

DOES THE ECONOMIC SECURITY OF THE RUSSIAN SPEAKING MINORITY THREATEN THE LATVIAN NATIONAL SECURITY?

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34135/svpmvpIV.191017>

Abstract

The core of this paper is aiming at the economic security of the Russian minority in Latvia. The Russian minorities are representing the potentially vulnerable part in Baltics security because of the collapse of the USSR that led to the disputes between the Russian minority and “local” Baltics citizens. Thus, the economic conditions mean the crucial point for allaying the disputes and improving the security, therefore, the Russian minority in Latvia won't tend to be integrated back to Russia. With this mind, the inquiry of the economic conditions of the Russian minority should depict if the economic security of the Latvian Russians jeopardizes the national security of Latvia. The paper is anchored on the concept of national security and economic security. The research is comparing and evaluating progress. Thus, the utilization of the comparative and process-tracing methods should endorse to explicate how the Latvian- Russians are doing in comparison with Latvians and evaluate progress during the time. Despite that the conditions of the Russian minority are constantly improving, we should not underestimate them since they have not reached the level of Latvians yet.

Key words: Latvia, Russian Minority, Economic Security

Introduction

In the last years, we can see how the world is rapidly changing. Many occasions are shattering with world order and it could seem that the actors, states are becoming more aggressive than in the period after the Cold War's end. For instance, the Russian aggression against Ukraine shocked the international community. With this in mind, other small states, in the definition of economic power, military power or even the territorial size are worried. Especially the Baltic countries are living in dense atmosphere regarding what has happened and still ongoing in Ukraine. The high number of Russian speaking minority can be labeled as the thorn is somebody side. Let's mention the incident with the Bronze Soldier monument in 2007 in Tallinn. The removing this Red Army soldier statue had evoked big riots among the Russian society in Estonia against the officials (Cavegn, 2017).

If we zoom at Latvia, we can find there as the well high percentage of Russian speaking minority. The core of this paper will be the Russian speaking minority and the goal is to inquire two points. First, we will inquire how the minority is living in regard to economic security or eventually insecurity. Second, we will attempt to draft how the status of the Russian speaking minority is affecting the Latvian national security. Thus, the question sounds “Does the economic security of

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Russian speaking minority affect/threat the Latvian national security?" The topic seems to be relevant in the current security situation because the Russian speaking minority has played a critical role in Ukraine and Crimea and with changing warfare tools, it might play a critical aspect.

The paper based on economic security concept, where the scholars have found the consensus. Furthermore, the paper will describe the concept of national security, therefore, we could possibly analyze how economic security influence national security in this case study of Latvia. The related information for analysis we will receive from Latvian officials webpages, eventually, reports, newspapers and the utilization will be found as well for international sources. Thus, the paper is a qualitative analysis with a concrete case study of Latvia. Below this introduction finds its place the concepts. With these theoretical concepts, I will express even the background of the Russian speaking minority in Latvia, because it is significant to know the circumstances in my opinion. After the theoretical part, we will move to the analysis. Firstly, the scope of analysis is exposing the economic security of the Russian minority, and secondly, we are attempting to depict the grids and connections between the economic security, and, National security of the country. At the end of the paper, I will conclude the results. Literally, at the bottom of the paper are the place the sources, which have been used through the paper.

Conceptual framework and indicators

The conducted research based on two concepts. The same number of methods are utilized in the paper. Generally, the security studies do not have the clear consensus of the one concept. According to Baldwin (1997) the studies have become contested with contested concept. Nevertheless, this paper's backbone is emerging from the Copenhagen School scholars who divided the security in five analysis sectors: Military, Economic, Political, Environmental and Societal (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). With this in mind, they are bringing to the table analytical layers what basically means the layer on which is done the analysis. The current analysis is aiming at Subunits as it represents the unit of Russian Minority in the Unit layer what is Latvia.

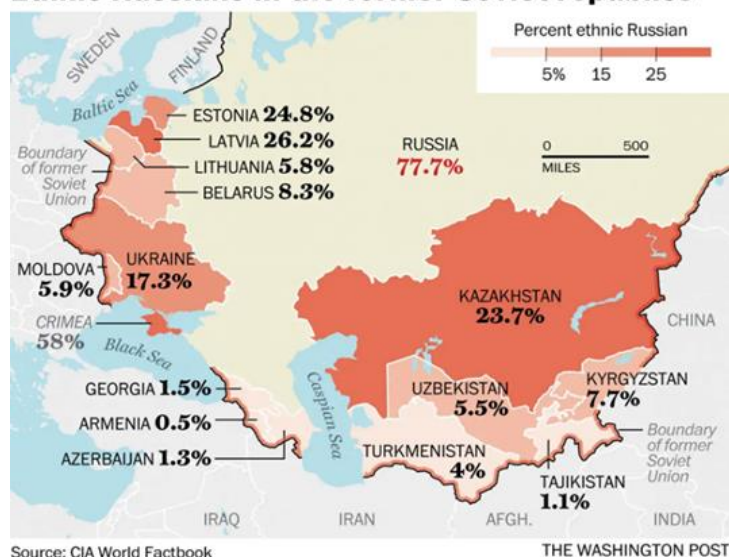
- I. International System
- II. International Subsystem
- III. Units
- IV. Subunits
- V. Individuals (Buzan - Waever - de Wilde, 1998).

Additionally, we should keep in mind two plateaus within the economic security, and thus, micro level, and, macro level. The macro-level "tends to focus on nation states and their engagements in the international system (Dent, 2010)". As a conclusion, we can see that the core of the paper is focused on micro-level, what contains according to Dent (2010) agents like individuals or local communities. Nevertheless, for the current concept, I use several criteria, which will create the nucleus for an examination of this paper. Thus, I will inquire about issues as unemployment, crime, and lastly, salaries. All those aspects will be inquired in relation to the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia. Additionally, I will outline the history process as it takes it to place in the position of Russian-speaking minority in Latvia or generally in all Baltic countries. Subsequently, the economic security issue regarding the Russian minority has to be linked with the national security, therefore, the clarification of the term national security is necessary. According to Katzenstein (1996), there is no clear consensus on what are the security issues, therefore, there are changing over time. Below, I am going to elaborate the perception of national security. Katzenstein (1996) is saying, that young scholars, who have not experienced the Cold war, tend more to the broaden agenda of security studies. However, he is adding as well: Security studies should not be narrowly restricted to states and questions of military security only. But neither should it be broadened so much that it comes to encompass all issues relating directly or indirectly

to the violence between individuals and collectives. Broader security studies can add to the traditional analysis of national security if the issues and actors that it studies have some demonstrable links to state and questions of military importance (Katzenstein, 1996).

He (1996) mentioned in his book *The Culture of National Security* that the traditional national security may be enriched by elements as issues or actors in case that there is a fair link to a state or military's queries. Thus, it is notably important to evaluate the issues, if they have a direct link to national security or not. Moreover, we should keep in mind that in every single case the variables may differ. If we examine the Latvian case there will be different variables than in for instance Haiti. Katzenstein (1996) has professed that economic issues are generally more clingy to national security, however, in Africa, it can be represented through the food security, somewhere else as Human Rights and mass migration. Thus, I see the relevance to examine the economic status of Russian-speaking minority in Latvia as it can affect the Latvian national security. We could spectate a similar scenario in Ukraine and Crimea, thus, we should not underestimate the role of this specific minority. Latvia has a big number of Russian speaking population inside its territory. Thus, we should examine, if the economic status and consecutively security of Russian minority is affecting or might affect the national security. The premise is that Russian speaking minority has played the crucial role in Crimea and generally in Ukraine in 2014, and, this minority represent, till nowadays, security issue for national security in Ukraine, because the Ukraine's statehood and sovereignty suffer a significant vibrations. Particularly the case of Crimea. Nevertheless, we can spectate another "Russian" metastasis in other countries with Russian speaking population as well. Those numbers, which are going to underline the relevance of research, are depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1: Ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics
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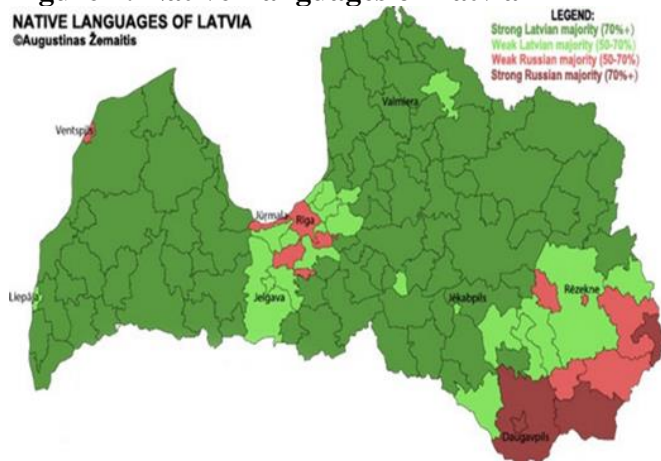


Economic security of russian speaking minority

Economic security represents an important factor in creating a suitable environment. Moreover, if the country is settled by different groups of people. Russians have been always representing a significant minority in Latvia. The number was fluctuating between 8% - 34% (Muižnieks, 2006). Despite these numbers, the Latvian officials were aiming and emphasized the relations with another group, as Germans or Jews, therefore, the Russian minority had been isolated in socio-economical development (Muižnieks, 2006). The region, which is mainly occupied by Russian

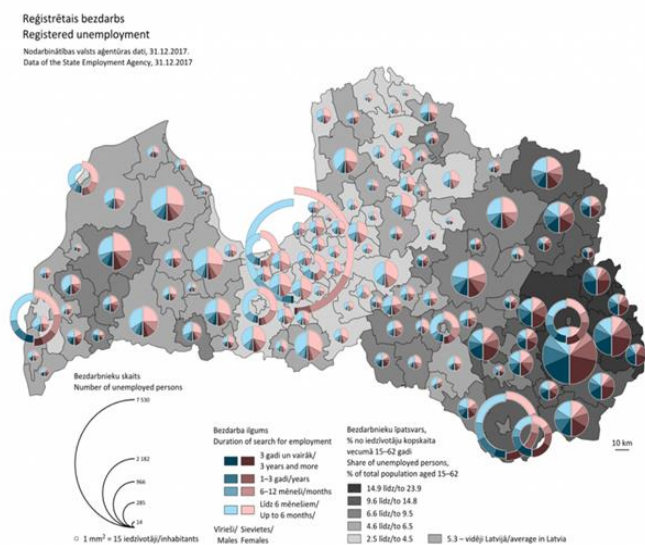
speaking minority, is called Latgale, with capital city Daugavpils. The Latvians counted less than 50% in the region. However, it may sound nonimportant, it does show an important factor. According to Auers (2015), the regions, which are located far away from capital cities, which lay in western parts, are more affected but poverty and crime. Moreover, these eastern regions are showing the high numbers of the unemployment rate. That stays in contrast to the Soviet Union times when there almost did not exist the unemployment (Auers, 2015). The annual report from 2018 is providing a great instance and overview as well about the unemployment rate in Latvia. It says that inherently affected part of Latvia is the eastern one, Latgale. The duration of the search for employment is mostly between 6 months and more than 3 years! Only Daugavpils represents the exception, however, the numbers are still high in comparison with another regions. Furthermore, the percentage's share of unemployed persons between the years 15-62 is oscillating between 10 and 24 (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2019). Nevertheless, the employment rate of Russians have increased since the 90s, thus, it may be labelled as the progress (Aasland, 2006).

Figure 2: Native Languages of Latvia



Source: Žemaitis, 2018

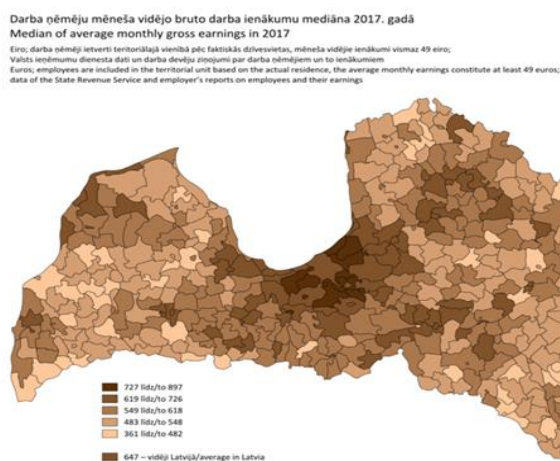
Figure 3: Unemployment in Latvia



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2019

Although we can clearly observe that the Russian minority is occupying Riga and Latgale, we should distinguish between these two locations. According to Aasland (2006), the Russians in Riga were facing different development after the Soviet Union's collapse. The foreign investors aimed at Riga as the most developed spot in Latvia. However, Latgale, due to its less development basement has been hit particularly hard by the change and mostly the Russians speakers, "simply due to their large share of the population the region" (Aasland, 2006). This caused the later troubles with the unemployment rate. The non-Latvians formed double of unemployment than Latvians due to their specialization on Russian technology and industry which suddenly became unneeded. However, nowadays these numerical gap fairly equates, but the differences in wages are still visible (Aasland, 2006). These points are evoking the wages question and the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2019) in its annual report for 2018 depicted that salaries hit the lowest level in Latgale in comparison with another counties. However, the gap does not illustrate such a huge differences.

Figure 4: Wages in Latvia



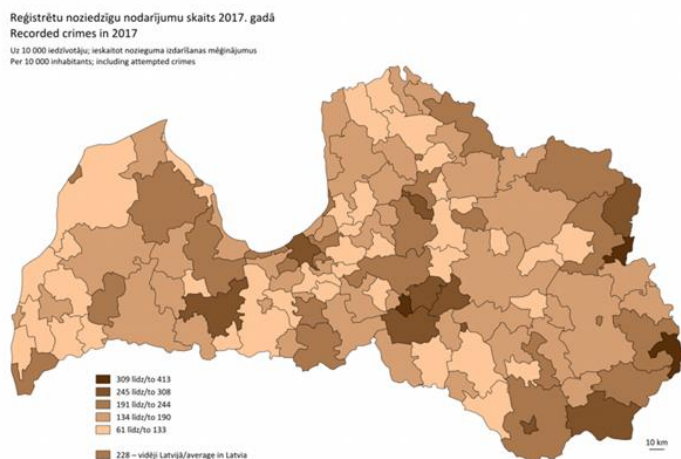
Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2019

Wages and unemployment rate are exposing another field to inquire. The poverty. Latvia accompanies two or three most poorest countries within the European Union (Auers, 2015). Moreover, the financial crisis hit Latvia inherent strongly. Additionally, Aasland (2006) sees several different approaches or solutions in solving financial problems in Latvia. First, he mentions the different approach to the social programmes which are offered by the government. "Fewer Russians and other ethnic groups had received the benefits they had applied for compared to ethnic Latvians" (Aasland, 2006). One possibility, why that happens, is that Russians concern less about the benefits and possibilities. On the other hand, it could be the results, that the Latvian officials provide special service the ethnic Latvians (Aasland, 2006).

The another chapter or point, which is connected with economic security are criminal activities. According to Auers (2015), the criminality overall has slightly increased after the Soviet Union's collapse. He adds, that the profile had changed a lot as the more violent crime was prevailing. However, by the time, when generally all Baltic countries has been steering to the west, the template of crime has been adjusted, but on the other hand, decreased as well (Auers, 2015). Auers' statements about crime underlined the annual reports, which are proving that the criminal activities are sinking in the last years. During the year 2005 the number there were recorded or convicted, 51 435 people, in total. In comparison, the year 2017 counted only 44 250 cases. The statistical report exposes the map with regard to the crime rate. The map provides useful information. On one hand, we can see that Latgale, where is the strongest Russian community allocated, is truly affected by the crime. The numbers fluctuating on the scale between 134 to 414

recorded or attempted crimes per 10 000 inhabitants². It could seem high, however, on the contrary, we can find another regions settled by Latvians where the numbers are on the scale between 345 and 414 recorded or attempted crimes per 10 000 inhabitants. Generally, the crime average number is 228 and it has been sinking last 5 years, therefore, Latgale engages the average position overall. Thus, the link between crime and Russian is not correct as this phenomenon is affecting even the Latvians regions. For instance, Ventspils, where the majority is represented by Russians, reached the Latvian average numbers related to crime (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2019).

Figure 5: Criminality in Latvia



Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2019

Conclusion

If we will evaluate the elaboration about the economic security of Russian speaking minority below, we can profess that the regions where the Russians are living are fairly more affected by troubles and they tend more to face economic “challenges” and obstacles. However, these issues are not yawing from Latvians standards. Generally, Latvia is facing economic challenges. The crime in Russian speaking areas does not show higher tendencies than in non- Russian speaking areas. Furthermore, the unemployment rate and wages have been improved and narrowed, thus, we can observe the positive path. Moreover, it was more probably just the result of the Soviet Union’s collapse, that Latgale has been more affected due to its industry and that investors were aiming at Riga. Although, in the 90s the economic security and the vision’s break down may cause the problems and evokes security issues, Latvia overcame this period of time and did particular effort to narrow the conditions.

Thus, we may claim that the economic security of Russian speaking minority does not represent the threat to the national security of Latvia. However, there are still empty spots, which should be improved, therefore, the issue is located is the “grey zone” between security problem and already secured problem. Moreover, security issues are living in symbiosis. They stay next to each other and they are interconnected, therefore, the links may indicate another threat which can be possibly the bigger threat to national security. Auers (2015) connects the economic troubles with health issues, education. Additionally, we can see education as a critical milestone for civic society, which demonstrates another topic related to the Russian speaking minority. Generally, we should not underestimate its importance in cohesion with another issue. Thus, it opens another door for examination, because this was not the main goal of this paper, however, the scholars are

² It depends on the exact district, however, generally Latgale is fluctuating on these numbers

mentioning this challenges and connect them together, thus, it seems fair to mention it, however, without a clear statement about their condition. Lastly, I dare to cite Zepa and Šupule (2006). "In other words, conflicts over ethnic policy are largely political and social constructs created by the political elite and the mass media. The agenda of respondents is more of course on issues such as the socio-economic stratification of society..."

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