IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS OF LATVIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE 14TH PARLIAMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

Latvia and the broader Baltic region face persistent security challenges from neighbouring areas, particularly due to hybrid threats. Therefore, political parties and party associations have become essential components of the political stability and internal security of the country. The ideological diversity within parliament has a significant impact on political stability and resilience; the lack of a unified, security-orientated policy could potentially weaken Latvia's position within EU and NATO cooperation frameworks. This study identifies key ideological trends and assesses how these positions align or conflict with Latvia's security goals, NATO commitments, and EU integration goals. The research methodology is based solely on qualitative methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The 14th Saeima (Latvian Parliament), elected in late 2022, includes seven political parties and associations with a wide range of ideological stances, from centre-right to leftist and nationalist perspectives. The findings reveal that: 1) no parties in parliament share identical ideologies, value systems or governance plans; 2) most parliamentary parties have ideological positions closely related to national security, especially given the geopolitical threats in the

region; 3) the majority prioritise national security, adhering closely to NATO and EU policies, while a minority takes a more cautious or populist position that could promote internal divisions in the long term; and 4) one party, which adopts a critical position towards the current government and appeals strongly to Latvia's Russian-speaking population, fosters social division through its messaging. Parties that amplify societal divisions with populist rhetoric could become internal security risks, potentially exploitable by external forces such as pro-Kremlin actors. Over time, this risk could undermine social unity and facilitate foreign interference or disinformation campaigns.

Keywords: Latvia, parties, party associations, ideologies, political stability, national security, democracy.

Introduction

The geopolitical situation in the world and Europe, including the Baltic region, presents growing security challenges, mainly due to aggressive actions by neighbouring states. These actions have evolved beyond conventional strategies, posing a significant threat to Latvia and other Baltic states, which face hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns. Under current circumstances, the role of political parties and party alliances extends beyond traditional governance; they have become central actors in fostering internal unity and aligning the country's security and foreign policy strategies with broader NATO and EU frameworks.

A fragmented party landscape or ideologically inconsistent parties can create vulnerabilities, thereby weakening Latvia's democratic institutions and internal resilience against existing challenges. At the end of 2022, the 14th Saeima (*Latvian Parliament*) was elected, with seven political parties and alliances securing representation out of 19 candidate lists (Central Election Commission, 2022). These parties cover a wide ideological spectrum, ranging from centre-right to leftist and nationalist positions. In particular, four of the seven parliamentary parties were newly elected, highlighting the dynamic nature of Latvia's political environment. Understanding this political landscape and party dynamics is crucial, as they shape foreign policy decisions and parliamentary votes on issues directly related to national and external security.

In this context, political parties and alliances play a crucial role in ensuring Latvia's political stability and internal security. Ideological diversity within the parliament significantly affects political stability and resilience, and the lack of a unified, security-orientated policy may weaken the position of Latvia within the EU and NATO cooperation frameworks. This study identifies key ideological trends and examines how these positions align or conflict with Latvia's security objectives, NATO commitments and European Union integration processes. While there is a general consensus among political forces on the need to strengthen Latvia's and Europe's collective security, the parliament also includes parties whose positions on Latvia's membership in these economic and security organisations remain ambiguous.

Political Ideology and National Security

Recent studies challenge the notion that foreign policy is determined solely by national interests. They emphasise the significant influence of political ideologies and the interconnection between domestic politics and international relations. Research reveals that parliamentary discourse blurs the boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, shaping a nation's international stance and strategic direction (Haesebrouck & Mello, 2020; Raunio & Wagner, 2020; Wenzelburger & Böller, 2020). The legal framework of Latvia and the division of state power highlight the key role of the parliamentary structure in decision-making on security and military matters. For example, parliamentarians are responsible for approving the National Security Concept, deciding on the deployment of Latvian troops in military operations, electing the Commander of the National Armed Forces, and approving the national budget, including defence expenditures.

Political ideology, understood as a system of values, ideas, and beliefs, influences not only the domestic policy priorities of political parties but also their perceptions and approaches to national security. As Andrew Heywood (2021) notes, ideologies provide interpretive frameworks through which political actors understand reality, including how they perceive potential threats and determine appropriate response strategies. In contemporary contexts, national security extends far beyond military defence, encompassing cybersecurity, the

information space, economic stability, and societal cohesion (Buzan et al., 1998). As such, ideological positions of political parties play a crucial role in shaping the objectives and policy choices within the realm of security. For instance, conservative parties tend to emphasize increasing defence budgets and safeguarding national sovereignty, whereas liberal parties are more likely to promote international cooperation, diplomacy, and the integration of human rights considerations into security policy.

A growing body of research has identified systematic differences between left- and right-wing parties regarding key questions related to security policy and the use of force (Palmer, Regan & London, 2004; Chakma, 2024; Koch & Sullivan, 2010; Greene, & Licht, 2017; Milner & Tingley, 2015; Dieterich, Hummel and Marschall, 2010). Parties also differ in their support for multilateralism and European integration (Mudde, 2013). In the context of foreign and security policy, it is relevant to distinguish between "hard Eurosceptics," who reject European Union membership altogether, and "soft Eurosceptics," who oppose the current or future direction of European integration but not the EU as a concept (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008).

This requirement underscores the challenges democratic systems face in balancing parliamentary oversight with foreign policy demands, particularly under external pressure (Coticchia & Moro, 2020; Fonck & Reykers, 2018). Political ideologies influence not only the domestic course of political parties, but also their foreign policy positions. Generally speaking, left-wing parties tend to emphasise economic regulation, welfare state expansion, and – most notably – a critical stance toward the military. On the contrary, right-wing parties typically support free-market policies, restrictions on social services, and a more favourable view of military power (Budge & Klingemann, 2001; Volkens et al., 2013). This ideological polarisation significantly impacts the policymaking process as governing parties strive to implement policies that align with the interests of their voter base and ideological foundation.

When the dominant political ideology loses its ability to justify its legitimacy in the eyes of society, national political security becomes vulnerable. Such a situation can lead to diminished public trust in state institutions, political fragmentation, and increased polarization. As Barry Buzan (1991) has argued,

the concept of political security encompasses a state's ability to maintain internal stability, national identity, and its political system. If the state's political narrative weakens in comparison to alternative – often externally driven – ideological narratives, there is a risk that these competing discourses will gain public support. This risk is particularly acute when such ideologies are deliberately spread by foreign actors with the intent to destabilize the political environment, as has been observed in Russia's information operations in the Baltic states. In such cases, the erosion of ideological control may not only signal a shift in societal values but also pose a direct threat to national sovereignty and security.

Although numerous studies have identified systematic differences in security policy approaches between left-wing and right-wing parties (Wagner et al., 2017), there has been limited research on the positions of Latvian political parties and their correlation with their ideological stances in the context of national security. According to the National Security Concept, Latvia's national security encompasses military, foreign policy, and internal security dimensions, which are interconnected. At the same time, a particularly important aspect of national security is political security, which is defined as a set of state capabilities and mechanisms that ensure political stability, effective governance, democratic resilience, and protection against both internal and external threats. Political security is directly related to the legitimacy of state institutions, ideological resilience, public trust, and the ability to combat disinformation and hybrid threats.

As early as 2019, when the National Security Concept was adopted, it was emphasised that threats to Latvia stem from foreign efforts to influence the state, society and its values through political, humanitarian, informational, and economic means, with the aim of undermining Latvia's Western-orientated foreign policy course and internal political stability (National Security Concept, 2019). In 2022, following the election of a new Saeima, a new National Threat Assessment was developed, and in accordance with the National Security Law (2001), a revised National Security Concept had to be formulated. A key factor that led to the review of the previous concept was the significant deterioration of the international security environment after Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The updated National Security

Concept (National Security Concept, 2023) reiterated that threats persist due to long-term efforts by certain states to influence Latvia's government, society and values through political, economic, and informational means, with the aim of disrupting the country's western-orientated foreign policy and undermining internal political stability.

In the case of Latvia, several studies have addressed security issues from various perspectives and considered national security strategies. However, these studies have not analysed ideological security within the broader national security framework in the period after the restoration of independence of Latvia. The ideologies of political parties represented in parliament constitute a crucial element of political security and should be examined in the context of national security. With each parliamentary election, the composition of the Saeima changes, leading to shifts in the ideological compass, as new parties enter the legislature, while older parties often transform or merge into different political forces.

Faced with a wide range of complex security threats, which, as mentioned earlier, combine both traditional and nontraditional security risks, maintaining national security and safeguarding national interests remains a critical task at the state level. In democratic systems, there is a broad spectrum of ideologies that reflect varied political, economic, and social perspectives and values. Traditional ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism, centrism, and socialism shape social development and define governance principles (Heywood, 20021). Conservatism also encompasses nationalism, which emphasises national identity and state sovereignty, whereas liberalism promotes individual freedom and market-driven economies. Centrism seeks to balance different political perspectives, while socialism focusses on social welfare and economic equality.

In today's political environment, new and more specialised (or narrower) ideologies are gaining increasing importance, responding to global challenges and social transformations within society. For example, feminism advocates gender equality, ecologism focusses on environmental protection and sustainability, regionalism emphasises local identity and autonomy, while Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008) critically assesses the influence of the European Union on nation states. The diversity of these ideologies reflects the adaptability

of democratic systems to new circumstances and their ability to integrate various societal perspectives, shaping a dynamic and ever-evolving political landscape.

Materials and Methods

This study mainly employs a qualitative research method, with a particular focus on comparative document and data analysis. The analytical framework was developed by combining multiple sources, allowing for an in-depth examination of how the ideological positions of political parties and party alliances influence Latvia's political security. The analytical foundation of the study consists of: 1) political party documents and pre-election materials, such as party programmes; 2) transcripts of Saeima sessions and parliamentary committee meetings; 3) statistical data and official records, including data from the Central Election Commission; 4) media statements, press publications, online sources, and other materials relevant for analysing and explaining the ideologies of parliamentary parties and their positions on security-related issues. Additionally, media coverage and expert commentary were reviewed to better understand how ideological positions are articulated and perceived in the context of Latvia's security discourse.

Characterisation of Latvia's Political Landscape

Latvia's political environment is characterised by broad representation of the parties and ideological fragmentation, manifested in frequent party transformations, regular government changes, and shifting political alliances or party coalitions. As noted above, the party system is highly fragmented, with the regular emergence of new political forces and the dissolution of existing parties. This reflects a lack of long-term voter trust in established political organisations. Furthermore, ideological inconsistency is a defining feature of Latvian politics – parties often adjust their rhetoric and policy programmes in response to public sentiment, rather than consistently adhering to traditional left- or right-wing ideological positions.

This uncertainty impacts political security, particularly in terms of government stability (Buzan, 2007), as coalition formation and governance sustainability frequently become complicated due to ideological and pragmatic differences. Furthermore, regional and ethnic factors, such as the significant Russian speaking population, play a crucial role in voter preferences and party competition. Political fragmentation and ideological flexibility present both challenges and opportunities: on the one hand, they drive continuous change and adaptation to new political realities; on the other hand, they may undermine long-term political stability, decision-making efficiency, and the durability of government policies.

As previously emphasised, ideologies as governance models within political systems are constantly evolving; new ideologies emerge, while existing ones transform, adapting to changing societies and global challenges. In this dynamic environment, political parties also undergo changes: some consistently adhere to a specific ideology, maintaining their identity and core principles in the long term, while others flexibly integrate elements from various ideologies into their political priorities and party programmes. Such parties often borrow ideas from multiple ideological traditions to appeal to a broader electorate and address contemporary political issues, but cannot be clearly classified within a single ideological framework.

This ideological adaptation (Heywood, 2021), on the one hand, enhances party competitiveness and allows them to respond to public demand, but, on the other hand, it may create uncertainty about their true political direction and long-term objectives, leading to inconsistent policy implementation. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Latvia, where parties frequently incorporate ideas into their programmes that are fundamentally contradictory to their declared ideological foundations and values, which ultimately affect their long-term sustainability.

In Latvia, the formation of new political parties and alliances is often a direct response to specific political or social challenges within society (Costa, 2008). However, the sustainability of such parties, which arise as a reaction to a narrow issue or problem, is jeopardised if they lack a clear ideological foundation, a stable organisational structure, and a solid voter base. These political forces tend to

focus on specific issues, such as economic reforms, language and identity politics, or social justice concerns. However, single-issue parties struggle to attract broader voter support and establish themselves in the political landscape in the long term, often failing to be re-elected in the next parliamentary cycle and ultimately disappearing from the political arena.

This situation affects not only the quality of the democratic process, but also national security and political stability in the country. Fragmentation of the political landscape and the continuous emergence of new parties can weaken the effectiveness of governance, including the implementation of consistent, long-term policies and the preservation of political balance (Stučka & Otzulis, 2021). The key challenges in this context include the prioritisation of short-term goals, the rise of populism, and leader-centred strategies, which often rely more on the popularity of a particular individual rather than a clear ideological vision or policy continuity. As a result, the political system becomes increasingly unpredictable, creating additional complications for both domestic stability and international credibility and security.

In Latvia, the parliament is elected on the basis of a proportional representation system (Law on the Election of the Saeima, 1995), which ensures broad political representation in the Saeima. Despite ideological differences and political contradictions between parties, the foundation of parliamentary democracy is coalition building, which enables the functioning of the government and the decision-making process. This process requires the search for compromise, the development of unified strategies and the ability to find common ground, even among political forces with fundamentally different ideological positions. Therefore, while there are fragmentation and ideological clashes in the political landscape, the formation and functioning of the government require cooperation, which remains a crucial element in maintaining the political stability and democratic system of Latvia.

Political parties, regardless of the political system in which they operate, typically function in a complex and uncertain environment. Since the restoration of Latvia's independence and the establishment of its party system, the country has held 10 parliamentary elections (1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2018, and 2022), resulting in the election of ten Saeima convocations.

Of these, nine were regular elections, while one, in 2011, was held following a national referendum on the dissolution of the 10th Saeima (Central Election Commission, 2025). This was the only instance in Latvian history where the President of Latvia exercised his constitutional right to initiate a referendum on the dismissal of parliament, leading to extraordinary elections. The most recent parliamentary elections took place in 2022 (Central Election Commission, 2022), resulting in the formation of the 14th Saeima, with representatives from seven electoral lists securing seats in parliament (out of a total of 19 participating party and party alliance lists).

In Latvia, certain parliamentary parties express positions that align with the Kremlin's foreign policy narratives, posing a potential risk that such ideological stances may influence national security decision-making. While similar patterns of ideological polarization between pro-European and anti-European parties (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008) can also be observed in other post-Soviet countries, the Latvian case is marked by a specific dynamic: declining voter turnout since the restoration of independence has created long-term vulnerabilities. In recent elections, voter participation has fallen below 50 percent (Central Election Commission, 2025), raising concerns that: 1) populist parties are increasingly effective at mobilizing and engaging their electorates; and 2) voters supporting Russian-speaking parties tend to express more radical views, allowing these parties to activate their base while more moderate segments of society become disengaged from the electoral process.

The 14th Saeima elections highlighted a significant shift in this context. The newly formed party "For Stability!" (*Stabilitātei!*) entered parliament, replacing the previously dominant and comparatively moderate "Harmony" (*Saskaņa*), which had long been favoured by the Russian-speaking electorate. "Harmony" had won the highest number of votes in three consecutive parliamentary elections (31 seats in the 11th Saeima, 24 in the 12th, and 23 in the 13th) (Central Election Commission, 2025), yet consistently remained in opposition due to its inability to secure a parliamentary majority and the presence of firm red lines drawn by other, primarily Latvian-speaking, parties. A turning point came following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when "Harmony" publicly condemned Russian aggression and renounced cooperation with "United

Russia" (TV3, 2022). This repositioning led to an immediate drop in the party's popularity, ultimately resulting in its failure to win any seats in the 14th Saeima. This development suggests a process of political radicalization among segments of the Russian-speaking electorate and indicates potential challenges for Latvia's political and security environment in the future (De facto, 2022).

A significant portion of Latvia's Russian-speaking electorate appears to have supported parties with more radical or populist agendas in the 14th Saeima elections. The party "Stability!" received 6.8% of the vote, securing 11 out of 100 parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, other parties often associated with this voter base failed to cross the electoral threshold, including "Harmony" (4.81%), the "Latvian Russian Union" (3.63%), and "Sovereign Power" (3.24%) (Central Election Commission, 2022). In total, these parties collectively received 18.48% of the vote. By comparison, in the previous 13th Saeima elections, the combined support for parties often favoured by more radical segments of the Russian-speaking electorate amounted to 23.46% ("Harmony" 19.8%, "Latvian Russian Union" 3.2%, "For Alternative" 0.34%, and the "Action Party" 0.12%) (Central Election Commission, 2018).

The electoral success of "Stability!" underscores the growing appeal of populist rhetoric among the Russian-speaking population in Latvia. At the same time, the party "Latvia First" (*Latvija pirmajā vietā*), which traditionally targets ethnic Latvian voters, has launched efforts to increasingly appeal to the Russian-speaking segment as well. While "Harmony" was often portrayed as pro-Kremlin – a characterization that was not always unequivocally justified – the ideological positioning of "For Stability!" raises more direct concerns. The party's platform remains vague or noncommittal regarding the war in Ukraine, which may be interpreted as tacit alignment with narratives that contradict Latvia's official foreign and security policy positions.

Such ambiguity, especially in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, heightens the importance of critically assessing how the ideological orientation of parliamentary parties can shape discourse on national security. It also points to a broader trend of political radicalization among segments of the electorate, which could have long-term implications for democratic resilience and internal cohesion in Latvia.

The ideologies of the Parliamentary Parties and Their Correlation with National Security

The 14th Saeima operates under complex geopolitical conditions, which necessitate a unified and resolute position on national security issues to prevent potential threats that Latvia may face, including escalating hybrid warfare challenges. The internal security and political stability of each member state of the European Union directly impact the overall security of the Union. Since Latvia's accession to the EU and NATO, the country has strongly advocated for deeper integration within these organisations, highlighting their crucial role in ensuring regional security. However, certain political forces in Latvia express positions that diverge from the current direction of the country's security and foreign policy, particularly with respect to membership and deeper integration in the EU and NATO.

By analysing the programmes of Latvian political parties and party alliances, with which they participated in the 14th Saeima elections, as well as their publicly expressed positions, it is possible to identify the ideological orientations of these national-level political forces, which shape the diversity of the country's political environment and the structure of political competition. The party alliance "New Unity" (*Jaunā Vienotība*) follows a liberal-conservative approach, combining principles of the market economy with moderate traditional values. The alliance "Union of Greens and Farmers" (*Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība*) represents a centrist and agrarian ideology, emphasising rural development and balanced economic policies. The party "The Progressives" (*Progresīvie*) positions itself as a supporter of ecologism and social liberalism, focussing on environmental protection and social justice. Similarly, the alliance "United List" (*Apvienotais saraksts*) emphasises ecological and regional issues, advocating for decentralisation and regional development.

The alliance "National Alliance" (*Nacionālā apvienība*) represents national conservatism, focussing on the preservation of Latvia's identity, cultural autonomy, and strict migration policies. Meanwhile, the party "Latvia First" leans towards social conservatism, stressing national sovereignty and traditional values in governance. On the contrary, the party "For Stability!" is characterised

by centrist and Eurosceptic elements, advocating for a moderate political course while expressing a critical position toward the influence of the European Union on national sovereignty. This ideological fragmentation reflects not only the diversity of the Latvian party system, but also the fragmentation and dynamics of voter preferences in political decision making.

The ideologically compatible parties in the 14th Saeima can be considered "United List" and "Union of Greens and Farmers", whose political positions share similar approaches to regional development, economic policy and a more conservative approach to governance. Meanwhile, "New Unity", although representing liberal-conservative values, still maintains ideological proximity to both "Union of Greens and Farmers" and the "United List". Additionally, this party alliance also shares a certain ideological affinity with the "National Alliance", which, despite its national conservatism orientation, still functionally belongs to the same political spectrum.

At the same time, the party "The Progressives", while not ideologically opposed to the parties mentioned above, occupies a different segment of the ideological spectrum, focussing more on social liberalism and ecologism. Unlike the other parliamentary forces, whose value systems are rooted in more traditional approaches to governance and economic policy, this political force places greater emphasis on green policies, social equality, and modern left-liberal initiatives, which ideologically distances it from the rest of the parliamentary political space.

However, ideological differences do not prevent the three parties and party alliances – "New Unity", "Union of Greens and Farmers", and "The Progressives" – from currently working together in the same coalition and government. On security issues, all three parties express a unified stance, advocating, for example, for strengthening the national border and increasing state security expenditures (with discussions on allocating 4% – 5% of GDP for defence in the coming years) (Saeima, 2025). It is important to note that Latvia remains among the NATO leaders in defence spending. For example, in 2025, Latvia plans to allocate 3,45% of GDP to defence (LSM, 2025). This finding indicates that ideological differences among the governing parties do not affect their support for national defence; all three primarily focus on strengthening long-term military capabilities rather than short-term political calculations or temporary policy shifts. At the same time,

two opposition parties – "National Alliance" and "United List" – also support a substantial increase in defence funding in the coming years. Conservative parties tend to emphasize the importance of national sovereignty and military defence, whereas liberal parties are more inclined to highlight international cooperation, multilateralism, and the role of diplomacy in addressing security challenges.

It may seem that a diverse ideological landscape in parliament could impact support for national defence policies, given that greater ideological diversity is often associated with lower support for military interventions. However, in practice, most of the parties represented in parliament – regardless of whether they are in government or opposition – remain unified on security issues and Latvia's participation in the EU and NATO. Furthermore, in the 2024 European Parliament elections, all the aforementioned parties and alliances, in their campaign messaging (Central Election Commission, 2024), prioritised external security-related issues, emphasising military defence and foreign policy at the Latvian, EU, and NATO levels.

Two political forces in the 14th Saeima stand out as significantly different from the rest of the parliamentary parties, the political parties "Latvia First" and "For Stability!". Their ideological positions and value systems diverge considerably from the dominant political lines within the parliament. The governance concepts of these parties, the approach to democratic processes and the vision of societal organisation often contradict the traditional political direction of Latvia, which, since the restoration of independence in the late 20th century following the collapse of the Soviet Union, has been primarily based on European values, the strengthening of parliamentary democracy, and international cooperation with partners in the EU, the UN, NATO, and other international organisations.

This ideological isolation makes it difficult for these parties to find common ground with the other political forces represented in the 14th Saeima, rendering them politically marginal players in decision-making and effectively positioning them in opposition. Furthermore, populist and Eurosceptic elements in their rhetoric further reinforce their separation from mainstream political blocs. As a result, "Latvia First" and "For Stability!" often position themselves as oppositional, protest-orientated parties, whose main strength lies not in ideological consistency or long-term strategy, but rather in their ability to appeal to specific voter groups,

including Latvia's Russian-speaking population, which expresses dissatisfaction with the existing political system and ruling parties.

Euroscepticism has not been particularly widespread in Latvia, as most political parties support the country's membership in the EU and NATO. However, the party "For Stability!" is associated with a Eurosceptic position, as it has expressed a desire to distance itself from the European Union. For example, in its 2024 European Parliament election programme, the party stated that sanctions imposed by Western countries on Russia for its aggression in Ukraine have been ineffective and have caused economic losses for Latvia as well (Central Election Commission, 2024). At the same time, the party's leader came to the attention of Latvia's State Security Service earlier this year due to public statements directed against Latvians (State Security Service, 2025). During discussions with the security services, the politician was warned of the potential legal consequences should this rhetoric escalate into the incitation of national hatred or other criminal offences. Statements and situations of this kind provide a foundation for Russian propaganda, which effectively exploits such narratives as part of its hybrid warfare strategy aimed at destabilising the political environment in Europe, including the Baltic region.

This party actively appeals to the Russian-speaking audience, which is not always loyal to the Latvian state. The Russian-speaking community in Latvia is far more divided on issues related to security and support for Ukraine compared to ethnic Latvians. Due to the current geopolitical situation, the risks of radicalisation have increased within Latvian society, and political forces that exploit ethnic issues, such as "For Stability!", may contribute to this trend in the long run through their rhetoric and political stance. In particular, in its latest European Parliament election campaign, "For Stability!" used Cyrillic script in its election materials, presenting the text as Bulgarian to circumvent Latvia's electoral advertising laws (LSM, 2024), which only allow campaigning in the official languages of the European Union. Such actions can be interpreted as an attempt to provoke discussions about Latvia's relationship with the EU. Due to its anti-elite rhetoric, its emphasis on the divide between the ruling political class and ordinary citizens, and its overall campaign strategy, the party is widely regarded as populist.

The party "Latvia First" is also considered a populist party, as its political programme and public statements (populist rhetoric) are primarily focused on national interests and social issues (LSM, 2024). For example, the party leader has publicly stated that Latvia should not impose any additional sanctions against Russia on its own. In addition, the party's chairman has expressed controversial opinions on international matters, such as stating that "a bad peace is better than a good war" in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

It is also worth noting that the party leader has been linked to allegations of ties to Russia, as he was reportedly named among the politicians whom Russian President Vladimir Putin allegedly paid money to (Baltic News, 2024). However, this information has not been officially confirmed, and Šlesers has publicly denied any such connections. Representatives of the party have also made public claims, stating, for example, that "in Latvia, talking about politics in Russian is dangerous because you can be imprisoned for it" (LSM, 2024). Statements of this nature are blatantly contradictory to the principles of a rule-of-law state, as they contribute to social division, undermine trust in the government, and create a narrative that can be exploited in propaganda, particularly by Russia, which has frequently used ethnic issues to criticise Latvia.

Public support for the party "Latvia First" continues to grow (DELFI, 2025), particularly as the party has launched an extensive campaign ahead of the upcoming municipal elections. Notably, it is actively addressing both Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking electorates – a relatively novel strategy in the Latvian political landscape, where parties have traditionally focused on either one or the other linguistic group. Recent party ratings indicate that "Latvia First" currently leads in the capital city of Riga and ranks second nationally (DELFI, 2025). In contrast, support for the governing coalition parties is declining, suggesting that the political landscape may undergo significant changes in the 15th Saeima elections scheduled for next autumn. Given current trends, it is likely that populist parties will not secure an outright majority, but their electoral strength may complicate coalition formation and contribute to increased political instability.

Voting on foreign and security policy issues in parliament often differs from decision-making in other policy areas, as it tends to be more directly influenced by party ideologies. In this way, foreign and security policy debates in parliament

tend to activate and structure ideological divisions among parties. Moreover, there are notable differences in voting behaviour between governing coalition members and opposition parties, which may be attributed to responsibility for policy implementation. Governing parties are typically expected to maintain a coherent foreign policy stance, especially when the country faces external threats. Therefore, parliamentary voting on security-related matters not only reflects ideological positions but also the institutional role of parties in government and the broader international context.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the relationship between political ideology and national security, providing valuable information for those interested in the interaction between domestic politics and security policy decisions. The analysed aspects may be particularly relevant to other European democracies that, like Latvia, operate within a multiparty system. By providing a detailed examination of the 14th Saeima, this study establishes a foundation for future research and fosters a more comprehensive understanding of how political ideologies and party positions shape attitudes toward national security.

The ideological diversity present in the Latvian parliament is both an advantage and a challenge for the country's political system. On the one hand, a broad spectrum of ideological positions fosters inclusive representation and democratic debate. On the other hand, it can create difficulties in implementing a unified and security-orientated policy. Ensuring national stability requires political parties to bridge ideological differences and develop a shared vision for national security priorities. For Latvia's long-term security, it is essential to maintain a consistent alignment with the NATO and European Union security strategies, which requires both political unity and a clear national defence strategy. To mitigate external influences and potential threats, it is crucial to build a resilient and cohesive political environment that can respond effectively to security challenges and strengthen national defence capabilities.

Conservative parties tend to emphasize the importance of national sovereignty and military defence, whereas liberal parties are more inclined to

highlight international cooperation, multilateralism, and the role of diplomacy in addressing security challenges. The increasing support for populist and ideologically ambiguous parties suggests a shift in voter mobilization patterns, which, combined with ideological fragmentation, poses long-term challenges to political security and democratic resilience in Latvia.

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