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NCSEER NOTE

This paper describes a book-length monograph available from the Council upon request [Tel.(202) 387-0168, FAX (202) 387-1608]. The description contains:

An Abstract;
The monograph Contents including lists of Figures and Tables by chapter;
The face page;
The Introduction
The Conclusion
A list of authors;
The Acknowledgements
ABSTRACT

This book is about Estonian society on the eve of its independence from the Soviet Union. Based on a unique attitude survey conducted in 1991, it examines ethnic relations, political attitudes and political activity, support for independence, educational and work careers, and many other aspects of social, political, and economic life of the Estonian people. Estonia is one of the success stories in the transition from authoritarianism, but it still must come to terms with its past, including the civil status of the half-a-million Russians still resident there and the history of political repression by the Soviet regime. Yet both during the rise of the nationalist popular front in the late 1980s and in the post-independence period, Estonia has moved forward calmly and without the kinds of major violent episodes seen in so many other former state-socialist countries.

The survey provides valuable insight into Estonia's course of development at a critical moment in its history. It also sheds light on dimensions of social change that are common to most of the post-communist countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The reshaping of political orientations and activities, support for transitions to market, attitudes of ethnic groups towards one another, dealing with the past—these are all common to the post-communist countries.

The survey's special features provide particular insight into the processes of intergenerational change and ethnic attitudes and relations. First, the core sample is based on individual Estonians who had been interviewed previously by Titma in 1979; by linking the results of the 1979 and 1991 surveys, the investigators are able to examine change in individual attitudes and activities among Estonians between 1979 and 1991. Second, in addition to reinterviewing these individuals, the investigators interviewed the oldest child (between ages 16 and 25) of these persons; this permits direct inter-generational comparisons of attitudes and experiences. Third, the sample included a matching group of Russian respondents from each of the generations, which permits direct comparison between Estonians and Russians as well as between generations.

The book is written by an international collaborative research team of Americans, Estonians, and Russians. The collaboration began in 1988 as part of a binational commission on longitudinal survey research sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S., and the USSR Academy of Sciences. With subsequent financial support from the Social Science Research Council, the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, and the National Science Foundation, the investigators designed and conducted a survey of the life course and generational change in Estonia during 1991, on the eve of Estonia's independence from the Soviet Union.

The study illustrates the value of focusing on the life-course of individuals during the transition from state socialism. It eschews the "grand theory" of transitions that often ignores fundamental changes that are taking place in individual lives. By examining individual experiences, it can show the extent of continuity and change over time and over the life-course in fundamental outlooks on work, politics, and ethnic relations. It can show that on the eve of transition the strong antipathy of most Estonians toward the Soviet Union was not correlated with antipathy towards Russians—despite the great difficulties in developing a just citizenship policy in the post-Soviet period. Similarly, it can show that despite the clear targeting of Soviet repression on certain classes of people after the annexation in 1940, the grandchildren of the repressed did not carry a heavy stigma that kept them from upward mobility in Soviet Estonia.
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Estonia on the Eve of Independence: Nationalities and Society in the Transition from State Socialism

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Brian D. Silver
Barbara A. Anderson

September 1994
INTRODUCTION

Americans discovered Estonia in 1988, when this tiny Soviet republic was suddenly portrayed as a frontrunner in perestroika. Mass rallies, popular front activity, and the Baltic Chain in August 1989 brought Estonia to the attention of the public in Western nations. Many asked how a nation with only a million people could challenge the Soviet authorities. We are not in a position to answer why Estonia was first, but we can throw some light on how Estonia gained independence and experienced a national awakening without a single death in the process of leaving the Soviet Empire.

Now, in 1994, Estonia is the most successful post-Soviet nation-state economically. It has begun to take the Nordic countries as its principal reference group and economic partners. It was the first of the former Soviet republics to move out of the ruble zone and to rely completely on its own currency. It has a relatively stable currency with modest inflation, and an average monthly salary equivalent to $100. It is a multiparty democracy. It still has a substantial burden of determining questions of citizenship for half a million Russian-speakers. And it will require years before new political processes and practices are fully institutionalized. But economic restructuring has proceeded quickly. With more than half of its economy privatized, it is a frontrunner in post-Communist Eastern Europe. But it has a powerful neighbor in Russia with whom it still must learn to live.

We conducted a social survey in Estonia during Spring and Summer of 1991, on the eve of Estonia’s independence. Our task was to understand how people’s lives were affected by the change from an old system to a new one. For the world at large, 1991 was the end of the legacy of Communism. The most powerful proponent of this ideology had been the Soviet Union. Our main interest was to look at the crash of this last great Empire in the world. More specifically we were interested in how Estonians fared and how a proportionately minuscule part of the Russian nation located in Estonia perceived their fate. We tried to learn how relations and attitudes between nationalities were changing. Unlike in Yugoslavia or Georgia, in Estonia the growth of the independence movement was more a matter of national awakening than of a conflict between nationalities. We were fortunate to be on the scene to study inter-nationality relations and attitudes just prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

We were fortunate to be able to study other aspects of Estonian society at that time as well. Most scholars wore rose-colored glasses as they looked at the transformation of social relations and the victory of civil society in the post-Soviet political systems. The civil society concept refers to the development of voluntary organizations and other social formations that are autonomous from the state, limit state control of the people, protect individual liberties, and provide a means
for people to act cooperatively and peacefully to resolve social and political problems. In most of the post-Communist states in Eastern Europe and the region of the former Soviet Union, such civil institutions had already begun to take shape and increase in importance before 1991. But for none of these countries was it a foregone conclusion that they would end up on a path of progressively more democratic development. As we look at the situation in 1994, we recognize that most have had at best a very fitful movement in this direction. Some have political leaders who cling to authoritarian methods of rule, and many have encountered violent civil war or civil conflict. Hence, it is valuable to examine the characteristics of one country that has been relatively successful and calm.

At the same time, in all of the former republics of the Soviet Union and former satellites in the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, the very process of transition created enormous crises in economic performance, the development of new political institutions, and political leadership. In many countries, a crisis of citizenship arose in connection with defining the civil status and rights of members of different nationalities or ethnic groups. This problem appeared in most of the countries of the former Soviet Union as a problem of defining the status of Russians and whether dual citizenship would be permitted.

Our study provides insight into the circumstances in Estonian society on the eve of independence but at a time when the question of Estonian independence from the Soviet Union remained open. Many dramatic steps had already occurred in establishing an autonomous Estonian political system, including the abolition of the Communist Party of Estonia. Like other republics in the former Soviet Union, however, Estonia had only a few years in which the institutions of a civil society had begun to emerge. This kind of process cannot happen all at once. Nor can it simply be legislated. Instead, it requires time, experience, and trial-and-error. It must ultimately emerge and take root from below rather than from above.

We are accustomed to a well-established tradition of social research on virtually every aspect of American society. The former Soviet Union also gathered a lot of data about its population but relatively little information about people’s attitudes and values and about factors that shaped people’s individual life-courses – including their education and work careers. Sociological studies had been revived in the late 1980s, when leading sociologists allied with Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika campaign argued for a much wider effort to collect and distribute information about society¹ and demographers broadened the scope of their inquiries to encompass many heretofore

¹ The arguments for this that are best-known in the West were those by Zaslavskaia (1987a, 1987b, 1988). However, other leading sociologists such as Boris Grushin and Iuri Levada probably played more important roles in developing and promoting a sociological perspective on "restructuring.”
hidden or ignored dimensions of the population (e.g., Vishnevsky 1989). However, these were only beginning steps, and many aspects of Soviet society remained obscure or scarcely touched on by serious scholars.

It was with these kinds of deficiencies in mind 25 years earlier, though working under serious limitations imposed by the authorities, that one of us (Titma) began in 1966 a study of Estonians born in 1947-1949. This was a longitudinal study, in which the same individuals were interviewed at different points in time. A longitudinal survey of this same cohort serves as the basis for the survey that we undertook in 1991 and as the basis for this book.

From the 1966 high school graduates from Estonian-language schools, the later lives of 2,260 were studied by sociologists. This was the most educated part of that cohort of Estonians, 29% of the whole. It was also one of the first cohorts born under the Soviet regime in Estonia. Follow-ups were done when this cohort was age 21, 25, 27, and 31. Before our survey, data were last collected from these respondents in 1979. In 1991, our earlier respondents were 41-43 years old. We had a lot of information about these people, but we also needed recent information about them as well as about non-Estonians in Estonia, especially Russians. At this point, we decided to interview a comparable group of respondents who graduated from secondary schools in Estonia in which Russian was the primary language of instruction in the years 1965-1967. We then decided to compare not only the 41-43 year-old cohort of Estonians and Russians but also a younger cohort, the oldest child of the original cohort. Thus, we ended up with a "parental" generation and a "younger" generation in our 1991 survey.

This book is about people in the middle of crucial historical events. We analyze data about their opinions, values, and political activity in the period of Estonia's departure from the Soviet Union and state socialism. We concentrate our presentation on two concerns. The first is the difference between the Estonians and Russians, which is the main cleavage line in Estonia. We try to evaluate how strong nationalism was at a time when events were moving very fast. The second concern is the comparison between the perceptions of middle-age people and the youth of Estonia at the crossroads, during the collapse of one world and the creation of another. How aware are people of who stands to lose and who stands to gain from independence and marketization of the economy? At the peak of their professional career and life long accumulation of resources, many middle-aged people must start again in a new society to build up their individual world. Young people, on the other hand, could be expected to benefit the most from the rise of a more humanistic and richer world that promised them higher living standards. They might view the future with a more open attitude and have comparatively little concern for what happened in the past.
We have only begun to exploit the potential of intergenerational comparisons in this book. We focus here only on the main features of our study population and our main approaches: comparisons between ethnic groups and between generations. Both dimensions are explored to provide insight into nationality relations. The generational approach allowed us to reach one of the major conclusions of our study: segregation of Estonians and the Russian community was a mode of coexistence; the division between the two communities deepened from generation to generation.

**Theoretical Orientation**

Although the academic and popular literature about transitions from state socialism is already enormous, most of this writing has a distinctly journalistic character or else is based on models of institutional and economic change that are far from the reality of people's lives. Little of it is based on concrete studies of change in people's everyday lives, their attitudes toward the political world, their outlook on work, or their views of the market system as it was developing.

However, we were in the field with a longitudinal survey at the critical moment of Estonia's transition from communist rule. Although Estonia and Estonians have their unique features, many things that people in Estonia experienced at the dawn of independence were common to other societies in transition from Soviet control and state socialism.

When the Soviet external empire first broke apart, specialists on the region cast about for theoretical and empirical models from other countries that might help them to understand the "transition from authoritarianism to democracy." Some of the earliest literature that seemed relevant was that on the transitions from authoritarianism in Latin America. In fact, however, there were no models of the multiple transitions that the external and internal colonies of the Soviet Union were experiencing: from a state socialist economy, from totalitarian government, and from imperial control. Before long, some of the initial euphoria that infected both the popular mind and social scientists began to yield to the reality that there was no single or direct path or single end-point "to" which the former state socialist countries were heading (cf. Comisso 1991).

Furthermore, it became clear to many scholars that extant theories of transition had little to say about some of the most troubling issues in former Communist countries, such as citizenship, restitution of property, reconciling the "past" (e.g., anti-Semitism, collaboration with imperial occupying forces), and establishing political institutions rooted in the social patterns of a given country. For example, strategies of "pact-making" by elites might work in Latin America but were less applicable to the former Soviet Union (Zhang 1994). In addition, the sequence in which the post-Communist states addressed key problems - whether political
liberalization preceded economic reform, or whether instead it followed or occurred simultaneously with economic reform – was important in accounting for the smoothness and short-term outcomes of the transition (Bunce 1994).

Perhaps even more important, the scholarly literature on transitions often dealt with such "big" issues as "democratization" and "marketization" that they lost sight of the concrete changes that were taking place in society, and in people's everyday lives, including who were the winners, losers, and most vulnerable groups in society during the transition period. Even the role and status of women, while receiving increased attention from scholars interested in women's rights and women's roles, was neglected or marginalized in the broader theoretical literature on the transition from authoritarianism or state socialism (Waylen 1994). Pensioners, young children, and mothers with young children were particularly vulnerable to the economic distress in many of the post-Communist countries (Torrey and Smeeding 1992).

Rather than attempt to use our data to provide critical tests of specific theories of transition, we focus on important dimensions of everyday thinking and behavior that are likely to be relevant to a variety of theoretical orientations and problems. Our research is rooted in the theory, methods, and special language of the social sciences, in particular of sociology and political science. We believe strongly in proceeding from hypotheses, weighing scientific evidence carefully, and not accepting the first convenient interpretation of the data. However, we chose to write a book that would not demand a high level of technical sophistication from its readers.

Hence, although we do our best to evaluate and analyze the evidence with a scientific frame of mind, and we remind readers constantly of the basis of our interpretations and the limitations of our data, we present our results in a style that should be accessible to interested readers who lack formal training in social science research methods. Nonetheless, we chose not to write a book without numbers – a book that might hide or condense the valuable detail revealed by our surveys, or lose much of the value of being able to examine the relationships between individual social backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. This book uses many tables and charts to summarize the main findings from our surveys.

That our book does not aim directly to test broad theories of the transitions from state socialism partly reflects our skepticism about social theorizing and interpretation that is not grounded in empirical research and social reality or cannot be subjected to such empirical tests. We have a lot of information about various aspects of Estonian society at a critical moment in its history. We want to present this information accurately and in a way that tells the reader something real about Estonia, in particular about some aspects of social change in Estonia that no other study has been able to address.
Although this is a book about Estonia, it is not only about Estonia. It should help to inform scholars and a broader array of readers about some important aspects of social and political change during the transition. Furthermore, it should illustrate the value of concrete studies that focus on the individual life course as a way to understand the transitions that are taking place in the society at large.

Structure of the Book

As we shall explain in greater detail in Chapter 3, this book involves a collaboration between researchers from three countries: Estonia, Russia, and the United States. Although the survey design and data collection required many months of cooperative effort between the researchers, we thought it would be unfair to subordinate and in some respects hide the contributions of individuals by writing a book that listed only the senior investigators as authors. Instead, although the editors have had a hand in the preparation of every chapter, the principal authors are listed at the head of each chapter.

The typical reader of this book needs a little knowledge about Estonia and the Estonians. The first part of the book, "Historical Context and Survey Design," lays groundwork for understanding the survey results. Together, the first three chapters provide essential background for understanding the data analysis in the remainder of the book. Chapter 1 provides knowledge that should help the reader to understand the geopolitical and historical context in which recent events happened and in which our respondents actually still live.

As further background for the analysis of our survey results, Chapter 2 takes a look back at perestroika, the process begun in 1986 that initiated a series of historical events that ultimately delivered freedom for Estonia. As time has passed, we have more evidence about the real intentions and results of actions initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev. We also have more evidence about the political and national forces that broke apart the Soviet Empire.

It is important to provide some basic information about our survey and sample design, how the questions were chosen for inclusion in the survey, how the interviews were conducted, and what are the characteristics of the respondents. This information is provided in Chapter 3.

The second part of the book is about "Political Attitudes and Behavior." Because we are dealing with individuals, we try to look at the diversity of behavior and opinions and to understand the sources of variation in behavior and opinions. In Chapter 4, we start with an analysis of views about Estonia and Estonian independence. Although Estonians and Russians clearly differed from one another in their attitudes toward independence, many Russians adopted an intermediate rather than an extreme position toward independence. Moreover, the issue of independence was largely distinct from attitudes of Estonians and Russians toward one another. The degree of support for independence among Estonians was nearly universal; it did
not vary according to an individual's degree of anti-Russian feeling or with the level of satisfaction with the quality of life in Estonia.

The same was true among Russians: the degree of support for Estonian independence was not related to antipathy towards Estonians nor opinions about the quality of life in Estonia. Rather, it was more closely linked to people's other experiences and social positions. This delinking of inter-ethnic attitudes from the independence question for both Estonian and the Russian communities in Estonia probably contributed to making a fairly peaceful transition possible.

In Chapter 5, we examine relations between the Estonian and the Russian communities. The large political events turned relations upside down between Estonians and Russians: recently subordinated people became masters of their own country, and representatives of an Empire became part of a diaspora outside of their homeland. Such a reversal in power has caused violent conflict in many nations recently. Yugoslavia is a classic case, where essentially the same kind of power shift as in the Baltic turned into a violent civil war. The amount of blood spilled during World War II and afterwards was comparable in Yugoslavia and in the Baltic, and ethnic hatred resulting from this might have produced violence on a comparable scale in the Baltic as in Yugoslavia. In reality, however, the scenarios of development were very different in the Baltic and Yugoslavia. We seek the key to the peaceful developments in Estonia in the relations between the two ethnic communities, in particular in attitudes toward language and ethnic interaction.

Chapter 6 focuses on political activity, on leaders and followers as main actors in the rapidly changing situation. We see the different pattern of politicization in the Estonian and Russian communities, and different kinds of commitment to institutions and organizations. At the same time, we discover substantial diversity in political behavior among Russians and Estonians, and we examine factors in personality and social circumstance that might account for such individual diversity. We also observe far more continuity in the recruitment of activists in the transition period and activists in under the old regime. We also explore the degree of correspondence between the policy preferences of elites and masses within both the Russian and Estonian communities.

Chapter 7 pays special attention to the people who suffered most from the Soviet totalitarian regime: families of people considered as "enemies of the Soviet people" (as Communist propaganda called them). It is an interesting issue against whom, how, and with what consequences to the children repressions were used. We find that common stereotypes about the behavior of victims and their children are not valid. The educated elite survives even
the harshest repressions. We also find that the scale of repression did not much differ by nationality. Russians were as often victims as Estonians.

The third section of the book, "Social and Economic Life," focuses on aspects of the life course – in particular, the variety of paths that people follow through their educational and work careers. People's possibilities for the future are affected by what they have already achieved. The same people who are starting to change the social order must change themselves in this process. Education was the characteristic by which we selected our initial respondents. Chapter 8 examines the educational careers of our respondents. As the most educated part of their cohort, more than half of our respondents managed to obtain higher education. Educational careers depended very little on nationality; basic patterns were the same for Russian and Estonians. Education was one of the big gains delivered by socialism to the people. The equalization of educational opportunities for women and the greater representation of women than men at universities and other higher educational institutions will surprise some readers.

Work, or to be more precise, lousy work, was also a result of socialism. One result of this work was a poor standard of living. Chapter 9 shows that ethnic differences in work careers were very sharp and the real powerhouse of segregation was the division of labor between the two communities. Russians were overwhelmingly hired in All-Union enterprises and heavy and light industry. Estonians dominated not only rural life and local production but also humanities and the cultural sphere. This has a tremendous impact in the transition to market economy. Russians are in trouble in independent Estonia exactly because of the troubles of heavy industry, a legacy of Soviet industrialization of Estonia.

An examination of occupational values can also be revealing. This is the subject of Chapter 10. The scales of occupational values were developed from Morris Rosenberg's original measures and provide a picture from 1966 to 1991. We compare age cohorts over time, parents and children, and change in individual values from age 31 to age 42. National differences are visible but not uniform; the evidence does not support the picture of Russians as supporters of Communist ideology.

Next, in Chapter 11, we look at the private sector as a major factor changing the whole of worklife in Estonia. At the time of our survey, the private sector had only limited development in Estonia. But those who engaged in private-sector work even in this period merit study, for they were among the pioneers in the development of a private economy in Estonia. This chapter finds that gender and ethnic differences in wage rates are greater in private that in state enterprises. This suggests increases in these inequalities in the future.
The final Chapter deals with gender. Sex differences in work and incomes are one of the most serious shortcomings of state socialism. The proclaimed emancipation of women coincided with negligence and a real crises of gender roles. At the same time, the institutional framework and strong emphasis on work provided certain safeguards for women that may disappear, at least for a time, in the transition to markets. During the transition period, women and the older generations may be the most immediate losers. Educated women are very accepting of discrimination against women in jobs. This acquiescence by educated women does not represent well the interests of less-educated women.

In our analysis we found two communities that were segregated heavily but able to coexist peacefully. Estonians have been survivors of several centuries of foreign rule. In the twentieth century, Estonians gained independence in 1920, lost it in 1940, and regained it in 1991. It is more surprising that the local Russian community followed a peaceful pattern of transition. We discovered diversity and bridges between communities as stabilizing factors during very tense political situations. We want to learn more about how this peaceful coexistence produces a new society that might incorporate Russians as a minority into the new Estonian state.

CONCLUSION

We have not sought an explanation of the transitions in Estonia in terms of grand theory. Most extant theories do not apply very well to the situations in the former Soviet Union in general and to Estonia in particular. Nonetheless, we have applied a social scientific approach to description and assessment of many phenomena. In this conclusion, we shall bring together some of the findings and implications of our research and identify issues that should be investigated further.

Transitory Approaches

Anti-Communism

Perhaps the simplest and most widespread grand approach under which everything about the post-communist transition is purported to be explained is anti-communism, which points to the internal contradictions and weaknesses of the communist system as the reason for the failure of state socialism. This approach sometimes carries with it a simple prognosis: state socialists and communists had only to be forced out and a free market and free society would emerge in its wake. Many new political leaders in the post-communist states naively endorsed such an approach but for one reason or another failed. In some cases, the politicians were
voted out and replaced by seemingly less reform-minded leaders (e.g., Landsbergis in Lithuania, replaced by Brazauskas in 1992; Kravchuk in Ukraine replaced by Kuchma in 1994). In other cases, the regime collapsed under the duress of civil conflict, and a new president was chosen by the Parliament (e.g., Gamsakhurdia in Georgia, replaced by Shevardnadze in 1992).

The previous communist elite proved to be much more durable than many had thought. This was caused by numerous factors: 1) the shortage of new leaders who had any kind of political experience or secure power base but who had not been active in the previous government; 2) reluctance by leaders and the broader population to embark on a difficult and untried course of reform that entailed real hardship; 3) division of opinion within the new leadership about the best course of action to take or simply a lack of relevant previous experience to draw on about how to devise and implement an effective program of reform; and 4) the structural weaknesses and lack of a strong popular base of support and legitimacy of new political institutions and leaders.2

Even when the previous communist "old guard" appears to have retaken leadership of the country, however, this did not mean restoration of the "old system." Not only was the Soviet Union gone, but so too was the ideological line and discipline of the Communist Party, replaced by myriad shifting parties and alliances and fed by the ambitions of would-be reformers and advocates of special interests. Moreover, the old communist elite leaders who may have come to power after 1991 sought their legitimacy in the popular will and remained overtly committed to democratization and marketization, though with rather different timetables and methods for achieving these goals.

Our analysis confirms that black hat vs. white hat, or good guys vs. bad guys is not a very useful approach to understanding the transition in Estonia. One of the apparent paradoxes is that activists in the Popular Front in the late 1980s came disproportionately from former members of the Communist Party nomenklatura. Moreover, among Estonians, former members of the Communist Party were no less supportive of independence for Estonia than were those who had not been members. At the same time, certain groups within our parental cohort benefitted in the early part of the transition, in particular persons from those elite groups (professionals, managers, and many former Communist Party members) who made their life careers on the basis of merit, not simple obedience. Many of the disadvantaged under state socialism are still relative losers in the transition to a market system.

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2 For a stimulating discussion of the growth of political capacity in new states, see Jackman (1993).
Limits of Transitology

In light of the inadequacy of a simplistic anti-communist explanation, the main analytic framework that has been applied to the study of post-Communist politics and societies is that of "transitions from authoritarianism." This literature has its origins in the study of Latin America and the Iberian peninsula. Internal debates among "transitologists" are now in full swing, however. The early literature on transitions was stretched and pulled far beyond its original capacity to explain the course of events in post-Communist countries. Some of the founders of the transitions literature (Schmitter and Karl 1994) now describe this literature as "pseudoscientific." Also, despite its purported generality, the theory neglected some regions of the world that were also undergoing transitions, such as Africa (Bratton and van de Walle 1994). The theory of transitions may thus be becoming another sand castle in the literature on comparative politics instead of a firm foundation for the study of political change in post-communist societies.⁴

The central focus of the early literature was on the transition of political institutions, not the transformation of an entire social and economic order. Successful transitions in Latin America occurred when competing elites agreed on establishing a new set of ground rules for the selection of leaders and when certain social preconditions also existed. In most of the former Communist countries, electoral rules and representational formulas are the least critical of the issues confronting the new leaders. To be sure, these rules and formulas are often contested, and different rules are favored by different parties depending on the perceived advantages to the contenders. Also, there is great value in studying how institutional rules, such as electoral rules and method of selection of the executive, may structure the competition of political parties.

But critical issues are being decided differently in each country and may have a more telling influence on the viability and performance of new institutions and leaders. These include the fundamental issues of property rights, how to dismantle the state sector and to create effective private ownership, the management of industry, and fostering of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, in countries that had barely two generations of Communist rule, the issue of restitution and restoration of property and rights to those who lost their property as the Communist regime took over is a real one that complicates the solution of property rights issues.

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³ For the sand castles metaphor we are indebted to Geddes (1991).
Linked with the transition from authoritarianism is state-building in the ashes of the Soviet empire. This involves not only the fundamental change involved in breaking away from the empire but also building the capacity of the new state to govern itself, to regulate commerce, to provide defense and personal security to the population, and to interact strategically and effectively with other countries (see Jackman 1993). They have to create for their citizens an expectation of political stability and predictability, so that they can plan to remake their lives, invest in the future, and disengage from the highly mobilized political state that they may have reached during the period of the popular front movements.

Alternative Approaches

Theoretical approaches that focus on the economic and political transition process are not the only ones that are relevant to understanding the important changes that are taking place in post-communist societies. Two other broad approaches are also useful: one focusing on national identity and the reemergence of the past; the other focusing on geopolitics.

National Identity and Legacy of the Past

Newly independent states also have to address a very basic issue: their national identity. The previous literature does not devote much attention to the problems that this presents. What useful traditions and legacies can they find in their past? Who are their real friends and enemies? Who among those residing on their territory deserves the right to be a citizen? How can the national culture be revived and freed from the legacy of repression from outside? How can the new states come to terms with the legacy of imperial and colonial control, including the existence of substantial numbers of immigrants who have a weaker attachment to the language and culture of the majority nationalities in the newly independent states? How do they deal with ethnic fragmentation brought about in some cases by the creation of artificial borders by the imperial or colonial regime?

In Estonia, the legacy of the past emerged especially strongly beginning in 1990, with the idea of restoration of the prewar Estonian state. We traced the legacy of Estonian prewar elite through the harsh times of Sovietization. The prewar elite turned out to be overrepresented among the sovietized Estonian elite. At the same time, the Soviet Estonian elite was in the forefront of the fight against Moscow and can in large part sustain its elite position in the future. Estonians never lost their national identity and were very loosely influenced by Communist ideology and weakly attached to the Soviet state. Strong cultural roots of individualism persevered, from peasant life through centuries of individual households rather than villages, and survived under the Soviet regime. Similarly, an identity or consciousness of common interests with Finland and with other
Nordic countries and Baltic Sea countries reflects Estonia's long historic trade and other relations in the region.

It would be a great oversimplification to interpret everything in this light, however. In our analyses of people's political behavior, we find very little support for the return of prewar traditions. Perhaps only political tolerance and calmness can be linked to the short history of prewar independence. No significant political party reemerged from the past. The whole of the large-scale political activism of 1989-1991 is unique in Estonian history, and the Singing Revolution is particularly unique. Mass politics and high electoral activity are features of modern political life borrowed from the Western world.

Geopolitics

An approach that views the transition from state socialism as a process of reemergence of presocialist society finds some support in our data. Much more difficult to establish is the influence of geopolitics. Countries have historical or cultural affinities with other countries and histories of relations and memories of interactions with various countries. Their location and other geographic characteristics help to define who is a potential threat and who might have common interests or experiences on which to draw.

Leaders of many countries wish they could change their geopolitical location. People in Azerbaidzhan are torn between identification with a modernizing, secular, and newly industrialized Turkey, and an identification with the religious state of Iran, with which Azerbaidzhan shares both a common branch of Islam and 15 million ethnic Azerbaidzhanis residing in Iran. For a country such as Ukraine, this search for a new geopolitical identity involves tugs and pulls by various forces and influences: religious linkages to the West through the Roman Catholic Church, challenged by similar linkages to Russia through the Russian Orthodox Church (but complicated by schisms within the Orthodox Church); a desire to be part of Europe and the West, but a realization that Ukraine is also the historic birthplace of the Kievan "Rus" and a center of Slavic culture.

Geopolitics intervened powerfully after the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Central Asian republics turned to their neighbors for support and alliances, so that Russia quickly realized that it had to be active to maintain economic, political, and social linkages to this region. The Baltic countries sought to move themselves away from the traditional ambit of German-Russian rivalry to a more northerly context, to join the very respectable Nordic countries if the Scandinavian club itself proved to be too exclusive.

Estonia is geopolitically closest to this target and is perhaps the most successful in moving itself in this direction economically and politically. It has more air flights per week to Finland.
Sweden, Amsterdam, and Germany than to parts of the former Soviet Union. A half-dozen ferries ply between Estonia and Finland every day. A clear aim in this process was the refocusing of Estonia politically on Scandinavia, as Finland did after World War II. At first, Sweden realized the strategic importance of this shift for Sweden and strongly supported Estonian foreign policy moves in this direction. Then Finland followed.

Nowadays, Estonia’s growing market and finance capital is closely linked with Finland and Sweden. Diplomatic ties are also strongest with these countries. Estonia’s defense also benefitted from Swedish and Finnish help. Overall, Estonia succeeded in switching its geopolitical orientation, although it has yet to come to terms with Russia and with the civil and political status of the roughly half-a-million Russians residing in Estonia. The further major aim of being integrated into the European Community and to come under the umbrella of NATO remains problematic but reasonable. If this were to be achieved, Russia could be pushed back to historical frontiers of prior to the Eighteenth Century. In future studies of change in Estonian society, it will be helpful to make more explicit comparisons with societies in northern Europe with which Estonia is redeveloping its historical linkages.

**Ethnic Relations and Independence**

An obvious force shaping change in many post-communist countries is nationalism. Especially after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the Bosnian conflict, scientists became acutely aware of the importance of intense ethnic animosities to the future of post-communist societies. Nationalism as a movement toward independence from an imperial power was viewed in the early days of the post-communist transitions as an essential element in the development of democracy. Sometimes observers even confused the establishment of independence with the establishment of democracy – as if being "free" from the Soviet Union meant being a "free country" with a functioning democratic political order.

But the Yugoslav conflict showed that nationalism could have an abhorrent side. It was not just an inevitable historical phenomenon, a necessary step toward democracy, but it could lead to people killing each other just because of their ethnic identity. Not as horrifying, but nonetheless very intensive inter-ethnic conflicts appeared in the former Soviet Union in the Azerbaidzhani-Armenian war over Karabagh and in the Abkhazian secession movement from Georgia.

In Estonia, no such intense conflict occurred. Nonetheless, we see the power of national attachments in our research. Nationality was perhaps the variable with the strongest influence on the life career and especially on values and opinions of our respondents. But differences
between Estonians and Russians on critically important issues such as Estonian independence were not connected at the individual level with how Russians and Estonians viewed each other. This is perhaps the most striking finding in our analysis of ethnic relations: the striving for national independence appears to have been much less an expression of ethnic consciousness and inter-ethnic conflict than it was simply a desire for autonomy from Communist rule and the Soviet state.

To be sure, most Estonians rallied strongly beyond symbols of national identity — the tricolor, Estonian language, and cultural leaders and achievements — but their national movement was much less anti-Russian than it was anti-Soviet. This in part may account for the relative calm with which ethnic relations unfolded in Estonia during and after the transition, despite the unsettled nature of the citizenship issue and the evidence that some in the post-transition Estonian parliament and government wished to create an "Estonia for Estonians." They hoped to encourage Russian emigration by making it difficult for Russians to live a normal life or to achieve full civil status in Estonia (Barrington 1994).

It is not our purpose to explain the peacefulness of Estonia's transition. We can only make the point that in the Estonian case, unlike some others, there was obviously room for a peaceful transfer of power to native people and it was in fact used. But our data may shed light on some of the conditions that made this possible.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Estonian nation-state reemerged without ethnic violence or the loss of any human life. Nonetheless, for the people of Estonia the change was dramatic. Estonia was no longer a colony inside the Soviet Empire. Russians in Estonia not only lost their superior status but faced the prospect either of becoming members of a national minority in the smallest nation-state emerging from the Empire or leaving the country, a place where many of them were born. In the short run, this has been an especially difficult choice because the Russian economy has not been able to generate enough opportunities to absorb substantial numbers of refugees from what has been called the "near abroad."

At the time of our survey in February-July 1991, the issue of citizenship had not become a sharp one, because the timing of independence remained uncertain. But a new language law passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1989 had stimulated a strong reaction and public demonstrations among Russian-speaking residents. Our survey studied two nationality groups on the verge of a crucial change in their relative political status: a tiny part of the largest nationality in the imperial country (the half-million Russians in Estonia amounted to one-third of one percent of all Russians in the Soviet Union), and the
native Estonians (numbering barely 1 million people) switched places politically. Along with Estonian independence came the collapse of the old political and economic systems.

These fundamental changes had to have a great impact on relations between nationalities. Yet we find that on the eve of this transition a substantial part of the Russians favored this transfer of sovereignty to a new country, recognizing either for pragmatic or other reasons that this transfer was legitimate or desirable.

One possible explanation for the peacefulness of the transfer is on the political level, that politicians were smart and handled a very delicate situation in a smart way. However, the lack of solution to the citizenship issue to this day has involved a peaceful tactical confrontation between Estonia and Russia, with Russians in Estonia caught in the middle. This is an important issue that leaves Estonia's geopolitical status itself unresolved.

Instead, we have argued that a more plausible explanation for the peacefulness of ethnic relations is that the issue of Estonian independence and inter-ethnic attitudes have not been tightly correlated. Establishment of Estonian independence was less an anti-Russian than an anti-Soviet or simply pro-Estonia development.

In addition, it is possible that Russia's own inability to offer an attractive economic and political example has tempered the initiatives of the Russian community in Estonia to seek refuge there or to rely on support from Russia. They would rather try to make a go of it in Estonia, if only their legal status and rights could be resolved. One reason for this may be that Russians in Estonia were better off economically than Russians elsewhere in the time of the Soviet regime. The higher standard of living in the Baltics was well-known in Russia during the Soviet period. For many Russians after independence, Estonia had a more promising economic future than Russia.

A related factor is the relative segregation of Estonians and Russians. Even where they interacted in the marketplace, they usually lived separate lives in their neighborhoods and workplaces. They were not in direct competition. The entire life careers of Estonians and Russians went ahead separately. Schools and universities worked separately in Estonian and Russian languages. Professional education was targeted toward different sectors of the economy, without real competition between representatives of both nationalities. They followed separate careers and only a tiny part of top nomenklatura competed on common ground for top jobs. Even there, however, a clear national division existed. Russians never dreamed of becoming a rector of Tartu University or Head of the Supreme Soviet of Estonia. Estonians never dreamed of becoming Director General of "Dvigatel'" (the largest defense factory in Estonia) or head of the Organizational Department of Central Committee of the Communist
Party of Estonia (responsible for personnel assignment). The first Estonian-born Estonian reached the highest position in the Communist Party nomenklatura only during the process of national awakening in 1988.

Segregation can produce a peaceful outcome if social inequalities do not follow along the lines of nationality differences. The workplace was a very important separate existence for Russians and Estonians, especially in so heavily institutionally organized and centrally governed a society as the Soviet one. But economic differences were not very large between Russians and Estonians, unlike the relative status of Russians and the indigenous peoples of Central Asia. Another type if nationality relations exists in Belarus and Ukraine, where Russians and the local nationality were heavily mixed and little segregation exists. However, national ferment there can be aggravated by political ambitions and economic hardship.

Our main discovery was in the area most heavily controlled by Soviet party-state: working units (collectives). Using defence and heavy industry as an immigration pump, Soviet authorities concentrated Russians into those working units. Estonians were pushed out and segregated from the most heavily controlled area by the Soviet regime itself. In defense industry, it was an axiom that Estonians would not be trusted and more than 95% of the labor force was non-Estonian. As labor units functioned under the Soviet system as primary party organizations (Communist party cells) and consumption units (with their own housing, distribution of food and commodities, childcare, medical, and vacation facilities), they were bases for personal life. Work units were thus the most fundamental basis of the separate existence of Estonian and Russian communities.

Our survey shows that segregation at work had even higher explanatory power over inter-ethnic attitudes than segregation in housing or in towns and cities. As members of a large and actively assimilating nation, Russians were very open to inter-ethnic national contacts. They favored multinational working units, living areas, marriages, and other contacts with Estonians. In contrast, the Estonian community, defending its existence, was restrictive about those contacts. Diversity appears only if Estonians are working with Russians in the same work units. This suggests that work units played a crucial role in breaking national barriers from the standpoint of Estonians and their relations with Russian co-workers.

**Estonian Elites and Political Activists**

The changing of the guard in political leadership in Estonia during the transition period was also not so sharp a break with the past as may be supposed. Members of the former Estonian and Russian nomenklatura were the most politically active throughout 1991.
Although the mass rallies that began in 1988 and the series of elections that began in 1989 vastly widened the scope of voluntary political activity in Estonia, real activists represented a small percentage of the population. As the political climate actually calmed during 1990 and 1991 compared to earlier years, a new group of political leaders began to form. These included some who had either avoided political activism during the pre-perestroika years or who were too young to take an active role and would take leadership roles after Estonia gained independence. But former institutional activists made up the core of the Popular Front and other organizational activists in the last years of Soviet power in Estonia. More than half of the Estonian activists of 1991 had been activists under the old regime. Among Russians, nearly three-fourths of those active in 1991 had been activists in the early 1980s.

Thus, we found much more continuity among the political elite of Estonia from before the transition to 1991 than is commonly supposed. Although most former institutional political activists did not become active in the political movements of the last years of Soviet Estonia, they were a fertile recruiting ground and the main source of supply of movement activists. Far from being recalcitrant reformers, those members of the former Estonian Communist Party nomenklatura who joined the movement (though coming only from the middle ranks of this nomenklatura) were in the avant guard of the push toward economic and political reform. They were ahead of the Estonian nonactivists in seeking to move away from state socialism. Whether Estonians had been Communist Party members had no bearing on their attitudes toward independence from the Soviet Empire or from the socialist party-state. This suggests that Party membership did not imply an ideological commitment but instead a pragmatic way to adapt to the situation.4

When the situation began to change in the late 1980s, weak loyalties to the Party based on pragmatic and material incentives were lost, and newly emerging opportunities for political activity were taken up by Party members (even while they remained in the Party). If we examine the active core of the Popular Front, then two-thirds of them had been politically active also in 1979 when they were in their thirties but during an era when essentially the only form of political activism was officially sanctioned activism organized by the Communist Party, trade unions, or other Party-dominated organizations. The lack of loyalty by the Soviet Estonian elite to the Soviet party-state not only made the transition easier but also directed it more through compromises between competing elites: the Communist Party leadership after 1988, the Popular Front leaders, and emerging nationalist fundamentalists.

4 For elaboration of the argument about the varied incentives for joining the Communist Party, based on data from a different study, see Bahry and Silver (1992).
In the first stage of the transition from Soviet control, the elite from the communist period was constrained in many ways. As Hungarian reformers first moved toward a market economy in the 1980s, the Soviet Union still was able to place clear constraints. When Soviet control ended and opportunities for more fundamental reform opened up, the reformers were blamed for not being more aggressive in their efforts, even if in the context of the times they had used the available opportunities as much as they could.

In Estonia, the new Communist party leadership that came to power in 1988 opened roads to the transfer from the party-state but also was clearly constrained by Moscow and its dogmatic approach to governance and economic management. The Popular Front, as a legal opposition inside the party-state, questioned the established way of doing things but still obeyed the rules of political life of this state. The Popular Front leadership was criticized for this by the Estonian Congress, a force that developed outside the established rules.

Russian activists were less in favor of economic reform than the typical Russian and also less likely to favor a middle ground between Estonian independence and maintenance of the Soviet Union. There were several reasons for this. Compared with Estonians, the Russian elite in Estonia was not only professionally weaker but much more constrained in political action. As the Estonians raised the independence question, members of the Russian elite who defended the Empire could hardly move into market positions or become active agents for democracy. To move in either of these directions was impossible, since both directions challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet party-state.

Hence, on both dimensions, the Russian elite in Estonia was more conservative than Russians as a whole (while at the same time, Estonian activists supported marketization and multiparty democracy more than the average Estonian). This also explains why, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian political elite in Estonia had no political program. Their entire program had been to preserve the "union." Their activism was a conservative effort to resist the transformation of the old regime.

On the whole, the activists among Estonians and Russians tended to intensify the differences between the Estonian and Russian communities as a whole. This did not offer much promise of a reconciliation of differences after independence. After independence and a new parliament and government were chosen in 1992, this challenge grew, as Russians were almost completely excluded from the national legislature because of electoral rules that denied them a right to vote, and many new activists among Estonians who came into office with a nationalist agenda as a mandate and had even less interest in compromise and accommodation to resolve
the question of the rights of the Russian minority. This second changing of the guard left the
young Estonian democracy with its most difficult problem being even more difficult to resolve.

The simplistic belief that the elite from the era of the communist party-state could be just
wiped out and replaced by new a one coming from nowhere brought tough times to many
countries. Inexperienced and often politically intolerant personalities made the political arena in
Eastern Europe a field for unrealistic promises without a real commitment to follow through.
After failing to fulfill those promises, those forces lost power to elites from the previous
socialist period in several countries: Poland, Russia, Hungary, Lithuania and, in all probability
in Estonia as well (the popularity of the Pro Patria [Fatherland] fraction had fallen to only
about 5% in the middle of 1994). It is completely misleading to interpret this as meaning that
the people have a nostalgia about the Communists. Instead, it means that compared with some
of the newcomers the old politicians are known phenomena.

The Legacy of Repression

The pre-Soviet political elite and the socioeconomic elite as a whole replicated itself
during the Soviet period despite the severe repressions that it suffered. We have the
opportunity to look at this by studying the fate of the offspring of the elite of the Estonian
Republic. To be sure, the change from the communist party-state to a market-based democracy
was not as coercive as the Soviet occupation of Estonia and the elimination of the national elite
under this regime. Even in the late 1940s in the new "socialist countries" that emerged by
force in Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II, Soviet repression
targeted well-defined social categories. Property owners, educated people, wealthier farmers,
citizens of cities and centers of localities, and professionals were clear targets of repression.

But we have evidence also that the offspring of previous elite were not underrepresented
in new communist elite in Estonia. Estonia was purged of "class enemies" in the 1940s much
in the same way that Soviet society was purged of "enemies of the people" in the 1930s. Many
thousands of Estonians were deported in 1941 and many thousands more emigrated in 1944.
These people came disproportionately from the elite. However, many of the offspring of the
previous elite were able to adapt to the Soviet regime and to secure leadership positions in the
liberal professions. To be sure, they suffered from relative deprivation. Without Soviet
occupation, the Estonian prewar elite would have replicated itself on a much larger scale, with
their own sons and daughters having a strong advantage in access to better education, the better
jobs, and material rewards. But because of Soviet occupation of Estonia, the offspring of the
old elite were only slightly overrepresented in the Soviet-era elite of Estonia.
There are several reasons why this could happen. First, the education and experience (the "human capital") that had been accumulated by the previous generation gave them an understanding and an advantage in seeking better positions for themselves and their children. Second, their education and overall childhood upbringing made them more adaptive to changes in society. However, the further spread of education and the semblance of a merit-based system in the Soviet period started to become a major basis of promotion in the party-state.

The structure of educational opportunities effectively allocated the new generation into major structures of society, giving people stable positions in the society. After the eighth grade, the three major tracks of education strongly determined the future career opportunities of the graduates. Vocational schools prepared farmers and workers. Local colleges prepared workers and lower-level white collar employees. General secondary education provided much wider opportunities to young people. The best positions went to those who had higher education. One’s profession mattered a lot and a variety of careers was available.

As private property was eliminated, the major linkage between generations went through human capital rather than through material inheritance or transfers, and education in many ways was reflective of this linkage. Comparing our results with Western market societies, in Estonia the mother’s education and social background was more influential than in the West, and even more than the father’s. This is another indication that gender differences under state socialism were not so easily interpretable as under market societies. In many ways, the equalization of women to men was real and the impact among more educated people on the next generation was more crucial than in the market societies. This influence of mothers coincided with deep educational shift toward overrepresentation of women among people with higher education.

**Work and Work Values**

At age 43, most people are at the peak of their job career (but not necessarily their earnings), while some parts of the age cohort are still moving ahead in their careers. Other parts are starting to decline and to open possibilities for younger cohorts. Our respondents confronted a situation in which not only their lifetime earnings but also their job careers may have been lost; with the transition to a market economy, they were confronted with severe competition with all other age cohorts for newly opening opportunities.

Our data still reflect a relatively stable situation under a state-controlled economy in which careers were highly stable. Three-fourths of the respondents had four or fewer changes
in job from the start of their working life. This is substantially less than in the United States, especially in the case of professionals.

The degree of material inequality between the top and bottom of society was modest, and the top 10% of the population was not very different from the bottom 25%. In this sense, the socialist party-state equalized rewards from the work career. Mobility was also restricted and paid off only for a very small fragment of the labor force.

Such a low differentiation of rewards and inflexible career mobility created huge problems with work motivation, however. We had in our longitudinal study a battery of questions on work values, and we can examine changes during working life for the same cohort as well as over time for successive cohorts. The socialist party-state heavily cultivated values based on ideological grounds: jobs should be useful to society, and work should be a major means of self-expression. Without a doubt, both are important motivators to people. In the 1960s, the majority of youth internalized them and material rewards from work were deemed much less important than in Western countries. Over the working life, however, the importance of self-expression and especially the usefulness of work to society were devalued, and the importance of material rewards from work gained substantially. Our evidence suggests that the importance of material rewards from work doubled over twenty years. At the same time, the importance of working for the benefit of society lost ground as an occupational value and self-expression was also valued somewhat more modestly.

The introduction of a market economy obviously changes the range of opportunities for jobs and the possible motivations for work. The introduction of a labor market with unemployment and larger differences in rewards from work can be painful for all people accustomed to the safe job career and social security. It increases the likelihood that people will change jobs and is likely to reorient work careers toward material rewards from work. It was obvious even at the beginning of the opening of the market economy in the early 1990s that those rewards were starting to become major work motivators.

Of special scientific interest is the question of how different generations compete with each other in a labor market that is transferring into private ownership and closing job careers in state-owned industries. There are three major ways to adapt to this transfer: 1) to be an initiator of privatization and to be an entrepreneur; this is very difficult for the generation in their forties, because their entire working life had proceeded in a different way, and it requires capital and knowledge of financial management; 2) to switch to privatized industries and start a risky new working life; this requires initiative but is a less risky life than trying to become an entrepreneur; 3) to wait while state-owned workplaces collapse and then be tossed unwillingly
into the labor market, when many of the best opportunities may already be gone. It is highly probable that our respondents would by and large behave in exactly this way.

**Future Studies**

We declared in the introduction to this book that transitions from authoritarian rule and from the state-socialist economy needed to be studied in terms of their practical consequences for people’s everyday lives. Study of education and work careers, values and attitudes, the different situations of ethnic communities, and intergenerational differences is essential if one is to understand what the major transitions are all about.

Opportunities to study how individuals adapt to change in the structure of the economy, society, and political system are rare. Because the Estonian Longitudinal Survey had conducted detailed studies of a particular cohort since the 1960s, we were able to make another reading of their progress through their life course at a critical moment in Estonia’s transition from state socialism. We also captured information about their children, who were for the most part just about to enter their work careers at the very time that the economy was opening up and Estonia’s strategy of development and place in the world were being defined by a substantially new political leadership. Further research on the adaptation of both age cohorts would be extremely interesting.
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