Attitudes toward Visible Migrants in the Baltic States:
An Empirical Analysis with Social Survey Data

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Abstract

This research, using European Social Survey (ESS) data, investigates effects of the social, economic, and political backgrounds on Baltic inhabitants' attitudes toward non-European visible migrants. Results show that attitudes toward such migrants are defined not merely by an individual's level of social awareness, but are also related to respondents' economic status and political orientation. Although some findings might be intuitively known by local context, this research contributes to providing concrete, empirical evidence to enable better understanding of rapidly-emerging source of social tensions.

Introduction

After the so-called European refugee crisis of 2014-15, the burden

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sharing of asylum seekers in the European Union (EU) caused various reactions in the Baltic States. While some parts of society welcomed the refugees from the Middle East and North African (MENA) states, other sectors harshly protested against the influx of such racially and culturally different peoples. One notable aspect of these protest movements was their antagonistic discourses regarding the arriving foreigners' different cultural and religious backgrounds, or even skin color, rather than their economic status.

Why do some Baltic peoples hold negative views of visible migrants, mainly from Asia and Africa, while others do not? What accounts for the differential hostility toward migrants of the same/similar racial background, and those of a different one? There is less research investigating attitudes toward visible migrants because of the lack of such visibly diverse minorities in the Baltic States in the past. However, as shown in the protest movements regarding the influx of asylum seekers in 2015 or the increased numbers of short-stay foreigners from Asia and Africa after the accession of the EU, we need to properly understand the attitudes of Baltic inhabitants toward racially different visible groups.

In the Baltic States, some have pointed out that severe racial extremism had never been mostly "absent or highly incidental" (Mudde 2005), while others imply that it has long existed and is just not demonstrated in public (as will be discussed later). The important question raised by the migration issue is, while some people in the Baltic republics have always hated any migrants in general (mainly for economic reasons), why are others hostile only toward migrants of Asian and African backgrounds? This research investigates the explanatory factors behind such sentiments by performing statistical data analysis with some case descriptions.

This paper is structured as follows: the first section reviews the literature about attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy (ATII), with some discussion of the racial orientation of the Baltic States. The second section demonstrates statistical analysis of survey data and argues that about 10-30% of respondents in the Baltic States have selective attitudes toward migrants, whether or not they are from the same racial/ethnic group. The third section investigates the explanatory factors that correspond with such attitudes among respondents. The final section re-summarizes the argument, and considers the implications and limitations of the study.

1. Anti-Immigrant Sentiments

1.1 General theories

The literature on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy (ATII) has identified what individual factors determine ATII. The effects of individual socioeconomic parameters have been controversial. Some works point out that individuals with low education, low income, or manual jobs tend to be negative toward accepting migrants (Quilian 1995; Wagner & Zick 1995; Schneider 2008). One work focusing only on refugees demonstrated similar results (Coenders et al. 2005). These works argue that vulnerable socioeconomic situation puts someone more directly in competitions for jobs with the newcomers, causing their negative stance toward migrants and refugees.

On the other hand, some works with statistical analysis found no significant socioeconomic parameters to explain individual ATII (Ceobanu and Escandell 2008; O'Rourke & Sinnott 2006). Such

studies argue that the important factor influencing individual perception of migrants is not objective socioeconomic conditions constraining individual competency, but rather subjective beliefs or political orientations. These studies focus on the effect of subjective threat perception (Chandler and Tshai 2001; Brader et al. 2006), political left-right orientation (De Figueiredo & Elkins 2003; Coenders & Scheepers 2008), and socio-political distrust and detachment (Sides and Citrin 2007; Ceobanu and Escandell 2008). Empirically speaking, these statistical researches demonstrate strong validity, and thus more explanatory power with regard to ATII, rather than socio-economic explanations.

Usually, these studies fail to distinguish migrant groups based on their visibility. Regarding the question of the visibility of migrants, their presence tends to be exaggerated because of their ethnocultural differences from the host society. One outstanding work highlighting the migrant visibility effect explains that a proportion of "non-European or North American" migrant have negative effect for acceptable attitude from the host society, while a proportion of western migrants have neither positive nor negative effect (Schneider 2008). The visibility of migrants from Asia and Africa might exaggerate their image perceived "threat" to job security.

1.2 The Baltic context

We should make a conventional distinction between two migrant groups. First is the so-called old migrants from the former Soviet territories; there are many works investigating attitudes toward them. The second group comprises the so-called "visible" migrants mostly from Africa and Asia; the number of works on them remains insubstantial.

Due to the relatively small number of visible migrants in the Baltic States, there are few reports of racial violence. However, this does not imply a lack of racially discriminatory sentiments. Some exceptional works (Kovalenko et al. 2010, Woolfson 2009) point out that intolerant attitudes toward these visible minorities exist, and that black Africans tend to be targets of physical or verbal attacks (Auers 2015: 152; Gunter 2001). Of course, there is also a wide consensus across society and public institutions about the necessity for tackling these issues. One popular short film about a social experiment, called "*Eksperimentas Vertimas*"[1] by the Lithuania Center for Human Rights is one vivid example.

What has received less consideration is the need to investigate what factors are behind the racially discriminatory attitudes toward visible migrants. One possible explanation, from the theoretical view mentioned above, is that socioeconomic factors play a key role. In one famous example, Būvniecības ABC's controversial 2007 advertisement featured a dark-skinned male with a turban and helmet working on a construction site (Figure 1). He says, "*Mans gribet remontet Tav's māja!*"[2], and the ad concludes, "All (tools) for repair and construction. Except imported workforces (Viss remontam un būvniecībai. Izņemot importa darbaspēku)." The Latvian government's Consumer Rights Protection Center (PTAC) issued a fine for this advertisement as it. contains prohibited contents, and used it as a public example of a racially prejudiced advertising.[3] This advertisement apparently contains

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNX1256eVw8
[2] It is hard to directly translate this phrase because of incomplete Latviangrammar. I personally assume that this sound like "For me, would-lik to repairr, home yours" for native Latvian speakers.
[3] PTCA official website [http://www.ptac.gov.lv/lv/content/aizliegta-rekl-ma]

connotations that describe the migrant as a "job-robber" This implies that someone, such as a construction worker, who has a job that attracts visible minorities, or has low-socioeconomic status, tends to have racially discriminatory attitudes toward visible migrant groups.

Figure 1. A fine-issued racially prejudiced advertising in Latvia 2007
Source: PTCA official website

Political orientation and background also may contribute to the formation of ATII. A recent example could be observed in the reaction toward the policy of asylum seeker burden sharing, decided at the EU summit in September 2015. Some of the major protest activities against this decision were organized by the radical rightist parties. The EKRE (Estonian Conservative Peoples Party) in Estonia and the NA (National Alliance)[4] in Latvia played key

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(4) Precisely speaking, VL (All for Latvia) which consist of the NA.

roles in the formation of the protest movement. Generally speaking, rightist parties and their supporters tend to oppose to the influx of migrant groups, but their activism depends on the political elites and what types of discourses they try to mobilize. They could even oppose the influx of immigrants and refugees since migrants have a negative effect on the national economy (regardless of their ethnocultural background), but they chose a discourse mobilizing feelings of cultural crisis in the host society. The NA organized protests under the phrase "Against 'Solidarity' with the human-rights business," and information about EKRE's protest was shared on a website expressing fear of a "white genocide" (Spektrs 2015). EKRE's campaign in 2015 Kui On Must, Näita Ust – meaning 'if s/he is black, send her/him back', gained a great deal of support from Estonians. We observed many such sentiments posted on online message boards of users fearing crises of ethnic, cultural, and national integrity, rather than economic insecurity (TVNET 2015, Dremljuga 2015).

The relationship with "old migrants" might affect attitudes toward visible migrants. One study found that Russian speakers in the Baltic States tend to demonstrate higher support for the concept of cosmopolitanism than Balts in each republic, or even in the Russian Federation (Toots and Idnurm 2012)[5]. While this might be partly because of their status as "migrants," it should be verified whether or not the same holds for attitudes toward visible migrant groups.

In the following sections, we will observe the distribution of

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(5) On the contrary, among migrant groups abroad, like in the UK, racial or ethnic differences work as an important "marker," and Baltic native workers tend to be represent themselves as "White" (Parutis 2011).

attitudes among the populations in the Baltic States, and divide them into three (technically four) groups, depending on their attitudes toward migrants groups. After that, we investigate the explanatory factors of each type or attitude regarding migrants.

2. Three Types of Attitudes Toward Migrants: Accepting, Refusing, Racially Discriminatory

This research uses the European Social Survey (ESS) data for analysis.[6] The ESS contains several questions about respondents' attitudes toward immigrants; we examined the similarities and differences of answers to following two questions.

[Question 1]
To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the <u>same</u> race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here?

[Question 2]
How about people of a <u>different</u> race or ethnic group from most [country] people? [7]

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(6) We used the ESS data from rounds 4 to 7, based on ESS1-7e01 data. However, this does not contain Latvia data because ESS has not received round 7 data from Latvia's research team (personal communication with ESS team). Hence, we used individual ESS round 4 data [latest] for the analysis of Latvia.

(7) The original texts of "Other race or ethnic groups" are as follows; samast rassist või rahvusest [EE]; cita(s) rase(s) vai etniskās grupa(s) [LV]; kito(s) rasė(s) ar etninės grupė(s) [LT].

As noted above, the only difference between these questions is the reference to immigrants' race/ethnic groups. Respondents can choose four options to these questions: allow many, allow some, allow a few, or allow none. In other words, they can show positive (allow "many" or "some") or negative answers (allow "a few" or "none") to the two questions. Hence, we could assume that there are four types of respondents based on how they answer these questions. The first type is immigrant *acceptant*, someone who answered both questions positively to accept migrants. The second type is immigrant *refuser*, someone who answered both questions negatively regarding accepting migrants. This group opposes immigrants in general, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Someone who negatively viewed migrants due to their negative impact on the national economy or competency for jobs might be included in this group. The third type is *racial discriminator,* who answered positively regarding immigrants from the same racial or ethnic group (meaning they do not hate immigrants and immigration in

		allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group as majority	
allow many/few immigrants of same race/ethnic group as majority			
		Allow many or some	Allow a few or none
Estonia	Allow many or some	42.85%	26.06%
(N=7463	Allow a few or none	2.39%	28.69%
		Allow many or some	Allow a few or none
Latvia	Allow many or some	35.83%	18.49%
(N=1817	Allow a few or none	1.54%	44.14%
		Allow many or some	Allow a few or none
Lithuania	Allow many or some	59.46%	12.94%
(N=5293	Allow a few or none	1.83%	25.77%

Table 1: Typology of ATII in the Baltic States
Source: ESS 4-7

general), but negatively toward immigrants from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. This third group was the focus of this research. The fourth group is made up of *xenophiles*, those who show positive attitudes toward migrants from different racial or ethnic groups, but negative ones toward their own. This might be exceptional group because of its inconsistency of logic.

The distribution (Table 1) of responses in the three Baltic nations, shows that most respondents are accepting of immigrants in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. About 40-50% of respondents demonstrate generally positive attitudes, indicating that they would allow immigrants from the same and different racial or ethnic groups. This indicates that refusing and racially discriminatory respondents consist of certain part of the population. In Estonia, around one fourth (26.06%) of respondents are racially discriminatory, and another fourth (28.69%) are immigrant refusers. In Latvia, 18.49% of respondents expressed racially different attitudes (discriminatory), while 44.14% showed their objection toward migrants in general (refusers). In Lithuania, 12.94% of respondents are racially discriminatory and 25.77% are immigrant refusers; hence, we could say that the Lithuanians are relatively non-discriminatory regarding the racial/ethnic background of immigrants: They either accept all immigrants or refuse. In all three republics, the xenophile groups are negligible. Thus, the following analysis omits the fourth group from the analyses.

3. Determinants of Anti-Immigrants Sentiments

3.1 Methods and data

The main question of this research is why some individuals are racially discriminatory regarding immigrant issues, and what parameters (social, economic, or political) explain their attitudes. To understand these explanatory variables, we must distinguish the factors that make individuals dislike immigrants in general, regardless of their racial/ethnic background, from those that lead them to be racially discriminatory.

To tackle this problem, we used a multinomial logistic regression analysis, by setting immigrant acceptant as the reference category. We could predict some parameters that demonstrate statistically significant influences, increasing the probability that someone will oppose all immigrants and racially different ones both, compared to the acceptant. Such factors could be treated as individual variables explaining the tendency to hate immigrants in general. Another type of factor might have explanatory power only over the probability that someone is racial discriminatory, compared to the acceptors. If we could find such parameters, then one could be treated as a determinant of tendencies toward racial discrimination in the Baltic countries.

Based on the existing literature, the following parameters are included in the analysis. Four basic social parameters (age, gender, educational level, and income) are controlled. Considering the social context of the Baltic States, citizenship status and minority status are also important. Russophones could demonstrate different attitudes toward migrant groups than native Balts. We use language

circumstance to control this aspect. In the process of attitude formation toward a migrant group, occupational status could be influential because job competition with migrant newcomers is different based on the type of job (and unemployment status). The literatures often hold that values, beliefs, or political orientation have more impact on ATII. Therefore, our analysis also contains three variables from the ESS dataset: importance of safe life, conservativeness (left-right scaling), and sociopolitical alienation.

3.2 Results and discussion

The findings from the analysis are as follows (Table 2). Some variables have commonly statistically significant ($p < .05$) effects in all three Baltic States. For example, elderly people tend have negative attitudes toward migrants. The older respondents have a statistically significantly higher probability of being migrant

Dependent variable reference = migrant acceptant	Estonia				Latvia				Lithuania			
	Racial discriminant		Refuser		Racial discriminant		Refuser		Racial discriminant		Refuser	
	coef.	se.	coef.	se.	coef.	se.	coef.	se.	coef.	se.	coef.	se.
Age	0.030**	(0.003)	0.033**	(0.003)	0.020**	(0.006)	0.024**	(0.005)	0.002	(0.006)	0.006	(0.004)
Female	-0.182+	(0.098)	-0.019	(0.097)	-0.324	(0.210)	-0.418*	(0.165)	0.012	(0.169)	-0.248+	(0.140)
Income	-0.024	(0.018)	-0.040*	(0.018)	-0.123**	(0.043)	-0.136**	(0.033)	0.045	(0.029)	-0.040+	(0.024)
Education	-0.078+	(0.046)	-0.187**	(0.045)	0.040	(0.097)	-0.019	(0.080)	-0.215**	(0.080)	-0.234**	(0.060)
Unemployment	0.215	(0.203)	-0.214	(0.224)	-0.508	(0.368)	-0.152	(0.243)	0.195	(0.342)	-0.263	(0.329)
Occupation (ref. manager)												
Army	1.218+	(0.689)	0.728	(0.797)	-1.214*	(0.439)	14.305**	(1.062)	-13.183**	(1.010)	2.934*	(1.165)
Specialist	-0.002	(0.157)	-0.280+	(0.162)	0.085	(0.422)	-0.055	(0.327)	-0.482	(0.327)	-0.276	(0.284)
Technician	0.417*	(0.177)	-0.252	(0.198)	0.323	(0.419)	0.252	(0.320)	-0.229	(0.337)	0.136	(0.287)
Clerk	0.033	(0.223)	-0.072	(0.216)	0.659	(0.479)	0.363	(0.373)	-0.083	(0.422)	0.077	(0.361)
Service/Sales	0.199	(0.183)	0.161	(0.179)	0.407	(0.412)	-0.008	(0.316)	-0.302	(0.331)	-0.033	(0.275)
Skilled Agriculture	0.298	(0.342)	0.235	(0.320)	0.705	(0.542)	0.398	(0.460)	0.266	(0.518)	0.214	(0.455)
Craft worker	0.161	(0.179)	0.331+	(0.176)	-0.024	(0.448)	-0.124	(0.332)	-0.483	(0.341)	0.013	(0.275)
Engineer	-0.096	(0.206)	0.232	(0.195)	1.087*	(0.482)	0.847*	(0.390)	-0.290	(0.346)	0.115	(0.284)
Elementary Work	0.148	(0.179)	-0.165	(0.184)	0.166	(0.446)	-0.203	(0.339)	-0.419	(0.344)	-0.236	(0.285)
Political Disinterest	0.038	(0.057)	0.181**	(0.058)	-0.008	(0.125)	0.235*	(0.096)	-0.007	(0.096)	0.229*	(0.089)
Left-Right position	0.012	(0.022)	0.020	(0.022)	0.083**	(0.040)	0.056+	(0.031)	0.009	(0.032)	0.061*	(0.025)
Security Concern	-0.065	(0.040)	-0.071+	(0.040)	-0.038	(0.088)	-0.085	(0.069)	-0.206**	(0.066)	-0.237**	(0.053)
Russian speaker	-0.242+	(0.140)	-0.409**	(0.148)	-0.569**	(0.252)	-0.580**	(0.193)	-0.641*	(0.283)	-0.435	(0.267)
Citizen	-0.178	(0.174)	-0.055	(0.178)	-0.600+	(0.346)	-0.152	(0.759)	1.663*	(0.814)	2.096*	(0.848)
Polish speaker									-0.579	(0.387)	-0.489	(0.320)
Constant	-1.072*	(0.445)	-1.392**	(0.458)	-0.489	(0.993)	0.084	(0.759)	-1.914+	(1.101)	-2.172*	(1.068)

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$.
Robust standard error is used.
Table 2: Multinomial Regression analysis of ATII typology in the Baltic States (N=3835(EE),1224(LV),3191(LT))

refusers or racial discriminants (except in the case of Lithuania for migrants of the same ethnic group). Education level does not have a statistically significant impact on attitudes toward migrants in Latvia, but does decrease the probability that someone will be a refuser – but not racially discriminatory.

Generally speaking, it seems likely that we could find common determinants in the Baltic states for the probability that someone will be a migrant refuser. Russian speakers (in Estonia and Latvia) and highly-educated people (in Estonia and Lithuania) are less likely to be racial discriminants or immigrant refusers. However, these variables do not explain solely the probability that someone will be racially discriminatory only.[8]

Regarding the factors leading to attitudes of racial discrimination, there are no common determinants across the three Baltic countries. This implies that, in each Baltic republic, there are distinct reasons and backgrounds that lead individuals to become racially discriminatory.

In Estonia, someone who works as a technician ("Technicians and Associate Professionals" in the ILO category), will tend to be less accepting toward migrants from differen races/ethnicities, while accepting migrants of the same racial groups. This result might be counter intuitive because technicians are usually highly skilled workers and less vulnerable to job insecurity from competition with migrants.

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(8) Interestingly, in Estonia and Lithuania, members of the military tend to be migrant refusers, but not racially discriminatory compared to other sector workers. Those working in the security sectors tend to have negative attitudes toward migrants in general, but have beliefs opposing ethnocentric perspectives.

In contrast to the Estonian case, in Latvia, manual laborers ("Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers" in the ILO category) tend to be racially discriminatory compared to other professions. This finding implies that the consciousness of competition with visible migrant groups for manual labor jobs leads to negative attitudes toward them. In addition, in Latvia, political left-right orientation has a statistically significant connection with racially discriminatory attitudes (with larger covariance of the probability for migrant refusers). Those who are more "right-wing" tend to be racially discriminator on migrant issues. We did not find this effect of political left-right scaling on racial orientation in any of the other countries. This implies that the connotation of political "left" and "right" in Latvia was different than in the other two Baltic republics.

In Lithuania, no factors can explain solely whether someone tends to be racially discriminatory. Other factors, which are beyond the scope of our analysis (e.g. cultural and religious orientation), may explain these differences. As shown in the Table 1, Lithuania seemed less racially discriminatory than the other Baltic countries. Therefore, it is also possible that its racially selective orientation might be an uncommon phenomenon, making it difficult to identify systematic origins.

4. Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications

This research found that following results : (1) While most of inhabitants in the Baltic States have positive or negative attitude toward accepting immigrants regardless migrants' racial background, about 10-30% of respondents have racially selective

attitudes. They demonstrate accepting attitudes toward migrants if the newcomers are racially similar to them, but show negative attitudes toward those from other races. These racially discriminatory attitudes exist in the all three Baltic States, but the determinant factors are different in each country. Our analysis did not find any common conditions or variables to explain the probability of someone being racial discriminatory. This implies that there are different contexts behind racial attitudes, even among the Baltic States. These are main findings of the current study.

Some limitations in the study have been identified. Regarding the different meanings of race/ethnicity, it is possible that some respondents treat the term "same ethnicity/race" narrowly, limiting its connotation to their Baltic compatriots. Among these people, even Russian-speaking minority groups are treated as racially different group. In practice, some of the nationalistic sentiment dominant in the Baltic States contains discourses "proclaiming themselves as part of Europe, the Baltic States distance themselves from Russia, seen as a non-European threatening 'other'" (Miniotaite 2003: 220).

Moreover, our analysis cannot sufficiently investigate the effect of political orientation due to limitations in the dataset. If we focused on respondents' political partisanships or media usage, for example, we might be able to find other parameters explaining the difference in individual attitudes toward visible migrant groups, but we need more survey poll data from the three republics. At any rate, the current study could contribute to the construction of a bridge-head to promote further research on attitudes toward migrants and their varying tendencies across the Baltic States.

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