

INTERNATIONAL ELITES AND THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL IDENTITY IN POST SOVIET SPACE

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The role of foreign elites in framing the 'Russian Question' in Latvia and Estonia,

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The overall paper's goal is to build a better insight into the state of the art of the current debate on the democratic leadership, which has developed within multinational and politically divided post-communist states. The objective of the paper is to contribute to the democratic integration and political stability in Latvia and Estonia, through democratic consolidation and liberalization of national elites in a context of dialog between the European Union and Russia. The paper aims to examine what are the principal models and values of political and economical elites and under what conditions actions of leaders provoke democratic consent, or mutual confrontation.

From the empirical point of view, the paper is oriented towards 1) the understanding of the main conflict among and inside the Latvian, Estonian and Russian political elites; 2) the consideration of key factors which influence positions of elite, subelite and mass of the population of Latvia and Estonia. It is concerned with the distinctions in economic, political and a social status of Latvians and Estonians, on the one hand and Russians, on the other hand. The first have occupied after gaining by Latvia and Estonia independence higher, and the second lower social positions. As a result there was the ethnic hierarchy «Russian question» in considered societies. This hierarchy is supported by action of variety of institutes which are not linked with traditional democratic model. Mainly, it is the absence of citizenship and the rights of participation in municipal elections at 40 % of Russians, ethnic character of parties and power structures, ethnic and linguistic restrictions in management of the state institutions, companies, and private business. Action of institutes generating ethnic hierarchy has more value for differentiation of positions of elite in Latvia and Estonia, than orientation of economic elite to EU or to Russia. Because of institutional restrictions Russian political elite is weakest and does not reflect political potential of the Russian population (especially in Estonia). Partly functions of representation of interests of Russian communities are fulfilling Russian intellectual and cultural elite. The Latvian and Estonian intellectual and cultural elites are very closely connected with political elites and do not take in a society of an independent position.

For the description of influence of political institutes on the decision of Russian question it will be described the basic law acts of Latvia and Estonia influencing position of Russian elite and Russian community as a whole, as well as the practice of discrimination applied by ruling political elite of the titular nations. In this respect, questions on the relation Russian, Estonians and the Latvian elites towards institutional inequalities, and also readiness for defend or struggle against the developed ethnic hierarchy are picked up. Here readiness of elites of EU and Russia for the decision of Russian question can be checked up.

Our main hypothesis is that: the level of confrontation attitudes between Russian and Latvian and Estonian political elites is high and depends on their institutional arrangements and ideological dimensions of top leaders. Latvian and Estonian elite is stratified into the European hierarchical economical inequality and deeply depends from European elites. Russian elites in Latvia and Estonia are stratifying into the social and political structures of Russia.