

**THE STATE SECURITY DEPARTMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**



ANNUAL THREAT ASSESSMENT 2013



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I. National Security Environment

Threats to Lithuanian national security are heavily determined by geographical and geopolitical conditions. Not all regional neighbors respect the right of other nations to implement policy based on their own national values. The desire to control or influence Lithuanian decision-making and policy-implementation processes invokes purposeful and calculated actions by foreign countries that threaten Lithuanian energy, economic, social and information security.

To influence Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies, foreign countries use a variety of soft and hard power instruments. VSD has identified attempts to set up new pressure groups and support those already operating in Lithuania; to exploit rivalry among politicians and take advantage of the failures in institutional interaction; to spread information that

contradicts Lithuania's national interests and discredits the country; and to instigate ethnic hatred and impair the integration of ethnic minority groups into Lithuanian society. In addition, foreign countries traditionally used economic and energy levers against Lithuania, attempted to discredit Lithuania's projects aimed at diversification of supply and sought to influence the decisions of Lithuanian politicians with the help of foreign business representatives.

To pursue their interests in Lithuania, foreign countries invoked both governmental and non-governmental structures and increased their funding. Hostile intelligence and security services fully supported by their national political establishment have been actively involved in many activities against Lithuania.



II. Threats Posed by Russian Intelligence and Security Services

Russian Intelligence Interests and Targets

Russian intelligence and security services are the most active and aggressive of all hostile foreign intelligence services that operate in Lithuania. Their interests encompass many aspects of Lithuanian affairs, to include:

- Lithuanian domestic policy (processes, trends, election campaigns, political leaders and their personal characteristics);
- Lithuanian foreign policy (government's positions in international organizations, bilateral foreign relations and the process of foreign policy making);
- Economy and energy (the development and prospects for national economy as well as support or opposition shown towards the strategic energy projects and possibilities of their discredit);
- Lithuanian intelligence services and other institutions responsible for the state security (intelligence and counterintelligence information, relations with the political leadership, operational capabilities and personnel);
- National defense system (military capabilities, military infrastructure and civil infrastructure of strategic importance, military cooperation with NATO and EU allies); and
- Telecommunication and cyber infrastructure (vulnerabilities and possibilities for information interception).

In 2013, Russian intelligence services sustained a high level of activity in Lithuania. This was determined not only by Russia's long-term political and

economical objectives, but also by the Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the European Union, especially as regards its efforts to promote the process of European integration in Eastern Partnership countries. Russian intelligence services sought to obtain classified or other sensitive information on the following issues: Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the European Union; internal processes in Lithuanian political parties and their strategies with regard to forthcoming presidential, European Parliament and local elections; implementation of strategic energy projects; and Lithuania's military capabilities and international military cooperation. Russian intelligence services also carried out active measures aiming at influencing Lithuanian foreign and domestic policies.

In Lithuania, Russian intelligence officers usually operate under diplomatic cover. This type of cover has been used by officers of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (GRU), who are stationed at the Russian Embassy and the Trade Representative Office in Vilnius, as well as at the General Consulate in Klaipėda. Their activities are coordinated by the embassy-based SVR and GRU residencies. The Federal Security Service (FSB) mostly targets Lithuanian citizens in Russia and from Russian territory.

Russian intelligence services apply several methods to collect information. One of them is human intelligence based on interpersonal contacts between intelligence officers and their sources. Russian intelligence officers approach individuals (targets) that are assessed as capable to obtain certain information at the present time or in the future. Some people are selected as targets because of their ability to make favorable decisions or spread favorable information in the



Russian intelligence officer at a meeting with Lithuanian political scientist

media. In Lithuania, the main targets of Russian intelligence services are the following:

- Civil servants who work in foreign policy, national security and defense domains;
- Politicians, leaders of local councils and local administration employees;
- Defense system employees and military personnel;
- Intelligence and law enforcement officers;
- Businessmen who have ties with politicians and high ranking civil servants and officials;
- Journalists and other opinion makers;
- Experts in economics, politics and other fields of intelligence interest;
- Promising students and young politicians, scientists and civil servants.

Russian intelligence and security services assess future targets not only according to their intelligence capabilities, but also

luxury, profitable business deals in Russia, etc.); disappointment with one's career; compromising information (law infringements, criminal offenses, sexual orientation, addictions and family problems); support for Russia stemming from personal beliefs or nationality. Russian intelligence services tend to manipulate civil servants who hope to achieve their political or professional goals by maintaining contacts with Russian diplomats and other officials.

Information about potential targets is collected by attending public events in Lithuania and abroad, telephone tapping, hacking personal computers, etc. Information on civil servants with security clearances, their personal life details, hobbies and problems is collected by using social networks. Information on potential targets could be also received from the individuals close to them or from already recruited individuals.

Russian intelligence services establish and develop ties with the chosen targets in Lithuania, Russia and third countries.



Intelligence Operations in Lithuania

The residencies of Russian intelligence services use a method of gradual recruitment. The time span between the first intelligence officer's meeting with a target and the actual handover of classified or other sensitive information could take several years. By introducing themselves as diplomats, intelligence officers meet potential targets at conferences, receptions and other public events, as well as at various leisure time places. Subsequently, Russian intelligence officers seek to develop relations of mutual trust. They nurture the benevolence of a future agent by showing special attention, paying restaurant bills, presenting gifts and offering various services (e.g. faster issue of a foreign visa). The purpose of these actions is to make the target feel indebted, so that he/she could not refuse to do a favour for his/her "friend". Initially, the intelligence officer asks the target to hand over some insignificant and unclassified information (e.g. to comment on political or economic situation in Lithuania) and rewards this with money, gifts or leisure activities. Later, the intelligence officer draws the targeted individual into information collection by asking to obtain classified or any other information that is significant to Lithuanian national security. The involvement in the espionage activity is pursued gradually, so that the target does not feel under pressure or being exploited.

In 2013, the residencies of Russian intelligence services carried out classic agent operations in order to benefit from their contacts within key state institutions or other entities of intelligence interest.

A member of GRU residency Valeriy Katula carried out aggressive intelligence activities against Lithuanian state institutions. His official position was a Second Secretary at the Russian Embassy

in Vilnius. Katula tried to recruit a Lithuanian civil servant and obtain classified and other sensitive information on the Lithuanian presidency of the Council of the European Union. The GRU officer requested for information on the following issues: presidency-related events and presidency priorities; a possibility of signing association agreements with Eastern Partnership countries; and the outcomes of the visits of foreign state delegations to Lithuania. Katula did not disclose his affiliation with the intelligence service and told his contact that he needed the requested information to draft reports for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A financial reward was offered for the requested information. VSD took preventive measures to terminate Katula's intelligence activities.



Valeriy Katula

Russian intelligence officers stationed in Lithuania are interested not only in classified information, but also in other sensitive information on processes and developments in the country. This type of information is collected during public events and official meetings with Lithuanian state officials and other individuals who are of interest to Russian intelligence services. Under a cover of diplomat's professional interest, intelligence officers can question their targets without causing suspicion. Intelligence officers try to avoid



disclosing the fact that they seek information for intelligence purposes.

Intelligence Operations from Russian Territory

To conduct intelligence activities against Lithuania, Russian intelligence services not only use a diplomatic cover in Lithuania, but also carry out intelligence operations from Russian territory. Such operations involve Russian intelligence officers and agents who work as undercover employees at Russia-based entities, to include: federal, regional and local state institutions; media organizations; state and private companies; NGOs. Intelligence operations from the territory are carried out by exploiting ties between Russian organizations and their Lithuanian counterparts. Intelligence contacts are established during visits of Lithuanian delegations to Russia and, likewise, during trips of undercover Russian intelligence officers to Lithuania.

The targets for Russian intelligence operations from the territory are Lithuanian citizens who take part in the meetings with Russian state officials, cooperate with Russian NGOs, participate in conferences in Russia, and have business connections with Russian entities.



Various Russian research institutes are actively used for intelligence operations from Russian territory. In 2013, the *Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)* aspired to expand its activities in Lithuania. RISI was founded in 1992 by the decree of the President of Russia. It has close ties with SVR. RISI regional branch in Kaliningrad – the Baltic Regional Information and Analysis

Centre– is headed by SVR Colonel *Genadiy Kretinin*. RISI seeks closer ties with Lithuanian scientific institutions, centres for political studies and media



Genadiy Kretinin

outlets. RISI experts are interested in participating in joint discussions with representatives of Lithuanian academia, as well as in getting their articles published on Lithuanian websites. RISI organizes a wide range of conferences in Russia and invites prominent Lithuanian political and economic experts, diplomats and politicians. Such RISI activities enable Russian intelligence services to achieve the following goals: to collect public and sensitive unclassified information on processes and developments in Lithuania; to gather personal information on Lithuanian politicians, diplomats and political and economic experts and identify future targets for recruitment; and to spread the information inconsistent with Lithuanian national interests and influence public opinion and expert judgements in Lithuania.

Intelligence Operations against the Lithuanian Citizens in Russia

The Russian FSB monitors and tries to recruit Lithuanian diplomats, businessmen, law enforcement officers and civil servants who visit Russia for business or personal reasons. Lithuanian



politicians, journalists, scientists, students and NGOs' employees also draw FSB's attention during their trips to Russia.

In Russia FSB uses aggressive means of recruitment. FSB may force individuals into cooperation by blackmailing them due to their law infringements (e.g. smuggling, incidents with local police, traffic accidents caused by driving under the influence) or other inappropriate actions. Sometimes FSB intentionally attempts to provoke such actions or behaviour of a potential target.

FSB has a mandate to conduct counterintelligence activities in all Russian enterprises and to control foreign investments. These capacities enable FSB officers to maintain constant contacts with the representatives of Lithuanian companies operating in Russia. FSB is interested in connections Lithuanian businessmen may have within political parties, state institutions, law enforcement agencies, as well as in substantial political or economic information. If businessmen refuse to provide the requested information, FSB can employ administrative pressure. For example, it may attempt to incriminate financial infringements or put other legal and administrative obstacles for business development. Having identified such cases, VSD provides recommendations for

a proper response on case by case basis.

Signals Intelligence

Russian intelligence services also employ signals intelligence against Lithuania and have special technical means to penetrate communications networks both operating in Lithuania and acting from Russian territory. In Kaliningrad, FSB and GRU have signals intelligence centres that enable Russian intelligence services to collect information on Lithuanian citizens, government officials and other individuals of interest. Collected information is used for both implementing intelligence operations and compromising targeted persons by leaking the intercepted correspondence or telephone conversations.

Cyber Espionage

Due to a fast development of information technologies, cyber espionage poses an increasing threat to the national security. The technological development encourages an inter-personal communication and a transfer of many aspects of everyday life to cyber space, thus opening new possibilities for intelligence services. By monitoring social networks, financial transactions and by accessing various data bases, one can



FSB signals intelligence centre in the Kaliningrad region



collect more information than just by telephone tapping or electronic communication interception. Just by exploiting software vulnerabilities, large amounts of valuable information can be stolen as from encrypted so from non-encrypted information systems.

Targets for Russian cyber espionage are the same as for conventional intelligence operations. They include Lithuanian state institutions, armed forces, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, diplomatic representations, and enterprises of strategic importance. Cyber espionage helps to obtain close-hold and other sensitive information related to politics of foreign countries, strategic energy projects, military capabilities, and activities of law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Russian intelligence services use special software applications for cyber espionage. This spying software is usually integrated into computer files (e.g. PDF files) that are later sent as email attachments to selected addressees. Malware could also infect the computers through external data storage devices (USB flash drives) and optical discs (CD, DVD). It should be noted that Russian intelligence officers distribute infected data storage devices and optical discs as gifts or persuade to use them for some other reason. The malware collects data from the infected computer, sends it to the virus handler and allows remotely monitor and access the infected computer.



Active Measures

Russian intelligence services use traditional methods of influence operations, such as attempts to discredit Lithuania by publicly disseminating certain information and to shape a favourable attitude to Russia among Lithuanian politicians, diplomats and businessmen by means of informal personal contacts. They spread biased and misleading information in Russian media and internet in order to spark public debates in Lithuania.

The leakage of Lithuanian diplomats' telephone conversations in July 2013 was the operation of Russian intelligence services aimed to discredit the Lithuanian presidency of the Council and the Eastern Partnership program, as well as to create new tensions in Lithuanian domestic politics. It should be noted that a part of international calls from Lithuania to Western countries and the rest of the world is channelled via networks of Russian telecommunication operators. Russian intelligence services have every means to control the international calls from and to Lithuania that are transmitted through Russian telecommunication networks.

In 2013, Russia imposed economic sanctions on Lithuania, including a ban on Lithuanian dairy and meat imports. At the same time, Russian intelligence services informally spread the message that the sanctions were a consequence of Lithuania's hostile policies towards Russia. Intelligence officers and their associates passed these messages personally to Lithuanian politicians, businessmen and diplomats. Lithuania's support for Ukraine's bid to sign the Association agreement with the European Union and Lithuanian government's conflict with Gazprom were quoted as allegedly the main reasons for Russian sanctions. Russian intelligence services



deliberately tried to convince Lithuanian politicians, political experts and businessmen that Lithuania should more often take into account Russian interests when pursuing its presidency of Council of the European Union and developing bilateral political and economic relations with Russia.

III. Activities of Belarusian Intelligence and Security Services

The main long-term tasks of Belarusian intelligence and security services are to ensure the stability of President Alexander Lukashenko's rule and to protect Belarusian political and economic interests abroad.

The State Security Committee (KGB) is the most active among Belarusian intelligence services in terms of work against Lithuania. This service focuses on the activities of Belarusian opposition entities and their connections in Lithuania. Another regular KGB target is the community of Lithuanian Belarusians. KGB officers who work under diplomatic cover seek to ensure that the Belarusian Embassy in Lithuania can influence the community and bring its activities in line with Minsk's interests. KGB also seeks support for Belarusian interests among Lithuanian politicians, Lithuanian businessmen working in Belarus, and the representatives of Russian speaking media in Lithuania.

The Belarusian Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (GRU) collects information on Lithuanian armed forces, their level of preparedness and objects of military infrastructure.

VSD sees no indications that the activities of foreign intelligence and security services against Lithuania could diminish. The greatest threat to Lithuanian national security currently is and will remain to be posed by intelligence and security services of the Russian Federation.

The trends in activities of Russian intelligence and security services suggest that, in the short term, Russia will continue its active intelligence activities against Lithuanian national interests. Russian intelligence services will focus their collection efforts on the upcoming presidential, European Parliament and local elections, as well as on Lithuanian energy policy. Russian intelligence services will make further attempts to influence Lithuania's internal political processes by means of active measures. Moreover, in response to Lithuania's active policy in Eastern Partnership countries, information that compromises Lithuania and its institutions will be further publicly disseminated. In addition to a traditional human intelligence method, Russian services will carry out intelligence operations involving technical means, as well as operations in cyberspace.



IV. Russian Compatriots Policy

Russia continues to be extremely active in strengthening and expanding its cultural and informational influence in the “post-Soviet area”. To achieve this objective, Moscow implements its compatriots policy. It should be noted that in Russia’s perception the concept of compatriot does not denote an ethnic attribution to Russian nation, but primarily means political views that favor Russia’s interests. Therefore, the compatriots policy is implemented invoking not only Russian nationals but also other communities.

In 2013, Russia consistently funded and coordinated the activities of persons favorable to its interests in Lithuania. Most of the money devoted to financing of such activities was assigned by The Support and Protection of the Compatriots Residing Abroad Rights Foundation under “Rossotrudnichestvo” (hereinafter – the Russian Foundation), which has become the key donor organization for compatriots-based influence groups abroad.



The most active Russian compatriots in Lithuania are the following groups: representatives of political parties formed on ethnic basis, marginal political movements; some representatives of Moscow-backed civil society, veteran, educational and other organizations; Russian citizens who have been granted a residence permit in Lithuania; scanty supporters of anti-Western and anti-globalist worldview; and representatives of subcultures. It should be noted that the

activities of compatriots are considerably coordinated and supported by the Russian Embassy in Vilnius.

In the short term, the individuals and organizations financed by the Russian Foundation intend to “fight” actively against the alleged “infringements” of the rights of ethnic communities in the Baltic States and to submit regular reports to the international human rights organizations, as well as to discredit and disparage Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies and to create a positive image of Russia and its internal processes. By supporting such actions, Russia seeks to incite ethnic confrontation in the Baltic States and compromise them in the eyes of the international community.

To pursue its interests in the Baltic States, Russia also seeks to exploit a topic of the Vilnius region. The activities and demands of some Polish community leaders in the Vilnius region are in line with Russian foreign policy objectives. The Russian Embassy in Vilnius provides an extremely active support to consolidation of ethnic minority parties in a pre-election period, as well as to joint efforts to raise publicly their “topical” problems. Russian diplomatic and consular representations in Lithuania are actively involved in the projection of soft power and quite aggressively seek to take part in Lithuania’s internal political processes.

VSD notes that, by implementing the compatriots policy and by uniting Russia sympathizers into organized groups, Russia forms a pool of its loyalists in Lithuania, which may be exploited to trigger social unrest and to create a pretext for interference in Lithuanian internal political affairs. The Crimean precedent suggests that the issue of compatriots and Russian citizens abroad can serve as a cover for aggressive actions and even a military invasion.



V. Russian Information and Ideological Policy

In 2013, Lithuania experienced a very active information campaign carried out by Russia. The campaign had the following goals: to discredit Lithuanian foreign policy, especially the Presidency of the Council of the European Union; to compromise Lithuanian membership in the European Union and NATO; to portray Lithuania as a flawed democracy; and to cause doubts with regard to Lithuanian energy policy. In order to achieve these goals, Russia consistently exploits alleged problems of ethnic minorities and promotes a version of modern history that corresponds to Kremlin's interests. Russian information policy towards Lithuania targets both Russian domestic audience and Lithuanian population. For Russian citizens, Lithuania is portrayed as a hostile to Russia fascist country, which persecutes Russian speakers. For example, this policy includes annually published surveys listing the countries that are regarded by Russian citizens as the most hostile to Russia. Lithuania usually tops this list. According to VSD assessment, the Kremlin consistently develops such emotional and informational environment among Russian population in order to justify Moscow's firm political stance against Lithuania as a "forced" measure of protecting local ethnic minorities and other "mistreated" groups.

In Lithuania, Russian information and ideological policy mainly targets Lithuanian citizens who are Russian speakers or belong to other ethnic minority groups. The intention is to foster distrust in Lithuanian state among these communities. One should notice that, in recent years, Russian information and ideological policy in Lithuania has increasingly focused on Lithuanian speakers and youth audiences.

A number of actors are involved in implementing Russian information and ideological policy against Lithuania, to include: the Russian Presidential Administration; the Russian Government; state or state-funded news agencies and media outlets; academic institutions; "non-governmental" organizations; intelligence and security services; and individual journalists, political scientists, historians and public relations specialists. "Rossotrudnichestvo" remains a key institution in implementing Russian soft power measures. In 2013, Russian information policy increasingly targeted the Russian speaking youth in Lithuania. Russia's goal is to get the Russian speaking youth in Lithuania under its political and ideological influence. Young Lithuanian citizens are invited to take part in various summer schools, schools for young journalists and "cultural" events. The most active participants of such events are later invited to study at Russian universities or offered various internships. According to VSD assessment, Russia seeks to nurture a group of loyal pro-Russian youth, which later might be used for the implementation of Russian information and ideological policy in Lithuania.

In 2013, Russian authorities further tightened their grip on the state-owned media. A new state-owned international news agency "Rossiya Segodnya" will be launched in 2014 to support Russian domestic and foreign policies and improve Russia's image abroad by propaganda means. Despite a present economic stagnation and budget cuts in Russia, the funding of Russian state-owned media has been increased for 2014.

In Lithuania, Russian speaking media outlets – "Litovskiy Kuryer", "Obzor", "Ekspress Nedelya" and "Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal" – were instrumental in implementing tasks of Russian information and ideological policy.



The contents of these media outlets mostly reflected Russia's official views towards Lithuanian foreign policy, history, energy and ethnic minority issues. Lithuania-based Russian speaking media was particularly active in pursuing the Russia-orchestrated information campaign against the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius.

Lithuania-based Russian speaking media outlets are directly influenced and controlled by Russian institutions that implement Russian information and ideological policy. According to VSD assessment, Lithuania-based Russian-language weeklies depend on financial support from Russian state institutions and foundations.

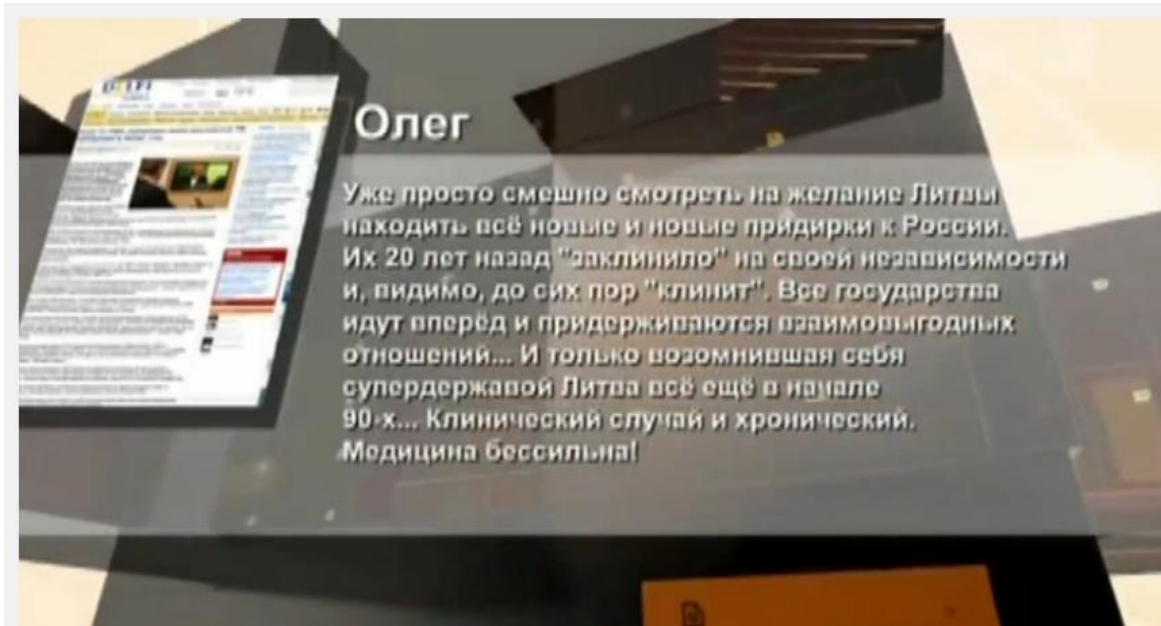
The international media club "Format A-3" (headed by a journalist of Russian newspaper "Komsomolskaya Pravda" Galina Sapozhnikova) is involved in disseminating Russian political and ideological postulates among Lithuanian population. In 2013, there were eleven events held in Lithuania with a participation of political scientists, economists, writers and other cultural figures that were supportive of Russian information policy.



Galina Sapozhnikova

Another instrument in the toolkit of Russian ideological policy is a so-called "policy of history". This instrument is actively employed against Lithuania. The main goals of Russian policy of history are as follows: to discredit the history of Lithuania; to deny the fact of Soviet occupation of Lithuania (1944–1990); to downplay the significance of the restoration of Lithuanian independence and other historical dates that are vital to the formation of national identity. Russian mass media is particularly active in manipulating the facts of Lithuanian history and inflating the alleged threats of Nazism and revanchism in the Baltic States. In both online and printed media, VSD has observed Russia's consistent efforts to belittle the members of Lithuanian insurgency against the Soviet occupation and to vindicate the representatives of Soviet repressive structures that had been involved in persecution, mass deportation and execution of Lithuanian citizens. The opponents of Lithuanian independence – most often Lithuanian citizens – disseminated a number of ideas consistent with Russian policy of history. They portrayed the Soviet Union in a positive light, accused Lithuania of rewriting history and supporting (neo-)Nazi ideas, and sought to compromise Lithuania's initiative to evaluate on international level the crimes of the Soviet occupation regimes. The persons who implement Russian policy of history participated in various international events where they presented ideas that compromise Lithuania and favour Russian interests.

Among the main Lithuania-based actors that advocate Russia's interpretation of history, one can list the following groups: individuals who idealize Soviet past and support far-left ideas; Russian speaking media; Russian-funded organizations of war veterans; activists of the political party the Socialist People's Front and the association "Lithuania without Nazism"



TV channel „Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal“ broadcasting „Human and Law“

(both led by Algirdas Paleckis); and some other public figures who are known for spreading pseudo-scientific ideas. Their activities receive support from and often are coordinated by Russian-sponsored research centres and other organizations related to Russian state institutions

VSD anticipates that Lithuania will experience even more intense information and propaganda attacks in 2014. False accusations and disinformation may come not only from pro-Russian opinion makers and influence groups, but also from high-ranking Russian politicians, officials and diplomats. In order to punish Lithuania for its strong leadership during the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and

its political support for Ukraine, Russian disinformation campaigns may target Lithuanian politicians and state institutions, including national security structures. A higher intensity of propaganda campaigns against NATO and the European Union is also expected. It is worth to stress that Russian security and intelligence services and other soft power agents (including diplomatic missions) play an active role in Lithuanian domestic politics and use the presidential and European Parliament election campaigns to get involved. Their aim is to increase animosity among Lithuanian political leaders and to compromise Lithuanian foreign policy makers (both officials and institutions).



VI. Extremism and Terrorism

Organizations and groups that promote radical ideologies remain scarce in Lithuania. Far-right ideologies are less popular here than in most Eastern European countries. Neither the experience passed by their foreign counterparts nor the participation in protests on various issues have increased popular support for far-right radicals. The underperformance of far-right groups has been determined by internal conflicts and the lack of motivated activists. The number of violent incidents caused by right-wing extremists remained low.

Over the past couple of years, a radical Polish nationalist movement has emerged in southeast Lithuania. According to VSD assessment, the primary reason for the rise of this movement was the enduring social and cultural isolation of the Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania. However, the decisive impetus for this movement was provided by increased activities of Poland-based right-wing organizations in

the Vilnius region. VSD assesses that the Polish nationalist movement does not pose a threat to Lithuanian territorial integrity. However, the activities of this movement and individual incidents may increase ethnic tensions in southeast Lithuania and provoke a negative public attitude towards the Polish community in Lithuania.

In 2013, the popularity of far-left ideologies in Lithuania was even lower compared to far-right ideologies. The existing far-left groups are scarce and engaged in feuds with each other.

In many European countries, the phenomenon of radical antifascism is linked with the autonomist groups that promote far-left ideologies. In Lithuania and other Baltic States, this topic has been exploited mostly by organizations that implement Russian foreign and information policy. Members of these organizations often treat patriotism, as well as the criticism of Russian policies and the opposition to Moscow's historical narrative, as manifestation of far-right



Mindaugas Gervaldas



extremism.

VSD has not identified any active radical groups representing religious ideologies. In Lithuania, the majority of local Muslims practice traditional Islam and oppose the radical interpretations of Islamic faith. However, foreign Muslims – particularly those coming from countries with a presence of terrorist organizations – and local converts constitute a risk group. As members of controversial foreign Muslim organizations, they may be radicalized in third countries and encouraged to act against the Lithuania and other countries.

In 2013, the threat level of international terrorism did not change and remained low in Lithuania. The increased international attention to Lithuania during its presidency of the Council of the European Union did not affect the terror threat level. There is no immediate threat posed to Lithuania by terrorist organizations that operate in third countries. However, greater attention should be paid to terrorist organizations in North Africa and Middle East, especially in Syria, as their activities may affect the security situation in Europe and pose an indirect threat to Lithuania. A significant number of European extremists have travelled to Syria and took part in the ongoing conflict. As those fighters repatriate, some of them may carry out terrorist attacks in European Union countries. It cannot be ruled out that Lithuanian citizens could also be involved in terrorist activities abroad.

According to VSD assessment, the threat of “lone wolf” terrorism remains relevant and such attacks may occur in any European Union country. This trend is confirmed by the attacks in Europe and the United States carried out in 2013 by individuals who did not have links with terrorist organizations but were highly motivated by extremist ideologies. People who choose the “lone wolf” tactics avoid attention of law enforcement institutions, so it is very difficult to identify them and prevent potential attacks.

VII. Illegal Migration

Lithuania remains a convenient transit country for third country citizens seeking to enter the European Union illegally. Both foreigners from third countries as well as Lithuanian citizens and companies abused immigration rules and exploited legal loopholes to set up a profitable business of legalizing non-EU nationals. Most foreigners obtain a residence permit in Lithuania by acquiring or establishing a business company or enrolling for studies. However, that is often used as a ticket to other European Union countries and not for residing in Lithuania as it has been declared.

It cannot be ruled out that the loopholes in the Schengen visa system may be used by individuals or groups that pose a threat to the national security of Lithuania or to the security of other European Union member states.

VIII. Regional Security Issues

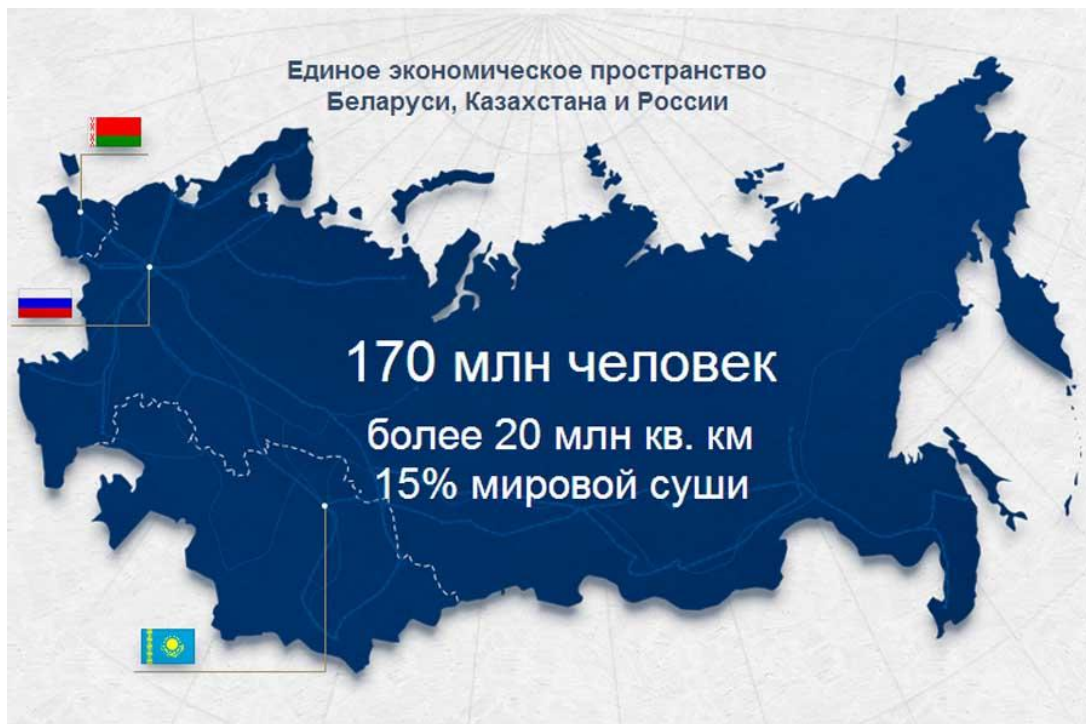
Regional stability is particularly important to Lithuanian national security. The most significant security challenges stem from the activities of neighboring non-democratic countries, including their integration projects, aggressive rhetoric against NATO and the European Union and attempts to incite conflicts among democratic countries. The increasingly authoritarian rule in Russia and its ambitions to influence domestic politics of the neighboring countries must be seen as a potential danger to the national security of Lithuania.

According to VSD assessment, Russia still regards all post-Soviet countries as a space of its “privileged interest”. Russian ruling elite cannot accept the fact that Lithuania independently chooses its policies and the path for its further development. Driven by imperial ambitions and the desire to present itself as a “global power”, Russia promotes integration around Moscow’s political

axis, pursues assertive foreign policy towards neighboring countries and aspires to shape their domestic politics.

One of Russia’s foreign policy priorities is the integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries into the Customs Union and – since 2015 – into the Eurasian Economic Union. The project can be regarded as a counterweight to the European Union’s Eastern Partnership and other programs. It is intended to hold back former Soviet Union countries from closer cooperation with Western political structures. Russian top leadership instructs foreign policy implementing bodies, intelligence services and state-owned media to promote in CIS countries a positive image of Russian-led integration projects and to discredit the supporters of European integration and European values.

Russia traditionally employs a complex of political and soft power instruments, as well as direct and informal economic sanctions, against countries that support



The Eurasian Economic Union



initiatives harming Russian interests. Russia applies sanctions not only against CIS countries but also against European Union member states. As a reaction to Lithuania's support for European aspirations of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, and to its criticism towards Russian foreign policy, Russian leadership made a decision in 2013 to restrict Lithuanian business activities in Russia. When introducing informal sanctions, Russia usually puts the blame on the sanctioned country and thus tries to discredit foreign policy makers of that country.

It should be noted that Ukraine is the main target of Russian-led integration projects. Russia has constantly pressured Ukraine to abandon its course of European integration, as Russian-led integration projects would not be full-fledged without Ukraine's participation. Russia used a "carrot and stick" approach towards Ukraine. Moscow introduced economic sanctions against Ukraine on the eve of the Vilnius Summit and pledged a multi-billion aid package in return for Kiev's refusal to sign the association agreements with the European Union. After the wave of pro-Western protests and the government change in Ukraine, Russia could not come to terms with the new state of affairs. VSD does not exclude the possibility that Russia is actively involved in destabilizing Ukraine and fuels separatist sentiments in the Crimean peninsula and other parts of Eastern Ukraine. It would be a great disadvantage to Moscow, if the recent political changes in Ukraine brought to central and regional administration officials that were disloyal to Russia and non-corrupt. It is very likely that Moscow will use every lever of influence and relatively numerous pressure groups to prevent a democratic change in the Ukrainian political system.

After having initialed in Vilnius the Association and Free Trade Agreements with the European Union, Moldova and Georgia are also likely to face Russia's intense pressure to cancel the signing and ratification of these agreements. It is in Russia's interest to maintain its influence in these countries and to incorporate them into the future Eurasian Union.

According to VSD assessment, in 2014, despite its economic problems, Russia will maintain tensions in the region (i.e. in Crimea, Transnistria and the occupied territories of Georgia), exert pressure on neighboring countries and attempt to reduce the influence of the European Union and NATO in countries that Russia regards as its area of interest. These trends, alongside the non-democratic government in Russia and its aggressive foreign policy, are assessed to represent a potential threat to Lithuania's national security.

The attention should also be paid to Belarus and its authoritarian regime, which is unlikely to undergo a political transformation in the medium term. The main long-term goal of Belarusian President Lukashenko is to ensure the stability of the current political regime. In order to maintain control over domestic developments, Belarusian authorities carry out systematic repressions against democratic opposition, civil society and human rights activists, as well as tighten their grip on nongovernmental organizations and independent media. Authoritarian tendencies in Belarus have a negative impact on regional security. They deepen Belarus' international isolation and its dependence on Russia and are incompatible with the promotion of democratic principles and values in the region.