Journal of Baltic Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rbal20

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To cite this article: Neringa Klumbytė & Kristina Šliavaitė (2021) Sovereignty and political belonging in post-Soviet Lithuania: ethnicity, migration, and historical justice, Journal of Baltic Studies, 52:3, 437-454, DOI: 10.1080/01629778.2021.1944237

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2021.1944237

JOURNAL OF BALTIC STUDIES
2021, VOL. 52, NO. 3, 437–454
https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2021.1944237

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Sovereignty and political belonging in post-Soviet Lithuania: ethnicity, migration, and historical justice

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we review the history of building a post-Soviet sovereign state in Lithuania by institutionalizing social and political difference of some groups in laws, policy, and public discourse. We argue that an exclusive inclusion of national (ethnic) minorities and migrants have played an important role in defining political belonging to a post-Soviet sovereign state. Language and citizenship laws and policies have been the major sites through which national minorities and migrants have been categorized and integrated in a post-1991 society. We conclude with the analysis of the politics of historical justice, central in defining political belonging to a post-2014 sovereign state.

KEYWORDS sovereignty; national (ethnic) minorities; migration; exclusive inclusion; historical justice

On 11 March 1990, the Supreme Council pronounced Lithuania an independent state, politically ending its fifty-year existence as a Soviet Socialist Republic. The independence of Lithuania was internationally recognized after the unsuccessful coup in Moscow on 19–21 August 1991.[1] Regardless of the leaders and parties in power, the integration into EU and NATO has been the major foreign policy goal in the 1990s. In 1994, Lithuania submitted an official application to become a NATO member, and in 1995 it became an associate country of the EU. Lithuania joined NATO and the EU in 2004, in 2007 it joined the Schengen zone, and in 2015 – the euro.

Building a sovereign state entailed establishing boundaries of political belonging. In this article, we explore how a post-1991 society has been constituted in Lithuania by institutionalizing social and political difference of some groups in laws, policy, and public discourse. We argue that *exclusive inclusion* of national (ethnic) minorities and migrants have played an important role in defining political belonging to a post-Soviet sovereign state.[2] Laws, policies, or public discourse have been "exclusive," because national minorities and migrants have been categorized in terms of ethnic and social or political difference and attributed or declined specific rights. "Inclusion" implies social integration in the case of national minorities and immigrants, or return and reintegration policies and initiatives in the case of emigrants. The year 2014 was a turning point in the post-Soviet history of Lithuania. After the annexation of Crimea and the eruption

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of war in eastern Ukraine, the Lithuanian government accepted new foreign and domestic policy measures to protect its sovereignty, consequently deepening the sense of exclusion among certain groups of the Russian-speaking population (Klumbytė 2017, 2019 ; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2018).

Numerous scholars have documented exclusionary policies directed at national minorities in eastern European states (e.g., Agarin and Cordell 2016; Budrytė 2011; Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012, 20), concluding that integration and social cohesion policies targeting minorities aim to guarantee security and wellbeing of the majority, as well as to build a socially integrated society (see Feldman 2003; Kymlicka 2000; Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012). In the case of migrants, researchers have also documented their exclusion and integration in western European societies, or in the countries with high numbers of emigrants like the Baltics, outmigration effects on the labor market, social security, and demography (e.g., Sipavičienė and Sankūnienė 2011). Our approach builds on these studies and analyzes the dynamics between the two processes – exclusion and inclusion – involving national minorities and migrants. We illustrate how laws, policies, and public discourse on minorities and migrants define boundaries of political belonging to a post-Soviet state, structured by ideals of descent, language, territory, and history as well as liberal notions of human and minority rights, multiculturalism, and global mobility.

The first two sections focus on the exclusive inclusion of national minorities and migrants by discussing some major laws and policies (citizenship law, language, and education laws) as well as media and public discourse since 1991. Language and citizenship laws and policies have been the major sites through which the state integrated national minorities and migrants in a post-1991 society by establishing boundaries of political belonging.[3] The last section explores the politics of historical justice, central in defining political belonging to a post-2014 state. The official history of Lithuania emphasizes suffering of the Lithuanian ethnic group (Klumbytė 2018; Marcinkevičius 2018). The politics of historical justice of national minorities invoke ethnic group victimization, negating, aligning, and reinterpreting Lithuania's official history, and invoking some history narratives of Russia and Poland. The politics of historical justice of Lithuanians, Lithuanian Russians, and Lithuanian Poles reveal that histories of the World War II and the Soviet era continue to be divided along ethnic lines.

Minorities: ethnicity, language, and loyalty

Unlike in Latvia and Estonia, which after integration into the USSR in 1940 faced an influx of settlers from other areas of the USSR, Lithuanians prevailed or emerged as a national majority in many cities and villages in the Soviet period (see Table 1). Latvia and Estonia were more attractive for the settlement of new migrants from Russia and

Table 1. The ethnic composition of Lithuanian society (%), based on census data.

	1959	1970	1979	1989	2001	2011
Lithuanians	79.32	80.13	79.97	79.58	83.45	84.16
Poles	8.49	7.68	7.28	7.02	6.74	6.58
Russians	8.52	8.57	8.95	9.37	6.31	5.81
Byelorussians	1.12	1.45	1.7	1.72	1.23	1.19
Ukrainians	0.65	0.8	0.94	1.22	0.65	0.54
Jews	0.91	0.75	0.43	0.34	0.12	0.10

Source: (Statistics Lithuania 2013, 7).

other Soviet republics because they were more industrialized, providing a possibility to settle in urban areas (Misiunas and Taagepera 1983, 104). Moreover, Latvia and Estonia had smaller postwar partisan resistance against the Soviet regime than Lithuania (Misiunas and Taagepera 1983, 104). In the post-Soviet period, Lithuanian society has been defined by a steep population decrease: during 2001–11 the population decreased by 440,600 and was 3,043,429 in 2011 (Statistics Lithuania 2011, 4–5), and dropped to 2,794,100 at the start of 2020 (Official Statistics Portal n.d.). The population has been decreasing mainly due to emigration and declining birth rates (Statistics Lithuania 2011, 5). The year 2019, however, marked the first positive demographic change after several decades with more people immigrating to the country than emigrating (Official Statistics Portal n.d.; Korsakovaitė and Mizgirdė 2020).

Ethnicity de-emphasized through internationalism and celebrated through nationalities policies in Soviet times, was mobilized during the nationalist movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1989, unlike Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania accepted a "zero-option" citizenship law, according to which all permanent residents of any ethnicity that reside in the territory of the country acquired Lithuanian citizenship (on all Baltic States, see Budrytė 2011). In 1989, citizenship was also granted to individuals who were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania before World War II and their descendants (Lietuvos TSR Aukščiausioji Taryba 1989a). While the 1989 law did not prioritize any ethnicity, ethnicity has been important in post-1989 citizenship laws (see also Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012). Lithuanian descent is considered significant in granting citizenship under the simplified procedure: a person of a Lithuanian descent, whose parents or grandparents are Lithuanian, can apply and get Lithuanian citizenship without going through a process of naturalization (Migration Law Center. n.d.a.).

Like in many other liberal democracies in Europe, post-1989 social integration has been primarily promoted through a shared language (i.e., Lithuanian), and societal institutions that operate in that language (see e.g., Kymlicka 2000; Beresnevičiūtė 2005a; Budrytė 2011; Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012). Unlike the Lithuanian citizenship law of 1989, which distinguished groups, but applied an all-inclusive approach (Kasatkina and Leončikas 2003; Budrytė 2011), laws that addressed the status of languages in the 1990s favored the majority of Lithuanian speakers, while recognizing some minority language rights, such as the right to pre-school and school education in the native language, to have press in the native language, and participate at religious rituals in the native language (cf. Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012).[4] In 1992, the Constitution of Lithuania defined the Lithuanian language as the official state language (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania 1992). In 1995, the State Language Law (*LR Valstybinės kalbos įstatymas*) stipulated that the Lithuanian language has to be used in the public sphere, for official correspondence; it is mandatory to use Lithuanian at state and municipal institutions, courts, transport, and health sector (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 1995). Thus, the state language policies were exclusionary toward national minorities because they prioritize the majority language competence as a major linguistic principle for coexistence in society. Linguistic integration served as an exclusive inclusion of national minorities.

In 2011, the Law on Education expanded the Lithuanian language rights over the language rights of national minorities. The 2011 amendments to the Law on Education foresee the increased hours of instruction of the Lithuanian language in schools with the non-Lithuanian language of instruction (e.g., Russian or Polish) and establish the

same requirements for the Lithuanian language graduation exam in all schools of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2011). These amendments to the Law on Education were criticized by Lithuanian Poles and to some extent Lithuanian Russians, they were evaluated negatively by Poland (see Šliavaitė 2016, 2018; Dambrauskas 2017).[5] The Lithuanian government justified the introduction of these amendments in terms of enabling proper integration of national minorities into the society and diminishing ethnic cleavages (Janušauskienė 2021). This linguistic integration, however, is another strategy of exclusive inclusion of national minorities since the language of majority is prioritized over the minority (cf. Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič 2012).

Lithuanian Poles have been the second most numerous national minority in Lithuania after Lithuanians in 2001 (Statistics Lithuania 2013, 7). They demonstrate a high degree of mobilization on ethnic basis both at a non-governmental and political level (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2016; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Sasunkevich, and Šliavaitė 2020; Janušauskienė 2021). The Polish language and Catholicism are important markers of ethnic identity for Poles of different generations in Lithuania (Korzeniewska 2013; Geben 2013; Janušauskienė 2021). Among Lithuanian Poles some major discontents concerned the use of the first and the family name with Polish letters in personal documents, as well as the use of Polish along with the state language for public display of names of geographical places, street names in the areas populated densely by the national minority (see Matulionis et al. 2011; Kazėnas et al. 2014; Sirijos Gira 2011). In 2000, Lithuania ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which guaranteed the right to use a minority language in personal official documents and for the names of streets or localities in areas populated densely by national minorities (see the Council of Europe 1995). These provisions of Article 11 of the Convention have not been implemented in practice since they are perceived as standing in contradiction with the legislation ensuring the status of the Lithuanian language as state language (see Račkauskaitė-Burneikienė 2013; Katuoka 2013; Račkauskaitė 2011; Council of Europe 2017). In numerous instances, the right to use non-Lithuanian letters in personal documents is achieved via court proceedings that addressed individual cases (European Foundation of Human Rights 2019b). In public debates policymakers emphasize both provisions, that the language rights of national minorities are guaranteed by the existing legislation *and* that the Lithuanian language is important for building the solidarity of Lithuanian society (see Kvietkauskas 2018). Non-governmental organizations, however, draw attention to the fact that the law on national minorities expired in 2010 and the new legislation has not been adopted (European Foundation of Human Rights 2019a).

After the annexation of Crimea and the Russia–Ukraine war some journalists, political scientists, and politicians have newly emphasized ethnic differences and boundaries by ethnic profiling Russian-speaking minorities as potentially disloyal members of the state (Marcinkevičius 2018; Klumbytė 2019). Some social science surveys on the Lithuanian Russians' and Lithuanian Poles' loyalty to the state presume that ethnicity might be important in shaping one's loyalty and solidarity.[6] In public discussions, these minority groups have often been perceived as manipulated by Russian mass media (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2015; 36–7). Such processes deepen the sense of exclusion among national minorities and reify political boundaries between the majority and minority groups. Research on national minorities in the Baltic States, however, illustrates that national minorities share a sense of belonging to several countries, for example, Russia and

Latvia (Birka 2016; Cheskin 2013). The qualitative research conducted by sociologists in Lithuania in the early 2010s before the Russia–Ukraine war revealed that the young generation of Russians in Lithuania feel strong attachments to Lithuania, even if Russian culture and Russian descent are important to them as well (Taljūnaitė 2014, 119–21, see also Lichačiova 2010, 145; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2011). In Lithuania, Russians are the third most numerous ethnic group after Lithuanians and Poles as of 2001 (Statistics Lithuania 2013, 7). Lithuanian Russians are mainly organized at civic level via different cultural centers and organizations (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2018). The younger generation of Lithuanian Russians recognize the importance of EU citizenship and free mobility (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2011; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė and Šliavaitė 2012; Labanauskas 2014; Taljūnaitė 2014).

To sum up, even in the absence of a large national minority population, in Lithuania, ethnicity has played an important role in defining boundaries of political belonging to a post-Soviet state. "National minorities" are attributed distinct rights, identities, and loyalties and are included through social cohesion and integration policies aimed to build a secure sovereign state. As the discussion above illustrates there is a particular dynamics at different periods of time of how minorities are incorporated into society through exclusive inclusion. The 1989 citizenship law promoted greater inclusion of minorities granting them citizenship on a single requirement of residency at the time the law was crafted. The 2011 Amendment to the Law on Education aimed at greater integration of national minorities, but it was negatively evaluated by minority activists and some members of school communities (Šliavaitė 2016, 2018; Dambrauskas 2017; Janušauskienė 2021).

The post-2014 cases of ethnic profiling in some mainstream media and social surveys illustrate an exclusion of Russian speakers as potentially disloyal citizens of the state and, thus, a threat to state security and sovereignty (on subjective perceptions of security after 2014, see Janušauskienė et al. 2017). As the above examples illustrate, national minority politics cannot be defined exclusively by exclusion or inclusion, but through the dynamics of exclusive inclusion shaped by state's policies embedded in the state and the EU legislation, geopolitical developments, and historical contexts as discussed in the last section.

Migrants: citizenship and the "global nation"

As with the case of "national minorities," "emigrants" have been central to state policies defining political belonging to a post-Soviet state since 1990s. Unlike "national minorities," "emigrants" constitute a category based primarily on their mobility and their (non-)residence. In public discourse they are often identified as citizens rooted in other social, economic, and political traditions. Like national minorities, they might be perceived as potentially disloyal members of the state. In the 2016 party programs and electoral debates, emigration had been cited with other major social problems in society such as, high suicide rates and alcoholism.[7] Moreover, high emigration rates were linked by various parties to a demographic, labor, or social security crisis.[8] Emigrants, however, are also seen as connected to Lithuania because of their origin as well as important for the social, cultural, and economic development of Lithuania because of their economic and cultural input and resources (Gečienė-Janulionė 2019).

In Lithuania, demography has been among the major national concerns since 1990s. From 1992 to 2017 the population of Lithuania decreased 23% and at the same time the

population over 65 years of age increased from 15.8% in 2005 to 19.3% in 2017 (Statistics Lithuania, cited in Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018, 5). Many people have emigrated for economic reasons; other important reasons include a lack of social security and justice, and better work opportunities abroad (Data from UAB "Spinter tyrimai", UAB "Vilmorus" cited in Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018, 20). The economic crisis of 2008 and the austerity measures of the Lithuanian government have been identified as key triggers for emigration processes (Juska and Lazutka 2019, 534). In 2018, the inter-institutional "Policy strategy on demography, migration, and the politics of integration for 2018–2030" was adopted with the aim to address demographic problems of the Lithuanian society, such as high emigration and low birth rates. This policy document introduces a number of inclusive measures, first of all directed at emigrants with the aim to promote re-migration processes. According to this policy, re-migration processes are prioritized against immigration of foreigners (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018, 18).

The discussions of emigration show a prevailing understanding of a society as residing in a specific territory, in which integrity of a society within certain territorial boundaries is important to the integrity of the state. While "national minorities" are considered to lack authentic connection to territory, "emigrants" are an aberration since they leave it (on Latvia see Dzenovska 2012). In the Lithuanian news media those who leave have been blamed for not sharing social and economic hardships, not paying taxes, not working to contribute to the welfare of the state, losing language and cultural identity, and not being willing to defend the country in case of a military conflict.[9] Contrary to some public discussions, academic debates indicate economic, social, political, and cultural input of emigrants to the development of the Lithuanian society (Gečienė-Janulionė 2019) and underscore multiple identities and loyalties of emigrants (Čiubrinskas 2014; Kuznecovienė 2014; Daukšas 2019), thereby calling into question the "natural" equation of a "people" with a particular territory. Moreover, some annual public initiatives, such as "Global Lithuania Awards" identify and honor leaders of the Lithuanian diaspora who contribute to Lithuania's economic growth, science, and culture (LRT.lt 2020).

The 1989 citizenship law was inclusive to emigrants, exiles, and their children, who were citizens of Lithuania before World War II and who could have dual citizenship. In 2003 and repeatedly in 2006 the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania resolved that dual citizenship can be granted only in exceptional cases (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinis teismas 2013; see also Žalimas 2008). This affected numerous diaspora since the possibility to hold dual citizenship was narrowed only to particular cases. The 2010s laws of dual citizenship exclude those who emigrated after 11 March 1990, when Lithuania pronounced independence; they lose their Lithuanian citizenship if they acquire citizenship of another state (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2010). But these laws have different clauses for emigrants' children. According to the 2010 Citizenship Law, children born abroad to parents who are Lithuanian citizens, are granted Lithuanian citizenship at birth.[10] Dual citizenship can also be granted by the President of Lithuania in exceptional cases (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2010).

Since 2010, various government projects and policies, such as the "Global Lithuania 2012–2020" (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė 2011), and the inter-institutional "Policy strategy on demography, migration, and the politics of integration for 2018–2030" advance a more inclusive approach toward emigrants (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018). According to Dangis Gudelis and Luka Klimavičiūtė (2016),

"Global Lithuania" represents a "shift away from the emphasis on emigration challenges and toward the potential of engaging the Lithuanian diaspora" (Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė 2016, 330). "Global Lithuania" aims to include emigrants through the policies of social integration by providing opportunities to return or at least through short visits of intellectual and labor exchange in Lithuania. This program projects national ideals on a global scale promoting the Lithuanian language and Lithuanian national identity of Lithuanians living abroad and fostering diaspora's connections with Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė 2011). Thus, like in the case of "national minorities," the language is an important basis for integration of the diaspora into a global nation. The inter-institutional policy strategy on demography also aims to promote remigration processes and a successful integration of re-migrants (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018). The goals of this policy include increasing the population of Lithuania by lowering emigration, increasing re-migration and birth rates.

Unlike in many other European states, *immigration* has been a much less publicly visible process in both cases: the re-migration of citizens, who constitute the majority of immigrants and the immigration of foreigners.[11] The economic crisis of 2008 resulted in high flows of emigration of foreigners from Lithuania (Petrušauskaitė and Batuchina 2015, 31). At the same time immigration decreased during the years of economic crisis in 2009–10, and generally has been increasing since 2011 (Statistics Lithuania 2015, 22). The majority of immigrants are re-migrants – returning Lithuanian citizens: in 2018 the total number of immigrants was 28,914 from which 16,592 were return migrants (Migracijos departamentas 2019, 19). The immigration from non-EU countries was low for years, but this trend changed in 2018, when the number of immigrants from non-EU countries increased from 15% to 40% of all immigrants (European Migration Network 2019). The majority of migrants from non-EU countries arrive from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia (Žibas and Petrušauskaitė 2015, 12; Žibas 2012; Migracijos departamentas 2019, 19; European Migration Network 2019) on the grounds, such as family reunion, labor migration, and education (European Migration Network 2019). Labor migrants from non-EU countries compensate local needs of labor force that cannot be substituted by Lithuanian or EU citizens (Žibas and Petrušauskaitė 2015; Petrušauskaitė and Batuchina 2015, 30). Language and residency are central for gaining citizenship for foreign immigrants into a society. The main way to gain citizenship of Lithuania to foreigners is through the process of naturalization, which requires 10 years of legal residence in Lithuania, passing the Lithuanian language exam, and the Republic of Lithuania Constitution exam (Migration Law Center n.d.b). The immigrants cannot have a dual citizenship, and can become citizens of Lithuania only if they renounce citizenship of the other/home country (Migration Law Center n.d.b).

While in the context of the Syrian war and refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016 discussions of immigration have intensified in the media, none of the political parties, which participated in the 2016 elections to the Parliament, mentioned immigration in their short party programs (Central Electoral Commission 2016). Few asylum seekers who apply for international protection choose Lithuania as their destination country: in 2014–18 the refugee status in Lithuania was granted for 638 foreigners (Migracijos departamentas 2019, 73). The majority of these, 409, were from Syria, while 47 applicants were from Russia (Migracijos departamentas 2019, 73). According to the EU Council resolutions, Lithuania intends to accept 1.077 asylum seekers who are in need of international protection until 2021 (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė 2015). After the

2020–21 protests in Belarus, which opposed the electoral victory of the long-term autocratic leader Alexander Lukashenko and were violently suppressed, citizens of Belarus, who escaped for humanitarian reasons, and asylum seekers were provided with support at the governmental level (Danieliūtė 2020). Public protests against the authoritarian regime in Belarus gained active public support in Lithuania (Jakubauskas 2020).

To sum up, although emigration has been framed as a national concern, in 2010 there is a shift conceptualized in "Global Lithuania" toward a more inclusive understanding of emigrants, reproduced through collaboration and cultural, social, political, and economic engagements on a global scale (Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė 2016). Moreover, the 2018 inter-institutional policy strategy on demography was drafted to increase re-migration and guarantee successful integration of re-migrants. The boundaries of a "global nation" preserve certain characteristics of the majority since it is expected that it will share the Lithuanian language and national identity. Regarding the immigrants-foreigners, the knowledge of the Lithuanian language and their residency in Lithuania are among the preconditions for their citizenship. In the labor market, the priority is given not for labor immigrants from non-EU countries, but to the EU and returning Lithuanian citizens (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2018; Žibas and Petrušauskaitė 2015, 16), this way emphasizing national and European dimensions of political belonging to the post-Soviet state.

The analysis of laws, policy, and public discourse toward both national minorities and migrants illustrate the importance of language, territory, and descent in defining political boundaries. National minorities in Lithuania are often categorized as different groups because of their descent and/or different languages. For migrants, non-residency (except their children) is at the core of their exclusion, while foreigners need to reside in Lithuania and know the Lithuanian language to qualify for citizenship. These three principles – descent, language, and territory, reminds one of Herderian nationalism of the nineteenth century, however, post-Soviet state building is interconnected with liberal ideals of human and minority rights, ideals of multiculturalism, and global mobility. In addition to language, territory, and descent, history, as we show in the last section, after 2014 has become another important site through which boundaries of political belonging have been defined and negotiated.

Historical justice: political belonging and sovereignty

The year 2014 was a turning point in the post-Soviet history of the Baltics. After Russia's annexation of Crimea and the eruption of war in eastern Ukraine, the Lithuanian government accepted new foreign and domestic policy measures to protect its sovereignty by preventing new occupation and hybrid warfare scenarios that occurred in Ukraine (Klumbytė 2019). Unlike in the 2002 and 2012 National Security Strategies, which referred to mutual trust and collaboration with the Russian Federation, the 2017 National Security Strategy explicitly named the Russian Federation as the major security and cybersecurity threat (see: Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2017). NATO has extended its military assistance by deploying NATO troops and equipment in the Baltic States. Russia's largest military presence since the Cold War in the Kaliningrad region and NATO's enhanced forward presence in the Baltic countries have further shaped a heightened insecurity of the Baltic States (Klumbytė 2019). The 2020 Evaluation of

the Threats to National Security reaffirmed that "Russia's foreign and security politics is the greatest threat to Lithuania" (Krašto apsaugos ministerija and Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės saugumo departamentas 2020, 4). Post-2014 geopolitical insecurity has shaped sovereign uncertainty and engendered politicization of ethnicity. In the public sphere, some politicians and journalists invoked dividing narratives of historical justice and assumed conflicting political belonging of Lithuanian Russians.

In Lithuania, historical justice laws and narratives on Soviet and Nazi crimes have been given particular importance; they justify Lithuania's right to sovereignty at state and international levels. In 2010, the Lithuanian Parliament accepted the Criminal Code Article 170^2, which criminalized public approval of crimes committed by the USSR or Nazi Germany against the Lithuanian Republic or its residents, as well as denying or grossly diminishing such crimes (Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamasis kodeksas 2000–, 170^2).[12] Although there is no unanimous consensus on the use of the term, the 1941 and post-World War II deportations to Gulag and the suppression of the Lithuanian Freedom Army anti-Soviet resistance are referenced as "Soviet genocide" (see, e.g., Anušauskas 2012, 280). Unlike the United Nations Convention definition of "genocide," the Lithuanian Criminal Code states that genocide can be carried out against "any social or political group" in addition to national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups (Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamasis kodeksas 2000–, 99).[13] Officials of the Russian Federation construe the "dual genocide" (i.e., as perpetrated by the Nazis and the Soviets) approach in eastern Europe and the Baltic States as an unacceptable historical revisionism, a "denial of Nuremberg results," and questioning the results of World War II (see Klumbytė 2017). The EU countries increasingly identify the Holocaust as a common European memory (cf. Subotić 2020). Communist crimes, however, have not earned the same status despite various initiatives by Baltic and eastern European countries (see Mälksoo 2014).

Historical justice laws and narratives articulate boundaries of political belonging to the state by defining victims and perpetrators, crimes, and heroism. Lithuanian history narratives divide victimization along ethnic lines and emphasize innocence and heroism of the Lithuanian people. The discourse of a loss of independence during World War II and a heroic struggle for its restoration have constituted the major historical plot line in the public sphere throughout the post-Soviet period (Nikžentaitis 2013, cf. Čepaitienė 2013). The tragic Lithuanian Jewish history and the Lithuanians' collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust have been largely excluded from the public discourse until the 2000s.[14] During the Nazi occupation in 1941–4, 195,196, or over 95% of the Lithuanian Jewish residents were killed; more than 80% were killed in Lithuania (see Anušauskas, Banionis, and Bauža et al. 2005, 222). In Vilnius, the Holocaust is commemorated in the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum. The major Soviet history and memory museum in Vilnius, since 1992 known as the Museum of Genocide Victims, in 2018 renamed to the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, primarily commemorates Lithuanian Soviet terror victims, anti-Soviet resistance fighters, Gulag prisoners, and forcefully displaced to the depths of Siberia. In the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, terror against the Jewish or Roma population is displayed in separate rooms, this way excessively focusing on the victimization and heroizing of a titular nationality (see Rindzevičiūtė 2015). Some scholars emphasize a common history among Lithuanians and Lithuanian Jewish citizens by exploring deportations to Gulag of both groups (Davoliūtė 2015). Various non-governmental and state initiatives, such as declaring 2020 the year of Gaon and Lithuanian Jewish history, aim to integrate

Jewish and Lithuanian histories. Recognition of the Holocaust and Lithuanian Jewish history coexist with claims about "Soviet genocide;" they constitute two parallel competing victimization narratives. Nevertheless, the Holocaust is part of the official Lithuania's history and integral to political belonging to the post-Soviet sovereign state – unlike the narratives about the glories of Soviet history.

Liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic party politicians, some journalists, and intellectuals tend to approach the Soviet past as an aberration, a lost time, and a period of cultural and economic stagnation (Klumbytė 2003). In the public discourse, the glorious Soviet victory in World War II or Soviet modernization and industrialization are associated with Russia's neo-imperialist discourse and the denial of the occupation and oppression of the Lithuanian people by the USSR. Although in some Lithuanian cities, and occasionally even nationally, the victory in World War II was commemorated, Lithuanians commemorate it on 8 May, the day of Germany capitulation, rather than 9 May, the official Victory Day in the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian calendar. In Lithuania's history, 9 May 1945 is the date which sealed the fate of the state for the next 45 years by leaving Lithuania incorporated into the Soviet Union. Since 9 May represents Lithuania's loss of sovereignty in the official post-Soviet Lithuania's history, in media and public discussions celebration of 9 May is linked to the approval of Lithuania's incorporation into the USSR.[15] Lithuanian Russians' celebrations of World War II victory in this context enacts Soviet and post-Soviet Russia's historical justice narratives glossing over Lithuanian victimization during Soviet times. For Russians, marking the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany is a way to commemorate their own victimization and celebrate heroism of the Soviet and Russian people. Like in the case with the Lithuanian Jewish citizens, victimization is divided along ethnic lines. Unlike in the case of the Holocaust, the different narratives do not coexist in the official Lithuanian history.

Like Lithuanian Russian history, Lithuanian Polish history reinforces ethnic divisions in their history narratives, aligning with and reinterpreting Lithuania's sovereignty discourse, and invoking some historical justice narratives of Russia and Poland. Lithuanian Polish Soviet history emphasizes the Polish partisan movement and commemorates *Armia Krajowa*, the Polish partisan army that resisted the Nazis during World War II and aimed to restore Poland with its 1939 boundaries which included Vilnius and Vilnius region (Čepaitienė 2013; Šutinienė 2015). According to Rasa Čepaitienė (2013, 255), the Lithuanian Polish memory is represented by the commemoration of the tragic events duirng World War II, such as a cross in Jašiūnai cemetery in memory of the mass execution of Poland's army officers, policemen, intellectuals, and civilians by the NKVD in 1940 at Katyn. Lithuanian Polish commemoration of World War II victims follows Poland's official history and integrates some official Lithuanian history dates (Šutinienė 2015).[16] Both Lithuanian Russian and Lithuanian Poles history narratives draw on similar tragic history periods and events like Lithuanians', however, they also draw on official histories of Russia and Poland, this way hybridizing different state histories to create their own local past.

Lithuanian Russian minorities, moreover, articulate their exclusion in post-Soviet times in their memories of the Soviet past. The ethnographic research conducted in 2000–2 in Visaginas, an industrial town in Lithuania built in the Soviet period and populated predominantly by Russian speakers who immigrated to Visaginas during the Soviet period, document that Russian speakers remembered the Soviet period as a time of rapid modernization and individual upward mobility, which is contrasted with

post-Soviet social and economic insecurity, downward mobility, unemployment, and even poverty (Šliavaitė 2005). This perception of the past is related to the changing social status, when a former Soviet working-class elite found themselves in the margins of a new sovereign society with the nuclear power plant being closed and the Soviet modernization project devaluated (Šliavaitė 2005). In the 2000s nostalgia for Soviet times had been prominent among the newly marginalized Lithuanians who recollected "better times" in the Soviet past and reclaimed dignity and recognition in their critical discourse of political, social, and economic transformations (Klumbytė 2010, cf. Kraniauskienė 2014; Šutinienė 2013). In Lithuania, narratives about post-Soviet marginalization have not been recognized as claims for historical justice. New research on post-Soviet transitions in eastern Europe invite to consider not only positive, but also negative effects of transition, they compare post-Soviet economic and social conditions to the postwar era, consequently they give recognition to the new forms of social and historical injustice (see, e.g., Ghodsee and Orenstein 2021).

To sum up, Lithuanian historical justice laws and narratives legitimize Lithuania's post-Soviet sovereignty and define political belonging based on particular visions of history – the Holocaust as well as the "Soviet genocide," which engender competing victimhood or exclude national minorities along ethnic lines. Lithuanian history narratives can be approached as alienating and unjust, especially to Lithuanian Russians, since this history often includes Lithuanian Russians as agents of the Soviet state who settled in Lithuania after World War II as part of the Sovietization process. Lithuanian history might be alienating to Lithuanian Poles since they are linked to Poland and their suffering is often not incorporated in the official narratives of Lithuania's history. Lithuanian Jewish citizens have no place in historical narratives focused on Soviet terror and resistance. They are integrated in Lithuania's history through the Holocaust narratives.

Although the politics of historical justice in post-2014 context are dividing, Russian speakers often negotiate their histories in public and private spaces, emphasizing "coexistence," "shared suffering," and "survival," this way reclaiming their belonging to a post-Soviet society (see Klumbytė 2018). While these claims aim to include national minorities within the history of Lithuania, they posit certain relations of power, whereby Soviet crimes of the past get silenced or forgotten, and the separating line between victims and perpetrators is almost erased (Klumbytė 2018). Nevertheless, they posit a moral principle that accepts commonality and togetherness, but not conflict or exclusion providing one way of reconciliation in post-Soviet post-conflict settings. In the case of Lithuanian Jewish citizens and Lithuanians, there is hope that different traumatic memories could also be uniting. Like in the case of Russian speakers, however, invoking a common wartime suffering of Lithuanians and Jews could mean erasing the distinction between perpetrators and victims, as well as reasserting Lithuanian domination. The nested ethnic historical injustices are implicit to political belonging in the post-Soviet state. In post-2014, history coexists with other markers of political belonging, such as descent, language, and territory.

Conclusions

In Lithuania after the disintegration of the USSR, a post-Soviet sovereign state building engendered new visions of political belonging. In this article, we have explored how a post-Soviet society has been shaped in Lithuania through articulation of social

difference and commonality in laws, policy, and public discourse and initiatives. We have argued that the exclusive inclusion of national (ethnic) minorities and migrants have played an important role in defining boundaries of political belonging to a post-Soviet state, structured by ideals of descent, language, territory, and history, as well as liberal notions of human and minority rights, multiculturalism, and global mobility.

National minorities have been a subject to different policies; some, like the citizenship law of 1989 being very inclusive. The 2011 amendments to the Education Law aimed for greater inclusion through state language competencies and at the same time narrowed minority's language use by promoting the Lithuanian language in education. The Ukraine–Russia war and Lithuanian–Russian politics since 2014 contributed to redrawing political boundaries between ethnic groups. Ethnic profiling in some media and social surveys, in which Russian speakers' putative disloyalty is associated with Russia's revisionist politics toward the Baltics, has emerged in the context of rising geopolitical insecurity and uncertainty about Lithuania's sovereignty.

Lithuanian government laws and policies illustrate the exclusive inclusion of national minorities with a prevailing focus on equality and commonality of citizens in terms of legal, political, economic, and social status in society. Lithuanian and national minorities history narratives on the World War II and the Soviet era, however, uncover experiences of historical injustice in which different ethnicities are often implicated as adversaries. The politics of historical justice of Lithuanians, Lithuanian Russians, and Lithuanian Poles and Jewish citizens reveal that histories of World War II and the Soviet era tend to be divided along ethnic lines.

In the case of migrants, there is much less emphasis on immigrants than re-migrants, Lithuanian citizens who emigrate to other countries. Although emigration has been framed as a national concern until the early 2010s and exhibited various exclusive strategies directed at the emigrants, in the early 2010s there is a shift conceptualized in "Global Lithuania" toward a more inclusive understanding of emigrants (cf. Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė 2016). The newly imagined "global nation" is expected to share the Lithuanian language and national identity. In the case of immigrants, they are also expected to know the Lithuanian language as well as to fulfill knowledge of the constitution and residency requirements for naturalization. In the labor market, the priority is given to the EU and returning Lithuanian citizens, this way prioritizing national and European dimensions of Lithuania's sovereignty.

Notes

1. Iceland was the first country (11 February 1991) to recognize the Republic of Lithuania de jure. The United States recognized the Republic of Lithuania on 2 September 1991, the USSR on 6 September 1991. On 17 September 1991 Lithuania became a member of the United Nations.
2. Our concept "exclusive inclusion" resonates with Giorgio Agamben's concept "inclusive exclusion." On "inclusive exclusion" see Agamben (1998). In our article, we focus primarily on Lithuanian Russians and Lithuanian Poles as "national minorities." In 2011 people of 154 nationalities resided in Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania 2011, 20). We are critical of the categorization of people into distinct ethnic "categories." We use "national minorities" following Lithuania's and the EU official use of this term.
3. Our discussion builds on the studies by Budrytė (2011), Beresnevičiūtė (2005a, 2005b), Kasatkina and Leončikas (2003), Petrušauskaitė and Pilinkaitė Sotirovič (2012), Gudelis and Klimavičiūtė (2016), Žibas (2012), etc.

4. The Law on National Minorities (*Tautinių mažumų įstatymas*) issued in 1989 guaranteed national minorities the right to gain education and get information in their native language (Lietuvos TSR Aukščiausioji Taryba 1989b). This national minorities legislation, however, expired on 1 January 2010, and a new law has not been accepted yet.
5. On Poland's and the Lithuanian Polish minority's critique of Lithuanian policy, see Sirijos Gira (2011). On public protests see, for example, BNS (2015) and Lapinskas (2010).
6. On survey by the Eastern Europe Studies Centre/"Baltijos tyrimai/Gallup" on whether citizens of Lithuania would defend the country in case of a military conflict and loyalty among national minorities see Saldžiūnas (2016).
7. See party program summary for the Lithuanian Freedom Union (Liberals) (*Lietuvos Laisvės Sąjunga (liberalai)*) provided by the the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (Central Electoral Commission 2016, 10).
8. See the summary of party programs for the 2016 parliamentary elections in the pamphlet provided by the Central Electoral Commission: Central Electoral Commission (2016).
9. These issues are prominent in the debates on dual citizenship in the Lithuanian news media. For example, Žilinskas (2013).
10. The 2015 Amendment to the Citizenship Law grants citizenship to children of Lithuanian citizens without any age restrictions unlike the 2010 law which granted citizenship until the age of twenty-one.
11. In the media and public discourse, Lithuanians/return migrants are not considered "immigrants," they are called emigrants. "Foreigners" are immigrants who do not hold Lithuanian citizenship, i.e., immigrants from other EU countries and countries outside the EU.
12. The qualification that endorsement has to be carried out "publicly and in a threatening, offensive or insulting manner, or it results in disturbance of public order," according to Žilinskas (2012, 321), introduces a safeguard to balance with the freedom of expression. For a discussion of this law from a legal perspective, see Žilinskas (2012).
13. This article of the Criminal code was last amended on 9 July 2009 (Seimas Resolution No. XI-330).
14. See Rindzevičiūtė (2015) on the Museum of Genocide Victims, Šutinienė (2015) on minorities and Holocaust commemoration in Southeastern Lithuania. On recognition of Holocaust in Lithuania see Davoliūtė (2011).
15. See, e.g., the 2010 discussions on 9 May celebrations on the Internet portal *veidas.lt* at http://www.veidas.lt/tag/geguzes-9-oji (accessed 4 February 2017).
16. Šutinienė reports a plurality of opinions among Lithuanian Poles and their varied interpretation of World War II commemoration practices. See Šutinienė (2015).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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