only a slim majority of 52% in 1996 (see Figure A.18 in Appendix).

Arguments utilizing nationalism as an explanatory variable prove also problematic when comparing similar polls conducted by the World Values Survey, where one is able to compare results in both Latvia and Belarus from 1996, in regards to the question of whether employers should give priority to people of the titular nationality. Interestingly, the results of this poll illustrate that 73.3% of Belarusian agreed, which far exceeded the 41.1% of Latvians that agreed.³⁰ Furthermore, Latvians also displayed quite liberal tendencies in regards to educational policies, which allow ethnic-minorities to be educated in their native-language.³¹ If it was simply strong nationalism that was at work, it seems highly probable that such provisions for the state-support of public education for minorities in their native language would have been cut. Indeed, Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews can be seen in this regard in Figure A.19 in the Appendix, which illustrates that when polled, ethnic-Latvians strongly favoured the rights of students to be educated in the native language of their parents.

Additionally, some have utilized National Identity explanations to argue that strong nationalist ideas were played on by Latvian elites for instrumental purposes to increase relative economic gain, in order to exclude political opponents. For instance, several have argued that nationalist ideas worked as an "exclusionary ideology," which was utilized in the self-interest of "political entrepreneurs of the Baltic republics," who "had a special incentive to mobilize ethnic resources when the old power base was eroding," because "independence and ethnic domination became the best guarantee for their careers."³² In other words, such National Identity explanations argue that since

³⁰ In 'Politics and Society' section of World Values Survey. (1996). <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

³¹ Several Latvian elite mentioned this cultural liberalness towards minority ethnic groups in Latvia. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010). It is true that there is some xenophobia present in Latvia, as well as socially-conservative values related to public morality, which is seen in higher levels of homophobic sentiment. While such views are not shared by the majority, it is important to point out the presence of such values amongst a minority. Such observations were mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

³² See Steen. (2000). "Ethnic Relations, Elite and Democracy in the Baltic States.," p. 70; Linz and Stepan. (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; Laitin. (1991). "National Uprisings in the Soviet Union"; Feldmann. (2001). "The Fast Track from the Soviet Union to the World Economy."

many ethnic-Russians living in Latvia had played a dominant role in administering the Soviet political-economy, these laws acted instrumentally to exclude large numbers of potential opponents, while at the same time materially benefiting local national-elites.

Certainly, it can be argued that Latvians, from early on, saw the importance in “the competition for relative power and position,”³³ within the newly independent Latvian state, and that this was an important reason for having an exclusive citizenship regime. This is because Latvians constituted only a small majority of 52% of the entire population upon regaining independence, which meant that an exclusive citizenship regime would disproportionately favour ethnic-Latvians. However, while it might be accurate that ethnic-Latvians gained a dominant position in the administrative apparatus of the government after independence, it is far from conclusive that the sole motivating reason for such a change resulted from purely rational, instrumental and materialistic calculations. In other words, such instrumentalist theories of Nationalism miss the point that such laws might have been more than just attempts to utilize high levels of crass nationalist sentiment as means to increase the material gain of politically astute elite.

Overall, evidence indicates that such changes in personnel did not result from the motivation to gain rent-seeking opportunities. As one Latvian [Economist] Non-Governmental Elite noted, “I don’t think the system was designed for some kind of special interest in mind.”³⁴ This is because the increasing reform occurring in Latvia, and the steady dismantling of the structures of the Soviet command economy throughout the 1990s, removed many of the old Soviet-era mechanisms and opportunities that government elites could use for rent-seeking. Additionally, if such policies were driven purely by instrumental motivations alone, it seems more likely that non-core political institutions, where opportunities for rent-seeking are more readily available, would have seen extensive personnel changes as well.

The main problem of National Identity formulations that incorporate instrumentalist explanations is that these theories tend to overemphasize that ideas are used instrumentally in the “self-interest” of individual actors, which in effect places ideas as a secondary explanatory variable. As was apparent from the example of Latvia’s

³³ Karklins. (1994). *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy.*, p. 7.

³⁴ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). This was echoed by a Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

citizenship laws, such theoretical conceptions do not properly acknowledge that ideas have deeper roots, and that the adoption of certain ideas might go beyond simple rational material calculations. In particular, these theories tend to ignore the prospect that domestic factors, such as historic political-cultural worldviews may be acting as the driving independent causal variables behind these legal structures.

As evidence indicates, the dominance of ethnic-Latvians was most concentrated in the core institutions of government decision-making, as opposed to lesser institutional apparatuses of government. Thus, many of the large Soviet-era state-owned enterprises were heavily staffed and predominantly managed by ethnic-Russians or Sovietized/Russianized Latvians during Soviet rule, and remained so in the immediate period after regaining independence. However, in regards to the core institutions where the reform agenda was implemented, such as the Bank of Latvia, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economics, the Latvian Privatization Agency, and other key bodies, ethnic-Russians/Slavs were largely excluded. Specifically, the Bank of Latvia is a good example where for many years there were hardly any ethnic-Russians.³⁵

At the elite level, the restrictive citizenship laws helped make bureaucratic personnel changes to remove the old Communist guard from key positions of influence. This was important in the minds of many Latvian elites and those in society, as there was a widely held view that “inclusion of Russians in the elite structure was seen as a real threat to national culture and independence.”³⁶ Since the large Soviet era state-owned enterprises were heavily staffed and predominantly managed by ethnic-Russians or Sovietized/Russianized Latvians during Soviet rule and in the immediate period of regaining independence, such views were not necessarily misplaced. This is because there was a clash of cultural worldviews seen with significant resistance to liberal reforms from this group, as most held highly pro-Russian/Soviet and illiberal political-cultural worldviews that were out of touch with the liberal-democratic, and market-

³⁵ Things have changed in more recent years where some ethnic-Russian/Slavs that have become naturalized citizens have been admitted into the Bank of Latvia. However, this was after these personnel would have first received a firm grounding in pro-liberal economics through their educational training. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

³⁶ Steen, Anton. (1997). *Between the Past and the Future: Elites, Democracy and the State in Post-Communist Countries. A comparison of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Aldershot: Ashgate., p. 54.

capitalist environment that Latvia was transitioning into.³⁷ Here, it should be mentioned that in the early stages Latvia faced resistance to its monetary reforms from many of the ethnic-Russian or Sovietized/Russianized Latvian managers of the large Soviet-era state-owned enterprises. As former Latvian Minister of Finance, Uldis Osis, pointed out: “representatives of big enterprises were opponents to the introduction of the Latvian ruble...and were interested in a united economic area.”³⁸ Moreover, managers of the all-Union Soviet industrial enterprises “also directed their fire against the Bank of Latvia’s policy of ‘tight money and tight credits.’”³⁹

Additionally, there was significant resistance from this group to early attempts at privatization of the large-scale heavy industries. Specifically, in regards to the former all-Union enterprises that were directly linked into the Soviet military-industrial complex and controlled by Moscow, significant problems in trying to facilitate early privatization were caused by strong resistance to the overall goals of reform and privatization from the predominantly ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers within these enterprises that had remained in their positions in the immediate aftermath after regaining independence. As one Latvian elite pointed out, not only was there significant resistance from this group to early attempts at privatization, initially, “the managers of these companies were directly opposing the whole idea of Latvia being independent of Russia.” Later on, it was mentioned that there was political and economic resistance from these groups, because “they wanted to create their own holdings and keep a certain level of linkage with Moscow, and these managers were not adapted to any kind of market decisions” which would have been necessary in Latvia’s rapidly transforming political-economy.⁴⁰ While one might be tempted to look to Rationalist explanations to understand ethnic-

³⁷ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). For evidence and consensus pointing to pro-Soviet and illiberal worldviews, values, traditions and habits amongst the ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers of Soviet enterprises, see Smith, Graham, Aadne Aasland, and Richard Mole. (1994). “Statehood, Ethnic Relations and Citizenship.” In *The Baltic States*, ed., Graham Smith. New York: St. Martin’s Press., p. 202; Riekstiņš. (2005b). “Colonization and Russification of Latvia,” p. 241.

³⁸ Quote from Uldis Osis in Viksniņš. (2008). “*The Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 116. Mentioned also by a Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

³⁹ Bungis. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia,” p. 36. Additionally, an “initial antagonism of various groups,” is also hinted at by Repše. (2000). “Latvia,” p. 17.

⁴⁰ The above quotes come from a key Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). This was also pointed out by other elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010);

Russian/Slavic managers' resistance to privatization, such explanations prove inadequate. Quite simply, Soviet era managers held worldviews that were contrary to the worldviews favouring liberal reform amongst their Latvian counterparts.

From an understanding utilizing political-cultural worldviews as the explanatory variable, one can see how the ideological resistance within these bodies from the old-guard ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers was driven more by their illiberal and Sovietized worldviews that resulted in opposition to liberal structural reforms and privatization, and which were beholden to Moscow because the former illiberal policy methods and orientation towards Russia were normatively viewed as the 'right,' 'best,' and 'natural' methods to promote both general economic development and personal gain.⁴¹ Moreover, even though these managers might have been seeking gain, it is important to understand that corruption and rent-seeking were not something new to these managers after 1991, since such problems were endemic to Russian/Soviet political-economic organization, and thus should be seen more as a political-cultural way and life and habits, which were buttressed by years of historical memory which viewed such methods as not only working, but also as the 'best,' 'right' and most 'normal' modes of political-economic organization. Overall, this resistance was only finally overcome as a result of strong political will from Latvian political elites and Latvian society which continued to elect pro-reform governments. As a result, the citizenship policy in the long-run acted in a very similar way to the Czech lustrations laws by eventually excluding such pro-Soviet personnel from key administrative positions.

Overall, support for restrictive measures for granting citizenship, and opposition to calls for universal citizenship for all residents were widespread throughout the 1990s. This is illustrated by public opinion polls on such questions (see Figure A.20 in

⁴¹ Additionally, as mentioned above, one can see political-cultural worldviews at play in that the ethnic-Russian/Slavic management that dominated decision-making in former Soviet industrial enterprises, remained fiercely pro-Soviet in their worldviews and habits in the lead-up to Latvia regaining independence, and were opposed to liberal reforms, and also actively supported pro-Soviet groups like the Interfront, and "Equal Rights." For additional evidence and consensus of behavior pointing to pro-Soviet/Russia and illiberal worldviews and habits of this group, see also Smith, Aasland and Mole. (1994). "Statehood, Ethnic Relations and Citizenship.," p. 202; Riekstiņš. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia.," p. 241; Vīksniņš. (2008). "The *Georgetown University Syndrome*," p. 116; Bungis. (1993c). "The Lats Returns to Latvia.," p. 36; Nørgaard et al. (1999). *The Baltic States after Independence*., p. 150; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution*., p. 291; Jundzis. (2009). "The Role of Non-Violent Resistance.," p. 471. This was pointed out by several Latvian elites. See footnote no. 40 above.

Appendix), as well as by the fact that parties that have tended to advocate for the universal option and more political-rights for ethnic-Russian/Slavic residents of Latvia have tended to fair badly at electoral polls. However, ethnic-Latvians have not also supported the more intolerant nationalist arguments in regards to ethnic-minorities. In fact, as mentioned above, Latvia has been quite liberal in maintaining and publically funding education for all minorities in their native language. Additionally, as will be mentioned below, in regards to the economy, Latvians have stayed true to their liberal convictions in not restricting the individual economic freedoms of ethnic-minorities in Latvia, as all residents are accorded the same rights in the liberal market place.

Thus, at a broader societal level, Latvians views on citizenship policy cannot be separated from the Latvian political-cultural worldviews about the negativity of Soviet industrialization, since migration and industrialization were viewed as intricately related issues. Explanations that rely on a National Identity framework of understanding fail to delve into the underlying political-cultural content informing such ideas, especially that these preferences were a continuity of those found with earlier Latvian dissidents demands for economic autonomy in order to counter cultural Russification. Thus, it is important to understand the worldviews that Latvians shared of the policies of cultural Russification and Soviet industrialization, which they perceived as not being separate, but interconnected policies that culturally swamped the country with vast numbers of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people, and almost made Latvians a minority in their own country.

Specifically, Latvians viewed the Soviet political-economic system as alien to their political-cultural way of life, and had a strong desire to promptly de-Sovietize the Latvian political-economy upon regaining independence. Overall, Latvian worldviews abhorred Soviet command-style policy methods which Latvians viewed as culturally alien. As mentioned in the historical sections above, most Latvians increasingly viewed the destruction of Latvia's private farms, and the subsequent Soviet heavy industrial development and its direct connection to the mass inflow of Russian/Slavic settlers into Latvia, Russification of almost all spheres of political-economic life, and the environmental degradation of the Latvian countryside, as a concerted and direct attack on well-being of Latvia's cultural way of life.

The fact that the administrative apparatus and workforce of Soviet industry was disproportionately non-Latvian, and the fact that Russian was the primary language of working communication in Soviet enterprises would have only served to reinforce Latvians' views that such enterprises were culturally alien. Moreover, it should be noted that widespread perceptions of Russian/Slavic settlers as being loyal Soviet citizens, coupled with the view that their presence resulted from forced Soviet migrations were important in shaping views on favouring strict citizenship. Such an outcome in preferences can be inferred from the description given by Dreifelds where he points out that “the legacy of the reality and perceptions of the USSR as a Russian power structure or empire has left many of the people in [Latvia] identifying ‘Soviet’ with ‘Russian.’”⁴² As a result, strict citizenship stemmed directly from worldviews that disliked Soviet industrial activity and viewed Soviet rule as un-natural and illegal.

Overall, Latvians felt right to be threatened, because they legitimately perceived insecurity vis-à-vis Russia, and as a result Latvians tended to view most ethnic-Russians as constituting a “fifth column” and had the “fear that the large Russian minorities would prove to be a Trojan horse in their vulnerable Baltic homeland.”⁴³ To illustrate more concretely, public opinion polls highlight that a sizeable minority of ethnic-Latvians continued to view the ethnic-Russian/Slavic population in Latvia as a threat (see Figure A.21 in Appendix). Indeed, this view of the ethnic-Russian population as a “fifth column” made the “Latvian majority afraid that granting the full scope of citizenship to Soviet immigrants would threaten Latvian ethnic [cultural] identity,” and “challenge the recently regained political independence,”⁴⁴ and desire to de-Sovietize/Russify.

Such worries amongst Latvian society and elites about giving full citizenship to ethnic-Russians were also echoed by several elites. For example, a clash of cultures

⁴² Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 10. See also, Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 223.

⁴³ Nørgaard et al. (1999). *The Baltic States after Independence.*, p. 184, 158.

⁴⁴ Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 77, 80. For consensus on Latvian views of ethnic-Russians operating as a “fifth column” to sabotage change, see Skak and Sorensen. (1999). *The Baltic States after Independence.*, p. 158; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). “Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration,” p. 145; Pettai. (2001b). “Estonia and Latvia,” p. 264-265. Such societal views about hesitancy to give automatic citizenship to ethnic-Russians were echoed by several elites (see footnotes no. 45 to 46 below). It should also be noted that such citizenship laws and firm requirements for naturalization, “also had a legitimate basis in international law, given the illegality of the Soviet occupation.” Pettai, Vello. (2001a). “Estonia: Positive and Negative Institutional Engineering.” Ch. 4. In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe, Volume I*, ed., Jan Zielonka. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 119. See also Riekstiņš. (2005b). “Colonization and Russification of Latvia,” p. 241.

between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russian/Slavic people in Latvia can be inferred from the perceptions of one elite, who mentioned that the “Russian population has this stronger sentiment favouring the system that was in place in the Soviet Union...they don’t really feel connected to Latvia at the moment, and...they don’t really care much about the freedom of our country.”⁴⁵ Additionally, another elite offered the assessment that...

Russians want to live in Latvia, but they also want to have all the same things that are in Russia...They know all the things more in Russia than in Latvia, and they create their own [cultural] environment...and they can’t really understand the country...If we gave citizenship to all the people that were living in Latvia, which are not really worried about Latvian development and the Latvian state,...it would be quite dangerous.⁴⁶

Overall, citizenship laws served a political-cultural purpose, by making Latvians the masters of their own political destiny and to allow for normalization via de-Sovietization. Latvian citizenship laws that required firm rules on naturalization served several political-cultural purposes relating to the goals of de-Sovietization/Russification, and liberal political economic transformation. First, language requirements resulted from historical memory and desire to de-Russify communication in all political-economic spheres and everyday life. This is because bilingualism for Russians would have meant only learning Russian, which was something that was characteristic during Soviet times. Second, there were security reasons, as Latvians wanted to join the EU and NATO, and Latvians were afraid that ethnic-Russians/Slavs would be against this goal. Third, restrictive citizenship laws also were connected to the primary goal of Latvians to tear down all traces of Sovietism, and Latvians were afraid and fearful that if ethnic-Russian/Slavic people had universal citizenship, were aloud to vote, and continued to occupy key positions in the decision-making apparatuses of the state, that this would result in a backslide away from liberal political-economic transformation.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

⁴⁶ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

⁴⁷ Such observations were expressed in an informal conversation with one elite and former Latvian government official in Riga (March 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by other Latvian elites during more formal interviews. See footnotes no. 45 and 46 above. Additionally, Nissinen pointed out that “many Latvians do not want the Russian-speakers to be enfranchised, because they are convinced that the new voters would vote for the Socialists or politicians like Belarusian Lukashenko.” Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 234. Similar observations, where bilingualism was viewed as only encouraging Russians to only use Russian, was mentioned by Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 75.

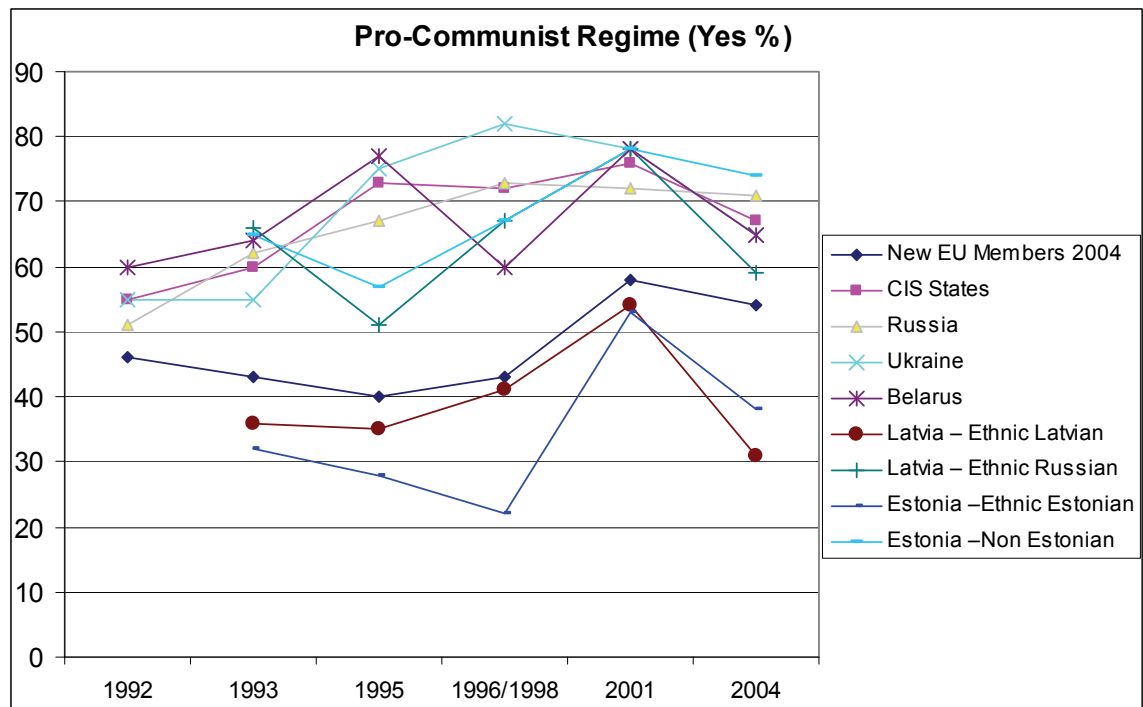
In regards to the last two reasons, one can infer significant political-cultural factors influencing the Latvians decision to adopt more exclusive citizenship and not wanting to share power with ethnic-Russians/Slavs. The significance of political-cultural worldviews relating to political-economic preferences in shaping citizenship laws can be seen in a quote from the Latvian party, Union For Fatherland and Freedom, which stated that ““unless the citizenship question is resolved as we wish, it is impossible to implement any economic programme in the interests of the Latvian people.””⁴⁸ Such views of Latvians were not entirely unfounded, and were shaped by their historical memories of ethnic-Russians dominating the administrative apparatus of the LSSR. Overall, universal citizenship would have allowed ethnic-Russian/Slavic people to vote in large numbers, and this prospect was worrisome to most ethnic-Latvians, since ethnic-Russians/Slavic people were perceived as having divergent worldviews on Russia and the Soviet period, as well as on issues relating to the political-economy, something which the public opinion polls below also give credence.

In order to get a sense of the overall liberal political-cultural worldviews informing Latvians political-cultural preferences at the time it is important to not simply rely on the words and observations of elites, but to also get a firmer grasp of Latvian political-cultural worldviews through an examination of public opinion data collected since 1991. Indeed, in the lead up to independence and even after 1991, many ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers’ attitudes remained highly pro-Soviet. As polls indicate, ethnic-Russian/Slavic peoples’ responses mirror more closely those of the illiberal and collectivist responses of Belarusians, all except in regards to questions of identity. This is illustrated in various public surveys, which show that ethnic-Latvians are more liberal in their responses compared to ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia, whose worldviews show high levels of nostalgia for the Communist system. For example, Figure 5.1 ranks positive responses in regards to individuals’ approval of the political system before perestroika (pro-Communist regime), which highlights that ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia gave responses similar to those of Belarusians in being more pro-Communist than ethnic-Latvians, which tended to give amongst the

⁴⁸ Quoted found in Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 113-114.

lowest pro-Communist responses relative to other new-EU member states and substantially lower than the high average from CIS countries.

Figure 5.1

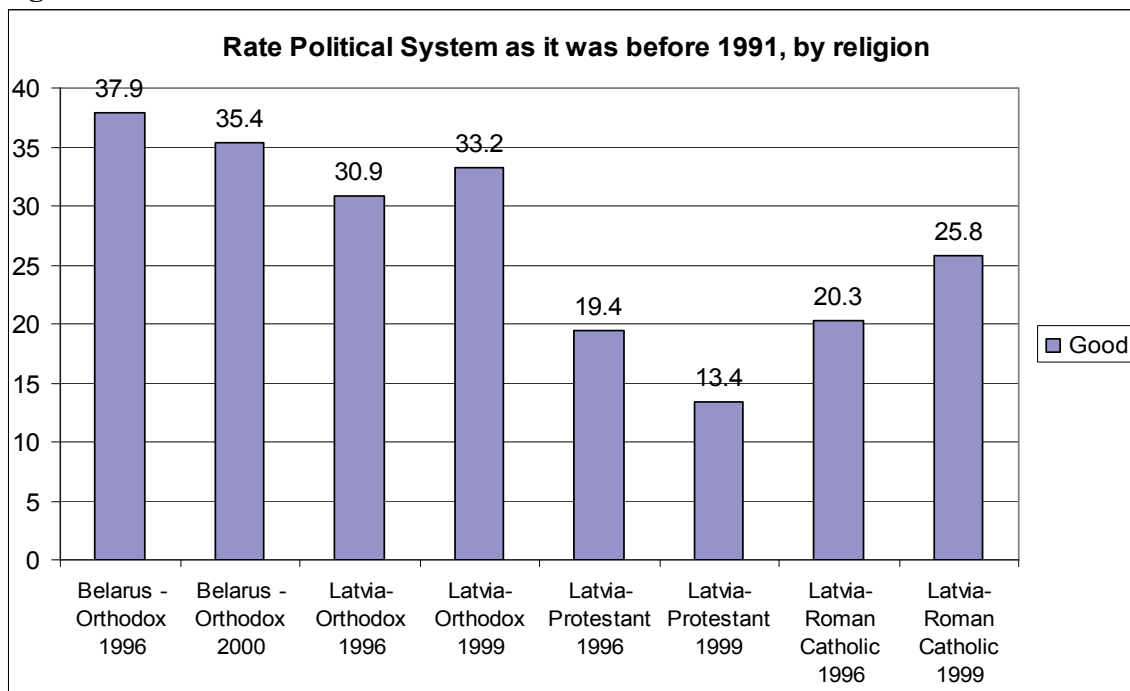


Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 23). 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 34; Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 32). 1995: (Rose 1995: 25; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 72). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 18-19; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 48-49). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 20-21; Rose 2002: 7-8). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 13-14; Rose 2005b: 47; Rose 2006: 57).

To illustrate, in terms of yes responses approving of the Communist political system (pro-Communist regime), in a poll from 1993, 66% of ethnic-Russians/Slavs in Latvia responded yes, which was similar to 64% yes response in Belarus, and nearly double the 36% found amongst ethnic-Latvians. More recently, as Figure 5.1 reveals, in a similar poll conducted in 2004, similar attitudes persisted in that 59% of ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia responded positively, compared to 65% for Belarusians and only 31% for ethnic-Latvians. These results showing higher pro-Communist/Soviet sentiments amongst ethnic-Russians/Slavic people living in Latvia, and Belarusians, compared to the low numbers for ethnic-Latvians are also supported by polling data on similar questions from the World Values Survey. What is also important about the World Values Survey polling results is that data can be broken down by religion, which

illustrates that ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) people living in Latvia gave more positive responses in rating the political system before 1991, compared to ethnic-Latvian (Protestant and Roman Catholic) respondents. Additionally, ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) respondents living in Latvia also mirrored more closely the similar positive responses given by Belarusians (see Figure 5.2 below).

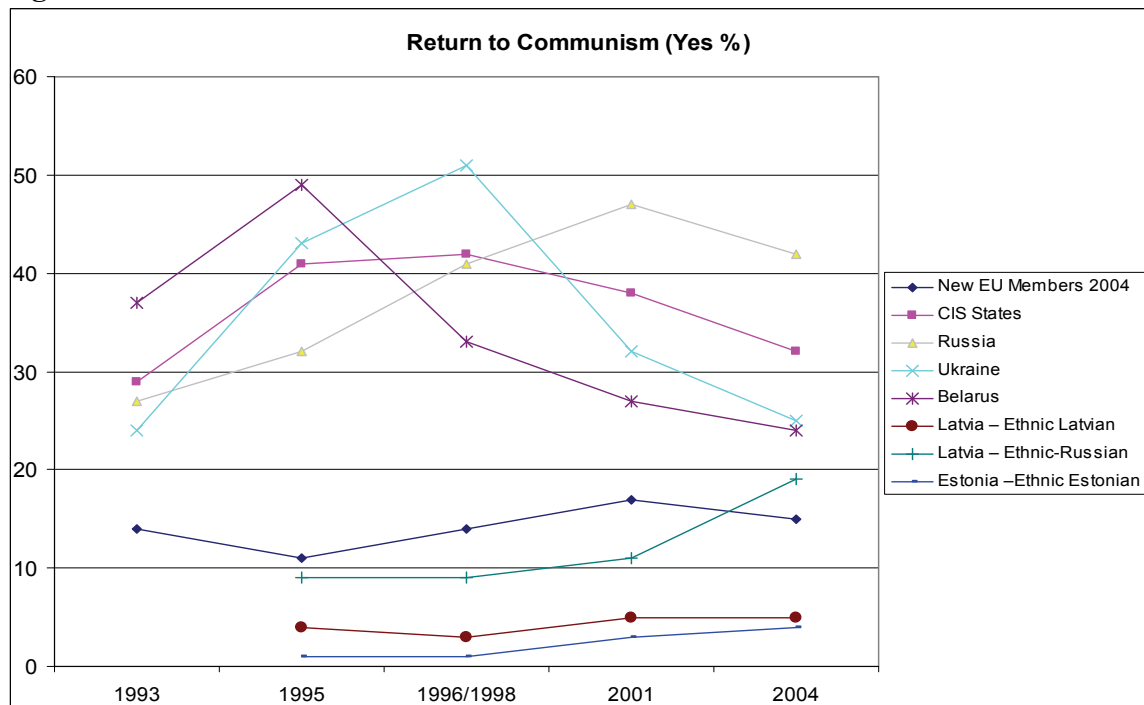
Figure 5.2



Source: Found in 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

Additionally, the higher extent of ethnic-Latvians anti-Soviet worldviews compared to Belarusians and ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia is highlighted in two other public opinion polls. For example, in a poll that asked people whether they favoured a return to Communism, ethnic-Latvians polled no higher than 5%, while Belarusians consistently polled in the double digits (see Figure 5.3 below). Moreover, as Figure 5.3 illustrates, Latvians polled consistently lower than the responses average by other new EU member states.

Figure 5.3



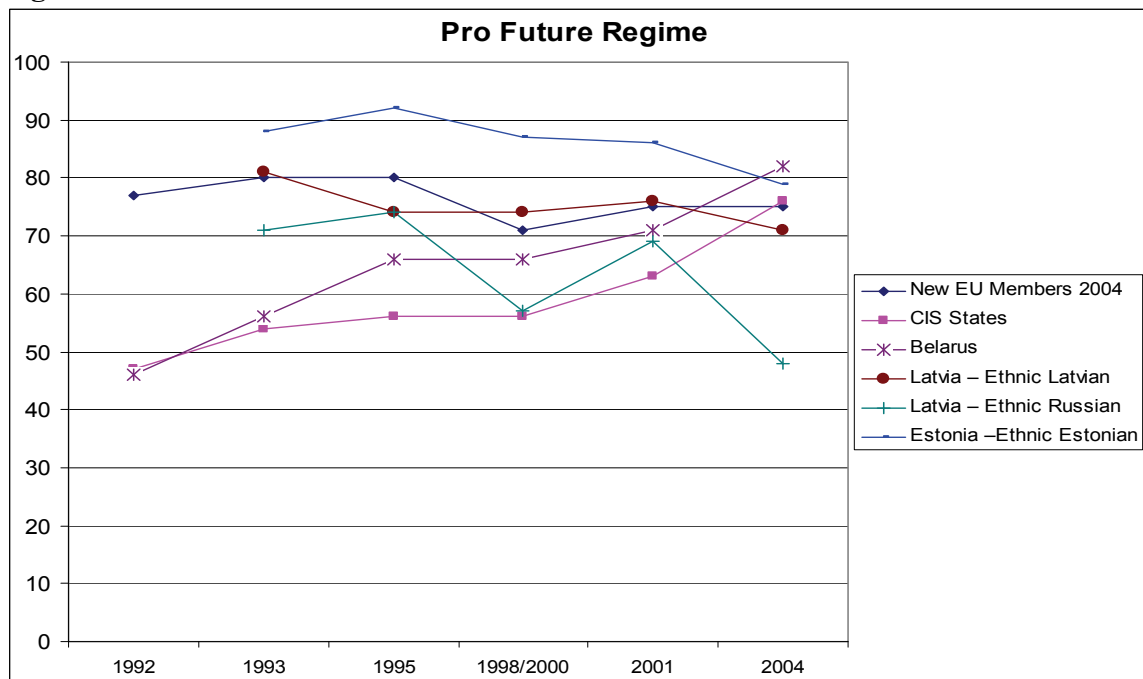
Source(s): 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 43). 1995: (Rose 1995: 35; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 77). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 28; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 53). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 25; Rose 2002: 12-13). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 18; Rose 2005b: 13-14; Rose 2006: 57).

Additionally, results from other polls that also gauge pro-Soviet attitudes, illustrate that ethnic-Latvians have far less nostalgia for the former Soviet Union than both ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia, and Belarusians. For example, in three separate polls conducted in 1995, 1996, and 2000, when residents of Latvia were asked if they thought they ‘would be better off if still part of the Soviet Union,’ ethnic-Latvian responses in the affirmative remained only in the single digits (6%, 7%, and 8% respectively), while ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia responded much more positively giving double digit responses in the affirmative (26%, 43%, and 28% respectively) (See Figure A.22 in Appendix). While Belarusians were not asked the same question exactly, high nostalgia for the former USSR can be seen from a similar question, which asked Belarusians in 2000, 2004 and 2006, if it was a ‘misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists.’ Here, Belarusian responses diverged from ethnic-Latvians and more closely resembled the responses of ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, in expressing greater nostalgia for the former Soviet Union, where Belarusian positive responses numbered 70%, 54% and 39% respectively (see Figure A.23 in Appendix).

Furthermore, in regards to values of freedom, when polled in 1993, 80% of ethnic-Latvian respondents stated that the value of freedom was *very important* to them, while only 38% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents in the same question replied that the value of freedom was very important to them.⁴⁹

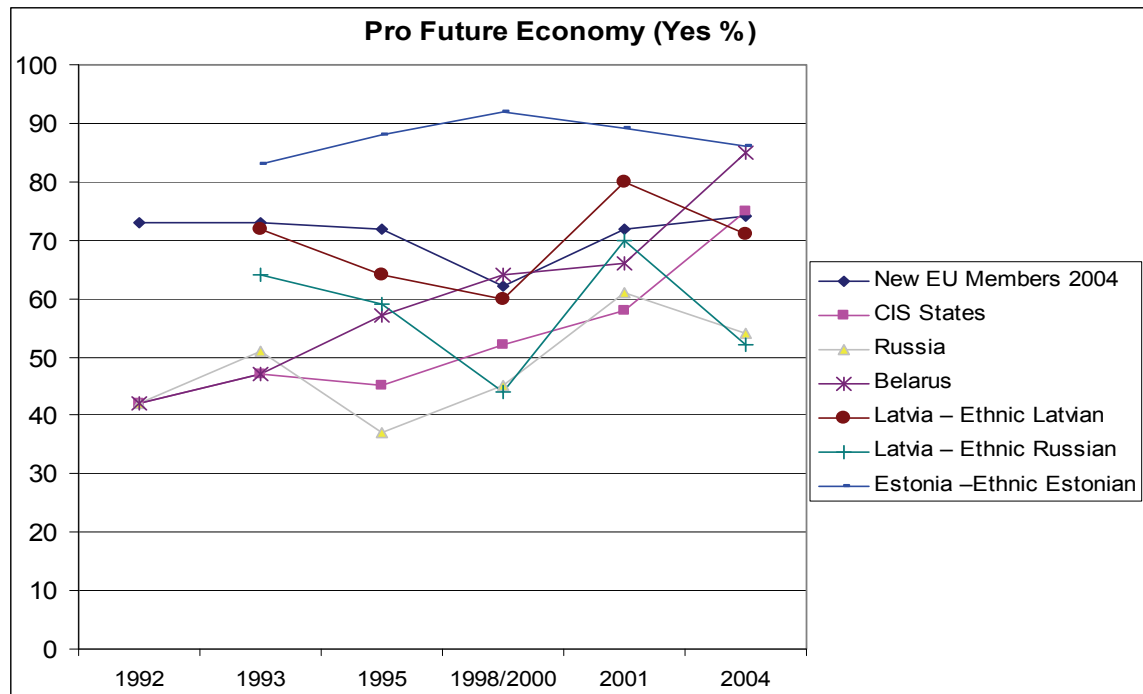
Clashing political-cultural worldviews can also be seen in regards to responses to questions dealing with reform. Since reforms were a work in progress, one can infer differing attitudes towards reform from polls rating positive attitudes towards the future political regime, and future economy. Specifically, in Figures 5.4 and 5.5, ethnic-Latvians ranked substantially higher in their pro-future regime and pro-future economy outlooks than both ethnic-Russians living in Latvia. What is also interesting when comparing ethnic-Latvian responses, which remained relatively consistent throughout various polling years, with the numbers from Belarus, is that Belarusian positive responses increased upwards at the same time Lukashenko was strengthening and consolidating his authoritarian rule.

Figure 5.4



Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 25). 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 34; Rose & Maley 1994: 35-36). 1995: (Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 75; Rose 1995: 26-27). 1998/2000: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 51-52; Rose 2000: 26-27). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 22-23; Rose 2002: 10-11). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 16; Rose 2005b: 50-51; Rose 2006: 57).

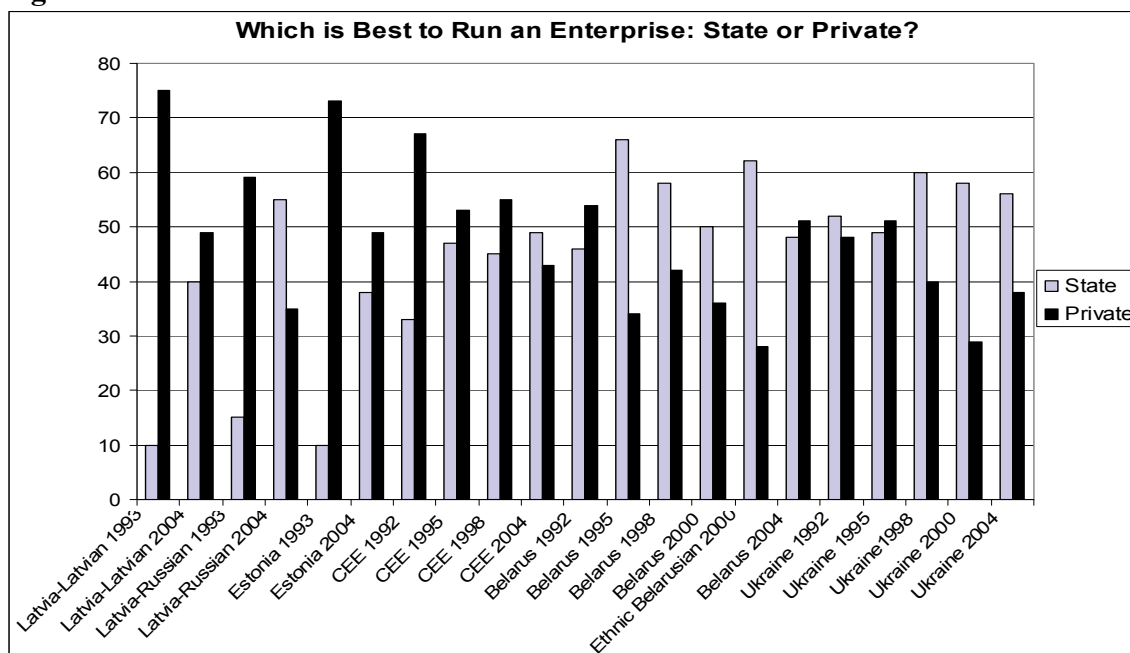
⁴⁹ Rose and Maley. (1994). Nationalities in the Baltic States., p. 46.

Figure 5.5

Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 18). 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 24; Rose & Maley 1994: 28-29). 1995: (Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 66; Rose 1995: 17-18). 1998/2000: Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 45; Rose 2000: 26-27). 2001: (White & Rose: 13; Rose 2002: 26-27). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 7-8; Rose 2005b: 39-40; Rose 2006: 57).

When examining specific questions related to policy reforms, more concrete evidence begins to emerge inferring that important divergences existed between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russians/Slavic people living in Latvia, which polled similar to responses from Belarusians. For example, when examining public opinion in Latvia and Belarus in regards to concrete policy preferences regarding the organization of the political-economy, significant trends are revealed. For instance, in relation to issues of privatization, and preferences regarding private versus state forms of ownership of businesses, in initial public opinion polls conducting in the immediate period following independence, ethnic-Latvian responses placed significantly higher in favour of private enterprise over statist solutions, compared to responses of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia, and Belarusian responses. Additionally, ethnic-Latvians placed higher than Central and Eastern European averages during this time period. This is illustrated by Figure 5.6, which sought respondent's viewpoints in regards to what was viewed as the best way to run an enterprise, which showed that ethnic-Latvians remained consistent in their preferences of favouring private enterprises over the state.

Figure 5.6



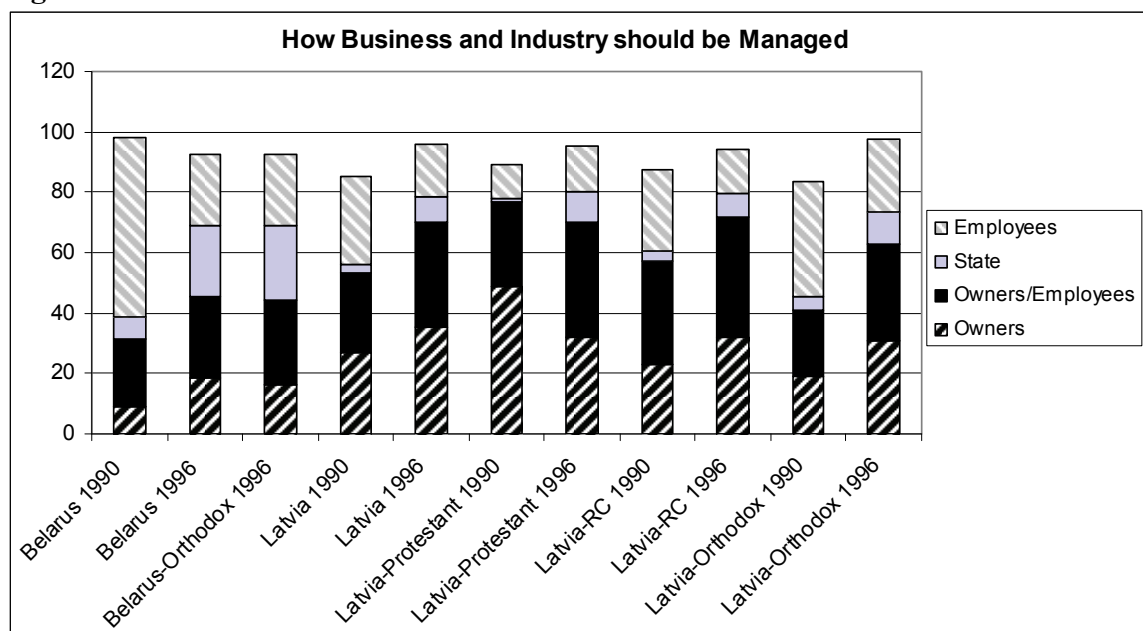
Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerper 1993: appendix, table 22). 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 2-3). 1995: (Rose & Haerper: 71). 1998: (Rose & Haerper 1998: 70). 2000: (White & Rose 2001: 14-15). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 29; Rose 2005b: 69).

In other questions related to privatization, ethnic-Latvians polled substantially higher than ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents, in terms of viewing the policies of privatization as resulting in making the overall economy more productive. As Figure A.24 in the Appendix reveals, 57% of ethnic-Latvian respondents in 1993 agreed that privatization would make the economy more productive, while only 28% viewed this as unlikely, whereas only 41% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents answered that privatization would increase overall economic productivity, with 33% viewing this as unlikely and 25% responded that they did not know. From such responses, one can see how such worldviews helped result in policy preferences that favoured more rapid liberal reforms, since large numbers of ethnic-Latvians associated privatization with positive economic outcomes.

These numbers on privatization are further corroborated by polls conducted by the World Values Survey. Overall, the World Values Survey is important for not only gauging the collectivist or liberal-individualist orientations of these responses, but also in inferring the important influences of historic-religious-cultural influences at play, as there are real differences evident in terms of divergent responses relating to one's religious

denomination. In this regard, Protestant and Roman Catholics would correspond with ethnic-Latvians, while Orthodox respondents would correspond with ethnic-Russians/Slavs in Latvia, and Belarusians in Belarus (see Figure A.25, A.26, and A.27 in Appendix). To illustrate, respondents were asked whether they preferred liberal-individualist forms of management (owners; owners/employees), or collectivist forms of management (state; employees). As Figure 5.7 illustrates, the vast majority of Latvian Protestants that responded (76.7% in 1990 and 70.0% in 1996), as well as the majority of Latvian Roman Catholics (57.1% and 71.6% respectively) were in favour of the liberal-individualist forms of management. In contrast, a much higher preference in favour of collectivist forms of business management were found amongst Orthodox (ethnic-Russian/Slavic) respondents in Latvia, as well as Belarusian and Belarusian-Orthodox respondents. To illustrate, 42.5% (1990) and 35.0% (1996) of Orthodox respondents in Latvia favoured collectivist methods. These numbers were closer to Belarusian responses where 66.7% (1990) and 47.4% (1996) of Belarusians, and 48.3% (1996) of Belarusian-Orthodox respondents favoured collectivist forms of management. Certainly, what is important here is the consistency of ethnic-Latvian responses, and also the fact that divergence was strongest in the early-1990s during the most crucial years of reform.

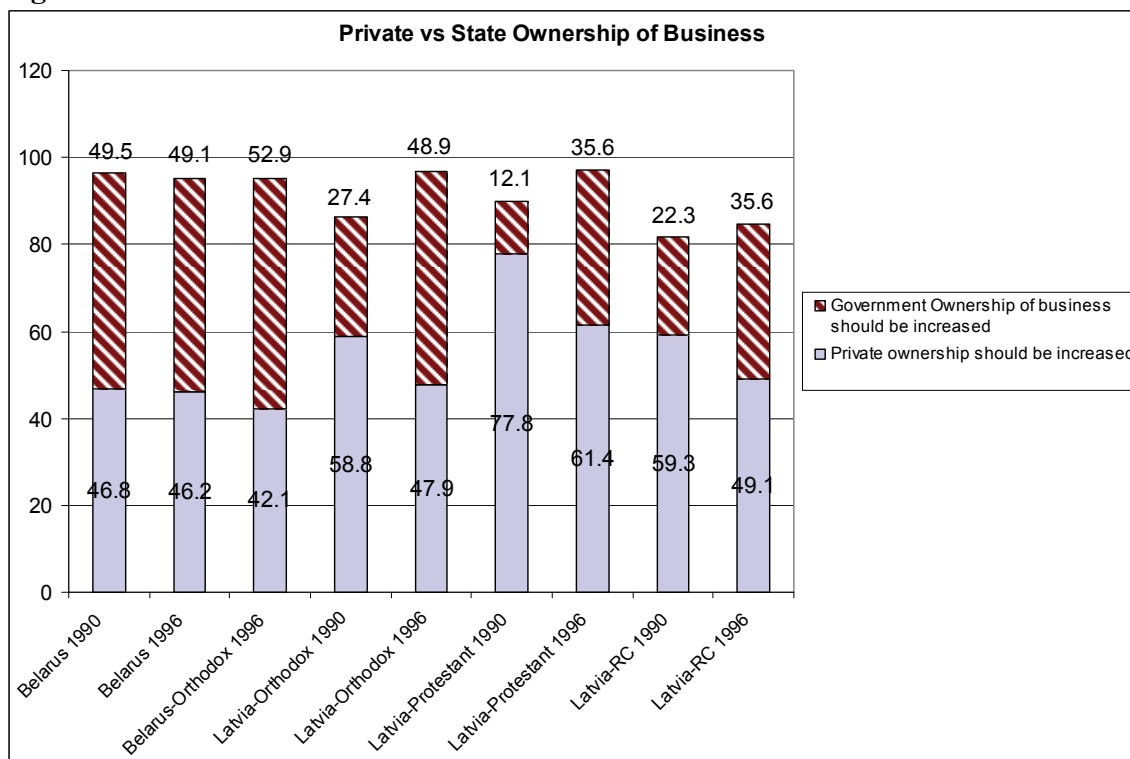
Figure 5.7



Source: See “Rule of Government” and “Attitudes Concerning Society” section(s) in the ‘Politics and Society’ section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1996) <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

Similar results were also found in another World Values Survey that ranked attitudes towards preferences over private versus state ownership. In general, ethnic-Latvian (Protestant and Roman Catholic) preferred private ownership over the state, compared to the lower emphasis placed on private ownership by ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) respondents living in Latvia, and also Belarusian respondents, which both tended also to have large segments still favouring state ownership (see Figure 5.8 below).

Figure 5.8



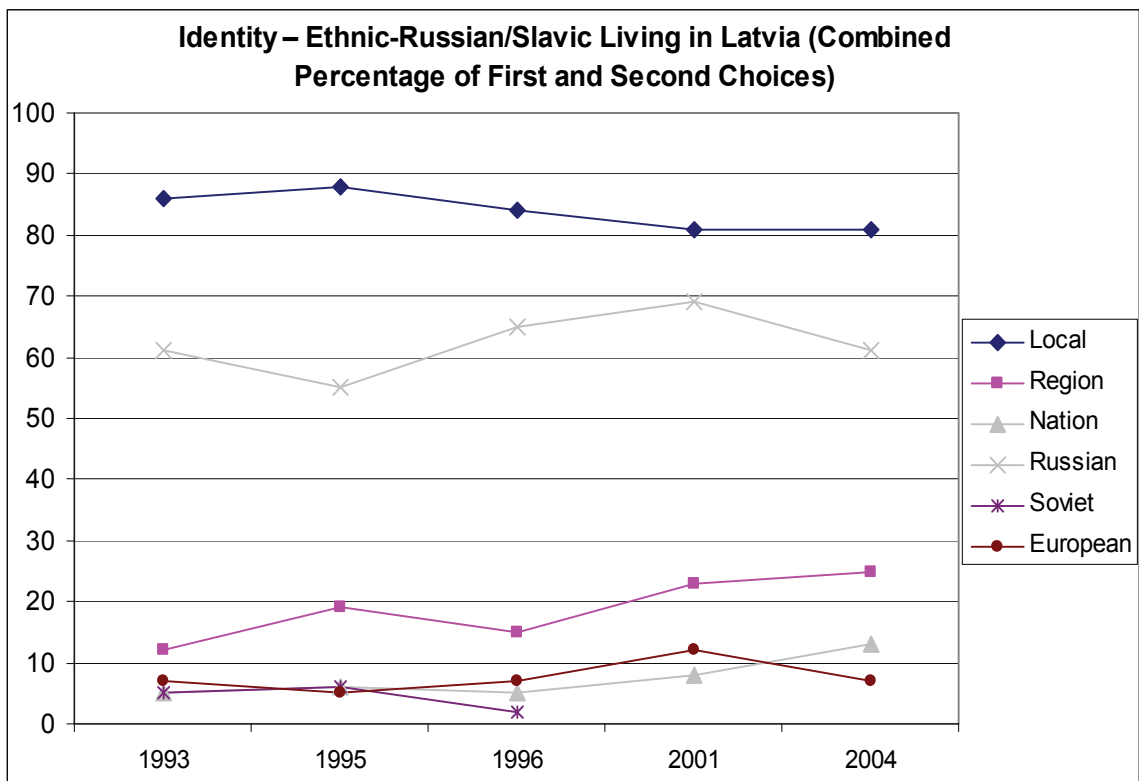
Source: In 'Politics and Society' section in World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

Furthermore, in regards to other polling questions relating to preferences towards economic reforms and market liberalization, a majority of ethnic-Latvians polled exhibited higher liberal-market preferences compared to both ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, as well as Belarusian respondents. For example, in regards to questions relating to preferences of having a secure job versus a job that is well paid, in a poll conducted in 1993, 52% of ethnic-Latvians favoured the well-paid over the secure job (38%), whereas only 42% of ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents favoured the well-paid job over the secure job (45%). These numbers were similar to Belarus, where only 35% of Belarusian respondents favoured the well-paid job, while a majority of 65% favoured

the secured job (see Figure A.28 in Appendix). Additionally, in regards to questions of state control in the economy when it came to creating jobs and controlling prices, the majority of ethnic-Latvians, 58% in 2000 and 2004, consistently preferred the market over the state as the best method for regulating the economy, whereas the majority of ethnic-Russians/Slavs in Latvia favoured statist methods (see Figure A.29 in Appendix).

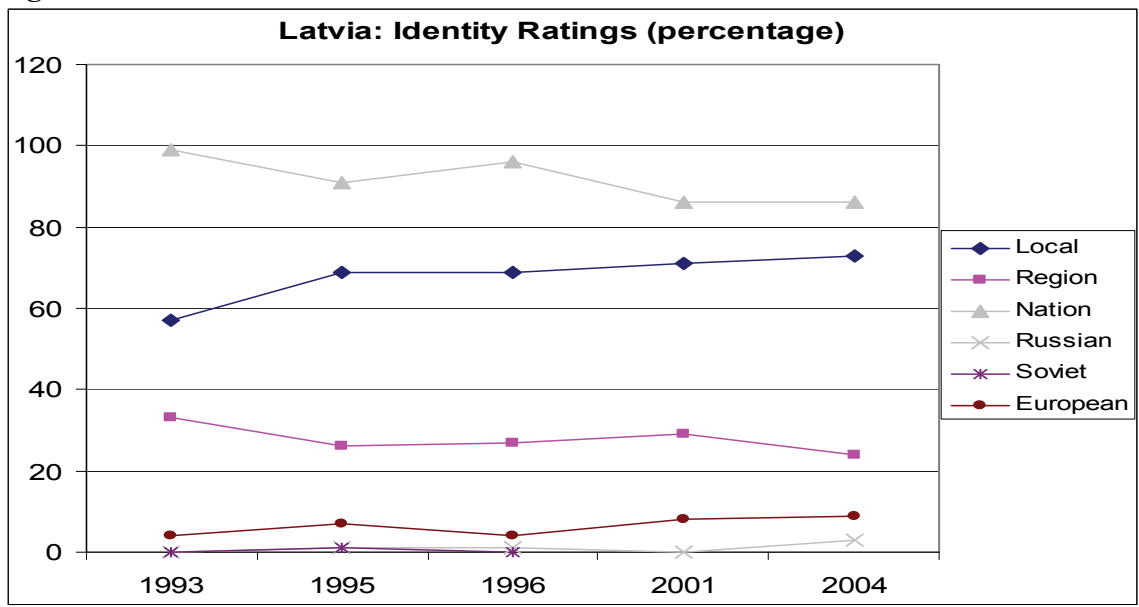
Clashing cultural worldviews can also be inferred as existing between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russians/Slavs in Latvia, when it comes to questions regarding identity. As Figure 5.9 highlights, many ethnic-Russian/Slavic people, which were polled in multiple years since 1991, do not identify a great deal with Latvia, and tended to identify more with Russia. Such numbers stand in stark contrast to the polling numbers regarding identity for ethnic-Latvians and Belarusians, where the vast majority in both countries identified with their nation (see Figure 5.10 for ethnic-Latvians, and Figure 7.1 in chapter 7 for Belarusians).

Figure 5.9



Source: Rose & Maley 1994: 51; Rose 1995: 47-48; Rose 1997: 46-47; Rose 2002: 34-35; Rose 2005a: 22.

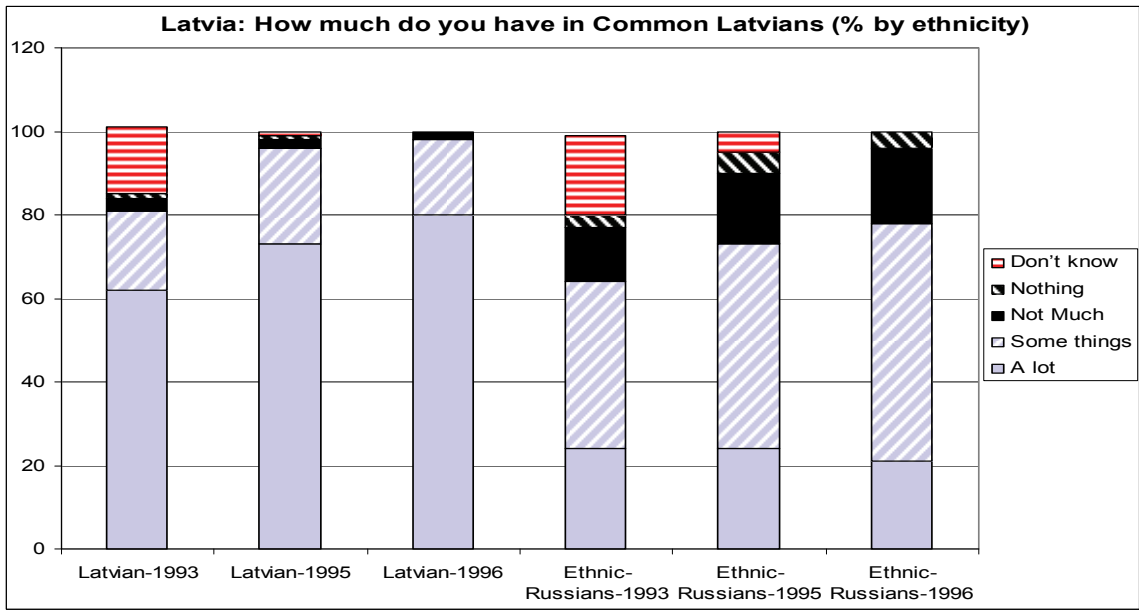
Figure 5.10



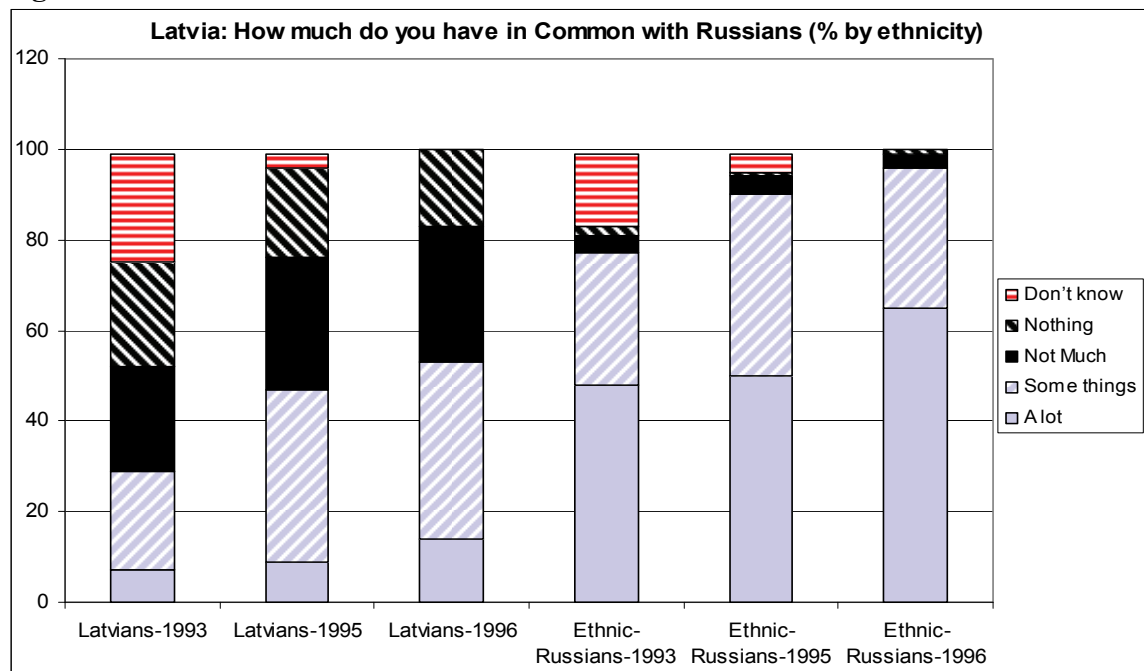
Source: Rose & Maley 1994: 51; Rose 1995: 47-48; Rose 1997: 46-47; Rose 2002: 34-35; Rose 2005a: 22.

Additionally, a clash of cultures between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russians/Slavs is perceptible when examining results from polls asking residents of Latvia whether they identify with certain cultural groups. For instance, both Figures 5.11 and 5.12 reveal that ethnic-Latvians tend not to identify with Russians, while ethnic-Russians identify predominantly with Russians and not so much with Latvians.

Figure 5.11



Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 55-56; Rose 1995: 32-33; Rose 1997: 26-27).

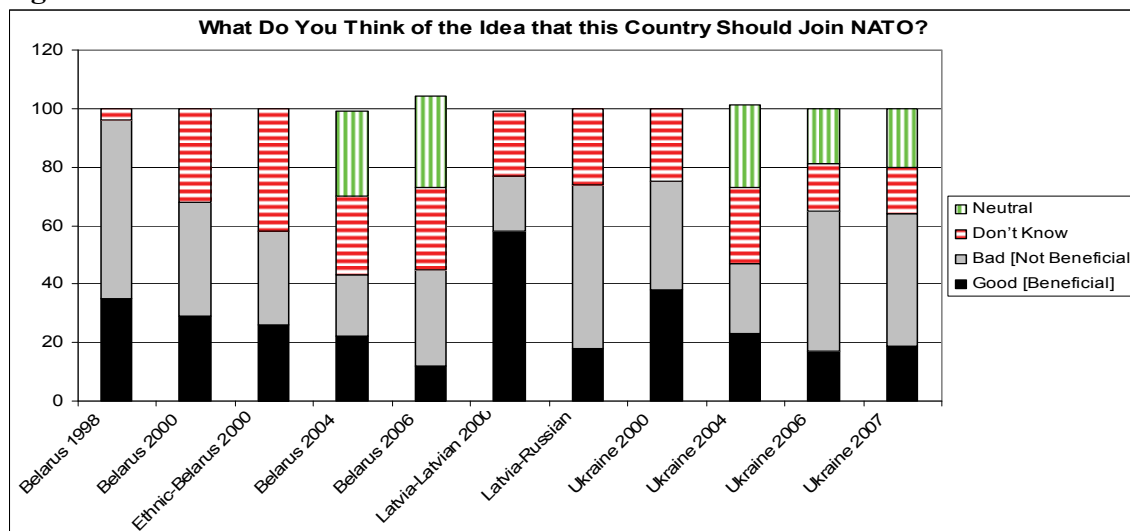
Figure 5.12

Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 55; Rose 1995: 33; Rose 1997: 27).

Here, it is also important to note that the ethnic-Latvians goal of de-Sovietization and marketization entailed not just a reintegration with Western Europe, but also a movement away from Russia. Thus, clashing political-cultural worldviews can be inferred from the fact that ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russians/Slavs diverge in opinion in regards to perceptions of whether Russia or the West was viewed as the most important trajectory for future international relations. Moreover, ethnic-Russian/Slavic responses mirrored more closely those of Belarusian responses to similar questions, which placed greatest importance on future close relations with Russia (see Figures A.30 and A.31 in the Appendix). Additionally, ethnic-Latvians viewed membership in the EU and NATO as security against possible Russian aggression and future attempts to re-exert political-economic domination.⁵⁰ This is illustrated in Figure 5.13, which highlights that ethnic-Latvians held substantially more positive worldviews in regards to the prospect of NATO membership relative to the negative outlooks displayed by ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, whose responses more closely resembled those of Belarusians.

⁵⁰ Several elites mentioned that there was a common view that EU and NATO membership were key in providing security against Russian. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

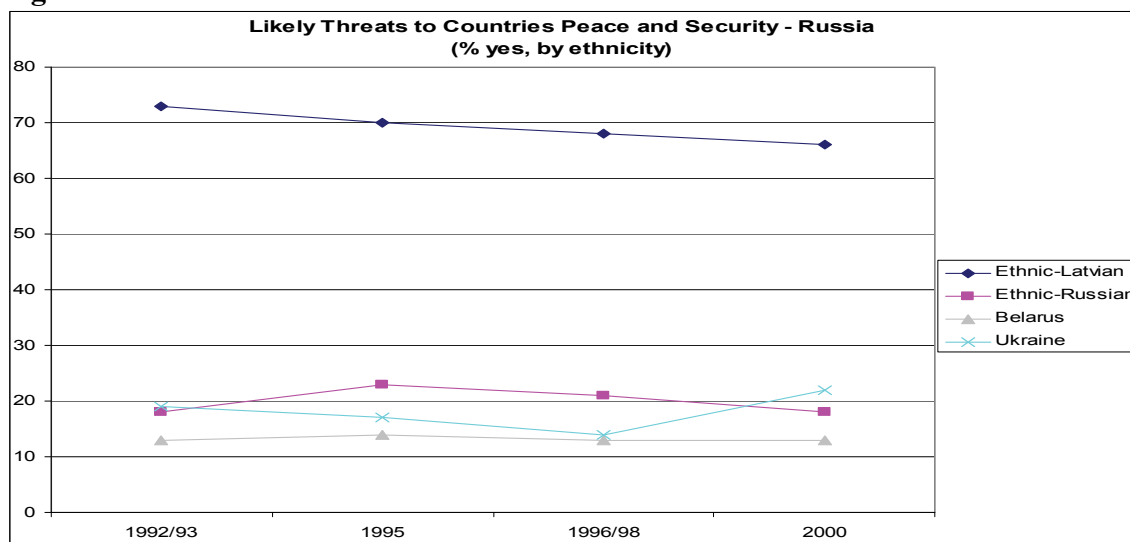
Figure 5.13



Source(s): 1998 (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 77-78). 2000: (Rose 2000: 39-40; White & Rose 2001: 53). 2004-2007: (White & McAllister 2008: 16).

However, such preferences of ethnic-Latvians were not simply security based on relative threat perceptions, but instead informed by Latvians worldviews and historical memories of past Russian aggression, and the very real clash of cultures that was present, as detailed above, during the long Soviet/Russian occupation of Latvia. Indeed, public perceptions about the threat from Russia can be seen in polls, which illustrate that ethnic-Latvia's threat perceptions of Russia differs substantially from Belarusians and also ethnic-Russians/Slavs in Latvia, thus inferring a clash of cultures (see Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.14



Source(s): 1992/93: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 28; Rose & Maley 1994: 43-44). 1995: (Rose

1995: 37; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 83-85). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 34-35; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 63-64). 2000: (Rose 2000: 37; White & Rose 2001: 51-52).

Additionally, it is important to note that many ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers in Latvia felt entitled to automatic citizenship, but were often willing to give little back in return. Thus, while Latvian citizenship laws require that naturalized citizens renounce other citizenships, swear a loyalty oath to the Republic of Latvia, and learn to speak Latvian, when polled only a small minority of ethnic-Russians/Slavs believed that they should have to take such steps. This is illustrated in a 1993 poll, where only 16% thought it necessary to renounce other citizenships, 20% of respondents felt that one should have to give a loyalty oath to Latvia, while only 5% thought one should have to learn Latvian.⁵¹ Additionally, as Figure A.32 in the Appendix illustrates that large segments of ethnic-Russians/Slavs, 34% in 1993, 42% in 1995, 43% in 1996, and 36% in 2000 responded in polls that they should not be made to learn Latvian.

Overall, Latvia's exclusive citizenship policy could be seen as a solution to solve the huge obstacle posed to ethnic-Latvians desire to de-Sovietize, resulting from the fact that ethnic-Russians/Slavs tended to dominate the political-economic decision-making apparatus in Latvia during Soviet times, and also tended to be the biggest supporters of the Soviet regime. Thus, from a political-cultural standpoint, these laws have had significant consequences influencing the shape and transformation of Latvia's political-economic policy behavior since 1991. This is because most ethnic-Russian settlers that came after 1945 did not qualify for automatic citizenship, which meant that they were not allowed to vote or hold state jobs in the Latvian public service. This was important considering that most resistance to liberal transformation, market reforms and de-Sovietization in the post-1991 period have been voiced from "especially those who came to and settled Latvia as the staunchest allies, supporters and defenders of the Soviet regime."⁵² Moreover, as polls conducted during the height of reforms indicate, ethnic-Russians/Slavs tended to situate themselves more on the centre-left of the political

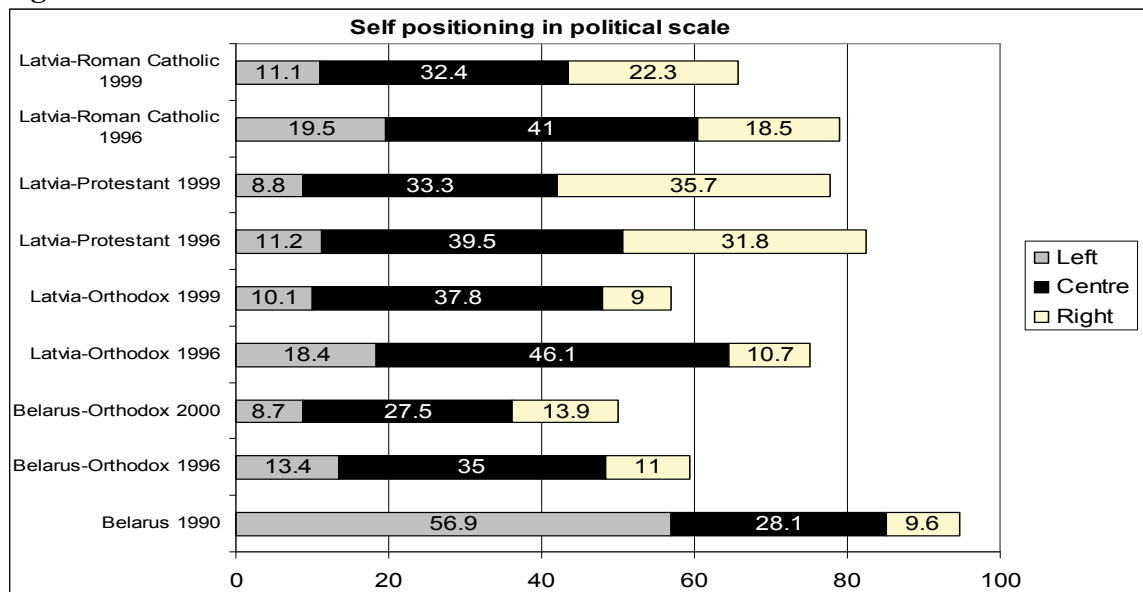
⁵¹ See Smith, Aasland and Mole. (1994). "Statehood, Ethnic Relations and Citizenship," p. 193-194. Indeed, citizenship requirements for naturalization are quite liberal and on par with many other Western countries. According to the Citizenship Laws, signed into Law August 11, 1994, conditions include: permanent residence in Latvia for 5 years, counting from May 4, 1990 [Declaration of Independence]; speak Latvian; know basic principles of Constitution; know the national anthem and history of Latvia; have a legal income; take an oath of loyalty; renounce any previous citizenship, and; excludes those who served in foreign security bodies of the USSR (e.g. KGB), and criminals.

⁵² Riekstiņš. (2005b). "Colonization and Russification of Latvia," p. 241.

spectrum, relative to ethnic-Latvians, which are situated more on the centre-right (see Figure A.33 in Appendix).

These numbers are further supported by similar polls conducted by the World Value Surveys asking respondents to rate their position on a political left-right political-scale. Again, the World Values Survey polls can be broken down based on religion, and results illustrate that ethnic-Latvians position themselves towards the centre-right, in contrast to ethnic-Russian/Slavic respondents, which place themselves towards the centre-left. In general, ethnic-Russia/Slavic respondents also mirrored more closely the centre-left orientation expressed by Belarusians in similar polls (see Figure 5.15). Additionally, as will be discussed in more detail in the section below, actual contemporary voting behavior in Latvia tends to go along cultural lines, with ethnic-Latvians voting predominantly for pro-liberal reform centre-right parties, and ethnic-Russians/Slavs largely voting for the left-of-centre social democratic parties. As a result, the exclusive citizenship law helped to exclude those who would be most likely to object to the Latvians preference for extensive liberal political-economic transformation, since many of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers' attitudes, as the above figures indicate, were highly pro-Soviet, more collectivistic, less favourable towards liberal reforms, and more supportive of closer relations with Russia.

Figure 5.15



Source: See 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1999).

Overall, it was at the broader societal level that restrictive citizenship policies would have their most influence over the reform process. This is because Latvian elites did not operate in a vacuum, but were immersed in Latvia's liberal political-culture, and thus took their political marching orders ultimately from the popular will of voters during elections. Moreover, these laws gave primary political-cultural influence almost exclusively to ethnic-Latvians, both in terms of the percentage of the electorate, and the percentage of deputies in the Saeima, especially compared to results from the last Soviet regional elections in 1990 when all residents were allowed to participate. For instance, by mid 1993, 98% of all Latvians had been granted citizenship, while only 39.0% of ethnic-Russians/Slavs gained citizenship, which left approximately 550,000 Russians without citizenship.⁵³ Thus, as Figure 5.16 below illustrates, while Latvians only made up at most 55% of the population, they came to make up nearly 80% of the overall electorate, and 90% of Saeima Deputies in the crucial years of transformation from 1993 and 1995.

Figure 5.16: Saeima Elections [1990-1995] – Ethnic-Electorate and Deputies (%)

	1990- Electorate	1990- Deputies	1993- Electorate	1993- Deputies	1995- Electorate	1995- Deputies
Latvian	52.0	69.5	78.6	88.0	79.3	90.0
Non-Latvian	34.0	22.5	16.3	6.0	15.9	6.0
Other	14.0	8.0	5.1	6.0	4.8	4.0

Source: Numbers cited in (Antane & Tsilevich 1999: 101).

Since it was from the democratically elected Latvian Saeima that the primary directives of reform would have originated via legislation, this has meant that Latvian politics in the crucial transformative years after regaining independence, has been dominated primarily by ethnic-Latvians. For example, all the governments that have existed since 1991 have exclusively consisted of Latvian parties, and there has never been an ethnic-Russian/Slavic party in government. Thus, restrictive citizenship laws allowed for Latvians liberal-individualist and anti-Soviet political-cultural worldviews to dominate the electoral process and to more effectively elect pro-reform political parties to form government. Indeed, the restrictive citizenship regime meant that Latvians were in firm control their political destiny, which has allowed Latvia's liberal political-cultural worldviews to shine through in regards to political-economic policy behavior.

⁵³ Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.*, p. 190.

Agricultural Land and Private Property Restitution

Nowhere was Latvians strong individualist ethos, faith in the market and cult of private property seen more prevalent than with the earliest policies of de-collectivizing agriculture, restoring the individual private farm, and land restitution for those Latvians and/or their ancestors who had their property illegally seized by the Soviets. Indeed, such policies were politically expedient as there was huge demand in favour of land restitution from the Latvia public, which was also supported by most elites. The fact that significant demand existed in the Latvian public can be inferred from the close to 300,000 claims for property restoration that were registered by individuals by the end of 1994.⁵⁴

These policies had little to do with being based on notions of economic rationalism or productivity, but were instead influenced by Latvia's liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews and historical memories. As one Swedish report noted during the early 1990s, “family farms...[re-]introduced in the Baltic Republics [Latvia] are of greater importance as a cultural and national manifestation than as a means for improving productivity.”⁵⁵ Moreover, as one elite pointed out, “whereas, for every single farmer it was not so easy to work alone [after property restoration]... but, okay, these people liked much better to work alone.”⁵⁶ Indeed, there were strong individualist

⁵⁴ IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 26; EBRD. (1995). *Transition Report 1995.*, p. 49. This high demand amongst wide segments of the Latvian population was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); In addition to the Latvian public, there was also high demand from the Latvian émigré community. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Amongst Latvia's centre-right parties (e.g. Latvia's Way, Union For Fatherland and Freedom, Latvian National Conservative Party (LNNK), Christian Democratic Union, Farmers Union], such policies were generally widely favoured. The only parties against decollectivization were the left of centre social democrat parties. Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 112-143, 153-166; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 472. Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 69-70; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 98.

⁵⁵ Van Arkadie, Brian, and Mats Karlsson. (1992). *Economic Survey of the Baltic States.* New York: New York University Press., p. 282. For further consensus see Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 354, 216, 351; Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 417; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 177-183.

⁵⁶ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010). The fact that reclaiming such land was not necessarily based on economic rationality, but based more on individualistic preferences was also mentioned by other elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Moreover, it should be noted that most farms only averaged close to 19 hectares in size, which 'expert' advisors of the IMF “considered to be too small.” IMF. (1994). *Latvia.*, p. 25.

ethos of elite and people evident favouring the privatization of land even though this might not have been entirely economically ‘rational.’

Overall, the policy reforms of de-collectivization, property restitution and mass privatization were precipitated by Latvians liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, which held private property at the level of being sacred, and were informed by historical memories that idealized the independent Latvian private farmer. Latvians had a long experience with private property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads. These worldviews were further reinforced by idyllic and nostalgic historical memories of prosperous private individual farmers in Latvia during the first period of independence. As Kirby points out, the Latvians “ideological and emotional values attached to farming and the land were still strong.”⁵⁷ Indeed, Latvians still retained historical memories, traditions and habits of individual private ownership and management of land, which survived even through many years of Soviet oppression.

Thus, in spite of Soviet forced collectivization and massive urbanization, the historically individualist rural traditions informing Latvia’s political-cultural worldviews continued to remain strong. Moreover, most of urbanization found in Latvia was a result of the migration of ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers coming to work in Latvian cities. For ethnic-Latvians transplanted to urban areas during Soviet rule, strong cultural connections to their rural locales remained, where many in society still had strong historical memories of individual farming. Overall, many Latvians had a strong personal connection to rural areas, as a poll conducted in 2000 showed that a large majority, 60% of ethnic-Latvians had grandparents that were owners of independent farms (see Figure A.34 in Appendix). Consequently, “a widespread attachment to ideals of rural society remain[ed] central to Baltic [Latvian] culture.”⁵⁸ Moreover, these historic rural ideals and historical memories

⁵⁷ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 417. Several elites also gave observations to the effect that the “Latvian individualist mindset... is related to the peasant type of attitude.” Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). For similar sentiments inferring policy goals and preferences being informed by cultural themes playing on nostalgic historical memories of farmers during the interwar, see Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 347; Muiznieks. (1997). “Latvia.” p. 376-377; Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 85-86. Additionally, advertisement posters during the 5th Saeima elections in 1993 played on these themes of rural pride. Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 78-89.

⁵⁸ Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 348. Moreover, as Küng pointed out, “the rural areas have on the whole more native character than the large industrial towns and the romantic notions of the rural areas

of the first period of independence informing Latvian political-cultural-worldviews also had noticeable tinges that echoed Protestant values of individual hard work.⁵⁹

In combination with the idyllic historical memories of private individual farmers during the first period of Latvian independence, these political-cultural worldviews were further reinforced by the historical consensus that there had been no ‘socialist revolution’ in Latvia, and that forced Soviet collectivization was antithetical and alien to such ideals of the independent private farmer. As Eglitis points out, “the abnormal state of agriculture...represented by collectivization,” resulted in the view that “de-collectivization was the ‘natural’ instrument for reconstructing normality in the countryside and the Latvian economic order.”⁶⁰ Such sentiments about the importance of culture are also readily apparent in the words of one Baltic elite, who mentioned at the time that “the restoration of private farming does not just mean re-organizing production but the restoration of traditional values in our lives.”⁶¹ Thus, Latvian cultural worldviews were alienated from collective ventures, and did not view such methods as the ‘right’ way to organize political-economic relations. As a result, such policies were informed by intensely individualist political-cultural worldviews that viewed de-collectivization, property restoration and privatization was the morally right, just, natural and normal course of action. As one elite pointed out, “the Latvian strong sense of individualism raised its head very strongly, and there was in society a mindset at this time...a strong sense of alienation from any collective ventures, including agricultural cooperatives... People just didn’t think that was the right way to go.”⁶²

have, therefore, patriotic undertones.” Küng. (1981). *A Dream of Freedom.*, p. 145. See also Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 184-185.

⁵⁹ For example, one Latvian pensioner at the time was quoted as saying that “it will be in the countryside that the Latvian state will be reborn... I remember the first period of Latvian independence. People got rich only through work, and not through any eight-hour workdays.” Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity after Communism.*, p. 85. Similar sentiments regarding habits of hard work was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

⁶⁰ Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 155.

⁶¹ Quote from Arnold Rüütel, in Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 355. While Rüütel was a former president of Estonia, such a quote can be equally applied to Latvia, as both Estonia and Latvia shared a similar Lutheran heritage, similar liberal-individualist sentiments, and traditions of private farming.

⁶² Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). A strong individualist ethos was also mentioned by other Latvian elites. Latvian Elite Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

Under the influence of Latvia's predominantly liberal political-cultural worldviews, such policies were normatively viewed as the best, right, proper, and normal way to organize land via individual private ownership and the market. Indeed, private property was and continued to be held at the level of being sacred in the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of Latvians. Hence, Latvians almost religious faith in the market and cult of private property, which was seen in the centuries old continued intense hunger for land held by Latvians to regain their private farms in the immediate post-independence period.⁶³ As will be discussed in the following chapters, this contrasts with Belarus where property restitution did not even register with most people.

Overall, the agricultural reforms in Latvia had many similarities to the extensive land reforms conducted in Latvia in the 1920s. Certainly, in both eras, when people were free to choose, they preferred an individualist way of life as opposed to a collectivist. Similar to the 1920 reforms, post-1991 policies were influenced by widespread perceptions found in Latvian worldviews and historical memories that such steps would be an act of restoring justice.⁶⁴ Indeed, such normative outlooks in both eras resulted largely from Latvia's predominant liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that viewed private property ownership as the right, normal and correct form of land organization. Certainly, such evidence inferring that the worldviews informing these policies had long historical antecedents, is important to counter rationalist arguments that such policy ideas were new to Latvians.

⁶³ To illustrate such sentiments amongst ordinary Latvians, Farmer Pēteris Kalniņš stated that “one day we were just free, and we could get back what we had – and we wanted it.” Quoted in Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 181. Such sentiment was also echoed by Latvian elites, particularly Valentina Mičūrova (deputy director, Ministry of Agriculture Reclamation and Land Use Unit [October 23, 1998]), who mentioned that reclaiming private property was “even more emotional than it was during the First Republic,” and that “the landowning spirit is so strong in us that it was not destroyed in fifty years [of Soviet rule].” Quoted in Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity.*, p. 83. Indeed, the words of Berzins are applicable to the post-1991 period, in that “a specific flavor is lent to the character of the Latvian by his adherence to old beliefs and by the fact that for so many generations he has struggled to achieve the right to own the land he tills...the latter makes him cling to his land almost fanatically.” Berzins, Alfreds. (1963). *The Unpunished Crime.*, p. 216. For further evidence of desire for property, see Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 351; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 495.

⁶⁴ For evidence relating to rhetoric playing on Latvian worldviews that such policies were a just act, see also Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 163. For 1920s reforms similarly being seen as an act of historical justice, see footnote no. 127 in Chapter 4.

Privatization

Overall, there was strong political will from Latvian elites to transform into market economy with private ownership as the bases of the political-economy and society, which resulted in rapid mass-privatization.⁶⁵ This almost hyper-liberal attitude seen with Latvians faith in the market was exemplified in such policy areas as agriculture, small and medium enterprises, and the initial problems of implementing large-scale privatization, and the subsequent failure of many Soviet-era heavy industries. In each of these areas, some restrictions, regulations and even government assistance, which are present in other Western liberal capitalist economies, might have been beneficial and in the interest of Latvians at the time, and would not have necessarily been contradictory to Latvians goal to de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy. Indeed, this aversion to planning and state intervention was specifically apparent in regards to the failure of notable Soviet-era large-scale enterprises. As one elite mentioned in retrospect, “this misplaced faith, in my opinion, in the ability of the market to make the economically most beneficial decisions...hurt Latvia in the sense that key industries, key Soviet period industries, were allowed to fail.”⁶⁶ This infers that such policies were ideologically driven, since decisions sometimes ignored what might have been viewed by other as being rational.

While some might view the Latvians promotion of privatization, and subsequent failures of heavy industry, as being predicated on nationalist sentiment to punish these

⁶⁵ This political will was attested to by various Latvian elites who had a first hand view of the early transformation process. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). See also, Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). This elite and several others often give the example of former Latvian electronics firm VEF which existed prior to Soviet rule, but had nonetheless through years of Soviet cooptation been branded as being too Soviet. In agriculture, many elites also mentioned that protections for farmers might have been beneficial, such as those that are used in the EU. However, ultra-liberal attitude deemed such behavior as contradictory to the shared liberal goals of free trade so that trade liberalization, especially in agriculture enjoyed fewer restrictions than in the EU, so much so that Latvia would have to raise its restriction in the lead up to accession. Additionally, the elite quoted above also noted that Latvian ports are managed according to this ultra-liberal market regime, in the form of private individual ownership and fierce competition, which this elite believed “did not always end up serving the national interest.” Similar observations were also mentioned by other elites, where the liberal market faith got a little too exuberant. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

sectors and their predominantly ethnic-Russian/Slavic workforce, such arguments do not hold up when placed against explanations utilizing political-cultural worldviews to understand such reforms. No doubt there was an intense dislike of Soviet industry, as was mentioned above, because Soviet industrial growth was viewed as a deliberate act of Russification threatening Latvia's cultural way of life and well-being. However, this had less to do with nationalist prejudice, and more to do with political-cultural sentiments. Often those who point to national identity, also inadvertently and implicitly point to more precise political-cultural explanations, however, while sticking steadfastly to the argument that nationalism is the root cause. To illustrate, one who pointed to nationalist "prejudice against heavy industry," also inadvertently implied that political-cultural worldviews and ways of life might be more at work in promoting privatization, since "the rural traditionalist ideology of large sections... would have pushed it in this direction."⁶⁷

In another example, Savchenko, who points to Latvia's stronger nationalism relative to Belarus as a reason for reform, also gives evidence implying the work of political-cultural worldviews, while sticking firmly to the line that such policy behaviors remained rooted in nationalism. Here, Savchenko also alludes to the prejudice of nationalists against the ethnic-Russian/Slavic dominance of heavy industry, whereas Belarus had positive images of Russia. However, in making this argument, Savchenko points to evidence that clearly infers political-culture worldviews at work in influencing post-1991 policy behavior, which is illustrated where Savchenko alludes that values of Latvian elites viewed former Soviet industries as negative, while "in Belarus... the ruling elite's attitude toward industrial enterprises was universally positive."⁶⁸ Regardless of such a statement pointing to explicit normative viewpoints about Soviet industry, thus alluding to the superior explanatory ability of political-cultural worldviews at play, Savchenko sticks to nationalism as being the primary root cause.

Overall, from the perspective and worldviews of ethnic-Latvian elite policy-makers, it was simply not in their philosophically liberal worldviews, which shared a faith in the market, to subsidize and prop up these failing Soviet-era industries. This resulted from Latvians worldviews favouring de-Sovietization, and a general faith in

⁶⁷ Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. 333.

⁶⁸ Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 118-119.

market mechanisms to be the proper regulator of political-economic relations, with the view that it was necessary to get the state out of role of business management, and to substantially reduce government planning in all parts of the economy. Indeed, these pro-liberal worldviews resulted in a general loathing for and distrust of government planning. As a result, Latvian elites were generally averse to any forms of government planning, or state subsidization of industry, since such actions would not have been seen as proper or the right course of action according to their shared liberal political-cultural worldviews, because such policy would have been normatively viewed to be ‘too Soviet.’ As one elite pointed out, “the attitude was that government should not be involved in promoting, subsidizing industry or fostering the development of any industry, because this would be a remnant of the Soviet Union.”⁶⁹ In this regard, privatization was advocated across the board, for both failing and successful enterprises. Due to such strong liberal sentiments no exceptions were envisioned, even if a successful and profitable state enterprise could bring in revenue to government finances.

Latvian elites’ aversion to planning could be seen in regards to the initial hiccups faced when implementing privatization of large-scale Soviet era enterprises. As mentioned in the policy chapter, while there were some administrative difficulties in implementing privatization of large-scale enterprises, the goals pushing for wide-scale privatizations were never in question. Moreover, the problems caused by the confusion of having multiple legal mechanisms and administrative bodies all dealing with privatization, in fact resulted from the general aversion within governing and policy-making circles during this time that was heavily loathe to, and against extensive government planning and centralized control. This can be inferred from where former “Prime Minister Godmanis decided to split these functions between branch ministries because there were worries about an excessive concentration of power,” and “it was feared that a small circle of people would take over all decision-making power,” because

⁶⁹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). Most mainstream centre-right parties during the 1990s (e.g. Latvia’s Way, Union for fatherland and Freedom, the LNNK, and Christian Democratic Union), had similar political-cultural worldviews at the time in regards to privatization, largely believing that privatization was normatively the right course of action in itself, rather than being used for an explicit rational economic motive, such as bringing in short-term revenue. This made these parties also averse to overt state planning, and subsidization of stagnating industry. For a good overview of political-economic policy platforms of the main centre-right parties during the 1990s, see Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 112-136.

“a centralized privatization agency was conceived of corresponding to a huge ministry.”⁷⁰ As noted in the policy chapter, after the Latvian Privatization Agency was established, large-scale privatizations went more smoothly. Thus, the early administrative mess and failure to create the LPA until 1994, resulted from the hyper-liberal worldviews and anti-statist sentiments found amongst Latvian policy decision-makers at the time.

From a political-cultural standpoint, attitudes in favour of de-Sovietizing and breaking up the dominance of former Soviet industries via privatization, stemmed from Latvians liberal worldviews, which exhibited a faith in the market. As one elite noted, the general “philosophy behind that, of course, was that private companies are always more efficient than state companies.”⁷¹ Moreover, another elite pointed out, “the general public’s perception was that we needed reform...and until 1996 there was no big opposition to any privatization decisions,” most of which it was mentioned came from those of ethnic-Russian/Slavic descent.⁷² Indeed, one can infer ethnic-Latvians higher preferences in favour of privatization from the public opinion polls detailed above, which highlighted that ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia, as well as Belarusians showed sentiments that were far less favourable to such reforms.

Coupled with ethnic-Latvians liberal political-cultural worldviews, were historical memories of Soviet/Russian domination of the organizational make-up of these enterprises, as well as more normative worldviews that reform via privatization was the morally right and just, since these industries had played a major role in the process of Sovietization/Russification. Thus, at the societal level, it was also certainly true that many ethnic-Latvians would not have been crying either about the demise of Soviet-era industry, as these had come to symbolize all that was morally wrong with Soviet command system of political-economic organization. Adding to this was the very real perception that the ethnic-Russian/Slavic managers and workers that dominated the former Soviet enterprises retained pro-Soviet/Russian worldviews, habits, and loyalties.

⁷⁰ Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 92; Similar observation were also mentioned by knowledgeable elites. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Former Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010).

⁷¹ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

⁷² Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Overall, it was only parties on the left that had a distinct pro-Russian orientation and favoured universal citizenship, which spoke out against privatization. See Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 153-166; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 472. Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 69-70; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 98.

Indeed, the fact that non-Latvians dominated Soviet industry, and the fact that Russian was the primary working language in these enterprises would have only reinforced ethnic-Latvians views that such industries were culturally alien. Moreover, Latvia's rural cultural heritage, and the fact that Latvians were a minority in most urban areas, also lead many to "express mistrust of or hostility to the 'alien' ethnic or cultural character of the city," and the industries located there.⁷³

Overall, both the attitudes of elites and the public were largely against overt state involvement and planning in the economy, because this was viewed by many as being too reminiscent of Soviet practices. Thus, without the presence of political-cultural worldviews favouring even a small semblance of state intervention to temporarily prop-up these ailing industries, the demise of Soviet-era heavy industry was inevitable, since on their own these industries were inefficient and resource inputs were expensive, and no one in the West wanted to buy these industries seemingly inferior Soviet products.

Bank of Latvia and Monetary Reform

In terms of key influences of the legal design of the Bank of Latvia, it was mentioned by knowledgeable elites that the establishment of the Bank of Latvia came with advice from influential Latvian émigrés in the United States. Namely this included noted Georgetown Economics Professor George (Juris) Vīksniņš who served as a key advisor and board member to the Bank of Latvia, and whom the Bank of Latvia's first and second Governors' Einars Repše and his successor Ilmārs Rimševičs studied under. Indeed, several Latvian elites explicitly named Vīksniņš as a key influence, not on the liberal-market goals, which were already widely shared in Latvia, but on the specific technical details of institutional design in re-founding the strongly independent Bank of Latvia, and also policy specifics when it came to implementing currency reform, an anti-inflationary monetary policy, and exchange rate mechanisms.⁷⁴

⁷³ Kirby. (1995). *The Baltic World.*, p. 418.

⁷⁴ The important role of Vīksniņš was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Vīksniņš, in describing his influence,

However, this process remained a mutual exchange of ideas since there was widespread support both amongst Latvian elites and society in favour of the goal of transforming into a liberal-market economy. Moreover, one can argue that émigrés, such as Vīksniņš that served as expert advisors were not necessarily outsiders to Latvian political-cultural worldviews and historical memories, which meant that their ideas on reform would not have been seen as being advocated by cultural outsiders. Instead, Latvian émigré advisors played more of a vital supporting role, since many of the pro-liberal market ideas, traditions and historical memories had been retained throughout the period of Soviet rule. Thus primary credit for the goals of liberal reform should be given to Latvians within Latvia themselves.

A key thing to also note is that the Bank of Latvia was not necessarily starting from scratch, nor adopting entirely new ideas in 1991. Similar to other policy areas, where Latvians held positive historical memories of the interwar period and desired to recreate as much as possible from the first period of independence, a great many continuities could be found in the policy and attitudes permeating the newly re-constituted Bank of Latvia. Indeed, there appears to be significant historical continuity in policy decisions, where ideas were preserved by key advisors to the Bank of Latvia, such as Vīksniņš and other émigrés, who then helped to regenerate these ideas in the Bank of Latvia after re-independence. This included vital monetary policy knowledge that was passed on, particularly in regards to currency reform, exchange rate mechanisms, and anti-inflationary policy, where Vīksniņš and others would play a vital role in guiding the Bank of Latvia in a historically liberal-conservative orientation with the goal of promoting the market, while preserving certain institutional knowledge and traditions that existed in the Bank of Latvia during the interwar period.⁷⁵

also mentioned that his writings “were ostensibly read carefully by Einars Repše.” Moreover, Vīksniņš also mentions the important roles played by other Latvian-American economists, such as Juris Neimanis, Gundars Kings, Uldis Klauss, and Latvian-Canadian Bruno Rebess. Vīksniņš (2008). “The *Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 110-111. One of those named, Neimanis, was a Professor of Economics who served as an economic advisor to the Economic Committee of the Latvian Parliament and also as a professor at the Riga Business School. Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire*.

⁷⁵ As one elite noted in regards to Vīksniņš assistance, “his knowledge for us in that period was very crucial.” Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). Similar sentiments on Vīksniņš importance was also mentioned by other elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February

As mentioned above in chapter 4, during the interwar period, monetary policy was characterized by the Bank of Latvia having a relatively strong semblance of independence relative for the time period, with the goal of providing monetary stability. Similar to the period after 1991, Latvia had to establish its own currency, and did so by first introducing an interim Latvian ruble, and then moving to the Latvian lats. Also similar to current practices, the Latvian lats was pegged during much of this time, first to the Gold standard and then to the British Pound Sterling. Additionally, the Bank of Latvia during this time also followed anti-inflationary policies by keeping a tight control over the supply of money in order to keep the value of the lats stable. Indeed, the goals of such policies were similar to the liberal-market orientation found today, in that these were informed by a liberal-individualist outlook, where stability was designed to achieve a business environment conducive to individual economic initiative and prosperity, ideally keeping the currency stable to allow farmers to adequately compete in exporting their produce.

Since being re-founded, the Bank of Latvia has followed a similar path. Specifically, the Bank of Latvia enjoys significant independence from the government and has stood firm in resisting any calls to print money or buy government debt. Indeed, the fact that such liberal worldviews about the necessity of having a strong independent central bank divorced from politics are strongly entrenched in the mindset of both Latvian central bank elites, and also those elites located in other areas outside the monetary policy realm. Indeed, such worldviews are generally taken by granted by most elites. As one elite pointed out, “one of the unwritten rules is that there is to be no politicians in Governing Board, no way,” which has remained “rule number one.”⁷⁶ Overall, large numbers of Latvian elites, both inside and outside monetary circles, agree from a normative standpoint, which is informed by their liberal political-cultural worldviews that such policies as having a strongly independent Bank of Latvia, are not only the best, but also the right policies to ensure market stability and long-term economic growth. As one elite surmised, “the independence of the central bank, this is

22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

⁷⁶ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

crucial because this is one of the key differences between us and Argentina...an independent central bank is one big anchor for the economy.”⁷⁷ Additionally, another elite gave the normative assessment that... “this model has worked very good...the Bank of Latvia is independent from politics, otherwise I could imagine different decisions and we could have a worse situation.... the policy was right, the direction is right.”⁷⁸

With Latvia’s successful transformation into a market economy, coupled with impressive economic growth by the early 2000s, these outlooks would become self-confirming policy ideas. While institutionalists might argue that the Law on Central Bank is key, it should be noted that while strong laws are fine, there also needs to be favourable political-culture worldviews present that are accepting of such policy ideas, which are predominantly shared by both elites and society. The presence of such favourable worldviews is necessary in order to ensure that government activity remains limited and respects central bank independence, or else these laws are not worth the paper on which they are written. This build’s on Weber, as discussed in the theoretical chapter on culture, who argued that effective formal laws merely give voice to pre-existing worldviews.

In terms of implementing monetary policy, a great deal of continuity can be seen in that the overriding objective of the Bank of Latvia since being re-created has been to provide stable prices. Indeed, a key reason in opting for strict anti-inflationary and fixed exchange rate policies resulted from the goal to foster long-term monetary stability with the broader goal of promoting a stable market. Specifically, Latvia’s emphasis on monetary reforms that included maintaining strict anti-inflationary policies, and an exchange rate policy of keeping the lats firmly pegged, are viewed as the ‘best’ and ‘right’ policies to help ensure currency and price stability. Indeed, the worldviews shared by the Bank of Latvia’s first Governor Einars Repše, and other monetary elites, viewed such policies as the pegged exchange rate as the ‘best’ and ‘right’ way to promote overall market stability, which would promote independent business activity and help the economy grow. Such views were influenced by the overall liberal-market orientation of

⁷⁷ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

⁷⁸ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by others. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010).

elite worldviews that view such policies as crucial in increasing marketization, market stability, and in making Latvia an attractive destination for foreign investment.⁷⁹

While the Bank of Latvia is a veritable brain-trust of pro-liberal market philosophies, ironically it is also the one exception to the above mentioned rule of an aversion to overt planning, since in the monetary realm the Bank of Latvia took a leading role in formulating coherent policy based on the strong independence of the central bank, tight control of the money supply, an anti-inflationary orientation, and keeping the Lats stable via the fixed-peg exchange rate. While the steadfastness of the Bank of Latvia's determination to stick to such policies might appear bureaucratically conservative, and ironic in the sense that such planning definitely could not be divorced from having an effect on market outcomes, it should be noted that such focused monetary planning was driven by liberal free market philosophies. Namely, there was general philosophy informing worldviews within the Bank of Latvia that the role of the central bank is to provide a stable monetary environment in order to allow private initiative in the broader market to flourish.⁸⁰

One can infer political-cultural worldviews at play in influencing these policies, because for the majority of elites, such policy is generally viewed as the 'best' and 'right' policy course. Indeed, such belief in the 'rightness' of policies like the currency peg are widely accepted by most central bank elite, as well as many other elite in other macroeconomic policy areas. Moreover, for many elite in the Bank of Latvia, policies such as the currency peg took on an almost faith like status. As one elite noted, the "reasoning that in order to get the economy and business to grow, there needs to be stability of the exchange rate...has been the foundation of this obsession with the fixed

⁷⁹ Such information was given by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). See also, Repše. (2000). "Latvia.," p. 17-19; Vīksniņš (2008). "The *Georgetown University Syndrome*," p. 115.

⁸⁰ While espousing explicitly pro-liberal market worldviews in regards to the overall economy (see footnote no. 79 above), the institutional mindset and politics within the Bank of Latvia can be characterized by a lot of bureaucratic-conservatism. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). See also footnotes no. 81 and 82 below.

exchange rate...to them it's almost like a religion."⁸¹ Similarly, another elite made the observation that "the position of the Bank of Latvia is that the rate is sacred."⁸²

Overall, such liberal philosophies have in way become self-confirming to many elites, largely due to the success achieved by the Bank of Latvia. This can be inferred from the comments of one elite who mentioned that "one example of how the market works very good, is if the Central Bank provides strong and clever monetary policy."⁸³ Additionally, examples of self-confirming worldviews can be seen where former Bank of Latvia Governor, Einars Repše wrote that "economic indicators for the years immediately following Latvia's emergence from the former Soviet Union provide evidence that it has chosen the proper model for economic development."⁸⁴ Note the emphasis placed on that this was the 'proper model,' which infers political-cultural worldviews at play due to the choice of words highly normative undertones. Indeed, Bank of Latvia elite were of the worldview that the pegged exchange rate was the 'best' way to promote overall stability which would help the economy grow, and in order to promote business activity. In such a ideational environment, devaluation would be out of the question and unthinkable to many elites operating in the monetary realm, whose worldviews regarding the pegged exchange rate have become self-confirming, and have hardened into a near faith which is unbreakable.

While most Latvian elites pointed to the important influence of Latvian voters electing pro-reform parties to the Latvian Saeima, which legislated the comprehensive reform agenda, the only policy area that was mentioned to be outside the political circle and the influence of elected politicians was in regards to the Bank of Latvia having firm

⁸¹ No doubt, this can lead to conservatism in the policy of the Bank of Latvia, because "they spend so much time with the fixed exchange rate that there's some kind of inertia, and they may think it's kind of an end in itself." Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

⁸² Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar observations that the Bank of Latvia elite strongly hold such policy worldviews towards the fixed-peg exchange rate was also mentioned by other elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

⁸³ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). Similar normative sentiments in favour of the central bank helping to promote the creation of a stable liberal market environment, and that such liberal monetary policies and the currency peg are the 'best' and 'right' modes of policy action were voiced by several other elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

⁸⁴ Repše. (2000). "Latvia.," p. 17.

control over monetary policy and being devoid of political interference. Certainly, the Bank of Latvia holds primacy in the monetary realm and exchange rate policy. Moreover, as several elites pointed out, the Bank of Latvia holds a significant trust of the largest collection of the best-and-brightest liberal-market oriented minds in the country.⁸⁵ Additionally, in other policies outside the monetary realm, the Bank of Latvia can also advise government on its preferred action. However, while the ideological culture within the Bank of Latvia definitely has an overwhelming concentration of pro-liberal market inclinations, it is a fact that the Bank of Latvia has often been rebuffed by politicians in regards to its recommendations for non-monetary policy areas outside its purview. For example, this has been apparent in regards to fiscal policy, where the predominant liberal ideologies found within the Bank of Latvia, which favour that the government does not run fiscal deficits, were not always heeded by politicians.⁸⁶

The lack of power of the Bank of Latvia in influencing policy areas outside its jurisdiction is important for countering claims that reforms are elite driven, because the central bank that had many linkages with international monetary bodies such as the IMF and those within the EU. However, regardless of these outside links, the Bank of Latvia has remained firmly independent of such bodies, and has even defied their strong advice at key times. As was mentioned above in the policy chapter, the Bank of Latvia defied the advice of advisors within the IMF and World Bank that were advising against Latvia breaking away from the Soviet ruble-zone and establishing their own national currency. More recently, when Latvia began to get into recent budgetary problems in 2008, the Bank of Latvia rejected calls for devaluations from independent economists, and advisors within the IMF that were recommending such a course. To illustrate, several elites mentioned that at the beginning of internal meetings, there were some doubts from the IMF and EU side that the peg would work, with the feeling that it might be necessary to devalue the lats, but at that moment representatives from the Bank of Latvia did not

⁸⁵ As one Latvian elite noted, “from an economic point of view, it is a powerhouse here in terms of economic thinking...The smartest people to make that economic analysis, they’re sitting in the Central Bank. And much more than in the Finance Ministry and the Economics Ministry for instance.” Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

⁸⁶ Such observations were detailed by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010).

hesitate and played a major role, firmly stating that “they will be able to hold down the lats, and that it is necessary to remain at that level.”⁸⁷ Moreover, the Bank of Latvia’s steadfastness can be seen in that it flatly rebuffed IMF suggestions that it run a stress test on the ability to back-up the lats and on the strength Latvian Banking sector.⁸⁸

Overall, the fact that the Bank of Latvia has acted independently of the IMF and EU bodies, as well as being rebuffed in its own advice to the government regarding other economic policy areas is important because it illustrates that elites do not operate in a vacuum. Moreover, it helps to show that reforms and economic policy are not under the influence and simply driven by un-elected elites in the central bank, but instead are strongly influenced by the will of the Saeima, which is elected by the Latvian people.

Additionally, while the Bank of Latvia does have a great deal of independence, it should be noted that even in regards to monetary policy, the dichotomy between politicians in the Saeima and the Bank of Latvia is not entirely crystal clear. First, this is because the Law on the Bank of Latvia was created, drafted and passed by democratically elected politicians in the Latvian Saeima. Secondly, the Bank of Latvia has not been entirely devoid of political influence, since its first Governor, Einars Repše was first a politician, heavily involved in the pre-independence LNNK, and who would later go on to a long political career after his term as governor, even serving once as Latvian Prime Minister and Finance Minister. As one elite observed, “Repše was a politician from the very beginning of our independence years, and he was very strong for independence.”⁸⁹ Indeed, the influence of political-cultural worldviews at play in influencing policy decisions, and that Bank of Latvia was viewed as a key actor in de-Sovietization and normalization of political-economic relations in Latvia could be seen from early public statements given by Repše during his early tenure as governor. To illustrate, in the early 1990s, “prior to the changeover to the lats, Repše told Latvian Television that the appearance of the new lats signified the start of ‘the healing process’ for Latvia’s

⁸⁷ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010).

⁸⁸ In addition to the elite noted in footnote no. 87 above, this rebuff to IMF advice was mentioned by several other knowledgeable elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). Obviously, IMF advice is not always politically sound, because if the Bank of Latvia had proceeded with a stress test, a public leak of this information could have been damaging to its credibility and caused panic domestically.

⁸⁹ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

economy.”⁹⁰ Obviously, with such political connections certain political ideologies would have had important influence over what was seen as the best, right and normal policies. Finally, it should be noted that the Latvian Saeima has the ability to amend the *Law on the Bank of Latvia* at any time, but this has yet never been a political issue.

Overall, the powers of the Bank of Latvia over monetary policy gain legitimacy because these are largely unquestioned and taken for granted by most Latvian elites and those in society. In general, Latvians favour the policies of having a strong independent central bank, with legal structures keeping politicians away from monetary policy, and prohibiting the printing of money to fund government spending. Similar to other policy reforms, not only has there been wide consensus on the role of the strongly independent Bank of Latvia, there has also been little opposition to such a liberal monetary policy orientations. This wide acceptance of the independent Bank of Latvia and its liberal orientation of maintaining strict anti-inflationary monetary policies to ensure currency exchange rate and price stability, can be inferred from the consensus that such actions by the central bank are generally taken for granted by most of the populace and elite alike. As one elite pointed out “I wouldn’t say that...there has been a bit of opposition to the independence of the Central Bank.”⁹¹ Additionally, another elite argued that “the majority [of society] is silent, and the majority vote and accept the independence of the Bank of Latvia.”⁹² Furthermore, the greater influence of the liberal political-cultural worldviews shared by the Latvian public, can be inferred from the fact that the monetary policy practices of the Bank of Latvia have received virtually no serious electoral

⁹⁰ This was pointed out by Bungas. (1993c). “The Lats Returns to Latvia,” p. 38. One can also infer political-cultural worldviews at play where Bungas’ reported that the “other objectives alluded to...could be described as subjective and had to do with the lats as a tangible symbol of positive change.” [ie. normalization] (p. 36-37).

⁹¹ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

⁹² Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). Similar sentiments to those noted above expressing widespread consensus amongst elites and the general public that the independent Bank of Latvia and its monetary policies are a good thing and taken for granted was mentioned by numerous elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

attention from politicians. As one elite observed, “to date, there hasn’t been any serious political challenge...I think the politicians believe it’s not a vote winner.”⁹³

The fact that attacking the monetary policies of the Bank of Latvia is not seen as a “vote winner” by Latvian politicians is telling, because it infers that the political-cultural worldviews predominant in Latvian society favour an independent central bank. Thus, in terms of elites and society, the overall consensus was that the independence of the Bank of Latvia was a good thing. Indeed, the majority of voters in Latvia have consistently and continuously given support overwhelmingly to political parties that are outspoken in their policy platforms about their strong commitment to the monetary policy status quo.⁹⁴

Low Taxes

Latvians liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews also had significant impact on the shape of various aspects on reforms related to taxation policy. In regards to taxes, it was mentioned in chapter 3 that the Latvian government liberalized the taxation regime in virtually all areas, with no progressive income tax, very low property taxes, as well as little to no capital gains taxes on the sale real-estate and other economic assets. While one should not try to infer liberal-ideas from pointing to the policies implemented, it is important to note that these policies were driven by the predominantly liberal-political cultural worldviews shared by elites and society. Here, one can see both a strong faith in the market at play, and also the continuing presence of an aversion to extensive state planning. As one elite pointed out, “the general philosophy of taxation...takes the

⁹³ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar sentiments about this not being a vote winner was also mentioned another elite. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

⁹⁴ Most of the main centre-right parties of the early 1990s [Latvia’s Way, LNNK, CDU, and even the populist Seigerist] were largely supporters of the Bank of Latvia’s strong independence, its tight monetary policy and adherence to the currency peg. Other centre-right parties favoured the Bank of Latvia’s independence, but did not support its policy of the peg. The same commitment for such policies was also consistently displayed by newer centre-right parties such as the Peoples Party, and New Era. Overall, it was largely social democratic parties on the left, which favoured a pro-Russian orientation, and largely spoke out against the strong independence of the Bank of Latvia, and its liberal monetary policies. See Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 120-143, 153-166, 184; Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia.*, p. 472. Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 69-70; Eglitis. (2002). *Imagining the Nation.*, p. 98.

approach that we are a small, open, liberal economy with low tax rates, as low as possible, which is open to any investors both in real-estate and corporate sectors.”⁹⁵

Overall, there was generally a strong favoritism of Latvian elites’ whose highly liberal worldviews saw a regime of low taxation as the ‘best’ and ‘right’ ways to promote economic development and growth, because low taxation would remove one aspect of government interference in the economy and thus allow the market to function more properly. Indeed, many elites during interviews expressed their own views in favour of pro-market policies such as low taxes, because these were viewed as being the ‘best’ way to spur economic growth, increase the growth of the private sector, entrepreneurship, independent business, and market competition. To illustrate such normative and self-confirming worldviews in favour of a low taxation regime, one elite pointed out that “it worked, it worked, until we entered the European Union.”⁹⁶ Additionally, in regards to the prospect of raising taxes during the recent fiscal problems, another elite noted that “generally speaking, one of the things we are against is raising taxes.”⁹⁷ More specifically, another explained these views further by arguing that “it is necessary to create the right environment, and if you have high taxes it is not of interest for entrepreneurs to put in money into and work in this country.”⁹⁸ Similarly, another elite mentioned that “low taxes are important if you want investors or companies to build here...because nobodies going to do that if there’s a heavy burden of taxes.”⁹⁹ In other words, many Latvian elites remain against higher taxes because these are viewed as bad for the economy, bad for the market, and bad for independent business entrepreneurs.

Additionally, in post-1991 Latvia, many elites felt it necessary to use low taxes to try and jump start the private sector and private initiative, because there was a huge concern that after many years of Soviet rule, private initiative would just not be there. As a result, this low tax regime was partially designed by pro-liberal market ideas that low taxes would provide an additional incentive for private entrepreneurs. However, such

⁹⁵ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Also, in the document “Latvia 2000,” there was not much “attention paid...to the design of a serious and effective tax system.” Viksnīšs. “The *Georgetown University Syndrome*,” p. 112-113.

⁹⁶ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

⁹⁷ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

⁹⁸ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). Favouritism of low taxes was also mentioned by others/ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010).

⁹⁹ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

perceptions about the possible lack of private initiative largely proved not to be true. As one elite pointed out, “this uncertainty about how much private initiative was there, certainly was misplaced, because the private initiative took off very quickly.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, this observation about private initiative taking off in post-1991 Latvia are important for inferring that liberal-individualist political-cultural ways of life [habits] continued to persist throughout the period of Soviet rule, despite efforts from Soviet authorities to quash such individualist habits.

In regards to societal beliefs, Latvians liberal political-cultural worldviews generally favoured a relatively low tax regime. Such sentiments about the mindset of Latvian society were pointed out by one elite who observed that “Latvians definitely don’t like paying taxes...it’s to do with the belief that the money you pay on your taxes is not well spent.”¹⁰¹ More specifically, the cynicism of the above statement, can be seen to be inferring strong anti-statist attitudes. This was found in the response of another elite who pointed out that “most people here are against a progressive income tax, because they don’t like to see the state being very big, because they mistrust the state...the state is trouble.”¹⁰² Inference to Latvians shared preference in low tax rates and aversion to big government favouring tax raises can also be gained from the comments of several elites who mentioned that in regards to the current relatively low tax-rates, it is not a political issue.¹⁰³ Moreover, one elite pointed out that when there were recent increases in personal income tax rate and the value added tax, “there was a lot of unhappiness in society,” because there exists “a view that the tax rate is at its maximum and that we cannot increase taxes anymore.”¹⁰⁴ From such statements one can infer that Latvian

¹⁰⁰ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by another elite who noted “the general perception is that nobody wants their taxes increased.... and also that the state cannot deliver. Why should we pay higher taxes if the quality of the service is poor?” Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by others. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

¹⁰² Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010).

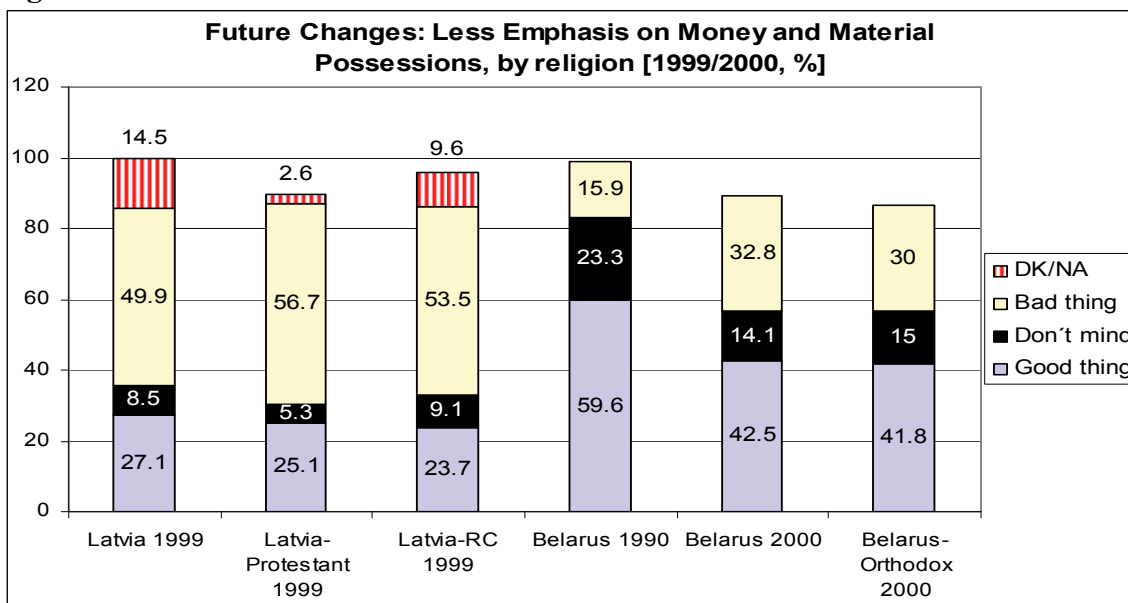
¹⁰³ Such observations were mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ This Latvian elite also offered their personal opinion that “I don’t think personal income tax can be raised any further.” Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010). Additionally, another elite pointed out that “in Latvia, nobody would really like taxation increases.” Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

people would view that any extra revenue that could be earned from a rise in taxation levels could be better spent by individuals themselves.

Additionally, Latvians liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews can be inferred in influencing taxation policy, from the results of several World Value Survey polls that gauged respondents attitudes towards money and personal material possessions, as well as attitudes concerning income equality in society. As Figures 5.17 below illustrates, ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) placed more emphasis on individualist goals, where a majority consistently responded that it was a bad thing to place less emphasis on money and material possessions, thus inferring a high value placed on personal property, and potential aversion to progressive taxation. Additionally, another poll also indicated that ethnic-Latvians believed that society needs larger income differences as incentives, which stood in contrast to the Belarusian responses which over time showed an increasing preference for more collectivist outcomes, such as income equality. To illustrate, 65.3% of Latvian-Protestants, and 53.2% of Latvian-Roman Catholics answered that they were in favour of the need for larger income differences as incentives, which stood in contrast to the opposite responses where 54.4% of Belarusians overall, and 55.9% of Orthodox-Belarusians answered that there needs to be more income equality (see Figure A.35 in Appendix).

Figure 5.17



Source(s): See 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

One can infer that such views on taxation result not only from Latvians strong individualist ethos and aversion to big government, but also from negative historical memories of Soviet collectivization, which forced Latvians off their private farms, and where one of the Soviet methods to coerce private farmers was to severely ramp up the taxes in order to force them off their land and into state-owned collective farms. Thus, historical memory comes into play here as a reference point for Latvian worldviews, which can be understood as being opposed to higher taxes, because these infringed on Latvian preferences favouring individual freedom. Additionally, as noted above, Latvians showed resistance during Soviet rule by committing what could be viewed as a form of tax evasion in Soviet times by withholding mandatory payments of produce to Soviet authorities and also by neglecting collective duties in favour of tending to one's individual small garden plot. Coupled to this was also contrasting historical memories of low taxes for private farmers during the interwar period.¹⁰⁵

Overall, the Latvian public had this general sentiment in favour of such reforms, and it was the elites that put such policies into practice. Specific measures, such as a low tax regime might be seen as being rationally motivated by some, because this could be seen as benefiting newly wealthy elite and newly rich businesspersons, which many have benefited from since the early 2000s onwards. However, this only became rational after political-cultural factors had played out in helping to establish the initial conditions to make such liberal reform policies possible in the first place. As one elite pointed out, "I don't think the system was designed for some kind of special interests in mind...I think the problems experienced was just an unintended by-product of the system that then proved very difficult to change."¹⁰⁶ Moreover, while such policies might seem to be based on rational calculations because no one wanted or attempted to change the low taxation laws, this was not purely rational, since most Latvian people including elites

¹⁰⁵ Finally, Soviet policies, ironically, could be pointed to in contributing to reinforcing favourable views towards low taxation. This resulted from the fact that in individuals' pay from Soviet state agencies, taxes were not listed, even though there were in fact very real and restrictive taxes. As a result, one elite noted that when people get their pay slips today, which list gross and net pay, and deductions, "people do not like to see them." Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by another elite. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

preferred lower taxes and normatively viewed such policies as the ‘best,’ ‘right’ and ‘correct’ methods for promoting increased economic welfare and growth.

Specifically, what is at play here is an example of self-confirming policies, since there were many years under this low tax regime where nothing was going wrong, the Latvian economy was booming, and tax revenues, while below their potential, were nonetheless rolling in at sufficient levels to cover government expenditures without incurring substantial increases in overall debt. Therefore, because the widely preferred low tax regime appeared to be self-confirming, the predominantly shared liberal worldview held by Latvian society and elites saw no need to fix something that did not appear to be broken. As a result, from 2004-2007, when the Latvian economy was booming there was essentially a self-fulfilling nature of the pro-liberal political-cultural worldviews in regards to the ‘rightness’ of these policy beliefs and ideas regarding the ability of free markets to regulate the economy. Indeed, because, economic growth was so robust, the general attitude prevailed that if the policy of having a low tax regime was not broken, and revenues were continuing to cover expenditure, then there was no need to fix it.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the attitude of many was to just sit back and enjoy the seemingly endless growth and fruits of their previous hard work because the market appeared to be working according to the understandings of Latvians liberal political-cultural worldviews. Indeed, one can see how such self-confirming beliefs can lead to policy lock-in.

Liberal Competition, FDI and Free-Trade

The pervasiveness of Latvia’s liberal-political worldviews can also be seen in regards to the liberal market freedoms granted to FDI in Latvia. As mentioned in the policy chapter, a key step in this process was in improving regulations to allow for the

¹⁰⁷ To illustrate this view that a market-oriented low tax regime was the ‘best’ and right’ mode of policy, one elite pointed out that “I think the main reason was just that economic growth was so good in from 2004 to 2007 that it looked like we could relax a little bit...the economy was growing without any economic policy measures, without any taxation measures, without anything. It was just going way up, so we all said ‘we don’t have to do anything anymore,’ because it looked like we would continue to increase our revenues and expenditures,” by economic growth alone. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010). Another elite pointed out that “they [policy-makers] definitely did not imagine that it would collapse, and that the collapse would be as sudden and as deep as it has been.” Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by others. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

possibility of foreign investors to buy land and real-estate, where today the only restrictions remains limited to the finiteness of land that is available in the market. Additionally, the Latvian government further made the market attractive to FDI by instituting a very low tax regime on property taxes, creating tax-free economic zones, as well as having little to no capital gains taxes on the sale of real-estate and other economic assets. In general, much of Latvia's policies towards FDI followed from liberal ideas that foreign investors should be treated as equals of domestic businesses in Latvia. Similar to other policies areas, such pro-FDI policies resulted from Latvians faith in the market, which held the view that government restrictions on individual economic activity should be kept to a minimum, because having an unfettered market-economy was viewed as the 'best' and 'right' way in order to promote long-term growth and development.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, recent public opinion polls in 2004 illustrate that such liberal worldviews in regards to FDI can be seen in that a large majority of ethnic-Latvian respondents, 76% shared a positive outlook toward multinational corporations operating in Latvia, which was much higher relative to Belarus, where only 58% responded positively, with a large minority of 41% also responding in the negative (see Figure A.36 in Appendix).

However, if strong nationalism were simply at play, one might also expect that restrictions on commercial activities would have been applied to non-citizens living in Latvia, such as the large ethnic-Russian/Slavic minority that made up a majority in urban centers like Riga. While citizenship laws excluded large numbers of ethnic-Russians/Slavs from the political decision-making process, ethnic-Latvians remained true to their liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, as ethnic-Russians/Slavs were allowed to freely play an active role in Latvia's market economy, and no restrictions were placed on the ownership of property. In fact, many Russians, being excluded from political-opportunities went about playing an active role in Latvian commercial enterprises.¹⁰⁹ If purely working from a nationalistic standpoint, the high levels of ethnic-Russian growth in commercial activity would have been seen as a policy area that needed

¹⁰⁸ Pro-liberal market sentiments that such liberalized FDI policies were the 'right' and 'best' policies for long-term economic growth and development were voiced by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ See for example, Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition.*, p. 160; Antane and Tsilevich. (1999). "Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration.," p. 133.

rectification. Using terminology from a national identity understanding, one could have even argued that such a potential policy reaction to restrict ethnic-Russian/Slavic commercial endeavors would have been ‘purposive’ in the long-run, since the implication of having so high levels of ethnic-Russian ownership could mean the eventual gravitation of Latvia back to Russia’s orbit. However, the strength of Latvia’s liberal worldviews can be seen in that free-market principles prevailed in the long-run over purely nationalistic sentiments. This is illustrated in polls which highlights that in numerous polls the vast majority of ethnic-Latvians, 63% answering definitely, and 28% answering usually in 2000, strongly favoured the right of private property ownership of land for all residents of Latvia, which were in far greater clarity than responses found in Belarus, where only 27% definitely agreed with such rights (see Figure A.37 in Appendix).

In regards to foreign trade, it should be mentioned that some calls for protectionism have existed, particularly where some individual Latvian farmers have voiced support for trade restrictions and subsidies to assist the agricultural sector, as well as protections to restrict foreigners from the free access to buy land.¹¹⁰ However, the fact remains that the support base for such calls has not been large enough to have an effect on the overall liberal foreign economic orientation. Moreover, it should be noted that although some individual Latvian farmers have been making such calls for protection against foreign competition, this does not negate the fact that these farmers remain strong supporters of individual freedoms, private property and the market economy domestically.¹¹¹ Moreover, it can be inferred that anti-free trade policies have not been able to gain much traction amongst Latvian voters, as official polling data from various Saeima elections highlights that political parties that were openly campaigning on promises of trade protections for certain sectors, have seen their vote share decline in repeated elections. Specifically, the Farmer’s Union, who left the first coalition government under Latvia’s Way and Prime Minister Berkavs, due to disagreements on

¹¹⁰ For example, some centre-right parties that generally favour liberalized FDI and trade, but also give exceptions to protections for the agricultural sector, included the LNNK, Christian Democrats, and Farmer’s Union. See Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 118-130, 136-143.

¹¹¹ Mentioned by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

free-trade,¹¹² were subject to a drop in popular support at the polls in following elections (see Figures 5.18 and 5.19 with election results below).

It is also apparent that there were noticeable continuities with certain policy aspects from Latvia's first period of independence, as noted in the policy chapter, in that the majority of trade is oriented towards Western markets. Moreover, it could be argued that the goal towards FDI and free-trade were rooted in ethnic-Latvians historically liberal-political cultural worldviews that were originally promoted in the liberal traditions promoted by Valdemār's,¹¹³ as noted in the section on the national awakening in chapter 4. Additionally, Latvians liberal views favouring free trade can be seen in that Latvia is not necessarily averse to trade with Russia, as it is still almost completely dependent on Russian energy imports, and even possibly open to more liberal trade, as long as this does not require negative political concessions from Riga to Moscow that would be adverse to Latvian worldviews and interests. However, such free trade relations have been slow to grow, as Moscow has always wanted to get back some political concessions in return, which Riga has deemed as unacceptable.¹¹⁴

Perseverance of Reform: Re-Electing Pro-Reform Coalitions

While it is readily apparent that the people who were making decisions had a strong liberal vision of what they wanted, it can also be inferred that most ethnic-Latvians shared similar liberal political-cultural worldviews favouring market reform and that these influenced elites, since Latvian elites did not operate in an ideational vacuum, but were an organic outgrowth of Latvian society. Therefore, in the process of implementing comprehensive liberal reforms, Latvian elite policymakers and public official were influenced by society at large and from the predominant worldviews found within Latvian political-culture in which they were situated. This is because ethnic-Latvians

¹¹² On Farmer's Union leaving Berkavs' Latvia's Way coalition, due to the promotion of comprehensive free trade for all sectors, see Vīksniņš (2008). "The *Georgetown University Syndrome*," p. 112.

¹¹³ Schwartz also notes that such policies were rooted in Valdemarian traditions. Schwartz. (2006). *Nature and National Identity*, p. 88.

¹¹⁴ Such sentiments were given by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). On Latvia's Way being not averse to liberal trade with Russia so long as no negative political catches or caveats were attached to such relations, see also Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy*, p. 130-136.

repeatedly elected pro-liberal reform parties to govern the Latvian Saeima where all of the major legislation for Latvia's comprehensive liberal market reforms was passed. Overall, there was widespread idea in favour of pursuing the general push of moving to a market economy within ethnic-Latvian society.¹¹⁵

The fact that there was widespread support and little opposition to reforms can be inferred from evidence during the 1990s that there was little dissent from the ethnic-Latvian public against reforms or anger as a result of the hard economic times faced during the early stages of political-economic transformation. Indeed, most ethnic-Latvians were ready to press on through any difficulties during the transformation process, as most considered this light in comparison to the historical memories of the many hardships endured during Soviet rule, and that nothing could be as worse as those times. Such sentiments were present in descriptions given by one elite who mentioned that even with all the economic hardships in the immediate period after regaining independence, a common saying at the time was that “‘it doesn't matter if we are poor, as long as we are free,’” which resulted from historical memories of where “the Soviet system was crushing down on all individualism, and the state was controlling everything.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, another elite observed, “I remember that period, and somebody from outside started to tell me that ‘wow, we are in crisis.’ And I said, ‘guys, you never saw crisis before. Crisis was when the shops were empty, and Soviet Union combat snipers killed the journalists in the night, and tanks operated in Riga City. This was a crisis.’”¹¹⁷ Indeed, Latvians had strong historical memories of personal suffering under the Soviet occupation, which was illustrated in a poll from 1993 where 37% of

¹¹⁵ This support was noted by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

¹¹⁶ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

¹¹⁷ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010). Similar sentiments about the mentality of Latvians being able to endure hardships were also mentioned by other elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010). Indeed, Latvians endurance can be seen in the recent economic recession and large fiscal austerity measures implemented by the government, where little protests or uproar occurred. See also section below on discussing the aversion of Latvians towards Social Democratic parties.

Latvian participants responded that they or someone in their family had suffered at the hands of the Soviets.¹¹⁸

Thus, while there were certainly hard times, this did not lessen the Latvians yearning for freedom or faith in the market. This long term yearning for freedom and return to normalcy came to political life in Latvia's all encompassing primary policy goals of a returning to Europe, de-Sovietizing and transforming into a liberal market economy, which were viewed as the morally right course of action, even if this would result in temporary economic poverty.

Overall, it can also be inferred that most ethnic-Latvians shared liberal political-cultural worldviews favouring market reform, and that these influenced elites because the Latvian people repeatedly elected pro-liberal reform parties to govern the Latvian Saeima where all of the major legislation for Latvia's comprehensive liberal market reforms was passed. Indeed, the key influence of societal worldviews can be inferred from the fact that Latvia is a liberal-democracy, and legislative acts implementing reform originated from the Saeima, and all government authority in drafting this reform legislation was legitimated by the Latvian people, which repeatedly elected largely centre-right pro-liberal reform oriented parties to govern. As one elite argued, the "people have always voted for centre-right and usually right-wing governments, and so the policies have recorded those ideologies."¹¹⁹ Moreover, because there have been repeated governments

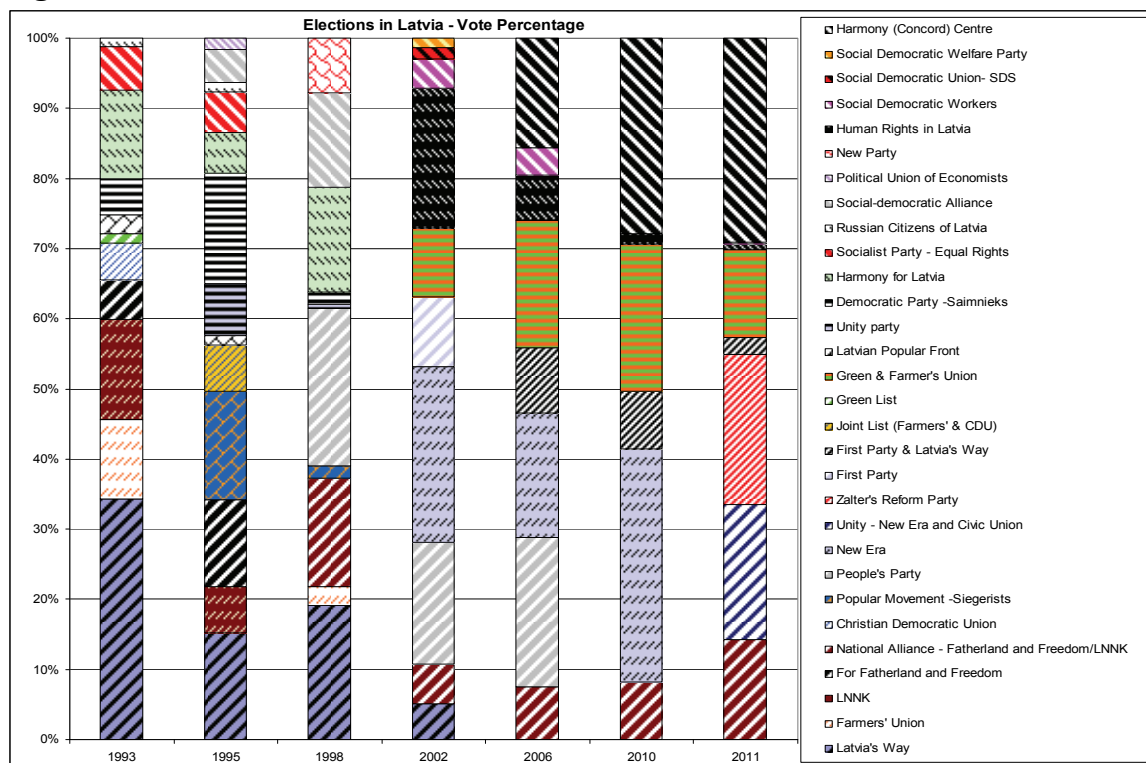
¹¹⁸ Such suffering was either the result of deportations which affected 29% of respondents, imprisonment which affected 21%, and execution which 16% replied had happened to members of their family (multiple responses permitted). While 37% reported suffering under the Soviets, only 11% reported suffering at the hands of Germans during WWII. Rose and Maley. (1994). *Nationalities in the Baltic States.*, p. 59.

¹¹⁹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010). Such sentiments about the importance of the Latvian Saeima and the democratic will of Latvian voters in influencing the politics of liberal reform were explicitly mentioned by several elites. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). Additionally, it was noted that the "Latvian system seems to come closest to...[a] society-dominated type," where "changes came primarily as a result of national elections through which the society...gained comparatively easy access to the decision-making process." Tsygankov. (2000). "Defining State Interests after Empire.," p. 114. Tsygankov, as mentioned in the literature review is taking a national identity framework to describe Latvia. However, what is missed is that political-cultural worldviews are actually the key ingredient explaining Latvian behavior. Thus national identity misses that key underlying political-cultural worldviews that informed content of national identity.

that have all continued along the path of reform, one can infer that there has been a wide consensus amongst Latvians in favour of the general trend of liberal reform.

Overall, a great deal of influence in the reform processes came from ethnic-Latvia society, where the pro-liberal reform members of the Saeima were elected by the democratic will and preferences of Latvian voters. As Figures 5.18 and 5.19 illustrate, since 1991, ethnic-Latvians repeatedly elected various right-of-centre political parties, both in terms of popular vote and seats, which formed the governing coalitions and opposition within the Latvian Saeima, most of which remained consistent and steadfast in vocally pushing a policy agenda of liberal market reforms with the goal of returning to Europe. Indeed, the numerous parties that have formed governing coalitions in the Saeima since 1991, including Latvia's Way, the Peoples' Party, Latvians First Party, and New Era, as well as smaller centre-right parties such as the LNNK, and Union for Fatherland and Freedom have all adhered to strong pro-liberal market and Western orientations, which meant that these parties were not only open to extensive privatization and market liberalization, but also highly favourable to liberalizing trade and FDI.

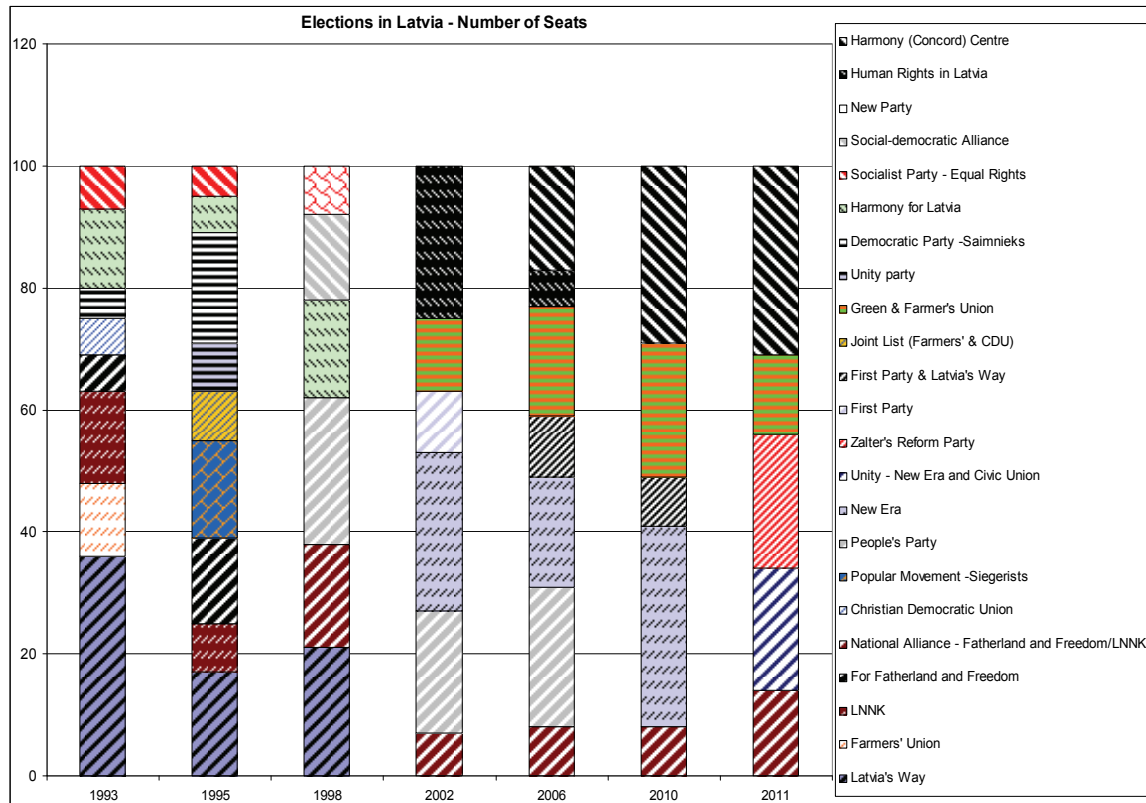
Figure 5.18



Source: Latvian Electoral Commission. <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/28757.html>.

Additionally, one can also infer that ethnic-Latvian interest in election issues was high, as there was respectably high relative voter turnout in the various Saeima elections since 1993. For example, the Latvian public's interest in the election of the 5th Saeima in 1993 was palpable, which was illustrated by the 89% participation of those eligible to vote. Additionally, voter turnout in the 8th Saeima elections in 2006 averaged 70%.¹²⁰

Figure 5.19



Source: Latvian Electoral Commission. <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/28757.html>.

Overall, the main centre-right parties were all quite consistent in that liberal reform tended to be a consistent message of their platforms. Also, it should be noted that most Latvian parties, save for the Socialists, were all committed to the key goals of liberal market economic reform, privatization and European integration. Indeed, another elite that had been involved in the implementation of liberal reforms from the outset in 1991, pointed out that the goal of mass privatization of virtually all sectors of the economy remained at the top of the agenda for all governments until it was completed.

¹²⁰ For 1993 numbers, see Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians*. p. 192; Dreifelds. (1996). *Latvia in Transition*., p. 91. For 2006 numbers, see Bleiere et al. (2006). *History of Latvia*., p. 473.

As one elite pointed out, even with all the changes in government, “Latvia has kept a quite liberal attitude and quite liberal market economy philosophy for quite a long time.”¹²¹ Additionally, as public opinion polls in 2001 highlighted, ethnic-Latvians tended to situate themselves more on the centre-right of the political spectrum, espousing high levels of pro-market sentiments (see Figures 5.15 above, and A.38 in Appendix). Moreover, pro-market sentiments can also be inferred from Latvians support for green movements in Latvia and Nationalist parties, as indicated in Figure A.38 in the Appendix, since both have all tended to espouse highly pro-liberal market sentiments.

Since Latvian political parties had to present clear platforms to the people at election times, one can infer that similar pro-liberal reformist attitudes were shared by elites and the public, especially in regards to the general goal about moving to a market economy and membership in the EU. Indeed, in virtually every election since 1993, the message remained the same. Moreover, while many new governments might have been formed and new parties come into political office, all mainstream centre-right parties have remained committed to market liberalization, and movement towards integration in the EU and NATO. As one elite pointed out, “nobody was against the market” except “the so-called socialist parties, they were not in power, and... I understand, they had a longing that future be socialism.”¹²² Additionally, another elite pointed out that...

politics here has been very, very stable because the names may have changed, but the politics have not... the overall framework has never changed...[and] there has never been an issue among the big political elite that we should not become a market economy or go into NATO or the EU.... While there are some few fringe elements that might think it's not a good idea, they have never, never had any influence.¹²³

¹²¹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Similar observations about the continuity in liberal political-economic ideas and orientation and was also noted by other elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010). See also footnotes no. 122 and 123 below.

¹²² Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). There was also very little support for populist parties, such as the Siegerist. See graphs of election results which shows support for the populist Siegerist party largely disappeared after the 1995 Saeima election (See Figure 5.18 above).

¹²³ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010). Similar observations about the continuity in liberal political-economic ideas and orientation was also noted by other elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 24, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia

Additionally, while some of the more seemingly nationalist parties, as well as more centrist parties such as the Farmer's Union advocated in favour of more conservative protectionist trade policies, and restrictions on FDI, specifically in regards to agriculture, such parties were nevertheless firmly committed in their policy platforms to the liberal market economy in Latvia. Overall, the only criticism by new parties in each election that has followed was that reforms were not going fast enough.¹²⁴ That such sentiment was widely shared by the general electorate of ethnic-Latvian voters can be inferred from polling numbers, which gauge peoples' attitudes towards the pace of reforms. Indeed, the vast majority of those polled responded in the affirmative that reform was either just right or moving too slow, so that upwards of 60% of ethnic-Latvians by 1995 and 70% by 1996 were responding that reform was going too slow.¹²⁵

Thus, even with many changes in government and new governing coalitions being formed, one thing that remained constant amongst all those new governing administrations was the consistent message of market reforms, liberal transformation, and accession to the EU. Since most Latvian parties elected to the Saeima were all pushing liberal reforms, and the people had to give these parties their mandate, one can infer that there was a general consensus and support for the general thrust of transformation. Furthermore, if a political party went against the pro-market line and advocated slower reforms or what was perceived to be anti-liberal and anti-market policies, this would have been detrimental to their political fortunes. As one elite observed, "I don't remember any political party which would say before elections, 'you know guys, we are going too fast.' With the Latvian mentality and level of populism in the market, it wouldn't work."¹²⁶

(February 26b, 2010). On major centre-right parties gaining seats in the Saeima during the 1990s all favouring the move to the market, de-Sovietization and return to Europe, see Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 112-143; Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia.*, p. 89; Plakans. (1995). *The Latvians.* p. 192.

¹²⁴ This was mentioned by one elite that was commissioned by independent media sources to analyze the economic platforms of Latvian political parties during various Saeima elections. As this elite noted, "when me and my colleagues were asked to look at the economic programs of the political parties and comment on them by the media... we found that there was virtually no difference, for they were making the same sorts of proposals. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 12, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010).

¹²⁵ Rose. (1995). *New Baltic Barometer II.*, p. 23; Rose. (1997). *New Baltic Barometer III.*, p. 16.

¹²⁶ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010). Similar observations were also mentioned by Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

Overall, there was a great deal of societal and elite consensus on these issues, as such goals were not even questioned by any of the mainstream right of centre parties, and as voting records indicate, Latvian voters overwhelmingly supported parties of the centre-right that were actively promoting an agenda of radical liberal-market reforms and membership in the EU. Thus, one can infer that the Latvian public was the main deciders of reforms, since it was liberal-market oriented politicians who were continually elected by the Latvian people. Such evidence illustrates that the key policy-makers were not simply unelected elites that were operating in a vacuum divorced from the people. Indeed, this infers that liberal political-cultural worldviews were present, and that reform was popular since it was the Latvia people that kept voting for pro-liberal reform parties. Thus, since all policy reform legislation was passed by the Latvian Saeima, this meant that the Latvian people had the ultimate influence over post-1991 politics and were key in promoting liberal-market transformation.

Culture Clash and Aversion to Social Democratic Parties

While consistent in their support of centre-right parties that were avowedly pro-liberal, ethnic-Latvians also continually rejected left-of-centre social democratic parties, which were associated by many Latvians as being too left, socialist, Russian, Soviet, and Communist. Indeed, social democratic party's were never able to gain traction or able to form a coalition, and Latvia is virtually the only country in Central and Eastern Europe that has never had a left-of-centre government since regaining independence.

Overall, contemporary voting behavior in Latvia tends to go along cultural-ethnic lines. As several elites pointed out, there is a strong ethnic-cultural dynamic influencing voting behavior, in that "Russians vote for the Russian parties, and the Latvians vote for the parties who mostly define themselves by the degree of their position towards the Russians, transformation and so on."¹²⁷ Moreover, another elite offered the assessment that the "leftwing parties are mostly associated with the Russian part of the nation....and

¹²⁷ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). This cultural dimensions in voting preferences and behavior, was mentioned by other elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010).

ethnic-Latvians will not vote for those Russian parties for a very long time,” which results from not just view that these parties are seen as Russian, but because of “the worry that they might want to reverse some of the changes and reforms and that these parties will build up more close relations with Moscow.”¹²⁸ As these statements reveal, such voting preference are not only based purely on the nationalist dynamic, but instead have important political-cultural influences, as the left-of-centre parties views not only on Russians, but also on liberal transformation, is an important dynamic influencing ethnic-Latvian voter preferences.

For instance, public opinion polls that break-down ethnic-cultural support for various parties reveals that there is a distinct cultural divide existing between the voting preferences of ethnic-Latvians that predominantly vote for the centre-right, and those of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people, including ones that have acquired naturalized citizenship and are allowed to vote, and those that remain non-citizens, which predominantly support pro-Russian, left-of-centre social democratic parties. Early election results are easier to infer such a cultural dynamic to voting behavior, due to the fact that ethnic-Latvians made up the vast majority of eligible voters. As one set of polls illustrate, large segments of ethnic-Latvians polled responded that they would support centre-right parties, while only small numbers voiced support for left-of-centre parties (see Figure A.39 in Appendix). In contrast, ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia responded with noticeably less enthusiasm towards centre-right parties (see Figure A.40 in Appendix).

Additionally, one can infer such a cultural clash of worldviews from polling results from the World Value Survey, where political support can be broken down along ethnic-cultural and religious lines. As Figures A.41 and A.42 in the Appendix reveal, in two separate polls conducted in 1996 and 1999, ethnic-Latvian (Protestant and Roman Catholic) respondents, in both years, answered predominantly that parties of the centre-right would be their first choice if they were to vote in an election. In contrast, ethnic-Russian/Slavic voters in both years responded more favorably towards the left-of-centre parties or as in the 1999 poll indicates, responded ‘not applicable’ since most would have been restricted due to the fact that they were not citizens.

¹²⁸ Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010).

The strong individualist ethos characterizing Latvian political-cultural worldviews played a big influence not only in influencing ethnic-Latvian preferences in favour of liberal-market reform, increasing individual freedoms, and reducing the role for the state in the economy, but also tended to work to dampen enthusiasm for explicitly social democratic parties as these were perceived to be too overly collectivistic and statist in orientation. Overall, it was only parties on the left which spoke out against de-collectivization of agriculture, liberal marketization, privatization, the strong independence of the Bank of Latvia, and against European integration, while at the same time advocating for a pro-Russian orientation and expressing nostalgia for the Soviet past. Additionally, most favoured universal citizenship, and many figures in these parties had dubious past records of having KGB connections.¹²⁹ As polls show, these parties remained in the political wilderness. Indeed, a strong individualist sentiment is predominant in Latvian political-cultural worldviews, which has tended to result in attitudes that are averse and loathe to anything seemingly collectivistic or overly statist, which is a key reason for the low levels of support for explicitly social-democratic parties.¹³⁰

However, it would be incorrect to argue that certain reform-liberal or even social democratic tendencies are simply non-existent in Latvia, since most of Latvia's centre-right parties also have campaigned on increasing certain welfare provisions, and preferences exist favouring some increases in welfare provisions.¹³¹ Moreover, as noted

¹²⁹ Many of the items advocated by these parties of a social democratic orientation seemed like a total nostalgia for past Soviet 'glories,' and as a result, out of touch with the mood and historical memories of the mass of society. For a good overview of breakdown of the left-of centre party policies, during the 1990s, see Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*, p. 153-166.

¹³⁰ That support for social democrats being dampened by anti-statist attitudes was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 17, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010).

¹³¹ This information on party politics was gained from observations given by several Latvian elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). However, what some might interpret as collectivist traits such as favouring a key role for the state in providing public goods such as universal healthcare and public education, this should be viewed more as individual-egalitarian attitudes of a reformist-liberal bent which place core emphasis on individual freedom. Thus, having state administered universal social programs in Latvia, should not be seen as contradicting Latvians liberal individualist worldviews, since extensive welfare programs are found throughout Western liberal-democracies, and are typically designed in a reformist-liberal orientation which places emphasis on such policies being geared to the betterment of the individual to lessen inequalities and enhance overall individual freedom.

in chapter 4, there was a large viable social democratic party during the first period of independence. Nevertheless, a strong individualist sentiment is predominant in Latvian political-cultural worldviews, which has tended to result attitudes that are averse and loathe to anything seemingly collectivistic or overly statist. As one elite pointed out in regards to the general lack of support for social democratic parties, “they have not succeeded to promote really social democratic ideas here.”¹³² Moreover, all mainstream parties have been quite explicit in foremost voicing their commitment to transformation and the liberal-market economy. Even the one main party that is classed as social democrat, Latvia’s Harmony Centre has gradually come to voice its commitment to the liberal-market economy.¹³³ However, this has only been more recently, which points to an acknowledgement by the so-called social democratic parties that pro-liberal market preference are widely shared amongst Latvian voters.

Until recently, no parties that have explicitly called themselves social democrats by name have never come close to gaining power or received many votes from ethnic-Latvians, as most are viewed as being too pro-Russian, statist, too collectivist, and having too many links to the Soviet past. The largest today, Harmony Centre was formed in 2005 linking various social democratic factions, including the Harmony Party, and Latvian Socialist Party. Here it is important to note that Harmony Centre, in its name avoids any reference to social democracy, and as its name reveals, portrays itself as a party of the ‘centre.’ Harmony Centre favours universal citizenship for all residents of Latvia and while accepting of the market economy, favours a definite increase of state intervention to regulate the economy, more protectionism, and also closer relations with Russia.¹³⁴ Moreover, it was only in the 2010 Saeima election that Harmony Centre was able to gain the highest percentage of votes. Nevertheless, such results reflect more the fact that

¹³² Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

¹³³ This information on party politics was gained from observations given by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

¹³⁴ Harmony Centre [*Saskanas Centrs*]. Harmony Centre Party Website (Russian Language). <http://www.saskanascenrs.lv/ru/>. Note also on the webpage a link commemorating Victory Day [May 9]. Here it is important to point out that one of the founding parties cooperating under the Harmony Centre is the Latvian Socialist Party, which was largely the remnants of the former LCP, and lead by former LCP hardliner and supporter of the hard-line coup against Gorbachev, Alfred Rubik’s. On Rubik’s, see also Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy*, p. 158.

increased numbers of ethnic-Russians/Slavs have become naturalized Latvian citizens, as voting patterns still tend to diverge along ethnic-cultural lines, with the result that most ethnic-Latvians continue to not trust, nor have sympathy with the policy programs of social democratic parties like Harmony Centre, which to many Latvians appear overly statist and even authoritarian.¹³⁵

Heightening such anti-collectivist and anti-statist attitudes, and thus an aversion to supporting social democrats, has also been a general distrust of social democratic parties. This distrust results from the predominantly shared perceptions found within the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of ethnic-Latvians that perceives anything connected to social democracy as being linked to Russians, Socialism, Communism and the Soviet Union, all of which are viewed as being synonymous.¹³⁶ Indeed, one can see an obvious clash of political-cultural worldviews persisting, as much of this has stemmed from ethnic-Latvian worldviews overall rejection of everything seemingly Soviet, which is seen as the antithesis of Latvian culture.

Overall, social democratic parties have not fared well, and showed repeatedly poor election results from ethnic-Latvians. This is because most social democratic parties and other parties of the left tended to repeat nostalgic arguments about the Soviet past, which went against the dominant political-cultural tide of the time. Certainly, such views and slogans contradicted the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of ethnic-Latvians, which had a general loathing for all things Soviet, and a general aversion to any policy proposals appearing overtly collectivistic or statist in orientation. Additionally, there existed views in the post-1991 period that were similar to viewpoints regarding collaboration during the Soviet era, in that many in ethnic-Latvian society held the view that voting for such parties was out of the question and even

¹³⁵ Information here was gained from elites during interviews. Several elites mentioned that many Latvians continue to largely distrust social democratic parties. Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010).

¹³⁶ As one elite noted, "Communism is conflated with Russia in the eyes of ethnic-Latvians." Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010). The view of Russians, Socialism, Communism, and the Soviet Union as being synonymous was mentioned by several elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).; Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010).

traitorous, and where any talk of cooperation by political parties would have been political suicide. As one Latvian elite pointed out, when one Latvian social democratic party teamed up with Russian social democratic parties it lost support, “and there has been a wide perception that Latvians did not vote for it because it had *tainted itself* by going in with the Russian parties.”¹³⁷ Additionally, such a clash of cultural worldviews can be inferred from polls asking residents of Latvia for the political parties that they would never vote for. This is illustrated by a World Values Survey poll from 1996 asking Latvians about the party for which they would never vote. Here ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics), responded predominantly that they would never support left-of-centre parties, whereas ethnic-Russian/Slavic (Orthodox) respondents answered in the opposite that they would never support any of the main centre-right parties in Latvia (See Figure A.43 in Appendix).

In such a political-cultural environment, where Latvians tend to view social democrats as being synonymous with Russians, Socialism, Communism, and the Soviet Union, this has led to the heightened perception that the right-wing of the political spectrum is viewed as being closer to Latvian culture, while the left-wing is associated with Russian culture. However, such strong views are not simply attributable to crass-nationalism, but instead political-cultural worldviews relating to political-economic preferences, since in the perceptions of most ethnic-Latvians worldviews, as noted above, Russians are synonymous with Sovietism, communism and the command economy. Thus it points not simply to a dislike of Russians simply for the sake of disliking them, but instead because of the type of political-economic system they are perceived to favour and be associated.

While these views might seem to be the result of stereotyping, such perceptions are very real in the mindsets of most ethnic-Latvians, which are informed by strong historical memories of repression during the Soviet occupation. When this translates into perceptions of contemporary social democrats, one elite pointed out that there is a widespread view shared in society that “we Latvians are right, and the Russians are left-wing...and [that] social democrats are left, which means for Russians, and being for

¹³⁷ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010). *For* evidence pointing to such a heated clash of cultural worldviews during the 1990s, see for example, Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. xx.

Russians means that they are for the former Soviet Union.”¹³⁸ Similarly, another elite made the observation that “in the public debate, all these groups were regarded as leftwing, socialist, and having some kind of Communist philosophy,” with the view that “rightwing parties are Latvian,...and leftwing parties are Russian.”¹³⁹

One can see how such worldviews associating social democrats as being synonymous with the Soviet Union, while appearing simplistic, are quite effective in leading to negative views and a distrust of social democratic parties due to ethnic-Latvians negative historical memories of Soviet rule. Indeed, Latvian centre-right parties during elections have played on such sentiments found in ethnic-Latvians political-cultural worldviews and historical memories that link Russians, the Soviet Union, Socialism, and Communism as being synonymous. As one elite pointed out “the other parties have kind of used the parallels with the Soviet past, in trying to equate them [social democrats] to the Communists, or being sort of neo-Communists.”¹⁴⁰ Additionally, another elite pointed out that “this public debate was concentrated at the level where... ‘the left is bad’ because it’s sort of turning us backwards to the Soviet Union, to the Russians,...and the rightwing, that is something good.”¹⁴¹ The importance of political-cultural worldviews in influencing such debates can be inferred from the explicit normative content of such debates, in that the left was portrayed as being ‘bad’ while the right was seen as inherently ‘good’ and ‘Latvian.’

¹³⁸ Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 23, 2010).

¹³⁹ Former Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Similar observation on predominant Latvian perceptions in regards to social democrats was also voiced by several other elites. Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 22, 2010); Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25a, 2010); Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26a, 2010); Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). Similarly Pabriks and Purs pointed out “the average voter tends to be skeptical about anything leftist and still assume that a leftist orientation automatically means an orientation towards Russia... [and] voters believe that they should be right oriented in order to bring about continued change.” Pabriks and Purs. (2002). *Latvia*, p. 83. Additionally, it was pointed out that during the 1990s, “widespread opinion maintains that the Latvian Social Democratic Party is more leftist than the West European social democratic parties.” Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy*, p. 163.

¹⁴⁰ Latvian Non-Governmental Senior Economist. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 19b, 2010).

¹⁴¹ Latvian Former Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 25b, 2010). Additionally, another Latvian elite pointed out that in the public debate, “usually the Russian speaking parties are called socialist parties.” Latvian Senior Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (March 2a, 2010). To further illustrate, in March 1997, before local elections, former Prime Minister Andris Skele gave a television speech where he “warned voters to beware of the rising tide of socialism and not to be deceived by the left-wing parties’ promises of miracles. Skele went on to denounce the ‘sociki’ as a collection of KGB agents and likened them to those who welcomed Soviet tanks in 1940.” Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia’s Transition to a Market Economy*, p. 163-164.

In the first decade of reforms, such portrayals were not necessarily misleading, since as noted above, many social democratic parties in Latvia have been dominated in membership and support by ethnic-Russian/Slavic people, and have also throughout the 1990s voiced statements and proposed policies that were anti-liberal market reform, and appeared overly nostalgic for the Soviet past, as well as pro-Russian and anti-Western. Additionally, the fact that it has been the social democratic parties that have been vocal in support of universal citizenship for all residents of Latvia, specifically for the many ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers that came to Latvia as a result of purposeful Soviet policies after 1945, has done nothing to lessen the negative perceptions regarding social democrats and left-of-centre parties. Such perceptions were driven by the desire of Latvians to be masters of their own land, and be in firm control of their political destiny. As mentioned above, such perceptions resulted from the view that perceived granting citizenship automatically to ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers as being a direct threat to Latvians desire to de-Sovietize, transform into a liberal-democracy and liberal market economy, and return to the West. As the discussion on citizenship highlighted, such views of Latvians were not necessarily misplaced as high-levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia, anti-liberal market reform attitudes, and pro-Russian sentiments existed amongst ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia.

Conclusions

Latvia's success in implementing rapid comprehensive liberal reforms resulted from the strong political-will of Latvians to return to Europe, de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy via comprehensive liberal political-economic reforms. This strong political will was driven by Latvia's predominantly liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and exhibit a reformist sentiment.

Overall, Latvia's strong political will to de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy were intricately connected and part of a broader goal ensuring Latvia's independence, freedom and rightful return to Europe and its Western Cultural heritage. Latvian people, both elites and masses believed that the Soviet command system was not

only a failure, but also political-culturally alien and antithetical and harmful to Latvian political-cultural interests. Moreover, after suffering nearly fifty years of being forcefully held against their will under Soviet/Russian domination, ethnic-Latvians had an intense yearning for the restoration of individual freedom and the right to own private property.

This yearning for the restoration of individual freedom and right to own property, entailed an immense faith in the market, and cult of private property amongst ethnic-Latvians, as well as a general loathing for and distrust of government planning both amongst elites and the public alike. As a result, most Latvian elites and members of society generally viewed transformation to a liberal market economy as essential in Latvia's quest to de-Sovietize, ensure freedom, return to Western Europe, and return to normalcy. Moreover, Latvians faith in market resulted in the view that the market economy was the 'best' and 'right' way to effectively organize the political-economic affairs of society in order to promote economic growth and overall development. These intense liberal worldviews lead to all-things that was seemingly Soviet to be rejected, with a general view favouring ultra-liberal marketization, which was seen as the antithesis of Soviet political-economic practices. Consequently, Latvia's predominant liberal political-cultural resulted in the vast majority of Latvian policy-makers having the view that market mechanisms were the 'best' and 'proper' regulator of political-economic relations. Such worldviews came into practice in the policy goals of getting the state out of role of business management, and substantially removing government planning from all parts of the economy.

While there were certainly hard times in the initial years after regaining independence, this did not lessen the Latvians yearning for freedom or faith in the market. Overall, most Latvians were ready to press on through any difficulties during the transformation process, as most considered these light in comparison to the historical memories of the many hardships endured during Soviet rule. These historically rooted political-cultural worldviews favouring a return to normalcy came to political life in Latvia's all encompassing primary policy goals of de-Sovietizing, transforming into a liberal market economy, and returning to Europe. Overall, Latvia was much more prepared for comprehensive liberal transformation because they never accepted the Soviet way of life, and saw it as a complete failure. In contrast the next chapter will

illustrate that Belarusian elites and society had an opposite viewpoint of the Soviet system from that of Latvians, which is why Belarusians were not prepared to seriously consider comprehensive liberal reforms, since the Belarusians did not view the Soviet system as broken.

CHAPTER 6: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF BELARUSIAN POLITICAL-CULTURE

From the outset of gaining independence in 1991, Belarus has taken a completely divergent path from the comprehensive liberal-market transformation that was carried out in Latvia. Overall, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to political-economic matters, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian in orientation, where the state controls almost all the economy and political-economic reforms have been largely nonexistent. Consequently, Belarusian political-economic policy practices have continued to remain stuck in Soviet-era methods, which tend to be illiberal, authoritarian, arbitrary, and generally lacking in respect of the rule of law. The absence of significant liberal reform has been characteristic of the entire political-economic situation where reform has been non-existent and the Belarusian economy largely resembles the command-type political-economy characteristic of Soviet times. These command and control methods of state centralization found in the Belarusian political-economy have been increasingly strengthened since 1994, under President Alexander Lukashenko.

Belarus's lack of comprehensive liberal market reforms resulted from an unwillingness amongst both Belarusian elites and in society, which did not share Latvians faith in the market, nor have a cult of private property, and instead favoured the maintenance of collectivistic and highly statist command-style management and control over virtually all segments of political-economic activity in Belarus. Thus, Belarus's lack of reform was attributable to collectivist political-cultural worldviews that are found historically in Belarus, which favor collective/communal interests, lack traditions of private property, prefer a strong role for the state in the economy, exhibit higher political passivity and have paternalistic tendencies of favouring a strong leader.

In the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by Belarusians, the former Soviet command system of political-economic management found in the BSSR was not viewed to be broken, and thus there was little preference for comprehensive market transformation, nor desire to radically de-Sovietize or move away from Russia. Belarusians also felt no expediency to move towards Western Europe, and increasingly expressed desires to maintain close ties towards Russia, not because they lacked a national identity, but because of the predominant feeling that a close orientation

with Russia was 'right,' 'natural' and 'normal, due to Belarus's close cultural heritage shared with Russia. Unlike Latvians, Belarusians believed that the Soviet-era command policies were a success, which were largely in tune with Belarusians political-cultural worldviews, and not viewed as culturally alien nor imposed by force. As a result, explicitly liberal political-cultural ideas and values similar to Latvians faith in the market and cult of private property were largely absent from the political-cultural mix in Belarus. Instead, Belarusians historically collectivistic, communal, statist and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews predominated and were reinforced by the positively nostalgic historical memories that Belarusians held of political-economic life under the BSSR. Indeed, as will be shown in chapter 7, Lukashenko has been able to consolidate and legitimize his rule by playing on these predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories widely shared by both Belarusian elites and society alike.

To understand the roots of such worldviews, it is necessary to trace the origins of Belarus's historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, which place Belarus firmly in the realm of Russian Orthodox Culture and help to explain Belarusians preferences in the post-Soviet period, which had little desire to radically de-Sovietize nor implement liberal-market transformation, but instead preferred to maintain many of the seemingly neo-Soviet, collectivistic and highly statist command-style decision-making mechanisms controlling most areas of Belarusians political-economic activity, as well as to maintain close relations with Russia. However, it is not simply enough to go back and only examine Soviet rule in the BSSR in the interwar period of independence and subsequent post-war period after 1945. This is because it would result in an insufficient understanding of the historical roots of Belarus's political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, historical memories, which played important roles in shaping both the politics of the first period of Soviet rule in the BSSR during the interwar period, Belarusian responses to Polish domination over Belarusians living in the western lands of Belarus that were under Polish rule during the interwar period, Belarusian responses to the German occupation during World War Two, Belarusian worldviews and historical memories in regards to Soviet economic development under the BSSR, and Belarusian political behavior after gaining formal independence in 1991.

This leads back to the core hypothesis that Belarus's political-cultural worldviews are conditioned by Belarus's unique historical legacies in terms of its ways of life and historical memories relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and economics. Thus, several core themes will be examined in the sections that follow, which will involve a comparative historical analysis that takes a chronological format to trace the roots and historical evolution of Belarus's historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories throughout various key stages of Belarusian history.

Religiously, Belarus remained under the Russian Orthodox Church, which was hierarchical, and promoted values of collectivism, communalism, passivity, paternalism, absolutism, strong state rule, and authoritarian leadership. In such a religious-cultural environment, there was a lack of emphasis placed on the values of individualism, individual freedom, individual literacy, and private property. Additionally, while Belarus did have historical links also to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, it was Belarus's strong eastern cultural connections intricately tying average Belarusians to Russian Orthodox Christianity, which had predominant long-lasting effects influencing the shape and pattern of political-cultural worldviews unique to Belarusians. Politically, from 1795 onwards, Russian Tsars which had strong direct connections to the Orthodox Church ruled Belarus in an absolutist and authoritarian fashion, which allowed the religious-cultural influences of Russian Orthodoxy to have cultural hegemony in the lands of Belarus. Moreover, throughout history there was a persistent pattern of Belarusian passivity and acquiescence to authoritarian rule, as well as a rural way of life promoting collective and communal rights over that of individual personal freedoms.

Economically, Belarusians remained predominantly rural up until the mid-Twentieth century, and had next to no experience with individual private property. Instead, Belarusians adhered to a political-cultural way of life characterized by a tradition of collectivist and communal control of land and property under the village commune. While there was some limited private property ownership in Belarus, such private holdings were largely controlled by non-Belarusians, typically Polish barons or Russian aristocrats. In these areas, ethnic-Belarusians largely remained as serfs in a feudal state of existence, and predominantly lived in rural villages. As a result, a view of private property being sacred, as displayed in neighbouring Latvia, was largely absent and

unthinkable to the collectivistic and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by Belarusians.

Belarus gained its first modern tangible experience with statehood under the BSSR, as an original and founding republic of the Soviet Union. In general, state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR are generally viewed positively in the predominant historical memories of Belarusians, largely because the political-economic practices of Soviet development in the BSSR built on and reinforced the historically preexisting collectivist, communal and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews already widely prevalent amongst Belarusians. Additionally, Belarusians also shared negative historical memories in regards to the experiences suffered by Belarusians living in the western lands of Belarus that were under Polish dominion during the interwar period.

Belarusians also have differing political-cultural worldviews and historical memories in regards to World War Two. First, Belarusians took a more positive view of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact because this ended Polish domination over the western lands of Belarus, and resulted in the reunification of the historic cultural lands of Belarus into one single political entity, which was the BSSR. Moreover, the lands of Belarus were also the centre-point of pro-Soviet and anti-German guerilla warfare, where the local population formed the core of the guerilla forces, which largely received mass popular support from the populace. As a result, the historical memories shared by Belarusians about WWII exude a great deal of patriotism, where the Soviet victory not only meant liberation from the domination of the German invaders, but also a shared victory for Belarusians and the BSSR with Russians in the Great Patriotic War. Thus for Belarusians, the end of WWII was seen as liberation and victory, and was one of the key historical events in the history of the BSSR. Indeed, many of the guerilla leaders would go on to play prominent roles as key Belarusian national statesmen leading the BSSR for much of the post-1945 period.

Overall, the majority of Belarusians were rural until 1945. This changed after 1945, as Belarus also experienced significant Soviet industrial development in the post-war years, becoming one of the leading 'industrial engines' of Soviet economy. During this time, the Belarusian political leaders of the BSSR enjoyed a great deal of political

capital and legitimacy, due to their impeccable pro-Soviet credentials, and past experience as leaders of the guerilla resistance during WWII, which resulted in Belarus having much greater decision-making autonomy relative to Latvia and other Soviet Republics. This meant that Soviet rule was not seen as foreign or culturally alien because Belarusians were largely predominate in the decision-making apparatus of the BSSR. Moreover, the majority of Belarusians largely viewed Soviet economic industrial development and modernization, as seen with the large socio-economic advancements in overall general growth and welfare achieved during this boom period, as positive progress. Indeed, compared to Latvia, there was very little relative mass grass-roots resistance to Soviet rule in Belarus, which was apparent in all periods, and especially during the period of glasnost and perestroika, which is largely viewed negatively in the historical memories of Belarusians. In general, state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR are viewed positively in the predominant worldviews and historical memories of Belarusians, largely because many of the political-economic practices found in the BSSR built on and reinforced the collectivist, communal and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews already widely prevalent amongst Belarusians.

These unique historical legacies have led to Belarus having historical political-cultural worldviews that are highly collectivist, communal, paternalist, and statist in their outlook. Thus, even with the collapse of the Soviet Union, collectivistic, command-style, and statist policy ideas were not discredited amongst most Belarusian elites and members of society. This is because key aspects of Soviet Communism exhibited in the policies and the ideology exhibited by the BSSR were rooted in Belarus's historic political-culture worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, which included predominant attitudes favoring collectivism, the communal ownership of property, and paternalism in the form of a penchant for strong statist solutions, and authoritarian leadership to solve pressing political-economic problems. Moreover, Belarusians continued to share significant nostalgia for Soviet political-economic life under the BSSR, which is seen in significant patriotism for the BSSR in the historical memories of large numbers of Belarusians. As a result of such pro-Soviet and collectivistic worldviews, Belarusians were not prepared to even seriously consider real reform after 1991, since the Belarusians did not view the previous system under the BSSR as broken. From such a political-cultural standpoint, this

will help to understand why similar collectivist and statist patterns reminiscent of Soviet times, continued to persist in Belarus under President Lukashenko long after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Original Conversion to Orthodox Christianity

The key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews was when Belarus originally converted into Byzantine Orthodox Christianity in the year 988. This religious foundation was a crucial influence setting Belarus's political-cultural worldviews and ways of life down a unique evolutionary path that was different from Latvia where the influences of Western Christianity and Protestant Lutheranism would become paramount. Here it is important to refer specifically to maps showing the border between the Russian Orthodox and Western Christian cultural realms. These maps divide Belarus and Latvia down their political border, and place Belarus firmly in the cultural realm of Orthodox Christianity with close religious-cultural links to Russia, and thus distinct from Latvia which belongs in the realm of Western Christianity.¹

Overall, the religious foundations of Orthodox Christianity were the crucial definitive influences informing the content of Belarus's historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life. Religiously, the Orthodox Church was hierarchical, and promoted values of collectivism, communalism, passivity, paternalism, absolutism, strong state rule, and authoritarian leadership, which meant that liberal ideas of individualism were culturally foreign concepts. However, before moving to discuss the worldviews, values and traditions promoted in the doctrines and teachings of Russian

¹ See Huntington. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations.*, p. 159; Eberhardt. (2004). "The Concept of Boundary.," p. 184. Overall, there is wide historical consensus that Belarus firmly belongs in the cultural realm of Russian Orthodox Christianity, where Western cultural influences were largely minimal. This is important because "the essential differences between Russia and the West were ultimately traceable to religion." Pipes, Richard. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.* New York: Peregrine Books., p. 266. For consensus on importance of the Russian Orthodox influence on Belarusian culture, see also Plokhyy, Serhii. (2006). *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p. 93; Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 6; Berdyaev, Nicholas. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press., p. 8-9, 21-28; Taagepera. (1973). "Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.," 71; Lubachko, Ivan S. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule, 1917-1957.* Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky., p. 4. See also, Kohn, Hans, ed. (1962). *The Mind of Modern Russia: Historical and political thought of Russia's Great Age.* New York: Harper Torch Books., p. 201; Gray. (1979). "Conclusions.," p. 258; Gerner and Hedlund. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 179; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 68.

Orthodox Christianity and the effects that these had on the patterns of the collectivistic/communal cultural way of life found historically amongst Belarusian peasants, it is necessary first to address counter historical narratives that dispute the notion of Belarusian cultural being intricately linked to Russian Orthodox Christianity, and which portray Belarusian culture's historical foundations as being rooted in the West.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland

Some historical narratives, including those presented by the 'nationalist' BPF have downplayed Belarus's historical cultural ties to Russian Orthodox Christianity. Instead, these have argued that due to Belarus forming a constituent part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, that Belarus's 'rightful' cultural ties are historically linked to the West rather than Russia, and that these were adversely affected by cultural imperialism on the part of Russia. Indeed, such arguments use the Grand Duchy narrative as a means to attempt to link Belarus culturally to Western Europe in order to show that the "mentality of Belarusians is different from that of Russians."² Overall, however, most Belarusians do not share the historical memories of Belarusian statehood being rooted and linked to the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian and Poland.

Overall, many of these arguments that portray Belarus as being historically linked to the West, via the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland are contradicted by historical evidence pointing out that Polish-Lithuanian rule over Belarus was not all that great as some historians portray. Overall there is generally a lack of positive historical memory towards the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian amongst most Belarusians today. First it should be noted that the majority of the political elite of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were not culturally Belarusian, but increasingly those of either Polish-Lithuanian descent, or individuals that had been sufficiently Polonized. Indeed, Polish dominance over the affairs of the Grand Duchy had begun to be strengthened in 1385, when Grand Duke Jogiello accepted the Roman Catholic faith, which gave the Polish Commonwealth

² Zaprudnik. (1994). "Development of Belarusian National Identity.," p. 133. Additionally, the period of the Grand Duchy is often viewed by such narratives as the "golden age of Belarusian culture." Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 9, 35; Zaprudnik, Jan. (1973). "Interpretation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Recent Works of Soviet Belorussian Historians." In *Baltic History*, eds. A. Ziedonis, Jr., W. L. Winter and M. Valgemäe. Columbus: AABS., p. 61-67; Dovnar-Zapolsky, M. (1988). "The Basis of White Russia's State Individuality." In *Byelorussian Statehood: Reader and Bibliography*, eds. Vitaut Kipel and Zora Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 48-49. [Originally Published 1919].

substantial influence over the religious and cultural orientation of everyday life in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was further strengthened by the Union of Brest which established the Uniate Catholic Church over all the Belarusian lands. Indeed, as time progressed, “the Grand Duchy of Lithuania...became an instrument of Poland’s eastward expansion.”³ Therefore, since the elites of the Grand Duchy were Poles or largely Polonized Belarusians, this is helpful for inferring that the masses did not identify with the Grand Duchy.

Overall, it is also evident that Belarusian peasants were often at times forcefully subjected to attempts at cultural assimilation and religious conversion from that of the dominant Polish leadership of the Grand Duchy. However, even while those elites that originally had more Belarusian origins began to adopt much of the religious-cultural and linguistic traditions of the dominant Poles, the majority of ordinary Belarusian peasants in the countryside remained true to their Orthodox Christian heritage, and were largely averse and resistant to any attempts at cultural Polonization or religious conversion to Roman Catholicism, and also hostile to the initial attempts to bring them under the dominion of the Uniate Church, which was oriented in its allegiance towards Rome.

Although substantial numbers of Belarusians did eventually come into the fold of the Uniate Church,⁴ several points are important to note, which point out that these influences might not have had the ‘Westernizing’ effect that several historians claim. First, Belarusians were forced to convert from Orthodoxy to the Uniate Church, where the Polish language predominated. Indeed, the Uniate Church was not so much Belarusian, as it was more a Polish institution in that it was dominated culturally and linguistically by Poles. Moreover, unlike many of the ruling class, the vast majority of Belarusian peasantry did not go willingly into such conversions. For instance, when the “masses of Belarusians did not follow their hierarchs into the union with Rome, a flood

³ Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 227. On the Grand Duchy’s elites being largely Poles or Polonized, see also Vakar, Nicholas. (1956). *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 45, 64; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 3; Novina, Anton. (1988). “Building the State.” .” In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. Vitaut Kipel and Zora Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 67 [Originally published. (1918). in *Varta*, Miensk, 1, 1 (October): 30-32]; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 277.

⁴ For example, 70% of Belarusians had been brought under the dominion of the Uniate Church from 1569 to 1839. Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 38.

of oppression was unleashed against the Orthodox.”⁵ Additionally, it is important to point out that while giving allegiance to Rome, the Uniate Church nevertheless continued to adhere to its traditional Orthodox doctrinal beliefs, which still placed more of an emphasis on collectivist values. Therefore, in terms of beliefs and worldviews, throughout this time, the majority of Belarusian peasants stayed true to their predominantly Orthodox Christian traditions.

Overall, there is also evidence of significant negative attitudes towards Poles, largely stemming from the fact that Belarusians who were converted into Orthodoxy first, were then subjected by the Poles who tried to more-or-less to forcefully convert them to the Western Christian traditions of Roman Catholicism, which were at odds with Belarusians Orthodox traditions. Thus, in spite of this overt coercion, the majority of Belarusians during this period remained true to their Orthodox faith, and were often openly resistant, resentful, and even hostile to attempts of cultural Polonization. For example, it has been pointed out that “the denizens of the countryside and the vast majority of the townsfolk remained Orthodox,...[where] attachment to the faith of their forebears was seen by a majority of Belarusians as a matter of national survival.”⁶ Similarly, Dovnar-Zapolsky noted that “The pressure of polonism and Catholicism compelled all Orthodox White Russians [Belarusians] to rally against it..and the peasantry, and the middle-class bourgeoisie stubbornly upheld their right to an independent religious and national existence.”⁷

Additionally, there was also an explosion of armed resistance from peasants during the seventeenth century, which was motivated by the Belarusians desire to defend “the Orthodox faith and the native speech,” which according to Vakar was significant

⁵ It is ironic that one of these quotes comes from Zaprudnik, who was noted above as praising the Grand Duchy as a ‘golden age’ for Belarusian culture. These claims are contradicted by other evidence that Zaprudnik presents that openly acknowledges that there was many examples of cultural Polonization. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 34, 38. For similar conclusions on forcefully induced Polonization via conversion to the Uniate Church, and also that the Uniate Church can be viewed more as a Polish cultural institution, see Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 3; Anonymous. (1988). “A Summary Glance into the History and the Situation of White Russia.” In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 126 [Originally printed in 1919, in *Eastern Europe*, Paris, 2 (September 2): 45-49]; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 229; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 1; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 45.

⁶ The fact that the Orthodox faith and local cultural traditions were largely retained by the majority of Belarusians, in spite of persistent attempts by the Poles at cultural Polonization, was also noted by Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 19, 24.

⁷ Dovnar-Zapolsky. (1988). “The Basis of White Russia’s State Individuality.” p. 42-43, 50.

not only because “faith and the speech determined nationality,” but also since “the movement can be described as one of ‘national emancipation.’”⁸ Such evidence of the retention of the Orthodox Christian faith and the maintenance of local national cultural traditions not only helps undermine claims regarding the important influences of the Grand Duchy, but also provides concrete historical evidence inferring that local Belarusian culture was already at play in strengthening a unique Belarusian national identity.

Finally, under the dominion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, it should be pointed out that in regards to the predominant political-cultural way of life at the time, the majority of Belarusians remained landless peasants, either living in a state of serfdom and subservient to the dominant Polish landlords, or continuing to live in the important historic cultural body of the village commune.⁹ Overall, serfdom for Belarusian peasants in the Grand Duchy was harsher than that experienced by Latvians in Courland and Livonia, with the exception of Latgale, which was also ruled by the Polish Commonwealth. No doubt in such a political environment, it would seem likely the Belarusians resisting the persistent attempts of Polonization would increasingly look to their religious-cultural brethren in Russian for protection.¹⁰ Indeed, as will be discussed below in the section dealing with contemporary national identity debates, these forms of historical narratives regarding the Western cultural foundations of Belarusian ‘nationalism’ espoused by some of the opposition is largely absent from the predominant historical memories of the population. Thus, in regards to narratives of Belarusian identity that places Belarus as more Western, Belarusians did not simply identify with narratives about the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian statehood, because Belarusians had not lived under it for generations. Thus, while Belarus did have historical links also to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, it was Belarus’s strong eastern cultural

⁸ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 60-61, 45, 64. Lubachko also points out that “The Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian peasantry retained their languages and national customs, thus becoming a barrier to the solid establishment of Polish nationality.” Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 4. Similar sentiments were mentioned by Anonymous. (1988). “A Summary Glance into the History and the Situation of White Russia.” p. 125.

⁹ For example, by the 16th century, the percentage of land owned by Polish landlords had increased to 65%, with also an additional 5% belong to the church. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 24.

¹⁰ Indeed, several have noted that the Belarusians looked towards Russia for protection. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 62; Dovnar-Zapolsky. (1988). “The Basis of White Russia’s State Individuality.” p. 43; Zaprudnik. (1994). “Development of Belarusian National Identity.” p. 141.

connections intricately tying average Belarusians to Russia and Russian Orthodox Christianity, which had predominant long-lasting effects influencing the shape and pattern of political-cultural worldviews unique to Belarusians.

Orthodox Christianity and Collectivist Rural Traditions of Communal Property

From 1795 onwards, the lands of Belarus were ruled by Russian Tsars, which had strong direct connections to the Orthodox Church, and which had planted firm roots in Belarus since the initial conversion of Belarusians to Orthodox Christianity in 988. Overall, the religious foundations of Orthodox Christianity were the crucial definitive influences informing and setting Belarus's political-cultural worldviews and ways of life down unique evolutionary path that provided strong cultural links to Russia. Religiously, the Orthodox Church was hierarchical, and promoted values of collectivism, communalism, passivity, absolutism, paternalism, strong state rule, and authoritarian leadership. Moreover, because the influences of Protestantism did not make significant headway and were largely absent from historic-political-cultural mix in Belarus, this meant that liberal ideas of individualism were foreign and culturally alien concepts amongst Belarusians. Indeed, the fact that Orthodox values promoted the collective will over that of the individual can be seen in Russian Orthodoxy's lack of emphasis placed on such values as promoting individual literacy, unlike the values of Lutheranism in Latvia that placed significant emphasis on individuals and the promotion of literacy.¹¹

Belarus was similar to Latvia in that both remained predominantly rural in regards to its population make-up and economic activity well up into the mid-twentieth century. However, in contrast to the land organization in the regions of Latvia that was managed

¹¹ Overall, "Orthodox Christian prelates and potentates did not welcome the prospect of mass literacy and free thought," which resulted in individual rates of literacy remaining substantially behind those of Latvians until the early Twentieth century. Clemens. (2009). "Culture and Symbols as Tools of Resistance.," p. 172-173. For consensus on Orthodox Christianity promoting values of collectivism and communalism to the detriment of the promotion of individual freedom, see Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 266-267. Because of the close cultural affinities shared by Belarusians with Russians, and the fact that Belarus is in the cultural realm of Russian Orthodoxy, it is suitable in tracing Belarusian peasant historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life, to refer to historical sources describing Russian rural peasant society that shared many cultural similarities with Belarusian rural peasants. Such sources, when cross-referenced with purely Belarusian historical studies is adequate for the purposes of tracing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews and predominant ways of life. As Ioffe points out, "while ethnologists would probably point to some differences between the 'peasant archetypes' of Russia and Belarus, these do not appear significant in the larger scheme of things, at least as far as Belarus's Orthodox majority is concerned." Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 168.

under a burgeoning system of individual private property, in large portions of Belarus, and similar to the Russian Empire, land holdings were controlled and organized collectively under the historic village commune. Such collectivistic patterns of land organization and management were directly shaped and legitimated by the religious teachings of Orthodox Christianity, which infused Belarusian political-cultural worldviews with a collectivistic and communal orientation.

Overall, Orthodox teachings directly helped shape Belarusian political-cultural worldviews towards attitudes of natural rights and notions of natural law, which favored collective rights and frowned upon individualism and private property. In contrast to Latvian political-cultural worldview, which had an ‘individualist spirit,’ Orthodox Christianity brought more of what could be called a ‘Communal Spirit’ to the Belarusian political-cultural way of life, which was epitomized historically in the village commune. To illustrate, the “communal spirit” promoted by Orthodoxy, was “antipathetic to the growth of the individual ethos,” and private property because it fostered “the notion that private enrichment was disadvantageous to the community, and therefore discreditable and even sinful.”¹² Moreover, Orthodox teachings were further prohibitive towards private property, not only because “Western ideas of property were alien,” but also because these religious doctrines promoted a worldview of natural rights amongst Belarusians, which held that “the soil was God’s, and all who toiled and laboured at it might enjoy use of it.”¹³ As a result, worldviews favouring the individual accumulation of private property were largely absent and unthinkable to the Orthodox infused collectivistic and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories shared by Belarusians.

Overall, there was no cult of private property shared by Belarusians, in contrast to the predominance of such liberal-individualist values found historically in Latvia. As a

¹² Keep, John L. H. (1976). *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization*. New York: W. W. Norton., p. 6. Weber also argued that in the village commune, “firmly rooted concepts of natural law [were] at work.” Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 89, 64-63; Weber. (1964). *The Sociology of Religion.*, p. 136, 176.

¹³ Berdyaev. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.*, p. 17. For similar consensus, see Vakar, Nicholas. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. New York: Harper and Brothers., p. 38, 46; Keep. (1976). *The Russian Revolution.*, p. 7; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. xi, 158-162, 198; Pipes, Richard. (2005). *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press., p. 10.

result, private property was not something that was taken for granted as it was for Latvians, but was instead culturally alien in the worldviews of the vast majority of rural Belarusian peasants. Thus, there was a general lack of traditional worldviews and ways of life, and historical memories favouring private individual land ownership amongst ethnic-Belarusians. Indeed, the historical pattern shows the trend in Belarus was towards a predominant tradition and habit of communal and collective control of the land, seen with the village commune, as opposed to the traditions of individual private-freehold farmsteads, which were key features of the political-cultural way of life of rural Latvia.¹⁴ Overall, Belarusian political-cultural worldviews that were informed by Orthodoxy, favouring collectivist and communal control of land were epitomized and came to life in the village commune, which had the primary responsibility of collectively managing, partitioning, and equally redistributing the land under its jurisdiction for common usage. Certainly, as time progressed this helped to reinforce not only a strong sense of collectivistic traditions, values, habits and historical memories, but also a strong emphasis on the importance of the extended collective family in the village commune which played a predominant role in the everyday lives of Belarusian peasants.

Orthodoxy, Passivity, Paternalism, Authoritarianism and lack of Rule of Law

The historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life influenced by Russian Orthodox Christianity also helped to reinforce patriarchal conceptions of natural law where one must be obedient to the family, the commune, and higher authorities like the Church and Tsar. Such political-cultural worldviews and ways of life served to reinforce collectivist, authoritarian, paternalistic, and absolutist habits of behavior, which was seen in all aspects of the political-economy during Tsarist times, below the commune to the family, and above the commune to the Tsar. Here, it should be noted that in regards to socialization, the Belarusian family was important in helping to spread these traditions

¹⁴ For consensus on traditions and values of private property being cultural alien, see Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime*. p. 266-267; Dovnar-Zapolsky. (1988). "The Basis of White Russia's State Individuality.," p. 46; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom*., p. xi, 158-162. The fact that there are no property rights, or no widespread traditions of private individual land ownership was mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). On such divergent patterns between the collectivism and communalism of rural Belarus and Russia, from that of the individualist traditions common to Latvia, see Ruis. (1959b). "Latvia.," p. 1676.

regarding the desirability of passivity to future generations, since the extended family largely operated as a collectivized economic unit whose collective will was enforced by the authoritarian head. For example, this can be inferred from descriptions that describe family relations, where under natural law “the family was unified under the absolute authority of the head...A *totalitarian* society in miniature, [that] demand[ed] not only obedience of all members to the head of the group but the devotion of each to the purposes of the whole.”¹⁵ Indeed, as time passed, such habits resulted in the development of historical memories that only reinforced worldviews that viewed collectivistic and passive behavior as the best and right way for one to prosper and thus for collective society to develop and grow.

Overall, pre-Bolshevik Tsarist society in Belarus, with its traditional Orthodox and Slavic beliefs and outlook reinforced traditional patterns and values promoting a collective mentality that was averse towards individualism and private property ownership, where there was also a penchant towards patriarchal and authoritarian tendencies. These political-cultural worldviews favouring collectivistic, communal, paternalistic and authoritarian tendencies were epitomized and came to life in the village commune, which had the sole primary responsibility of collectively managing, partitioning, and equally redistributing the land under its jurisdiction for common usage. Therefore, at the level of the village commune, Vakar notes that “the striking fact of peasant life was its primary communism. The basic social unit was the village. To each of these an individual inextricably belonged, and could not act or be thought of in his daily existence apart from them.”¹⁶ This served to infringe on individualism, restrict private

¹⁵ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. p. 34, 38. On authoritarianism and absolutism of head of peasant families being rooted in natural law, which promoted the collective will over the individual and general habits of passivity, see also Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 20-21, 23; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 204; White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 58-59; Gsovski, Vladimir. (1959). “The Soviet Union.” Ch. 58, in *Government, Law and courts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: Volume 2*, eds., Vladimir Gsovski and Kazimierz Grzybowski. London: Stevens & Sons Limited., p. 1607-1608. Observations on historic pattern and habits of passivity being predominant in Belarusian society, and that the family was key in socializing such habits was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010)

¹⁶ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 32. For further consensus lack of individual rights within the commune, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 17, 20-21; Male, D. J.. (1971). *Russian Peasant Organization Before Collectivization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Robinson, Geroid

property, and restrict liberal notions of rule of law. This is because in the village commune, as in the family...

the guiding principle...was that authority once established must not be questioned....The business of the *mir* was not to find a consensus: it was to locate the collective will and activate the collective authority...Decision was binding...it was not subject to review by court or conscience. In fact, the *mir* had absolved individual responsibility.¹⁷

As a result, there was completely no semblance of rule of law in the political-culture of the village commune, which was headed by a communal elder that would be charged with enacting the collective will of the village in an authoritarian manner. In such a political-cultural environment, any conceptions of legality based on rule of law, were culturally alien. For example, this can be inferred from the fact that “in making decisions, the *mir* did not feel itself bound either by law or its own precedent,” because “the law resistant to manipulation, inflexible and external, was conceived as the enemy of justice and morality.”¹⁸ Moreover, unlike in Latvia, there was no ability for peasants to seek redress in appeal-type courts for grievances, personal protection, and wrongdoing. This is because, even when some rudimentary laws for redress began to be put in place in Belarus, “rural justice in both the village and the district, as a rule, ignored the written law...[and] more often than not customs would conflict with it, and people who appealed to the higher courts were frowned upon.”¹⁹ As will be shown below, such patterns and traditions that go against liberal notions of rule of law continued to be followed during the period of Soviet rule, and more recently under the contemporary rule of Lukashenko.

Additionally, absolutist and authoritarian traditions promoted by Orthodoxy were carried upward from the family and village commune, all the way to the autocratic leadership styles of the Tsar, which further greatly served to restrict Western notions of

Tanquary. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime: A History of the Landlord-Peasant World and a Prologue to the Peasant Revolution of 1917*. 3rd Printing. Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 34-35, 125; Keep. (1976). *The Russian Revolution.*, p. 9; Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 77, 91; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 184-186.

¹⁷ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. p. 47. *Mir* literally means village in the Russian language. For further consensus, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 19-21;

¹⁸ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. p. 48.

¹⁹ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia*. p. 24-25. For additional consensus on traditions of rule of law being alien, see also Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime*. p. 41-42; Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 154-158, 267; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom*. p. 205.

individual rights and rule of law. Overall, Orthodox doctrines promoted patriarchal worldviews held amongst the peasants that viewed the Tsar as a little father to the people, whose power was ordained by the grace of God. From such doctrines promoted by Orthodoxy came the predominant worldviews of Belarusians that promoted a persistent pattern of passivity and favouritism and acquiescence towards absolutist authoritarian rule that was often characterized by ruling by decrees that were not subject to any semblance of rule of law. When combined with the complementary religious teachings promoting the collectivized management of land, such worldviews that viewed the Tsar as being God's representative on earth helped to legitimize the pattern of having strong statist solutions in organizing political-economic relations, especially in regards to the state acting as the supreme guardian of all the land. As Pipes points out, because land was viewed as being "created by God for everyone's use," when "the crown took advantage of this attitude to claim title to all soil...the peasantry found [such actions] quite acceptable and logical since the church taught it to regard the Tsar as God's vicar."²⁰

Working from such legitimating doctrines, Russian Tsars would begin to implement the beginnings of a burgeoning system of an increased authoritarian state with controls over the individual that would become even more pervasive under the Soviet regime of totalitarian control after 1917. Overall, this can be seen as an example of political-cultural worldviews and ways of life driving politics, as opposed to autocratic institutions causing behaviors. As Vakar observed, "the Russian [Orthodox] habits of obedience have been the cause, not the result, of political autocracy."²¹ As will be

²⁰ Pipes. (2005). *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics.*, p. 10. See also footnotes no. 12 and 13 above.

²¹ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.* p. 40. Additionally, as Pipes also pointed out, the "contributing factor to the rise of an extreme form of autocracy was the Orthodox religion." Pipes. (2005). *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics.*, p. 12. See also, Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.* p. 161, 221-222, 232-233. For others that also agree on this omnipotent perception of the Tsar promoted by Orthodox religious doctrines and that religion was key in contributing to promoting habits of passivity and preferences legitimizing the authoritarianism absolutism of Tsars, see Berdyaev. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.*, p. 8-9; Kohn. (1962). *The Mind of Modern Russia.*, p. 266; White, Stephen. (1979b). "The USSR: Patterns of Autocracy and Industrialism." Ch. 2. In *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, eds., A. Brown and J. Gray. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers., p. 29-30; White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 27, 38; Graham. (1927). *New Governments of Eastern Europe.*, p. 15; Weber. (1993). *The Sociology of Religion.*, p. 179. Several elites also mentioned Belarusians penchant for passivity and preferences favouring authoritarian leadership being rooted historically in the teachings of Russian Orthodox Christianity. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010)

illustrated in the section below, such patterns of passivity and adherence to values and habits promoting the overall wellbeing of the collective at the expense of the individual, and penchant for unquestioningly favouring authoritarian, paternalist and statist leadership, would be a common feature of Belarusian political-cultural way of life through the Tsarist period, through the Soviet era, to the present time.

Thus, with a lack of emphasis on individual freedom, and an emphasis on the collective and absolutist authority of the Orthodox church, Tsar and village commune, this helped reinforce attitudes and habits of collectivism, communalism and passivity which came to life in the societal attitude that it is best to mind ones own work, to toil, and work diligently, rather than being openly individualist, advocating for reform and questioning authority. Moreover, as time passed, the continuity of such ways of life resulted in the development of historical memories that only reinforced worldviews that viewed collectivistic and passive behavior as the best and right way for one to prosper, and thus for collective society to develop and grow. Indeed, this consistency in patterns can help to explain patterns of societal acquiescence to the authoritarianism under Soviet rule, as well as that under Lukashenko, and the lack of overwhelming antipathy towards strongly statist solutions in Belarus today.

Political-Culture and Politics in the Nineteenth Century

As mentioned above, pre-Bolshevik Tsarist society in Belarus with its traditional Orthodox beliefs and outlook, reinforced traditional patterns and values promoting a collective mentality that was averse towards individualism and private property, as well as favourable towards patriarchal and authoritarian tendencies. While both Belarus and Latvia experienced serfdom, it is important to note that the serfdom that existed in Latvia under the Baltic German barons, while harsh, differed substantially from the bitterly harsh conditions of feudalism and collectivist traditions and habits of land governance that was experienced by Belarusian peasants. What is also significant is that Latvia experienced reforms much early than Belarus, as the abolition of serfdom in Latvia, with the exception of Latgale, occurred nearly forty years ahead of abolition of serfdom for Belarusian peasants, which occurred in the 1860s. While the early reforms in Latvia from 1817 to 1819 did not grant immediate access of Latvian peasants to their historic land

claims, it nevertheless was important due to the fact that Latvian peasants were freed from serfdom and granted their own individual freedoms, which is significant because this occurred over forty years before serfdom was abolished in Belarus and the rest of the Russian Empire. Moreover, Latvian peasants living in Courland, Livonia, and Zemgale, also had a head-start in being granted the right for individuals to acquire their own individual property as a result of the reforms of 1849, which occurred nearly twenty years before such rights were granted in Belarus when serfdom was finally abolished in 1861.

Here it is important to note that not all of Belarus operated under the village commune system, as serfdom was also strong in the western lands of Belarus. In these areas there was private ownership both before the reforms and after the reforms of the 1860s. In terms of distribution, by the 1890s, 34% to 40% of land was held communally, around 5% held by the state and church, while much of the rest around 60% was held in private holdings.²² However, such numbers should not be taken as evidence of the weakness of collective arrangements, or as inference to Belarusians having experience with private landownership. This is because Belarusian peasants owned virtually no private land. Indeed, where there was private land in Belarus, this was controlled by a small number of land barons that were ethnic-Polish nobles, which retained their privileges for many years even as the lands of Belarus came fully under the control of the Russian Empire after 1795. Furthermore, serfdom for Belarusian peasants living under the control of Polish landlords was harsher than that experienced by Latvians, and increasingly during the late-nineteenth century, Belarusian peasants began to view the Polish landlords as their oppressors.²³ As will be discussed below, one can infer a clash

²² See for example, Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 32; Gershenkron, Alexander. (1968). *Continuity in History and other Essays.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 185; Watters, Francis M. (1968). "The Peasant and the Village Commune." Ch. 5. In *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich. Stanford: Stanford University Press., p. 146.

²³ For examples pointing to Poles remaining in dominant positions in controlling virtually all available private land holdings, and examples of their harsh treatment of Belarusian peasants, and Belarusians viewing Polish landlords as their oppressors, see Zaprudnik, Jan. (1988). "The National Consciousness of the Byelorussians and the Road to Nationhood." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 11; Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 30-31, 66; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 31, 6-7,10; Palisander, Heb. (1988). "The White-Russians: A Nation driven back into the Middle Ages Under Muscovite Rule." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 34; Varonka, Jazep. (1988). "The Byelorussian Movement from 1917 to 1920: A Short Review." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 121; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 277; Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 10. By the 1850s Polish

of cultures existing between the ethnic-Polish landlords and the landless Belarusian peasants, whose traditionally collectivistic worldviews would have viewed such patterns of Polish control over the vast majority of agricultural land via private land ownership as being unjust.

Since ethnic-Poles continued to own most of the small amounts of private land that was largely available in the western lands of Belarus after the reforms of 1861, average Belarusians did not have any experience of individual private land ownership, similar to Latvians, influencing the historic evolution of their political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. Additionally, in the areas that remained under the village commune system, these collectivist traditions and regimes of land organization were actually strengthened where they existed after the reforms of 1861. As a result, there was a great deal of political-cultural continuity in the worldviews and everyday way of life of the people, which were largely shaped by the teachings of Orthodox Christianity, the family, and the village communes, which played a predominant role in the everyday lives of Belarusian peasants. Furthermore, even for those Belarusians operating outside the realm of communal land holdings, Belarusian peasants rural way of life differed from that of Latvians, in that Belarusian peasants did not have the same experience of Latvian farmers that had historically lived separate lives of some independence on small farmstead plots with their own relative independence. Moreover, while there was experience of Belarusian families having hereditary tenure on certain plots of commune land, such tenure should not be confused with private property ownership. Indeed, Belarusian peasants in all areas tended to live more communally in rural villages, where collective obligations to the village commune remained an important part of everyday life. As Zaprudnik and Urban point out, “the great mass of the native population in the [19th] century remained on the land, leading lives that were essentially unaltered for centuries.”²⁴ Thus while Latvians had the historic experience of political-

landlords controlled about 50% of the cultivatable land. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 46, 55; Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime.*, p. 85.

²⁴ Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 280. Additionally, Vakar points out that before 1917, 87% of Belarusian farms were “closely tied to the village.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 17, 19. For consensus on Emancipation of 1861 serving to reinforce the strength of traditional collectivist political-cultural bodies such as the village commune in the everyday lives of vast majority of Belarusian peasants, see Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 51; Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime.*, p. 71, 118-119; Gershenkron. (1968). *Continuity in History.*, p. 209; Keep. (1976). *The Russian Revolution.*, p. 9;

cultural life being oriented around the individual private farmstead, Belarusians had the experience of political-cultural life being oriented around the close knit and communally oriented rural village.

Here it should also be noted that because the village commune was also responsible for the collection of taxes, which would be passed upward to Tsarist authorities, restrictions on the movement of individuals from village communes was restricted. As a result, during Tsarist times, individuals needed an internal passport in order to travel away from their village commune. Moreover, individuals, even when they were permitted to leave, still had to kickback earnings to their local village.²⁵ This internal passport system of restricting the movement of individuals, was carried though to great effect during Soviet times, and also continues to persist today in Belarus, as well as Russia. However, such examples of increased state control are not problematic for political-cultural explanations due to the fact that the Orthodox Church and the Russian Tsarist state were intricately linked, with Russian Tsars gaining their legitimacy from the religious doctrines taught by Orthodoxy. Indeed, this points to cultural worldviews and traditions informing the institutional formation rather than institutions informing values. This is because the strengthening of the powers of the village commune via formal legal enactments from the Tsar, served merely to only reinforce the peasants' pre-existing natural law worldviews regarding the legitimacy of collectivistic, communal and authoritarian forms of political-economic organization.²⁶

As a result, such patterns helped to reinforce the already collectivized worldviews, and ways of life of the masses of ordinary Belarusian peasants, which was

Dovnar-Zapolsky. (1988). "The Basis of White Russia's State Individuality.," p. 46; Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 164-165; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 203; Ioffe et al. (2006). *The End of Peasantry.*, p. 10-11; Bilmanis. (1945). *Baltic Essays.*, p. 143; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 2.

²⁵ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 83. For other examples of increasing authoritarian controls of the state over the individual via traditional cultural bodies such as the village communes, see also Gershenkron. (1968). *Continuity in History.*, p. 195; Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime.*, p. 78. Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 292, 306-312; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 184-185; Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 77; Braudel. (1992). *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century.*, p. 446-448.

²⁶ This builds on Weber's notion that norms informing natural laws precede and give legitimacy to formal laws. Weber. (1978b). *Economy and Society, Volume 2.*, p. 867. To illustrate further, Gershenkron notes that "the basic traditionalism of the peasantry received strong legal support." Gershenkron. (1968). *Continuity in History.*, p. 188, 209. For examples of political-cultural worldviews at play, see also Pipes, who notes that in regards to the "the retention of the commune...the peasants cleaved to it." Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 166. See also, White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 58. See also footnotes no. 20 and 21 above.

seen in no cult of private property being exhibited amongst average Belarusians. Moreover, this reinforcement of strong collectivistic traditions, values and habits, would have served to ensure that any notions of future reforms promoting things like greater individualism and private property ownership were largely marginalized. As time passed, such habits resulted in the development of historical memories that only reinforced worldviews that viewed collectivistic, passive behavior, and statist and authoritarian leadership as the ‘best’ and ‘right’ way for collective society to develop and grow.

Clash of Culture between Orthodox Belarusians and Westernized Poles

As mentioned above, serfdom for Belarusian peasants living under control of Polish landlords was harsher than that experienced by Latvians, and during the late-nineteenth century, Belarusian peasants increasingly viewed the Polish landlords as their oppressors. In the areas of the western lands of Belarus where some private land existed, one can infer a clash of cultures existing between the ethnic-Polish landlords, and the landless Belarusian peasants whose traditionally collectivistic worldviews would have viewed such patterns of land organization as unjust. With their close cultural orientations toward Russia resulting from their adherence to the Orthodox Christian faith, such a clash of cultures between the Westernized Poles and Orthodox Belarusians can be inferred from open acts of rebellion towards the Polish barons, as well as simultaneous displays of loyalty towards Russian Tsarist rule. To illustrate, Belarusian peasants sided in defence of Russia when Napoleon’s French armies invaded, and counter-attacked the estates of the Polish landlords which had largely acted in support of Napoleon’s forces.²⁷

Political groups that were forming in the second-half of the nineteenth century that tended to be more liberal in terms of values, such as movements in Vilnius, which are categorized by some as representing Belarusian interests, were in reality predominantly composed of Poles, Lithuanians and Polonized Belarusians, which often had little in common with the predominantly rural masses of Belarusians. Any claims that such an elite represented a Westernizing Belarusian elite becomes suspect, due to the fact that such groups operating in cities such as Vilnius, Minsk and other urban areas that

²⁷ See for example, Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 146; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 48; As noted in chapter 4, this stands in contrast to the Latvian peasant’s behavior which rebelled against Russia in support of Napoleon’s forces.

were heavily Polonized, and whose populations were made up of in the range of 98% of non-Belarusians, which had an entirely different religion, culture and language from the vast majority of Belarusian peasants in the countryside.²⁸

Overall, most of these political groups had little cultural connection to ethnic-Belarusians because most of these groups members were largely Polish in terms of language, religion and culture. Additionally, in their actions and everyday affairs, these groups largely used Polish as their primary means of communication, operated from culturally non-Belarusian urban contexts, and advocated themes of Polish nationalism. Moreover, not only were the vast majority of the members and leaders of these groups, such as Kastus Kalinowski, Polish-speaking, but most were also from an upper-class background of Polish nobility. Indeed, such groups in Vilnius and Minsk represented something more like a Polish national movement, and were largely culturally alien and disconnected from the vast majority of Belarusians living in the countryside.²⁹

As a result, there was a clash of cultures between the ethnic-Polish elite in the cities and the majority of Belarusians located in the rural countryside. This seems logical since Belarusians worshiped Orthodox Christianity rather than the Roman Catholicism of the Polish elites, spoke a different language, and also tended to view Poles as their oppressors, due to historical memories of past forced religious conversions, as well as because Polish landlords continued to own most of the land that was privately held in the Belarusian lands at the time. Indeed, inferences to religious values informing this clash of worldviews between the predominately Orthodox Belarusian peasants and the Roman Catholic Polish urban elites and landed nobles, can be found where it was reported that

²⁸ Guthrie, Steven L. (1977a). "The Belorussians: National Identification and Assimilation, 1897-1970: Part 1, 1897-1939." *Soviet Studies*, 29, 1: 37-61., p. 43. Additionally, it also is ironic that many of the authors that argue a Westernized historical narrative for Belarus, also offer contradictory evidence in their descriptions that raise serious questions whether these groups were actually 'Belarusian,' because they too provide ample evidence that such movements were highly Polonized and influenced by Polish culture. See for example, Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 278-279, 281-282.

²⁹ For evidence and consensus on disconnect and alienation between Polish urban elite forming the Polish dominated political groups with that of the masses of rural Belarusian peasants, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 70; Palisander. (1988). "The White-Russians.," p. 36; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 229-230. Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 43, 46-47. On distinct Belarusian culture present in rural areas, see also Sahn. (1999). "Political Culture and National Symbols.," p. 650.

“Orthodox priests, instigated by the Government, inflame[d] the people against the educated classes.”³⁰

Additionally, such a clash of political-cultural worldviews between Belarusian rural peasants and the Polish urbanites and landed nobility forming these political groups, can be inferred from the fact that in the uprisings that occurred in the lands of Belarus in 1863, were largely a Polish insurrection, in that the vast majority of those participating and leading the insurrection, around 75%, were predominantly upper-class Poles either from the landed-nobility or from urban areas. Moreover, during the 1863 revolts the vast majority of rural Belarusian peasants remained loyal to the Russian Empire, with some even helping Tsarist authorities to mete out justice to the Polish insurrectionists.³¹ Overall, both in the Polish-lead insurrections of 1863, and in their activities afterwards, the message of these groups did not resonate with the political-cultural worldviews of the majority of Belarusian living in the countryside at the time.

Here it is also necessary to note that Tsarist authorities certainly exacted an equal if not greater policy of Russification in the lands of Belarus from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, where the Russian language was privileged over local dialects in regards to the language of administration and education, and the Russian Orthodox Church was granted virtual religious hegemony.³² However, several points are important to point out. Culturally, Belarus shares many links with Russia, one aspect of which is the linguistic similarities between the Belarusian and Russian languages. Also of great importance are the religious ties, in that the majority of Belarusians are members of the Russian Orthodox Church, to which they had first converted too and struggled against Polish Westernizing attempts to bring average Belarusians into the fold of the Western oriented Uniate Church. For example, in terms of religious demographics, by 1917, Belarusians of the Orthodox faith numbered 81%, while those of the Roman Catholic

³⁰ Palisander. (1988). “The White-Russians.,” p. 36.

³¹ For numbers see, Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 57. For historical descriptions that give inference to a clash of cultures occurring between the majority of Belarusian rural peasants and the Polish dominated insurrectionists, see Palisander who noted the “ill feeling that exist[ed] between the White Russian [Belarusian] peasants and the polonized nobility...and this friction increased since the Polish insurrection of 1863.” Palisander. (1988). “The White-Russians.,” p. 36. See also, Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 31, 70, 73; Dovnar-Zapolsky. (1988). “The Basis of White Russia’s State Individuality.,” p. 45.

³² The Uniate church was closed in 1839, and 1.5 million people returned to Russian Orthodox Church. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 68; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 61-65; Palisander. (1988). “The White-Russians.,” p. 34-36.

faith, who primarily were culturally Polonized, numbered some 18.5%.³³ Furthermore, as noted above, most average Belarusians continued to live in the countryside, remaining largely illiterate relative to Latvians, and already spoke in their everyday language use both a combination of Belarusian and Russian. Indeed, attempts at Russification would have engendered far greater resistance from the Polish groups that formed a majority of most Belarusian urban areas. Overall, Russification was seen as more benign and not a threat in Belarus compared to Latvia, largely because there was historically close religious-cultural links shared between Belarusians and Russians.³⁴

Overall, this experience stands in contrast from that of Latvia where the upcoming intellectual elites involved in the Latvian national awakening, spoke Latvian, and while operating from Riga and other urban areas, nevertheless had strong and credible personal connections to the majority of rural Latvians in the countryside. Moreover, of the Belarusian national groups that did emerge, most tended to be Socialist in orientation. Indeed, there was a general lack of liberal values amongst most other Belarusian political parties which were beginning to form during this time, such as the Belarusians Socialist Hramada (Union), formed in 1902, which were all quite revolutionary in their goals and can be describe as being Socialist.³⁵ One of the connected outgrowths spawned from activists of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, was the creation of the first weekly Belarusian newspaper *Naša Niva* (Our Field) in 1906, whose authors came from rural backgrounds, and which promoted themes of Belarusian self-autonomy, within a confederated Russia, and to large extent themes of collective rural life and revolutionary social protest. Key contributors of *Naša Niva*, included Janka Kupal, Jakub Kolas, Ales Harun, and several others which came from peasant backgrounds and promoted themes of social protest. However, it should be noted that readership was limited, with estimates

³³ Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 282.

³⁴ For inferences to the close historical links and cultural-religious bonds influencing Belarusian perceptions of Russia and Russification as not being a threat, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 73-74. Similar sentiments were mentioned by one Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010).

³⁵ For consensus on socialist and revolutionary orientation of national Belarusian political movements that began to form during the final years of the Tsarist period, see Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 58-59; Zaprudnik. (1988). "The National Consciousness of the Byelorussians.," p. 12, 16; Nedasek, N. (1988a). "Bolshevism in the Revolutionary Movement in Byelorussia." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 57; Mienski, J. (1988). "The Establishment of the Belorussian SSR." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 140; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 2-3.

put in the range of 3,000 to 4,500 copies in circulation, which largely resulted from the fact that the vast majority of rural Belarusian peasants at the beginning of the twentieth century were largely illiterate.³⁶ Indeed, what is important to note here from these observations, is that there were exclusively Belarusian national political groups forming during this period, but unlike the Latvian groups that adopted a more liberal orientation, Belarusian national political groups largely adopted a socialist-revolutionary stance.

1905 Revolution: Lack of Uprisings in Belarus

The Belarusian masses in the countryside reacted much differently from those of their rural counterparts in Latvia. In contrast to events in Latvia in 1905, where mass rural uprisings were significant and peasants took a leading role in the countryside, large segments of the rural peasants in Belarus remained passive during the events of 1905. In fact, where ethnic-Belarusians did take an active part, many actually rallied in support of Russian Tsarist authorities. Overall, Belarusians lacked a similar cult of private property that was seen during this time in Latvia, and witnessed with the constant rural uprisings of Latvian peasants. A large reason for Belarusian peasants passivity during 1905, was a result of the Orthodox infused political-cultural worldviews that preferred collectivized organization of land and was loathe towards private property, and were historically reinforced by generations living under the informal cultural institutions of the village commune. Therefore, since Belarusians did not share similar Latvian worldviews to acquire private landholdings, but instead preferred to maintain the traditional collectivized modes of land organization under the traditional village commune, Belarusians did not share a similar rationale to revolt as the individualistically oriented Latvian peasants did in 1905.³⁷

³⁶ For further discussion, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 88-90; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 9; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 63-64. In terms of literacy rates, estimates have put the number of Belarusian peasants that were illiterate at the level of 90%. Palisander. (1988). "The White-Russians," p. 34; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus," p. 229. Even if one takes the less conservative estimate offered that included predominantly non-Belarusian urban areas, and placed overall literacy rates at 32% (Zaprudnik 1993: 61), Belarusian literacy rates still stood at levels far below Latvia during the same period which stood in the 90% range, as noted in chapter 4.

³⁷ For consensus on lack of revolt coming from Belarusian peasants, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 86, 97; Pipes, Richard. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923.* Revised Edition. New York: Atheneum., p. 11-12, 73-74; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 8; Vinogradoff. (1979). "The Russian Peasantry and the Elections to the Fourth State Duma," p. 225-

World War One and 1917 Russian Revolution

There were different reactions from Belarusians compared to Latvians in regards to the Russian Revolution, as there was greater support for the Bolsheviks amongst Belarusians. In regards to the mass of rural Belarusian society, there was also noticeably little resistance amongst Belarusian rural peasants to the Bolsheviks, in contrast to the high amounts of opposition found in rural Latvia. Overall, evidence suggests that Belarusian peasants were receptive and supportive of Communist ideas during the Bolshevik Revolution. Such support can be inferred from the fact that peasant revolts, and attacks on the estates of Polish landlords had begun to breakout in the immediate years preceding, and especially during the Bolshevik Revolution. Moreover, the Bolsheviks increasingly outpaced the more nationalist Belarusian political groups, such as the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, so that by October 1917, membership in the Bolshevik Party in Belarus had grown to upwards of 29,000.³⁸ Indeed, in contrast to Latvia, many ideas from Marxism made far greater headway amongst the predominantly peasant population, as key aspects of Marxist ideas jived with the traditional collectivistic and paternalistic worldviews of the rural peasants historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life. As Berdyaev argues, “Bolshevism...fitted in with the absence among the [Belarusian] people of the Roman view of property and bourgeois virtues, [and] it fitted with [the] collectivism that had its roots in religion,...[thus] proclaim[ing] the necessity of the integral totalitarian outlook of dominant creed, which corresponded with the habits, experience, and requirements of people in faith and in the dominating

226. For observations of peasants in 1905 preferring the maintenance of the traditional village commune, see also Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 210, 242.

³⁸ For evidence of Bolsheviks popular growth to the detriment of more nationalist oriented groups, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 97; Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 73-75. For noted examples of Bolshevik inspired rural revolt, unrest, and examples of collectivistic land seizures being higher in Belarus than in the Baltics, see *Ibid.*, 152; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 11, 15, 23; Gill, Graeme J. (1979). *Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution.* New York: Harper and Row., p. 190-191. Additionally, evidence and observations inferring the popular appeal of the message of Bolsheviks amongst the Belarusian masses can also be found in Mienski. (1988). “The Establishment of the Belorussian SSR,” p. 143, 156; Varonka. (1988). “The Byelorussian Movement from 1917 to 1920.,” p. 105. It should also be pointed out that Zaprudnik, who disputes the strength of Bolsheviks (see p. 18-19), also notes that in reality, “the rural areas were dominated by the Socialist Revolutionaries.” Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 79. Such evidence in regards to the political orientation of the rural masses, allows one to infer that because such groups shared similar socialist orientations with the Bolsheviks, that Bolshevik ideas and goals would have found popular appeal and resonance with the broad public in rural Belarus.

principles of life.”³⁹ In other words, much of the Bolshevik appeal in Belarus had to do with the worldviews promoted by Russian Orthodox Christianity, which had contributed to the fact that amongst ethnic-Belarusians there was a virtual absence of traditions, worldviews, nor experience with individual freedoms, liberty and private property.

Additionally, what made things more difficult for the more nationalist oriented Belarusian political groups, such as the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, which wanted to remain out of the Bolshevik fold was that their visions in terms of organization of government and society, did not differ to a great extent from the worldviews towards political-economic management espoused by pro-Bolshevik forces in Belarus. For example, of the Belarusian national political groups that did emerge such as the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, as discussed above, these were viewed to be competing with the Bolsheviks, as there was a general lack of liberal values amongst these groups and most tended to be socialist and revolutionary in their orientation and goals. Such an orientation could be seen in that one of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada’s key goals was nationalizing and collectivizing all private land. Indeed, such policy goals were often modeled on that of similarly oriented socialist-revolutionary parties in Russia.⁴⁰ As a result, the more nationalist oriented Belarusian political groups were hampered in gaining mass political appeal, due to the fact that many of the general policy goals related towards promoting a socialist orientation towards the management of political-economic

³⁹ Berdyaev. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.*, p. 140-141, 135-136, 165. For Bolshevik support amongst Belarusian rural peasants, and evidence inferring appeal of Communist ideas to their traditionally collectivistic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life, see Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.* p. 37, 56; Vołacič, M. (1956). “The Curzon Line and Territorial Changes in Eastern Europe.” *Belorussian Review*, 3: 37-72., p. 44; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 7-8; Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime.*, p. 143; Kohn. (1962). *The Mind of Modern Russia.*, p. 233, 252-255; Nedasek. (1988a). “Bolshevism in the Revolutionary Movement in Byelorussia.” p. 57; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 205; Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 100. Ioffe also gave praise to assessments of Berdyaev and Vakar on roots of Communism in Russia and notes that such assessments are applicable to Belarus. Ioffe et al. (2006). *The End of Peasantry.*, p. 17; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. xiii, 136-138.

⁴⁰ On the Socialist orientation of Belarusian political groups, as well as the strong appeal of the socialist-revolutionary message emanating from Russian revolutionary political groups, which especially appealed to Belarusians of the younger generations, and that both the Belarusian and Russian groups both promoted similar socialist-revolutionary goals, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 85, 97; Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 74; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 9, 18; Zacharka, Vasil. (1988). “The Major Events in the Byelorussian Movement.” In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 78-79, 95-96 [Key figure in Belarusian Democratic Republic (BDR) and BDR in Exile. Originally published in the 1920s]; Urban. (1989). *An Algebra if Soviet Power.*, p. 12; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 67.

affairs, were also shared and widely promoted by the more overtly Russian oriented Belarusian Bolsheviks.

Even in the realm of national autonomy, the ideas and goals of Belarusian Bolsheviks should not be viewed as entirely divergent from that of more purely Belarusian national political forces such as the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, especially when it came to the Belarusian Bolsheviks goals to eventually form the BSSR, which can be viewed as a goal of promoting national autonomy and national state-building for Belarus, albeit within a federated Soviet Union. Indeed, it should also be noted that the Belarusians Socialist Hramada favoured the similar goal of local autonomy for Belarus within new Russian federation, which infers that such political groups were not overly averse towards policy program that was oriented towards close ties with Russia. Thus, Belarusian nationalism received support from both Belarusian Bolshevik political forces in addition to the more nationalist oriented political groups.⁴¹

Overall, the fact that Belarusian Bolsheviks were working for such socialist and revolutionary goals in cooperation with Russian Bolsheviks, should not be viewed as a case of Belarus lacking a distinct national identity, due to the fact that Belarusians and Russians shared many political-cultural worldviews in common, which would have resulted in similar outlooks and goals. This experience of Belarus stands in contrasts to Latvia where most of the national and anti-Bolshevik Latvian political parties that emerged remained liberal in terms of the political-cultural worldviews they espoused in regards to their vision for an independent Latvia, and where there was a pronounced clash of cultures between the predominantly liberal orientated ethnic-Latvian political groups and the Russian dominated Bolshevik political factions. Indeed, there was no clash of cultures between the predominant worldviews of Belarusians with that of Soviet Bolsheviks in Belarus. This is because cooperation with Russian revolutionaries would not have been generally viewed as a threat, due largely to the historically close religious-cultural and linguistic links shared between Belarusians and Russians.⁴²

⁴¹ For evidence of such nationalist goals being promoted by both political factions as noted above, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 97-98, 138-139; Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 11-12, 73-74; Mienski. (1988). "The Establishment of the Belorussian SSR.," p. 141; Zacharka. (1988). "The Major Events in the Byelorussian Movement.," p. 78-79.

⁴² To illustrate this lack of clashing cultural worldviews, Pipes points out that even while Russians played a large role in the Bolshevik leadership in Belarus, "There is no evidence that the peasantry, which composed

Many key battles of the Bolshevik Revolution were fought on Belarusian soil. Indeed, the newly created Polish state, after 1918, briefly occupied large portions of the territory of Belarus, including the key city of Minsk. First, Belarus experienced a brief period of rule under the Central Powers and German rule, where a brief period of independent statehood was attempted under the Belarusian Democratic Republic (BDR), which existed from 1918 to 1920. In regards to the Belarusian national opposition to the Bolsheviks, which formed the short-lived BDR, many of this nascent state's goals could be described as being actually quite revolutionary and socialist in orientation, particularly when it came to the nationalization of all property. Indeed, evidence suggest that much of the members of leadership of the government of the BDR actually had strong socialist and revolutionary leanings. However, similar to the other more nationalist oriented Belarusian political groups as noted above, the BDR suffered in gaining mass popular appeal amongst the masses, due to the fact that its socialist-revolutionary message was in direct competition with that of Belarusian Bolsheviks, and also due to the fact the BDR was increasingly seen to have dubious links with the Central Powers.⁴³

On January 1, 1919, the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed in Minsk. However, the BSSR suffered some early setbacks early on, as a result of military attacks from Polish forces attacking from the West. For a brief period, the newly recreated Polish state ruled over Belarus from 1919 to 1920. Overall, this period would give a foretaste to the style of Polish rule implemented in the western lands of Belarus during the interwar period. First, a policy of cultural Polonization was put briefly into effect, as Polish was made the official language of the Belarusian lands during this period. Moreover, the nascent Polish administration attempted to reverse many of the previous policies of land nationalization implemented by Belarusian Bolsheviks and Belarusian peasants, and instead reverted to returning such confiscated land to the former

the mass of Belorussian people, possessed any consciousness of ethnic [cultural] separateness." Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 73.

⁴³ For more on the above points, see Zacharka. (1988). "The Major Events in the Byelorussian Movement.," p. 97; Council (Rada) of the Byelorussian Democratic Republic. (1988). "Constituent Charters [1918]." Translated by Thomas E. Bird and Jan Zuprudnik, in *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 133; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 3-4; Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 151-152. Additionally, Vakar notes that the BDR, regardless of its lack of popular appeal at the time of its existence, has for some self-proclaimed Belarusian 'nationalists,' "grown into a heroic legend," even though such historical memories "may sometimes be at odds with historical truth." Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 105-106.

Polish landlords which directly went against the predominant cultural worldviews held by Belarusians which favoured collectivistic patterns of land organization. Additionally, many Belarusian rural villages were attacked by Polish forces during this time. Indeed, one can infer that there existed a clash of cultural worldviews between the collectivistic, socialist and revolutionary oriented Belarusians with that displayed by Polish officials. Such a clash can be inferred from the fact that there was no doubt about the allegiances and orientation of the Belarusian masses during this time, many of which were openly pro-Communist, and actively engaged in hostile resistance against Polish authorities.⁴⁴

Even for more nationalist oriented Belarusian political elites, one can infer that political life under the BSSR would have been seen as preferable to that under Polish domination, due to the shared socialist-revolutionary goals promoted by the BSSR, and due to the fact that the BSSR offered the prospect of real tangible national autonomy and state-building for Belarus, albeit under the rubric of a federated Soviet Union. Eventually, the Polish battlefield successes began to wane, and Polish forces were forced to retreat from Minsk and the territories of eastern Belarus. Needless to say, this brief period of Polish rule is remembered quite negatively in Belarusian historical memories, though while short were remembered as years of hard-time and oppression. Indeed, with the predominantly pro-socialist orientation of virtually all major political groups, and the masses of Belarusians at the time, there was the predominantly shared view that the Soviets had liberated Belarusian from the oppression of the Poles.⁴⁵ With the conclusion of hostilities between Poland and the Soviet Union with the signing of the Treaty of Riga on March 21, 1921, the cultural lands and population of Belarus would remain divided during the entire interwar period, with the eastern lands forming the newly created BSSR, and the western lands falling under the control of the newly recreated Polish state

⁴⁴ As Pipes points out, “the Polish occupation forces showed little regard for the social radicalism prevalent among the masses of the population.” Pipes. (1968). *The Formation of the Soviet Union.*, p. 153. For consensus on Polish rule from 1919 to 1920 being viewed as years of hard times and evidence that infers that there was a clash of cultures between that of Belarusians and their Polish rulers, as well as examples of mass hostile anti-Polish resistance from Belarusians, see Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 35, 38-39. Indeed, the strong rural resistance from Belarusian peasants was important in assisting the success of the Red Army’s counter-attack on Polish forces. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 111, 113-114.

⁴⁵ For consensus on negative historical memories on this brief period of Polish rule and that the Soviets were viewed as liberators from Poles, see Zacharka. (1988). “The Major Events in the Byelorussian Movement.” p. 97; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 45; Mienski. (1988). “The Establishment of the Belorussian SSR.” p. 165-166.

Statehood under the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic during the Interwar

Belarusians living in the eastern lands of what is now Belarus gained state-hood for the first time with the founding of the BSSR in 1919, which was a founding republic of the USSR. During the interwar period of state-building under the BSSR, a distinct Belarusian national identity was readily present, which was seen with extensive Belarusianization that was promoted by Belarusian Soviet authorities. Overall, positive historical memories of this period of Belarusianization exist, since under the state-building of the BSSR, Belarusians for the first time began to be lifted from abject poverty into increased socio-economic and cultural development.

For the Belarusian elites and the masses which remained overwhelmingly rural up to this time, the policies implemented under the state-building program of the BSSR would have been seen in a positive light. First, Belarusianization was witnessed with the advancement of ethnic-Belarusians to positions of political-economic and administrative leadership for the first time in known memory. Under such policies, Belarusians increasingly became the dominant majority in all major administrative, political-economic, and cultural positions in the BSSR decision-making apparatus. Therefore, for the first time not only did ethnic-Belarusian elites have some real opportunity to make real political progress and shape the direction and decision-making process of political-economic policy development, but many from the rural peasant backgrounds would for the first time have the real opportunity of educational, and social advancement. Indeed, ethnic-Belarusians, which made up just over 80% of the population of the BSSR, during the interwar period became the clear majority in control over the political-economic and cultural decision-making apparatus of the BSSR, and most importantly a majority of members in the Belarusian Communist Party (BCP). Moreover, by 1926 Belarusians began to make up the majority of officials in both central and provincial administrative positions in the BSSR, which between 1927 and 1929 had grown from 80-90%. Certainly, such results helps one to make similar conclusions to one Belarusian elite whom positively noted that “if we see how much was done in the BSSR, even for ethnic majority development, we see that it was really even affirmative action.”⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For numbers noted above pointing to advancements of ethnic-Belarusians control the decision-making apparatus and levers of

Belarusianization also resulted in great advancements being made in the fields of culture and education. For example, BSSR authorities implemented a concerted campaign promoting increased literacy, educational development, seen in higher education with the establishment of the Belarusian State University in 1921, the Academy of Sciences in 1922, and the Institute of Belarusian Culture also in 1922, in addition to numerous other centers of higher learning, as well as cultural development including the first text written on Belarusian history. Great progress was made especially in regards to advancements in literacy, as the historically high rates that had characterized the majority of rural Belarusians had begun to be progressively reduced under this policy of Belarusification promoting Belarusian language education, where the majority of Belarusians became literate, and the majority of primary education was given in the Belarusian language by the mid-1920s. Under such policies, new generations of young Belarusians would be able to attain real educational advancement. Additionally, Belarusian language newspapers were actively promoted and flourished. In general, Belarusian was promoted during this period, largely to the detriment of anything Russian.⁴⁷

Indeed, this progress in education, and the general pattern of increased socio-economic development, was positively remembered by the people, especially rural peasants, where high levels of illiteracy were rampant and no opportunities existed for higher learning in Belarus prior to the establishment of the BSSR. Overall, one can see how such developments would have reinforced old pre-existing political-cultural worldviews, since historical memories of educational progress, and other areas of socio-economic development would have resulted in historical memories of such progress occurring under the seemingly collectivistic and communally oriented policy programs of the BSSR, thus reinforcing the view of the rightness and legitimacy of these policies.

power of the BSSR, and for arguments that such policies acted as ‘affirmative action,’ see Martin, Terry. (2001). *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press., p. 261. For additional numbers and consensus on progress of Belarusification, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 140-141; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 70, 85; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 76-77.

⁴⁷ On such cultural advancements and specific numbers on progress in realms of culture and education, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 141; Martin. (2001). *The Affirmative Action Empire.*, p. 261; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 86-88, 91; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 80; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 65.

As a result, during this period of state-building under the BSSR, a distinct Belarusian national identity was readily present, which some have described as “an unprecedented flowering of nationhood that...reached the masses of people.”⁴⁸ Moreover, it should be pointed out that when asked to identify their ethnicity and nationality in official government registries and during official censuses, the vast majority identified themselves as Belarusian, which as Guthier notes “indicated a level of national consciousness among the people.”⁴⁹ Certainly, one can conclude that Belarusian national consciousness and identification had been in existence prior to Soviet rule, and did not necessarily result simply because of Soviet policies alone. Instead, these policies of Belarusification merely reinforced such identification. Moreover, one should note examples inferring that Belarusians historically collectivistic and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews were preceding and informing such positive views of the BSSR and its policies. To illustrate, it was pointed out that because “the Bolshevik revolution abolished all social distinctions, for the Belarusians this outcome amounted to national liberation because ‘class and national composition of the Belarusians almost coincided with each other’ [because] ‘Belarusian culture...is the culture of the working masses of Belarusians.’”⁵⁰ Thus, one can infer from such descriptions that there was a presence of Belarusian national identity, countering claims that Belarus is denationalized, and also that positive historical memories of state-building under the BSSR form a core component of the political-cultural worldviews informing Belarusian identity.

As a result of the positive appeal of cultural, political and economic Belarusianization, and having some semblance of real perceived national autonomy in

⁴⁸ Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 283. Similarly, Lubachko called this period a “golden age of Belorussian culture.” Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 82. For further consensus, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 139, 140-141, 144; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 231-232. For documentary consensus, see “Appeal by Byelorussian Writers [15 December] – To...Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev,” that ““Byelorussifying all aspects of society in the 1920s...made a decisive contribution to the flourishing of Soviet Byelorussian culture and the growth of national self-awareness among the people,” found in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 247.

⁴⁹ Guthier. (1977a). “The Belorussians.,” p. 52.

⁵⁰ Quoting Usievalad Ihnatoŭski BSSR Commissar of Education, in Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 77. Additionally, Urban notes that this thesis which “associated the ‘political and social’ emancipation of the Belorussian people with its national liberation,” because “the Belarusian people constituted a classless community,” was “both naturally and historically correct.” Urban, Paul. (1988). “Byelorussian Political Activities and the Establishment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.” In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 195-196 [Originally published (1959). *Belorussian Review*, Munich, 7: 3-22]. See also, Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 232.

regards to local political-economic affairs and state-building, the BSSR began to be seen in an increasingly positive light by both Belarusian nationalists in Belarus, as well as those in exile. Such views were further reinforced also by other benefits conferred on Belarus from the Soviet leaders in Moscow. For instance, under the state-hood of the BSSR, Moscow transferred the historically Belarusian cultural regions of Mogilev and Vitebsk in 1924, as well as Gomel and Recica in 1926, to the jurisdiction of the BSSR, which greatly increased the traditional cultural lands and population of ethnic-Belarusians directly under Belarusian national rule in the BSSR. Indeed, what is most interesting to note is that the BDR's exiled leaders in western Poland would increasingly begin to take on an increasingly pro-Communist, anti-Polish and pro-BSSR stance. This was seen with the fact that the BDR would cede all governing power to the government of the BSSR, and also that many prominent leaders, such as Lastouski would return to the BSSR and take up prominent positions in the cultural and educational sectors of government in the BSSR. Certainly, a large part of these nationalists' positive views and willingness to work with the BSSR, largely owed a great deal to the fact that many in this group had strong socialist backgrounds and shared similar worldviews.⁵¹ Indeed, one can infer from examples of the BDR ceding power to the BSSR, and many of its executives eventually going to work in the BSSR that Belarusian elites both in the BSSR and those in the BDR, shared some ideological affinities, and also held a shared Belarusian national identity.

Overall, the BSSR would have been seen in a positive light due to the shared socialist-revolutionary goals promoted by the BSSR, and also due to the fact that the BSSR offered the prospect of real tangible national autonomy and state-building for Belarus, albeit under the rubric of a federated Soviet Union. Thus, even for more nationalist oriented Belarusian political elites, one can infer that political life under the BSSR would have been seen as preferable to the discrimination and repression under Polish domination being experienced in the western lands of Belarus.

For the Belarusian elites and the masses which remained overwhelmingly rural up to this time, the policies implemented under the state-building program of the BSSR would have been seen in a positive light. This is because the collectivist values promoted

⁵¹ For examples of the increasingly pro-soviet views of members of the BDR, see Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 82-84, 189; Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 138-139, 144; Zacharka. (1988). "The Major Events in the Byelorussian Movement.," p. 98.

by the BSSR were in tune with the traditional collectivist values of Belarusians, which was especially the case in regards to agricultural development, where upwards of 90% of the population were still connected to the agricultural economy.⁵² Moreover, in Belarus the predominant historically collectivistic political-cultural values, habits and ways of life of communal land management were further reinforced by the Soviet collectivization of agriculture into Soviet state collective farms. Overall, under the development of the BSSR, a collectivistic and communal ethos in regards to everyday life, land management, and policy practices related to governing political economic relations were reinforced and continued to role along at full pace. Especially in regards to worldviews about political-economic organization and management, it is important to emphasize that even before Soviet rule, Belarusians had a virtual absence of political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories favouring private individual land ownership.

Additionally, even though the system under Soviet agriculture was far more brutal in its centralizing effect, various continuities and similarities existed in the ways of life under the collective farm with that previously experienced under the village commune. Historically, Belarusians did not share Latvians land hunger or cult of private property. Moreover, even before the advent of full-scale Soviet collectivization, Belarusian rural peasants had already re-communalized many of the private lands that had been initially confiscated from the Polish gentry, which had controlled the majority of Belarusian agricultural prior to 1917. Thus, in terms of numbers, progress towards collectivization, on a more voluntary level, even before the full-scale effort instituted throughout the Soviet Union by Stalin in the 1930s was impressive. Indeed, the Belarusian traditional rural body of the rural village began to thrive again in the immediate period after the formation of the Soviet Union. To illustrate, in 1925 and 1926, communes held 55.2% and 63.5 % of the land respectively, while private landholdings amounted to only 22.6% and 20.7% respectively.⁵³ However, claims of private holdings should be taken with a

⁵² Guthier. (1977a). "The Belorussians.," p. 54. For consensus inferring that the policy goals promoted by the BSSR were in tune with the collectivistic and communally oriented worldviews of the majority of Belarusians, see footnote no. 50 above, and Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 77; Urban. (1988). "Byelorussian Political Activities.," p. 195-196; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 232.

⁵³ Numbers found in Male. (1971). *Russian Peasant Organization Before Collectivization.*, p. 24-25. Others have put the amount of land being farmed by Belarusian farmsteads at 40%. Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 73. However, as will be noted below, such land was small in size and not directly

degree of skepticism, and should not be equated with the traditions of private freehold farming characteristic of rural Latvia. This is because Belarusians did not share similar worldviews regarding the natural rights of individuals to private property ownership, nor did Belarusian peasants directly own any of the land in the area designated as private landholdings, since the state having nationalized much previously private land from Polish landlords, had merely granted tenure rights of small amounts of this to peasants, but continued to retain ultimate collective ownership rights over its long-term use.

Under Soviet policies of collectivization, most of the property that was confiscated was not that of ethnic-Belarusians since they tended to not be land-owners, but instead belonged to ethnic-Poles. Indeed, amongst Belarusians there was a virtual absence of traditions, worldviews, nor experience with individual freedoms, liberty and private property. Moreover, since there was large portions of rural Belarus that still remained under the primitive communist form of land organization found in the village commune up until collectivization, it was not hard thus to convert these into a broader system of state-owned collectivized farms, as property was already communalized and the people were already living collectivity in the village, as opposed to dispersed private individual farmsteads such as those found in Latvia. Indeed, the process of agricultural collectivization moved quite rapidly and experienced little resistance, where collectivized farms numbered 38.3% in 1930, 55.1% by mid-1934, so that by 1937, collectivization was virtually all completed.⁵⁴ Overall, in contrast to Latvia, many ideas from Marxism made far greater headway amongst the predominantly peasant population, because key aspects of Marxist ideas jived with the traditional Orthodox inspired collectivist worldviews, ways of life and historical memories predominant in the political-culture of rural peasants. As Vakar suggests “peasants...practiced Communist principles long before Karl Marx made ideals out of them,” which meant that “collectivization...was not a revolutionary idea but a very old one...[and] undoubtedly appealed to many poorer peasants...[because] it hustled the peasants back into their age-old communes, where

owned by the peasant, who merely was granted temporary tenure by the state, which retained ultimate ownership rights over all nationalized land in the BSSR.

⁵⁴ For numbers, see Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 97, 103; Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 151. One should also note that collectivization moved fastest in the eastern provinces of Mogilev and Mazyr, where up to 80% had been collectivized by 1930, probably owing to the fact that this region historically was a stronghold of the communal village in Belarus. Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 10.

they rediscovered the equality of poverty and unfreedom.”⁵⁵ In other words, collectivization reinforced political-cultural worldviews and ways of life that were historically known and taken for granted by Belarusians rural peasants.

Overall, the policies of collectivization, for the most part, were in tune with the historically predominant worldviews and value orientations of the majority of rural Belarusians. Also, while there might have been some disappointment with some of the effects of Soviet collectivization, this had little to do with any real aversion to collectivism similar to that found in Latvia, but had more to do with local resentment that power over everyday decisions regarding things like crop planting, and the collective redistribution of land had been taken away from the local village commune level, and been shifted upwards into the hands of centralized authorities that did not always respect the needs or knowledge of locals, as well as the increased mandatory deliveries of produce and labor that collective farms and collective workers had to deliver to the state. However, resistance to collectivization in Belarus was minimal, relative to the extensive armed resistance that occurred in Latvia in the late-1940s. Thus compared to Latvia, the Bolsheviks succeeded to a far greater extent in collectivizing agriculture and gaining support amongst the people for such policies, which was even the case after 1939 in the newly annexed territories of western Belarus, where the majority of property owners were Polish landlords. Certainly, the fact that such collective traditions persisted only served to reinforce the historically preexisting collectivist and communal political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians, and also meant that there was a continued total absence of any historical memories of property rights, nor traditions of land ownership.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 37, 56. Vakar also observed that “the [collectivist] principle, ‘He who does not work shall not eat,’ had been known in Belorussia long before the Soviets.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 22. For consensus on the appeal of collectivization, and active involvement of peasants to bring about its goals, see Berdyaev. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.*, 135-136, 140-141, 165; Robinson. (1972). *Rural Russia under the Old Regime.*, p. 143; Male. (1971). *Russian Peasant Organization.*, p. 1; Shragin, Boris. (1978). *The Challenge of the Spirit.* Translated by P. S. Falla. New York: Alfred A. Knopf., p. 115-116. Ioffe et al. (2006). *The End of Peasantry.*, p. 13. Weber also points out that “the resolutions on redistribution [were]...by no means only economic class interest, but firmly rooted concepts of ‘natural law’ at work.” Weber. (1995). *The Russian Revolutions.*, p. 89; White. (1979b). “The USSR.” p. 34-35.

⁵⁶ This lack of private individual property traditions, values and historical memories of Belarusians was mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Overall, compared to Latvia where there is widespread condemnation of collectivization and descriptions

When examining the first period of state-building under the BSSR, one cannot ignore the mass murder committed under the rule of Stalin. For instance, some have categorized Stalin's crimes against Belarusians as 'genocide,' where an estimated 250,000-300,000 perished execution-style, such as in Kurapaty outside Minsk, or as a result of being deported to Soviet prison camps.⁵⁷ However, even with the many well known terrors committed under Stalinization, there still exists largely positive historical memories of this first period of Belarusian state-building in the BSSR. Indeed, it has been noted that in their historical memories, "Belarusians do not see the Stalin era as a time when their culture was suppressed and their national development thwarted."⁵⁸ Thus, while things certainly got bad under Stalin, and large numbers of Belarusian elites fell victim to Stalin's excesses, either being executed or sent to a near certain death fate in the Soviet Gulags, there were still many contradictions of positive memories during this time, which seem to trump many of these negative aspects.

Overall, even under all the centralizing control of the Stalin period, the Belarusianization of education, culture, and even in the leadership positions of the BSSR remained the norm under Stalin. For example, while a great many ethnic-Belarusian were purged under the terror enforced by Stalin, these positions were nonetheless filled by many willing ethnic-Belarusians. In some cases, ethnic-minorities (Russian, Poles and

of popular widespread mass resistance, very little is mentioned about resistance to collectivization across all segments of Belarusian historical literature. For examples of brief mentions of resistance to collectivization and deportations of Kulaks, see Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 97, 100, 103; Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 148. Still these authors only give a brief mention of such 'resistance.' Also, the fact that most authors only mention the 'resistance' in one sentence and do not go into extensive detail, such as the authors of Latvian histories, suggests that such resistance might have been just sporadic, and neither as extensive, nor popular, nor widespread, as was the case in Latvia. Further contradictory evidence is provided by Savchenko, who notes that "although Byelorussia was subjected to collectivization in the thirties, the policy was conducted less brutally than in many other parts of the USSR." Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 95.
⁵⁷ Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 86-88, 132. Mihalisko, Kathleen. (1991). "The Popular Movement in Belorussia and Baltic Influences." Ch. 10. In *Toward Independence*, ed. J. A. Trapans. Boulder: Westview Press., 126-127. Others put the entire number of Belarusians who perished under the whole period of Stalinization at 2 million. Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 232. See also, Kabysch, Symon. (1988). "Genocide of the Belorussians." In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 231-234. While not labeling these as 'genocide,' Vakar gives a well-detailed description of the extent of Stalin's purges, where few remained except for those like Janka Kupala and Jakub Kolas. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 146-150.

⁵⁸ Marples. (2004). "The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus.," p. 32. Even Zaprudnik is contradicted somewhat in his earlier strong assertions, where he noted that during the Stalinist period, "the development of this consciousness remained busy." Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 283. Additionally, widespread claims of 'genocide' from diverse historiographic schools, such as those consistently found in the Latvian literature, are not similarly found in Belarusian historical literature.

Jews) were purged from administrative positions, and often replaced by local ethnic-Belarusians, thus ironically furthering the cause of Belarusianization. As Guthier points out, even with Stalin's purge of national elite in 1929, because these positions were filled by young Belarusians, this meant that "such trappings of cultural nationalism as Belorussian language in the schools, administration, and literature continued to receive official support," which was witnessed culturally in that the vast majority of newspapers and books published in the BSSR remained in the Belarusian language in 1939.⁵⁹ Additionally, Vakar points out that "the national framework of the Republic had been wisely left intact, [and] it had only to be furnished with a new personnel, and Belorussian life and culture oriented in a new direction...[under] the younger generation, ideologically conditioned in the Soviet mixer."⁶⁰

Overall, many of this new generation of ethnic-Belarusian elite recruits filling key BSSR leadership and administrative positions came from authentically rural peasant Belarusian backgrounds, and brought with them their traditional strong sense of collectivism, communalism, paternalism, and authoritarianism in their outlooks, orientations, and worldviews, thus bringing an element of authentic Belarusification. Indeed, this would have served to reinforce many of the totalitarian aspects found in Soviet political-economic practices during this period. Finally, because Stalin's purges affected many Belarusian elites, both political leaders and intelligentsia, this only helped to reinforce worldviews and habits in Belarusian political-culture amongst average Belarusian masses favouring a tendency towards a lack of emphasis on individual freedom, and a continued strong reinforcement of attitudes and habits of passivity which came to life in the societal attitude that it is best for a person to mind ones own work, to toil, and work diligently.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Guthier. (1977a). "The Belorussians.," p. 59. For numbers illustrating continued Belarusification of elite positions and professions in the BSSR regardless of purges between 1926-1939, see Martin. (2001). *The Affirmative Action Empire.*, p. 380, 382, 384. Additionally, it should be noted that the overall population of Belarusians in the BSSR actually increased by 30% in the period from 1926-1939. Medvedev, Roy A. (1979). *On Stalin and Stalinism.* Translated by Ellen de Kadt. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 75.

⁶⁰ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 147, 150. Vakar notes the rise in Belarusian publications and newspapers, and that the Russian language remained non-mandatory in Belarusian schools until 1938 (p. 153).

⁶¹ Observations on historic pattern and habits of passivity amongst members of Belarusian society were mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian

However, this continued passivity of Belarusians, and the increased authoritarian nature of the Soviet regime was not something new to Belarusian political-cultural environment. As noted above, pre-Soviet Belarusian society with its traditional Orthodox beliefs and outlook, reinforced traditional patterns and values promoting a collective mentality, passivity, and tendencies promoting patriarchy and authoritarianism. Such patterns of passivity and values promoting the overall wellbeing of the collective at the expense of the individual, and penchant to unquestioningly favour authoritarian and paternalist leadership, which were characteristic of Tsarist times would continue to be a common feature of Belarusian political-cultural way of life during the Soviet era.

Thus, any patterns of despotism found under Soviet rule, especially that under Stalin, had its roots in past historical traditions of authoritarian, absolutist and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews that were legitimized historically from the doctrines promoted by Orthodoxy and which had come to life in the autocratic rule of heads of rural families, village communes, and in the authoritarianism of Russian Tsars. To illustrate such absolutist, authoritarian and paternalistic traditions, Vakar noted that “the mass of peasantry...can be driven anywhere by a capable leader speaking with authority...they are used to obeying ecclesiastical and secular authorities.”⁶² Additionally, Zaslavsky points out that in regards to the prevalence of positive attitudes towards Stalin’s rule, “it is not difficult to recognize in this attitude a residue of the faith in the ‘good Tsar’ – the cornerstone of the Russian peasant’s traditional political-culture.”⁶³ In general, state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR followed similar patterns, as most of the Soviet practices of political-economic development in the BSSR built on the highly collectivist, communal, paternalistic, authoritarian and statist political-cultural worldviews already widely prevalent amongst Belarusians. No doubt, this experience of rule under Stalin, which Vakar dubbed a

Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010)

⁶² Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 135-136. For further consensus on the key historical cultural traditions and values that Soviet Communism was rooted in, see Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 40-41, 58, 61,63; Berdyaev. (1960). *The Origin of Russian Communism.*, p. 9, 7, 15, 120, 127, 140-141; Gray. (1979). “Conclusions.”, p. 258; Shragin. (1978). *The Challenge of the Spirit.*, p. 9, 70-71; White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 64; Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 141, 317; Pipes. (1999). *Property and Freedom.*, p. 205.

⁶³ Zaslavsky, Victor. (1982). *The Neo-Stalinist State: Class, Ethnicity, and Consensus in Soviet Society.* Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 11.

“magnified ‘father cult,’”⁶⁴ would have only served to reinforce tendencies in Belarusian political-culture favouring passivity of the individual to the collective, and paternalistic and authoritarian leadership styles. As will be discussed in chapter 7, these historical roots help to add some understanding to the authoritarian leader cult successfully promoted in the contemporary period under President Lukashenko.

No doubt, what would have offended Belarusians the most about Soviet rule was not its preferred policy methods of collectivization but more the Soviets rabid attacks on religion and the Orthodox Church, which was not spared any reprieve under the Soviet attacks on religion implemented by Stalin. Regardless of this, however, for most Belarusian elites and those in society, which remained overwhelmingly rural up to this time, the policies implemented under the state-building program of the BSSR, during the period of Stalin’s rule, would have been seen in a positive light.⁶⁵ This is because even with the excesses of Stalin and atrocities committed against Belarusian elites, positive historical memories remain predominant because the state-building of the BSSR was seen by many Belarusians as the first real statehood of Belarus. Indeed, positive historical memories of this period of Belarusianization exist, because for the first time Belarusians began to be lifted from abject poverty into increased socio-economic and cultural development. Overall, Belarus’s early incorporation into the USSR as a founding republic, only served to help to reinforce these collectivist, communal, patriarchal, statist and authoritarian tendencies historically predominant in Belarusian political-cultural worldviews. Moreover, the longevity of such ways of life would have only resulted in

⁶⁴ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*, p. 86-87.

⁶⁵ Indeed, Stalin’s rule fit with Belarusians traditional worldviews that had a penchant to favour more paternalistic, authoritarian and absolutist forms of political leadership. To illustrate such positive historical memories of Stalin’s leadership, Zaslavsky points out that while “the extent of Stalinist terror... is well-known by the Soviet population, this does not change the fact that many workers and peasants have an image of Stalin as a disciplined yet kind leader who sought, sometimes with cruel means, to create an egalitarian and just society, even though his will may have often been distorted by his collaborators.” Additionally, Zaslavsky quotes Aleksandr Zinoviev who observed that regardless of the hardships under Stalin, many still viewed this as a period of “advancement unparalleled in human history, an advancement which promoted many millions from the lowest of social classes to the status of industrial worker, engineer, teacher, doctor, artist, officer, writer, scientist, etc.” Zaslavsky. (1982). *The Neo-Stalinist State*, p. 11. Similar sentiments were also mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). When compared to Latvia, Zaslavsky’s quote helps to show the differing set of cultural outlooks and historical memories existing between Latvians and Belarusians, as there is widespread consensus on narrative of Stalin’s terror towards Latvians, largely because such terror in Latvia was largely inflicted predominantly on the Latvians by a regime that was viewed to be culturally alien.

historical memories that largely worked to further reinforce these taken for granted collectivistic political-cultural worldviews, and this would have been devoid of any alternative political-cultural scenarios for possible change or ideas of liberalization.

Overall, during this period of state-building under the BSSR, a distinct Belarusian national identity was readily present, which was seen with extensive Belarusianization that was promoted by Belarusian Soviet authorities. As noted above, Belarusians increasingly became the dominant majority in all major administrative, political-economic, and cultural positions in the BSSR decision-making apparatus. Indeed, for the first time not only did ethnic-Belarusian elites have some real opportunity to make real political progress and shape the direction and decision-making process of political-economic policy development, but many from rural peasant backgrounds would for the first time have the real opportunity of educational, and social advancement. Finally, as the section below will discuss, even for more nationalist oriented Belarusian political elites, one can infer that political life under the BSSR would have been seen as preferable to the cultural, political, and economic discrimination and repression being inflicted on Belarusians living in western Belarus under Polish domination.

Polish Dominion over the western lands of Belarus during the Interwar

The western lands of Belarus came under the control and domination of Poland during the interwar period. While some might expect this to have resulted in the cultural Westernization of Belarusians living in what was eastern Poland during the interwar period, this could not have been further from the truth. Overall, Polish rule was oppressive towards the ethnic-Belarusian majority living in the western lands of Belarus controlled by Poland. Under a policy of what has been described as being colonial, and one of cultural imperialism, Polish authorities launched a concerted attempt at cultural Polonization of ethnic-Belarusians living under Polish dominion. Overall, a significant clash of cultures between the Polish governing administration and the Belarusian majority living in eastern Poland was occurring. This is because ethnic-Belarusians remained largely resistant to such attempts at cultural Polonization, and as a result experienced significant discrimination and oppression from Polish authorities. In the realm of cultural policy, this clash of cultures between Poles and ethnic-Belarusians took

several forms. Indeed, Polish authorities pursued a relentless policy throughout the interwar period which attempted to coercively Polonize the close to 3.5 million Belarusian living under Polish dominion.

In regards to religion, most Belarusians remained Russian-Orthodox in their religious beliefs and faced an increased and consistent policy of discrimination from Polish authorities during this time. For example, in the areas next to the Soviet border, the Belarusian Orthodox faithful inhabiting this region were forced into Roman Catholicism. In many other areas, hundreds of Orthodox churches were closed down, and many Orthodox religious holy sites and monasteries were often looted by Polish soldiers. Other churches were converted into Roman Catholic places of worship. For those that remained open, these were forcefully subjected to using Polish religious texts, even though the congregations could not speak Polish. Additionally, religious educational instruction was mandated to be only conducted in the Polish language. Polish authorities further attempted to undercut the authority of Belarusian Orthodox religious figures by arresting or exiling both prominent and low ranking members of the Orthodox clergy. Here, it should be noted that for the minority of ethnic-Belarusians that belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, these Belarusians also were subjected to discrimination and Polonization, as repeated national censuses conducted in 1921 and 1931 listed these groups as Poles, even though these people did not identify as being Poles, nor speak the Polish language. Overall, the greatest amounts of religious discrimination and persecution by Polish authorities was inflicted against Belarusian of the Orthodox faith, who experienced a concerted policy of discrimination in all areas of cultural, political, and economic life.⁶⁶

The Belarusian language was also discriminated against widely in public affairs and government services, and was restricted from being used in other public areas such as the court system, post offices, and railway stations. Additionally, Belarusian newspapers were banned and closed down, and many of their editors were imprisoned. Especially, in regards to education, opportunities for learning in the Belarusian language were increasingly restricted. Here, the official policy of cultural Polonization resulted in

⁶⁶ For further detail on religious persecution of Belarusians, especially of the Orthodox faith, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 121-122, 130-131; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 135; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 7.

hundreds of Belarusian schools either being closed or turned entirely into Polish schools, and Belarusian parents were increasingly coerced into sending their children to be educated at the Polish language schools. Finally, large numbers of Belarusian political, cultural and intelligentsia elites were imprisoned in concentration camps by Polish authorities at Bereza Kartuska.⁶⁷

Overall, policies of cultural imperialism displayed in the concerted attack on the culture of Belarusians living in the western lands of Belarus under Polish dominion during the interwar period have been widely condemned by most scholars on the subject and have been described as “an intensive campaign of Polonization that consciously sought the eradication of all Belorussian cultural, religious and educational institutions.”⁶⁸ Indeed, such attacks on the cultural well-being of Belarusians living in the western lands of Belarus under Polish domination, contrasted in comparison to the progress being made in cultural and educational advancements in the BSSR at the same time, as noted in the section above.

Economically, the western lands of Belarus under Polish rule remained some of the least developed regions of Poland, and were economically more underdeveloped than the eastern lands of Belarus under the BSSR. In terms of socio-economic development, illiteracy continued to remain rampant, close to 70% by 1938, amongst ethnic-

⁶⁷ For examples of coerced Polish assimilation in regards to culture, language and education, and forced imprisonment of Belarusian elites, see the speech of B. Taraškevič in the Polish Sejm, on June 6, 1924, quoted in Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 123-124, (see also p. 125, 130-131). For further consensus on policies of forced Polonization, see also Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 134-137; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 83; Jaremicz, Fabian. (1988). “White Russia: Its Present Political Situation and Its Aim.” In *Byelorussian Statehood*, eds. V. Kipel and Z. Kipel. New York: Byelorussian Institute of Arts and Sciences., p. 222 [Speech delivered by White Russian Deputy in the Polish Parliament (1927). Originally published in *The Whiteruthenian Tribune*, Chicago, 2 (1928)]; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 282-283; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 65.

⁶⁸ Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 12-13. Additionally others have noted that “every effort to amalgamate them both politically and culturally,” in an “approach dominated by an attitude of unrelenting suppression of that was Belarusian and peasant.” Quote from Josef Lewandowski, in Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 75, 82. Some have described the cultural discrimination and attempts at Polonization, as worse than all attempts at cultural Russification under the USSR. Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 127, 135; Guthier, Steven L. (1977b). “The Belorussians: National Identification and Assimilation, 1897-1970: Part 2, 1939-1970.” *Soviet Studies*, 29, 2: 270-283., p. 282. See also Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 121-124, 130-131; Vołacič. (1956). “The Curzon Line and Territorial Changes.” p. 68; Guthier. (1977a). “The Belorussians.” p. 60; Iwanow, Mikołaj. (1991). “The Byelorussians of Eastern Poland under Soviet Occupation, 1939-1941.” Ch. 14. In *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1939-41*, ed. Keith Sword. New York: St. Martin’s Press., p. 258; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 282; Magdziak-Miszewska, Agnieszka. (2002). “Belarus: Poland’s Strange Neighbor.” Ch. 14, in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 346.

Belarusians living under Polish domination.⁶⁹ Indeed, such high illiteracy, increasingly became noticeable compared to progressively growing rates of literacy now occurring in the BSSR. No doubt a large contributing factor for such dismal figures owed a great deal to the concerted policy of forced assimilation from Polish authorities and the increased denial of educational opportunities for Belarusians in their native language.

In terms of the economic distribution of wealth, increasingly most agriculture land was given to ethnic-Polish owners that were largely newly arrived settlers to the region, while ignoring the demands from the local ethnic-Belarusian population native to this region. Moreover, Belarusians belonging to the Orthodox faith were also not allowed to own property and most were located in rural areas and largely remained in serf-like conditions. To illustrate, around 50% of all the private arable farm land in the western lands of Belarus were owned by Polish landlords which numbered only 1% of all landowners, with 90% of forested land also being owned by Polish landlords. In contrast, most ethnic-Belarusians might have had access to only a couple of acres, with many being landless entirely and also being subjected to mandatory corvee labour in the service of the state.⁷⁰ Indeed, the fact that it was Belarusians of the Orthodox faith that were banned from owning property, helps to infer that there was a definite clash of cultures occurring in the concerted policy of discrimination inflicted by Polish authorities against the ethnic-Belarusian population in the western lands of Belarus living under Polish domination. No doubt, such experience was crucial for reinforcing Belarusians historically predominant worldviews which favoured collective and communal property relations and generally took a negative view towards individual private property ownership. Moreover, such an understanding of ethnic-Belarusians circumstances living under Polish domination helps to understand how Belarusians would be receptive to future Soviet policies of agricultural land collectivization.

Due to the very real discrimination and oppression faced by the ethnic-Belarusian majority living under Polish domination, as well as the positive propaganda coming from across the boarder in the BSSR, many Belarusians living in Poland held increasingly

⁶⁹ Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 135.

⁷⁰ Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 83-84, 85-86. For consensus on economic discrimination under Polish rule, and serf-like conditions of Belarusians, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 123, 132-133; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 132-133, 136; Jaremicz. (1988). "White Russia.," p. 222-223.

positive views of the BSSR. Indeed, it is evident that an open clash of cultures was occurring between Polish authorities and ethnic-Belarusians which were resisting the official policies of forced Polish assimilation. Such a clash can be inferred, not only from the persistent and brutal nature of the policies of Polonization, but also due to the fact that ethnic-Belarusians, lead by the Belarusian Socialist Hramada and its 100,000 plus members, also openly resisted via open armed conflict, which was countered and put down with force from Polish authorities in the period from 1928-1932. During this period of open conflict, ethnic-Belarusians openly attacked offices, symbols, and officials of the Polish state. Additionally, the settlements of Polish colonists who had been sent by the Polish government to the region with the goal of diluting the predominantly ethnic-Belarusian make-up of the region were also attacked. In response, Polish authorities acting via the military launched an open counter-offensive in order to quash the Belarusian uprising and restore some semblance of order. Often such countermeasures took a negative toll on Belarusian villages which were deliberately targeted, as well as Belarusian elites, many of whom were later imprisoned and sent to concentration camps. The strength of these countermeasures to subdue the Belarusian uprising, no doubt left an increasingly negative impression of Polish authorities in the minds of Belarusians, and did nothing to enhance the loyalty of Belarusians towards the Polish state. At the same time, positive perceptions of the BSSR were enhanced when many of the imprisoned leaders of the revolt were granted asylum in the BSSR.⁷¹

In such an environment where a definite clash of cultures came to the fore, the majority of ethnic-Belarusians living in Poland were increasingly becoming radicalized, pro-Communist and pro-Soviet in their political worldviews, which was seen with the biggest Belarusian political parties in interwar Poland being predominantly Socialist, Communist and pro-Soviet in their orientations. Prominent political groups included the Communist Party of West Belarus, the Belarusian Peasant and Workers Union, and the Independent Peasants Party. Indeed, parties such as the Communist Party of West Belarus had strong links and were directly connected to the Belarusian Communist Party of the BSSR. Additionally, the Belarusian Socialist Hramada remained active although its

⁷¹ For more on the armed uprisings and resistance of Belarusians, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 125-128, 145; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 137; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 282; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 7; Magdziak-Miszewska. (2002). "Belarus.," p. 346.

leaders were subjected to repeated harassment and attacks from Polish authorities. Additionally, as mentioned in the sections above, many of the BDR's exiled leaders in eastern Poland would increasingly begin to take on an increasingly pro-Communist, anti-Polish and pro-BSSR stance, something which owed a great deal to the fact that many in this group had strong socialist backgrounds. In general, a major portion of the whole Belarusian national movement in Poland during the interwar was totally Communized in their political orientation. No doubt, such worldviews jived with and were reinforced by the historically predominant collectivistic and communal worldviews historically shared by Belarusians. Indeed, such worldviews formed into an increasingly strong and noticeable national identity, which was seen with most ethnic-Belarusians also beginning to yearn for unification of all culturally Belarusian lands into one entity under the BSSR. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, "in these circumstances socialism got so widespread that it was the national mentality and national ideology, and it remains so until now."⁷²

Such a mentality did not simply result from a Polish oppression or class structures where Poles held the political-economic reigns of power, because such relations merely served to reinforce and confirm old preexisting worldviews and historical memories that were characterized by their strong collectivist, communal and socialist orientation. Such historical roots informing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews helps one to understand why Belarusians living under Polish oppression would naturally gravitate towards more pro-Communist, pro-socialist, and pro-Soviet political movements. Moreover, the fact that Belarusians were displaying a definite and pronounced national identity that identified with the BSSR, was distinctly anti-Polish, and was informed by Belarusians historically collectivistic and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews is important for countering claims that Belarusians had a weak sense of national identity, and also for showing that political-culture precedes and informs the content of national identities.

In general, the predominant historical memories informing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews about the interwar period when the western lands of Belarus were

⁷² Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For consensus on strong pro-socialist, pro-Communist and pro-Soviet orientation of Belarusian political groups, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 125-128; Iwanow. (1991). "The Byelorussians of Eastern Poland.," p. 258; Urban. (1989). *An Algebra if Soviet Power.*, p. 13; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 84; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 282-283; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 137.

under Polish dominion view this negatively as time oppression for Belarusians.⁷³ Indeed, such an understanding of the cultural, political and economic plight of Belarusians living under Polish dominion during the interwar period, can help to understand how Belarusians negative historical memories of this period might result in feelings that are more antagonistic looking towards the West or to Poland as examples for them how to organize the political-economic relations of their society, and also explain the persistence of strong collectivistic, communal, and pro-Russian orientations in Belarusian worldviews.

World War Two

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939

Belarusians took a very different view of the events of 1939, than did the people of Latvia. Indeed, Belarusian historical memories view the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact more positively than ethnic-Latvians, which saw the events resulting from this pact as a loss of independence. Instead, Belarusian historical memories viewed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in a different light than Latvians, and positive in the sense that this helped to finally result in the full-unification of all the culturally Belarusian lands into one state under the BSSR. This was particularly the case for the oppressed ethnic-Belarusians living in the western Belarusian lands under Polish dominion, which did not identify culturally with the state of Poland, and thus viewed positively their full incorporation with their fellow Belarusians in the eastern lands of Belarus into one state under the BSSR. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “okay, it was tragic [for the Poles], but it was the only chance that we had where we could gain national unity...and Belarusians were the only people who had something positive from this Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Such negative historical memories of Polish rule were mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also, Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 133.

⁷⁴ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For further consensus on popular assessment and historical memories of the positive results of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact for Belarus, see also Magdziak-Miszewska. (2002). “Belarus.,” p. 346.

Overall, large amounts of positive enthusiasm was witnessed towards the incoming Red Army soldiers, which the majority of the ethnic-Belarusian inhabitants of the western lands of Belarus treated as liberators. In general, resistance to Soviet incorporation of the western lands of Belarus into the BSSR was minimal and largely non-existent from ethnic-Belarusians. Instead, there are well documented accounts of ethnic-Belarusians forming armed guerilla bands that actively harassed retreating Polish soldiers, Polish government officials, as well as Polish settlers living in the region of western Belarus, thus aiding the advance of Red Army forces and the consolidation of Soviet rule. Of the minimal resistance that did come towards Soviet rule, this came largely from ethnic-Poles now living under Soviet rule. In general, the Soviet invasion and reunification of all the Belarusian lands into one Belarusian state under the BSSR was generally viewed positively and as an act of national liberation.⁷⁵

The fact that Belarusians at the time viewed the events and national reunification highly positively and as act of liberation, and that such events are still celebrated on the anniversary of the Soviet invasion (September 17th) as a public holiday, signals that there was a distinctly evident Belarusian national identity present, which counters arguments that Belarusians had an historically weak national identity. To illustrate further the presence of such a seemingly strong identity, one should note the descriptions given by several historians. For example, Vakar notes that “to the Belarussians...it meant the restoration of their own territorial integrity...a full-sized nation at last...[and] people naturally rejoiced at seeing their land and kin reunited, their dignity and freedom...restored.”⁷⁶ Similarly, the descriptions offered by Lubachko also signals the prevalence of a strong identity, which is inferred by the description that “the people in west Belorussia were happy because now they were to be reunited with their brothers of

⁷⁵ For consensus on the above points and that events of September 1939 were seen as a period of liberation, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 156; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 139-140; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 13; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 89. On Soviets being seen as liberators, and Belarusians forming armed guerilla bands to harass retreating Polish forces, see also Gross, Jan T. (1988). *Revolution From Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia.* Princeton: Princeton University Press., p. 19-20, 29; Iwanow. (1991). “The Byelorussians of Eastern Poland.” p. 257-258; Kozhevnikov, S. (1991). ““A Historic Campaign.”” Appendix 2. In *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1939-41*, ed. K. Sword. New York: St. Martin's Press., p. 299-300 [Originally from the Red Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), 18 September 1940]. The most telling aspect which allows one to infer that there was very little anti-Soviet resistance, other than from ethnic-Poles, was that there is virtually no mention of such resistance in any of the histories sampled.

⁷⁶ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 156.

east Belorussia...their old dream had come true.”⁷⁷ Moreover, since the BSSR no doubt played a highly visible role in this liberation and reunification of all ethnic-Belarusian lands, this signals the important role and place that the BSSR fills in Belarusian political-cultural worldviews and historical memories informing Belarusian national identity.

Since most ethnic-Belarusians that had lived under Polish dominion had remained discriminated against and oppressed by Polish authorities, as well as in a general state of political-economic underdevelopment, many welcomed the progress that was experienced in terms of political, educational, and cultural development promoted by the new Soviet authorities of the BSSR. Indeed, what could be described as a similar program of Belarusification was instituted, as rates of literacy were vastly improved, Belarusian schools reopened, Belarusian newspapers and publications were reopened, and where the Belarusian language was generally given official privilege in all areas of public life.⁷⁸ No doubt, this would have proved popular with the local population of western Belarus, which was largely composed of an overwhelming majority of ethnic-Belarusians. Moreover, positive historical memories of the BSSR would have been strengthened, since most Belarusians living in western Belarus had been repressed and living in a destitute existence under Polish rule, which began to improve under the policies of the BSSR, especially in the realm of socio-economic development, which provided positive tangible symbols and reference points in the minds of the people.

Additionally, while the Soviets began to implement a policy of general collectivization in western Belarus from 1940 to 1941, before the German invasion, this did not affect the economic interests of the majority of ethnic-Belarusians in this region, since the land which was confiscated came largely from independent Polish land-owners. As such, when the land property and other economic assets of ethnic-Poles was confiscated and nationalized, this did not readily upset the local Belarusians.⁷⁹ While

⁷⁷ Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 140; See also Magdziak-Miszewska. (2002). “Belarus.” p. 346.

⁷⁸ Such historical memories of achieving what was seen as positive progress after the start of Soviet rule was mentioned by one Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For further consensus on progress in education and culture, see Gross. (1988). *Revolution From Abroad.*, p. 127-128. Even though highly critical of areas of Soviet rule, Zaprudnik also gives acknowledgment of such programs. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 91.

⁷⁹ For consensus on Belarusians not being upset by confiscation of ethnic-Poles property, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 162; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 143.

some point to the Belarusian peasants gaining access to more private land as a result of confiscation of the ethnic-Poles property, any claims that these were genuinely private holdings should be taken with a degree of skepticism, and should not be equated with the traditions of private freehold farming characteristic of rural Latvia. This is because ethnic-Belarusians did not share similar worldviews regarding the natural rights of individuals to private property ownership. Nor did Belarusian peasants directly own any of the land in the area designated as private landholdings, since the state having nationalized most of the previously private land of ethnic-Polish landlords, had merely granted tenure rights of small amounts of this to peasants, but continued to retain ultimate collective ownership rights over its long-term use.

Therefore, not only was private property ownership largely foreign to the masses of the Belarusian majority living in western Belarus, but many continued to share predominantly collectivist worldviews in regards to land management and remained closely connected to the rural village. Furthermore, these predominantly collectivistic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life common to ethnic-Belarusians were further reinforced by a lack of recent historical memories of individual private property ownership. Thus, as one Belarusian elite pointed out, the fact that there was “not this mentality of having some parcel of land,” and the fact that Polish landlords held most of the major land holdings, made it “an easy play for the Bolsheviks to communize everything here.”⁸⁰ To illustrate this rapid pace of collectivization, all individual farms had been virtually eliminated by the spring of 1941.⁸¹ Indeed, such numbers indicating the rapid pace of collectivization in western Belarus are impressive, if one simultaneously compares the Soviet’s dismal rates at collectivization in Latvia during this time, where

⁸⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). The fact that Belarusian living in the western lands of Belarus had little historical experience, values nor habits of individual private landownership was mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010).

⁸¹ See for example, Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 166; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 144. Also, while there maybe was some disappointment with some of the effects of collectivization, and indeed some resistance, this had little to do with any real aversion to collectivism per se, similar to that found in Latvia, but had more to do with local resentment that power over everyday decisions regarding things like crop planting, and the collective redistribution of land had been taken away from the local village level and been shifted upwards into the hands of centralized authorities that did not always respect the needs or knowledge of locals, as well as the increased mandatory deliveries of produce and labor that collective farms and collective workers had to deliver to the state.

the Soviets did not even try to implement such rapid outcomes out of fear of mass resistance from the majority of rural Latvians

Thus, collectivization faced far fewer hurdles than in Latvia, as described in chapter 4, which had a long tradition and strong worldviews favouring individual private property ownership. In contrast, in western Belarus, private agriculture land was held largely by Polish landlords, and ethnic-Belarusians did not have the negative experience of having their private property forcefully expropriated by Soviet authorities. As will be explained in detail in chapter 7, this helps to explain in recent times why there was a lack of calls for property restoration in western Belarus, since there was a general lack of any historical memories of private property ownership held by ethnic-Belarusians.

While atrocities were certainly committed by Soviet authorities against some of the populace of western Belarus, however, this was largely committed predominantly against the ethnic-Poles living in western Belarus, and especially against the large numbers of Polish officers and elites that were murdered by the Soviets in Katyn.⁸² Overall, however, for the ethnic-Belarusians living in the western Belarus, Soviet incorporation into the BSSR was not seen as un-natural or as a foreign takeover, since the BSSR was seen to be an authentically ethnic-Belarusian state. Thus, there was no clash of cultures similar to that experienced by ethnic-Latvians and their very real perception of being invaded and forcefully taken over by the culturally alien Soviet/Russian power.

German Invasion, 1941

While life under the Soviet regime was hard, and the German invasion in June 1941 was not so much viewed as a liberation, as was the case in Latvia, it is apparent that these events were viewed by ethnic-Belarusians with goodwill, positive indifference and passivity. This is because many Belarusians mistakenly believed that this might be similar to the rule of German military authorities near the end of World War One, which most Belarusian historical memories viewed as relatively benign and which actually promoted some Belarusianization. However, it should also be noted that anti-Soviet

⁸² To illustrate the high degree of cultural antipathy toward ethnic-Poles, Vakar notes that even with the mass atrocities inflicted against the ethnic-Poles, “no one apparently cared to know what happened.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 160. Estimates put the number of people deported from western Belarus at around 300,000, but no specifics are given to the ethnic make-up of these numbers. Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 145.

sentiment was not even close to the seething hatred found in Latvia. This can be inferred from the fact that in contrast to the Latvians, Belarusians did not take retribution against local Soviets and their perceived allies that remained in Belarus, as many of these figures were often adopted into the local community. Moreover, as Vakar points out, any “hatred [toward the Soviets] was always motivated by some personal offense and hardly ever by any realization of the evils and moral and physical devastations Communism always engenders wherever it takes root.”⁸³ Thus, from such descriptions, one can infer that in contrast to Latvians which generally had a loathing towards all the collectivistic and communal aspects of Soviet rule, most Belarusian anger was located at the personal level, and no doubt had something to do with the fact that the communally oriented rural villages had lost some of their local decision making autonomy to centralized bureaucrats.

Additionally, there was also a persistence of collective traditions and practices in rural Belarus, which was especially apparent in the parts of Belarus that did not immediately fall under the authority of German forces after the Soviet retreat eastwards. In these areas where there was a vacuum of authority, the first German authorities that arrived described how the local Belarusian population in these rural areas had already taken the collective initiative to dismantle the administrative apparatus of the Soviet state collective farms. However, this did not result in liberal-individualist solutions as Latvians adopted. Instead, these Belarusians resorted to their historically collectivist traditions, adopting tried and tested solutions that were known to them, which meant dividing up the land based on centuries old collectivist principles and control by the local village commune. Also, as mentioned above, Belarusians did not take retribution against local Soviets officials that had remained in rural Belarus, and instead adopted these figures into the local village community, often granting these individuals a portion of collective land to work. In terms of administering justice, peasants and later Belarusian guerilla’s also utilized time-tested traditions of collectivized justice and communal order historically

⁸³ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 185. On lack of retribution towards remaining Soviet officials, and adopting them into local communities, see *Ibid.*, p. 174; Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 43. Additionally, on original feelings of positive indifference to the initial German invasion in June 1941, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 172, 175; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 146; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 95; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 15. For eyewitness accounts, see Guderian, Heinz. (1952). *Panzer Leader.* Translated by Constantine Fitzgibbon. New York., p. 193-194.

utilized by the village commune, which although lacking in any semblance of liberal rule of law, were the patterns of justice administration that generations of rural villagers were historically accustomed too. As Vakar points out, “in the rural areas...a medieval pattern of government, the *mir*, was spontaneously revived, [and] all kinds of communal ‘liberation committees’...and [a] pattern of communal order began to shape up.”⁸⁴

Overall, such accounts are important for inferring the importance of collectively oriented political-cultural worldviews, habits and historical memories at play in influencing behavior. This is because in the absence of the Soviet regime, rural Belarusians reverted back to their traditional practices and habits that were viewed to be the most effective. Indeed, Vakar’s observations help show that when authority disappeared and people were free to establish modes of governance, they reverted back to their traditional worldviews, habits and ways of life, which were oriented towards collectivistic, communal and patriarchal patterns of behavior.

As German rule progressed, the general passivity and indifference of Belarusians at the start of German rule, was replaced by an increasingly outright hostility towards German authorities. Thus, even though Belarus suffered under the terror inflicted by Stalin, these events tended to be forgotten following the German invasion in 1941, which unleashed a new wave of horrors. Overall, there was very little collaboration with German authorities relative to that found in Latvia, and Belarusians grew increasingly hostile over several factors. This included reversing many of the decisions, made by local village collective authorities. Additionally, Belarusians were horrified after observing the German atrocities against local Jews, remaining Soviet authorities, and Soviet prisoners of war. Moreover, German authorities showed a general contempt towards Belarus and its people. In general, German authorities in far greater proportion relative to Latvia also committed large-scale atrocities against the local population, including the deportation for forced labour in Germany, and the indiscriminate burning of villages and killing of

⁸⁴ Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 173-174. Additionally, Vakar also notes that that the old village commune’s “sudden and spontaneous comeback was surprising and significant in its scope and depth” (p. 180-181). For additional descriptions of collectively oriented behavioral patterns of local governance amongst rural Belarusians, and that while local Soviets that did remain did not play an important role, but were nevertheless pleased in the shape of such outcomes, see (p. 183). For further consensus on the revival of traditional communal patterns in rural Belarus, see Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 13.

civilians. Such actions only served to increase outright hostility to German forces.⁸⁵ As a result, in a relatively short-time period, Belarusians became increasingly resistant to German authorities, forming large armed guerilla bodies to combat German forces occupying Belarus. Indeed, such resistance of Belarusians was avowedly pro-Soviet, and in contrast to Latvians, Belarusians did not negatively view the prospects of an eventual Soviet return.

Belarusian Anti-German Resistance During World War Two

The events of the Second World War were a key historical event for the BSSR and helped to harden the pro-Soviet historical memories of Belarusian political-culture. In general, pro-German collaborators in Belarus remained an overwhelmingly small minority of the population. Instead, Belarus became the centre of anti-German, pro-Soviet guerilla resistance, which stands in contrast to Latvians anti-Soviet armed resistance, first in the form of Latvian Legion units in the German SS, and then in the subsequent anti-Soviet guerilla activity of the Latvian Forest Brethren. During the struggle, the Belarusians in large numbers formed as guerilla partisans to fight the Germans, in assistance to the overall Soviet war effort. To illustrate, there were 75,000 anti-German, pro-Soviet Belarusian guerillas operating in the Belarusian countryside by mid-1943, with numbers increasing to over 120,000 by the end of 1943, and up to an estimated 300,000 in the year 1944.⁸⁶

Overall, the pro-Soviet guerilla resistance in Belarus was largely grass-roots and made up of local Belarusians. This was similar to the grass-roots support of Latvian anti-

⁸⁵ For greater detail, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 185-190; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 149-155; Guderian. (1952). *Panzer Leader.*, p. 193-194. It should also be noted that sometimes these atrocities did not always fit into the realm of black and white in regards to deliberateness, as pro-Soviet guerilla's and Soviet agent-provocateurs, would often kill German soldiers close to villages, often savagely, knowing full-well that this would result in German policies of disproportionate retribution, which typically meant the burning of the local village and killing of its inhabitants. There is also documented cases of Soviet agent provocateurs wearing captured German uniforms and committing atrocities against local rural Belarusians in order to foment anti-German sentiments and resistance. Additionally, it has been noted that Soviet agent-provocateurs, unconnected to guerilla's, and often acting in a way that would make it appear that they were German collaborators would zealously engage in brutal acts against the populace in order to stir anti-German sentiment and resistance. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 192-193, 197; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 156; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 97-98.

⁸⁶ Such numbers are indicated in Vakar, who also noted that his numbers were supplied by a former German official conducting anti-guerilla operations Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 198. See also, Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 99; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 16.

Soviet guerillas, with the only difference between Latvian and Belarusian guerillas was that they shared divergent political-cultural orientations. Moreover, the local Belarusian guerilla fighters, while being pro-Soviet, largely operated for the most part with a great deal of operational autonomy in their activities and chain of command throughout most of their existence, thus remaining autonomous from the control of the Red Army and Soviet intelligence agencies. This signifies that such groups were a genuinely local grass-roots phenomenon, which was recruited and aided in their existence and activities by the local Belarusians. Indeed, such a grass-roots nature can also be inferred from the accounts that the Belarusian guerilla groups enjoyed wide popularity and support amongst the people.⁸⁷

Here, it should be noted that strong notions of patriotism came into play, especially because the guerillas believed they were fighting for their cultural motherland against a hostile foreign cultural invader. Additionally, for the Belarusians, the Russians and Soviets were viewed not only as protectors from the foreign invaders, but also as the Belarusians fellow comrades and brothers and sisters in arms. Not only did cultural values of protecting the Motherland come into play, but also much of this popular sentiment and local patriotism of Belarusian guerilla fighters resisting the German oppressors also played on the strongly religious Orthodox sentiments shared by Belarusians. Even today, one can also find evidence of a religious-cultural pride informing the predominant historical memories, in that there was a noticeable “degree of pride for its role as the bulwark of defense of the Slavic peoples and the Orthodox faith against attackers from the West.”⁸⁸ With such a knowledge of these historical memories of past experience with the West, one can understand how there is the persistence of noticeable Belarusian antagonism towards the West, and the continuance of strong positive feelings towards Russia.

⁸⁷ On grass-roots nature of Belarusian guerrilla fighters, Vakar notes that “the claim that the Soviet agents had created it is unwarranted.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 192, 203. For consensus on grass-roots, mass popularity, and local autonomous control, see Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus,” p. 233; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus,” p. 284; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 97.

⁸⁸ Reppert, John C. (2002). “The Security Dimension in the Future of Belarus.” Ch. 10, in *Independent Belarust*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 266. On above themes motivating guerrillas, such as religion, Belarusian Soviet patriotism, and cultural kinship with Russians, see Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 197-198; Lubachko. (1972). *Belorussia under Soviet Rule.*, p. 156-157; Marples. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus,” p. 33.

Overall, the predominant historical memories informing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, have greatly mythologized the stories of the Belarusian guerilla's anti-German resistance which no doubt played an important role in the eventual Soviet victory over German forces during what Belarusians refer to as the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, the historical memories shared by Belarusians about WWII were thus divergently different from those shared by ethnic-Latvians. Whereas for ethnic-Latvians the Soviet victory meant a continued forced Soviet occupation and loss of freedom, for Belarusians the Soviet victory not only meant liberation from the domination of the German invaders, but also a shared victory for Belarusians and the BSSR with Russians in the Great Patriotic War. As a result, the events of the Second World War were a key historical event for the BSSR, the historical memories of which would harden and reinforce the pro-Soviet political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians, thus strengthening the important place of the BSSR in Belarusian identity.⁸⁹

Finally, in contrast to the anti-Soviet resistance that was found in Latvia during the closing years of WWII and then in the anti-Soviet guerilla resistance that persisted in Latvia for most of the following decade after 1945, there was a general lack of anti-Soviet resistance by Belarusians both during WWII and after. Of the anti-Soviet guerilla activity that did exist in the western lands of Belarus, much of this was conducted by ethnic-Poles.⁹⁰ Moreover, as will be discussed in more detail below, many of the

⁸⁹ Such positive views of Belarusians guerilla resistance during WWII and general Soviet nostalgia were mentioned by several elites. One even referred to Belarus during this time as being "very much a partisan republic." Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Additionally, inferences to partisan struggle and historical memories of victory in WWII helping to reinforce pro-Soviet attitudes and strong patriotism towards the BSSR in Belarusian worldviews and identity, are found in Mihalisko, who notes that it had a huge "impact...on the national psyche...to the exclusive benefit of Soviet patriotism." Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 233. For similar consensus, see Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 14-15; Sahn. (1999). "Political Culture and National Symbols.," p. 653; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 283-284. Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 17-18. It is ironic that Zaprudnik, Marples, and others note the importance of the experience of WWII in greatly shaping Belarusian identity in terms of reinforcing attachment to the BSSR, when such authors repeatedly go to great lengths to later minimize the importance of the BSSR in shaping a strong and coherent Belarusian national identity, in that the main argument of these authors is that Belarus lacks a coherent national identity.

⁹⁰ The most telling aspect which allows one to infer that there was very little anti-Soviet resistance in western Belarus, other than from ethnic-Poles, was that there is virtually no mention of such resistance in any of the histories sampled. For comparative purposes, it is also important to contrast the vast majority of Latvian and Baltic historical sources, where the exploits of armed-guerilla anti-Soviet resistance is widely detailed. To illustrate, in one of the most comprehensive histories of Belarus, Vakar notes that in regards to

Belarusian pro-Soviet guerilla leaders would go on to become prominent national leaders of the BSSR throughout the post-1945 period, remaining largely popular and well-respected amongst the population.

Soviet Modernization and Industrial Development under the BSSR, 1945-1991

Belarus was severely devastated during World War Two, losing 2.2 million of its population, or around 25% of its population, with virtually all Belarusian cities, in the range of 90% being destroyed, and the countryside lying in utter devastation.⁹¹ Belarus was similar to Latvia in that both remained predominantly rural in regards to its population make-up and economic activity well up to the mid-twentieth century. Similar to Latvia, Belarus also experienced massive Soviet industrial development and modernization from the 1950s onwards, which was seen in great leaps in welfare and socio-economic development. However, since much of Belarus had already been Sovietized, and collectivization of large parts of economy had already been accomplished with little resistance relative to Latvia, post-war rebuilding and industrial modernization of the BSSR began largely without question in the years following the end of WWII.

In the years following 1945, Belarus developed to become one of the most highly modernized, industrialized, urbanized and affluent (by Soviet standards) republics of all of the members of the Soviet Union. For instance, Belarus led in advanced industrial and technological production, and also made great leaps in the service sector. Huge advancements were also made in Belarus during this time in education, health, and social welfare. Essentially, Belarus became a showpiece of Soviet Communism, and one of the ‘economic engines’ of the Soviet Union, with industry, as noted in chapter 1, making up more than 70% of GDP, which was impressive considering that Belarus was predominantly rural prior to 1945. Moreover, in contrast to Latvia, where such Soviet development was viewed negatively, Belarusian people viewed such development highly

groups that were alleged to have been fighting the Soviets, “material evidence is lacking.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 196. Vakar also notes that full-scale collective farming was restored again from the outset after liberation (p. 211). This is important to note since collectivization in Latvia faced severe resistance and took years to consolidate. Additionally, one Baltic source noted that compared to Latvia, in all of Belarus, even in the western regions added to the BSSR, “there is no indication of extensive guerilla [anti-soviet] activity.” Misiunas and Taagepera. (1993). *The Baltic States.*, p. 102.

⁹¹ See for example, Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 100-101; Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 209; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 233.

positively. Indeed, the Belarusians could be argued to be Sovietized in the sense that they were overwhelmingly pro-Soviet in their political-cultural worldviews and outlook.

However, some national identity theorists point to this period as an example of mass Sovietization/Russification which served to decrease the strength of national identity in Belarus relative to its Baltic neighbors. Here, many making such arguments that under Soviet rule Belarus was thoroughly Russified, point to the fact that many Belarusians adopted Russian as their predominant personal language of choice.⁹² Most of these points will be critiqued in detail in chapter 7, but it is important to point out that in the case of Belarusians, evidence suggests that the adoption of the Russian language or what was often a mixture of Belarusian/Russian was largely voluntary for most Belarusians. Moreover, it should be pointed out that it could be argued that the Latvians were subjected to far greater amounts of coerced Russification, as demographic patterns show that while the vast majority of Latvians became thoroughly fluent in the Russian language, the same could not be said of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic minority living in Latvia, which did not reciprocate in learning the Latvian language.

Furthermore, due to strong historical cultural links and similarities shared by Belarusians with Russians, and because the native character of the governance and leadership structure of the BSSR, the Soviet system was not viewed as culturally alien, and most Belarusians continued to view Russia and any seeming aspects of Russification with little hostility compared to the Latvians. Indeed, it is logical that Belarusians held certain high levels of esteem for Russia, since Belarus's first real period of political-economic development and modernization came about under the political union of Belarus and Russia under the USSR, which would have only served to reinforce such positive cultural associations and kinship with Russia. Whereas, most Latvians would have regarded any claims of 'progress' under Soviet development to be laughable, due to the persistent clash of cultures occurring between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russian/Slavs, which was evident in Latvia and detailed in chapter 4. Instead, as will be discussed below, the process of Soviet development in the BSSR merely built on

⁹² See for example, Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 106-108, 125-128; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 233, 235; Burant. (1995). "Foreign Policy and National Identity.," p. 1133; Marples. (1996). *Belarus.*, p. 31; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 50-52; Goujon. (1999). "Language, Nationalism, and Populism in Belarus.," p. 668; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 525.

reinforced old collectivistic, communal, patriarchal and pro-Russian sentiments, which largely helps explain Belarusians seemingly nostalgic pro-Soviet worldviews and patterns of behavior.

Overall, the fact that such Soviet-style industrialization and modernization appeared to be working for Belarusians, only served to increase positive historical memories of this time period, which served further to reinforce the predominantly collectivist worldviews of Belarusians, which favoured collectively oriented policy methods because these were viewed as being the ‘best,’ ‘right’ and ‘natural’ way to organize political-economic relations. Indeed, the predominant historical memories shared in the political-cultural worldviews of most Belarusians viewed the Soviet era of political-economic governance under the BSSR with nostalgia, and as a time of great advancement and progress.⁹³ Moreover, because many aspect of Sovietization built on traditional collectivistic, communal and patriarchal traditions that were historically rooted in Belarusian political-cultural worldviews and way of life, one should view Soviet development as merely reinforcing such outlooks and habits, which largely accounts for why Belarusians were Sovietized in the sense of having a strongly pro-Soviet mentality and strong patriotism towards the BSSR.

This historical experience helped further reinforce Belarus’s illiberal political-cultural worldview and way of life, lending credibility to authoritarian-style policies. This is because there was a pervasiveness of authoritarian traditions and general lack of rule of law in all areas of governance throughout Soviet rule, where rule by decree was often the norm. Moreover, even as Belarus experienced intensive modernization, with heavy industrialization and increased urbanization, seen with larger numbers of Belarusians moving from rural areas to the cities, many of these traditional collectivistic, paternalistic and authoritarian patterns continued in Soviet industrial settings. As Vakar notes, “Soviet

⁹³ High levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia about development under the BSSR, found in the historical memories of Belarusians was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Further consensus on such points were mentioned by Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 163; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 259; Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building.,” p. 72; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 23; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.,” p. 537-538; Gricius, Algirdas. (2002). “Lithuania and Belarus: Different Paths on the Way Back to the Future.” Ch. 13, in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 323; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. xviii.

enterprises continue[d] to be run essentially like overgrown households in which members have the obligation to work and the right to be rewarded according to their work.”⁹⁴ Patriarchal relations also followed similar traditions and were reinforced during Soviet times. For instance, in Soviet propaganda “the father figure in the collective or the factory is not merely a cultural survival; it is also idealized as a Soviet type.”⁹⁵ Such continuation of traditional cultural leadership styles from the historic village commune is logical considering that most working in the rapidly urbanizing and industrializing cities of Belarus, such as Minsk after 1950, had strong links with rural Belarus, and shared the same collectivist political-cultural worldviews that were historically predominant in Belarusian society. Moreover, unlike Latvia where such Soviet industrialization and development was viewed negatively, due to the fact that these sectors relied on ethnic-Russian/Slavic labour, in Belarus such development was built by ethnic-Belarusians.

Overall, this can be seen as an example of preexisting cultural worldviews driving political practices, as this authoritarian habit of rule by decree had been commonplace through out society during Tsarist times, and was generally accepted, viewed to be the norm, and viewed to be legitimately working by most in Belarusian Soviet society, whose political-cultural worldviews were rooted in the collectivist, communal, paternalistic and authoritarian traditions and habits predominantly found historically in rural Belarus.⁹⁶ Moreover, because high levels of relative industrial growth and socio-economic modernization were occurring under such traditional political-cultural modes of political-economic governance, it only helped reinforce the pre-existing political-cultural worldviews in society that such practices were not only working, but also right.

⁹⁴ Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. p. 57

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58. Additionally, it has been noted that in Belarusian urban-industrial society, there remained a “persistently patrimonial outlook.” Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.,” p. 540. Most Soviet elite also came from predominantly rural backgrounds where such patriarchal and collectivistic worldviews were strongly rooted. As a result, Pipes notes that much of the Soviet “ruling class...consisted largely of peasants,” which “instinctively modeled itself on the village strong man.” Pipes. (1979). *Russia Under the Old Regime.*, p. 141.

⁹⁶ See for example, Vakar who observed that even by the 1960s, traditions and norms favouring rule of law were largely absent in Soviet society, which actually continued to view the historical authoritarian habit of rule by decree as being legitimate, and also ‘right’ in the sense that such modes of law-making and governance were viewed by many to be working. Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society*. p. 77-78. Additionally, Zlotnikov notes that during the period of extensive Soviet development after the 1950s, “a large share of the urban population and elite...preserved feudal patriarchal values,...a negative attitude towards incomes derived from trade and exchange, a weak perception of human rights values and legality, and a tendency to valorize authoritarianism.” Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 124.

Thus, Sovietization, seen with huge amounts of industrial development and modernization of all aspects of the Belarusian political-economy served to reinforce the seemingly Soviet and collectivistic aspects characterizing Belarusians political-cultural worldviews. This is because such Soviet policies came close to the traditional collectivistic, paternalistic, and authoritarian political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians in regards to what was viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘natural,’ and ‘normal’ methods in regards to organizing the political-economic relations of society. Indeed, as will be outlined below, there has been continuity in the historic political-cultural way of life when it came to organizing political-economic relations, as similar trends continue to be apparent in helping to explain Lukashenko’s rule, which continues similar traditions of ruling by decree.

BSSR Ruled by Belarusians: Cultural Cohesion and no Clash of Cultures

Overall, there was no clash of cultures similar to that found in Latvia. In general, there was much less of an issue for ethnic-Belarusians to join the BCP, since the local Communist party was viewed to be a thoroughly organic Belarusian institution, and was not seen as an entity of a culturally alien occupier as was the case with the LCP in Latvia. This was seen in the much greater proportions of ethnic-Belarusian membership in the leadership and membership of the BCP, where Belarusians remained dominant, in contrast to Latvia where ethnic-Latvians resisted by not joining the LCP, and also where the LCP was dominated in its leadership and membership by ethnic-Russian/Slavic people, and by Russified-Latvians. Moreover, as will be discussed below, cultural cohesion can also be seen in that Russian/Soviet authorities in Moscow trusted the local ethnic-Belarusian leadership of the BSSR. This stands in contrast to Latvia where local ethnic-Latvians were generally mistrusted by the central Soviet authorities in Moscow. As will be detailed below, this cultural trust in local Belarusian authorities resulted in the lack of interference of Soviet central authorities in the leadership affairs of the BCP, and also in the administrative decision-making of the BSSR, relative to the interference of Moscow in the everyday administrative affairs of the LSSR.

For most of the post-war years, many of the leaders of the local Belarusian guerilla forces became the dominant the group of leaders of the BSSR during this time.

Today, these leaders such as Kyril T. Mazurov and especially Piotr M. Masherov, who ruled Belarus from 1965 to 1980, are viewed as extremely positive figures in the historical memories of Belarusians, particularly in terms of the view that such leaders were selfless, put Belarusian interests first, and were not tainted by corruption, all skills and traits that were learned during their guerilla years. Such leadership styles and values of selflessness, anti-corruption and strong collectivism were rooted in traditional rural collectivistic and communal worldviews, ways of life and habits, owing largely to the fact that most of these leaders were closely connected themselves to rural Belarus. Indeed, such leaders as Mazurov and Masherov were imbued with the collectivistic, communal and paternalistic traditions found amongst the majority of rural Belarusians from which the leaders of the BCP and BSSR originated.⁹⁷ Certainly, such historical values of anti-corruption fit with the historically collectivistic worldviews of Belarusians that would have traditionally emphasized the health of the overall collective over that of the individual, which would have also been reinforced and strengthened as a result of the experience of guerilla warfare during WWII, where even small amounts of corruption would have had fatal consequences.

Throughout this time, and contrary to assertions that Belarus lacks a sense of strong national identity, evidence from historical descriptions suggest that a robust national identity was not absent in the leadership styles of these Belarusian leaders of the BSSR, which while remaining staunchly Soviet, remained steadfast in the promotion of Belarusian national interests. Indeed, these leaders such as Masherov would regularly use the Belarusian language when publicly addressing crowds of Belarusians, and would regularly promote the virtues of, and pride in Belarusian culture. Moreover, during this time, Belarus adopted its own national republican flag. One can infer the presence of national identity, as several have noted, in that the Belarusian guerilla leaders that formed the core of the BCP and BSSR leadership from 1945 onward exhibited and “adopted

⁹⁷ For consensus on such skills, and leadership attributes that had a collectivist, communal and paternalistic orientation, and also rural roots of BSSR leaders, see Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 13-14. On paternalistic leadership style, see also Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet.” p. 48. While utilizing national identity explanations and largely ignoring cultural variables, Savchenko notes the importance of “communal value orientations” informing the leadership styles of these leaders. Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 97.

tenets of ‘national communism.’”⁹⁸ Moreover, Urban importantly points out that even “Belarusians in the West often regarded such figures as Mazurov and Masherov as bearers, under Soviet circumstances, of Belarusian cultural nationalism.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, even explicit national identity theorists, who argue that contemporary Belarus lacks a strong national identity, also make contradictory arguments that actually point to the presence of a robust national identity and national purpose amongst these leaders. This is seen where Savchenko points to the key importance of these leaders in promoting Belarusian development and state-building, as a result of the “commitment of the Belarusian leaders to the welfare of their republic, their sense of responsibility to the local population...together with the ability to attain their goals.”¹⁰⁰ Certainly, from such claims one can infer the strong presence of national identity within the BSSR, thus undercutting contemporary claims by national identity explanations.

Overall, these former partisan guerilla leaders, such as Mazerov and Masherov, which would dominate BSSR politics through most of the post-1945 era enjoyed a great deal of legitimacy and popularity amongst the Belarusian populace. This was because not only of their status as Belarusian freedom fighters during WWII, but also largely due to their leadership styles which promoted the national republican interests and development of the BSSR, which were generally lacking in corruption, and followed the collectivistic

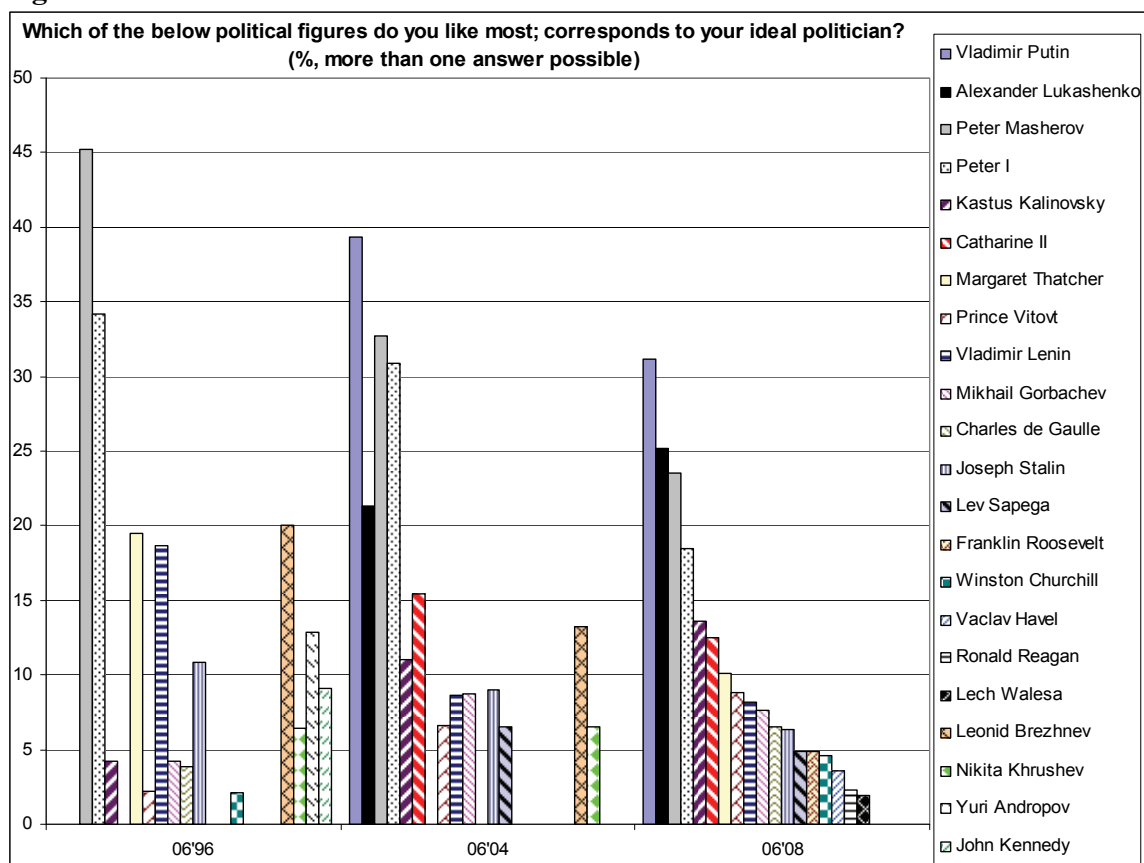
⁹⁸ Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building,” p. 72, 78. Obviously Moscow had a large amount of trust in the Belarusian leadership of the BSSR, signaling a significant degree of cultural kinship between ethnic-Belarusians in Minsk, and ethnic-Russians in Moscow, since the national-communist of Belarus were allowed to stay in power, whereas in many other republics, as seen with Latvia, as well as several Soviet satellites during this period, national communist figures were thoroughly purged. Here, it should be noted that the promotion of Belarusian nationalism and national identity by BSSR authorities was not frowned upon by Moscow. As Vakar points, “special emphasis was laid by the Kremlin upon political symbols of separate Belarusian identity.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 214. Although downplaying such policy’s more as ‘propaganda’ to mask actual Russification, Zaprudnik also acknowledges the promotion of national pride by Soviet authorities, pointing to the example of Belarusian cosmonaut Piotr Klimuk reading the poetry of classical Belarusian poet Jakub Kolas during a 1975 space flight, which infers the presence of Belarusian identity. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 110.

⁹⁹ Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 160-161, no. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 97. Additionally, Marples’ notes that while figures such as Mazurov and Masherov were certainly loyal Soviet leaders, these figures were also strong in “pursu[ing] republican interests,” and [working...to secure advancement for their native republic,” doing so at times that they were not always popular with central authorities in Moscow. Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 19-20, 22, 65. Additionally, others who also point to a contemporary lack of Belarusian national identity, also point out that these leaders “were able to promote a...version of Belarusian national identity,” which “fram[ed] national identity in terms not antagonistic to Moscow,” and which “was no small achievement.” Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus,” p. 284. See also footnote no. 101 below on the popularity of such leaders.

and communal traditions that were historically rooted amongst Belarusians. Thus, in the predominant historical memories shared by Belarusians today, many view such figures as Masherov and Mazerov as important Belarusian statesmen, and key in promoting Belarusian culture, national republican interest, and the political-economic development and state-building of Belarus. Such positive historical memories and popular sentiment towards these leaders of the BSSR can be inferred from the results of contemporary public opinion polls that ask people to rate their ideal political leader from a choice of contemporary and historical figures, where large numbers of Belarusian respondents picked Peter Masherov as their choice for ideal political leader (see Figure 6.1 below).¹⁰¹

Figure 6.1



Source: (IISEPS 2008b).

¹⁰¹ For additional consensus that these leaders were popular with the Belarusian people, see Mihalisko who notes that such popularity resulted from the fact that Masherov “radiated concerns about ordinary citizens,” and was outspoken against corruption found at the all-union level under Brezhnev. Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus,” p. 237. For similar consensus, see Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*, p. 22; Marples. (2003). “History and Politics in post-Soviet Belarus,” p. 22-25; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe,” p. 539; Economist. (1992). “Bewildered.” *The Economist*, January 25, 46-48.

Additionally, as will be discussed in chapter 7 below, many of the leadership traditions and styles exhibited by the former guerilla leaders of the BCP and BSSR, were similar to leadership values promoted in the rhetoric and style of current Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko. Indeed, the fact that Lukashenko, has successfully promoted such themes in his political struggles infers that large numbers of Belarusians have positive historical memories and worldviews favouring the collectivistic, communal, and authoritarian leadership styles of the former partisan guerilla leaders that lead the BSSR through most of the post-1945 period. This stands in contrast to the predominant historical memories of ethnic-Latvians, where the LCP leaders of the LSSR would have been viewed as Soviet puppets, and where no contemporary Latvian politician would even dream of publically emulating or praising former Soviet leaders in order to gain public support.

In general, Belarusians had different viewpoints about the Soviet period than Latvians. Thus, in the predominant historical memories of Belarusian political-culture, Belarus was an original founding member of the Soviet Union, Soviet political-economic development and modernization was generally viewed as positive and progressive, and there was the common viewpoint that the BSSR enjoyed some semblance of real and equal sovereignty under Soviet rule. As will be discussed below, this view derives from the fact that Belarus enjoyed a much more privileged position vis-à-vis Russia, compared to other Soviet republics, which can be seen in that Belarusian decision-makers tended to have more decision-making autonomy and were given more leeway within the republic's administrative and political-economic affairs.

Overall, Moscow trusted the local Belarusian leadership of the BCP and BSSR and correctly perceived the stronger pro-Soviet/Russian sentiments of the Belarusian elite and general public, and thus viewed Belarusians to be loyal Soviet citizens. Indeed, there was also less interference by Moscow into the local administrative affairs of the BSSR, relative to that found in the LSSR. Such trust was seen with the BCP enjoying far greater autonomy in its decision making than its counterparts in the LCP. Indeed, Belarusians had in large numbers played a dominant role in administering the Soviet political-economic apparatus in the BSSR. Certainly, the fact that the Soviet administrative apparatus was Belarusian and the fact that a mixture of Russian and Belarusian was used

interchangeably as the primary language of official working communication in the BSSR would have only reinforced Belarusians views that the Soviet regime and its policies were culturally Belarusian. Moreover, even though many Belarusian began to use Russian in their primary everyday communications, Belarusians did not see this as much of a problem as Latvians, because Belarusians viewed Russians as their cultural brethren, as opposed to Latvians who viewed Russian domination as culturally alien.

Moscow's trust of Belarusians was also witnessed in the fact that Belarus retained greater institutional decision-making autonomy from Moscow, during its existence as the BSSR, than did Latvia and even Ukraine. This can be seen from evidence that shows that Belarusian decision-makers tended to have more decision-making autonomy and were given more leeway within the republic's administrative and political-economic affairs, which was seen in the fact that the BSSR was designated as its own administrative district, and had much of its own national economic infrastructure put into place. As Zaprudnik and Urban point out, "within the framework of the Soviet order, the BSSR had been since the mid-sixties, if not earlier, a self-governing republic."¹⁰² This stands in contrast to other Soviet republics that were more likely to be divided regionally, or formed parts of a larger regional political-economic unit, such as the Baltic States. Moreover, this is also helpful for illustrating how both elites and those in Belarusian society would have come to see the BSSR as authentically Belarusian and not as a culturally alien entity, since the governance and administrative decision-making structures were dominated by Belarusians.

Not only did this close trust in Belarusians loyalty result in more local governing autonomy for the republican leaders of the BSSR, but it also had tangible results in other areas. For example, Moscow's trust regarding the loyalty of average Belarusians, can be inferred from the fact that it was Belarusians that were largely the only ethnic group other than ethnic-Russians that were allowed to settle in large numbers in the Kaliningrad

¹⁰² Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 285. See also, Urban. (1989). *An Algebra if Soviet Power.*, p. 50-57, 60, 140. Similar observations were mentioned by one elite who pointed out this administrative autonomy of the BSSR. Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For consensus on self-governing characteristics of BSSR relative to other republics, see Hill, Ronald J. (2005). "Post-Soviet Belarus: In Search of Direction." Ch. 1. In *Postcommunist Belarus*, eds. S. White, E. Korosteleva, and J. Löwenhardt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., p. 2.

region (formerly German East Prussia and Königsberg) after the native ethnic-German populace was ethnically cleansed after 1947.¹⁰³

Another key sign of this trust was in both defence matters and foreign affairs. In defence matters, Belarus also enjoyed a more trusted position, and were allowed to serve in key security positions. Moreover, Belarus was the only Republic in the USSR, which had its own Belarusian military structure integrated within the borders of the BSSR. This meant that the military region of the BSSR got its own Belarusian Army, where ethnic-Belarusian military units in the Soviet armed forces were privileged to be allowed to serve on their home soil of Belarusian territory, something that would have been unheard in Latvia. In contrast, ethnic-Latvians very rarely were allowed to serve as officers in the Soviet military, and recruits were often shipped off to serve in Soviet units in the far reaches of the Soviet empire. Additionally in foreign affairs Belarus was the only other Soviet republic other than Ukraine to be given a seat in the UN General Assembly, and thus had its own foreign ministry. Here it should be noted that accounts of Moscow's insistence that Belarus be granted a seat on the UN General Assembly, actually infer significant amounts of Belarusian nationalism at play. As Zaprudnik points out, "Stalin's insistence on the UN seats for these republics seems to have had more to do with placating...Belarusian nationalism," since the decision to grant membership for Belarus in the UN "certainly flattered the national ego of the Belarusians, who saw some of their national values and prestige rehabilitated."¹⁰⁴ Indeed, this quote infers that a strong national identity was present, and in doing so serves to counter contemporary claims that argue that Belarus historically lacks a robust national identity.

Overall, this experience was important in reinforcing in Belarusians historical memories the idea that the BSSR was important for state-building. Also, this experience at the UN and in foreign relations was important because it meant that the BSSR had many institutions already in place. While it is true that the BSSR always towed the Soviet line at the UN, and also did not have any significant diplomatic representation established with non-Communist states, it is nevertheless important that such institutional structures

¹⁰³ On above points see for example, Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁴ Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 103, 110. On reinforcing pride and national identification, see also Taagepera. (1973). "Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.," p. 78-79. On foreign affairs and defence matters see also footnote no. 102 above.

were created because this gave some semblance of real statehood, and thus meant Belarus was not merely starting from scratch in 1991.

Lack of anti-Soviet Dissidence in Belarus

In general, there was a lack of anti-Soviet resistance in Belarus throughout the period from 1945 to 1991, compared to Latvia, which as chapter 4 illustrated had one of the biggest documented cases of resistance to Soviet rule in all the Soviet republics. For example, compared to Latvia, Belarusians were much more willing to voice their support by joining the BCP. First, this was seen in high levels of adult membership in the BCP and other Communist bodies, where in 1945 membership in the BCP amounted to 19,787, rising to 520,283 by 1978, and close to 700,000 by 1989, with Belarusians making up 77.2% of the party.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, there was also higher relative levels of Belarusian youths actively participating in Communist youth organizations such as the Komsomol and Red Pioneers.¹⁰⁶ Most importantly, as the above numbers indicate, Belarusians were an overwhelming majority when it came to the politics and administration of the BSSR. Indeed, as the above sections detailing the attributes of the post-1945 leadership of the BSSR indicate, the leadership of the BSSR was dominated by local Belarusians, which stands in contrast to Latvia, where the Communist leadership of the LSSR was dominated by ethnic-Russians/Slavs and Russified Latvians.

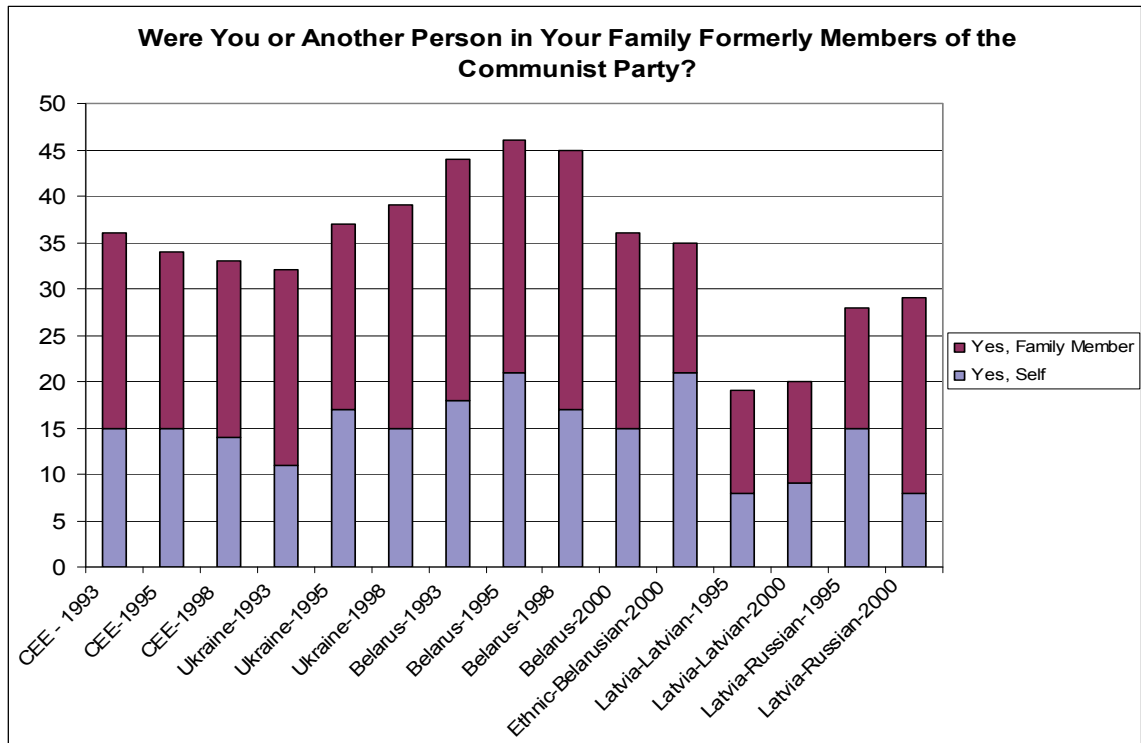
Additionally, evidence of such higher willingness on the part of Belarusians to join the BCP and participate in its activities, relative to the unwillingness of Latvians, can be found in recent polls conducted in the post-1991 period, asking Belarusian, Latvians and other residents of post-Communist countries whether they or their family members had been members of the Communist party. Here Belarusians polled substantially higher in yes responses than ethnic-Latvians, and also higher than the average responses found

¹⁰⁵ Also, rural membership in the BCP far outpaced urban membership, as urban members amounted to only 11.6% of the party in 1945, climbing to only 57.1% by 1978. Urban. (1989). *An Algebra of Soviet Power.*, p. 15. For 1989 numbers, see Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 137. These numbers stand in stark contrast to Latvia, where the LCP was strongest in urban areas, with the highest proportions being made up of non-Latvians. For acknowledgement of significantly higher rates of resistance in Latvia than in Belarus and other Soviet republics, see Šilde. (1972). *Resistance Movement in Latvia.*, p. 55; Taagepera. (1973). "Dissimilarities between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.," p. 81.

¹⁰⁶ For high numbers in BCP, other Communist bodies, and Communist youth organizations in Belarus, see Vakar who notes that in 1952 the Komsomol numbered 511,090, and Red Pioneers numbered 800,000, which amounted to around 50% of the school-aged Belarusian youth. Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 213.

in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (see Figure 6.2 below). Overall, the BCP was not viewed by ethnic-Belarusians to be culturally alien.

Figure 6.2



Source(s): 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 77). 1995: (Rose 1995: 60; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 88). 1998: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 67-68). 2000: (Rose 2000: 62; White & Rose 2001: 56).

Some might be prone to describe activity in the BCP as being purely rationalist and for the personal material benefits that such membership offered. However, while the prospects of materially benefiting were certainly real, it should be pointed out that more was at play than simply rationalist motive. This is illustrated by the fact that such benefits would have also been present to Latvians, which chose resistance in the form of willingly not joining the LCP or participating in LCP sponsored groups and activities. Indeed, the Belarusians large open participation in the BCP helps to infer that political-cultural worldviews were at play which viewed the BCP as legitimately Belarusian.

Here, the evolution and reinforcement of political-cultural worldviews can also be seen to be at play because the occurrence of material benefits that were being experienced with the significant developmental growth and modernization under the BSSR, would have only served to foster the development of shared historical memories that would have

served to further reinforce Belarusians political-cultural worldviews favouring such collectivists, statist, paternalistic and authoritarian methods of political-economic development. Such political-cultural worldviews can be inferred from the leadership styles of much of the prominent post-1945 leadership of the BCP and BSSR, as noted above, which were staunchly pro-Soviet, collectivist, authoritarian, critics of corruption and material excess, and also portrayed as strong Belarusian patriots. Furthermore, when looking at the period of glasnost and perestroika, as well as the contemporary period after 1991, such pro-Soviet, collectivistic, statist, and authoritarian worldviews and habits can be inferred from the fact that for many Belarusian political elites that had roots in the former BCP, any radical ideas of market transformation were largely unthinkable, as the former policy ideas were not de-legitimized.

Additionally, it is also important to note that pro-Communist channels of political activism in the BSSR not only served to further help reinforce predominant political-cultural worldviews and habits in Belarusian that de-emphasized individual freedoms and action, but also continued to strongly build on and reinforce traditional preexisting attitudes and habits promoting passivity as well as the collective wellbeing of society. Thus, if one wanted to be politically and socially active in the BSSR, such endeavors were successfully channeled by the BCP into encouraging individuals to become members of the local BCP, Communist youth organizations such as the Komsomol and Red Pioneers, or by working in other supporting capacities, such as being a trade union official. For those wishing to stay outside the political realm, traditional values and habits of passivity were reinforced via the continued promotion and emphasis on patriotism in the BSSR, with an emphasis on promoting the overall collective wellbeing and welfare of society, as well as the absolutist authority of the BCP. This experience helped reinforce attitudes and habits of passivity which came to life in the predominant attitude that it was best to mind ones own work, to toil, and work diligently, rather than being openly individualist, advocating for reform or questioning authority. Moreover, Belarusian families took an active role in helping to reinforce these traditional values emphasizing the wellbeing of the collective over that of the individual, as well as habits of passivity, by socialization future generations that such forms were the best, right, and normal ways

to behave and act politically.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, as mentioned above this passivity had its roots in the Orthodox religious teachings that placed the individual at the whim of the collective.

Such continued patterns reinforcing passivity and adherence to values and habits promoting the overall wellbeing of the collective at the expense of the individual, which were a common feature of the Belarusian political-cultural way of life from pre-Soviet times, and throughout the BSSR, would come to the fore again in the predominant worldviews and habits of Belarusians during the Gorbachev era, and during the period after 1991. Indeed, a large reason for this lack of protest and continued passivity was that the worldviews of most Belarusian elites and members of society preferred the Soviet political-economic system, and did not see it as broken, and thus viewed this system as ‘right’ and ‘normal.’

Overall, Belarusians had far greater sentimental and nostalgic historical memories about the Soviet past. In addition to having pre-Soviet traditions of collective farming under the governance of the village commune, Belarusians also had the experience and memories of continuing such traditions under the Soviet collective farm system. Because of such collectivist worldviews, traditions, and habits, the Belarusians largely without little deliberation, soaked up the collective mentality that characterized what could be described as being a ‘good Soviet person,’ something which was staunchly resisted by ethnic-Latvians. Additionally, as mentioned above, Sovietization served to reinforce the historically collectivistic traditions characterizing Belarusians political-cultural worldviews. This is because Soviet policies came close to the traditional collectivistic political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians in regards to what was viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ and ‘natural,’ methods for organizing the political-economic relations of society.

¹⁰⁷ Several observations on historic pattern and habits of passivity amongst members of Belarusian society was mentioned by several Belarusian elites. As one Belarusian elite observed, “there is not really a culture of activism amongst Belarusians.” Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010). Passivity was also noted by, Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). A general trend of passivity is noted and bemoaned by Zaprudnik, who notes that Belarusians also had a “low level of political culture.” Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 145. However, while Belarusian might not have had the most liberal ‘civic-cultural’ form of political-culture, this does not mean that they had a “low level of political-culture,” but merely that they had a different political-culture, and one that did not fit the normative preferences of Zaprudnik. Moreover, it is not simply enough to blame such passivity on the depredations inflicted by Stalin and the Soviets, or as a result of being victims of geo-political circumstances out of their control (p. 155). This is because Latvia also faced similar geo-political concerns, and equally faced terror inflicted under Soviet rule.

In terms of how this plays out in debates over identity, Belarusian identity was ‘Soviet’ in the sense that the predominant worldviews and historical memories of Belarusian political-culture identified most prominently with statehood under the BSSR. Many commentators weighing in on the national identity debate often ignored or were reluctant to give any acknowledgement to the positive affirmations that many Belarusians held towards the BSSR, or simply played down and negated any positive feelings that Belarusians held for BSSR. However, in doing so most National Identity explanations negate and most commonly ignore the fact that Belarusians shared positive worldviews toward the BSSR actually held some factual weight, due to the fact that the BSSR enjoyed some semblance of real and equal sovereignty under Soviet rule, which was seen in Belarus having its own relative control over its political-economic administrative affairs, and also symbolically in foreign affairs as a member of the UN general assembly, which as noted above, Belarusians largely viewed with high amounts of national pride. Thus, for most Belarusians the BSSR was not just a mere façade, but was viewed in the historical memories of Belarusians as being real progress. Indeed, for most Belarusians this was the only tangible memory of real Belarusian statehood and national state-building which served as a positive historical reference point in their political-cultural worldviews and historical memories that people could remember and identify because they had lived it.¹⁰⁸

Overall, most Belarusians viewed the progress of the BSSR under Soviet industrialization and modernization as positive, and thus saw no need to resist. Moreover, as mentioned above, most viewed Soviet industrialization and modernization of the BSSR positively and viewed the BSSR as real statehood. Indeed, because the Soviet Union was not viewed as being culturally alien, and Soviet political-economic practices adhered to Belarusians historically preexisting collectivistic worldviews of what was viewed as the best and right form of policy methods, resistance to Soviet authorities was for large segments of Belarusian population simply unthinkable. As a result, Soviet

¹⁰⁸ High levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia about development under the BSSR, found in the historical memories of Belarusians was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010); Nostalgia for the Soviet era was also mentioned by a Latvian elite knowledgeable about the politics of Belarus. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010)

industrial development and modernization, as well as state-building under the BSSR were generally viewed positively by Belarusians, whom thus saw no need to resist Soviet rule. Indeed, these positive historical memories seen with high levels of pride and patriotism towards the BSSR would play a prominent role reinforcing the collectively oriented political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians, which would form a key component of a robust Belarusian national identity which was often ignored or discounted by national identity scholars.¹⁰⁹

1980s: Glasnost and Perestroika

As mentioned above, before the 1980s there was very little anti-Soviet dissidence in Belarus. This continued during glasnost and perestroika, where Belarusian dissidence was far less pronounced than in Latvia. Overall, Belarusians took a far different view of these events than Latvians, who always viewed the Soviet system as culturally alien and thus wanted out of the USSR. Moreover, it was not simply that Belarusian elite and society were overly Russified and lacked a coherent national identity.¹¹⁰ Instead, Belarusians viewed the Soviet system was working. As a result, there was a general view predominantly held within Belarusian society and its elites that reform was unnecessary. Indeed, in the opinion of most elites and members of society, the Soviet system of political-economic development in the BSSR was not broken. Thus, for most Belarusians the language of reform and liberalization promoted in glasnost and perestroika did not jive with their historic political-cultural worldviews about how the political-economy should operate.

¹⁰⁹ On examples inferring presence of robust Belarusian national identity, seen with pride and patriotism, and identification with the BSSR, see footnotes no. 99-101 above, and also Vakar who notes that “the existence of formal attributes of statehood, have strengthened the feeling of a separate Belarusian identity.” Vakar. (1956). *Belorussia.*, p. 219. Such a quote shows the importance of the BSSR in linking national identity to the peoples worldviews, and also why many contemporary national identity explanations, and Belarusian ‘nationalists’ that discount or disparage the role of the BSSR get the message wrong, since most Belarusians identify with the BSSR. For similar consensus, see also Guthier. (1977b). “The Belorussians.” p. 282; Taagepera. (1973). “Dissimilarities Between the Northwestern Soviet Republics.” p. 76-79; Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 163. Even those advocating the idea of a lack of Belarusian national identity also point grudgingly to examples of certain high levels of a “sense of national pride” existent in the BSSR. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 110. Similarly, Silitski argues that there was a strong sense of “‘Soviet Belarusian’ patriotism” within the BSSR evident during this time. Nevertheless like many other commentators that privilege only the Westernized, anti-Russian narrative of Belarusian ‘national identity,’ Silitski only goes so far to call this a second-class “surrogate national identity.” Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet.” p. 47-48. See also Conquest. (1967). *Soviet Nationalities Policy.*, p. 89-91.

¹¹⁰ For such arguments, see Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 124, 137, 145.

Overall, because the system of Soviet industrial development and modernization under the BSSR was viewed to be working so well, reform was simply out of the question and unthinkable in the worldviews of most Belarusians at the time. Indeed, grass-roots support for large-scale change was generally absent in the mass public. Moreover, many of the economic problems now plaguing the Soviet economy only began to be felt by Belarusians by the late-1980s, and thus coincided with Gorbachev's reforms of glasnost and perestroika and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union. As a result, Gorbachev's restructuring, and the notions of reforms were viewed in a highly negative light by both Belarusian elites and society. Indeed, not only were Gorbachev's reforms viewed as unnecessary, but the fact that such downturn corresponded with the simultaneous implementation of glasnost and perestroika, and because Belarusians historical memories contrasted these hard times with the previous economic growth in the BSSR under the leadership of Masherov, this resulted in perestroika, glasnost, and liberalization more generally, becoming "dirty words for many Belarusians."¹¹¹ Additionally, one can infer such views from public opinion polls where most Belarusians do not rank Gorbachev as strong leader relative to leaders like Masherov and Lukashenko (see Figure 6.1 above). Moreover, in other polls, responses by far the largest number of Belarusian respondents, 44.9% of those polled placed primary blame for the breakup of the USSR on Gorbachev and his reform initiatives during perestroika.¹¹² In general, the worldviews of Belarusian elites and most of society viewed the system of political-economic organization to be working in the BSSR, and thus saw little need for change.

During this time, and similar to Latvia, there was also concerns about the environment in Belarus, specifically relating to the outcomes of the Chernobyl disaster,

¹¹¹ Marples. (2004). "The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus.," p. 33. Sahm also notes that "'stab-in-the-back' myth" developed as the a result of the perceived correlation of Gorbachev's reforms and downturn in the BSSR during the early 1990s. Sahm. (1999). "Political Culture and National Symbols.," p. 651. For similar consensus on negative views towards perestroika and glasnost and lack of grass-roots support for change, see Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 239-240; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 285-286; Urban. (1989). *An Algebra if Soviet Power.*, p. 70-73, 98-135; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 116, 179. A general lack of support for perestroika, glasnost and reform can also be inferred from far the fewer evident cases of reaction and protest, seen with the lack of documents and chronological references to such activities, relative to the high levels in Latvia and the Baltic States. See documents for Latvian and combined Baltic examples of activism during the Gorbachev era (p. 111-145 and 199-214), and smaller number of documents for Belarus (p. 247-268). In Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics*. Additionally, in the cases of protest, overall frequency and numbers participating per event in Belarus was substantially lower than the high numbers in Latvia.

¹¹² IISEPS. (2007). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (January). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet07-1.html>.

which led more people to favour autonomy from central decision-making in Moscow and more local control. No doubt, issues such as the Chernobyl disaster, and the subsequent calls for greater autonomy were important in signifying that a national identity did exist in Belarus, since these events were able to stir up large amounts of sentiment favouring more local policy autonomy from Moscow amongst large segments of the Belarusian population. Indeed, the formation of Belarusian Popular Front, founded at a congress in Vilnius, Lithuania in June 1989, was certainly spurred on by the revelation of Stalinist crimes committed against Belarusians at the forest of Kurapaty, as well as by widespread concerns about the Chernobyl disaster. Moreover, the BPF and its leader's, Zyanon Paznyak's promotion of public knowledge of crimes committed by Soviet authorities under the rule of Stalin, such as the massacre of Belarusians at the forest of Karapaty were also important in promoting anti-Moscow sentiments, and in signifying the presence of a pre-existing Belarusian national identity.¹¹³

However, the BPF never was able to gain the wide popular appeal enjoyed by the Latvian Popular Front. Thus, while promoting increased preferences of favouring more policy autonomy for Minsk from Moscow, the revelation of crimes such as those at Karapaty and environmental disasters like Chernobyl were unable to discredit the overall policies of Soviet industrial development and modernization, as Belarusian political-cultural worldviews continued to remain largely collectivistic in orientation. Additionally, in regards to mass protest, it should be noted that while the November 1, 1988 demonstration commemorating Kurapaty was able to attract large numbers in the tens of thousands in Minsk, most of the mass demonstrations during this time were largely disconnected from the BPF, and in most cases took on motives protesting reforms. This was seen with one of the largest protests conducted during this time in Minsk, which lasted from April 4 until April 10, 1991, where tens of thousands of workers protested over price increases.¹¹⁴ Thus, while Latvians were protesting in mass numbers to tear down the Soviet system in favour of total reforms, Belarusians, when

¹¹³ For documentary evidence, see Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 215, 247-250, 252-253, 593. On such issues being important in growth of the BPF, and generally more autonomist sentiment, see Mihalisko. (1991). "The Popular Movement in Belorussia and Baltic Influences.," p. 132; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 288.

¹¹⁴ See Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 641. See also footnotes no. 111 and 112 above on lack of support for reform, and Economist. (1992). "Bewildered.," p. 46-48.

they did engage in mass political activism, were essentially protesting to maintain continued Soviet policy mechanisms such as continued price controls.

As mentioned above, while more local autonomy and control were viewed as a positive, preferences for the collectivized regime of political-economic organization were not discredited, due to the fact that Belarusians continued to view the general outcomes of Soviet industrial development and modernization to be overwhelmingly positive. Thus, in contrast to Latvia where there was a rejection of Soviet industrialization, in Belarus there was not a rejection of Soviet industrial development, as this was not seen as a threat to Belarusians cultural well-being, but as a boon for national development. As a result, while some reform might have been viewed as positive, such as giving the local Soviet authorities of the BSSR more de-centralized policy autonomy, Belarusians did not desire to ‘throw the baby out with the bath water,’ and thus did not envision or desire reforms that would lead to the dismantling of the Soviet political-economic system.¹¹⁵

Overall, while the BPF certainly had some popular following, it never enjoyed the widespread grass-roots support and mass popular appeal enjoyed by Latvian anti-Soviet dissident groups, such as the LPF. Thus, while much of the anti-Soviet views and calls for reforms resonated with the general public in Latvia that loathed the Soviet system, this was not the case in Belarus. This was seen in the fact that the BPF failed to gain a majority of seats to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR during the local elections of 1990, in contrast to Latvia where pro-LPF political forces gained a majority of seats in the Latvian Supreme Soviet (Saiema). For example, Communist political forces in Belarus dominated these elections gaining around 85% of the seats in the Belarusian Supreme Soviet with the BPF only gaining 7.5% of the seats.¹¹⁶ Moreover, far fewer Belarusian intellectuals came out in open support of the BPF, as most Belarusian intelligentsia remained

¹¹⁵ For documentary evidence of elite’s desire for more autonomy, with simultaneous lack of support for perestroika, glasnost and reform, see “Report by First Secretary of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, Yefrim Ye. Sokulov [25 March 1987],” which while talking about the need to preserve and strengthen the Belarusian language, thus inferring the presence of national identity, nevertheless for the most part gives a contrary message to that which was coming from Latvian elites, seen with the Belarusians heaping huge praise and high nostalgia on the Soviet system and the developmental achievements that were made in Belarus up to that time. In Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 250-251. See also, “Declaration on State Sovereignty of the BSSR Supreme Soviet – 27 July 1990,” which while making calls for increased Belarusian autonomy, continued to put many aspects in traditional Soviet platitudes that contained a noticeable aura of collectivism (p. 265-286, 633).

¹¹⁶ Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 239; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 145. See also footnote no. 4 in chapter 7 below for consensus on lack of grass-roots orientation and failure to gain mass popular appeal.

relatively pro-Soviet in their worldviews. Indeed, if one contrasts the situation in Belarus to Latvia where the majority of ethnic-Latvian intelligentsia began to promote an increasingly anti-Soviet reinterpretation of history and calls for reform, most Belarusian intelligentsia continued to adhere to the pro-Soviet line of history.¹¹⁷ Thus, groups like the BPF never gained the mass popular appeal that was enjoyed by the LPF in Latvia.

One can infer lack of support for the BPF in Belarus relative to the mass public support for the LPF in Latvia, as well as generally less overall anti-Soviet dissidence in Belarus relative to Latvia, by examining polls gauging public participation in such dissident activity. Similar to the LPF and other prominent Latvian dissident groups, the BPF would also use petitions to voice dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime. However, in contrast to high amounts of participation in signing petitions found amongst large numbers of ethnic-Latvians, a noticeably small number of Belarusians participated in signing anti-Soviet petitions during the same time period. As polls conducted in 1990 illustrate, Belarusians responded that they had signed petitions in far fewer numbers than ethnic-Latvians during the same time period. For example, in a World Values Survey conducted in 1990, only 27.0% of Belarusians respondents said that they had signed a petition, which was much lower than the high of 83.1% of Protestant ethnic-Latvian respondents and 74.20% of Roman Catholic ethnic-Latvian respondents that said they had signed a petition during the same time period before the breakup of the Soviet Union (see Figure A.11 in the Appendix).

Similar numbers inferring a cultural divide in worldviews between Belarusians and ethnic-Latvians can also be seen in polling numbers showing that ethnic-Latvians outnumbered Belarusians in participating in political protests during this same time period. For example, in a World Values Survey conducted in 1990, only 18.1% of Belarusian respondents said they had participated in lawful public demonstrations, which was much lower compared to the high of 50.0% of Protestant ethnic-Latvian respondents and 39.1% of Roman Catholic ethnic-Latvian respondents that said they had participated in lawful demonstrations during this same period before the breakup of the Soviet Union

¹¹⁷ That most intelligentsia remained pro-Soviet and committed to Marxian dogmas was noted by one Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). That intelligentsia remained predominantly pro-Soviet, is also confirmed and lamented by Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 146; Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 216; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 238.

(see Figure A.12 in the Appendix). Furthermore, the fact that significant numbers of Latvians signed such polls and participated in protests organized by prominent Latvian dissident groups such as the LPF and others mentioned above illustrates that large numbers of Latvians agreed with the goals of these anti-Soviet groups, while the small number of Belarusians participating in such activities infers that they did not agree.

Indeed, the fact that the BPF's message did not resonate with the mass public can be inferred from the BPF's relative lack of success in the local elections to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR relative to that of pro-LPF political forces in Latvia which gained a majority of seats controlling the Latvian Supreme Soviet. As will be discussed in chapter 7, in the sections detailing the failure of the BPF to gain mass popular appeal after 1991, most of the pro-Western and anti-Soviet/Russian rhetoric promoted by the BPF did not resonate with the broad masses of Belarusian society and elites. For example, the BPF's negative portrayal of the achievements of the BSSR, promotion of Belarusian historical roots being connected to the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian, and especially the BPF's often radical anti-Russian rhetoric did not resonate with the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by most Belarusians. As will be shown in chapter 7, most Belarusians had little historical memory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, and most Belarusians also found the BPF's anti-Russian views and calls for strict Belarusianization as offensive and radical.

Overall, the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by large segments of Belarusian elites and society did not view the political-economic development and state-building under the BSSR as negative, and thus most Belarusians at the time saw little need to extensively reform the Soviet political-economic apparatus. This is illustrated by the fact that 83% of Belarusians voted in a referendum in March 1991, to maintain the USSR, albeit within a union that stipulated more 'autonomy' for the national republics.¹¹⁸ This stands in contrast to low results in Latvia, where ethnic-Latvians outright rejected such options, in favour instead of outright sovereignty.

While some national identity explanations would point to the lack of a popular movement and widespread support for independence as being a lack of national identity, from a political-cultural standpoint, independence and reform were not seen as necessary.

¹¹⁸ Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 242.

As mentioned above, this is because Belarusian political-cultural worldviews did not view the Soviet system as culturally alien nor as broken. From such a political-cultural standpoint, it is not enough to simply argue that Belarus simply had a lack of national identity to explain such behavior. Instead, such pro-Soviet orientations of Belarusians had more to do with the fact that the Soviet system was viewed as legitimate in the worldviews of Belarusian political-cultural, in contrast to the political-cultural worldviews shared predominantly by ethnic-Latvians which had viewed the Soviet system as culturally alien and illegitimate from the outset of the Soviet/Russian occupation. This was seen in the clash of cultural worldviews and ways of life between ethnic-Latvians and the Soviet/Russian authorities, which is contrasted with the general cultural cohesion in Belarus where there was far greater widespread societal consensus on the legitimacy of Soviet rule.

Therefore, in the case of Belarus, when the Soviet Union did collapse, this did not signal that command-style collectivist policy ideas were discredited, since key aspects of Soviet Communism and the Communist ideology were rooted in Belarus's historic political-culture worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, which included attitudes favoring collectivism, communal ownership of property, and strong statist rule. As a result, most Belarusians viewed the Soviet era with nostalgia, and as a time of great advancement. Thus, after the Cold War ended, similar patterns persisted in Belarus, and just as Moscow could not forcefully create a 'new soviet man' in Latvia, a 'new liberal individual' with a capitalist spirit could not be instantaneously created in Belarus after 1991.

With the historic evolutionary pattern of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories being successfully mapped out out above, this will facilitate an understanding into how such historic political-cultural worldviews were transmitted into policy continuity during the contemporary period after 1991. This measurement of Belarusian contemporary political-cultural worldviews will be conducted next in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7: POST-1991 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL-CULTURE IN BELARUS

From the outset of gaining independence in 1991, Belarus has taken a completely divergent path from the comprehensive liberal-market transformation that was carried out in Latvia. Overall, Belarus has followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to political-economic affairs, which could be described as being anti-liberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian in orientation, where the state controls almost all the economy and reforms have been largely nonexistent. In terms of monetary policy, the central bank in Belarus has been repeatedly subject to intense political interference, where political authorities placed far less emphasis on anti-inflationary monetarist policies, such as limiting the supply of money, which has resulted in problems of higher inflation and far-less currency stability relative to Latvia. A liberalized private commercial banking sector is also non-existent, as banks are largely owned and controlled by the state. Structural reforms have also largely been absent, which can be seen with the continued extensive state control over agricultural land and real-estate, and the general lack of privatization of small, medium and large enterprises. Additionally, markets and competition are not prioritized, and the state continues to play a strong role in most political-economic matters, in the form of maintaining extensive regulations, price controls, subsidization of industry, high taxes, and arbitrary decisions that flout the rule of law. Finally, at the international level, Belarus has taken an anti-liberal approach in regards to free trade and FDI, as Belarusian authorities continue to uphold significant barriers to trade and foreign investment. As a result, there has been little transformation from a state controlled command economy in Belarus, and political-economic practices have continued to remain stuck in Soviet-era statist methods, which tend to be illiberal, authoritarian, arbitrary, and lacking in respect of the rule of law. These command and control methods of state centralization of the political-economy have been increasingly strengthened since 1994, under President Alexander Lukashenko.

Belarus's lack of comprehensive liberal market reforms was attributable to an unwillingness amongst both Belarusian elites and in society continuing to favour the maintenance of collectivistic and highly statist command-style management and control over virtually all segments of political-economic activity in Belarus. Overall, Belarus's lack of reform is attributable to collectivist political-cultural worldviews that are found

historically in Belarus, which favor collective/communal interests, lack traditions of private property, prefer a strong role for the state in the economy, exhibit higher political passivity and have paternalistic tendencies of favouring a strong leader.

In the predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by Belarusians, the former Soviet command system of political-economic management of the BSSR was not viewed to be broken, and thus there was little preference for comprehensive market transformation, nor desire to radically de-Sovietize or move away from Russia. Belarusians also felt no expediency to move towards Western Europe, and increasingly expressed desires to maintain close ties towards Russia, not because they lacked a national identity, but because of the predominant feeling that a close orientation with Russia was right and natural due to Belarus's close cultural heritage shared with Russia. Unlike Latvians, Belarusians, both elites and the large mass of society believed that the Soviet-era command policies were largely a success, which were largely in tune with Belarusians political-cultural worldviews and not viewed as culturally alien nor imposed by force as was the case in Latvia. As a result, explicitly liberal political-cultural ideas and values similar to Latvian's faith in the market and cult of private property were largely absent from the political-cultural mix in Belarus. Instead, Belarusians historically collectivistic, communal, statist and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews predominated and were reinforced by the positively nostalgic historical memories that Belarusians held of political-economic life under the BSSR. Indeed, Lukashenko has been able to consolidate and legitimize his rule by playing on these predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories widely shared by both Belarusian elites and society alike.

Post-1991 National Identity Critiques: BPF's Failure, Language, and Non-Reform

During the period from 1991-1994, there was the continued failure of the BPF to gain mass popular appeal, a persistent lack of reform, continued strong pro-Soviet/Russian sentiments, and the eventual rise of Aleksander Lukashenko. Many national identity explanations point to the lack of reform after 1991, the rise of Lukashenko and his collectivistic, neo-Soviet and pro-Russian policy orientation, as well as the failure of the BPF as resulting from a lack of national identity in Belarus. Overall,

methodological problems arise as a result of the normative bias in terms of how national identity is categorized (i.e. purposive policy behavior that is oriented towards Western Europe and away from Russia), and how this definition is subsequently measured in the methods. Such impressions are revealed if one looks at the methodological statement for indicating the presence of a strong national identity, namely that “if all political parties share the foreign policy goals of the nationalists, it is a reliable indicator that a consensual, shared national identity frames policy debate and influences the preference of the government.”¹ In fact, if one were to drop the emphasis on the “national” from the above statement, considering the polling data that will be illustrated below, and lack of support for political groups labeled as ‘nationalists,’ it is possible to apply this argument to Belarus. This is because evidence even provided by national identity scholars points to a great deal of policy consensus at the elite level. As Abdelal points out, “in contrast to the [‘nationalist’] BPF’s pro-European and anti-Russian foreign policy stance, all major Belarusian political parties emphasized in their platforms that they did not oppose close economic integration and political cooperation with Russia.”²

Of critical importance is the fact that most Belarusians have never offered much support for the political groups such as the BPF, which have been designated by many commentators as being “nationalists.” This fact is even noted by many of the above commentators utilizing National Identity explanations, who acknowledge the fact that in “Belarus...anti-Soviet, anti-Russian, and anti-CIS agendas proposed by nationalist groups were largely rejected by most other societal actors.”³ However, it seems inaccurate to apply the label “contested” to Belarus, when it appears that very little contestation actually took place. This is because of the fact that these groups only received minute support and were “*largely rejected*” by the populace, which contradicts claims that Belarusian identity is “contested” and “ambiguous.” Overall, the BPF’s ‘nationalist’

¹ Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, p. 140. See also, Bugrova and Naumova. (1996). “Parliamentary Elections and Foreign Policy Orientations of Belarus,” p. 4-9; Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 270, 282-283; Zaprudnik. (1998). “Political Parties in Belarus,” p. 2-6.

³ Abdelal. (2003) “National Strategy and National Money,” p. 117. See also, Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 134, 138-139; Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 40-41; Beissinger. (1996). “How Nationalisms Spread”; Marples. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus.” It is possible that normative bias in categorizing strong national identity has resulted in Abdelal and others incorrectly and prematurely labeling the wrong groups ‘nationalist.’

versions of history and ideologies were out of touch with the attitudes of most Belarusians, and were viewed to be elitist and of a radical, hard-core and extremist nature.⁴ Indeed, when examining contemporary Belarusian public opinion, which will be detailed in sections below, significant evidence exists indicating that Belarusians do have a clear and coherent identity which is informed by their political-cultural worldviews ways of life and historical memories, which can be characterized as being collectivist, communal, and illiberal when it comes to political-economic planning.

Overall, such assessments that Belarusians lacking a strong national identity are to blame for the lack of reform and lack of BPF support are incorrect because the policy goals and vision for Belarus espoused by the BPF did not resonate with the Belarusian masses and elites. A large reason accounting for this was that a great deal of material and especially ideational support and inspiration for the BPF, which was founded at a congress in Vilnius, Lithuania in June 1989, came from the Popular Fronts operating in the Baltic States. Indeed, at the ideological level, many of the anti-Russian/Soviet ideas in the ‘nationalist’ narratives of the BPF were inspired and borrowed from the negative historical interpretations of Soviet/Russian rule predominant in Latvia and the Baltic States, which exhibited a noticeable cultural clash between the local cultures and Russia. However, such worldviews and historical memories were largely absent from the Belarusian political-cultural environment. For example, Belarusians had vastly different historical memories contained in their political-cultural worldviews than did the Latvians about life under Soviet rule. This was problematic as one Belarusian elite observed, because the “nationalist” BPF “lived physically in Belarus, but mentality in the Baltic and

⁴ This observation was echoed by many elites. Belarusian Non-Government Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Government Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For further consensus on Belarusian ‘nationalist’ opposition being seen as out of touch and extremist by large segments of society, see Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 26, 37, 42-43, 154; Economist. (1995). “In the Slav Shadowlands.” *The Economist*, May 20, 47-49; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. , 240, 261-262; Sahm. (1999). “Political Culture and National Symbols.” p. 655, 657; Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.” p. 114; Marples, David R. and Uladzimir Padhol. (2002). “The Opposition in Belarus: History, Potential, and Perspectives.” Ch. 2. In *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 61; Marples. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy.” p. 33-34; Silitski. (2003). “Explaining post-Communist Authoritarianism.” p. 39-40, 42; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 266; Korosteleva, Elena A. (2005). “The Emergence of a Party System.” Ch. 3. In *Postcommunist Belarus*, eds. S. White, E. Korosteleva, and J. Löwenhardt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., p. 43; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 95. See also footnote no. 14 below.

in Poland....They hated the Soviet era, yet they didn't have a strong Belarusian tradition to support them in their anti-Soviet struggle, so they turned to our neighbouring countries to give this ideology,...and they didn't deliberate on the differences between here and there."⁵ Overall, this example of hardcore 'nationalists' living physically in Belarus, but mentally in a different cultural context, proved problematic, as BPF worldviews and historical memories on various historical topics, and in the promotion of various policy solutions, proved out of sync with the predominant worldviews and preferences of most average Belarusians, and also most elites.

Also of critical importance in explaining the failure of the BPF was that the pro-Western and anti-Russian historical memories promoted by the BPF did not resonate with the predominant historical memories informing Belarusians political-cultural worldviews. First, most Belarusians did not share the historical memories of Belarusian statehood being rooted and linked to the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian, nor the negative portrayals and downplaying of the achievements of the BSSR, which were themes regularly promoted by the BPF and its leaders such as Pazniak. Many commentator arguing from a National Identity standpoint normatively take such 'nationalist' narratives as the 'truth' when defining what 'true' Belarusian national identity should look like. However, in regards to BPF portrayals of Belarusian statehood being rooted in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, and pointing to essentially more Western foundations for Belarusian culture, these forms of cultural narratives and 'nationalism' espoused by some of the BPF opposition, and some historians and National Identity scholars in the West, do not resonate and are largely absent from the predominant historical memories of the population. As one Belarusian elite observed, "the people simply do not identify with the Polish-Lithuanian Grand Duchy that existed over nearly 400 years ago...and if there are

⁵ This elite also argued that "the problem was that they wanted Belarus to be like something they are not." Additionally, this interviewee also noted that many in the BPF and those portrayed as 'nationalists' "lived in another context, and you can see it from the texts of the 'nationalists' very easily, because they make reference, and they even put Polish words in the texts, and use even Polish words for their definitions that we had in the Belarusian language....They used Polish words because their minds worked in Polish. Not that they thought generally in Polish, but if you read everyday in Polish and speak to Polish colleagues, at the end of the day you get Polish." Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by another Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). For evidence of BPF's reliance on and ideational inspiration from Baltic movements, see Mihalisko. (1991). "The Popular Movement in Belorussia and Baltic Influences," p. 125-126, 130; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 130; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). "Belarus," p. 287; Neimanis. (1997). *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire.*, p. 56.

any memories about the Poles, it is also that they did not treat Belarusians well either.” More importantly, this same Belarusian elite went on to point out that “the ‘nationalist’ opposition did not get this memory passed down from their parents or grandparents, but instead from history books.”⁶

Overall, one can see how this Westernized and anti-Russian historical narratives of Belarus portrayed by BPF ‘nationalists’ was largely rejected by the populace, since even Western scholars promoting this version of Belarus’s ‘true’ cultural and national identity, also admit that under such narratives, “the nation is being redefined both in terms of its history and its place in the world.”⁷ Indeed, the problem here is that this ‘nationalist’ redefinition of Belarusian history is largely elite driven by those who happen to make up only a small minority of Belarus’s political, economic, and cultural elite, and who are generally out of touch with mass society. In general, such narratives about the meaning of Belarusian ‘nationalism,’ adhered to by the BPF and a minority of Belarusian elites, where Belarus is portrayed as being linked culturally to the West, via the historical ties from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, are only followed by a minority of the population.⁸

⁶ Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010) Similar points were also mentioned by others. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For documentary evidence of BPF linking Belarus culturally to West via the Grand Duchy argument, see “Program of the Byelorussian People’s Front for Perestroika – Rebirth [June 1989],” in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 253-260.

⁷ Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 131-132. Even the claims by several Western historians making the arguments about Belarus’s ‘Western’ cultural roots [e.g. Zaprudnik. (1994). “Development of Belarusian National Identity.” p. 133; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 9; Zaprudnik. (1973). “Interpretation of the Grand Duchy.” p. 61-67], are at times contradicted by themselves. This contradiction can be seen where Zaprudnik acknowledges that the strong historic religious-cultural links with Russia, including “elements of language, religion, ethnicity,” as well as a strong Soviet mentality, “are clearly persistent and even resilient.” (Zaprudnik, 1994: 147). The fact that all those cultural attributes are mentioned casts serious doubt on claims that Belarus is ‘Western.’ For instance, how can it be ‘Western’ if it shares such an extensive cultural heritage with Russia? Similar acknowledgement of the BPF’s Western, and anti-Russian historical-cultural narrative failing to resonate with the majority of Belarusians is also noted by Silitski, who had previously downplayed the strong patriotism towards the BSSR as only a second-class national identity (see footnote no. 109 in chapter 6). Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet,” p. 48.

⁸ As Ioffe astutely noted, “no more than 20% (at the very best!) identify with that ideological niche,” so “presenting it as the only interpretation of what it means to be a Belarusian, as Zaprudnik does, reflects a narrow, biased, and somewhat self-centered – Belarus- is-me – view.” Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. xiv. For an example of such a ‘Belarus-is-me-view,’ see Silitski where he describes the BPF and its small minority of supporters as “ethnically conscious,” while the majority that did not respond positively to the BPF’s ‘nationalist’ message are portrayed as having a “weak sense of national identity.” Silitski. (2003). “Explaining post-Communist Authoritarianism in Belarus,” p. 42. Recall above that

Thus, in regards to narratives of Belarusian identity that places Belarus as more Western, Belarusians did not simply identify with narratives about the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian statehood, because Belarusians had not lived under it for generations. Also, as mentioned in chapter 6, if there were any historical memories of this period, these would have been predominantly negative due to that fact that Polish cultural domination characteristic of the period of Grand Duchy rule would have been equated as being detrimental to Belarusian cultural interests. Moreover, since Belarusians had not lived under it for generations, such negative worldviews about this earlier period of Polish domination would have been further exacerbated by the more recent negative historical memories of Belarusians living in the western land of Belarus that suffered large amounts of discrimination under Polish domination during the interwar period.⁹

Another telling example of where ‘nationalists’ such as the BPF were out of tune with predominant Belarusian political-cultural worldviews was in their borrowing of rhetoric from the historical memories of the Baltic States and Poland, which had negative historical memories of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “one of the idiotic examples is when the Belarusian opposition even now criticize the events of 1939,” because even though “it was tragic, it was the only chance where we could gain national unity.”¹⁰ As noted above in chapter 6, in the historical section on Polish rule over the western lands of Belarus, Belarusians living under Polish dominion generally welcomed their incorporation into the BSSR. Moreover, it was shown that the predominant historical memories informing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews about the interwar period when the western lands of Belarus were under Polish dominion generally tended to view this negatively, and as time oppression for Belarusians.

Additionally, the BPF borrowed heavily from the historical narratives of Soviet rule successfully used by the Popular Fronts in Latvia and the other Baltic States, which would demonize and portray the entire existence of Soviet rule under the BSSR as being a period of occupation and exploitation of Belarus by Russia. While such rhetoric was

Silitski had previously downplayed the noticeably strong patriotism towards the BSSR as only a second-rate national identity (see footnote no. 109 in chapter 6).

⁹ Such negative historical memories of Polish rule were also mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

¹⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

highly successful in Latvia, as a result that it only served to reconfirm the predominant historical memories about the negativity of Soviet rule in Latvia, in the political-cultural context of Belarus, such messages were largely irrelevant for the majority of the Belarusian population, because they did not have any other historical memories other than those of life under the BSSR, most of which were predominantly positive. As a result, Belarusian society largely rejected much of the anti-Soviet message promoted by ‘nationalist’ groups such as the BPF.¹¹

However, it should be noted that this positive historical memory of Belarusians towards the BSSR does not entail that Belarusians are simply un-nationalistic/patriotic or blindly pro-Russian. Indeed, as noted in chapter 6, Belarusians positive historical memory of and strong patriotism towards the BSSR greatly informs Belarusian historic political-cultural worldviews, where this positive assessment of the BSSR is a robust feature of Belarusian political-culture and identity that was often overlooked by many National Identity commentators or taken as an example of a lack of national identity.¹² Moreover, the fact that such historical memories promoted in the narratives of those portrayed by National Identity scholars as being ‘nationalists,’ such as the BPF, are not naturally rooted nor seemingly organic to the local political-cultural context, and are often influenced and borrowed from outside cultures, such as the Baltic States and Poland, makes it plausible to argue that such national identity explanations get it wrong when they categorize groups such as the BPF as being the true Belarusian ‘nationalists.’

Thus, for most Belarusians the state-building achievements of the BSSR were not just a mere façade, but instead viewed as the real deal and as tangible development, and most Belarusians identified with the BSSR because in their historical memory it represented real progress. Moreover, the BSSR was for most Belarusians the only tangible memory of real Belarusian statehood and state-building which served as a

¹¹ Such points above were elaborated in observations by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). On rejection, see also footnote no. 4 above.

¹² In one example of such downplaying of the state-building of the BSSR, and Belarusians close affinity and positive historical memories of such achievements, Tsygankov argues that “Belarus had not had a state of their own for almost their entire history.” Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.” p. 111. However, as many interviewees mentioned, and the sections on the BSSR detailed, Belarus did have a long history of state-hood under the BSSR, which most Belarusians positively identified with. For examples of high patriotism towards the BSSR, see footnotes no. 99-101 in chapter 6.

positive historical reference point in their political-cultural worldviews that people could remember or identify with because they had lived it. Indeed, the fact that “the importance of Belarusians only experience of modern statehood was with the BSSR...was the point which was missed by the leadership of BPF.”¹³ From such a vantage point, one can better understand how Belarusian ‘nationalist’ politicians when they repeatedly spoke negatively of all things Soviet, ended up running into a wall when speaking to average Belarusians, because such blatantly negative narratives about the BSSR did not resonate with the political-cultural worldviews and historical memories of average Belarusians.

Overall, the BPF remained predominantly focused on divisive cultural matters relating to its firm adherence in advocating Belarusianization of language and culture. Here the BPF’s policy stance of Belarusianization was ill-suited to the Belarusian cultural context, and most Belarusians viewed the BPF as too hard-core and radical, especially in regards to its vocal anti-Russian views and favouritism of Belarusianization. This is because Belarusianization was modeled on similar aims to the policies of Latvianization in Latvia, which was suitable in the Latvian cultural context and favoured by ethnic-Latvians, but ill-suited in the Belarusian context, since many self-identifying ethnic-Belarusians used Russian as their primary language of communication, but nonetheless would have been discriminated against under a policy of Belarusification. However, as will be noted below, the problem was that Belarusians did not see the widespread use of the Russian language as a cultural threat nor as culturally alien, and in the views of most Belarusians, speaking Russian would not be seen as problematic to ones cultural well-being as it would be in the case of Latvia. In general, this results largely from the strong historical cultural links and similarities shared by Belarusians with Russians, which resulted in most Belarusians continuing to view Russia and any seeming aspects of Russification with little hostility compared to the Latvians. This was a major reason why

¹³ As this Belarusian elite also argued in regards to the history of development under the BSSR, “one shouldn’t just demonize the BSSR and Soviet Union, because there were also positive points.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). High levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia about development under the BSSR, found in Belarusian historical memories was mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010) Such observations about higher levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia amongst Belarusians was also mentioned by a Latvian elite knowledgeable in Belarusian political affairs. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

the BPF's anti-Russian rhetoric and calls for Belarusification were viewed by many as too radical and hard-core, and also one factor that Lukashenko used successfully to rally support and to reinforce negative viewpoints towards his BPF opponents in the 1994 presidential election, his first term in office, and in the 1995 parliamentary elections where the BPF did not win a single seat.¹⁴

In regards to policy, because the BPF remained so focused on divisive cultural matters such as Belarusification, this meant that the BPF actually did not have much of a cohesive vision for policy reforms put in place, and while the BPF gradually began to advocate for more liberal reforms, such calls for the most part remained vague and ill-communicated. The fact that such proposals for liberal reforms remained vague and ill-communicated relative to proposals found in Latvia and the other Baltic States, helps to infer the general absence of liberal economic policy ideas not only amongst the 'nationalist' BPF, but also in Belarus more generally.¹⁵ Therefore, unlike that Latvians which basically linked the goals of independence, de-Sovietization, liberal reform, and

¹⁴ Such points on BPF's overwhelming focus on Belarusianization and that such proposals were seen as generally divisive, overly hard-core and radical by large segments of the Belarusian population was mentioned by several elites who pointed to the Belarusians traditional attitudes of tolerance. As one elite noted, what is viewed to be "too hardcore doesn't survive here," and the BPF's proposals were viewed to be too hard-core. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For similar consensus on BPF's anti-Russian slant being seen as too radical and extremist by most Belarusians, see footnote no. 4 above, and Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 270, 335; Prazauskas. (1994). "The Influence of Ethnicity.," p. 165; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 534, 540; Ioffe. (2003). "Understanding Belarus.," p. 1041. One should note that while elections in 1995 were free, some might categorize them as unfair, in the sense that the BPF had far fewer resources, and less access to media outlets to reach Belarusian voters.

¹⁵ Such points on the general absence and vagueness of liberal policy reform ideas amongst the BPF and also more generally amongst Belarusian elites and society was mentioned by several elites, whom noted that the BPF placed most faith for Belarus in cultural renewal, via 'Belarusification.' Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). For examples advocating for 'renewal' and of vagueness towards liberal reforms, which at times exhibited rhetoric advocating continued statist solutions and promotion of collective 'social justice,' and communal apparatuses of organization, see documents, "Program of the Byelorussian People's Front for Perestroika – Rebirth [June 1989]" (p. 253-260), and "The Electoral Platform of the Byelorussian People's Front: 'I vote for Byelorussia' [9 December 1989]" (p. 261-265), in Furtado and Chandler. (1992). *Perestroika in the Soviet Republics.*, p. 253-260. As chapters 4 and 5 showed, even those parties in Latvia which can be characterized as being more hard-core in their nationalist positions also had a clear message in terms of visions for reform in advocating for comprehensive liberal marketization of the economy.

Latvianization as being interconnected and inseparable from one another, the BPF largely failed to elaborate much of a coherent liberal message.

Additionally, it should be noted that when some liberal political-economic reforms began to be advocated by the BPF, these could be viewed as being culturally alien for most in Belarusians society. This is because the BPF borrowed much of there ideas about reform from the Popular Fronts in the Baltic States, especially those in Estonia and Latvia. Additionally, one can also infer a more anti-Western bent in Belarusian political-cultural worldviews from the fact that these opposition groups most often only worked and continue to work with outside Western agencies, and NGO's which did not always sit well with the locals, particularly when it came to some of the political-economic reforms being advocated.¹⁶ Indeed, in presenting and promoting a piecemeal vision for liberal reforms copied from a foreign political-cultural context, such as those that were being implemented in Latvia, such BPF proposals would have failed to resonate with the mass Belarusian public, since such proposals were at odds with the collectivist political-cultural worldviews historically shared by Belarusians.

Obviously, there was a huge divide between Belarusian 'nationalist' elite and the majority of average Belarusians and Belarusian elites. Indeed, as noted above the 'nationalists' and BPF's worldviews and policy proposal did not resonate widely with the broad political-cultural worldviews of most Belarusians, which tended to view the BPF 'nationalists' as too hard-core, radical and extremist. Here it is also important to note that 'nationalists' such as the BPF are also not the only opposition groups in Belarus. As will be discussed below, the anti-Lukashenko opposition forces remain extremely divided in outlook and orientation. While a small yet vocal minority, such as the descendents of the BPF portray themselves as true 'nationalists,' and take what are seen to be hard-core and radical positions in advocating for policies of 'Belarusianization,' most Belarusian opposition supporters are quite vocal in their views and criticisms about the hard-core and radical nature of such 'nationalist' proposals. Moreover, most of the other Lukashenko opposition groups also remain divided on other specific concrete policy

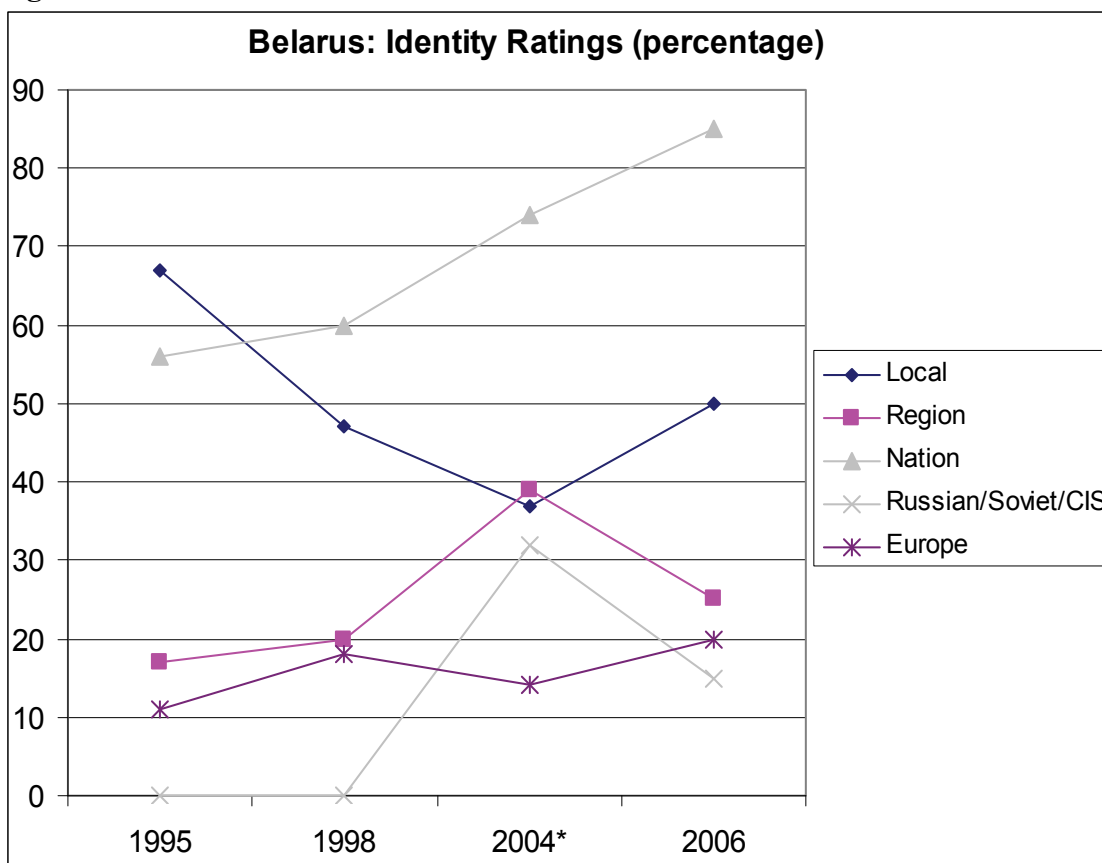
¹⁶ On the BPF borrowing heavily for ideas on reform from the Popular Fronts in Latvia and Estonia, and that such ideas and worldviews could be viewed as culturally alien, was given in the observations of several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

matters, with only a small number of groups advocating for staunchly liberal-market reform. Indeed, many factions of the Belarusian opposition, while favouring a return to democracy, are also quite outspoken in their criticisms of opposition groups advocating for liberal ‘shock therapy,’ and favour a retention of many of the collectivistic and statist features which have come to characterize Belarusian political-economic relations. Moreover, it will be noted that most opposition elites remain largely disconnected from the rest of society.¹⁷ This increasingly signals that a more strongly robust national identity had existed in Belarus than many National Identity commentators gave Belarus credit.

Overall, such arguments that explain Belarus’s post-1991 political-economic behavior as resulting from a lack of national identity become suspect when examining numerous public opinion close gauging identity that were conducted in the years since 1990. Of critical importance is evidence from public opinion polls, conducted throughout the 1990s and 2000s, which shows that the arguments utilizing National Identity variables to explain post-Soviet political-economic behavior are far from conclusive. This is illustrated in Figures 5.10 for Latvia in chapter 5, and 7.1 for Belarus below, which show that while Latvia has regularly polled slightly higher than Belarus in questions about identity, both countries were far from being polar opposite of one another, and actually poll a great deal closer than one would expect, if one were to conclusively accept National Identity explanations. For example, in one group from the *New Democracies Barometers* and *Baltic Barometers*, ethnic-Latvians polled between a high of 99% to a low of 86% in terms of identifying with the nation, while Belarusians never polled below 56% and recorded a high of 86% identifying with the nation. Here it should be noted that such numbers for Belarusians are far greater than the polls showing ethnic-Russian/Slavic peoples living in Latvia, lack of identification with Latvia (see Figures 5.9 and 5.10 in chapter 5, and 7.1 below for Belarus).

¹⁷ Such observations and criticisms of opposition advocating rapid liberal reforms, and criticisms of opposition forces being elitist and out of touch with the mass public were gained during interviews of several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010). Belarusian Non-Government Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). On huge divide in opposition, see sections below, footnote no. 133 and 135 below.

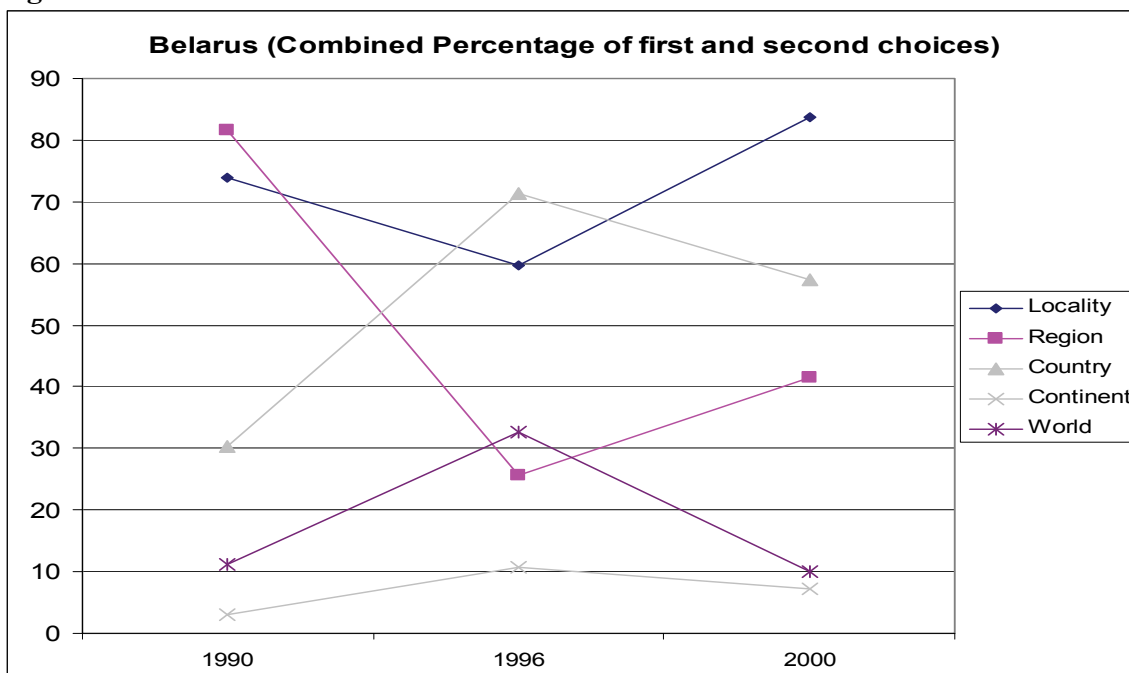
Figure 7.1



Source(s): 1995: (Rose and Haerpfer 1996: 90). 1998: (Rose and Haerpfer 1998: 68). 2004: (Rose 2005b: 58-59). 2006: (White and McAllister 2008: 13).

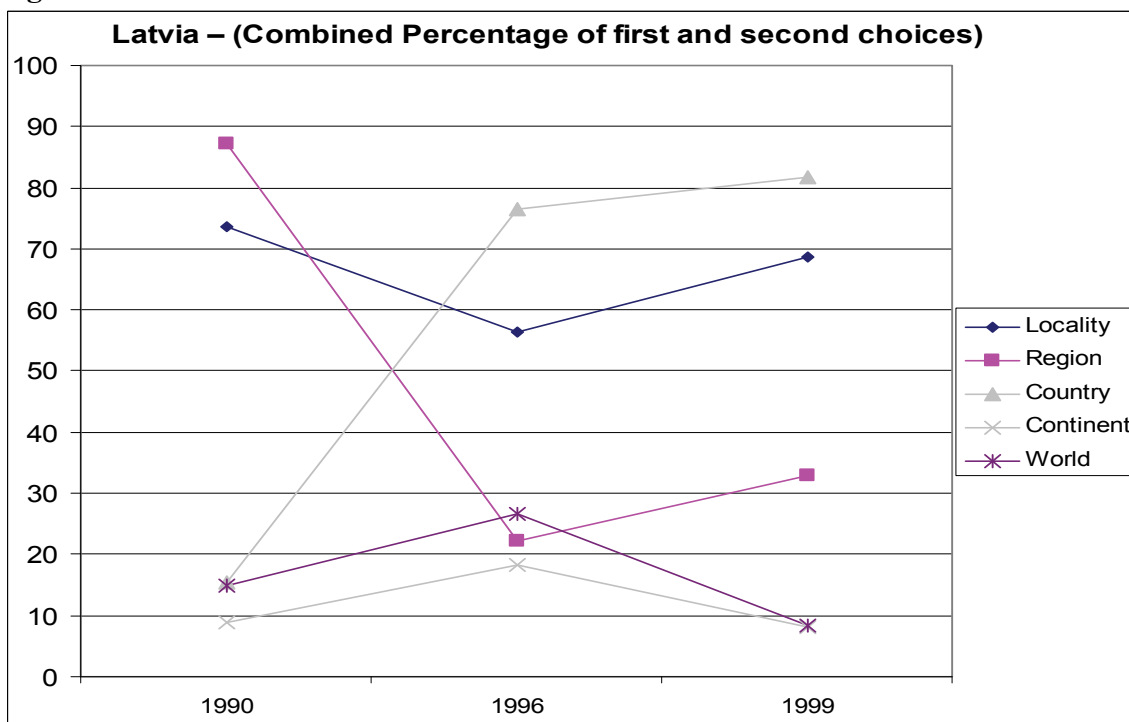
Additionally, in results on identity from polls conducted by the World Values Survey on three different occasions from 1990 to 2000, Belarusians polled similar to responses given by Latvians. For instance, in terms of identification with ones country, Latvians polled 15.3% in 1990, 76.6% in 1996, and 81.8% in 1999, while Belarusians polled 30.3% in 1990, 71.3% in 1996, and 57.4% in 2000. The only anomaly is from the poll conducted in 1990 where Latvian and Belarusian attitudes identified predominantly with their locality and region as opposed to their nation. Here, the nation could be inferred to signify the Soviet Union at the time, while the locality and region would have meant Latvia and the Baltic region for Latvians, and Belarus for Belarusians (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3 below).

Figure 7.2



Source(s): See 'National Identity' and 'Geographical Background' sections within the 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-2000).

Figure 7.3



Source(s): See 'National Identity' and 'Geographical Background' sections within the 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-2000).

Additionally, National Identity arguments prove problematic in that Belarusians score higher in terms of responses that could be used to gauge the levels of economic nationalism domestically. For instance, arguments utilizing nationalism as a explanatory variable prove also problematic when comparing similar polls conducted by the World Values Survey, where one is able to compare results in both Latvia and Belarus from 1996, in regards to the question of whether employers should give priority to people of the titular nationality when jobs are scarce. Interestingly the results of this poll illustrate that 73.3% of Belarusian agreed, which far exceeded the 41.1% of Latvians that agreed to the same question.¹⁸

Overall, evidence suggest that Belarusians do have a strong identity and are quite secure in terms of knowing who they are as a people, knowing the land where they come from, and that they are Belarusian. As one Belarusian elite mentioned, “the very idea that Belarus is an independent country and that this is valuable, is already here.”¹⁹ Additionally, it should be noted that many advocates of National Identity explanations have even acknowledged that Belarusian identity, “Russified or not, remains distinctively Belarusian.”²⁰ Indeed, strong sentiments of national identity amongst average Belarusians can be inferred from other polls showing high levels of national pride amongst Belarusians, which are relatively similar to results to similar polls measuring pride in Latvia. For instance, Figure 7.4 highlights the results of polls conducted by the World Values Survey in regards to peoples pride in their nationality, which reveal that Belarusians are similarly proud of their national identity, just as ethnic-Latvians. Moreover, such numbers are further corroborated by other independent polls gauging respondents national pride, where 86% of Latvians in 2001 said they were proud of their citizenship, with only 14% saying that they were not proud, while 63% of Belarusians

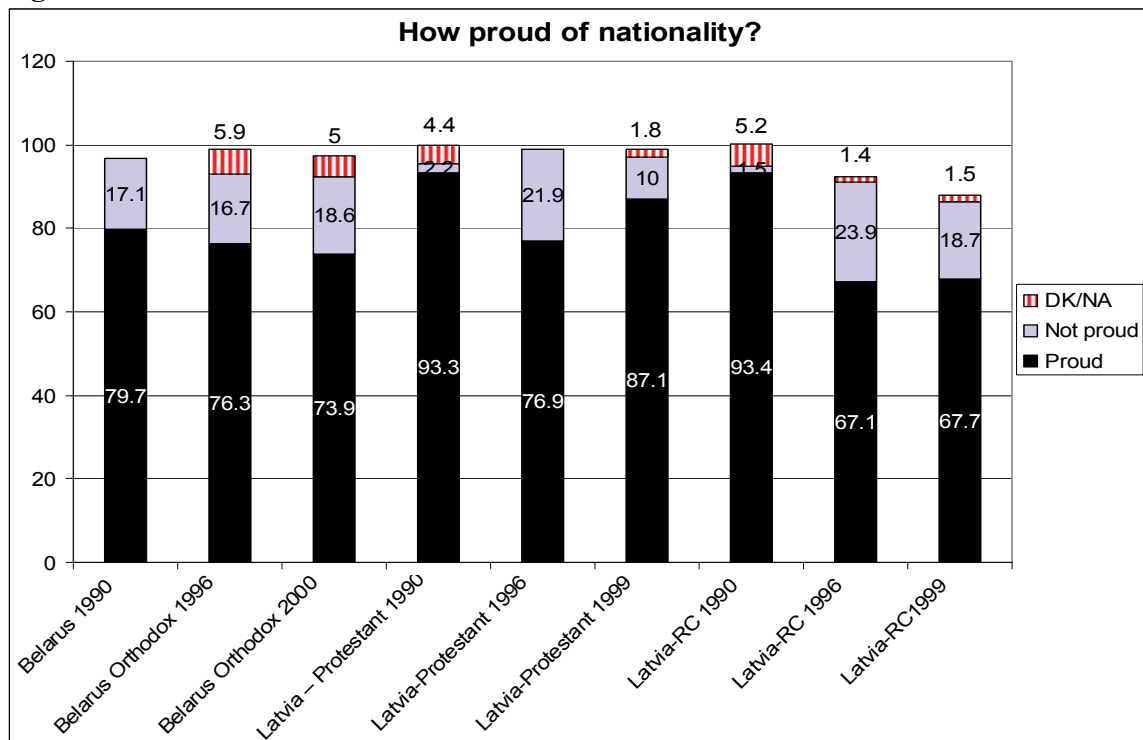
¹⁸ Found in ‘Politics and Society’ section of the World Values Survey. (1996).

¹⁹ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Additionally, another argued, “we have quite a strong sense of identity.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Similar sentiments attesting to the strength of Belarusian national identity were given by other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

²⁰ Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 123. Additionally, Mihalisko argued that “many Western observers have fallen prey to the misconception that Belarusians consider themselves Russian. They do not.” Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 236. See also Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 280.

answered that they were proud in 1998, and 87% in 2004, with only 20% and 13% responding that they were not proud in both years.²¹ Moreover, the presence of a robust national identity and national pride can be inferred from other public opinion polls where 74% overall, and 75% of Belarusian-Belarusians in 2000 listed ‘patriotism and preference for interests of one’s nation,’ as ideological qualities that are desirable for politicians to have.²² Not only do these results reveal the presence of a robust Belarusian national identity, but it is also the position here that these contextually unique ideas regarding Belarusian national identity and interests are ultimately informed and dependent on the political-cultural worldviews predominant in Belarus.

Figure 7.4



Source(s): See ‘Politics and Society’ section of the (World Values Survey 1990-2000).

Regardless of such results, some National Identity accounts also point the high percentage of Russian speakers in Belarus, as well as that over 80% of the population voted in 1995 to make Russian one of Belarus’s official languages as an example of the lack of Belarusian national identity. Indeed, as polls indicate, it is a fact that many

²¹ Rose and Haerpfer. (1998). *New Democracies Barometer V.*, p. 66-67; Rose. (2002). *New Baltic Barometer V.*, p. 36; Rose. (2005b). *Insiders and Outsiders.*, p. 60-61.

²² White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 34-37.

Belarusians list Russian as their first choice of language. During much of the period of Soviet development and modernization under the BSSR, the Russian language became the dominant language for education, work, service in the military and government, and in media, cultural events and entertainment. Today in Belarusian society, a large number of the population prefers to speak Russian, with only a small number of Belarusians, around 10% of the population, actually using the Belarusian language entirely. In fact the vast majority of the population, 69%, including President Lukashenko prefer literally to speak the *Transyanka* dialect that incorporates aspect of Belarusian and Russian into the everyday language of speaking (see also Figure A.44 in Appendix).²³ However, *Transyanka*, is often looked down upon by Russian-speakers as being unsophisticated, and also negatively put-down as being not sufficiently ‘Belarusian’ enough by the ‘nationalist’ BPF and many commentators in the West utilizing National Identity explanations. Too often, many National Identity explanations cite this high use of Russian as evidence of Belarusian having an ambiguous and weak national identity.²⁴

Here, it should be pointed out that it could be argued that the Latvians were subjected to far greater amounts of coerced Russification, as demographic patterns show that while the vast majority Latvians became thoroughly fluent in the Russian language, the same could not be said of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic minority living in Latvia, which did not reciprocate in learning the Latvian language. However, in contrast to Latvians, Belarusians did not see the widespread use of the Russian language as a cultural threat nor as culturally alien. Indeed, it is important to point out that in the case of the Belarusians, evidence suggests that the adoption of the Russian language or a mixture of Belarusian/Russian was largely voluntary and natural for most Belarusians. As one Belarusian elite argued, “in the Soviet Union for people just to interact on the Union level, they needed to know Russian...and most of the time this was voluntary, and not

²³ For numbers, see Economist. (1995). “In the Slav Shadowlands”; Ioffe. (2003). “Understanding Belarus,” p. 1016.

²⁴ See Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 125-128; Burant. (1995). “Foreign Policy and National Identity,” p. 1133; Marples. (1996). *Belarus.*, p. 31; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 50-52; Marples. (2003). “History and Politics in post-Soviet Belarus,” p. 27; Goujon. (1999). “Language, Nationalism, and Populism,” p. 668; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe,” p. 525. Ioffe offers a good critique of such arguments, particularly the negative assessments based on the high use of *Transyanka*, noting that arguing this is “insufficiently Belarusian...does not make sense at all,” due to the fact that only a small percentage actually claim to be pure speakers of Belarusian. Ioffe. (2003). “Understanding Belarus,” p. 1017.

assimilation....It was more an appropriation of language skills which shouldn't put it into the bin with real Russification."²⁵ Indeed, close cultural affinities were often at play in influencing the voluntary adoption of Russian by Belarusians as their primary language, due to the close similarities between the Belarusian and Russian languages. Certainly, this resulted from strong historical cultural links and similarities shared by Belarusians with Russians, where most Belarusians continued to view Russia and any seeming aspects of Russification with little hostility compared to the Latvians.

Overall, one should not associate a person's language choice with a lack of national identity. This is because there is generally no thought of categorizing Russian-speaking Belarusians as 'non-Belarusian' due to the fact that Russian is the primary language of many Belarusians. Indeed, the vast majority of Russian-speaking Belarusians have strong Belarusian identities. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, "Belarusians are not defined primarily by the language...We have a different mentality compared to Russians...we're not Russians, that's completely true, that's 100% true...I speak Russian in my family, but I don't feel Russian."²⁶ Here one only needs to examine public opinion polls measuring national pride, which equally shows that most Russian-speaking Belarusians identify first and foremost as Belarusians and with Belarus. For example, in a poll conducted in 2000, 92% of Belarusian speakers identified Belarusians as their nationality, while 72% of Russian-speaking Belarusians identified as Belarusian, for a combined overall total of 78% of respondents identifying their nationality as Belarusian (see Figure A.45 in Appendix). Additionally, one should also note that most of the opposition and 'nationalist' forces are predominantly located in Minsk, many of whose

²⁵ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). That the process was voluntary and there was no overt coercion was also noted by Guthier. (1977b). "The Belorussians," p.278; Ioffe. (2003). "Understanding Belarus," p. 1041. Furman, Dmitrii, and Oleg Bukhovets. (1996). "Belarusian Self-Awareness and Belarusian Politics." *Russian Politics and Law*, 34, 6 (December), p. 9. Even some of those utilizing National Identity explanations, acknowledge that adoption of the Russian language historically was often done willingly, naturally and voluntarily rather than on any overt coercive measures from Soviet authorities. Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*, p. 51; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe," p. 535.

²⁶ Belarusian Non-Government Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

members also use Russian as their first language.²⁷ Moreover, as will be noted below, it is in rural Belarus where most native Belarusian speakers reside, and it is from this group where the strongest support for not only Lukashenko exists, but also where collectivistic and statist policy preferences is the highest.

Thus, a central problem lies in the black and white definition of how National Identity definitions are constructed, as being either strong or ambivalent. In reality, what these arguments miss is that Belarus has its own coherent and unique national identity, which simply contains different ideas, contrary to the normative definitions of national identity constructed by many observers that seek to wrongly pit Belarusians against Russians. As one former prominent Belarusian journalist during the 1990s, Anatol Maisenya reported, “Belarus stood out against the background of the former USSR republics for the fact that there were no signs of national discord.”²⁸ That there was a general lack of national discord and high amounts of cultural cohesion in Belarus can be seen from the identity polls discussed above, and in Figure A.45 in the Appendix, which illustrates virtually all inhabitants of Belarus identify themselves predominantly as Belarusian regardless of whether they speak Belarusian or Russian as their first language of choice. Moreover, that there is a strong Belarusian national identity held by both Belarusian-speaking and Russian-speaking Belarusians, and a lack of national discord and clashing cultures in Belarus, can be seen in that Belarusians tend not to view ethnic-minorities living in Belarus as a threat. This stands in contrast to Latvia where there was a distinctly perceived clash of cultures between ethnic-Latvians and ethnic-Russians (see Figure A.21 in the Appendix).

Further significant problems exist with National Identity explanations that argue that Belarusian identity is “contested” and “ambiguous,” and that this has resulted in Belarus having inconsistent and incoherent policies. This is because Belarusian policies actually failed to meet the assumed outcome, as illustrated by the statement that “Belarusian[’s]...contested and ambiguous...identity does not specify clearly the

²⁷ Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 38.

²⁸ Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 254. Similar sentiments on ethnic harmony and tolerance were also mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b 2010). See also, Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 291, 302; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 243.

fundamental purposes of the state and foreign policy.”²⁹ Thus, instead of the assumed outcome being incoherent and inconsistent, Belarusian policy has actually shown high levels of consistency since 1991, as the findings measuring policy reforms in chapter 3 illustrated. Indeed, problems exist in overly focusing on the “national” and labeling Belarusian identity as “contested” and “ambiguous,” because it creates the impression that Belarus lacks an identity and has no coherent worldviews.

Additionally, in another example where national identity explanations prove problematic, is where Savchenko points to the Baltic States and Latvia’s stronger nationalism relative to Belarus as a reason for reform, but simultaneously also gives evidence implying the work of political-cultural worldviews at play. Once again Savchenko alludes to the prejudice of ethnic-Latvian nationalists against the ethnic-Russian/Slavic dominance of heavy industry, whereas Belarus had positive images of Russia. While Latvia’s negative views and Belarus’s positive views of Russia are not up for debate, national identity arguments get it wrong when it comes to explanation that lack of reform in Belarus is caused by a weak national identity. Therefore, in making his argument, Savchenko points to evidence that clearly infers political-culture worldviews at work in influencing post-1991 policy behavior, which is illustrated where Savchenko alludes that values of Latvian [Baltic] elites viewed former Soviet industries as negative, while “in Belarus...the ruling elite’s attitude toward industrial enterprises was universally positive.”³⁰ Regardless, Savchenko like others stick to the line that nationalism was the primary root cause, even though this statement points to explicit normative viewpoints about Soviet industry, which makes inference to superior explanatory variables at play, namely political-cultural worldviews.

Pre-Lukashenko Lack of Reform, 1991-1994

As chapter 3 illustrated, very little reform was actually implemented in the pre-Lukashenko period from 1991 to 1994. Here it was pointed out that there was also an attempt on the part of Belarusian policy-makers to maintain key structures of the collectively oriented command and control decision-making apparatus over the political-

²⁹ Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 40.

³⁰ Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 118-119.

economy. This occurred even before President Lukashenko came to power in 1994, where the preceding governing administration of former Prime Minister Viacheslav Kebich did not really take many concrete steps to implement significant reform.

Overall, the Belarusian government under Kebich did not let any private initiative evolve, nor implement much in terms of liberalized privatization. Instead, as mentioned in the policy chapter, Kebich wanted to retain state ownership and merely reform the state-owned enterprises. Indeed, the reform envisioned by the Kebich administration was not that radical in terms of limiting state control in the economy, since such policies would have entailed extensive continued state control over the economy. Obviously, such reform endeavors were not really focused on limiting state control in the economy, but merely on improving state enterprise efficiency, which would have contrasted sharply with the comprehensive liberal reforms in Latvia. At the same time, while the Speaker of the Belarusian Parliament, Shushkevich, remained less pro-Soviet in his credentials, he was nonetheless indecisive in pushing for reforms. Additionally, what is also important to note is that compared to Latvia which had an important supporting network of expert Latvian émigré advisors from the West, Belarus relatively lacked any close Western cultural networks at the outset of independence in 1991.

In general, there was little political will to de-collectivize and de-Sovietize via the implementation of comprehensive liberal reforms because Belarusian elites and large segments of the broader population did not view the old Soviet policies as broken. Such views were facilitated by positive historical memories of development and modernization under the BSSR, and the fact that the BSSR was viewed as being authentically Belarusian and not viewed as culturally alien. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 6, there was a great deal of governance and administrative autonomy enjoyed by the BSSR in forming its own political-economic region. As a result, even basic economic reforms would not have been viewed as necessary from a purely administrative standpoint, in regards to integrating the country into one national political-economic unit, as this was already established in Belarus under the BSSR. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “this meant that the political elite that was in power, didn’t have to think what to change, they just said ‘okay, we will continue as usual,’ and this business as usual attitude meant that they

had one less reason to reform in every sphere.”³¹ However, it is not simply enough to point to the longevity and retention of historical institutions to explain non-reform, because the worldviews of most of Belarusian society and especially amongst elites did not view the Soviet system as being broken.

Overall, most Belarusian elites remained heavily Sovietized in terms of their political-cultural worldviews, habits, practices and behavior. This was especially the case for Belarusian Prime Minister Kebich, who was Lukashenko’s leading opponent in the presidential elections of 1994, and who was also equally very pro-Russian, pro-statist and anti-liberal reform in his policy preferences, and had begun to exhibit some authoritarian tendencies. Indeed, it was Kebich, thinking that he would easily slide to victory in the presidential election in 1994, who drafted a new constitution for Belarus which gave the president substantially new increased powers, and which Lukashenko utilized to great effect upon gaining office. In more recent years, while in opposition, Kebich had also begun to cooperate more with Lukashenko. Overall, one can infer that collectivist, authoritarian, statist, pro-Soviet and pro-Russian worldviews were at play and that Kebich legitimately believed in the rightness of such policies, because “even today, after so many years, he still talks about the advantages of the Soviet model compared to the Western model.” Additionally, this same elite also mentioned that “Kebich still openly talks about how he is proud to remain Communist until now, how he is proud of the Soviet state and of Soviet history, and that he didn’t want to do economic reforms like in Russia, but wanted to just stay with what we had.”³²

³¹ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

³² *Ibid.* Kebich’s pro-Soviet and anti-reform mindset was also mentioned by another Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Additionally, Savchenko gives a telling quote from a Kebich media interview, which infers his worldviews of such policies as being ‘natural,’ ‘normal,’ and ‘right,’ where he stated proudly that “we managed to stem the tide of reform... thanks to this, our people are not hungry, had their homes heated in winter, produced goods and tilled the soil.” Kebich, 1994 ‘Interview’, *Belaya Rus’* May 20, quoted in Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 115. Similar evidence inferring Kebich’s and other elites collectivist, authoritarian, anti-reform, statist, pro-Soviet, and pro-Russian preferences can also be found in many national identity accounts. Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 144; Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 299-300; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 250-251; Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 155; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 541; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 61-62. Lukashuk, Alexander. (2001). “Constitutionalism in Belarus: A False Start.” In *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe, Volume 1: Institutional Engineering*, ed. Jan Zielonka. Oxford: Oxford University Press., p. 301, 306-307; Kuzio. (2001). “Belarus and Ukraine.” p. 482; Weydenthal. (1998). “Belarus”; Markus, Ustina. (1996). “Imperial Understreich: Belarus’s Union with Russia.” *Current History* 95, October: 335-339.

One can infer that Belarusian elites were not operating in a vacuum but were directly influenced by society and the political-cultural environment in which they were situated. Indeed, similar to Belarusian elites, most of Belarusian society also shared strongly pro-Soviet, collectivistic and anti-reformist political-cultural worldviews. Overall, there was a general lack of liberal policy ideas and certainly no similar cult of private property, nor faith in the market commonly found in Latvian society, held amongst Belarusian elites and society, and thus no widespread public demand present in those crucial early years in favour of policy reforms of comprehensive liberalization. Moreover, if any notions about market reform or capitalism were discussed, this tended not to go anywhere, since amongst both elites and society “there were very negative attitudes towards the market economy in the 1990s.”³³ As a result, there was not much talk about any significant liberal economic reform programs let alone decentralization or privatization of property, which would have largely been unheard of and unthinkable for most Belarusians due the general absence of liberal worldviews.

However, such attitudes had nothing to do with a lack of national identity on the part of Belarusians, but resulted from the fact that Belarusian political-cultural worldviews and historical memories did not see a great-deal wrong with the collectivist and statist political-economic system under the BSSR, which was still viewed as legitimate by most Belarusians. Indeed, collectivistic and statist solutions were maintained, “because the people and the government believed that this was the right way and stuck to old ways [habits].”³⁴ This is because amongst both elites and society, “there

³³ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Evidence of such distrust of liberal reforms and anti-market attitudes was also inferred in Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.,” p. 124; Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 195, 200; Marples. (1996). *Belarus.*, p. xvi; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 224; Marples and Padhol. (2002). “The Opposition in Belarus.,” p. 65; Wilde, Caryn. (2002). “The Challenges of Using NGOs as a Strategy for Engagement.” Ch. 18, in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 435.

³⁴ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Indeed, one can infer that Belarusian elites were not operating in a vacuum but were directly influenced by society and the political-cultural environment in which they were situated, from the observations of Sahm who noted that “conscious of the people’s mentality, the nomenklatura... avoided any serious reform program.” Sahm. (1999). “Political Culture and National Symbols.,” p. 651. See also footnote no. 50 below for further sources offering consensus that both society and elites believe in the rightness of these policies, and that serious ideas of liberal reform would have largely been absent and unthinkable amongst elites and society. Such observations are further corroborated by Tsygankov, who while ironically sticking to a national identity explanation, nevertheless noted that “the policy networks in Belarus can be described as a society-dominated one.” Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.,” p. 114.

were no really liberal and pro-market forces in the early 1990s...they all had a Soviet culture, they didn't understand how to do reform,...and they were convinced the Soviet model was the best."³⁵ Additionally, one can infer a lack of support for reform in that large segments of the Belarusian population, upwards of 45% continued to either prefer no reform, see reform as moving too fast, or view it as being just right in the years from 1992-1995, even though as chapter 3 highlighted, little to no reform had been conducted in the first half of the 1990s in Belarus.³⁶ Thus, society and elites believed in the rightness of these policies. Certainly, in this political-cultural environment, there was a great deal of support amongst the Belarusian political elites and public for the Belarusian government's neo-Soviet, collectivistic, statist and increasingly authoritarian policy practices in regards to managing the political-economic relations of society.

Thus, even when freedoms were opened up, and old repressive structures were temporarily removed, as occurred in Belarus in the immediate period of independence after 1991 to approximately 1994, there was a certain limit to reforms and changes that could happen when the people were given the freedom to choose. This was due to the finiteness of ideas and habits that Belarusian elites and society could draw upon for policy inspiration, which depended largely on the predominant historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories in Belarus that were highly collectivistic and nostalgically pro-Soviet, and generally lacked any explicit liberal value orientation. Therefore, when it came to political-economic transformation after 1991,

³⁵ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Several other elites also pointed to the absence of liberal values, and the predominance of collectivist, statist, pro-Soviet and anti-reform attitudes of the pre-Lukashenko elite and society from 1991-1994. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Governmental Official. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (March 23, 2010). For similar evidence offered which infers that elite and society have the same preferences as noted above, even from some scholars who remain steadfast in sticking to the national identity line, see Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 192-193; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 60; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 541; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 115. Zlotnikov. (2002). "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.," p. 125, 142.

³⁶ For numbers, see Commission of the EC. (1993). *Central and Eastern European Barometer.*, p. 49; Commission of the EC. (1994). *Central and Eastern European Barometer.*, p. 44; Commission of the EC. (1995). *Central and Eastern European Barometer.*, p. 56; Commission of the EC. (1996). *Central and Eastern European Barometer: Nineteen Countries Survey.* Public Opinion about the European Community, No. 6. Commission of the EC., p. 74.

Belarusian elites and society chose what was ‘known’ to them over what was ‘unknown,’ according to the predominant collectivistic ideas and habits found in Belarus’s historic political-culture worldviews and way of life. Moreover, what was ‘known’ supported Belarusians preconceived political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories of what was viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘natural,’ and ‘normal’ policy practices. Such a political-cultural framework helps to explain and provide important understanding for why President Lukashenko and most Belarusian elites and those in society prefer the current collectivist, command-style mode of political-economic management, since they are unaccustomed to anything different and their worldviews and habits have been largely uninfluenced by Western liberal political-cultural ideas.

Explaining Lukashenko’s Longevity and Legitimacy

While little reform was actually taking place in Belarus from 1991-1994, it is also interesting and ironic to note that Belarusians nevertheless incorrectly viewed this time of economic downturn, upheaval, and great flux as being a short-lived period of reform and ‘wild-capitalism,’³⁷ although as chapter 3 revealed such views did not fit reality. In such a political-cultural environment where many viewed the current political insiders as being corrupt, Aleksander Lukashenko, a former collective farm manager from the eastern rural regions of Belarus and a relative political outsider up until the early 1990s, when he became chair of the parliaments anti-corruption committee, was able to step in and successfully campaign on a pretty clear and explicit platform. In doing so, Lukashenko ran on an anti-corruption platform, speaking the language of the people and playing on the peoples traditionally collectivistic and pro-Soviet worldviews, which had a desire of having strong leadership, positive historical memories towards the BSSR and its leaders such as Masherov, and a favouritism towards promoting increased close relations with Russia. Indeed, by playing on Belarusians traditionally collectivistic, paternalistic and

³⁷ The observation of such false misperceptions held by the populace was mentioned by a prominent Belarusian opposition leader who noted that such perceptions were totally false, particularly where “they believed that liberalism and the market economy is all about unemployment, corruption, irresponsibility. People have all these misperceptions.” Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). That Belarusians believed the time from 1991 to 1994 was a time of market capitalism, was also mentioned by another Belarusian elite. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). See also, Lukashuk. (2001). “Constitutionalism in Belarus.,” p. 308.

pro-Soviet political-cultural worldviews and historical memories, Lukashenko was overwhelmingly elected in the first presidential election in Belarus by an overwhelming majority of votes. As will be discussed below when examining contemporary Belarusian public opinion, such behavior of Lukashenko has been largely in tune with predominant political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians, which can be characterized as being communal, collectivist and illiberal when it comes to political-economic planning.

Since being first elected in 1994, Lukashenko's rule has followed the path of old traditions, in that he has consolidated his authoritarian grip over most aspects of political-economic decision-making in Belarus, where his decisions are often tantamount to the law. Some coming from a rationalist perspective might argue that Lukashenko and other Belarusian elites goal to maintain power has resulted from the rational desire to firmly control the leavers of political-economic decision-making for rent-seeking purposes and to increase personal economic material gain. Indeed, drawing on observations from other post-Communist countries such as Russia, Rationalist arguments might speculate incorrectly about the power of oligarchic control over the Belarusian economy. However, it should be recognized that Belarus has had far fewer problems with oligarchs than countries such as Russia,³⁸ largely as a result of the sheer dominance of Aleksander Lukashenko. Moreover, Zlotnikov notes that "Lukashenko...has impinged upon the interests of adherents to the 'oligarchic' model and even against the interests of the 'nomenklatura' entrepreneurs."³⁹ As a result, "criminality – economic and its other forms – has been kept in check, as a by-product of a zero-tolerance approach."⁴⁰ Moreover, such achievements have also been recognized in the responses given by Belarusians in public opinion polls from 2007 and 2008, where when asked to list Lukashenko's activity that was successful, 56.7% in 2007, and 58% in 2008 said yes to the fight against criminality, and 54.7% and 59.7% gave yes responses to "barring the appearance of 'oligarchs.'⁴¹ Such evidence is important for casting doubt on Rationalist arguments regarding the 'rent-seeking' motives of Belarusian officials, since Lukashenko's decisions were not in the interest of self-aggrandizing bureaucrats.

³⁸ This was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). See also, IMF. (2010a). *Republic of Belarus.*, p. 14.

³⁹ Zlotnikov. (2002). "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.," p. 152, 138.

⁴⁰ Nuti. (2005). "The Belarusian Economy.," p. 98.

⁴¹ IISEPS. (2008a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 47 (March). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet08-1.html>.

Additionally, a rationalist approach might view Lukashenko's policies of severely restricting the small number of Belarusian entrepreneurs that opened small-businesses in the early 1990s, as a means to eliminate potential economic competitors to the state, and for purposes of self-aggrandizement through the seizure of private assets. However, such policy actions initiated by Lukashenko appear to be more driven by Lukashenko's worldviews favouring statist solutions, in which the owners of small enterprises do not fit with Lukashenko's and the official state ideology, which most of the masses also subscribe. In other words, the cultural habits and worldviews exemplified by this small group of Belarusian small business owners is seen as a threat from the point of view of the statist worldviews of Lukashenko and other elites, which do not place a premium on individuals acting independent of the state, because such individuals offer an example of an alternative way of life where individuals can be independent of the state.

Moreover, it is from this small minority of Belarusian small entrepreneurs where there has been consistent support for market and democratic reform. Certainly, such visions directly clash with Lukashenko's collectivistic and statist worldviews. Therefore, in attacking small-business owners and restricting the growth of the independent private sector, political-cultural worldviews are definitely at play, because there is "this ideological reason that the government simply wants to get rid of a network of people who are relatively independent."⁴² Indeed, one can infer that such sentiments are rooted in pre-Soviet historical cultural influences, in that Lukashenko "prizes the values of justice and equal distribution," and views "the motive for an entrepreneur...the desire for profit...[and] 'the spirit of gain' [to be] incompatible with the values of the Slavic-Orthodox peoples," and that such views are in tune with large numbers of Belarusians.⁴³

What is also important to note is that Lukashenko surrounds himself with ideologically like-minded individuals, usually with rural backgrounds, who had previously close network connections with Lukashenko himself. However, while

⁴² Belarusian Non-Governmental Elite. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Similar sentiments to the observations mentioned above were also elaborated on by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010).

⁴³ Zlotnikov. (2002). "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.," p. 132, 133. Some reports from Maisenya have described the strong convictions of Lukashenko in this regards as beliefs "bordering on Messianism," and that his attack on private businesses "corresponds to the President's vision of social justice." Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 224, 265, 318-319.

Lukashenko is certainly interested in maintaining his grip on power, it is argued here from a political-cultural standpoint that such a desire is not based on power being an end in itself and simply for power's sake. Overall, Lukashenko and other elites of his close inner-circle view the necessity to maintain power, not for rationalistic personal economic gain, but in order to use that power as a means to maintain the neo-soviet, collectivist and statist command style political-economic system. This is because such practices are in accordance with Lukashenko's political-cultural worldviews of what constitutes the 'best,' and 'right' policy practices in order to promote overall economic development, growth and wellbeing.⁴⁴

Since 1994, Lukashenko has become increasingly popular, and has steadily implemented a consistent policy regime that could be described as being neo-Soviet in nature. Indeed, as one Belarusian elite pointed out, "the ideology of Lukashenko is very much based on some kind of neo-Soviet nationalism, using Soviet symbols and Soviet nostalgia."⁴⁵ Overall, it can be argued that Lukashenko believes in the rightness of these policies, as a result that the political-cultural worldviews held by Lukashenko can be described as being highly collectivistic, illiberal, pro-Soviet/Russian and rooted in the historically authoritarian leadership habits found in rural Belarus. For example, one Belarusian elite pointed out that "Lukashenko's mentality was like that of a Soviet person," while another added that "he is an idealist and he believes that the Soviet system was a good system."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Such strong likeminded ideological motivations influencing Lukashenko's goals for power, leadership style and the policy ideas of his close inner circle, was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). For evidence inferring preferences favouring collectivistic and statist solutions over the private sector, see also Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 207, 281, 323; Korosteleva et al. (2003a). "Introduction.," p. 15-16.

⁴⁵ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Neo-Soviet ideologies were also mentioned by others. Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

⁴⁶ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by another Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Also mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga,

Indeed, one can see such worldviews and ideologies displayed in the policy rhetoric regularly exhibited to the Belarusian public by Lukashenko. For example, Lukashenko was quoted as saying that he views the “‘ability to work not just for the sake of profiteering, but for the good of the society, the collective, and other people.’”⁴⁷ Moreover, what is also key to note is that Lukashenko is not just spouting off some statements that he thinks the people want to hear, and is not merely using such policy methods as a means to simply maintain power, but actually truly believes and views these policies as the ‘best’ for the people, and the ‘right’ policy methods to promote overall economic growth and wellbeing. As one Belarusian elite noted about Lukashenko’s beliefs and rhetoric, “I believe that he strongly believes in the right nature of his policies and that he thinks, it’s the best way for the country to develop.”⁴⁸ To illustrate such normative value judgments regarding the rightness of collectivistic and statist policies, Zlotnikov noted that “Lukashenko has repeatedly affirmed that the former socialist economic system justified itself and that Belarus’s economic crisis was caused 50% by the disintegration of the USSR and 50% by the decline of executive discipline,” which according to Lukashenko “was why it is necessary not to reform, but to perfect, the system.”⁴⁹ Indeed, collectivistic, communal and statist solutions are not only preferred

Latvia (February 26b, 2010). For similar assessments, see also footnote no. 43, and Furman. (1999).

“‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 39.

⁴⁷ Lukashenko quoted in Silitski, Vitali. (2005). “Internal Developments in Belarus.” In *Changing Belarus*, eds. Dov. Lyn et al. Chaillot Paper No. 85. November. EU Institute for Security Studies., p. 33.

⁴⁸ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Additionally, several other elites also mentioned that they believe that Lukashenko truly believes and views these policies as the best and right policy methods to promote overall economic growth and wellbeing. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010); Belarusian Governmental Official. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (March 23, 2010). This was also mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

⁴⁹ Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.” p. 133. A similar assessment of Lukashenko’s strong commitment to such ideologies was mentioned by Maksymiuk, Jan. (2007). “Belarus: Father of the Nation, or Fatherless Son?.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 8. www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/02/d22a8d8e-95a3-48f5-a3fd-cf11f7536421.html; Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 224, 318-139, 337; Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 39; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 118; Wilde. (2002). “The Challenges of Using NGOs.” p. 429. Additionally, Lukashenko’s own website also has the main slogan prominent displayed that “We will build a strong and prosperous Belarus – the state for the people.” Lukashenko, Aleksander. (2010). “The Official Internet Portal of the President of the Republic of Belarus. <http://president.gove.by/en/>. See also footnote no. 44 and 48 above. In this cultural context, collectivistic and statist solutions would be seen as rational

over market mechanisms, but also viewed normatively as being the ‘right’ and ‘best’ modes of policy orientation.

Still, some might argue that because Belarus is a dictatorship under Lukashenko, that it is his values and desire to maintain power at play, which limits the ability for the political-cultural worldviews of Belarusian society to influence political-economic decision making. Certainly, one of the key challenges certainly facing Belarus when it comes to current reform is that Lukashenko’s dictatorship has consolidated its power so effectively. However, it is important to note that the current regime’s legitimacy and longevity are not merely based on force, oppression and beating down opponents, because the preferences and values displayed by Lukashenko are in tune with the predominant political-cultural worldviews of the broader society. Indeed, similar to much of the rest of Belarusian society, there was an overall lack in liberal political-cultural worldviews held by Lukashenko, and a favouritism towards continued collectivistic, communal, paternalistic and authoritarian political-economic policy practices, which made any thought of liberalized reform to be non-existent and out of the question. To illustrate, one Belarusian political commentator noted that “the Lukashenko regime, has “placed...the outlook of the average Belarusian political culture in its own foundation.”⁵⁰ Thus, the phenomenon of Lukashenko’s power and popularity did not come about in a

since market-style reforms are not in accord with Lukashenko’s and other elite’s political-cultural worldviews favouring command-style solutions. In contrast, liberal-market reforms in their worldview would not be seen as a rational way to manage the political-economy.

⁵⁰ Silitski, Vitali. (2006). “Памятаць, што дыктатуры руйнуюцца [Remember that the collapse of the dictatorship].” *Arche*, 7, 8. <http://arche.bymedia.net/2006-7/silicki706.htm>. Moreover, in a report from the Economist, Vladimir Karyagan was quoted saying that “Lukashenko reflects the interests of the great majority of the population...the working class like him because he is no different from themselves.” Economist. (1995). “In the Slav Shadowlands.” That Lukashenko was in tune with the values of society, where there is an absence of liberal worldviews, and the presence of highly collectivistic, statist and pro-Soviet worldviews and historical memories was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010); Belarusian Governmental Official. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (March 23, 2010). For similar consensus inferring that the values of Lukashenko are in tune with society’s worldviews, see Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 45; Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.” p. 133; Colton, Timothy J. (2002). “Belarusian Public Opinion and the Union with Russia.” Ch. 1, in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 21-22; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 153, 234. Hill. (2005). “Post-Soviet Belarus.” p. 9. See discussion below on popular appeal and footnotes no. 101 to 103.

vacuum, but were directly conditioned by the historic political-cultural environment of Belarusian society. Therefore, when one examines the situation more in depth, such policy patterns actually follow more closely motivations deriving from the worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories predominant in Belarusian political-culture, because such policies are viewed by not only Lukashenko, but also by many Belarusian elites and members of society, as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ methods to promote growth and overall societal well-being.

Therefore, throughout the period of Lukashenko’s rule there was a certain limit to reforms and changes that could happen. This was due to the finiteness of the ideas and habits that Belarusian elites and society could draw upon for policy inspiration, which depended largely on the predominant historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories already preexisting in Belarus which were highly collectivistic and nostalgically pro-Soviet, and generally lacked any explicit liberal value orientation. Indeed, Lukashenko and other Belarusian elites and those in society chose what was ‘known’ to them over what was ‘unknown,’ according to the predominant collectivistic ideas and habits found in Belarus’s historic political-culture worldviews and way of life. Moreover, what was ‘known’ supported Belarusians preconceived political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories of what was viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ and ‘normal’ policy practices. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “the people, and the government believed that this is the right way...and they never abandoned their views and their beliefs.”⁵¹

Overall, Belarusians collectivist political-cultural worldviews diverge significantly compared to the pronounced liberal-individualist worldviews found in broad segments of Latvian society. Instead, most Belarusians have remained pro-Soviet,

⁵¹ For comparative purposes, it is important to note that this elite also noted that “the Poles, Czechs, Latvians and Balts, never believed in the Soviet system, they abandoned these easily, and they knew the way and the path they were going to follow, so they never regretted it, but Belarusians never abandoned their views and beliefs.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). That both society and elites believe in the rightness of these policies was also mentioned by several other elites Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian [Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate]Non-Governmental Elite. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010); Belarusian Governmental Official. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (March 23, 2010).

favouring collectivistic, authoritarian, paternalistic and strong statist solutions for managing political-economic affairs, as well as close relations with Russia. As will be discussed below, throughout his time in power, Lukashenko has been a talented politician by repeatedly using rhetoric playing on the peoples traditionally collectivistic, pro-Soviet and pro-Russian worldviews. Indeed, the policy patterns that have characterized Belarus's general lack of liberal-market political-economic transformation since 1991 have followed more closely motivations deriving from the habits and worldviews predominant in the Belarusian political-cultural way of life, as a result of such policies being normatively viewed by Belarusians as being the 'best' and 'right.'

Pro-Russian Orientation

National Identity explanations often point to pro-Soviet nostalgia and preferences for close orientation to Russia, shared by Lukashenko and Belarusians in general, to infer that Belarus has a weak national identity. In regards to the latter, National Identity arguments will refer to the fact that Lukashenko was elected on an explicitly pro-Russian platform, as well as that Belarusian people also voted in a relatively free referendum in 1995 in favour of increased close relations with Russia. In both areas, National Identity arguments have cited polling data and electoral results as 'proof' of a weak national identity. In this regard, there appears to be problems of selection bias as certain polls and electoral results are grabbed upon while others are ignored. For example, this is apparent where the referendum results of 1995 are cited, where the people voted 83.3% in support of also making Russian an official language equal to Belarusian, 75.1% supported the creation of a new flag which was reminiscent of the official flag of the BSSR, and most importantly, 83.3% of the people voted in favour of the President to act to bring closer economic integration with Russia.⁵² While choice of language, national symbols, and closer relations with Russia are all cited as evidence of Belarus lacking a 'strong' and

⁵² See Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda. (1995). "The Report of the Central Commission on Voting Results at the National Referendum." Minsk, Belarus. <http://www.rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Archive-Referenda-1995-Soob.pdf>; (1996). "The Report of the Central Commission on Voting Results at the National Referendum." Minsk, Belarus. <http://www.rec.gov.by/sites/default/files/pdf/Archive-Referenda-1996-Soob.pdf>. For National Identity arguments that cite such numbers, see Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 141; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 73-75; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 279.

‘cohesive’ national identity, such evidence is rarely put into context, and no attempt is made to understand the deeper meaning of what these preferences of the people indicate.

In regards to pro-Russian orientations, National Identity explanations have tended to argue that Lukashenko’s pro-Russian political rhetoric of advocating for stronger relations with Russia were examples of Belarusians lack of national identity. Moreover, National Identity explanations often characterized Belarusian policies, such as the lack of political-economic reforms, and Belarus’s continuing cooperation and trade, in the form of cheap oil and gas, and potential customs and currency unions with Russia, as primary examples of a lack of national identity resulting often in rent-seeking. For example, Savchenko and others have similarly argued that “oil supplies at relatively low prices were actively and successfully used to influence internal political processes,” where, “Russia was able to use oil as a means of...inducement (in the case of Belarus) for the purposes of foreign policy.”⁵³ As a result, such arguments imply that this structurally worked against reform since Belarus’s heavily industrialized economy was dependent on Russian oil.

Several commentators have even made doom and gloom predictions about the prospects for Belarus’s long-term sovereignty as a result of Minsk’s close relations with Moscow.⁵⁴ However, several substantial counterpoints can be raised to such forecasts. First, it should be pointed out that countries that were categorized as having strong national identities, such as Latvia and the Baltic States, which commentators argued were purposively moving away from Russia, nevertheless remained dependent on energy imports in the form of Russian oil and gas. Not only does this fact make problematic National Identity explanations, since countries like Latvia remain dependent on Russian oil and gas imports, but it also casts serious doubt especially on many of the other connected premises, such as that Russian oil and gas dependence is a serious inhibitor of Belarusian reform.

⁵³ Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 102; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 31-32; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 530-531. However, in response, Colton argues that such are “wrongheaded assumptions...that giant imperialistic Russia [is] dictating to a helpless Belarus.” Colton. (2002). “Belarusian Public Opinion.” p. 21-22.

⁵⁴ See for example, Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 274-275; Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building.” p. 75, 84; Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.” p. 116, 118; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 110.

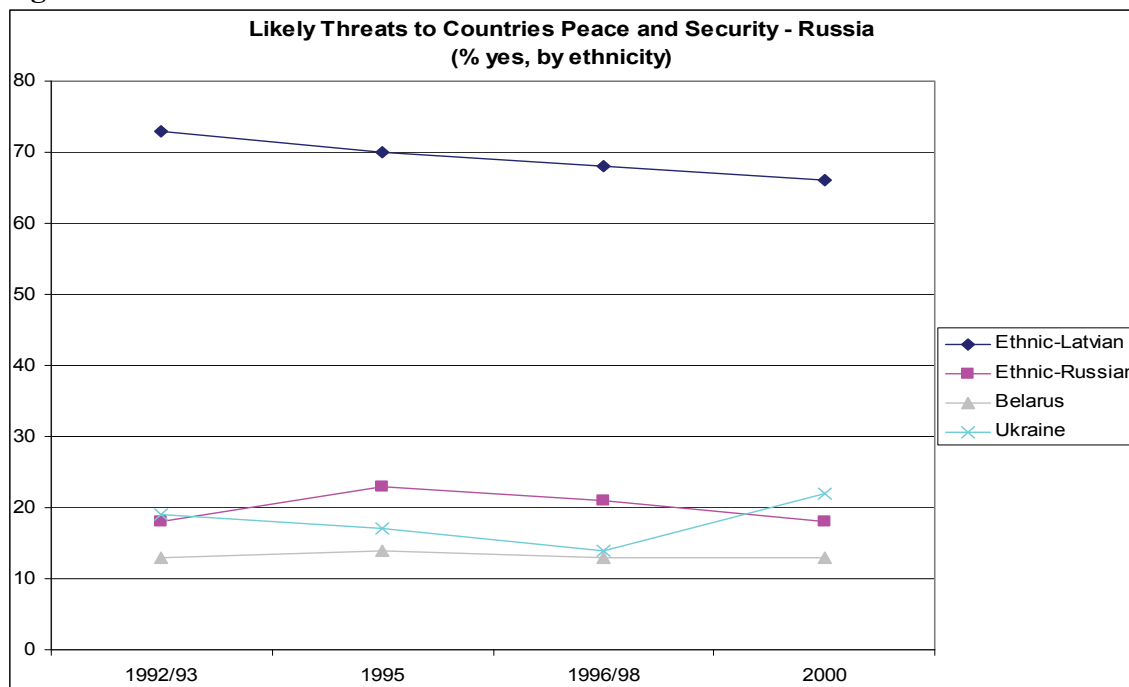
Additionally, such behavior is not simply a result of a lack of national identity or driven by rational economic motives. While certainly viewing Russian oil and gas, and other areas of economic cooperation as means to assist in the goal of retaining power, it cannot simply be concluded that the motivations here of Belarusian elites are a result of simply using such cooperation as a means to maintain power for power's sake. Instead, Lukashenko and other Belarusian elite, use that power as a means to maintain the traditionally, collectivist, communal, statist and authoritarian command style political-economic practices and policies which are reminiscent from Soviet times. This is because such policy is in accordance with their political-cultural worldviews of what constitutes the 'best' and 'right' policy practices.⁵⁵ Indeed, when one examines the situation more in depth, such policy patterns actually follow more closely motivations deriving from the worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories predominant in Belarusian political-culture, because such policies are viewed by not only Lukashenko, but also by many Belarusian elites and members of society, as the 'best,' 'right' and 'natural' methods to promote overall growth and well-being.

Certainly, Belarusians have tended to favour close and friendly relations with Russia. Moreover, compared to Latvia which has tended to view Russia as its biggest threat, few Belarusians see Russia as a threat, which was illustrated in various public opinion polls. Overall, Belarusians were informed by political-cultural worldviews and historical memories that did not view Russia as an aggressor towards Belarus, in contrast to Latvia where there were strong historical memories of Russian aggression, and the very real clash of political-cultural worldviews that was present during the long Soviet/Russian occupation of Latvia. Belarusian public perceptions about the non-threat of Russia can be seen in public opinion polls, which illustrate that Belarusian non-threat perceptions of Russia is similar to that of ethnic-Russian/Slavic people living in Latvia, and differs substantially from ethnic-Latvians, thus inferring a great deal of political-

⁵⁵ That Lukashenko views these policies as the 'best' and 'right' policy methods to promote overall economic growth and wellbeing was noted above. See footnotes no. 43 to 48. For similar consensus, see also Wieck, Hans-Georg. (2002). "The Role of International Organizations in Belarus." Ch. 15, in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 382. Additionally, Mihalisko also notes that Kebich in his moves to build increased cooperation with Russia, was driven by a desire that this would "create a more efficient social economy," and "socioeconomic stability through centralized control" [Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 250-251], thus implicitly inferring that Kebich believed such policies to be 'best' and 'right.'

cultural cohesion and affinity between Belarusians and Russians, in contrast to the clash of political-cultural worldviews that existed between ethnic-Latvians and Russians (see Figure 7.5 below).⁵⁶

Figure 7.5



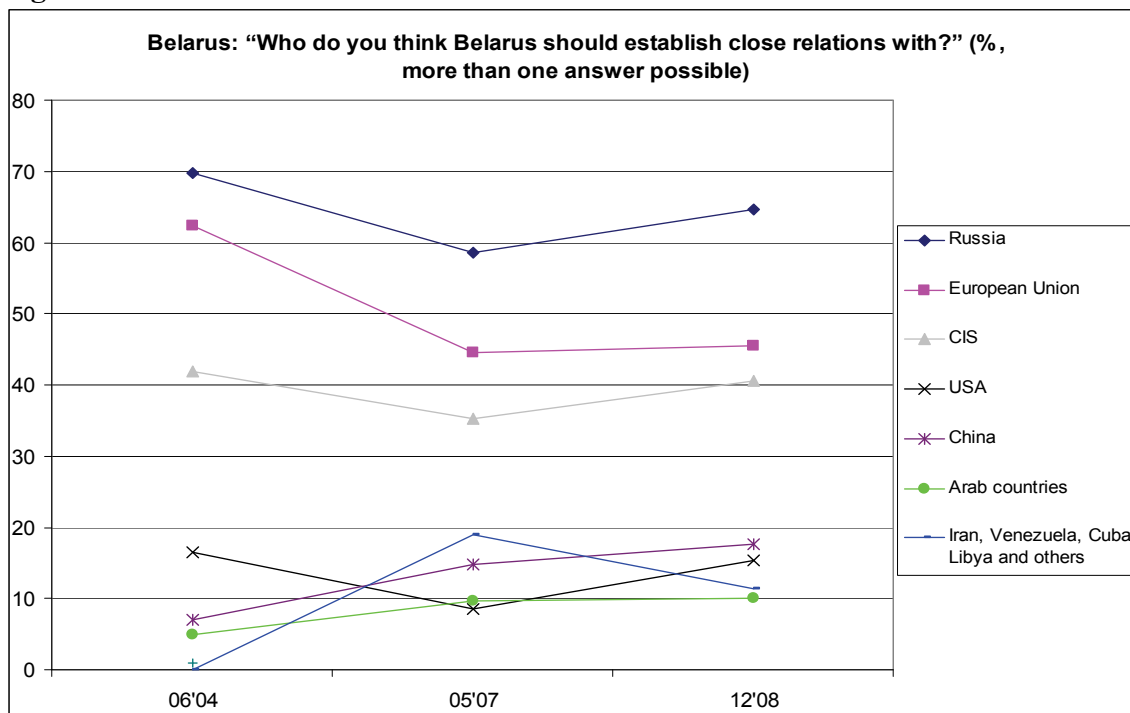
Source(s): 1992/93: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 28; Rose & Maley 1994: 43-44). 1995: (Rose 1995: 37; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 83-85). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 34-35; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 63-64). 2000: (Rose 2000: 37; White & Rose 2001: 51-52).

Here, clashing political-cultural worldviews can be inferred from the fact that Belarusian responses mirror closely the responses of ethnic-Russians/Slavs living in Latvia and diverge significantly from the opinions given by ethnic-Latvians in regards to perceptions of whether Russia or the West is viewed as the most important for future international relations. Indeed, Belarusian responses place greatest importance on future close relations with Russia and the CIS, whereas chapter 5 illustrated that Latvian opinion largely favoured a return to the West and integration with Western bodies such as the EU

⁵⁶ In regards to political-culture, there has always been a strong cultural identification historically with Russia, and Russia is not seen as a threat to Belarus, which was pointed out by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by a Latvian elite. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

and NATO. Indeed, as Figure 7.6 illustrates, a large majority of Belarusians listed Russia as the most important to establish close relations, while only a minority of Belarusians gave responses in favour of a more Western orientation.⁵⁷

Figure 7.6



Source(s): (IISEPS 2004b; IISEPS 2008d).

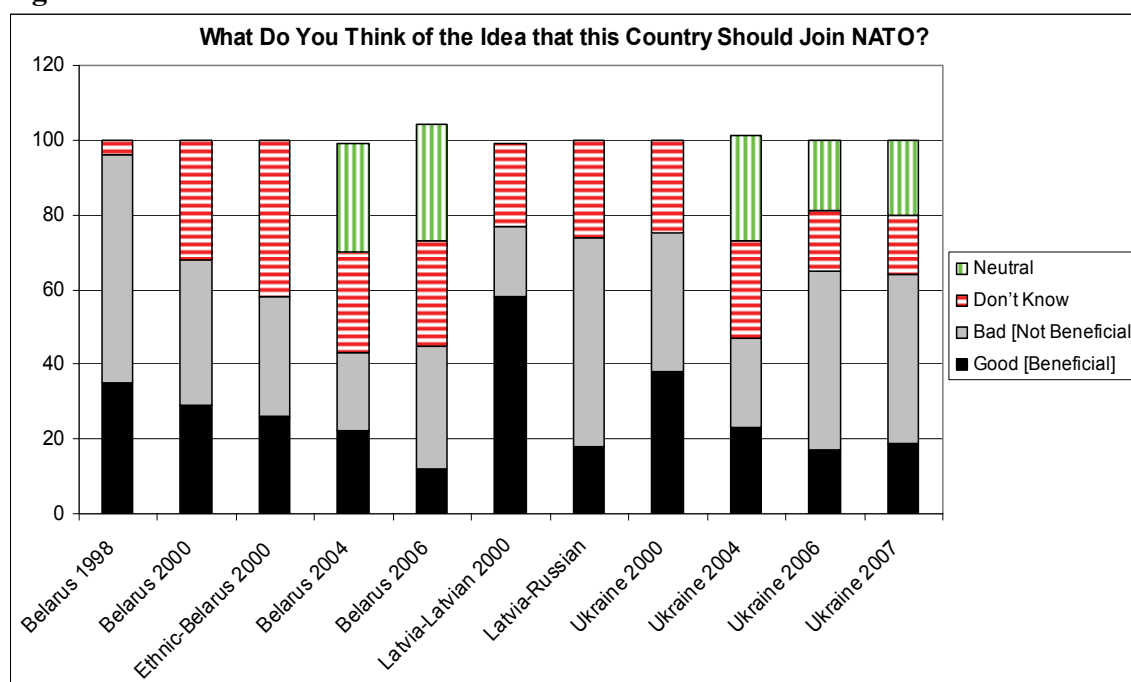
Additionally, Figure 7.7 below illustrates that Belarusians held substantially more negative worldviews in regards to questions of NATO membership which were similar to responses given by ethnic-Russians living in Latvian, and also divergent from the positive outlooks displayed by ethnic-Latvians towards NATO. Indeed, Lukashenko's rhetoric has consistently and effectively played on these underlying popular sentiments that had an historically anti-Western bent, by pointing to the hardships of market reforms in Latvia, Poland, as well as negative portrayals of NATO as an enemy to Belarusian interests.⁵⁸ Indeed, it is evident that many average Belarusians themselves tend to think

⁵⁷ Such numbers are supported by another poll conducted in 2000, where over 70% of Belarusians argued that it was most important for Belarus to have good relations with Russia, while only a minority of Belarusians gave responses in favour of a more Western orientation. See Figure A.31 in Appendix.

⁵⁸ For instance, this played on hostile anti-western sentiments in regards to the Baltic States and Poland gaining membership, and NATO's war with Serbia. Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar observations were also mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010);

of themselves as culturally different from the West, which is illustrated in a public opinion poll from 2009, which asked Belarusians their personal ideas and opinions about the West, where the highest number of respondents, 37.2% listed the West as “a different civilization, an alien world with its laws, [and a] different people.”⁵⁹

Figure 7.7



Source(s): 1998 (Rose & Haerper 1998: 77-78). 2000: (Rose 2000: 39-40; White & Rose 2001: 53). 2004-2007: (White & McAllister 2008: 16).

However, such friendliness should not be confused with Belarus generally lacking a national identity or simply being driven by rational economic motives. This is because

Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Additionally, most Belarusians when polled in 1999, in the range of 47.7% thought that NATO's eastward expansion was a threat, while only 17.6% answered no. IISEPS. (1999d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 14 (December). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet99-4.html>. For similar consensus, see Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes*, p. 196, 330; Marples and Padhol. (2002). "The Opposition in Belarus," p. 67; Marples. (2004). "The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus," p. 41; Lindner, Rainer. (2002). "The Lukashenka Phenomenon." Ch. 2 in , in *Independent Belarus*, eds. M. M. Balmaceda, J. I. Clem and L. L. Tarlow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press., p. 91-93; Hill. (2005). "Post-Soviet Belarus," p. 10.

⁵⁹ Additionally, 14.0% listed the West as "a rational and cold world with formal and selfish relations between people," while 10.2% said that "these are states and political forces which will always be hostile to our country." IISEPS. (2009a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 51 (March). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet09-1.html>. Moreover in another poll from 2006, which asked Belarusians what they thought about the influence of Belarus, Russia, and the USA in the world, 43.5% said Belarusian influence was positive, 68.3% gave a positive response to Russian influence in the world, which contrasted with the 52.0% of Belarusians who found the influence of the USA to be negative for the most part. IISEPS. (2006c). *IISEPS News*, Issue 3, 41 (September). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet06-3.html>.

Belarusians favour close and friendly relations with Russia, as a result of shared historic religious-cultural links, traditions and positive historical memories toward Russia that are contained in predominant political-cultural worldviews of Belarusians. Such close cultural affinity can be inferred from a statement from former Belarusian Prime Minister Kebich, where he was quoted as stating that “it is not just a question of economic circumstances. We are linked by the closest spiritual bonds; we have a common history and similar cultures.”⁶⁰ Similarly echoing such close cultural affinity, President Lukashenko was quoted as saying that the “Belarusian people from the depths of its soul longs for union with Russia.”⁶¹ Again it is important to emphasize that such close cultural affinity does not signal a lack of national identity. Indeed, due to Belarusian common cultural histories and links shared with Russia, the tendency to want to be friends and cooperative with Russia is only normal and natural for Belarusians.

Additionally, it is important to emphasize that Lukashenko has sought to cooperate with Russia on equal terms as two independent states, and as a result has been instrumental in maintaining and strengthening Belarusian sovereignty. Indeed, political-economic cooperation with Russia has been moving at an exceedingly slow pace since the mid-1990s, and more often than not, Lukashenko has extracted significant gains from Moscow, without conceding much from Belarus to Moscow in return. Therefore, in spite of the many doom and gloom predictions there is also increasing consensus that Lukashenko can be increasingly seen as a strong defender of Belarusian national interests and sovereignty, and has gained popular favour for doing so. For example, when Belarusians were polled in regards their views regarding successful activity by Lukashenko, in 2007 and 2008, 61.3% and 64.5% respectively, answered yes in regards to “the construction of an independent state.”⁶² Additionally, this view of Lukashenko

⁶⁰ Kebich quoted in Burant. (1995). “Foreign Policy and National Identity.” p. 1136.

⁶¹ Lukashenko quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 1136. Inferences to close historical religious-cultural-linguistic bonds between Belarus and Russian, and how such links would produce natural feelings amongst the populace for close relations between two countries, can be found in Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 172, 270, 282-283, 335; Drakokhrust and Furman. (2002). “Belarus and Russia.” p. 232, 250. Even those who argue that Belarus lacked a coherent national identity also noted that in Belarus’s close orientation towards Russia, “there was undeniably a cultural impulse involved.” Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 130.

⁶² IISEPS. (2008a). *IISEPS News*. Moreover, in another poll from January 2007, 52.6% of Belarusian respondents gave Lukashenko high marks for standing up to Russia during the earlier Belarus-Russia oil

acting as a protector of Belarusian national independence was echoed by several Belarusian non-governmental elites during field interviews.⁶³

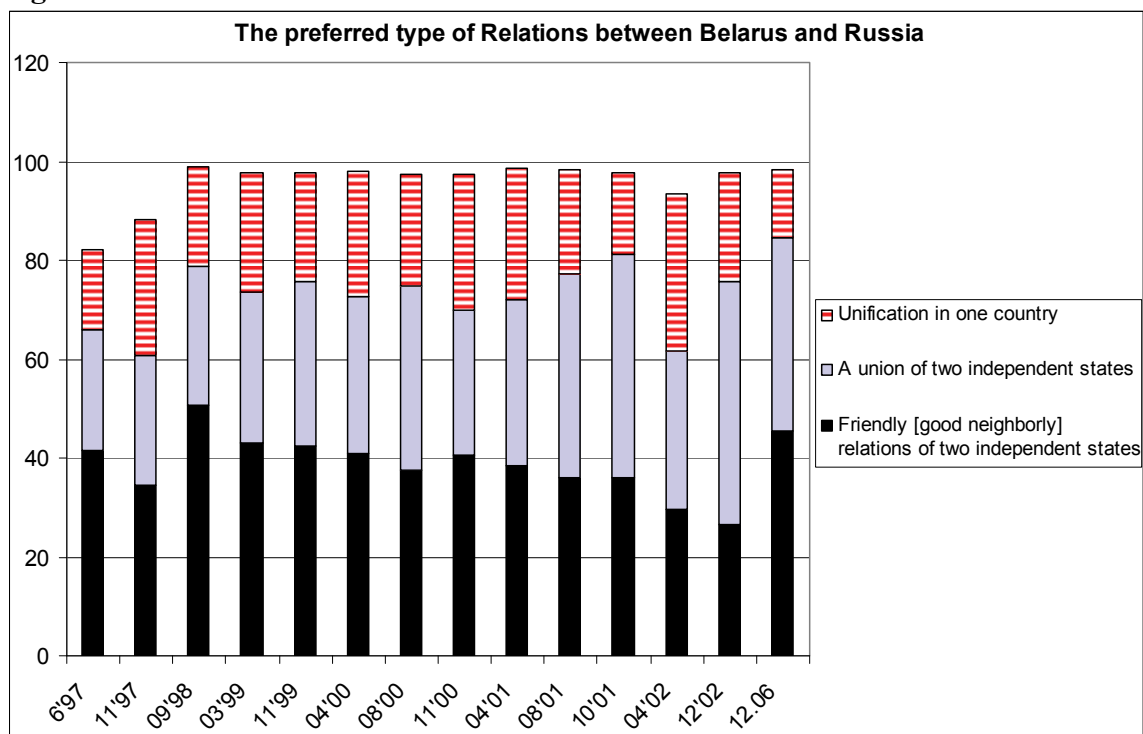
Additionally, while Lukashenko has sought to cooperate with Russia on equal terms, and been instrumental in maintaining and strengthening Belarusian sovereignty in relation to Russia, such behaviors are preferred by the worldviews of most of Belarusian society, which favours the protection of Belarusian sovereignty from Russia. In general, while favoring closer relations and a general political-economic orientation towards Russia, the vast majority of Belarusian people do not wish to see such closer relations as resulting in the loss of Belarusians sovereignty. Specifically, if one examines polls on questions regarding the types of Belarusian-Russian integration favoured by Belarusians, the vast majority favour the options of two independent sovereign states, with only a minority supporting the full political-economic integration of Belarus into Russia. This is seen in Figures 7.8 and 7.9 below, which show that repeatedly in multiple polls conducted from 1997 to 2008, Belarusians consistently answered that they were in favour of close cooperation with Russia, with Belarusian remaining independent.⁶⁴ Such a view was echoed by several Belarusian Non-Governmental elites during field interviews, especially in regards to the details of what Belarusian friendliness towards Russia actually entails, in that Belarusians highly value that Belarus remains sovereign.⁶⁵

and gas conflict, saying that “he showed himself a strong politician.” In contrast, only 25.7% responded no, answering “he showed himself a weak politician.” IISEPS. (2007a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (January).

⁶³ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Such a fact has even been widely acknowledged, sometimes grudgingly, by several National Identity theorists and commentators. Sahn. (1999). “Political Culture and National Symbols,” p. 658; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe,” p. 530; Drakokhrust and Furman. (2002). “Belarus and Russia,” p. 239, 253; Silitski. (2003). “Explaining post-Communist Authoritarianism,” p. 43; Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet,” p. 50; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus*, p. 93, 170; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations*, p. 284; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*, p. 118; Marples. (2004). “The Prospects for Democracy in Belarus,” p. 40; Rontoyanni. (2005). “Belarus and the East,” p. 132; Maksymiuk. (2008). “Commentary.”

⁶⁴ Such numbers are further corroborated by independent Western polls where close to 70% of Belarusians responded in 2000 said that they prefer close relations with Russia, with Belarus remaining independent. White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine*, p. 18.

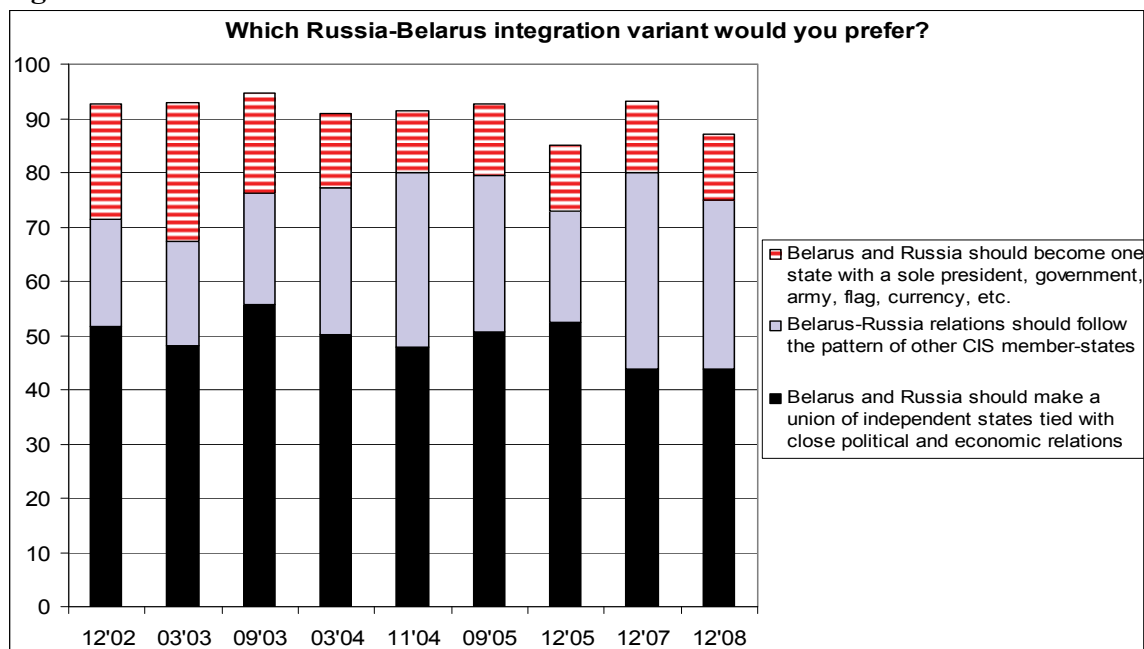
⁶⁵ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Additionally, it should be noted that in a public opinion poll

Figure 7.8

Source(s): (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001b; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2002b; IISEPS 2006a).

In viewing such responses, it is hard to view the answers of Belarusians as being that different from Latvian worldviews towards integration with the European Union, only that a significant normative bias is placed by National Identity explanations against Belarusian support for more friendly relations with Russia. In other words, just as the Latvians prefer being in the same group as their cultural brethren in Western Europe and thus desired accession into the EU, so too does Belarus feel closer to its historical cultural grouping in identifying and preferring closer relations with Russia, while at the same time maintaining its independence. It is thus unfair to normatively argue that Belarus lacks a national identity because Belarusians prefer to gravitate towards the cultural pole with which they have the strongest links. Indeed, Belarusian could not imagine being outside or delinking from their traditional cultural realm of being closely oriented towards Russia, just as Latvians could not imagine not having a close orientation towards the West. This increasingly signals that a more strongly robust national identity had existed in Belarus than many National Identity commentators gave Belarus credit.

from June 1997, 85.4% of Belarusian respondents answered in the affirmative that Belarus should be a sovereign state, while only 12.8% said no. IISEPS. (1999d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 14 (December).

Figure 7.9

Sources: (IISEPS 2004a; IISEPS 2004b; IISEPS 2005c; IISEPS 2007d; IISEPS 2008d).

Pro-Soviet Nostalgia

Throughout his time in power Lukashenko has been a talented politician by repeatedly using rhetoric playing on the peoples traditionally collectivistic and pro-Soviet worldviews, speaking the language of the Belarusian masses, playing on the desire of having strong leadership, invoking positive and nostalgic historical memories of Belarusian guerilla fighters during WWII, the extensive development and modernization under the BSSR, and the role of its most prominent leaders such as Masherov. In regards to domestic affairs, Lukashenko used rhetoric that glorified the Soviet past, and presented his governing style as wise leadership based on a reliance of Soviet traditions. Additionally, as mentioned above, Lukashenko has also played on underlying popular sentiments that had an historically anti-Western bent, by pointing to the hardships of market reforms in Latvia, Poland, as well as negative portrayals of NATO as an enemy to Belarusian interests. As will be discussed below, this skilfulness in being an astute politician at reading the sentiment of the people, and also speaking the peoples language, both literally, and also in promoting themes in his rhetoric that play on the peoples predominant collectivist, statist, and nostalgic pro-Soviet historical memories of the

BSSR, as well as anti-Western and anti-capitalist sentiments has been a major factor explaining Lukashenko's strong connections with average Belarusians.

The fact that Lukashenko has successfully promoted such themes in his political struggles infers that that large numbers of Belarusians have positive historical memories of, and value the collectivistic, communal, and authoritarian leadership styles of the former partisan guerilla leaders that lead the BSSR through most of the post-1945 period. Indeed, a large majority of Belarusians had great nostalgia for the stability, growth and prosperity fostered by Soviet industrial development under the BSSR, of which Belarusians shared positive historical memories. Such pro-Soviet nostalgia of Belarusians were shaped by their historical memories of relative stability, development and prosperity under the BSSR, which reinforced the already preexisting collectivistic political-cultural worldviews. Lukashenko played on such pro-Soviet nostalgia effectively in his bid for the presidency in 1994, and in the following years to build up popular support for his rule. As one elite pointed out,

People wanted stability, jobs, and basic standards of living...and the old Soviet times were associated with stability and relative prosperity...we didn't know how people lived in the West, we just had rumors about exploitation and injustice. So Lukashenko promised order, by promising state support to create jobs, which the people knew at state enterprises. He promised to get back to regulating prices, and to protect the disenfranchised people who suffered. So his rhetoric was popular with the people.⁶⁶

However, such popular pro-Soviet sentiment and desire for a return of the perceived stability and prosperity found in the BSSR did not simply result from rationalistic inclinations of the people for material gain. Overall, there is a nostalgia for the old system, and the people felt that it worked and that they were prosperous under the

⁶⁶ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). That Lukashenko was able to effectively tap into pro-Soviet or neo-Soviet worldviews and historical memories about the BSSR, and the negative association of liberal market capitalism with exploitation was mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). This was also mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). For similar consensus, see Zlotnikov. (2002). "Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.," p. 126; Korosteleva et al. (2003a). "Introduction.," p. 7, 12; Silitski. (2006). "Still Soviet.," p. 48; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 535.

BSSR. In such a political-cultural environment where many viewed the current political insiders as being corrupt, Aleksander Lukashenko, a former collective farm manager from the eastern rural regions of Belarus and a relative political outsider up until the early 1990s, when he became chair of the parliaments anti-corruption committee, was able to step in successfully to campaign in 1994 on a pretty clear and explicit platform.

In doing so, Lukashenko ran on an anti-corruption platform, speaking the language of the people and playing on the peoples traditionally collectivistic and pro-Soviet worldviews, desire of having strong leadership, positive historical memories of the BSSR and its leaders such as Masherov, and also by promoting increased closer relations with Russia. Indeed, many of the leadership traditions and styles exhibited by the former guerilla leaders of the BCP and BSSR, were similar to leadership and values promoted in the rhetoric of President Lukashenko. Thus, a large part of Lukashenko's appeal was that he portrayed himself as a "proper Soviet person" whose leadership style was rooted in his experience as manager of a Soviet collective farm and untainted by corruption.⁶⁷ Certainly, the fact that Lukashenko was effectively able to tap into such sentiments to gain support by utilizing such pro-Soviet rhetoric points to strength of political-cultural worldviews at play, where Belarusian elites and society normatively viewed such methods to be the 'best' and 'right' courses of action to bring back order and prosperity.

As previously mentioned, one can see such high levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia at play, in that upwards of 75% of Belarusians voted to change the national flag in 1995 to one that was reminiscent of the Soviet flag. Moreover, by 2007 when polled on their preference for the current state symbols, 59.2% of Belarusians answered that they approved, while only 12.1% answered that they disapproved.⁶⁸ Indeed, National Identity

⁶⁷ This was mentioned by one Latvian elite with a knowledge of Belarusian affairs. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). Several Belarusian elites noted that Lukashenko as not just portraying such an image, but actually having "the mentality of a Soviet person." Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). On Lukashenko playing on such themes, being perceived as untainted by corruption, and popularity, see remarks by Lukashenko's former press attaché, Alexander Feduta. (2005). *Lukashenko: Politicheskaya Biografiya*. Moscow: Referendum., p. 127. See also, Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 167-169, 234, 325-326, 330; Marples. (2003). "History and Politics in post-Soviet Belarus.," p. 25, 28; Mihalisko. (1997). "Belarus.," p. 254; Lindner. (2002). "The Lukashenka Phenomenon.," p. 84-85; White, Stephen and Elena Korosteleva. (2005). "Lukashenko and the Postcommunist Presidency." Ch. 4. In *Postcommunist Belarus*, eds. S. White, E. Korosteleva, and J. Löwenhardt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., p. 59.

⁶⁸ IISEPS. (2007). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (January).

arguments often cite examples of pro-Soviet nostalgia as a way to infer that Belarusians lack a cohesive national identity. However, in relation to choice of national symbols, and preference to abandon the Belarusian white-red-white flag in favour of the green and red flag from the BSSR, several points should be noted. On a methodological level, a certain level of circularity infuses the arguments of many National Identity arguments in referring to Belarusians decision to alter their national symbols as an inference to claims explaining such policies on a lack of national identity. Additionally, it is an example of the normative bias found in many National Identity explanations which overly privilege Western, anti-Russian and anti-Soviet narratives of Belarusian identity. Moreover, National Identity arguments rarely put the Belarusian choice of national symbols into context, and no attempt is made to understand the deeper meaning of what these preferences of the people indicate.

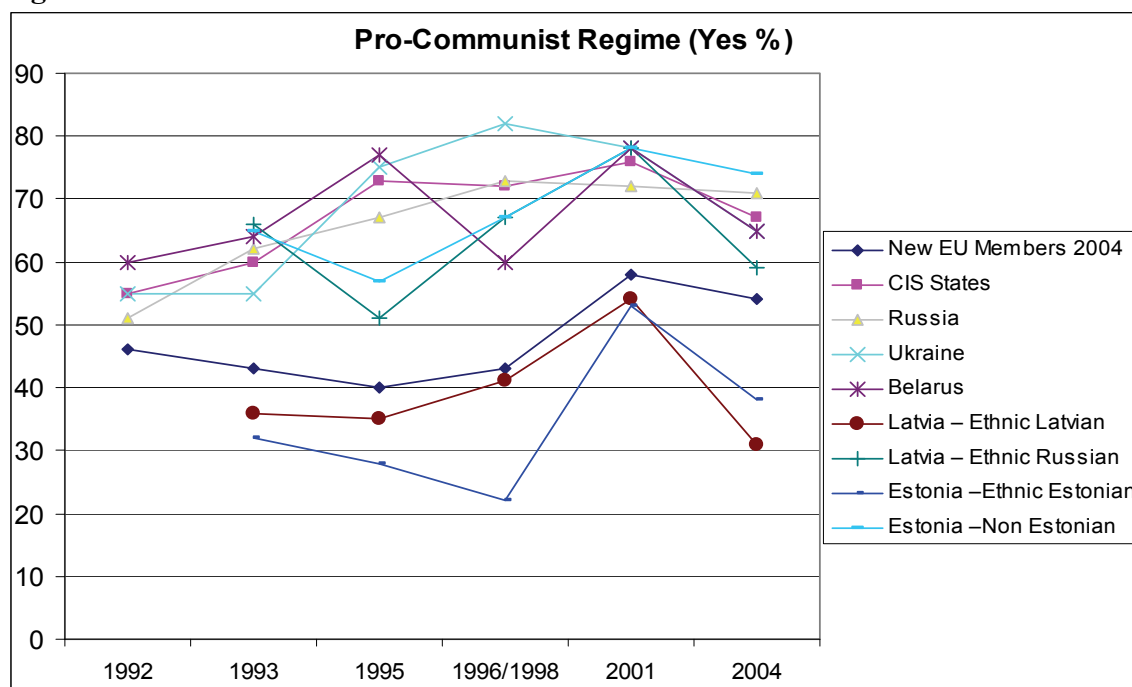
In doing so, such accounts do not adequately acknowledge or simply discount the alternative predominant political-cultural worldviews actually infusing Belarusian national identity, where the majority of people would have viewed the state symbols of the BSSR more properly as the real, legitimate and identifiable national symbols of Belarus. Indeed, most National Identity arguments ignore that “much of Belarusians nationally conscious history falls into the Soviet period.”⁶⁹ Therefore, just as Belarusians did not identify with ‘national’ historical narratives regarding the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the connected state symbols promoted by the BPF, including the white-red-white flag and the Pahonia emblem, so too did many Belarusians largely identify positively with the state-symbols and green and red flag of the BSSR. This was due to the fact that many Belarusians shared positive historical memories and had strong identification with the modern state-building and economic progress of industrial

⁶⁹ Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, 56, 61-64. While Ioffe probably gives one of the best descriptive analysis of Belarus to date, in that he implicitly points to a great deal of cultural factors at play, Ioffe’s arguments nevertheless fall back on the explanatory variable of national identity, in that the problems facing Belarus result from it being a “cleft country” (p. 235). For examples of National Identity arguments that appear circular in regards to discussions of national symbols, and also normatively biased in that they overly and unquestioningly privilege Western, anti-Russian/Soviet versions, and belittle the state-building of the BSSR, and thus disregard the Belarusians high levels of affinity for, and pride in the BSSR as an example of a lack of national identity, without adequately assessing whether this might actually be part of a real existing robust Belarusian identity, see Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 141; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.,” p. 527, 536; Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire.,” p. 111.

development and modernization that was experienced under the governance of the BSSR. Most importantly, for Belarusians, the BSSR and Soviet system were not perceived to be culturally alien.

Overall, the worldviews of many Belarusians remained highly pro-Soviet after gaining independence after 1991, which stood in contrast to much lower levels of pro-Soviet sentiment found amongst ethnic-Latvians. This is illustrated in various public surveys of Belarusians, which are more pro-Soviet and nostalgic for the USSR/BSSR in their responses compared to ethnic-Latvians, whose worldviews show much more negative views towards the Communist system. For example, such attitudes are illustrated in Figure 7.10, which ranks positive responses in regards to individuals approval of the political system before perestroika (pro-Communist regime), and highlights that Belarusian people were far more pro-Communist than ethnic-Latvians, new-EU member states, and the average of the CIS countries.

Figure 7.10



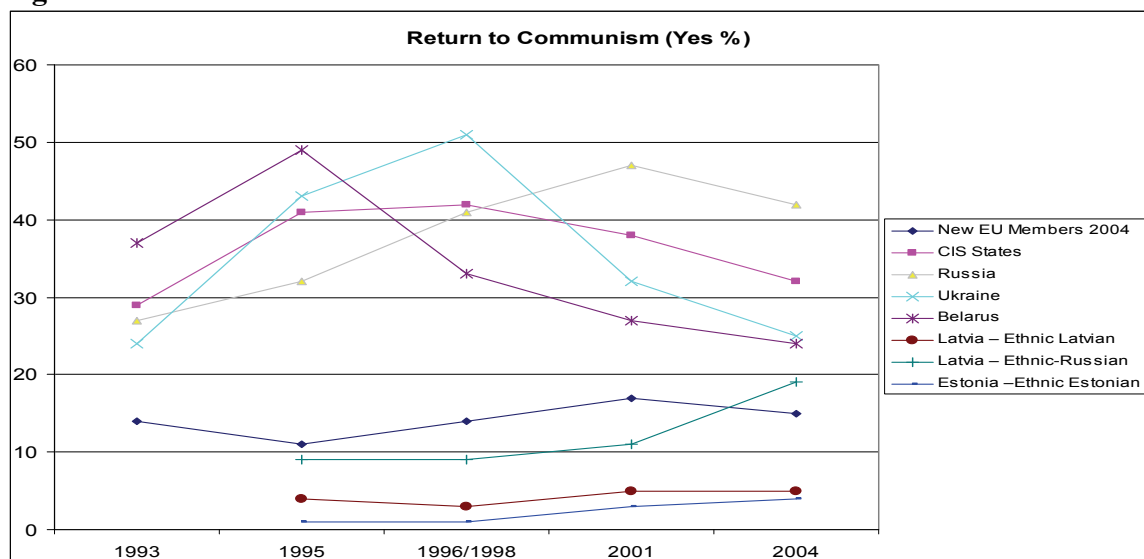
Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 23). 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 34; Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 32). 1995: (Rose 1995: 25; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 72). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 18-19; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 48-49). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 20-21; Rose 2002: 7-8). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 13-14; Rose 2005b: 47; Rose 2006: 57).

In terms of yes responses in regards to approval of the Communist political system (pro-Communist regime), in a poll from 1993, 64% of Belarusians responded yes, which was nearly double the 36% found amongst ethnic-Latvians. More recently, as Figure 7.10 reveals, in a similar poll conducted over ten years later in 2004, similar attitudes persisted in that 65% of Belarusians responded positively, compared to only 31% for ethnic-Latvians. These results showing higher pro-Communist/Soviet sentiments amongst Belarusians compared to ethnic-Latvians are also supported by other polling data on similar questions from the World Values Survey. What is also important about the World Values Survey polling results is that data can be broken down by religion, which illustrates that Orthodox Belarusians gave more positive responses in rating the political system before 1991, 37.9% in 1996, and 35.4% in 2000, compared to ethnic-Latvian respondents where Latvian-Protestants polled only 19.4% and 13.4%, and Latvian-Roman Catholics polled 20.3% and 25.8% respectively in 1996 and 1999.⁷⁰

Additionally, the higher extent of ethnic-Latvians anti-Soviet worldviews compared to Belarusians nostalgic and pro-Soviet worldviews is highlighted in two other public opinion polls. For example, in a public opinion poll which asked people whether they favour a return to Communism, ethnic-Latvians polled no higher than 5%, while Belarusians consistently polled in the double digits. Indeed, as Figure 7.11 illustrates, Belarus polled consistently higher than the low numbers of Latvia which ranked amongst the lowest of all post-Communist countries.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See, 'Rate the Political System as it was before 1991,' found within the 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1996-2000). For visual, see Figure 5.2 in chapter 5. Additionally, it is also interesting to note that in a World Values Survey from 1996 where it was asked which groups in society people liked least, ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) second highest group that they liked least after 'criminals' was 'Stalinists and Hard-line Communists,' where 34.8% ethnic-Latvian Protestants responded yes, and 20.7% of ethnic-Latvian Roman Catholics said yes. In contrast, while Belarusians also similarly named 'criminals' as their least liked group of society, Belarusians dislike of 'Stalinists and hard-line Communists' was less pronounced, where 11.7% yes rate was given by Belarusian respondents. See 'Least liked groups in society' in 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1996).

⁷¹ Additionally, such numbers are corroborated by other independent polling results from Belarus conducted between 1993 and 2009, which showed high yet declining positive attitudes towards the restoration of the USSR. For instance, in terms of positive responses towards restoration of the USSR, Belarusians polled answered 55.1% in 1993, 49.9% in 1997, 38% in 1999, 38.8% in 2002, 39.5% in 2004, 38% in 2005, 26.7% in 2006, 21.5% in 2008 and 26.7% in 2009. IISEPS. (2002b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 24 (June); IISEPS. (2006b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 40 (June); IISEPS. (2007a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (January); IISEPS. (2008b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 48 (June); IISEPS. (2008d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 50 (December); IISEPS. (2010). "Trends of Change in Belarusian Public Opinion." December 4. <http://www.iiseps.org/etrend.html>.

Figure 7.11

Source(s): 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 43). 1995: (Rose 1995: 35; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 77). 1996/98: (Rose 1997: 28; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 53). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 25; Rose 2002: 12-13). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 18; Rose 2005b: 13-14; Rose 2006: 57).

In other polls which also gauge pro-Soviet attitudes, results further illustrate that Belarusians have far greater nostalgia for the former Soviet Union than ethnic-Latvians. For example, in three separate polls conducted in 1995, 1996, and 2000, when residents of Latvia were asked if they thought they ‘would be better off if still part of the Soviet Union, ethnic-Latvian responses in the affirmative only reached in the single digits (6%, 7%, and 8% respectively) (see Figure A.22 in Appendix). While Belarusians were not asked the same question exactly, Belarusians nostalgia for the former Soviet regime can be seen from a similar question asked of Belarusians in 2000, 2004 and 2006, which asked Belarusian if it was a ‘misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists.’ Here Belarusian responses diverged from the ethnic-Latvian responses noted above, in that Belarusian positive responses were 70% (76% from those identifying as Belarusian-Belarusians) in 2000, 54% in 2004 and 39% in 2006 (see Figure A.23 in Appendix).

Overall, the worldviews of many Belarusians remained highly pro-Soviet after gaining independence after 1991, and stood in contrast to much lower levels of pro-Soviet sentiment found amongst ethnic-Latvians. Moreover, as a result of being a founding republic of the Soviet Union, Belarusians did not share the Latvians collective historical memory of the pain about how the Soviets/Russians took over. Instead, Belarusians had far greater sentimental and nostalgic historical memories about the

Soviet past. Indeed, as described in chapter 6, Belarusians predominant collectivistic worldviews that viewed Soviet political-economic development as positive stand in sharp contrast to Latvians staunchly liberal-individualist and anti-Soviet political-cultural worldviews which were characterized by a high level of anti-Soviet sentiment and desire to do away with all things Soviet. Most importantly, for Belarusians, the BSSR and Soviet system were not perceived to be culturally alien.

Collectivistic, Communal and Statist Worldviews

Overall, Belarusians collectivist and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews diverge significantly compared to the pronounced liberal-individualist worldviews found in broad segments of Latvian society. As described in chapter 6, there is historically not a cult of private property found amongst Belarusians as was the case in Latvia. Instead, most Belarusians favour collectivistic, authoritarian, paternalistic and strong statist solutions for managing political-economic affairs. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “Belarusians are overwhelmingly collectivist,...and in Belarus there is huge support for a ‘strong hand,’ and view that the state should take care of all citizens and ensure a reasonable standard of living, like a cradle to grave kind of attitude, with few people believing that the state should do as little as possible and not interfere in the lives and the economic activity of the people.”⁷²

At a basic level, several Belarusian elites noted the importance of Belarusians collective and communal political-cultural worldviews that place a strong emphasis on collective well-being over individual freedoms. To illustrate such sentiments, one elite observed that “very many people prefer security over freedom.”⁷³ Such observations are

⁷² Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Similar observations were also mentioned in Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector,” p. 124.

⁷³ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Some elites also noted that Belarusians conceptions of freedom differed from how those in West view freedom. For instance, one elite mentioned that “people didn’t have any experience of living in a democracy or free market economy, they had never any experience of going out freely.” Belarusian Opposition

corroborated by public opinion data, where far fewer Belarusians responded in a poll in 2000 that one of the most basic fundamental individual freedoms, namely freedom of speech is absolutely necessary, with only 25% of Belarusians overall, and 18% of Belarusian-Belarusians giving an unconditional yes response, which stood in contrast to the large majority of 60% of ethnic-Latvians who unconditionally said yes to the necessity of having such individual freedoms (see Figure A.17 in the Appendix). Additionally, when Belarusians were asked in 2000 to list the most desirable ideological qualities for national politicians to possess, amongst the highest rated items, 61% listed “humanism and adherence to human brotherhood,” 64% listed “internationalism,” 73% listed the “aspiration for social equality,” 74% listed “patriotism and preference for interests of ones nation,” while only 35% listed “liberalism and adherence to freedom.”⁷⁴ Indeed, what is also important to note about this poll was that it was conducted for Belarusians at the time when Lukashenko had almost virtually consolidated his authoritarian grip over Belarusian politics, which infers that Belarusian worldviews place less emphasis on individual freedoms, due to the fact that individual freedoms were on the decline during this time.

The strong collectivistic, communal, paternalistic, statist and illiberal ethos characterizing Belarusian political-cultural worldviews has played a big influence on Belarusian preferences favouring the continuance of collectivistic and statist solutions to extensively manage and regulate political-economic relations. In regards to questions of property ownership, one can see that worldviews favouring the right of individual private property ownership in Belarus are far less pronounced nor as consistent as those found with Latvians. This is illustrated by Figure A.37 in the Appendix, which illustrates that in numerous polls the vast majority of ethnic-Latvians without a doubt favoured the right of private ownership of property and land for all residents of Latvia, with far greater clarity than responses found in Belarus, where a significant minority even as late as the year 2000 viewed such rights negatively or responded that they simply did not know.

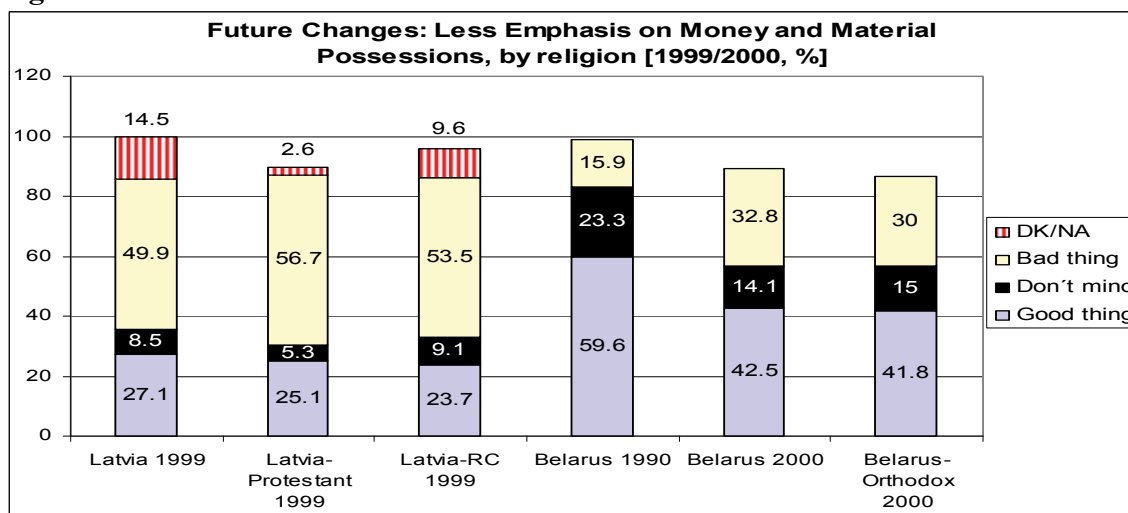
Additionally, Belarusian predominantly collectivistic political-cultural worldviews can be seen to be at play in influencing taxation policy. This is illustrated by

Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010)

⁷⁴ White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 34-37.

several World Value Survey polls that gauge respondents attitudes towards money and personal material possessions, as well as attitudes concerning income equality in society. As Figures 7.12 illustrates, ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) placed more emphasis on individualist goals, where a majority of ethnic-Latvians consistently responded that it was a bad thing to place less emphasis on money and material possessions, and also that society needs larger income differences as incentives, which stood in contrast to Belarusian responses which tended to verge towards more collectivistic responses. Thus, most Belarusians polled favoured the idea of placing less emphasis on money and material possessions.

Figure 7.12



Source(s): See the 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-1996).

Moreover, in regards to promoting income equality in society, 54.4% of Belarusians overall and 55.9% of Orthodox-Belarusians polled in 2000 answered yes, which stood in contrast to similar polls conducted in Latvia where 32.6% Protestant-Latvians and 43.3% of Roman Catholic-Latvians answered yes, while the majority of both ethnic-Latvian groups 65.3% and 53.2% respectively, answered that they rather were in favour of the need for larger income differences as incentives (see Figure A.35 in Appendix). Additionally, in regards to issues such as responsibility for housing, Belarusian attitudes placed far greater emphasis on state responsibility over that of the individual, where 66.3% overall, and 66.4% of Orthodox-Belarusians responded in the affirmative that the state should be responsible for housing, while only 31.9% and 31.6%

respectively responded that responsibility should belong to the individual.⁷⁵ Overall, in Belarus, social-welfare programs administered by the state are rooted in the hierarchical, paternalistic and collectivist worldviews predominantly found in Belarus's historic political-culture. Here, the stability of the collective and emphasis on state responsibility comes first in contrast to Latvia's political-cultural worldviews that place individual freedom first and foremost.

Overall, something like property restitution, which was popular and historically rooted in the political-cultural worldviews, and historical memories of Latvians, lacked any similar popular appeal and resonance amongst Belarusians because of the mentality of their political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories where ideas of individual private property ownership were largely culturally alien. Indeed, as chapter 6 illustrated, Belarusians had no strongly rooted traditions of private property ownership. Thus, as one Belarusian elite aptly pointed out, "private property was not a cult here...there was no cult of private property." As this Belarusian elite went on to explain what this non-cult of private property entailed, it was pointed out that "many people have this attitude that everything belongs to us, everything belongs to everyone... nobody really has any reservations about going on a hike in the fields or hiking in a forest, because everything is still considered to be public property."⁷⁶ As a result, Belarusian political-cultural worldviews collectivistic orientation continued to favour the common use of land after 1991.

This was especially the case in the eastern lands of Belarus where there was no traditions or historical memory of individual private land ownership. Moreover, this was even the case in the lands of western Belarus that were under Polish dominion during the interwar period, where the majority of the small group of individuals that were property owners was largely Polish people. Today, these former Polish landlords are now long passed away, and no point was seen in restoring property to their descendents, since most

⁷⁵ See "Responsibility for Housing," in 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (2000).

⁷⁶ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Examples of private property accumulation being unthinkable for many after 1991, was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

Belarusians would have viewed it as not only unthinkable but also unjust to restore this land property to the descendents of former Polish landlords that had their property confiscated by Soviet authorities after 1939, and were viewed to be historical oppressors of the collective rights of Belarusians peasants.⁷⁷

However, aside from the unthinkable option of restoring the land to the former Polish landlords, another realistic option in the early 1990s would have been to simply break up the state-owned collective farms and divide it up among the local Belarusian inhabitants for their own individual use and ownership. However, Belarusian collectivistic and communal worldviews, which had a traditional aversion to private land ownership became quite evident, because even this option did not garner much support or many takers. This is because acquiring more private property did not simply register in the political-cultural worldviews of most average Belarusians of rural western Belarus since the inhabitants had little historical values, traditions, experience, habits, nor historical memory of individual property ownership and accumulation. As one Belarusian elite mentioned, “my family is from western Belarus, and it’s a family memory that everyone knows that we had nothing before 1939...and we had not this mentality of having some parcel of land, not like Latvian heritage which...was pretty firm on private property...and we didn’t have this kind of influence.”⁷⁸ Overall, inference to the lack of private property values amongst Belarusians in general, is further buttressed by the observation of Zaprudnik who noted that there was “a lack of psychological preparedness among them to become private owners.”⁷⁹

Thus, while Latvians influenced by their cult of private property were demanding vociferously that private property rights be restored and that agricultural land restitution be given to Latvians that had their land unjustly confiscated, such sentiments did not

⁷⁷ Such negative historical memories of Polish rule in western lands of Belarus and that it was unthinkable grant land restitution to the descendents of former Polish landlords was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

⁷⁸ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). This lack of experience with, nor traditions, values and habits of individual private land ownership was mentioned by several elites. See footnote no. 76 above. Similar sentiments of Belarus having more historically collectivistic traditions relative to Latvians staunchly individualistic orientation was mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010).

⁷⁹ Zaprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*, p. 193. For similar observations inferring lack of private property attitudes and support for maintaining collective farms, see also Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 120. Ioffe portrays somewhat more rationalistic motives, but still that there was strong support for collective farms.

register and were unthinkable in the worldviews of Belarusians that had no similar worldviews of private property being sacred. This is because Belarusian political-cultural worldviews were infused historically with collectivistic values of “socialism [which] got so widespread that it was the national mentality and national ideology, and it remains until now so.”⁸⁰ Indeed, another Belarusian elite pointed out, “people still don’t understand the concept of private property...for people, land is something sacred which belongs to the state, and they don’t believe in the concept of private property of land...[which] to them...equals exploitation, class struggle, and injustice, that is why people are against.”⁸¹

Overall, there was little historical experience with private property in Belarus, and as a result the general absence of worldviews and historical memories that would have been more conducive towards comprehensive reforms via the privatization of land. Indeed, such collectivistic attitudes favouring the communal ownership of land would have been hostile at any proposal for changes advocating a move to a more liberal-individualist regime in order to manage property relations. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, “the fact that people see the whole country as everyone’s property, I don’t think that they would eagerly agree to see it the other way, that the country belongs to somebody else, so one is not freely able to walk around the fields and...I don’t think this would be very popular, I wouldn’t be a fan of it.”⁸² Thus, not only did such attitude limit reforms in the 1990s and 2000s, but they continue to limit prospects for land privatization, as most people continue to view the ownership of land from a clearly collectivistic political-cultural mindset. Indeed, such factors help explain the persistence of state-owned collective farms in Belarus.

When examining specific policy questions about political-economic reform, more concrete evidence begins to emerge illustrating that important divergences existed

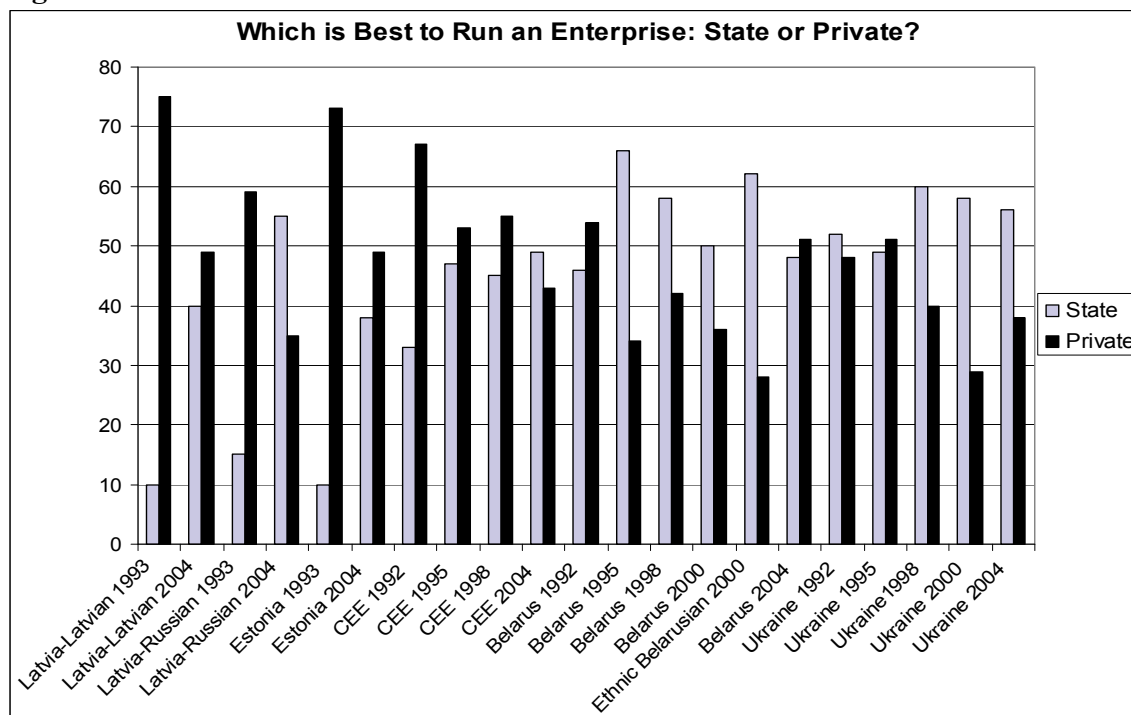
⁸⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

⁸¹ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Additionally, another Belarusian elite pointed out that “we don’t really think much about that, it really doesn’t come into our heads...Nobodies thinking about maybe giving land to our children,... It’s not issues that are currently discussed in society, such as ‘why don’t I have my own personal piece of land that nobody else is able to own?’ Nobody talks like this on these terms.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Examples of private property accumulation being unthinkable was mentioned by other elites. See footnote no. 76 above.

⁸² Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Such sentiments on prospects for future reform were also mentioned by other elites. See footnote no. 81.

between Belarusians and ethnic-Latvians in regards to questions gauging preferences for changes occurring following the breakup of the former Soviet Union. For example, when examining public opinion polls in Latvia and Belarus in regards to concrete policy preferences and the organization of the political-economy, significant trends are revealed. For example, in regards to issues of privatization, and preferences favouring state or private ownership of business, in initial public opinion polls conducting in the immediate period following independence, ethnic-Latvian responses placed significantly higher in favour private enterprise over statist solutions, compared to the responses of Belarusians during this time period. This is illustrated by Figure 7.13, which shows respondent's viewpoints in regards to what was the best way to run an enterprise organization, state or private, which showed that ethnic-Latvians remained consistent in their preferences of favouring private enterprises over state enterprises, compared to Belarusians which favoured statist solutions.

Figure 7.13



Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 22). 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 2-3). 1995: (Rose & Haerpfer: 71). 1998: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 70). 2000: (White & Rose 2001: 14-15). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 29; Rose 2005b: 69).

Additionally, in another set of polling numbers from 2000, where when asked what type of economic system Belarus should have, the overwhelming majority favoured a regime that was lopsided towards heavy state involvement in the economy. To illustrate, 36% overall and 39% of Belarusian-Belarusians favoured primarily statist solutions, 45% and 43% preferred equal state and private, and only 20% and 17% respectively favoured primary emphasis on private solutions.⁸³ Indeed, Belarusians tended to favour a large statist involvement in managing political-economic affairs. As a result, while policies such as subsidizing old heavy industries were largely unthinkable to Latvians liberal political-cultural worldviews because such policies would be viewed as not only wrong but also too ‘Soviet,’ Belarusians take an alternative view and are much more supportive of state subsidization of large enterprises. As one elite pointed out, “we go back to our old policies because we believe in the policies of sponsorship, subsidization and state loans.”⁸⁴ Additionally, another elite pointed out that “most of the population believes that the state should do a lot, such as ensuring job creation, investment, everything, which is why when Lukashenko took over, his messages coincided with the expectations of the people.”⁸⁵

These sentiments are further corroborated by polls conducted by the World Values Survey. Overall, the World Values Survey is also important in not only gauging the collectivist or liberal-individualist orientations of these responses, but also in inferring the important influences of historic religious-cultural influences at play, as there are real differences evident in terms of divergent responses in terms of one’s religious denomination. To illustrate, respondents were asked whether they preferred liberal-individualist forms of management (owners; owners/employees), or collectivist forms of management (state; employees). As Figure 7.14 reveals, the vast majority of Latvian-Protestants that responded (76.7% in 1990 and 70.0% in 1996), as well as the majority of Latvian-Roman Catholics (57.1% and 71.6% respectively) were in favour of the liberal-

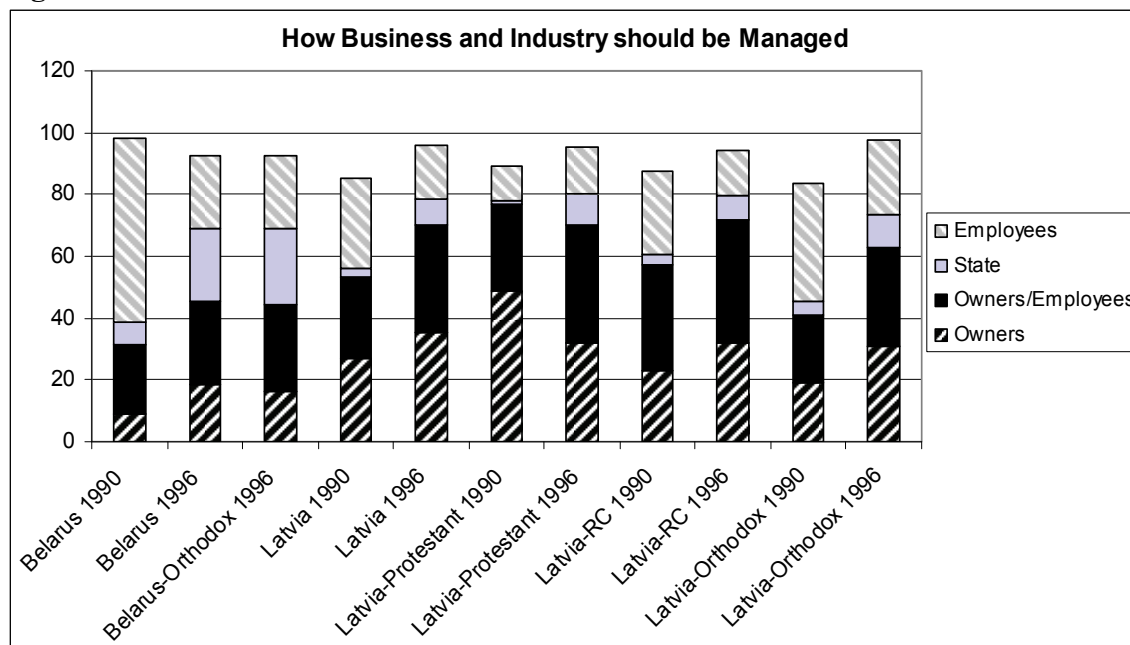
⁸³ White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

⁸⁵ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar sentiments pointing to elites believing in such a system was also mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Governmental Official. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (March 23, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

individualist forms of management. In contrast, a much higher preference for collectivist forms of enterprise management was found amongst Belarusian and Belarusian-Orthodox respondents. To illustrate this stronger favoritism towards collectivist forms of business management, 66.7% (1990) and 47.4% (1996) of Belarusians, and 48.3% (1996) of Belarusian-Orthodox respondents favoured collectivist forms of management.

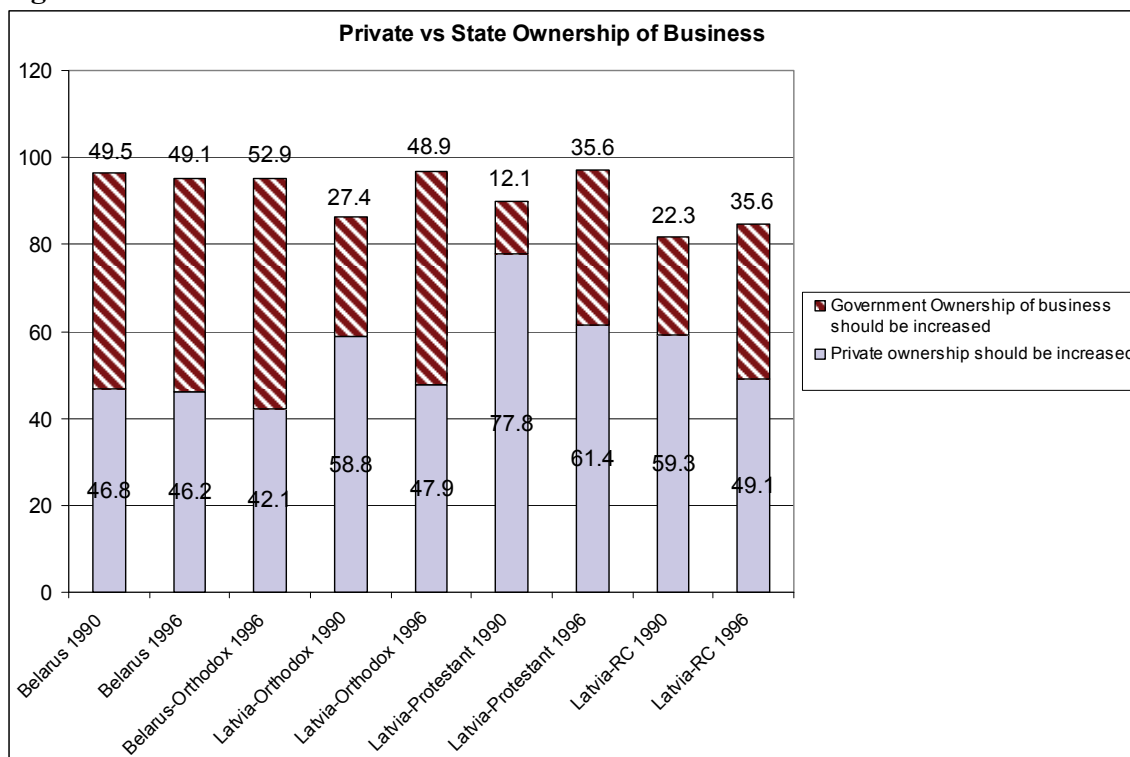
Figure 7.14



Source(s): See 'Rule of Government' and 'Attitudes Concerning Society' sections in the 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-1996).

Additionally, similar results were also found in another World Values Survey which ranked attitudes towards preferences over private versus state ownership of business, and revealed that ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) predominantly favoured private ownership. In general, ethnic-Latvian (Protestant and Roman Catholic) preferred private ownership over the state, compared to the lower emphasis placed on private ownership amongst Belarusian (Orthodox) respondents, which tended to have large segments of the population still favouring state ownership (see Figure 7.15 below). Additionally, in another set of public opinion polls conducted in 2008, 48.2% of Belarusian respondents answered no in a poll asking whether the large-scale state-owned enterprises should be privatized, while only 39.7% answered yes.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ IISEPS. (2008b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 48 (June).

Figure 7.15

Source(s): See 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-1996).

Such polling results are important for inferring the presence of deeply rooted religious norms and values infusing the content of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, even though at first glance religion might not appear to be teeming to the surface to influence matters that seem to many to be secularized. Such inference to religious values at play, is also tacitly corroborated by Ioffe's observations where he noted that although Belarusian "people may not attend services, most are keenly aware of their religious backgrounds."⁸⁷ This importance of religion can also be inferred from public opinion polls conducted between 1992 and 2004 where the vast majority of Belarusian respondents increasingly indicated their faith as Orthodox, while the number of atheist believers was steadily on the decline (see Figure A.27 in Appendix).

Additionally, Belarusians more illiberal worldviews can be seen in regards to issues such as openness to FDI and free trade, which in Belarus are highly restricted and

⁸⁷ Ioffe, Grigory. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 39. Ioffe, while adding this important observation about Belarusian's religious identification, nevertheless discounts the importance of religious values, even those that have been secularized in playing an important role in shaping peoples worldviews in regards to political, economic and social matters.

regulated by the state. For example, in regards to trade, 50.6% of Belarusian respondents in 1999 answered yes that the state should limit the import of goods to Belarus in order to support home enterprise and stem unemployment, while only 27.6% said no to restricting imports.⁸⁸ Furthermore, recent public opinion polls in 2004 illustrate that a far larger number of Belarusians have more illiberal worldviews in regards to FDI and trade than ethnic-Latvians, which can be seen in that while a small majority of Belarusians (58%) favours openness for MNCs operating in Belarus, a significant minority (41%) also disagreed with allowing more openness, which stands in contrast to the very large majority of ethnic-Latvian respondents (76%) sharing a positive outlook toward MNCs operating in Latvia, with only 22% disagreeing.⁸⁹

Furthermore, in regards to other polling questions relating to economic reforms and preferences in regards to market liberalization, a majority of ethnic-Latvians polled exhibited higher liberal-market preferences compared to Belarusian respondents. For example, in regards to questions relating to preferences of having a secure job versus a job that is well paid, in a poll conducted in 1993, 52% of ethnic-Latvians favoured the well-paid over the secure job (38%), whereas only 35% of Belarusian respondents favoured the well-paid job, with a majority of 65% favouring the secured job (see Figure A.28 in Appendix). Such numbers are further supported by other independent Belarusian public opinion polls that indicated in repeated years from 1997 to 2006 that Belarusians favoured low, but guaranteed income, where those answering in the affirmative numbered 65.3% in 1997, 57.8% in 1999, 51.8% in 2000, and 53.6% in 2006.⁹⁰ Indeed, not only do such numbers stand in contrast to ethnic-Latvians, but they also infer relatively high levels of Belarusian support for strongly statist solutions in managing key areas of the economy such as prices and employment. For instance, in regards to questions of state control, when it came to creating jobs and controlling prices, the

⁸⁸ IISEPS. (2007a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (December).

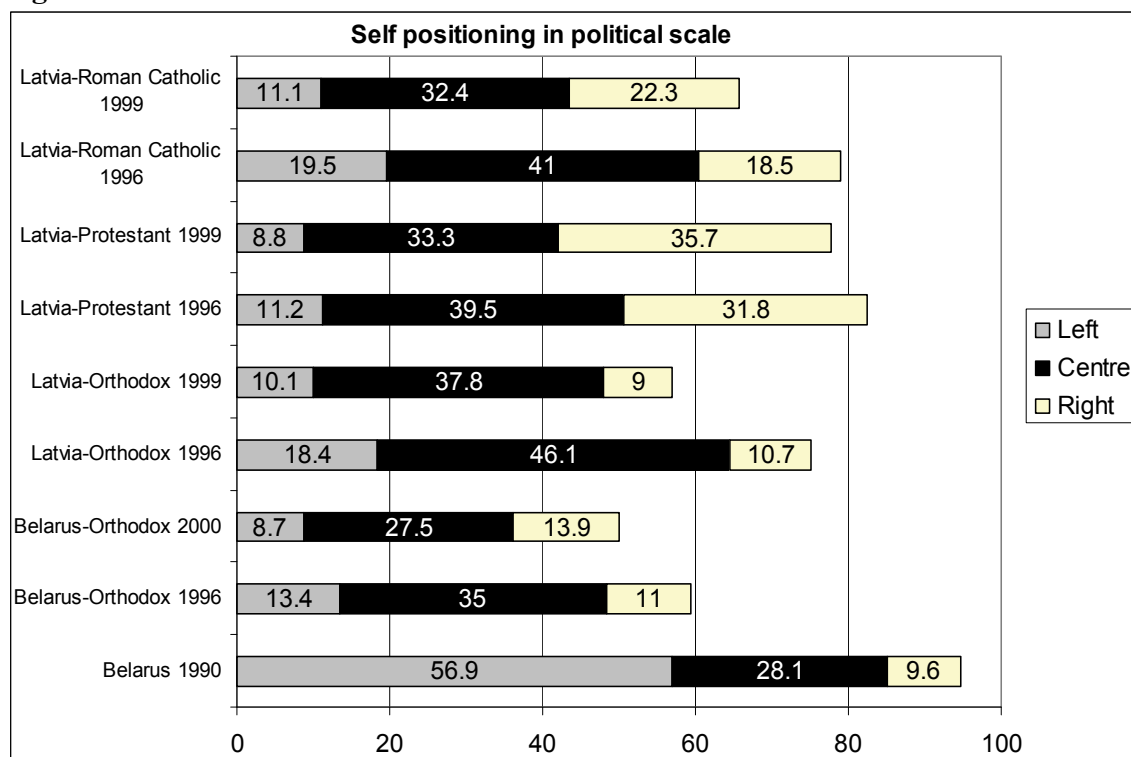
⁸⁹ Rose. (2005a). *New Baltic Barometer VI.*, p. 13; Rose. (2005b). *Insiders and Outsiders.*, p. 46. One elite also noted that societal attitudes had hostility towards liberalized reform, FDI, privatization, and the sale of land, if foreigners were allowed to gain extensive control. Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010).

⁹⁰ In contrast, those answering no and preferring more market based high income that was not guaranteed, numbered only 32.8% in 1997, 40.2% in 1999, 46.8% in 2000, and 30.8% in 2006. IISEPS. (2001c). *IISEPS News*, Issue 3, 21 (September); IISEPS. (2006b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 40 (June).

overwhelming majority of Belarusians, upwards of 70%, consistently preferred the state to heavily regulate everyday economic transactions (see Figure 7.18 below).

Moreover, as recent public opinion polls highlight Belarusians tend to situate themselves more on the centre-left of the political spectrum, relative to ethnic-Latvians that place themselves more right of centre. Such positions on the left-right political scale can be inferred from polls conducted by the World Value Survey asking respondents to rate their position on a political left-right political-scale. What is most important about the World Values Survey polls is that data can be broken down based on religion, and results illustrate that ethnic-Latvians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) position themselves towards the centre-right, in contrast to Belarusians (Orthodox) respondents, which place themselves towards the centre-left. In general, Belarusian (Orthodox) respondents expressed a left-of-centre orientation, compared to the centre-right responses given by ethnic-Latvians in similar polls (see Figure 7.16).

Figure 7.16

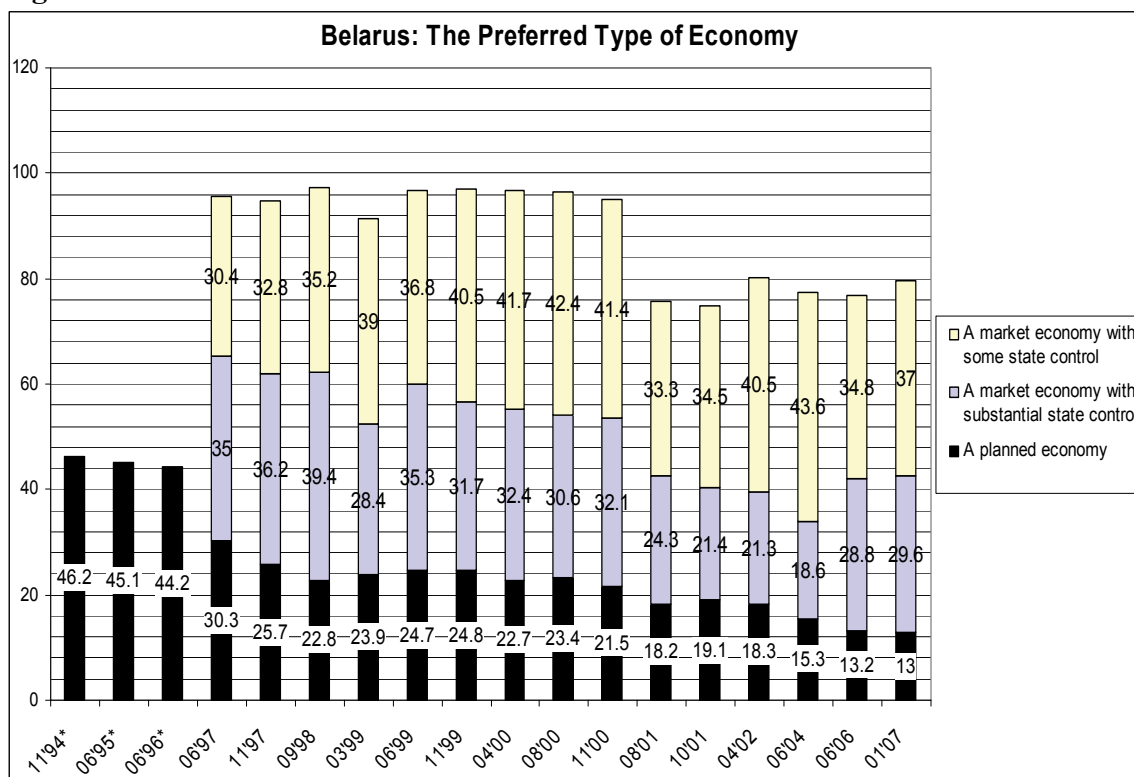


Source(s): See 'Politics and Society' section of the (World Values Survey 1990-1999).

Indeed, one can infer from such responses that Belarusians would more readily support more strongly statist solutions in managing key areas of the economy such as

prices and employment. Overall, as repeated public opinion polls from 1994 to 2007 indicate, the largest plurality of Belarusian favour an economy with high amounts of state control, as most respondents either mentioned explicitly their preference for a planned economy or a market economy with substantial state control (see Figure 7.17).

Figure 7.17

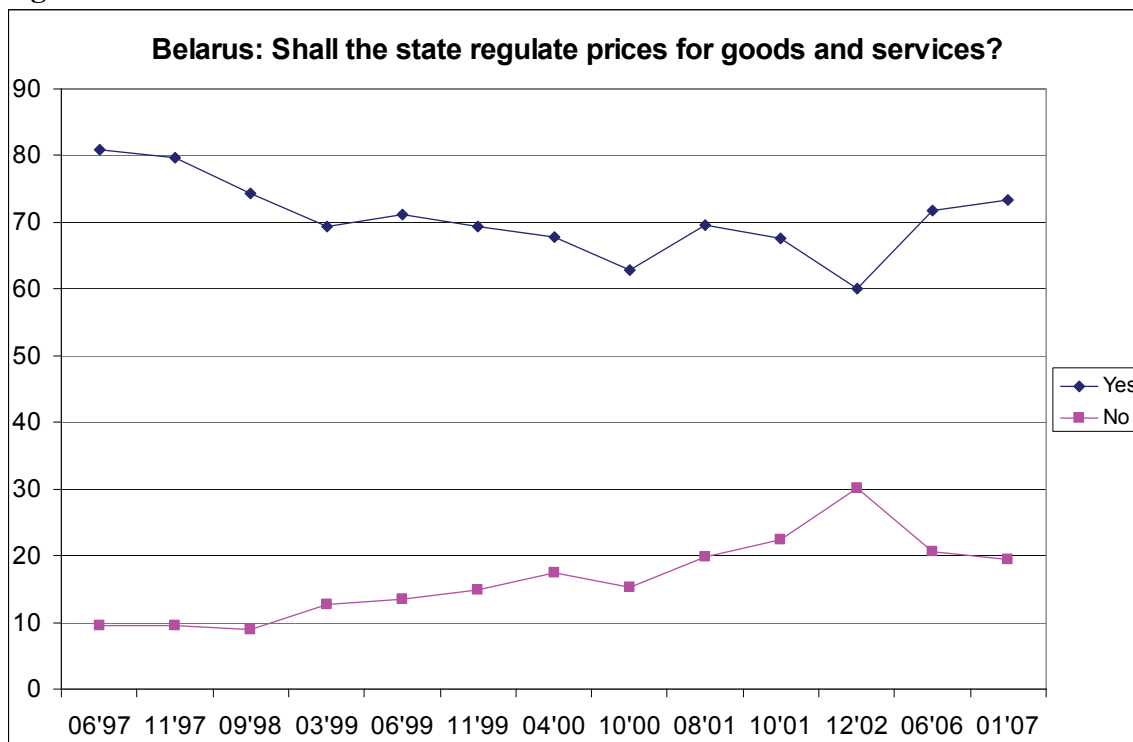


Source(s): (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2001d; IISEPS 2002b; IISEPS 2006c; IISEPS 2007a).

However, while numbers for those expressing a preference for a market economy with some state control might tempt some observers to infer the presence of a strong segment of liberalist sentiment, such conclusions should be tempered, and these results should be viewed with a degree of skepticism. First as discussed above, Belarusians did not have good grasp of liberal market principles, which was inferred from the comments of several Belarusian elites as noted above. Moreover, other simultaneously conducted public opinion polls contradict such results and claims of possible liberalist sentiments, which indicated that the overwhelming majority of Belarusians, repeatedly polling in the 70% range answered that they preferred that the state should regulate prices for good and services (see Figure 7.18 below). This infers that Belarusians, regardless of what they

might answer in regards to hypothetical questions about possible market scenarios, nevertheless continue to prefer substantial state regulation and control of even the most basic everyday aspects of the economy such as price controls.

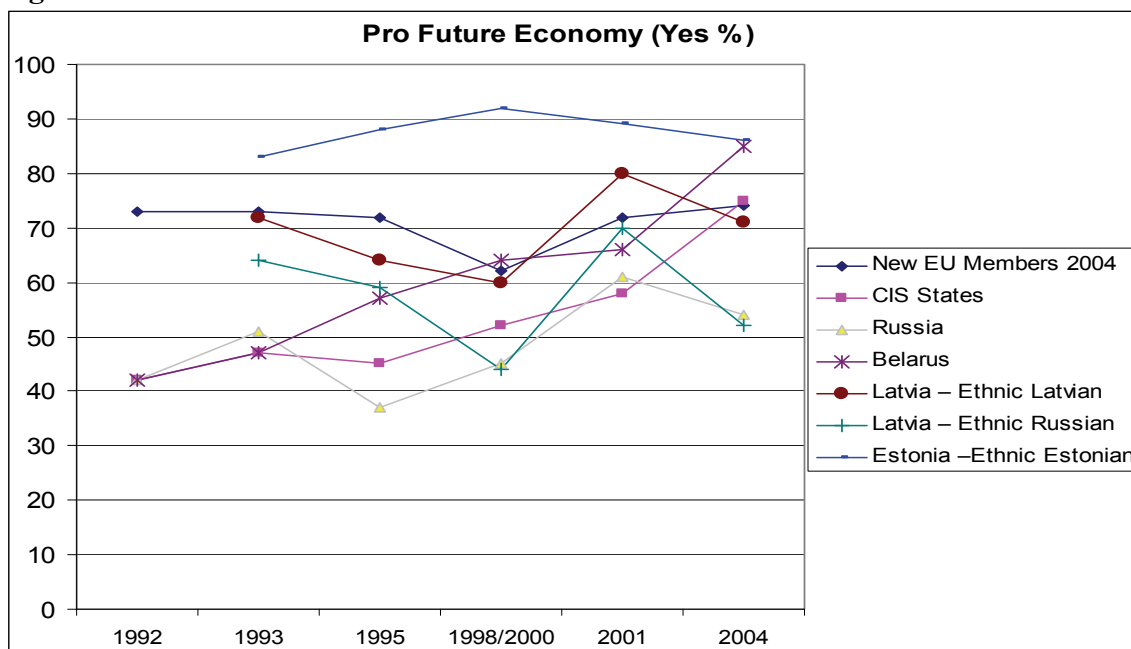
Figure 7.18



Source(s): (IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2001d; IISEPS 2002d; IISEPS 2006c; IISEPS 2007a).

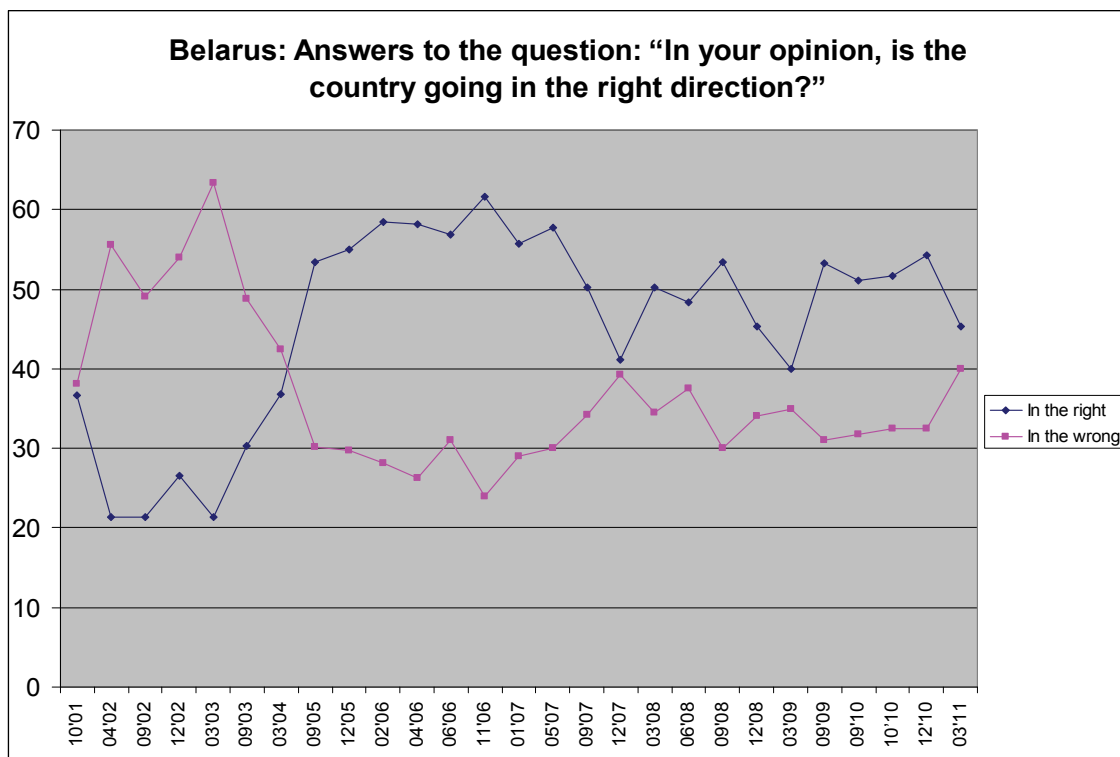
Indeed, one can find evidence inferring Belarusians satisfaction with the system. Indeed, since reforms are a work in progress, one can infer differing attitudes towards reform from polls rating positive attitudes towards the future political regime, and future economy. Specifically, Figure 7.19 reveals that while ethnic-Latvians ranked substantially higher in their pro-future economy outlooks than Belarusians, Belarusian numbers indicating satisfaction went up just as all of the small amounts of reform were eradicated and Belarus moved under Lukashenko towards an increasingly authoritarian political-economic regime. Such numbers are further supported by other independent polling results that indicate for much of Lukashenko's rule during the past ten years, the majority of Belarusians polled, for the most part, answered in the affirmative that their country was going in the right direction (See Figure 7.20 below).

Figure 7.19



Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 18). 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 24; Rose & Maley 1994: 28-29). 1995: (Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 66; Rose 1995: 17-18). 1998/2000: Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 45; Rose 2000: 26-27). 2001: (White & Rose: 13; Rose 2002: 26-27). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 7-8; Rose 2005b: 39-40; Rose 2006: 57).

Figure 7.20



Source(s): (IISEPS 2004a; IISEPS 2006a; IISEPS 2006c; IISEPS 2008b; IISEPS 2009a; IISEPS 2011a).

Overall, the strong collectivistic, communal, paternalistic, and statist ethos characterizing Belarusian historic political-cultural worldviews played a big influence on Belarusian preferences for the continuance of collectivistic and statist solutions to continue to extensively manage and regulate overall political-economic relations with an emphasis on statist and collectivist solutions in contrast to Latvia where increasing market and liberal freedoms was emphasized. Here, the stability of the collective and emphasis on state responsibility comes first in contrast to Latvia's political-cultural worldviews that place individual freedom first and foremost.

Dictatorship Rooted in Authoritarian and Paternalistic Traditions

In regards, to Lukashenko's absolutist, authoritarian, and paternalistic style of leadership, such patterns actually correspond to historical leadership traditions, patterns and habits experienced historically by Belarusians. Indeed, Lukashenko's paternalistic, absolutist and authoritarian style of leadership, where decisions are often made by decrees, are reminiscent of previous similar patterns of strong leaders under both Soviet rule and under Russian Tsars. In fact, Lukashenko's authoritarian leadership could be described as embodying a mini-Tsar, where he acts as father figure, similar to historically authoritarian, absolutist and paternalistic leadership patterns found in the past under Tsars, the heads of village communes, and the tradition of rule by decree preferred by Soviet leaders of the BSSR and USSR. As one Belarusian elite observed, "we just had this kind of Tsarist concept of the state, we had *Batka* who was kind of like father of the nation, and so we let him run the country and we followed."⁹¹ Similarly, another

⁹¹ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar sentiments were mentioned by another elite. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). To see similarities between autocratic rule during Tsarist times with those of today, where Lukashenko could be described as acting like a 'mini-Tsar,' that resembled the traditions of the head of the traditional collective family, and head of the village commune, Vakar pointed out that "like the modern dictator, a father was held to act as trustee and embodiment of the will of all... the totalitarian leader, like the peasant father, does not just take care of his subjects; he knows and exercises their true will by doing for them what they want done even when they do not themselves know their own minds." Vakar. (1961). *The Taproot of Soviet Society.*, p. 34. Similarly, one can also infer continuity in Lukashenko's pattern of authoritarian rule with that of Tsarist times, from White's historical description that "the Tsar remained the ultimate source of legislative authority, an 'autocratic and unlimited monarch' whose commands... could endorse or reject legislative proposals, determine when the Duma should sit and when it should be dissolved...[where] his own authority had the force of law." White. (1979a). *Political Culture and Soviet Politics.*, p. 27.

Belarusian elite argued that “the political-economy is very much patriarchal with its big father figure.”⁹²

Such authoritarian, absolutist and paternalistic patterns actually adhere to many ideals of strong leadership preferred by Belarusian political-cultural worldviews that have been shaped by centuries of paternalistic, collectivistic, authoritarian and absolutist patterns of political leadership that have their roots in the strong influence of Russian Orthodox faith over Belarusians. In general, much of society dislike many of the values associated with liberal-democracy and the market economy. Such attitudes can be inferred from the fact that even after Lukashenko’s consolidation of authoritarian power, there has not been widespread public aversion in Belarus to the lack of respect for democracy, nor to the Belarusian government and Lukashenko’s increasingly authoritarian and neo-Soviet nature. Such conclusions can be inferred from observations made in years since Lukashenko came to power, where it was noted that the “citizens of Belarus...have yet to adhere to democratic values, and...the mentality of the former Soviet period still prevails.”⁹³ Moreover, as chapter 6 illustrated, Belarus’s early incorporation into the USSR as a founding republic, only served to help to reinforce these collectivist, communal, patriarchal, statist and authoritarian tendencies historically found in Belarusian political-cultural worldviews.

Overall, the absolutism and authoritarianism exhibited by Lukashenko has followed traditional historical patterns of strong leadership that have long been a consistent feature of political rule over the Belarusian lands for centuries. Indeed, Belarusians political-cultural worldviews and habits favouring a general tendency towards political passivity and penchant for favouring a strong and even authoritarian

⁹² Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010). Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Additionally, in a BBC news report, Anatoly Gulyaev, who knew Lukashenko from when he was a manager of a collective farm, was quoted as saying, “Lukashenko is known to Belarusians as ‘Batka,’ or ‘Daddy.’” BBC News. (2008). “Farming Roots of Belarussian leader.” *BBC News*. September 27. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7639562.stm>. On being described as ‘father of the nation,’ see Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 216, 223, 325-326; Furman. (1999). “‘Centers’ and ‘Peripheries.’” p. 45; Maksymiuk. (2007). “Belarus.”

⁹³ Marples and Padhol. (2002). “The Opposition in Belarus.” p. 65. See also Lindner. (2002). “The Lukashenka Phenomenon.” p. 96; Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector.” p. 131. For similar consensus and examples of absence of values conducive to liberal democracy or transformation to a market economy even from proponents of national identity explanations, see Gricius. (2002). “Lithuania and Belarus.” p. 323; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 141; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe.” p. 537, 542.

style of leadership, which were rooted in the cultural-religious values historically promoted in the teachings of the Orthodox Church were also at play in influencing the acceptance and legitimization of President Lukashenko's authoritarian and often absolutist rule. To illustrate further, one elite offered their assessment that "here a lot depends on the mentality of the people, and of the religion." Additionally, this elite went on to elaborate that...

Belarus is a very patriarchal country...you can see it everywhere in the family, and in the political system where we have this one man that is very much like a Tsar. Even though conditions are different and the system has changed, if you just look deeply, you can see those roles are still in place. And people look up...at times of decision making to get the big decisions from someone. I don't think that it just comes from the Soviet times, but I think it comes from earlier on...more likely from the Byzantine religious idea of the Orthodox Church being part of the state."⁹⁴

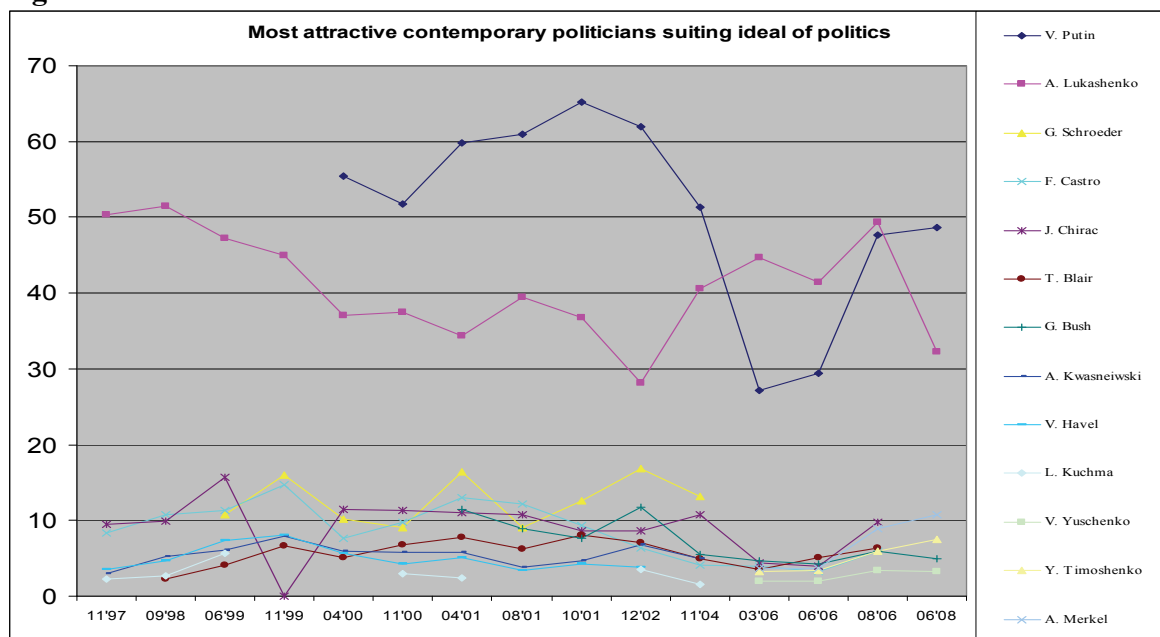
Thus, as shown in chapter 6, the Belarusian traditions of passivity, patriarchy and the contemporary support for Lukashenko has its roots primarily in the pre-Soviet, Tsarist society with its traditional Orthodox beliefs and worldviews, which reinforced traditional patterns and values promoting a collective mentality and patriarchal and authoritarian tendencies. Certainly, these historic political-cultural worldviews which exhibit predominant attitudes that are collectivistic, statist, patriarchal and show a penchant for authoritarian leadership would serve to work against any tendencies of values promoting market liberalization and liberal democracy based on individual rights as seen in Latvia. As one Belarusian elite pointed out, "in Belarus there is huge support for a 'strong hand,' and view that the state should take care of all citizens and ensure a reasonable standard of living, like a cradle to grave kind of attitude."⁹⁵ The presence of such attitudes are

⁹⁴ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Similar insight on the importance of values promoted by the religious teachings of the Orthodox Church in influencing such tendencies were given in the observations from another elite. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010). This importance of passivity was also mentioned by several other elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

⁹⁵ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar sentiments were also mentioned by others. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010);

corroborated by reports that note that “his tough-guy approach to politics had strong appeal for a society craving authority and a firm hand – the same society that had been overwhelmingly rural and patriarchal only a half-century ago.”⁹⁶ Additionally, another Belarusian political commentator offered the pointed observation that a favouritism towards “authoritarian power is embedded in the political-culture of the population.”⁹⁷ Such attitudes are revealed in Figure 6.1 in chapter 6, and Figure 7.21 below, which highlights that the most attractive historical and contemporary politicians that Belarusians tend to prefer in terms of their “ideal of politics,” most consistently listed strong-authoritarian types such as Masherov historically, and Lukashenko, and Russian President Vladimir Putin as their contemporary choice in repeated public opinion polls from 1997 to 2008.

Figure 7.21



Source(s): (IISEPS 2001b; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2002b; IISEPS 2002d; IISEPS 2003c; IISEPS 2004d; IISEPS 2008b).

Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Similar observations were found in Zlotnikov. (2002). “Possibilities for the Development of a Private Economic Sector,” p. 124.

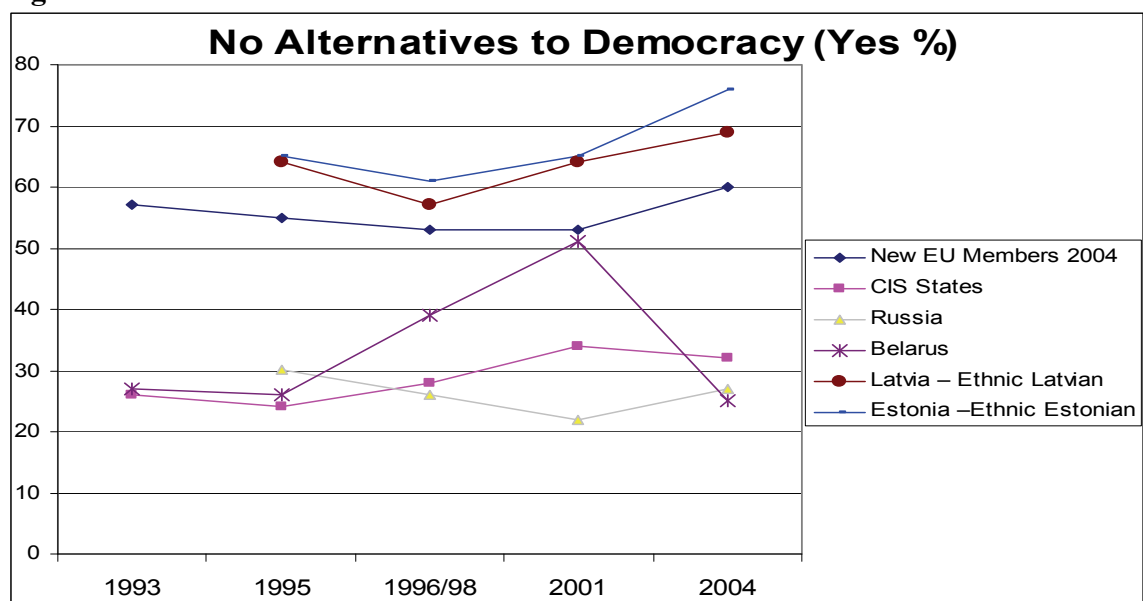
⁹⁶ Maksymiuk. (2007). “Belarus.”

⁹⁷ Silitski. (2006). “Still Soviet,” p. 47. That there is still strong authoritarian tendencies permeating the leadership preferences of average Belarusians and that this helps explain significant political support for Lukashenko, and that his policy ideas were in tune with the preferences of large segments of the population was mentioned by several Belarusian elites (see footnotes no. 50-51 above, and 101-103 below). For further consensus, see Lukashuk. (2001). “Constitutionalism in Belarus,” p. 301; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus*, p. 138, 151; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe,” p. 536;

Korosteleva. (2005). “The Emergence of a Party System,” p. 55; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus,” p. 259.

Additionally, such observations are further conferred when examining public opinion polls that measure positive attitudes towards the prospect of having dictatorship rule. For example, one set of polls reveal that a majority of Belarusians were consistent in giving positive attitudes towards dictator rule in four separate polls from 1992 to 2004, where 76% (1992), 57% (1993), 56% (1995), and 63% (2004) of Belarusians answered yes responses to favouring dictatorship. Indeed the answers of Belarusians stand in contrast to those given by ethnic-Latvians to the same question where in four separate polling years, ethnic-Latvians polled between 30-35%.⁹⁸ Additionally, in another polling question that asked respondents whether there were no alternatives to democracy, only a minority of Belarusian said yes, which contrasted sharply with responses from ethnic-Latvians where a large majority repeatedly answered yes when asked the same question (see Figure 7.22 below).

Figure 7.22



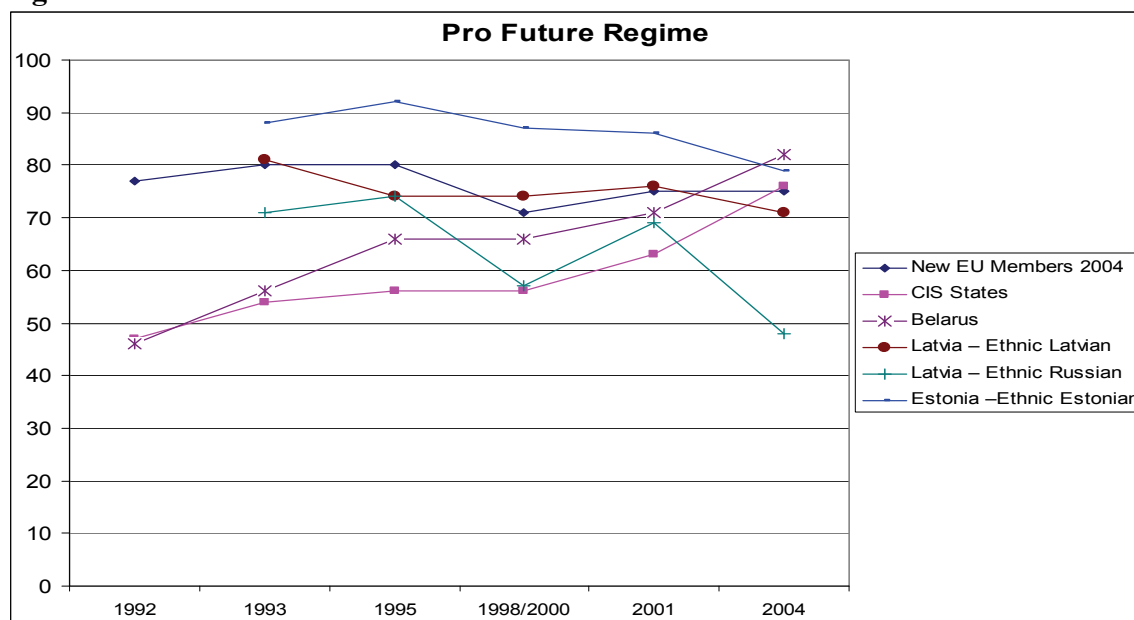
Source(s): Latvia and Estonia: (Rose 1995: 35-36; Rose 1997: 29; Rose 2002: 14; Rose 2005a: 19). Belarus and others: (Rose 2006: 57).

Additionally, independent public opinion polls from 2007, 2008, and 2009 reveal, over a majority of Belarusians gave high marks to Lukashenko in regards to being

⁹⁸ Belarus: Rose and Haerpfer. (1993). *New Democracies Barometer II.*, appendix, Table 31; Rose and Haerpfer. (1994). *New Democracies Barometer III.*, appendix, Table 45; Rose and Haerpfer. (1996). *New Democracies Barometer IV.*, p. 78; Rose. (2005b). *Insiders and Outsiders.*, p. 53. Latvia: Rose. (1995). *New Baltic Barometer II.*, p. 35; Rose. (2000). *New Baltic Barometer IV.*, p. 57; Rose. (2002). *New Baltic Barometer V.*, p. 13; Rose. (2005a). *New Baltic Barometer VI.*, p. 18.

successful in terms of “getting things put in order in the country, with 64.1%, 66.3% and 55.7% respectively, giving positive responses.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, Figures 7.23 reveals that while regularly ranking lower than ethnic-Latvians in terms of being pro-future regime, Belarusians overall positive outlook nevertheless consistently crept upwards from the first polls conducted in 1992 to levels slightly higher to those of ethnic-Latvians by 2004. Moreover, as Figure 7.20 in the preceding section indicated, a large number of Belarusians upwards of 50% responded in repeated polls conducted in the last ten years that Belarus was going in the right direction. With both of the above polling numbers, what is important to note is that Belarusian numbers indicated that satisfaction with the regime went up, at the same time when any small amounts of reform were eradicated and Belarus moved towards an increasingly authoritarian political-economic regime.

Figure 7.23



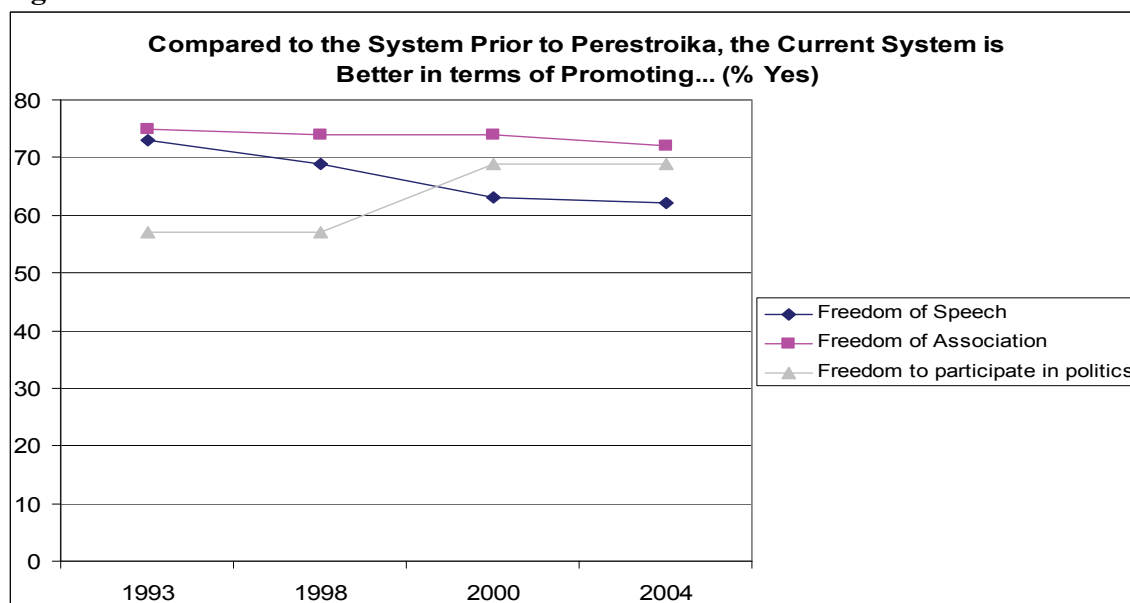
Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 25). 1993: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 34; Rose & Maley 1994: 35-36). 1995: (Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 75; Rose 1995: 26-27). 1998/2000: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 51-52; Rose 2000: 26-27). 2001: (White & Rose 2001: 22-23; Rose 2002: 10-11). 2004: (Rose 2005a: 16; Rose 2005b: 50-51; Rose 2006: 57).

One can also find inferences to Belarusians satisfaction in the system, as well as the fact that such a regime is viewed as ‘normal,’ according to the worldviews of Belarusians, due to the fact that a large majority of Belarusians in multiple public opinion

⁹⁹ IISEPS. (2008a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 47 (March); IISEPS. (2009a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 51 (March).

polls conducted from 1993 to 2004, responded that the current system was better than the government prior to perestroika, on such matters as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of individuals to participate in politics (see Figure 7.24 below). Moreover, in terms of inferring views of normality, and also that Belarusian political-cultural worldviews clash with taken for granted Western liberal political-cultural values regarding democracy and human rights, in a poll conducted in June 2006, which asked peoples opinions on the observance of human rights in Belarus, 61% said yes or rather yes, while only 34.3% answered no or rather not.¹⁰⁰

Figure 7.24



Source(s): (Rose and Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 35, 36, 38, 40-42; Rose and Haerpfer 1998: 55-58; White and Rose 2001: 26-27; Rose 2005b: 55-56).

Therefore, when it came to political-economic transformation after 1991, Belarusian elites and society chose what was ‘known’ to them over what was ‘unknown,’ according to the predominant collectivistic ideas and habits found in Belarus’s historic political-culture worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. Moreover, what was ‘known’ supported Belarusians preconceived worldviews of what was viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ and ‘normal’ policy practices. Furthermore, since these policies appeared to continue to be working this has created new historical memories helping to keep on reinforcing the predominance of collectivistic, paternalistic, and pro-statist political-

¹⁰⁰ IISEPS. (2006b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 40 (June).

cultural worldviews that such policies are the most effective, ‘best’ and ‘right’ way to organize the political-economic relations of society. Certainly such attitudes had and continue to have a limiting effect on the prospects for liberal reform because the longevity of such ways of life would have only resulted in historical memories that largely worked to further reinforce these taken for granted collectivistic political-cultural worldviews, and would have been devoid of any alternative political-cultural scenarios for possible change or ideas of liberalization. Indeed, there is a high probability that Lukashenko could be replaced by another strong authoritarian-type president, since there is a tradition and penchant for more paternalistic and authoritarian modes of political rule.

Popular Support and Trust

Overall, Lukashenko has been highly successful at retaining power, and also maintaining a strong plurality of support amongst large segments of Belarusian society. Not only is there high levels of public support amongst Belarusians for collectivist solutions in managing political-economic relations, there has also been high levels of trust and support voiced amongst the Belarusian public in favour of Lukashenko, which infers support not only for his neo-Soviet policy practices but also for his authoritarian leadership style.

Overall, many of Lukashenko’s values resonate and are in tune with the larger public and the predominantly collectivistic worldviews common to Belarusian political-culture. Indeed, trust in the President has been consistently high. One can infer political-cultural worldviews at play in that Lukashenko is a skillful politician and was able build strong connections with society through his understanding the peoples mindset seen with his ability to speak the language of average people. First, he literally speaks the peoples language, in that Lukashenko does not speak good Russian, and he does not speak good Belarusian, so he uses a mixture of the two languages speaking the *Transyanka* dialect that incorporates aspects of Belarusian and Russian into the everyday language of speaking, which is the way that many people in Belarus talk. Secondly, Lukashenko speaks the peoples language in regards to consistently promoting themes in his rhetoric that play on the peoples predominant collectivist, statist and pro-Soviet sentiments and historical memories. As one opposition elite pointed out, “Lukashenko was the first to

essentially understand the people in a way that he talked the language that the people were use too...his messages coincide with the expectations of the people, and he is quite smart in using his rhetoric exactly to match the expectations of the people.”¹⁰¹ Such sentiments are corroborated by the observations of several political commentators. For instance, Andrei Okara pointed out that “the popularity of President Lukashenko is largely due to his rhetoric, behavior, and policies matching the Belarusian peasant archetype.”¹⁰² Similarly, Jan Maksymiuk observed that Lukashenko has “a deep understanding of the national psyche.”¹⁰³

Additionally, the fact that Lukashenko was delivering on his promises would have boosted trust amongst the people, which would have resulted in the development of positive historical memories developing in the medium term that would only serve to reinforce the peoples worldviews that such policies were not only working but also ‘right.’ Moreover, in terms of channels of socialization and maintenance of culture, the building of such positive historical memories becomes mutually reinforcing to both predominant worldviews and habits in that this became normatively viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ and ‘normal’ way to conduct politic-economic affairs, which in the long-run can be habit forming in that such worldviews are taken for granted.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010).

¹⁰² Okara, N. Andrei. (2001). “Belarus in the Absence of the Third Alternative [Беларусь в отсутствие третьей альтернативы].” *Russian Journal* [Русский Журнал]. November 14. <http://old.russ.ru/politics/20011114-oka.html>.

¹⁰³ Maksymiuk. (2007). “Belarus.” Similar sentiments on Lukashenko speaking the language of the people was mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). This was also mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). Additionally, Ioffe also notes that “Lukashenko appears to be in sync with most of his fellow countrymen.” Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, 183-184, 168, 188-189. For similar consensus, see also footnotes no. 50 to 51 above, and Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, 167-169, 330; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 75; Marples. (2003). “History and Politics in post-Soviet Belarus.” p. 28; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 253, 259; Lindner. (2002). “The Lukashenka Phenomenon.” p. 81; Ioffe. (2003). “Understanding Belarus.” p. 1016; White and Korosteleva. (2005). “Lukashenko and the Postcommunist Presidency.” p. 70-71.

¹⁰⁴ That such policies are viewed not only as ‘right’ by much of society, but also taken for granted is illustrated in the observations of one elite, who pointed out that “most people really tend to take it for granted that the plants function, that we have a fair and stable system of pensions and health, because people see that this all functions rather successfully, and they do take this for granted. And if there is a major cutback in the social policies, then nobody would really listen to any rationale for why this happened...because it has been fifteen years of stability, and people just got used to this...stability, and take it for granted, and they would be very much dissatisfied if this were to end, and I don’t think people really believe or realize that it might end someday.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview.

Indeed, evidence suggests that Lukashenko does have greater support than many would argue. For example, if one looks at electoral indicators, Belarusian voting preferences show that the populace remains solidly illiberal, collectivist and anti-reform in its voting habits. This was illustrated in 1994, when Aleksander Lukashenko was first elected president in free and fair elections on a pro-Soviet, illiberal, and authoritarian election platform, receiving over 80% of the vote against his main opponent Vyachaslau Kebich, who as noted above was also equally illiberal and anti-reform in his policy positions. Only one year later in 1995, Lukashenko was given a huge mandate of approximately 77.7% in favour of the President dissolving the Belarusians parliament. Additionally, in another referendum held in 1996, with 84% of the eligible electorate taking part, 70.5% of voters gave their support for a new draft constitution put forth by Lukashenko, which gave the president increased powers over parliament, and the power to appoint the prime minister, deputy ministers, members of the Constitutional court, and also the head of the National Bank of Belarus.¹⁰⁵

More recently, even though Belarusian elections have now ceased to be free and fair, there is evidence that regardless of this, President Lukashenko still remains popular, and would even have been elected with a majority in 2001 under truly democratic procedures. For example, a poll conducted in 2001 indicated that 53% of people surveyed overall, and 64% of Belarusian-Belarusians answered that they would have voted for Lukashenko, while all other candidates listed only polled in the single digits below 5%.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, as Figure 7.25 below reveals, independent polls show that upwards of 45% of respondents in polls conducted in both August and October 2001, listed

Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Additionally, Zaprudnik and Urban pointed out that “Belarusians look to the state to take care of them.” Zaprudnik and Urban. (1997). “Belarus.,” p. 302.

¹⁰⁵ For electoral numbers, see Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda. (1995). “The Report of the Central Commission.”; (1996). “The Report of the Central Commission.”

¹⁰⁶ White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 39-40.

Additionally, in another poll from IISEPS, which asked on October 10, 2001, “for whom did you vote at the past presidential election,” 48.2% listed Lukashenko, while his next highest opponent V. Goncharik received only 21.0%. IISEPS. (2001d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 22 (December). For further consensus that Lukashenko would have won, see Economist. (2001). “The Nostalgic Opposition.” *The Economist*, September 15, 46-47; Korosteleva, Elena A., Colin W. Lawson and Rosalind J. Marsh. (2003b). “Afterword: The Presidential Election of September 2001.” In *Contemporary Belarus*, ed. E. A. Korosteleva, C. W. Lawson and R. J. Marsh. New York: Routledge Curzon., p. 194; White and Korosteleva. (2005). “Lukashenko and the Postcommunist Presidency.,” p. 60; Lynch, Dov. (2005b). “Catalysing Change.” In *Changing Belarus*, eds. Dov. Lyn et al. Chaillot Paper No. 85. November. EU Institute for Security Studies., p. 103, 109.

Lukashenko as the candidate they would have vote for in a presidential election. What is also important to note here is that when Belarusians were polled on two separate occasions, in regards to their perceptions of whether voting and administering the ballot was fair during elections, 63% overall and 67% identifying themselves as Belarusian-Belarusians in 2000, and 62% in 2004 responded in the affirmative that the election processes were fair. In contrast, only 24% overall and 21% of Belarusian-Belarusians in 2000, and 30% in 2004 responded that elections were not very fair.¹⁰⁷ These numbers are further supported by polling results from December 2001, where Belarusians were polled in regards to whether they trusted the results announced by the Central Elections Commission, and 55.3% answered yes, while only 30.5% answered no.¹⁰⁸

Additionally, Figure 7.25 also reveals that by the time of the next elections in March 2006, the same public opinion questions revealed on four separate occasions in February, April, August, and November 2006 that respectively 57.6%, 60.3%, 54.9%, and 49.7% of Belarusian respondents answered that they would vote for President Lukashenko. While not giving Lukashenko the inflated results listed by the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections, Lukashenko nevertheless was polling overwhelmingly the highest in these independent polls, and either would have been elected with a slim majority on the first round, or eventually won on a second ballot. Furthermore, in another poll from IISEPS, which asked in April 2006, “for whom did you vote at the past presidential election in March 2006,” 54.2% listed Lukashenko, while his next highest opponent A. Milinkevich received only 15.8%.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, others noted that if a free and fair vote were actually held, Lukashenko would still have won in 2006 and

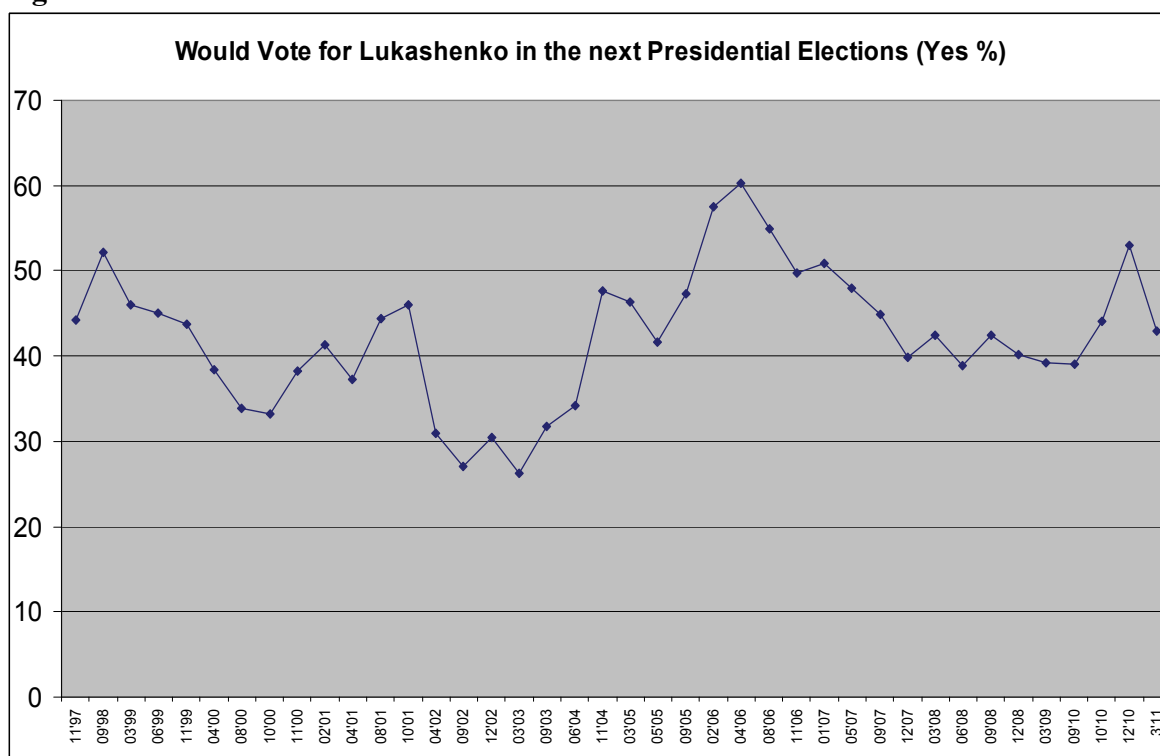
¹⁰⁷ 2000: White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 32; 2004: Rose. (2005b). *Insiders and Outsiders.*, p. 57. Additionally, in another polling question conducted in 2000, it is interesting to note that 62% overall, and 69% of Belarusian-Belarusians responded in the affirmative they for the most part viewed Belarus as being fair in giving people with different views a voice in parliament. (White and Rose 2001: 33).

¹⁰⁸ IISEPS. (2001d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 22 (December). One should note that elections were more free but unfair, and that there were only small irregularities, which made Lukashenko the clear winner. Marples and Padhol. (2002). “The Opposition in Belarus.” p. 91. Indeed, others agreed that the Lukashenko regime was more like an ‘elected dictatorship.’ Korosteleva et al. (2003a). “Introduction.” p. 15; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 147, 150; Marples, David R. (2005). “Europe’s Last Dictatorship: The Roots and Perspectives of Authoritarianism in ‘White Russia.’” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 57, 6: 895-908., p. 905.

¹⁰⁹ IISEPS. (2008b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 48 (June).

also would likely win in 2010.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, what is important to note, is that when Belarusians were polled in October 2008, in regards to their perceptions of whether voting and administering the ballot was free and just during elections, 56.3% of respondents said yes, while only 24.2% answered no.¹¹¹

Figure 7.25



Source(s): (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2003a; IISEPS 2004d; IISEPS 2005c; IISEPS 2006b; IISEPS 2007a; IISEPS 2008b; IISEPS 2008d; IISEPS 2009a; IISEPS 2011b).

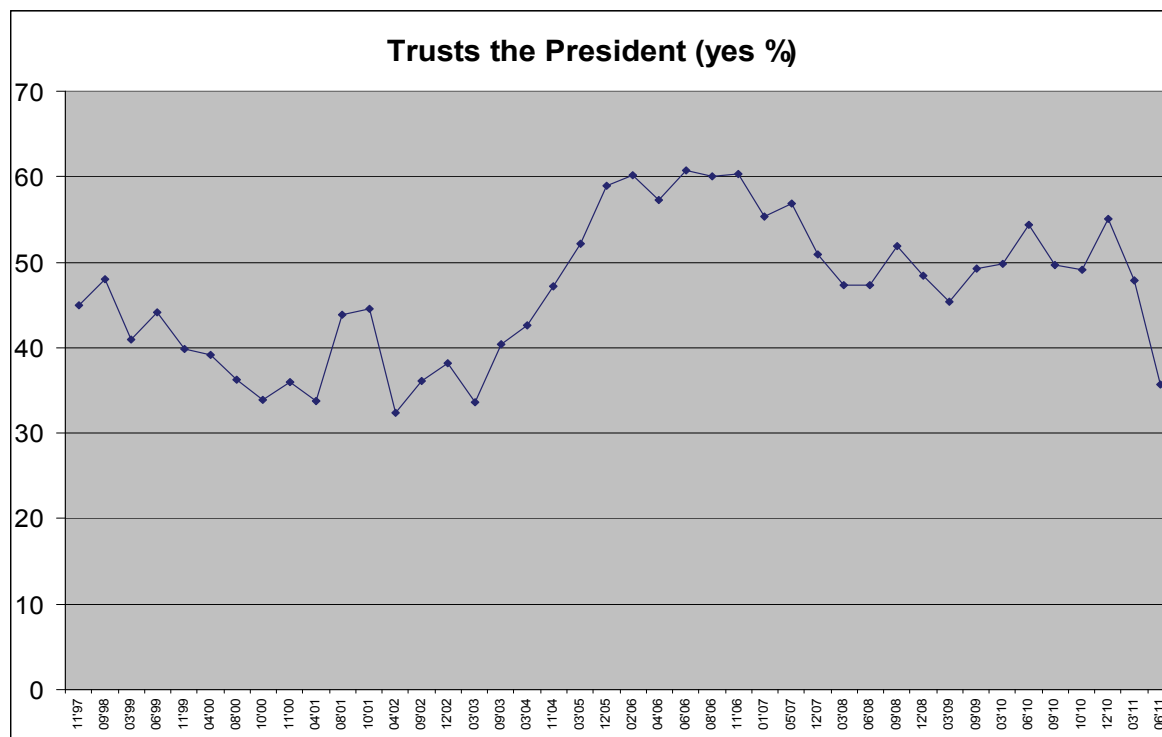
Overall, evidence suggests that Lukashenko does have greater support than many would argue, and does have a strong rapport with a large and broad segment of society as several public opinion polls measuring support and trust for Lukashenko throughout his

¹¹⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Formal Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also polling numbers from IISEPS 2000 to 2010, which illustrate that support for Lukashenko's opponents never regularly surpassed 10%. See IISEPS. (2001b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 20 (June); IISEPS. (2001c). *IISEPS News*, Issue 3, 21 (September); IISEPS. (2007a). *IISEPS News*, Issue 1, 43 (January); IISEPS. (2010). "Trends of Change in Belarusian Public Opinion." December 4.

¹¹¹ IISEPS. (2008d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 50 (December). Such numbers are further corroborated in another public opinion poll from October 2008, where 53.3% of respondents answered yes that elections were free and democratic, while only 26.2% answered no. *Ibid.*

time in office attest. As Figures 7.25 above and 7.26 below indicate, polling numbers from the independent Belarusian public opinion firm IISEPS have consistently shown that public support and trust for Lukashenko has remained consistently high throughout his time in office. Indeed such numbers are corroborated by Western polling sources that also reveal that Belarusian respondents have retained high amounts of trust in Lukashenko, since he was elected in 1994, where 58% in 1998, 57% in 2000, and 62% in 2004 responded ‘yes’ that they trust the President, while only 28%, 28% and 23%, respectively responded that they did not.¹¹² Indeed, it is highly probable from viewing such numbers, and as several Belarusian elites pointed out, that if a free and fair vote were actually held in December 2010 that Lukashenko would still have won.¹¹³

Figure 7.26



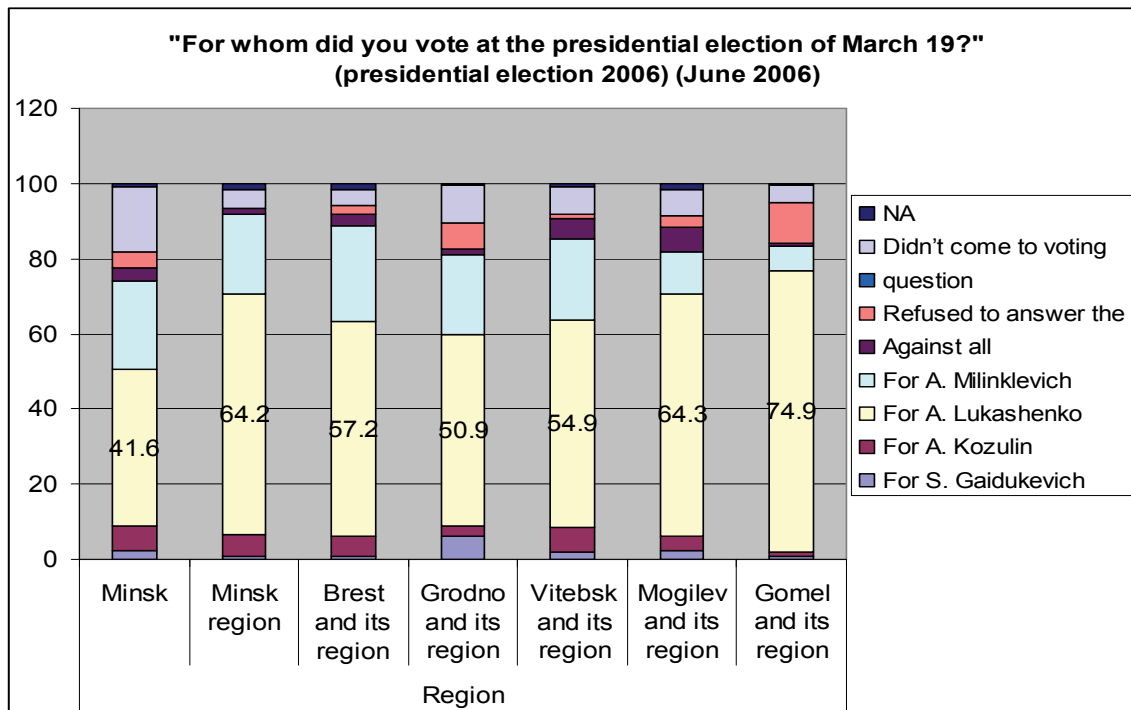
Source(s): (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2003a; IISEPS 2004d; IISEPS 2005c; IISEPS 2006b; IISEPS 2007a; IISEPS 2008b; IISEPS 2008d; IISEPS 2009a; IISEPS 2011b).

¹¹² 1998: Rose and Haerpfer. (1998). *New Democracies Barometer V.*, p. 62; 2000: White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions.*, p. 30; 2004: Rose. (2005b). *Insiders and Outsiders.*, p. 65.

¹¹³ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010)

Additionally, polls also indicate that there is strong rural support for Lukashenko amongst ethnic-Belarusians in the rural regions of Belarus, especially in the rural villages and on collective farms where there exists a strong base of support for the President. In addition to rural voter, Lukashenko also wields significant support from urban industrial workers, many of whom still have close ties to the rural countryside. Here, it is also important to note that most Belarusians that speak Russian as their first choice of language live in Minsk, and this is ironically where most of the Belarusian urban elite opposition to Lukashenko is located (see Figure 7.27 below). Indeed, public opinion polls show that Belarusian-speaking Belarusians voice much greater support for Lukashenko than that voiced by Russian-speaking Belarusians.¹¹⁴

Figure 7.27



Source: (IISEPS 2006b).

Indeed, Lukashenko's initial success and continuing longevity can be linked to the fact of his close ties to rural Belarus. Certainly, the fact that Belarus remained largely

¹¹⁴ Such conclusions were gained from insights of several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010). For similar observations, see Maksymiuk. (2007). "Belarus."

rural prior to 1945, and the fact that most people in Belarus, even urban dwellers, still have close ties and retain the predominant political-cultural worldviews historically rooted in the Belarusian countryside helps to understand the popular appeal of Lukashenko. This continuing strength of such predominant historic political-cultural worldviews can be inferred from findings that found that the “village remained a comparatively solid carrier of the traditional culture in its folkloric and ethnographic form.”¹¹⁵ Moreover, as noted above, Lukashenko speaks the language of ethnic-Belarusians in these areas, literally speaking the *Transyanka* dialect that incorporates aspect of Belarusian and Russian into the everyday language of speaking. Additionally, Lukashenko has not only played on pro-Orthodox religious themes, but also received praise and endorsement from high ranking officials in the Belarusians Orthodox Church.¹¹⁶ Overall, Lukashenko has tended to speak the peoples language of traditional Orthodox and rural Belarusian society, in terms of speaking to the predominant collectivist policy preferences of the people for increasingly statist solutions, collective management of political-economic organization, and in having a strong leader to implement decisive decisions.

Repeatedly since 1994, analysts have continued to make incorrect and premature assessments about what was viewed as the impending demise of Lukashenko. Indeed, a major problem is that most National Identity arguments have been blinded in their analysis and predictions of outcomes, due not only to the repeated tunnel vision on ‘national identity,’ without adequately acknowledging the preeminent role of political-culture, but also as result of a normative blindness caused by their completely understandable aversion to Lukashenko’s illiberal, authoritarian and non-democratic leadership style, which has resulted in serious problems in attempting to adequately and parsimoniously explain Belarus’s political-economic practices and behavior since 1991.

¹¹⁵ Citing findings of Belarusian scholar G. Kasperovich in Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 52, 125. On strength of traditional rural cultural attributes influencing support for Lukashenko, see also footnotes no. 101 to 103 above, and Maksymiuk. (2007). “Belarus.”

¹¹⁶ This is important considering that in “Belarus... the Orthodox Church is strong despite decades of persecution.” Bourdeaux, Michael, ed. (1995). *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 11. See also, Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building,” p. 77; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 113; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe,” p. 535; Snyder. (2003). *The Reconstruction of Nations.*, p. 280; Dunlop, John B. (1995). “The Russian Orthodox Church as an ‘Empire-Saving’ Institution.” Ch. 2. In *The Politics of Religion in Russian and the New States of Eurasia*, ed., Michael Bourdeaux. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe., p. 28.

However, as noted above, the values and behavior of Lukashenko have largely been in tune with the predominant political-cultural worldviews of much of Belarusian society. Indeed, the Belarusian political-cultural worldviews favouring collectivism, a pro-Soviet/Russian, orientation, and penchant for strong leadership have all been cultivated by Lukashenko, which helps to explain his longevity, popular appeal and staying power in Belarusian politics.

Whither Lukashenko?

While there has increasingly been similar tentative predictions about Lukashenko's 'impending' demise recently, due to the current economic downturns being experienced by Belarus, it is the position here that such predictions are premature, and it is likely that Lukashenko will retain his hold over Belarusian political-economic decision-making for the foreseeable future. Moreover, while many have also argued that Lukashenko and neo-Sovietism will ultimately be vanquished in Belarus as younger generations of Belarusians come of political age, it is apparent that such an outcome needs to be viewed with a certain grain of salt. This is because even amongst the youth, opposition movements have serious problems in winning support. Indeed as one Belarusian elite pointed out, any and "all the liberalization tends to stay on the surface, and it doesn't go that deep."¹¹⁷

Outside the generational age-group of those aged in their thirties, who came of political age during the 1990s, younger generations that have come of age since have increasingly been successfully socialized by the political-system under Lukashenko. Indeed, many non-governmental elites that were out-spoken in their opposition to Lukashenko, voiced skepticism about the prospects of younger generations to advocate for change, arguing that many were being successfully co-opted and socialized into the predominant illiberal and collectivistic Belarusian political-cultural worldviews. Overall, the regime has been extremely effective in socializing the youth. For example, the new generations are being socialized in the current system, which uses similar tools as in the

¹¹⁷ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Also, in terms of the student opposition, few people have crossed over and joined the opposition student movements, which as two knowledgeable elite pointed out includes something like 5 out 500,000 in the past few years. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010).

former Soviet Union, but now on a micro-level. This is seen with the creation of pro-Presidential youth organizations and student groups. Moreover, as several elites elaborated, most of the younger generations of Belarusians coming of age are not aware of the alternatives, and are coming of age under the current system and under relative prosperity and stability. This has been assisted by the fact that today there are far more relative freedoms than in Soviet times, and by the fact that one can have a comfortable life if one only keeps their head down and does not partake in active opposition politics. Indeed, in one public opinion poll from 2006, 61.6% of those polled responded positively that they felt it was possible for youth to make a successful career in Belarus.¹¹⁸ As a result, this “in many ways leads to another generation coming up, which was born in, and raised under the ideals of today’s political elite,” and this “will define the future in many ways.”¹¹⁹

Sure there would be some individual benefit from such co-optation, which might appear rationalistic for some. However, it is not so much notions of rational materialistic gain coming into play, but instead due to political-cultural socialization of worldviews that are reinforced by recent historical memories of the political-economic system under Lukashenko providing for overall growth and stability. Indeed as time goes by, these historical memories will only harden, which only serves to further reinforce the preexisting political-cultural worldviews and habits that view such policies as the ‘best’ and ‘right’ methods to manage political-economic relations of society. In other words, policies will be self-confirming.

Additionally, as mentioned above, even amongst both older and younger generations, most Belarusian tend to view the reforms in Russia and Ukraine, which were not even halfway at best, as being too much reform in the wrong direction. Indeed, both

¹¹⁸ IISEPS. (2008b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 48 (June).

¹¹⁹ Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Similar pessimistic sentiments were also mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010) See also, Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 85-86. For similar consensus see also report by Maksymiuk. (2008). “Commentary.” Additionally, when polled on who they voted for in the March 2006 presidential election, while Lukashenko’s main demographic of support was certainly those 40 years and older, it should be noted that 53.8% of those aged 18-19 answered that they had voted for Lukashenko, thus indicating positive future support from up-and-coming younger generations of Belarusians. IISEPS. (2006b). *IISEPS News*, Issue 2, 40 (June).

young and old Belarusians look on the instability and the corruption of oligarchs that was witnessed in Russian and Ukraine with disfavour. Most importantly, Belarusians also have highly negative views of the comprehensive reform conducted in Latvia and other Central and Eastern European countries. Such negative views have been greatly facilitated from many of the negative portrayals in Belarusian and Russian media of the liberal-market transformation process in these countries. As a result, many in Belarusian society are unaware of the alternatives out there, which results in little awareness from the people about their Western neighbours, such as the Baltic States and Poland.¹²⁰

Overall, Lukashenko has monopolized state broadcasting outlets to the detriment of opposition groups, with upwards of 90% of media outlets being controlled by the state. However, most people tend to take the news appearing on state owned TV and radio at face value, and average people accept the official line that they are fed by the state broadcaster when it comes to the information that is given on the political-economic system and stability, which leaves people unaware of any potential alternatives.¹²¹ Moreover, Lukashenko himself has also been quite skilled charismatic in using the media to appeal to the public and connect with average Belarusians.

In regards to the media, few Belarusians also read the newspaper to get their news as most people tend to get their information from either Belarusian state-run mass media or Russian mass media outlets. Indeed, there was also an increasing reliance on television over all other forms of media outlets, so that by 2002 Belarusian respondents answered

¹²⁰ Sometimes this is merely based on propaganda playing on cultural affinities with the ethnic-Russian minority in Latvia and Estonia, where the Russian-speaking media negatively portrays the Latvians and Estonians treatment of ethnic-Russian minorities. This, and negative views towards 'reforms' in Ukraine and Russia, was mentioned by several elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Elite. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). For evidence inferring the presence of such attitudes, see also Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 69; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 236.

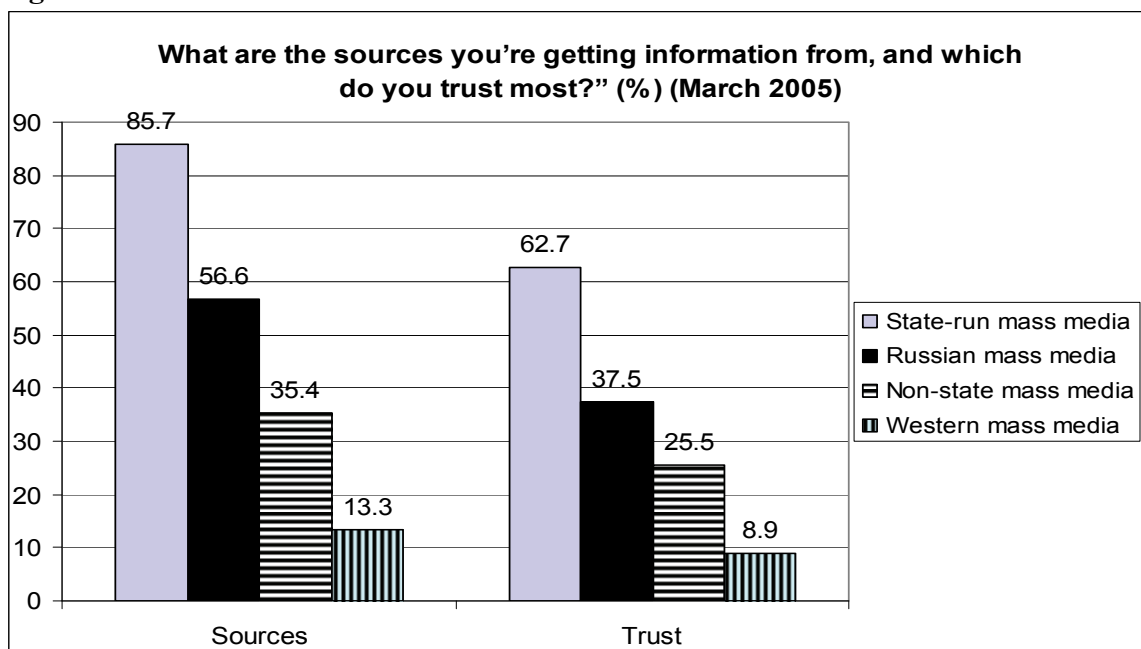
¹²¹ As several Belarusian elites pointed out, many in society believe the propaganda from the state media that portrays Belarus as the richest and most prosperous in the world. This portrayal in the peoples' minds is also assisted and confirmed by the huge number of price controls, which provide the basic staples for a low cost, such as milk, bread, butter, etc., as well as the fact that pay cheques and pensions cheques keep being delivered, and that young people have good prospects. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). Similar observations were mentioned by one Latvian elite. Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). See also Maisenya. (1997). *The Land of Unrealised Hopes.*, p. 330-331.

that their main sources of news information were Russian Television (78.1%), Belarusians state-run television (64.1%), Belarusian state-run radio (25.0%), and the Belarusian state-run press (22%), while independent newspapers played a relatively minor role in the country, except amongst the small minority of people measuring only 12.9%.¹²² Indeed, opposition newspapers like *Nasha Niva*, have only a small circulation and following, which is primarily confined to the Minsk area.

However, socialization is not only a one way street of the state helping to forge the societal preferences and worldviews. This builds on evidence from other cultural studies that found that people tend to choose their sources of media from those which correspond to their predominant cultural outlooks and worldviews. Overall, Belarusians often choose themselves to watch, read and listen to the dominant state-media sources at hand, especially television and radio, which many in polls answer that they have high levels of trust for (see Figure 7.28 below). Additionally, when examining polls related to questions of media sources and trust in the media, there is strong correlation that not only do a majority of Belarusian choose state-media outlets as their primary source, which tend to be highly statist and collectivist in their rhetoric and message, and rarely allow for any open political debate or dialogue. As several elites pointed out, most of Belarusian society tends to already share and subscribe to much of the predominant collectivistic and statist ideas presented in the official ideological narratives from the state-run media outlets. For instance, one elite pointed out that while there are those “who are critically thinking and who are socially active, this is a very small portion of the population.”¹²³

¹²² IISEPS. (2002d). *IISEPS News*, Issue 4, 26 (December).

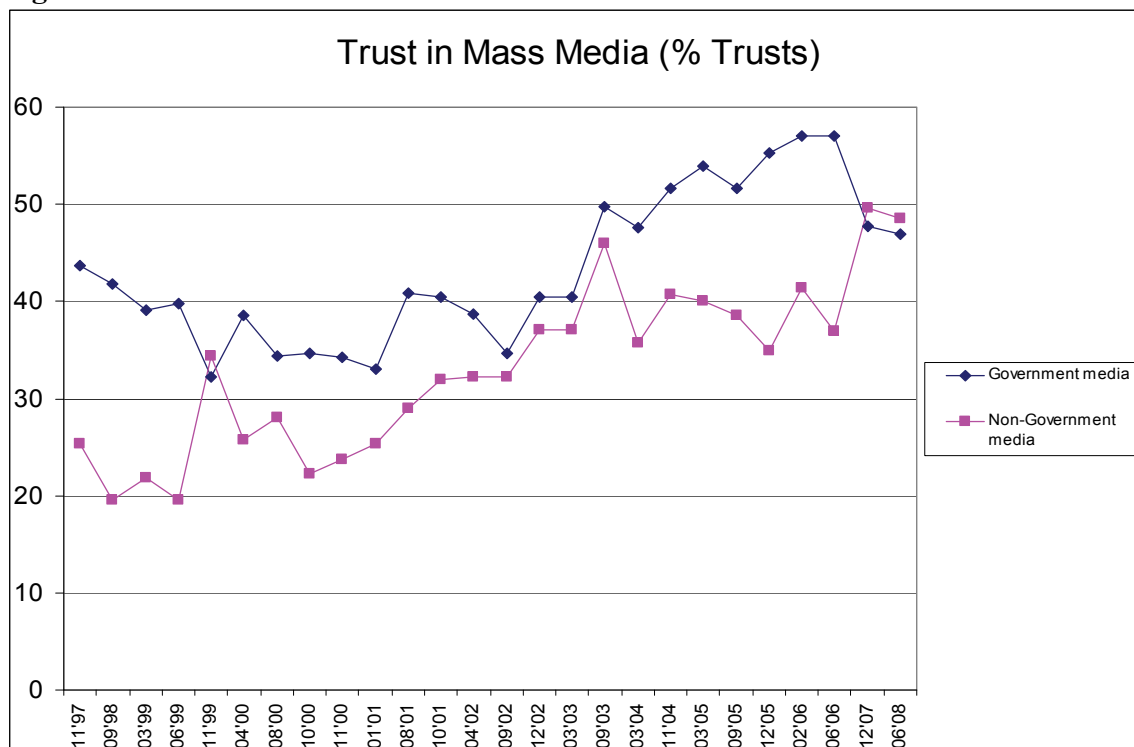
¹²³ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010). One elite argued that “Belarusian television was still Soviet indoctrination, and few people knew a foreign language that was of use to watch foreign news such as BBC or CNN.” Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010). See also footnote no. 121.

Figure 7.28

Source: (IISEPS 2005a).

Indeed, what is of particular interest is that the majority of Belarusian polled have consistently answered that they trust state media sources while tending to distrust more the message from private media outlets (see Figures 7.28 and 7.29). Additionally, it is also important to point out that in polling question from 2000, which asked Belarusians whether they viewed the television reporting of election campaigns as fair in Belarus, 53% overall, and 59% of Belarusian-Belarusians responded yes that they viewed the coverage as fair, while only 34% and 29% respectively answered no and not very.¹²⁴ Moreover, what one should realize is that while trust in independent media is relatively high, it should be noted that much of the “independent” media, with the exception of explicitly opposition news outlets, are actually heavily controlled by the state, and also that the independent media from Russia, which is also popular, tends to typically present a more pro-Lukashenko line in its message. Indeed, such results indicating a strong correlation between choice of media source and trust in media that broadcast a consistently collectivistic, statist, authoritarian and pro-Lukashenko message helps to infer that similar values are already shared by the Belarusian masses.

¹²⁴ White and Rose. (2001). *Nationality and Public Opinions in Belarus and Ukraine.*, p. 33.

Figure 7.29

Source(s): (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001c; IISEPS 2002b; IISEPS 2003a; IISEPS 2004a; IISEPS 2005c; IISEPS 2006a; IISEPS 2006b; IISEPS 2008b).

In regards to media and information sources, it is important to point out that the internet is increasingly becoming an important information medium for Belarusians especially for younger generations.¹²⁵ Surprisingly, even with high amounts of state control in other information mediums, access to the internet remains relatively free in Belarus. Certainly, the internet is a valuable tool that individuals could potentially use to gain access to alternative political ideologies promoting change. However, even with this relative freedom it should be noted that this does not mean that such sources will be key and instrumental in fostering liberal values and fomenting change. As several Belarusian opposition elites skeptically pointed out, many of the younger generations and broader society that regularly use the internet do so more for entertainment and leisure purposes, rather than participating in active political engagement. Additionally, as several pointed out, often opposition political dialogue on the internet and e-forums is often conducted

¹²⁵ For instance, while only 9.7% of the population used the internet when polled in August 2008, by September 2008, the number had increased upwards to 35.9%. IISEPS. (2008c). *IISEPS News*, Issue 3, 49 (September). <http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet08-3.html>.

consistently by like-minded and finite group of actors, which some described as engaging in a dialogue of the deaf, since such participants are already preaching to those converted on the need for change rather than reaching out to new members and building a mass e-grass-roots society for change.¹²⁶

In response to the critiques from some regarding the protests after the December 2010 Belarusian Presidential elections, it is first important to point out that these were small protests, both in size and duration, compared to ones that had occurred previously in the Baltic States, as well as Ukraine during the Orange Revolution. Moreover, these protests were short-lived and not much has been heard since. While Lukashenko's voter support of 80% is widely disputed and accepted as being overly inflated, it is also true that regardless of the results being inflated, Lukashenko still likely would have succeeded had elections been totally free and fair, as he remained the most popular politician in country, with support in the 53% range, as indicated in independent public opinion polls from December 2010 (see Figure 7.25 above). It should also be of no surprise that these protests were concentrated in Minsk, which is predominantly where most opposition elite and societal opposition to Lukashenko are located. Additionally, it is important to note that there was also virtually no corresponding protests in centers outside of Minsk nor in rural areas of Belarus, where there is little grass-roots opposition organization or support, and which tend to be the hotbed of where support for Lukashenko is situated.¹²⁷

Finally, while it is also apparent that many of these commentators also expect huge change should Lukashenko's eventual demise come, many of these assessments are problematic because these do not adequately examine the past history and traditions of

¹²⁶ As one elite from the independent media noted, even though it is relatively "free in terms of nobody really regulating the internet, ... where normally websites are not blocked ... the downside is that quite a lot of political activity goes away from the streets and is being done on the internet. People commend each others blogs or there are some presentations on the websites ... So basically this political steam is being let out on the internet, but not without really influencing the situation in the country. I mean, it does influence the internet community, of course, but still I would not exaggerate the importance of the internet ... people get involved in endless discussions and never get anywhere." Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010).

¹²⁷ On oppositions confinement to Minsk and lack of grass-roots organization in outside areas, see Fuller, Liz, and Jan Maksymiuk. (2008). "Opposition in Belarus, Azerbaijan Differ Over Election Boycotts." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. September 27. Additionally, it should also be noted that one of the key neo-liberal opposition presidential candidates, Yaroslav Romanchuk was opposed to such "plans of radical action," and did not face arrest either. Quote from Romanchuk in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. (2010). "Lukashenka Claims Victory Amid Mounting Criticism." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. December 20.

Belarus that might point to the situation not radically changing in a liberal direction, and for the collectivistic status-quo to prevail. Indeed, even by 2008, it was reported “that there are no indications of a general public uprising or that the electorate is hungry for change.”¹²⁸ Thus, even when Lukashenko leaves office, or is forced from power, which seems unlikely in the near future, the end result of such a change will not necessarily result in Belarus experiencing comprehensive liberal reform. First, it should be pointed out that most opposition forces remain extremely divided in outlook and orientation. Some such as the descendents of the BPF portray themselves as true ‘nationalists’ taking what are seen to be hard-core and radical positions advocating for policies of “Belarusianization.” Indeed, most opposition supporters are quite vocal in their views and criticisms about the hard-core and radical nature of such ‘nationalist’ proposals.¹²⁹

Additionally, other Lukashenko opposition groups remain divided on other specific concrete policy matters, with only small groups advocating for staunchly liberal-market reform. Indeed, it is clear that the Belarusian opposition is far from being united in terms of visions of future economic policy and possibilities for reform. Moreover, only a small minority of the opposition actually advocates for extensive liberal reforms. Thus, the general absence of liberal values in the broader society tends to be largely mimicked at the elite opposition level, where opposition parties very rarely make any concrete and understandable explanations of their economic policy proposals. Instead, many factions of the Belarusian opposition, while favouring a return to democracy are also quite outspoken in their criticisms of opposition groups advocating for liberal-shock therapy. Overall, most opposition parties favour a retention of many of the collectivistic and statist features which have come to characterize Belarusian political-economic relations. As one elite pointed out, “the opposition is normally quite near to the government in their notions, and you cannot find much difference between them, with all taking an etatist

¹²⁸ Drakakhrust, Yuri. (2008). “Belarus’s Quiet Campaign.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. September 24. http://www.rferl.org/content/Belarus_Quiet_Campaign_Election_Lukashenka_Vote/1291139.html.

¹²⁹ Such observations and criticisms of ‘nationalist’ BPF opposition as being too radical and hard-core was mentioned by several Belarusian elites. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). See also footnote no. 4 above.

approach, where the economy is, if not government controlled, then at least heavily government oriented.”¹³⁰

Furthermore, most Belarusian opposition elites remain largely disconnected from the rest of society. From the comments of several Belarusian elites, one got the general sense that not only does the opposition seem out of touch with the worldviews and sentiments of the people, but also that many of the key opposition figures sound to be somewhat elitist. Certainly, this divide is further exacerbated by the fact that many opposition groups most often only work and continue to work with outside [Western] agencies, which does not always sit well with the anti-liberal attitudes of locals, particularly when it comes to some of the political-economic reforms being advocated.¹³¹

This divide between the general public and the Belarusian opposition parties can be inferred from public opinion polls conducted in 2003, which asked people which political party is close to your political views, where 64.2% answered none or that they did not know.¹³² Moreover, such observations about elitism of the Belarusian opposition and its disconnect from general society can be corroborated and inferred from the observations given in a news report, which criticized the opposition and blamed their marginal status due to their “questionable strategy that favoured political change from the

¹³⁰ Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Similar consensus on most of oppositions favouritism of statist approaches and criticisms of opposition advocating rapid liberal reforms, as well as divide within elite were mentioned by other elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b 2010). Additionally, several opposition elites during interviews openly criticized the more liberal United Civic Party and Jaroslav Romanchuk, because such groups ‘liberal’ ideas were out of touch with popular sentiments in Belarus and would not get that much traction amongst the broader society. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

¹³¹ Such observations and criticisms of opposition advocating rapid liberal reforms, and criticisms of opposition forces being elitist and out of touch with the mass public were gained during interviews of several elites. Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010). Belarusian Non-Government Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010). Similar observation on oppositions divide and disconnect with society was mentioned by one Latvian Government Official. Interview. Riga, Latvia (February 26b, 2010). Additionally, it was noted by another Belarusian elite that the Belarusian opposition which have been educated in the West now hold a Westernized mindset that is divergent from the predominant political outlooks shared by most average Belarusians. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010). This contrasts to the situation in Latvia where a Western education was generally viewed as an asset and gave increased credibility to reformers. One study also found that obstacles faced by Western NGO’s in Belarus were due to the lack of liberal-democratic and market values in society. Wilde. (2002). “The Challenges of Using NGOs,” p. 435.

¹³² IISEPS. (2003c). *IISEPS News*, Issue 3, 29 (September).

top over a grassroots approach,” which was problematic especially “when two-thirds of Belarusians believe the current political situation is safe and stable.”¹³³ Indeed, because of the extensive division characterizing Belarusian opposition to Lukashenko, and the Belarusian oppositions elitist attitudes towards most of the rest of Belarusian society, there is a high probability that Lukashenko could be replaced by another strong authoritarian-type president, especially so since there is a tradition and penchant for more paternalistic and authoritarian modes of political rule.

Alternatively, if democracy does develop, it is also far from certain that a democratic regime would implement rapid liberal transformation, due to the large absence of neo-liberal values amongst large segments of Belarusian society and elites. Indeed, several Belarusian elites voiced their opinion that such a prospect was unlikely, with some opposition members openly stating that they would be opposed to rapid comprehensive liberal reforms that occurred in Latvia, the Baltic States and other post-Communist countries such as Poland and Czech Republic. As one elite pointed out, “today...I don’t think most people really believe that it can be any other way,...they don’t want to change much... most people don’t really see the way to change it, and don’t believe that it will change eventually...and while they’re sometimes critical about our economy, and I don’t think that they would eagerly trade it for the market economy.”¹³⁴ In other words, even if the people would like to see more democracy opened up, it does not necessarily mean that they favour unfettered liberalism in politics or the economy per se. Moreover, such factors as the predominant features of a lack of a cult of private property, a preference for collectivistic solutions, as well as a favouritism

¹³³ Maksymiuk. (2008). “Commentary.” For further consensus inferring the oppositions elitism and being out of touch with mass society, see footnotes no. 4 and 131 above, and Marples and Padhol. (2002). “The Opposition in Belarus,” p. 55-76; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, 184.

¹³⁴ Belarusian Non-Governmental Senior Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 5, 2010). Another elite also commented on the unlikely prospects of Belarus following the radical liberal reforms in Latvia and the Baltic States by noting that “we don’t know that much about Latvia or Lithuania, because they have different languages and cultures.” Belarusian Non-Governmental Economist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6b, 2010). Indeed, other elites voiced their opinion that such a prospect was unlikely, with some opposition members openly stating that they would be opposed to rapid comprehensive liberal reforms similar to that which occurred in Latvia, the Baltic States, and others such as Poland and Czech Republic. Belarusian Non-Governmental Opposition Activist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 1, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 6a, 2010); Belarusian Opposition Leader/Former Presidential Candidate. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7a, 2010); Belarusian Senior Academic. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 7b, 2010); Belarusian Non-Governmental Journalist. Interview. Minsk, Belarus (April 8, 2010).

for having a strong leader, which characterize Belarusian political-cultural worldviews all limit the future prospects for comprehensive liberal-market reform. Thus, liberal reform would not be a given outcome in a possible post-Lukashenko scenario.

Conclusions

In contrast to Latvians which never accepted the Soviet way of life, and saw it as a complete failure and culturally alien, Belarusian elites and society had an opposite viewpoint of the Soviet system, one that was very pro-Soviet and nostalgic for the achievements experienced under Belarus's first period of state-hood under the BSSR, which were reinforced by historically rooted collectivist, communal and paternalistic worldviews that had penchant for authoritarian and statist solutions for solving complex political-economic questions of economic development and the well-being of society. As a result of such pro-Soviet and collectivistic worldviews, Belarusians were not prepared to even seriously consider real reform, since the Belarusians did not view the previous system under the BSSR as broken.

As was illustrated in chapter 5, Latvia desired to return to the West, because Latvians saw themselves as historically part of the Western cultural fold, and everything the Latvians did from domestic policy to foreign policy was to highlight their return to the Western cultural realm, and make a clear statement that Latvia was not part of the Russian cultural realm. In contrast, Belarusians took a divergently different view, as Belarusian political-cultural worldviews and historical memories created a view of themselves as being historically linked culturally to Orthodox Christianity and Russia. This resulted in an attitude of friendliness towards further close relations with Russia, due to their common religious-cultural histories and common links, which made the tendency to want to be friends and cooperative with Russia only natural. This does not mean that Belarusians lacked a cohesive national identity, but instead that their historical political-cultural worldviews did not deem it necessary nor expedient to move away or break off from Belarus's traditional cultural realm. Overall, due to the contingent evolutionary path of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories where collectivistic, communal, paternalistic, statist, authoritarian and pro-Russian sentiments predominated, such contingent historic political-cultural factors simply ruled out and

made unthinkable for many Belarusian the potential for comprehensive liberal-market reforms, and any serious movement away from Russia.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of this dissertation have shown that political-cultural worldviews, which are shaped by the historic religious-cultural environment in which these are situated, have a central influence on the patterns of political-economic development chosen by a state. Specifically, the core findings have illustrated that the divergent political-economic policy orientations found between Latvia and Belarus were driven by each state's different political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, which inform Latvians and Belarusians' ideas, beliefs and preferences about modes of living, in regards to what constitutes proper political-economic organization of society and the legitimate role of the state in the economy. Moreover, that Latvia's and Belarus's divergent political-cultural worldviews were conditioned by each state's differing historical legacies in terms of ways of life relating to religion, and the social organization of politics and economics.

Summary of Findings

Latvia

Overall, Latvia's strong political will to de-Sovietize and transform into a market economy via comprehensive liberal reforms, and the desire to return to Europe was driven by Latvia's predominantly liberal individualist political-cultural worldviews that are historically rooted in Latvia, which involve strong preferences for individual rights and freedoms, private property, a limited role for the state in the economy, and also exhibit a reformist sentiments. As chapter 4 illustrated, the key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Latvian political-culture, which placed Latvia firmly in the cultural realm of Western civilization, was its conversion into Western Christianity and exposure to the subsequent Protestant Reformation and Lutheranism. Religiously, most Latvians converted to Lutheranism, which encouraged literacy, individualism, individual equality, private property, and reformism, and was largely influenced by the pietism made popular to Latvians by the Moravian Brethren. Politically, Latvia had been ruled over by German nobility, Sweden, and then Russian Tsars beginning in 1795, which ruled Latvia in a more hands-off manner, allowing more

openness and cultural autonomy, due to the strength of the Baltic German nobility that had ruled over the Baltic region for centuries. Economically, the majority of ethnic-Latvians remained rural until the mid-twentieth century, and Latvians had long experience with private property, and a strong tradition of private individual farmsteads. For rural Latvians, private property was often held at the level of being sacred in the worldviews and historical memories of Latvians.

Throughout history there was also a persistent pattern of Latvian resistance against authoritarian encroachments to personal freedom and private property, which was seen in numerous rural uprisings over the centuries, and seen especially during Russian rule, which was largely driven in most instances by a constant hunger for land amongst rural Latvians. What is key to note is that this resistance was not just based on reflexive anti-Russianism. Instead, as chapter 4 illustrated, Latvians historic liberal-individualist worldviews and ways of life was found in the resistance which was evident during the many peasant uprisings from the eighteenth century onwards, during the period of the national awakening, during resistance to Russification, during the failed revolution of 1905, during the Russian Revolution, and during the simultaneous Latvian War of Independence (1918-1920).

Latvia's historically liberal-individualist political-culture thrived during the period of interwar independence, 1918-1940, the foundations of which were built on the historic traditions, worldviews, and ways of life of Latvia's independent private farmers. In 1940, Latvia was forcefully and illegally incorporated into the USSR, and as a result Latvian views of the Second World War are thus uniquely shaped by its position of being literally stuck between a rock and hard place, where they were first occupied by the Soviet Union, then by Germany, followed again by the Soviet Union. As chapter 4 illustrated, many Latvians actively resisted Soviet forces, first by grudgingly donning German uniforms to fight the Soviet occupation, and then as guerilla fighters, known as the Forest Brethren, which were active from 1945 to the mid-1950s. In each act of armed resistance, it was illustrated that Latvians historically liberal-individualist worldviews were key in informing the actions of resisters and the large majority of rural Latvian society that supported the resistance groups, whom were fighting for Latvian freedom and to protect their historical cultural way of life, which Soviet aggression directly

threatened. Thus, the historical memories shared by Latvians about the Second World War viewed the Soviet victory as the return of an oppressive occupation regime.

Overall, the majority of Latvians were rural until 1945. In chapter 4, it was shown that this changed under the second period of Soviet occupation after 1945, as Latvia experienced significant Soviet-style industrial development during this period, becoming one of the leading 'industrial engines' of the Soviet economy. However, since political-economic decision-making was largely controlled by ethnic-Russians/Slavs and Russified Latvians that were beholden to Moscow, most ethnic-Latvians viewed Soviet economic industrial development negatively. This resulted from the forced collectivization of agricultural and destruction of individual private farming, and the subsequent movement to heavy industrialization after 1949, which resulted in environmental degradation of rural Latvia, mass immigration of ethnic-Russians/Slavs into Latvia causing ethnic-Latvians to become nearly a minority in their own land, forced Russification, and constant attacks on religion and culture. Indeed, it was shown that there was a distinct clash of cultures occurring in Soviet Latvia, seen with the many illustrated acts of resistance throughout the period, both violent and passive, from ethnic-Latvians to Soviet Russian rule. In tracing the motives of Latvian resistance in key instances throughout Soviet rule, it was shown that Communist ideas were never widely credible amongst ethnic-Latvians, and alien to Latvia's historic liberal political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories. Moreover, it was shown that Latvia's predominantly liberal-individualist historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life were not swept away during the era of Soviet rule.

Thus, it was illustrated that the mass resistance that emerged when limited freedoms were introduced under glasnost and perestroika was not a new phenomenon, but rooted in the liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories that were long historically predominant in Latvia, which Soviet authorities had failed to destroy, and were seen in the many acts of resistance the preceded and served as inspiration for the mass resistance found from the mid-1980s to 1991. Indeed, Latvian people, both elites and the majority of society believed that Soviet command policies were not only a failure, but also political-culturally alien and unnatural, and imposed forcefully on Latvia by the Russian dominated Soviet Union.

Thus, it was shown that a key emphasis was placed on an overall pattern of de-Sovietization of the political-economy, which resulted from the Latvian view of the Soviet system as antithetical and harmful to Latvian political-cultural interests. Moreover, after suffering nearly fifty years of being forcefully held against their will under Soviet/Russian domination, ethnic-Latvians shared an intense yearning and desire for the restoration of individual freedom and the right to own private property.

Such desires for individual freedom and the right to own property, coupled with anti-statist views favouring a limited role for the state, entailed an immense faith in the market, and a cult of private property being widely shared both amongst most Latvian elites and members of society, which viewed private property as being sacred, and generally loathed and distrusted government planning. As chapter 5 illustrated, this faith in the market and cult of private property resulted in the view that the market economy was the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ way to effectively organize the political-economic affairs of society in order to promote economic growth and overall development. Moreover, such worldviews lead to all-things that were seemingly Soviet to be rejected, with a general view favouring ultra-liberal marketization, which was seen as the cultural antithesis of Soviet political-economic practices. These worldviews came into practice in the policy goals of getting the state out of the role of business management, and substantially removing statist government planning from all parts of the economy. Additionally, while there were certainly hard times in the initial years after regaining independence, this did not lessen the potency of Latvians liberal worldviews, as most Latvians were ready to press on through any difficulties during the transformation process, which most considered light in comparison to the historical memories they remembered of the many hardships endured during Soviet rule, and nothing could be as worse as those times. Overall, most Latvians generally viewed transformation to a liberal market economy as essential in Latvia’s quest to de-Sovietize, ensure freedom, return to Western Europe, and return to normalcy.

Belarus

In contrast, Belarusian elites and society had an opposite viewpoint of the Soviet system from that of Latvians, which is why Belarusians were not prepared to seriously

consider comprehensive liberal reforms, since most elites and those in society did not view the Soviet system as broken. Overall, Belarus's lack of reform is attributable to collectivist political-cultural worldviews that are found historically in Belarus, which favor collective/communal interests, lack traditions of private property, do not have a cult of private property, prefer a strong role for the state in the economy, exhibit higher political passivity and have paternalistic tendencies of favouring a strong leader. As chapter 6 illustrated, the key critical historical juncture that was definitive in the historical evolution of Belarusian political-culture was Belarus's original conversion into Orthodox Christianity, which placed Belarus firmly in the realm of Russian Orthodox Culture. In terms of religious values, the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus was hierarchical, and promoted values of collectivism/communalism, passivity, paternalism, absolutism, strong state rule, and authoritarian leadership. In such a religious-cultural environment, there was a lack of emphasis placed on the values of individualism, individual freedom, individual literacy, and private property. Additionally, it was also shown in chapter 6 that while Belarus did have historical links also to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, it was Belarus's strong eastern cultural connections intricately tying average Belarusians to Russia and Russian Orthodoxy which had predominant long-lasting effects influencing the shape and pattern of political-cultural worldviews unique to Belarusians. Politically, from 1795 onwards, Russian Tsars, which had strong direct connections to the Orthodox Church, ruled Belarus in an absolutist and authoritarian fashion, which allowed the religious-cultural influences of Russia and Russian Orthodoxy to have cultural hegemony in the lands of Belarus. Throughout history there was also a persistent pattern of Belarusian passivity and acquiescence to authoritarian rule, as well as a rural way of life promoting collective/communal rights over that of individual personal freedoms.

Economically, Belarusians remained predominantly rural up until the mid-twentieth century. However, unlike Latvians, Belarusians historically had next to no experience with individual private property, and instead adhered to a political-cultural way of life characterized by a tradition of collectivist/communal control of property under the village commune. While there was some limited private property ownership in Belarus, such private holdings were largely controlled by non-Belarusians, typically Polish barons or Russian aristocrats. In these areas, ethnic-Belarusians largely remained

as serfs in a feudal state of existence, and predominantly lived in rural villages. As a result, a cult of private property or view of private property being sacred, as displayed in Latvia, was largely absent and unthinkable to the collectivistic and communally oriented political-cultural worldviews and historical memories shared by Belarusians.

It was also illustrated in chapter 6 that Belarus gained its first modern tangible experience with statehood under the BSSR, where state-building and political-economic development built on and reinforced the preexisting collectivist, communal and paternalistic cultural worldviews already historically prevalent amongst Belarusians. Additionally, it was also shown that Belarusians also shared negative historical memories in regards to the experiences suffered by Belarusians living in the western lands of Belarus that were under Polish dominion during the interwar period. Furthermore, chapter 6 also showed that Belarusians also have differing political-cultural worldviews and historical memories in regards to World War Two. First, Belarusians took a more positive view of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact because this ended Polish domination over the western lands of Belarus, and resulted in the reunification of the historic cultural lands of Belarus into one single political entity, which was the BSSR. Moreover, the lands of Belarus were also the centre-point of pro-Soviet anti-German guerilla warfare, where the local population formed the core of the pro-Soviet guerilla forces, which largely received mass popular support from the populace. As a result, the historical memories shared by Belarusians about WWII exude a great deal of patriotism, where the Soviet victory not only meant liberation from the domination of the German invaders, but also a shared victory for Belarusians and the BSSR with Russians in the Great Patriotic War. Thus, for Belarusians, the end of WWII was seen as liberation and victory, and was one of the key historical events in the history of the BSSR. Indeed, it was shown that many of the Belarusian guerilla leaders would go on to play prominent roles as key Belarusian national statesmen leading the BSSR for much of the post-1945 period.

Overall, it was also shown in chapter 6 that the majority of Belarusians were rural until 1945, which changed as Belarus experienced significant Soviet industrial development in the post-war years, becoming one of the leading 'industrial engines' of the Soviet economy. During this time, the Belarusian political leaders of the BSSR enjoyed a great deal of political capital and legitimacy, due to their impeccable pro-

Soviet credentials, and past experience as leaders of the guerilla resistance during WWII, which resulted in them having much greater decision-making autonomy relative to Latvia and other Soviet Republics. This meant that Soviet rule was not seen as foreign or culturally alien, because Belarusians were largely predominate in the decision-making apparatus of the BSSR. Moreover, it was shown that in contrast to Latvians, the majority of Belarusians largely viewed Soviet economic industrial development and modernization achieved under the BSSR as positive progress. Indeed, compared to Latvia, there was very little relative mass grass-roots resistance to Soviet rule in Belarus, which was apparent in all periods, and especially during the period of glasnost and perestroika which was shown to be largely viewed negatively in the historical memories of Belarusians. In general, state-building and political-economic development under the BSSR are generally viewed positively the in predominant worldviews and historical memories of Belarusians, largely because many of the political-economic practices found in the BSSR built on and reinforced the highly collectivist, communal and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews already historically widely prevalent amongst Belarusians.

As chapter 7 illustrated, these unique historical legacies meant even with the collapse of the Soviet Union, collectivistic, command-style, and statist policy ideas were not discredited amongst most Belarusian elites and members of society. This is because key aspects of Soviet Communism found in the policies and the ideology exhibited by the BSSR were rooted in Belarus's historic political-culture worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, which included predominant attitudes favoring collectivism, the communal ownership of property, and paternalism in the form of a penchant for strong statist solutions and authoritarian leadership to solve pressing political-economic problems. Moreover, as chapter 7 illustrated, Belarusians continued to share significant nostalgia for Soviet political-economic life under the BSSR, which is seen in significant patriotism for the BSSR in the historical memories of large numbers of Belarusians. As a result of such pro-Soviet and collectivistic worldviews, Belarusians were not prepared to even seriously consider real reform after 1991, since Belarusians did not view the system under the BSSR as broken.

Overall, chapter 7 showed that in the predominant political-cultural worldviews shared by Belarusians, there was little preference for comprehensive market

transformation, nor desire to radically de-Sovietize or move away from Russia. Unlike Latvians, Belarusian elites and society believed that the Soviet-era command policies were largely a success, which were largely in tune with Belarusians political-cultural worldviews and not viewed as culturally alien. As a result, explicitly liberal political-cultural ideas and values similar to the Latvians faith in the market and cult of private property were largely absent from the political-cultural mix in Belarus. Additionally, Belarusians also felt no expediency to move towards Western Europe, and increasingly expressed desires to maintain close ties with Russia, not because they lacked a national identity, but because of the predominant feeling that a close orientation towards Russia was 'right' and 'natural,' due to Belarus's close cultural heritage shared with Russia. From such a political-cultural standpoint, this helps to understand why similar collectivist and statist patterns reminiscent of Soviet times, continued to persist in Belarus under President Lukashenko long after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. As chapter 7 illustrated, Lukashenko has been able to consolidate and legitimize his rule by playing on these predominant political-cultural worldviews and historical memories widely shared by both Belarusian elites and society alike.

Theoretical Implications

The core political-cultural theoretical arguments of this dissertation that explain the divergent patterns of post-Soviet political-economic development between Latvia and Belarus, are rooted in the rich body of cultural theory found within Social Constructivism. Given that the findings of this dissertation have confirmed the core hypothesis that political-cultural worldviews play a central role in influencing the patterns of political-economic development chosen by a state, it lends important support and credence to cultural theories of Social Constructivism, and also exposed serious deficiencies with other competing theoretical frames of explanation.

Traditional theories of IR and IPE faced significant problems from the outset, as Latvia and Belarus were in similar geographic positions, had similar power resources, and faced similar strategic incentives and constraints, which would have been viewed as being a major burden on both Latvia's and Belarus's ability to radically alter each one's respective relationship vis-à-vis Russia in regards to decreasing dependence, increasing

autonomy and forming new alliances. Economically, it was also shown that neither Latvia nor Belarus was situated in relatively better positions to radically reorient their macroeconomic and foreign economic policies away from Russia, as both were heavily dependent on the former Soviet market for trade, export markets, and the import of raw materials and energy. Furthermore, significant problems were posed to theories of IR and IPE by the fact that many economic commentators in the West and in liberally minded international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank were advising Latvia against reform measures which might take them out of Russia's economic orbit, as well as by the fact that Latvia had begun the process of comprehensive reform long before the countries of the EU had warmed to the prospect of Latvia actually gaining EU membership.

Overall, the main problem with much of the IR and IPE theories inability to solve Latvia's and Belarus's divergent behavior was that this literature does not adequately take account of the important independent influence that domestic political variables play in shaping states policies, especially those involving ideational factors such as political-culture. This is problematic because the choices of Latvia and Belarus, in regards to the patterns of post-1991 political-economic transformation had implications for both the domestic and international realms, and were often closely interrelated. Indeed, this dissertation has shown that to fully understand the divergence of Latvia's and Belarus's post-Soviet political-economic trajectories, it was necessary to not privilege the theoretical realms of IR and IPE over Comparative Politics, which supports the advice of those who argued against the rigid dichotomy often found between international and comparative politics.¹

While theories of Comparative Politics, such as Historical Institutionalism, Rational Institutionalism, and more purely ideational approaches from Social Constructivism, such as those focused on ideas at the elite-level and especially those utilizing National Identity frameworks opened promising avenues of research, the findings of this dissertation also showed that methodological issues arise with these frameworks, and that evidence from Latvia and Belarus posed significant problems for these theoretical explanations.

¹ See Katzenstein, in Kohli et al. (1996). "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics.," p. 9.

Historical Institutional frameworks have pointed to historic institutions as impediments to change to explain why transformation has not been forthcoming in Belarus. Here, the crux of these arguments was that the institutional structures of the Communist system were more entrenched and/or hard-line in some of the post-Soviet countries than in others, which has inhibited pro-reform forces and facilitated the old nomenklatura to continue to wield significant control over the levers of power, thus stymieing attempts at reform.² Additionally, in the case of Latvia, there might have also been the temptation to make an argument along Historical Institutional lines that ideas favouring reform were implemented successfully, because Latvia had the experience of being an independent state during the interwar period.

However, in regards to Latvia, chapter 4 illustrated that such arguments were inadequate because once forcefully incorporated into the USSR, these formal institutional structures of the interwar period were completely dismantled, with Latvia being fully incorporated into the Soviet administrative and institutional structure. Thus, as chapters 4 and 6 illustrated, both Latvia and Belarus were similar in terms of having the same institutional structures, and being heavily integrated into the central institutional command structure of the Soviet political-economy. Moreover, chapter 6 showed that Belarus retained greater institutional decision-making autonomy from Moscow, during its existence as the BSSR, than did Latvia, which was seen with Belarusian leaders being given more leeway in political-economic affairs, where the BSSR was designated as its own administrative district, and had much of its own national economic infrastructure put into place. Additionally, Belarus was also given its own seat in the UN General Assembly, had its own foreign ministry, and as chapter 6 pointed out, also enjoyed a more trusted position in defence matters, forming one single military district of Belarusian military units within the Soviet armed forces.

However, it is not simply enough to point to the longevity and retention of historical institutions mentioned above to explain non-reform in Belarus. Indeed, the worldviews of most of Belarusian society and especially among elites did not view the Soviet system as being broken. This is because the political-economic practices found in

² See for example, Korosteleva et al. (2003a). "Introduction.," p. 7; Korosteleva. (2003). "Party System Development in Post-Communist Belarus"; Prizel. (1997). "Ukraine Between Proto-Democracy and 'Soft' Authoritarianism.," p. 345.

the BSSR largely built on and reinforced the highly collectivist, communal and paternalistic political-cultural worldviews already historically preexisting and prevalent amongst Belarusians. Overall, Historical Institutional arguments are inadequate to account for comprehensive reform in Latvia, and the failure to reform in Belarus. This is because these explanations, were not able to account for why Communists in Latvia were more effectively purged from key positions, while in Belarus, local Communists initially retained a significant hold over the levers of power, nor why an apparent outsider like Lukashenko was able to gain power and effectively consolidate an authoritarian regime which has retained an aura of legitimacy.

Additionally, in pointing primarily to the longevity of historical institutions to explain the lack of change in Belarus, and thus treating ideational variables with secondary importance, such theories overlook the cultural worldviews that such institutions are historically rooted in and legitimized by in society. In doing so, theories of Historical Institutionalism are unable to account for the lack of reform in Belarus, as resulting from the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories found in large segments of Belarusian society. As chapters 6 and 7 illustrated Belarusian political-cultural worldviews shared not only significant nostalgia for the BSSR, but also retained strong attitudes favouring collectivism, the communal ownership of property, and paternalism in the form of a penchant for statist solutions and authoritarian leadership to solve pressing political-economic problems.

This dissertation has also shown that prominent Rationalist Institutional arguments that incorporate ideas are also inadequate in explaining Latvia's and Belarus's divergent political-economic records for several reasons. While these Rationalist arguments were right in pointing to the prevalence of liberal ideas in Latvia in the post-1991 period, such explanations failed to specify the roots of specific ideas, and thus tend to use ideas in an ad hoc manner, to help address deficiencies in these Rationalist theoretical frameworks, and in doing so reduced political behavior and ideas to instrumental calculations of rational self-interest.

For instance, it was illustrated that problems were prevalent with Rationalist arguments that such liberal ideas acted as "flashlights" in Latvia by helping its government to find new policy solutions to solve the immediate problems that were

occurring after the fall of Communism, because Communist institutions and ideas were simply discredited because of poor economic performance during the Soviet era.³ However, as chapters 4 and 6 illustrated, these arguments are contradicted when examining empirical evidence, which shows that both Latvia and Belarus experienced significant industrialization and development after 1945 under the Soviet system, and both were relatively equal, and ranked amongst the top of the ex-Soviet Republics in terms of having high socio-economic modernization (e.g. per-capita income, education, health, urbanization, and welfare). Moreover, in the immediate post-independence period, both Latvia and Belarus still faced similar economic situations, had similar levels of development, were heavily industrialized, and remained intricately tied into the Soviet command economy. Instead, it was shown in chapter 4 that while Latvia did receive tangible material benefits during Communism, Latvian worldviews abhorred Soviet-Communist policy methods, which Latvians viewed as culturally alien and not normal and natural to the Latvian cultural way of life, while Belarusian worldviews favoured such command-style policies, which were rooted in Belarusians historically collectivist, communal, paternalistic and statist political-cultural worldviews, which viewed such policies as normal and natural.

Other Rationalist studies incorporating ideas were also important in analyzing the privatization process, and for giving an in depth understanding of policy platforms of the various political parties in Latvia, and in pointing to the importance that ideas are key drivers of economic transformation.⁴ However, such explanations of the transformation process fell short in arguing that such liberal ideas were ‘new,’ and predominantly informed by exogenous outside influences, such as the ‘Washington Consensus.’ As a result, these explanations failed to account for the key endogenous ideological and historical-cultural factors for why the major political parties in the Latvian Saeima coalesced in favour of rapid liberal reform, nor why most Latvian voters repeatedly supported such pro-reform parties. In general, too much emphasis is also placed on the exogenous ideologies promoted by the IMF and ‘Washington Consensus.’ In the case of Latvia, it was shown in chapter 5 that such liberal worldviews were not ‘new,’ but rooted

³ See for example, Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 90.

⁴ See for example, Nissinen. (1999). *Latvia's Transition to a Market Economy.*

in the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories that were historically preexisting in Latvia. Additionally, chapters 3 and 5 illustrated that Latvian policy-makers willfully ignored the advice of IMF advisors on numerous occasions. Moreover, the fact that liberal ideas were actually nil in Belarus, and that Belarusians did not follow the same path as Latvia points clearly to that there is something else at play. The comparison of this study of Latvia and Belarus is crucial for dismissing these Rationalist arguments. Indeed, the ‘Washington Consensus’ ideas were equally “available” in both places. However, it was shown that these ideas only ‘worked’ in Latvia and not in Belarus, because Latvia was already culturally predisposed to those ideas, while Belarus was not.

Significant problems were also found with Rationalists ad hoc use of ideational explanations, especially that Latvians had an “antipathy toward all things Soviet,” and a desire to Westernize,⁵ which while definitely true, did not account for, nor trace the historical cultural factors for why this antipathy was so strong, nor that it was not so much a goal of ‘Westernizing,’ but actually an idea of returning to Europe and the West, which Latvians were historically culturally part of, and cut off from during the years of Soviet/Russian occupation. Furthermore, chapter 4 presented credible historical evidence and consensus revealing the presence of Western liberal worldviews, ways of life, habits, and traditions characterizing Latvians political-economic behavior in various periods throughout history, especially in the modern-era during Latvia’s first period of independence where there was market capitalism, and individual private property. Additionally, it was also shown that Soviet rule failed to extinguish Latvia’s historically liberal-individualist cultural traditions. As chapter 4 pointed out, Communist ideas were never widely credible to begin with in Latvia, and were antithetical to Latvia’s historically rooted liberal-individualist political-culture. Overall, it was shown in chapter 5 that Latvians historically liberal political-culture was the driving force behind Latvia’s policies of comprehensive political-economic reform and transformation away from Communism.

In regards to Belarus, it was also shown that serious inadequacies exist with Rationalist explanations that argued that Belarus’s divergent political-economic behavior

⁵ *Ibid.*

could be explained by the near dearth of ideology in Belarus, relative to the high support for liberal ideas in places like Latvia, which resulted not only in a lack of reform, but also in a lack of purpose, and rent-seeking by authoritarian elites.⁶ Such explanations are inadequate to explain Belarus's divergence, because while there was an absence of liberal ideology in Belarus, it was shown in chapter 7 that there was a strong presence of ideologies, both amongst elites and society, favouring collectivist, communal, statist, paternalistic, and authoritarian methods for managing political-economic relations, which most glaringly came across in public opinion polls, the observations in interviews from Belarusian elites, and in news reports and contemporary accounts on Belarusian politics.

Furthermore, since most Rationalists utilize such factors as the dominant position of oligarchs to bolster their explanations, such arguments were seriously challenged by evidence in chapter 7, showing that Belarus has had far fewer problems with oligarchs than other similar countries which have chosen not to pursue liberalizing reform, such as Russia, largely as a result of the sheer dominance of President Lukashenko. As chapter 7 illustrated, such evidence showed the inadequacies of Rationalist arguments regarding the 'rent-seeking' motives of Belarusian officials, since Lukashenko's decisions were not in the interest of self-aggrandizing bureaucrats. Moreover, chapter 7 further illustrated deficiencies with Rationalist theories, in that strong evidence was presented showing that Belarusian elites and society were motivated more in their policy behavior by their political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, characterized by attitudinal preferences favouring collectivist, communal, statist, paternalistic and authoritarian methods for managing political-economic relations, which viewed these as being the 'best,' 'right,' 'natural,' and 'normal' methods, rather than being influenced by rationalist motives.

Rationalist theories that also incorporated ad hoc ideas of Nationalism and National Identity to buttress their explanations, arguing primarily that nationalist ideas were used instrumentally by Latvian elites, in the form of restrictive citizenship and

⁶ See for example, Åslund. (2002). *Building Capitalism.*, p. 393; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 538; Havrykyshyn. (2006). *Divergent Paths in Post-Communist Transformation.*, p. 245, 272; Havrykyshyn. (2007). "Fifteen Years of Transformation.," p. 12, 13.

language laws, in order to exclude political opponents and materially benefit local elites,⁷ were also shown to be inadequate in explaining policy decisions in Latvia. However, while it might be accurate that ethnic-Latvians gained a dominant position in the administrative apparatus of the Latvian government after independence, it was shown that the sole motivating reason for such a change did not result from purely instrumental and materialistic calculations. Indeed, such Rationalist theories of nationalism miss the point that such laws were more than just crass nationalist responses used for material gain, which was illustrated in chapter 5, with the lack of such ‘exclusionary’ preferences found in polling responses to questions asking whether ethnic-nationals should be favoured for jobs over minorities, as well as from elite observations given in interviews, which pointed primarily to ideological motives in influencing policy goals over those of rational materialistic motivations.

Additionally, significant flaws exist with the argument that such a change in personnel resulted from the motivation to gain rent-seeking opportunities, because the increasing reforms occurring in Latvia throughout the 1990s, removed many of the old Soviet-era mechanisms and opportunities that elites could use for rent-seeking. Moreover, it was shown in chapter 3 that the non-core political institutions, where opportunities for rent-seeking are more readily available, did not necessarily see extensive personnel changes. Instead, evidence indicated that the dominance of ethnic-Latvians was most concentrated in the core institutions of government decision-making, as opposed to lesser institutional apparatuses of government. Moreover, evidence in chapters 3 and 5 showed that the large Soviet era state-owned enterprises were largely staffed and managed by ethnic-Russians/Slavs during Soviet rule and remained so in the immediate period after regaining independence, and that there was significant resistance from this group to early attempts reform and privatization, which poses significant problems for rationalist theories, since ethnic-Latvians largely remained alienated from such institutional bodies. Indeed, evidence in chapter 5 indicated the presence of strong liberal ideological goals operating primarily in influencing behavior over those postulated by Rationalists that nationalism was used for instrumental purposes.

⁷ See for example, Steen. (2000). “Ethnic Relations, Elite and Democracy.” p. 70; Laitin. (1991). “National Uprisings in the Soviet Union”; Feldmann. (2001). “The Fast Track from the Soviet Union.”

Thus, rather than simply being predicated on rationalist assumptions, these institutional changes had clear connotations relating to the Latvians liberal-individualist worldviews. As chapters 4 and 5 illustrated, Latvians viewed the Soviet political-economic system as alien to their political-cultural way of life, and had a strong desire to promptly de-Sovietize the Latvian political-economy upon regaining independence. Part of this de-Sovietization meant excluding ethnic-Russians/Slavs that had dominated the Soviet political-economic apparatus, whom ethnic-Latvians viewed as ideologically Soviet and loyal to Russia. This was illustrated in public opinion polls, observations from elites during interviews, and from contemporary commentary from the time, which showed that a sizeable portion of ethnic-Latvians continued to view the ethnic-Russian/Slavic population in Latvia as a threat and ‘fifth column,’ that would subvert the goals of de-Sovietization, liberalization, and a return to Europe. Moreover, as chapter 4 pointed out, ethnic-Latvians generally loathed the Soviet political-economy, and the connected migration of ethnic-Russians/Slavs to work in the Soviet enterprises, which Latvians viewed as a threat to their cultural well-being.

Additionally, chapters 4 and 5 illustrated, such views of Latvians in regards to the ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers living in Latvia were not entirely unfounded, and were shaped by their historical memories of ethnic-Russians/Slavs dominating the Soviet administrative apparatus and being loyal Soviet citizens, as well as evidence in public opinion polls, the accounts of elites, which showed that in the lead up to independence, and even after 1991, many ethnic-Russians/Slavs attitudes remained highly pro-Soviet, illiberal, anti-reform, and pro-Russian. Moreover, in regards to the elites, it was shown in chapter 5 that the ethnic-Russian/Slavic elite managers actively opposed the Latvian government’s liberal reforms, which was illustrated from first-hand accounts from Latvian elites, and contemporary reports from the time. In doing so, this dissertation took a new outlook on ethno-cultural relations and questions of citizenship, in arguing in chapter 5 that the exclusive citizenship policy of Latvia served actually as a solution to solve the huge obstacle posed to the desire of Latvians to de-Sovietize, resulting from the fact that ethnic-Russian/Slavs dominated the political-economic decision-making apparatus in Latvia during Soviet times, and tended to be the biggest supporters of the Soviet regime. From a political-cultural standpoint, it was shown that these laws have had

significant consequences influencing the shape and transformation of Latvia's political-economic policy behavior since 1991, by excluding those most likely to oppose de-Sovietization and liberal reform, because the vast majority of the ethnic-Russian/Slavic settlers that came after 1945 did not qualify for automatic citizenship, which meant that they were not allowed to vote or hold state jobs. Overall, the restrictive citizenship regime have meant that Latvians were in firm control their political destiny, which has allowed Latvia's liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews to shine through in regards to political-economic policy patterns and behavior.

It was also shown that more recent Social Constructivist theoretical accounts, operating at the elite-level of analysis, which argued that elite-level ideas have been important in shaping the types of international organizations that the post-Soviet states have chosen to join,⁸ were also not adequate in explaining the divergent political-economic orientations found between Latvia and Belarus. This dissertation has shown that problems result from the focus of Darden's explanations on ideas at the elite-level, because the importance that domestic societal influences have in shaping elite ideas is ignored. As chapters 5 and 7 illustrated, this is problematic because elites do not operate in a vacuum when formulating policy, and are informed and influenced by the political-cultural worldviews that are historically predominant in their respective society, which was highlighted in the extensive public opinion polling that was presented for each country, and the fact that Latvian voters repeatedly elected pro-reform governing coalitions since 1991.

Additional methodological problems from the large-N comparison of these studies resulted from the cursory and next to no comparative historical analysis that was conducted by Darden, or in the case of Latvia and Belarus, where such ideational preferences were taken for granted and assumed as given.⁹ This was problematic because this resulted in these explanations either missing or misunderstanding important key factors at play, which only the rich comparative historical analysis found in chapters 4 and 6 was able to do by pointing to historical rootedness and contingency of such ideas at play. Furthermore, little treatment of the historical roots of Belarusian elites integrationist

⁸ See for example, Darden. (2009). *Economic Liberalism and Its Rivals*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.135-139, 161-166.

preferences were given by Darden, and there was only a little blurb pointing to other possible explanations, such as that Belarus had a ‘weak’ national identity.¹⁰ Additionally, the elite ideas at play in Belarus were also described with rationalist undertones, which made such ideas appear as serving instrumental ends.¹¹ Thus, the importance that domestic societal influences have in shaping elite ideas in both Latvia and Belarus was largely ignored. This is problematic, as the case study chapters of this dissertation showed evidence from comparative historical analysis, public opinion polls, elite observations, and in first-hand reports and secondary commentaries from the time that such liberal ideas in Latvia, and collectivist ideas in Belarus were present in large segments of society and elites, and influenced policy decisions, well prior to the influence of international organizations. Overall, it was shown that that Latvians had strong Western liberal political-cultural roots, whereas Belarusian society’s collectivist historical political-cultural did not view cooperation with Russia as being problematic, since Belarusians viewed Russia as culturally akin to Belarus.

Similar elite-level ideational explanations also made by Epstein, who argued that international institutions, such as the EU, were key in guiding post-Communist transformation and helping to foster domestic support for ideas favouring of liberal reforms,¹² were also shown to be problematic for several reasons. First, as chapters 3 and 5 illustrated, Latvia largely opted to implement comprehensive reforms long before the EU had warmed to the prospect of Latvia’s membership. Moreover, it was shown in chapter 3 that Latvia had implemented such extensive liberal reforms in certain areas that went beyond liberalization found in the EU, which resulted in Latvia having to implement greater amounts of regulation once acceding to the EU. In terms of the ideas influencing such reforms, it was shown in chapters 4 and 5 that such liberal ideas in Latvia were long historically present in large segments of society and amongst elites, and influenced policy decisions well prior before the EU actually warmed to the idea of Latvian membership. Moreover, instead of merely resulting from the influence of the EU and other international institutions, it was shown in chapter 5 that in countries such as Latvia, there was also an overriding political-cultural component involved that acted prior

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161-166.

¹² Epstein. (2008). *In Pursuit of Liberalism*.

to the influence of international bodies. Specifically, it was shown that that Latvia viewed membership in organizations such as the EU and NATO as part of its overall goal to ‘return to Europe,’ in the form of returning to their Western cultural roots, and away from Soviet/Russian culture. Finally, when applied to Belarus, such arguments fall short as the EU has had quite marginal influence there. As chapter 7 illustrated, in Belarus the opposite occurred to that of Latvia, where Belarusians did not perceive close cooperation with Russia as a problem or a cultural threat, since Belarusians viewed Russia as culturally akin and historically linked to Belarus.

This dissertation has also shown that some of the more compelling National Identity frameworks of Social Constructivism, that explained the divergent policies amongst post-Communist countries by pointing to variations in the strength of national identity between these states, also faced serious problems and were unable to explain the differing policy trajectories found between Latvia and Belarus. To recap, such explanations argued that certain post-Soviet states, such as the Baltic States exhibited more cohesive levels of Nationalism, which directly facilitated these states successful implementation of policy reforms and movement of their foreign economic policy orientation away from Russia.¹³ In contrast, National Identity explanations argued that Belarus’s inability to reform and transform political-economic policy practices, high-levels of pro-Soviet nostalgia, and close orientation towards Russia resulted from a general lack of a cohesive national identity amongst Belarusians, with the view that Belarus is simply a “denationalized nation.”¹⁴

However, the findings of this dissertation have shown that arguments of National Identity are inadequate to explain the vast differences in political-economic behavior and divergent rates of reform amongst the post-Soviet states, and especially those between

¹³ See for example, Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations*; Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy*; Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy”; Tsygankov. (2000). “Defining State Interests after Empire”; Kolstø, ed. (1999). *Nation Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies*; Lieven. (1994). *The Baltic Revolution.*, p. xlvi.

¹⁴ See for example, Marples. (1999a). *Belarus*; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 39; Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 127-128; Burant. (1995). “Foreign Policy and National Identity”; Mihalisko. (1997). “Belarus.” p. 224; Kuzio and Nordberg. (1999). “Nation and State Building”; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). “Sultanism in Eastern Europe”; Kuzio. (2001). “Belarus and Ukraine.” p. 462; Silitiski. (2006). “Still Soviet.” p. 47; Ioffe. (2008). *Understanding Belarus.*, p. 235; Zuprudnik. (1993). *Belarus.*

Latvia and Belarus. Methodologically, issues arise because the primacy of nationalist ideas was brought into question by the alleged instrumental actions of political actors. In other words, by following their short term material interests, such National Identity accounts assume that Belarus was acting against its long-term national interests, and as a result lacked a coherent sense of national identity. Moreover, even in the case of the Baltic States, materialist goals were important motivators in the explanations of these states return to Europe.¹⁵ Furthermore, Abdelal's arguments normatively imply that "nationalism" should only be associated with a policy behavior that is "purposive" in the form of being "liberal," oriented towards Europe, and away from Russia. These normative assertions when combined with the Rationalist undertones of the explanations are problematic. This is because, while it is not wrong to assume that Belarusians did not interpret closer relations with Russia as a problem, it was also shown in chapter 7 that there was more to the story here than just simply explaining Belarus's behavior on the lack of National Identity.

As the discussion in chapter 7 illustrated, National Identity explanations regarding Belarus's alleged 'lack' of national identity due to Minsk's close relations with Moscow have proven faulty when held up to strong evidence contradicting such claims. First, evidence in chapters 3 and 7, suggested that Belarusian political-economic cooperation with Russia has been moving at an exceedingly slow pace since the mid-1990s, and more often than not, President Lukashenko has extracted significant gains from Moscow, without conceding much from Belarus to Moscow in return. Moreover, National Identity claims about the influence of Russia over Belarus face serious problems from evidence pointing to consensus that Lukashenko has been a strong defender of Belarusian national interests and sovereignty, and has gained popular favour for defending Belarusian sovereignty, which was illustrated in comments given by Belarusian elites during interviews, and also from secondary commentary on Lukashenko's behavior. Indeed, chapter 7 illustrated that a more strongly robust national identity had existed in Belarus than many National Identity commentators gave credit. Thus, rather than simply acting as a means to maintain power for powers sake, or as a means for Moscow to gain control

¹⁵ See for example, Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy*; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*, p. 102; Marples. (1999a). *Belarus.*, p. 31-32; Eke and Kuzio. (2000). "Sultanism in Eastern Europe.," p. 530-531

over the actions of Minsk, it was shown that Lukashenko and other Belarusian elites viewed Russian oil and gas as a means in order to in order to maintain the neo-soviet, collectivist, and highly statist command political-economic policy practices, which were in accordance with their political-cultural worldviews of what constituted the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘natural,’ and ‘normal’ policies to promote political-economic development.

Further significant methodological problems were also shown to exist with explanations arguing that Belarusian national identity is “contested” and “ambiguous.” First, Belarusian policies actually failed to meet the assumed outcome of National Identity explanations, namely that instead of the assumption of policy being incoherent and inconsistent,¹⁶ Belarusian political-economic policy practices have actually shown high levels of consistency since 1991, which was illustrated in chapter 3. Secondly, and more problematic, the claim that Belarusian identity is “contested” and “ambiguous” was shown not to be conclusive, and it creates the impression that Belarus lacks an identity and has no coherent worldviews. Moreover, there was a great deal of normative bias in how national identity was categorized (i.e. ‘purposive’ policy behavior that is ‘liberal,’ oriented towards Western Europe, and away from Russia).¹⁷ Of critical importance here, is the fact that most Belarusians have never offered much support for the political groups, which have been designated by National Identity commentators as being ‘nationalists.’ Instead, when one unloaded this normative baggage, chapters 6 and 7 illustrated that there was actually not only a seemingly cohesive Belarusian identity, but also strongly coherent political-worldviews evident in the attitudinal preferences of Belarusians, which were consistently collectivistic, communal, paternalistic, statist, and pro-Russian in their ideational orientation.

Furthermore, evidence also points to a great deal of policy consensus at the elite and societal levels. Indeed, chapters 6 and 7, which traced Belarus’s historic cultural worldviews to the contemporary period, via comparative historical analysis, examination of public opinion polls, analysis of the observation of elites, and contemporary reports and commentary, showed that Belarusians do have a clear and coherent identity which is informed by their political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories,

¹⁶ Abdelal. (2005). “Nationalism and International Political Economy.” p. 40.

¹⁷ Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 43.

which can be characterized as being collectivist, communal, paternalistic, and oriented towards statist preferences in regards to the organization of political-economic relations.

Furthermore, as chapter 6 and 7 illustrated, the ‘nationalists’ versions of history and ideas presented by groups such as the BPF were out of touch with the attitudes of most Belarusians, which viewed these groups to be of an extremist nature. Such evidence that the worldviews of the ‘nationalists’ like the BPF did not resonate widely with the broad political-cultural worldviews of most Belarusian society, to which such groups were alienated from, can be seen in how the Westernized and anti-Russian historical narratives of Belarus portrayed by BPF ‘nationalists’ were largely rejected by the populace. Indeed, it was shown that the problem was that this ‘nationalist’ redefinition of Belarusian history was largely elite driven, by a small group that made up only a minority of Belarus’s political, economic, and cultural elite. In general, the narratives about the meaning of Belarusian ‘nationalism,’ adhered to by the BPF and a minority of elites, which was presented by some historians and National Identity scholars in the West, and linked Belarus culturally to the West, via the historical ties from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, were shown to be followed by only a minority of the population.

Thus, in regards to narratives of Belarusian identity that placed Belarus as being more Western, most average Belarusians did not simply identify with historical narratives about statehood under the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland, because Belarusians had not lived under it for generations. Moreover, it was illustrated that if there were any historical memories, these would have been predominantly negative due to the fact that Polish cultural domination characteristic of the period of Grand Duchy rule would have been equated as being detrimental to Belarusian cultural interests. Certainly, such negative worldviews about this earlier period of Polish domination would have been further exacerbated by the more recent negative historical memories of Belarusians living in the western land of Belarus that suffered under Polish domination during the interwar period.

Additionally, another telling example of where ‘nationalists’ such as the BPF were out of tune with predominant Belarusian political-cultural worldviews was in their negative portrayals of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which while obviously negative for Latvians, was viewed positively in the historical memories of Belarusians who largely

welcomed the incorporation of the western lands of Belarus formerly controlled by Poland, into the BSSR in 1939. Finally, National Identity explanations also pointed to the high amounts of nostalgia for the former Soviet regime as an example of lack of nationalism. Often such accounts would point to the fact of the lack of resonance in society for the BPF's negative demonization of the entire existence of Soviet rule under the BSSR as being a period of occupation and exploitation of Belarus by Russia. However, as chapters 4 and 6 illustrated, while such rhetoric would have been highly successful in Latvia, as a result that it would have served to reconfirm the predominant historical memories about the negativity of Soviet rule in Latvia, in the political-cultural context of Belarus, such messages were largely irrelevant for the majority of the Belarusian population, because they did not have any historical memories other than the memories and life under the BSSR, which were predominantly viewed by most Belarusians as being positive.

However, chapters 6 and 7 also illustrated that this positive historical memory of Belarusians for the BSSR does not entail that Belarusians are simply un-nationalistic/patriotic or blindly pro-Russian. Instead, Belarusians positive historical memories and strong patriotism towards the BSSR were greatly informed Belarusian historic political-cultural worldviews. Indeed, this positive assessment of the BSSR, which is a robust feature of Belarusian political-culture, was often overlooked by many National Identity commentators or taken as an example of a lack of national identity. Overall, the fact that the anti-BSSR historical memories promoted in the narratives of those portrayed by National Identity scholars as being 'nationalists,' such as the BPF, are not naturally rooted nor seemingly organic to the local political-cultural context, and are often influenced and borrowed from outside cultures, such as the Baltic States and Poland, makes it possible to argue that such National Identity explanations get it wrong when they categorize groups such as the BPF as being the true Belarusian 'nationalists.' Indeed, the fact that these groups were not supported by the populace, contradicts claims that Belarusian identity is "contested" and "ambiguous."

Additionally, some of the most specific problems found with National Identity explanations was that most of these accounts failed to incorporate relevant public opinion polls to support their claims. Most problematic, specifically, were numerous public

opinion polls conducted during the 1990s and 2000s, which were illustrated in chapter 7, and showed that National Identity explanations of post-Soviet political-economic policy behavior are far from conclusive. Indeed, as chapters 5 and 7 highlighted, the results of these polls on questions of identity illustrated that while countries that were labeled as having strong national identities, such as Latvia and the Baltic States, regularly polled slightly higher than Belarus in questions about identity, the results were far from being the polar opposite of one another, and Belarus actually polled a great deal closer than one would expect, if one were to conclusively accept National Identity explanations. Furthermore, National Identity explanations also were shown to be faulty, where it was illustrated in chapter 7 that public opinion polling of Belarusians indicated high levels of positivity in their responses in regards to questions related to national pride, national identification, perceptions on statehood, high patriotism, positive nostalgia towards the BSSR, and the preferred relations with Russian being based on Belarus retaining its sovereignty. Additionally, National Identity claims regarding language use were shown to be seriously compromised by evidence from public opinion polls and an analysis of observations of elites, which showed that Russian-speaking Belarusians actually have strong Belarusian identities, and that just because they speak Russian, does not mean that they identify themselves as Russian nationals. Indeed, the evidence presented in chapter 7, illustrated that one should not associate a persons language choice with a lack of national identity.

Belarusian worldviews, while predominantly favouring close and friendly relations with Russia, were also shown in chapters 6 and 7 to result from shared historic religious-cultural links. Moreover, it was illustrated that such friendliness should not be confused with Belarus lacking a national identity. Indeed, evidence from public opinion polls, the observations of Belarusian elites, and contemporary political reports showed that National Identity explanations were seriously challenged by findings that found that in regards to the types of preferred Belarusian-Russian relations, the vast majority of Belarusians favoured the options of two independent sovereign states. As a result, Belarusians responses should not be viewed as being that different from Latvian views towards integration with the EU, only that a significant normative bias is placed by

National Identity explanations against Belarusian support for friendly relations with Russia.

This normative bias can be seen with the emphasis that many National Identity explanations place on the Baltic States reorientation and ‘return to the West,’ as evidence of a strong national identity. However, it was shown that it was not simply a ‘return to the West’ resulting from a strong national identity, but instead Latvia’s desire to return to Western culture, because Latvians saw themselves as historically part of the Western cultural fold. Thus, everything the Latvians did from domestic policy to foreign policy was to highlight their return to the Western cultural realm, and make a clear statement that they were not part of the Russian cultural realm. In contrast, it was shown that Belarusians took a divergent view, as Belarusian political-cultural worldviews saw themselves as historically linked culturally to Russia, Eurasia and Orthodoxy. This resulted in an attitude of friendliness towards close relations with Russia, due to their common historic religious-cultural links, which made the tendency to want to be friends and cooperative with Russia only natural and normal. Therefore, just as the Latvians prefer being in the same group as their cultural brethren in Western Europe, so too does Belarus feel closer to its historical cultural grouping in preferring closer relations with Russia. This does not mean that Belarusians lacked a cohesive national identity, but instead that their historical political-cultural worldviews did not deem it necessary, nor expedient to move away or break off from Belarus’s traditional cultural realm. Indeed, the contingent evolutionary path of Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, where collectivistic, communal, statist and pro-Soviet/Russian sentiments predominated, simply ruled out and made unthinkable for many the potential for comprehensive liberal-market reforms, and any serious movement away from Russia. Thus, what National Identity arguments miss is that Belarus has its own coherent and unique national identity, which simply contains different ideas, contrary to normative definitions constructed by many observers.

One of the contributing factors why National Identity arguments get it wrong in the areas discussed above, results from much of the historical analysis of these explanations being cursory, and in not looking in depth enough at the historical roots of identity, which leaves many questions unanswered and/or ignores important contradictory

evidence. Here, selection bias occurs because such a small time frame is examined, where most National Identity explanations go little beyond examining the experience during interwar independence in the case of Latvia, or the lack of ever technically having gained independence prior to 1991 in the case of Belarus. In doing so, such analysis largely falls back on historical institutional frameworks in pointing to institutional structures from the interwar period or the Soviet era as being key in informing both states national identities.¹⁸ However, as chapters 4 and 6 illustrated, both Latvia's and Belarus's unique historical-political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories were key in influencing the shape and behaviors for both countries during the interwar period. Moreover, in the case of Belarus, Abdelal and others were too quick to play down, negate, and/or ignore the positive feelings and affirmations that Belarusians held towards the BSSR, instead of acknowledging or seeking to better understand how these positive historical memories of Belarusian state-building under the BSSR formed a key component and reinforced the worldviews and historical memories informing the content of Belarusian identity. Most problematic, however, was that these explanations largely dismissed that these identities are primarily informed by the historic religious-cultural roots that are predominant in these countries,¹⁹ which the findings of this dissertation have shown to be the primary influencers of attitudinal preferences shaping political behavior in Latvia and Belarus.

Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, the core political-cultural theoretical arguments of this dissertation that explain the divergent patterns of post-Soviet political-economic development are rooted in the rich body of cultural theory found within Social Constructivism. The conceptions of political-culture brought forward in this dissertation followed and built on

¹⁸ See for example, Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 126; Tsygankov, (2000). "Defining State Interests."; Savchenko. (2000). *Rationality, Nationalism and Post-Communist Market Transformations.*

¹⁹ Specifically, this was done by Abdelal, who too quickly dismissed explanations formatted along the lines of a Huntingtonian thesis that it was religious-cultural roots at play in informing divergent attitudinal preferences and behavior. While Huntington (1996), can be criticized for not providing enough empirical evidence to back up his arguments, Abdelal was nevertheless too quick to brush religious-cultural variables of explanation, and provided little by the way of comparative historical analysis, nor historical consensus for why such variables should be dismissed in favour of his proposition that identity outlooks were driven by historical institutional factors. Abdelal. (2001). *National Purpose in the World Economy.*, p. 123-126.

the work pioneered by Max Weber, who saw culture as a key determinant of political, social and economic action, and crucial in helping to explain political authority and legitimacy.²⁰ In addition to following Weber, such views of culture follow also in the traditions of other pioneering studies that focused on the cultural habits and the taken for granted ideas of everyday life affecting social behavior, including Berger and Luckmann's "social stock of knowledge" and "symbolic universe," Geertz's "web of meaning," Bourdieu's "habitus," Wittgenstein's "form of life," and Hopf's "logic of habit."²¹ In doing so, the arguments in this dissertation emphasized the importance of historic contextual legacies in shaping political-cultural worldviews, ways of life, and historical memories, and distinguishing them from other cultural contexts. This takes a 'strong' view of culture, seeing cultures as distinctive, autonomous, slow to change and relatively stable to that of institutional and material conditions. Such political-cultural theories take a divergent outlook from rationalists, and view it as not enough to simply categorize and speak of what is rational or irrational when seeking to explain political behavior. This stands in contrast to rationalist assumptions that view ideas as reducible to individual actor's rational utilitarian calculations.

Theoretical arguments that are guided by such premises view political-cultural worldviews, as highly important in shaping what sociological institutionalists refer to as the intangible institutions of society. In this view, political-cultural worldviews (norms, rules and values), and ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs) are largely taken for granted within the societal context these are situated. Political-culture can thus be seen as highly influential on intangible institutions in helping to legitimate and rule out certain types of behavior. As Bourdieu notes, other ideas and patterns of behavior remain "unthinkable."²² As a result, political-culture can be seen as the taken for granted worldviews and ways of life that shape the intangible institutions of society, and act to

²⁰ See for example, Weber. (1975). "The Social Psychology of the World Religions"; Weber. (1978a). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*; Weber. (1992). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

²¹ Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*., p. 40-41, 92; Geertz. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*; Bourdieu. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*., p. 52-65; Wittgenstein. (1958). *Philosophical Investigations*; Hopf. (2009). "Identity Relations in the Sino-Soviet Split," p. 280.

²² Bourdieu. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*., p. 18, 21, 77, 177. See also, Weber. (1978a). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*., p. 320; Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*., p. 14; Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*., p. 109; Powell. (1991). "Expanding the Scope of Institutional Analysis," p. 192.

limit certain forms of behavior, shape preferences, narrow policy options, and enforce continuity. Finally, it was shown that such worldviews and ways of life (habits) are reinforced by a third component of political-culture, namely historical memories.

Political-Culture: Worldviews, Ways of Life and Historical Memories

Recently, Hopf's seminal study of identity and culture placed particular emphasis on habits, which includes significant focus on "the routine, repetitive, habitual, customary, and everyday,"²³ in order to understand the factors that give people meaning in the world and affect their political behavior and decisions. However, in this primary focus on habits and practice (herein referred to as ways of life),²⁴ less emphasis is placed on the normative (worldviews) aspects of culture. While ways of life (habits and practice) are definitely of crucial importance in any understanding of culture, it was the position of this dissertation that it is also important to examine two other intricately related components of political-culture, and thereby not privilege one component over another. Therefore, along with examining ways of life, it was argued here that it is crucial to analyze the predominant worldviews, and prevailing historical memories. Thus a major contribution of this study is that it builds on such cultural frameworks, as noted above, by showing that the three core components of political-culture, worldviews (norms, rules, values, and beliefs), way of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs), and historical memories all work intricately together to project political-culture as an important determinant of political action.

In this formulation, it was shown that the first core component of political-culture includes worldviews (norms, rules, values and beliefs), which influence ideas about the proper modes of living, social organization and ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs), and essentially inform the normative views regarding the way how political-economic relations 'should' and 'ought' to be managed in society. Therefore, in the conception offered here, political-cultural worldviews influence what is seen as the

²³ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 3. For other key works that emphasized the importance of everyday habits, and practice in shaping political action, see also Bourdieu. (1990). *The Logic of Practice.*, p. 52-65; Bourdieu. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; Adler. (2005). *Communitarian International Relations*; Wenger. (1998). *Communities of Practice*; Pouliot. (2008). "The Logic of Practicality."

²⁴ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics.*, p. 10.

‘right,’ ‘best,’ ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ policy practices and behaviors. In a general sense, therefore, political-cultural worldviews result in certain policy prescriptions being viewed as ‘right’ and ‘best’ in terms of being the most effective means to organize the political-economic affairs of society, and thus most ‘rational’ in order to promote economic growth and overall development. Additionally, such worldviews regarding appropriate policy practices and behavior are taken for granted and legitimized in that these are seen as ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ which also contributes to alternative ideas being either normatively ruled-out or becoming ‘un-thinkable.’

Additionally, it was shown that the second interrelated core component of political-culture includes the ways of life, which are the predominant habits, practices, traditions and customs in regards to conduct of political-economic behaviors and social organization (e.g. such as how property relations are historically managed). Here, ways of life (habits, practices, traditions and customs) are not only influenced by worldviews, but can also work to shape worldviews, via historical memories, in the sense that long-term historical ways of life can also harden into worldviews. This built on Berger and Luckmann’s idea of habitualization, where “any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern,” a taken for granted worldview of the proper patterned action that is viewed to work best.²⁵ It was shown that the hardening of such ways of life into worldviews occurs via the third component of political-culture, historical memory, which helps to reinforce and sustain the continuity of those ways of life.

Finally, it was shown that the third component of political-culture, historical memory helps to shape worldviews, particularly following key historical junctures and events, as well as after antagonistic encounters with opposing cultures. Additionally, the hardening of worldviews occurs via the persistence and continuity of historical ways of life (habits, practices, traditions, and customs), where historical memories of the longevity of such culturally legitimate patterns of behavior serves to harden into worldviews legitimating such behavior, where these are viewed as the ‘best,’ ‘right,’ ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ modes to organize the political-economic relations of society.²⁶ Indeed, if such policy behaviors appear to continue to work, this will only serve to help

²⁵ Berger and Luckmann. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality.*, p. 50, 110.

²⁶ This builds on Kirshner’s argument that “ideas...can be self-confirming.” Kirshner. (2003a). “The Inescapable Politics of Money.” p. 15.

keep on reinforcing the predominance of such political-cultural worldviews that regard such policies as the most effective and correct way to organize the political-economic relations of a society. While all three components make political-culture slow to change, historical memory is important because it helps to reinforce the longevity of existing political-cultural worldviews and ways of life. Furthermore, historical memory also signifies the historical and evolutionary aspect that political-culture is constantly in motion throughout history, and has the ability to potentially change and evolve over the long-term to take on possibly new and different shapes, as a result of new memories developing following future key events. Nevertheless, the expected norm is that political-culture is slow to change, which results from important critical historical junctures, where specific influences set a political-culture down a particular historic evolutionary path, resulting in path dependence and self-reinforcing tendencies. Therefore, when thinking about historic political-cultural it is important to understand how the worldviews and historical memories of the people help to reinforce their historic ways of life, such as their habits, practices, traditions and customs.

While some might wonder why Soviet practices did not harden into self-reinforcing worldviews in Latvia, it was shown that such an outcome was normatively rejected by Latvians from the outset, as chapter 4 showed that Communist ideas were never widely credible to begin with in Latvia, and were antithetical to Latvia's historically rooted liberal-individualist political-culture. Whereas in Belarus, Soviet policies merely built on and reinforced already historically preexisting collectivistic and communal cultural worldviews.

Thus, political-cultural worldviews and ways of life are conceptualized in the long-term and viewed as being slow to change in terms of societies historically predominant modes of political-economic behavior and organization. Such conceptualizations of culture were put into practice when tracing the historic political-cultures of both countries via comparative historical analysis in chapters 4 and 6. Methodologically, the inspiration for such methods came from two sources. First, there was a necessity to examine long-term historical processes, or what Braudel called the *longue durée*.²⁷ However, in Braudel's *longue durée*, there was not a tight connection

²⁷ Braudel. (1993). *A History Of Civilizations*.

between the vast information given in regards to each cultural civilization. Thus, there was a necessity to provide tight connections to facilitate the tracing of the predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories at play in various eras. Here, the second influence came from Hopf's extensive historical detail in tracing Soviet/Russian identities in 1955 and 1999.²⁸ However, the problem with Hopf was that there was little sense given for where the cultural identities of 1955 came from. Thus, this study builds on these two different styles of studying the effects of culture, as represented by both Hopf and Braudel, and makes an important methodological contribution by providing an exhaustive means of historical sampling to adequately trace the historic political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories of both societies, by showing how these were connected to various historical eras, and transmitted to the contemporary period after 1991. Hence, the arguments emphasized the historical roots of political-culture, where old ingrained worldviews and ways of life, in regards to methods of political-economic decision-making, organization, and allocation were slow to change and persistent over time. Indeed, through such an analysis it was shown that there were clear connections in similar or predictable responses in the continuity of attitudinal preferences and political behavior elicited from the specific political-cultures in Latvia and Belarus at key events throughout history.

Overall, the findings of this dissertation build on the rich body of multidisciplinary literature on cultural studies to help understand the political-cultural context in which Latvia's and Belarus's policies were chosen, and gives new insight into the connection between ideational preferences and policies. In doing so, the findings of this dissertation generated new data on the policies adopted in Latvia and Belarus, the ideational cultural context in which those policies were chosen, and gave new insight into the connection between political-cultural worldviews and these policy programs. Here, a key finding was the confirmation of the hypothesis that differing political-cultural worldviews will conceive of the individual and collectivity in vastly divergent ways, which will directly affect the types of political-economic governance that are permitted in a society, depending on the cultural context one is situated.

²⁸ Hopf. (2002). *Social Construction of International Politics*.

Additionally, the findings of this dissertation also contribute important insights into how political-cultural worldviews regarding the individual and collective are intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the historic religious-cultural context within which they are situated. Thus, in the conception of political-culture presented here, it was shown that historic political-cultural worldviews and ways of life in Latvia and Belarus were intricately interwoven, shaped and defined by the religious context within which they are situated. Specifically, it was demonstrated that Western Christianity and Lutheran Protestantism in Latvia, and Orthodox Christianity in Belarus offered differing conceptions of natural law and natural rights, with the former offering liberal-individualist notions of natural rights and the latter following collective and communal notions of natural rights. Moreover, it was shown that core foundations and definitions of the specific predominant religious teachings of both countries were central in defining what was deemed as ‘right’, ‘best,’ ‘natural,’ and ‘normal,’ in the political-cultural worldviews of Latvians and Belarusians, even long after much of these religious values and norms had been secularized and taken for granted.

Finally, it was shown that the historic religious-cultural divide existing between Latvian and Belarus also had important implications for international relations, in that Latvia being situated in the sphere of Western Christian culture gravitated towards the West and away from the Russia, while Belarus being situated predominantly in the cultural sphere of Russian Orthodox Christianity was more naturally prone in its worldviews to gravitate towards closer relations with Russia, and also to be more antagonistic to Western Europe. Thus, the findings of this study in pointing to the prime influence of religion in shaping politics and social behavior is important because religion has previously tended to remain understudied in explaining political action by theorists of IR, IPE, and Comparative Politics.²⁹ In doing so, my work addressed many of these gaps, and the findings should have a wider applicability to other post-Communist and post-authoritarian states experiencing extensive political-economic transformation and integration into the global economy.

²⁹ Fox and Sandler. (2004). *Bringing Religion into International Relations*; Casanova. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World.*, p. 66.

Given that the findings of this dissertation have confirmed the core hypothesis that political-cultural worldviews play a central role in influencing the patterns of political-economic development chosen by a state, it can be argued that a key time to observe political-culture in action is to observe the ideas behind policies during times of crisis, such as in post-Communist, post-authoritarian, and post-colonial contexts. This is when historic-political-cultural worldviews will shine through and guide preferences in regards to choosing culturally appropriate modes of political-economic organization to resolve the crisis at hand. Moreover, as the findings of this dissertations showed, even when freedoms were opened up, and old repressive structures were temporarily removed, as occurred throughout the former Soviet Union in the immediate period after 1991 to approximately 1994, there was a certain limit to the reforms and changes that could happen in many of these countries when things changed and people were given the freedom to choose. This was due to the finiteness of the ideas and habits that a given society could draw upon for policy inspiration, which depended largely on the historically predominant political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories in the context of a given country.

In regards to political-cultural worldviews and ways of life informing the predominant ideational preferences and behavioral habits regarding the appropriate forms of political-economic organization, it was also shown that such ideas and habits, while historically persistent, are largely taken for granted by most of society, and normatively held at a faith-like status, and therefore viewed as ‘normal’ and ‘natural.’ Such faith-like worldviews in Belarus included the political-cultural emphasis placed upon collective social-welfare as being inherently Belarusian, while in Latvia, such faith-like political-cultural worldviews placed and emphasis on individual freedoms, private property, and the market as being inherently Latvian ways of proper political-economic conduct. Therefore, future research into political-economic development strategies in other post-Communist, post-authoritarian, and post-colonial contexts will need to examine the historic religious-cultural influences at play. This is because depending on the political-cultural context, certain policy prescriptions will be deemed to be the ‘best’ and ‘right’ ones, while others will be automatically ruled out because these policies ideas are not in sync with what is viewed to ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ according to the political-cultural

worldviews informing the underlying norms and value preferences that are predominant amongst elites and society.

Policy Implications

The findings of this dissertation have confirmed the core hypothesis that political-cultural worldviews play a central role in influencing the patterns of political-economic development chosen by these states. Indeed, this has important and widespread policy implications, as chapter 3 showed that Latvia's comprehensive reforms, and Belarus's lack of reform touched on all areas of micro and macroeconomic policy. Indeed, the comprehensive changes that have been implemented in all sectors of the Latvian economy serves to highlight how many aspects of the policy reforms are interconnected and complimentary to one another in promoting the overall process of transformation, since the exclusion of one area of reform could have derailed or undermined the policy goals of other reform initiatives in other areas. In regards to Belarus, this dissertation showed that while lacking in reform, its policies have followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to its political-economic affairs, where the state controls almost all the economy, and reforms have been largely non-existent. In doing so, the findings of this dissertation have revealed the serious issues with just how out of step conventional wisdom was with what is actually happening on ground in Belarus.

This is especially the case in regards to analysis about President Lukashenko since 1994, where analysts have repeatedly continued to make incorrect and premature assessments about what was viewed as the impending demise of Lukashenko. Indeed, a major problem is that most National Identity arguments have been blinded in their analysis and predictions of outcomes, due not only to the repeated tunnel vision on 'national identity,' without adequately acknowledging the preeminent role of political-culture, but also as a result of a normative blindness caused by their completely understandable aversion to Lukashenko's illiberal, authoritarian and non-democratic leadership style, which has resulted in serious problems in attempting to adequately explain Belarus's political-economic practices and behavior since 1991. However, as noted above, the values and behavior of Lukashenko have largely been in tune with the predominant political-cultural worldviews of much of Belarusian society. Indeed,

Belarusian political-cultural worldviews favouring collectivism, a pro-Soviet/Russian orientation, and a paternalistic penchant for strong leadership have all been cultivated by Lukashenko, which helps to explain his longevity, popular appeal and staying power in Belarusian politics. Overall, as shown in chapter 7, Lukashenko has tended to speak the peoples language of traditional values, in terms of speaking to the predominant collectivist policy preferences of the people for increasingly statist solutions, collective management of political-economic organization, having a strong leader to implement decisive decisions, and in promoting friendly relations with Russia. While there has increasingly been similar tentative predictions about Lukashenko's 'impending' demise again recently, due to the current economic downturns being experienced by Belarus, it is the opinion here that such predictions are premature, and it is likely that Lukashenko will retain his hold over Belarusian political-economic decision-making for the foreseeable future.

While some have argued that Lukashenko and neo-Sovietism will ultimately be vanquished in Belarus as younger generations of Belarusians come of political age, it is apparent that such an outcome needs to be viewed with a certain grain of salt. As chapter 7 illustrated, this is because even amongst the youth, opposition movements have serious problems in winning support. Outside the generational age-group of those aged in the thirty-plus range, who came of political age during the 1990s, younger generations have increasingly been successfully socialized by the political-system under Lukashenko. Indeed, it was shown in chapter 7 that many Belarusian non-governmental elites that were out-spoken in their opposition to Lukashenko, voiced skepticism about the prospects of younger generations to advocate for change, arguing that many were being successfully co-opted and socialized into the predominant illiberal and collectivistic Belarusian political-cultural worldviews. Overall, the regime has been extremely effective in socializing the youth, which has been assisted by the fact that today there are far more relative freedoms than in Soviet times, and by the fact that one can have a comfortable life if one only keeps their head down and does not partake in active opposition politics. Moreover, it is highly probable that this political-cultural socialization of worldviews will be reinforced by recent historical memories of the political-economic system under Lukashenko providing for relative growth and stability,

so that as time goes by these historical memories will only harden, which will serve to reinforce the preexisting political-cultural worldviews and habits that view such policies as the best and right methods to manage political-economic relations of society.

Additionally, it was shown that even amongst both older and younger generations, most Belarusian tend to view the reforms in Russia and Ukraine, which in reality were not even halfway at best, as being too much reform in the wrong direction. Indeed, both young and old Belarusians look on the instability and the corruption of oligarchs that was witnessed in Russia and Ukraine with disfavour. Most importantly, Belarusians were also shown to have highly negative views of the comprehensive liberal reforms conducted in Latvia and other Central and Eastern European countries. Such negative views have been greatly facilitated from many of the negative portrayals in Belarusian and Russian media of the liberal-market transformation process in these countries. Indeed, it was shown that many in Belarusian society are unaware of the alternatives, which results in little awareness from the people about their Western neighbours, such as the Baltic States and Poland. While, one might dismiss this lack of information on the Belarusian state's monopoly control over the media, it was also shown in polling results presented in chapter 7 that there is a strong correlation in Belarus between the choice of media sources and trust in media that broadcast a consistently collectivistic, statist, authoritarian and pro-Lukashenko message, which infers that similar values are already shared by large numbers in Belarusian society.

Additionally, while policy analysts might be prone to point to the internet as a source for potential future change, because it remains relatively free in Belarus, a certain degree of skepticism is warranted here. Certainly, the internet is a valuable tool that individuals could potentially use to gain access to alternative political ideologies promoting change. However, even with this relative freedom it should be noted that this does not mean that such sources will be key and instrumental in fostering liberal values and fomenting change. As was shown in chapter 7, most people who used the internet actively in Belarus did so for entertainment and leisure purposes, rather than participating in active political engagement. Additionally, it was shown that too often opposition political dialogued on the internet and e-forums is often conducted consistently by a like-minded and finite group of actors, where such participants are already preaching to those

converted on the need for change rather than reaching out to new members and building a mass e-grass-roots movement for change.

In response to the critiques from some regarding the small protests after the December 2010 Belarusian Presidential elections, it is first important to point out that these were small protests, both in size and duration, compared to ones that had occurred previously in the Baltic States, as well as Ukraine during the Orange Revolution. Moreover, these protests were short-lived and not much has been heard since. While Lukashenko's voter support of 80% is widely disputed and accepted as being overly inflated, it is also true that regardless of the results were inflated, Lukashenko still likely would have succeeded had elections been totally free and fair, as he remained the most popular politician in country, with support in the 53% range, as indicated in independent public opinion polls from December 2010 (see Figure 7.25 in chapter 7). Additionally, it should also be of no surprise that these protests were concentrated in Minsk, which is predominantly where most opposition elite and societal opposition to Lukashenko are located. As the discussion in chapter 7 pointed out, there was also virtually no protests in centers outside of Minsk, nor in the rural areas of Belarus.

Finally, while it is also apparent that many of these commentaries mentioned above also expect huge change should Lukashenko's eventual demise come, many of these assessments are problematic because these do not adequately examine the past history and traditions of Belarus that might point to the situation not radically changing in a liberal direction, and for the collectivistic status-quo to prevail. Thus, even when Lukashenko leaves office, or is forced from power, which seems unlikely in the near future, the end result of such a change will not necessarily result in Belarus experiencing comprehensive liberal reform.

Overall, most Lukashenko opposition groups remain divided on other specific concrete policy matters, with only small groups advocating for staunchly liberal-market reform. Indeed, it is clear that the Belarusian opposition is far from being united in terms of visions of future economic policy and possibilities for reform. Moreover, only a small minority of the opposition that actually advocates for extensive liberal reforms, and the general absence of liberal values in the broader society tends to be largely mimicked at the elite opposition level, where opposition parties very rarely make any concrete

explanations of their economic policy proposals. Instead, many factions of the Belarusian opposition, while favouring a return to democracy are also quite outspoken in their criticisms of opposition groups advocating for liberal-shock therapy. As chapter 7 illustrated, most opposition parties favour a retention of many of the collectivistic and statist features which have come to characterize Belarusian political-economic relations. Furthermore, most Belarusian opposition elites remain largely disconnected from the rest of society. As chapter 7 illustrated, this is because many of these opposition groups are out of touch with the worldviews and sentiments of the people, and in many case the key opposition figures sound to be somewhat elitist. Certainly, this divide is further exacerbated by the fact that many opposition groups most often only work and continue to work with outside Western agencies, which does not always sit well with the anti-liberal attitudes of locals, particularly when it comes to some of the political-economic reforms being advocated.

Therefore, because of the extensive division characterizing Belarusian opposition to Lukashenko, and the Belarusian oppositions elitist attitudes towards most of the rest of Belarusian society, there is a high probability that Lukashenko could be replaced by another strong authoritarian-type president, especially since there is a historical tradition and penchant for more paternalistic and authoritarian modes of political rule. Alternatively, if democracy does develop, it is also far from certain that a democratic regime would implement rapid liberal transformation, due to the large absence of liberal values amongst large segments of Belarusian society and elites. Thus, while there might be the chance for more open democracy, it does not necessarily mean that the Belarusians people favour unfettered liberalism in politics or the economy per se. Moreover, such factors as the predominant lack of a cult of private property, and strong preferences for collectivistic solutions, as well as a favouritism for having a strong leader, which characterize Belarusian political-cultural worldviews, all work to limit the future prospects for comprehensive liberal-market reform of Belarusian political-economic relations. Thus, due to the predominant political-cultural worldviews that favour collectivist, communal, paternalist, and statist solutions to solve problems of political-economic development, it is safe to argue that liberal reform would not be a given outcome in a possible post-Lukashenko scenario.

Such an outcome fits with the main conclusions of this dissertation, which have shown that political-cultural worldviews in the post-Soviet states of Latvia and Belarus, were shaped by the historic religious-cultural environment in which these states were situated, and have had a central influence on the patterns of political-economic development chosen by each country since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Indeed, this has important and widespread policy implications, as Latvia's comprehensive reforms, and Belarus's lack of reform touched on all areas of micro and macroeconomic policy. Indeed, the comprehensive changes that have been implemented in all sectors of the Latvian economy serves to highlight how many aspects of the policy reforms are interconnected and complimentary to one another in promoting the overall process of transformation, since the exclusion of one area of reform could have derailed or undermined the policy goals of other reform initiatives in other areas. Moreover, Latvia provides a clear example, which supports the prescriptions advocated by 'shock therapy' that liberal reforms needed to be rapid, deep, consistent and across the board. However, as the findings of this dissertation showed, 'shock therapy' was only possible in Latvia because the Latvians preexisting liberal-individualist political-cultural worldviews, ways of life and historical memories, seen with their faith in the market and cult of private property resulted in them being open from the outset to political arguments in favour of such policies. This was illustrated by ethnic-Latvian voters repeatedly electing governing coalitions to the Saeima that advocated extensive liberal reforms.

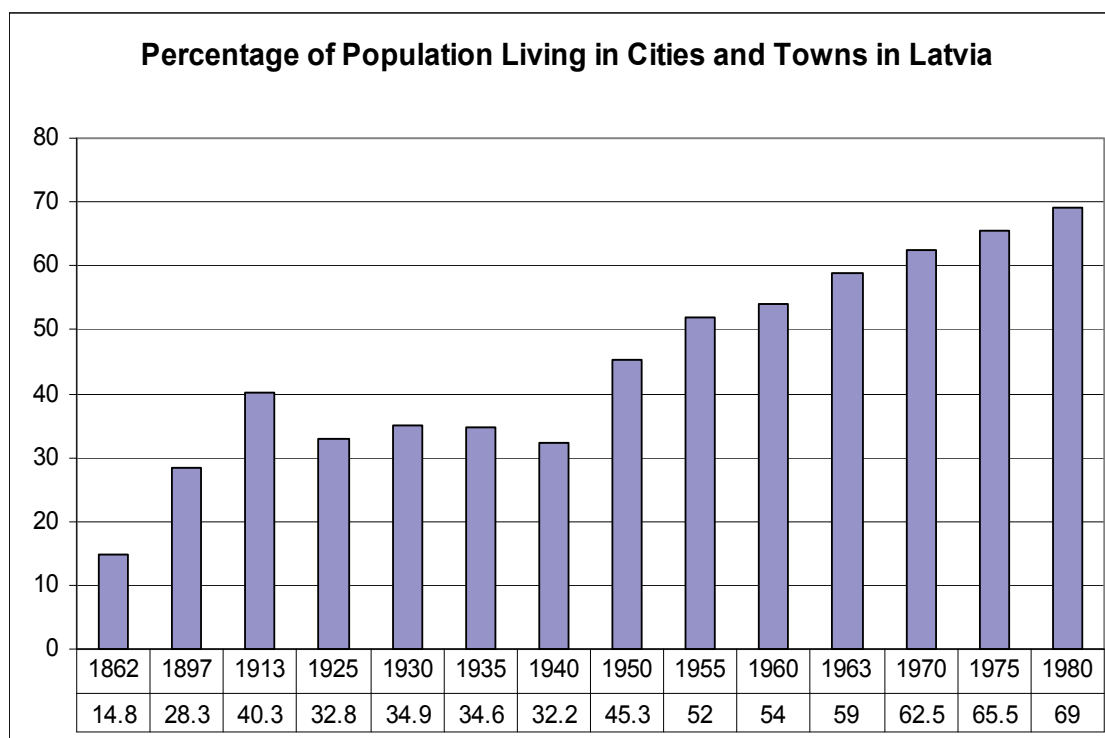
In regards to Belarus, this dissertation showed that while lacking in reform, its policies have followed a relatively consistent and clear pattern of behavior in regards to its political-economic affairs, where the state controls almost all the economy, and reforms have been largely non-existent. In doing so, the findings of this dissertation have revealed the serious issues with just how out of step conventional wisdom was with what is actually happening on ground in Belarus, which is especially the case in regards to analysis about President Lukashenko.

Given that the findings of this dissertation have confirmed the core hypothesis that political-cultural worldviews play a central role in influencing the patterns of political-economic development chosen by these states, it can be argued that this can have important implications in regards to the types of political-economic development

policies that are chosen by other states in post-Communist/Soviet states. Thus, a fruitful area of future research would be to expand the country focus of this study from Latvia and Belarus, to examine whether such findings are applicable to other post-Communist/Soviet countries (e.g. Estonia, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, and the countries of former Yugoslavia, and Central Asia. Additionally, future areas of research into such religious-cultural themes would be advantageous for studies of states in other post-authoritarian and post-colonial contexts that are experiencing extensive political-economic transformation, democratization, and integration into the global economy.

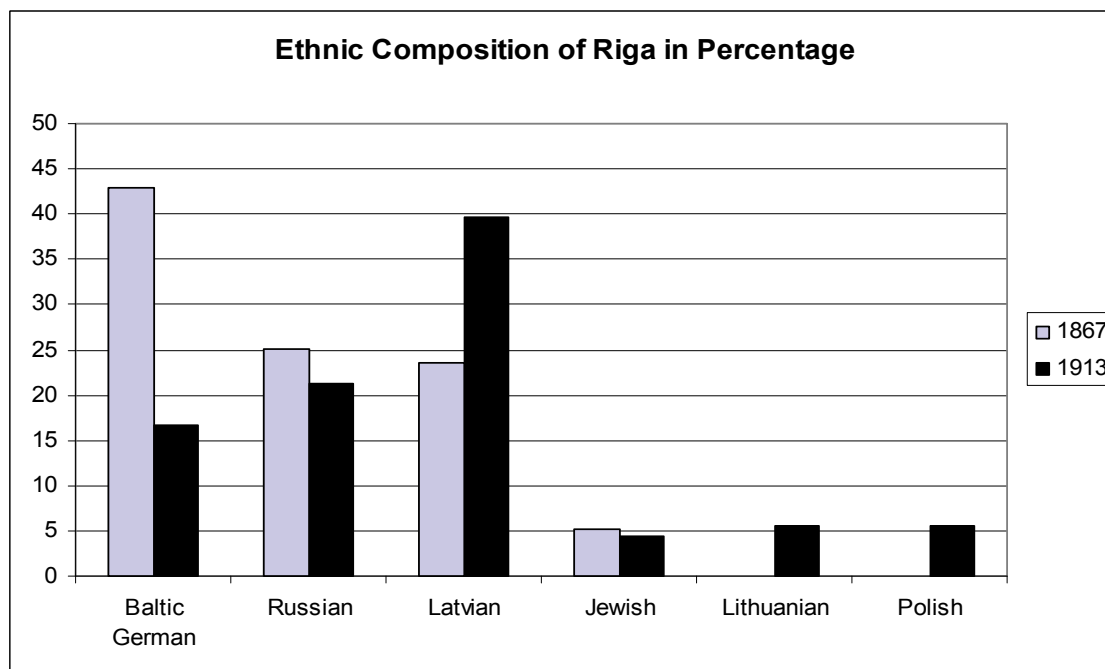
APPENDIX 1: FIGURES AND GRAPHS

Figure A.1



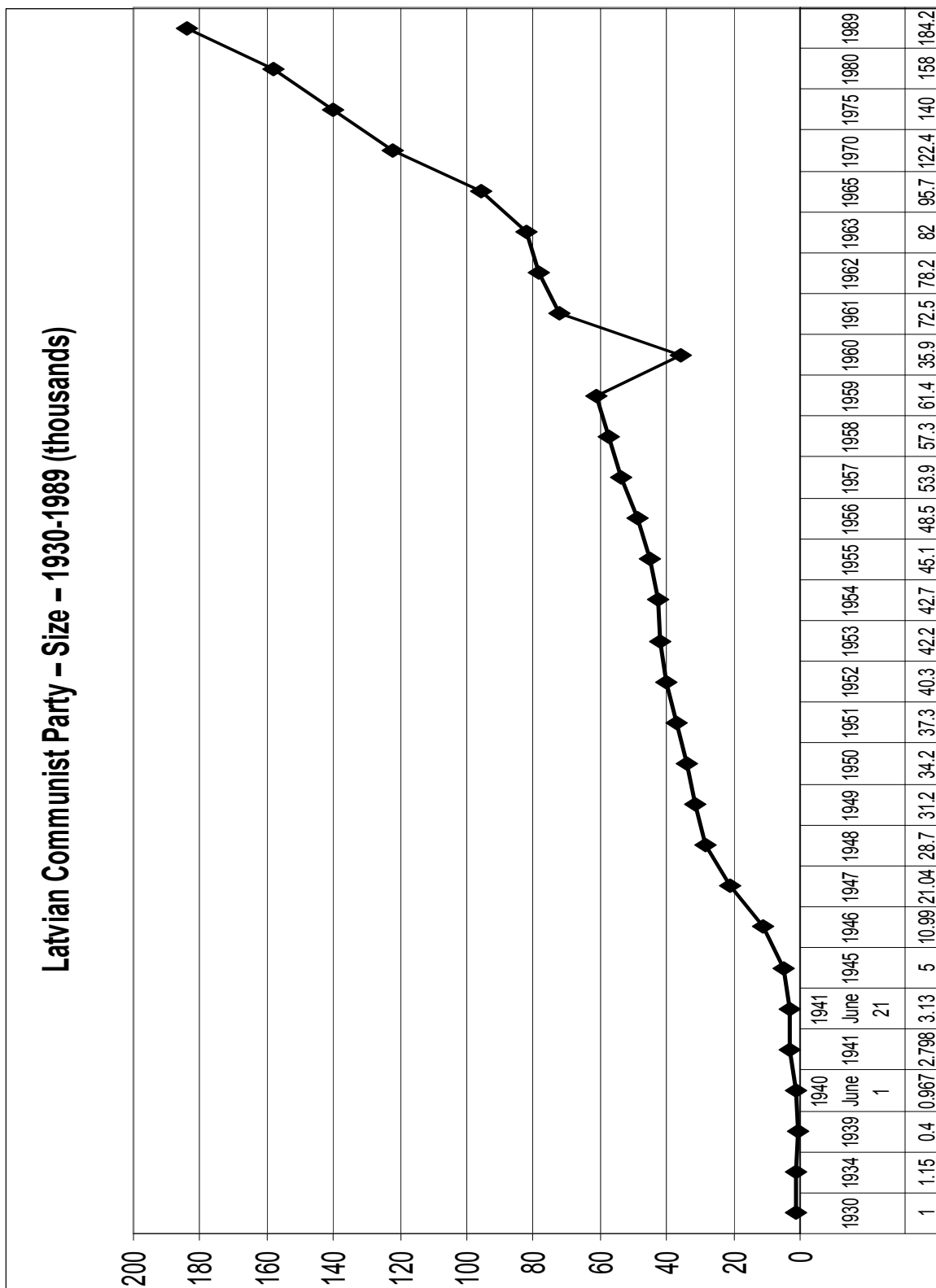
Source(s): 1862-1935: (Plakans 1995: 108). 1940-1980: (Misiunas & Taagepera: 364).

Figure A.2



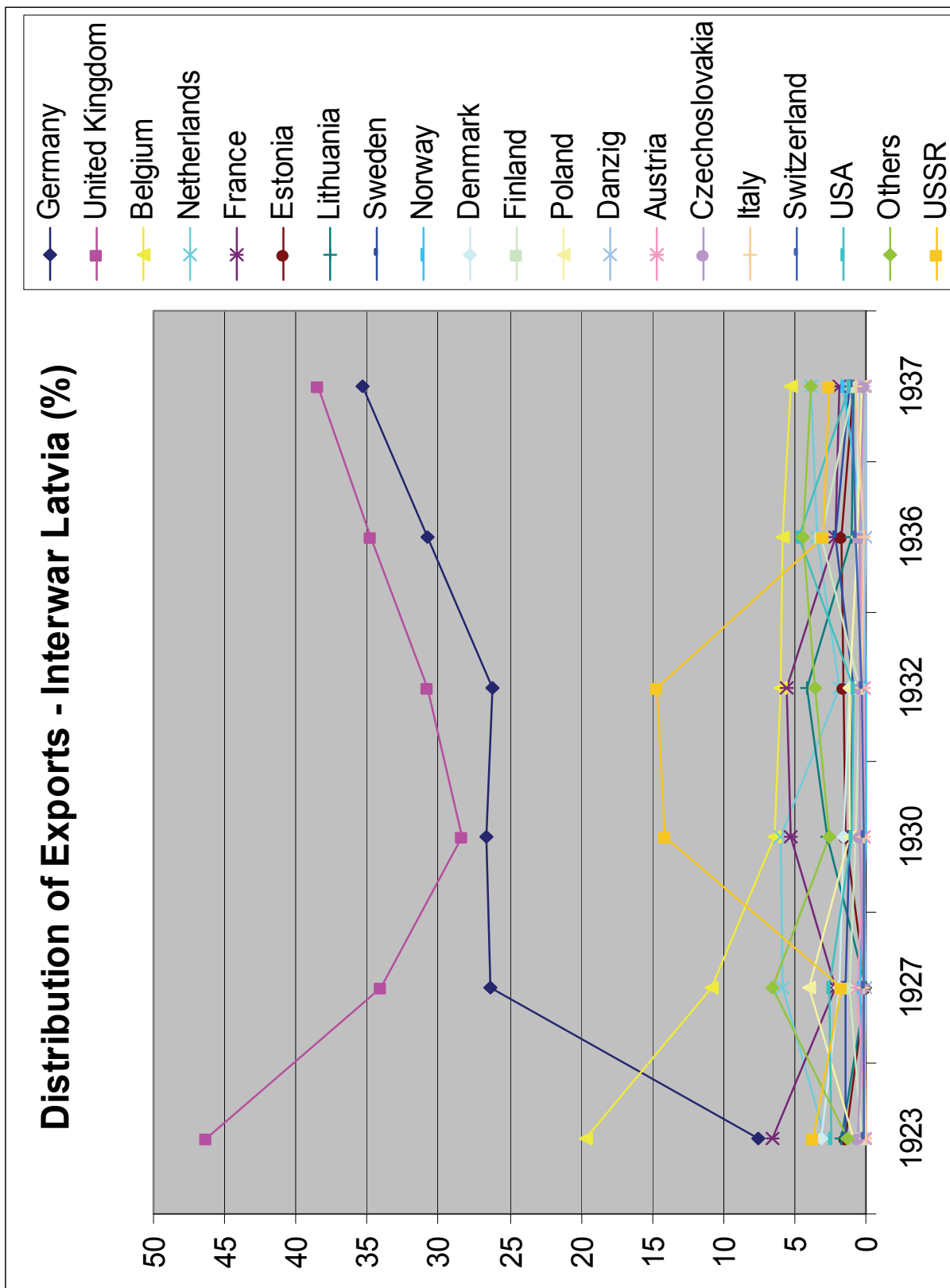
Source: (Plakans 1995: 108).

Figure A.3



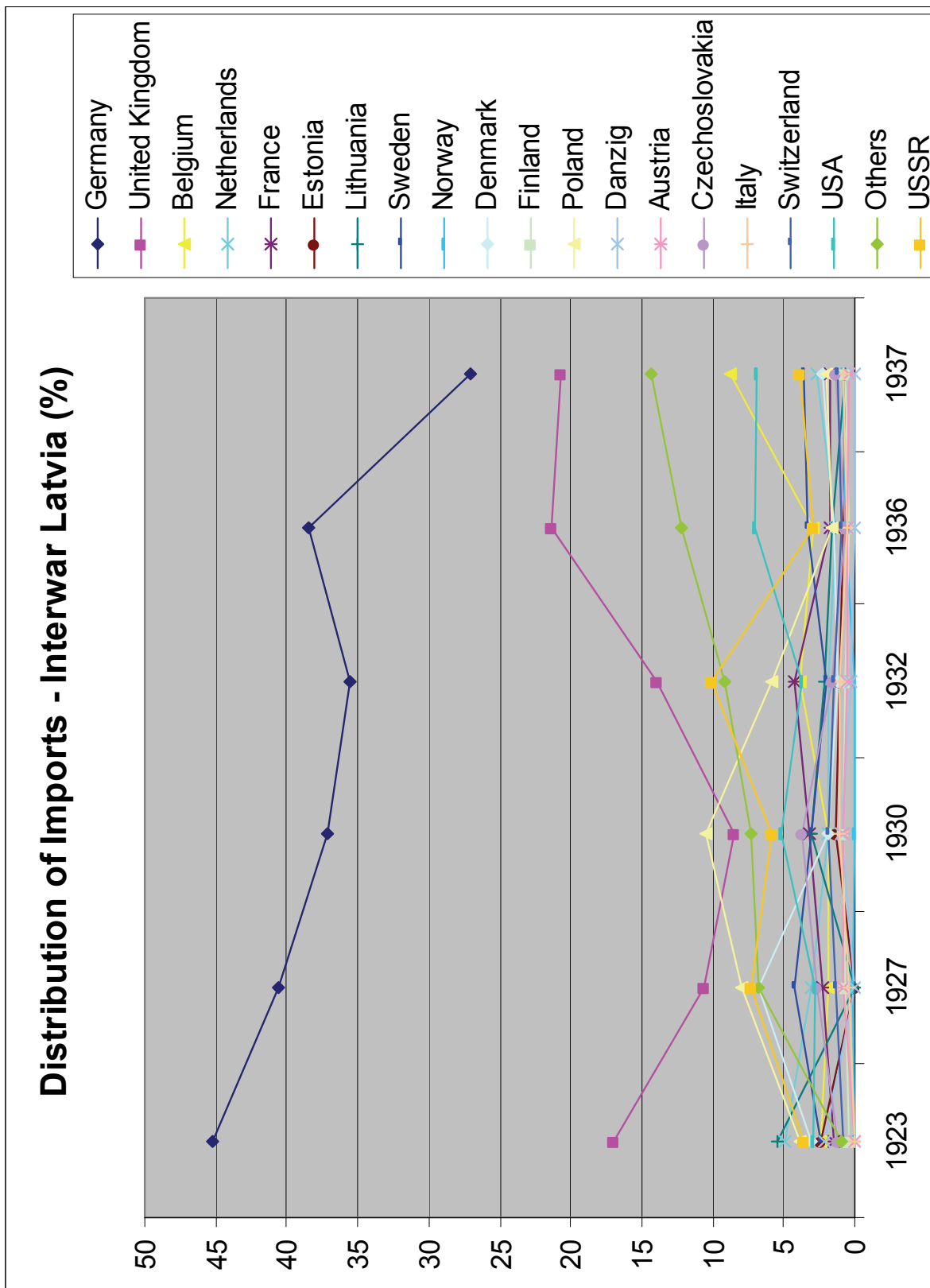
Source(s): (Misiunas & Taagepera 1993: 359-360; King 1965: 183; Plakans 1995: 162; Strods 2005a: 221).

Figure A.4



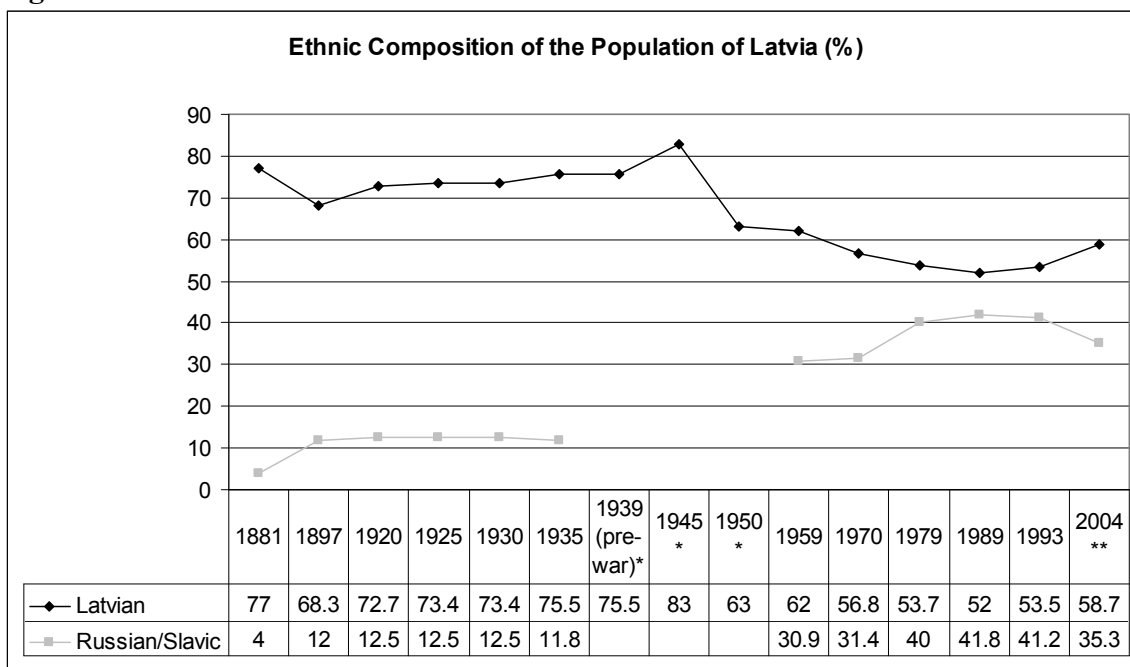
Source: (IDRIIA 1938: 126, 165).

Figure A.5



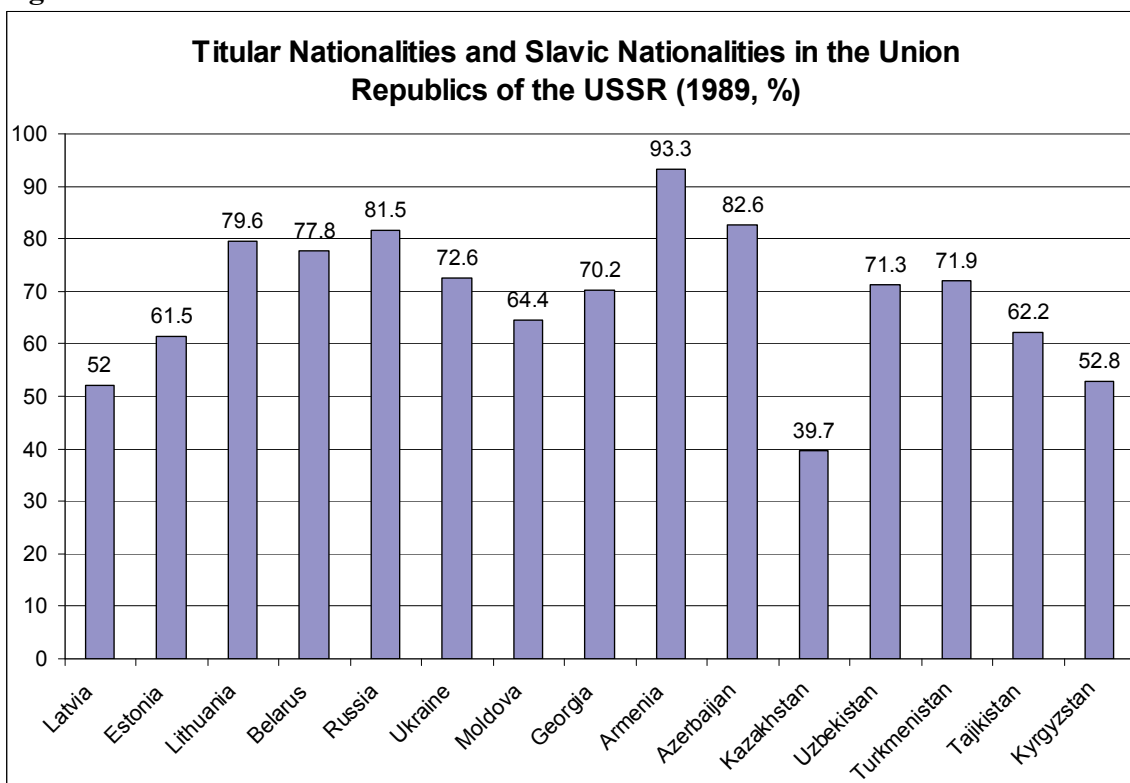
Source: (IDRIIA 1938: 126, 165).

Figure A.6

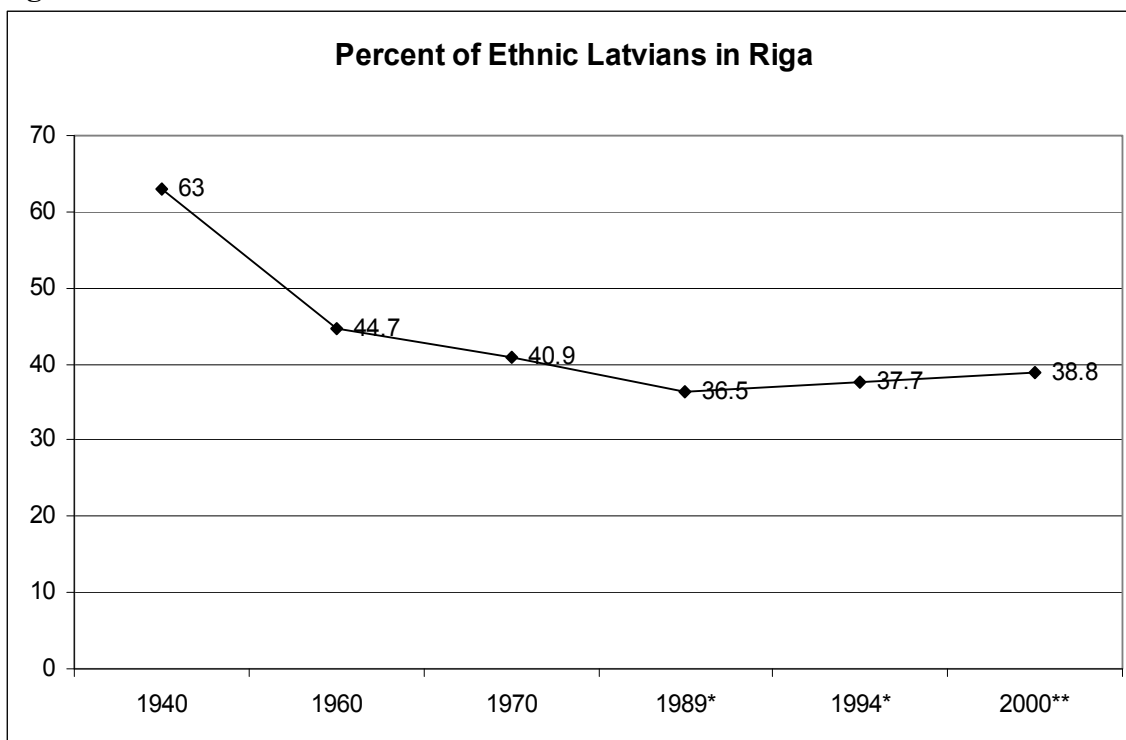


Source(s): (Plakans 1995: 158; *Misiunas & Taagepera 1993: 353; **Rislakki 2008: 223; Plakans 2007: 372; Dreifelds 1996: 146; Vebers 1994: 4).

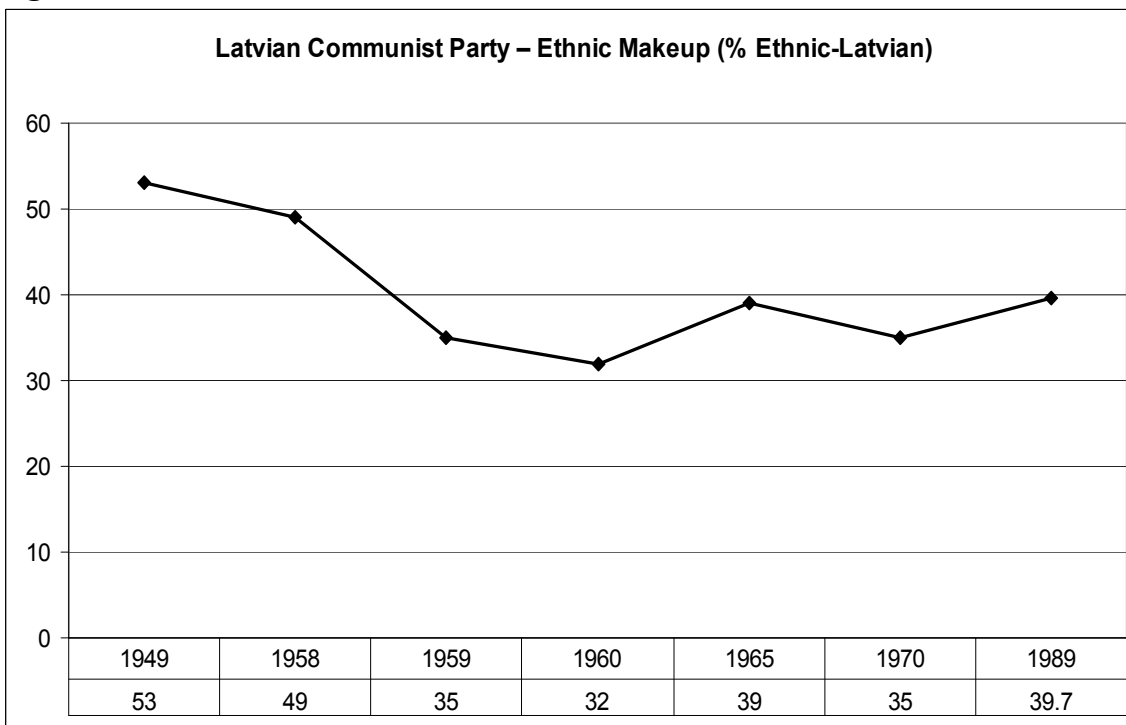
Figure A.7



Source: (Plakans 2007: 372).

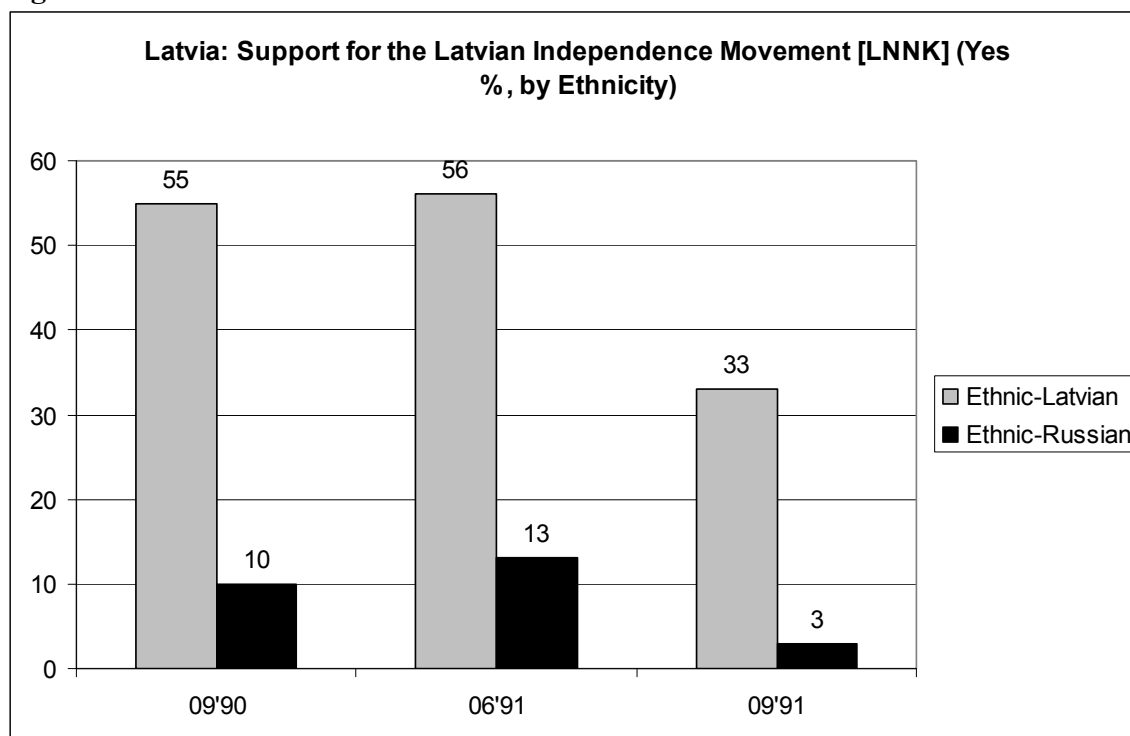
Figure A.8

Source(s): (Misiunas & Taagepera 1993: 365; *Dreifelds 1996: 149; **Rislakki 2008: 223).

Figure A.9

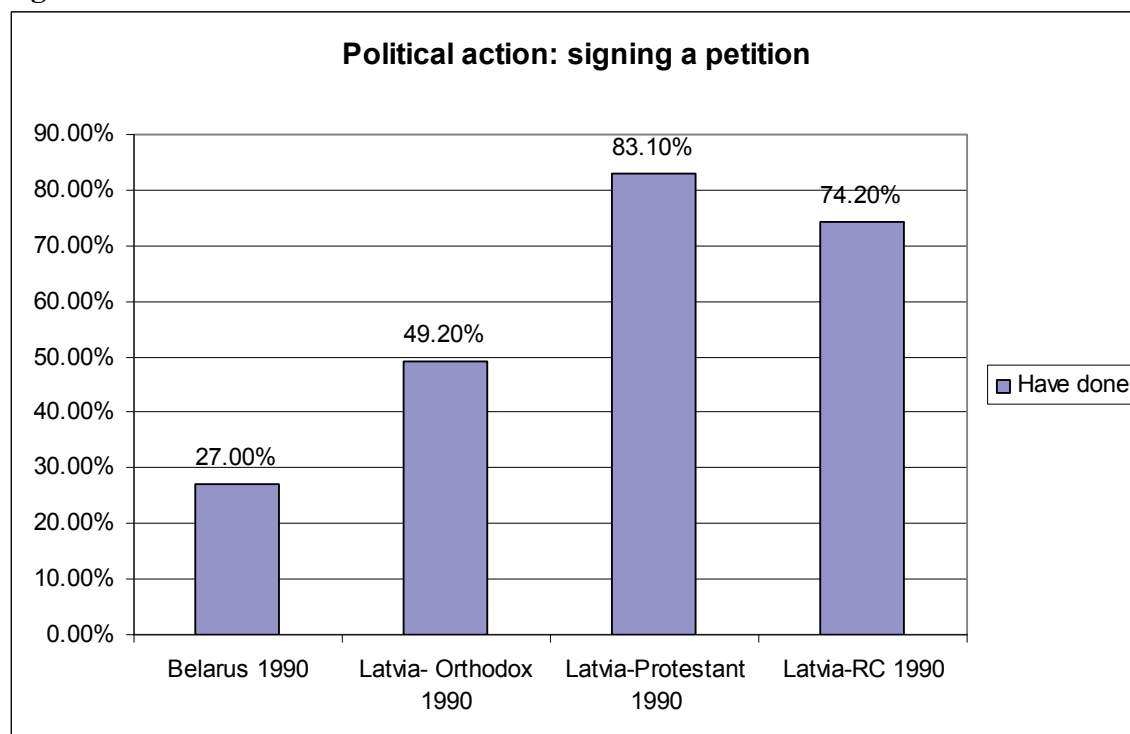
Source(s): 1949, 1959, 1960, 1965: (Misiunas & Taagepera 1993: 359-360). 1958: (King 1965: 183). 1970: (Plakans 1995: 162). 1989: (Strods 2005a: 221).

Figure A.10



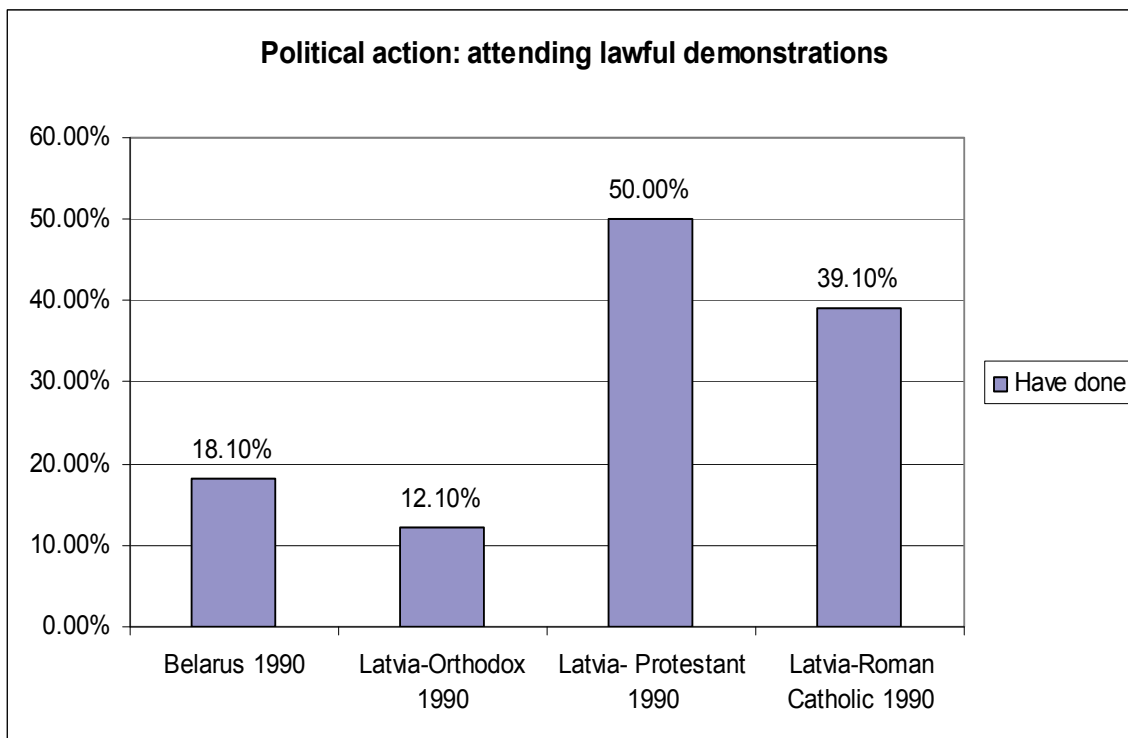
Source: Numbers from Social Research Center of Latvia, cited in (Karklins 1994: 82).

Figure A.11



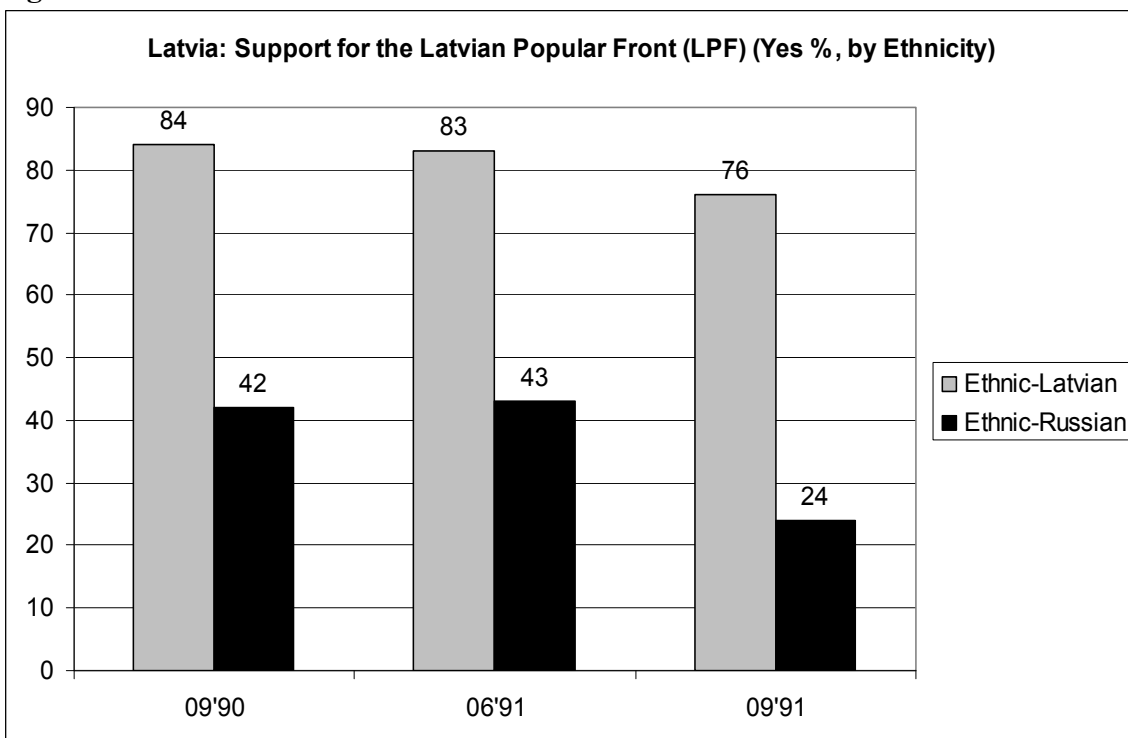
Source: See 'political action' section within the 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990). <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

Figure A.12



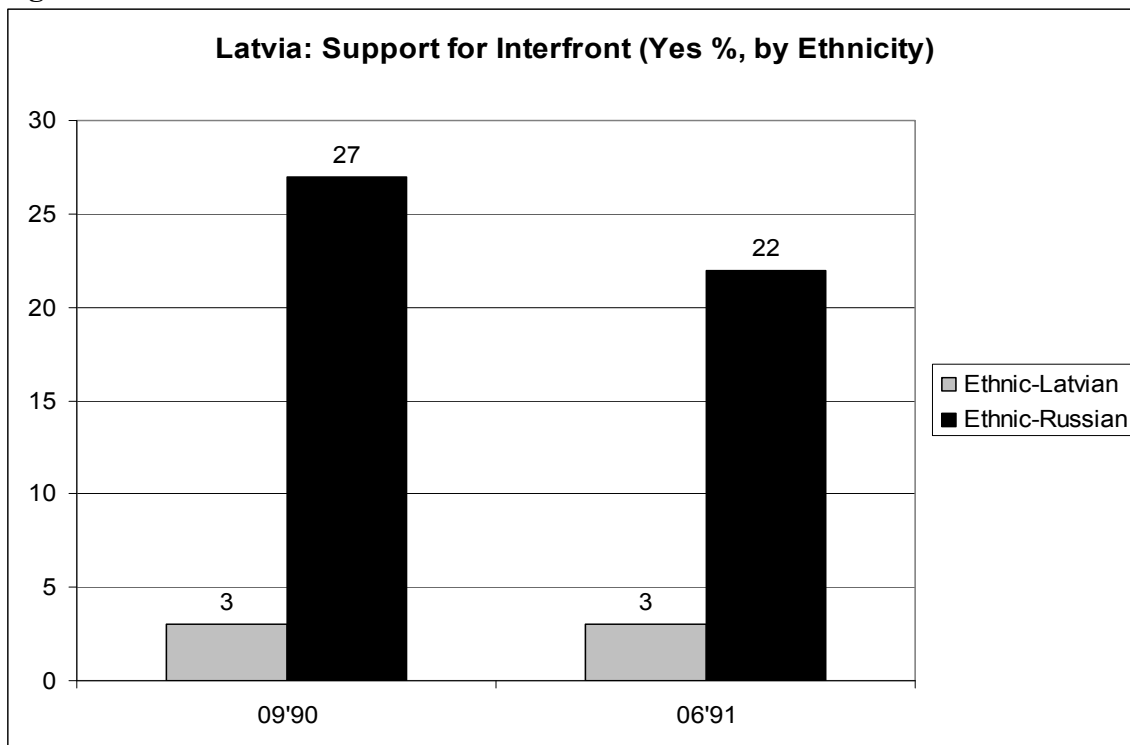
Source: See 'Political action: attending lawful demonstration' section in the 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990).

Figure A.13



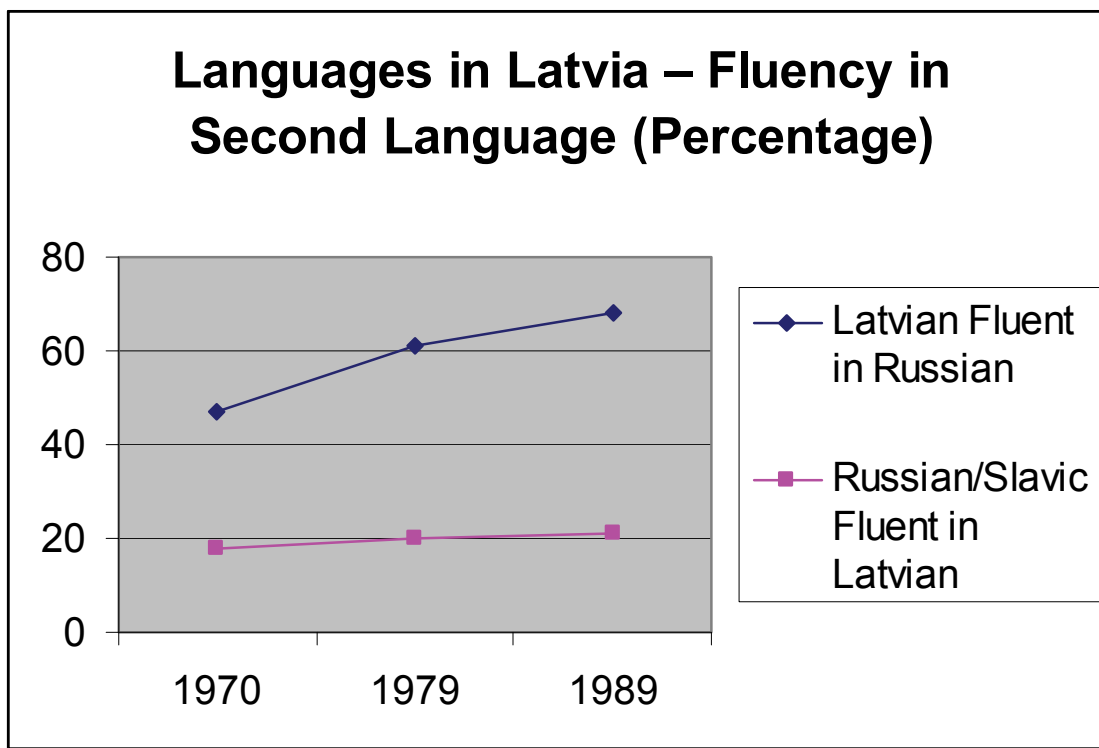
Source: Numbers from Social Research Center of Latvia, cited in (Karklins 1994: 82).

Figure A.14



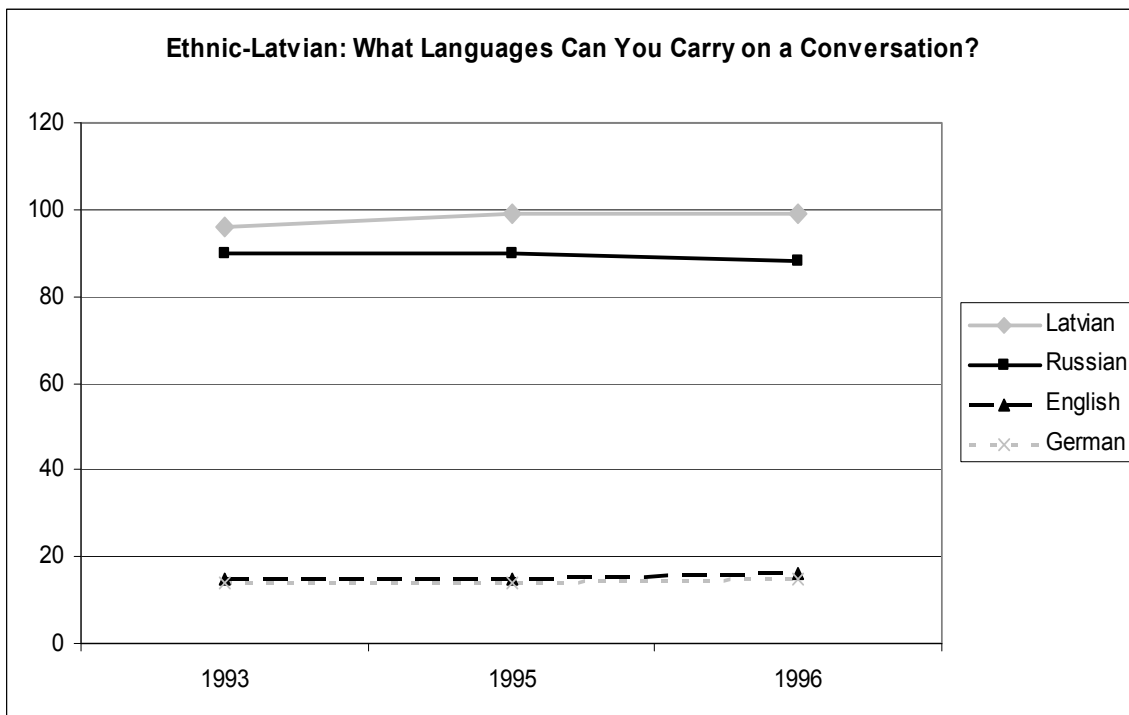
Source: Numbers from Social Research Center of Latvia, cited in (Karklins 1994: 82).

Figure A.15



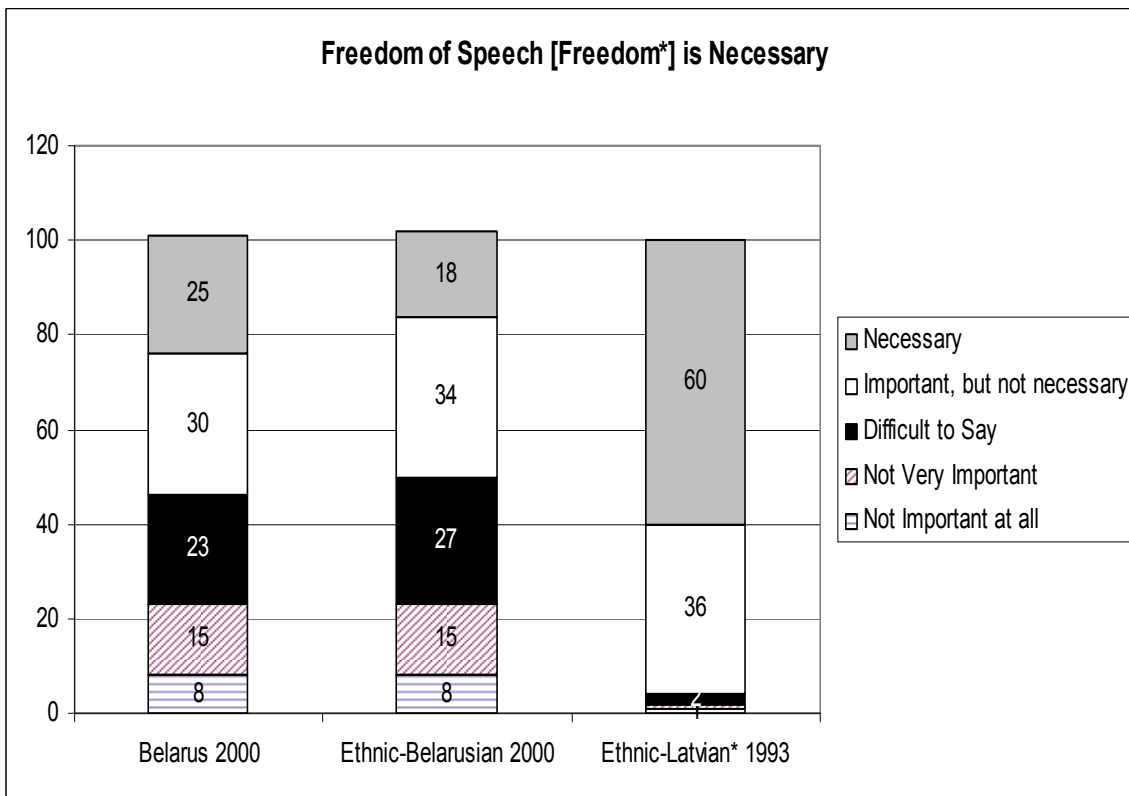
Source(s): 1970-1979: (Karklins 1986: 223). 1989: (Karklins 1994: 151).

Figure A.16



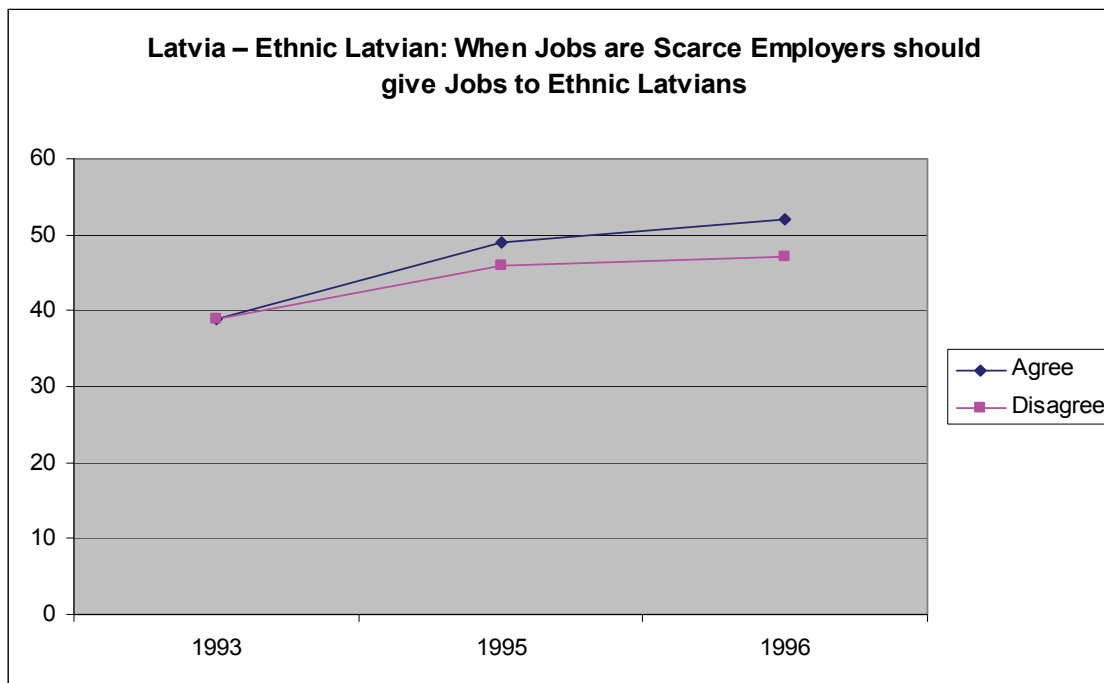
Source(s): 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 52). 1995: (Rose 1995: 49). 1996: (Rose 1997: 48).

Figure A.17



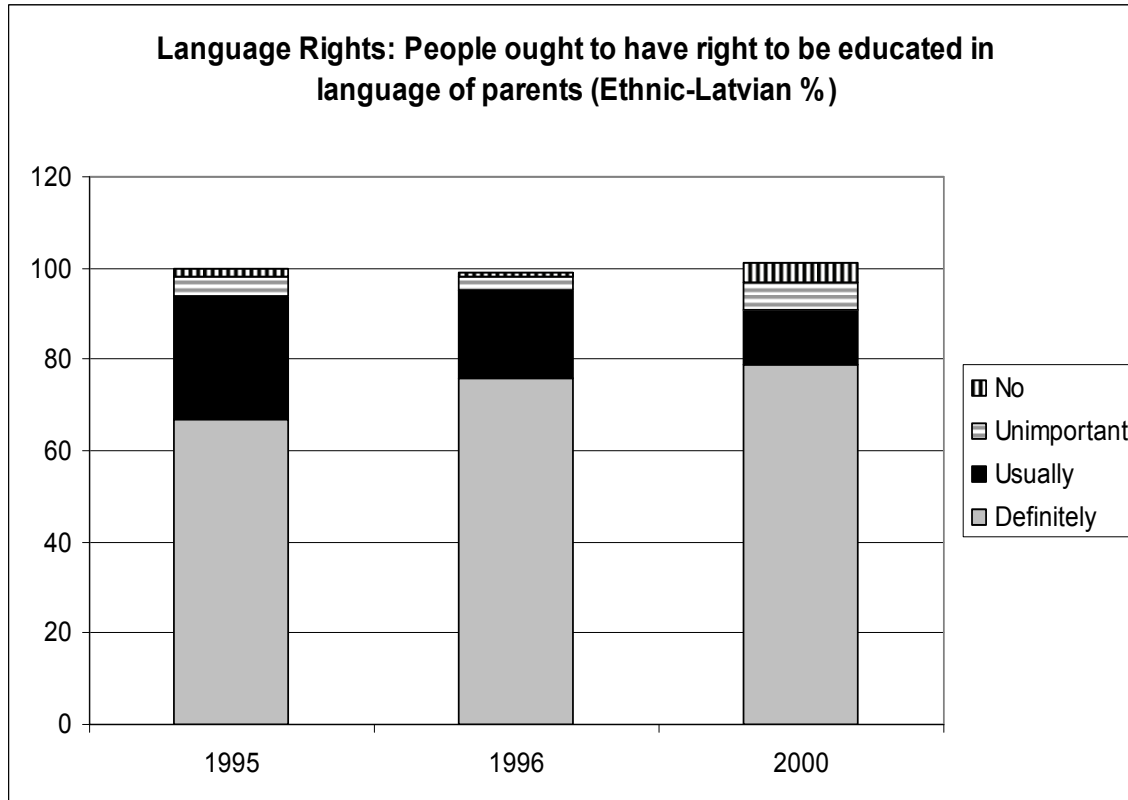
Source(s): Latvia - 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 46). Belarus - 2000: (White & Rose 2001: 19).

Figure A.18



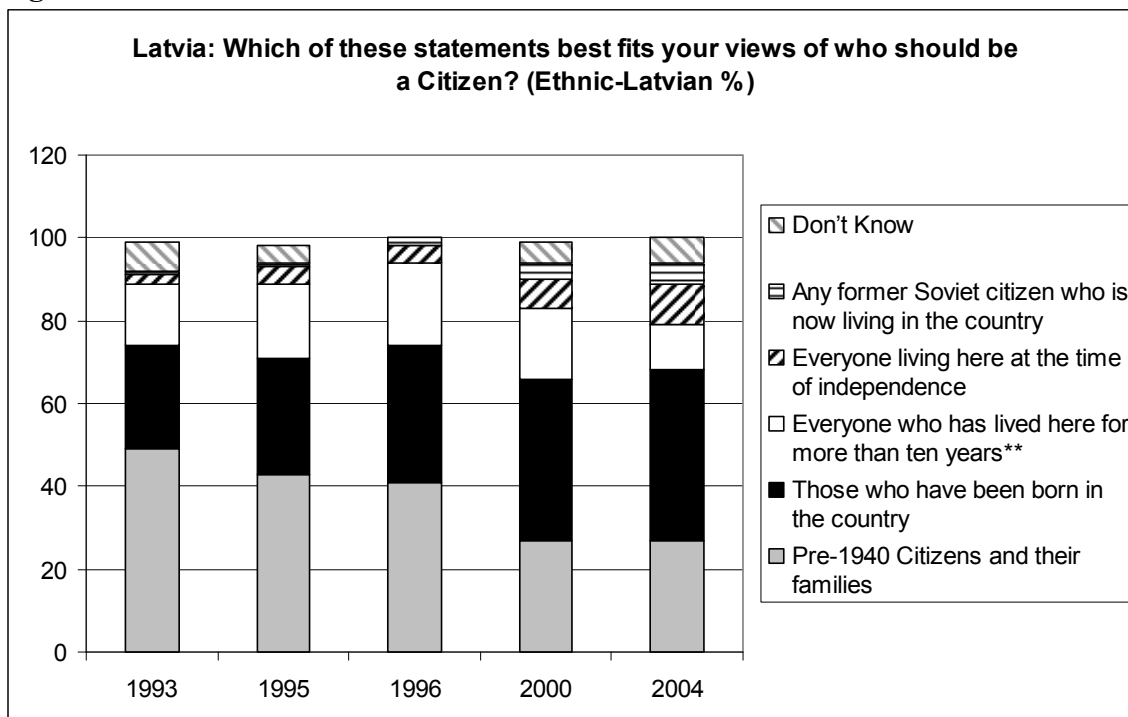
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 58; Rose 1995: 50; Rose 1997: 49).

Figure A.19



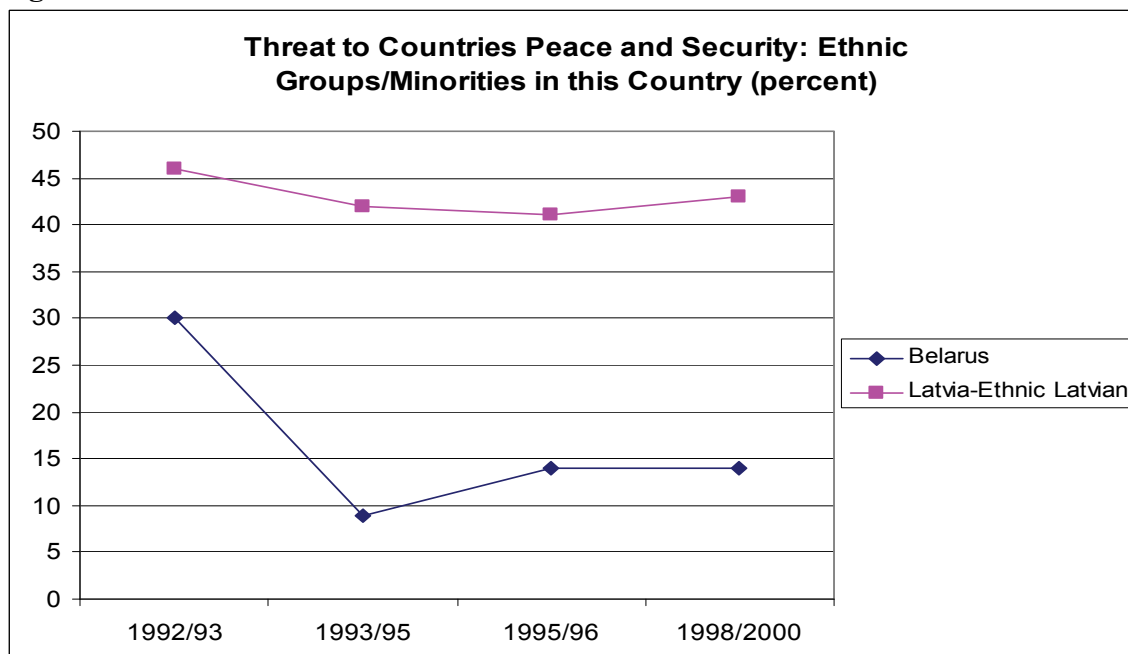
Source(s): (Rose 1995: 42; Rose 1997: 39; Rose 2000: 41).

Figure A.20



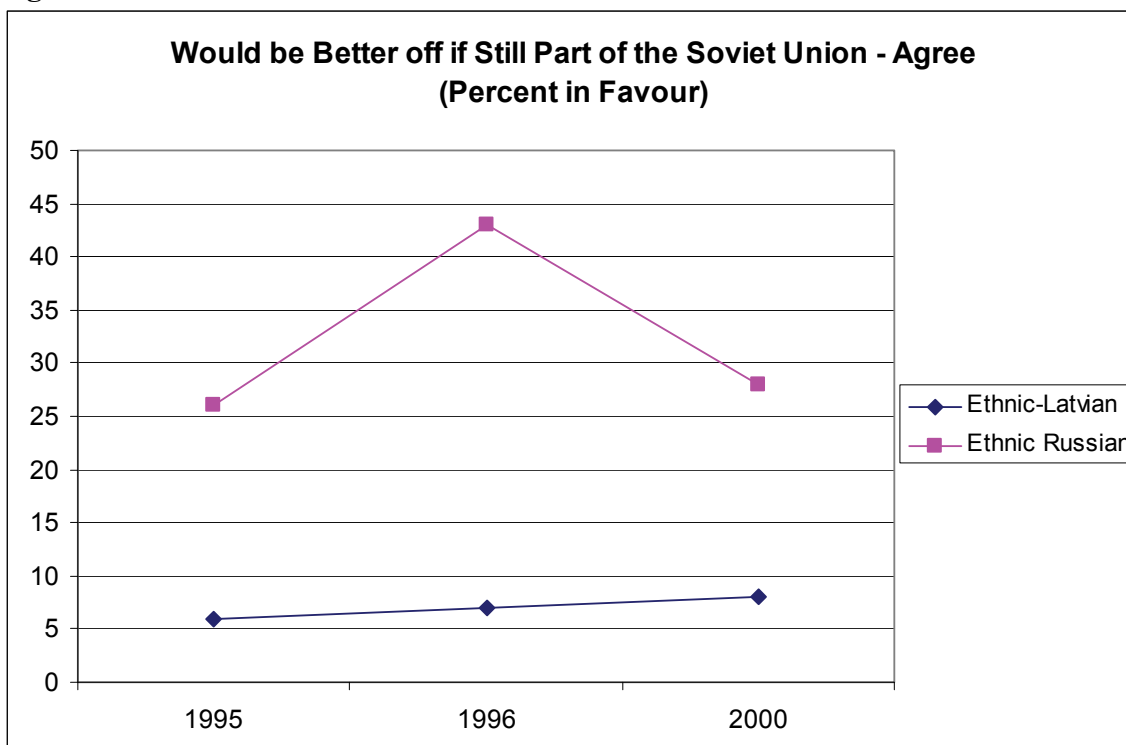
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 33; Rose 1995: 43-44; Rose 1997: 40-41; Rose 2000: 50; Rose 2005a: 23-24. *In 1993, the question was, 'which of these statements best fits your views of who should have the right to vote in elections to Parliament?' **In 2004, the response was 'everyone who has lived here for more than seven years.'

Figure A.21



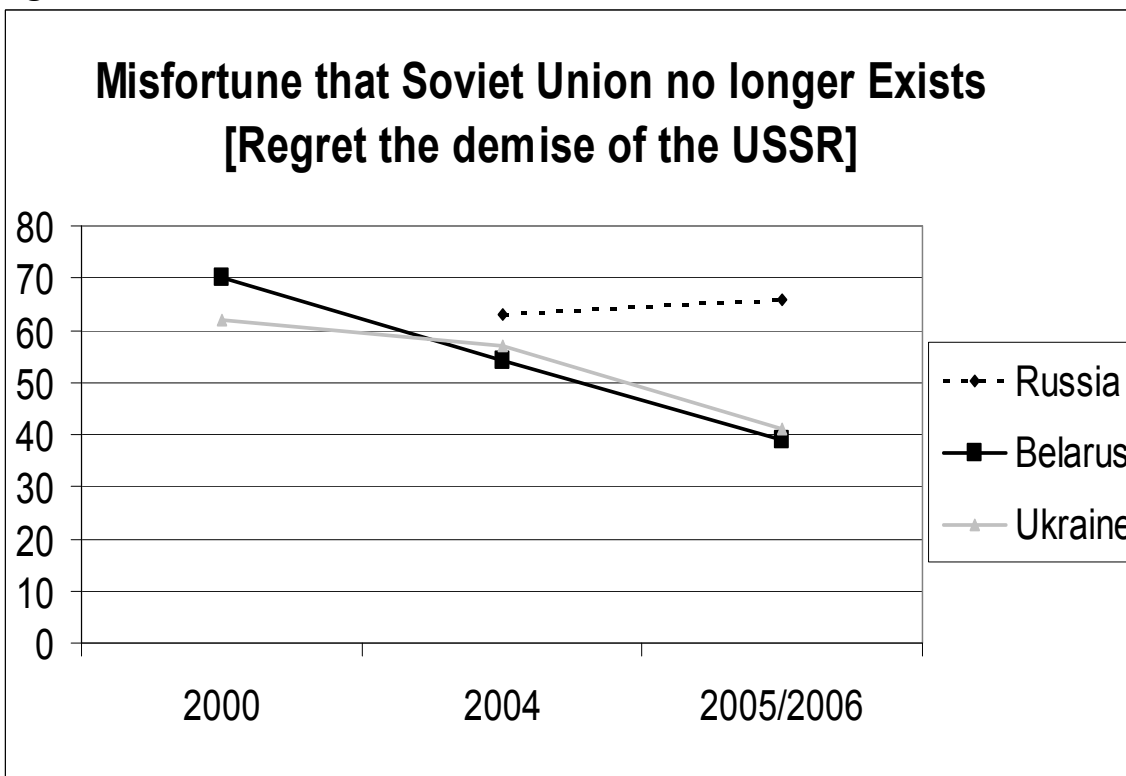
Source(s): 1992/93: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 28; Rose & Maley 1994: 43-44). 1993/95: (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 69; Rose 1995: 37). 1995/96: (Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 84-85; Rose 1997: 34-35). 1998/2000: (Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 64; Rose 2000: 37).

Figure A.22



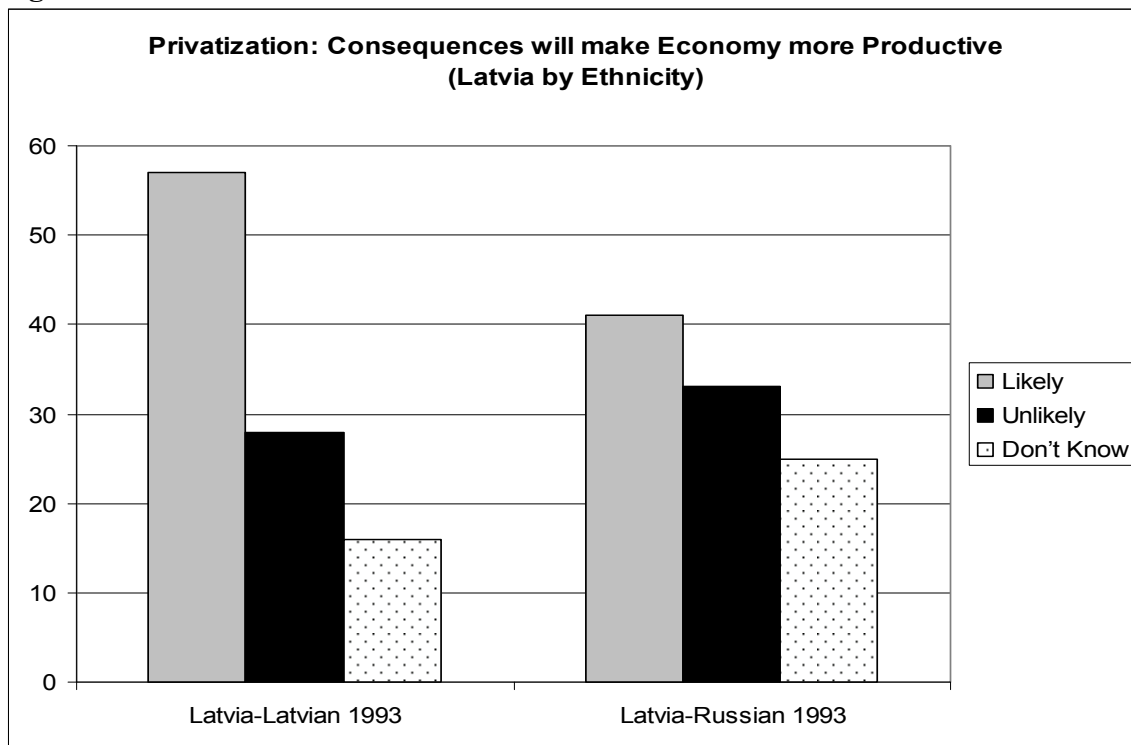
Source(s): 1995: (Rose 1995: 36). 1996: (Rose 1997: 29). 2000: (Rose 2000: 58).

Figure A.23



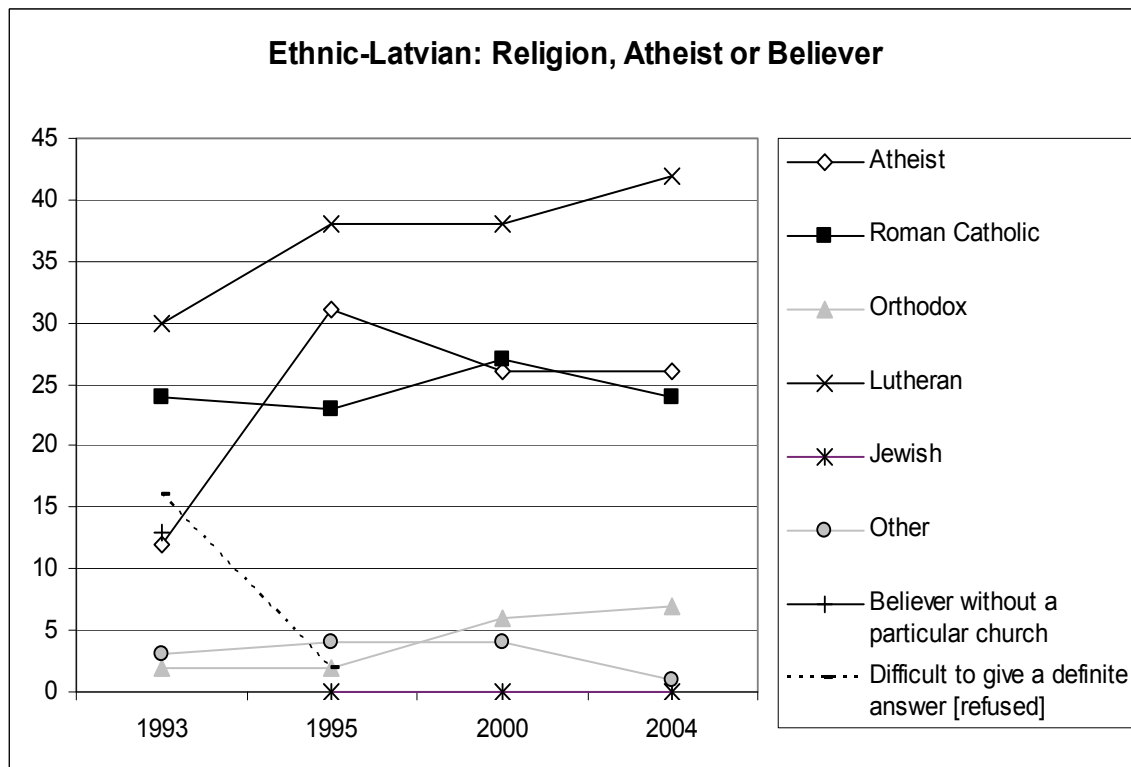
Source(s): (White & Rose 2001: 44; White & McAllister 2008: 19).

Figure A.24



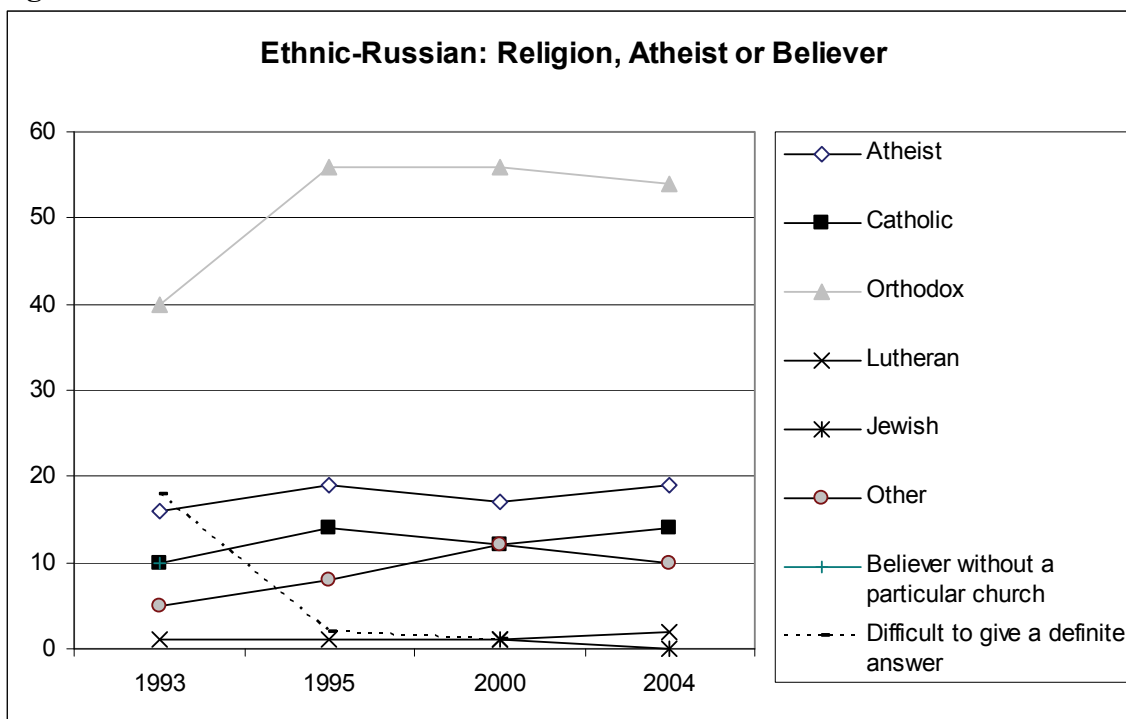
Source: (Rose & Maley 1994: 3).

Figure A.25



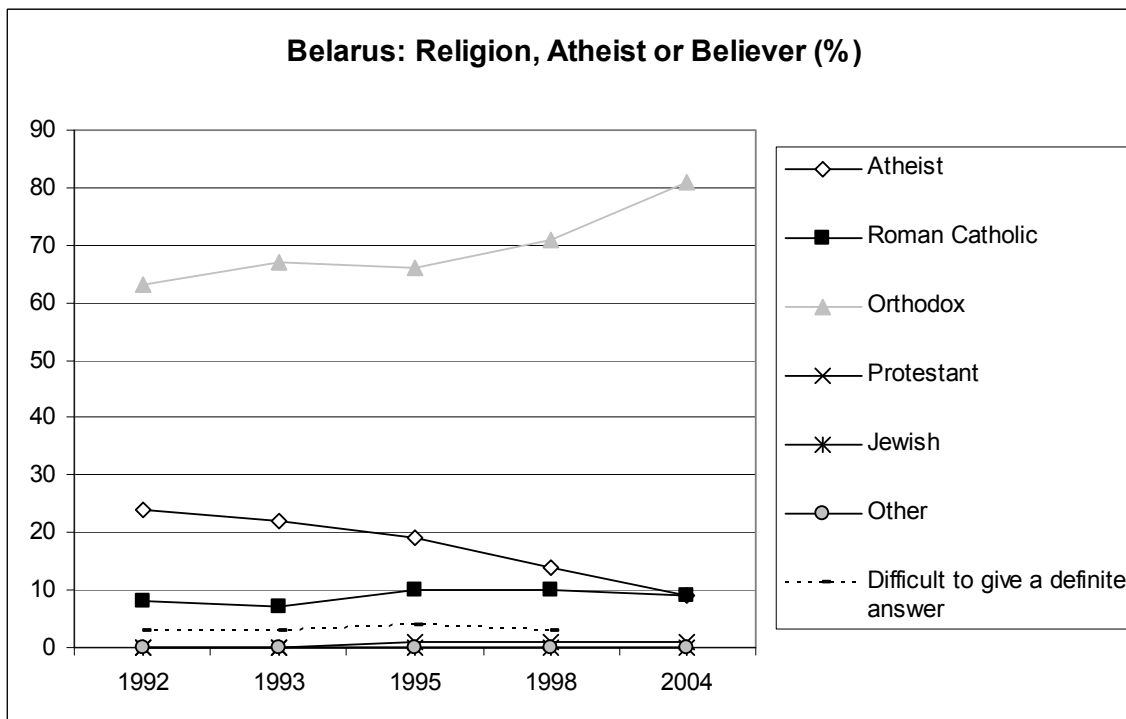
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 62; Rose 1995: 59-60; Rose 2000: 61; Rose 2005a: 41).

Figure A.26



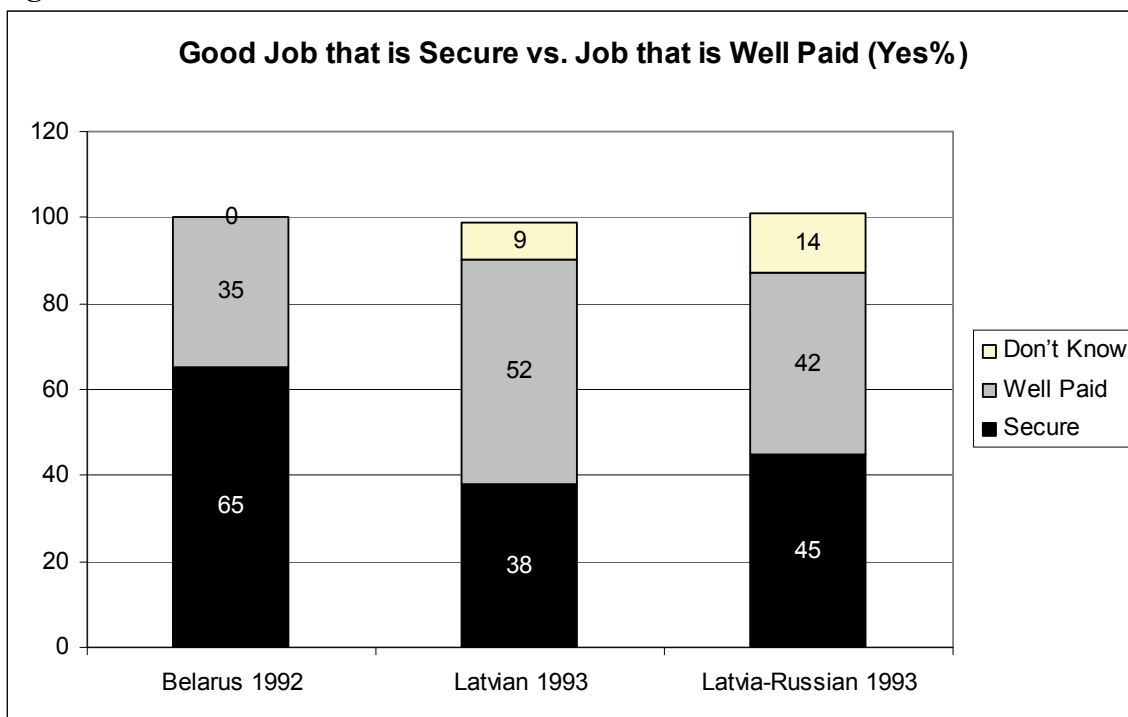
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 62; Rose 1995: 59-60; Rose 2000: 61; Rose 2005a: 41).

Figure A.27



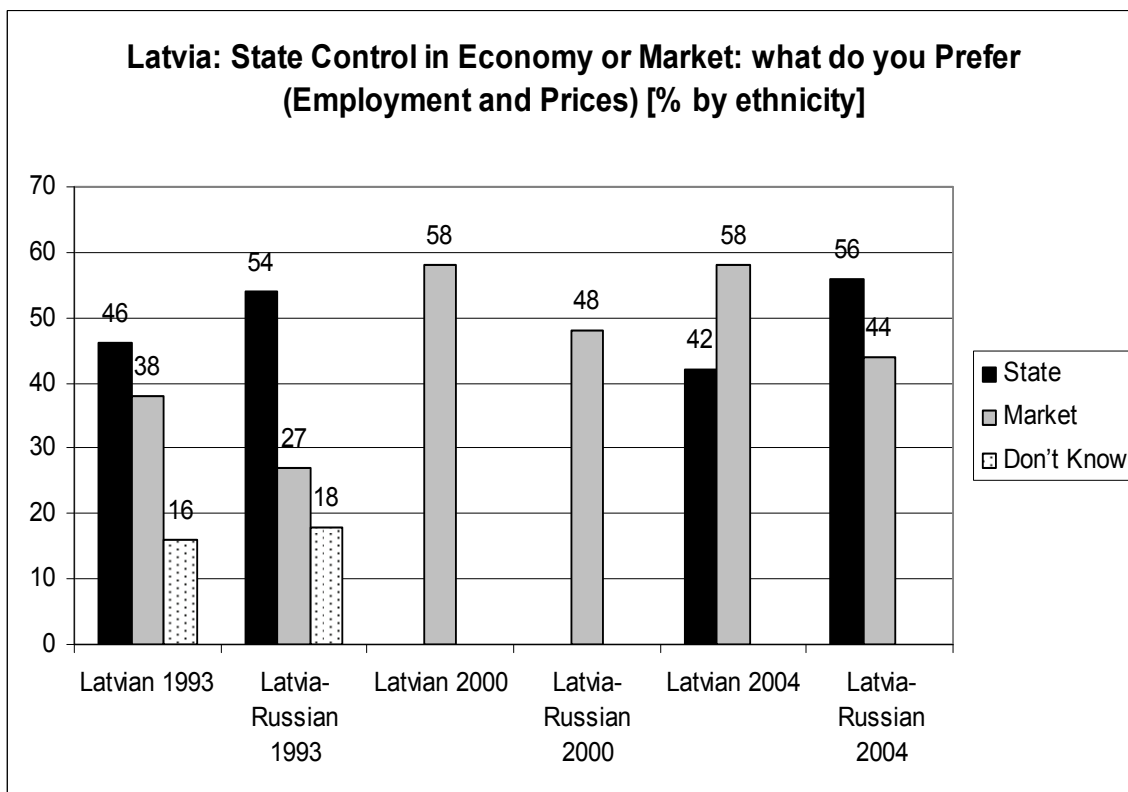
Source(s): (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 34; (Rose & Haerpfer 1994: appendix, table 73; Rose & Haerpfer 1996: 86-87; Rose & Haerpfer 1998: 66-67; Rose 2005b: 83).

Figure A.28



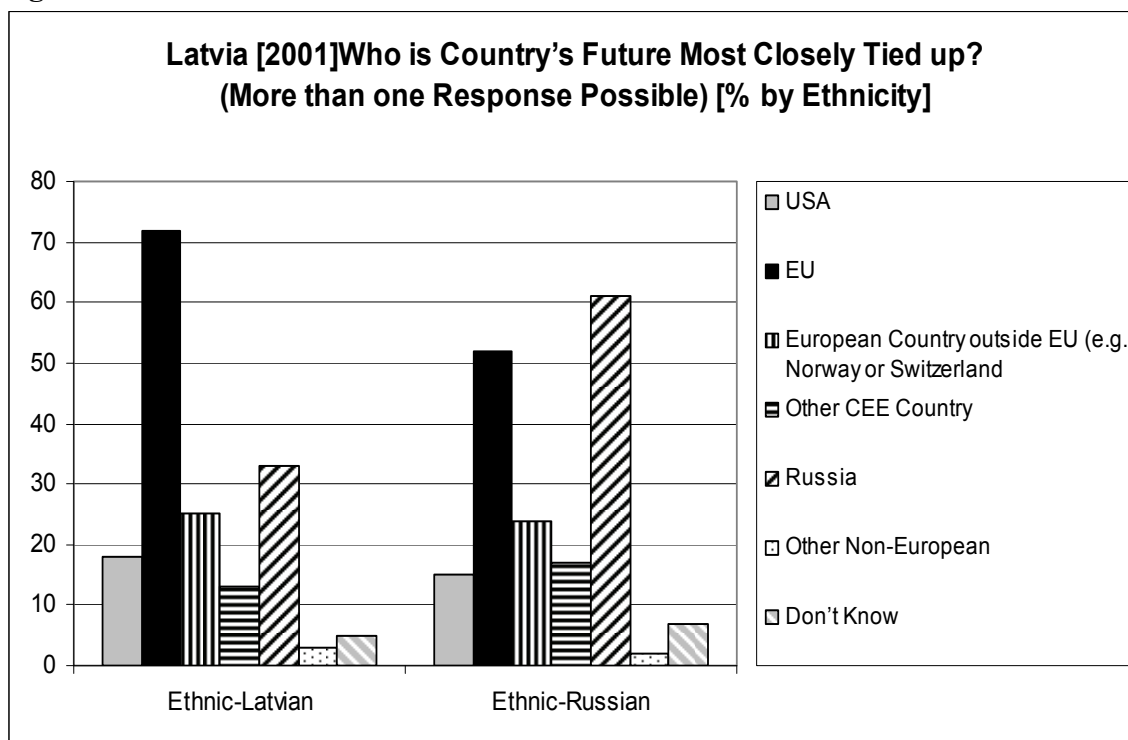
Source(s): 1992: (Rose & Haerpfer 1993: appendix, table 22). 1993: (Rose & Maley 1994: 3).

Figure A.29



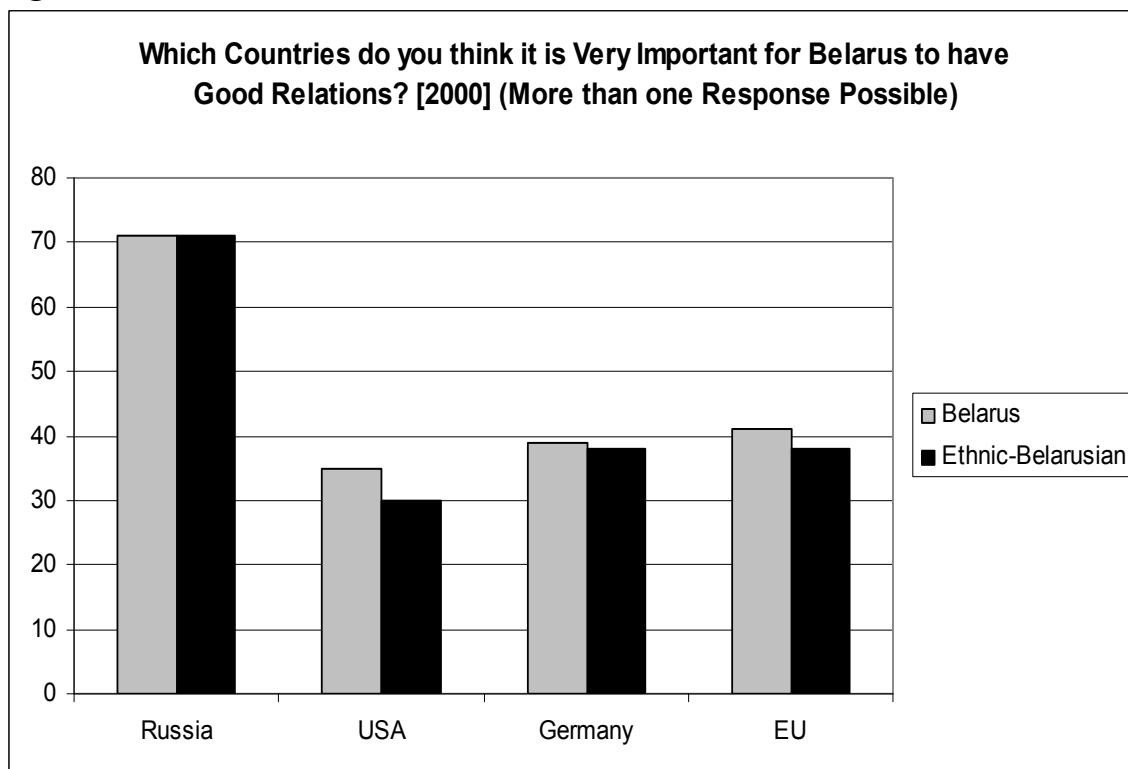
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 26; Rose 2000: 29; Rose 2005a: 13).

Figure A.30



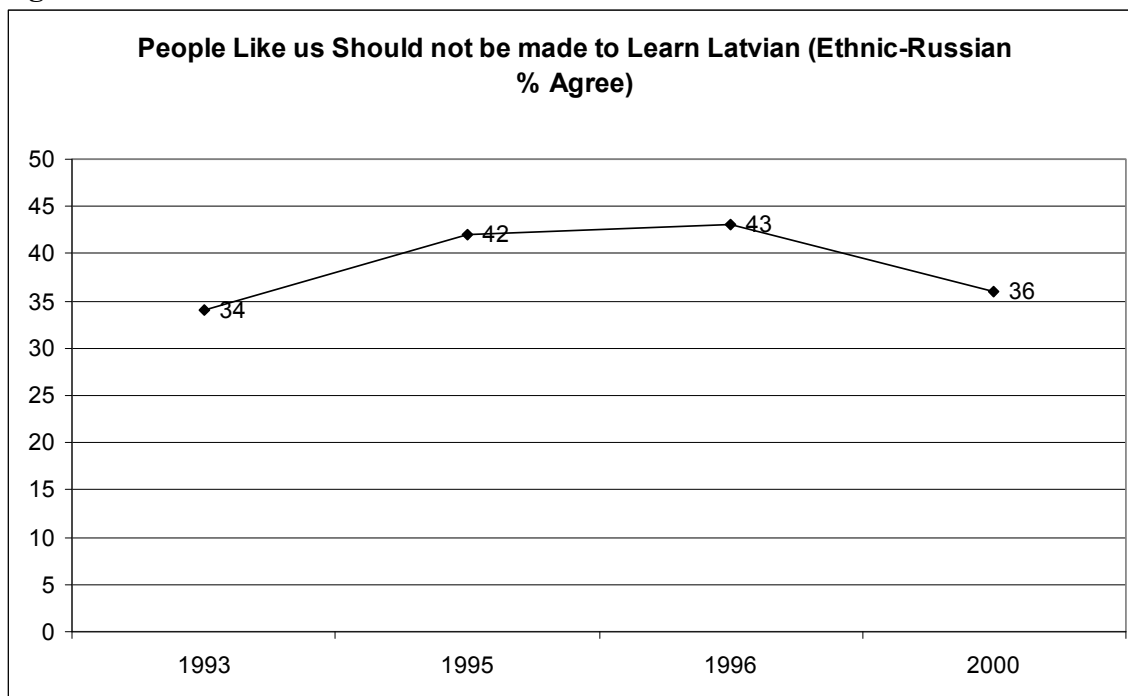
Source: (Rose 2002: 33-34).

Figure A.31



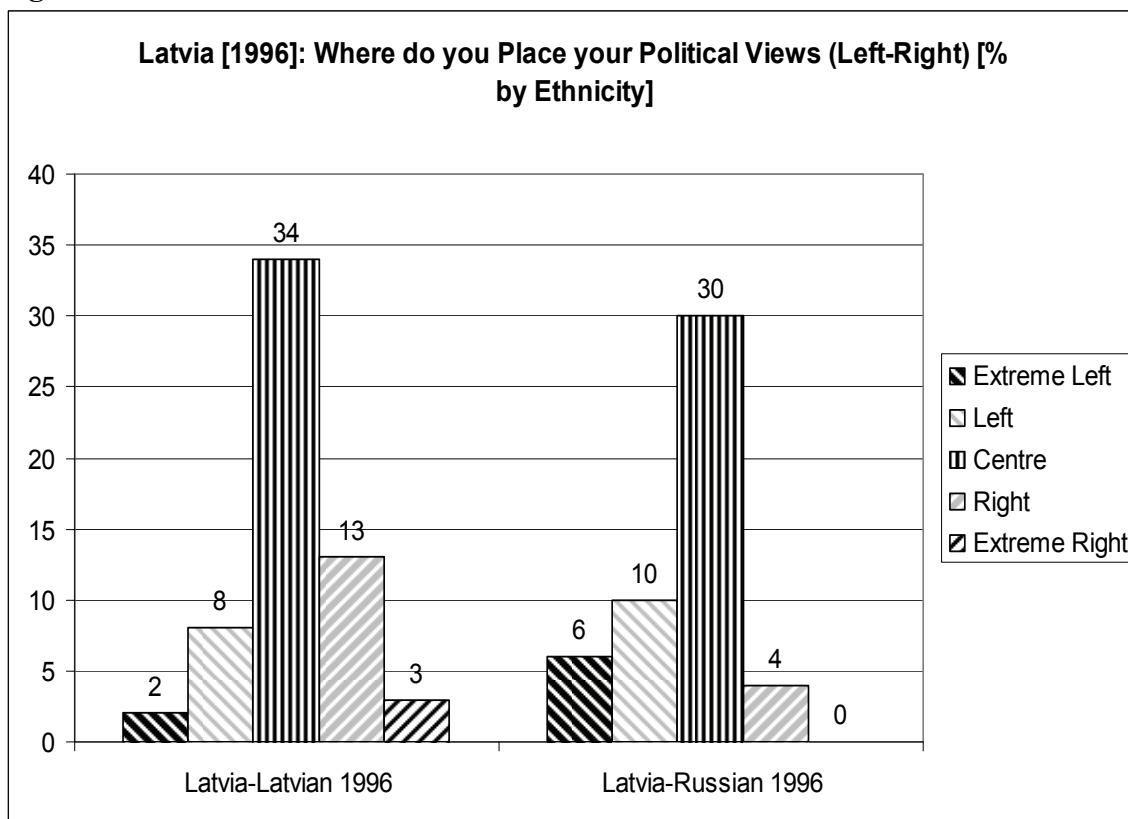
Source: (White & Rose 2001: 43-44).

Figure A.32



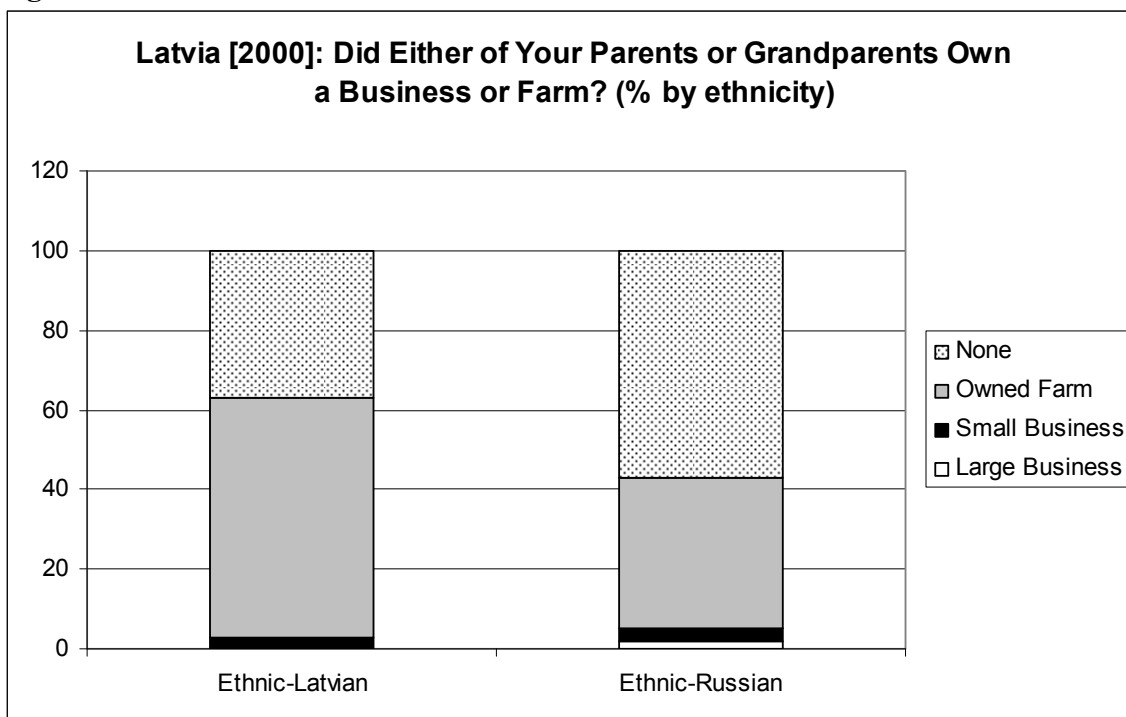
Source(s): (Rose & Maley 1994: 56; Rose 1995: 51; Rose 1997: 49; Rose 2000: 49).

Figure A.33



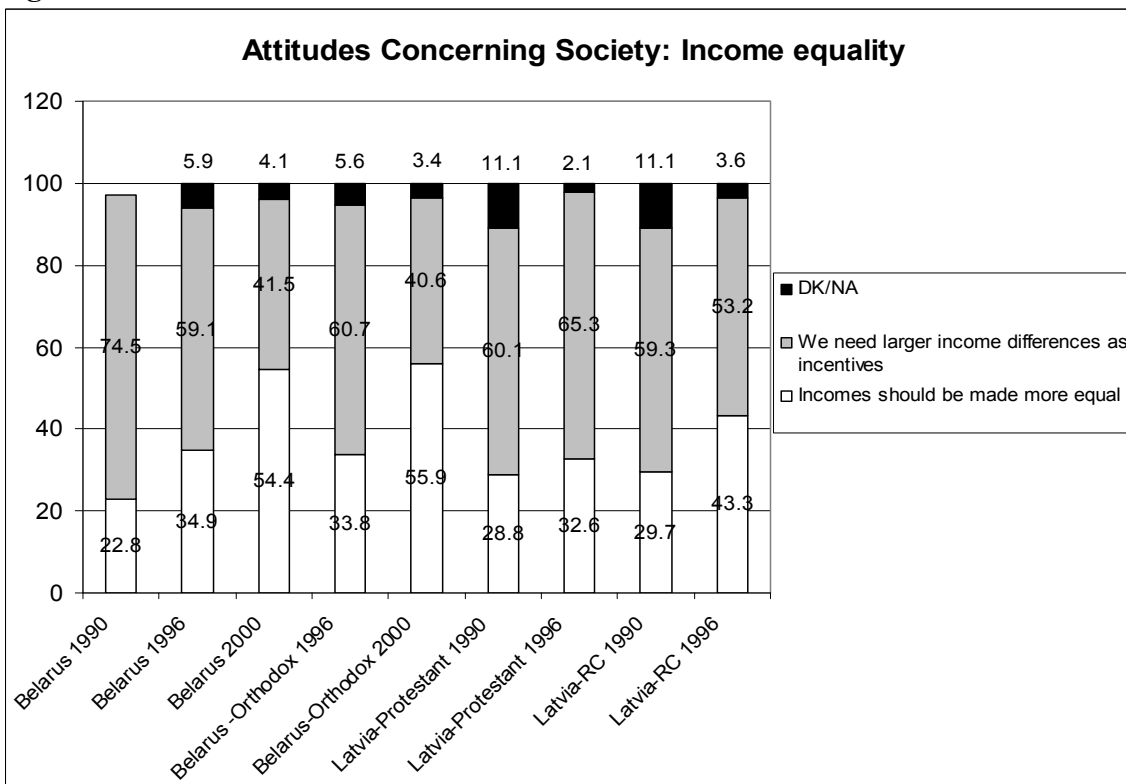
Source: (Rose 1997: 17).

Figure A.34



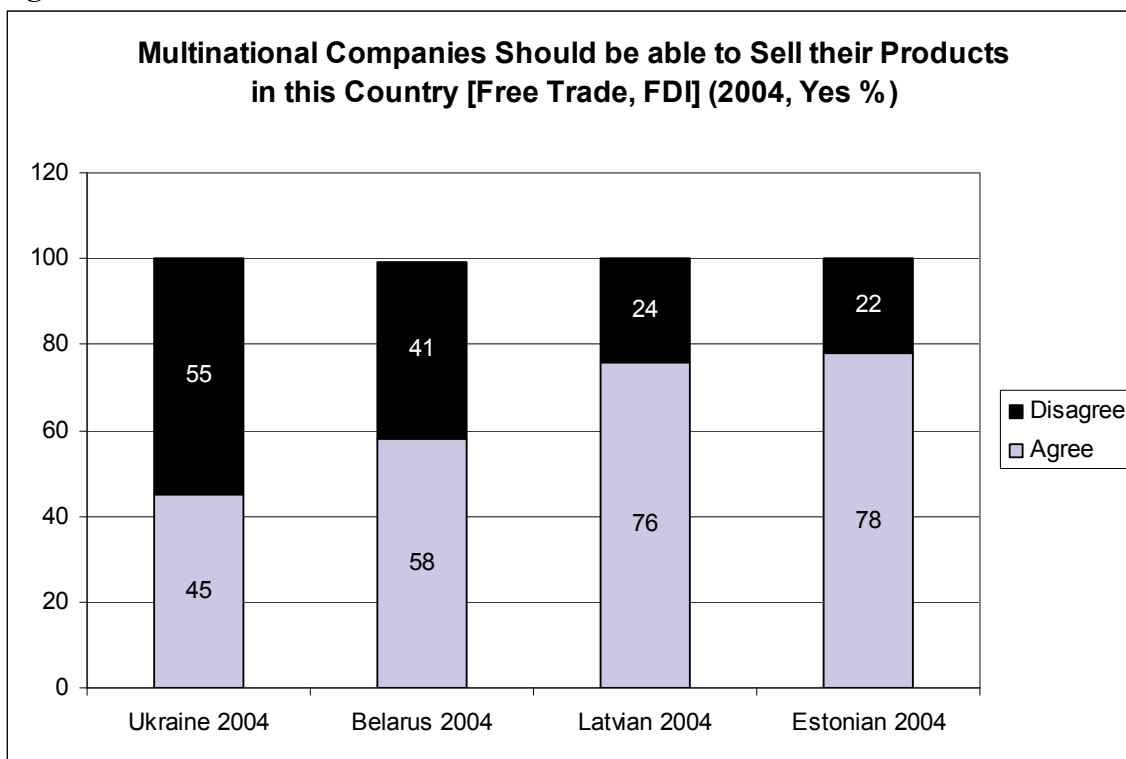
Source: (Rose 2000: 59).

Figure A.35



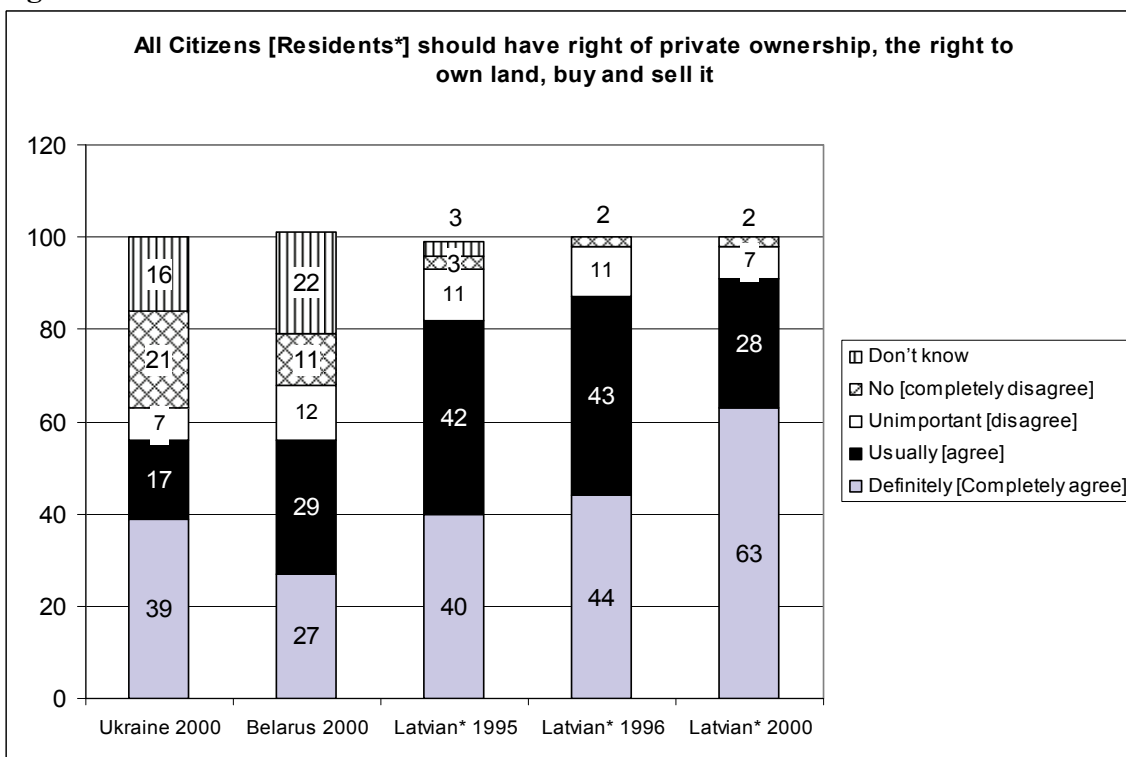
Source(s): See "Attitudes Concerning Society: Income Equality," in the Politics and Society Section of the World Values Survey. (2000) <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

Figure A.36



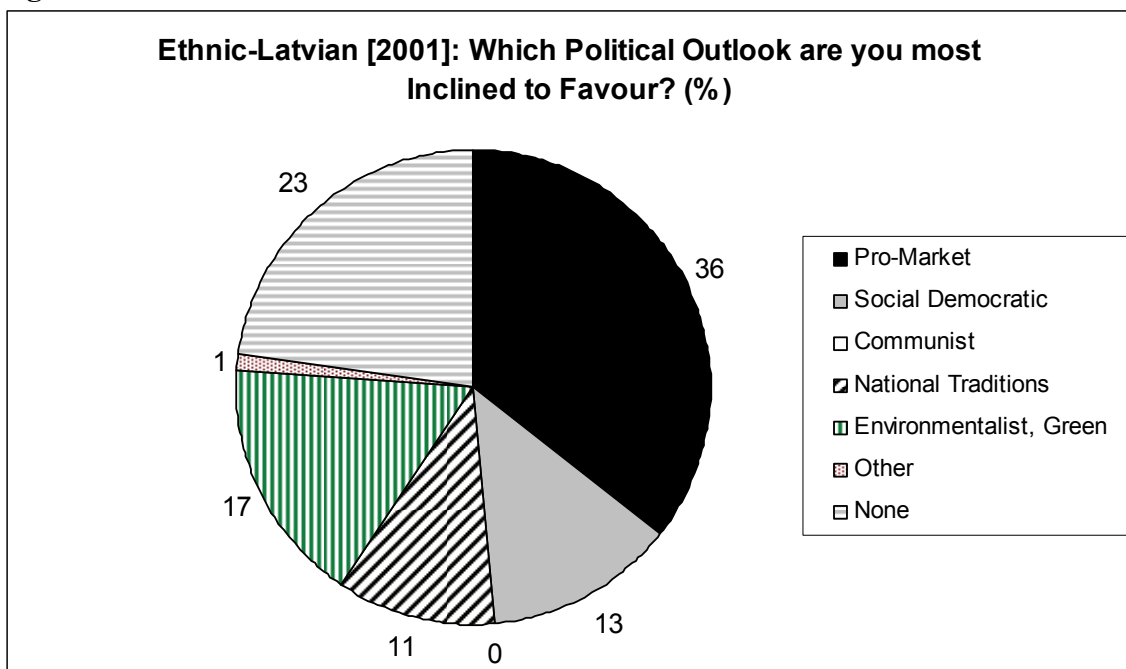
Source(s): (Rose 2005a: 13; Rose 2005b: 46).

Figure A.37



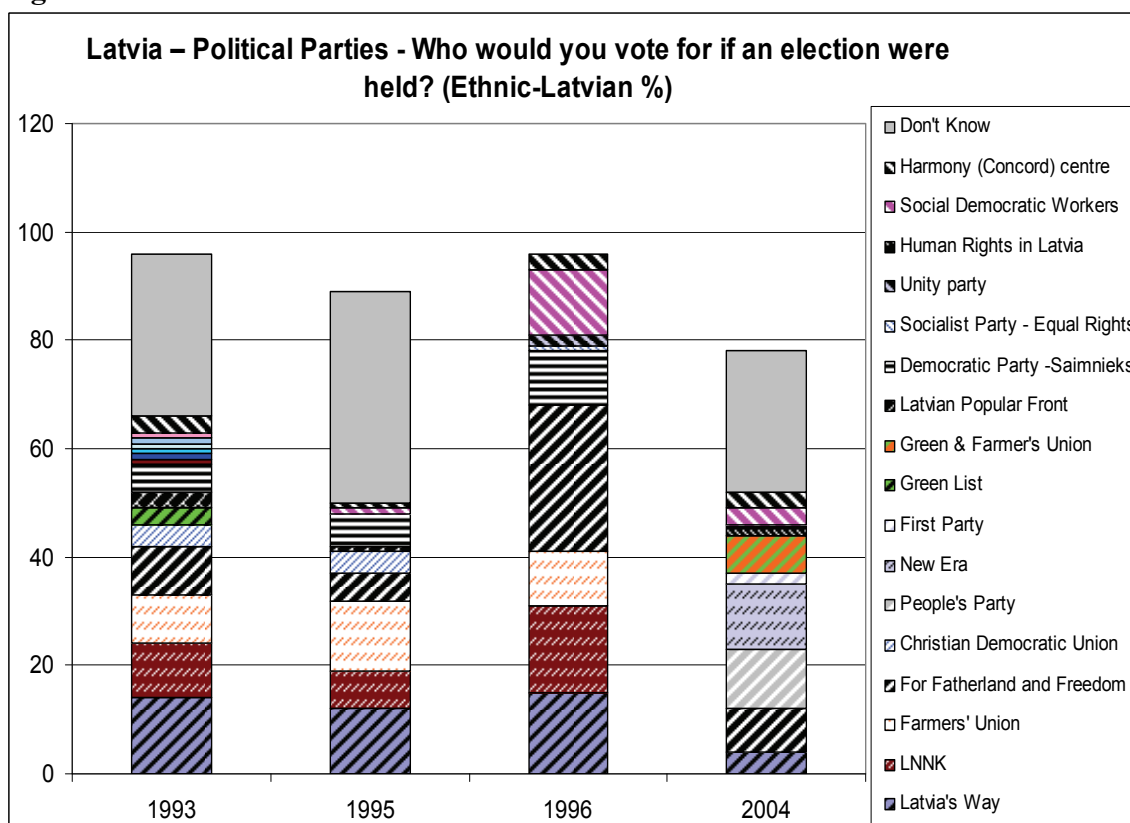
Source(s): (Rose 1995: 43; Rose 1997: 39-40; Rose 2000: 42; White and Rose 2001: 16).

Figure A.38



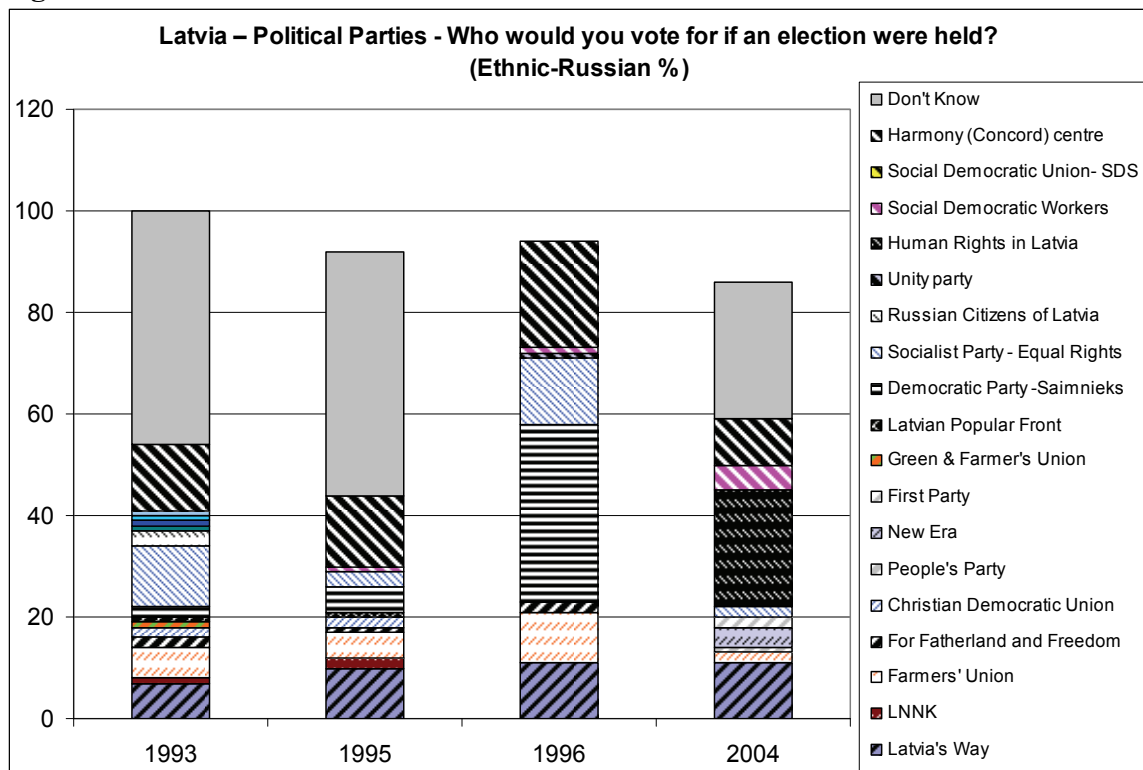
Source: (Rose 2002: 32).

Figure A.39



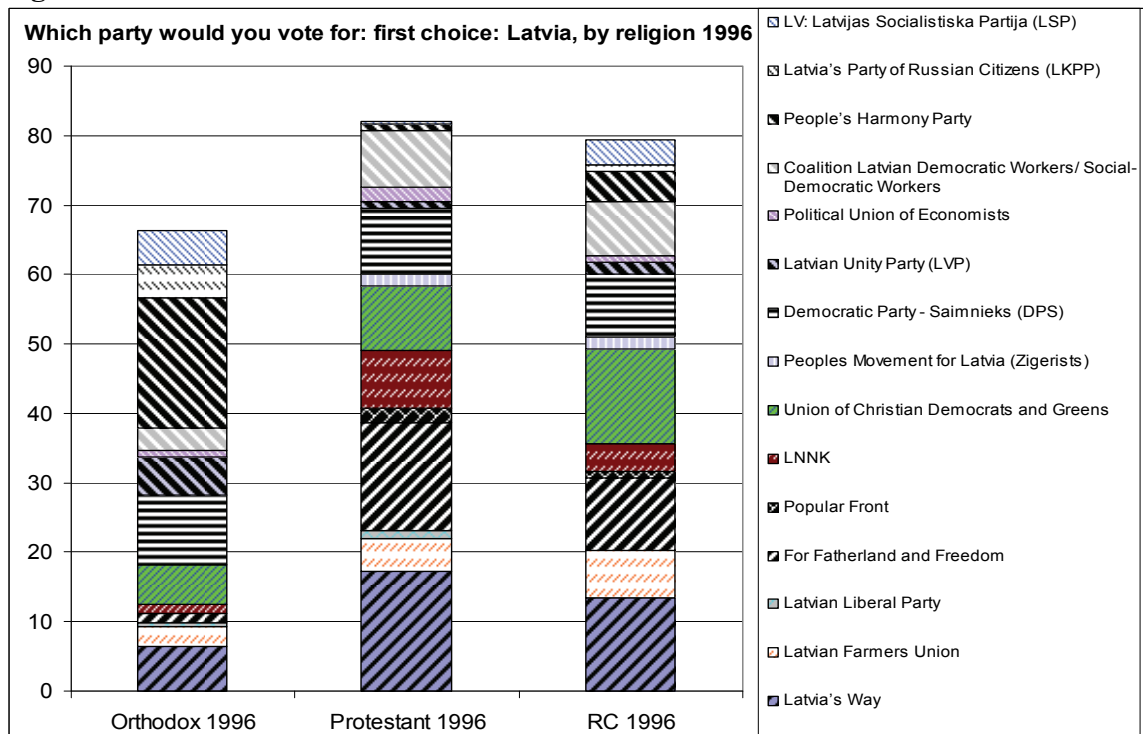
Source(s): (Rose and Maley 1994: 48-49; (Rose 1995: 46); (Rose 1997: 42-43); (Rose 2005a: 40). *Centre-Right (pro-reform) – lines upward to right; Left Parties (anti-reform) – lines upward to left.

Figure A.40



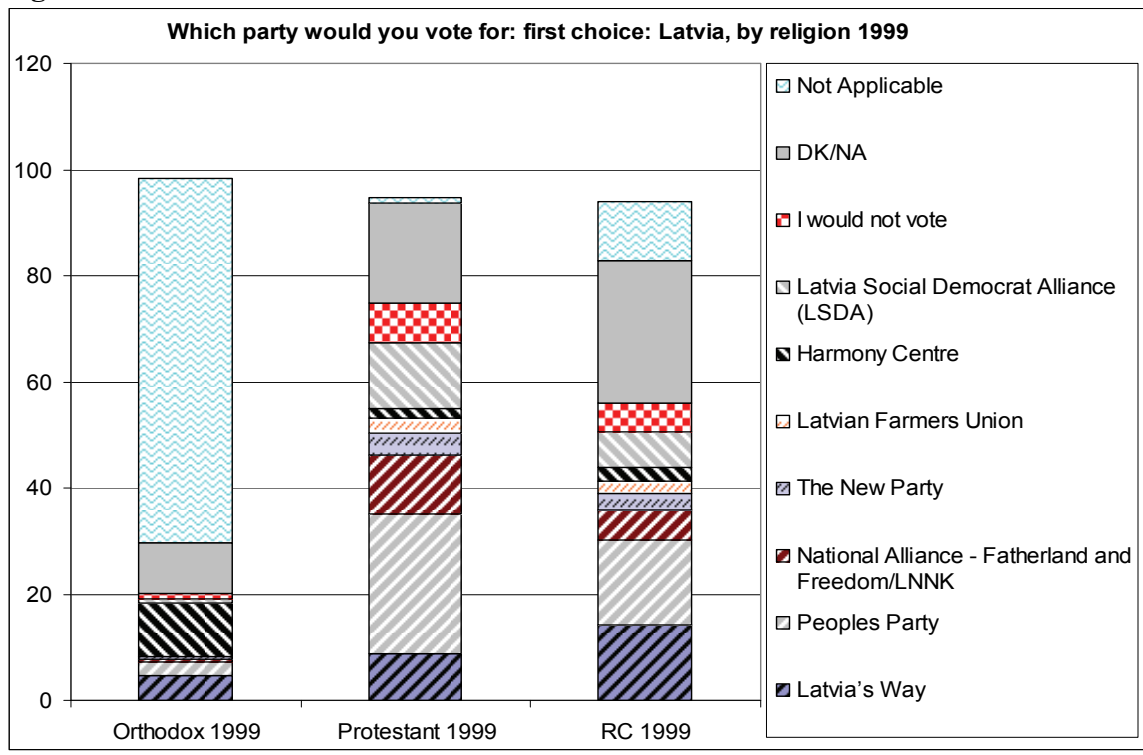
Source(s): (Rose and Maley 1994: 48-49; (Rose 1995: 46); (Rose 1997: 42-43); (Rose 2005a: 40). *Centre-Right (pro-reform) – lines upward to right; Left Parties (anti-reform) – lines upward to left.

Figure A.41



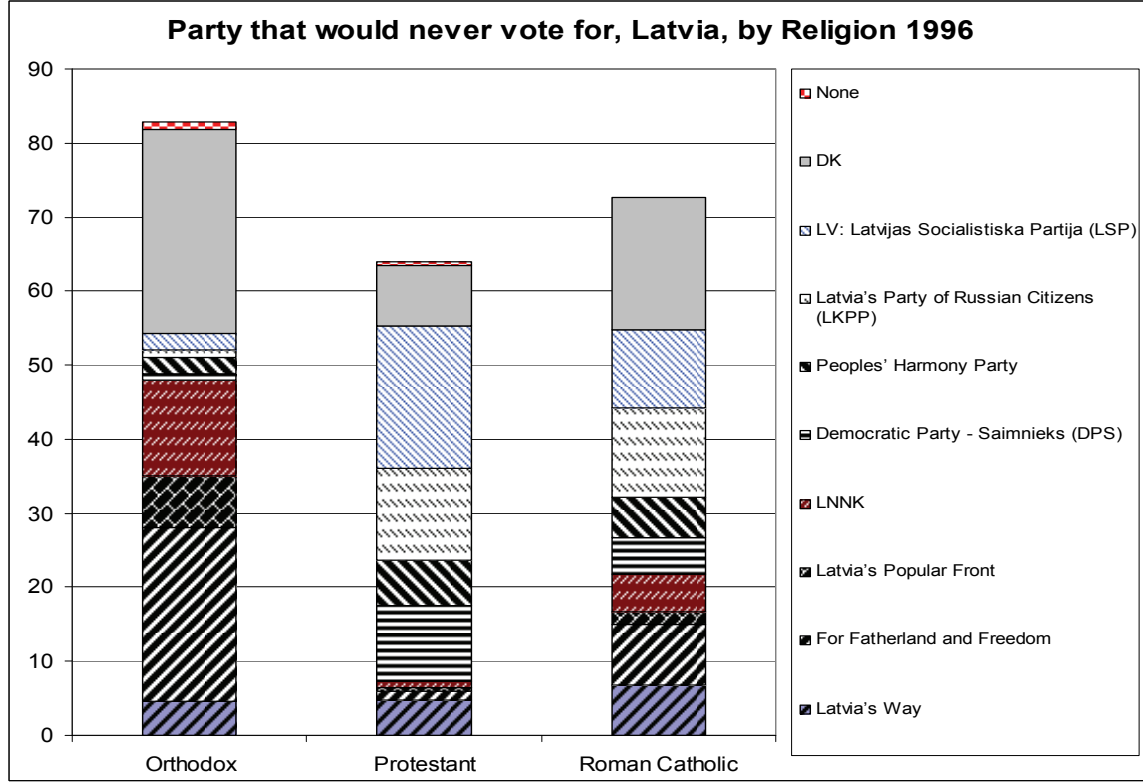
Source: See 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

Figure A.42



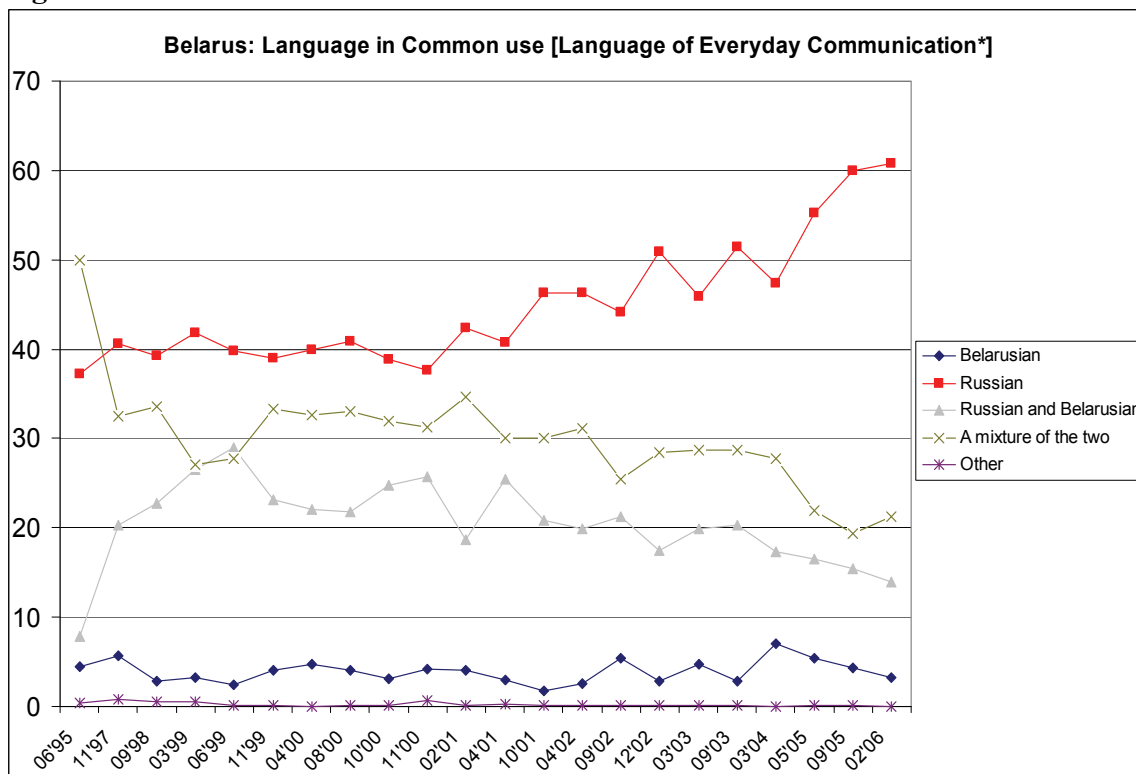
Source: See 'Politics and Society' section of the World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

Figure A.43



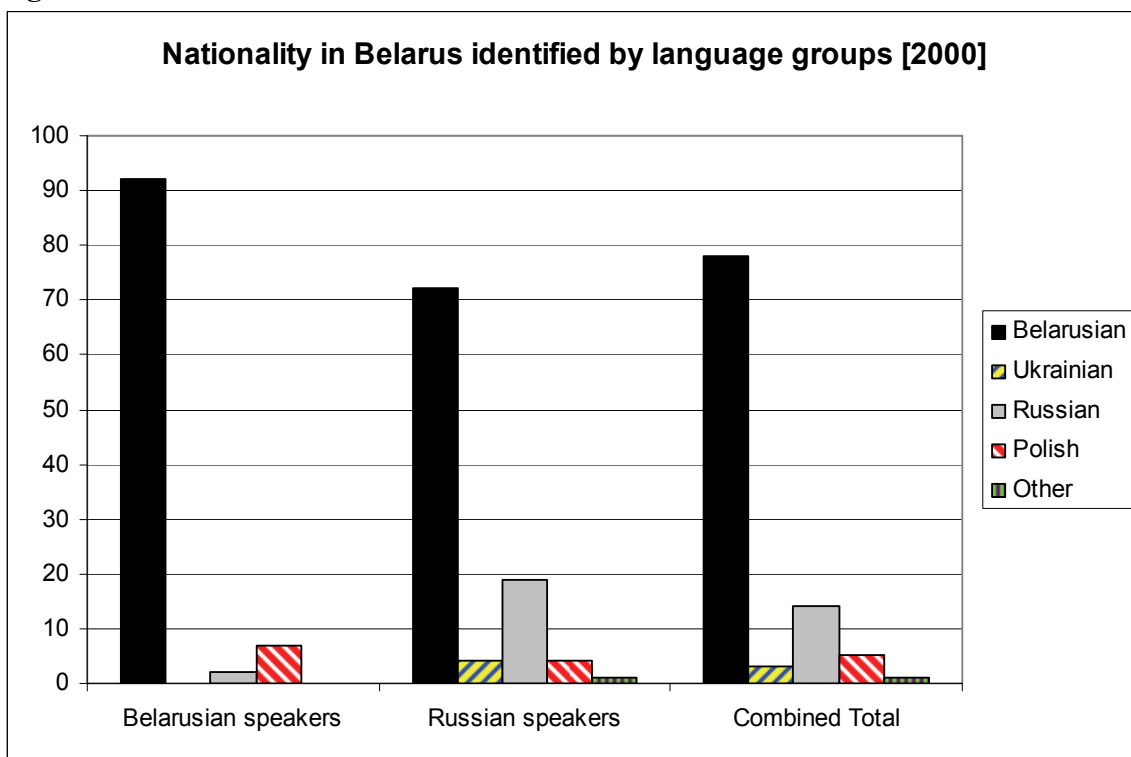
Source(s): See 'Politics and Society' section of World Values Survey. (1990-1996).

Figure A.44



Sources: (IISEPS 2000d; IISEPS 2001b; IISEPS 2002b; IISEPS 2004a; IISEPS 2005c; IISEPS 2006a).

Figure A.45



Source: (White and Rose 2001: 56).

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What post-Soviet macroeconomic policies did your ministry organization operate?
2. What were your perceptions regarding the economic challenges that were faced by your country in 1991?
3. What were some of the perceived risks involved in breaking from the Russian orbit?
4. What role did your department play in the post-Soviet transformation of the country's macroeconomic policies?
5. How were your ministry's or organization's policies established?
6. What were the biggest successes that your ministry or organization has enjoyed in the realm of macroeconomic policy? Explain?
7. How would you describe the Belarusian pattern of macroeconomic development in the post-Soviet period? (Belarus only).
8. How did your ministry or organization use policies of macroeconomic policy reform to foster transformation?
9. What were the key goals, vision, and motivations of these programs and policies with regards to post-Soviet transformation? What were the key goals, motivations, and visions behind Latvia's rejection and refutation of the former communist political economic system? (Latvia only).
10. Whose ideas do you think had the most influence on setting macroeconomic policy and foreign economic policy?
11. What were some of the professional incentives facing policy-makers: In particular, what kinds of choices would make a policy-maker successful, and what kinds of policy choices would have been dangerous to one's career.
12. What do you think were some of the major domestic obstacles to macroeconomic reform after 1991?
13. Do you think that it is best for state intervention in the economy to be minimal? Explain why?
14. Do you think that Central Bank independence is always a necessity or is government intervention in monetary policy and the affairs of the Central Bank sometimes justified? Explain why?

15. Do you think that the government should always strive to achieve fiscal stability in the form of balanced budgets, surpluses as opposed to deficits?
16. Do you think that the state should play a limited role in the economy by keeping regulation to a minimum, reducing restrictions on capital, labour and trade?
17. What do you think about using price controls to regulate the economy?
18. What do you think about government subsidization for stagnating industries and economic sectors?
19. Do you think that it is necessary for the government to strive to provide individual freedoms and firm property rights that are protected by the rule of law? Explain?
20. Would you say that it is important to have firm private property rights? Explain why?
21. Thinking back to the time before 1991, do you think that there was widespread support for the idea of pursuing economic policies that were more like those in the West? Please explain?
22. Do you think that the Latvians are a 'liberal' people? What did you mean by 'liberal'?
23. Did you feel it was more important to pursue the economic policies that would 'work,' or those that would be popular with voters? Explain?
24. How important were the influences such as popular sentiment and political preferences of society on post-Soviet macroeconomic policy?

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