

Strategic frames. Europe, Russia, and minority inclusion in Estonia and Latvia, by Jennie L. Schulze, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018, 416 pp., £28.94 (paperback) ISBN 10: 0-8229-6511-9

Almost thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and since the moment when Estonia and Latvia regained independence, the issues of minority inclusion are still very topical. The Russian-speaking population in both countries is, in spite of everything, still there and very much visible. While the political position of Estonia and Latvia has changed and now that both nations are part of the European Union, NATO and the Council of Europe, Jennie Schulze's book highlights early optimism that European institutions would completely transform the minority situation and foster inclusion. However, current evidence demands a more sceptic view and produces more questions than answers. At the same time, the geographical location of Baltic states next to Russia will always stay the same, so in any analysis of the issues relevant for Russophones in Estonia and Latvia, Russia's position and interaction with it by these countries' leaders and politicians is essential.

Strategic Frames provides a detailed comparative investigation of minority inclusion policymaking in Latvia and Estonia from the early 1990s until 2015. The analysis is presented across six chapters plus an introduction and conclusion; four of the six chapters address policy-making case studies which look at citizenship, naturalization for stateless children, language, and electoral policies. Schulze's focus is on the questions regarding Europe's role and Russia's role in minority policy making, on the process of national (re)building in Latvia and Estonia, and attempts to detangle similarities and differences between Estonia and Latvia.

The analysis is carried out via the strategic framing within the quadratic nexus (Smith, 2002, 2020; Pettai, 2006) and thus expands Roger Brubaker's (1996) original assessment of nation-building in the post-communist part of Europe, and adds a fourth field to his 'triadic nexus' (Brubaker 1996, p. 4). Schulze situates her analysis in relation to the four overlapping relational fields: the host states (Latvia and Estonia), the kin-state (Russia), minority groups and a new external field of European institutions. The author also reconsiders the positioning of domestic policymakers within and between these fields, in which some of the policymakers represent 'nationalisers' and in Brubaker's terms, the 'nationalizing nationalism' (Brubaker 1996, pp. 4-5), while others represent minority advocates, which Brubaker would define as 'minority nationalism' (Brubaker 1996, pp. 7-8).

Although figure 1 (p. 19) is valuable and works for the purpose of the book and setting the scene by presenting a complex picture visually, the binary split into 'minority advocates' and 'nationalisers' in combination with the ethnic or linguistic background of policymakers seems slightly simplistic. For example, where would Russian-speaking policymakers who have a nationalising agenda sit? Schulze does address this aspect in the text. Rather, the way in which she suggests how one may combine and present positioning and overlapping fields of the ethnic majority/Russian-speaking minority and nationalisers/minority advocates in a Venn diagram may need further thinking.

The author anchors her study in an impressive range of data that comes from recordings of parliamentary debates and in-depth interviews. The mixed methods approach, which combines textual analysis with numerical summaries while using elements of content analysis effectively processes tracing to construct a frame from the 'bottom up' (p. 28). This approach not only represents a methodological innovation in a field in which most studies of nation-building rely on using just one of the traditional (mainly qualitative) methodologies, but also makes it possible to bring a domestic affairs perspective into the centre of a perspective that has been relatively scarce in policy studies. This methodology,

combined with a policy sociology stance, creates a refreshing view of minority inclusion politics not only in post-communist countries but also in general.

Throughout the analysis the author displays a detailed knowledge of her subject, producing a nuanced analysis of the complex construction of political identities during the first twenty years since the regaining of independence in Latvia and Estonia, all of which is situated in the context of dynamic changing relations between Russia, European institutions and the two Baltic countries.

The introduction, chapter one and chapter six are the best accounts in many ways. Although I can clearly see how all case studies helped to build the broader argument by providing examples of the process of policy-making decisions and comparisons between Latvia and Estonia to explain the outcomes and existing differences, I am not entirely convinced that all four chapters which look at specific cases were required. Chapters two to five seem repetitive in places, where the analysis could have more thoroughly traced the historical development of arguments with a more direct textual analysis focused exclusively on citizenship policies.

Despite this minor criticism, the book provides a great contribution to the field of nationalism and policymaking in general and answers some questions previously not covered. It provides a very detailed historical overview of the development of citizenship, electoral and language policies in post-communist states by painting an intricate picture of policymaking and political decision-making processes. Schulze demonstrates how investigation of the decisions concerning minority inclusion or exclusion policymaking in Latvia and Estonia provides a satisfactory explanation for the processes and outcomes if the European Union and Russian domestic affairs are treated as a part of the same nexus. She contributes to existing knowledge about the significance of the interplay between European institutions, kin-states and domestic affairs in minority politics in countries with a Soviet past.

On the whole, Schulze's study reaches similar conclusions as other studies by Kristina Kallas (2016), Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin (2016), Nils Muižnieks (2011) or Vahur Made (2005). This comes as no surprise as she essentially covers the same topic and looks at the same political actors adopting a different methodological and revised theoretical approach. An aspect of the topic that has previously been inadequately researched is the interplay between external and internal fields. Here, Schulze's book presents Latvian and Estonian policymakers as proactive and strategic political game players who use Russian and European institutional frames to justify their own decisions and reinforce their own frames of reference. A lot of existing studies look at Russian and European influences on minority policymaking, while Schulze's book clearly demonstrates that *influence* may not be the most appropriate word here because, although policy decisions are often made and substantiated in the interplay between the external fields of kin-state and European institutions, they are always grounded in the internal fields of Latvian and Estonian policymakers.

The question I was left with is how strategic the framing in Estonia and Latvia is and can potentially be. It could be because I am not convinced that talking about causal mechanisms in decision-making and seeing decision-making as a linear process is necessary, useful or possible. Given the complex and contradictory nature of policymaking, I would suggest that some more consideration of the performative nature of policymaking is warranted.

Schulze touches on this subject in the introduction, but never comes back to it or discusses it sufficiently in the book. Could it be more about discursive practices rather than linear more rational policy decision-making that links to strategic framing? The concept of strategy seems to be too rational, too linear, and too business-like in explaining the symbolic, emotional and affective nature of ethnic and national issues. I wonder how much choice or

agency politicians have, and how much long-term planning was consciously done in advance of their act of performance during parliamentary debates.

At the same time, the book reminds all of us how the affective nature of ethnicity may create policies that result in very serious and real consequences for people. While communities may be imaginary and borderlines are arbitrary and ever-changing when it comes to politics and laws, the outcomes are always very much tangible. The book shows the complexity and multidimensionality of nation-building and identity politics. Although Schulze herself very rarely uses the word identity in the book, the question of where one belongs is embedded in all the discussions. The book demonstrates how binary oppositions between East and West, and between Russia and the European Union, are much more complex in reality. Schulze highlights contradictions in justifications and cognitive dissonance that exists in policy making. For example, Latvian policymakers argue that they are not going to be influenced by Russia, but still use Russia's frames of reference when justifying their decisions as it seems one cannot define Latvians without defining Russians. Bringing identity in more explicitly and focusing on performative aspects of policy decision-making would take this book further and potentially enhance a very well-informed, but quite predictable and therefore not entirely refreshing book. Having said that, I am very much biased here because I am not a policy sociologist, but a scholar of ethnic and national identity.

Undeniably, Schulze's book is a thorough study of the complex minority inclusion policy-making processes. We see how 'policymakers can use kin-state frames to interpret European standards and recommendations' (p. 269) as a resource for their own justification of decisions. For the reasons outlined above, this book will be of interest to anyone concerned with the development of minority policy and contemporary political debates in Baltic countries concerning citizenship and language. Beyond these fields, this research provides a significant contribution to a growing body of scholarship about the role of external stakeholders such as international organisations or kin states in domestic policy decision-making that should be of interest to a much broader range of policy scholars.

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