

## Determining Areas of High Ethnic Russian Concentration that are Vulnerable to Inter-Group Conflict in Latvia

As Russia becomes increasingly aggressive in its near abroad, much of the international community has been viewing Russian minority populations in former Soviet states with increasing suspicion. These fears are compounded by the fact that Russia has made no secret of its willingness to leverage Russian minority populations abroad, as it did in Crimea.

Many have pointed to the Baltics as a probable location for such an incident. As NATO's eastern flank, they would be the first to fall in the case of a conflict between NATO and Russia. But do these populations pose a threat to their home states? In speaking with many Baltic citizens, both ethnic-Russian and non-ethnic-Russian, it became clear that the majority of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltics were happy to remain outside of Russia. However, there may come a time when that calculus could change. Therefore, it would be useful to know where the areas that have indicators traditionally associated with the outbreak of inter-group conflict are located within Latvia.

### Methodology

Ultimately, this project sought to answer the following question: **Where are the areas of concentrated ethnic Russian populations in Latvia that are most prone to inter-group conflict?**

To answer this question, I used five key indicators to determine ethnic concentration and vulnerability to inter-group conflict. These variables were

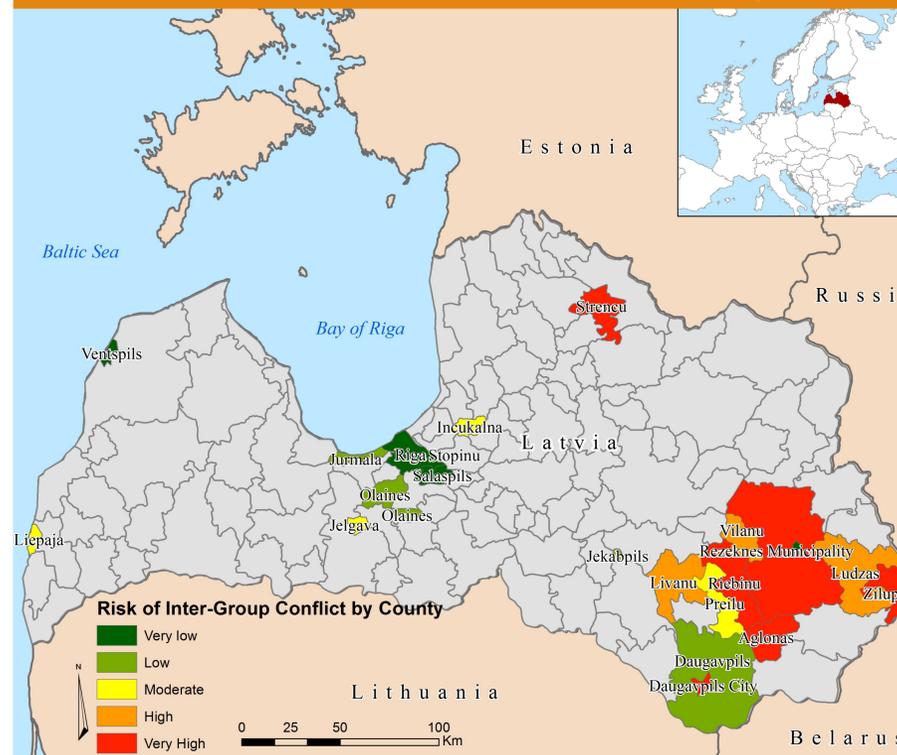
chosen to represent factors associated with perceived deprivation and lack of opportunity as compared to a majority population.

- Concentration of Ethnic Russians—this refers to the percentage of the population that identifies as Russian
- Concentration of Non-Latvian Citizens—this refers to percentage of the population that are not Latvian citizens and therefore do not have national voting rights
- Concentration of Unemployed Populations—this refers to the percentage of the active population (i.e. of working age and job seeking) that is unemployed
- Concentration of Population Living in Houses Without Running Water—this indicator is meant to point substandard housing
- Concentration of Population Without Secondary Education—this variable denotes the percentage of the population over the age of 15 that have not completed secondary education

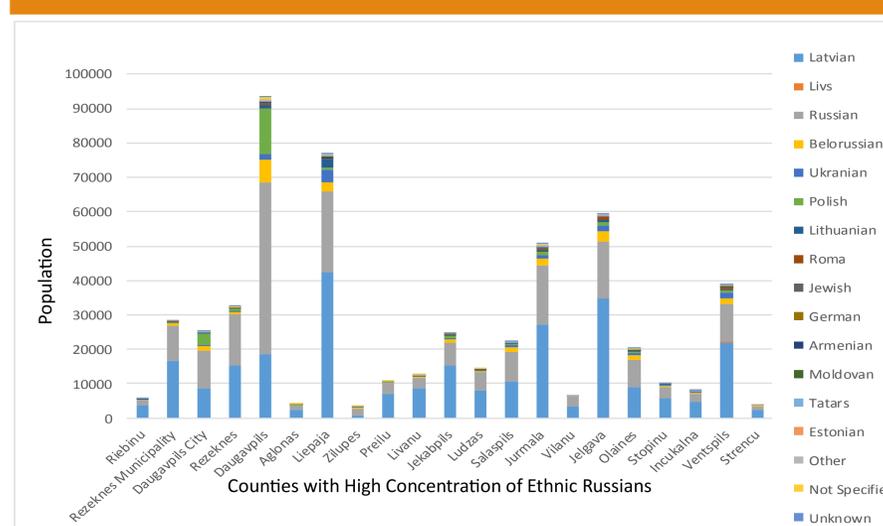
Each county was then given a score of 1-5 for each variable, according to natural breaks in the data, rather than a standard cutoff drawn from the literature. This is because relative deprivation inspires unrest as much if not more than deprivation in and of itself. Thresholds for this scoring are displayed for each variable in Table 1.

While the final analysis only deals with counties with higher concentrations of ethnic Russians (defined as counties

### Ethnic Russian Concentration Areas, 2011



### Ethnic Breakdown of Vulnerable Counties\*



\*Note: Riga City omitted as an outlier

with a score of 4 or 5 in the Concentration of Ethnic Russians variable), vulnerability scores were calculated as compared to the entire country to examine counties that are vulnerable according to a national standard.

Table 1: Variable Score Thresholds

| Variable   | Score with Percentage/Threshold |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Concentration of Ethnic Russians                             | 1. 1.29 - 6.32% (low risk)      |
|  | 2. 6.33 - 12.8                  |
|  | 3. 12.81 - 23.96                |
|  | 4. 23.97 - 36.76                |
|  | 5. 36.77 - 54.91 (high risk)    |
| Concentration of Non-Latvian Citizens                        | 1. 1.02 - 4.02% (low risk)      |
|  | 2. 4.03 - 6.94                  |
|  | 3. 6.95 - 9.83                  |
|  | 4. 9.84 - 14.89                 |
|  | 5. 14.9 - 25.98 (high risk)     |
| Concentration of Population Living in Houses Without Running | 1. 0.88 - 7.88% (low risk)      |
|  | 2. 7.89 - 16.73                 |
|  | 3. 16.74 - 23.37                |
|  | 4. 23.38 - 32.07                |
|  | 5. 32.08 - 49.02 (high risk)    |
| Concentration of Unemployed Populations                      | 1. 11.94 - 14.55% (low risk)    |
|  | 2. 14.56 - 17.78                |
|  | 3. 17.79 - 20.83                |
|  | 4. 20.84 - 26.26                |
|  | 5. 26.27 - 35.99 (high risk)    |
| Concentration of Population Without Secondary Education      | 1. 13.18 - 20.56% (low risk)    |
|  | 2. 20.57 - 26.53                |
|  | 3. 26.54 - 31.53                |
|  | 4. 31.54 - 36.02                |
|  | 5. 36.03 - 44.37 (high risk)    |

### Results

There were 22 counties with concentrations of ethnic Russian population above 23.97%. Of those, 9 had a higher

vulnerability score (13-18) and tended to be in the east of the country. This is significant in that the concentration is very close to Russia. As Russia has a history of intervening in internal conflicts involving ethnic Russians along its border, having areas that are prone to such conflict presents a huge risk to the Latvian government. Therefore, the development of these regions should be prioritized to lower their vulnerability.

### Limitations

The greatest area for improvement in this project is the choice of variables. To ensure accurate representation of vulnerability, future research should conduct primary source research to determine which variables represent relative deprivation and lack of opportunity to ethnic Russians in Latvia, rather than extrapolating them from a literature review and regional knowledge.

Moreover, as the data relies on the 2011 Population and Housing Census, these conclusions are likely out of date in 2016. Therefore, future research should either wait for the next census or conduct independent surveys on the variables determined to be significant.

### References

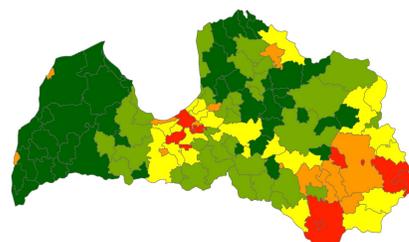
- Date: May 6, 2016  
 Class: GIS for International Applications  
 Projection: ETRS\_1989\_TM\_Baltic\_1993  
 Scale: 1:1,500,000  
 Data Sources: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia: 2011 Population and Housing Census, Terra Populus, GfK

### Vulnerability Variable Scoring Color Key\*

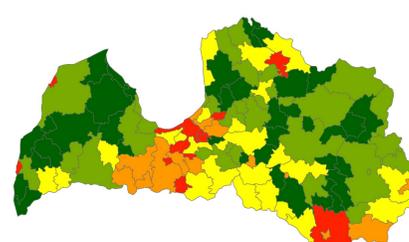
- 1 - Very Low Risk
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Very High Risk

\*Note: The legend above applies to all maps in this row. Thresholds for the each variable can be found in Table 1.

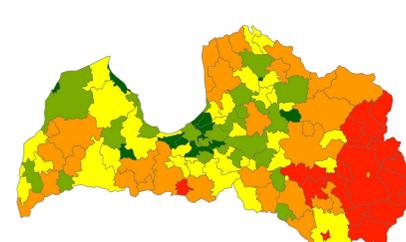
### Concentration of Ethnic Russians



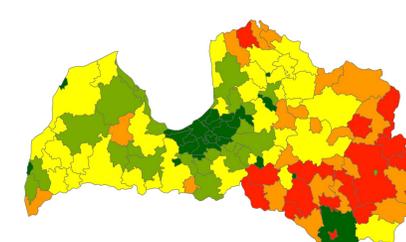
### Concentration of Non-Latvian Citizens



### Concentration of Unemployed Populations



### Concentration of Population Living in Houses Without Running Water



### Concentration of Population Without Secondary Education

