

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MILITARIZATION PROCESS IN THE STATE BORDER GUARD

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Abstract. *This article is dedicated to the study of the management of militarization processes in the State Border Guard of the Republic of Latvia. The aim of the article is to investigate the significance of the militarization process and its management within the State Border Guard. To achieve this aim, the authors have set the following tasks: to explore the definition of the militarization process and the rationale for its implementation in the State Border Guard; to examine the management of the militarization process in the State Border Guard from the perspectives of provision, training, and cooperation. To accomplish these tasks, the following research methods were employed: monographic research method, analytical and semantic research methods, a personnel survey, and interviews with senior officials. The work consists of two chapters, where the first chapter provides an insight into the definition and justification of the militarization process, and the second chapter analyzes the aspects of managing this process in the State Border Guard.*

Keywords: *border guard, geopolitics, management, militarization, security.*

Introduction

Throughout its development, humanity has developed and utilized its military potential countless times. Stephen Peter Rosen acknowledges that the history of human evolution has influenced our modes of information perception and decision-making in such a way that human choices in a given situation can extend far beyond predictable and rational behavior standards (Rosen, 2009). Such irrational decision-making has often led to wars between nations and even alliances of states. To deter aggressive state leaders, even those nations inclined towards peace must develop their military potential, or take steps toward militarization in their armed forces, law enforcement agencies, and civil society.

This study addresses the exploration of the militarization process globally and in Latvia, focusing on its justification, definition, and legal regulation. The authors analyze the militarization processes occurring within the State Border Guard from the perspectives of provision, training, and cooperation, as well as providing insights into the monitoring and control of this process.



The objective of the study is to examine the management of the militarization process within the State Border Guard. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set: to investigate the definition and justification of the militarization process and to examine the aspects of managing this process within the State Border Guard. The following research methods were employed to accomplish these tasks: the monographic research method was utilized to explore the insights of experts in the field on the subject matter. To conduct the study on the justification of militarization processes in Latvia, the author employed analytical and semantic research methods.

For the study of the management and implementation of the militarization process within the State Border Guard, the author used a survey of State Border Guard personnel and interviews with senior officials. Additionally, to draw conclusions and propose recommendations, the author applied the logical-constructive research method. The study covers the period from 2012 to 2024.

1. Definition and substantiation of the militarization process

When conducting research on any process, including militarization, it is crucial to define its significance, or in other words, to establish the concept of militarization. The authors of this article believe that by defining militarization, the reader will find it easier to understand the essence of the study going forward.

The comprehensive explanatory and synonym online dictionary “Tezaurs,” developed by the University of Latvia, provides two definitions of the militarization process:

1. The subordination of a state’s economy, politics, and public life to the objectives of war, the establishment of a war economy during peacetime; the introduction of military organizational forms and methods, for example, in certain economic sectors.
2. The construction of military facilities, the deployment of armaments and troops in a given territory (tezaurs.lv, 2024)

Analyzing the first of the aforementioned definitions, it is evident that the militarization process pertains to wartime or the adaptation of peacetime conditions to warfare. The second definition relates to the construction of military infrastructure and the provision of armaments to existing or newly established military units. Clearly, it cannot be stated that Latvia’s economy, politics, or society is currently fully subjected to militarization processes; moreover, during peacetime, such a trend would likely be viewed negatively by the country’s population. However, it should be noted that following elements of militarization are observable in our country.

Firstly, the deployment of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battle group that began its operations on Latvian territory in 2017, and its numerical composition has gradually increased—currently reaching 1,900 soldiers, with the strengthening process expected to continue until 2026 (Defence Ministry of Latvia, 2023). Secondly, an element of economic militarization can be seen in the commencement of armoured vehicle assembly in Latvia. In 2022, a “Patria” armoured vehicle assembly plant was launched in Cēsis, where armoured personnel carriers for the Latvian National Armed Forces are assembled using parts from Finland (National Armed forces of Latvia, 2021). Thirdly, the initiation of the construction of defensive positions in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, near the border with the Russian Federation. This concerns the establishment of the so-called Baltic Defence Line, which will include fortified defensive positions and various types of anti-mobility engineering obstacles along the borders with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, thereby deterring and blocking any threats of military aggression from neighbouring countries (National Armed forces of Latvia, 2024).

To more objectively evaluate the definition of the militarization process, the authors of this work propose considering the concepts offered by the Cambridge Online Dictionary:

1. The process of introducing military forces into a specific area.
2. The process by which police forces are transformed into those resembling military forces, for example, by arming them with military weapons (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

As evident from the first definition, the Cambridge Online Dictionary explains the militarization process in a manner similar to the previously analysed definition provided by the University of Latvia. Within the framework of this article, it is crucial to consider the second definition offered by the Cambridge Online Dictionary. Although the State Border Guard, which is the focus of this study, is an armed institution, its functions and tasks are more characteristic of policing (State border guard law, 2020). Thus, the introduction of military armaments and individual equipment, as well as military-style training within the State Border Guard, undoubtedly aligns with the definition of the militarization process (State border guard, 2019).

It should be noted that such a militarization process within a law enforcement agency is not unique to Latvia. An example of this can be found in Peter B. Kraska's article, "Militarization and Policing – Its Relevance to 21st Century Police." In this article, the author analyses the arming of police formations according to military standards. The author estimates that in the 21st century, there is a growing trend where the distinction between law

enforcement agencies and armed forces is becoming increasingly blurred (Kraska, 2007).

Overall, it is evident that the definitions of militarization analysed from these two different sources correspond to certain processes in Latvia: our country is strengthening its armed forces, developing military infrastructure and production, hosting allied military forces, and aligning existing security agencies with military standards.

In addition to defining militarization, it is essential to assess the justification of ongoing militarization processes in Latvia. In general, the justification for militarization can be explained either by the desire of some states to gain advantage through the initiation of military conflict or by the desire of other states to defend themselves. Regarding the justification of the militarization process in our country as a whole, and specifically within the State Border Guard, it is imperative to examine the current international situation that triggered the initiation of this process not only within the Border Guard or in our society but also in several European Union member states. The authors of this work unequivocally refer to the events in Ukraine.

In the context of this study, it is important to begin examining the conflict in Ukraine starting from 2013, when the then-President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, and his government postponed the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union. Daina Bleiere, in her research, lists the following chain of events triggered by this political decision: mass protests in Maidan Square in Kyiv, the resignation of the Ukrainian government, Viktor Yanukovich's flight to Russia, the covert deployment of Russian military formations in the Crimean Peninsula and the subsequent annexation of the peninsula into the Russian Federation, the commencement of hostilities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, the proclamation of so-called "Novorossiia," the downing of the Malaysian passenger plane, the signing of the so-called Minsk agreements to cease active hostilities, and finally, the launch of a full-scale armed invasion by the Russian Federation into Ukraine on February 24, 2022 (Bleiere, 2018).

With the onset of full-scale hostilities, within a month (by March 30, 2022), more than four million Ukrainian civilians had fled their homes, and at least 3,167 people were affected, including 1,232 fatalities (Awuah, 2022). Meanwhile, the United Nations estimates that within a year and a half (as of September 24, 2023), there were 27,449 casualties in this conflict: 9,701 killed and 17,748 wounded (United nations, 2023). In light of the above, it is clear that Ukraine's militarization and its ability to defend against aggression have a significant impact on the security of its society and the protection of its citizens' lives.

When assessing the security situation in Latvia, it is necessary to analyse the National Defence Concept of the Republic of Latvia, a document approved

by the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) that outlines the strategic principles, priorities, and measures for ensuring the country's military defence (National security law, 2019). The authors of this article examine the National Defence Concepts adopted in 2020 and 2023. These documents specifically indicate that the current security situation in Latvia has significantly deteriorated and requires certain steps from society to ensure national defence.

In the National Defence Concept adopted in 2020, the security situation is analysed on both global and regional levels. Global threats are identified as factors such as the fragmentation of the global system, tendencies towards conflict resolution through force, terrorism, climate change, and pandemics. Within the scope of this study, it is particularly relevant to examine the threats posed by the use of military force and terrorism. In this context, the National Defence Concept pays special attention to the role of private military and security companies in contemporary armed conflicts, emphasizing how states pursue political objectives through military means while denying their involvement (National defence concept, 2020). It is crucial to underline that Latvia remains at risk of becoming a victim of such military force exerted by major powers.

Based on the regional security trends outlined in the concept, the Russian Federation perceives itself as encircled by enemies, implying that Latvia, sharing a direct land border, could be regarded as a direct adversary of Russia. This assumption is corroborated by the conclusion included in the National Defence Concept: "Russian state-controlled media deliberately cultivate a negative—Russophobic and Nazi-like—image of Latvia. As a result, public opinion polls indicate that for an extended period, Latvia has been perceived as one of the main enemies of Russia by the Russian public." (National defence concept, 2020). The 2020 National Defence Concept continues to justifiably consider the Russian Federation as the source of threats in the region.

The interaction between Russian state media and military forces in achieving unified political objectives is further confirmed by Sandor Fabian in his article "The Russian Hybrid Warfare Strategy—Neither Russian Nor Strategy" published in the journal *Defence & Security Analysis*. By analysing Russia's actions in Ukraine, it becomes evident that the country employs cyberspace and mass media to support conventional methods of pursuing political ambitions (Fabian, 2019).

Additionally, the use of private military formations, such as the "Wagner Group," in foreign operations also indicates Russia's tendency to pursue its ambitions through military force. As noted by Kimberly Marten in her article "Russia's Use of Semi-State Security Forces: The Case of the Wagner Group" published in the journal *Post-Soviet Affairs*, the Russian Federation has

employed private military companies to achieve its goals in countries such as Nigeria, Ukraine (Crimea and eastern regions), Syria, Sudan, the Central African Republic, and others (Marten, 2019). As this example demonstrates, the use of mercenaries knows no borders—their involvement does not establish a direct connection with the hiring state, allowing it to pursue its objectives through military force. This conclusion significantly impacts Latvia's security situation, as the involvement of private military formations could become a simple tool in Russia's National Security Strategy, thereby achieving its foreign policy objectives and solidifying its "great power" status. This assumption by the author is supported by Elena Pokalova's article "The Wagner Group in Africa: Russia's Quasi-State Agent of Influence" published in the journal *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, which directly indicates the use of Wagner Group mercenaries by the Russian government in military operations in Africa to strengthen its position in the political struggle against Western countries (Pokalova, 2023).

Examining the security situation and the changing dynamics of threats in Latvia, the authors of this study also analyse the National Defence Concept adopted on October 5, 2023. In this document, the threats posed by the Russian Federation are explicitly identified. The threats posed by Russia, as outlined in the National Defence Concept, include the influence of propaganda, violations of international treaties, nuclear threats, the transformation of Belarus into a Russian satellite state, and the evolution of Russia's ruling regime into a totalitarian state (National defence concept, 2023).

Regarding the threat of spreading propaganda, the author urges attention to the aspects of information, particularly in the context of the Gerasimov Doctrine (document developed by Russian general Valery Gerasimov, considering inclusion of non-military means and hybrid warfare). In the realm of information warfare, propaganda indeed plays a crucial role. As Robert Mencis describes in his article "The Fragile Power of Empire: The War in Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective" in the journal *Akadēmiskā Dzīve*, Russia frequently employs propaganda to justify its imperial ambitions and position itself as a defender rather than a colonizer. Mencis highlights a striking example: when occupied Ukrainian territories were annexed into the Russian Federation, this action was portrayed as a defence against the Western "neocolonial" system, thereby casting Russia as the nation that "rescued" Ukrainian territories from the negative influence of Western countries (Mencis, 2023). Thus, in the collective consciousness, propaganda shapes the image of Russia as the embodiment of a just state, while the war in Ukraine is declared necessary and vital for the protection of good. This type of rhetoric is also applied to Latvia, denigrating the independence of our country. Therefore, the authors of the study believe that

the threat from Russian propaganda, as included in the National Defence Concept, is fully justified and well-argued.

One of the most prominent examples of Russia's disregard for international treaties is the circumvention of the Budapest Memorandum for its interests. The Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons, or the Budapest Memorandum, is a document signed by Ukraine, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, agreeing to provide security assurances to Ukraine in exchange for its commitment to relinquish its nuclear weapons. Among other points, the Memorandum obliges signatory states to respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and borders. The violation of such an international document can have far-reaching negative consequences, affecting not only the respect for Ukraine's borders but also the threat to nuclear non-proliferation. In his article "The Budapest Memorandum and Russia's Intervention in Ukraine," David S. Yost argues that Russia's actions in breaching the Budapest Memorandum threaten the future of nuclear non-proliferation policy globally since the very essence of the Memorandum was aimed at ensuring that Ukraine would relinquish its nuclear weapons at the time. Still, the failure to comply with these requirements sets a precedent and a negative example that security guarantees may not work, and renouncing nuclear weapons could be meaningless (Yost, 2015).

The threats to the Republic of Latvia are not only manifested as the risk of direct military invasion but also through the implementation of hybrid attacks against our country. It is crucial to mention information warfare, which includes propaganda directed against the state of Latvia, as well as the organization of illegal migration flows on the Latvia-Belarus border.

2. The aspects of militarization management in State border guard

Despite the militarized structure of the State Border Guard, its armed status, and its responsibilities in ensuring Latvia's military defence, contemporary trends indicate a gradual intensification of its military character. This study chapter focuses on the manifestations of this process, analysing its practical aspects and providing recommendations for improvement and more effective application.

Within the framework of the study, the authors conducted a survey among the personnel and management of all five border surveillance units under the Daugavpils territorial board of the State Border Guard, allowing respondents to express their views on the militarization process within the

institution. By determining the level of support for militarization among the personnel, the authors believe it is possible to gauge the overall loyalty of border guards to the state, which is undoubtedly a crucial factor in the current political context.

In response to the study's question, "Do you believe that the international security situation necessitates the development of the military sphere in Latvia?", 65.9% of the surveyed personnel from the Daugavpils border surveillance units agree that the international security situation indeed requires the development of the military sphere in Latvia, 25% disagree, and 9.1% have no opinion on the matter. Among the management representatives, 83% agree with the statement, while 16.7% disagree. Research results are depicted in Figure 1.

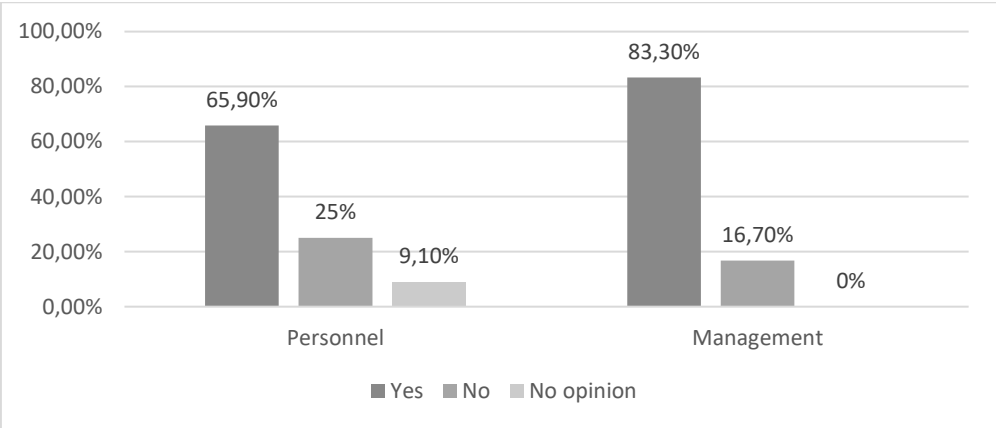


Fig.1 Respondents’ answers on the question “Do you believe that the international security situation necessitates the development of the military sphere in Latvia?” (Created by the authors)

Based on these opinions, the authors conclude that the majority of respondents perceive the security situation in our country realistically. The analysis conducted in the first chapter of this study supports the notion that the international security situation does indeed pose challenges, and the development of the military sphere in Latvia is a necessary step. Less than half of the surveyed personnel do not perceive threats to the overall global security situation or have not formed an opinion on the matter. The authors suggest that such opinions reflect a low level of awareness among the personnel, which, according to the authors, could result in a low motivation to maintain consistent military preparedness—one of the border guards' functions. Therefore, direct supervisors should enhance personnel awareness of political and security issues to address the current situation and improve the media literacy of their subordinates.

Continuing the investigation into broader issues related to militarization, the authors posed the question to respondents: "What is the level of support for the militarization process within the State Border Guard?" According to the survey results, 29.5% of border guard personnel fully support the militarization of the State Border Guard, 22.7% are somewhat supportive, 13.6% have no opinion, 29.5% are somewhat opposed, and the remaining 4.5% completely oppose the institution's militarization. Comparatively, among the surveyed management representatives, 16.7% fully support the militarization, 66.7% are somewhat supportive, and 16.7% are somewhat opposed. Results are depicted in the Figure 2.

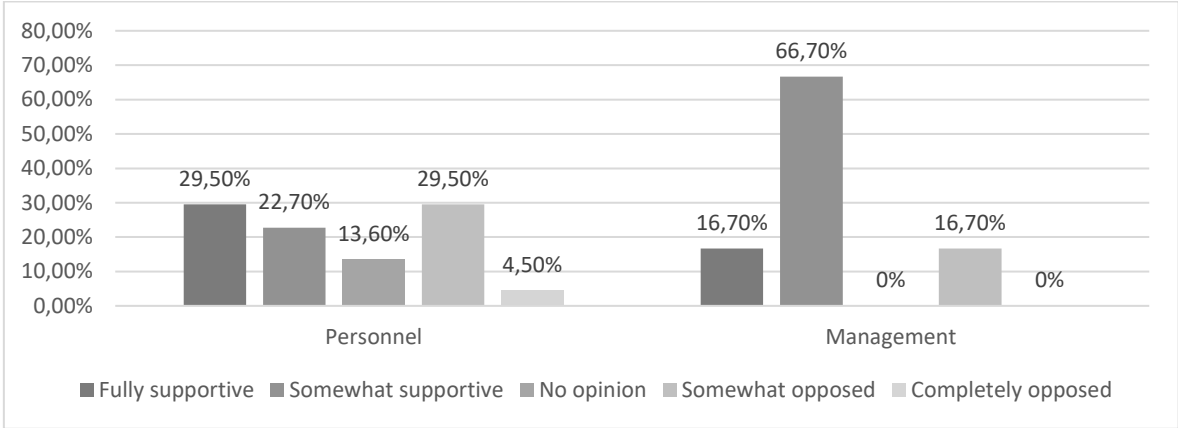


Fig.2 Respondents’ answers on the question “What is the level of support for the militarization process within the State Border Guard?”
 (Created by the authors)

The responses indicate that the majority of personnel, to varying degrees, express support for the ongoing militarization processes within the State Border Guard. A clear correlation can be observed with the responses analysed in the previous question: those who perceive a deterioration in the security situation and the necessity of militarization processes in the country also recognize the need for such processes within the State Border Guard. Unfortunately, nearly half of the surveyed personnel either have not formed a personal opinion on the issue or do not support the militarization process within the institution. In contrast, support among management representatives is notably higher, with only 16.7% somewhat opposing militarization.

The authors suggest that a low level of support for militarization could be an obstacle to strengthening the institution in the context of the current security situation. This viewpoint may be explained by the fact that border guards typically perform duties that do not involve the use of the

aforementioned military equipment, such as patrolling the state border, preventing illegal migration, and controlling compliance with regulations, which require different types of specialized tools and equipment. However, the authors emphasize the importance of returning to the topic addressed in the first survey question: the overall security situation in the world and Latvia, which has recently deteriorated. The reality and the necessity to fulfil the National Defence Concept demand an increase in the military capacity of the border guard. Yet, the perception that this hinders the performance of direct duties once again highlights a low level of awareness among personnel.

To approve current conclusions and to confirm the suggestions, the authors made an interview with the Director of State Border Guard College – colonel Mariks Petrusins. In colonel's opinion the militarization process in the State Border Guard is being performed due to the changes in geopolitical situation thus presenting more threats to the institution and its personnel. In M.Petrusin's opinion, the militarization process is an effective answer to the modern security threats and provide effective deterrence capabilities to possible aggression. Summarising the results of an interview, the authors conclude, that awareness and knowledge of the current situation are key aspects of understanding of ongoing processes in State Border Guard.

Conclusions and suggestions

In conducting the research presented in this article, the authors have thoroughly investigated the militarization process, its significance in the context of contemporary geopolitical conditions, and its manifestation in Latvia, specifically analysing the militarization of the State Border Guard. This analysis includes perspectives from both personnel and senior officials. Upon completing the aforementioned study, the authors have drawn the following conclusions:

1. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, and the ensuing warfare, demonstrated that the threat of military conflict in modern Europe is indeed possible. The nature of this war underscores that defence against potential aggression is vitally important, not only from a legal standpoint but also for the protection of civilians, as warfare can extend into populated areas.
2. The analysis of the definition of militarization revealed that this process involves both the strengthening of armed forces and the reorganization of law enforcement agencies according to a military model, the construction of military infrastructure, and the deployment of new military units in specific territories. Militarization processes are employed both to defend a nation's territory and to prepare for

aggression. The authors conclude that militarization can have both positive and negative connotations, depending on the context in which the term is used. Therefore, the concept of militarization is fully applicable in describing the ongoing processes of military enhancement in Latvia.

3. Research data indicate that the majority of surveyed border guards understand the real security challenges facing Latvia and the State Border Guard and support the ongoing militarization processes within the institution. However, it must be acknowledged that a significant portion of the surveyed officials have a low level of awareness regarding the current security situation and exhibit low motivation to perform military duties. Such a situation could pose serious internal threats to the security of the State Border Guard and necessitates specific steps for improvement.

In analysing the aforementioned proposals and summarizing the research findings, the authors of this article make the following recommendations:

1. To improve the justification of militarization processes and the overall understanding of the political situation, it is necessary to enhance media literacy and awareness among the Border Guard personnel in the near future. For instance, the heads of the State Border Guard's territorial units should support the participation of border guards in psychological support courses and initiate their involvement in courses organized by the Media Literacy Centre. This would help raise the current level of loyalty and prevent potential psycho-emotional stress and burnout.
2. To improve personnel attitudes towards the daily use of military equipment and weaponry, the management of border protection units should organize training on the proper use of equipment, as well as appropriately plan assignment operations by introducing more frequent patrols with vehicles to alleviate the physical strain on subordinate personnel.
3. The Chief of the State Border Guard should maintain the ongoing militarization process as a priority task for the institution. This would contribute to the overall enhancement of military capacity in Latvia, thereby ensuring an effective deterrence policy against military threats in the current geopolitical situation.

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