SECURITY PROBLEMS CAUSED TO THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA BY THE UKRAINIAN WAR AND BELORUSSIAN HYBRID ATTACKS

Gediminas Buciunas, PhD

Lecturer
Associate professor
Law Faculty of Vytautas Magnus University
Public Security Academy at Mykolas Romeris University
Lithuania

ABSTRACT

"Those who fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it"
Winston Churchill

The second stage of Russia's war against Ukraine began on 24 February 2022, with a new invasion into other parts of Ukraine and the occupation of more territories. This invasion led to a massive influx of refugees from Ukraine into other countries, including the Baltic States, in search of shelter. It brought new challenges to the national security of the Republic of Lithuania and other countries as they anticipated the Russian Federation's next moves. Another event with relevance to the national security of the Baltic States is the fraudulent Belarusian election of 2020 and the subsequent migration crisis. As these two events are closely intertwined, they will be jointly analysed in this paper. Despite their different natures and essences, they serve as entry points for an analysis of the threats and challenges to national security, specifically for the Republic of Lithuania, emanating from the Russian Federation and its closest ally in the war against Ukraine, the Republic of Belorussia.

INTRODUCTION

"Study the past if you would define the future"
Confucius

Every country and region is faced with an array of threats, the origins or rather, the source of which, can vary from the impacts of natural disasters to the deliberate actions of individuals, groups or even countries aiming to destabilise the situation in a local area, region or state for geopolitical aims. These threats are encountered by countries with strong economies and stable societies, as well as countries taking their initial steps towards democracy. The source of the threat need not be internal, i.e., in the territory of the country. The threat can, like a virus, emanate from the territories of other nations. As an example, migrants from Asia and Africa are being employed as a hybrid warfare strategy by Belarus against the Republic of Lithuania, Poland and the Republic of Latvia.

Following the collapse of the Soviet empire, all former Soviet Republics gained independence and moved at varying speeds toward a market-based economic model, democracy and the rule of law. While the Russian Federation was initially on the path to democracy, by paving friendly relations with neighbouring countries, especially the former Soviet Republic, it has steadily shifted its focus towards centralising power in the hands of the president, suppressing opposition within Russia and pursuing more ambitious goals in the international political arena. Furthermore, it employs different tactics to force independent states, especially its neighbouring countries, to accept Russia's view on the World order. The instruments used to achieve this objective range from manipulating the prices for gas, oil and other raw materials, indirectly financing political movements and creating favourable conditions for influential individuals to engage in business with Russian companies in the gas and oil sectors to resorting to brutal military interventions, all with the singular aim of drawing former Soviet Republics into Russia's sphere of influence.

The author of this paper would like to highlight several events that reflect Russia's shift towards the restoration of the Soviet empire and its exceptional role in global political affairs. For example, in 1999, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov's decision (during an official visit to

the United States of America), to turn his plane around mid-flight over the Atlantic and return to Moscow, in protest of NATO actions against Serbia; the 2003 Tuzla Island conflict; V. Putin's 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference; the 2008 military invasion and occupation of parts of Georgia; and the 2010 Ukraine-Russia gas war, among others.

In its 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, the Russian Federation stated: "The world is currently going through fundamental changes related to the emergence of a multipolar international system". After the collapse of the Soviet empire, Ukraine gained independence and steadily moved toward a market-based economic model, despite all attempts by the Russian Federation to keep Ukraine within its sphere. In 2014, the Russian Federation initiated a brutal war against sovereign and independent Ukraine, marked by the appearance of the so-called "*little green man*" during the occupation of several Ukrainian regions. This development was unexpected for many politicians and societies in countries around the world. The term "*little green man*" was coined by residents of the Crimean peninsula.[1] This concept was something new in the context of modern warfare and these were unexpected actions conducted by the Russian invaders. The next stage of Russia's war against Ukraine began on 24 February 2022, with a new invasion into other parts of Ukraine and the occupation of additional Ukrainian territories. This bloody aggression from the Russian Federation brought about significant changes within Ukrainian society and beyond, raising numerous questions for policymakers, military organisations and civil societies in countries worldwide regarding the effectiveness of existing preventive measures to stop the war. This topic could serve as a distinct subject for academic research, focusing on the exertion of influence through various tools and methods. These methods include manipulating the price policy for gas and oil, engaging in information warfare through the dissemination of false information, interference in Ukraine's political life using a variety of tools and ultimately resorting to brutal military aggression (*Author's note: The first stage of war against Ukraine began in 2014, while the second stage of war commenced on 24 February 2022*).

This research paper aims to analyse the challenges to the national security of the Republic of Lithuania arising from two closely intertwined

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[1]   The Changing Story Of Russia's 'Little Green Men' Invasion. https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-crimea/29790037.html

events: The first event is the response of the A. Lukashenko's regime to the sanctions imposed due to the fraudulent results of the 2020 elections in Belarus, which resulted in mass migration from Belarus to the European Union Member States bordering the Republic of Belorussia. The second event is linked to the second stage of the Russian Federation's aggressive war against Ukraine, which has created one of the largest migration crises in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The research questions that this paper seeks to address are as follows:

- What problems and challenges have emerged in the internal security of the Republic of Lithuania as a result of the border crisis following the fraudulent presidential election in 2020 in Belorussia?

- What problems and challenges have emerged to the internal security of the Republic of Lithuania due to the aggressive invasion by the Russian Federation into Ukraine in 2022?

- How might the Russian Federation leverage the influx of migrants into European Union Member States and third countries?

- What potential threats do these two events pose to the national security of the Republic of Lithuania?

The aims of this research paper are as follows:

- To analyse the impact of the fraudulent presidential elections in the Republic of Belorussia in 2020 and the second stage of the Russian Federation's aggressive war against Ukraine on the national security of the Republic of Lithuania.

- To examine the vulnerabilities and threats to the national security and public order of the Republic of Lithuania resulting from the aforementioned events.

- To identify potential instruments that could be employed by the Russian Federation in cooperation with the Republic of Belorussia to create potentially dangerous situations within the country.

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To achieve the aim of this research, the author will analyse the following topics:

- **The importance of the strategic location of the Baltic States and Russia's geopolitical ambitions in the Baltic Sea area.**

- **Military cooperation between Russia and Belorussia.**

- **The weaponization of migration.**

- **Espionage operations conducted through deep cover illegals.**

- **Tools used for gathering sensitive information.**

- **Russia's ideology and information warfare.**

- **The risk of diversion.**

- **The risk of an influx of weapons, explosive materials and devices from Ukraine.**

- **The free visa regime policy for visiting the Republic of Belorussia and the Russian Federation.**

- **The propagation of fake narratives about Ukrainians in Lithuania and Ukraine.**

Other topics, such as the indirect financing of political movements, creating exceptional conditions for specific individuals to engage in business with Russia and diplomatic instruments including official statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on various events in Lithuania, public comments made by Russia's officials and politicians on decisions made by the Republic of Lithuania, as well as the use of gas and oil prices as instruments of pressure and the presence of the notorious private military group "Wagner' troops in Belorussia, will not be addressed in this paper.

Research methods: The research employed various theoretical and empirical research methods, including content analysis, textual analysis,

archival research, analytic induction, systematic analysis, comparative research and descriptive-interpretive analysis.

Content analysis was used to analyse data sources, both online and offline, to categorise and compare different pieces of information and to summarise it into valuable insights.

Textual analysis was employed to study and comprehend written texts.

Archival research was conducted to search for and extract information from original archives.

Analytic induction and systematic analysis methods were employed to unveil the relationships between events and facts, enabling a systematic and exhaustive examination of a limited number of cases to draw generalisations and formulate conclusions.

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE STRATEGICAL LOCATION OF THE BALTIC STATES AND RUSSIA'S GEOPOLITICAL AMBITIONS IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

"The best way to predict the future is to study the past or prognosticate"
Robert Kiyosaki

The Baltic Sea area holds great significance for Russia. In the late 17th century, Russia's expansion was stymied by its lack of access to the sea. The dream of Russia's young czar, Peter the Great, was to establish a "*window on Europe*" for Russia, an outlet to the sea. Unfortunately, to the south, access to the Black Sea was blocked by the Ottoman Empire. So, Peter the Great turned his attention north, where Sweden controlled territory bordering the Baltic Sea.[2] During his reign from 1682 to 1725, Peter the Great founded the city of Saint Petersburg, often referred to as Russia's "**window to Europe**". He founded the Russian Empire in 1721. Dmitry Peskov, a Kremlin spokesman, noted in 2022, "If we are

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2 St. Petersburg—Russia's "Window on Europe". https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/102003608

specifically discussing Peter the Great, Putin deeply values the role of this particular individual in our country's history ".[3]

When we examine the historical events of the past century in the Baltic Sea area, we see tragic events related to the Baltic States in the past. For example, the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940 allowed the Soviet Union full access to the Baltic Sea, thereby enabling their ports to operate all year round.

The author of this paper has provided a visual representation of the locations of the Baltic States, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belorussia on the map below. This will offer a better view and understanding of why Russia seeks to keep the Baltic States within its sphere of influence or in other words, in the backyard of the Russian Federation as the successor must be undisputable after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
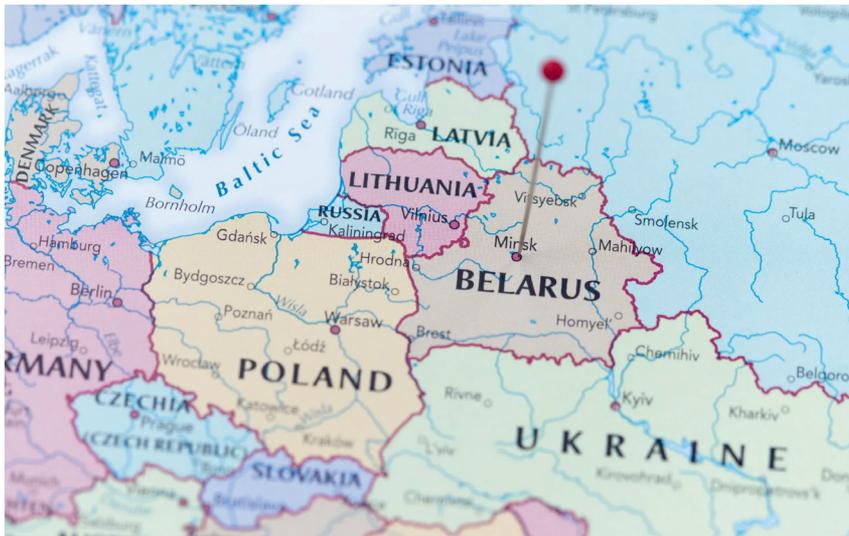

Figure 1. Map of Belarus. Source: mappr

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[3] Russia won't close Tsar Peter's 'window to Europe', Kremlin says. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-does-not-plan-close-window-europe-kremlin-says-2022-06-02/

Figure 2. Neman river. Source: Wikipedia.

Figure 3. Suwalki gap. Source: Yahoo! finance.

The author of this paper presents information and maps of the border with the Russian Federation to enhance visual comprehension of the geographical terrain and identify vulnerable border areas that could be exploited for special operations targeting objects within Lithuania.

The Lithuania–Russia border is an international border between the Republic of Lithuania (an EU external border) and the Kaliningrad Oblast, an exclave of the Russian Federation. It serves as an external border of the European Union. This 274.9-kilometre-long border traverses the Curonian Spit and Curonian Lagoon before following the course of

the Neman River, Šešupė, Širvinta, Liepona and Lake Vistytis. The sea border extends for an additional 22.2 kilometres. Along the 116-kilometre stretch of the Neman River, is the border between Lithuania and Russia's Kaliningrad oblast. Its maximum depth is 5 metres and it widens to about 500 metres. The Neman is a slow-flowing river, with a current of approx.1 to 2 m/s. It serves as a natural obstacle for illegal border crossings, making it much easier to control the border by utilising technical means.

2. RUSSIA'S AND BELORUSSIA'S MILITARY COOPERATION

For the Russian Federation, Belarus holds critical geostrategic importance. From a military perspective, the Suwałki corridor is of particular significance. Only 120 kilometres are separating the Kaliningrad region from the Republic of Belarus. The Suwałki corridor/gap is often considered the Achilles' heel of NATO. See the map (Figure 3) above.

Russian politicians, military experts, Western politicians and NATO military experts all agree on one thing: The Belarusian region is of significant importance to Russia due to its proximity to the Kaliningrad enclave, where the troops of the Western Military District are stationed. In the event of a potential crisis between Russia and NATO, the role of the Kaliningrad enclave will become more prominent and establishing a land connection with Kaliningrad via Belarus may become essential for Russia's interests.

Belarus is an important region for Russia, serving both as part of Russia's strategic deterrence and as part of Russia's internal military policy. This is demonstrated by Russia-Belarus joint military exercises, known as "Zapad", which Russia initiated in 1999. These military exercises with the Belarusian military forces involve the testing of test military readiness, refining operational concepts, evaluating new equipment and technologies and enhancing command-and-control capabilities. In 2013, Russia conducted joint military exercises ("Zapad") with Belarus, aimed at integrating the lessons learned from the 2008 war in Georgia. The 2017 "Zapad" military exercises focused on defending Russia against

potential attacks by several hypothesised hostile states. One of the military exercise's scenarios encompassed the northwest region of Belarus, not far from the Suwałki gap, a corridor along the Lithuanian-Polish border that separates Kaliningrad from Belarus. An area of 12,000 square kilometres encompassed the Grodno, Minsk and Vitebsk regions, where special forces operated and the more tactical phase of the drill took place. The location of the military exercise near the Suwałki gap may have been a hint that what Russia views as defensive operations could potentially include limited operationally offensive actions, such as the seizure of key arteries. The "Zapad" military exercise in 2021 marked a major tactical shift in operational and strategic intensity. The drills involved approx.200,000 military personnel, over 80 aircraft and helicopters, as well as up to 760 units of military equipment, including over 290 tanks, multiple-launch rocket systems and 15 ships. The scenario was built around a massive operation and conventional war response to an allied invasion by three different countries, similar to the Baltic states and Poland.[4]

On 3 December 2022, Russian Defense Minister Shoigu and his Belarusian counterpart Viktor Khrenin signed a protocol (classified) amending the countries' joint regional security agreement dating back to 1997. In 2023, Moscow and Minsk signed an agreement formalising the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear missiles on Belarusian territory. Shoigu stated that Moscow would retain control over the weapons and make decisions regarding their use. TASS quoted him as saying that Iskander-M missiles, capable of carrying conventional or nuclear warheads, had been provided to the Belarusian armed forces and some Su-25 aircraft had been adapted for the potential use of nuclear weapons. …It's political signalling… The Russian government, at the highest levels, may issue warnings about the risk of nuclear war if NATO provides Patriots to Ukraine, and gives F-16s to Ukraine.[5]

The author's opinion is that it's a smart step done by the Russian political-military establishment. Let's consider the worst-case scenario: Russia might employ a nuclear tactical weapon against Ukraine to

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4   Understanding Russia's Great Games: From Zapad 2013 to Zapad 2021. https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/understanding-russias-great-games-zapad-2013-zapad-2021

5   Russia signs deal to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/25/russia-signs-deal-to-deploy-tactical-nuclear-weapons-in-belarus

prevent Ukrainian victory and simultaneously force Ukraine to initiate talks on a truce agreement with Russia or to provide leverage in negotiations with the democratic world and Ukraine, favouring the Russian Federation. How NATO and Western politicians will respond to the use of tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine, a non-NATO member, remains uncertain. Several scenarios could be considered. One possible scenario might involve Western powers supplying lethal weapons, e.g., long-range rocket systems, advanced military jets and ships. Another scenario for discussion could involve an attack on military installations of the Russian Federation, which will lead to a confrontation with the world's largest nuclear power. Are Western countries prepared to take such action? Among the many questions that will arise is the simple one: should the territory of Russia or the territory of Belorussia be attacked? This will lead to endless and extensive discussions among policymakers and the military of NATO members. Different opinions will be presented and reaching a final clear decision is highly unlikely. It is the weakness of democracy, and the Russian Federation has been well aware and has skillfully exploited this for an extended period. Furthermore, Russia's decision to deploy a nuclear weapon in Belarus can be considered an additional attempt to divide the united Western leaders who stand for the territorial integrity of Ukraine into several quarrelling camps. This move aims to instil fear of a potential nuclear winter among the population of the Western hemisphere, intended to foster or incite possible unrest and demonstrations in the Western European countries, similar to what happened during the Vietnam War in the USA and Western European countries. On the other hand, the use of nuclear weapons will lead to environmental catastrophe, causing pollution in the air, water and soil in many East, Central and even Western European countries.

3. WEAPONISATION OF MIGRATION

War, poverty, military conflicts and famine force people to leave their homes looking for safer havens in other countries or continents. As per the official portal of the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, the steadily increasing influx of illegal migrants coming from Belarus to Lithuania has become a serious challenge from 2021 onwards. For example, the number of foreigners

temporarily accommodated at the Parade Detention Centre (Foreigners Registration Centre) in the first half of 2021 increased 3.6 times compared to the second half of 2020. Information about possible migrant flows has been obtained through various channels, beginning with the movement of migrants from their countries of origin to intermediate countries where they await an opportune moment to enter the territory of the European Union. In this case, that territory is Belarus. Indicators such as a sharp increase in international transport services, local traffic towards the EU external border, developments in the human trafficking market, political processes in Belarus and the response of the A. Lukashenko's regime to the sanctions imposed for the fraudulent results of the 2020 elections in Belarus have all contributed to the mass migration threats. The influx of migration, as part of the hybrid attack against Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia, supported by Belarusian authorities in 2021, necessitates that Lithuanian institutions take immediate and coordinated countermeasures to halt the hybrid attack on the European Union (hereinafter referred to as the EU).

Accordingly, Lithuania is responsible for ensuring the protection of its border, and as a sovereign state, has the exclusive and discretionary right to make final decisions in a given situation and employ the most suitable and effective measures to address threats to national security. The Belorussian authoritarian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, employed similar tactics toward Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia as Gaddafi did in Libya. Gaddafi used the threat of maritime migration to pressure the lifting of the embargo and he continued to do so until the NATO air campaign of 2011. The unrecognised Tripoli government has similarly issued threats, much like Gaddafi did in 2010, suggesting that Europe would 'turn black' unless it received more resources and political recognition. In Morocco, the government has managed to extract substantial 'geographical rent' (Natter 2013), due to the country's strategic location on irregular migration routes and it has done so in a more subtle manner. In Spain, it's widely acknowledged among border professionals that 'if migrants pass, it's because they [the Moroccan authorities] want them to pass'. By selectively 'opening' and 'closing' its borders, Rabat can maintain pressure on Spain and the EU while seeking recognition of Morocco as a key European partner (Andersson, R., 2016).

The utilisation of migration processes by the authoritarian Belarus leader, A. Lukashenko, against Poland, the Republic of Lithuania, and the Republic of Latvia, which are responsible for safeguarding the external border of the European Union, as a weapon of "*soft power*", represented a new development in the coordinated policy of the Russian Federation and Belarus during the escalating geopolitical confrontation between the Russian Federation and the West. The utilisation of migration as a weapon against other countries is not a new phenomenon in human history. However, what makes this situation unique is that it was used against member states of the European Union. In these border territories with Belarus, a significant part of the population has kinship, economic and cultural ties to Belarus. Additionally, many share the same religion, Orthodox Christianity under the control of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Other member states of the European Union, such as the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Italy and Greece, have faced and continue to face waves of migrant influx. However, the methods migrants used to access the external southern border of the European Union are radically different from how migrants reached Belarus. With the assistance of the regime's repressive structures, they reached the external eastern border of the EU. These migrants crossed the border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belorussia in places not designed for border crossing, which, in legal terms, is considered illegal border crossing. They did not go through the border crossing points, the official gate to the country. This action carries criminal liability, as outlined in Article 291 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania. Since 3 August 2022, the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania was granted the right to turn back illegal migrants. In 2022, "Amnesty International" prepared a report and among its recommendations, it called for an end to pushback.

In all municipalities bordering Belarus and the Russian Federation, there is no language barrier for cross-border communication. In many cases, the population is linked by kinship. For some people, small-scale smuggling of tobacco, alcohol, food and other consumables serves as an additional source of income. This is due to the much lower prices in Belarus and the environment, which is favourable for such activities, including swamps and extensive forests covering over 500 hectares. Approx.43% of the total land area in the districts bordering Belarus

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is covered by forests. In some districts, this forested area is even larger than the average. The land border between Belarus and Lithuania spans 677 kilometres and is called a "*blind border*", serving a strictly controlled, barrier-isolating function, with only a few exceptions for crossing on foot to visit neighbouring regions.

At the border with Belarus, the ethnic composition of the population has a significant impact on both the development of the economy and on its underground illegal activities. Due to Belaru's different economic system, its price policies featuring especially low prices of tobacco, alcohol, fuel and some food products attract a segment of the population to profit from this situation. For example, in the city of Salcininkai, every second pack [of cigarettes] is illegal and "Every fifth pack [of cigarettes] discarded in rubbish bins is non-Lithuani."." and illegal." Furthermore, since only public rubbish bins are covered, the percentage may be somewhat higher. If we look at what Lithuanians discard in their domestic rubbish bins, it's possible that people might tend to hide [illegal goods] and throw them away where nobody can see them.[6]

This leads to the conclusion that certain goods, such as tobacco, might be brought into the territory of Lithuania through various smuggling schemes. The aforementioned vulnerability, which is linked to the geographical terrain and the likely persistence of smuggling routes from Belorussia to Lithuania, could be exploited for special operations against the Republic of Lithuania by Russian spy agencies.

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Millions of people have fled Ukraine. As per "**Statista**", a German online platform specialised in data gathering and visualisation that provides statistics, reports, market insights, consumer insights and company insights on the global digital economy, industrial sectors, consumer markets, public opinion, media and macroeconomic developments, the estimated number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe and Asia since February 2022, as of May 9, 2023, varies by selected country.

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6   Neapskaitytų tabako gaminių problemos vertinimo galimybės Lietuvoje. https://www.elta. lt/storage/pressreleases/2021/01/22/96/9646.pdf

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COUNTRY	AS OF DATE	NUMBER OF REFUGEES
Russia	10/3/22	2,852,39
Poland	5/9/23	1,593,860
Germany	4/19/23	1,061,623
Czechia	4/30/23	516,100
United Kingdom	5/1/23	203,700
Spain	5/8/23	175,962
Italy	4/21/23	175,107
France	10/31/22	118,994
Slovakia	5/7/23	114,628
Moldova	4/30/23	107,645
Romania	5/7/23	97,085
Austria	5/9/23	96,766
Turkey	1/26/23	95,874

4. ESPIONAGE THROUGH DEEP COVER ILLEGALS

As per the document "National Threat Assessment 2020", which was prepared in cooperation with the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania and the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, "Russia's intelligence and security services, which closely collaborate with Belarusian intelligence and security services, represent the primary intelligence threat to the Republic of Lithuania. Russian and Belarusian intelligence agencies are looking for new methods, ways and opportunities to continue their intelligence activities within the territory of the European Union Member States."

The infiltration of sleeper agents and the creation of spy networks/rings are the *modus operandi* of Russian intelligence agencies, including the Main Directorate of Military Intelligence of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (hereinafter referred to as the

GRU), the Federal Service of Security (responsible for intelligence activities and operations in the territories of former Soviet Republics) and the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation. This strategy is usually employed during economic, and migration crises, civil unrest and in times of military conflicts and wars. The Illegals Program (so named by the United States Department of Justice) was a network of Russian sleeper agents under unofficial cover. Edwards (2018) pointed out that the investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (hereinafter referred to as FBI) culminated in the arrest of ten agents (*Anna Chapman et al.*) on 27 June 2010, following a decade-long FBI operation (Edwards, 2018). A prisoner exchange occurred between Russia and the United States on 9 July 2010. The spies were sent to the USA by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (Russian abbreviation SVR). Posing as ordinary US citizens, they sought to reach out to academics, industrialists and policymakers to gain access to intelligence. Russia's program for deploying dormant agents abroad has proven to be an effective way of gathering sensitive information. In court documents, the US Department of Justice referred to the Russian spy group discovered in 2010 as a program of "illegals" (*The United States of America v. Anna Chapman and Mikhailo Semenko*): "The spies were trained in Russia and then sent to the United States (often through Canada, where they could establish a more reliable history) to gain access to intelligence from senior government and academic officials." Many of these spies had lived in the United States for a long time, spoke good English, had a regular job and even
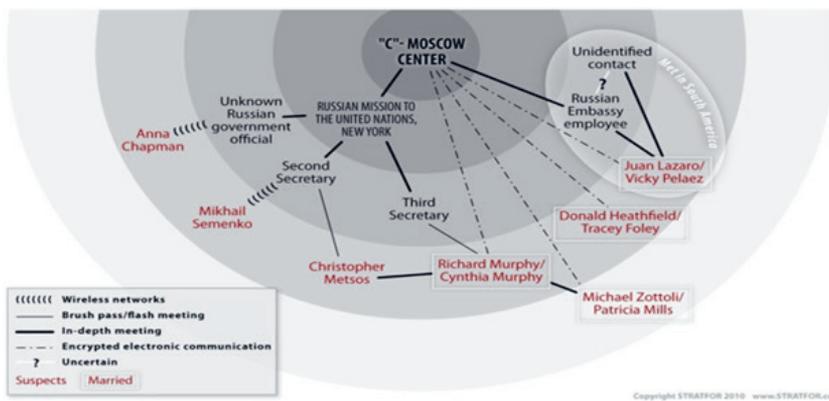

Figure 4. Russian spy ring. Source: Wired.

had children. Occasionally, they adopted the identity of deceased individuals who had died at a young age. Couples were brought together in Russia "…so that they could live and work together in the country of destination under the guise of being a married couple" (*The United States of America v. Anna Chapman and Mikhailo Semenko*). Above is a diagram[7] illustrating the communication system used among spies.

Russian officials publicly admitted the usage of illegal agents for gathering information abroad (interviews with former dormant agents and acting officials)[8],[9].

In recent years, espionage scandals involving Russian intelligence have emerged in some EU Member States. For example, in 2022, a Brazilian university researcher was arrested in northern Norway on suspicion of being a Russian. Norway's domestic intelligence service informed the state broadcaster NRK on Tuesday that they intended to expel the researcher, who is currently being held in custody, as he represented "a threat to fundamental national interests." The Police Security Service (hereinafter referred to as the PST) believes this researcher is the first Russian spy operating under deep cover to be identified in Norway.

The man now alleged to be a Russian spy was studying at the prestigious Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, an elite graduate programme favoured by US military personnel, young diplomats and sources say, future spies. "*Muller*" graduated from SAIS in 2020. In June 2022, a Dutch intelligence agency publicly identified him as Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, a Russian military intelligence officer who, in April 2022, travelled to the Netherlands to start an internship at the International Criminal Court (hereinafter referred to as ICC). From there, he would have had a vantage point to spy on war crimes investigations related to Russian military actions in Ukraine and other locations.[10]

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[7]   Who's Who in the Russian Spy Ring. Retrieved on June 2nd 2023 from: https://www.wired.com/2010/07/whos-who-in-the-russian-spy-ring/

[8]   Служба, которой не видно Эксклюзивный репортаж Вестей в субботу из штаб квартиры СВР. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrXhNEdoAd0

[9]   100 лет СВР «Без права на славу» Алексей Козлов. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1RCUL-FvM0

[10] Бразильский кандидат: тщательно подготовленная легенда предполагаемого российского шпиона. https://bellingcat.com/novosti/russia/2022/06/17/the-brazilian-candidate-the-studious-cover-identity-of-an-alleged-russian-spy-ru/

Criminal cases of espionage involving Belarusian intelligence on Lithuanian territory are not uncommon. For example, in 2015, a criminal case was opened involving espionage. As per the case files, an employee of the state-running enterprise "**Air Navigation Services**" R. L. secretly photographed documents and other objects in his office, later passing them to Belorussia's spy agency through secret agent S. K.[11] Another criminal case related to the same secret agent S. K. was also opened in 2015. The court found that, while serving in the Lithuanian army, this individual collected information related to Lithuanian military equipment, military training programs, military facilities and soldiers' loyalty to their country and then passed this information on to a Belarusian intelligence officer. Due to their diplomatic immunity status, some officials from the Russian Federation Embassy in Lithuania were declared as *persona non grata*.[12]

Director of the public institution "Our Home", Olha Karachi, stated at a press conference held on 7th October 2022 that there is reason to believe that a network of Lithuanian citizens recruited by Belarusian special services is operating in Lithuania. According to her, the Belarusian KGB is particularly interested in the activities of "Our Home" and "Dapamoga", as they are the biggest supporters of the Belarusian refugees in Lithuania. She also mentioned that a lawyer, M. D., was attempting to infiltrate into organisations that assist the families of persecuted Belarusians within Belarus. According to O. Karach, M. D. was interested in how to prevent the escape of persecuted Belarusians from escaping Belarus through Lithuania. She claimed to know that M. D. was attempting to establish connections with the American organisation "Salvation Army" and other entities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. She further stated that after the start of the war in Ukraine, M. D. also targeted the Ukrainian diaspora in Lithuania. The law enforcement agencies of Lithuania opened a criminal case on espionage and M. D. was arrested before escaping to Belorussia.[13]

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[11] Paviešinti slapti įrašai šnipinėjimo byloje: kaip buvo perduodamos žinios. https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/paviesinti-slapti-irasai-snipinejimo-byloje-kaip-buvo-perduodamos-zinios.d?id=67753810

[12] Svarbiausios šnipų bylos Lietuvoje. https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/svarbiausios-snipu-bylos-lietuvoje-56-823106?utm_medium=copied

[13] Baltarusių visuomenininkai įspėja: Lietuvoje veikia visas šnipų tinklas. https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/baltarusiu-visuomenininkai-ispeja-lietuvoje-veikia-visas-snipu-tinklas.d?id=91431691

As mentioned earlier, the Soviet Union and Russian spy agencies have been using and continue to use periods of unrest, especially the influx of migrants, to infiltrate illegal agents into foreign countries. As per the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 130 thousand Russian citizens have crossed the Lithuanian border from 24 February 2022 to 01 September 2022 – since the onset of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Some of them may have crossed several times.[14] Between 19 September 2022 and 30 September 2022, a total of 15,483 citizens of the Russian Federation were admitted to Lithuania, while 244 were not. 12 million Russian citizens have Schengen visas.[15]

Nowadays, specialists in information technology are in high demand in many developed countries. For a long time, the Republic of Belarus was best known for its tractors, fertilizers and oil products. However, when Lukashenko signed a decree in 2017 exempting technology companies from various taxes, including corporate tax, the country's capital Minsk has become a regional high-tech hub in recent years. This taxation policy has enabled the establishment of over a thousand information technology companies in Belarus, employing more than 70 thousand people. Among them is the famous high-tech company "**Wargaming**," the creator of the extremely popular computer game "World of Tanks" that is loved worldwide.

Another Belarusian success story is the messaging and video calling application "**Viber**." Initially, the application was developed in Belarus and in 2014, the company was acquired for 900 million US dollars by the Japanese technology giant "Rakuten". In 2019, the export of products and services of the Belarusian information technology sector reached 2.7 billion US dollars and was 25% higher than in previous years. In 2020, the information technology (hereinafter referred to as IT) sector of the Republic of Belorussia accounted for approx. 4% of the country's GDP. Several IT specialists took part in the demonstrations due to the fraudulent presidential election on 9 August 2020 and later became the target of

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[14] Landsbergis G.: rusai nuo karo pradžios Lietuvos sieną kirto. https://durys.daily.lt/naujienos/lietuva/politika/g-landsbergis-rusai-nuo-karo-pradzios-lietuvos-siena-kirto-130-tukst-kartu-1093662

[15] Ilgalaikes Šengeno vizas turi net 12 mln. Rusijos piliečių ir netrukdomai marširuoja po Europą: bet tai keisis
httpps://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/lietuva/ilgalaikes-sengeno-vizas-turi-net-12-mln-rusijos-pilieciu-ir-netrukdomai-marsiruoja-po-europa-bet-tai-keisis-n1186763

law enforcement agencies. Thousands of IT specialists left Belarus, and IT companies moved to neighbour EU MS (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia). As per the magazine "Verslo žinios (in English "Business News"), from 2020, the Belarusian IT companies that began to move more actively have had a significant impact on the real estate market in the Lithuanian capital city, Vilnius. In the first half of 2022, Belarusian IT companies were the main drivers of the real estate market in the office segment in Vilnius.[16]

In the author's opinion, Russian and Belorussian spy agencies might use opportunities to gather sensitive information through IT specialists who left the country. There are numerous ways to force migrants working at IT companies to cooperate with spy agencies. Additionally, there are also numerous legal methods for infiltration.

The author of this research paper would like to present one of many scenarios. Many private companies, especially state institutions, provide a wide range of online services and an increasing number of e-services are expected to be available shortly. State institutions often announce a public tender for the creation of new document management systems or the upgrading of existing ones. As per the law on public procurement, certain exemptions and tenders can be conducted under other regulatory laws. Let's consider a scenario where a company won a public tender to create a new document management system for the National Health Insurance Fund under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. The winning company, tasked with completing projects on time, entered into a subcontractor agreement with an IT company based in Belarus to develop mobile applications. The information about this contract was intercepted by a Belorussian spy agency. Let's imagine the next steps these spy agency agents might take, especially if family members of the IT specialists are living in Belorussia. Numerous other scenarios can be used to collect sensitive information through established SPA centres, etc. So, to sum it up, amendments to the Law on Public Procurement of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts related to public tenders should be made to prevent the leakage of sensitive information. These amendments should be done in a non-discriminatory manner.

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[16] Baltarusijos IT kompanijos keliasi į Lietuvą ir tikrina NT sektoriaus ribas. https://www.vz.lt/nekilnojamasis-turtas-statyba/2022/07/28/baltarusijos-it-kompanijos-keliasi-i-lietuva-ir-tikrina-nt-sektoriaus-ribas

Additional attention should be paid to the involvement of information technology companies originating from third countries and non-NATO member countries as subcontractors to provide the most important services related to the information infrastructure within state institutions, enterprises and strategic enterprises run by the state or privately owned.

4. TOOLS FOR GATHERING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The official commentary from the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Lithuania stated that "For the intelligence and security services of Russia and Belarus, gathering information about Lithuania's special and military objects is important. The collection of information about objects important for military planning can be conducted by various means and methods, including the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) over these objects". However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it currently had no data "confirming the use of drones for the interests of the intelligence and security services of Russia and Belarus".

Comparing the data from 2022 and 2021, the military has noticed a significant increase in the number of remotely controlled aircraft illegally flying over military territories. One of the military facilities recorded more violations in one month this year than in the entire previous year. The former Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, Reserve Lieutenant General Jonas Vytautas Žukas, informed BNS that the activation of unidentified drones over military territories was initially recorded during the large-scale Russian-Belarusian exercise "Zapad" in 2017. This raised concerns among officials about possible incidents. Consequently, rules were introduced to allow such drones to be physically shot down. The general stated, "Activity decreased and practically stopped after the decision to physically shoot down drones." According to J. V. Žukas, during his leadership of the army from 2014 to 2019, not a single controller of the drones that flew over military territories was identified. Therefore it's practically impossible to confirm their links with espionage. Prohibited zones are established over important, sensitive infrastructure facilities where drone flights cannot be conducted without the permission of the owner of the location. Drones are only required to be registered when they fall into a certified category. At present, there are no such registered

aircraft in Lithuania. Common and private drones that are frequently seen in the sky do not fall into this category. Conducting drone flights over military territories or within specified distance from them or in prohibited, restricted and border zone airspace, without the necessary authorisation, results in **administrative liability,** which includes a fine of two hundred to four hundred Euros. Repeated offences can result in a fine of between three hundred and five hundred Euros, as well as confiscation of the drone.

In mid-October 2022, several mysterious drone flights were observed in Norway. Seven Russians were arrested in Norway, suspected of illegally flying drones or taking pictures in prohibited areas. One of the Russians arrested was identified as Andrey Yakunin, the son of former Russian Railways chief Vladimir Yakunin, who is considered to be close to Russian President Vladimir Putin.[17]

Another unconventional method employed by the Russian Federation for gathering information is through the use of mobile phone devices. Firstly, to grasp how this information may be collected, we need to understand how the mobile network system operates. Mobile phones operate by transmitting and receiving low-power radio signals, similar to a 2-way radio system. These signals are exchanged with antennas connected to radio transmitters and receivers, commonly known as mobile phone base stations. The base stations are connected to the broader mobile and fixed phone network and relay the signal/call within these networks. In essence, a mobile phone needs to have a "clear line of sight' to a mobile phone base station. In other words, the radio signal from the phone to the base station needs to be uninterrupted.[18] A mobile phone establishes a connection with one of the available cellular towers by emitting radio waves. Most of the time, the receiver and transmitter are integrated into a single device known as a transceiver. The tower may have antennas that look the same or different, depending on the network generations in use. These antennas receive radio waves from various devices on different bands, depending on the network generation in use.

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17   Norway on edge over drone sightings, arrest of son of Putin confidant. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/20/norway-drones-russia-arrests-gas/

18   How mobile networks work. https://amta.org.au/1041-2/

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Towers are typically connected to a data centre via underground cables.[19] The International Telecommunication Union (hereinafter referred to as ITU) is the specialised agency of the United Nations for information and communication technology. This organisation has 193 member countries, including the Russian Federation. Signal strengths of mobile phone base stations/cellular towers typically range from -30 to -110 dBm. In general, a signal strength of -50 dBm is considered excellent. The maximum effective range of a cell tower is typically 25 miles (40 kilometres), although in some cases, cell tower radio signals can extend up to 45 miles (72 kilometres) in distance. Cell towers are vertical structures that vary in height from 30 metres to 120 metres. These towers use antennas to transmit radio signals from the tower to a customer's mobile device. By positioning antennas high above the ground, cell towers can provide wireless coverage over a wide area (or radius).[20] An official from the Communications Regulatory Authorities of the Republic of Lithuania explained that, as per the Vienna Agreement, mobile communication stations situated on the border must be constructed in a manner that prevents neighbouring operators from emitting signals that exceed a specified threshold into our territory. Specifically, when measured at a height of 10 metres, within 30 kilometres from the border, their signal should be nearly non-existent. However, problems may arise due to the peculiarities of the terrain and the positioning of the stations."[21] As per the regulations, mobile network operators are mandated to restrict the reach of their signal to the border of Lithuania. Antennas are installed at an angle that ensures a strong connection with Lithuania and minimises signal spillage into neighbouring countries. Indeed, the Russian Federation mobile network operators in some areas of the Kaliningrad enclave, particularly near the popular resort city of Nida bordering with Lithuania and Belorussian mobile network operators, have strategically installed cell towers along the border with the Republic of Lithuania in a such way that the antenna's signal towards Lithuania is stronger, overpowering the local (Lithuanian) operator's signal. In this scenario, if mobile phone users have not manually selected a network on their mobile phones, they may unintentionally connect to another country's

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[19] How mobile networks work. https://www.simbase.com/learning/how-mobile-networks-work

[20] Simmons. A., Cell tower range: how far do they reach? https://dgtlinfra.com/cell-tower-range-how-far-reach/

[21] At the border - a trap for mobile users.https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/148579/pasienyje-spastai-mobiliojo-rysio-vartotojams/

mobile operator's network. Nowadays, with the advancement in technologies and signal surveillance, it's now possible to collect information remotely. As a result, there are no guarantees that Russian or Belorussian spy agencies may not have the technology to gather information from mobile phone devices remotely, such as extracting the list of contacts from the mobile phone's device memory.

This leads to the conclusion that drones could be used for gathering sensitive information. The legal regulation on preventing the use of drones over military installations, critical infrastructure, strategic objects, other flammable objects and communication networks should be revised. Specialised equipment should be set up to safeguard these protected areas from unauthorised drone access. Additionally, mobile phone devices may become targets for spy agencies even within your own country. This risk persists if your mobile phone lacks the manual network search function as you could connect to another country's mobile operators' network during your visit to the Silute and Nida districts located near the border with the Kaliningrad enclave or in the districts bordering Belorussia.

5. RISK OF DIVERSION

Terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to peace and security and it poses a direct threat to universally recognised democratic values. As per the National Threat Assessment 2023 prepared by the Defense Intelligence and Security Service under the Ministry of National Defense and State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, the threat of terrorism in Lithuania is low. However, the risk of terrorism-related offences by lone radicalised individuals remains. As per the National Threat Assessment 2023, the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces (GRU) constantly collects intelligence on strategic military and civilian infrastructure in countries bordering Russia. This information allows Russia to assess the military capability and weaknesses of its opponents. Russia utilises this knowledge for planning subversions that target state functions and democracy procedures and also military operations, like the one against Ukraine's critical infrastructure.

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The author of this paper intends to classify potential targets for possible attack into the following categories: strategic objects, critical infrastructure, recycling facilities for used tires, objects of timber industry sites and shopping malls, especially those trading in agricultural and industrial products, e.g., example, fertilizers, paints and flammable liquids. As we can see, these categories encompass a range of objects with varying levels of protection. For instance, strategic objects are the most heavily protected. Therefore, to summarise, facilities used for the storage of used tires or sites related to the timber industry might be considered soft targets in the event of a diversion due to their lower level of protection.

The next question to consider is, who might be potential perpetrators of acts of diversion? Could it be radicalised residents, a Lone Wolf or members of paramilitary organizations in Russia? How would members of paramilitary organisations from Russia enter the territory of Lithuania to create diversions? There are numerous ways to do it. For example, they could choose to illegally cross the Belorussia-Lithuania border using routes employed by smugglers or they could use the regular transit of cargo trains that traverse Lithuania while moving from Belorussia to the Kaliningrad enclave, etc. This particular topic could warrant separate research.

6. RISK INFLUX OF WEAPONS, EXPLOSIVE MATERIAL AND DEVICES FROM UKRAINE

This issue is at the forefront of the agendas of EU MS law enforcement agencies. Wars create conditions conducive to the accumulation of weapons, often outside direct state control. Furthermore, the conclusion of wars tends to lead to an illegal outflow of these weapons into the hands of criminal and terrorist organisations. In many cases, most Western weapons find their way into southern Poland and are subsequently shipped to the Ukrainian border and then simply distributed in vehicles to make the crossing: trucks, vans and sometimes private cars. Weapons like the Javelin and the Stinger have become significant concerns for high-ranking officials of Western countries. These portable weapons are easy to handle and capable of neutralising an armoured vehicle at several hundred metres or of targeting helicopters and combat aircraft at

low altitudes. Despite concerns about the proliferation of weaponry, preventive measures have been taken by Ukrainian authorities and the law enforcement agencies of EU MS bordering Ukraine. As a result, there are no recorded instances of weapons being smuggled out of Ukraine. Western countries are concerned about the potential widespread distribution of weaponry in neighbouring countries, as was observed after the Balkan wars in the 1990s. This legacy continues to fuel weaponry trafficking in Western Europe. Concerning the war in Ukraine, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation has issued a warning "that the proliferation of firearms and explosives in Ukraine could increase firearms and munitions being trafficked into the EU via established smuggling routes or online platforms. This threat could be even higher once the war in Ukraine has ended."

7. RUSSIA'S IDEOLOGY AND INFORMATION WARFARE

Nowadays, exerting influence on other countries through the use of hard power, particularly military force, is not a popular tool. The reader might ask, why? There are many explanations for this. In the author's opinion, one of the explanations why military interventions have been getting less and less popular in the last 50 years is the ability of a nation to fight battles outside their country's territory. On the other hand, the celebration of military victories on the battlefield, the mystification of military commanders and the highlighting of successful operations conducted by intelligence services, both domestically and abroad, serve as powerful tools to mobilise a nation's population, diverting their attention from domestic painful concerns. A movie is a powerful tool in a country's soft power arsenal. The impact of just two or three films can affect millions of souls and minds, especially young, fragile youth. Today, many people crave instant gratification. This places pressure on the country's political and business leaders to take decisive actions to find ways to maintain the trust of the population if they wish to remain in their position. So, like chef de cuisine, the country's governing politicians are constantly looking for recipes to prepare meals for the eyes and minds of the population. What are the most suitable ingredients to prepare a popular meal? How should the final product be delivered? Who should be the

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target audience? Will it be addressed inside or outside the country e.g., to neighbouring countries and/or other continents? Could the ingredients include a country's history, the accomplishments of its citizens in diverse fields of science and the arts or the country's victorious military battles in the past? A head of state is in charge of the foreign policy of the country, e.g., Article 86 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation states that "*The President of the Russian Federation: 1)* governs the foreign policy of the Russian Federation." (http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_28399/ (2020). The head of state's vision for the country's development serves as a firm foundation for the strategy on how the country will achieve or maintain its visions. A combination of both hard and soft power is essential and must be put into action to achieve a goal. Detailed information about the country's development visions, the tools and the methods to attain these goals can be found in the country's strategic documents. They help us to understand a country's strategy and tactics in shaping international relations and mobilising the population. For example, the Strategy of the State Cultural Policy for the period up to 2030 (comprising 44 pages), approved on 29 February 2016, by Order No 326-p of the Government of the Russian Federation states that: "The most significant potential threats to the future of the Russian Federation possibly showing the humanitarian crisis include: … deformation of historical memory, negative assessments of significant periods of Russian history …. attempts to falsify Russian and world history, illegal attacks on cultural objects. Attempts to falsify Russian history and subject it to revision, to revise the results of the Second World War, continue. Under these conditions, the most important condition for the success of the soft power of Russian humanitarian influence abroad is the implementation of an effective cultural policy. …The priority directions of the Strategy are strengthening and expanding the influence of Russian culture in foreign countries" (*http://government.ru/docs/22083/, (2016),* page 27 of the Strategy. Translation done by the author of this paper).

There are several concepts related to historical events, fully supported by Russian Federation authorities and evidenced in 2005-2020. Firstly, the concept of "**The Immortal Regiment**" (in Russian "Бессмертный полк") has a long history. The main objective is "immortalising" the memory of home front workers, armed forces service personnel, partisans, members of resistance organisations and personnel of law enforcement and emergency services. It involves people honouring war veterans

by carrying pictures of relatives and/or family friends who served in the country's labour sector, paramilitary units, the Soviet Armed Forces and law enforcement organisations during the Second World War." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immortal_Regiment). This concept was first announced and implemented in practice in 1965 in Novosibirsk. (https://academ.info/news/28151). This concept from the Soviet times was later reintroduced and revitalised in Russia and around the world in 2011. Today, it has become a massive civil event held in major cities in Russia and across the globe every 9 May as a part of the Victory Day celebrations.

Other concepts supported by top Russian Federation officials are the "**Russian World**" and the "**Exceptionalism of Russia in world history**". Some of these concepts are based on the studies of a Russian scholar, strategist and political activist Aleksandr Dugin. The "Russian World" concept was devised by intellectuals, academics and journalists with close ties to the Kremlin around 1995–2000 and it was publicly introduced into political discourse by Putin in 2001. The concept of the "Russian World" is associated with the totality of Russian culture. In the years that followed, pro-Kremlin policymakers systematically linked this concept to their efforts to legitimise both domestic and foreign policy, e.g., President Vladimir Putin justified the annexation of Crimea by invoking the concept of a "Russian World" (Russkiy Mir). He spoke of Russians as living in a "divided nation" and highlighted the "aspiration of the Russian world, of historic Russia, for the restoration of unity." He also stressed the existence of a "broad Russian civilization," that needed protection from external forces (particularly from the West) and defined it as the sphere of Russian interests.

The revival of the **Russian Historical Society** in 2012 underscores the significance of historical policy for the Russian Federation. The main goal of the Russian Historical Society is to promote Russian history both within the Russian Federation and abroad, preserve the historical heritage and traditions of the peoples of Russia and support historical education programmes. The Permanent Chairman is Sergei Naryshkin, who has been the director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation since 2016. He also serves as the head of the Board of Trustees for one of the largest film studios in the Russian Federation, the "Lenfilm" film studio. The Fund (non-profit organisation), the "**History**

of the Motherland", was created by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation on April 6, 2016, No. 163. Sergei Naryshkin is also the Chairman of the Board of the Fund. He stated "The main goals and tasks of the fund's activities correspond to the priorities of the activity of the Russian Historical Society. First, educational work, fostering patriotism and promoting respect for Russia, its history and the struggle to preserve the truth of the interpretations of historical events based on the most objective and transparent presentation of historical facts" (https://fond.historyrussia.org).

A highly effective tool for influencing both the minds and perceptions of the population is cinema. Historical movies have been, are and will continue to be one of the most attractive genres within the visual arts for the general public. Simultaneously, it serves as a platform for state institutions to influence the interpretation of historical events. A state which aims to keep the interpretation of historical events in a desirable direction must create suitable conditions for both professional and amateur interpretation, offering sufficient financial support, and access to archives at the same time, a state offers guidance to filmmakers on how to align their interpretation of events with done the state's historical policy. Most of the movies in the Russian Federation work exclusively with the events of WW2. In the year of the 75th anniversary of the Victory against the Nazis, history took centre stage in political discussions. Amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation in 2020, the cultural development strategy until 2030, the establishment of a fund (non-profit organisation) "History of the Motherland", as well as public statements made by President V. Putin and other top officials regarding historical events, highlighted the importance of interpreting historical events in both the country's domestic and foreign policy. It has become a significant tool in the arsenal of soft power. For example, during an informal summit of the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (hereinafter referred to as "CIS") in Saint Petersburg on 20 December 2019, V. Putin proposed the creation of a commission of historians from CIS countries to shape a single historical discourse within the territories of CIS countries (Buciunas. G., (2021), Interpretation of historical facts in documentary movies about the occupation of Lithuania in 1940 by Soviet troops. (*Buciunas, G., 2021, Springer Nature, 373-396*).

Today, the Russian Federation employs history for political mobilisation purposes, using technology to increase the degree of support from the general population to the authorities, especially the institution of the President of the Russian Federation. The victory of 1945 is not just a central axis of Soviet history. It also serves as a positive reference point for the national identity of Russian society. In this context, the Russian saying, "*winners are not judged*", is apt. In other words, "*the ends justify the means, so long as you achieve the ends*" https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/103491/idiom-wanted-for-means-and-ends).

Information warfare is becoming increasingly important nowadays due to the large amounts of fake information disseminated by different players pursuing their agendas. Based on the methods of how information reaches each habitant, it can be distinguished by way of information spreading. The number of households with Internet access is also important. Both local and central authorities should prepare a comprehensive set of measures to counter the influx of fake information from neighbouring unfriendly regimes. The most effective weapon against the spread of fake information, the misinterpretation of facts and interpretation of the provisions of restrictions, is to make the population aware of the upcoming and ongoing changes in their personal lives. Unclear information about certain matters and confusing procedures for accessing e-services can be skilfully exploited by authorities and media from an unfriendly side. As Winston Churchill rightly noted, "*A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on*".

In 2016, a survey commissioned by the Centre for East European Studies showed that over half of the Poles and Russians living in Lithuania watch Russian-language channels every day or several times a week. Lithuania, with the support of Poland, implemented countermeasures in the information field against Russian and Belorussian TV channels in the areas of Lithuania bordering Belorussia. Since 2017, the official rebroadcasting of five 5 non-coded Polish TV channels, including "TVP Polonia", "TVP Info", "TVP Historia", "NUTA.TV" and "Power" was initiated in south-eastern Lithuania, which provided access to a wider range of information sources for the population, including in most municipalities bordering Belarus.

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Language is a vital part of human communication. Language allows us to share our ideas, thoughts and feelings with others. The largest number of Russian language users outside the Russian Federation territory were citizens of Ukraine. Due to the war in Ukraine, the Russian language has become less and less popular in East European countries. For example, as per the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, the number of students taking Russian language lessons at school decreased by 8.6% in September 2022.

The Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in implementing the Kremlin's concepts, and policies and conveying the appropriate message to. Today, approx. 85,9% of the Lithuanian population are Roman Catholic. The second largest faith is Russian Orthodox, comprising approx. 4,6%, primarily ethnic Russians. 0,9% of the population consists of Old Believers, whose Russian ancestors sought refuge in Lithuania when they were persecuted in Russia for refusing to adhere to Nikon's religious reform. Lutherans, the 4th largest religious group (0,7%), enjoy a centuries-old stronghold in the Klaipeda Region, while the Lithuanian centre of the Reformed Christianity (0,2%) is in the Birzai district in the northeast. The map below illustrates the distribution of religious communities in the Republic.
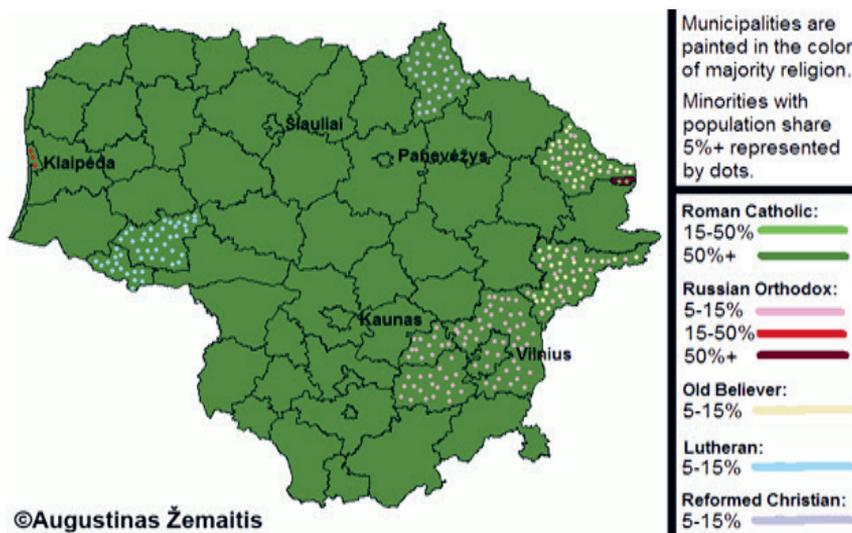

Figure 5. Religion in Lithuania. Source: truelithuania.com.

So, the instruments for implementing the concept of the Russian World and the Kremlin's values vary from using the Russian language as the means of communication among people to religion as a means of influencing the human psyche.

8. FREE VISA REGIME POLICY TO VISIT THE REPUBLIC OF BELORUSSIA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In June 2022, Belarus announced that it had abolished visa requirements for Polish nationals to foster" good neighbourly" relations. The decision to implement a "temporary visa-free entry regime" for six months was made by President Alexander Lukashenko, as confirmed by Belarus' National Border Guard Committee. This measure will be in effect from 1 July to 31 December 2022, as confirmed by the committee. Polish citizens will now also be able to travel to the Belarusian border areas without special permission. Instead, citizens will be required to verbally explain their presence in the area and their intended destination, as stated in an official announcement. Lukashenko has already allowed citizens of Lithuania and Latvia to travel to Belarus without a visa until the end of the year. This might be a honey trap for travellers. As per the National Threats Assessment 2023 report, as a response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, European countries expelled more than 400 Russian intelligence officers working under diplomatic cover. This coordinated decision has negatively affected Russia's intelligence-gathering capabilities. Under such circumstances, it's highly likely that Russian intelligence will resort to other information-gathering methods and will search for new intelligence opportunities. The free visa policy provides excellent opportunities for spy agencies to gather information from travellers' communication devices and computers. It also creates a conducive environment for recruiting new agents from among travellers utilising various methods.

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9. FAKE NARRATIVES ABOUT UKRAINIANS IN LITHUANIA AND UKRAINE

As per the National Threats Assessment 2023, distributors of pro-Kremlin propaganda in in Lithuanian information domain primarily use social media. They run targeted campaigns against Ukrainian refugees, accusing them of law violations, abuse of social support and promotion of extremist ideologies. After tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees settled in Lithuania, several messages with unconfirmed information appeared online. They falsely accused the refugees of committing crimes and instigating ethnic hatred. For example, a false message was spread on social networks in January 2023, that the municipality of Vilnius city will search Ukrainian conscripts.[22] Another example is, "Don't just register us as fugitives and then not take us to the refugee centre." We asked: "Why?" We think that maybe the man was afraid of the army or afraid that we would not take them in... It turns out that they had heard rumours that if they registered as refugees, they wouldn't be allowed to leave the European Union and return to Ukraine until they paid back the assistance provided by the Europeans.

The European Digital Media Observatory (hereinafter referred to as "EDMO"), comprising 37 fact-checking organisations from 25 European Union Member States and Norway, conducted an analysis of fake information about Ukraine spread throughout the year 2022. EDMO classified all false narratives about Ukraine into four categories.

The first category – narratives compromising Ukrainians' image (38% of analysis):

• Ukrainians are corrupt and embezzling international aid funds.

• Ukrainians are planning to use dirty bombs to escalate the conflict.

• Ukrainians are staging the war.

• Ukrainians are Nazis and murderers.

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[22] Savivaldybė įspėja, kad platinama melaginga žinutė su Vilniaus mero pasisakymu apie ukrainiečius. https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1875847/savivaldybe-ispeja-kad-platinama-melaginga-zinute-su-vilniaus-mero-pasisakymu-apie-ukrainiecius

The second category of narratives attacks NATO and Ukraine's foreign supporters (23% of analysis):

• EU sanctions on Russia and inflation are backfiring on the Western Governments.

• NATO is militarily involved in the war.

The third category of narratives is damaging to Zelensky's public figure (17% of the analysis):

• Zelensky is a Nazi and is corrupt and a liar, as well as a coward and a drug abuser.

The fourth category of narratives discredits Western media reporting on the war (13% of the analysis):

• Unethical and sensational publications on the war.[23]

The main platforms for spreading fake information are social networks: Facebook, Twitter and others.

CONCLUSIONS

The geographical terrain and most likely the still-existing smuggling routes from Belorussia to Lithuania could be used for special operations against the Republic of Lithuania by Russian spy agencies.

The territory of Belarus is important for Russia due to its proximity to the Kaliningrad enclave, where the troops of the Western military district are located. Russia's decision to deploy a nuclear weapon to Belarus can be considered as an additional attempt to split united Western leaders, supporting the territorial integrity, of Ukraine into several quarrelling camps, to spread a virus of fear on possible upcoming nuclear winter

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[23] Disinformation narratives about the war in Ukraine. Periodic insight N°14. 21/10/2022 to 22/11/2022. https://edmo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Periodic-insight-n.14-Disinformation-narratives-about-the-war-in-Ukraine.pdf

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among the Western hemisphere population, to ignite possible unrests, demonstrations in the Western European countries similar to during the Vietnam war in the USA and Western European countries.

The Suwałki corridor (part of Poland, bordering Lithuania, Belarus and Russia) is particularly important from a military point of view and is considered NATO's Achilles heel.

The utilisation of migration processes by the authoritarian Belarus leader, A. Lukashenko, against the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Latvia, responsible for the safeguarding of the external border of the European Union, as a weapon of "*soft power*".

The Soviet Union and later, Russian spy agencies, have used the influx of migrants from one location to another as a means for infiltrating illegal agents into foreign countries. The infiltration of sleeping agents and the creation of spy networks/rings is the *modus operandi* of the intelligence agencies of the Russian Federation. The migrant crisis offers the Russian and Belarusian intelligence services a great opportunity and possibility for the infiltration of dormant agents into the EU Member States.

Russian and Belorussian spy agencies might use the opportunity to gather sensitive information through IT specialists who left Belorussia and Russia.

The amendments to the Law on Public Procurement of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts related to public tenders should be made to prevent the leakage of sensitive information and should be done in a non-discriminatory manner. Additionally, special attention should be given to the involvement of information technology companies originating from third countries that are not NATO members. They may participate as subcontractors in providing crucial services related to the information infrastructure of state institutions, enterprises, and strategic enterprises run by the state or private businesses.

Drones can be used for gathering sensitive information. The legal regulations to prevent the use of drones over military installations, critical infrastructure, strategic objects, other flammable objects and communication networks should be revised. Special equipment should be

installed to protect the territory of sensitive objects in case drones enter prohibited areas.

Mobile phone devices might be potential targets for spy agencies, even if you're within your own country and your mobile phone doesn't have a selected manual network search function. You could find yourself connected to another country's mobile operators' network during your visit to Silute and the Nida districts located near the border with the Kaliningrad enclave or at the districts bordering Belorussia.

The storage of used tires or timber industry objects might be soft targets for diversion due to their limited protection.

In Soviet times, history was used as a political tool to foster patriotism, and a similar approach is being employed in the Russian Federation today. Several concepts related to historical events are fully supported by authorities in the Russian Federation, such as "The Immortal Regiment", the "Russian World" and the "Exceptionalism of Russia in World History". The revival of the Russian Historical Society in 2012 underscores the significance of historical policy for the Russian Federation.

The instruments for implementing the concept of the Russian World and the Kremlin's values vary from using the Russian language as a means of communication among individuals to using religion as a means of influencing people's psyche.

The free visa policy declared by Russia and Belorussia presents excellent opportunities for spy agencies to gather information from travellers' communication devices and computers and also creates a conducive environment for recruiting new agents among travellers through various methods.

All fake narratives about Ukraine can be classified into four categories: compromising Ukrainians' image; attacking NATO and Ukraine's foreign supporters; damaging Zelensky's public image; and discrediting Western media reporting on the war. The primary platforms for spreading fake information about Ukraine and Ukrainians are social networks: Facebook, Twitter and others.

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Contact:

Gediminas Buciunas, PhD

Vytautas Magnus University

Mykolas Romeris University

E-mail: gediminas.buciunas@vdu.lt

gediminas1967@mruni.eu

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