

Baltic American Diaspora Mobilization in the Formation of Baltic Sovereignty, 1918–1922

This paper examines Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian diaspora activism in the United States between 1918 and 1922 within the broader reconfiguration of global order following the collapse of the Russian and German empires. While U.S. recognition of the Baltic states ultimately depended on geopolitical developments—including regional stabilization, the progression of the Russian Civil War, and evolving American strategic calculations—Baltic American mobilization formed part of the transnational process through which Baltic sovereignty was articulated, translated, and embedded within American political discourse.

Drawing on archival materials, diaspora press, and monographs, the study analyzes how Baltic immigrant communities integrated into American civil society and political culture. Through coordinated petition drives, fundraising campaigns, lobbying efforts, and strategic appeals to Wilsonian self-determination, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian Americans reframed national independence claims in the language of American democratic modernity.

Rather than treating sovereignty as a unilateral Western export or diaspora activism as a decisive causal force, the paper conceptualizes Baltic American politics as a site of interaction between post-imperial Eastern European political traditions and U.S. internationalism. The Baltic case demonstrates how small-nation diasporas participated in shaping how claims to sovereignty were articulated within emerging norms of international recognition in the twentieth century.

By situating diaspora mobilization within debates on post-imperial state formation and transnational political exchange, this study highlights how peripheral actors contributed to the articulation of claims to Baltic sovereignty—even when ultimate decisions remained in the hands of great powers.