

Bad behaviour is rewarded?

Comparison of minority policies in the Baltic states

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Region as a whole?

Meanwhile, substantial differences between the situations in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

- Lithuania – Russian minority was never considered a security issue, nor even a significant problem, more complicated relations with the Polish minority
- Latvia and Estonia – similar but not identical
- meaningful differences not always visible from outside

Latvia vs Estonia

- Demography (1989)
 - Estonia – 62% of ethnic Estonians
 - Latvia – 52% of ethnic Latvians
- Geographic distribution
 - Estonia – Tallinn (about a half) and overwhelming majority in Ida-Virumaa (North-East)
 - Latvia – more or less even distribution throughout urban areas, as well as Latgale, minor presence in countryside in other regions
- Mixed marriages (Latvia 25%)
- Proficiency in titular languages
 - Latvia – 23%
 - Estonia – 11%
- Share of citizens “by birth” (Latvia ~40% of ethnic Russians)

Latvia vs Estonia

- Therefore, while the Russian-speaking minority is bigger in Latvia, level of separation is higher in Estonia
- Soviet-time newcomers compactly reside in Estonia, more evenly distributed in Latvia
- Conflict potential
 - Allegiance to Russia
 - Potential for ethnic mobilization

Citizenship

- Basic concepts of the restored citizenship - similar
- Differences
 - Adoption of the citizenship law, beginning of naturalization
 - Estonia – February 1992
 - Latvia – July 1994, February 1995
 - Promises of the Citizens’ committees kept in Estonia, discarded in Latvia
 - Requirements – similar, but in Latvia timetable, or “windows” (quasi-quotas)

Results by 2016

■ Numbers of non-citizens (1992)

- Estonia: almost 500,000
- Latvia: over 730,000

■ Estonia

- mass acquisition of the Russian citizenship (over 90,000, of them 40,000 by 1993, plus ~10,000 of citizens of Ukraine and Belarus)
- speedy naturalization (158,000, of them 110,000 before 2000), number of non-citizens ~80,000 (6%)

■ Latvia

- Low interest in the Russian citizenship (42,000, including recent immigrants, also through investment, ~15,000)
- slow naturalization with peaks in 1998 and 2004 (144,000), number of non-citizens ~230,000 (12%)

Results by 2016

- Statelessness of newborn children
 - Latvia: amendments of 2013, liberalization, however, parents may choose not to register their child as a Latvian citizen. Registration rate grew up from 52% (2013) to 88% (late 2014). Still, ~9,000 children born in Latvia after 1991 remain stateless
 - Estonia: amendments of 2015, de facto automatic registration of non-citizens' children as Estonian citizens
- To sum up: in Estonia both naturalization and opting for the Russian citizenship are much more intensive than in Latvia – corroborates sharper polarization

Status of non-citizens

■ Estonia

- Crisis of July 1993 (tensions peak 1)
- Law of 1993: aliens, most have the right to permanent residence permits
- Freedom of movement ensured, “grey passports”
- Officially – “persons with undetermined citizenship”, no loud protests when non-citizens are called stateless
- **The right to vote in municipal elections – participation!**

■ Latvia

- Delay until 1995, “legal limbo”, restrictions of non-political rights
- Law of April 1995: special status, no residence permits required
- Freedom of movement and consular protection abroad guaranteed, “violet passports”
- Separate law on stateless persons, strong objections when non-citizens called stateless
- No voting rights at municipal elections

Language legislation

- Professional and occupational requirements – basically similar
- Use of languages before public authorities
 - Latvia – only Latvian
 - Estonia – may be Russian (if 50% residents)
- Language of local administration
 - Latvia – only Latvian
 - Estonia – may be Russian (if > 50% residents)
- Public education
 - Estonia: definition of “the language of instruction” (at least 60%), required at the secondary level, reform postponed several times, introduced in 2011
 - Latvia: law of 1998 – secondary education in Latvian only, after crisis of 2003-2004 change to 60%, introduced in 2004

Tensions peaks

■ Estonia

□ July 1993

- Law on Foreigners
- Referenda in North-East municipalities
- OSCE mediation
- Package of conciliatory measures (liberalization of the law, establishment of the Consultative council, granting citizenship to activists of the Russian organizations)

□ April 2007

- Removal of the Soviet army monument from the Tallinn city centre
- “The Bronze Night”
- Struggle between the parties, selfish interest of some politicians

■ Latvia

□ 2003 – 2004 - minority education reform

Political participation

■ Similarities

- Collapse of explicitly ethnic Russian parties
- Consolidation of pro-minority parties with essentially mixed ethnic composition
- Strong positions in urban municipalities (mayors in Tallinn and Riga)
- Deep opposition at national level, coalitions *de facto* on ethnic basis

■ Differences

- Estonia: more Russians appear on the lists of mainstream parties (and get elected), few Russian ministers
- Latvia: very few or no Russians on the lists of mainstream parties, no Russians at ministerial positions

Conclusions

■ Estonia

- Much higher level of separation and hence potential for ethnic mobilization and conflict
- Stringent measures could trigger conflict, hence more pragmatic policies
- Voting rights for non-citizens – particularly important
- Fragile stability – 2007 crisis, long-term and drastic consequences

■ Latvia

- Low conflict potential, broad contacts at the everyday level, hence can afford harsher regulation and policies and maintain segregation in politics at national level

Conclusions

- Both minorities and governments in the Baltics demonstrated that peace and non-violence are the top values, almost always stopped in dangerous proximity to the “red lines”
- However, the situation remains fragile, particularly with actions by external actors and factors like “the hybrid war”
- Security-driven and value-based approaches to minority policies may seem complementary
- However - fundamental contradiction, as the security-driven minority policies undermine universality and an assumption that protection of minority rights can be achieved through democratic dialogue
- What message for minorities? Is it that blackmail and threats are the most (the only?) effective tools to secure their rights?