PUBLIC SAFETY IN LATVIA

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Abstract. *Security is one of the most important issues both at the individual and organizational level, as well as at the national level. In today's world, where technological development and globalization create new opportunities, new threats also arise. Therefore, security guidelines are becoming increasingly important to ensure stability, protection and sustainability. Geopolitical situations in the world are determined by the great powers that have a better economic status, natural resources, human resources, development on the world "stage", the country's military armament, as a result of which smaller countries with less recognition in the world are affected. Many factors determine public safety, in peacetime, in a state of emergency, or in a time of emergency.*
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Introduction

Every day, the residents of a country are shaken by events happening in the world, national policies impacting politics, economics, the economy, and the safety of individuals. These geopolitical upheavals are caused not only by human actions but also by natural disasters.

The geopolitical situation in the world is determined by the superpowers that have better economic conditions, natural resources, human resources, development on the global "stage," and military armaments, which in turn influence smaller countries with less recognition in the world.

Small countries, such as Latvia, cannot influence the impact of superpowers, which is why the state strives to protect itself from the threats of such influences.

Today, these threats include cyberattacks, misinformation dissemination, misrepresentation of opinions to the public, and even the expression of military threats, while public security is a crucial element in the development and prosperity of any nation. In Latvia, as well as in other countries, public safety issues have become particularly relevant due to recent events, including not only external threats but also internal ones.

The goal of the study: To investigate the state of public safety in Latvia, identify the main threats in the future, and propose solutions for improving the situation.

Threats to national security are related to the development of the situation in the international security environment, Russia's expanded war in Ukraine,

hybrid threats, malicious cyber activities and trends in international terrorism. Although they have decreased under the influence of objective circumstances, the long-term efforts of individual countries to influence the Latvian state (Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 2023), society and its values, the current Western-oriented foreign policy course, as well as domestic political stability, with political, economic and informational means, still pose a threat (Smirnova, 2024).

The tasks of the study:

1. To determine the basic security guidelines for Latvia.
2. To assess the current level of public safety in Latvia.
3. To identify the main threats to public safety in the future.
4. To propose recommendations for improving public safety.

Security guidelines

Security is one of the most important issues at the individual, organizational, and national levels. In today's world, where technological development and globalization create new opportunities, new threats also arise. Therefore, security guidelines are becoming increasingly important to ensure stability, protection, and sustainability.

Security guidelines are frameworks and measures designed and implemented to protect people, property, information, and resources from potential threats. They cover a broad spectrum of security issues, ranging from physical security to digital protection.

Public safety examines the threats to the traditional lifestyles, customs, religious practices, ethnic, and national characteristics of society or its parts. The dimension of public safety has been on both political and academic agendas in the past decade; however, no research has thus far been conducted that would allow for the integration of the threats identified by individuals to their identity in the overall perception of threats among Latvia's population and assess the possible correlations that exist between perceived threats and relevant policy responses (Kjaste & Struberga, 2021).

The authors of the study articulated the following security guidelines that ensure the safety of individuals, society, and the state:

• Physical security - ensures the protection of individuals, property, and territories. Physical security is ensured by individuals themselves, who comply with the state's regulatory framework that governs public order and property and territorial protection;

• Information security - is essential to protect sensitive data from unauthorized access and attacks. Data protection is particularly important to ensure the respect of privacy and prevent identity theft;

• Cybersecurity - defense against cyberattacks that can affect IT infrastructure, networks, and systems.

The implementation and control of the security guidelines proposed by the authors of the paper is ensured by the Ministry of the Interior and Defense.

The task of national security is to preserve human life. It strives to achieve this goal through continuous accident prevention on a national scale, covers all areas of hazardous activities and directly or indirectly prepares all of us citizens (National Safety Council, 1932).

The national legal framework of the Latvian state defines national security, which states that national security is a set of conditions achieved as a result of purposefully implemented measures. When the state and society implement specific measures, Latvia's internal and external vulnerability is reduced, as well as the state's overall capabilities and general readiness to identify, prevent and overcome national security threats are improved (Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 2023).

Comparing the two definitions of national security, the purpose of these definitions is to protect people from threats and ensure conditions that could threaten national security, including human security.

Latvia's national security has military, foreign policy and internal security dimensions, which are interconnected. The foreign policy dimension is characterized by the current unstable international security environment, possible changes in it and external threats.

The dimension of internal security is characterized by the state's provision of the basic values defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, as well as security risks and threats of a hybrid nature, which affect all three dimensions (Tiesību aktu projektu publiskais portāls).

The safety guidelines defined in the Latvian National Defense Concept are:
• internal security;
• external security;
• hybrid security threats.

Internal security is implemented by the structural units of the Ministry of the Interior - the State Police, the State Border Guard, the State Security Service, the State Fire and Rescue Service.

External security is provided by the National Armed Forces. The defense of Latvia consists of the capabilities of the National Armed Forces and the presence of allied forces, or NATO, in Latvia. Together with the allies, the national armed forces demonstrate their military capabilities to protect Latvia and NATO countries, as well as jointly maintain and develop combat capabilities for collective protection from external threats.

The concept of hybrid threats plays a growing role in understanding the multidimensional nature of the security phenomenon today. A number of studies have been developed in the world, which basically describe hybrid threats as an increasingly frequently used hostile, coordinated action by state and non-state actors, which includes two or more threats at the same time and is aimed at harming the target country. The hybrid threat research carried out in Latvia so far

has mainly been focused on the influence activities implemented by the Russian Federation (Ceple & Struberga, 2021).

The European Union has created a unit that responds in time and prevents hybrid threats to one of the member states.

The task of the unit is aimed at preventing the spread of disinformation, cyber-attacks, attacks on critical infrastructure, the instrumentalization of migrants and the interference of malicious actors in elections, the rapid response units for the prevention of hybrid threats will be an important new ability of the EU, which will allow to prevent new and potential threats (Eiropas Savienības padomes Paziņojums presei, 2024).

State security

National security is a state achieved as a result of unified, purposeful measures implemented by the state and society, in which the independence of the state, its constitutional structure and territorial integrity, the perspective of free development of society, prosperity and stability are guaranteed (Nacionālās drošības likums, 2001.).

The national security system is made up of institutions implementing state power and state administration and citizens of Latvia (Valsts robežsardzes koledža, 2024).

The task of the system is to predict internal and external threats in a timely manner, prevent threats, guarantee the safety of the country and people. If internal threats arise, for example, internal riots break out, then a State of Emergency would be declared in the country, as stipulated by the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On the State of Emergency and State of Emergency", where the Cabinet of Ministers already makes a decision on declaring a state of emergency. Therefore, mobilization may be announced according to the threat and the scale of unrest and depending on the necessary material and technical support and human resources to overcome the threat, according to the "Mobilization Law" (Kurek, 2022).

The purpose of mobilization is to prevent threats to the state's military and civil defense or eliminate their consequences by involving mobilization resources - human, material and financial resources according to prepared plans, according to the scale of the emergency situation or the state's military threat.

A state of emergency is declared (up to 3 months, extended to 3 months. Canceled - when the state of emergency is overcome):
• throughout the country;
• part of the country;
• in part of the administrative territory.

A state of emergency is declared (up to 6 months, extended to 6 months. Canceled - if the national threat has been prevented or overcome):
• throughout the country;

• in a part of the country.

Mobilization can be announced:

• general mobilization – is announced in case of war or state of emergency, subjecting all mobilization resources;

• partial mobilization – announced in an emergency situation or state of emergency, partially involving mobilization resources;

• local mobilization – announced in an emergency situation in the defined administrative territory (Balode, 2017).

Taking into account the scale of the threat to the security of the country and people, an emergency situation or a state of exception may be declared and, if necessary, mobilization may be declared after assessing the threat.

The emergency situation that affected the security of people and the state in Latvia was declared during the Covid-19 pandemic, because the continuous and effective operation of state institutions was threatened, therefore restrictions and obligations were imposed on natural and legal persons to limit the spread of Covid-19 and ensure the operation of state institutions (Olsena et al., 2022).

Taking into account the geopolitical situation in the world and the developed hybrid war of Belarus against Latvia, an emergency situation has been declared on the Latvian-Belarusian border, where illegal migrants are directed to Latvia and Europe on a daily basis, in this way the external security of the country and including the internal security are affected by illegal migrants. By declaring a state of emergency on the Latvian-Belarusian border, the State Border Guard can attract additional human resources, that is, State Police officials, National Armed Forces and National Guard soldiers to prevent illegal migration on the state border.

Considering the Covid-19 pandemic and illegal migration in the country, no mobilization has been announced, as the state and local government institutions have been able and are able to overcome the emergency situation with their own resources, without involving public resources.

The state of emergency has not been announced in the country, because the country is taking preventive measures and informing the public about what is happening in the country and in the world. Informing the public is an important guarantor of national security, which allows people to act accordingly and ensure the internal order and external security of the country (International Review of Management and Marketing, 2023).

Since Russia's extended war against Ukraine, Latvia has started to strengthen the national border.

On March 5, 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the plan for the military strengthening and anti-mobility of the eastern border. The Eastern border military strengthening and anti-mobility plan is part of the creation of the Baltic defense line, which will include the creation of support points for the National Armed Forces units along the entire border of Russia and Belarus - defense positions for soldiers and fortified defense positions, various obstacles, anti-tank

ditches, ammunition and mine warehouses (Robežas stiprināšana, 2024). Taking this type of defensive measures will not allow or hinder the movement of the opponent or the opponent will be directed to advantageous positions for us to deter the opponent.

It should be noted that the economy is one of the areas that can most significantly affect the national security of the country. Moreover, economic threats are closely related to political and even military threats. The economically weaker the country, the less means it has to guarantee military security. Likewise, the more economically dependent a country is on another country's economy, the more this stronger country can manipulate its position in order to achieve favorable decisions.

Security threats today

State threats and people's safety are threatened every day, but if the people themselves observe the state order, we are able to live in a safe internal environment. But we are not immune to other types of threats, such as natural disasters, over which we have no control.

Latvia has been affected by floods, snowfalls, rains, storms, heat and cold waves, which have not endangered human lives, because preventive measures have been taken, such as informing and evacuating people. But these natural disasters have damaged human infrastructure, where post-disaster cleanup and infrastructure restoration must be done.

The biggest threats to human life and health are man-made disasters – vehicle accidents, infrastructure accidents, epidemics, terrorist attacks, riots, war.

In the opinion of the authors of the work, which, if divided according to the threat, the security threat and the scale, could be divided today into:

1. Unrest – the hybrid war waged by Russia and Belarus against Latvia and the European Union, with the entry of illegal migrants and possible subversive groups into Latvia with the implementation of internal unrest, could destabilize the country's internal security and threaten the effective functioning of state and local government institutions.

2. Epidemics – The Covid-19 pandemic is contained, but there are still risks of outbreaks of Covid-19. Today, the greatest threat is monkeypox, which has already been detected in many countries of the world and threatens human health and life.

3. War - Russia's unprovoked and illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has brought war back to Europe. In response to this, the NATO Strategic Concept approved in June 2022 defined Russia as the most significant and direct threat to the alliance. Various terrorist groups pose a significant threat, while China's policy poses challenges to the alliance's interests.

In order to respond to changes in the security environment, Latvia, together with its allies, pays increased attention to strengthening defense capabilities at

the national and international level. The decisive role in Latvia's security policy is played by membership in NATO and the European Union. Within the framework of organizations, as well as in bilateral cooperation with allies, Latvia implements an active foreign policy in order to strengthen its own, regional and international security (Vasiļjevs, 2019).

An irreplaceable part of effective deterrence and defense policy is the military presence of NATO allies in Latvia. Therefore, one of the most important tasks of Latvia's foreign policy in the field of external security is to promote the strengthening of the allies' military presence in Latvia in the long term, thereby strengthening the collective defense of all NATO countries. No less important is the strengthening of NATO's Rapid Response capabilities, which would allow sending additional forces and providing assistance to any member state of the alliance in the event of a crisis (Drošības un aizsardzības politika, 2021).

Seven out of ten Lithuanian residents believe that Russia poses a threat to their country's national security, according to a public opinion survey, and the same is true in Latvia (Aptauja: aptuveni 70 % lietuviešu uzskata, ka Krievija ir drauds nacionālajai drošībai, 2024).

Western discourse about Russia's way of war has oscillated between emphasising the conventional and unconventional threat.[1] Up until Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the emphasis was disproportionately on Russian unconventional warfare – the conduct of sabotage, subversion and destabilisation through undeclared Russian forces – carried out in the so-called 'grey zone'. This has since shifted to the conventional threat that Russia poses to NATO. The problem with this is that Russia considers both conventional and unconventional military means to be tools of national power and applies them in combination. It is the conventional threat of escalation that deters retaliation against unconventional activity, thereby expanding the scope of what Russia can get away with. Conversely, it is the unconventional operations of the Russian special services that aim to set the conditions for the successful application of conventional military force.[2] Both tool sets must be understood to appreciate the threat that Russia poses. Its unconventional efforts remain central to its theory of victory against Ukraine – and countering them is equally important. This report's primary conclusions are that Russia's special services actively seek to expand their capacity in several areas that pose strategic threats to NATO members. First, the GRU is restructuring how it manages the recruitment and training of special forces troops and is rebuilding the support apparatus to be able to infiltrate them into European countries. Second, the GRU has taken the Wagner Group's functions in house and is aggressively pursuing the expansion of its partnerships in Africa with the explicit intent to supplant Western partnerships. Third, the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, is being used to build a broad network of influence among Chechen and Muslim populations in Europe and the Middle East, with the aim of contributing to the subversion of Western interests. These lines of effort should be countered (Watling et al., 2022)

4. Vehicle and infrastructure accidents - due to carelessness and carelessness of people.

Safety measurement in Latvia:

- 97% of the population believe that it would be necessary to inform more about national defense and security topics;
- 32% reduce the spread of false news in society;
- 23% to strengthen overall security in the country;
- 22% exclude panic raising;
- 19% make you feel safer;
- 43% worry about fake news getting into the media;
- 86% want to know what to do in the event of a national threat (Aptauja: aptuveni 70 % lietuviešu uzskata, ka Krievija ir drauds nacionālajai drošībai, 2021).

In general, according to statistical data, it can be concluded that the public in Latvia is not sufficiently informed about what is happening in the field of national security. The different information about what is happening in the country by different media is of great concern. So, in various media, information is presented as disinformation, where the public is misled and divided in opinions.

86% do not know what to do in the event of a national threat and how to act, in X hour it can affect the national defense measures, because there will be panic in the society and chaos in the streets.

Conclusions and suggestions

In a study on public safety in Latvia, the authors of the paper made the following conclusions:

1. The country has established security guidelines to ensure the safety of society and state institutions.

2. The national regulatory framework determines actions and activities in the event of an emergency, state of emergency or war.

3. Provide enhanced external security of the airspace and land borders. With the aim of demonstrating the combat and military capabilities of Russia and Belarus.

4. The state has overcome the Covid-19 pandemic by declaring a state of emergency and imposing restrictions and obligations on natural and legal persons to overcome the situation.

5. Timely forecasting and evaluation of threats is carried out, ensuring public information.

Main recommendations:

1. For state and local government institutions to inform and train people on how to act in the event of a state threat, which will allow people to protect their health and life in the event of a state threat.

2. National armed forces with allies to strengthen the country's external security, which will ensure and strengthen internal security.
3. The mass media should inform the public about the geopolitical situation in the neighboring countries.

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