

**Democratic Transition and Institutionalization of
Party System in Estonia, 1991-2001**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION


I declare that the dissertation entitled *DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PARTY SYSTEM IN ESTONIA, 1991-2001* submitted by me for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.



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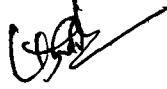
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Dedicated
To
My Parents

CONTENTS

	Pages
Acknowledgement	iv
List of Abbreviations	v-vi
List of Tables	vii
Definition of Key Terms	viii-xi
Chapter 1: Democratic Transition and Institutionalization of Party System: A Theoretical Framework	1-23
Chapter 2: Evolution of Political Parties in Estonia	24-50
Chapter 3: Electoral Process, Political Parties and Government Formation	51-66
Chapter 4: Institutionalization of Party System in Estonia, 1991-2001	67-89
Chapter 5: Conclusion	90-98
References:	99-110

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None of the above bears any responsibility of errors and omissions crept into this study. I am solely responsible for any such lapse.

New Delhi


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List of Abbreviations

APF	Association of Pensioners and Families
CP	Coalition Party
CPSU	Communist Party of Soviet Union
EBP	Estonian Blue Party
ECDA	Estonian Christian Democracy Association
ECDP	Estonian Christian Democratic Party
ECDU	Estonian Christian Democratic Union
ECP	Estonian Communist Party
ECPP	Estonian Conservative People's Party
EDJU	Estonian Democratic Justice Union
EEP	Estonian Entrepreneurs Party
EFP	Estonian Future Party
EFU	Estonian Farmers Union
EGM	Estonian Green Movement
EGP	Estonian Green Party
EH	Estonian Home
EHS	Estonian Heritage Society
ELDP	Estonian Liberal Democratic Party
ENIP	Estonian National Independent Party
EPPP	Estonian Progressive Peoples Party
EPU	Estonian Pensioners Union
ERCPC	Estonian Rural Centre Party

ERCP	Estonian Republican Coalition Party
ERP	Estonian Reform Party
ESDIP	Estonian Social Democratic Independence Party
ESDLP	Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party
ESDWP	Estonian Social Democratic Workers Party
ESP	Estonian Socialist Party
ESR	Estonian Social Revolutionaries
EUHS	Estonian Union of Handicapped Societies
EUPP	Estonian United People's Party
FDP	Free Democratic Party
LPP	Liberal People's Party
NDU	New Democratic Union
NHS	National Heritage Society
PFE	Popular Front of Estonia
PP	Progressive Party
PPU	Pro Patria Union
RDM	Russian Democratic Movement
RPE	Russian Party of Estonia
RSDPE	Russian Social Democratic Party of Estonia
RSDWP	Russian Social Democratic Workers Party
RUP	Russian Unity Party
SSR	Supreme Soviet of the Estonian
UPP	United People's Party

List of Tables

1. Political Parties Contested in <i>Riigikogu</i> Elections	28
2. Political Parties Evolved in Estonia after Independence	36
3. 7 th <i>Riigikogu</i> Election Results (20 September 1992)	57
4. 8 th <i>Riigikogu</i> Election Results (5 March 1995)	59
5. 9 th <i>Riigikogu</i> Election Results (7 March 1999)	61
6. Party Coalitions and Government Formation from 1992- 2001	63
7. Party Membership 1998-2001	72
8. Cleavages in Estonia	81

Definition of Key Terms

Cleavages: A cleavage is defined as a cluster of conflicts dividing the population. It designates a division between groups within the society based on some more or less fixed attribute. One can have cleavages along the lines of class, religion, language, race or even conceivable gender.

Democracy: The concept of democracy is combined with strong local government, with a two-party system, with a vigorous tradition of civil rights, or with a multitude of private associations. It is an institutionalized system of rule to solve conflicts in society in which constitution and political institutions determine or control the results of political decisions.

Democratization: The concept of democratization is best understood under the wider umbrella concept of regime change. The regime change comprises the dissolution of the old and the establishment of the new regime. In this, basic structures, functions, legitimacies and patterns of integration of the old regime are replaced.

Democratic transition: Democratic transitions denotes when dissatisfied opponents of the regime successfully challenge the existing authoritarian status quo and institute democratic rule. In this, relative power distributions play a critical role in determining when an opposition is likely to challenge the authoritarian status quo.

Electoral reform: Electoral Reform is a legal change in electoral systems to improve elections. It improves the responsiveness of electoral processes to public desires and expectations through fostering enhanced impartiality, inclusiveness, transparency, integrity or accuracy. It also involves changes to representational arrangements such as electoral systems.

Electoral system: Electoral system mainly denotes the method used to calculate the number of elected positions in government that individuals and parties are awarded after elections. In other words, it is the way in which votes are translated into seats in parliament to form government. It is an important part of the democratic process which allows various political actors to compete over choices and issues.

Electoral volatility: Electoral volatility refers to the aggregate turnover from one party to others from one election to the next in which the degree of change in voting behaviour between elections is traced. It also denotes the idea that voters have become more willing to switch between parties.

Ideology: Ideology are comprehensive visions of societies and social developments which contain explanations, values, and goals for past, present and future developments. Ideology inspires and justifies political and social action. It is basically a philosophy or set of principles that underlines a political programme. It is an essential element for political orientation.

Institutionalization of party system: Institutionalization of party system is the process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted. The institutionalization of the party system directly depends on that of individual parties. Since individual political parties constitute integral parts of the whole party system, institutionalization of separate parties as well as institutionalization of interaction patterns among the elements of the party system contributes to the overall institutionalization of the party system.

Legitimacy: Legitimacy is the popular acceptance of an authority, usually a governing law or a regime. It also denotes the acceptance of the rights of the public officials to hold office and to promulgate policies because of which they were chosen.

Membership base of party: Membership base is one of the essential characteristics of political parties. Generally parties try to build large and broad based membership as it is vital for the internal functioning of political parties. Membership is the most widely used indicator in the studies on party organizations.

Multi- Party system: A multi-party system is a system in which three or more political parties have the capacity to gain control of government. In this system more than two parties have the possibility to influence the states politics. Multi-party system is also known as competitive and pluralistic party system.

Organizational structure: It refers to the hierarchical arrangements of lines of authority, communications, rights and duties of an organization. Organizational structure determines how the roles, power and responsibilities are assigned, controlled and coordinated and how information flows between the different levels of the organization.

Party manifesto: It is a statement of the goals and principles of the party. It is a formal document which puts forward the party's policies, aims, agendas and many more. During pre-elections parties raft a program with a list of policy preferences which will be further presented to the electorate. After getting a considerable amount of support the party is allowed to enter the government and begin implementing their party manifesto.

Political party: A political party is a voluntary political association of citizens the objective of which is to express the political interests of its members and supporters and to exercise state and local government authority. It is also defined as an organized group that nominates candidate and contest elections in order to influence the policy and personal of the government.

Party reform: Party Reform refers to the attempts to change the rules and principles of the political parties in order to make them more democratic and responsiveness toward the citizens. A party reform stabilizes party institutions and consolidates democracy.

Party system: Party system mainly refers to entire group of parties that forms in a country and reflect the pattern of relationships between individual parties in relation to each other. In a party system parties control the government and take each other into account as they set various electoral and governing strategies.

Party system fragmentation: A party system fragmentation refers to more than two parties, none of which comes close to obtaining an absolute majority in the representative assembly. Party system fragmentation also denotes the number of parties in the system and their relative size. In empirical terms, fragmentation in practice refers to those parties that gain representation, split and appearance of new parties.

Referendum: A referendum is a vote in which the electorate can express a view on a particular issue of public policy. It differs from an election. Unlike elections referendum provide the public with a way of expressing their views about a specific issues.

Stability: Stability suggests that the system should demonstrate regular patterns of interaction between its elements. Stability of a political organization is a necessary characteristic of its institutionalization

Two-party system: Two party systems is a system in which major political parties compete for control of the government. In a two party system most voters are loyal to one or the other major party where independent candidates or candidates from the third party have a little chance of winning office. It is also called as a competitive party system.

Chapter 1

Democratic Transition and Institutionalization of Party System: A Theoretical Framework

Background

Estonia regained its independence from former Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, the country has been undergoing multiple transitions: economic, political, cultural and social. Estonia began nation-building and democratization based on the values and principles of western liberal democracy. Institutional structures of democracy such as constitution, president, parliament, electoral system, political parties and judiciary were established. The constitution of Estonia was adopted on 28 June 1992. According to the constitutional provisions a unicameral legislature *Riigikogu* consisting of 101 members was formed. The members of parliament are elected for a term of four years through secret ballot on the basis of proportional representation. The president is elected by the *Riigikogu* for a five-year term. The president nominates the prime minister for the approval by the *Riigikogu*. A multi-party system was developed in Estonia after independence. Political parties play a very important role in Estonia as in all representative democracies. Since political parties act as link between society and state, competitive political parties and institutionalization of party system are significant factors for successful functioning of representative democracy in Estonia.

The political parties in Estonia have established their place in democracy and began to recruit candidates for representing parliament. Political Parties Act of Estonia which came into force in June 1994 is the legal basis of functioning of political parties in Estonia. In a party system, a set of parties interact in patterned ways. There exist a large number of parties but no party could win vote necessary to form government. Therefore, parties have to work in alliance with other parties to form

coalition governments. Each of the three *Riigikogus* elected in the 1990s had at least seven parties or electoral blocs represented, and most of the latter consisted of several individual parties. Furthermore, especially in the early 1990s, numerous splits and reconfigurations occurred among the various parties and blocs. The system of proportional representation has brought in a fragmented party system (Lewis 2002: 27).

During the inter-war period there was a split among various political parties like the Labour Party split in to two with the former landless peasants forming the Homesteaders Party in 1923, the Radical Democrats with whom the Democratic Party amalgamated in 1919. The right parties mainly grew out of Progressive Party, which in 1917 split into the Democratic Party and the Farmers Union. In 1919 the Christian National Party was also formed on the right. The ethnic minorities parties like German and Russian parties did not play any significant part in the Estonian politics, their combined representation in the first to fourth *Riigikogu* ranged from five to eight mandates. Other ethnic parties like Jewish and Swedish never elected members to parliament and disappeared after a single electoral outing. During this period various other parties were also formed like the National Liberal Party, the Renters, Veterans etc. (Miljan 2004: 377).

Since 1992, Estonia has used the system of two tier proportional representation with five percent national threshold for parliamentary elections. Transforming the electoral formula was one of the most important rule alterations during democratic transition of Estonia. Estonia transformed in the direction of proportional representation and from proportional representation to single member districts (Grofman, et. al. 2000: 352). During the second wave of competitive voting, the founding elections put an end to the prevailing single member district pattern and Estonia moved from the single transferable vote to conventional proportional representation. It was at this point that all the politicians felt that they could begin developing the party system in earnest because there was a new constitution in place

along with an electoral system. For the elections practically every political or citizen association was allowed to run (Sikk 2006: 43).

From 1990 to 2001, a number of political parties were formed during Estonia's three parliamentary elections of 1992, 1995, and 1999 for the (7th, 8th, and 9th *Riigikogu*). They are Centre Party (1991), The Estonian Centre Party, a centrist and social liberal political party of Estonia founded on 12 October 1991, Russian Democratic Movement (1991), Democratic Labour Party (1992), Pro Patria (1992), Future Party (1993), Reform Party (1994), The Estonian Reform Party, (a liberal pro-free market political party of Estonia founded on 18 November 1994 by the then President of the Bank of Estonia Siim Kallas as a split from National Coalition Party Pro Patria), Party of Conservatives and Republicans (1994), Peasants Party (1994), Country People's Party (1994), Party of Families and Pensioners (1994), United Peoples' Party (1994), Pro Patria Union (1995), Progressive Party (1996), Social Democratic Labour Party (1997), Popular Party (1998), Independence Party (1999), Democratic Party (2000) and Popular Union (2000). The party system in Estonia is ideologically rightist oriented and social democratic parties are weak. Some parties like Labour Party, National Party etc. are centrists (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 10).

During 1990-2001, Estonia had four elections. The first election was held in 1990 for republican legislature. The first post-independence election held in 1992 to elect 101 representatives to parliament, *Riigikogu*. The government formed on October 1992 consisted of National Coalition Party (NCP), National Independence Party (NIP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Rural Centrist Party (RCP), Conservative People's Party (CPP), and the Republican Coalition Party (RCP) (Taagepera 1994: 214).

The 1995 *Riigikogu* elections brought a striking reversal of fortune for the ruling coalition, as three oppositions: Coalition Party and Rural Union, Reform Party and Center Party won three-fourths of the seats in parliament. Later the centrist were

forced out of the government. The Reform Party joined the coalition in their place but left it in 1996. In 1997 the Reform Party and several other parties formed the United Opposition but the United Opposition was not entirely united as it expelled a right-wing grouping in early 1988 (Bielasiak 2002: 192).

In 1998 the parliament passed a vital electoral law. According to this law, electoral coalitions were henceforth banned and only single political parties could field candidates for parliament although non-affiliated independent candidates were still allowed. This change was meant to encourage consolidation of the party system. During this time, the requirement that a party must have at least 1000 members had also taken effect. The membership in Estonian political parties grew steadily over the years because all parties were required to re-register pursuant to the minimum 1000 member requirement enacted in 1994 (Piccio 2012: 18).

The new electoral law came to be effective in the 1999 election for the *Riigikogu*. In that election only officially registered parties run in national elections alongside individual candidates, who are effectively subject to more restrictive electoral rules. Small parties suffered due to this law because before this law was passed they might have got some seats in the parliament with some concrete proposal in the election or they might get five percent threshold in the *Riigikogu* elections with the help of big political parties; this helped some of the political elites to control the state (Taagepera 1998: 72).

Party system institutionalization began to take place in the first decade of independence, but this process faced many challenges. The aspect of institutionalization of party system can be traced in terms of development of the electoral system, reforming election rules, forming election codes, setting new laws and party rules that regulate electoral competition between and within parties. These rules influence the mechanical and strategic effects of voting regulations on the expectations and actions of political entrepreneurs and voters (Mair 1990: 27).

In order to understand the democratic transition, development of political parties and institutionalization of party system in Estonia, previous studies offer relevant theoretical insights in regard to the role, functions and performance of political parties in the process of democratization. The theoretical framework of analyzing the democratic transition, political parties and institutionalization of party system in Estonia is discussed below.

Understanding Democratic Transition and Party System Institutionalization

The concepts of democratic transition, political party, party system and institutionalization of party system are contested aspects. There is no all agreed definition available regarding these concepts. Several authors have interpreted and conceptualized these concepts in various ways. The scholarly insights contributed by various scholars like Epstein 1967; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Huntington 1968; Brass 1969; Converse 1969; Dahl 1971; Rustow 1973; Welfling 1973; Sartori 1976; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Panebianco 1988; Mair 1990; Przeworski 1991; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Arter 1996; De Melo 1996; Jack 1996; Kitschelt 1999; Taagepera 2000; Bielasiak 2002; Lauristin 2002; Munro 2001; Lewis and Gordon 2003; Pettai 2003; Crotty 2006; Rose 2006; Ehin 2007; Meleshevich 2007; Janda 2009; Runnel 2009 are relevant to understand democratic transition and institutionalization of political parties in Estonia.

Democracy is not a new concept. Its origin goes back to the primordial philosophies. According to ancient thinkers from de Tocqueville to A.D. Lindsay, democracy is rooted in man's innate capacity for self-government. Later concepts of democracy stated that it must be combined with strong local government with a two-party system, with a vigorous tradition of civil rights or with a multitude of private associations (Rustow 1973: 73). According to Diamond, Linz and Lipset "democracy" or what Robert Dahl terms "polyarchy", is a system of government that meets three essential conditions. *Firstly*, meaningful and extensive competition

among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of government power at regular intervals and excluding the use of force. *Secondly*, highly inclusive levels of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major social group is excluded. *Thirdly*, it is characterized by a level of civil and political liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form organizations, which is sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (Diamond and Linz 1989: 16).

‘Transition’ is the interval between one political regime and another. The concept of transition to democracy (democratization) is usually defined as a change from an authoritarian (sometimes totalitarian) political dispensation to a democratic political dispensation (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 7). Democratic transitions arise when dissatisfied opponents of the regime successfully challenge the existing authoritarian status quo and institute democratic rule. In this, relative power distributions play a critical role in determining when an opposition is likely to challenge the authoritarian status quo (Organski and Kugler 1980: 78). With the above explanation one can derive that power parity among an authoritarian government and dissatisfaction among opposition sets the stage for a democratic transition.

A number of theories focus on the possibilities and problems of democratic transitions, often with diverse outcomes. Some of these focus on the various stages in the process of democratization. The two key factors involved in a regime transition process are an authoritarian government that sets and controls the status quo and a domestic opposition that seeks to change the authoritarian status quo. For the process of democratic transition to be complete, it has to go through the stages of liberalization, democratization, socialization and democratic consolidation (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 6).

According to Samuel P. Huntington, during the “third wave of democracy” (starting from 1974) a lot of states have made a transition from authoritarian rule to multi-party systems. This ‘Western-way’ democracy has generally been viewed as having ‘universal value’ and is not regarded as just Western anymore (Strayer 2001: 377). The first wave occurred from 1828-1926, and the outcome of this wave were economic development, industrialization, urbanization, growth of middle class, victory of Western Allies in WWI, dismantling of empires (Economic and Social factors) and the second wave from 1943-1962, highlighted democracy imposed by allies after WWII, effects of allied victory, decolonization (Political and Military factors) (Huntington 1991: 10).

Huntington identifies five changes in the world that paved the way for the latest wave of transitions to democracy: The deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian governments unable to cope with military defeat and economic failure. The burgeoning economies of many countries which have raised living standards, levels of education, and urbanization, also raising civic expectations and the ability to express them. Changes in religious institutions which have made them more prone to oppose governmental authoritarianism than defend the status quo; The push to promote human rights and democracy by external factors such as non-governmental organizations and the European Community; and the "snowballing" or demonstration effects enhanced by new international communications of democratization in other countries. A transition from authoritarian rule to democracy has been characterized as the dynamic interaction between authoritarian leaders seeking to maintain their rule and a democratic opposition seeking to overturn it. However, the impact of changing power distributions among domestic groups on the dynamics of democratic transitions remains relatively unexplored (Huntington 1991: 11).

Political parties play a significant role in the democratization process. Parties help anchor the recently established democratic regimes in a broader society and contribute to their stability amidst multiple processes of rapid social and economic

change. Political stability in democratic political system depends on party institutionalization. As social institutions parties can carry different implications and their attributes vary in significance according to social context. Therefore, political parties appear as one of the most prominent institutions of modern liberal democracy (Bielasiak 2002: 12).

According to Epstein "Party means any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect governmental office holders under a given label (Epstein 1967: 9). Dyck states that a political party can be defined as an organized group that nominates candidate and contest elections in order to influence the policy and personal of the government (Dyck 2012: 206). According to Mac Iver a political party is an association organized to support some principles of policy, by which constitutional means it endeavors to make the determinant of government. A political party is an organization that sponsors candidates for political office under the organizations name and ideology (Junda, et. al. 2009: 189). Sartori defined political parties "as organizations that contest political election and seek governmental office" (Sartori 1976: 64). According to The Political Parties Act of Estonia political party is "a voluntary political association of citizens, the objective of which is to express the political interests of its members and supporters and to exercise state and local government authority" (Political Parties Act of Estonia 1994: 1). These definitions show that parties are central to the operation of a modern democracy and they are always necessary for the establishment of a democratic order and have been major agents in all transitions.

Party system consists of entire group of parties that forms in a country. The party system reflects the pattern of relationships between individual parties in relation to each other (Arter 1996: 16). The composition of a party system results mainly from two factors. On the one hand it is the structure of social conflicts and interests. On the other hand, the party and electoral laws also exercise considerable influence on the configuration of the party system, depending on how liberal and free or

restrictive the creation of new parties have been laid out and whether the electoral system facilitates the representation of a larger number of parties in the parliament or not. In pre-democratic times the existence of one party provoked at least the emergence of another party. Throughout history, party systems have in principle developed along social and ideological lines of conflict (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011: 18).

Institutionalization of party system is a necessary condition for the effective functioning of democracy. Institutionalization of party system is conceptualized in various ways. Rose and Mackie state that a party is judged to have become institutionalized if it fights more than three national elections. A group that fails to do this is not an established political party, but an ephemeral party (Rose and Mackie 1988: 536).

Huntington defines institutionalization as the “process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability”. He proposes four dimensions of institutionalization they are: *Adaptability/Rigidity*, it is measured in terms of chronological age, generational age and functions. The level of institutionalization reached by an institution is thus positively correlated respectively to its length of existence, the number of peaceful successions between leaders it has experienced, the number of changes in its principal functions to which it has survived. *Complexity/Simplicity*, it is measured by the level of differentiation of organizational and functional sub-units and by the significance of personalism. *Autonomy/Subordination*, it is measured based on the extent to which institutions fulfill their functions and act autonomously from other institutions, have an even support among the citizens and not simply express interests of a particular social group, and actuate the recruitment of the leadership from within the institutions themselves, giving little scope for “outsiders” and “non-politicians”. *Coherence/Disunity*, it is the more vague dimension assessed by indicators such as the frequency of contested successions, the cumulation of cleavages among leaders

and members, the incidence of dissent within the organization, and the degree of loyalty and preferences' coherence of its members (Sacchetti 2008: 4-5).

According to Panebianco institutionalization is "the way organizations solidify and become valuable in and of themselves" (Panebianco 1988: 4). He states two dimensions for measuring institutionalization they are: *Autonomy* (the degree of independence and of delimitation of boundaries of the institution from its environment); *Systemness* (the degree of interdependence of the different internal institution actors, the level of centralization and control over organizational subgroups). Applying the concept of institutionalization to the realm of party systems means appraising to what degree the system of parties in one country has developed basic characteristics that can testify its acquired stability and value (Panebianco 1988: 4).

Mainwaring and Scully who introduced the concept of institutionalization of party system defines it as the process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). According to Mainwaring and Scully the four dimensions of party systems' institutionalization are: *stability*, *rootedness in society* *legitimacy*, and *relevance of party organization*. *Stability* refers to the regularity in the patterns of party competition the higher the regularity, the higher the degree of stability; the more institutionalized the party system. Its main indicator is the electoral volatility. *Rootedness in society* refers to the strength of ties between parties and citizens the stronger the ties, the higher the roots; the more institutionalized the party system. It can be assessed by looking at indicators such as party longevity. *Legitimacy* refers to the extent to which political actors (élites and citizens) believe in parties as fundamental, necessary and desirable institutions of democratic politics, basing their behavior on the expectation of continuity and stability of the institutions: the higher the degree of legitimacy, the more stable the expectations and the behaviors, the more institutionalized the party system. It can be measured through sympathy-

indices by surveys and opinion pools among citizens and political élites. *Relevance of Party Organization* refers to the extent to which parties possess an independent status and value of their own, territorial comprehensiveness, well established and defined internal structures and procedures (i.e. for selecting and changing the party leadership), resources on their own, active mass memberships, sizable and professionalized staffs: the higher the level of party internal organizations, the more institutionalized the party system (Mainwarring and Scully 1995: 4; Sacchetti 2008: 6).

In the analysis of the institutionalization of a party system, two broad criteria are concerned: *autonomy* and *stability*. *Autonomy* requires that the institutionalized organization should have an independent status and value of its own vis-à-vis its external environment. Three indicators are employed for measuring *autonomy*: the role of political parties in the recruitment into the legislative branch of government; the role of political parties in the formation of the executive branch; and the strength of the party and the uniformity of this strength in different regions across the country. The second dimension *stability*, suggests that the system should demonstrate regular patterns of interaction between its elements, and this is measured by the percentage of the vote share in a legislative election taken by the parties that participated in any previous electoral contest and by Pedersen's index of electoral volatility (Meleshevich 2007: 4). The institutionalization of the party system directly depends on that of individual parties. Since individual political parties constitute integral parts of the whole party system, institutionalization of separate parties as well as institutionalization of interaction patterns among the elements of the party system contributes to the overall institutionalization of the party system (Meleshevich 2007: 3).

The historical evidence suggests that the crucial consideration for democracy is the degree of party institutionalization. Previous studies call attention to the institutional strength or weakness of parties as a determinant of success or failure with democracy (Diamond and Linz 1989: 21). Party systems are of different types depending on the number of parties contest elections.

Classification of Party systems

Party systems can be classified by different criteria depending on various factors such as history, population, geography, resources, foreign dominations, liberation and popular choice. Most frequently it is the number of parties that are fighting for power that serves as the criteria for the description of a party system. Almond classified party system in five types; totalitarian, authoritarian, dominant non-authoritarian, competitive two parties and competitive multi-party (Almond 1960: 40). According to Mair the analysis of party system would require a consideration of the number of parties, their strength, and ideological spectrum, the nature of their support, their organization and type of leadership (Mair 1990: 302). Five major classifications of party system can be distinguished: single party, two party, multi-party, non-party and dominant party systems.

Single Party System

Single party system is also known as non-competitive system. One party system produces the autocratic or dictatorial regime. One of the most common features of the one party state is that the position of the ruling party is guaranteed in a constitution and all forms of political opposition are banned by law. The ruling party controls all aspects of life within the state. The old Soviet Union is the best example for a one party state. Egypt has operated under single party rule for several decades. In single party system political power is monopolized by single party. There may be several parties, but one party is dominant (Sak and John 2009: 112).

According to Sartori there are two different ways in one party system. One is Hegemonic party that permits the survival of other parties only as a satellite or secondary parties. Second is predominant party system which allows one party to govern the country as long as it continues to win elections. This form of government is often used by countries in the early stages of the development of a parliamentary system, because the ruling party holds support from the vast majority. The system is not necessarily a poor one, especially when it can provide the stability and rapid growth (Sartori 1976: 18).

Two Party Systems

Two party systems is a system in which major political parties compete for control of the government. In a two party system most voters are loyal to one or the other major party where independent candidates or candidates from the third party has a little chance of winning office (Janda, et. al. 2009: 194). It is also called as a competitive party system. According to Sartori in a two party system format even the existence of third party does not prevent the two major parties from governing alone and whenever the coalitions are necessary they join hands. Two party systems is by far the best known category and it's a relative simple system (Sartori 1976: 164).

Two part system have emerged either as the result or the reflection of the will of electorate. Often the two parties represent key ideological divisions in society over the direction of policies between left and right, small government and activist government, liberalism and authoritarianism (Trapp 2009: 214). America is fallowing two party political systems with the Republicans and Democrats dominating the politics. In this system, one of the parties must obtain a sufficient working majority after an election and it must be in a position to govern without the support from the other party. USA, UK and New Zealand are having most obvious two party political systems. (Sak and John: 112; Lewis 2006: 567).

Multi- Party System

A multi-party system is a system in which three or more political parties have the capacity to gain control of government. As the title suggests, this is a system where more than two parties have the possibility to influence the states politics. The emergence of multi-party system will be a lengthy process (Lewis and Gordon 2003: 151). Multi-party system is also known as competitive and pluralistic party system. Party pluralism simply denotes the existence of more than one party. Multi-party system is one where no party can guarantee as absolute majority. Even though some parties may be large, their elected representatives fall short of majority (Sak and John 2009: 112). Parliamentary majorities in multi- party system can shift suddenly. These systems are far less stable than two party systems. Multi- party systems are also less fair to the electorate because after the election they tend to ignore campaign promises to voters. Compared to the two party systems, a multi-party system is better because it allows for more voices to be heard (Trapp 2009: 214). In a multi-party system, more viewpoints will be discussed; and will end up with more well-rounded government. Party formation and the emergence of multi-party systems seem to offer the best prospects for political development and progress towards democracy (Pridham and Vanhanen 2003: 151).

Non Party System

Sanchez introduced the concept of party non-systems. He defined it as 'party universes characterized by a fundamental absence of inter-temporal continuity in the identity of the main parties'. In operational terms, a party universe and a party non-system is a sequence of elections. Sanchez indicates that if the identity of the top is not the same across more than two elections, then that party universe is best described as a 'non-system.' He further states that at least three elections are required to pass before a party universe can be labeled as 'non-system' (Sanchez 2009: 487-489). In the contemporary world the salience of party non-systems greatly increased with the arrival of many new democracies. Some of these democracies nascent party

arenas are remarkably unstable, which is true both for highly fragmented settings of post-communist East Central Europe and for highly concentrated settings of sub-Saharan Africa (Mozaffar and Scarritt, 2005). The definition of party non-systems offered by Sanchez makes extensive use of the notion of extra-system volatility, defined by Mainwaring (2010) as the vote-share of new parties (Golosov 2011: 547).

Dominant Party System

A dominant party system can be found in a party system where one single party wins elections consecutively as long as public contestation and participation are ensured. The dominant party systems can be found in both democracies and non-democracies and it does not necessarily conflict with the definition of different regime types (Greene 2010: 12). In a dominant party system a party becomes quite capable within the political structure of a state, to such an extent that victory at elections is considered a formality. In this system one dominant party controls the electoral process and restricts the other parties, resulting in no other alternative for the people. The dominant party does not allow opposition. An era of a dominant party is also an era when opposition parties are in total disorder. Cuba, Libya, North Korea and China are good examples of dominant party system. Such a system may easily transform in to a dictatorship (Onkvisit and Shaw 2009: 112).

Characteristics of Political Parties

Political parties has several distinctive features, *firstly*, ideology is one of the significant feature of political party. Ideology are comprehensive visions of societies and social developments which contain explanations, values, and goals for past, present and future developments. Ideology inspires and justifies political and social action. It is an essential element for political orientation. The term “ideology” has been and is still used mainly by leftist, communist and socialist parties to characterize their worldviews and political positions. Nevertheless, other streams of political thinking can also be denominated as “ideologies” like for instance liberalism, conservatism, nationalism or fascism (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011: 24).

Ideologies help to entice and mobilize masses and it is the very spirit of the political party. Political parties develop policies based on ideology to govern the country. They are model of multifaceted political ideas presented in an understandable structure which inspires individual to accomplish certain goals. They can be grouped according to their places on the political spectrum such as right, left, centrist, conservatives, radical or revolutionary, religious etc (Gitelson, et. al. 2001: 130).

Secondly, Political manifesto is another pivotal aspect of political parties. The manifesto is a statement of the goals and principles of the party. It is a formal document which puts forward the party's policies, aims, agendas and many more. During pre-elections parties raft a program with a list of policy preferences which will be further presented to the electorate. After getting a considerable amount of support the party is allowed to enter the government and begin implementing their party manifesto (Dubnick 2001: 130). The manifesto is also called as the party platforms. It explores the measures which the party proposes to take in order to improve public service such as health, education, transportation, trade, environment and technology. Party manifestos are implemented because they influence the political agenda and steer policy situation towards certain issues. As circumstances change party manifestos are expected to fallow and change as well. However, a party's ability and the efficiency of its policies can only be fully tested when it forms the government and attempts to implement its policies programs effectively. (Nuytemans and Walgrave 2009: 191-193).

Thirdly, finance is another factor which serves as the base to carry the regular activities and electoral campaign expenditure of political parties in modern democracies. Political parties need financial resources in order to carry out their functions efficiently, to develop their programmes effectively, to maintain a stable organizational structure, to establish communication with the members and to conduct electoral campaigns (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011: 55). There are two major sources of funding for parties: public and private funding. According to Ware

there are seven types of funding facilities to the parties such as candidate expenditure, patron, interest groups, and payment of officials from their salaries, party capital, mass membership, and state funding of parties. The most important traditional and private sources for a political party are membership fee, income from property, revenue from the party activities such as sale of newspapers or other party publications. In most non-communist regimes, including liberal democracies, parties are regarded as private organizations. Donations from interest groups, organizations and trade unions are crucial for party activities (Ware 1987: 18-21).

Fourthly, membership is another indispensable characteristic of political parties. It is the foundation of any political party further determining its existence. Number of member's influences the smooth performance as well as the strong base of any political parties which try to build large and broad based membership in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, social class, ethnicities, region etc. the large membership will have additional chances to win elections. All party members must pay a membership fee; keep informed of party activity and attend a party meeting in order to participate in national politics. In addition, the membership base is vital for the international functioning of a political party (Cross 1962: 57).

Fifthly, Organizational structure forms an indispensable foundation of the political party. Political parties do have certain organization structures such as constitution, officers and local branches of parties. The legal requirements vary from one country to another and different political parties have different organizational structures. The underlying purpose of the organizational structure of any political party is to enable the party to develop standard policies, broaden its support and campaign efficiently in elections. It is in this background that the political parties require organizational structure, which can be used by the members to run the parties through choosing their leaders and members. In a broader sense the organizational structure determines the party policies. As such, ethnic political parties have an extremely low level of ideological influence and it leads to lack of highly developed organizational structure

(Diamond and Gunther 2001: 23). In order to stabilize democracy and improve the quality of democratic process the political parties should possess all these characteristic features. The efficient functioning of political parties in a democracy is based on these features.

Functions of Political Parties in Democracy

The criterion which defines political parties along with its functions and role are as follows: A political party as an association of citizens hold individual memberships and consists of minimum number of members. A party as an independent and permanent organization; is not formed only for one election and cease to exist afterwards. A party demonstrates the will and consistently takes part in the political representation of the people during elections (Mair 1994: 16). Therefore, it distinguishes itself from unions, non-governmental organizations and other initiative that does not want to carry any political responsibilities for larger sectors but only try to have selective influence (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011: 11-12).

According to Janda four of the most important party functions are nominating candidates for election to public office, structuring the voting choice in elections, proposing alternative programs and coordinating with government officials (Janda, et al. 2009: 190). According to Gunther and Diamond, Parties fulfill seven functions such as candidate nomination, electoral mobilization, issue structuring, represent various social groups, interest aggregation, performing and sustaining governments, social integration role. In this sense political parties fulfill crucial functions such as developing policies and programs, picking up demands from society and bundling them in to packages, recruiting and selecting people for government and legislative office and lastly parties control government depending on whether they are in government or opposition (Diamond and Gunther 2001: 6).

It is necessary to identify the various functions of political parties; all parties do not perform similar functions. In non-democratic regimes parties control the economy

and the lives of individual citizen political parties perform a number of functions in any political system. Some functions will be given here to explore their contribution to society. They serve as instruments of political education, interest articulation, political mobilization and political instrument (Diamond 2001: 9). The most essential functions of parties demonstrate are their societal position as an intermediary between the rulers and ruled or the society and the state. The fundamental role of political parties in almost all democratic states is to motivate people to go to elections and participate in the electoral process (Trent and Priedenberg 2000: 73).

Political parties are not only electoral, they are movements of people with similar values who sought by grouping together to use the political system to bring about social change in line with their values. For example in almost all the third world countries political parties were born and developed from the nationalist movements. Moreover parties provide people with important political information; they educate inform and influence the republic. Parties recruit people and train them as good politicians (Dyck 2012: 206).

Parties organize and determine their own process for membership, collective decision making platforms, and candidate's collective electoral action. One of the unusual functions of the parties in party democracies is to make more accessible for citizens. Voters are provided with valuable information about specific candidate's policy concerns through media and campaigning (Trent and Priedenberg 2000: 106). After winning elections, a party forms the government, makes the laws and implements the policies. Practically, in a large society individual cannot take part in the decision making. Decision making lies in the hands of the representatives who act on behalf of the people (Matteo 2011: 26).

Political parties strengthen various types of political rights to the citizens, such as right to equality, right to vote, right to contest for any public office, right to assembly, right to freedom of speech and expression, and equal protection from the

law. Political parties launch certain issues and discourses in to civil society, providing the public with the possibility to discuss matters and form opinions. (Diamond and Gunther 2001: 6-9). Political parties also engage in debates and discussions about political reforms and political change. Those interested in politics will mostly find a party that reflects the own perception, May it be a party in government or opposition. Parties in opposition exercise an important function in a democratic system as a watchdog of government policy and as a political alternative in the future. Opposition may be considered awful, but it is essential for the functioning of democracy (Lewis 2000: 157). Contrary to interest group, a party expresses on all issues relevant for government. Parties propose views on domestic and foreign policies, economic and social policies, and youth and civil policies etc. In order to meet these requirements each party functions according to its programmes, in which its fundamental positioning in various areas is retained (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011: 13).

The emergence of political parties and party system are optimistic indicators for a healthy process of democratic transition. Parties contribute to democratic government exclusively through the functions they perform, especially for the political system. Political parties have also been the instruments for inspiring voters. They organize citizen's around ideological and policy platforms, establish basis for voters to choose their representatives, and collectively represent diverse interest of the people. Traditionally, people get involved in public life via political parties they support (Trent and Priedenberg 2000: 100).

Parties with a slender social base and few organizational resources maintain not just a sizeable parliamentary presence and access to government power but also a reasonably strong capacity for responsible political behaviour and surprisingly high levels of commitment to democratic norms. Hence, parties promote the political socialization and participation of citizens in the political process mainly to contribute to the consolidation of democracy. Parties create a link between citizens and the

political system. They articulate and aggregate social interests; Parties express public expectations and demands of social groupings to the political system. They recruit political personnel and nurture future generations of politicians (Matteo 2011: 26).

Nevertheless, political parties are still the principal agents to aggregate public opinion and represent it in the political decision making process and they also take the political decisions through their representatives in the parliament and government. By following the work of the parties, perceiving and evaluating its argumentation during political debate, citizens can orientate themselves politically through the parties. Furthermore, by engaging with a party, every citizen can exercise some influence on the political decision-making process. Therefore, successful functioning of political parties in a democracy is necessary for an institutionalized party system.

Research Purpose and Questions

Against this backdrop the study tries to examine institutionalization of party system in Estonia during 1991-2001 with the following objectives.

1. To analyze the process of party system institutionalization in the emerging democratic political system in Estonia.
2. To examine the role and significance of the parties in democratic transition, vertical and horizontal relationships of parties, political fragmentation and party system stability.
3. To study the dynamics and determinants of mass political support, electoral volatility and performance of parties.

The study tries to address the following questions.

1. What is the significance of institutionalization of party system in democratic transition?
2. What are the factors that are influencing democratization and institutionalization of party system in Estonia?

3. What are the challenges in the process of institutionalization of party system in Estonia?
4. Does party formation and electoral competition in Estonia demonstrate institutionalization of parties?
5. How effective is institutionalization of party system in Estonia?
6. How much trust Estonian people have in their political parties and regimes?

Hypotheses

1. The legal and institutional regulations, electoral volatility, performance of political parties and linkage between voters and parties show that party system are moderately institutionalized in Estonia during 1990-2001.
2. Estonian party system is characterized by high level of fragmentation and it appears to be relatively stable and fairly rooted in the society as parties enjoy public trust.

Methodology

The study is historical, analytical and descriptive in nature. The study uses various theoretical approaches on institutionalization of political parties and party systems. It draw scholarly insights from contributions of Huntington, Mainwaring and Scully, Sartori, North, Panebianco, Mileshevich and Mair in order to analyze democratic transition and institutionalization of party system in Estonia. Both primary and secondary sources are used in the study. The primary sources consist of the various governmental documents and official reports, party programs, speeches, press statements, debates, interviews and so on. The secondary sources include books, articles, magazines, newspaper, internet sources etc.

The important parameters used to analyze the dimension of institutionalization of party system are: legal basis of party formation, electoral rules and reforms, regulations of party activities, mass base of parties, mobilization of electoral support, recruitment of leadership, number of parties, party membership, cleavage structure,

norms and values, personnel controls, patterns of behavior, electoral volatility, fragmentation of parties, personality dependent parties and legitimacy.

Structure of the Study

The study is structured in five chapters. The first chapter formulates the theoretical framework for analyzing democratic transition and institutionalization of party system in Estonia. The second chapter discusses the historical background of origin and development of political parties in terms of their evolution in Estonia. The third chapter examines the working of various political institutions in Estonia. It discusses legal and institutional regulations, electoral volatility, and performance of political parties, linkage between voters and parties and the role of political parties in Estonian government formation. The fourth chapter explains the association between political parties and the citizens especially by exploring the role of parties in educating and mobilizing the citizens. This chapter also analyzes the level of institutionalization of party system in Estonia mainly through organization, fragmentation, functions and cleavages influencing the public trust on political parties. The fifth chapter enlists the findings and the conclusions and states the validity of hypothesis.

The study proceeds to the next chapter that explains the evolution and historical background of emergence of political parties in Estonia.

Chapter 2

Evolution of Political Parties in Estonia

The emergence and development of political parties in Estonia is related to its re-establishment of independence and democratic transition after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The democratic transition in 1990s created an opportunity for its citizens to build democracy in which the emergence of political parties and multi-party system became crucial. The evolution of political parties in Estonia dates back to its first independence period during the interwar period (1918-1940). During the interwar period Estonia had a democratic political system until 1934.¹ This promoted the development of political parties and party systems. However, during the World War II Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union in which democratic system and political parties were abolished and communist rule with a single party system was established. The Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) was the only legally recognized party and no other party was promoted during the Soviet regime until its demise in 1991. In spite of the retreat and collapse of various political parties during the Soviet rule, the ideological association and inclinations were very much alive. This led to the re-installation of the Estonian political parties during 1991. This chapter will trace out the origin and development of political parties and party system in Estonia.

Political Parties in Estonia during Interwar Period

The nation-building process to transform Estonia into a democracy led to the emergence of political parties. In order to understand the emergence of political parties in Estonia it is very important to look into the brief history of various phases of development of the political parties in Estonia. The 1905 revolution marked a fundamental turning point in Estonian history. As the tsarist regime tottered in 1905,

¹ From 1934 to 1940 the executive power was seized by authoritarian figures. The authoritarianism in Estonia is considered by historians as benign dictatorships.

the Estonians worked out programmes for political autonomy in a federalized Russia (Raun 2001: 19).

In the final years of 19th century Estonian social and political thought revived with changed circumstances. Leadership of the intelligentsia passed to a newly educated generation who were more optimistic about Estonian development. One of them was Jaan Tonisson, a law graduate from Tartu University (1892). He became editor of *Postimees* (Postilion) in 1896. He was the first major figure to emerge in the post Russification era (Raun 2001: 22). Later the crucial shift in Estonian social and political thought came at the beginning of the 20th century with the appearances of newspapers like *Teataja* (The Messenger) in Tallin, edited by Konstantin Pats and *Uudised* (The News) in Tartu, edited by Peeter Speek. In contrast to Tonisson and the *postimees* group, *Teataja* and *Uudised* emerged as the first journalistic voices of the lower classes of the Estonian population and stressed the need for social and economic change (Jansen 2004: 100). *Uudised* proposed a reform calling for the creation of a state parliament elected by universal suffrage as well as broad autonomy for the non-Russian areas including Estonia. This resulted in arrests of Estonian revolutionaries (Medijainen 2004: 107).

The major activity of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) in Estland and northern Livland was centered in Tallinn. The Estonian Social Democratic Workers Party (ESDWP) with a federalist orientation was founded in Tartu in August 1905. During the tsarist period the revolutionary activities of many groups awakened the population about civil rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, and the press. Tonisson's Estonian Progressive Peoples Party (EPPP) founded in November 1905 in Tartu (Jansen 2004: 101). The political spectrum of Estland and northern Livland in 1905 can be divided into following major groupings: The Baltic Germans, who supported the Baltic Constitutional Party (allied with the

Octobrists in the State Duma); The Moderates, led by Tonisson's Estonian Progressive Peoples Party (EPPP) whose views were comparable to those of the Constitutional Democrats in the empire as a whole; The Radicals never formally organized into a political party and mainly led by *pats* and *Teataja* intellectuals, who held a mediating position between the moderates and the social democrats. The Revolutionaries divided into the Russian and Estonian Social Democratic Workers Parties with the RSDWP espousing a centralized all Russian movement and the ESDWP following the principles of federalism and local autonomy (Raun 2001: 83-86). However, immediately after the February Revolution in Petrograd, Jaan Tonisson Called for autonomy of Estonia and put pressure on Provisional government to agree reorganization of self-government in Baltic provinces. With the establishment of Estonian Representative Assembly (*Maapäev*) in March 1917, Petrograd agreed to the existence of Estonia (O'connor 2003: 76).

On May 1917 in connection to the elections of provincial assembly (*Maapäev*), the political parties emerged on a broad basis for the first time in Estonian history. They were Bolsheviks, Estonian Social democrats (ESD), Estonian Social Revolutionaries (ESR), Labor Party, Democrats (formerly Estonian Progressive Peoples Party-EPPP), Radical Democrats, Agrarian League, German and Swedish Minorities and nonparty Representatives. In 1917 the first test of political strength in the form of direct voting came in the municipal elections of late July and early August 1917 (Medijainen 2004: 100). The results indicated a significant fractionalization of the political spectrum complicated by the presence of large number of non-Estonian soldiers. During this period the moderate political forces dominated in the smaller urban areas and Tartu while the left proved to be stronger in the industrial cities of Tallinn and Narva (Raun 2001: 100-101).

On 15, June 1920 the first permanent constitution of the Republic of Estonia was approved. Drawing on the models provided by the Weimar, Swiss, French and U.S. constitutions, the document reflected the democratic idealism of the center-left majority in the Estonian Constituent Assembly. It established a parliamentary superiority in the new political system. The State Assembly (*Riigikogu*) was elected by all men and women who were twenty years of age and above on the basis of proportional representation. It consisted of 100 members who enjoyed three year term (Dawisha and Parrott 1997: 335).

The constitution of 1920 provided for no independently elected executive; the *Riigivanem* (State Elder) was selected by the State Assembly and acted as a prime minister by presiding over the cabinet. Thus the government served entirely at the pleasure of the State Assembly and it could be dismissed at any time. The Supreme Court judges were elected by parliament and the constitution provided for referendum and popular legislative initiative by demand of 25,000 voters. A referendum was required for the approval of constitutional amendments (O'connor 2003: 90).

During the era of liberal democracy (1920-1934), and an era of moderate authoritarianism (1934-1940) five State Assembly elections (1920-1932) were held. In comparison to the Constituent Assembly elections of 1919, the first State Assembly of 1920 showed a powerful swing to the right among the voters. During the 1920s the division of the political spectrum as represented in the State Assembly remained remarkably equal and stable, even though the fortunes of individual parties showed wide fluctuations (Raun 2001: 114). The following table shows various political parties contested during elections.

Table 1
Political Parties Contested in Riigikogu Elections

Party	Number of Seats in State Assembly				
	1920	1923	1926	1929	1932
<i>Left</i>					
Communists	5	10	6	6	5
Independent Socialists (SRs)	11	5	-	-	-
Social Democrats (SDs)	18	15	-	-	-
Socialist Workers	-	-	24	25	22
<i>Center</i>	22	12	13	10	-
Labor Party	10	8	8	9	-
National Party	-	4	14	14	-
Homesteaders	-	6	-	-	-
Other Parties	-	-	-	-	23
National Center					
<i>Right</i>	7	8	5	4	-
Christian National Party	21	23	23	24	-
Farmer's Party	-	-	-	-	42
United Agrarian Party	1	2	2	3	-
Landlords	5	7	5	5	8
<i>National Minorities</i>					
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: (Raun 2001: 114).

In the four elections held between 1920 and 1929, the right, center and left each received close to one-third of the parliamentary seats; the national minorities won five to seven seats. In 1932 the distinctions between right and center were blurred by a new regrouping of parties but these entities proved to be highly unstable (Dawisha and Parrott 1997: 337). On the left, the communist were never formally proscribed but their open attacks on the sovereignty of the Estonian republic precluded the possibility of a public existence. On the other hand the Communists were able to participate in elections under the guise of front organizations. Their most successful effort under the rubric United Front of the Working People came at a time of

economic distress in 1923. In 1925 the non-Communist left (the SDs and the Independent Socialists) merged to form the Socialist Workers Party (O’connor 2003: 90).

Despite the radical beginning in the Constituent Assembly, the era of liberal democracy in Estonia was completely dominated by the right and center. Of the 21 Estonian cabinets in 1919 to 1933, ten were headed by members of the Farmers or United Agrarian parties and another nine went to the National Party, Labor Party and National Center. As head of the state, the most active individual politicians were Konstantin Pats (Farmers and United Agrarian Parties), who was *Riigivanem* five times and Jaan Teemant (Farmers and United Agrarian Parties) and Jaan Tonisson (National Party and National Center), who were head of state four times each. Only once was the office of *Riigivanem* held by socialist (August Rei in 1928-1929) although the Socialist Workers Party was the largest one in parliament in 1926-1932 (Medijainen 2004: 126). The National Center and its main components, Labor and the National Party were involved in sixteen cabinets while the Farmers, including their role in the United Agrarian Party participated in fourteen. In contrast the Socialist Workers and SDs took part in only six cabinets. Like the Weimar Republic, Estonia faced the problem of multiplicity of political parties. The Socialists, Communists, and National Minorities together were holding generally one third of the seats in parliament (Kasekamp 2010: 106-107).

During the inter-war period the League of Veterans of the Estonian War of Independence (*Eesti Vabadussõjalaste Liit*, popularly known as the Vaps movement) was one of the most popular radical-right parties in Europe. It was outlawed in 1934 because the government feared that it would win the forthcoming elections (Barak 2009: 66). Later the years from 1934-1940 have been appropriately termed as “era of silence” (*vaikivajastu*) by Kaarel Eenpalu, he was the prime minister during most of

this period. Martial law and restrictions on civil and political rights were continued throughout years, and the elections for *Riigivanem* and a new State Assembly were never held as mandated in the constitution of 1933 (Kasekamp, 2003: 402). When the existing State Assembly convened a special session in the fall of 1934 and displayed opposition to government restrictions. Pats permanently postponed the session and in March 1935 and abolished all political parties. Immediately thereafter the government established the Fatherland League (*Isamaaliit*), an organization designed to promote national unity and insecure state stability (Medijainen 2004:123).

During the era of silence this was the only political organization, which claimed to stand above the politics of the past and represent along with the true interests of the people. Pats also created a series of corporative institutions in which various elements of the population were represented. By the end of 1936 seventeen of these organizations came into existence (Dawisha and Parrott 1997: 337). Although the nationalist leaders of Estonia could establish dictatorship and prevent liberal democracy from flourishing, they could not provide security to their country as there was a constitutional crisis. The authoritarian rule ended up in succumbing to the power of Soviet Union.

Political Parties in Estonia under Soviet Union

Estonia came under Soviet sphere of influence with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. In the following year the country was occupied by Soviet troops and installed a pro-Soviet puppet government. On August 24, 1940 the Estonian Constitution based on the Stalinist model of 1936 proclaimed Estonia. While recognizing the leading role of the Communist Party in socialist development the constitution placed the ultimate power in the hands of a new legislative organ, the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian (SSR). After June 1940 the real locus of political power in Estonia was in

the hands of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU). The Estonian Communist Party remained relatively small (Raun 2001: 149).

The early post-war years were marked by intensive Sovietization, Russification and colonization of the Estonian Soviet Republic. With the incorporation of Estonia into the USSR, communist loyalists imported from Russia were implanted in the government because local governments were distrusted by Moscow. A guerilla resistance movement, the "Forest Brethren" with about 15,000 active participants and thousand more sympathizers was brutally crushed through forced collectivization in the countryside and the deportation of thousands of Estonian farmers to Russia (Bugajski 2002: 46).

The process of political Sovietization proceeded along with prominent political figures from the independence era including eight former heads of the state and 38 former ministers were arrested and deported to the interior of Soviet Russia. Thousands of Estonia's military and law enforcement officials were executed; political and social leaders were imprisoned (Tarand 2004: 137). Following the World War II, when Stalin began forced collectivization of agriculture another round of deportations took place. Soviet judicial, police, security and other administrative institutions were established in Estonia. No dissent or political activities were permitted under Soviet Rule. Only party which dominated was Communist Party of Soviet union (CPSU). Thus, multiparty system emerged during the interwar period completely ended when Estonia came under Soviet Union (Medijainen 2004: 127-133).

The Sovietization of Estonian society also included a comprehensive, planned assault on independent Estonian cultural life. The first blow was the loss of the majority of the pre-war intelligentsia through emigration. Due to the fearful Soviet suppression the Estonians fled the country in the final stages of the World War II. They include teachers, university lecturers, doctors, engineers, architects and Estonian clergymen.

Those who remained were targeted by the Soviet regime for arrest and deportation. All literatures, newspapers and journals became closely supervised by Communist Party. History was rewritten to stress the Baltic region's organic connection to Russia (Taagepera 1993: 62).

Political purge and intense repression of Estonian culture and education was designed to thoroughly Russify the population and to eliminate any autonomous spheres of public life. Leading positions in the country were occupied by Russified and Sovietized Estonians who were imported into the country and periodic purges of the Communist Party were conducted to root out any dissenter and to maintain a state of constant terror (Tarand 2004: 137). Under Brezhnev's regime between 1968-1980 the country witnessed bureaucratic failure and economic stagnation. The number of dissident organizations remained in active conditions. They include the Estonian Democratic Movement, the Estonian patriots and the Estonian National Front. But their influence remained limited under highly repressive conditions (Bugajski 2002: 47). During the Soviet occupation period demonstrations or attempts at revolt were repressed.

When Mikahil Gorbachev introduced perestroika and glasnost reforms, the Baltic dissent movements got opportunity to voice their concerns and demands. Public demonstrations against Soviet rule took place and the independence movement became more organized. Political parties such as the Estonian National Independence Party and the Popular Front movement gained relevance. The Soviet authorities found it increasingly difficult to ignore popular pressure (Freire 2003: 152). Estonia's drive for statehood and democratic rule began in the late 1980s with the birth and growth of various independent ecological, cultural and informational, student and political groupings. These were either protest movements against specific aspects of Soviet policy such as environmental devastation and censorship or elements of national rebirth in which Estonian history, culture and language were rediscovered (Bugajski 2002: 46).

Estonia embraced the liberalization of the Soviet economy and society in the late 1980s as their last opportunity to regain some control over their lives. The late 1980s was marked by the creation of new political movements. On the 48th anniversary of the secret pact between Hitler and Stalin on 23 August 1987 a massive demonstration took place in Tallinn condemning the pact and its aftermath. It was the first major public demonstration against the Soviets in nearly 40 years. (Otfinoski 2004: 16). By early 1988, public protest and rallies had become more common place. Demands rapidly began to escalate from mere autonomy within the Soviet Union to full scale national independence. During 1988, the press and cultural organizations increasingly disengaged themselves from Soviet censorship and even the Estonian Communist Party (ECP) began to call for republican sovereignty in the economic and administrative arenas. (Bugajski 2002: 47).

The Estonian National Independent Party (ENIP) also known as the Popular Front of Estonia (PFE) formed in early 1988 was the first large political organization in the Soviet Union outside the Communist Party. It was led by Lagle Parek, Tunne Kelam and other former dissidents; they took the lead in raising the issue of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Minahan 2004: 226). From its beginning the ENIP took the strongest stand for restoring complete independence to Estonia. It was the first openly opposition party to appear within the Soviet Union, boasting 300,000 members. Later, on October 1988 the Estonian Popular Front called for autonomy, self-control of its government from Moscow. The following year Estonia's leading political body the Supreme Council boldly proclaimed a declaration of sovereignty giving it the power to follow only those laws of the Soviet Union that it had approved (Otfinoski 2004: 17).

By mid-1990 the Estonian political spectrum had filled out considerably, with most noteworthy parties they are: on the right side of the spectrum were the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP), Estonian Conservative People's Party, the

Estonian Christian Democratic Party, the Estonian Christian Union, the Estonian Entrepreneurial Party and the *Respublica* Association. In the center were the Estonian Liberal Democratic Party, the Estonian Democratic Party and the Estonian Rural-Center Party. On the left wing were the Estonian Green Party, Estonian Social Democratic Independence Party, the Estonian Democratic Labour Party and the Russian Social Democratic Party (in Estonia) (Raun 2001: 225-226).

Politically, one of the most striking consequences of glasnost and perestroika was the rebirth of pluralism and the emergence of many parties and groupings. In 1989 Pro-independence organizations led by the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP, the National Heritage Society (NHS), the Estonian Conservative People's Party (ECPP), and the Estonian Christian Democratic Party (ECDP) established local citizens committees and the Estonian congress as a parallel national parliament untainted by any compromises with communism (Bugajski 2002: 47).

The path towards democratization in Estonia witnessed not only the emergence of a significant number of parties and groupings but also the development of increasingly freer elections and more sophisticated voters. The major beneficiaries of this greater openness were Estonian themselves. During this path a special emphasis was laid on the legal ramifications of party formations, party membership, organization and election of leaders, party structures for internal and external governance, and party staff and resources (Minahan 2004: 227). It was only during Mikhail Gorbachev's period Estonians got the opportunity for political freedom. They used the political opportunity during Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost reforms to reestablish their independence in 1991. This led to democratic transition and emergence of political parties in Estonia (Medijainen 2004: 226).

The Party System in Post-Independence Estonia: Origin and Development

Party system in Estonia is originated from the "Popular Front", an umbrella organization of Estonian dissidents, reform communists and nationally oriented

movements. Once the political goal of independence was achieved, the popular front coalition disintegrated due to the heterogeneity of the participating groups. As a result a party pluralism emerged. At times party pluralism took extreme forms, partially encouraged through the lack of regulatory mechanisms (Merkel 1999: 433; Biechelt 2001: 40). Estonia's political spectrum began to crystallize after the achievement of independence. Both the PFE and the Estonian congress were essentially pluralistic formations that subsequently split into diversity of political parties. Various centrist and moderate parties emerged from the PFE. More radical nationalist forces sought to consolidate and create a viable electoral bloc in opposition to the centrist and ex-communists tied to Prime Minister Savisaar (Janusz 2002: 50). The nationally viable parties emerged from 1992 to 2001 and the number of parties entering parliament increased. The vote shares of parties have swung dramatically during the time of elections. The programmatic profile of some parties changed, yet the ranks of key politicians remained largely constant throughout the decade (Sikk 2006: 343).

The major political parties along with their direct predecessors had been present in politics since early 1990s. Despite numerous changes in governments, Estonian did not repeat the inter-war pattern of a rapid succession of weak government. It embarked on a prolonged process of party consolidation and democratic institution building. By the late 1990s a handful of stable and relatively large parties were beginning to emerge (Tamm 2013: 5). These include Popular Front (1988) later became Centre Party (1991) under the charismatic leadership of Edgar Savisaar; the market liberal Reform Party (1994), the national-conservative Pro Patria Union (1995); the rural People's Union (1989); and the Social Democrats (1990), formerly called the Moderates. As in other East European states parties did not originate as mass organizations but as a small groupings with a core leadership based largely personal and political ties and often with similar programme. It took several years for

political parties in Estonia to gain public confidence, internal stability, organizational competence, programmatic clarity and a constituency base (Sikk 2006: 344).

The Estonian perception of the role of parties and their relationship to the state does not simply reflect the status of parties in modern democracies, but has particularities that can be traced in terms of its evolution. The following table depicts this.

Table 2
Political Parties Evolved in Estonia after Independence

Political Party	Immediate predecessor	Earlier predecessor	Original predecessor
Centre Party (1991)	Popular Front (1988)		
Pro Patria Union (1995)	Pro Patria (1992)	Christian Democratic Party (1988) Christian Democratic Union (1989) Conservative Popular Party (1990) Party of Republicans (1990)	
	National Independence Party (1988)		
Reform Party (1994)	Liberal Democratic Party (1990)	Popular Front (1988)	
Moderates	Moderates	Social Democratic Party (1990)	Popular Front (1988)
		Rural Centre Party (1990)	Popular Front (1988)
	Popular Party (1998)	Party of Conservatives and Republicans (1994)	Pro Patria (1992)
		Peasants Party (1994)	
Popular Union (2000)	Rural Union (1989) Country People's Party (1994) Party of Families and Pensioners (1994)		
United Peoples' Party (1994)	Russian Democratic Movement (1991)	Popular Front (1988)	
Progressive Party (1996)	Centre Party (1991)		

Social Democratic Labour Party (1997)	Democratic Labour Party (1992)	Communist Party of Estonia	
Independence Party (1999)	Future Party (1993)	Pro Patria (1992)	
Democratic Party (2000)	Blue Party (1994)		

Source: (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 3)

The Pro Patria Union (1995) is derived from the two earlier nationalist groupings, the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP) and the Pro Patria party. The former was Estonia's first opposition party formed from the anti-Soviet dissident movement in 1988. It was also one of the main forces behind the nationalist Congress of Estonia movement, which campaigned for a restorationist approach to Estonian independence (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 4). The Pro Patria party was a coalition formed in 1992 from among four proto-parties they are: Christian Democratic Party (1988), Christian Democratic Union (1989), Conservative Popular Party (1990), Party of Republicans (1990). During the 1992 elections the two groups ran separately but later formed a governing coalition together and became allies. In 1994, one of the constituent members of Pro Patria, the Liberal Democratic Party broke off and linked up with a number of other defectors from the Moderates. The new party was also helped by the decision of the popular chairman of the Bank of Estonia Siim Kallas to become its leader (Bugajski 2002: 53).

The center in Estonian politics has been held by the Moderates, which got their origins in 1992 as a coalition between two small parties i.e. the Social Democrats (1990) and the Rural Centre Party (1990). The two parties formally merged in 1995. In 1999 the Moderates also absorbed a small marginal party the People's Party, which had gained prominence after the long-time émigré of Estonian diplomat and later foreign minister, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, he joined the People's Party. Through

this move, he negotiated a more powerful position in the Moderates and eventually became its chairman (Raun 2001: 227).

A secondary position in the center was held by the Coalition Party (CP). The CP was a party mostly made up of Soviet-era professionals and administrators what some people called apparatchiks. The party proved very strong in 1995 and it was the alternative for most voters disgruntled with the 1992-1995 rules by Pro Patria, the ENIP and the Moderates. As a result, the party was the main governing party from 1995 to 1999 (Bugajski 2002: 57).

A major ally of the CP during its 1995-1999 rules was a group of rural and social-niche parties, which eventually all merged into the People's Union or Popular Union in 2000. These parties included: The Rural Union (*Maaliit*), which was formed in 1990 among leaders of Estonia's Soviet era collective farms; The Country People's Party (*Maarahvaerakond*), which was formed in 1994 as another new-face party to contest the 1995 elections; The Farmers Assembly (*Põllumeeste kogud*), which was a very marginal agrarian party founded in 1991 and The Pensioners and Families Party (*Pensionäride ja perede erakond*), which emerged gradually in 1994 as a party appealing to the interests of the two groups in its name (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 5).

During the 1995 election the four were allied in the Country People's Union (*Maarahvavühendus*), which ran as a partner with the Coalition Party. They worked more-or-less closely, although in 1999 the first three parties i.e. The Rural Union, The Country People's Party and The Farmers Assembly ran as a single list (under the banner of the Country People's Party), while the Pensioners and Families Party joined the CP. After the 1999 election the four parties were brought together under the skillful leadership of Villu Reiljan, a former environment minister and thus People's Union was born (Sikk 2006: 347).

Most of Estonia's Russian population has been represented by three different parties, the United People's Party (UPP), the Russian Party of Estonia (RPE), and the Russian Unity Party (RUP). The United People's Party (UPP) was founded in 1994 on the basis of the Russian Democratic Movement. It was the first moderate Russian grouping to be formed immediately after Estonia regained independence. The leaders were never able to mobilize much support because of Estonia's restorationist citizenship policy. In 1992 no Russian party even contested the first parliamentary elections. In 1993 the UPP and RPE did well in local elections. However, in 1995 the UPP, the RPE and the RUP had to come together in an electoral alliance in order to attain the 5% parliamentary election threshold to enter the Riigikogu (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 8). The appearance of new parties and change in parties show fragmentation in political landscape.

Legal Framework and Regulation of Activities of Estonia's Political Parties

During Soviet era the monopoly of Communist Party did not allow any independent decision and diverse political activism. However this situation changed after independence by adopting the new constitution (Lane 2001: 132). The Constitution of Estonia promulgated in 1992 one year after gaining independence from the Soviet Union mentions political parties in four articles. Article 48 states that everyone has the right to form non-profit undertakings and unions. Only Estonian citizens may belong to political parties (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia 1992: 6). Articles 30, 84 and 125 establish party membership incompatibility with civil servants, with the office of President of the Republic and with persons in active service in the military respectively. The activities of parties in Estonian Republic are regulated by the constitution on the one hand and on the other hand by the party law adopted on May 1994 (Piccio 2012: 18).

In Estonia political parties are governed by the Political Parties Act which entered into force in 1994 and also by more general laws such as the Non-profit Associations Act of 1996. The basic provision of laws defines party as "a voluntary political

association of citizens, the objective of which is to express the political interests of its members and supporters and to exercise state and local government authority" (Political Parties Act 1994: 1). According to the act only an Estonian citizen with active legal capacity who has attained eighteen years of age may become a member of a political party unless he or she has been divested of his or her active legal capacity or is imprisoned following a conviction of a criminal offence by a court. Under the same conditions, Estonian citizens who have attained 21 years of age by the last day of registration of candidates have the right to stand as parliamentary candidates (Second Compliance Report on Estonia 2012: 4).

The activities of political activities are regulated by various legal acts and provisions. Political Parties Act (1994) Electoral laws, Accounting Act and in the Anti-Corruption Act are the basic laws that regulate party activities. The legality of the activities of political parties is assured and the merger, division and termination of political parties shall be effected on the basis of Political Parties Act and the Non-profit Associations Act. A merger resolution of political parties is adopted if over one-half of the members who participate at the general meeting, vote in favour. On the other hand, if the number of members of a political party falls below 1000 and voluntary dissolution is not commenced, the registration department of a court, in addition to persons specified in the Non-profit Associations Act may request the commencement of compulsory dissolution of the party (Non-profit Associations Act of Estonia 1996: 2).

Legal restrictions are also envisaged on the political parties were a political party whose objectives or activities are directed at changing the constitutional order or territorial integrity of Estonia by force or are otherwise contrary to criminal law are prohibited. Organizations or alliances which possess weapons, are militarily organized or perform military exercises shall not operate as a political party or structural unit of a political party. Interference in the internal matters of a political party except in special cases permitted by law is prohibited. The formation and

operation of political parties or their sub-units or of other political associations or their structural units of other states is prohibited within the territory under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Estonia (Political Parties Act 1994: 2).

No specific party finance law has been adopted in Estonia. Aspects concerning the finances of political parties are regulated in the Political Parties Act (1994). Direct public funding of political parties was introduced in Estonia in 1994 with the promulgation of the Law on political parties (Taagepera 2007: 51). According to the Political Parties Act, the funding of political parties may consist of membership fees, allocations from the State budget, donations by natural persons (anonymous or concealed donations are prohibited), political party funds and loans or credits. No distinction is made as to whether the national or the sub-national level is concerned. However, the direct public funding is restricted to parties participating in parliamentary elections and receiving at least one per cent of the votes (Second Compliance Report on Estonia 2012: 5).

The amounts to the political parties represented in parliament are allocated in proportion to the number of seats it obtains in the parliament. It is determined annually by the state budget. The political parties that are not represented in parliament obtaining at least one per cent of the votes receive an annual fixed amount established by law, in proportion to the number of votes obtained (Taagepera 1998: 70). No direct funding of election campaigns exists in Estonia. Political parties do however benefit from other indirect forms of public funding, such as free broadcasting time on public media during election campaigns, tax deductions for advertisement costs in relation to election campaigns and tax deductions for donations to political parties (Piccio 2012: 19).

Under the Accounting Act of 1995, political parties are required to prepare an annual report recording all business transactions incurred. Political parties that are beneficiary of public funding must appoint an independent auditor for the

preparation of such reports. Political parties must also maintain a register of donations, including information on the donor and on the amount received (Mcgee 2008: 105). According to the Law on political parties, the political parties' reports, as well as the register of donations must be published on the political parties' web pages. Income and expenditure incurred in election campaigns must instead be reported to the Parliamentary Select Committee (an inspection authority composed of MPs that was established in 1999 under the Anti- Corruption Act) (Sikk 2006: 348).

Major Political Parties of Estonia during 1991-2001

The major political parties in Estonia emerged in both pre- independence and post-independence period. But the number of political parties increased when the country regained independence and held its first parliamentary elections in 1992. By providing legal basis, the political parties' act of 1994 strengthened the institutions of political parties in Estonia. In general, political parties have undergone a clear development from being just private NGOs than that of a state regulating public units which are essential part of political life (Sikk 2006: 342). The major political parties which consolidated democracy in Estonia are as follows.

Estonia National Independence Party (ENIP)

The Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP) was established on 20 August 1988 and officially registered on 10 May 1989. It was the first political party to be founded in Soviet Estonia in 1988 and considered as the first real opposition party established in the entire Soviet Union. As the name itself indicates, the restoration of Estonian independence was the main goal of the party. Their programme was a complete rejection of the Soviet regime as well as stronger Popular Front's (*Rahvarinne*) (Kasekamp 2003: 403). The ENIP had an initial membership of about 1,200 people and was chaired by Tunne Kelam with a core leading political dissidents. It worked closely with the Estonian Heritage Society (EHS) in creating citizens committees in the late 1980s that pressed the full state independence. The

ENIP was more radical than the Popular Front of Estonia (PFE), the party's radicalism (high principles) was highlighted by the fact that it did not participate in the elections to the Supreme Council but rather chose to support the alternative Estonian Congress which sought more independence for Estonia and tried to register Estonian citizens based on the definition of citizen in the pre-war constitution (Bugajski 2002: 72).

The ENIP played an important part in the creation of the new national constitution by supplying 13 of the 30 members allocated to the Council of Estonia in the 60 member Constitutional Assembly. Like Pro Partia, the ENIP believed strongly in the Republic of Estonia as a nation comprising primarily Estonian citizens. It was therefore considered a nationalist formation and subsequently merged with Pro Partia. The party was beset by factionalism and internal division that resulted in several splits throughout the 1990s (Bugajski 2002: 73).

Estonian Liberal Democratic Party (ELDP)

The Estonian Liberal Democratic Party (ELDP) was founded on 9 March 1990 through a merger of two groups that emerged from the Popular Front of Estonia: the Liberal People's Party (LPP) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP). The former had social democratic leanings, while the latter primarily consisted of humanistic and social approach to the introduction of market economy in contrast to some of the free marketers and was viewed as social liberal. In October 1990, the ELDP was granted observer status at the liberal international, becoming the first East European party to be admitted to the organization. The ELDP merged with the Reform Party during 1994 to form the Estonian Reform Party (ERP) (Toomla 2005: 144).

Estonian Social Democratic Party (ESDP)

The Estonian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) was established on 8th September 1990. It had emerged partly from a section of the Popular Front of Estonia (PFE), which played a major role between 1998 and 1991 in mobilizing support for

Estonian independence. It included the defunct Estonian Democratic Labor Party (EDLP), the Russian Social Democratic Party of Estonia (RSDPE) which broke away from the pro-Moscow Inter-movement and the Estonian Social Democratic Independence Party (ESDIP) (Toomla 2005: 143). The ESDP was the first political grouping that was able to bridge the ethnic gap between Estonians and Russians. The ESDP also merged with the Estonian Socialist Party (ESP) at its founding congress and claimed several hundred members. The ESDP was chaired by Tiit Toomsalu, with an initial membership of only 300 people the party closely resembled other European social democratic parties. Its platform included an appreciation of nature and culture where everyone has self-determination and the less fortunate are not forgotten (Grofman, et. al. 2000: 351).

The ESDP became the dominant member of a coalition called the Moderates, in which the Estonian Rural Centre Party (ERCP) formed the smaller party. The ESDP was one of the three-party coalitions that formed the first post-communist administration between 1992 and 1995. Andres Tarand, Prime Minister following the collapse of the government led by Mart Laar, was a member of this party (Bugajski 2002: 60). In 1996, the ESDP formed an electoral and political bloc with the Estonian Rural Center Party styled as "Moderates." The Estonian Social Democratic Party (ESDP) initially tried to stay in the center of the political scale by supporting moderate social programs and taxes. Along with the Center Party, the ESDP tried to represent the impoverished middle class (Taagepera 1998: 72).

Estonian Republican Coalition Party (ERCP)

Estonian Republican Coalition Party (ERCP) emerged in September 1990 through the combination of three groupings: young intellectuals, industrial managers who supported Estonian independence and free market conservatives. The party became a keen supporter of a capitalist economy and was involved in the governing Isamaa coalition between the fall of 1992 and the summer of 1994 under the premiership of Mart Laar (Bugajski 2002: 65). The party stood for lower taxes, and represented

primarily those entrepreneurs and businessmen who had been Soviet-time state enterprise directors and administrators. In the opposition this party skillfully used the tactics of government criticism and offered populist themes. In government (1995-99) its urban and rural wings disagreed regarding protective customs on food products (Grofman, et. al. 2000: 336).

Estonian Reform Party (ERP)

The Estonian Reform Party (ERP) was established on 18 November 1994 with 710 members and was chaired by Siim Kallas. The Reform Party actually emerged as an alternative to the previous radically reformist government. Although similar in many of their views to Fatherland and Moderates, Reformers tried to distance themselves from the previous reformist forces (Grofman, et. al. 2000: 352). The party was considered right of center and maintained contacts with the German Free Democrats, the Swedish Liberal Folk Party, the Finnish Swedish Folk Party and Latvia's way. The ERP was formed through a merger between the small Reform Party and the Estonian Liberal Democratic Party which broke off from the Estonian Popular Front in 1990 (Toomla 2005: 147). When the ERP became the junior coalition partner in the Coalition Party of Rural Union led government, Sim Kallas was appointed as the country's foreign minister. The EPR left the Coalition Party led administration at the end of 1996 over a cooperation agreement that the Coalition Party concluded with the Center Party. At the ERP congress in Tallin on 15 May 1999 Kallas was re-elected as party head (Bugajski 2002: 64).

Popular Front of Estonia (PFE)

The Popular Front of Estonia (PFE) was established on 13 April 1988 when an initiative group was formed under the name of the Popular Front for the support of Perestroika. By June 1988 the PFE claimed about 40,000 members and was an umbrella organization for democratic and pro-sovereignty forces which included human rights groups, religious organizations, environmental movements, heritage groupings, nascent political parties and even some fractions of the Communist Party

(Norgaard 1999: 74). The PFE involved in various intellectuals, cultural figures and young politicians who later rose to prominence in an independent Estonia. As the Communist organizations crumbled, the PFE lodged increasingly more extensive demands and staged a number of large scale public rallies including the song of Estonian demonstration on September 1998. The PFE disintegrated into competing political formations after September 1992 elections in which it gained 12.3% of the vote and 15 parliamentary seats (Toomla 2005: 147).

Pro Partia Union (PPU)

The Pro Partia Union (PPU) was established on 1995 with a membership of 800 people and was chaired by Mart Laar. Earlier it was a coalition of four national conservative parties but later it became an official party itself after the parliamentary elections. Prop Partia (Fatherland) was one of the most radical nationalist parties in the Estonian political spectrum. This was mainly due to its core belief in the continuation and strengthening of a truly Estonian nation state and its emphasis on citizenship based on ethnicity (Sikk 2006: 344). The party received the largest share of the vote in the September 1992 parliamentary elections, as the Fatherland Coalition garnered 22% of vote and captured 29 seats. Its influence declined in the March 1995 elections despite forming an electoral coalition with another conservative party, the Estonian National Independence (Bugajski 2002: 67). The more radical PPU members left the party due to the PPU's moderate stance on issues such as citizenship; they formed the Right-Wingers which subsequently merged to form the People's Party. This group rejoined the Pro Partia Union after the Moderates merged with the People's Party (Kasekamp 2003: 404). Mart Laar resigned from the post of party chairman after the 1995 general election but he was still considered the most influential member of the party. Later Toivo Jurgenson became the new party chairman (Norgaard 1999: 72).

Other Parties

Besides the above mentioned important parties, other small parties also emerged in the political system. The Estonian Christian Democratic Party (ECDP) founded on 23 July 1988 as the earliest non-communist political formation. Its initial phase combined a number of young Christian activists, mostly students from the Technical Training College in Tallin. It had a close link with the National Heritage Society, which campaigned in the late 1980s and early 1990s for the restoration of historical and cultural monuments and supported Estonian independence (Janusz 2002: 67).

The Estonian Rural Center Party (ERCP) was established on April 1990 by Jan Leetsaar and Ivar Raig. The Party was more active in central Estonia. The main part of the ERCP platform called for the restoration of private farming, which was viewed as key to economic development. In the early 1990s nearly half of the party's members consisted of private farmers due to the restoration of private agriculture. Later the ERCP formed the Moderates Coalition with the Estonian Social Democrats (Grofman, et. al. 1999: 228).

The Estonian Green Party was established on May 1990 under the leadership of Vello Pihlak and was largely the political voice of the Estonian Green Movement (EGM). After the two years of the fragmentation a new party, the Estonian Greens (EG) was created in December 1991. Only one Green representative Rein Jarlik was elected to parliament following the September 1992 general elections. The Greens played an important role during the first stages of the Estonian independence drive and were equally popular among both Russians and Estonians. By 1994 they had very little influence on Estonian politics (Taagepera 1998: 72).

Estonian Christian Democratic Union (ECDU) was established on 17 December 1998 and was originally known as the Estonian Christian Union. Its more prominent members included Mart Laar, Illar Hallaste and Trivimi Velliste. The party initially included members from a diversity of religious traditions. However it eventually

evolved into a primary Lutheran political organ which sought to give the Lutheran Church a pre-eminent position in Estonian society. It also supported the creation of a social market economy for the poorest segments of society (Toomla 2005: 145). A separate organization the Estonian Christian Democracy Association (ECDA) was created to focus on social work. The ECDA itself changed its name in 1988 to the Estonian Christian Democratic Party (ECDP) and gained membership in the Christian Democratic International in 1990 (Sikk 2006: 347).

The Progressive Party (PP) was established on 25 May 1996 with a liberal and centrist orientation. It began when several parliamentary deputies left the Estonian Center Party and created the Liberal Centrist faction in the *Riigikogu*. In April 1996 members from the Centrist faction and four former Center Party members joined to form the small New Democratic Union (NDU). The NDU became the Progressive Party faction in May 1996. During the late 1990s the Progressive party was deregistered because of lack of members (Grofman, et. al. 2000: 355).

The People's Party was created from the merger of an agrarian party, the Estonian Farmers Union (EFU) and the Right-Wingers organization. Foreign Minister Ilves was elected People's Party chairman on 5 April 1998. Later the People's Party joined the Moderates coalition before the elections in March 1999 and the two parties (the PP and the PPM) officially merged in April 2000 to create a single People's Party (Kasekamp 2003: 407).

Estonian Entrepreneurs Party (EEP) founded on 2 March 1990 was led by Tiit Made. The party involved several interest groups including the Union of Private Enterprises and Cooperatives and the Small Business Association. The party managed to gain 2.3% of the vote at the September 1992 parliamentary elections and subsequently joined the Estonian Center Party and gained a seat in parliament (Toomla 2005: 66).

The Estonian Blue Party (EBP) was formed on 29 November 1994 and registered on 8 December 1994. The party was led by Aleksander Einsein and Jaan Laas. It was consistently centrist in its orientation. The Estonian Blue Party strongly supported the increased demographic growth of the Estonian nation while insisting that the equality and welfare of all individuals be upheld. In the March 1999 general elections, it just managed 1.6% of the popular vote and it subsequently disappeared from political life (Bugajski 2002: 66).

The Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party (ESDLP) was established on 28 November 1992 and registered on 4 May 1993 with a membership of 1,100. It was chaired by Tiit Toomsalu. The party did not win enough votes to gain seats in the Riigikogu in either the 1992 or the 1995 parliamentary elections. The ESDLP adopted a more traditional social democratic platform and became part of the electoral union "Justice" during the March 1995 parliamentary elections. After the parliament voted to ban electoral alliances in November 1998 the Social Democratic Labor Party, the United People's Party and the Russian Unitary Party merged to form a new organization (Norgaard 1999: 74).

The Estonian Home (EH) was established on 24 April 1994 and registered on 6 December 1994. It was chaired by Kalju Poldvere. This minority party was primarily interested in increasing democratic participation and punishing those who committed crimes against the Estonian people and the Estonian nation throughout the communist era. It believed strongly in the First Republic of Estonia as the highest form of identity for the Estonian people. It advocated in 1995 the decolonization of Estonia and the treatment of non-Estonians as guest workers without the right to own land. In the late 1990s EH disappeared from the political scene as it could not compete with other nationalist formations (Lewis 2002: 168).

The Estonian Future Party was formed on 19 August 1993 and registered on 4 November 1993. It was created by former ENIP executive board member Arvo Kiir.

Its membership reached approximately 1,000 people and the party was subsequently led by Jaanus Raidal. The Future Party was widely considered nationalist and isolationist. It advocated strengthening local government and limiting Estonia's participation in international institutions and initiatives. The Future Party's leaders proclaimed the goal of national unity hoping to benefit from public dissatisfaction with the major existing parties and political discords (Grofman, et. al. 1999: 237).

The Estonian United People's Party (EUPP) was established on 8 October 1994 and registered on 8 December. It was chaired by Viktor Andrejev. The EUPP grew out of the non-communist Russian Democratic Movement (RDM) and became one of the principal parties supported by ethnic minorities, mainly the Russian population. It strongly backed the extensions of citizenship to all those who legally resided in Estonia at the time of country's independence from the Soviet Union. The EUPP performed well in the 1996 local elections and won six seats to parliament in the March 1999 general elections with 6.1% of the popular vote (Kasekamp 2003: 407).

The Estonian Democratic Justice Union (EDJU) was established in December 1991 largely as a pressure group to protect the interest of marginalized sectors of the society such as pensioners and veterans. The Union obtained two parliamentary representatives after the September 1992 ballot, Raoul Uksvarav and Edgar Spritt. It also cooperated with other single issue pressure groups including the Estonian Pensioners Union (EPU) and the Estonian Union of Handicapped Societies (EUHS). In 1994 EDJU changed its name to the Association of Pensioners and Families (APF) (Medijainen, 2004: 244).

Chapter 3

Electoral Process, Political Parties and Government Formation

On the basis of the principle of legal continuity Estonia re-established its independence on 20 August 1991. Constitution of the Republic of Estonia (*Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus*) was adopted through a referendum held on 28 June 1992. The Estonian constitution stipulates a parliamentary democracy. The country's unicameral parliament (*Riigikogu*) consisted of 101 members. The parliament is elected for a term of four years through free, general, uniform and direct elections based on the principle of proportional representation and secret ballot. Any Estonian citizen who has attained the age of 21 is entitled to vote and contest elections. Prime minister is the real executive and cabinet has to obtain and maintain the approval of parliament. President is the nominal head of the state. President is indirectly elected by parliament for a term of five years. Post-Soviet Estonian political system has been distinguished by a multiparty system with numerous political parties participating in the electoral competition. The victorious parties in electoral process have the constitutional right to form government. Political parties acts as a linkage between the state and the society. They represent the interests of various sections of society in the government while making policies. The participation of political parties in electoral process is indispensable in the evolving democratic system of Estonia. This chapter examines the functioning of electoral system, the participation of political parties in the electoral process and the government formation in Estonia.

Electoral System of Estonia: Evolution and Reforms

Electoral system began to evolve in Estonia since 1989. The first electoral law was enacted in 1989 by the Supreme Soviet, the first freely elected parliament during the Soviet era; after the declaration of the republic's right of sovereignty (16 November

1988) is the predecessor of the Estonian electoral system. This law introduced proportional electoral rules under a Single Transferable Vote system (PRSTV). The 1990 elections were conducted under this law. In this election although 27 pro-Soviet deputies were elected, the two thirds Estonian majority was enough to declare at its first full session (30 March 1990) the country's official intention to re-establish its independence. Votes were casted on candidate-centered basis. Voter's choice was on the basis of the order of candidate rankings. No other parties, except Soviet communist party, had any role. Some organizations were given candidate nomination rights ¹ (Núñez 2011: 2; Taagepera 2007: 330).

Electoral reforms in re-independent Estonia began with the adoption of the new electoral laws. From 1991 to 2001 period electoral laws were reformed three times i.e. in 1992, 1994 and 1998. The electoral reforms which brought a significant change in the Estonian electoral system are as follows.

The 1992 Electoral Reform

The *Riigikogu* Election Act was enacted on 20 April 1992. This Act introduced an open list proportional electoral system with three tiers and multimember districts. Thus, for elections to the *Riigikogu* there were three rounds of counting in order to distribute seats. They are: personal mandate, a simple quota was calculated for each electoral district, which was obtained by dividing the number of valid votes cast in the electoral district by the number of mandates. The candidate who received enough votes to exceed or equal the simple quota was elected. District mandate, the candidates were ranked on lists according to the number of votes received. The votes cast in favour of candidates on the same list were added up. A list received as many

¹The author mentions that the following had the right to nominate candidates: The Estonian Communist Party, labour unions, cooperative organizations, the Estonian Leninist Youth Association, women's associations, war and labour veterans' associations, scientific personnel's associations, artists' unions, workers' unions, societal organizations that have been registered according to the law, societal movements that hold a statutory right to nominate, as well as electoral alliances that they have formed, voters meetings, and citizens' initiatives that have united behind a single candidate (Nunez 2011).

mandates as the number of times the number of votes it received in the electoral district exceeded the simple quota. The candidates further towards the top of the list were elected; and compensation mandate, the mandates which had not been distributed in electoral districts were distributed between the lists that had received at least five per cent of the votes nationally or already included three candidates who had been elected. The distribution of compensation mandates was based on a modified d'Hondt distribution method. In each list, a mandate was given to candidates who were further towards the top of the list (National Electoral Committee 2012: 25). There were twelve multi-mandate electoral districts. They are: Tallinn1, Tallin 2, Tallin 3, Tallin 4, Harju-Rapla, Hiiu-Laane-Saare, I-V, Narva-Jarva, L-V Jog-Vilij, Tartumaa-Tartu, Polv-Valg_Vor, Pamumaa-Parnu (Núñez 2011: 6).

This Act was amended once on 18 June 1992. The various outcomes of the laws are: there was no change in the size of the *Riigikogu*, the *Riigikogu* had 101 members. There were 12 multi-mandate districts. Seat apportionment to these districts was calculated prior to elections according to the number of registered voters. There were fully open lists in which each voter had one vote. Electoral alliances were allowed. Each party or electoral alliance was allowed to decide by itself the order of the national lists while submitting the candidate lists. There was a five percent nationwide party threshold or parties must have won at least three seats by simple quota etc. (European Commission for Democracy through Law 2008: 207).

The 1992 electoral law had the most striking unanticipated consequences relative to the expectations of the law. These unanticipated consequences are not particularly in terms of disproportionality, in partisan seats-votes outcomes. Disproportionality was due to five percent national threshold imposed in a new democracy with a proliferation of parties and the absence of a defined party system. The five percent threshold eliminated the smallest parties and the votes of these parties totalled twenty percent of all votes cast (Grofman, et. al. 1999: 239). It might seem that the 1992

electoral rules described would allocate most seats in the districts on the basis of personal seat shares and only minor remainders were left for nationwide allocations, just enough to assure safe seats to top party leaders. However, because of the large number of lists the opposite was true (Taagepera 1994: 212).

The 1994 Electoral Reform

The *Riigikogu* Election Act was amended on 11 July 1994. It introduced various changes like the registration of voters was based on the Estonian electoral register of citizens. All Estonian citizens who resided in the particular rural municipality or city on 1 December of the year preceding the elections were entered in this register. Every registered person received a polling card. The rural municipality or city government prepared a polling list on the basis of the register. Electoral committees were given the right to suspend the authority of a member of a lower level electoral committee if this person had violated the law (National Electoral Committee 2012: 27).

A minor change regarding the number of districts also took place. It reduced the number of districts from twelve to eleven. Mandates were distributed to the electoral districts on the principle of proportionality in accordance with the number of citizens entitled to vote. It was established that only political parties can form election coalitions. Thus, only political parties, election coalitions of political parties and independent candidates could participate in the *Riigikogu* elections (Taagepera 1998: 69).

Every candidate had to fill in several documents but, under the new procedure for submitting documents established by the *Riigikogu*, it was no longer allowed to correct errors in the documents on the last day for the nomination of candidates and if the information concerning the candidates contained errors then these candidates were not registered. Citizens' election coalitions and other associations and organizations lost the right to nominate candidates. The *Riigikogu* also specified the

procedure for formation of electoral committees. The National Electoral Committee was to consist of 18 members and it was formed by the *Riigikogu* on the basis of proposals of county governors and mayors of Tallinn and Tartu. There was no change in the nationwide threshold (Mikkel and Pettai 2004: 339).

The 1998 Electoral Reform

The 1998 electoral reform was a continuation of 1994 *Riigikogu* Election Act, which had undergone several amending rounds predominantly technical changes of how elections are to be organized and carried out, restrictions on campaigning etc. It was rewritten as a new integral act with the Fourth Amendment enacted on 13 November 1998 and Fifth Amendment introduced on 17 November 1998 which introduced new changes. The principle of territorial representation was replaced by the principle of professionalism. It was also decided that the National Electoral Committee would be formed to consist of seven members, of representatives of seven institutions each appointed by the head of the respective institution. In 1998, the National Electoral Committee was granted the right of supervision over electoral committees (National Electoral Committee 2012: 28).

The fourth amendment divided the number of seats between the electoral districts. In this total number of voters were divided by the number 101. Each electoral district was awarded a particular number of mandates in correspondence with the integer of the number obtained as a result of the calculation (Núñez 2011: 7). The formation of election coalitions was prohibited with a separate fifth amendment introduced on 17 November 1998. The draft initiated by the Estonian Centre Party Faction prompted a lively discussion in the *Riigikogu*. The supporters of the draft claimed that this would develop the political parties' landscape in Estonia and make the electoral system more transparent. Only political parties and independent candidates could participate in the elections from then on (Grofman, et. al. 1999: 240).

Parliament Elections and Party Competition

Estonia is a parliamentary republic in which the legislative authority is exercised by a unicameral *Riigikogu* (Parliament) elected for a term of four years. The *Riigikogu* is the highest legislative body comprised of 101 members. The *Riigikogu* adopts law decides on the holding of referendums. The *Riigikogu* also elects from its members a chairman who directs the work and procedures of the assembly (Miljan 2004: 190). The executive power is held by the council of ministers which is formed from the members of the *Riigikogu*. The council of ministers consists of the prime minister and other ministers. The prime minister has the task of forming the council of ministers whose members are usually selected from the leading political parties. The council of ministers implements policy decisions and legislation, coordinates the work of the government institutions, submits draft to legislation to the *Riigikogu* and organize relations with foreign states (Spilling 2010: 35).

Riigikogu elections are free, general, uniform and direct. Each voter has one vote. Election results are verified on the basis of proportional representation. The President of the Republic of Estonia by a resolution call regular *Riigikogu* elections on the basis of clause 78 (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia at least three months before the election day. The president is elected by the *Riigikogu* and he nominates the prime minister for the approval by the *Riigikogu* (Taagepera 1995: 329). The conducts of parliamentary elections are regulated primarily by the 1992 Constitution and the *Riigikogu* Election Act. Other applicable laws include the Political Parties Act, the Media Services Act, the National Broadcasting Act, the Constitutional Review Court Procedure Act, the Penal Code and the Code of Misdemeanor Procedure. These laws are complemented by regulations of the National Electoral Committee (NEC) (OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report 2011: 3).

Riigikogu elections are organized by the following electoral committees: The National Electoral Committee, The term of authority of the National Electoral

Committee shall be four years; The county electoral committees, The term of authority of county electoral committees and the electoral committees of the cities of Tallinn and Tartu shall be four years; Division committees, Division committees shall be formed before regular and extraordinary *Riigikogu* elections. The authority of a division committee shall continue until the new membership of the committee is appointed (*Riigikogu* Election Act 2002: 7).

Parliamentary Election of 1992

Estonia's parliamentary elections held in 1992, 1995, and 1999 (for the 7th, 8th, and 9th *Riigikogu*) have seen swings between the center-right, center-left and back to the center-right. As noted above, a number of political parties were formed in Estonia during 1990 and 1991. However, the real party landscape began to take shape only in 1992 with the first *Riigikogu* Elections. It was at this point that all the politicians felt that they could begin developing the party system in earnest because there was a new constitution in place along with an electoral system. For these first elections, practically every political or citizen association was allowed to run as a result of which the ballot featured a total of 38 parties or associations. These were grouped into a total of 17 electoral lists. The outcomes of the 1992 elections are shown below (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 10).

Table 3

7th *Riigikogu* Election Results (20 September 1992)

Party	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Seats
Pro Patria	101	100,828	22.00	29
Secure Home	73	63,329	13.60	17
Popular Front	103	56,124	12.25	15
Moderates	49	44,577	9.73	12
ENIP	97	40,260	8.79	10
Royalists	30	32,638	7.12	8
Estonian Citizen	26	31,553	6.89	8
Greens	14	12,009	3.71	1

Entrepreneurs	14	10,946	2.39	1
Others	121	66,983	14.60	-

Source: (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 11).

The results show the big victor of the elections was Pro Patria, which started a pro-market reform and national satisfaction over independence to a dominant position in the parliament. Together with the strength of the ENIP and the Moderates it was able to form a government under the premiership of Mart Laar. Mr. Laar indicated that the principal objectives of his administration would be to negotiate the withdrawal of all Russian troops remaining in Estonia as well as to accelerate the privatization programme in the economic sector (Pettai 2009: 954).

The opposition was formed by the 'Secure Home', which was the first partnership between the Coalition Party and the Rural Union and the Popular Front coalition which was dominated by the Centre Party. Surprise showings were made by the Royalists and Estonian Citizen. However, these parties soon faded. Two parties the Greens and the Entrepreneurs Party gained single seats via direct mandates due to the strength of their leaders in their individual districts. However, the parties did not top the five percent national threshold but still managed to retain their positions (Pettai 2006: 11).

Parliamentary Election of 1995

In the 1995 elections, the center-right government had taken a beating because of the severity of its shock-therapy economic policies. In late 1994, Mart Laar was forced to relinquish the premiership in favor of an interim cabinet headed by the Moderate Andres Tarand. As a result, the Secure Home coalition gained in stature and included the Country People's Party. The resulting Coalition Party-Country People's Union served as the main alternative for those voters weary of reform. Although many voters also sided with the Centre Party, the CP-CPU was seen as the stronger option. In addition, the elections saw the entry of the Reform Party it attempted to create a

new right-of-center niche in the shape of a liberal pro-market party. It also attracted votes from among those who wanted to register their disapproval with Pro Patria and who did not want to vote for the center-left (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 12). The results are shown below.

Table 4

8th Riigikogu Election Results (5 March 1995)

Party	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Seats
Coalition Party and Country People's Party	161	174,248	32.23	41
Reform Party	103	87,531	16.19	19
Centre Party	114	76,634	14.17	16
Pro Patria and ENIP Union	109	42,493	7.85	8
Moderates	101	32,381	5.99	6
Our Home is Estonia	73	31,763	5.87	6
Right-wingers	101	27,053	5.00	5
Others	494	68,596	12.69	-

Source: (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 12)

In this election only formally registered political parties had fielded candidates. However, electoral coalitions were still permitted. This provision allowed for example, Estonia's Russian parties to form a substantial enough coalition in order to win nearly six percent of the vote and six seats. Another newcomer was the Right-wingers Party. This was a short-lived formation, which broke off from Pro Patria in 1994 during internal wrangling over Mart Laar's leadership. The party barely squeaked into parliament but later merged back into Pro Patria. Voters began to adjust to the electoral system. The number of wasted votes declined and unaffiliated candidates also received vastly fewer votes. Although the plurality won by the CP-CPU in 1995 was stronger than that of Pro Patria in 1992, the new centrist grouping

still had a hard time finding a suitable partner between either the Centre Party or the Reform Party (Solvak and Pettai 2004: 575).

After initial overtures to the Reform Party failed, the leader of the CP-CPU Tiit Vähi turned to the Centre Party and Edgar Savisaar. However, this coalition lasted only for seven months. Valli then formed a new government with the Reform Party this government also survived barely a year, in October 1996 the Coalition Party decided to resume cooperation with the Centre Party at the level of the Tallinn city government. This move was repudiated by the Reform Party and it left the coalition. Thereafter, the CP-CPU continued as a minority government (Taagepera and Ensch 2006: 171).

Estonia's second post-independence parliamentary elections on March 1995 saw a shift to the center-left Coalition party/Rural Union (KMU) over the right-of-center Pro Partia/Estonian National independence Party coalition. The results reflected popular dissatisfaction among the elderly and rural electorate who were hardest hit by the previous government's market reforms. The KMU subsequently formed a majority coalition government with the leftist Center Party which held until October 1995, when the Center Party left the coalition and was replaced by the right-of-center Reform Party (Taagepera 1995: 329).

Parliamentary Election of 1999

In parliamentary elections held on 7 March 1999, the Center Party won the largest percentage of votes. However, the Reform Party, Pro Partia and the Moderates together took 53 seats and subsequently formed a center-right majority coalition government. The Center Party and its leader Edgar Savisaar, with whom various political forces expressed reluctance to co-operate was effectively forced into the opposition. The other three parties which secured enough votes to enter parliament were the centrist Coalition Party and the left-of-center Country People's Party, each of which took seven seats and the United People's Party representing some of the

country's large ethnic Russian population captured six seats (Karatnycky 2000: 185). The following table depicts the election results and performance of parties in the election.

Table 5

9th Riigikogu Election Results (7 March 1999)

Party	Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Seats
Centre Party	242	113,378	23.41	28
Pro Patria Union	178	77,917	16.09	18
Reform Party	212	77,088	15.92	18
Moderates	303	73,630	15.21	17
Coalition Party	216	36,692	7.58	7
Country People's Party	167	35,204	7.27	7
United People's Party	172	29,682	6.13	6
Others	395	40,648	8.40	-

Source: (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 14)

The 1999 *Riigikogu* elections saw a further modification of electoral law in the electoral coalitions (like the CP-CPU) was formally banned. This indicated that only single parties could field candidate lists although non-affiliated, independent candidates were still allowed. This change was meant to encourage consolidation of the party system. During this time the requirement that a party must have at least 1000 members had also taken effect. Due to the banning of electoral coalitions came relatively late on November 1998, smaller parties were not always able to formally merge in time for the election. In many cases smaller parties added their candidates onto the formal lists of larger parties. Thus, in the campaign they continued to talk about cooperation between parties and these parties continued to exist legally but formally they were within the electoral law. Although there were only 12 electoral

lists for the March 1999 poll the total number of parties subsumed under these lists was closer to 20 (Solvak and Pettai 2004: 576).

The result of the election was the return to power of the center-right based on an agreement between the Pro Patria Union, the Moderates and the Reform Party. The Pro Patria Union received the most votes it was given the premier's post and this gone again to Mart Laar. His coalition lasted for less than 3 years, until in December 2001 the Reform Party decided to enter into a coalition with the Centre Party on the level of the Tallinn city council. This move led to fatal reverberations on the national level and prompted Laar to resign in January 2002 and the erstwhile coalition collapsed. This forced the Reform Party to negotiate a national (minority) government with the Centre Party, and the RP leader Siim Kallas became Prime Minister (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 15).

This development also caused considerable consternation among political observers, since a coalition between the pro-market Reform Party and the left-leaning Centre Party was unprecedented and had been almost inconceivable to most analysts. The two parties agreed to set aside a number of the differences on policy issues (such as taxes and state subsidies) in order to hold power to the March 2002 elections. It was widely expected that the Centre Party would win the upcoming poll, and then continue the coalition with the RP or form a new center-left coalition with the People's Union (a merger of the Country People's Union, the Rural Union and the Pensioners and Families Party), if the latter gained enough seats (Taagepera 1995: 330).

Party Coalitions, Government Formation and Functioning of Parliament

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Estonia started to build a new system of government. The Estonian government consists of an elected president (head of the state) and a single legislative assembly (*Riigikogu*) led by the prime minister (head of the government). The constitution and the *Riigikogu* Rules of

Procedure Act regulate the formation of the government of the Republic. Article 89 of the constitution includes the main provision for forming a government that is characteristics of a parliamentary republic in which the government enjoys the confidence of the parliament when it is formed (Spilling 2010: 31).

According to Article 89 (1) if a government resigns the President of the Republic designates a candidate for Prime Minister within fourteen days after the resignation and the president gives this candidate the task of forming a new government. The constitution does not set out the conditions which the president has to take into account when choosing a candidate for prime minister. The candidate does not have to be the leader of the party that receives a majority of votes at the elections (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 10). A candidate may be a leader of the party who has declared his or her intention to form a coalition and who presumably has the approval of the parliament. In practice, the selection is preceded by consultations between the political parties in the parliament and between the President of the republic and the leaders of political parties. The president designates a candidate for prime minister and the candidate need to be the winner of the election (Kortmann, et al. 2006: 47).

Table 6
Party Coalitions and Government Formation from 1992- 2001

Period of Government	Government Durability in Months	Prime Minister	Leading party	Coalition Partners
21.10.1992- 08.11.1994	24	Mart Laar	Pro Patria	Moderate, ENIP
08.11.1994-17.04.1995	5	Andres Tarand	Moderates	Pro Partia, ENIP, Right wingers
17.04.1995 -06.11.1995	7	Tiit Vähi	Coalition Party	Centre Party
06.11.1995 -21.11.1996	12	Tiit Vähi	Coalition Party	Reform Party

21.11.1996 -17.03.1997	4	Tiit Vähi	Coalition Party	Progressive Party
17.03.1997 -25.03.1999	24	Mart Siimann	Coalition Party	Progressive Party
25.03.1999-28.01.2002	34	Mart Laar	Pro Patria Union	Reform Party, Moderates

Source: (Dahlmann 2005: 9; Pettai and Toomla 2006: 11-14).

Many parties contested elections since independence but the coalition government became the norm in Estonian politics. Estonian current political system dates from 1992, when a new constitution was adopted following the referendum which provided for a 101 seat in parliament with a limited powers. Estonia's first free parliamentary elections were held in September 1992. In this election 38 political parties participated. The conservative Fatherland alliance won 29 seats making it the largest party in the *Riigikogu*. Mart Laar, leader of the Fatherland alliance became prime minister of a coalition government (Spilling 2010: 31).

In the Estonian case the mechanics of competition for government took shape rather quickly, as they adopted. From 1992 onwards a very clear logic pitting one large bloc of the left against one large bloc of the right were established. This turned Estonia's party system into the one among the most institutionalized party system in post-communist Eastern Europe (Bértoa 2007: 17). In Estonian parliamentary elections the system of party lists were used. Candidates high on the party or electoral list are elected regardless of how many votes they themselves gained. Party lists that win at least five percent of the votes (electoral threshold) all over the republic enter the parliament.

Nine lists were elected in 1992 to the 7th *Riigikogu* making up a parliament of seven parliamentary party groups representing twenty three electoral parties. Three parliamentary party groups representing eight parties formed a coalition government (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 19). The largest parliamentary party Pro Patria won twenty

nine seats in the 1992 elections. As the largest party group in the legislature it took the lead in putting together the majority to form the government. The 1992 government consisted of nine ministers including Prime Minister Mart Laar from Pro Partia, three from the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP), four from moderate groups and one independent (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 52).

Estonia's second post-independence parliamentary election held in 1995 and it was contested by 30 parties. On 5 March 1995 the 8th *Riigikogu* was elected. Seven lists representing fourteen parties formed a parliament with nine parliamentary party groups. Independent candidates also took part in the elections. Forty one seats were won by an alliance of the Estonian Coalition Party and the Rural Union. A coalition of the newly established Estonian Reform Party won 19 seats and the Estonian Center Party gained 16 seats. For the first time the Russian Minority was represented by Our Home Is Estonia alliance which won six seats in the *Riigikogu*. Tilt Vahi, leader of the Estonian Coalition Party became prime minister.

The new government was based on four parliamentary party groups that consisted of six electoral parties. The governing coalition numbered fifty seven members. The Coalition Party led by Prime Minister Tiit Vahi with forty one legislative seats took ten ministerial posts while the Center Party with sixteen members took five ministers. The Reform Party formed from the Liberal Democratic Party was successful especially among the urban voters. The electoral coalition Our Home is Estonia representing the Russian speaking population was also elected to the *Riigikogu* (Russ 2002: 118).

In the parliamentary elections of 1999, the People's Party Moderates formed a coalition with Mart Laaras as Prime Minister (Fleuren 2006: 33). The proportional election system in Estonia favors a fragmented distribution of seats in parliament. Due to proportional system Estonian MPs are more concerned with their inclusion and placement on the list of candidates than with their own popularity in their

districts. Thus MPs tend to worry more about cultivating good relationships with their party leaders who are responsible for the candidate lists than about developing constituent relations (Saarts 2011: 87). As in other post-communist states, Estonian Parties at the time of independence were weak and fragmented. Frequent government change indicates instability.

From 1992 to 2001 all the governments of Estonia were coalition's governments. The coalition governments were often formed from two parties. As of distinguishing between governments the changes of government in Estonia are recorded when there is a change in the partisan composition of the government coalition that is when the representatives of one or more parties leave the coalition government or join the coalition government (Kortmann, et. al. 2006: 47). In Estonia the changes of parties in the government formation have been inevitable after elections and between elections. In this way political parties in Estonia play a very important role in the government formation.

Chapter 4

Institutionalization of Party System in Estonia, 1991-2001

Democratic transition led to the emergence of political parties in Estonia. Since 1989, political parties began to emerge in Estonia. During Estonian independence movement political parties played a very significant role. After regaining independence, the consolidation of democracy phase began with the adoption of a new constitution in 1992. Political parties became crucial for Estonia in order to develop a new democratic political and economic system. During 1991-2001, the period under study, every active political parties and organizations including former communists supported the democratic transition to liberal market economy. In the initial stage of independence some degree of ideological polarization existed in Estonian society. The constitution of Estonia stipulates the supreme power of Estonia is vested in the people. By voting in elections to the *Riigikogu* (Parliament) the citizens exercise this power. Three parliamentary elections were held during 1991-2001. The first free and fair parliamentary elections in post-Soviet Estonia took place in 1992. The second elections were held in 1995. The third regular elections occurred in 1999. Parties won the elections formed governments. But frequent change in government became a problem threatening political stability. From 1992 to 2001 Estonia had seven governments. This shows political landscape was fragmented in Estonia. Party system institutionalization a key underpinning of democracy and is closely linked with stability. This chapter tries to examine the level of institutionalization of party system in Estonia during the period from 1991 to 2001.

Party System Institutionalization: Indicators and Parameters

The main theoretical arguments, indicators and parameters discussed in chapter one is reproduced below for analyzing the level of party system institutionalization in Estonia. Huntington on the other hand defines institutionalization as the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability (Huntington 1991:

12). He suggests four dimensions of institutionalization: 1. Adaptability/Rigidity; 2. Complexity/simplicity; 3. Autonomy/subordination and 4. Coherence/disunity. Adaptability can be measured in terms of three factors: chronological age, generational age and functions. There will be positive correlation between the level of institutionalization and length of existence of the party, number of peaceful leadership succession and number of changes in basic functions for which the party stands for. Complexity/simplicity can be measured by personalism and level of differentiation of organizational and functional sub-units. Autonomy/subordination is indicated by three aspects of the institutions: institutions which fulfill their functions autonomously and act different from other organizations, have a strong support of citizens rather than of any particular group and recruitment of leadership only from the organization itself. Coherence/disunity can be evaluated by indicators such as the frequency of contested successions, cumulation of cleavages among leaders and members, incidence dissent within party, coherence of member's degree of loyalty and preferences (Ibid: 12)

Panbianko suggests two indicators to measure institutionalization: autonomy and systemness. Systemness is about the degree of independence and delimitation of boundaries of the institution from its environment. Systemness denotes the degree of interdependence of different actors in the institution and the level of centralization and control over organizational subgroups (Sacchetti 2008: 2)

Mainwaring and Scully offer four different dimensions to assess institutionalized party systems: stability, strong party roots in society, legitimacy, and relevance of party organizations (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4). Stability is about regular patterns of inter-party competition. The degree of stability and institutionalization depend on the degree of regularity. The main indicators of stability are electoral volatility, the extent and frequency of party replacement. Strong party roots in society means the link between party and citizen. The main indicators to understand

this include party longevity, voter's attachment to party ideology and party labels, difference between presidential and legislative voting, linkages between organized interests and parties, the percentage of the vote in a legislative election captured by older parties and potential of emerging forms of populism, personalism and anti-politics. Legitimacy refers to political actor's (elites and citizens) belief in party's role in democratic process. Parties and elections should be perceived as the means of determining who governs. Relevance of party organizations is about the independent status of parties, possession of own values, territory of functioning, established internal structures and procedures, active mass membership and considerable size of professionals (Mainwaring and Scully 1995: 4).

Mair analyses three different although clearly related factors responsible for institutionalization of party system in the process of government formation: alteration in government, innovation or familiarity of the governing formula and access to government. Alternation in government involves three different, patterns namely: wholesale, partial, and non-alternation. In the first case, the incumbent government leaves the office in its entirety and is replaced by a wholly different party or group of parties. A second possibility takes place when the new cabinet contains both new parties and old ones from the previous government. The third option is marked by a complete absence of alternation, as the same party or parties remain in exclusive control of government over an extended period of time being displaced neither wholly nor partially. Innovation or familiarity of the governing formula indicate whether there are stable groups of parties that tend to govern together or whether there is a tendency towards previously unseen party compositions being represented in government. Access to government indicates whether all parties have a chance to join the executive or whether there are some parties permanently excluded from participation in office (Mair 2007: 17).

Party System Institutionalization in Estonia: Sources, Dimensions and Degree

By employing the above indicators analysis of sources, degree and dimensions of institutionalization of party system Estonian is attempted. In the Estonian context the factors which indicate the institutionalization of party system are: legal framework and organizational structures of parties, funding of parties, party fragmentation, parties penetration (rootedness) into society, electoral accountability, political cleavages, electoral volatility and government stability.

Legal Framework of Estonian Parties

Estonian constitution and the Party Act are the basic legal framework provide for the functioning of political parties in Estonia. The basic rules for the organization of the parliamentary party were given by the *Riigikogu* Rules of Procedure Act. Section 31 of this Act says that parliamentary party groups (or factions) may be formed by a minimum of 5 Member of Parliaments (MPs). Each parliamentary party group must elect a chairman and a deputy chairman; if there are more than 12 members in the group, it may also elect a second deputy chairman. Furthermore, an MP may belong to only one parliamentary party group at any one time. If an MP leaves a parliamentary party group and hence also the list on the basis of which he or she was elected, he or she cannot join another parliamentary party group but must remain as an unaffiliated. (This rule was meant to improve MP discipline, since unaffiliated MPs do not get access to perquisites like secretarial assistance or automatic membership in legislative committees). Committee assignments are in general done by consensus and organized mainly by the three-member executive board of the *Riigikogu* (the speaker and 2 deputy speakers, one of whom is always from the opposition), who must go through each parliamentary party group's requests and make compromises (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 20).

Estonia introduced control over party financing also. Estonia has a relatively advanced system of public party funding. The principle of state budget subventions to political parties was introduced already in the original Political Parties Act of

1994. It became effective in 1996, later it was decided that using the party composition of parliament before the 1995 elections was too confusing: most MPs elected in 1992 were running in electoral coalitions, sometimes not affiliated to any parties, and many had changed camps during the parliamentary term. However, it is important to note that the will to introduce state financing was there already some years before it actually started (Second Compliance Report on Estonia 2012: 5). Estonia has witnessed a significant increase in total state financing to political parties after 1996. The total level of subsidies has increased more than tenfold. Public party financing in Estonia is based on the number of seats that is rather different from parties' vote shares in national elections. Distribution of public financing based on votes rather than seats has been discussed at times, but the only amendment put forth in this direction was revoked before it took effect. Only parties reaching the five percent national threshold have been eligible for public financing (Sikk 2006: 10-11). These regulations show that Estonia developed a strong legal framework for the functioning of political parties. Therefore, parties legally registered have the opportunity to participate the democratic process in the country. The legal regulation of party activities leads to effective functioning of the party system.

Organizational Structure

The legal provisions and regulations indicate that the organizational formation and structural function of political parties are essential for effective functioning of democracy. Membership is the most widely used indicator in the studies on party organizations, because party organizations in post-communist countries are usually less developed and institutionalized and discrepancies between the countries are often more pronounced than in the West. Party membership in Estonia is undisputedly the highest in the region (Saarts 2011: 97).

Membership in Estonian political parties has grown steadily over the years. According to the Political Parties Act, a political party can only be founded when it has at least 1,000 members. The parties are required to keep a membership register

which they submit annually to the Ministry of Justice. If membership falls below 1,000 the party is dissolved. Hence the minimum membership requirement is important in controlling the number of parties (Political Parties Act 1994: 4).

Table 7

Party Membership 1998-2001

Party	1998	1999	2000	2001
Reform Party	1000	1400	1600	2300
Pro Partia Union	1100	2600	2800	2800
People's Union	4050	5000	5400	6200
Moderates	2450	3000	3200	3200
Centre Party	2500	3400	4000	5700
United people's Party	1100	1400	1500	1600

Source: (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 16).

The above table shows that the Centre Party and the People's Union has been the largest parties in Estonia compared to the rest. The People's Union increased its size by merging with the Country People's Union, the Rural Union and the Pensioners and Families Party in 2000. Its base has been among rural residents. The other parties like Reform party, Pro Partia Union, Moderates and the United Peoples Party also witnessed a consecutive rise in their membership in between 1998 to 2001.

The Centre Party has attracted members among urban residents but has also made inroads in the countryside. It has long been the best organized party in Estonia with local organizations across the country. The dominance of Edgar Savisaar is more predominant within the party and it has the widest support base. It's difficult to call it as a mass-party mainly because it attracts mostly middle and lower class voters. However, it is the only party that has steadily sought to gain more members. The three main center-right and centrist parties the Pro Patria Union, the Reform Party and the Moderates have remained limited to the major cities and have never posited mass membership to be among their goals (Bugajski 2002: 47).

The parliamentary parties in Estonia can be classified into categories by degrees of membership regularity and stability. Parties with no member defections can be characterized as stable; parties which have seen defections of single MPs are moderately stable and parties that have experienced splits and major defections with in parliament are considered unstable (Solvak and Pettai 2008: 575). There are clear differences among the parties. The Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP), Pro Partia, Estonian Citizen Union (ECU) and the Center Party are unstable. ECU disintegrated completely during the 7th Parliament. ENIP merged with Pro Partia in December 1995 and the Center Party survived two major splits. The Coalition Party (COP), Rural Union (RU), Independent Royalists and People's Party of Republicans and Conservatives (PPRC) each lost one MP. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Moderates (SPD) however did not lose a single MP during the 7th term (Steen and Ruus 2002: 225).

The emergence of new political parties and the disintegration of others are accompanied by quantitative changes in parliamentary party groups and committee composition. As elections approach coalitions become weaker and shift. In the last several months of the first *Riigikogu* before the 1995 elections there was no governing majority. The situation was the same in 1997 and 1998 with Mart Siiman's government prior to the 1999 elections. Estonian parties are relatively new and unstable (Russ 2002: 120).

Electoral System and Political Representation

Since independence in 1991, Estonia has used a proportional representation electoral system for *Riigikogu* (National Parliament). The most important privilege granted to Estonian parties is their virtually exclusive right to political representation and even political organization of citizens at the national level. Both the initial Political Parties Act and the parliamentary debates preceding it were guided by the idea that if an organization wants to be engaged in politics or have any political aims at all it has to be registered as a party (National Electoral Committee 2012: 24). The status of

political parties was strengthened with the 1998 electoral reform, which put a ban on electoral coalitions from contesting parliament elections. This applied both to coalitions composed of two or more parties and any ad hoc coalitions. Since 1999 parliamentary elections, only officially registered parties can run in national elections alongside individual candidates who are effectively subject to more restrictive electoral rules (Núñez 2011: 7).

In Estonian electoral law there are no formal requirements as to how parties shall choose their electoral candidates. Candidates are not required to be members of the party on whose list they run. Thus parties can recruit independents or even members of other parties when they form a coalition. Of the six major parties in Estonia only two the Centre Party and the United People's Party formally allow local party organizations to draft a list of candidates for their respective electoral district. This is submitted to the national executive who coordinates the different districts as well as draws up the ranking of the national list. In the Moderates Party, a special electoral committee is formed which manages the process. Lastly, in almost all parties the standing council has the final say on the national list. In the case of the Reform Party a congress may be called as part of the nomination and ranking process (Pettai and Toomla 2006: 20).

The proportion of women in political parties in Estonia is quite large. About 48 per cent of party members are female but women holding power positions are still a minority among party activists and leaders. Because of the exclusion of women from party work and their relative inactivity women's voices are neither heard nor taken into account in policy development. This exclusion and inactivity has lessened women's chances of rising to the decision-making bodies at the national and local levels (Brady and Kaplan 2001: 370).

The rights and responsibilities that membership entails are also very similar among the parties. Members, for example, have the right to vote in party meetings and

participate in party elections; to take part in events and working groups organized within the party; to receive information on the party's work and policy decisions, as well as to influence those decisions; to receive the party's newsletters and newspapers; and to use party facilities such as offices. Although the parties do not require their members to work voluntarily, such work is still expected and approved of. The responsibilities include adherence to the party's statutes, programme and policy decisions and regular payment of membership fees (Biin 2005: 8).

Discrepancies between the individual parties are also clearly manifested in Estonia where the Reform Party, IRL and the Centre Party have a quite extensive network of local party branches and centralized organizations, while the Social-Democratic Party and the Greens are much weaker in their organizational scope although their organizations are internally more democratic and decentralized. Hence, party organizations are strongest in Estonia (Saarts 2011: 98).

Party Competition in Electoral Process

The format of a party system also plays a crucial role in the process of institutionalization itself. In the first post-independence elections in Estonia in 1992, 17 electoral unions and political parties as well as a number of independent candidates contested the race competing for seats in the 101 member parliament (*Riigikogu*) using a proportional representation system. Essentially three types of contestants took part in the elections (*Riigikogu* Elections Law 1992: 2). The electoral lists of the first group (the Isamaa electoral coalition, the Left opportunity alliance, and the ERSP) characterized relatively strong ties between the candidates and the political parties that nominated them. For example, on the electoral list of Isamaa won 22 percent of the vote with 29 seats in the *Riigikogu* there was only one nonparty candidate among the top 20 names. All other candidates belonged to one of the five parties that comprised this electoral coalition. The party list of the ERSP won 10 seats with 8.7 percent of the vote which at the time was really only one party in Estonian politics worthy of the name had the highest membership and the best

network of local organizations of any Estonian political organization overwhelmingly included members of this party (Núñez 2011: 5).

In the 1995 parliamentary elections in Estonia 16 party and electoral coalition along with 13 independents participated. Shortly before the election, the Isamaa-ERSP alliance won 8 seats with 7.9 percent votes disclosed the names on its election list. It included only active functionaries from both parties (National Election Committee Report 2012: 42). The Estonian Center Party won 16 seats with 14.2 percent votes and tried to enforce party discipline among its candidates who had to sign an agreement that once elected to the Riigikogu, one can quit the party parliamentary faction only by giving up his or her seat in the legislature. The electoral list of the Estonian Center Party (ECP) included a few candidates who did not have a previous career in this party (Miljan 2004: 47).

The electoral list of the Moderates union won 6 seats with 6 percent votes formed by the Social Democrats and Rural Center Party was again topped by the former Prime Minister Andres Tarand. Tarand, who did not belong to any party at the time was rated the most popular politician in Estonia in 1994–1995. Another nonaffiliated leading member of this coalition was Raivo Paavo, the head of the Trade Union association. Quite a few nonparty interest group members ran also on the party slates of the Coalition Party-Rural Union alliance won 47 seats with 32.2 percent votes, Estonian Reform Party-Liberals won 19 seats with 16.2 percent of votes, People's Party of Republicans and Conservatives won 5 seats with 5 percent of votes etc. (Meleshevich 2007: 39).

The Estonian parliament passed a law in November of 1998 banning multiparty electoral blocs many leaders of small political organizations run on electoral lists of major parties. Unable to form separate parliamentary factions of their own many small parties were forced to merge with their senior coalitional partners in order to stay in big politics. Thus, in the 1999 elections the Green Party merged into the

Center Party list won 28 seats with a 23.4 percent votes, representatives of the Pensioner's and Families' Union run on the ballot of the Coalition Party and won 7 seats with 7.6 percent votes, the People's Party put its candidates into the ticket of the Moderates winning 6 seats with 7.0 percent votes etc. (National Election Committee Report 2012: 47).

Estonia electoral reforms introduced during the period from 1991 to 2001 for the three parliament elections brought changes in voting system. This witnessed a shift from an absolute majority formula to single transferable vote and the principle of territorial representation was replaced by the principle of professionalism. Although by this time several political parties and groups had emerged in Estonia, the party affiliation of candidates was strong in the 1992 *Riigikogu* elections and in later elections it declined (Taagepera 1993: 176).

Stability of Party System

Stability of the party system and its consolidation is a major component for examining party systems. Various indicators have been used to measure the stability of party systems: electoral volatility, the number of effective parties, the proportion of votes taken by parliamentary parties presented on more than one occasion in the legislatures, the number of new parties represented in the parliament and their average yield of votes in elections, changes in the patterns of bloc competition and dynamics of government opposition relationships, etc. (Sacchetti 2008: 6). The most widely used measure for party system stability both in Western and Eastern Europe has been electoral volatility (Saarts 2011: 88).

Electoral Volatility

Electoral volatility refers to the aggregate turnover from one party to others from one election to the next. It is computed by adding the net change in percentage of votes gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, then dividing by two. Volatility usually is related to handful of other instability traits; merges and splits of

parties, success of new political forces. Party system with high levels of electoral volatility can lead to wild swing in policy, open doors to non-traditional parties and candidates make it harder for states to negotiate treaties and agreements with external actors and in some cases even threaten the stability of the democratic regime (Powell and Tucker 2012: 1). There are two types of electoral volatility. The phenomenon of volatility occurs when voters switch their votes between existing parties. This is the first type of volatility; this type of volatility is considered to be a healthy component of representative democracy and essentially reallocates power between political actors that are already by and large a relevant part of the political process. The second type of volatility is caused by the entry and exists of parties from the political system (Powell and Tucker 2012: 2).

Electoral volatility in the Estonia has been relatively high and remarkably fluctuating from election to elections. However, the average electoral volatility has been much lower in Estonia. The party system in Estonia has been the most stable and voters have preferred to vote for more established parliamentary parties except in 1995 election, which brought new electoral laws. Consequently, there are notable differences in the stability of party systems in Estonia. The Estonian party system was quite unstable in the 1990s, but ultimately turned out to be the most consolidated in the region in the 2000s (Saarts 2011: 90).

There has been a fluctuation in Estonian electoral volatility. This changing trend in the voting patterns mainly exhibited the public apathy towards the current political parties. It also showed the public's search for a political alternative which provide effective governance. Due to the absence of the consolidation of the political parties in Estonia the electoral patterns has changed (Lauristin and Peeter 2009: 4). The changing electoral volatility transformed the situation of both new as well as the old political parties. The older political parties continued with their principal electorates whereas the new parties tried to appeal certain masses who were completely disappointed with the current establishment. The newly initiated political parties

mostly brought those candidate who were less experience and not familiar with the rules and regulations of the election campaign. These new candidates failed to look at the problems in a broader sense instead escalated those issues of lesser concern. These underlying limitations with the newly established political parties made the process of co-operation more difficult with other established parties (Solvak and Pettai 2008: 576).

Despite relatively high levels of volatility and seeming instability, Estonian party politics, witness the change. In parliamentary elections of 1995 and 1999 the only genuinely new entity entering the legislature was the electoral coalition of ethnic Russian parties 'Our Home is Estonia'. Its rise can be attributed to the fact that between 1992 and 1995 many ethnic Non-Estonians were naturalized and the share of Russian-speakers in the electorate increased substantially. The total number of eligible voters in Estonia increased from 689,241 to 790,392 and by far the most of the rise can be attributed to naturalization (Sikk 2003: 9).

Pattern of Interaction

Another important factor is regular patterns of interaction between its elements. Thus, for many social scientists, institutionalization primarily connotes stability and persistence over time. Proponents of systems analysis in political science emphasize *stability* in interactions among subunits as an important attribute of a political system. Stability of a political organization is a necessary characteristic of its institutionalization: the more stable the system, the more highly institutionalized it is (Meleshevich 2007: 20).

Fragmentation of the Party System

The two major ways to analyze the fragmentation of the party system are: firstly, to use statistical indices like the effective number of electoral or parliamentary parties (ENEP/ENPP), Secondly, to classify the party systems according to the strength and numbers of parties as well as studying the patterns of party competition. However,

the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) is often regarded to be a major parameter for measuring the fragmentation of the party system. In the Estonian case it is evident that party system fragmentation has constantly fallen after the 1990s but not on a very notable scale. Hence, the Estonian case reveals an important point that is worth taking into consideration a relatively high-level fragmentation and instability of the party system are not always compatible. Lewis notes the two distinct models of party system consolidation evident in Estonia. Party competition in Estonia has been clearly more balanced but highly fragmented as well (Saarts 2011: 91).

Emergence of Cleavage Structure in Estonia

According to Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair cleavage consists of three parts: *Empirically*, it has to be definable in terms of social structure; *Normatively*, it is a system of values giving a sense of common identity to a social group and; *Behaviourally*, a cleavage manifests itself as an interaction between political actors. Cleavages refer to the political differences among the citizens which indirectly affects the electoral process. It has led to the emergence of political dissimilarity. Cleavages in politics are something which leaves imprint in a long run (Jurkynas 2004: 281-282).

In the initial year of 1990s the Estonian society was more subtle without any trace of political differences. In 1990s in spite of having an unstable party system and unpredictable voting patterns Estonia managed to balance its political base. By 1992 the political phase completely took a new turn wherein new political parties came up with diverse political agenda pitching behind the old political parties. Politically relevant cleavages emerged strongly in the society. During the inter-war period in Estonia cleavages among the political parties hardly existed due to the influence of Soviet regime. The emergence of cleavages included various aspects like the historical, transitional and contemporary (Tolvaisis 2011: 57).

In Estonia, ethnic cleavage mixed with a communist/anti-communist cleavage has been a central divide in the party competition. There is an anti-communist and nationalist camp (IRL, Reform Party) on the one hand and the fairly Russian-friendly Centre Party which has also been more neutral towards the communist past. Besides, socio-economic cleavage played a secondary role or has been merged with the latter-mentioned dominant cleavages (IRL and the Reform Party have been market-liberals while the Centre Party has a left-wing orientation). In the 1990s an urban-rural cleavage was also quite pronounced but during recent years it has lost its ground. Clerical/anticlerical cleavage has played absolutely a marginal role in Estonia because Estonian society is regarded to be one of the most secular in Europe (Saarts 2011: 96).

Table 8
Cleavages in Estonia

Country	Major cleavages	Cleavages with secondary importance	Cleavages playing a marginal role
Estonia	Ethnic cleavages linked to communist anticommunist cleavage	Socio-economic cleavage, Urban-rural cleavage	Clerical/anti-clerical, Centre-periphery

Source: (Saarts 2011: 97).

Ethnic minorities play a decisive role in the state politics in Estonia. Ethnic cleavages occupy a significant place in the process of politicization. The main peculiarity of the ethno political configuration of post-communist Estonia laid in a striking discrepancy between the share of non-Estonians in the society and their under-representedness in all branches of power. This discrepancy occurred as a result of denying citizenship and disfranchisement of over 2, 50,000 non-Estonians in early 1990s. Subsequent naturalization did not help non-Estonians achieve a degree of representation in the national Parliament that would be proportional to their share in

the society. Ethnic parties in Estonia such as Estonia's Russian parties (United People's Party, ONPE; Russian Party of Estonia, RPE) failed to retain their role of the main channel of political representation of the non-Estonian population both on the national and the local level, as Russian deputies used to be elected through nation-wide parties. Besides the distrust of the Russian electorate towards political leaders and parties translated itself into distrust towards the whole party system and alienation from political life on all levels manifested through a decrease in voter turnout (Saarts 2011: 93; Tolvaisis 2011: 57-58).

These trends reveal a crucial importance of the majority political elite for the structure of political opportunities available to Estonia's Russian community. Since Estonia is a parliamentary republic, parliamentary elections are the most crucial factor in determining the political course of the country. The consensus between all the major nation-wide parties with regard to the main principles of citizenship, language and migration policies remained intact for two decades, based on ethnic primordialist vision of Estonian nation-state, commitment to a rigid procedure of naturalization and Estonian language requirements for employees of both public and private sector (Raun 2009: 528).

So far, no Estonian nation-wide party has elaborated special policy strategies with regard to minority issues. The political practice of these parties with regard to ethnicity related issues and tactics applied in relation to the minority electorate allows classifying the major Estonian political parties into three groups. The first group is made up by right-wing parties characterized by a notably intransigent stance with regard to language, citizenship and other ethnicity-related issues. Many provisions of rigid legislation on citizenship and language were initiated by the political leadership of these parties, the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica. The second group is represented by parties whose attitude towards the issues relevant for non-Estonian population was more pragmatic than ideological. These parties, the Social Democratic Party and right-wing liberal Reform Party, demonstrated

consideration of the non-Estonian electorate as Russian members of these parties managed to constitute Russian factions. The Reform Party was the first to create Russian faction which elaborated the Program on National Minorities. The last category comprises parties that consistently emphasize their commitment to the defense of national minority rights. The Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond, KE) is the only nation-wide party that managed to build a stable relationship with the Russian electorate: electoral results and voting preference studies show that Russian voters constitute its crucial support base. The KE exploited the Russian electorate's disapproval of right-wing parties presenting itself as the only alternative (Minahan 2004: 24; Tolvaišis 2011: 57). Alliances, voting pattern, representation all these are quint essential for any ethnic community to represent themselves at the national level. In Estonia this has been witnessed through the participation of political parties by representing their ethnic community.

Communist and Anti- Communist Divide

After the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Estonia on 1991 the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Estonia along with the Communist party of Soviet Union tried to revive its structures. The independent Communist Party of Estonia declared to favour the adoption of the new constitution and took part in the general elections of 1992, as a member of the electoral alliance The Left Alternative. Despite comparatively good positions in the Supreme Council its list included only 14 candidates. The Left Alternative candidates gained a total of 7,374 votes or 1.61% of all votes. Vaino Valjas leader of the Communist Party (1988-95) was close to being re-elected but his seat was taken over by his former subordinate Vambola Poder. He ran for the parliament under the flag of the Royalists, a strange populist electoral alliance Poder gained 4,153 votes against Valjas 2,670 votes to be elected to the *Riigikogu*. The list of Royalist gained 32,638 votes and 8 seats and among the winners there was another CPE CC lecture Tonu Korda. The election campaign included an intensive propaganda campaign under the slogan of Sweep out launched

by the winning right parties. In the first round of presidential elections Arnold Ruutel who had distanced himself from the CPE in 1989-90 was a clear winner with a 42% popular support. A lot depended on the personalities and their readiness to act and their manner to conduct (Alatalu 2008: 178).

Some anti-Communist propaganda took place in all following elections campaigns. They were very weak before the 1995 general elections as then the right wing forces were losers. The latter's return to power was preceded by several special anti-communist campaigns. For example in October 1998 a group of former Komsomol activists were ready to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the foundation of this organization and then a group of intellectuals organized a public campaign against it. As a result the event took place behind the closed doors. This was the last anti-communist party campaign (Alatalu 2008: 179). As by that time the official successor of the CPE had lost any significant influence, the fighters against communism turned their attacks against former communists in the other political parties, first of all in ranks of the Estonian Centre Party. Very soon it became clear that the new post-communist party was not able to use the theoretical chance. The general mood against Communists was kept hot by Prime Minister Mart Laar declaring from time to time that his government was non-Communist or even anti-Communist. The main reason for the disabilities of the EDLP was that a time for such a kind of party was over in Estonia (Brady and Kaplan 2001: 349).

Rural and Urban Divide

Among the various aspects of conflict in Estonia the political conflict between the urban and rural masses existed. The urban rural disparity is a source of salient political division in Estonia. In the beginning of the party system formation the urban rural cleavage was almost nonexistent in Estonia but it has gained importance in spite of the growing differences in the quality of life in the cities and rural areas. Majority of the capital invested in the major urban areas. The Estonian Coalition party (EK) was set up as a single party prior to the 1999 elections to unite most of

the Coalition and Rural People's Union (KMU) alliance. The KMU itself was created for the 1995 elections and campaigned on a platform of agricultural subsidies and increased social expenditure. Included in KMU were an antecedent Coalition Party, the Estonian Rural Union (EM), and the Estonian Rural People's Party (EME). The coalition party was founded 1991 by former managers of small and medium size state enterprises and therefore contained many former members of the Communist Party. The EM also founded in 1991 dates back to a 1989 grouping that was closely allied with the rural wing of the Communist Party. The EPPL represented the pensioners and invalids of Estonia. The Coalition Party, EM, and EPPL contested the 1992 elections under the Safe Home rubric (Siaroff 2000: 236; Bennich and Bjorkman 2007: 341-344).

Estonia's post-independence government that introduced neo-liberal free market reforms have consistently and proudly refused to support the agrarian sector with subsidies arguing that this would be inconsistent with their avowed policy of maximizing competition and minimizing state interference in the economy (Pickles and Smith. et. al. 1998: 293). Those who have been benefited most from the economic changes since 1991 have tended to be people living in urban areas and working in the service sector particularly in the capital region of Tallin. It is here that support for the reform Party has been highest. Class divisions have emerged rapidly in urban communities than in the rural areas (Pickles and Smith. et. al. 1998: 296). The growing divide between urban and rural is due to the political, economic and social process.

Legitimacy (Social Rootedness) of Political Parties in Society

The political parties which are strongly rooted into society are often considered to be essential in party system analysis. Voter turnout, electoral volatility and party membership which are already discussed elsewhere in this chapter are very informative indicators. Changing patterns of confidence in institutions in Estonia from 1990 to 1996 accompany the restoration of the national state and the

development of civil society. One such pattern has been not only the creation and development of new institutions but also their acceptance on the part of the citizens. In 1990, when Estonia was still a de jure part of the Soviet Union trust in institutions was polarized largely between the two ethnic communities with regard to the Estonian governmental and soviet institutions. In 1992, when Estonia had become independent levels of trust in institutions that played an important role in achieving Estonian Independence had decreased while trust in institutions that were not involved in politics such as Church remained stable. Trust in politicized institutions like political parties and parliament was also low in 1996 (Timma and Rammer 2006: 304). The ties between parties and citizens can be assessed as moderate.

Apart from the internal factors, an external factor, i.e., the integration process of Estonia to attain membership in the European Union also helped bringing stability in the party system. Implementing the EU conditionalities at the national was a necessary eligibility condition for EU membership. Therefore, Estonian political elites tried to make the developments in Estonia compatible to standards accepted by the EU.

Degree of Party System Institutionalization in Estonian

The level of institutionalization is a critical dimension for understanding party systems. In this political parties in a party system may score high or low. On the other hand aspect like party systems' characteristics determined by non-institutional factors, primarily by the number, types, and strength of societal cleavages, with institutional structures play either an insignificant or inconsistent role (Hassan 2013: 668).

In the Estonian context the level or degree of party system institutionalization can be assessed in terms of the degree of fragmentation, polarization, citizen party ties, strength of organizational structure, government stability, etc. Since 1990s a handful of stable and relatively large parties were began to emerge in Estonia. These include

Popular Front (1988) later became Centre Party (1991); the market liberal Reform Party (1994), the national-conservative Pro Patria Union (1995); the rural People's Union (1989); and the Social Democrats (1990), later came to be known as the Moderates (Tamm 2013: 5).

During the seventh parliamentary election of 20 September 1992, 67.8% of voters took part in the elections. 6.2 persons stood as candidates for one seat in the Riigikogu. 19 political parties had been registered for the elections in 1992; 9 parties and election coalitions stood under their own name. A total of 17 lists of parties and election coalitions were submitted. There were 25 independent candidates. Between September 1992 and March 1995, Estonia was governed by a right-of-centre coalition that supported two different Prime ministers (National Electoral Committee 2012: 26).

In the eighth parliamentary elections of 5 March 1995, 68.9% of voters participated in the voting. 12.4 persons stood as candidates for one seat in the *Riigikogu*. In 1995, 30 political parties had been registered. 16 political parties and election coalitions of political parties, and 12 independent candidates participated in the elections. In the ninth parliamentary elections of 7 March 1999, 57.4% of voters participated in the voting. 18.7 persons stood as candidates for one seat in the *Riigikogu*. There were 18 registered political parties in 1999, and 12 of them participated in the elections. There were 19 independent candidates. (Toomla 2005: 147; National Electoral Committee 2012: 27-29). All these aspects denote the party representation and effectiveness in a party competition scenario of Estonia. Party system is highly fragmented but showing a trend towards stability.

In Estonia the party system has undergone some consolidation since independence. From 1991 to 2001 the number of registered political parties witnessed a declining trend due to new electoral reforms. During this time parties have developed greater organizational capacity and are each associated with broadly defined ideological

positions. The Reform party, Pro Patria and Res publica occupied the centre-right pro market, limited government position. While the Centre party, the Social Democratic party and the People's Union party are considered to be more concerned with social justice (Richard 2012: 207). Parties acquiring greater organization capacity are compatible with the indicators of moderate institutionalization.

Ideological differences in Estonia have emerged due to socio-economic dimensions and cultural ethnic dimensions. Based on the socio-economic dimensions parties were classified into Leftist, centre-left, centre right and rightist parties. The distinction between the right and the left side is based on the attitude of parties towards a market economy. Those on the right or centre-right have the programme ideal of a market economy society. The left wing consists of parties with the main goal to resist the negative influences of the market economy on the Estonian society (Toomla 2005: 140). The difference between the rightist and centre-right parties is that the Reform party supports the model of a liberal market economy while the centre-right parties advocate a social market economy. The United People's party is located on the centre-left based on their own self-identification. Among the centre-right parties, the Centre party lies on the left wing of the group and Pro patria on the right wing. This order is based on the tax policy views of the parties. The Centre party strongly supports the establishment of a graduated tax, the Popular Union and the Moderates have expressed this view more mildly and the Coalition party and Pro Patria Union was convinced supporters of proportional taxation (Toomla: 142).

Due to the diverse economic structure the range of socio-economically defined constituencies with in Estonian society is wide, forcing political parties to define themselves in very broad terms. Thus the Reform party casts itself as the liberal, market friendly party, while the Centre party is characterized as the party of social justice. Only the agrarian People's Union party openly represents a single narrowly defined constituency. Since 1990 the dispersed structure of the economy and the

fluidity of socio-economically defined constituencies resulted in a party system that is characterized by relatively low barriers to entry and high levels of inter-party competition. Because of the fluid socio-economic situation in countries engaged in deep economic transformation, stable party system often takes time to crystallize (Richard 2012: 207). Stability began to appear in Estonian party system.

Cultural-ethnic dimensions are another parameter in which political parties take different stands. The three parties United People's Party, Russian Unity Party and Russian Party in Estonia have set representing the interests of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia as one of their goals. A large portion of the shift has been forced upon voters by the reconstitution of the supply of political parties contesting a given election, creating floating parties than in turn force floating voters. The disappearance of parties between elections and the emergence of new political offerings to the electorate account for the shift in voting patterns to a greater extent than volatility among the parties that continue to compete from election to election. This has indeed resulted in the shaping of party system in Estonia (Munro, et. al. 2001: 427).

To sum up Estonian parties are showing strong fragmentation, less ideological polarization, and elements of stability. In Estonia the number of effective parliamentary and electoral parties was higher. Hence the level of institutionalization is moderate. Party systems do not hamper broader democratic development. It is facilitating consolidation of democracy in Estonia.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In 1991 Estonia regained its independence from former Soviet Union. After independence, Estonia began its democratic transition from authoritarianism to democratization by incorporating the values and principles of western liberal democracy. Institutional structures such as constitution, president, parliament, party system, competitive election and organized legal system which are necessary for democracy were established in Estonia. It adopted its present constitution on 28 June 1992; with this unicameral legislature *Riigikogu* representing a parliamentary form of government was introduced. Political representatives have been elected through the democratic electoral process. Elections have been conducted for *Riigikogu*, president, European parliament and local councils. During 1991-2001, Estonia had six parliamentary elections to the *Riigikogu*, elections. Estonian constitution permitted the citizens freedom of association and of assembly. Freedom of expression of the press and media are also guaranteed by the constitution.

In Estonia political parties and multi-party system has been very essential feature for consolidating democratic system. Political parties are playing a very important role in Estonia as in all representative democracies. The emergence of political parties and multi-party system in Estonia has the historical relevance from 1919. In 1919 Estonia gained independence from the Bolsheviks for a short period. After independence it engaged in developing a democratic structure in the political set up. Ideological differences led to the formation of numerous political parties. Estonian Social democrats (ESD), Estonian Social Revolutionaries (ESR), labor Party, Democrats, Radical Democrats, Agrarian League, German and Swedish Minorities and non-party Representatives etc. were the main political forces during the inter-war period. These parties participated and dominated in the electoral process. The transformation towards a multi-party system initially started during the inter-war

period. The existing political parties failed to form a democratic state. As a result Estonia turned in to an authoritarian state. Estonia was incorporated into Soviet Union based on non- aggression pact (Molotov- Ribbentrop pact) on 23 August 1939 signed between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union during the II World War.

During the Soviet occupation the democratic institutions of Estonia was collapsed. Political parties were abolished. Multi- party system turned into a single dominant party system under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Political movements and cultural organizations were banned. Under the leadership of Stalin several Estonian political leaders were arrested, exiled and killed. Elections were held under strict Soviet control. Only Communist Party of the Soviet Union was allowed to contest elections in the country and no other party was promoted. The dominance of the Communist Party conditioned the absence of democracy by restricting the growth of political parties and multi-party system in Estonia. As a consequence of Sovietization the Estonian people lost their civil, political, economic and social rights. However the liberal reforms initiated by Gorbachev extended political opportunity for re-establishing independence, the development of democracy and party system in Estonia.

Democratic transition in Estonia can be traced back to Gorbachev's liberal reforms of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Gorbachev's reform and democratic transition developed national awakening in Estonia by mobilizing people to work together for independence. Several political movements and organizations were established in Estonia. In 1988 Estonian independence movement was carried by Nationalistic Popular Front of Estonia and the liberal wing of the Communist Party of Estonia which consisted intellectuals, leaders and students. It initiated mass rallies and demonstration and mobilized thousands of citizens against the Soviet regime.

The singing revolution of the 1980s formed by the Estonian intellectuals, writers and students had a great influence in the formation of democratic system in Estonia. It

was a peaceful movement and people used it as a platform to express their feelings through songs. Estonian citizens criticized Soviet political, economic and cultural domination through cultural performances. They sang patriotic songs that were forbidden by the Soviet Union. Singing was extremely successful in mobilizing people throughout the country for the establishment of independence. During this period Popular Front acted as an umbrella organization which later on transformed into various political parties. .

Initially the origin of party system started with the anti-communist groups. In the early 1990s there were several organizations and movements against the Soviet regime. These organizations participated in mass protests and rallies against the communist regime. But most of the organizations failed to turn as strong political parties. Ideological differences within the organization led to the fragmentation of this organization.

In mid-1990 the Estonian political spectrum was considerably filled out with most noteworthy parties like Estonian National Independence Party, Estonian Conservative People's Party, the Estonian Christian Democratic Party, the Estonian Christian Union, the Estonian Entrepreneurial Party and the *Res publica* Association, Estonian Liberal Democratic Party, the Estonian Democratic Party and the Estonian Rural-Center Party, Estonian Green Party, Estonian Social Democratic Independence Party, the Estonian Democratic Labour Party and the Russian Social Democratic Party (in Estonia). The path towards democratization of Estonia witnessed not only the emergence of a significant number of parties and groupings but also the development of increasingly freer elections and more sophisticated voters. The major beneficiaries of this greater openness were Estonians themselves.

After regaining independence Estonia had experienced transition to democracy and market economy. Systematic transition and political independence of Estonia (1990-1991) provided the opportunity for its citizens to establish political parties and party

system. The transition process in Estonia has led to the formation of multi-party system. The development of the party system has been based on political culture, democratic values and legal background. The Constitution of Estonia promulgated in 1992 has introduced the legal framework for the functioning of political parties. The regulation of political parties in Estonia begins with Article 48 of the Constitution, where it is stated that "Everybody has the right to assemble into non-profit associations and unions." In accordance to Article 48 (1) of the Constitution, the rights to belong to a political party and to establish political parties are constitutional right restricted to Estonian citizens and EU citizens. In Estonia political parties are also governed by the Political Parties Act of 1994 and the Non-profit Associations Act of 1996. During this path a special emphasis was laid on the legal ramifications of party formations, party membership, organization and election of leaders, party structures for internal and external governance, and party staff and resources.

Political parties in Estonia have undergone a clear development from being just private NGOs than that of a state regulating public units. The major political parties like Estonian Christian Democratic Party (1988), Estonian National Independence Party (1989), Estonian Rural Center Party (1990), Estonian Green Party (1990), Estonian Republican Coalition Party (1990), The Estonian Social Democratic Party (1990), Estonian Entrepreneurs Party (1990), Estonian Liberal Democratic Party (1990), Estonian Communist Party (1991), Estonian Democratic Justice Union (1991), Pro Partia Union (1992), Estonian Social Democratic Labor Party (1992), Estonian Future Party (1993), Estonian Home (1994), Estonian United People's Party (1994), Party for Legal Justice (1994), Estonian Reform Party (1994), Estonian Blue Party (1994), Progressive Party (1996), Popular Front of Estonia (1998), Estonian Christian Democratic Union (1998) etc. have participated in the democratic consolidation of Estonia.

Independent Estonia has used a system of proportional representation in its electoral process. The Estonian electoral system comprised of elections to the parliament, the office of president, the councils of local government and the European parliament. From 1991 to 2001 time period three parliamentary (7th, 8th and 9th *Riigikogu*), three presidential and three local government council elections were held. The first post-soviet parliamentary elections were conducted on 1992. Pro Patria party had a dominant position by winning 29 seats and receiving 100,828 votes in the *Riigikogu*. Together with the strength of the ENIP and the Moderates it formed a government under the premiership of Mart Laar. In the 1995 elections the Coalition Part and Country Peoples party had a dominant position by winning 41 seats and receiving 174,248 votes in the *Riigikogu*. In the 1999 elections Centre Party had a dominant position by winning 28 seats and receiving 117,378 votes in the *Riigikogu*.

The 1999 *Riigikogu* elections saw a further modification of electoral law in the electoral coalitions (CP-CPU) was formally banned. This change was meant to encourage consolidation of the party system. Moderate Party dominated in Estonia's first post-soviet presidential elections held on 1992. Lennart Meri became the president. He again continued as president after winning 196 votes in the 1996 presidential election. In the 2001 presidential election Arnold Rüütel of Estonian People's Union won 186 votes and became president. These elections led to the emergence of political parties and practice of party system in Estonia. Many parties have contested elections since independence but the coalition government became the norm in Estonian politics. From 1992 to 2003 all the governments of Estonia were coalition's governments.

The aspect of institutionalization of party system in Estonia can be assessed in terms of development of the electoral system, reforming election rules, forming election codes, setting new laws and party rules that regulate electoral competition between and within parties, stability in party system, legitimacy and strength of organizational structure of parties. Transforming the electoral formula was one of the most

important rule alterations during democratic transition of Estonia. Estonia transformed in the direction of proportional representation and from proportional representation to single member districts. During the second wave of competitive voting, the founding elections put an end to the prevailing single member district pattern and Estonia moved from the single transferable vote to conventional proportional representation. It was at this point that all the politicians felt that they could begin developing the party system. An electoral act passed in the parliament in 1998 banned electoral coalitions and only single political parties could field candidates for parliament although non-affiliated, independent candidates were still allowed. During this time, a requirement that a party must have at least 1000 members had also taken effect. The Membership in Estonian political parties has grown steadily over the years because all parties were required to re-register pursuant to the minimum 1000 member requirement. This law came to be effective in the 1999 election for the *Riigikogu*. Due to this only officially registered parties contested in national elections alongside individual candidates.

Under new constitution the consolidation of democracy phase began in Estonia. The institutions such as legislature, executive and courts acquired structural stability. In this phase political parties were transformed into autonomous structures and the process of institutionalization was started. In Estonian context the factors which indicated the institutionalization of party system were: organizational structures of parties, electoral system, public funding of parties, and stability of parties, political cleavages, electoral volatility, party membership, party fragmentation and parties' penetration into society. Estonian party system appears to be relatively stable and fairly rooted in the society. They have shown slight signs of stabilization rather than being completely unstable. The factors like electoral volatility and programmatic competition depicted the Estonian party system moving towards consolidation.

From 1992-2001 Estonia had experienced both stability and instability in the party system. The most important privilege granted to Estonian parties was the exclusive

right to political representation and even political organization of citizens at the national level. Discrepancies between the individual parties are also clearly manifested in Estonia, where the Reform Party, IRL and the Centre Party have a quite extensive network of local party branches and centralized organizations, while the Social-Democratic Party and the Greens are much weaker in their organizational scope although their organizations are internally more democratic and decentralized.

Estonian political system experienced important cleavage structure like ethnic cleavages linked to communist and anti-communist cleavage, Socio-economic cleavage, urban-rural cleavage, clerical and anti-clerical, centre-periphery etc. among these the dominant were ethnic cleavage, communist and anti-communist cleavage. The post-communist Estonia had a striking discrepancy in the share of non-Estonians in the society. This discrepancy occurred due to denial of citizenship and disfranchisement of non-Estonians in early 1990s. Later the Russian parties in Estonia gained a tiny representation in the parliament. The Reform Party was the first to create Russian faction and elaborated the Programme on National Minorities. Communist Party of Soviet Union along with the Communist Party of Estonia tried to revive the political structures in Estonia. The Communist Party of Soviet Union was conservative, it was against the Estonian independence but the independent Communist Party of Estonia declared to favour the adoption of the new constitution and took part in the general elections of 1992.

Anti-communist elections campaigns were very weak before the 1995 general elections. Later special anti-communist campaigns were held by Estonian Centre Party. Those who were victims of Sovietization preferred to vote for the anti-communist and those who felt that they had a better life during the Soviet Union preferred voting for the communist. The urban-rural disparity is another source of salient political division in Estonia. In the beginning of the party system formation the urban-rural cleavage was almost nonexistent in Estonia. But it has gained importance in spite of the growing differences in the quality of life in the cities and

rural areas. The Estonian Coalition party (EK) was set up as a single party prior to the 1999 elections to unite most of the Coalition and Rural People's Union (KMU) alliance.

Electoral volatility in Estonia has been fluctuating from election to elections. This changing trend in the voting patterns mainly exhibited the public apathy towards the current political parties. The changing electoral volatility transformed the situation of both new as well as the old political parties. The older political parties continued with their principal electorates whereas the new parties tried to appeal certain masses who were completely disappointed with the current establishment. The Estonian voters have preferred to vote for more established parliamentary parties. The Estonian party system which was quite unstable in the 1990s became relatively stable in the region in 2000s.

However, the average electoral volatility has been much lower in Estonia. The constantly shifting coalitions among political mutations have led to considerable instability and fragmentation in Estonian politics. The voting volatility, cleavages among the political parties and ideological conflicts are the other reasons for instability in parties and party system of Estonia. Moreover few parties are facing legitimate crisis as people have lost trust in the parties. This indicates the failure of few political parties in inculcating democratic political cultures and values among the people. All this indicates that in Estonia parties began advancing with institutionalization and performing the function of intermediary between society and government during democratic transition.

This study intended to test the following hypothesis.

1. The legal and institutional regulations, electoral volatility, performance of political parties and linkage between voters and parties show that party system are moderately institutionalized in Estonia during 1990-2001.

2. Estonian party system is characterized by high level of fragmentation and it appears to be relatively stable and fairly rooted in the society as parties enjoy public trust.

All the hypotheses are tested positive. However, the institutionalization of party system in Estonia is found different. Though there are signs showing instability and fragmentation in the political landscape, it is not at the detriment of democratization. The fragmentation and instability factors are not showing compatibility with institutionalization. Estonian parties are moderately advanced in the process on institutionalization and are successfully performing the functions of the intermediary structures in consolidating democracy.



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(*indicates a primary source)

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