

Analyzing the Effects of Capitalist Diversity and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis on the Rise of Populist Radical-Right Parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on examining the relationship that exists between the economic systems in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and the rise of the populist radical right. While the populist radical right is often linked to issues surrounding culture and identity or political protest, this analysis suggests that the occurrence of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and its subsequent repercussions led to the emergence of the EKRE in Estonia, the NA in Latvia, and the LTS in Lithuania. The paper uses quantitative content analysis, and thus presents a conceptual evaluation of the frequency with which key terms are mentioned throughout the data. The findings of the study suggest that the rise of populist radical right parties in the Baltic States is more strongly linked to the two alternative arguments in the paper, namely that the country's populations perceive their national culture and identities to be threatened and that voters engage in political protest by voting for parties perceived to be outside the political establishment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Political Parties

| | |
|------|---|
| EKRE | Estonian Conservative People's Party / <i>Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond</i> |
| NA | National Alliance / <i>Nacionālā apvienība</i> |
| LTS | Nationalists Union / <i>Tautininku Sajunga</i> |

Key Term Categories (Explanations)

| | |
|----|----------------------|
| EF | Economic Frustration |
| CI | Culture and Identity |
| PP | Political Protest |

Introduction

When the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980's, the Soviet Socialist Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, were quick to capitalize on the central government's weaknesses. After overcoming a series of struggles with Soviet troops, all three states declared independence and set out on a path towards economic, national and political change. This "triple transition", as coined by Offe (2004) in his seminal work, "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe" (p. 501), allowed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to formally leave their Soviet past behind. As they celebrated their sovereignty, they were met with a series of new and unfamiliar challenges. In an effort to understand each Baltic state's development following this moment of infancy, it is important to examine the ways that the economic developments in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have come to influence national and political issues in each country. Provided that this tri-part process is composed of a series of major events, this text seeks to address and analyze one of these moments in greater detail, namely the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. While the recession occurred over ten years ago, one can argue that the effects of this economic downturn have taken time to materialize politically. This paper presents an original approach to the discussion surrounding the causes and effects of the Global Financial Crisis in the Baltic States, as it integrates the fields of political economy and populism.

While the Baltic States are often analyzed together, as they are assumed to be similar socially, nationally, economically, and politically, this approach limits one's ability to recognize each state's nuances. Their common past as occupied territories of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union has led them to converge to a certain extent, but they have proceeded to maintain distinct paths in their development as states. By evaluating the economic, national, and political

differences that exist between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, one can argue that the intense neoliberal economic systems in Estonia and Latvia led to a more pronounced economic downturn in 2008, thus prompting a greater degree of populist radical-right sentiment amongst their populations. On the other hand, Lithuania's more moderate neoliberal economic system resulted in fewer losses for its population, thus arguably leading to lower levels of radical-right populism. Therefore, this paper argues that the economic systems adopted by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania during the post-communist transition period, led the 2008 recession to have varying effects on each country's population. While all three states were intent upon becoming liberal market-centered democracies, they implemented varying degrees of neoliberal reforms. In essence, the Baltic States' capitalist diversity has led to divergent domestic economic environments, which can be linked to the emergence of different kinds of populist radical-right parties. In other words, populist radical-right parties have gained diverse levels of strength in the Baltic States, as they attempt to address and translate the grievances of individuals in the post-2008 Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian political spheres into populist policy.

These claims are investigated with the use of a quantitative research design, which allows the author to examine each case, namely Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in depth. The paper carries out a conceptual content analysis of a series of newspaper articles that have been published by Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, or Baltic outlets in the English-language. While content analysis is subject to limitations, in that it only a finite number of text or data may be available on certain topics, it also allows one to examine phenomena that may not be addressed or discussed across all mediums. In this sense, content analysis encourages scholars to study phenomena that might not primarily be recognized or valued in academic texts, thus permitting them to get a closer look at

the perspective of the individuals they are studying. In sum, this quantitative content analysis examines the ways that the 2008 Global Financial Crisis may have led three populaces to express their national and political discontent with the creation of populist radical-right political entities that adamantly reject the status-quo.

The Research Project

While a number of studies have approached the question of what drives populist radical-right party formation, these analyses have relied upon models and/or arguments that focus on other factors, such as identity and culture or political frustration. As a result, these studies provide compelling claims about the populist radical-right process, but they fail to address and incorporate the role that economic issues play. Therefore, this paper argues that one must evaluate the ways that a state's economic system affects a its population and thus inadvertently encourages the development of populist radical-right parties.

While Estonia and Latvia are often credited with having carried out economic reforms, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, much faster than Lithuania, this is not necessarily a positive thing. In addition, Estonia and Latvia's efforts were purported to be more thorough than those of its southernmost Baltic neighbor. The depth of reforms was celebrated by national and international actors during the early years of transition, as the extent to which a country was willing to reorganize its economic sphere was viewed as a sign of commitment to leaving its Soviet past behind and moving towards integration into the economic and political spheres of the west and beyond. As time passed and the memory of the Soviet Union became more distant, it became clear that the market-oriented reforms carried out by all three Baltic states did not guarantee as much economic

stability as their transitional governments had hoped. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were all faced with serious economic difficulties throughout the 1990's and early 2000's.

As such, this paper seeks to examine the ways that the economic systems of the Baltic States and the resulting economic difficulties may have encouraged the rise of populist radical-right following the occurrence of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. The paper is composed of an introduction, a literature review, a chapter that sets up the analysis, three chapters that discuss the results of each of the paper's hypotheses, and a conclusion. The chapters that are dedicated to the findings of the analysis discuss the hypotheses in relation to each country, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and their respective populist radical right parties. In essence, this chapter structure addresses the case, or country, in the first step, the effects of the context, or Global Financial Crisis, in the second, and the unit of analysis, or far-right populist party, in the third step.

This quantitative content analysis provide the reader with a thorough look into the means by which the Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond or Estonian Conservative People's Party (EKRE), the Nacionālā apvienība or National Alliance (NA), and the *Tautininkų Sąjunga* or Nationalists Union (LTS) (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 1-4), may have developed. While the EKRE has struggled to establish stable relationships with other Estonian political parties, both inside and outside of the parliament, it has nonetheless become a prominent political actor within the Estonian political sphere (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 9). The NA, on the other hand, has been actively involved in parliamentary affairs in Latvia (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 9), showcasing its appeal and ability to gain trust within the government. Finally, the Nationalists Union has not been influential enough to win any parliamentary seats (Auers, 2018, p. 351), and has a more ambiguous political

status than both the EKRE and NA. Its members often partake in extra parliamentary events and activities in Lithuania's major cities, such as marches commemorating Lithuania's declaration of independence in 1990 (Elta EN, 2015) but it struggles to transform its presence into a viable political force. In an effort to explain the nature of each of these far-right populist parties, the approaches they use, and the extent of their popularity, this paper suggests that one must look to the kind of situation their economic system has led them to exist within.

The Research Design

In order to test the aforementioned claims, this research project employs a quantitative content analysis research design. The analysis of multiple countries is important, as it allows the paper to provide a thorough look at the ways that the economic systems of three former Soviet Socialist Republics have led to the emergence of different populist radical right-wing parties. Furthermore, when completing a quantitative analysis, it is important to have as much data as possible.

As mentioned above, the paper is composed of seven parts, which include an introduction, a literature review that covers the discussions surrounding both political economy and the populist radical-right, one chapter that focuses on data and operationalization, three chapters that discuss the findings related to each of the study's hypotheses concerning the interaction between populist radical right parties and the effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, in the form of economic frustration, which arguably varies from case to case, and a conclusion. Chapter One sets up the analysis by providing a thorough explanation of the research question at hand, discusses the data will be used, and lays out the hypotheses that are used to test research question. Chapters Two through Four evaluates whether or not each country's economic system, in addressing the effects of the 2008 recession, can be linked to the emergence of the Estonian Conservative People's Party

(EKRE), the National Alliance (NA), and the Nationalists Union (LTS) (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 1-4).

This study employs quantitative content analysis, in which the content of English-language newspaper articles from Baltic-based publishers are analyzed. While the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health states “[t]here are two general types of content analysis: [namely] conceptual and relational analysis” (2019), this study employs conceptual analysis. The use of conceptual analysis allows the author to examine the frequency with which certain terms or concepts are mentioned in data that is collected (Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2019). In this case, the study is focused on the prevalence of specific terms, rather than examining the ways that the terms interact with one another. While one can argue that conceptual analysis and relational analysis are inherently interrelated, this paper attempts to primarily focus on the rate at which important key terms appear throughout the data.

These articles that are used in the study were collected from Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Baltic news outlets. The journals that are used include *15min*, *Baltic News Network*, *DELFI EN*, *ERR News* (Estonian Public Broadcasting), *LRT* (Lithuanian Radio and Television), *LSM* (Latvian Public Broadcasting), *Postimees*, *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism- Re:Baltica*, *The Baltic Times*, and *The Lithuania Tribune*. It is important to analyze as many news outlets as possible, so as to reduce the risk of bias that comes with relying upon a select few. The study is admittedly limited by the fact that there are not a great number of news outlets in the Baltic States and by the fact that it only analyzes articles that have been published in the English language. This latter issue presents two additional problems. To begin with, newspapers that publish in English

are likely to appeal to an audience that is either urban, educated, international, or a combination of the three. This is problematic, as these audiences are presumably not populist in nature, and are possibly even anti-populist. This means that articles published in the English language may describe populist radical-right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in a negative way, thus making it difficult to understand the nature of the parties in a neutral fashion. Second, newspapers that publish in the English language are likely to be absent of the literary nuances that might be used to describe populist radical right parties in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, or the minority languages of Polish and Russian. While one can still glean their general features from articles published in English, it may be more difficult to present a comprehensive profile of each party. However, with these issues in mind, this paper, nonetheless, seeks to capture the presence and essence of the populist radical-right in the Baltic region. In his text (2012), *Social Research Methods*, Bryman maintains that analyzing the contents of journal articles, allows one to evaluate data that has not been specifically designed for an academic study, but rather serves as a source of information for the general public (Bryman, p. 543). In other words, focusing on newspaper articles, allows one to quantitatively code non-academic content, highlight the various themes present, and analyze the ways that populist radical right parties are linked to these issues in the media. Furthermore, the conceptual content analysis seeks to complement its findings with limited qualitative contributions that highlight the specificities of the political or electoral systems in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

In sum, multiple cases have been chosen to complete this study because it is important to compare and contrast the ways that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's post-communist economic systems have led to an economic collapse that is arguably connected and at the source of the emergence of

three populist radical right political parties. While this requires the author to be very specific in their analysis, it allows the reader to take a deeper look into the potential causes of populist radical right sentiments in Eastern Europe and to understand their subsequent national variations.

Literature Review

When it comes to studying the emergence of various populist radical right parties in the Baltic States, it is crucial to analyze the ways that the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, as an extension of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's economic systems, affected these country's political spheres. The nature of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis in these states and its effects must be examined in depth, as the implementation of neoliberal policies had disproportionate effects on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's populations. Due to the fact that this paper addresses the interaction that take place economics and politics, it is important to evaluate the literature that exists within two fields, namely the political economy of the Baltic States and populist radical right parties. This study attempts to merge these two subjects, as they are often discussed in parallel with one another. As such, this paper adds to two scholarly discussions by arguing that the results of the 2008 crisis in each of the Baltic States' neoliberal economic regimes led to the emergence of different populist radical right parties. It seeks to further incorporate contemporary political issues into discussions surrounding the political economy of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and works to link the rise in populist radical-right ideas in the Baltic region to the establishment of neoliberal economic systems in the 1990's.

To begin with, the literature that discusses the political economy of Eastern Europe is extensive. Provided that thirty years have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars have successfully discussed the ways that a number of post-communist states have worked to transition away from their centralized planning structures towards a mixed or market economy. A number of these texts focus on addressing the long-term changes that can be found by analyzing a series of economic and political events. While this comprehensive approach is helpful in that it provides

the reader with a detailed history of each state, it is also important to isolate specific events along the aforementioned transition trajectory. Therefore, this paper focuses on the occurrence of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and examines the ways that three post-communist economic systems worked to confront this issue, which arguably resulted in the rise of the populist radical right.

First, in their book, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*, Bohle and Greskovits (2012) argue that three types of capitalism can be identified within the post-communist space (Postsocialist Regime Concepts section, para. 15). These include, “a *pure neoliberal* type in the Baltic states, an *embedded neoliberal* type in the Visegrád countries, and a *neocorporatist* type in Slovenia” (Bohle & Greskovits, Postsocialist Regime Concepts section, para. 15). The authors place Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania within the same category of capitalism, but then proceed to outline the structural differences between the three states. They argue that Estonia’s early emergence as a post-Soviet capitalist economic system led it to gain more attention than Latvia and Lithuania (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012, Constructing the Estonian Success Story section, para. 1-21). Latvia’s efforts to act as a point of financial exchange for foreign actors ended poorly and Lithuania was hesitant to carry out the kind of capitalist reforms that had been implemented elsewhere (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012, Constructing the Estonian Success Story section, para. 21-24). When the Global Financial Crisis hit in 2008, all three countries faced a severe economic downturn, as they were presented with losses in GDP, exports, and employment (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012, From Nationalist Social Contracts to Privatized Keynesianism section, para. 14). The governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania did not view the recession as a moment to adjust their economic policies and moved towards severe austerity measures (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012, Trust and Mistrust in the Baltic Model section, para. 1-2). While these measures allowed the countries to stay afloat and to

maintain their reputation amongst other economic or political actors, they created a harsh economic reality for the countries' populations (Bohle & Greskovits, 2012, Trust and Mistrust in the Baltic Model section, para. 2-14). In sum, the authors align themselves with Deegan Krause's argument (2007), which suggests that these developments led to the emergence of a "Baltic brand of populism...[that] can be described as purely antielite populism" (as cited in 2012, From Nationalist Social Contracts to Privatized Keynesianism section, para. 5).

Second, in their book, *Transition Economies: Political Economy in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia*, Myrant and Drahokoupil (2011) claim that there are five kinds of capitalism in the post-communist sphere. These include *FDI-based (second-rank) market economies*[,]...*peripheral market economics*[,]...*oligarchic or clientelistic capitalism*[,]...*order states*[,]...[and] *remittance- and aid-based economies*" (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 310-312). They suggest that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania belong to the second category, which is used to describe states that have more neoliberal systems and can thus be thought of as focusing on short-term rather than long-term economic developments (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 310-311). This is problematic, as these states follow a trajectory that is perceived as financially unpredictable (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 310-311). As such, when the recession took place in 2008, the Baltic States were forced to devalue their currencies, as they were heavily reliant upon loans in foreign currencies (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 319). This had severe effects, as 85.3% of Estonia's, 89.3% of Latvia's, and 64.0% of Lithuania's loans had been taken out in foreign currencies (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 319). Latvia's extremely high borrowing rate left it with no option but to ask for assistance from the International Monetary Fund, thus causing further economic devastation (Myrant & Drahokoupil, 2011, p. 320). In addition, the Baltic States

were faced with a serious fall in demand and low levels of exports, which greatly worsened the situation (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 324-236). Third, the authors suggest that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were subject to another series of other economic changes that occurred as a result of the first two issues (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 326). While this wave is more difficult to attach to a specific issue, it proved to be extremely harsh (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 326). Finally, the Baltic States were forced to reconcile the problems that arrived on the domestic front and concerned state-level economic cuts (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 329). They “faced larger deficits, reflecting the more severe depression in financialized economies”, even if these deficits were to work themselves out in the months following the recession (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 33). In order to address the situation, all three governments decided to reduce their public expenditures to new great extremes (Myrant & Drahoukoupil, 2011, p. 330).

In addition, the conversation surrounding populism is well-developed, but complex, as the meaning of the term is subject to significant debate in scholarly circles. While there are a number of different definitions that can be employed in an academic study, this paper relies upon that that is coined by Mudde (2004) in his work, “The Populist Zeitgeist”. Mudde argues that:

populism [is] an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. (Mudde, 2004, p. 543)

The broad nature of Mudde’s definition allows scholars to incorporate it into a variety of studies on populism and to apply the proposed divide to different political scenarios.

Furthermore, the aforementioned definition of populism has come to serve as base term for authors that seek to describe specific forms of populism that have emerged in past years. In other words,

scholars argue that party systems witness the formation of divergent forms of populism, be it leftist, centrist, rightist, radical, or extreme. This paper focuses on the materialization of populist radical-right parties, as coined by Mudde (2007) in his work *Populist radical right parties in Europe* (p. 24-26), as this populist variety has become increasingly prominent in recent years. Mudde states that “populist radical-right parties...[are] political parties with a core ideology that is a combination of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism” (Mudde, 2007, p. 26).

When it comes to the study of populist radical-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe or the post-communist space, most texts tend to focus on countries in the Visegrád Group, such as Hungary. While the Hungarian party Jobbik, for example, presents another interesting case study in the group of populist radical-right parties, this text attempts to narrow its focus to the debate surrounding Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In addition, when addressing the rise of populist radical-right parties in a given country, scholars suggest that this phenomenon can occur for three reasons, which include a demonstration or exhibition of economic frustration, a population’s concern about preserving its identity or culture, or an expression of political dissent or frustration towards the current parties or entrenched political system.

First, in their text “Between party-systems and identity-politics: the populist and radical-right in Estonia and Latvia”, Braghiroli and Petsinis argue that Estonia and Latvia are home to the Baltic states’ most prominent populist radical-right parties (2019, p. 1-2). They assert that the Estonian Conservative People’s Party (EKRE) and the National Alliance (NA) in Latvia are more important than Lithuania’s Nationalists Union (*Tautininkų Sąjunga*), because Estonia and Latvia have distinct ethnic cleavages between ethnic Estonians and Latvians and ethnic Russians (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 2). Lithuania’s populist radical-right party is thus not essential to analyze

because it is likely less radical and based on non-ethnic grievances (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 2). The authors acknowledge that economic issues are significant for the EKRE and NA but argue that other issues take precedence (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019, p. 6). In addition, in their paper “Who Fears What? Explaining Far-Right-Wing Preference in Europe by Distinguishing Perceived Cultural and Economic Ethnic Threats”, Lucassen and Lubbers argue that voters are more likely to vote for far-right parties when they sense that their culture or ethnic group is at risk, than when they feel their economic security is threatened by another or a series of other ethnic groups (2012, p. 547-574). In addition to examining this hypothesis, the authors also find that an individual’s social class affects his or her support of the far right, and thus suggests that certain groups are more inclined to focus on economic threats, while others are concerned with cultural threats (Lucassen & Lubbers, 2012, p. 561-566).

Second, in their paper, “Explaining the Electoral Failure of Extreme-Right Parties in Estonia and Latvia”, Auers and Kasekamp assert that radical-right parties have not been successful in Estonia and Latvia for two reasons, which include restrictions on the presence of radical-right parties in elections and the notion that larger parties appropriate the political messages that are delivered by the radical-right parties and use them for their own campaigns (Auers & Kasekamp, 2009, p. 249). In a later contribution (2013), “Comparing Radical-Right Populism in Estonia and Latvia”, Auers and Kasekamp adjust their argument and maintain that Latvia’s radical right party, the National Alliance, is in fact an effective radical right party, as it managed to get elected shortly after its formation and consolidation (p. 235-236). They suggest that Estonia has still not seen a successful radical right party, because the Estonian Independence Party (EI) has not managed to secure the

¹ It is important to note that earlier articles on the radical-right in the Baltic States do not mention the EKRE because it was formed in 2012 (Minkenberg, 2015, p. Estonia section, para. 6).

most important features that a political party needs, which include local support, leadership, and politically moderate policies (Auers & Kasekamp, 2013, p. 236). Furthermore, the National Alliance faced much less pushback within the Latvian political sphere, because many of the radical issues it claimed to represent were not viewed as radical, but rather as normal (Auers & Kasekamp, 2013, p. 236). As such, the NA was not viewed as a political entity that could threaten the balance or democratic governmental system in Latvia. Third, in another chapter (2015), “The impact of radical right parties in the Baltic states”, Auers and Kasekamp challenge their own aforementioned argument and claim that populist far-right parties are facing different degrees of success. They suggest that Latvia’s National Alliance is the most embedded populist far-right party, as its presence may be linked to the independence groups that emerged towards the start of the 1990’s (Auers & Kasekamp, 2015, Latvia section, para. 3). They claim that Estonia’s EKRE is prominent but lacks some of the core features that allow a party to be successful in the parliament (Auers & Kasekamp, 2015, Estonia section, para. 6). Furthermore, they state that Lithuania’s Nationalists Union is well integrated into the country’s 20th century history but does not have a lot of grievances that it can attach itself too (Auers & Kasekamp, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 5-6). In other words, Lithuania is perceived to be less vulnerable than Estonia and Latvia when it comes to issues that can lead to a political upset.

Third, in her paper, “A New Winning Formula? The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right”, de Lange argues that the radical right has maintained its success because it continues to adopt relevant economic positions and to adjust to the political situation at hand (de Lange, 2007, p. 412). De Lange bases her analysis on the Kitschelt’s (1995) seminal work, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: a Comparative Analysis*, which argues that political parties in Western Europe

confront one another in a “two-dimensional space [that is] formed by the socialist-capitalist dimension and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension” (as cited in de Lange, 2007, p. 413). This structure, while based on two axes, is focused economic issues. Upon carrying out her analysis, de Lange finds that radical right parties continue to survive and to attract voters, because their focus on adapting their economic stance, is in fact important (de Lange, 2007, p. 429). In other words, this suggests that the expression of economic grievances is addressed by the radical right, contrary to what other scholars suggest. While de Lange’s study is focused on the Front National in France, the Vlaams Blok in Belgium, and the Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands (de Lange, 2007, p. 422-426), which are all concentrated in Western Europe, it nonetheless addresses the fact that the economic dimension plays a role in the continued presence of the radical right.

Fourth, in her article, “Financial Crisis Management and the Rise of Authoritarian Populism: What Makes Hungary Different from Latvia and Romania”, Györffy claims that populism has taken on varying strengths in the post-communist space because each country has reacted to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis in different ways (2020, p. 792-793). In arguing that these two phenomena are connected to one another, she narrows her focus to three countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which include Hungary, Latvia, and Romania (Györffy, 2020, p. 793). While the recession proved to be difficult for most states in the region, Hungary, Latvia, and Romania suffered serious economic repercussions after the collapse that led them to ask for structural and financial support from organizations that were willing to bail them out (Györffy, 2020, p. 793). Latvia and Romania proceeded to work with the International Monetary Fund and to swiftly put the IMF’s plans into action (Györffy, 2020, p. 801-803). Hungary, on the other hand, was initially cooperate and agreed to enforce the severe, but necessary, economic measures that the IMF had put forward (Györffy,

2020, p. 803-804). The government's attitude changed, however, when Fidesz and Orbán won the 2010 national election, as Orbán had no intention of acting in accordance with the IMF's recovery program (Gyórfy, 2020, p. 804). As Orbán worked to consolidate his power, he began to implement various structural changes to the government, on the basis of what Gyórfy deems authoritarian populism, and looked to the east for financial support rather than the west (2020, p. 799; 806-809). In sum, Gyórfy maintains that Latvia and Romania were able to avoid the dangers of populism because they were willing to cooperate with the IMF, to carry out economic reforms despite the financial difficulties that followed, and more adamantly rejected any kind of communist nostalgia the 2008 crisis may have led them to experience (2020, p. 792-824).

While each of the aforementioned texts makes compelling arguments about the presence and importance of populist radical-right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, they do not address the fact that each country's economic system and specific economic history may have also played a role in the development of populist radical-right parties, following the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. The importance of economic factors cannot be underestimated, as the Baltic States suffered a great deal under the auspice of the neoliberal-natured reforms that were carried out by each state's government in response to the crisis. While most scholars link the rise of populist radical-right parties to cultural or identity issues and the need for voters to express frustration with the political status quo, the economic system of a country must also be considered. Furthermore, it is important to take note of the fact that the EKRE, the NA, and the LTS either emerged or reemerged following the 2008 economic downturn. Even if this occurrence is related to issues concerning culture and identity or political protest, the economic dimension must not be cast aside.

An Original Contribution

While over ten years have passed since the occurrence of the Global Financial Crisis, one can argue the effects of this economic shock are still being felt today in a number of countries. Therefore, in an effort to contribute to the discussion surrounding the relationship between economics and the rise of populist radical right parties, this research project attempts to address the issue in an original way by focusing on the role that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's this event played in influencing the return or inception of particular political parties or political movements. This contribution will broaden the kind of economic indicators that are used to assess the rise of populism and will encourage the discussion surrounding populist radical right parties to develop stronger ties with the field of political economy. The completion of a study that seeks to isolate and analyze sub-regional trends in the Baltic States will also provide students and scholars with a useful model for future studies.

Chapter One: Economic Frustration and the Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties: Hypotheses

In order to assess the extent to which the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the left-right economic dimension can be linked or used to explain the rise of populist radical right parties in the US, this conceptual content analysis relies upon a set of key terms that are used to signify the presence of economic factors in the text of articles that discuss each country's populist radical right parties. In this case, the analysis relies on 277 key terms, which are then searched for within the relevant news articles. This approach allows one to see which words come up in each individual article, the number of times each word is mentioned within each journal, and the total number of times each term is mentioned within each country's analysis. While overall word counts may appear to offer a clear picture in regard to content analysis, it is important to take the analysis one step further and to include a temporal dimension. As such, this study will also examine the frequency with which the aforementioned key terms were used from 2011-2020. By examining each year and the years in which elections took place, one will be able to gather whether or not this kind of political event can have an effect on the frequency with which the key terms are used. In this sense, this analysis attempts to address several issues. First, it analyzes the frequency with which populist radical right parties are associated with ideas concerning economic frustration, which can be linked to the 2008 recession.

Provided that this paper argues in favor of the economic frustration model as an explanation for the rise of populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, it is also important to evaluate other potential issues that may have caused this political phenomenon. These alternative explanations include two main arguments. To begin with, some scholars argue that a population, or voters more specifically, feel that their national culture and identity are under attack or

threatened by an outside, external, foreign, or global force. This then leads them to turn away from traditional or moderate parties that are not doing enough to protect the population's national culture or identity and to instead look for a party that is more radical in its approach towards cultural and identity-related issues. While this is a fairly common argument, this study attempts to argue that the rise of populist radical right parties must instead be linked to more nuanced and underlying structural economic issues.

In addition, another explanation for the rise of the populist radical right is that populations grow frustrated with the status quo that exists within the political sphere. This status quo is likely to include centrist parties that attempt to appeal to a large proportion of the public and that typically align themselves with moderate policies. While this idea of what is perceived as moderate or centrist no doubt varies in Western Europe and Eastern Europe, with the former relying upon along the established left-right economic dimension, and the latter on issues such as corruption or regional security, the voters in both political spaces are nonetheless able to identify which parties belong to the establishment. Even if centrist parties have offered a relatively stable choice for long periods of time, their policies may in fact be alienating or frustrating more traditional voters. In other words, as moderate or centrist parties adapt to 21st century issues, this inevitably leads some voters to be left behind in the process. This is particularly problematic as these voters are likely to engage in protest voting, in which they intentionally boycott mainstream parties and instead vote for parties that are perceived to be removed from the potentially corrupt and elitist segments of the political sphere. These parties are likely to be populist if they claim to offer voters something new and essentially detached from the political establishment. As such, in his 2004 seminal work "The Populist Zeitgeist", Mudde states that populist parties are likely to encourage voters to view

the political sphere as a space that is divided into factions, which include “‘*the pure people*’ [and] *‘the corrupt elite*’” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543), which may be translated into the more simple idea of us vs. them. In essence, this explanation for the rise of populist radical right parties also carries a great amount of weight in scholarly discussions.

Therefore, in an effort to assess the possible alternatives to the left-right economic frustration explanation, this paper also employs conceptual content analysis to address the culture and identity and political protest arguments. In addressing other potential causes, this paper acknowledges that the prevalence of populist radical right parties is not a simple phenomenon, and its origins and/or causes must be thoroughly examined. In order to address these two alternative explanations, the first hypothesis claims that:

H1. The rise of populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can be explained by the presence of economic frustration following the occurrence of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, rather than concern with threats towards each country’s national culture and identity, or the process of political protest whereby voters seek to reject the political establishment.

Second, this study assesses the relationship between national parliamentary election cycles and the use of key economic terms by populist radical right parties. In other words, it attempts to evaluate whether or not populist radical right parties are more likely to increase the frequency with which they use key terms that concern economic grievances when an election is planned for the near future. This hypothesis is meant to take a step further and to determine how populist radical right parties interact with economic issues, even if it is unclear whether or not these issues lay at the

core of the emergence of the populist radical right in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In addition, this paper seeks to address whether or not populist radical right parties are more likely to use EF key terms than CI or PP key terms during an election period. As such, the second and third hypotheses are:

H2. Populist radical right parties are more likely to increase the frequency with which they use key terms relating to economic frustration prior to a national election, in order to address voters' economic grievances and to gain a higher number of votes.

H3. Populist radical right parties are more likely to use key terms relating to economic frustration rather than terms related to culture and identity or political protest prior to a national election.

Data and Method

This study relies on an original dataset that is comprised of data collected by the author. The dataset covers all three countries in the analysis, namely Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It focuses on three countries, commonly referred to as the Baltic States, as they are often excluded from analyses discussing the populist radical right in Eastern Europe or the post-communist space. Provided that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are often coined as successful examples of democratic transition within both the post-communist and post-Soviet space, they provide scholars with an incredible opportunity to study the unique nature of their political systems. While these three countries are arguably quite different from one another, despite their shared experiences with prolonged occupation, they nonetheless allow one to present an interesting comparison among three states that are similar in their size and developmental approach to democratization.

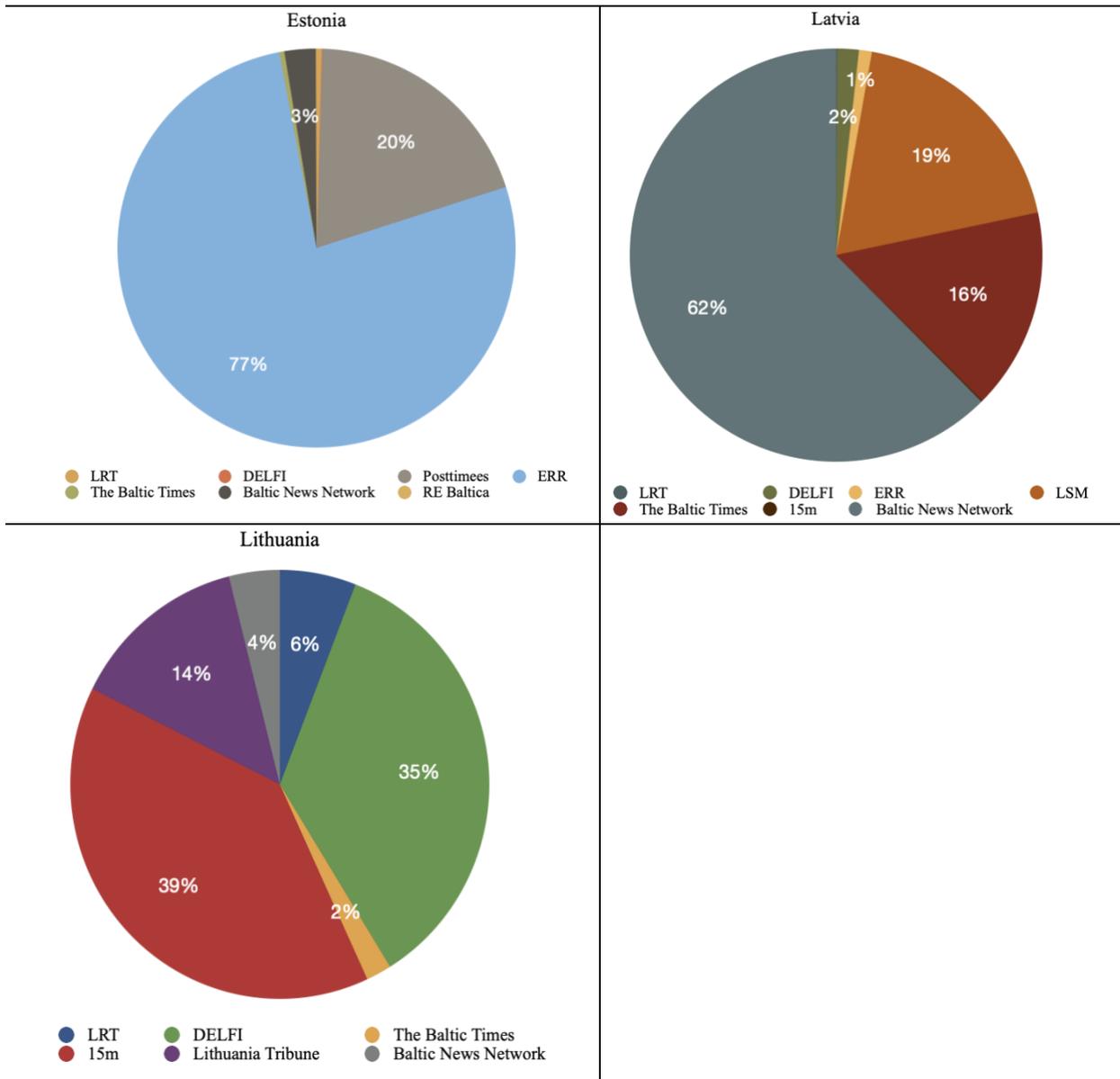
The dataset that the study relies upon is composed of 3,138 newspaper articles. These articles were collected from ten different Baltic news outlets, namely *15min*, *Baltic News Network*, *DELFI EN*, *ERR News* (Estonian Public Broadcasting), *LRT* (Lithuanian Radio and Television), *LSM* (Latvian Public Broadcasting), *Postimees*, *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism-Re:Baltica*, *The Baltic Times*, and *The Lithuania Tribune* that published articles in the English-language from 2011-2020. The range of news outlets selected is important because it allows the author to analyze populist radical right parties from different perspectives. Furthermore, the news outlets that have been included in the study are both publicly and privately owned. This is essential, as each form of ownership is open to potential political biases, as publicly owned news outlets may be more likely to align themselves with current government policies and privately-owned outlets may be encouraged to align themselves with the perspectives of their owners. *ERR News* (ERR News, 2016), *LRT* (Lithuanian Radio and Television, 2020), and *LSM* (Latvian Public Broadcasting, 2014) are the three countries' publicly owned news outlets. Lithuania's *15min* and Estonia's *Postimees* are owned by "Estonian businessman Margus Linnamae, the majority shareholder of the investment company UP Invest" (DELFI EN, 2019). The *Baltic News Network* is based in Latvia but owned by Austrian businessman Fred Zimmer (Baltic News Network, 2020). *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism- Re:Baltica* is a "non-profit organization...[which relies upon] competitive grants,...from...institutions...in EU/NATO countries ([the] EU, IJ4EU, Open Society Foundations, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Latvian Culture Capital Foundation, POBB program, etc)[,]...our own income which we earn...teaching, moderating...events, doing research, scripting documentaries[,]...[and] donations,...from physical and legal persons" (The Baltic Center, 2020). *The Baltic Times* is privately owned and based in Riga, Latvia (The Baltic Times, 2020), but does not reveal who its owner is. Finally, *The Lithuania Tribune* is also a privately-

owned news outlet, but deems itself a non-profit that relies upon financial help from its readers (Iržikevičius, 2019).

The articles that the database is composed of were selected on the basis of having included a direct mention(s) of the three populist radical right parties that this study focuses on, namely Estonia's EKRE, Latvia's NA, and Lithuania's LTS. While a number of articles mention themes that are arguably closely related to the populist radical right, such as populism, right-wing radicalism, nationalism, racism, fascism, Nazism, sexism, and xenophobia, they do not explicitly mention the names of the parties and, therefore, have been left out of the analysis. Even if one were to presume that articles discussing such issues and the individuals or groups that are involved in promoting them are related to the EKRE, NA, or LTS, the author felt that this assumption could lead to an incoherent analysis. Provided that some individuals engage in activities that are encouraged by populist radical right parties, such as celebrating national heroes who are believed to have consensually carried out orders on behalf of the SS or to have participated in the Waffen SS forces' murder of Jewish people during World War II, but are not party members, this can create some confusion when it comes to strictly analyzing the party. As such, the dataset is composed of articles that mention the EKRE, NA, and LTS and the various issues or events, such as independence day marches, protests, debates, elections, parliamentary sessions, and political scandals, that they have been involved in from 2011-2020.

The articles tend to be concise discussions or analyses and range from one paragraph to five pages long. The language used in the articles is straightforward and not overly inflated with exaggerated

Figure 1.1 News Source Distribution in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania



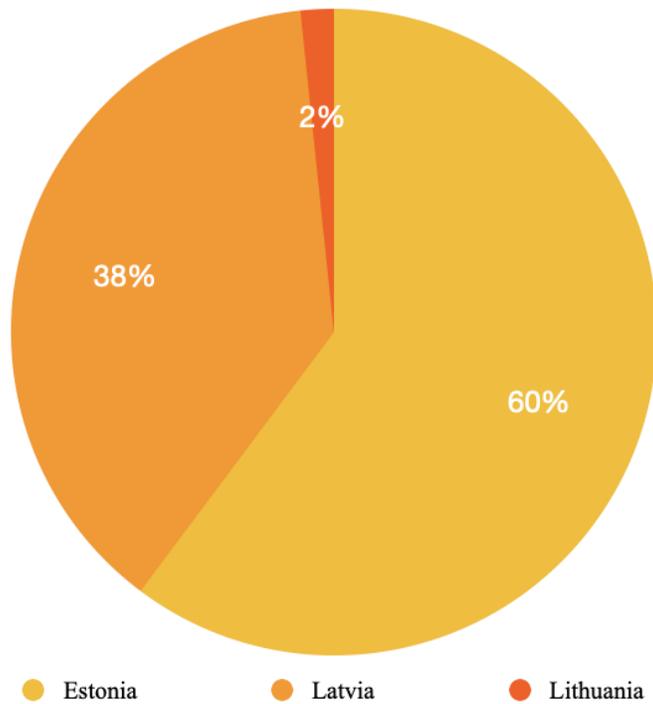
expressions. While it is likely that the parties may be described in a more nuanced fashion in each country’s national language, the author’s status as a native English-language speaker limits their ability to analyze the EKRE, NA, and LTS in the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish or Russian language.

Provided that this analysis is focused on the evaluating the effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis on the populist radical right, it is important to note that the dataset only extends as far back as 2011. The lack of digital articles prior to 2011 may be related to several different factors. First, it is possible that many outlets began to digitize articles at this time. If this is in fact the case, this paper is then limited to the relevant articles that can be found from the year 2011 and onward. Second, these news outlets may have limited the number of articles they published in the English-language prior to 2011. While news outlets in the Baltic States, and Latvia and Estonia in particular, appear to have consistently published in the Russian-language, this is likely due to the fact that these countries are and have been home to a substantial Russian minority. Increased globalization and European integration for the Baltic States may thus have encouraged news outlets to appeal to a wider audience, both regionally and internationally. Third, one can also argue that articles relating to the populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania did not appear until 2011 because these parties were just beginning to enter the political sphere. The Estonian Conservative People's Party (EKRE) formed in 2012 following "the merger of the Estonian Nationalist Movement (*Eesti Rahvuslik Liikumine*) with the remnants of the Estonian Peoples' Union (*Eestimaa Rahvaliid*) in 2012" (Minkenberg, 2015, Estonia section, para. 6). The National Alliance (NA) in Latvia was assembled in 2010-2011 when two troubled radical right parties, namely "All for Latvia! (*Visu Latvijai!, VL!*)" and "For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (*Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/Latvijas Nacionālā Neatkarības Kustība, TB/LNNK*)" decided to join forces (Minkenberg, 2015, Latvia section, para. 8). Finally, the Nationalists Union (LTS) in Lithuania laid its political foundations for the third time in 2011, when it was forced to disjoin from the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats because of a disagreement over internal party politics (Minkenberg, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 5-6).

While the party appeared in the early 1990's, following Lithuania's declaration of independence, and deemed itself the heir of the interwar Nationalist Union, it struggled to gain traction in the Lithuanian party system during the country's period of democratization (Minkenberg, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 5). As such, each of these party's rather recent emergence or reemergence suggests that the frequency with which they were mentioned is likely to have slowly increased throughout the past decade.

In addition to addressing the timespan that the dataset covers, it is also important to discuss the fact that there is a variance amongst the number of articles that are analyzed for each country. The dataset is composed of 1,891 articles from Estonian news outlets, 1,196 articles from Latvian news outlets, and 51 articles from Lithuanian news outlets. While this divergence is not ideal in a quantitative study, it is also telling for both the author and the reader. This discrepancy can be explained from two different perspectives. To begin with, one can argue that each country's news industry varies, which directly affects the number of articles that can be included in a dataset that is meant to be used for quantitative content analysis. While Estonia has several prominent news outlets that frequently publish in the English-language, namely *ERR News* (Estonian Public Broadcasting) and *Postimees*, the major news outlets in both Latvia and Lithuania, which include *15min*, *Baltic News Network*, *DELFI EN*, *LRT* (Lithuanian Radio and Television), *LSM* (Latvian Public Broadcasting), *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism- Re:Baltica*, *The Baltic Times*, and *The Lithuania Tribune*, offer fewer publications in the English-language that discuss populist radical right parties or related issues. On the contrary, one can argue that this divergent trend is directly linked to the popularity or success of each country's populist radical right party.

Figure 1.2 Total News Articles Per Country



In other words, there are nearly 2,000 articles on the EKRE because it appears to be the most influential populist radical right party in the Baltic States, slightly more than 1,000 articles on the NA because it is seemingly the second most prominent populist radical right force, and a mere 51 articles on the LTS because it has failed to gain traction in the Lithuanian political sphere and is, therefore, rarely discussed. The major difference that can be gleaned from these figures makes it clear that the populist radical right has varying levels of strength within the Baltic States. These countries may not appear to be vastly different on the surface, but it is clear that there are certain national dynamics that have led Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to develop different party systems and political spheres. Given the myriad explanations for these structural distinctions, this paper maintains that the differences amongst the populist radical right parties can be explained by evaluating the strength with which the 2008 Global Financial Crisis affected each country, in the

form of economic frustration or grievances. While both the news outlet variance and party strength explanations are plausible, this article supports the second argument, which allows the analysis to further explore this issue.

The dataset is divided by county and the articles are grouped according to their source. The titles of the articles are highlighted on the left, so as to allow the author to glean the titles prior to carrying their analysis. The titles of the articles range from three to thirteen words, depending on the issue being discussed in the text. The figures that correspond with each article highlight the frequency with which each key term is mentioned in that particular piece. The dataset is composed of 277 key terms in total, which seek to address a variety of issues that have been associated with the populist radical right. As such, the terms belong to three categories which are associated with the possible explanations behind the rise of the populist radical right in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. These first of these three categories is the left-right economic frustration explanation, which will be shortened to “EF”. It focuses on terms that are related to the economic resentment or grievances that a population may feel towards the state. Provided that this study is focused in particular on the link between the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the terms belonging to the economic frustration category also incorporate terms that concern this event. Several sample terms from the economic frustration category include “2008”, “global financial crisis”, “protectionist”, and “state intervention”. While a term like “2008” can be potentially problematic because it is highly unspecific in nature, in this case it is important to include it in the dataset because parties or party leaders tend to reference the 2008 Global Financial Crisis short handedly as “2008”. In other words, the term “2008” is used in an economic sense in the articles analyzed. As a category, the economic frustration terms total 43.

The second category of key terms in the data set is associated with the culture and identity explanation, which will be referred to as “CI”. The CI terms are concerned with a population’s fear that its unique national culture and identity are being threatened by people or forces that are perceived to be external to that nation. This group of terms is more expansive than the other two groups because it is arguably multifaceted and in need of a larger group of descriptors when it comes to content analysis. It includes 195 key terms in total. The CI category includes terms like “national identity”, “social cohesion”, “values”, and “waffen ss”. It is important to note that the CI category includes a range of terms that one might not immediately identify with the political sphere in the Baltic States, such as “black people”, “white people”, “clash of culture”, or “patriotic”, as these terms are typically associated with political discourse in the United States. However, in this case, they have been included because the three categories within this dataset have been specifically designed with the language of these articles in mind. In other words, when the data, or articles, were collected for this dataset, it became clear that a number of them included key terms that were likely not part of the traditional political discourse in the Baltic States. The expanded vocabulary of political groups in the Baltic States could be related to a number of different events that are associated with an increasingly globalized world, such as the European Union’s migrant crisis that occurred in 2015, Hungary and Poland’s refusal to comply with the EU’s rules regarding refugee quotas, BREXIT, and the election of Donald Trump in November of 2016. While terms relating to race, culture, and patriotism appear to be more heavily used by the EKRE in Estonia, they have also begun to be used by the NA in Latvia and are creeping into the populist radical right’s discourse in Lithuania as well. In this sense, it is important to use this set of terms to analyze all three Baltic countries. The only difference between the CI terms applied to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania concerns a small subgroup of terms that have been tailored

specifically to each country. These terms include “estonia”, “estonia for estonians”, “estonian”, “estonian language”, “estonian nation”; “latvia”, “latvia for latvians”, “latvia language”, “latvian”, “latvian nation”; “lithuania”, “lithuania for lithuanians”, “lithuanian”, “lithuanian language”, and “lithuanian nation”. Even if the frequency of use varies from Estonia, to Latvia, to Lithuania, there is nonetheless a political environment in which such vocabulary is not only tolerated but also encouraged by politicians from the populist radical right. In essence the CI category is rather complex, as it tries to seek out the extent to which issues of culture and identity have become intertwined with the populist radical right. While these parties generally shun globalization and forms of global cooperation, they appear to have been influenced by politics in places such as the United States, which are often polarized and concerned with race.

The third category of key terms that is used in the dataset is concerned with the political protest explanation, which will be coined “PP”. It includes 39 key terms in total. This group of terms is focused on the idea that the populations in Estonia, Latvia, and Estonia have grown frustrated with the political status quo and no longer trust the main parties that their governments are composed of. It is comprised of terms such as “anti-establishment”, “corruption”, “direct democracy”, and “referendum”, which are designed to draw out sentiments related to frustration with the status quo in the political sphere. The PP category also includes several terms, like the CI, that are usually unspecific but important to analyze in this situation. These terms include “trump”, “law”, “propaganda”, and “elite”, and serve to highlight the specific ways that populist radical right parties employ these terms to position themselves politically. As mentioned previously, mainstream political parties tend to have rather centrist party platforms and attempt to appeal to a

² The coding of the data led the incorrect spelling, of “latvia language” to be included, as this term should read “latvian language”.

very wide audience. While the trend of parties relying upon mass appeal via traditional cleavages is something that has traditionally taken place in Western Europe, large parties in Central and Eastern Europe have also arguably sought to appeal to the median voter with rather broad political messages concerning issues such as European Union membership, democratization, and corruption. Even though these issues have proved to be major issues in the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian political spheres, one can argue that the parties representing these messages have faced difficulties on two fronts. First, a number of large political parties in the Baltic States have failed to deliver the changes or opportunities they promised for their voters. This pattern takes many forms, such as engaging in corruption after campaigning on an anti-corruption platform. In his article, “Post-Communist Politics: On the Divergence (and/or Convergence) of East and West”, Casal Bértoa argues that these trends result in high party system fragmentation and volatility (2013, p. 419-420). As Haughton & Deegan-Krouse argue in their article, “Hurricane Season: Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics”, new parties are frequently formed in order to oust those in office, which pushes a cycle to be established in which political outsiders continue to replace political insiders, thus effecting the stability of the party system in general (2015, p. 61-62). Second, the main political parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania fail to account for certain segments of the voting population, by focusing on issues that may be either unimportant or potentially exclusionary for certain voters. These voters may feel that mainstream issues are focused on individuals or groups of individuals who benefit from the current system due to their social or political status, while their own social or political station does not allow them to benefit from the status quo. In response, these voters view the establishment as an entity that must be opposed, if not vehemently, and protested against. These voters thus translate their disapproval into protest voting, which leads them to vote for parties that address their anti-establishment

sentiments and claim to differ from mainstream parties. While political protest can be employed by voters who hold various political positions, this paper is focused on the notion that it may be exceptionally prevalent amongst those who identify with the populist radical right. As a consequence, these individuals align themselves with parties that seek to radically differentiate themselves from the central political apparatus and tend to shun centrist parties from both the left and the right. In sum, these parties gain power and pace as populist radical right organizations. Despite the fact that this can be unsettling, if not shocking for politicians from the establishment, the issues that these parties represent are devised in order to directly address the opposition, resentment, and exclusion that voters feel. ³

In sum, the terms included in the dataset serve to signify which issues are most poignant for the populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, based on the rate of repetition that is documented. While the rise of populist radical right parties is often measured using other kinds of data, or established datasets, this analysis focuses on an original approach with the use of dataset based on the content analysis of English-language articles that have been published by both public and private news outlets in the Baltic States. This is no doubt a limitation of the study, as it does not take articles into account that have been written in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, or Russian, but it does allow one to presume how populist radical right parties are presented to an English-speaking or potentially external audience that is interested in the politics of the Baltic States. Furthermore, the dataset incorporates terms that address three different potential explanations for the rise of the radical right so as to understand not only if its hypotheses are right,

³ In an effort to save space within the body of the text, the key terms for each explanation are listed in *Table 1*, *Table 2*, and *Table 3* in the Appendix at the end of the article.

but also to investigate what the correct explanation is in case the economic frustration argument is disproven by the analysis. It is by way of evaluating multiple perspectives that one can begin to understand the complex foundations of the populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Chapter Two: The Populist Radical Right and its Links to Economic Frustration, Culture and Identity, and Political Protest

While the rise of the populist radical right may come as a surprise to individuals both inside and outside of academia, it is a phenomenon that has recurred throughout time, and under different circumstances. This study and its analysis attempt to understand what lies behind the reappearance of the populist radical right in the second decade of the 21st century, from 2011 – 2020. Even though this study is limited in its ability to address the various complexities of the populist radical right, it does allow the author to present a set of compelling results within the analysis, which examines the content of various newspaper articles that discuss populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The analysis is composed of three parts, which correlate with each of the thesis' three hypotheses. Each hypothesis is then examined in accordance with each country, so as to highlight each country's figures.

Estonia

As such, in examining Table 1.1, one can review the overall frequency with which key terms are mentioned across the three potential explanations for the rise of the populist radical right in Estonia (EKRE), which includes the EF explanation (economic frustration), CI explanation (culture and identity), and PP explanation (political protest). The figures relating to these explanations represent the total number of times that key terms belonging to each category are mentioned throughout the data that was collected in regard to EKRE or the Estonian Conservative People's Party. The results in Table 1.1 demonstrate that key terms relating to the CI explanation have the highest frequency out of the three categories, with a total of 21, 265 mentions across 1,196 articles, and an average of 114.9 mentions. For the CI analysis, the figure is nearly eight times bigger than

Table 1.1 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations: Estonia

| Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total (Sum) | 2,648.0 | 21,265.0 | 5,718.0 |
| Average | 61.6 | 114.9 | 146.6 |
| Minimum | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Maximum | 658.0 | 4421.0 | 1,557.0 |

the EF figure, which sits at 2,648 mentions and 4 times bigger than the PP figure, which sits at 5,718 mentions. While the CI category includes a bigger number of terms, due to the multifaceted nature of the explanation, the result is nonetheless significantly greater than that of the other two key term categories. As such, these results lead the author to reject **H1** in the case of Estonia. **H1** is rejected because the figures in Table 1.1 prove that EF, or terms relating to this topic, are not the most prominent topic in the articles that discuss the EKRE in Estonia. In fact, the EF figure is the lowest of the three figures, which suggests that this category of key terms is actually the least prevalent in the data that was analyzed. The figure the PP explanation is twice the size of the EF figure, thus making it clear that the EKRE is more focused on addressing the needs of voters who are frustrated with the political establishment in Estonia.

In addition, the strength and significance of the CI figure makes it an outlier amongst the others. The rise of the EKRE in Estonia can be strongly linked to the CI explanation, which shows that this populist radical right party is strongly focused on the idea that Estonia’s national culture and identity are under threat. In an effort to respond to these sentiments, the EKRE works to

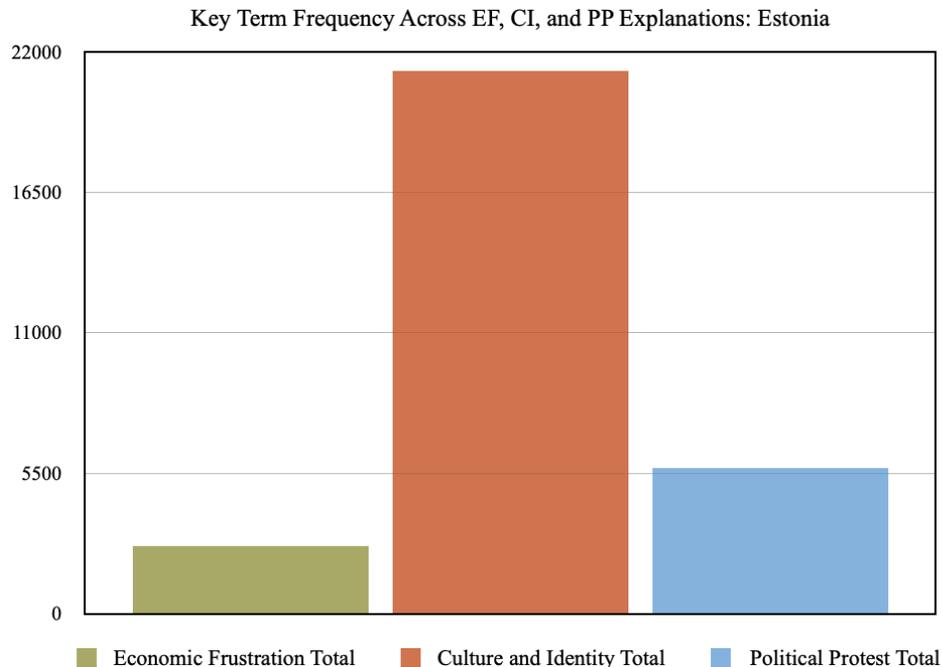


Figure 2.1

acknowledge the fears of Estonian individuals. The nature of their message may appear extreme to other parties on the right, or outright problematic to those on the left, but it effectively allows them to connect with and represent a portion of the Estonian population that feels that other political parties either promote policies that are to their disadvantage, or fail to acknowledge the fact that the policies of the post-Soviet transition period have the potential to threaten specific aspects of a Sovereign Estonian nation-state. While this notion is difficult to grasp if one does not strongly identify with the Estonian nationality and its peculiarities, it appears to be rather prevalent amongst the parties' voters and thus highly intertwined with its discourse as a political entity.

It is also important to point out that the strength of the CI figure in the case of Estonia and the EKRE may be related to the fact that a much larger number of articles have been published about the EKRE than the National Alliance in Latvia or the Nationalists Union in Lithuania. Even though the party was established later than its Latvian counterpart (NA), in 2012, it has gained much more

strength than the NA. Table 1.1 suggests that the EKRE's prominence is linked to its focus on identifying perceived cultural and identity threats that a portion of the population is concerned about.

The figures in Table 1.1 in effect convey that the rise of the EKRE is not linked to the presence of economic frustration that arose following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, but to a heightened sense that there are threats that may work to dismantle or dissolve Estonia's national culture and identity.

Latvia

In Table 1.2, which lists the results for Latvia's National Alliance, it is clear that the key terms, belonging to the CI category have been mentioned with the greatest frequency, at 20,406 mentions. The PP category follows in second place, with 4,893 mentions, and the EF category in third, with 2,274 mentions. The trend in Table 1.2 is similar to the trend that occurred in the case of Estonia in Table 1.1. In accordance with these results, **H1** is also rejected in the case of the National Alliance in Latvia, as the explanation with the highest frequency is CI and not that of EF, as argued in **H1**. These results suggest that the political situation in Latvia is somewhat similar to that of Estonia, as both the EKRE and the NA are closely linked with key terms that address issues concerning national culture and identity. Voters in both countries have come to seek out, support, and vote for parties that actively address matters related to the importance of protecting the unique cultures and identities of the Estonian and Latvian populations. The rise of populist radical right parties cannot thus be based upon issues stemming from the economic frustration that arose after the occurrence of the 2008 recession. The EF figure in Table 1.2 for the National Alliance is the lowest out of three figures at 2,274, thus suggesting that terms related to economic grievances are

Table 1.2 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations: Latvia

| Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total (Sum) | 2,274.0 | 20,406.0 | 4,893.0 |
| Average | 52.9 | 110.3 | 125.5 |
| Minimum | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Maximum | 381.0 | 3,430.0 | 1,427.0 |

present within the data, but not significant. The NA may occasionally discuss issues related to the economic hardship that certain segments of the Latvian population has faced, but this is much less important than issues surrounding political protest and culture and identity.

Following the occurrence of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, Latvia faced a difficult economic situation. Its largest bank, Parex, faced extreme economic difficulties and its real estate and financial sectors collapsed, leaving much of the Latvian public in a difficult situation (Åslund & Dombrovskis, 2011, p. 34-35; 39-42). The state was thus pushed to apply for assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as few options remained in terms of regaining economic stability (Åslund & Dombrovskis, 2011, p. 42-47). In analyzing this situation, it appears that the recession had serious repercussions for Latvia's population, as it was faced with the introduction of reforms and austerity, due to the state's handling of economic matters prior to the crisis (Åslund & Dombrovskis, 2011, p. 34-41). Despite the intensity and difficulty of this situation, the results in Table 1.2 suggest that these events did not play a big role in the rise of the National Alliance in Latvia, as the party is far more concerned with addressing other grievances that voters present.

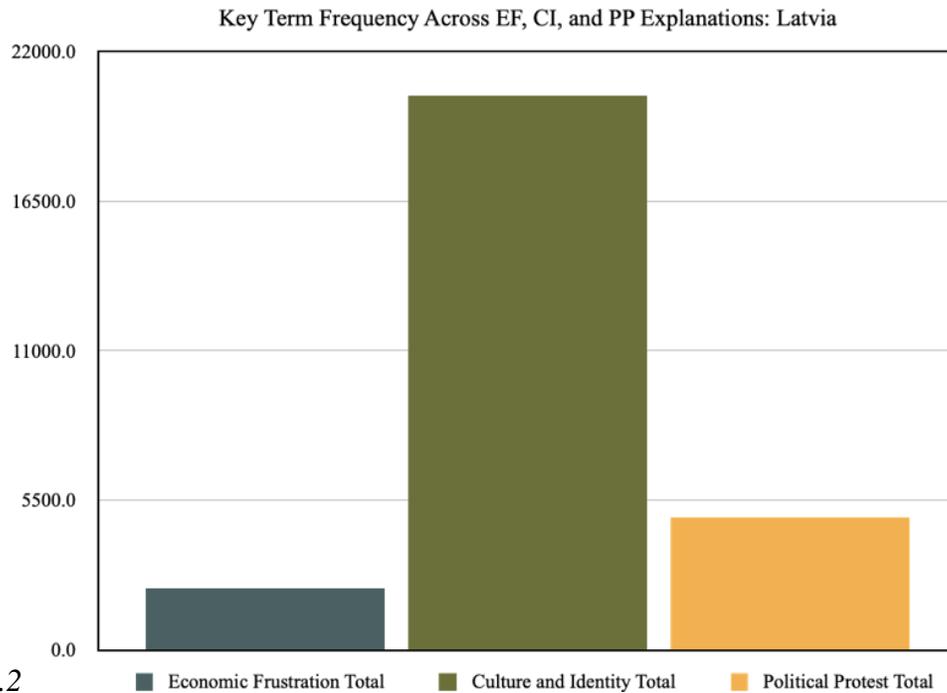


Figure 2.2

This is noteworthy, as the EF explanation, which one can argue rests upon the traditional economic left-right voting cleavage, is not necessarily applicable to the rise of populist radical right parties in the 21st century. Scholars such as Bohle (2018) argue that the recession created a divide between economic winners, who benefitted and continue to benefit from the post-Soviet transition to capitalism, despite the occurrence of the 2008 crisis, and economic losers, who have not managed to secure positions in a post-Soviet society that offer them economic security and well-being (p. 245). As a consequence, these individuals are presumed to have transferred their economic frustration into political preferences and votes for a party that seeks to represent the interests of those who have not profited from the new economic system and the state's transition away from redistribution and/or intervention on behalf of the more vulnerable members of society. However, this argument does not hold in the cases of Estonia and Latvia, as the EKRE and NA appear to be supported by voters with concerns beyond the economic sphere.

Table 1.3 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations: Lithuania

| Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total (Sum) | 42.0 | 858.0 | 324.0 |
| Average | 1.0 | 4.5 | 7.7 |
| Minimum | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Maximum | 23.0 | 208.0 | 198.0 |

In essence, the EF explanation, while highly convincing, does not play a dominant role in explaining the emergence of the National Alliance in Latvia. The large CI figure in Table 1.2 further suggests that it is an outlier amongst the other two figures, as it was in the case of Estonia. The NA thus focuses its efforts on fighting against incumbent or proposed policies that may sacrifice Latvia’s national culture and identity or prevent these two phenomena from being developed and strengthened amongst the country’s population.

Lithuania

Table 1.3 lists the results of the content analysis for the Nationalists Union (LTS) of Lithuania. In contrast to Estonia and Latvia, there is far less data available for analysis in the case of Lithuania. As discussed previously, this may due to the fact that there are fewer outlets that publish in the English language in Lithuania, or that the party’s failure to gain a support base has led it to be excluded from political discussions in the media. The total number of key terms mentions across all three categories, EF, CI, and PP comes out to 1,224. In comparison with Estonia and Latvia,

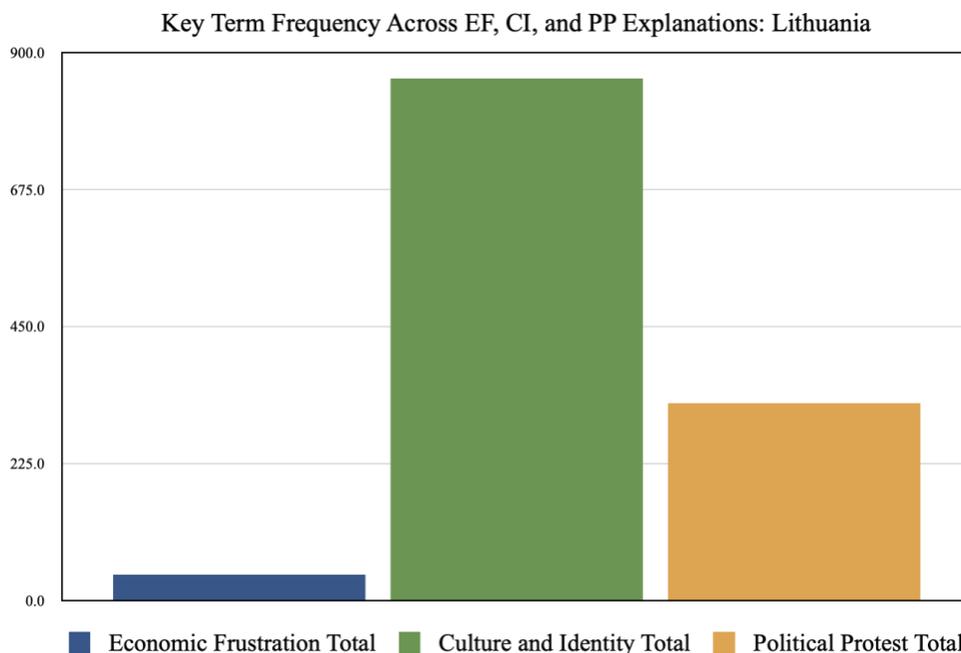


Figure 2.3

this figure is very low. The category that received the highest frequency of mentions is the CI explanation, with 858 mentions. The PP explanation has the second largest figure, with 324 mentions. Third, the EF explanation has the smallest figure, at 42 mentions.

Table 1.3 reveals that Lithuania follows the same key term trend that was observed in the cases of Estonia and Latvia. This is important to note, as even though the LTS receives only a very small number of votes (Minkenberg, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 6-7) it still follows a policy platform that is similar to that of the EKRE in Estonia and the NA in Latvia. In other words, the key term category that it is most closely connected to is culture and identity. As such, this leads the author to reject **H1**, as the figures in Table 1.3 suggest that the LTS did not emerge as a result of the Lithuanian population's economic frustration following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. In addition, it is important to mention that the LTS' emergence is rather a reemergence, as the party has been present in Lithuania's political sphere since the country declared independence in the

early 1990's (Minkenberg, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 5), and thus prior to and not following the 2008 recession like the EKRE and the NA. The LTS prides itself as the direct descendant of most dominant interwar political party, the Nationalist Union (Minkenberg, 2015, Lithuania section, para. 5). The history of the LTS is, therefore, somewhat divergent from that of the EKRE and the NA, which both emerged after the crisis and as a result of the union of a series of parties that were struggling to gain ground in the Estonian and Latvian party systems. The LTS' purported links to Lithuania's interwar political realm and its status as an established party may have led voters to view the party as a political entity that speaks to certain contemporary issues but is not capable of addressing them in an transparent way because of its association with the country's past. While this logic may contradict the idea of protecting Lithuania's national culture and identity, one can argue that voters look for new parties to represent issues concerning Lithuania's national culture and identity, as they are more likely to be devoid of issues that are perceived to be connected with the political establishment.

In sum, **H1** is rejected in all three cases, as the rise of populist radical right parties in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, or the EKRE, NA, and LTS, cannot be linked to the EF explanation. While the key terms relating to the EF category have received some mention, the figure is not significant in comparison to that of the CI explanation. As such, the results suggest that all three parties rely upon the notion of protecting Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian culture and identity from potential threats.

Chapter Three: The Populist Radical Right and Economic Frustration Amongst Voters

While the previous chapter, which focuses on **H1**, seeks to evaluate the general trends that may be observed in the analysis of the data regarding the forces behind the rise of the EKRE, NA, and LTS, this chapter focuses on the temporal aspects related to the use of key terms within the data. The use of key terms must be examined not only generally, but also specifically in relation to certain events. In this study, the events that are incorporated and evaluated are national parliamentary elections. Incorporating national parliamentary elections allows the author to evaluate whether or not populist radical right parties increase their use of key terms during election season, and if so, to understand what kind of key terms they choose to use with the greatest frequency. Provided that national parliamentary elections lead parties to increase, decrease, or maintain their level of support, they are likely to try and engage their voting base leading up to such events. While their rhetoric may be consistently aligned with populist radical right ideals, it is possible that they will proceed to be even more vocal and more involved with their voters than they usually are.

Estonia

In the case of Estonia, this may also be related to the fact that EKRE has worked to personalize its politics by way of creating an emphatic father-son duo, who openly voice their views on a variety of controversial political topics. Mart Helme and Martin Helme are no stranger to using their platform to garner attention from both their supporters and those in the Estonian political sphere that adamantly oppose their message.

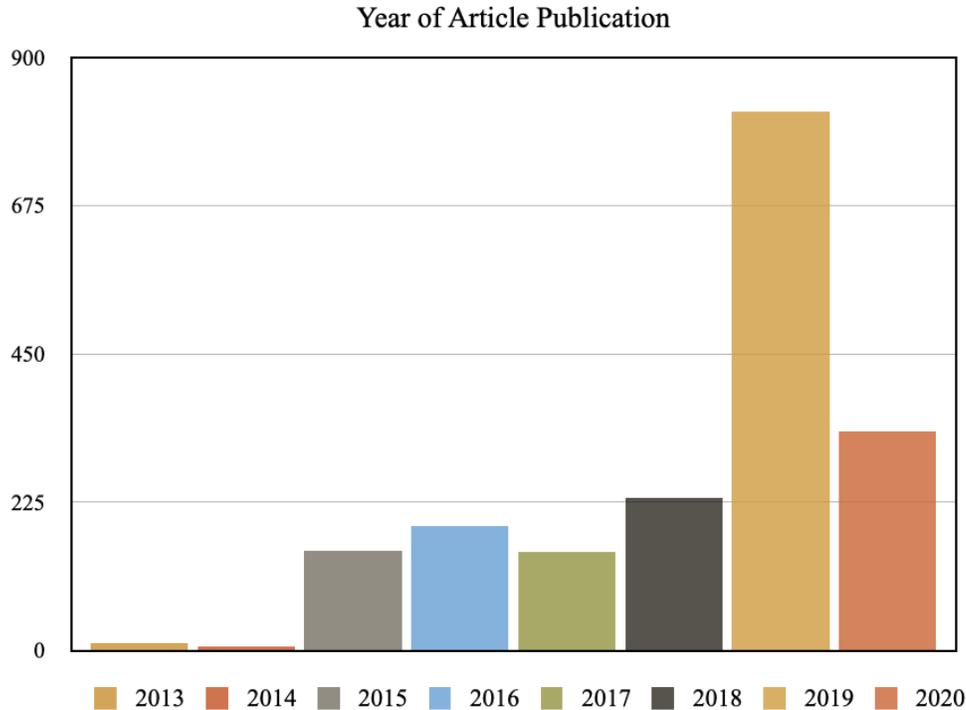


Figure 3.14

As such, this part of the analysis focuses on evaluating the second hypotheses, or **H2**. **H2** states that populist radical right parties are likely to increase their overall and general use of key terms related to the EF explanation, prior to national parliamentary elections.

Table 2.1 reveals that the frequency with which EF key terms are mentioned in the data increases as time goes on. While there is a two-year decrease from 2016 – 2017, the figures continue to

⁴ Figure 3.1 has been included to show the general trend that can be observed in relation to the publication year of articles that discuss the EKRE in Estonia. While there is a slight decrease in the number of articles published in the year 2017, overall Figure 3.1 suggests that the number of articles about the EKRE has steadily increased over the past decade, and since the emergence of the party in 2012. The year 2020 also presents a decrease in the number of articles published, but this due to the fact that the data was collected in in May and June of 2020, and thus excludes articles discussing EKRE that have been published since then and those that will be published until the end of the year in December 2020. The general increase in the number of articles published about the EKRE may be seen as further evidence that the party has increasingly gained popularity in the Estonian political sphere, even if it is viewed as a negative political force by other political parties.

Table 2.1 Key Term Frequency Across EF Explanation by Year in Estonia

| Year | 2013 | 2014 | 2015* | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019* | 2020 | Total (Sum) |
|-------------------------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------|
| Key Term Category | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic Frustration | 12 | 1 | 237 | 145 | 133 | 295 | 954 | 847 | 2,624 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

steadily increase. As mentioned previously, the 2020 figures are provisional in that the dataset only includes articles published from January 2020 to June 2020.

More importantly, Table 2.1 shows that the years in which national parliamentary elections took place, namely 2015 and 2019, the EF frequency greatly increases in comparison to the years that proceeded these events (i.e. 2014 and 2018). As such, one can argue that the figures in Table 2.1 support the claims made in **H2** in the case of Estonia. The EKRE in Estonia has proceeded to employ more EF key terms in the years in which parliamentary elections took place. While the figure for the year 2015 in Table 2.1 (237), which corresponds with the national parliamentary election that took place on March 1, 2015 (ElectionGuide, 2020, *March 1*), is much lower than the figures from 2019 and 2020, it nonetheless shows a large increase from the 2014 figure, which sits at 1. In addition, the figure for the year 2019 in Table 2.1 (954), which corresponds with the

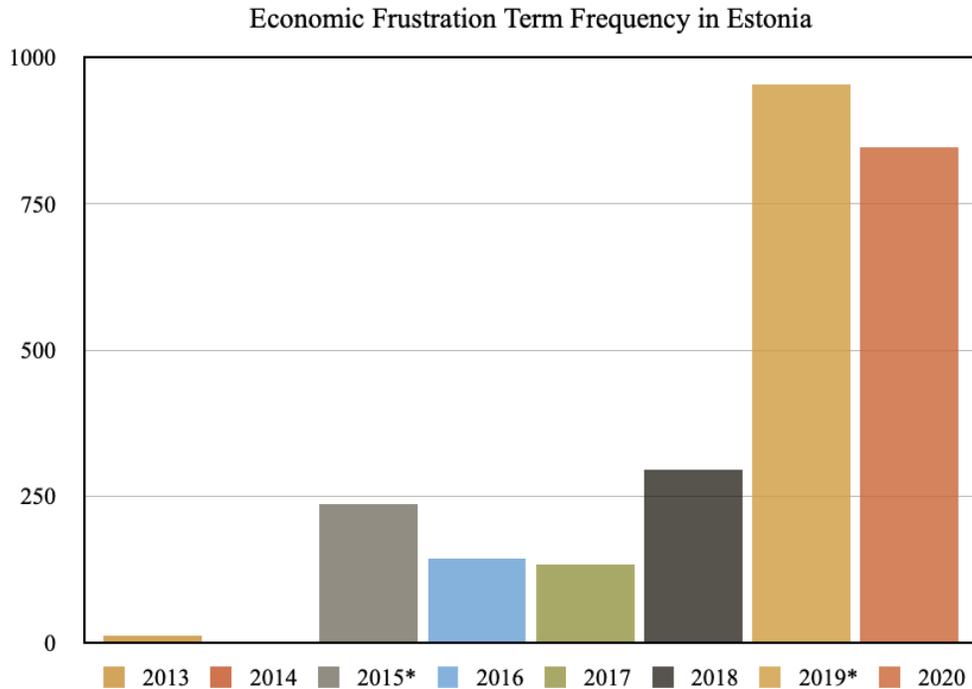


Figure 3.2

national primary election on March 3, 2019 (ElectionGuide, 2020, *March 3*) may end up being smaller than the final 2020 figure, but it is three times larger than the figure for the year 2018, thus supporting **H2**.

These results suggest that the EKRE is apt to employ campaign measures that address their voters' economic grievances when elections are planned to take place, even if it is by way of mentioning just several matters that are associated with the economic difficulties faced by Estonia's voters. The EKRE's need for a strong, and potentially diverse, support base during election season may push them to focus on issues related to EF. While the results from Table 1.1 in Chapter Two disprove **H1**, which claims that the rise of the EKRE is due to the EF felt by the Estonian population, that does not mean the presence of EF in Estonia should be ignored or cast aside. Therefore, **H2** seeks to take a closer look at the specific trends associated with the EF explanation,

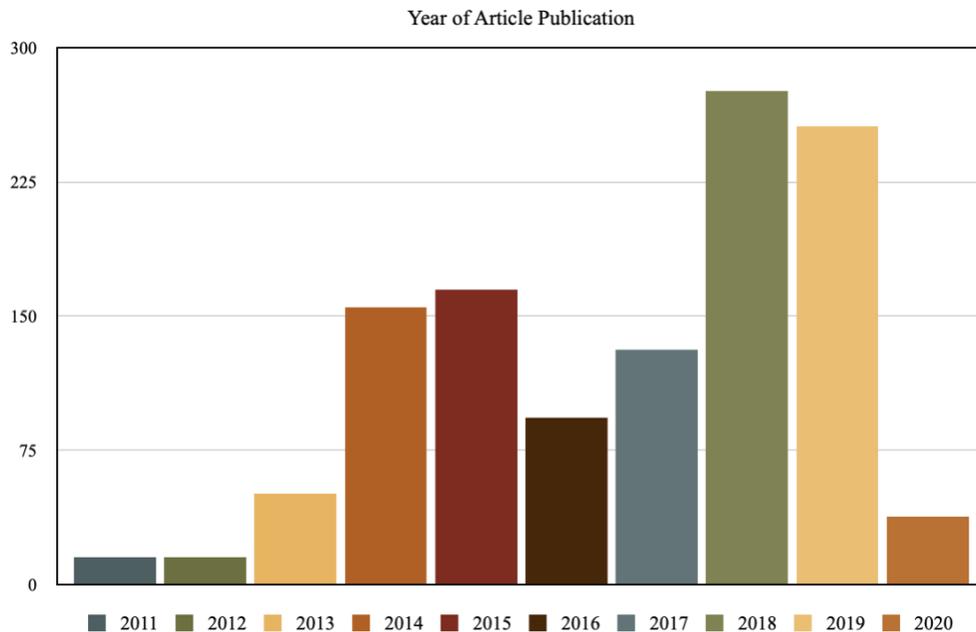


Figure 3.3⁵

even if it does not serve as EKRE’s political backbone. Even if the results from Table 1.1 suggest that the EKRE’s advancement in the Estonian political sphere is due to issues concerning culture and identity, one should still evaluate the ways that the EKRE interacts with matters relating to EF over time and in relation to national parliamentary election cycle. As such, the support found for **H2** indicates that the EKRE has maintained a very low-level, but steady attachment to the Estonian population’s potential economic grievances. When looking to get elected in 2015 and reelected in 2019⁶, the EKRE appears to have further highlighted the country’s economic struggles.

⁵ Figure 3.3 shows the general pattern that the publication of articles discussing the NA in Latvia has followed from 2011 – 2020. A limited number of articles about the NA were printed 2011 and 2012, as the party was founded in 2011. A gradual increase in the number of publications from 2011 – 2015 is followed by a subsequent drop from 2016 – 2017, an increase 2018, and a decrease in 2019 and 2020. As noted previously, the data for 2020 is limited in its coverage, thus presenting a limited picture of this year’s final figure. However, it is important to note that the publication trend for Latvia appears to steady rise and fall with time.

⁶ The EKRE received 46,772 votes and seven seats in the March 2015 national parliamentary election (ElectionGuide, 2020, *March 1*) and 99,671 votes and 19 seats in the March 2019 national parliamentary election (ElectionGuide, 2020, *March 3*).

Table 2.2 Key Term Frequency Across EF Explanation by Year in Latvia

| | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|----------------------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|--------------|
| Year | 2011* | 2012 | 2013 | 2014* | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018* | 2019 | 2020 | (Sum) |
| Key Term | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Category | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic Frustration | 7 | 8 | 86 | 334 | 208 | 211 | 273 | 548 | 485 | 111 | 2,271 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

Latvia

The results of the analysis in Table 2.1 suggest that the NA is more likely to increase its use of key terms relating to economic frustration (EF) during an election year, thus providing support for **H2** in the case of Latvia. While there is limited data on the NA for 2011 election year⁷, likely due to the recent publication of articles written in the English language or formation of the party in 2011 (Auers & Kasekamp, 2015, Latvia section, para. 8), the figures for the following election years, 2014 and 2018, confirm the claims made in **H2**. The figure for 2014 (334), which corresponds to the national parliamentary election that took place on October 4, 2014⁸(ElectionGuide, 2020, *Oct. 4*), is approximately four times larger than 86, the 2013 figure. Furthermore, the figure for 2018 (548), which corresponds to the national parliamentary election that took place on October 6, 2018

⁷ In the parliamentary election of September 17, 2011, the NA received 127,208 votes and 14 seats in the parliament (ElectionGuide, 2020, *Sept. 17*), which suggests the party had already acquired a reasonable amount of support at this time.

⁸ The NA received 151,567 votes and 17 seats in the national parliamentary election of October 4, 2014 (ElectionGuide, 2020, *Oct. 4*).

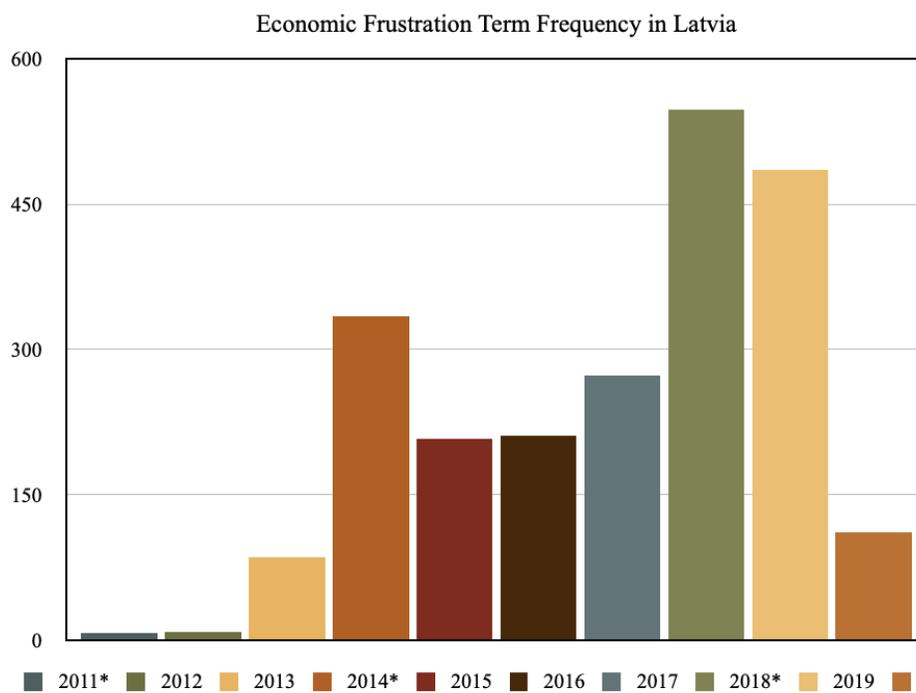


Figure 3.4 Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Latvia.

9(ElectionGuide, 2020, Oct. 6), is around two times larger than 273, the 2017 figure. It is clear that the frequency with which the NA employs key terms concerned with EF increases when Latvia’s populist radical right party is involved in an electoral competition. The rise of the NA, like that of the EKRE and the LTS, is not strongly linked to the presence of EF but to that of threats to the country’s national culture and identity. The relevance of the EF felt amongst Latvia’s population does not, however, stop there and must still be analyzed in order for one to understand the NA’s relationship with issues that exist within this realm.

9 The NA received 92,963 votes and 13 seats in the national parliamentary election of October 6, 2018 (ElectionGuide, 2020, Oct. 6). It is important to note that despite the overall increase in the frequency with which the NA is mentioned in news articles published by Baltic news outlets, the party lost 58,604 votes and 4 seats in the 2018 election.

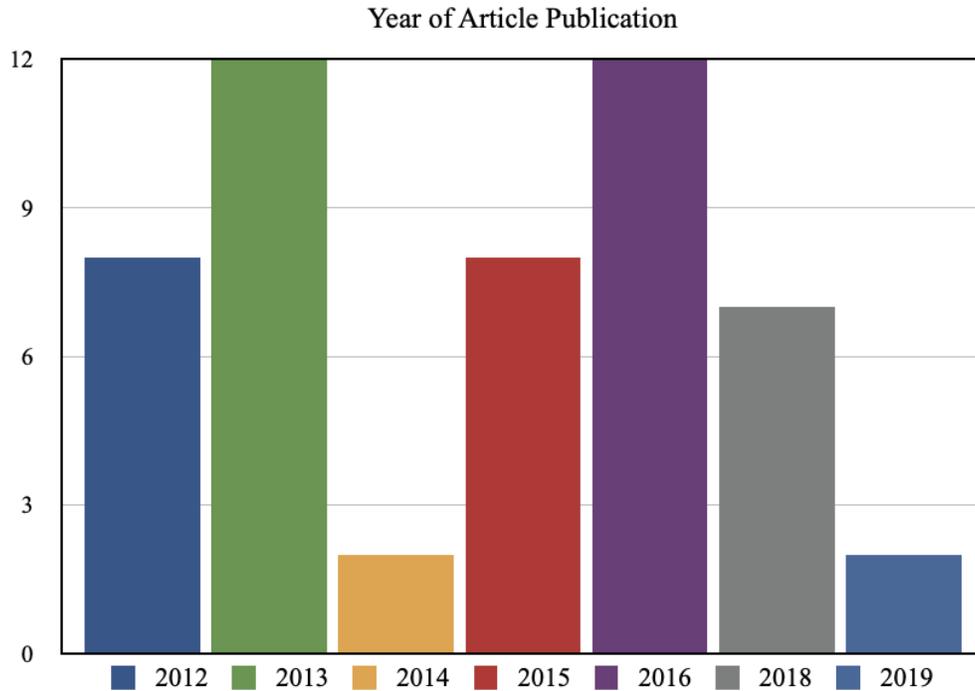


Figure 3.5¹⁰

Lithuania

Table 2.3 underscores the fact that it is difficult to analyze **H2** in the case of Lithuania, as there are very few articles and thus very little data that can be used to analyze the LTS in general. The figures in Table 2.3 are extremely small when compared with those in Table 1.1 that discusses the EKRE in Estonia and Table 2.2 that discusses the NA in Latvia. However, in evaluating the figures that are present, it appears that the LTS is less likely to increase its use of key terms relating to economic frustration (EF) during an election year, thus pushing the author to reject **H2** in the case of Lithuania. It appears that key terms from the EF explanation were more likely to be employed the year following the election, in case of the national parliamentary election that

¹⁰ Figure 3.5 highlights the fact that the general publication pattern of articles in Lithuania that discuss the LTS is rather sporadic. The number of mentions increases greatly and then decreases greatly, thus suggesting that the party has not been mentioned or examined on a regular basis. This pattern may be due to the fact that English language publications in Lithuania are not as common or that the LTS is not viewed as an important actor in the Lithuanian political sphere.

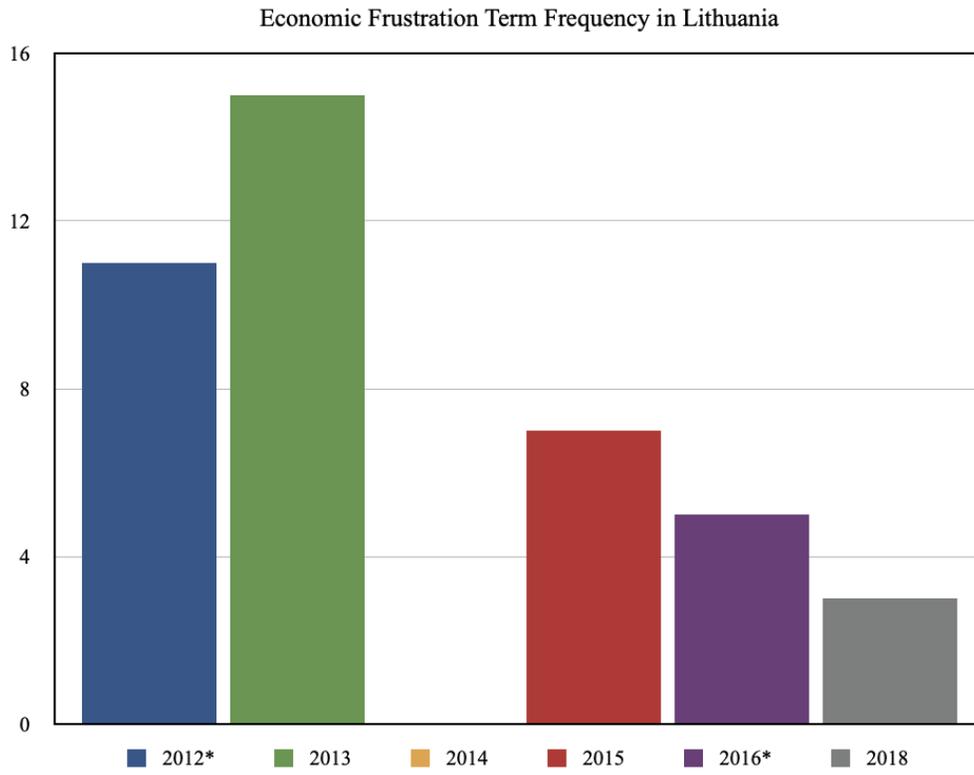
Table 2.3 Key Term Frequency Across EF Explanation by Year in Lithuania

| Year | 2012* | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016* | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Total (Sum) |
|-------------------------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Key Term Category | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic Frustration | 11 | 15 | 0 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 41 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

took place on October 14, 2012 (ElectionGuide, 2020, *Oct. 14*), and the year before the election that took place on October 9, 2016 (ElectionGuide, 2020, *Oct. 9*). While one can argue that the year proceeding an election should also be evaluated, **H2** focuses solely on the year in which a national parliamentary election actually took place.

Overall, the results reveal that **H2** is supported in the case of the EKRE in Estonia and the NA in Latvia but rejected in the case of the LTS in Lithuania.



Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

Figure 3.6

Chapter Four: The Populist Radical Right and the Election Cycle

The analysis included in Chapter Three seeks to evaluate whether or not the EKRE, NA, and LTS increase the frequency with which they use key terms relating to the EF explanation during a year in which a national parliamentary election will occur. The hypothesis related to these claims, **H2**, is complimented by the argument made in **H3**, which maintains that populist radical right parties are also more likely to use key terms relating to the EF explanation than the CI or PP explanations, preceding the occurrence of a national parliamentary election. While these two hypotheses sound similar, **H2** evaluates whether or not there is an increase in frequency, and **H3** examines whether or not the populist radical right parties in the Baltic States are prone to focus on EF key terms prior to an election, or those related to culture and identity or political protest. The nuanced relationship between these two hypotheses is meant to take the analysis surrounding the relationship between the populist radical right parties and the EF explanation one step further.

Estonia

The results in Table 3.1, which seek to incorporate those in Table 2.1 with the alternative CI and PP explanations, suggest that the EKRE in Estonia is not more likely to use terms related to economic frustration prior to a national parliamentary election. While Table 2.1 suggests that the party increases its use of EF terms, an increase in frequency does not mean that it is more likely focus on economic grievances than other issues such as culture and identity or political protest. While these two hypotheses are somewhat intertwined and can thus present a confusing analysis, they have both been included to show that the issues a party chooses to address during an election cycle may become more prominent, but still not be the driving force behind their campaign.

Table 3.1 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations by Year in Estonia

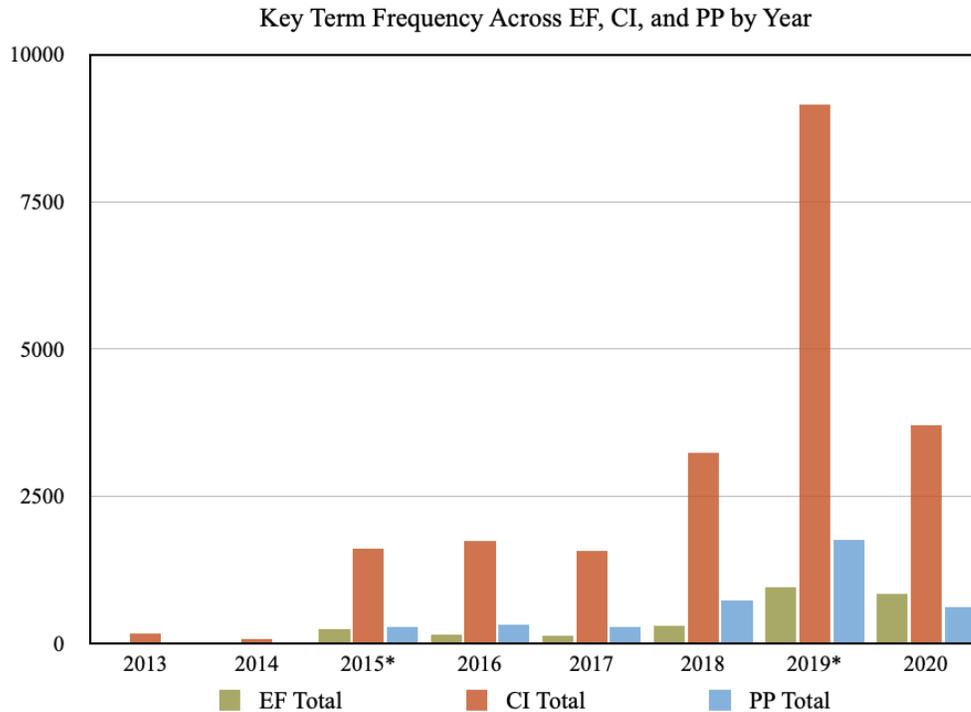
| Year | Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2013 | | 12 | 167 | 17 |
| 2014 | | 1 | 71 | 15 |
| 2015* | | 237 | 1610 | 269 |
| 2016 | | 145 | 1741 | 305 |
| 2017 | | 133 | 1563 | 286 |
| 2018 | | 295 | 3240 | 730 |
| 2019* | | 954 | 9149 | 1756 |
| 2020 | | 847 | 3708 | 615 |
| Total (Sum) | | 2,624 | 21,249 | 3,993 |
| Average | | 328 | 2,656.125 | 499.125 |
| Minimum | | 1 | 71 | 15 |
| Maximum | | 954 | 9,149 | 1,756 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

As such, with 1,610 CI mentions versus 269 PP mentions and 237 mentions in 2015, and 9,149 CI mentions versus 1,756 PP mentions and 954 EF mentions in 2019, it is clear that the EKRE is more focused on acknowledging the CI issues that voters may have, which allows the author to reject **H3** in the case of Estonia.

Latvia

The findings included in Table 3.2 suggest that despite the struggles associated with the country's economic situation following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the explanation with the largest figure is the CI explanation, which is followed by the PP and EF explanations. The



Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

Figure 4.1

CI figures are consistently higher than the PP and EF frustration figures, coming in at 211 for the 2011 election, 2,061 for the 2014 election, and 4,798 for the 2018 election. Similar to the pattern found with the EKRE in Estonia, the NA increases its use of key terms relating to the EF explanation during the election cycle but proceeds to both employ more terms from the CI and PP explanations and to use terms from the latter to categories with greater frequency. As such, the EF explanation has once again been overshadowed by the alternative arguments that have been included in the analysis, thus leading the author to reject **H3** in the case of Latvia.

Lithuania

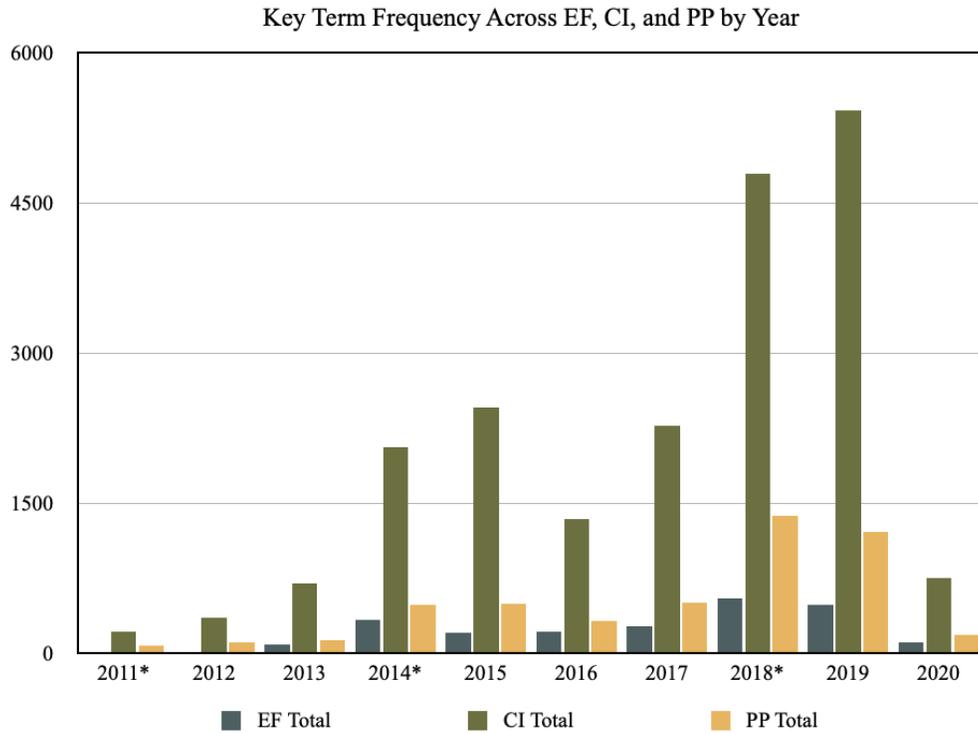
Table 3.3, which highlights the frequency with which the populist radical right (LTS) in Lithuania uses key terms belonging to the EF explanation, suggests that there is no support for

Table 3.2 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations by Year in Latvia

| Year | Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2011* | | 7 | 211 | 75 |
| 2012 | | 8 | 360 | 112 |
| 2013 | | 86 | 701 | 132 |
| 2014* | | 334 | 2061 | 482 |
| 2015 | | 208 | 2458 | 497 |
| 2016 | | 211 | 1342 | 319 |
| 2017 | | 273 | 2274 | 500 |
| 2018* | | 548 | 4798 | 1372 |
| 2019 | | 485 | 5426 | 1210 |
| 2020 | | 111 | 754 | 187 |
| Total (Sum) | | 2,271 | 20,385 | 4,886 |
| Average | | 227.1 | 2,038.5 | 488.6 |
| Minimum | | 7 | 211 | 75 |
| Maximum | | 548 | 5,426 | 1,372 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.

H3 in the case of Lithuania. The results follow a very similar trend to those discussed in the sections on Estonia and Latvia. The LTS in Lithuania is also much more likely to use key terms that concern both the CI and PP categories than key terms associated with economic frustration. In the case of Lithuania, it is important to mention once more that the LTS is much weaker and far less prominent than the EKRE and NA. As such, one can suggest that the party does not necessarily have any clearly identifiable behavior when it comes to the occurrence of national



Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Latvia.

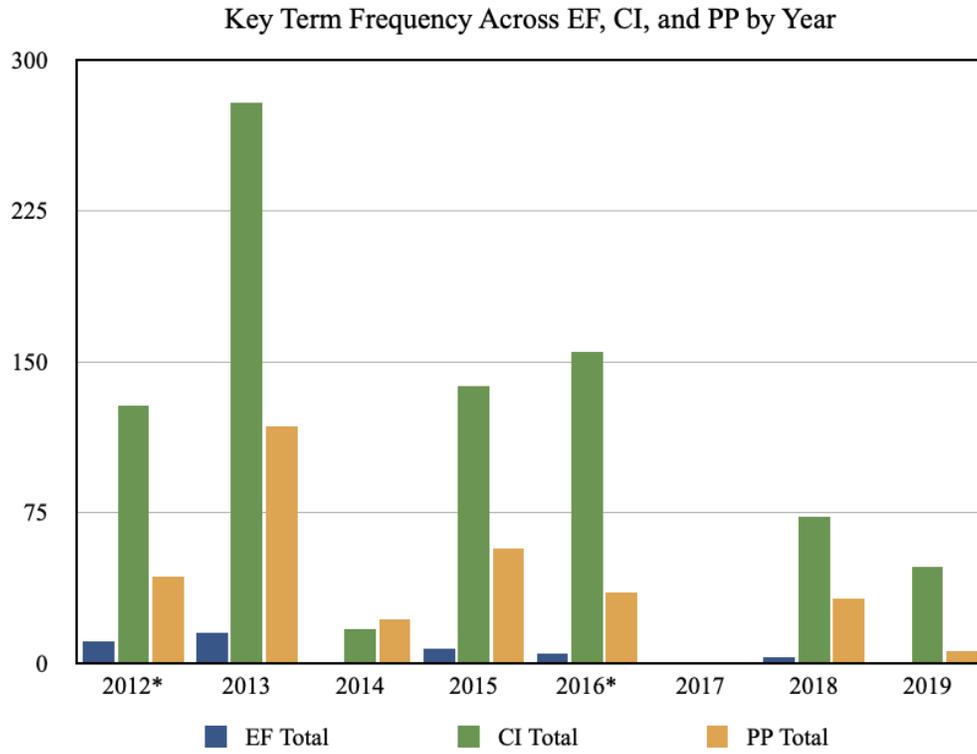
Figure 4.2

parliamentary elections. In fact, it appears that as time has gone on, the LTS has become decreasingly involved in electoral matters, as Figure 3.9 highlights the sporadic nature of the relationship between the populist radical right and the various explanations that may be used to explain its presence in the Lithuanian political realm.

Table 3.3 Key Term Frequency Across EF, CI, and PP Explanations by Year in Lithuania

| Year | Key Term Categories | Economic Frustration | Culture and Identity | Political Protest |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2012* | | 11 | 128 | 43 |
| 2013 | | 15 | 279 | 118 |
| 2014 | | 0 | 17 | 22 |
| 2015 | | 7 | 138 | 57 |
| 2016* | | 5 | 155 | 35 |
| 2017 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2018 | | 3 | 73 | 32 |
| 2019 | | 0 | 48 | 6 |
| Total (Sum) | | 41 | 838 | 313 |
| Average | | 5.125 | 104.75 | 39.125 |
| Minimum | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Maximum | | 15 | 279 | 118 |

Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Estonia.



Note. An asterisk (*) denotes an election year in Lithuania.

Figure 4.3

Conclusion

When it comes to the study of the populist radical right, there are a number of factors that one has the opportunity to examine. The phenomenon is perhaps one of the most complex and increasingly studied topics in the field of political science, as a growing number of parties in Europe and arguably factions of the Republican Party in the United States, appear to align with the ideology of populist radical right. This trend is fascinating but concerning, as voters in some countries adamantly support these parties, thus voting them into office and encouraging other parties to include them in coalitions. While populist radical right parties seek to address a number of issues that are ignored by centrist parties or seemingly excluded from their radar, their prominence, election, and reelection may lead some countries to develop a thorny political environment. It is difficult to imagine a political environment in Europe without some semblance of the populist radical right at this moment in time, as most countries have become host to a party that seeks to approach the contemporary world in a national conservative manner.

Provided that populist radical right parties are multiplying and gaining strength, it is essential that scholars, students, and the public take the time to understand why these parties have been formed, supported, and elected time again. Despite the fact that populist radical right parties tend to address issues that are traditionally off limits, viewed as politically incorrect, or prejudiced in some manner, they manage to maintain a fairly loyal voting base. As such, in an effort to delve deeper into the claims made above, this study has worked to evaluate what has led to the rise of the populist radical right in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. While these states are small in terms of both geography and inhabitants, they provide a look into the potential explanations that lay behind the emergence of such parties, whether it be a population's economic frustration, perception that

its national culture and identity are under threat, or that its politicians are one and the same and have little to no interest in representing the common people. This study claims that the populist radical right has become more prominent in past years because of the adverse effects that the 2008 Global Financial Crisis had on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania's populations. While this argument is based on the notion that the Baltic States' post-Soviet transition has been marred with neoliberal policies that are disadvantageous to their populations, the hypotheses surrounding this argument have been mostly disproved. The EKRE, NA, and LTS have emerged not as a result of each country's economic frustration or political protest, but because of its concern for its national culture and identity.

Appendix

Table 1: Left-right Economic Frustration

| Key Terms | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 2007 | 2008 | 2008 recession |
| 2009 | 2010 | bank |
| crisis | decreased taxation | downturn |
| economic downturn | economic losers | economic protection |
| economic winners | economics | economy |
| europa accession | europa integration | fdi |
| foreign direct investment | global financial crisis | high taxes |
| increased taxation | investigation | laissez faire |
| losers | loss | low taxes |
| national economy | protection | protectionist |
| real estate | real estate bubble | recession |
| scandal | scandinavian banks | state intervention |
| swedish banks | tax | taxation |
| taxes | welfare | welfare chauvinist |
| winners | | |

Table 2: Culture and Identity

| Key Terms | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| abortion | africa | african |
| anti immigrant | anti immigration | anti-abortion |
| anti-globalization | anti-immigrant | anti-immigration |
| anti-semitic | antisemitic | arab |
| baltic | banner | bauska |
| bauska declaration | birth | birth rates |
| black | black people | black person |
| borders | christian | christianity |
| citizen | city | civil partnership |
| civilization | clash of civilizations | clash of culture |
| closed borders | colonial | colonial power |
| colonialism | conservative | country |
| countryside | culture | demographics |
| demography | emigration | estonia |
| estonia for estonians | estonian | estonian language |
| estonian nation | ethnic | ethnic makeup |
| ethnic nationalism | ethnic profiling | ethnicity |
| ethno | ethno-nationalists | ethnocracy |
| ethnonationalists | eu | eu flag |
| europa | european | european union |
| european union flag | eurosceptic | eurosceptic |
| external | family | family values |
| father | flag | foreign |
| foreigner | gay | genocide |
| germany | globalism | globalist |
| globalization | heterosexual | homeland |
| homogenization | homophobia | homophobic |
| homosexual | homosexuality | identity |
| immigrant | immigration | immigration policy |
| imperial | imperialism | independence |
| inhabitant | insiders | integrate |
| integration | internal | interwar |
| interwar period | invade | invasion |
| iraq | jew | jewish |
| jewish people | jews | language |
| latvia | latvia for latvians | latvia language |
| latvian | latvian nation | lgbt |
| liberal | lithuania | lithuania for lithuanians |
| lithuanian | lithuanian language | lithuanian nation |
| loyal | loyalty | majority |
| marxism | marxist | mass immigration |

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| middle east | migrant | migrant crisis |
| migration | minority | monocultural |
| mother | multiculturalism | muslim |
| nation | nation state | national |
| national anthem | national awakening | national conservative |
| national identity | national values | national-conservative |
| nationalism | nationalist | nationality |
| native | native culture | nativeness |
| nativism | non-native | non-resident |
| nonnative | occupation | occupy |
| outsiders | patriot | patriotic |
| patriotism | putin | race |
| racism | racist | refugee |
| refugee quota | resident | rural |
| russia | russian minority | russian speaking minority |
| russians | same sex | segregate |
| segregation | social cohesion | sovereignty |
| soviet | soviet union | soviets |
| Ss | strong state | syria |
| territory | tolerance | torch |
| torchlight | tradition | traditional |
| traditional family | unwelcome | urban |
| values | waffen ss | welcome |
| white | white people | white person |

Table 3: Political Protest

| Key Terms | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| anti-democracy | anti-elite | anti-establishment |
| anti-system | antisystem | authoritarian |
| authoritarianism | bourgeois | bourgeoisie |
| censorship | corrupt | corrupt elite |
| corruption | democracy | direct democracy |
| donald trump | elite | establishment |
| general will | law | law and order |
| march | nato | negligence |
| political | politician | politicized |
| politics | pro-democracy | propaganda |
| protest | pure people | referendum |
| representative democracy | state | the corrupt elite |
| the pure people | trump | undemocratic |

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