Nationalities Papers (2024), 1–20
doi:10.1017/nps.2024.60

ARTICLE

Pork Barrel and Identity Politics: Explaining a Minority Party's Electoral Success in Lithuania

Timofey Agarin[1] and Karolis Dambrauskas[2]

[1]Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK and [2]Institute of Sociology, Lithuanian Centre of Social Sciences, Lithuania
Corresponding author: Timofey Agarin; Email: t.agarin@qub.ac.uk

Abstract
Our article describes the lifecycle of Lithuania's *Electoral Action of Poles–Christian Families Alliance* (LLRA-KŠS) party that has been a part of country's political landscape for near 30 years. Despite its seemingly ethnic program, the party has a poor track record for delivering on its electoral promises. Yet, it has been continuously supported by the majority of Polish-speakers in Lithuania. The background of the nationalizing state, which encourages the party elites to conflate substantive representation with the signposting of ethnic identity in party politics, offers one of the reasons for the LLRA-KŠS's electoral success. Although the party effectively consolidated its regional electorate, it came to control service delivery to their ethnic constituency by engaging in pork barrel politics. Poor performance in recent national and municipal elections put this strategy to bond with its voters into question, casting doubt on the LLRA-KŠS's ability to survive as an ethnic party in the long term.

Keywords: nation-building; minority representation; Lithuania; Poles

Introduction

The ability of political organizations to translate the concerns of their voters into policy is the yardstick with which to measure a party's effectiveness in representing its constituents; it is also a useful reference for assessing whether electors chose parties to transmit their interests into political agendas or for other reasons (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011; Merkl and Lawson 2014). Arguably, voter choices depend on their environmental considerations: degree of consolidation in both representative democracy and in the party system, the party's profile as reformers or upholders of sociopolitical order, the party's ability to govern either alone or in stable and ideologically coherent coalitions, and many more (Stokes 2005; Müller and Meyer 2010).

Minority citizens particularly might be formally involved in the political process, but they have few avenues to substantially contributing input on decisions over nation-state-building and enjoy little leeway to challenge state policies (Koev 2015). And across the new postcommunist democracies, minority citizens are especially sturdy in their belief that the state's priorities reflect poorly on their concerns and that their interests cannot break into the system even if minority representatives can be elected to and sit in parliaments or have a shot at a government post (Bilinski 2015; Nedelcu and DeBardeleben 2016).

Formal political participation of Lithuania's minorities supports this general view. Although Lithuania's minority parties were comparably successful in the early days of transition from communism—that is, when pitting their political agendas in opposition to policies of nation-

Table 1. LLRA-KŠS's Performance in National and European Parliament Elections

Year	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Seimas elections	–	3.1	1.9	3.8	4.8	6	5.48	4.80
Mandates	–	1	2	2	3	8*	8*	3
Year				***2004***	***2009***	***2014***	***2019***	***2024***
EP elections	–	–	–	5.71**	8.42	7.62**	5.24**	tba
Mandates	–	–	–	0	1	1	1	tba

Source: Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023. Authors' calculations. National and European parliamentary elections, votes in percentages of all cast in the election. Missing values in the table indicate that the party has not taken the electoral threshold. *Mandates acquired via proportional party list *and* in single-member constituencies; **Joint electoral list with parties appealing to Russian speakers.

state-building—as soon as the consolidation of the society around the nation-state was completed by the early 2020s they had disappeared, bar one important exception: the *Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija–Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga* (Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania–Christian Families Alliance), an ethnic minority party that was founded in 1994. Our article explores whether this party's long-term presence in the corridors of power indicates popular support for its agenda and which aspects of its appeal voters have endorsed in the past (see Table 1).

The electoral allegiance of the minority electorate to the LLRA-KŠS and the party's vocal preference for minority accommodation suggest that belonging to an ethnonational minority marks a crucial policy-relevant cleavage in Lithuania's society. We consider its effect on the LLRA-KŠS's success through the prism of Rogers Brubaker's "triadic nexus" (1996), the model developed to facilitate the analysis of ethnopolitical dynamics across postsocialist Europe. We reason that voters' continuous preference for the (de facto, ineffective) political party can be explained as an effect of the existing relationships between the Polish minority and the Lithuanian state. According to Brubaker, the political process in the region cannot be understood without interrogating the instrumental role that ethnic identity plays therein. To appreciate the minority's political preferences, he suggests considering them as part of the intertwined relationship between nationalisms of three distinct actors: minorities, their kin state, and that of their state of residence. Thus, by focusing on the group's political representatives as agents standing in for minority's interests in this triadic nexus, we are able to understand why ethnic parties enjoy electoral support and to what extent this support is sustainable. Following Brubaker (Brubaker 1993, 12), we

> choose the term "nationalizing state" rather than "nation-state" to emphasize […] the tendency to see the state as an "unrealized" nation-state, as a state destined to be, but not yet in fact (at least not to a sufficient degree), a nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation; and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, and/or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation.

In line with the definition above and existing scholarship (among others, Popovski 2000; Agarin 2010; Norkus 2023), we consider Lithuania a nationalizing state. Thus, Lithuania's citizens who participate in the process of political representation will consider the institutional framework of the state established for (ethnic) Lithuanians with double effect. On one hand, the country's citizenry will cleave into distinct electoral blocks, largely replicating contours of majority and nonmajority communities. On the other, political parties of both communities may choose to amplify the principles of ethnonational societal organization to attain additional political capital from their discrete ethnic constituencies.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Most political parties in Lithuania focus on representing mainly their ethnopolitical segment, rallying their voters around ethnonational preferences and claiming to promote their interests. Political parties that are appealing to an (ethnic) Lithuanian voter do not need to demonstrate their commitment to protecting the majority's identity because the interests of their ethnic constituency are tentatively accounted for by state institutions that are designed to secure the right of an (ethno-) nation to self-determination (Ubarevičienė, Burneika, and Ham 2015). They appeal to the "general" Lithuanian voter and, until 2020, rarely included ethnic minority candidates on their electoral lists; they are also more likely to only nominally contest elections in regions with demographic plurality of minority citizens (Gaučaitė-Znutienė 2023). At the same time, the political organizations of Lithuania's minorities need to drum up support from as many in their ethnopolitical segment as possible and tend to field candidates only in districts where they have a chance to cross the 5% electoral threshold.

Over the past 30 years, this strategy marked the political organizations of Lithuania's minorities as regional rather than national players. But in contrast to other minority parties in the country, the LLRA-KŠS had its ethnic minority members elected to the European Parliament as well as to the *Seimas* where they participated in two government coalitions (2012–2014 and 2019–2020). The party also has considerable visibility in local and municipal administrations in areas of concentrated settlement of Lithuania's Polish-speakers and other minorities. Voters' allegiance to the LLRA-KŠS, however, is surprising because the party has neither honored any of its electoral promises nor lobbied for change on any of the issues around which it galvanizes its voters. What, then, explains voters' continuous support of the LLRA-KŠS?

Methodologically, we have combined the analysis of secondary literature with qualitative research methods. We were interested in the *supply* side of party's appeal: the LLRA-KŠS's self-positioning on the spectrum of Lithuanian political parties and its electoral strategy to secure voter support and generate perception of its meaningful contribution to political debate. Our research relies on the analysis of electoral programs against the party's electoral performance as well as the effects of fluctuating voter preferences on the party's agenda. Additionally, throughout autumn 2020–summer 2021, we conducted 17 semistructured expert interviews with representatives of minority political and social elites (In text, we have anonymized the sources who have preferred not to be publicly identified). This combination of diverse approaches to data collection centered on identifying *elites' perception* of minority voters' rationale for supporting the party. We triangulated this information by reviewing existing statistical, survey, and interview-based data by local researchers on issues that are relevant to the minority (Kazėnas et al. 2014; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2016; Klimanskis et al. 2017); purposefully sampled media assessments of and public debates about political participation in the country; and minority-led discussions about under- and misrepresentation of community's concerns, the *demand* side. Contrasting the supply and demand sides of party-to-voter relationships allows us to draw conclusions about the likely efficacy of the party's political strategy and the likely challenges for LLRA-KŠS's long-term political success.

Our article assesses the LLRA-KŠS's political strategy to connect to their voters by successfully capitalizing on the apprehension of Lithuania's minorities with the Lithuanians' nation-state-building project. We do so in three steps. First, we outline how ethnic parties can achieve electoral success in a national state by presenting themselves as a buffer against the (perceived assimilatory) pressure of the host state. Second, we discuss the process of ethnopolitical consolidation of Lithuania's minority electorate behind the LLRA-KŠS. We then consider the effects of ethnopolitical appeal of the LLRA-KŠS and its consequences for hollowing out of its programmatic appeal to the voter. Overall, we conclude that the nation-state-building in an ethnically diverse society encourages minority elites to shift from defending their coethnics' interests to servicing their potential electoral constituencies' pragmatic concerns.

Ethnic Minority Representation in Nationalizing States

Across the postcommunist region, given the traumatic experiences of the socialist past, responding to challenge of accommodating domestic minorities has been the central fixture of democratic

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

consolidation over the first decades of transition (Galbreath and McEvoy 2012). Postcommunist democracies' expressed commitment to national cohesion, and the process of building institutions of liberal democracy is acknowledged to have determined the parameters of the political process. Rogers Brubaker (1996) claims in his, now classic, study of nationalism and intergroup relations in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe that when state institutions undergo fundamental restructuring, who retains decisive voice in shaping them matters for political agendas well into the future. He impresses that not only do people of different ethnic backgrounds conceive of themselves as belonging to "their" eponymous state but also that across the region national political elites have successfully consolidated titular peoples' claims to state ownership. Brubaker called such states "nationalizing," emphasizing that sentiments underlying nation-state-building cannot be understood without taking seriously the ethnocentrism of minorities living in the state as well as of their kin states, with all three forming the tightly knit triadic nexus (Brubaker 1996, 67–69).

Nation-state-building normalizes the dominance of the majority ethnic group in the public space and encourages nationalizing policies. This, in turn, makes ethnic identity a salient political category, with political elites likely to benefit from casting the contours of political fractions as borders of their ethnic segment (Stefanova 2014; Cramsey and Wittenberg 2016; Glaurdić, Mochtak, and Lesschaeve 2021). The perceptions of the minority threatening the ethnocentric state-building project of majorities allows the elected elites to justify their exclusive societal, economic, and political agendas at the expense of minorities' interests (Agarin and Cordell 2016).

In the absence of specific provisions for minority representation (such as quotas ensuring minorities' presence in legislature, vetoes as a safeguard for community interests, or a lower threshold for entering parliaments), an ethnic-demographic minority's interests will be underrepresented, if not outright absent, from politics that are dominated by representatives of the country's ethnic majority (Birnir 2007). Neglect of specific provisions for minority might be intentional if, as van Houten (1998) claims, minority groups are perceived to challenge society's (sense of) security, and Mylonas (2013, 4) suggests that because minorities are likely to undermine democratic politics of their states of residence, their exclusion might well be perceived as legitimate.

To avoid the trap of marginalization, representatives of ethnic minorities are likely to focus their campaigns on districts where the minority is a local plurality to shore up the party's support and build up a geographically concentrated electoral basis. Should they succeed, some decisions made by the central government could be received more readily when the ethnic minority party delivers them to its "own" voter locally (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014; Einstein and Kogan 2016). In effect, ethnic parties in minority demographic strongholds can be perceived as effective defenders of their group's interests and legitimate representatives because "in their own persons and lives [they are] in some sense typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent" (Mansbridge 1999, 629). Mansbridge defines such modalities of representation "descriptive" because identity tends to crowd out and hold a place for the interests and concerns of those to be represented. A study in the UK and US contexts suggests that identity-based voting even acts as a replacement for actual engagement with political content (Achen and Bartels 2016). Specifically, ethnic parties' electoral success in their identity-based constituencies can be the result of a "generalized group appeal" (Wang and Kolev 2018) and reflect elites' success in essentializing ethnopolitical identities to reduce accountability to voters (Tavits 2008).

On the other hand, a group's visibility—even in cases where representatives are insufficiently delivering on their promise of group protection from the encroachment by the nation-state—may counterintuitively increase minorities' political empowerment (Pantoja and Segura 2003). In the context where political cleavage runs along the ethnic lines, Atkeson & Carrillo (2007, 81) observe that a "representative body that shares physical characteristics with its constituency symbolically appears more open to input from more citizens and appears better able to understand citizen interests." This is because despite differences in political attitudes and behavior, ethnic elites demonstrate greater responsibility to their own group (Philpot and Walton 2007). Over time, the quality of deliberation required for informed decision making might improve as "descriptive

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

representatives work as spokespeople for their group, advocate group-specific policies, or change public policy priorities in areas of importance for members of their own group" (Hänni 2017, 99).

Yet, representation of the "likes by the likes" is recognized as having adverse effects on the quality of representation: it undermines the visibility of society-wide interests in the public space and makes systematic political reform difficult (Stokes 2005; Huber 2012). At the same time, citizens' loyalty to political organizations is likely to be more robust if the party profiles itself as the defender of in-group concerns against the perceived competing interests of an out-group or institutions (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006).

In effect, the transition to democracy across the postcommunist region is acknowledged to have consolidated popular expectations that democratic states ought to be "national" homelands of ethnic majorities. Nation-state-building normalized descriptive representation in the design of state institutions, content of public policy, and ultimately the make-up of political elites. In practice, it defined and later consolidated majority ethnic groups' dominance over the direction and dynamics of democratic transition, effectively nourishing precisely the type of political entrepreneurship that mobilizes around the notion of servicing one's own in-group and implicitly favoring the government of "like over like" (Wimmer 2002, 88). Such "descriptive characteristics of a representative can lull voters into thinking their substantive interests are being represented even when this is not the case" (Mansbridge 1999, 640).

Nation-state-building privileges symbolic linkage between majority citizens and majority political elites as conduits for interest representation in the arena of the nation-state based on their (perceived as) shared identity. The substantive links related to the policy preferences of the entire community of citizens can be pushed into the margins of representative politics. Yet, the differing positionality of minorities and majorities vis-à-vis nation-state institutions can invite minority political parties to present themselves as protectors of minority-group interests against the rationale of the (however democratic) state of the majority. Thus, nation-state-building needs not follow Brubaker's "nationalizing" logic to encourage ethnic minorities to mobilize around their shared perception of exclusion from the benefits of state-building and to organize politically in their distinct parties.

Whether Lithuania can be considered a *nationalizing* state may be disputed, yet it is accepted as being a *national* state of Lithuanians (and not, for example, of Poles, Russians, Roma, etc.). Despite the regionally unique approach to regulating membership in the political community (Popovski 2000)—only a few categories of the Lithuanian SSR's residents were barred *ipso jure* from becoming citizens of the post-Soviet state—considerable segments of Lithuania's minority electorate have been alienated from the idea of nation-state-building (Duvold, Berglund, and Ekman 2020). At the dawn of independence, some of the local Polish minority leaders argued against the sovereignty of the Lithuanian government that was elected in March 1990 and aligned themselves with Moscow (Sirutavičius 2013), declaring—twice unsuccessfully—Polish territorial autonomy within the Lithuanian SSR (September 1989 and May 1990). The goal was to ensure that Polish-speakers' socioeconomic and political concerns registered with representatives of the titular elites who were steering the country toward the path of ethnonational consolidation (Burant 1993, 401).

Post-Soviet Lithuania's commitment to democratic representation of the interests of all its citizens was written into the Constitution of post-Soviet Lithuania; however, the Preamble clearly dedicates the state of Lithuania to its core ethnic nation (Lithuanian Government 1992):

> The [ethnic] Lithuanian people, having established the State of Lithuania many centuries ago, […] having preserved its spirit, native language, writing and customs, […] by the will of the citizens of the State of Lithuania, hereby adopts and promulgates the present Constitution. (*Lietuvių Tauta prieš daugelį amžių sukūrusi Lietuvos valstybę,[…] išsaugojusi savo dvasią, gimtąją kalbą, raštą ir papročius,. […] atgimusios Lietuvos valstybės piliečių valia priima ir skelbia šią Konstituciją.*)

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Furthermore, Article 14 of the constitution states that "Lithuanian shall be the State language," reconfirming the central role to be played by the ethnic majority in the nation-state-building. At the time, both the reformist and the former communist political elites agreed on this principle, but minorities, and particularly Lithuania's Polish-speakers feared the negative consequences for asserting minority group rights that resulted from such a consensus (Sirutavičius 2013). Conferring the status of the state language to Lithuanian in the constitution has implicated a range of follow-up regulations (such as laws on Language and on Education, Labour Code, etc.), highlighting that every citizen's position in the political hierarchy depended on their acquiescence to the majority's rationale of nation-state-building.

Adherence to the letter of the constitution and ensuring that state language plays the central role therein is the cornerstone of Lithuania's education policy. Across the country, municipal administrations are responsible for ensuring "the education of individuals and their right to education in the national language." Thus, "where the municipality does not guarantee the right of persons to be educated in pre-school, pre-primary and general education programmes in the state language, public schools may be established."[1] As a result, in municipalities that are densely populated by ethnic minorities, the Ministry of Education has been establishing and funding education facilities in the state language, referring to its constitutional obligation to protect the interests of the local Lithuanian-speaking population over the right to equal access to education in minority languages.

It is thus clear that the political foundations of the Lithuanian nation-state were laid not to ensure the equality of all citizens, despite the presence of multiple ethnolinguistic identities in the citizenry. Rather, it appears that the country's constitutional dispensation, agreed on by ethnocentric social elites during the period of divorce from the Soviet Union, has sustainably shaped the ethnopolitical preferences of post-Soviet political representatives and the content of the policies that they have implemented. Nation-state-building has been ongoing for over 30 years, and thus "[t]o ask whether policies, practices, and so on are 'really' nationalising makes little sense. For the present purposes, a nationalising state is not one whose representatives, authors, or agents understand and articulate it as such, but rather one that is perceived as such in the field of the national minority or the external national homeland" (Brubaker 1996, 63). Brubaker also suggests that we "think of a national minority not as a fixed entity or a unitary group but rather in terms of the field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual political entrepreneurs, each seeking to 'represent' the group" (1996, 61).

Ultimately, over the past 30 years it is non-Lithuanians' position as "takers," not "makers" of policies in the national state that has been defining minority representatives' strategy to encourage voters to support their own ethnopolitical entrepreneurs. This has ensured the continuous political visibility of Polish-speakers—and their concerns—in municipal administrations in both national and European parliaments. Yet, it is acknowledged that parties that represent ethnic constituencies develop unique relationships with their voters (Gunther and Diamond 2003), resulting in what Trevor Bachus denotes as ethnic parties' "affinity for clientelism [that] is generally crowding out programmatic platforms" (2020, 2). Because the electorate may expect their representatives to return favors once in office, voters of ethnic parties are likely to tolerate limited policy coherence as well as programmatic intransigence, being aware of the practical challenges to minority accommodation (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018). We turn to assessing the process and some effects of the ethnopolitical consolidation of the LLRA-KŠS's electorate in the next section.

Consolidation of the Minority Party Landscape in Post-Soviet Lithuania

Since independence from the Soviet Union, parties that represent the ethnic Lithuanian demographic majority have been pivotal for consolidating mechanisms of democratic representation. At

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

large, this ensures that majorities' policy preferences override attention to social issues that are relevant for members of (ethnic) minority groups (Janušauskienė 2016). The country's minorities are a heterogeneous group that is composed predominantly of Russian-speaking (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Jewish), Polish-speaking, and allophone (mainly, Romani) communities, each with diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and ideological orientations: Russian-speakers are predominantly concentrated in urban areas, and Polish-speakers dominate an area of Lithuanian–Polish–Belarusian ethnolinguistic contact, the region around Vilnius (Ubarevičienė, Burneika, and van Ham 2015).

Because the representatives of Polish, Russian, and Jewish communities do run on lists of majority ethnic parties, one could be tempted to believe that the ethnopolitical cleavage is no longer prevalent—at least, among those elected to the *Seimas*. However, the electoral success of the parties that represent Lithuania's Polish community—Electoral Action of Lithuania's Poles (*Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija*, LLRA) as well as Russians' Alliance (*Rusų aljansas*, RA) and the Lithuanian Russian Union (*Lietuvos rusų sąjunga*, LRS)—prove otherwise.

The RA was established in 2002 in the western Lithuanian Klaipėda and stood, like the LRS, in municipal electoral contests. Albeit in different constituencies, both parties cooperated with the LLRA and joined coalitions that were led by other (majority) parties. This culminated in these parties' cooperation following the 2004 joint electoral list and, from 2008, participation of the leader of RA, Irina Rozova, in the parliamentary election on the list of the LLRA. These parties' ability to enter the *Seimas* depended on their success in crossing the electoral threshold (5%), somewhat of a challenge for both Poles and Russians, each constituting around 7% of the citizenry. Eventually, the parties of Russian-speakers became defunct (LRS in 2021, RA in 2022) due to dwindling membership, but Polish-speakers' electoral performance consolidated increasingly.

Since its establishment in 1994, the LLRA-KŠS took part in all elections (municipal, parliamentary, and European) and repeatedly participated in government as a member of center-left (2012–2014) and center-right (2019–2020) coalitions, successfully fending off intraethnic competitors.[2] To do so, first, the LLRA-KŠS professionalized its candidates and rallied for greater representation of non-Lithuanian communities in elected office. On one hand, data by the Central Electoral Commission demonstrates that LLRA-KŠS candidates run off several times at various levels of electoral contests.[3] Whether as a part of electoral alliance or alone, the LLRA-KŠS's candidates' success suggests that at its core it extends its appeal to the entire non-Lithuanian segment of society. But, the party's appeasement of Lithuania's minority voters has been divisive, and the LLRA-KŠS has often set the wrong foot forward. In 2014, participating in the Victory Day Parade on May 9 (i.e., after Russia's incursion into Crimea), the leader of the LLRA-KŠS, Waldemar Tomaszewski, wore the Ribbon of Saint George, associated primarily with Russia's assertive policies in Ukraine. Likewise, ahead of the 2020 Seimas elections he issued statements in support of Belarus's political leadership. Targeting the ethnic minority electorate and mobilizing symbols marked the LLRA-KŠS as defender of the minorities that are marginalized in the public space as a result of ethnocentric, Lithuanian nation-state-building.

Second, the LLRA-KŠS built cross-ethnic cooperation with representatives of Russians, the country's second-largest ethnic group. This strategy proved to be effective in the 2009, 2014, and 2019 EP elections when the Polish–Russian electoral alliance won one MEP seat. In 2015, both the LLRA-KŠS and RA collected 60.8% of votes in the Vilnius region and 76.25% in the Šalčininkai region, demonstrating that the core electorate of the minority coalition is located in small towns and rural areas, but the votes of urban minorities ensured the LLRA-KŠS's success in the Seimas elections. In the 2014 and 2019 municipal elections in Vilnius and Klaipėda, the LLRA-KŠS resorted to forming a preelectoral coalition with the RA. As a result, the party became a well-established political force in the administrations of the Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Trakai, and Švenčionys districts, as well as in Vilnius and Visaginas cities where it either governed alone or was part of the coalition. Even when the LLRA-KŠS ran separately from other minority parties, Russian-speaking politicians were positioned comparatively high on its lists for the Seimas elections, whereas rural Polish

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

representatives were placed lower down. A Member of Parliament (MP) intimated that the strategy has paid off and that the party won enough seats to form a separate faction in the Seimas that was elected in 2012; the inclusion of Russian candidates on the LLRA-KŠS's electoral list since has been intended to send a signal to majority parties rather than to appease domestic voters.

Third, the LLRA-KŠS sought to consolidate its image as an "electable" option for Lithuania's electorate as a whole. At the 2016 Seimas elections, the LLRA-KŠS collected 5.7% of the vote, which guaranteed the party eight seats of 141 in the Seimas.[4] As the elections returned a fragmented parliament and the government eventually split on October 19, 2017, the rump coalition remained in power until July 2019 and relied on "confidence and supply" from several parties, including the LLRA-KŠS, at first informally and from mid-2019 as part of the coalition government. As a junior coalition partner, the LLRA-KŠS took responsibility for the Ministries of the Interior and of Transport and Communications. These resorts have no direct bearing on minority policies but were crucial to demonstrating the party's "coalitionability."

Finally, the party's priorities have been "changing and broadening over the time. If previously the main focus of the party was on the rights of ethnic minorities, this has later expanded to include wider understanding of welfare, including social aspects, and contribution to decision making in various segments of the state governance."[5] In 2016, the LLRA-KŠS changed its way of projecting its electoral appeal: at the Party Congress, its name was officially appended with "Christian Families Alliance." The change had been discussed as early as 2009 to emphasize the party's adherence to the *Christian Democratic* ideas (Andžejevski 2014), but by 2016 the ecumenical innuendo was no longer sufficient to justify the LLRA-KŠS's vocal opposition to women's reproductive rights. Tomaszewski, the party's leader, suggested that the party had to respond to their voters expectations, who had strong Christian and family values and expected the party to defend the "traditional family" (Jackunaite 2019).

In 2020, the LLRA-KŠS's Seimas electoral campaign divested from focusing on minority issues in favor of proselytizing commitment to Christianity. Its electoral materials called to vote "For Christian values! For the values of a traditional family! For social justice! For fair policy!" foregrounding the reference to religion: "The basis of LLRA–KŠS are Christian values, because we are all children of God and we are all equal to Him—regardless of race, nationality, political beliefs and social status" (LLRA-KŠS 2020).[6] This reorientation toward Christian foundations was widely perceived as an appeal to both Polish- and Russian-speakers and appeasement of the religion-inspired conservatism in the countries from which both groups consume "their" news, Russia and Poland. Indeed, the LLRA-KŠS's electoral program was highly similar to that of Poland's governing *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), particularly in social and economic policies (Potocki 2019). Beata Petkiewicz, the LLRA-KŠS's MP elected in 2020, positively noted that her party "did a good job by rebranding itself by shifting its identity to emphasize its Christian character, [thereby] becoming a genuinely right-wing party."[7]

The Lithuanian state's nationalizing pressure and majority parties' reluctance to support minority issues played a primary role in the LLRA–KŠS's calculation of its political moves during the initial 20 years of independence (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė et al. 2016; Agarin 2017). The party's less-subtle programmatic agenda mentions social and economic issues, allowing it to frame its participation in earlier government as an acumen while suggesting to the ethnic minority voter that their voice would remain unheard without. Although the LLRA–KŠS remained weaker than other Lithuanian political actors, it appealed tactically to non-Lithuanians and capitalized on its monopoly over representing Lithuania's minorities across the state apparatus. The party traditionally deployed an "isolationist rhetoric" on the relationship between the minority and the state (Savukynas 2000) and in the 2020 electoral manifesto emphasized that political participation is a matter of ethnic identity and that the linguistic rights of the community only flow from individual allegiance to the group (LLRA-KŠS 2020). This required the LLRA–KŠS to reflect on its past cooperation with political parties of the Lithuanian majority as primarily, if not entirely, a commitment to giving voice to the minority against Lithuania's nationalizing political forces.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Therefore, from 1994 to 2020 the LLRA–KŠS completed the evolution from an organization vocalizing the interests of rural Eastern Lithuania's Polish-speaking residents to an ethnopolitical outfit standing in for the interests of all non-Lithuanians who are marginalized by the state majority. The LLRA–KŠS's strong electoral performance in parliamentary elections over the past three decades reflects this party's dominant position in municipalities with a Polish-speaking demographic majority in and around the capital, Vilnius. In some administrative districts, Polish-speakers field a sizable portion of the electorate: in Šalčininkai (76.3 %), Vilnius region (46.8%), Trakai (27.5%), and Švenčionys (24.3%), encouraging their political representatives to focus on bread-and-butter issues, access to native language education, the use of the Polish language in the public sphere, and economic development (Statistics Lithuania 2023).

Some minority voters have consolidated behind the LLRA-KŠS as "an ethnic-based 'niche' political party" (Janušauskienė 2016, 582) to represent them in the Seimas and in municipalities. Yet, it is far from certain that the LLRA-KŠS's electoral success among voters reflects this party's—over any other political organization's—commitment to giving minority voice in majority-dominated politics. Across these four regions, there is little competition from other (statewide) parties whose national programs fail to consider regionally specific interests of Polish-speakers; this is also highlighted by slightly higher electoral returns for the LLRA–KŠS relative to the demographic weight of Polish-speakers in the area.

Likewise, voter turnout has been on average higher in the municipal elections across the area that are populated by Polish-speakers. Whereas in both Vilnius city and the rest of Lithuania the average turnout in 2019 was only 48%, in excess of 50% of voters cast their ballot in Eastern Lithuania, with elections of the central government seeing far fewer voters turning out.[8] This shows that the party appeals to minority voters and is able to mobilize them. The higher turnout in municipal elections in parliamentary contests is running against the countrywide trend, suggesting that the region's voters anticipate broader returns on their vote from local administrations. By putting the LLRA-KŠS into municipal administrations, minority voters ensure that the evolution of regional policy is different from that of the overall policy priorities designed by and serving the Lithuanian statewide majority. Here, the LLRA-KŠS is in an advantageous position to collect support from minorities and to engage in pork-barrel politics in municipalities' administrations where it has held power for years. We turn to this in the next section.

The LLRA-KŠS's Ethnic Appeal

Although the state of Lithuania commits to support the minority, the lack of a systematic outline of state priorities has hampered the factual effectiveness of its engagement with minority communities in general and the regions where they are in plurality. This has been an issue of concern for successive national governments (Klimanskis et al. 2017), particularly because the LLRA-KŠS foments more than it channels the frustration of its electorate with the Lithuanian state's limited involvement with the Polish-speaking community. Local scholars, too, reveal that the leaders and members of Polish NGOs raise questions similar to those addressed in the program of the LLRA–KŠS (e.g., the use of minority languages on public signs and the situation of schools with instruction in the Polish language; Podagelytė 2014; Frėjutė-Rakauskienė 2015).

However, studies by local researchers in the region identify the LLRA-KŠS as the main source of Polish-speakers' antagonistic views toward the Lithuanian state (e.g., Janušauskienė 2016). In fact, the party consistently speaks of itself as a voice of "Poles in Lithuania" rather than as a voice of Polish-speaking Lithuanian citizens (Kazėnas et al. 2014). The LLRA-KŠS's emphasis on promoting Polish ethnic culture, traditions, language, historical memory, and religion is carried out mainly by individuals who are aggrieved by the lack of recognition of their equality in their state of citizenship despite individual experiences that are rarely ethnicity-related or nonnegotiable in the framework of citizenship (Daukšas 2015). Because most Polish-speakers suffer from a rather low level of education and chances for socioeconomic mobility and a comparatively underdeveloped

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

infrastructure (Polski Klub Dyskusyjny 2019), the LLRA-KŠS has had ample opportunity to profile itself as defender of Polish-speakers' "right to be visible." In contrast, to focus of the state on ethnonational societal cohesion that failed to address minorities' concerns about their identities, in Eastern Lithuania the "likes" are closer to the voter geographically, ideologically, and critically, socially (Press Europe 2009).

The party appeared to focus mainly on the spelling of personal names and education in the mother tongue as matters of minority interests. Funding minority schools has been particularly hotly contested. As elsewhere across the country, schools in the region are funded by the Lithuanian state and thus are tasked with providing substantial competencies in education and in the state language, both essential for integration of all Lithuania's citizens into Lithuanian society. The state for its part views schooling across all of Lithuania as foundational for social cohesion and political education about Lithuania to allow pupils opportunities to continue further education in either Polish in Poland or in Lithuanian in their home country (Klumbytė and Šliavaitė 2021). Many Polish-speakers believe that state-funded education ought to provide instruction in pupils' native languages to allow them to maintain their discrete ethnolinguistic identity. The state also should not prevent students from learning about Poland-centered culture and help by incorporating modules on Poland's history and facilitating school exchanges with and access to higher education in Poland (Balžekienė et al. 2008; Daukšas 2015). "In this context choice of a school is not only a matter of choosing a school that meets families' expectations of the quality of teaching but also a matter of affirmation of one's ethnic belonging, that is, who you are and who you are not in an ethnic sense" (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Sasunkevich, and Šliavaitė 2021, 1138).

Contention about the visibility of non-Lithuanian names of municipalities and streets as well as in official personal documents, such as passports, has been another contentious issue. Because the State Language Law prohibits the use of languages other than Lithuanian in the public domain, the LLRA-KŠS on multiple occasions called for permission to write names in the passports of Polish-speakers and to use bilingual street signs in municipalities where Polish-speakers dominate (Kazėnas et al. 2014). Although the LLRA-KŠS has been rallying its supporters around the language-recognition issue for the past three decades (Delfi.lt 2014), not once had this point been included as a policy preference when the party joined the coalition government. The party's inattention to legislation that prohibits the spelling of personal names in languages other than the state language was particularly criticized by Ewelina Dobrowolska, human rights advocate (and, from December 2020, the Minister of Justice). At the same time, Wanda Krawczonok, the leader of the LLRA-KŠS's parliamentary fraction during its participation in the coalition government (2019–2020), countered that the issue of the original spelling of personal names was not a priority for the LLRA-KŠS; it was a "fifth-order problem" (Platūkytė 2019, sec. 1, para. 2). However, the lack of progress on Polish-speakers' demands in law or policy has meant that both have often been resolved on an individual basis via courts: "People to whom [the original Polish spelling of the name and surname] is important and who care about it can use this tool," according to Wanda Krawczonok (Platūkytė 2019, sec. "Original spelling of personal names is not a priority" (*Originali asmenvardžių rašyba – ne prioritetas*), para. 1).

In both cases of funding for minority education and recognition of minority language preferences in public, the party drew attention to the conflicting logic at the heart of nation-state-building and limited recognition for ethnolinguistic minorities (15min.lt 2013). In an interview, Jarosław Narkiewicz opined that (Lithuanian) coalition partners needed to be continuously persuaded to address minority concerns over other issues of relevance, and although some success has been achieved the LLRA-KŠS needed to resolve "legal issues first":

> [Majority parties'] red lines … are the writing of names, the perception, the value of the alphabet [i.e. spelling of names in Polish original]. We are looking for [a resolution on] what we consider to be a standard regulation of rights in democratic societies, respect for rights.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> […] [Majority political elites] think that in any one country there should be education in the state language in all schools, and that there should also be the possibility of mother tongue education as a [separate] subject. And the rest are concessions.[9]

Here, Narkiewicz identifies the overlap of state interests in nation building with those of the ethnic-majority political actors as a problem for the representation of the minority. Even if the minority's pursuit is of equality and not of affirmative action, the political elites acting in the name of (ethnic) Lithuanians drew the "red line" around the rational of the nation-state-building and presented decisions that may benefit the entire citizenry of Lithuania as "concessions to the minority." In the absence of concessions, however, changes to the legal framework that were made with an assumption that all Lithuania's citizens are native speakers of Lithuanian had an immediate adverse effect on the rights of the minority to access education in its native language.

> 2008–2012 was the period when rights were most narrowed in legal terms. I am speaking in terms of rights, because that is when the new Education Act was adopted [in 2011], … [which limited] access to language education. Then, the existing Law on National Minorities, which contained certain enumerated provisions, was repealed. And as a result, there have already been practical steps.[10]

The above points out that the opportunities to enjoy the right to use and to retain their group-relevant identity marker, the language, are unequally distributed for members of distinct ethnopolitical communities in the national state of Lithuanians. In our interviews, we have often come across views such as the ones from the LLRA-KŠS leadership quoted above, which highlights the disadvantages experienced as a result of the majority's neglect of the effects that the pursuit of their interests has on perceptions of minority equality in the state. Unsurprisingly therefore, representatives of the LLRA-KŠS were able to position themselves as defenders of their group's minority interests in the face of the majority's reluctance to recognize its adverse effects on non-Lithuanians and practical depression of intergroup equality. Thus, acting in the interest of its own electorate, the LLRA-KŠS sought to reduce the multidimensional inequality between their ethnic minority constituency and the Lithuanian majority to a single dimension of language-based marginalization. This allowed it to continue mobilizing voters and maintaining its own ethnopolitical profile (Kazėnas 2012) while leaving space for maneuvering and cooperating on social and economic issues with the parties representing the Lithuanian majority.

During the past three decades, the LLRA-KŠS has consolidated a support base among its coethnics. It has done so by nurturing the perception of the Lithuanian state as nationalizing and mirroring it to the Polish- and, to some degree, the Russian-speaking voter. Voter perceptions of stalling minority problems have been repeatedly rehashed and recast by the LLRA-KŠS as calls for societal justice, which could only be delivered at the municipality level (Dambrauskas 2017). But, as Antoni Radczenko, journalist writing on minority issues, notes, "LLRA is not the cause of the problem, but in some way it is the consequence of [state] policy, of the policy of the central authorities, toward the Poles in Lithuania."[11] This allowed the LLRA-KŠS to capitalize on Polish-speakers' suspicion of the majority political elites, who have commonly been perceived as biased against the minority. In our interview, Narkiewicz summarized this as the "great desire on the part of the rulers of the nascent state to restrict or even eliminate the possibility of education in [the nonstate] mother tongue."[12] The failure of majority elites to reconcile their nation-state-building project with accommodation of minorities' group-relevant rights, such as language use, has been the main reason for Polish-speakers to think of state actions as being assimilatory in their intent.

At the very least, state policies have shaped the perception in the minority that they are takers, not makers, of reforms and provided sufficient reasons for group-based mobilization behind the LLRA-KŠS. In municipalities, where the party had a say over the accommodation of interests and representation of group-relevant concerns, it could remain in charge, control access to, and redistribute scarce socioeconomic resources to its electoral base. The dominance of the LLRA-

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

KŠS in municipalities and its increasingly polemic efforts to speak on behalf of all minorities, while distributing perks mainly to their own followers, has increasingly encouraged alternative routes for political organization in minority communities.

What Explains the LLRA-KŠS's Regional Electoral Success?

For over two decades, the LLRA-KŠS has operated in a political environment where the category of ethnicity has remained continuously salient, allowing the party to entrench its image as an ethnic party standing for the interests of their likes. Even if the party was present in the Seimas, it gathers its strength from the votes that are returned in municipalities where the LLRA-KŠS has enjoyed the opportunity to coordinate, if not to control, its electorate's perceptions about the party's efficacy as a national actor. This explains why the LLRA-KŠS's appeal to voters outside its ethnopolitical stronghold of South Eastern Lithuania has remained limited during all this time, with numerous individual Polish-speakers seeking to wrestle control from the LLRA-KŠS as the sole voice of minority in both municipal and national politics.[13] However, most of these attempts have been either too short-lived to consolidate organizational structures and ensure sustained voter support or too focused on individual personalities. The LLRA-KŠS's visibility in national politics allowed it to present itself to voters as *the* opposition to Lithuanians' national state-building, regardless of their effectiveness as representatives of its electorate's interests.

Until the comprehensive review of public opinions across Eastern Lithuania (Kazėnas et al. 2014), many group-relevant rights and concerns had received scant attention from national policy makers from both majority parties and the LLRA-KŠS. Likely because the party participated in coalition government at the time of the survey, just over 30% of respondents suggested a need for an alternative to the LLRA-KŠS to ensure better the representation of Poles' interests (Kazėnas et al. 2014, 143). This suggests that in the context of nation-state-building, the ethnic minority party may count on support of its electoral segment anyway. Because minority voters might not expect substantial returns on their vote in form of legal recognition of their group-relevant interests, in this view, the LLRA-KŠS's participation in government might be perceived by minorities as the best option at hand, the presence of their representatives in the statewide politics.

We believe, however, that the LLRA-KŠS has been successful due to taking a narrowly instrumental view of the political process and convincing their voters that, if elected, they will (continue to) facilitate privileged access to scarce resources of the state on the local level, at least in the municipalities they control.

Apart from issues related to language use and visibility, the LLRA-KŠS presents itself as an attractive political force for local minorities who are engaging in various forms of economic transactions. Polish-speakers in Eastern Lithuania seem to be unaware of the government support mechanisms and state funding of ethnocultural- and language-related activities that are provided (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Sasunkevich, and Šliavaitė 2021). In our fieldwork, interviewees often claimed that application for funding from Poland appeared to be less bureaucratic than that from the Vilnius-based, Department for National Minorities, which requires that community organizations register to disburse project-based funding for any one annual budget period. Consequently, Polish community organizations are significantly dependent financially on good neighborly relationships with Poland, from where "Polish Community" (*Wspólnota Polska*) and "Aid to Poles in the East" (*Fundacja Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie*) coordinate aid via the Polish Consulate in Vilnius. The LLRA-KŠS's government participation 2019–2020 has improved Lithuania–Poland relations and ensured a continuous flow of such funding from Warsaw into LLRA-KŠS constituencies. In our interview, Beata Petkiewicz, at the time the newly elected MP for the LLRA-KŠS, highlighted this close-knit relationship as something positive: "Being close to the Polish community, attending to people's needs, and seeking avenues to resolve them" was, in her judgement, the main reason for party's existence, which voters understand even if "some problems remain unsolved, because the party cannot do everything."[14]

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But many organizations that cater to the Polish community are intertwined with community centers that are located in municipalities and partially dependent on municipal institutions, their funding, and thus personal linkage with party officials to cater to the local community's interests. The long-term leadership by Waldemar Tomaszewski (since 1999) and his close affiliation with Michał Mackiewicz, the chair of the NGO, Union of Poles in Lithuania (*Lietuvos lenkų sąjunga*, LLS), since May 2002 has contributed to the merger of political and cultural organizations of the Polish-speaking community. Both figures have secured the continued support of the minority electorate but have not avoided conflicts of interest during their long years in leadership. For example, Mackiewicz's reelection in May 2018 to the position of the LLS's chair brought to light nontransparent funding arrangements resulting in conflict with Poland's ambassador to Lithuania, Urszula Doroszewska.[15]

At the same time, the LLRA-KŠS-run municipalities in Eastern Lithuania have been in the focus of attention by the Special Investigation Services of the State, responsible for monitoring corruption. Particularly, the comparatively poor Vilnius and Šalčininkai district administrations have been employing disproportionately high numbers of the elected officials' family members on the state payroll. In 2019, the Šalčininkai region municipality was the second on the Index of Nepotism Risk and the Vilnius region municipality scored well above the Lithuanian average (21% and 16.92 %, respectively; STT 2020). At the same time, the Šalčininkai district municipality employers registered one of the highest average salaries in the country (59th out of 60 municipalities), with the municipality of the Vilnius region consisting of territories adjacent to the capital trailing a distant 13th (OSP 2019). Given the dire socioeconomic opportunities in these regions and their peripheral location, the LLRA-KŠS's dominant position in local administrations provides privileged access to economic opportunities for the loyal and ensures their electoral allegiance to the party, de facto employing voting family members.

In our interviews, both the elected elites and community activists emphasized that the state has not supported either the welfare or the ethnolinguistic needs of its minority citizens enough. In contrast, the party's activism on behalf of its ethnic minority constituency seems to bring more than just recognition and electoral support. More than 90% of Lithuania's Poles allocated a part of their income tax to the LLRA-KŠS in 2019 despite the party's claim that not all of their supporters are able to file the declaration correctly (Jackunaite 2019). In addition to significant financial support from Lithuanian citizens in this way, the LLRA-KŠS leadership's links to grant givers in Poland have allowed it to engage in unmistakably pork-barrel politics at the municipal level.[16]

The specific socioeconomic and demographic profile of the LLRA-KŠS's electorate might therefore help us appreciate the reasons for party's longevity in the past. The established patronage networks offered stable reference and access points to social, economic, and political resources of the state in municipalities. This not only offset the risks of minority communities and individuals' marginalization as a result of pork-barrel politics; the Manichean rhetoric of the minority's leaders about the effects of Lithuanian nation-state-building ensured continuous backing for party candidates in the national and municipal elections over the past decades despite the party's reneging on its electoral promises continuously.

During this time, the LLRA-KŠS was repeatedly criticized for failing to table concerns about minority rights, its confrontational approach to policy making, and its controversial use of pro--Russia rhetoric in the face of Russia's engagement in Ukraine. Since 2014, the party has lost most of its urban Polish voters, as many as 18,209 (7.95% of the electorate) in Vilnius alone (Sobik 2017). However, only 6,000 additional voters deserted the LLRA-KŠS in municipalities around Vilnius, making it clear that the LLRA-KŠS's leadership made full use of opportunities offered by the political context of nation-state-building. It has convinced voters that minority interests ought to be represented by the minority's own ethnic party, which would take care of its voters in municipalities even if at the national level nonaccommodation would be the most likely political outcome.

In our final section, we discuss how the party's appeal failed to account for the changing expectations of its ethnic electorate and what this forebodes for the future political success of the LLRA-KŠS.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Beyond the Soviet Nostalgia of Polish Voters

Since the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence, individual members of the minority continuously have had to reassert their ethnic and linguistic difference from an ideal Lithuanian to enjoy equal rights as citizens. At the same time, the LLRA-KŠS has evidently failed even to table legislative amendments while in government, leaving ample space for bottom-up initiatives of the Polish minority to challenge the party's dominant position as *the* representative of Lithuania's Poles. Then, annunciating the beginning of the end of ethnic minority parties in Lithuania, Kiryl Kascian observed that "Leadership renewal is much needed to improve the public mandate to speak on behalf of the entire Lithuanian Polish minority. Failure to do so, and to reboot the party's current image, will lead to further dispersion of the [LLRA-KŠS's] electorate" (Kascian 2020).

Ahead of the October 2020 Seimas elections, a series of public debates was organized by a grassroots minority Polish Discussion Club (*Lenkų diskusijų klubas/Polski Klub Dyskusyjny*, PKD). The PKD mapped out the perceptions and expectations of Polish-speakers about the contribution of ethnic minorities to Lithuanian society, their place therein, and opportunities for maintaining linguistic and cultural identity. The result of the exercise, *Strategy Wileńszczyzna 2040*, informed cross-ethnic political dialogue about the needs and aspirations in the community (Polski Klub Dyskusyjny 2019). The public definitively pushed back on the LLRA-KŠS's flirtations with the Christian conservatism, eastward geopolitical innuendos, and increasingly authoritarian intraparty politics. De facto, a bottom-up initiative by the community's intellectuals, the strategy drew actionable points together under the heading "Vision," pointing to the significant engagement required from political elites of minority and majority alike to address the perceptions of minority exclusion in Lithuania generally and Eastern Lithuania specifically. For the first time in three decades, the public dialogue on challenges and opportunities for Polish-speakers that took place (but the advancing pandemic had shifted priorities) particularly highlighted the differences in opinions expressed by the LLRA-KŠS and those whom it claimed to represent.

The PKD has paved the way for the change in supply of minority representatives running in the 2020 Seimas elections. Many Polish-speakers have run as members of majority liberal and center-left parties, contesting elections on lists jointly with the Lithuanian majority as the key to a better representation of Polish minority interests. At present, two political alternatives to the LLRA-KŠS have crystalized out of the municipal activities in Vilnius city and the region. Ewelina Dobrowolska, running on the list of the Freedom Party (*Laisvės partija*, LP), assumed the post of Minister of Justice after the 2020 Seimas elections following a successful career as Vilnius city councilor, and Robert Duchniewicz, formerly chair of regional self-government, ran for and won the mayoral seat in the Vilnius district in 2023. Both Dobrowolska and Duchniewicz took part in PKD activities and offered an issue-based alternative to the ethnic minority agenda of the LLRA-KŠS based on the narrow interpretation of Christian family values. Both politicians represent the younger generation of Lithuania's Polish-speakers, positioning themselves as an alternative to the long-standing monopoly of the LLRA-KŠS.

Following the Seimas elections, the *Strategy Wileńszczyzna 2040* was presented to most of the national parties and discussed during meetings with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, Seimas Speaker Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, and Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė. In July 2021, the PKD held a podium discussion with the coauthors of the strategy, President's Advisor Jaroslaw Niewierowicz, and a representative of the Polish Embassy in the House of Polish Culture, Vilnius, where it was agreed to establish a Strategic Committee to review and amend the strategy annually in the format of public consultations.[17] This suggests that, in the PKD's perception, the Polish minority had finally located allies in the "field" of the nationalizing state among some of the Lithuanian political elite to reassess the state's role in tackling the social inequalities faced by the minorities.

In 2022, some prominent members left the party after its leadership failed to align the LLRA-KŠS's geopolitical priorities with those of Lithuania in the face of the war in Ukraine. On March 31, 2022, Zbigniew Jedziński, top of the LLRA-KŠS's electoral list for the 2020 parliamentary elections,

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

encouraged Poland to "leave NATO and the EU as soon as possible and create an alliance with Russia … [to] benefit Polish citizens and not someone from across the ocean" (LRT.lt 2022c). As a result, Beata Petkiewicz, the newly elected Seimas representative, left the party and was followed by several prominent party politicians, such as Vilnius District Vice Mayor Robert Kamarowski and Renata Cytacka, the LLRA-KŠS's former Deputy Minister of Energy of Lithuania (2012–2014) and long-time party member (LRT.lt 2022a). In response, the LLRA-KŠS sought to appeal to voters who were keen on younger representatives by nominating Waldemar Urban after the resignation of Maria Rekść as the long-term mayor of the Vilnius district in late 2022 (LRT.lt 2022d).

Overall, however, the party has been losing not only experienced members but also important discussion points. The major issue on LLRA-KŠS's program list—the use of Polish name-spelling in Lithuania—was resolved in 2022 by the Minister of Justice Ewelina Dobrowolska on the initiative of minority politicians who were elected to the Seimas on the majority party's lists (LRT.lt 2022b). As a result, the municipal elections of May 2023 brought significant disappointment to the LLRA-KŠS, which retained the majority and mayoral post of the Vilnius region but lost the mayorship of Vilnius to the Social Democratic Party's Polish-speaker Robert Duchniewicz.

Some success of the LLRA-KŠS in the Vilnius region may be due to allegiance of minority voters, who are satisfied with rhetoric of identity politics or with the distribution of "pork." It appears, however, that the distribution of pork plays a more significant role in explaining the voters' allegiance. The outcomes of the municipal election have not brought changes to party's governance, activities, and ideology, nor has the exodus of the party's prominent members aligned the LLRA-KSS's narrative with the domestic majority's *and* kin states' perception of Russia's threat to their states and identities. This suggests that continuous electoral support for the party rests on the ability of its singular leader, Waldemar Tomaszewski, to control patronage networks in the region around Vilnius where the party has polled better than before. Although Tomaszewski announced the party's successful hold in the region, the media commented on the outcome of the municipal elections of 2023 in light of the party's poor performance in the 2020 Seimas elections.

Commenting on the future of the party, journalist and former politician Rimvydas Valatka opined that "even if 70 to 80 percent of the party's members were to leave the party, neither the party's principles nor the [votes] obtained during the elections would change" (Grigoit, 2023, sec. "Sovietised Poles." para. 10) Identifying its dwindling demographic support base and no political future, Valatka is also clear about party's continuous electoral appeal: "Lithuania's policy in the Vilnius Region is still stupid, based on a false linguistic nationalism. If it had been otherwise, I think the [party] would have disappeared some 10 or 15 years ago" (Grigoit 2023, sec. "Sovietised Poles," para. 15).

Conclusions

Although held in high repute across the postcommunist region, nation-state consolidation has several adverse effects on the representation of citizens, the cornerstone of liberal democracy. Nation-states established by and for the ethnocultural majority of the country tend to privilege ethnic citizenship regimes and consolidate societies around institutions that are defined as democratic *for the majority*. Thus, even superficially democratic institutions explicitly put citizens who speak a de facto minority language, identifying with (even if not exercising) the nonstate religious creed and more generally not (considered to be) a part of majority's cultural community, at a disadvantage. Over time, nation-state-building normalizes the privileged status of majority populations in accessing and exercising a range of rights and opportunities formally attributed to all citizens in political, economic, social, and cultural life. In effect, the minority may come to view the state as missing the commitment to serving their group-relevant interests and coalesce around ethnic parties that act as defenders of their group concerns in the formal political arena. Once the contours of the electorate of the ethnic party have been consolidated, its programmatic appeals may yield place to encouraging pragmatic benefits from allegiance to the party, especially in areas where it can control how individual voters access the resources of the state.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

We suggest that two factors play a decisive role in ensuring the successful mobilization of the minority party in Lithuania: first, the persistent relevance of (minority) identity as a category of exclusion from cultural and socioeconomic resources of the state and for political mobilization, in effect nation-state-building for the majority, and, second, the party's ability to engage in the politics of redistribution across municipalities where it has acted as the dominant political force, in effect of minorities' concentrated settlement. On both accounts, for nearly three decades, the LLRA-KŠS has successfully convinced Polish-speaking voters of its ability to act as defenders of their rights and deliver pork to the otherwise (nationwide) neglected ethnic minority constituency.

The success of a rather programmatically idiosyncratic LLRA–KŠS illustrates that in nationalizing states minority parties do not need to attain results on electoral promise to their voters; it suffices to articulate the party's alignment with ethnic groups' negative view on the practicalities of nation-state-building. This contrasts with opportunities for political parties in democracies where state ownership is not constitutionally promised to one ethnic community, allowing citizens to identify with programmatic appeals of, engage in, and choose political parties at the ballot box regardless of their alignment with national concerns.

This helps understanding how the LLRA-KŠS built up and capitalized on their regional electoral base, positioning itself as the main if not the only formal political institution for the minority at the municipal (substate) level, willing and able to deliver cultural services and socioeconomic opportunities. These were promised to all citizens of Lithuania yet, absent recognition of special cultural and linguistic needs of minority by the state, equality of opportunities for all remained inaccessible to minority members. The effects of nation-state-building thus have dissociated representation from substantive issues and encouraged voters to perceive representatives' responsiveness as a measure of their ability to deliver pork rather than the party's ability to aggregate the interests of voters into sensible policy proposals.

Therefore, our article makes a significant contribution to research concerning the evidence-based assessment of the effects that national consolidation of a state servicing an ethnically diverse society has on mobilization and formal political participation of all affected citizens. In contrast to Polish-speakers, the Russian-speaking population ceased to be a distinct ethnopolitical segment in Lithuania's electorate, suggesting that this ethnic group integrated into society. Their representatives appeared as *Lithuania's* political elites by the mid-2010s.

We argued that in electing their own to represent the interests of the Polish-speaking minority in the Lithuanian political space, voters continue to confirm their appreciation of the nation-state-building project of the majority. Because its central tenet was to ensure the visibility of ethnic Lithuanian preference in formal politics rather than to align the political process with ideas of representation and participation of all citizens of the country (Brubaker 1996, 5–6), members of Polish minority, too, vote for their political party, as it is perceived to defend their group interests.

We conclude that the LLRA-KŠS's political success is the side effect of the descriptive representation that underlies nation-state-building. The party has not been effectively representing minorities, and disadvantages incurred on the minority group as the result of their identity's exclusion from the nation-state-building project have remained unaddressed. Since the 2020 Seimas elections, and largely thanks to visibility of numerous Polish-speaking politicians successfully representing nonminority parties in national politics, the cross-party consensus that appears to be evolving among the political elite of the Lithuanian state is that voters should not be disadvantaged as a result of their ethnocultural and language identity. Thus, the LLRA-KŠS's electoral future will depend mainly on its ability to benefit from its reputation as a service station in municipalities where it has previously built patronage networks to distribute pork to their voters.

Financial support. This work was supported by a grant from the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen on the project Minority Participation and Representation in National Societies to Timofey Agarin (Grant CUP D54I18000060003, Südtiroler Landtag, Nr. 693 17.07.2018).

Disclosure. None

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Notes

1 Law on Education (1991), Section 3, Article 28(6) https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.9A3AD08EA5D0/asr.
2 The misfired attempt to establish Lithuania's Polish People's Party (*Lietuvos lenkų liaudies partija*, LLLP) (2002–2010), later transforming into a nationwide, nonethnic Republican League (*Respublikonų lyga*), only further allowed LLRA to consolidate its electorate in both Vilnius and Šalčininkai regions, where Polish speakers are in the majority.
3 For instance, Waldemar Tomaszewski ran for seats in Vilnius District Municipality Council, Seimas, and European Parliament elections (https://www.vrk.lt/2019-europos-parlamento/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/904/rnk1186/kandidatai/epKandidatasAnketa_rkndId-2415249.html, Accessed January 8, 2024), whereas Rita Tamašunienė ran for the District Municipality and Seimas seats https://www.vrk.lt/2020-sei/kandidatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/1104/rnk1424/kandidatai/lrsKandidatasAnketa_rkndId-2418395.html. (Accessed January 6, 2024.)
4 2016 Seimas elections, Central Electoral Commission, https://www.vrk.lt/2016-seimo/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/102/1/1304/rezultatai/lt/rezultataiDaugmPartVrt_rorgId-26090.html. (Accessed January 6, 2024.)
5 Authors' interview with Jarosław Narkiewicz, September 15, 2020.
6 LLRA-KŠS Programme for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections. "Family, Health, Safety. Lithuania–A Country of Values and Prosperity." http://awpl.lt/wybory2020/rinkimu-programa/?lang=lt. (Accessed January 6, 2023.)
7 Authors' interview with Beata Pietkiewicz, November 10, 2020.
8 The 2019 municipal elections saw 47.80% turnout nationally, with more Vilnius (48.08%), Vilniaus region (48.53%), Trakai (53.03%) Šalčininkai (57.41%), and Švenčionys (59.66%). See, Central Electoral Commission. 2023. "1993-2021 Electoral Data. Elections by Date," https://www.vrk.lt/en/rinkimai and "Result by District," https://www.vrk.lt/2019-savivaldybiu-tarybu/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/864/1/aktyvumas/lt/aktyvumas.html. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)
9 Authors' interview with Jarosław Narkiewicz, September 15, 2020.
10 Authors' interviews with Jarosław Narkiewicz, September 15, 2020.
11 Authors' interviews with Antoni Radczenko, October 19, 2020.
12 Authors' interviews with Jarosław Narkiewicz, September 15, 2020.
13 Some of these have attained nationwide recognition despite the critical stance on the ideal of nation-state building—for example, Artur Płokszto from 1996 in the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (*Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija*, LSDP), Aleksander Popławski in the New Union (*Naujoji Sąjunga*, NS) and the Lithuanian Liberal Union (*Lietuvos liberalų sąjunga*, LLS), Tomas Tomilinas in the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (*Lietuvos žaliųjų ir valstiečių sąjunga*, LŽVS), Julia Mackiewicz and Edyta Mackiewicz in the Liberal Movement (*Liberalų sąjūdis*, LS), and Leokadia Poczykowska in the Lithuanian People's Peasant Union (*Lietuvos valstiečių liaudininkų sąjunga*, LVLS). In the 1995 local elections, Anicet Brodawski's Polish Electoral Committee ran together with the Lithuanian Peasant Party (*Lietuvos valstiečių partija*, LVP), winning several seats in the Vilnius region. In 1996, the Lithuanian Alliance of National Minorities (*Lietuvos tautinių mažumų aljansas*, LTMA), later the nationwide Alliance of Lithuanian Citizens (*Lietuvos piliečių aljansas*, LPA), the Polish People's Party, and the Polish Discussion Club (*Lenkų diskusijų klubas/Polski Klub Dyskusyjny*, PKD) had all formed formidable efforts to appeal to the cross-ethnic concerns of all Lithuanian citizens. Polish fractions of statewide political parties have also been rather successful, such as *ProLibera* in the Lithuanian Liberal Union, Zygmunt Klonowski's Polish faction in the Lithuanian Freedom Union (*Lietuvos laisvės sąjunga*, LLS) established in 2016, has been transformed into the Vilnius citizens' Bear (*Vilniečių Lokys*, VL) for the local elections in 2019, cooperating with the Lithuanian Green Party (*Lietuvos žaliųjų partija*, LŽP) in 2020.
14 Authors' interview with Beata Pietkiewicz, November 10, 2020.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

15 "Rok afery Mackiewicza - Wiadomości Znad Wilii" (2019); International Centre for Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity Studies Blog (2018).
16 Authors' interview with Ewelina Dobrowolska, October 22, 2020.
17 *Kurier Wileński* (2021). However, following the Russian aggression in Ukraine, both government and Polish community priorities have shifted; joint activities ran out of steam and Club's webpage registered as inactive.

References

15min.lt. 2013. "Polish MEP Pawel Zalewski: Settling Name-Spelling Issue in Lithuania Would Undermine Polish Party's Ability to Mobilize Support." April 26, 2013. http://www.15min.lt/en/article/politics/polish-mep-pawel-zalewski-settling-name-spelling-issue-in-lithuania-would-undermine-polish-party-s-ability-to-mobilize-support-526-329917. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. 2016. "Democracy for Realists: Holding up a Mirror to the Electorate." *Juncture* 22 (4): 269–275.

Agarin, Timofey. 2010. *A Cat's Lick: Democratisation and Minority Communities in the Post-Soviet Baltic*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Agarin, Timofey. 2017. "Nation-States into Nationalising States." *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* 3 (4): article 393.

Agarin, Timofey, and Karl Cordell. 2016. *Minority Rights and Minority Protection in Europe*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Andžejevski, T. 2014. "Neišspręstos Lenkų Mažumos Problemos Lietuvoje Kelia Grėsmę Jos Egzistencijai." http://www.awpl.lt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67%3Anierozwizane-problemy-spoecznoci-polskiej-na-litwie-zagraaj-jejegzystencji&catid=42%3Aaktualia&Itemid=59&lang=lt. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

Atkeson, Lonna Rae, and Nancy Carrillo. 2007. "More Is Better: The Impact of Female Representation on Citizen Attitudes toward Government Responsiveness." *Gender and Politics* 3 (1): 79–101.

Bachus, Trevor. 2020. "Why Are Ethnic Parties Less Programmatic? Mixed-Method Evidence of Ethnic Endogeneity to Clientelistic Linkages." *Ethnopolitics* 21 (4): 325–351.

Balžekienė, Aistė, Audronė Lapienienė, Gediminas Merkys, and Audronė Telešienė. 2008. "Daugiakultūrio Ir Daugiakalbio Ugdymo Prielaidos Bei Problemos Etniškai Mišriame Regione." *Etniškumo Studijos*. Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2008 (1–2).

Bilinski, Adam. 2015. "Cultural Legacies and Electoral Performance of Ethnic Minority Parties in Post-Communist Europe." *Nations and Nationalism* 21 (4): 721–740.

Birnir, Johanna Kristin. 2007. "Divergence in Diversity? The Dissimilar Effects of Cleavages on Electoral Politics in New Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (3): 602–619.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1993. "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe: Notes toward a Relational Analysis." *Institut Für Höhere Studien, Reihe Politikwissenschaft* 11, Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, December 1993. http://aei.pitt.edu/44482/1/1264675711_pw_11.pdf.

Brubaker, Rogers. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burant, Stephen R. 1993. "International Relations in a Regional Context: Poland and Its Eastern Neighbours Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine." *Europe-Asia Studies* 45 (3): 395–418.

Cramsey, Sarah A., and Jason Wittenberg. 2016. "Timing Is Everything Changing Norms of Minority Rights and the Making of a Polish Nation-State." *Comparative Political Studies* 49 (11): 1480–1512.

Dalton, Russell J., David M. Farrell, and Ian McAllister. 2011. *Political Parties and Democratic Linkage: How Parties Organize Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dambrauskas, Karolis. 2017. "Minority Response to Ethnic Democracy. Poles in Lithuania after EU Accession". *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* 3 (4): 66–86.

Daukšas, Darius. 2015. "Valstybės Teritorialumas Ir Tautinės Mažumos: Lenko Kortos Atvejis." *Lietuvos Etnologija* 15 (24): 53–66.

De Kadt, Daniel, and Horacio A. Larreguy. 2018. "Agents of the Regime? Traditional Leaders and Electoral Politics in South Africa." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (2): 382–99.

Delfi.lt. 2014. "B. Juodka: Lenkų Tautinės Mažumos Problemos Yra Dirbtinai Eskaluojamos." February 7, 2014. http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/b-juodka-lenku-tautines-mazumos-problemos-yra-dirbtinai-eskaluojamos.d?id=63956604#ixzz2uEgNlbiP. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

Duvold, Kjetil, Sten Berglund, and Joakim Ekman. 2020. *Political Culture in the Baltic States*. New York: Springer.

Einstein, Katherine Levine, and Vladimir Kogan. 2016. "Pushing the City Limits: Policy Responsiveness in Municipal Government." *Urban Affairs Review* 52 (1): 3–32.

Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Monika. 2015. "The Role of Voluntary Organisations in Constructing the Common Identity and Mobilising of Polish Community in Southeastern Lithuania." *Polish Political Science Review* 3 (1): 17–34.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Monika, Andrius Marcinkevičius, Kristina Šliavaitė, and Irena Šutinienė. 2016. *Etniškumas Ir Identitetai Pietryčių Lietuvoje: Raiška, Veiksniai Ir Kontekstai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos Socialinių Tyrimų Centras.

Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Monika, Olga Sasunkevich, and Kristina Šliavaitė. 2021. "Polish Ethnic Minority in Belarus and Lithuania: Politics, Institutions, and Identities." *Nationalities Papers* 49 (6): 1132–1149.

Galbreath, David J., and Joanne McEvoy. 2012. *The European Minority Rights Regime: Towards a Theory of Regime Effectiveness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Gaučaitė-Znutienė, Modesta. 2023. "Rinkimų biuletenyje – vos trys pavardės: Šalčininkus ir Rietavą dauguma partijų pamiršo, aiškina, jog nemato prasmės." LRT.lt, January 31, 2023. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1878795/rinkimu-biuletenyje-vos-trys-pavardes-salcininkus-ir-rietava-dauguma-partiju-pamirso-aiskina-jog-nemato-prasmes. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)

Glaurdić, Josip, Michal Mochtak, and Christophe Lesschaeve. 2021. "Ethnic Bias after Ethnic Conflict: Preferential Voting and the Serb Minority in Croatian Elections." *Ethnopolitics*, November 1–21, 2021.

Grigoit, Anna. 2023. "Relying on Soviet Nostalgia: Lithuania's Controversial Polish-Minority Party Losing Members." LRT.lt, August 12, 2023. https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2053169/relying-on-soviet-nostalgia-lithuania-s-controversial-polish-minority-party-losing-members. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)

Gunther, Richard, and Larry Diamond. 2003. "Species of Political Parties: A New Typology." *Party Politics* 9 (2): 167–199.

Hänni, Miriam. 2017. "Presence, Representation, and Impact: How Minority MPs Affect Policy Outcomes." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42 (1): 97–130.

Huber, John D. 2012. "Measuring Ethnic Voting: Do Proportional Electoral Laws Politicize Ethnicity?" *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (4): 986–1001.

Jackunaite, Kristina. 2019. "Popierinių deklaracijų 'čempionai' – Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija-Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga." LRT.lt, December 23, 2019. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1127672/popieriniu-deklaraciju-cempionai-lietuvos-lenku-rinkimu-akcija-krikscionisku-seimu-sajunga. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)

Janušauskienė, Diana. 2016. "Ethnicity as Political Cleavage: The Political Agenda of the Polish National Minority in Lithuania." *Nationalities Papers* 44 (4): 578–590.

Kascian, Kiryl. 2020. "Are We Witnessing the End of Ethnic Parties in Lithuania?" *The Loop* (political science blog), *European Consortium for Political Research*, December 3, 2020. https://theloop.ecpr.eu/are-we-witnessing-the-end-of-ethnic-parties-in-lithuania/.

Kazėnas, Gediminas. 2012. "Lenko Korta – Tai Ne Išimtinai Politinė, Bet Ir Teisinė Problema." Delfi.lt, April 18, 2012. https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/law/gkazenas-lenko-korta-tai-ne-isimtinai-politine-bet-ir-teisine-problema.d?id=58166754. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)

Kazėnas, Gediminas, Adas Jakubauskas, Inga Gaižauskaitė, Romualdas Kacevičius, and Asta Visockaitė. 2014. *Lenkų Tautinės Mažumos Lietuvoje Identiteto Tyrimas*. Vilnius: Mykolo Romerio Universitetas.

Klimanskis, Simonas, Vilius Ivanauskas, Gediminas Kazėnas, Vytautas Keršanskas, and Šarūnas Legatas. 2017. *Tautinės Mažumos Lietuvoje*. Vilnius: Rytų Europos studijų centras.

Klumbytė, Neringa, and Kristina Šliavaitė. 2021. "Sovereignty and Political Belonging in Post-Soviet Lithuania: Ethnicity, Migration, and Historical Justice." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 52 (3): 437–454.

Koev, Dan. 2015. "Interactive Party Effects on Electoral Performance: How Ethnic Minority Parties Aid the Populist Right in Central and Eastern Europe." *Party Politics* 21 (4): 649–659.

Kurier Wileński. 2021. "Prezentacja Strategii Wileńszczyzna 2040 w DKP." July 27, 2021. https://kurierwilenski.lt/2021/07/27/prezentacja-strategii-wilenszczyzna-2040-w-dkp. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

Lithuanian Government. 1992. *The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania.* Vilnius.

LRT.lt. 2022a. "Call for Poland to Leave NATO Divides Lithuania's LLRA Party." April 7, 2022. https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1665926/call-for-poland-to-leave-nato-divides-lithuania-s-llra-party. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

LRT.lt. 2022b. "Lithuanian Parliament Allows Letters X, W and Q in ID Documents." January 18, 2022. https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1591388/lithuanian-parliament-allows-letters-x-w-and-q-in-id-documents. (Accessed October 22, 2023.)

LRT.lt. 2022c. "Skandalingas Jedinskio pareiškimas apie Lenkijos ir Rusijos sąjungą sukėlė politikų pyktį – reikalauja LLRA-KŠS reakcijos." March 31, 2022. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1659146/skandalingas-jedinskio-pareiskimas-apie-lenkijos-ir-rusijos-sajunga-sukele-politiku-pykti-reikalauja-llra-kss-reakcijos. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

LRT.lt. 2022d. "Vilniaus rajono savivaldybės merė Rekst nebesieks dar vienos kadencijos." December 23, 2022. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1852289/vilniaus-rajono-savivaldybes-mere-rekst-nebesieks-dar-vienos-kadencijos. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)

Mainwaring, Scott, and Mariano Torcal. 2006. "Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization." *Handbook of Party Politics* 11 (6): 204–227.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.'" *Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 628–657.

Merkl, Peter H., and Kay Lawson. 2014. *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.60 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Müller, Wolfgang C., and Thomas M. Meyer. 2010. "Meeting the Challenges of Representation and Accountability in Multi-Party Governments." *West European Politics* 33 (5): 1065–1092.
Mylonas, Harris. 2013. *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Nedelcu, Harry, and Joan DeBardeleben. 2016. "Conceptualizing Party Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe: A Typology of Ethnic Minority Parties." *East European Politics & Societies* 30 (2): 381–403.
Norkus, Zenonas. 2023. "Property Restitution and Privatisation in the Baltic Restorations of Capitalism." In *Post-Communist Transformations in Baltic Countries: A Restorations Approach in Comparative Historical Sociology*, edited by Zenonas Norkus, 99–116. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
OSP. 2019. "Darbo užmokestis regionuose, apskrityse ir savivaldybėse." Lithuanian Government, April 3, 2019. https://osp.stat.gov.lt/informaciniai-pranesimai?articleId=6128644. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)
Pantoja, Adrian D., and Gary M. Segura. 2003. "Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in Legislatures and Political Alienation among Latinos." *Social Science Quarterly* 84 (2): 441–460.
Philpot, Tasha S., and Hanes Walton, Jr. 2007. "One of Our Own: Black Female Candidates and the Voters Who Support Them." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (1): 49–62.
Platūkytė, Domantė. 2019. "Įvertino originalią asmenvardžių rašybą Lietuvoje: tai – teisinis chaosas ir absurdas." LRT.lt, November 6, 2019. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1111334/ivertino-originalia-asmenvardziu-rasyba-lietuvoje-tai-teisinis-chaosas-ir-absurdas. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)
Podagelytė, Violeta. 2014. "Ribų Ženklinimas Ir Atskirtis Paribio Etninėje Bendruomenėje: Etninių Veikėjų Vaidmuo Ir Strategijos." *Ethnicity Studies/Etniskumo Studijos*, no. 2, 69–88.
Polski Klub Dyskusyjny. 2019. *Strategia Zachowania i Rozwoju Języka Polskiego i Polskiej Społeczności Na Litwie Wileńszczyzna 2040/Lenkų kalbos ir lenkų bendruomenės Lietuvoje išsaugojimo ir vystymo strategija 'Vilniaus kraštas 2040.'* https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Wile%C5%84szczyzna%202040%20(LT).pdf. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)
Popovski, Vesna. 2000. *National Minorities and Citizenship Rights in Lithuania. 1988-1993*. Houndmills: Palgrave.
Press Europe. 2009. "You Say Waldemar, I Say Valdemar." http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/news-brief/133621-you-say-waldemar-i-say-valdemar. (Accessed January 8, 2024.)
Potocki, M. 2019. "Litewscy Polacy między Moskwą, Wilnem i Warszawą." *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, August 28, 2019. https://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/1427487,akcja-wyborcza-polakow-na-litwie-z-rosjanami.html?ref=purchaseCompleted (Accessed January 8, 2024.)
Savukynas, Virginijus. 2000. "Lietuvos Lenkai Ir Rusai: Dvi Skirtingos Laikysenos." *Politologija*, no. 2, 67–84.
Sirutavičius, Vladas. 2013. "Etniškumo politizacija Lietuvoje: Lenkų autonomistų judėjimas, Sąjūdis ir Lietuvos valdžios politika 1988 m.--1990 m. Pradžioje" *Ethnicity Studies/Etniskumo Studijos* no. 2, 120–148.
Sobik, Paweł. 2017. "Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie w systemie politycznym Republiki Litewskiej." Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, Wojnowice.
Statistics Lithuania. 2023. "Population by Ethnicity and Municipality. Census 2021." https://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=98272f17-83c2-40a2-b27e-95a9aeb92e61#/. (Accessed January 6, 2024.)
Stefanova, Boyka. 2014. "Ethnocultural Voting? Explaining Ethnic Minority Preferences in Bulgarian Elections." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 20 (3): 328–348.
Stokes, Susan C. 2005. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 315–325.
STT. 2020. "Nepotizmo rizikos institucinės struktūros analizė, Lietuvos Respublikos Specialiuju tyrimu tarnyba." Vilnius: Lithuanian Government. https://www.stt.lt/analitine-antikorupcine-zvalgyba/kiti-tyrimai/nepotizmo-rizikos-institucines-strukturos-analize/7546. (Accessed September 1, 2024.)
Tausanovitch, Chris, and Christopher Warshaw. 2014. "Representation in Municipal Government." *American Political Science Review* 108 (3): 605–641.
Tavits, Margit. 2008. "Policy Positions, Issue Importance, and Party Competition in New Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (1): 48–72.
Ubarevičienė, Rūta, Donatas Burneika, and Maarten van Ham. 2015. "Ethno-Political Effects of Suburbanization in the Vilnius Urban Region: An Analysis of Voting Behavior." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 46 (2): 217–242.
van Houten, Pieter. 1998. "The Role of a Minority's Reference State in Ethnic Relations." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 39 (1): 110–146.
Wang, Yi-ting, and Kiril Kolev. 2018. "Ethnic Group Inequality, Partisan Networks, and Political Clientelism." *Political Research Quarterly* 72 (2): 329–341.
Wimmer, Andreas. 2002. *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cite this article: Agarin, Timofey, and Karolis Dambrauskas. 2024. "Pork Barrel and Identity Politics: Explaining a Minority Party's Electoral Success in Lithuania". *Nationalities Papers*: 1–20, doi:10.1017/nps.2024.60