

INTRODUCTION

# THE STRATEGIC FRAMING OF BALTIC SECURITY

## EUROPE, RUSSIA, AND MINORITY INCLUSION

After the collapse of communism, most Central and Eastern European (CEE) elites were eager to resurrect national identities based on the ethnic majority culture and to “return to Europe” by pursuing membership in European institutions. These goals were not easily reconciled. Minority groups promoted conflicting conceptions of the nation and claims about their place within the (re)constructed post-communist space. Ignoring minority claims was difficult. Not only did kin-states advocate on behalf of their ethnic kin living in other states, but the European Union made membership conditional on the protection of minorities. In Estonia and Latvia, nationalizing policies that privileged ethnic majorities and politically disenfranchised large numbers of Russian-speakers drew an unprecedented amount of attention from both European institutions and the Russian kin-state. The influence of European institutions and Russia on the minority situation in these states has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate.

Estonia and Latvia joined the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004. In the period leading up to accession, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CE) monitored the minority situation and issued numerous recommendations for policy reforms. These recommendations were reinforced by EU conditionality, which made EU membership conditional on the removal of some of the most exclusionary aspects of citizenship and language policies. While these reforms are often considered “wins” for European institutions, early optimism that European institutions would transform the minority situation in these countries soon gave way to skepticism and disappointment. Post-accession backsliding on policies, slow progress along

minority integration indicators, and continuing preferences for minority exclusion among ethnic majority elites demonstrated the limits of EU conditionality. What explains these less than spectacular policy outcomes in cases where European institutions had considerable leverage?

The weaknesses of the European minority rights framework and the reluctance of politicians to pay the costs of reform at the ballot box are important pieces of the puzzle that have been identified in other studies. However, neither European-level variables nor domestic audience costs can tell us much about the path or specific form of policies in these cases, nor can they adequately explain the post-accession policy landscape. For example, how can we explain Latvia's comparatively more restrictive minority policies, given that Russian-speakers are more politically organized and better represented at the national level in Latvia? Furthermore, how do we explain the passage of substantial liberalizing reforms to citizenship policies in Latvia in 2013 and in Estonia in 2015, a decade after EU accession? Similar initiatives had repeatedly failed in each state and there were no changes in parliamentary composition directly prior to the passage of amendments. Did Estonian and Latvian elites finally accept the legitimacy of further reforms, or were there other strategic incentives at work?

Finding answers to these puzzles requires bringing Russia into the story of policymaking in these states. The twenty-five million ethnic Russians stranded outside Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union provided Russia with a pretext for meddling in the affairs of other states, including in Estonia and Latvia. Over the years, Russia has used a variety of "harder" military and economic levers, as well as other "softer" tools of influence, all in the name of protecting Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia. Concern over Russia's influence in these states had been growing in response to Russia's shift toward tactics aimed at the coopting Russian-speakers after 2007. However, it was Russia's annexations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the course of the 2008 Russia–Georgia War, and its annexation of Crimea in 2014, all areas with sizable Russian-speaking populations that reawakened fears of a Russian military threat in the Baltic states. As this book goes to press, all three Baltic states strongly support raising defense budgets and the stationing of NATO forces on Baltic territory in order to deter Russian aggression. But how does the presence of a powerful and active Russian kin-state on their borders influence policymaking toward Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia? And how do Russian and European pressures interact in these cases to influence policymaking?

This book explores those questions through an analysis of policymaking in the areas of citizenship, language, and electoral policies over the past twenty-five years. These policy areas have been consequential for the inte-

gration of Russian-speakers into these societies and politically fraught both domestically and internationally. While there are good reasons for domestic policymakers to fear angering Russia, or failing to live up to European expectations, neither European institutions nor Russia have had a direct effect on policy outcomes in these cases. Rather, the influence of external actors has depended to a large extent on how domestic policymakers frame them in order to bring policy outcomes more into line with their own domestic agendas. Attention to the strategic framing and counter-framing of external actors explains not only the controversies, delays, and suboptimal outcomes surrounding the passage of “conditional” amendments in both cases, but also policy landscapes in each case post-accession.

By focusing on the policymaking process and the interaction between international and domestic fields, we can better understand how, and under what conditions, European institutions and Russia have collectively and interactively shaped policies in these states. Despite the credit given to the democratizing influence of European institutions in encouraging minority policy reforms in these cases, European frames alone have rarely produced significant policy changes, and then only when domestic constraints were low. In cases where policymakers faced greater domestic opposition, they used Russian frames to reinforce the necessity of reform and to justify the passage of more inclusive minority policies. This is not to say that European pressure did not matter at all. It clearly did, and provided powerful frames for setting the agenda and for shaping minority policies in a more inclusive direction, particularly during the EU accession period. However, the Russian kin-state has also provided powerful frames that have at times undermined and at other times reinforced European pressure in ways that have affected the path and form of policies. The strategic framing approach focuses our attention on how domestic policymakers in Estonia and Latvia were able to not only pass minority legislation when there was significant domestic opposition, but to wrest political compromises in the midst of considerable external pressure from comparatively powerful external actors. European institutions, Russia, and domestic policymakers are all key actors in that story.

### EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND MINORITY PROTECTION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Post-communist Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) sought membership in European institutions, including the OSCE, CE, NATO, and the EU, not only to distance themselves from their communist past, but because membership in the EU and NATO, in particular, offered greater prosperity and security. Member states, however, were wary of eastern expansion after the eruption of violent ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslav republics

in the early 1990s. There, post-communist states with large ethnic minorities, exclusionary nation-building projects, and activist kin-states in the neighborhood had proved to be potent recipes for conflict. The comparisons to states like Estonia and Latvia, with their restrictive citizenship and language policies, large Russian-speaking minorities, and an antagonistic Russian kin-state on their doorstep, were striking.

European institutions had hoped to dampen ethnic rivalries in EU candidate countries by including minority protection into the Copenhagen criteria for EU accession (1993), and by encouraging countries to sign and ratify conventions on minority protection during the accession process.<sup>1</sup> European institutions also engaged in active dialog with CEECs throughout the accession period and issued numerous recommendations with respect to minority protection. This European minority rights framework aimed broadly at preventing discrimination against minorities and creating opportunities for minority participation and cultural reproduction. These rights are not only essential features of liberal democracies and therefore important prerequisites for being accepted as full members of the liberal-democratic club; but they have been shown to prevent conflict in multiethnic societies.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties of meeting European minority requirements varied considerably across CEE. The challenges were substantial for states with sizeable minorities, historical legacies involving reversals of ethnic hierarchy, and active kin-states in the neighborhood. Such was the case for Romania and Slovakia, with their Hungarian minorities; Estonia and Latvia with their Russian-speaking minorities; and Lithuania with its Russian-speaking and Polish minorities. While communist legacies had instilled a sense of ethnic majority ownership over these territories, democratization gave a voice to both majority and minority groups, who articulated conflicting nation-building projects.

Many post-communist states incorporated the protection of the ethnic majority language and culture into their constitutions and developed policies aimed at protecting both majority culture and majority ownership over state institutions. In reaction to these homogenizing projects, minorities have demanded the right to protect their own language and culture on territories they often consider to be their own national homelands. In Romania and Slovakia, minority claims revolve around the right to cultural reproduction and conflicts have developed in reaction to language policies that privilege ethnic majorities.<sup>3</sup> In Estonia and Latvia, battles over citizenship and the right to participate in the political arena have been intertwined with conflicts over language and education policies.<sup>4</sup> While Lithuania adopted a more inclusive approach to citizenship, which dampened conflicts both internally and with external actors, controversies surrounding language and education policies

have been part of the policy landscape. In all cases, minority claims conflicted with the nationalizing projects of the state, which privileged ethnic majorities and aimed at the assimilation of minorities into the majority culture. Competing claims were fueled by ethnic tensions involving historical resentments, reversals of ethnic hierarchy, and difficult transitions from centrally planned to market economies. When kin-states began advocating on behalf of those minorities in the early 1990s, it intensified ethnic majority fears of irredentism and perceptions of minorities as disloyal.

The “problem of minorities” can be addressed either by enforcing conformity or recognizing diversity,<sup>5</sup> although the situation on the ground is often messier than this simple dichotomy implies. Since 1989, there has been a growing consensus among academics, policymakers, and international lawyers that recognizing diversity is the preferable and more appropriate response to ethnocultural heterogeneity, and is clearly the approach that has been favored by European institutions. Policies that aim at the homogenization of difference often provoke the kind of resentment and enmity that leads to ethnic conflict.<sup>6</sup> Such was the concern with the strongly nationalizing policies of Estonia and Latvia in the early 1990s.

By privileging the majority nations through citizenship, language, and education policies, nationalizing elites in Estonia and Latvia had hoped to encourage either the assimilation of Russian-speakers or their outmigration. Based on the concept of legal restoration, automatic citizenship was granted only to those who held citizenship in 1940 and their descendants, politically disenfranchising and rendering “stateless” over a half million people in each state, the vast majority of them Russian-speakers. This “stateless problem,” unprecedented in scope, was further compounded by the passage of naturalization requirements that included high levels of national-language knowledge. Language policies, which sought to protect and promote the use of Estonian and Latvian in the public sphere, further limited the ability of linguistic minorities to integrate into society.

The eastern enlargement of the EU to include eight post-communist and seven former Warsaw Pact countries in 2004, sparked numerous studies on *Europeanization*, defined broadly as the ability of European institutions to socialize states toward the acceptance of the democratic norms, or rules, of the European community, including the protection of minorities.<sup>7</sup> The EU accession process has undoubtedly had a democratizing influence on the region; however, the effectiveness of EU membership conditionality in the area of minority protection is less clear and remains the source of considerable debate among scholars. While early studies credited EU conditionality with forcing important policy reforms in Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Estonia, and Latvia,<sup>8</sup> later studies pointed to the shallowness of those reforms, and post-

accession trajectories that included a return to more exclusionary orientations and the resurgence of political parties with antiminority platforms across the region.<sup>9</sup> The ability of CEE elites to resist the adoption of more inclusionary minority policies while facing considerable pressure, not only from European institutions, but also from powerful kin-states, presents interesting questions to the international socialization literature. Perhaps nowhere in CEE have minority policy trajectories been more puzzling than in Estonia and Latvia.

### THE PUZZLES OF ESTONIA AND LATVIA

European institutions engaged in an extensive dialog with these governments throughout the pre-accession period, issuing numerous and often repeated recommendations for reforms to citizenship, language, and electoral policies. Where recommendations were tied explicitly to EU or NATO membership, reforms were passed, eliminating some of the most exclusionary aspects of those policies.<sup>10</sup> Given the policy trajectories of these states in the early 1990s, there is little doubt that minorities would be worse off today had it not been for European intervention. However, EU conditionality was not an “automatic” or uncontroversial mechanism for reform. Policy debates were contentious and lengthy, even when membership conditionality was applied, and policy outcomes still often failed to fully accommodate European recommendations.<sup>11</sup> As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, there were tendencies for governments to interpret European recommendations as maximum as opposed to minimum requirements, to ignore some recommendations, and to undercut reforms either through the passage of legislation in other areas or by rolling back amendments post-accession.

The result is that a number of direct and indirect barriers to minority integration remain, particularly in the political sphere.<sup>12</sup> The number of residents without the citizenship of any state has decreased considerably in both states since the early 1990s; however, those without citizenship still comprise approximately 6 percent of the population in Estonia, and 12 percent in Latvia.<sup>13</sup> It is also worth noting that another 7 percent have chosen Russian citizenship in Estonia, although this number is much smaller in Latvia.<sup>14</sup> Noncitizens are not allowed to participate in national politics in either country or in local politics in Latvia. Ironically, Russian-speakers in Latvia are more civically and politically organized than in Estonia, and there are real “Russian-speaking” parties represented in parliament, despite the fact that minority policies are more restrictive. Russia has been outspoken regarding the absence of political rights for noncitizens in Latvia, and Latvia’s EU membership has actually increased tensions over political rights because EU citizens can participate at the local level. Furthermore, in both states the regulation of language in both the public and private spheres makes effective participation contingent on

language skills, and broad sectors of the elite continue to favor exclusionary policies toward minorities.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that Estonia and Latvia were reluctant minimal reformers with respect to minority protection contrasts with their highly compliant behavior with respect to other aspects of the Copenhagen criteria, which includes market liberalization and the creation of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.<sup>16</sup> While such outcomes are hardly unique in the region, Estonia and Latvia are puzzling cases, given the unprecedented amount of international intervention in citizenship and language policies, and the fact that both states stood to benefit greatly from EU and NATO membership. Not only did membership in the EU hold out important economic benefits, but membership in the EU, and particularly NATO, provided important security guarantees against Russia.

Because Estonia and Latvia were the only two states not to grant citizenship to all residents at the time of (re)independence in 1991, they became the primary targets of Russia's kin-state activism throughout the pre-accession period. Russia's kin-state activism has included military and economic pressures, favorable citizenship, visa, cultural and educational policies for Russian-speakers and former Soviet citizens, as well as financial and organizational support for minority-friendly parties, Russian cultural initiatives, and public demonstrations. Russia has also used both European institutions and the Russian-language media as platforms for internationalizing the situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia and for influencing public opinion.<sup>17</sup> We might have expected Estonian and Latvian elites to develop more inclusive policies toward their Russian-speaking minorities out of fears of Russian aggression, given Russia's power and proximity, as well as historical legacies that included the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states into the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. At the very least, we might have expected greater compliance with European recommendations as a function of European security guarantees.

While Russia's recent aggressions in Georgia and Ukraine have reawakened Baltic elites to the realities of living next door to a militarily superior and territorially revisionist power, Russia has been on the security agenda of the Baltic states since independence. While the security threat that Russia posed to these states receded after their admission to NATO and the EU in 2004, the stakes in pursuing exclusionary policies toward Russian-speakers were high prior to accession. When restrictive citizenship and language policies were first adopted in the early 1990s, substantial numbers of Red Army troops were still stationed on Estonian and Latvian soil. Throughout the 1990s, exclusionary policies risked not only provoking intervention from the Russian kin-state, but also jeopardizing membership prospects in Western institutions.

The possibility of being left out in the cold should have hit home after Latvia's invitation to join the CE was delayed and made contingent on the passage of a citizenship law acceptable to European institutions in 1994. In December 1997, Latvia was left out again when it was not invited to begin accession negotiations along with Estonia and the other first-group countries as a result of its restrictive citizenship law. Despite such warnings from Western institutions, debates over minority policies remained protracted and Latvia continued to drag its feet on other conditional amendments, particularly concerning the regulation of language in the private sphere, which took parliament two years to pass, and the removal of language requirements for electoral candidates, which was finally passed in 2002, but only alongside the tightening of other legislation. Estonia drew few lessons from its neighbor's exclusion and continued to drag its own feet and to look for compromises on naturalization reforms for stateless children in 1998. As in Latvia, the removal of language requirements for candidates in 2001 only passed alongside the tightening of language policy. In addition to possibly provoking Russia and delaying admission to Western institutions, exclusionary policies risked alienating Russian-speakers, which comprised around one-third of the population in each state. Not only could this have had consequences for domestic stability, but it risked pushing Russian-speakers more firmly into Russia's camp, ultimately granting Russia greater leverage over these societies. Given the stakes involved, which were arguably high, how can we explain the reluctance of Estonian and Latvian elites to embrace a more inclusionary policy trajectory toward Russian-speakers prior to accession?

Post-accession policy trajectories also present interesting puzzles. Several studies argue that EU conditionality actually produces lock-in effects that make passing liberalizing reforms difficult post-accession.<sup>18</sup> From an incentive-based perspective, we would expect European recommendations to have less impact post-accession after the carrot of EU membership is removed, and might even expect some backsliding in states where policymakers only grudgingly made reforms, as was the case in Estonia and Latvia. European institutions had been continually calling for the further simplification of naturalization procedures for stateless children throughout the post-accession period. Yet reform initiatives consistently failed to gain enough support; outcomes consistent with lock-in effects. How then can we explain the passage of significant liberalizing reforms in Latvia in 2013 and in Estonia in 2015, in the absence of significant changes to the composition of parliaments directly prior to the passage of amendments?

The failure of European pressure to have had a greater transformative effect on the minority situation in these states is typically explained by deficien-



cies in the European minority rights framework itself, or as a function of domestic audience costs. The former emphasizes the ambiguous and contested nature of the European minority rights framework, including the difficulties of translating the Copenhagen criteria into a clear policy and enforcing it in the absence of an international consensus on minority protection.<sup>19</sup> From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that improvements in minority protection have been less dramatic, given that the benchmark itself is a vague, inconsistently applied, and constantly moving target. However, the weaknesses inherent in the minority rights framework alone cannot explain delays in the passage of legislation, why specific policies are chosen over others, or why liberalizing reforms would be passed post-accession in the absence of membership incentives.

Other scholars, who are more positive about the application of the EU's minority condition, explain the persistence of more restrictive policies as a function of domestic audience costs. From this perspective, elected officials were not willing to pay the costs of passing policies that would be unpopular with their electoral base, ultimately explaining suboptimal pre-accession outcomes.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the removal of even the most exclusionary aspects of citizenship and language policies prior to accession was significant for minorities in these cases. How were reformers able to persuade others to vote in favor of even minimal changes to the status quo, given the resistance of nationalizing governments and domestic societies to adopting minority policy reforms prior to accession? Furthermore, how can we explain cases where nationalizing parties changed their preferences in favor of reform after protracted debates? Such dynamics were at work, for example, surrounding the passage of controversial citizenship reforms in Latvia in 1998.

Recognizing the ways in which domestic policymakers strategically use Europe *and* Russia as justifications for their policy positions, in response to both external pressure and domestic constraints, is crucial for understanding the path and form of policies in these cases. Policymakers are clearly concerned with their domestic audiences. However, audience costs are to a large extent dependent on the ability of politicians to convince voters that they have their best interests at heart. The involvement of European institutions *and* Russia in minority policies provides opportunities for policymakers to present their policy preferences to other elites and their domestic audiences in new ways. The ambiguity surrounding the European minority rights framework provides the permissive conditions for elected officials to promote specific interpretations of their international obligations, ones that will resonate with their electorate. Policymakers can use Russia's activism to reinforce or undermine those interpretations in ways that are consistent with their own policy preferences.

## THE STRATEGIC FRAMING APPROACH

In the wake of the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, and the uneven compliance with European recommendations in new accession states, a new research agenda encouraged scholars to move “beyond conditionality” both temporally and with respect to theories of compliance.<sup>21</sup> I contribute to this turn in scholarship by adopting a strategic framing approach that bridges the gap between scholarship in the Europeanization, kin-state, and minority politics fields in order to understand how both European institutions and Russia influence policymaking toward Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia. This approach moves beyond traditional approaches to the study of external actors and their influence in three ways.

First, I approach the puzzles of the Estonian and Latvian cases from the perspective of the quadratic nexus. The conceptualization of minorities, nationalizing states, kin-states, and European institutions as a “quadratic nexus” of interactive and contingent fields has shaped much scholarship on nationalism and minority rights in CEE.<sup>22</sup> However, I introduce a new innovation to this framework by operationalizing policymakers as their own field of contestation. I will discuss these “fields” and their interrelationships briefly in the following section and in much greater detail in chapter 1.

Second, I adopt a predominately agency-oriented approach that focuses on how policymakers frame external fields. I define strategic framing as the deliberate effort of policymakers to promote a certain view of European institutions and/or the Russian kin-state in order to justify a particular policy preference and to persuade others to support it. While CEECs are often treated as passive targets of external pressure, a strategic framing approach draws our attention to the ways in which domestic policymakers can capitalize upon the contestation taking place both within and between fields of the quadratic nexus to persuade others to follow a particular policy course.<sup>23</sup> It therefore focuses our attention on the intermediary processes taking place between external pressures and policy outcomes. However, there are two sets of scope conditions that limit the strategic framing of the European and Russian fields in these cases: (1) the existence of external pressure, and perceptions or awareness of that pressure by policymakers; and (2) domestic political structures, particularly party systems and electoral policies. These scope conditions explain important differences in strategic framing across policy areas and countries, including the frequency and range of permissible frames.

Third, I focus primarily on the policymaking process as opposed to policy outcomes. Some studies evaluate the influence of European institutions or kin-states on policy outcomes in CEE, by comparing the timing of external pressure with macropolicy changes, especially in the pre-accession period.<sup>24</sup>

At times, these studies make references to the speech acts of high-ranking elites in order to lend evidence to the causal impact of external pressures. By contrast, a focus on the policymaking process draws our attention to the ways in which policymakers use external fields relationally and strategically in ways that affect both the path and form of legislation. Attention to policymaking as a process, as opposed to an outcome, shifts our focus from questions of *whether* external fields matter to *how* they matter. In order to sufficiently address the “how,” I adopt a broader scope for analysis than is done in previous studies, by analyzing debates surrounding both successful and unsuccessful policy initiatives and by looking at the entire post-independence period from the initial adoption of policies in the early 1990s through the end of 2015.

Through this reorientation in perspective I address the following specific research questions: How do domestic policymakers use European institutions and Russia to frame their policy preferences toward minorities? What relationships exist between European and Russian frames? How do policymakers shift their strategic frames in response to changes in the external environment? What effects does framing have on the path and form of policies?

Recent studies have advanced our understanding of the important relational interplays between European institutions and kin-states in CEE, in the process introducing new and important debates for the field. While some scholars argue that membership or prospective membership in the EU moderates kin-state behavior in CEE,<sup>25</sup> others conclude that European institutions can both dampen and intensify conflicts between kin-states and resident-states over minorities irrespective of their EU status.<sup>26</sup> For example, in cases where elites rely on the political and cultural resources of coethnics in neighboring countries, the EU’s ambiguous position on minority rights protection may actually encourage kin-state politics, even in prospective members.<sup>27</sup> In Estonia and Latvia, some find that European institutions have had a dampening effect on bilateral relations,<sup>28</sup> while others suggest that membership in European institutions has intensified conflicts over minorities by providing new venues for showdowns.<sup>29</sup> Several studies attribute European monitoring of the minority situation in Estonia and Latvia to Russia’s efforts to internationalize the situation of Russian-speakers.<sup>30</sup> To the extent that conditionality contributed to reforms, we might then conclude that Russia has had an indirect effect on improving the minority situation in these societies. However, others argue that the impression that Europe was “giving in” to Russia actually worked against the liberalization of minority policies, suggesting that outcomes may have been more substantial had Russia not been involved.<sup>31</sup>

A strategic framing approach can shed new light on these debates. I find that European institutions and Russia have at different times served as accelerators and brakes on reform in these cases, and that the Russian kin-state has

been used to both reinforce and undermine European pressure, sometimes in the context of a single policy debate. Consequently, the question of whether European institutions have had a dampening effect on conflicts between resident-states and Russia over the situation of Russian-speakers is considerably more complicated than existing debates might imply. In fact, everyone is right, depending on which policies and time period we are examining and from whose perspective. Understanding how policymakers strategically frame external fields in response to changes in the external environment and domestic constraints connects foreign actors to the policymaking process in ways that can more fully explain their influence on the path and form of policies. Observing such patterns over time can tell us quite a bit when we would expect strategic framing to emerge, and when European and Russian frames were significant for policy outcomes, ultimately moving us toward a more general theory of strategic framing and its effects.

Policymakers are at the center of pressures from multiple overlapping, contingent, and relational fields. These fields include majority and minority groups, kin-states that claim to protect those minorities, and European institutions. However, policymakers are not simply passive targets of those pressures. Rather, they operate within their own field of domestic incentives and constraints. Policymakers are strategic, and external fields provide opportunities for them to justify policy preferences in new ways. The following sections operationalize the main components of the strategic framing approach including the quadratic nexus framework, the role of policymakers at the center of that nexus, and the concept of strategic framing.

#### THE QUADRATIC NEXUS

Rogers Brubaker “reframed” perspectives on nation-building in post-communist Europe as a “triadic nexus” of three overlapping relational fields consisting of minority groups, the host-states, or resident states, in which they live, and kin-states to which they are bound by ethnocultural affinity.<sup>32</sup> These fields, which consist of “differentiated and competing positions,” were constructed through the post-communist reorganization of political space.<sup>33</sup> The reconstruction of state borders after the collapse the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia left many groups in the region, including Russians, Hungarians, Albanians, Serbs, and Turks, attached to one state by either formal residence or citizenship, and to another by ethnonational affinity. The mismatch between cultural and political boundaries in CEE, and the subsequent interactions between these fields generate distinct forms of nationalism.

Estonia and Latvia, like many other CEECs, pursued nationalizing policies in the early 1990s that aimed at promoting the linguistic, cultural, political, economic, and demographic superiority of the dominant nation. The

discourse of the *nationalizing state* stresses the idea that the state is of and for a single *core* nation that is ethnoculturally distinct from the rest of society. Policies that aim at the elevation of this core nation are intended to compensate for the weakened position of the core as a result of past policies of discrimination. The nationalizing state aims to assimilate minorities into the dominant nation, or to prevent them from influencing the political, economic, or cultural life of the state.<sup>34</sup> While the nationalizing state has been dominant in post-communist CEE, states differ with respect to *how they are nationalizing* and *how nationalizing they are*, both across cases and over time. This is the result of both the changing composition of this field as well as reactions to other fields.

*Kin-state nationalism* challenges the nationalizing state when political or cultural elites protest violations of the rights of their conationals and assert the right to defend their interests.<sup>35</sup> Kin-states “monitor the condition, promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, assert the rights, and protect the interests of their ethnonational kin in other states.”<sup>36</sup> Kin-state nationalism encompasses a wide range of policies and activities aimed at influencing the policies of other states or the situation of conationals in those states. At times, kin-states may adopt punitive measures that pressure the nationalizing state economically or militarily, however actual military intervention on behalf of conationals is historically rare.<sup>37</sup> Kin-states also have a number of other tools at their disposal to establish connections with their ethnonational kin including electoral rules; regulations on repatriation; dual citizenship; economic regulations that incentivize cooperation with conational entrepreneurs abroad; cultural exchanges; or support for bilingual education, minority political parties, social movements, or demonstrations in states where their conationals reside. Kin-states may call attention to the situation of their conationals through the media, work through the international organizations of which they are a member, or call upon those that they are not, to pressure nationalizing elites into developing more accommodative policies.<sup>38</sup> The existence of a European minority rights framework, albeit a contested framework, legitimizes the actions of kin-states, which can invoke European standards and recommendations in the hopes of discrediting the nationalizing state, shaming it into adjusting its policies, or convincing European institutions to hold nationalizing states accountable to international standards. The legitimacy of kin-state nationalism can be further reinforced through bilateral treaties that acknowledge the mutual interests of states in their cultural diaspora. The form, degree, and motivations behind kin-state nationalism may vary widely within and across cases, depending on the size, power, proximity, domestic political situation, and geopolitical priorities of the kin-state, which also reflect its relationship with European institutions.<sup>39</sup> The kin-state itself is a dy-

namic field, where policies are contested and may vary over time in response to the push and pull among interested parties and in reaction to other fields.

Caught between these two nationalisms is the minority group. Minority nationalism is not a static ethnodemographic condition, but a dynamic political stance that defines the group in political rather than simply ethnocultural terms. Minority nationalism is shaped by a variety of cultural, political, and historical factors, and therefore varies widely in the form that it takes across cases, as well as within cases over time.<sup>40</sup> A national minority may assert a variety of collective cultural or political rights ranging from, for instance, the right to education in the minority language to territorial autonomy or independence. While minority nationalisms are likely to find support from kin-states, as both oppose the policies of the nationalizing state, they are not necessarily strategically aligned. The kin-state may use the national minority as a pretext for pursuing nonnational political goals, or may even abandon its conationals for strategic reasons. The minority may look upon the kin-state favorably as a result of its efforts to protect minority interests and may forge closer ties to the kin-state, or not. Minority affinity for the kin-state depends on a variety of factors including the reactions of the nationalizing state to kin-state activism and minority mobilization, improvement in the minority situation as a result of that activism, and perceptions of kin-state intentions.

The involvement of European institutions in regulating the minority situation in CEE adds a fourth field to Brubaker's nexus.<sup>41</sup> Before rolling out the red carpet to CEECs, European institutions sought guarantees that they would work toward integrating their minorities. The OSCE established the office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to engage in "quiet diplomacy" to encourage states to adopt policies that would not exacerbate interethnic tensions.<sup>42</sup> Members of the CE were subject to both the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights and were encouraged to adhere to a number of other international conventions and documents on minority protection that were written during the 1990s. Minority protection was also connected to EU membership through the mechanism of membership conditionality.

European institutions might become aware of infringements on the rights of minorities through their own monitoring mechanisms, by local or international NGOs that are also monitoring the situation, by direct appeals from minority members, particularly through European courts, or by accusations of discrimination against conationals by the kin-state. Given Western anxieties over the potential for violence in CEECs, playing up security concerns has been a useful strategy for grabbing European attention.<sup>43</sup> European institutions can address violations through a variety of mechanisms ranging from constructivist tools of argumentative persuasion and shaming, to more ratio-

nalist mechanisms of political or economic conditionality. Institutions may also try to empower reform-minded domestic actors or to sway public opinion against the actions of the nationalizing elite. These mechanisms are often used in combination and may change over time, particularly as membership prospects are either fulfilled or withdrawn, and in relation to the availability of aid. However, European institutions are also a variably configured and continuously contested political field, as evidenced by the ambiguities inherent in the European minority rights framework and its inconsistent application across cases and over time.

As Brubaker aptly described, the relation between these components is “a relation between relational fields; and relations between the fields are closely intertwined with relations internal to and constitutive of the fields.”<sup>44</sup> Thus these fields are not static, monolithic, or homogenous, but rather contested, contingent, and relational. The “quadratic nexus” framework is extremely useful for helping us to understand the consequences of “divided nations” in CEE, that is, nations who through historical processes have found themselves on opposite sides of international borders.<sup>45</sup> By operationalizing policymakers as their own contested field within the nexus, I am able to show how they respond to external pressure and strategically frame European and Russian fields in ways that have influenced the path and form of minority policies.

#### POLICYMAKERS AS THEIR OWN CONTESTED FIELD

Policymakers can be defined broadly as anyone involved in the formulation and passage of policies, including both elected officials and policy advisors. Because I am concerned primarily with the process by which specific policies become law at the national level, I focus on parliamentary debates and policymaking processes among and between members of government, members of parliament (MPs) and factions within parliament. At times, members of external fields may be invited into the domestic policy arena to advise on policy or to present their viewpoints to the government, various committees, or to the entire parliament. While these external representatives are “framers” in their own right and will present external fields in ways that encourage the passage of particular policies, this book focuses on how domestic policymakers in Estonia and Latvia utilize external fields during the policymaking process. Nevertheless, the involvement of external actors in domestic debates provides policymakers with the opportunities to frame their own policy preferences in new ways.

So where do policymakers fit into this quadratic structure? While it might be implied that they are part of the nationalizing state, in the sense that they are responsible for determining policies at the national level, not all policymakers necessarily support official state policies with respect to minorities.

Alternatively, we might consider them members of the majority or minority ethnic group with which they identify ethnoculturally. But policymakers may support policy positions that run counter to the interests of the group with which they identify. It is possible that those advocating the interests of the core ethnic nation could be conceived as part of an ethnic majority field, while those claiming to represent the interests of the minority group could be alternatively conceived as representatives of the minority field. However, politicians may still at times adopt policy positions at odds with those they claim to represent. Because policymakers may hold a variety of policy positions that differ significantly from the official position of the state, and may even at times support positions that run counter to the interests of the ethnic group that they either identify with or claim to represent, I treat policymakers as their own subfield of contestation within this larger nexus.

I categorize policymakers who claim to advance the interests and culture of the core nation, or ethnic majority (usually at the expense of minorities) as “nationalizers,” and those who advocate for more inclusive policies toward minorities as “minority advocates.” It is important to acknowledge that these elites would not necessarily describe themselves this way;<sup>46</sup> in fact, they may have incentives to deny such labels. While nationalizers are typically members of the ethnic majority, minority advocates are not always members of the minority field. This is true in both Estonia and Latvia, but particularly in Estonia, due to consistently low levels of minority representation in parliament. Neither nationalizers nor minority advocates necessarily agree among themselves on the appropriate framing of external fields or the correct policy course. Nor are the stances of individual policymakers or parliamentary factions necessarily consistent over time or across issue areas. Sometimes these positions shift during the course of a single reading of a bill. Consequently, in the case study chapters, these labels represent the position of an individual or parliamentary faction at a specific moment in time with respect to a particular policy position; and accordingly, they may shift over time and across issue areas.

Figure I.1 depicts the strategic framing model and locates policymakers within this larger nexus that includes European institutions, Russia, the Russian-speaking minority, and the ethnic majority group. Policymakers that are more supportive of inclusionary policies toward Russian-speakers could be depicted as located closer to the Russian-speakers field and those favoring more exclusionary, or “nationalizing,” policies closer to the majority field. The arrows connecting these fields simply represent the multiple interactions taking place between them, which are outlined briefly above.

As Michael Zürn and Jeffrey Checkel argue, the effects of international socialization are often secondary to domestic politics, implying an import-



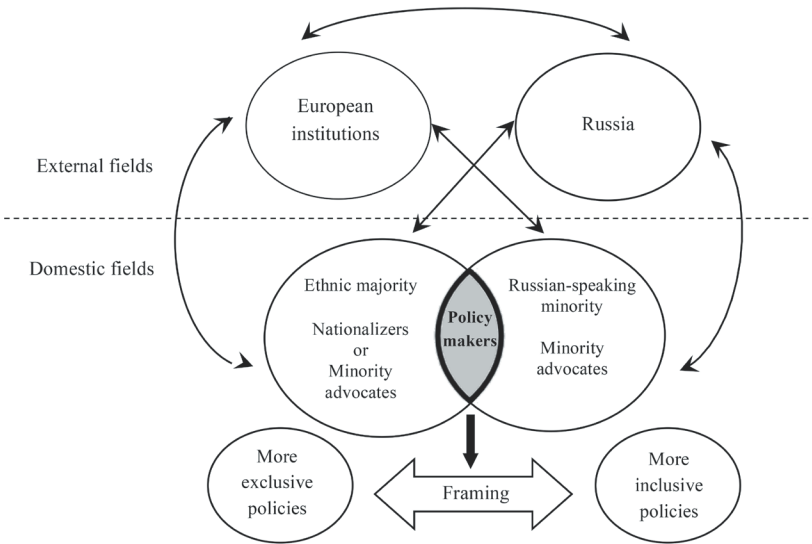


FIGURE I.1. Strategic Framing within the Quadratic Nexus

ant role for domestic agency.<sup>47</sup> Several recent studies treat minority policies in CEE primarily as a product of domestic politics, while acknowledging the importance of the external environment as a background variable or condition.<sup>48</sup> This book is also primarily a story about domestic politics; however, it is one in which European institutions and Russia also play important roles. Policy-makers have used *both* European *and* Russian frames to set the agenda and to direct policies in more exclusionary and inclusionary directions. Thus, the strategic framing of external fields by domestic policymakers is an important intermediary process between external pressures and policy outcomes.

#### STRATEGIC FRAMING

Existing scholarship on the influence of external fields in target states has placed a great deal of attention on causal mechanisms and their scope conditions. Causal mechanisms “clarify what happens between a cause and its effect.”<sup>49</sup> That is, they refer to the intermediary processes along which the external actor induces the target state toward accepting the rules, norms or modes of appropriate behavior.<sup>50</sup> Scope conditions describe when we would expect the mechanism to be effective. The strategic framing and counter-framing of

external fields is an intermediary process between external fields and the pressure they exert on target states, and domestic policy outcomes. As is the case with any causal mechanism, strategic framing has its own scope conditions.

The concept of strategic framing that I elaborate here draws greatly upon Brubaker's original conceptualization of the nexus. The novelty of the nexus framework is that these fields are conceived as "variably configured and continuously contested political fields, in which different organizations, parties, movements, or political entrepreneurs, vie to advance their own particular political stance and to gain acceptance as the legitimate representative of the group."<sup>51</sup> Once committed to a particular course of action, actors within a field will strategically construct "representations" of other fields to justify those preferences. Brubaker stressed that the reciprocal relationship between fields was a product not only of "stances" or the "expressly articulated positions" of each field, which could develop through policies and rhetoric, but how those stances were affected by the "representations" of other fields.<sup>52</sup> While Brubaker's nexus is frequently used to explain nationalisms in CEE, it is precisely this discursive construction of other fields that has received less attention in the scholarly literature. As Ammon Cheskin argues, operationalizing the quadratic nexus effectively requires that we "combine the study of policies and events with discursive and perceptual elements."<sup>53</sup> By doing this, a strategic framing approach can account for the path and form of policies in ways that comparing the timing of external pressure to policy outcomes alone cannot. My concept of "frames" has much in common with Brubaker's concept of "representations," and there is admittedly a lot of "framing" taking place within Brubaker's original nexus. However, the strategic framing approach developed here also draws heavily upon theories of framing within the social movement and policymaking literatures.

A *frame* is an "idea or story line" that gives meaning to a set of events.<sup>54</sup> While frames can be useful as problem-solving devices or for making sense of the world,<sup>55</sup> frames can also be used strategically to accomplish goals. Social movement scholars have demonstrated that frames can be used strategically to mobilize collective action, garner bystander support, demobilize antagonists, and secure funding from donors.<sup>56</sup> Within the policy literature, frames are treated as political tools that policymakers use to build support for their proposals, and to shape policy debates in ways that promote their policy agendas.<sup>57</sup> A host of studies have found evidence for framing effects across a variety of domestic and foreign policy areas.<sup>58</sup> These studies demonstrate that by presenting an issue or problem in a certain way it is possible to either alter the preferences of individuals, or to force them to consider a subset of new potentially relevant issues or concerns.<sup>59</sup> In this way, frames can shape opinions on policies in predictable ways.<sup>60</sup>

In the context of this study, I define *strategic framing* as the deliberate effort of a policymaker to promote a particular view of European institutions and/or Russia in order to justify their policy preference and to persuade others to support it. Frames are typically presented as statements of belief; however, policymakers themselves need not be convinced of those frames. While it is of course possible for external fields to shape the attitudes and preferences of policymakers and for frames to be a reflection of those processes, policy preferences might also be the product of a variety of factors unrelated to external fields. The latter would not preclude policymakers from utilizing external fields to achieve their policy goals, implying a more manipulative use of external frames. The influence of external fields on attitudes or policy preferences might be discernible through surveys or in-depth interviews; however, these questions lie outside the scope of this project. The causal influence of strategic framing on policymaking is, by contrast, observable through words and actions; for example, when a policymaker uses external fields to persuade others to vote in favor of a particular policy or to justify personal policy preferences in the context of policy debates.<sup>61</sup> Policymakers “act rhetorically”<sup>62</sup> and they can use external fields to break old frames, present new frames, or reinforce existing frames in order to convince others that a particular policy is justified.<sup>63</sup>

#### FRAMING AND COUNTER-FRAMING

*Frames are contested.* All policymakers have incentives to frame and reframe external fields in ways that support their own policy preferences, resulting in a process of strategic framing and counter-framing.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the influence of any particular frame on policymaking is affected by both the availability and utilization of alternative counter-frames.<sup>65</sup> Policymakers are strategic in promulgating specific understandings or views of external fields, and they are adept at playing fields off one another in order to generate support for particular policies. That these frames are relational and contingent is not only possible, but likely. “Framing contests”<sup>66</sup> may take place regarding the meaning of one field, or they may involve the juxtaposition of more than one field. In other words, policymakers may disagree over the meaning and consequences of European or Russian pressure, or they may frame European and Russian pressures in competing ways. For example, while minority advocates typically reference the recommendations of European institutions or European minority rights conventions to justify more inclusionary policies toward minorities, nationalizers tend to offer alternative interpretations of those recommendations or conventions in order to justify exclusion or the status quo. Nationalizers might also argue that European institutions are overly influenced by the kin-state, or that European conventions are not applicable as a result of kin-state policies. While these are only a few examples, they illustrate

that external frames are relational and that framing contests are part of the policymaking process.

Framing contests occur not only between nationalizers and minority rights advocates, but also among them, as different individuals emphasize different aspects, events, or consequences related to external pressure. As Brubaker aptly notes, “struggles among competing representations of an *external* field may be closely linked to struggles among competing stances *within* the given field.”<sup>67</sup> These internal contests may be the result of genuine disagreement among policymakers about what actually “matters” or the result of a search to find a frame that is convincing to others. These framing contests have a significant influence on the path and form of policies. Where frames and counter-frames enjoy strong support from their respective proponents, the policymaking process is lengthier and policy outcomes tend to be less transformative than in cases where contradictory frames are absent, or where external fields are framed in mutually reinforcing ways.

#### SCOPE CONDITIONS FOR THE STRATEGIC FRAMING OF EXTERNAL FIELDS

Strategic framing depends upon the existence of external pressure, or at least the perception of external pressure among policymakers. While frames may be new and even surprising, they have limits.<sup>68</sup> To be effective, frames must be grounded in reality and credible to the target audience.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, strategic framing should reflect changes in the external environment and vary along with the intensity of external pressure. For example, strategic framing should be more prevalent surrounding conditional amendments because the costs of not meeting external demands is higher (exclusion from the organization), compared with policy debates following the release of a European monitoring report that does not have material incentives attached to it.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, strategic framing should be more frequent following Russian threats of military or economic sanctions, compared with less aggressive kin-state mechanisms, such as Russia’s use of the Russian-language media to call attention to the situation of Russian-speakers. However, when those public campaigns become linked to European monitoring and membership prospects, the opportunities for domestic policymakers to leverage kin-state frames increase. Here, attention to how policymakers frame the links between fields is crucial for understanding their relational interplay and ultimately their influence on policymaking.

While both European institutions and Russia have taken an active interest in the situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia throughout the post-independence period, the form and intensity of external pressures on policymaking has varied over time in these cases. Pressure from European institutions was arguably higher in Latvia than in Estonia in the early 1990s,

given the use of CE conditionality in the case of Latvia's citizenship law in 1994. However, European pressure peaked prior to the start of EU accession negotiations in Estonia in 1998, and in Latvia in 1999, and continued throughout negotiations over the passage of conditional amendments. The intensity of European pressure has decreased in both states post-accession, although regular monitoring and dialog with European institutions continues.

Russia's kin-state activism has also varied in form and intensity. While Russia's use of military and economic pressures was more intense in the period leading up to EU and NATO accession in 2004, its use of "softer" mechanisms to cultivate more direct links with Russian-speakers became more prevalent post-accession. Bilateral relations with Russia have been contentious for both Estonia and Latvia throughout the entire post-independence period, with each experiencing periods of high tensions, often connected to the situation of Russian-speakers in these societies. While NATO membership increased Baltic security, Russia's interventions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 have again heightened the existential security threat.

While the mechanisms of European and Russian pressure will be discussed extensively in chapter 1, this brief sketch demonstrates that external pressures vary over time, both in degree and in kind. Consequently, we would expect patterns of strategic framing to follow the ebbs and flows of external pressures and for policymakers to strategically frame their policy preferences in different ways in reaction to changes in external fields. However, variations in strategic framing over time and across cases depend not only on the intensity and type of external pressure, but also on domestic level factors that limit the range of permissible frames available to policymakers.

Policymaking takes place within a broader social and political context that acts as a set of constraints. The domestic context not only limits the types of policies that policymakers can reasonably advocate, but also the range of permissible external frames that are available to them. While elected officials are always concerned with how supporting certain policies will influence their base of support in society, external fields can provide new ways for them to justify their policy preferences to their domestic audiences. Nevertheless, the ability of policymakers to create new frames, or to reframe external fields, is limited by other domestic level variables. Party systems, which include the number of parties, their ideological orientations, as well as norms pertaining to party discipline, affect the space available for strategic framing and counter-framing. Electoral rules and competition between parties for votes, particularly within subsectors of the electorate, also influence strategic framing and can lead to framing contests.<sup>71</sup>

As will be demonstrated in the case study chapters, there are important differences in strategic framing across the Estonian and Latvian contexts

that cannot be attributed to differences in the degree and types of external pressure alone. These include the persistent use of frames related to Soviet occupation and the disloyalty of Russian-speakers by Latvian nationalizers to justify exclusionary policies, and by contrast, the increasing use of kin-state security frames by Estonian minority advocates to justify more inclusionary policies post-accession. I argue that differences in party and electoral systems help to explain such differences across cases. In Estonia, an electoral system that allows noncitizens to vote at the local level, and a party system in which “Russian-speaking” parties no longer play a significant role, has the combined effect of moderating the rhetoric of mainstream parties as they compete for Russian-speaking votes, ultimately making strongly nationalizing frames impermissible. At the same time, minority advocates within mainstream parties have the space to present Russia as threatening without risking the complete alienation of their electoral base because there are no electoral alternatives for Russian-speakers and because they also draw support from ethnic Estonians. By contrast, in Latvia, the success of real “Russian-speaking” parties and the polarization of parties along ethnic lines leads to ethnic outbidding among parties catering to the ethnic Latvian vote and the persistence of occupation and disloyalty frames. At the same time, it is too risky for minority advocates from within “Russian-speaking” parties to use kin-state security frames because they risk not only alienating their electorate, but branding themselves as unreliable coalition partners in future governments. While such dynamics are explored more extensively in chapter 6, these cases draw our attention to the ways in which domestic variables limit the strategic framing of external fields.

#### CASE STUDIES: CITIZENSHIP, LANGUAGE, AND ELECTORAL POLICIES IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

Estonia and Latvia are typically treated as most similar cases in the literature on international socialization and minority rights, and for good reason. They share similar historical legacies, including fifty years under Soviet occupation, during which they inherited similar institutional legacies and sizable Russian-speaking minorities. The two countries regained their independence in 1991 and faced comparable challenges to integrating their large Russian-speaking minorities as they embarked on their quest toward membership in European institutions, including the significant interventions of an activist Russian kin-state. They were included in the same round of EU and NATO enlargement in 2004, although Estonia was invited to open EU accession negotiations ahead of Latvia. While each country did face unique challenges in meeting accession criteria, many of the conditional amendments related to minorities were strikingly similar. The unprecedented involvement of both European institutions and the Russian kin-state in minority protec-

tion in Estonia and Latvia presented domestic policymakers with a myriad of opportunities to frame minority policies in new ways.

Nevertheless, there are important differences across these countries that make them extremely useful for exploring how and when strategic framing influences the path and form of policies. Throughout the pre- and post-accession periods, policies and initiatives have been more exclusionary toward Russian-speakers in Latvia than in Estonia. In addition to the absence of voting rights for permanent residents at the local level, Latvian nationalists succeeded in introducing restrictive provisions into conditional amendments, and have tried unsuccessfully to roll back conditional amendments post-accession. Domestic opposition to policy reforms has also varied across cases and issue areas, with citizenship amendments being significantly delayed in Estonia, and language policy more hotly contested in Latvia.

Explaining such variations in the path and form of policies across these two countries requires examining how policymakers respond to external fields and frame them under different domestic constraints. The intensity and types of external pressures have varied over time, across countries and issue areas. However, the levels of civic and political organization among Russian-speakers and the degree of ethnic party polarization also vary across countries, both being higher in Latvia. Such variations in external and domestic fields influence strategic framing and the policymaking process, helping to explain differences across cases.

The empirical chapters focus on case studies drawn from citizenship, language, and electoral policy areas because those have been the focus of external pressure both prior to and after EU and NATO accession in 2004. Through an analysis of parliamentary debates, the case studies aim to do two things: (1) Explore how policymakers use European institutions and Russia to frame their policy preferences over time; and (2) evaluate how strategic framing processes influence the path and form of policies. This provides key insights into how Europe and Russia have influenced the policymaking process, as well as how the range of permissible frames has changed over time both within and across countries.

European institutions have issued numerous recommendations in the areas of citizenship, language, and electoral policies, which are highlighted in regular reports from the CE, the OSCE and the EU prior to EU accession, as well as in monitoring reports from the CE post-accession. Russia has been an active kin-state in each of these policy areas throughout the pre- and post-accession periods. European institutions have applied a mixture of normative pressure and membership conditionality, while Russia has utilized a variety of hard and soft power tools in the name of protecting Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia. Because the number of issues within each of these policy areas

is far too numerous to cover in a single project, I selected specific policy issues that were debated in parliaments based on two criteria: (1) The existence of significant pressure from both European institutions and Russia; and (2) the existence of policy initiatives both before and after EU and NATO accession, as well as before and after periodic escalations in tensions with Russia. This allowed me to observe how the framing of external fields changes over time within issue areas and in response to changes in external fields. This resulted in the selection of six issue area case studies: four comparative cases across the Latvian and Estonian contexts; and one specific to each country. Within each selected issue area, I analyzed all policy initiatives from independence through the end of 2015.

At the start of the 1990s, the focus of international pressure was different in Estonia and Latvia. Consequently, in Estonia, I focus on the passage of the Aliens Act in 1993 and subsequent amendments involving issues of residency, the status of former Soviet military and security personnel, and family reunification, while in Latvia I focus on the passage of the 1994 Citizenship Law and subsequent amendments involving the “windows system” and other restrictions on naturalization. By the mid- to late 1990s external pressure coalesced around several common issues, which I treat comparatively: naturalization procedures for stateless children, the regulation of language requirements in the private sphere, language requirements for candidates in local and national elections, and the working language of parliaments and local government councils. Each of these six case studies adds a unique dimension to our understanding of how policymakers strategically framed European and Russian fields under particular sets of external and domestic constraints, in order to influence the path and form of policies.

European institutions applied membership conditionality in all of these policy areas except in the areas of aliens policy in Estonia and the working languages of government bodies in both cases. The CE attached membership conditionality to the passage of the Citizenship Law in Latvia in 1994 and made it clear that restrictive quotas were not acceptable by European standards. In all cases, aside from the ones just mentioned, the EU linked membership prospects to policy reforms during the accession period in the European Commission’s Regular Reports; expectations that were reinforced through regular visits and consultations between European institutions and the Estonian and Latvian governments. NATO also linked membership to the removal of language requirements for political candidates.

Despite the fact that Russian pressure was also high during the pre-accession period, reforms have typically been attributed to European pressure, and particularly to the mechanism of membership conditionality. Consequently, these are critical cases for demonstrating how a strategic framing approach



can shed new light on how Russia influenced the policymaking process. Furthermore, while we would expect European pressure on minority policies to decrease post-accession and for European frames to become less influential, Russia's kin-state activism has arguably been increasing in recent years making these useful cases for exploring how kin-states influence policymaking post-accession.

### **METHODOLOGY: PROCESS TRACING, FRAME ANALYSIS, AND INTERVIEWS**

I have developed this argument over the course of many years of research, which has included extensive fieldwork in Estonia and Latvia. The case study chapters present the results of a qualitative analysis of parliamentary debates and in-depth interviews with Estonian and Latvian policymakers. Here I describe the sources of data, methods of analysis, and presentation of results in the empirical chapters.

In case study chapters, I use process tracing, which involves the intensive description of events as they unfold over time, to track how the framing of external fields changes in response to external pressure, and how that framing influences the policymaking process.<sup>72</sup> In order to establish the existence of external pressure within each policy area, I utilize a variety of primary and secondary sources including regular monitoring reports from European institutions, foreign policy documents of the Russian government, and media sources, in addition to a rich scholarly literature on the European minority rights framework, EU conditionality, and Russian foreign policy toward the Baltic states. I then compare the timing of this pressure to: (1) the timing of policy initiatives in each of these policy areas and the policy outcomes of those initiatives in each case; and (2) the ways both nationalizers and minority advocates justify their policy preferences in relation to external fields in the context of policy debates as well as the reaction of other policymakers to those frames. While other studies have relied primarily on the first type of comparison in order to determine the influence of external fields on minority policy outcomes,<sup>73</sup> the second type of comparison is unique to the strategic framing approach. As will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters and argued throughout the book, reliance on the first type of comparison alone leads to an underestimation of the influence of external fields on the policymaking process and ultimately on policy outcomes in these cases. Through detailed process tracing, I establish how the framing and counter-framing of external fields by nationalizers and minority rights advocates change in relation to shifts in external pressure, ultimately influencing the path and form of policies in a variety of ways.

The analysis is based on all policy initiatives that were presented and debated in parliament in each of these issue areas through the end of 2015. In

Estonia, this includes all first readings and subsequent readings of bills, and in Latvia, all plenary sessions and subsequent readings. I include both successful and unsuccessful policy initiatives. To my knowledge, such a comprehensive analysis has not been undertaken. I refer to policy initiatives by their draft bill numbers whenever data is summarized in tables or in graphs. Additionally, I always provide a description of the relevant aspects of each draft bill in the text of the chapter, as well as links to each version of the draft bill in the notes to each chapter.

I construct frames from the “bottom up”—from text to frame<sup>74</sup>—by analyzing the spoken texts of policymakers in the form of oral debates on the floors of parliaments. An analysis of the oral debates themselves, which are publicly available, allows us to examine directly how policymakers “act rhetorically” and engage in the art of persuading others through the use of external frames. I do at times refer to the written draft bills that are submitted for consideration, as relevant passages are sometimes referenced in the context of the debates. However, the frames that are presented and summarized in the case studies are based on a qualitative analysis of the debates themselves.

I began by reading through each debate several times in its entirety, in the process coding all references to European institutions and Russian fields as justifications for policy preferences. This involved simply coding a frame as “Europe” or “Russia” if a policymaker used the external field as a justification for their policy preference or in an attempt to persuade others of the rightness of the policy course. During this process, the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (Riga, Latvia) and the Estonian Research Center (Tallinn, Estonia) provided crucial research support. The institutes did their own independent search of the parliamentary record for relevant policy initiatives in each issue area, coded passages related to European and Russian fields, and provided English translations of those passages, as well as additional passages I had identified. I also had a graduate student trained to do a separate independent search of the parliamentary record. These provided important checks that I was not missing relevant policy initiatives or passages, some measure of coder reliability given the sheer quantity of data, and professional translations of the policy debates by native Estonian and Latvian-speaking researchers.

Of course, policymakers may frame external fields in a variety of ways. European frames might for instance include references to policy recommendations from European institutions, Western norms or standards embodied in minority rights conventions, the policies and practices of member states, or the “appropriate” way to behave as a member state, European country, or Western democracy. Russian frames might include references to Russia’s activism on behalf of Russian-speakers including military, economic, or diplomatic pressures, kin-state policies that grant privileges to ethnic kin, attempts

to coopt Russian-speakers in Estonia or Latvia or to influence domestic policies, as well as past transgressions or historical injustices that place responsibility for the situation of Russian-speakers on the kin-state. While I am also interested in *how* European and Russian fields are presented and how those frames change over time, I began by simply tallying all references to each external field under a general “Europe” or “Russia” code within each policy initiative. These references to external fields are then presented numerically in tables in the cases study chapters and also graphed onto a timeline for each issue area for comparative purposes in chapter 6. The numerical tabulations provide evidence of the use of external frames by policymakers in these debates and some measure of comparability across external fields, issue areas, and countries over time.

A few words should be said about these numerical references. First, I do not believe that frame analysis should be fundamentally a quantitative exercise, nor do I treat it as such, as I hope will be clear in the chapters that follow. Nor do I think that numbers in and of themselves provide evidence of causality.<sup>75</sup> So, why did I bother counting up the number of times European and Russian fields were raised by policymakers as justifications for their preferences in the context of these debates? First, I do think that the numbers lend evidence to the notion that external frames were at times extremely influential in these debates. While scholars may be right to argue that minority policy development in CEE has been primarily a story about domestic politics, it is still one in which external actors have important roles to play.

Second, the numbers support the argument that Russia casts a long shadow in these debates, and that Russia has had a significant impact on the policymaking process, including during the accession period where more scholarly attention has been focused on European institutions. Part of what has driven my fascination with this project has been policymakers who would tell me (usually defensively) that Russia no longer has any influence on Estonia or Latvia, or others who are sure that Russia matters but are less sure about how. The numbers reveal that policymakers devote considerable time to discussing Russia’s kin-state activism during these policy debates, suggesting that we need to unpack Russia’s influence on policymaking. Finally, numbers also provide an easy even if only preliminary way to look at trends over time and in relation to critical junctures, such as EU accession or tensions in bilateral relations, giving us some insight into when strategic framing is more or less likely to emerge.

The second point that needs to be made about these numbers is that they are very low estimates, representing each time an external field is raised in a debate by a policymaker in a particular speech act, as opposed to the total number of references to the field, which would take into account the various

ways a field might be framed. This perhaps reflects my belief that frame analysis should be more than just a counting exercise. For example, if in the course of a single speech act, a policymaker justifies their policy preference with respect to European recommendations, European minority rights conventions, and the policies and practices of other European countries, I treat it as one reference to the European field. In the course of the analysis and discussion, however, I present these as three distinct types of European frames. As another example, if a policymaker asks the initiator of the bill a question about the consequences of the policy for EU membership, the question and response are coded as one reference to the European field. However, if the same policymaker raises the European field again in the context of a different question or speech act, it is coded as a second reference. For the purpose of transparency and replicability, I have attributed the use of external frames to specific policymakers and provided links to the original parliamentary debates in the notes to each chapter.

The final point about these numerical references is a word of caution in making comparisons across countries due to differences in legislative procedures. In Latvia, the presidium issues an opinion on a draft bill which is presented to parliament in a plenary session during which only one MP may speak for the legislation and one against before it is voted upon.<sup>76</sup> In Estonia, if the board of the parliament decides to open proceedings on a bill or draft resolution, it is presented to parliament in a first reading during which any MP may ask up to two questions after which the floor is open to all parliamentary factions for debate.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, legislation that is presented in Estonia, even if it is defeated in a first reading, may have more references to external fields than a bill that is presented to parliament in Latvia and defeated in a plenary due to differences in legislative procedures. It is therefore important not to conflate causation with the number of references to external fields. For example, Russia could be a very persuasive frame for defeating a policy initiative in Latvia, despite there being only one reference to the Russian field in the plenary debate. Consequently, numbers should be interpreted with caution. I have marked all plenary sessions in Latvia in tables and graphs.

While numbers serve a purpose, I treat the analysis of the parliamentary debates as far more of a qualitative than quantitative exercise. After all, it is quite possible that one very well-articulated frame could be more persuasive than several poorly articulated ones. *Who* is doing the framing also matters. External frames should be more persuasive when articulated by persons who have more knowledge about European and Russian fields. Therefore, the focus of the analysis is on what types of frames policymakers are using, how they use European and Russian frames in complementary and competing ways, how those frames change over time in response to changes in external fields,

and ultimately, on how those framing processes affect the path and form of policies.

Frames can be divided into higher-level concepts that provide a basis for sharing and coordination among actors—in this case nationalizers and minority advocates—and lower-level concepts that may provide variations on higher-level concepts, but are often the product of personal experiences or perspectives.<sup>78</sup> I present these “frame maps” for both minority advocates and nationalizers for each issue area in the form of tables in the empirical chapters. I also provide examples of these types of external frames in the form of speech acts drawn directly from the parliamentary debates. I also attribute the use of these frames to other specific policymakers through citations to the parliamentary records, ensuring transparency and replicability.<sup>79</sup> In doing so, I refer to an MP’s membership in a particular parliamentary faction or position in government at the time of the speech act. If an MP is not a member of a political faction within parliament, they are listed as “independent.” Presenting the data this way allows us to observe both the continuity and changes in frames across issue areas and cases.

I list parliamentary faction membership for MPs not only because this is how debates in parliament are transcribed into the parliamentary record, but because parliamentary factions are important to the policymaking process. Parliamentary factions are associations formed on the basis of the political opinions of MPs. It is therefore within factions, as well as within committees, that collective opinions on particular issues are born. In both Estonia and Latvia, MPs from the same candidate list can form a faction, the minimum number required to form a faction being five; however, MPs from other political parties may also join the faction. MPs may only belong to one faction, and after the 7th Parliament in Estonia and 10th Parliament in Latvia, MPs are no longer allowed to change factions; however, they may still willingly leave a faction to become an independent MP.<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that the number of parliamentary factions is frequently different from the number of political parties represented in parliament, and the names of parliamentary factions may differ from political party names. The reader should also be aware that faction membership for some MPs changes over time within and across these case studies, and that strategic framing of external fields may reflect such changes. The list of political parties and parliamentary factions represented in each parliament at the front of the book may provide a useful reference.

I did not impose any a priori coding scheme on the data, nor did I “select” texts for coding as is sometimes done in content analysis or frame analysis that involves the coding of large quantities of text. Selecting specific “texts” or bills would have risked not capturing fluctuations in strategic framing over time, while selecting only specific passages within bills would risk overemphasizing

the importance of external frames to the detriment of other factors, such as domestic conditions. Reading through debates several times in their entirety was essential in placing the importance of external frames in the broader scope of these debates. In some cases, external fields did not have much relevance for the path and form of policies, a point that could be missed if a researcher were to simply zero in on those parts of the text that reference external fields, without paying attention to their relative importance within the larger context of the debate. Consequently, I treat each set of debates for each policy initiative as a holistic construct, and then place those debates within the larger context of each issue area.<sup>81</sup> However, applying a strategic framing approach requires not only moving back and forth between analyzing strategic frames, and situating those frames within these texts as a whole, but also situating those policy debates within the larger domestic and international context. It is this type of thick description that is at the heart of process tracing and frame analysis.

In chapter 6, I reflect on the continuities and differences in strategic framing over time and across countries by focusing largely on a comparison of the higher-level conceptual frames that emerge from the case studies. While there is considerable continuity in the strategic framing of Europe by policymakers across both issue areas and countries, there are considerable differences in kin-state framing. These include the greater use of kin-state frames in Latvia overall, the persistent use of occupation and disloyalty frames by Latvian nationalizers post-accession, and the strategic shift to the use of kin-state security frames by minority advocates in post-accession Estonia. I explain these differences as a function of the scope conditions for strategic framing, namely greater perceptions of kin-state activism in Latvia, and as a function of differences in party and electoral systems.

The parliamentary analysis is complemented by forty-nine interviews conducted with Estonian and Latvian policymakers, who have been involved in both formulating and implementing minority policies in these states, and who were in a position to both observe and comment on the influence of European institutions and Russia on that process. The interviews reinforce the findings of the parliamentary analysis and point to important variables for explaining differences in strategic framing across cases.<sup>82</sup> While the parliamentary analysis extends beyond my fieldwork, which concluded in 2010, I have maintained relationships with policymakers, journalists, academics, and opinion leaders, who have been invaluable informants and critics throughout my work on this project.

### WHEN AND HOW DID EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN FRAMES MATTER?

By observing patterns, or trends, in strategic framing over time, we can draw some general conclusions about when and how European and Russian frames

influenced policymaking in these cases. First, strategic framing has largely been a reaction to external pressure and has varied with the intensity of that pressure. European frames were more prevalent during EU accession negotiations and in cases involving membership conditionality. The strategic framing of Europe has declined post-accession after membership was fulfilled. The use of Russian frames has followed a similar pattern, with economic or security threats producing more framing than other forms of pressure. While Russia's activism has shifted, it has not declined post-accession, and strategic framing has continued in response to kin-state activism.

Second, European frames alone have rarely been enough to produce significant policy changes in these cases. This is significant considering the emphasis given to the democratizing effects of European institutions and EU conditionality in particular. In all cases where domestic audience costs were high, and nationalizing or conservative governments risked losing the support of their electorate, kin-state frames were crucial for passing liberalizing amendments. In other words, the use of both European and kin-state frames in reinforcing ways was necessary to pass liberalizing policies whenever domestic opposition was high. The only exception is the conditional amendment regarding the regulation of language in the private sphere in Estonia, where European frames were used exclusively. In cases where domestic audience costs were low, such as those involving residence permits in Estonia, which were either domestically driven initiatives, or reforms to bring policy in line with EU directives post-accession, European frames were enough to induce policy changes.

Kin-state frames often set the agenda and provided justifications for nationalizing policies in both states in the early 1990s. While they continue to provide justifications for nationalizing initiatives in post-accession Latvia, those initiatives have not found much support. Kin-state security and policy frames were influential in the passage of liberalizing citizenship amendments for stateless children in post-accession Estonia. However, they were used alongside European frames and domestic audience costs were low at the time the amendment was passed. Consequently, Russian frames have also rarely produced significant policy shifts independently in these cases.

Explaining policymaking including the delays, eventual passage, and the final form of both pre- and post-accession amendments, requires paying attention to the strategic use of *both* European *and* Russian frames and their interactive effects. While the indeterminacy of the European minority rights framework provided permissive conditions for the strategic framing of European pressure, Russia's activism provided new and powerful ways for policymakers to present European recommendations and to persuade others to back their own policy preferences. The strategic framing of the European and

Russian fields have had the following effects on policymaking toward minorities in these cases:

1. European *and* kin-state frames were utilized to pass liberalizing reforms prior to EU and NATO accession including in the cases of conditional amendments. In cases where domestic opposition was high, European frames alone were not sufficient to pass legislation. In these cases, both minority advocates and nationalizers used kin-state frames to reinforce the importance of European security guarantees. These frames were crucial for allowing nationalizers to justify their support for reforms to their domestic audiences.

2. The framing and counter-framing of both the European and kin-state fields delayed the passage of conditional amendments. The extent of the delay reflects the degree of opposition in those frames, which is in turn a reflection of the types and degree of external pressure and the polarization between parties on minority issues.

3. Kin-state frames were used to modify conditional amendments at the margins through the inclusion of restrictive criteria, or to tighten policies in other areas. This resulted in the passage of amendments that either fell short of European expectations, or did not fully address minority grievances. Nationalizers used kin-state frames to justify the inclusion of restrictive criteria in order satisfy their domestic audiences.

4. European frames have had little influence on policymaking post-accession. However, kin-state frames related to Russia's increasing activism in the region have been used to justify both inclusionary and exclusionary policies toward minorities post-accession. In Estonia, kin-state frames have been used to argue for greater inclusion, whereas in Latvia they have justified more exclusionary policies. Differences in strategic framing can be explained by variations in the degree of kin-state activism directed toward the target state and differences in party and electoral systems, which limit the range of permissible claims that elites can make.

While these general patterns would need to be explored in other cases, several possibilities of which are suggested in the conclusion, the identification of when and how European and kin-state frames were significant in these cases is a first step toward a more general theory of strategic framing and its effects.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The strategic framing approach that I have outlined here has much in common with others that view minority policies as dependent to a large extent on how kin-states and European institutions are perceived by elites in target states.<sup>83</sup> It also shares with others the idea that external fields can serve as



resources for domestic political action and can be used rhetorically to further policy agendas.<sup>84</sup> From this perspective, a top-down, compliance-based approach that focuses on formal legal changes is likely to yield only minimal insights into external effects.<sup>85</sup> I treat policymakers not simply as passive targets of external pressure, but as active agents in the construction of external fields within the domestic arena. While external fields may affect the minority situation in target states, their influence on policies depends to a large extent on how domestic policymakers frame them. In this way, I respond to calls from within the international socialization literature to pay greater attention to the domestic political landscape and the interaction between international and domestic-level variables.<sup>86</sup>

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the presentation of the case studies by providing a description of the domestic and external fields in the Estonian and Latvian contexts. It describes the nationalizing policies adopted by Estonia and Latvia at the start of the 1990s, as well as the differences in how Russian-speakers have responded to those policies across cases. It also reviews the literature on the involvement of European institutions and Russia in minority policy development and the mechanisms that they have utilized over time to pressure these states for policy changes. Finally, it emphasizes the contribution that a strategic framing approach makes to that literature.

Chapters 2–5 present the results of the parliamentary analysis, with each chapter focusing on a specific policy issue over the entire post-independence period. Chapter 2 examines the passage of the Aliens Act in Estonia and subsequent amendments involving residence permits, Soviet military personnel, and family reunification. This chapter also discusses the influence of external fields on the passage of the 1995 Citizenship Law, setting the stage for debates over amendments for stateless children in chapter 4 and a general comparison with Latvia in chapter 6. Chapter 3 explores citizenship policies in Latvia focusing on naturalization restrictions. Chapter 4 is a comparative case study of naturalization procedures for stateless children, while chapter 5 looks comparatively at the regulation of language in the private sphere, language requirements for candidates in local and national elections, and the working languages of local and national governments in Estonia and Latvia.

Chapter 6 summarizes the trends in strategic framing that emerge across policy areas and countries over time. While there is considerable continuity in the framing of the European field, considerable differences exist with respect to the framing of the Russian kin-state. Drawing on both existing literature and qualitative interviews in each country, I argue that differences in kin-state activism, as well as domestic-level variables including electoral rules and party systems, are important for explaining variations in strategic framing across cases. I finish with a discussion of when policymakers were likely to

use strategic frames and under what conditions frames were significant for policy outcomes.

The book concludes with a discussion of how a strategic framing approach provides a better understanding of policy development in these cases, the contributions the book makes to existing debates in the field, as well as areas for future research, including an extension of the framework to other cases.