



STATE SECURITY DEPARTMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

SECOND INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT UNDER THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

NATIONAL THREAT ASSESSMENT 2019



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
SUMMARY	4
REGIONAL SECURITY	9
MILITARY SECURITY	19
ACTIVITY OF HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES	27
CYBER ESPIONAGE	35
PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER	39
INFORMATION SECURITY	43
ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY	49
TERRORISM	55
CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS	61

INTRODUCTION

National Security Threat Assessment by the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania (VSD) and the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence (AOTD) is presented to the public in accordance with the Articles 8 and 26 of the Law on Intelligence of the Republic of Lithuania. The document provides consolidated, unclassified assessment of threats and risks to national security of the Republic of Lithuania prepared by both intelligence services.

The document assesses events, processes and trends that make the biggest influence on national security situation in the Republic of Lithuania. Based on them and considering the long-term trends affecting national security, the document provides the assessment of major challenges that the Lithuanian national security is to face in the near term (2019–2020). The assessments of long-term trends project the perspective up to 10 years.

The assessment is based on information available before 1 December 2018.

The table below outlines the language of probability and definition of terms used in this assessment:

< 25 %	25–50 %	50–75 %	> 75 %
UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	LIKELY	HIGHLY LIKELY
Short term: 0–6 months	Near term: 6 months – 2 years	Mid term: 3–5 years	Long term: 6–10 years

SUMMARY

In 2018, the international community witnessed Russia's ambitions in global politics and means to achieve them. Western countries detected and exposed aggressive measures employed by Russia: attempts to interfere with domestic processes of the Western countries, use of chemical weapon against the former Russian intelligence officer, aggressive cyber operations conducted both from Russia and on European soil.

Russia's aggressive foreign policy became the key measure to justify the ruling regime. Seeking to obtain an 'inherent' place in the global system Russia combines diplomacy and influence operations against the 'weak' West, looks for ways to diminish the US and European influence in other regions. However, so far Russia has not found trustworthy allies to achieve its global ambitions, whereas the West becomes increasingly aware of Russian threats and employs joint response measures.

Russia's ruling regime recognizes challenges posed by the international isolation and economic recession, but attempted reforms indicate that the existing political system will not tackle fundamental problems. There are no political changes in Russia and they are unlikely to occur. The Kremlin further strengthens array of means to control society and successfully manipulates attributes of the façade democracy – fake elections, controlled opposition, tolerates socially, but not politically oriented protests.

In 2018, Russia continued its overall military build-up including in the Kaliningrad Oblast that neighbours Lithuania. In the short term, it intends to deploy additional offensive elements there as well as air defence and aviation capabilities. Russia strengthens its capabilities to start execute combat orders with 24–48 hours' notice. Significance of the military force as one of the main instruments of the Russian foreign and security policy increases. However, growing defence capabilities of the Baltic States and NATO military contingents deployed in the region considerably reduce chances that Russia would resort to military means against the Baltic States.

In the Lithuanian neighbourhood, Belarus is the most susceptible to Russian influence. For the meantime, Minsk is incapable of implementing fully independent policy because of financial dependence on Russia, unresolved bilateral issues and lack of economic reforms in the public sector.

Russian intelligence and security services (RISS) try to adapt to Western (including Lithuanian) defensive measures: use business, tourist and other non-diplomatic cover, expand the geography of their operations, relocate intelligence operations to Russia or third countries, employ proxies (particularly Belarus), manipulate common Soviet past, search for individuals ideologically close to Russia, very actively recruit Lithuanian and foreign citizens travelling to Russia and Belarus.

Russia develops cyber capabilities that became one of the main tools to conduct intelligence and influence operations abroad. Implementing these activities Russia has no 'red lines' regarding geography and importance of the target and expects to escape responsibility. So far, Russia likely considers that benefits gained from cyber operations outweighed potential costs incurred by response of the Western countries.

Aiming to disparage Lithuania's statehood Russia implements targeted projects to promote history policy favouring Russian interpretation of the past, denying Soviet occupation, and propagating positive image of Soviet influence on Lithuania's development. Russia particularly seeks to attract youth to these projects. In 2018, one of the main targets of the Russian history policy was the Lithuanian post-war armed resistance. Russia produces a constant stream of propaganda against Lithuania. It particularly intensifies when Lithuania initiates response measures against Russia's aggressive foreign policy.

Seeking to influence Lithuania's domestic processes Russia exploits democratic freedoms and rights for its subversive activity. Under the veil of care for its diaspora, Russia tries to fragment Lithuanian society. Furthermore, while pretending to develop cultural relations, Russia actually promotes its aggressive foreign policy. Russia seeks to influence political processes in Lithuania, but there are currently no solid indications that Russia has achieved the desired influence.

As Chinese economic and political ambitions grow in Lithuania and other NATO and EU countries, activities of the Chinese intelligence and security services become increasingly aggressive. Seeking to gather relevant information Chinese intelligence attempts to recruit Lithuanian citizens.

Terrorism threat level in Lithuania remains low. In 2018, the number of terrorist attacks in Europe has decreased, but the threat remains significant. The terrorist organization Islamic State (ISIL) tries to adapt to changing conditions in Syria and Iraq and encourages its supporters in the West to conduct terrorist attacks.



World Cup 2018 in Russia
allowed Putin to step into
the spotlight
REUTERS / Scanpix

REGIONAL SECURITY

RUSSIAN RULING REGIME FACES DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES, BUT CHANGES ARE UNLIKELY

In spring 2018, Vladimir Putin was re-elected as the President and no significant elections will take place in Russia until 2021. This provides an opportunity to prepare for the major uncertainty of 2024 – the end of the current presidential term. Political leadership is indicating that they will respect the constitutional restriction regarding the number of presidential terms, but it is highly likely that the Kremlin will seek to find a continuity model to ensure functioning of the current ruling regime without real changes.

Formation of the new Government and the Kremlin's first steps after the presidential elections indicate the scope of likely changes in Russia. The ruling regime recognizes challenges posed by the economic stagnation. It tries to implement certain reforms and stimulate the economic growth with national mega-projects, but there are no plans to reform the existing political system. Changes within the ruling elite are negligible – domination of members of intelligence and security services and regime-loyal technocrats continues. The Kremlin consistently enhances control over society, expands the arsenal of tools to control internet, censors media, and limits activity of non-governmental organizations. The Kremlin pays close attention to patriotic upbringing and propaganda targeting essential groups of society. Regime critics not only face persecutions of law enforcement, but also violence of

regime loyalists. Journalists, who investigate crimes of the regime, disappear, mysteriously perish or are forced to flee the country.

After the presidential elections, Russia's ruling regime embarked on long-delayed structural reforms. However, the very first step – pension reform – caused public resistance. Protest potential also surfaced during regional elections in September 2018. The ruling party United Russia and the Kremlin-supported candidates delivered the worst results in the last 10 years.



Protests against pension reform in Moscow
REUTERS / Scanpix

The Kremlin's reaction to protests was quite moderate. The regime tolerated certain events and sought to aggravate the organization of some others with preventive measures. The Kremlin regards social protests as one of the means to reduce tensions in society and resorts to repressions only against individuals who raise political demands. Moreover, the protesters usually expressed support to the conformist opposition – the parliamentary Communist and Liberal Democratic parties that are completely loyal to the regime. Such situation is

acceptable to the Kremlin as it can further manipulate the political system without changing rules of the game.

Despite economic and social difficulties that gradually transform into decreasing regime's approval ratings, regime's stability is not at risk in the near term. However, it is unlikely that the Russian model of the political system is fit for tackling systemic issues. Throughout his tenure Putin created illusion of stability, which made the Russian society allergic to changes. Therefore, even attempts to embark on truly necessary reforms provoke discontent.

It is possible that while facing the inability to deliver growth and prosperity the Kremlin may continue resort to well-established practices – aggressive foreign policy or even reckless adventurism. Slogans like ‘West is Russophobic’, ‘Russia needs to regain proper respect and its place within international system’ and exaggeration of external threats became the essential basis for legitimacy of the regime. Even though the Kremlin does not feel a need to take immediate actions to change the current situation, it is unlikely that deteriorating domestic situation would lead Putin to softening the aggressive foreign policy towards the West or refraining from attempts to increase its influence in neighbouring countries.

RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY – GREAT AMBITIONS AND MIXED RESULTS

During his election campaign Putin demonstrated that Russia's foreign policy could only change to be even more aggressive and more unilateral. At one of the key events of his campaign, Putin neglected foreign policy topic, instead he presented the most recent weaponry and displayed a simulated attack on the US. The Kremlin takes advantage of favourable international situation, demonstrates its global ambitions, and seeks to be recognised as a great power which has a privileged zone of geopolitical interests.

Putin and his entourage expect that various disagreements among Western countries regarding migration, terrorist threat alongside rising political populism would overwhelm the Russian threat. The Kremlin perceives the West as weak: the Western governments seek social welfare and agreement within society that makes them prone to compromises; political leaders are accountable to the population therefore vulnerable; genuine elections take place and political leaders are under constant pressure to be voted out; media freedom enables criticism of government decisions. Decision-making in the Kremlin belongs to several individuals and is prompt, election results are always clear

beforehand, opponents are silenced or flee the country. The Kremlin expects that polarization within of the EU and NATO would enhance Russia's role in international arena, the world would be dominated by the great powers, where the weak must submit or become part of the deals between the leading states.

The Kremlin is not just a passive observer. Where deems necessary and plausible it provides financial support, dispatches journalists who present an 'alternative truth' or promotes the voice of 'ordinary people'

that is often prefabricated in the 'kitchen' of Yevgeny Prigozhin. Russia actively seeks contacts with these strata of the Western societies that are dissatisfied with their Governments. Russia attempts to amplify alleged loss of their sovereignty, downsides of globalisation, alleged negative aspects of integration into NATO and the EU. It is the Kremlin's desire to see the rise of nationalist parties in Europe. The Kremlin would

also welcome the rise of anti-globalist and radical powers. Most of such movements see the Kremlin as their natural ally that allegedly fosters traditions and conservative values, fights globalisation and questions the global role of the US.

The Kremlin tries to develop relations with academia and specifically targets those who feel unheard, initiates discussions where Moscow gets a venue to present the Russian vision of the world and the Russian ways to tackle problems. In 2018, the international community had many chances to witness the extent of Russia's attempts to meddle in domestic politics of other countries. Investigations on Russian



Russian oligarch Prigozhin (in plain clothes) also known as 'Putin's chef' participates in a meeting with a military delegation from Libya on 9 November 2018
AP / Scanpix

interference in domestic political processes in the US and attempted assassination of Sergey and Yulia Skripals, exposed activities of Russian spies and hackers and revealed the scope of aggressive measures the Kremlin employs to fulfil its global ambitions.

In global politics, Russia strengthened its positions in the Middle East and Africa. The Kremlin's active support to Bashar-Al-Assad regime made Russia indispensable in settlement of the Syrian conflict. Leaders of Israel, Turkey and other countries regularly engage Putin regarding other issues of regional matter. Russia's military activity in the Mediterranean indicates that the Kremlin's security interests stretch way beyond Syrian borders. More and more actively, the Kremlin looks for allies in Africa and seeks to counterbalance the influence of the EU, the US and China in this continent. Egypt became one of its closest allies in the region. Russian private military companies and military instructors operate in Central African Republic. The Kremlin is also actively involved in Libya, sells arms to many countries and enhances economic and energy ties. Increasing engagement with African countries not only relieves Russia's international isolation, but also provides significant support in votes on Russia-favourable United Nations resolutions. At the same time, Russia enhances its cooperation with China. Beijing enables Russia to procure technologies that became inaccessible due to Western sanctions, buys its energy resources, and serves as an alternative source of investments.

The Kremlin prefers power tactics and actively employs it in its foreign policy. Russia is not prone to compromises and considers concessions as a sign of weakness. It is unlikely that the Kremlin would surrender Crimea, withdraw from Donbas or retreat regarding other major international issues. It therefore waits for the Western position to change gradually. This would be the Kremlin's major achievement. It would confirm effectiveness of the power tactics and would encourage similar Russian behaviour in the future.

Although the Kremlin is highly ambitious, the actual results of its foreign policy are mixed. Russia would like to normalize its relationship with the West on its own terms, but so far without major success. It is

unlikely that China would consider Russia as an equal partner because of its considerably smaller economic potential. Across the world, Russia turned into the greatest supporter and arms provider to dictatorships. The Western countries tend to limit their relations with such regimes, while Russia exploits them to increase its influence. However, such allies provide limited possibilities to create an alternative world order or to develop a growth-stimulating economic cooperation.

Russia and Belarus –
a strained union
AP / Scanpix



Russia is gradually changing its foreign policy towards the Baltic States. The Kremlin likely concluded that the key to the Baltic States is not in Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn, but in Brussels or in other major world capitals. Therefore, the Kremlin has refocused its effort in that direction. Russia believes if it succeeds in normalising relations with the EU, the Baltic States would either have to soften their positions towards Russia or could be accused of subverting relations with the Kremlin.

RUSSIA CONTINUES TO INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES USING STRUCTURAL DEPENDENCE AND FROZEN CONFLICTS

Despite Russia's great ambitions and aggressiveness, its foreign policy achievements are limited even in consolidating its influence in the former Soviet Republics. However, due to their political, economic and military dependence on Russia, the Kremlin is capable to exert much greater influence over the decisions taken in these countries than over those in the West.

After re-election of Putin, Russia has started tightening control over Belarus, so that Minsk would not implement policy inconsistent with the Kremlin's interests. When addressing bilateral problems Russia exploits its neighbour's economic dependence and uses financial support in manipulative fashion. The Kremlin will seek to secure favourable political decisions knowing that Russian subsidies and financial support are vital to the Belarusian budget. Moreover, the newly appointed Russian Ambassador to Belarus Mikhail Babich has wider authority in his capacity as the Special Envoy of the President for Trade and Economic Cooperation with Belarus. This appointment indicates Putin's increasing requirement for direct control over processes in Belarus.

The upcoming 2019–2020 elections in Belarus, intensifying bilateral negotiations over unresolved energy, financial and trade issues prompted Russia to enhance its information policy towards Belarus.

The Velvet revolution refers to the protests against the ruling Republican Party and the election of the former President Sargsyan as the Armenian Prime Minister

AFP / Scanpix

An investigation by Belarusian journalists revealed that pro-Kremlin internet news sites had been developed since 2016 with the aim to target regional audience and to pose as an alternative to existing local news sites. Such internet sites usually republish articles from other media outlets, some of them featuring anti-Belarusian and anti-Western, as well as anti-Lithuanian propaganda.

Russia's role in frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet area enables it to influence foreign policy of the former Soviet republics particularly in



the case of Armenia. Armenia's dependence on Russia's support in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict drives Yerevan's need to maintain good relationship with the Kremlin. The Velvet revolution will not change country's foreign policy direction. However, changes in Armenia are not in line with Russia's interests as they manifest that social protests can overthrow Kremlin-favourable political leadership. The Kremlin cannot allow protests in post-Soviet countries to become a positive example and will seek to discredit political organizations and individuals that promote political change. Elections in the Republic of Moldova in 2019 will be in the focus of Russia's attention. Although the pro-Kremlin Socialist Party is the most popular political power in the Republic of Moldova, the Kremlin cannot feel certain about its victory. Therefore, it is likely that the Kremlin will meddle actively and overtly in the upcoming elections.

Despite its aggression against Ukraine lasting since 2014, Russia has no effective levers to impact Kiev's policy – the image of an aggressor has significantly reduced support for pro-Kremlin parties in Ukraine. The Kremlin's abilities to penetrate decision-making process with the help of highest-level influence agents and exert direct influence over the fundamental national processes in Ukraine will remain very limited. The aggression has considerably reduced Russia's possibilities to use 'soft power' means, while granting autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church can weaken one of the main Russian influence tools.

Currently, Russia does not have a long-term strategy neither for resolution of the conflict nor for normalization of relations with Ukraine. Therefore, it seeks opportunities to destabilize internal situation in Ukraine and discredit Kiev in the eyes of its Western allies and international community. Russian imposed restrictions on Ukrainian navigation through the Kerch Strait fuel tension in the Azov Sea Region – a risk of armed incidents persists. It is likely that Russia will further seek to provoke Kiev to use military force. Russia could respond by completely closing Ukrainian navigation through the Kerch Strait. Situation in the Azov Sea can increase military tension in Donbas between Ukraine and Russia-controlled separatists. However, in the short term, resumption of a full-scale armed conflict in Donbas is unlikely.



Military parade in
Kaliningrad
Sputnik / Scanpix

MILITARY SECURITY

RUSSIAN MILITARY POWER IS THE ESSENTIAL ENABLER OF ITS AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY

The Russian Armed Forces (AF) still play a crucial role in supporting Russia's great power ambitions. Both Russia's domestic and foreign policy are heavily militarized. Russia's military power remains one of the main sources of national pride. Unlike fundamental economic reforms, the military reform is consistent and successful. The AF undergo comprehensive modernisation – they reformed command and control, modernised equipment. The AF modernisation progress is also visible in the AF operations in Syria and Ukraine. Putin also emphasized the significance of the AF during his annual address and campaign speech on 1 March 2018 at the Federal Assembly. The main messages of his speech and herewith his electoral programme stressed achievements of the military reform and the nuclear potential of the Russian AF, which demonstrate superiority over other countries. Such messages delivered by the state leader imply that the attention to the AF and the determination to use military force will not decrease in the future.

In 2018, tempo of the Russian military operation in Syria decreased allowing the AF to withdraw part of the military equipment and personnel. However, Russia's motivation and ambitions to expand its military influence both in the Middle East and in Africa did not decline. The AF have intensified their actions towards Libya and strengthened posi-

tions in Central African Republic. It is highly likely that Russia's political and military leaders will continue to search for ways to strengthen country's global positions and will make effort to expand the network of military bases abroad.

In 2018, no new hotbeds of potential military confrontation emerged in the Baltic Sea region, but the trends of Russian military build-up in the Western military district (including Kaliningrad Oblast) negatively affect Lithuania's security environment. There are no indications that

Russia would intend to revise its policies and posture towards de-escalation and reduction of tension in the region.



Putin meets members of the
'Young Army'
AP / Scanpix

MAJOR TRENDS IN RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES

Russian defence spending has always been neither clear nor transparent. According to official numbers, in 2018 the nominal funding for Russian Defence Ministry decreased and should not reach 3 percent of the GDP. Nonetheless, due to a possibility to conceal spending and allocate additional financing at any time, the real defence spending is and will be

noticeably higher in comparison to the official statistics. However, lack of modern technologies, demographic problems and sanctions imposed by the Western countries will have a considerably larger negative impact than the reduced financing. The AF will remain quite attractive compared to most employers in the public and private sector. It is highly likely the allocated funding will allow to implement the modernisation programme and the nominal decrease of the funding will not have a significant negative impact on Russian military potential.

Growing defence capabilities of the Baltic States and NATO military contingents deployed in the region reduce Russia's ability to localize potential military conflict and rapidly achieve desirable results avoiding a large-scale NATO involvement. This reduces probability that Russia would resort to military means against the Baltic States. Despite this, Russia will further seek to convince Western (including Lithuanian) politicians and societies that additional NATO security measures in the Baltic region are counterproductive and increase tensions.

Russia develops military capabilities in all strategic directions. One of the priorities is the Western strategic direction, which includes Lithuania. Changes have been both, qualitative and quantitative in this strategic direction. Russia develops military infrastructure, establishes new and re-equips existing units, includes experience gained in Ukraine and Syria into combat training programmes. Moreover, the AF regularly conduct large-scale strategic exercises simulating military conflict with NATO.

Russia actively tackles the issue of the combat readiness of its forces. Manoeuvre units (brigades and regiments) establish battalion tactical groups (700–800 soldiers) that are fully manned (with contract soldiers exclusively) and equipped. These groups are able to start execute combat orders with 24–48 hours' notice. Russia's ability to rapidly generate forces and especially the Kremlin's fast and centralized decision making process enables it to gain (at least at the initial stage of the conflict) an obvious military advantage over the neighbouring states.



Iskander-M
Sputnik / Scanpix

Strategic nuclear forces remain the main priority. Nonetheless, Russia intensively develops and deploys long-range dual capable precise strike systems. Russia develops systems like Iskander-M/SS-26/SSC-7, Kh-101/102 air-to-surface cruise missiles, ship-borne and submarine-borne Kalibr cruise missiles. These systems enable Russia to attack critical infrastructure of potential adversary within range up to 2,000 km.

RUSSIA STRENGTHENS THE MILITARY GROUPING IN KALININGRAD OBLAST

The processes in Kaliningrad Oblast are particularly important to Lithuania's military security. Russia consistently strengthens the military grouping based in Kaliningrad Oblast: it upgrades the old and develops new military infrastructure, establishes new military units, deploys new equipment, conducts intensive combat training in Kaliningrad's ground and naval ranges.



Su-30SM / Flanker-H
Sputnik / Scanpix

In the short term, a new tank regiment will be established in Kaliningrad Oblast. Russia also plans to re-equip the Kaliningrad-based artillery brigade with new artillery systems. Current multiple rocket launch systems Grad/BM-21 will be replaced by longer-range Uragan/BM-27. It will extend the effective range from 20 km to 35 km. Russia also intends to reinforce naval aviation capabilities in Kaliningrad by re-establishing two aviation regiments – fighter aviation regiment and naval assault aviation (bomber) regiment. Russia started to supply modern combat planes and helicopters to Kaliningrad Oblast. In 2018, Kaliningrad Oblast received five antisubmarine combat helicopters Ka-27M/HELIX and two multirole fighters Su-30SM/FLANKER-H.

Military activity particularly increased in Dobrovolsk range close to the Lithuanian border, where the Kaliningrad-based 11th Army Corps units and the Baltic Fleet naval aviation conduct training. Frequent activity of the AF units at the border negatively affects Lithuania's security environment and increases the risk of unintentional incidents.

EXAMPLES OF MILITARY INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION IN KALININGRAD OBLAST:

- Completed upgrade of the Kaliningrad-based Chkalovsk military airfield, which is capable of receiving most types of military aircraft including heavy bombers Tu-22M3/BACKFIRE.
- A large ammunition storage site is under construction in the western part of Kaliningrad Oblast (close to the Prokhladnoye settlement). New-type reinforced ammunition bunkers are being established.
- Reconstruction of nuclear weapons storage bunker is underway in the western part of Kaliningrad Oblast (close to the Alekseyevka settlement).
- Home base of Iskander-M missile brigade is under intensive development in Chernyakhovsk. New storages for Iskander-M missile systems were built, additional construction works are ongoing.
- A modern home base for a coastal defence unit in Donskoye area is being built. New permanent storage hangars for Bastion-P/SSC-5 and Bal/SSC-6 coastal defence systems were built.
- A motor-rifle brigade is being relocated to Sovetsk, close to the Lithuanian border. Russia develops additional military infrastructure to enable permanent deployment of the brigade.

Long-range weapon systems deployed in Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus create a complex anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) environment. In the event of crisis or war this would hamper NATO operations in the Baltic Sea region. A2/AD is a set of military instruments used to isolate the region, prevent access and free movement of adversary forces in the region in time of crisis or war.

MAIN WEAPON SYSTEMS DEPLOYED IN KALININGRAD OBLAST CONTRIBUTING TO A2/AD EFFECT:

- Long-range air defence systems S-400/SA-21 capable of destroying air targets within 250 km range. In the short term, Russia plans to deploy additional S-400 systems.
- Coastal defence systems Bal and Bastion-P, capable of engaging ships up to 130 km and 300 km range respectively.
- Missile systems Iskander-M can be equipped with both conventional and nuclear warheads and are capable of destroying ground targets within 500 km range. In spring 2018, Russia fully upgraded the missile brigade based in Chernyakhovsk with Iskander-M systems.
- The Baltic Fleet has three ships equipped with cruise missile systems Kalibr capable of destroying targets within 2.000 km range.
- A2/AD also includes non-kinetic tools such as radioelectronic warfare systems primarily intended for interference with opponent's communications and navigation.

BELARUS AS BUFFER STATE IN RUSSIAN MILITARY STRATEGY

From the standpoint of Lithuanian national security, the role of Belarus in Russian military planning is extremely important. In case of a conflict with the West / NATO, Russia plans to use Belarusian territory as a bridgehead for combat actions against the West.

Belarus associates its military security with Russia, as it still perceives NATO as the major source of external threats. Nevertheless, military rhetoric regarding expansion of NATO and the US capabilities and activity in the region is quite moderate. Belarus is immensely important for Russia due to its geographical position and historically intertwined bilateral relations. Russian military strategy refers to Belarus as a 'buffer' state. In view of common geopolitical and security interests as well as perceived common

threats, Belarus and Russia established a Regional Military Grouping and United Regional Air Defence System.

Russia attributes Belarus to its zone of influence and uses its territory for military operation planning and demonstration of force. Bela-



Russian and Belarusian Defence Ministers Sergei Shoigu and Andrei Ravkov
www.mil.by / Scanpix

rus and Russia joint strategic exercises ZAPAD simulate military conflict with NATO. Moreover, Belarus holds unannounced joint military exercises with participation of Russian military equipment and personnel. In recent years, the number of joint exercises of Russian Airborne Troops and Belarus Special Operation Forces has considerably increased. During the last joint Special Forces exercise in September 2018, Russian airborne troops brought their state of the art equipment to Brest region. Russian military transport aircraft conducted an airdrop of military equipment in Belarus territory for the first time in its modern history. The gradually deepening military integration with Russia reduces Belarus' ability to implement independent defence and security policy.



AP / Scanpix

ACTIVITY OF HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

FAILURE OF AGGRESSIVE RUSSIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN THE WEST

In 2018, most EU and NATO countries conducted intense counter-intelligence activity. Russian intelligence operations detected and thwarted in the recent years revealed the extent of Russian intelligence activity and the extremely aggressive operations of Russian military intelligence against the Western countries in peacetime.

The failed attempt of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces (GRU) to poison its former officer Sergey Skripal on British soil prompted a collective and unprecedented response of Western countries and their allies. In March-April 2018, 29 countries and NATO declared *persona non grata* 153 undeclared Russian intelligence officers under diplomatic cover. Lithuania declared *persona non grata* three Russian spies under diplomatic cover – one GRU and two Foreign Intelligence Service' (SVR) officers. The ever-largest collective response reduced (at least temporarily) Russian intelligence capabilities in Lithuania and other Western countries. However, Russian intelligence services now try to recover their lost positions.

The other failed GRU operation – the interception of GRU officers who attempted to penetrate IT networks of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Netherlands – revealed that Russia

conducts cyber espionage not only remotely, but when needed, Russian intelligence services dispatch their officers abroad to break into IT networks.

The above-mentioned cases and other episodes of 2018 exposed GRU activity revealed that Russian military intelligence breaks the established 'red lines' even in peacetime and conducts aggressive and cynical operations against the West. GRU activity reflects Russian foreign policy and constant confrontation with the West. For this purpose, Russia invokes Cold War-like foreign espionage methods that fell into oblivion in the West – influence operations, assassinations, and coup d'états.

RUSSIA RELOCATES ITS INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS AGAINST LITHUANIA TO ITS HOME TERRITORY OR TO THIRD COUNTRIES

Diplomatic cover – in Russian intelligence terminology defined as diplomatic or legal rezidentura – one of the platforms for Russian intelligence operations abroad. Russian intelligence services persistently try to adapt to defensive measures used against them. They use business, tourist and other non-diplomatic cover, expand the geographical spectrum of their operations. It came to light through revelation of information on the travel routes in Europe and the cover of GRU officers ('tourists') who attempted to assassinate the Skripals.

Russian intelligence services expanded the geography of their operations against Lithuania. Although Russian intelligence services increasingly employ technical means against Lithuania, the intensity of human intelligence (recruitment of Lithuanian citizens) remains high. The tightening counter-intelligence regime in Lithuania increasingly limits activity of Russian intelligence officers under diplomatic cover. As a result, Russian spies adapt by using non-traditional cover and often move their intelligence operations to Russia or third countries. In Lithuania, Russian intelligence officers or their agents select and investigate

Russian intelligence has a worldwide network and conducts long-term operations which makes it difficult to escape its sight once somebody has attracted its attention. For example, in 2008, a Lithuanian civil servant with access to information of interest to Russian intelligence became acquainted with a Russian diplomat who was actually an undercover intelligence officer. Russian intelligence did not push him to cooperate, but during meetings confined itself to unsuspecting small talk. Subsequently, the Lithuanian citizen went to work abroad and the relationship ended. 10 years later an intelligence officer from the same Russian service approached that Lithuanian citizen in a foreign country. When abroad, Russian intelligence was bolder, organized secret meetings, gave gifts, treated him at restaurants, sought to involve him into intelligence collection. Russian intelligence also intended to lure the Lithuanian citizen out to Russia, tempted him with lucrative business contracts with a Russian energy company.

targets, make initial contacts, but relocate further intelligence work to territories of third countries.

RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE USES BELARUSIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

Russian intelligence utilises intelligence collection capabilities of friendly countries. Russia uses those countries as proxies both to fill their intelligence gaps, to conceal their intelligence requirements, and to mask its intelligence activities against certain targets. Belarus remains Russia's closest ally in this field.

Belarussian intelligence services implement tasks of the Russian intelligence services and provide support to their operations in Belarus. In Belarussian territory, Russian intelligence freely recruits citizens of Western countries. Therefore, both Russian and Belarussian intelligence services may target Lithuanian and other Western citizens regularly travelling to Belarus. Russian and Belarussian intelligence services are not equal partners as Russians dictate their terms to Belarussian colleagues.

Russian intelligence services regularly analyse the lists of individuals who served in Soviet military and search for Lithuanian citizens currently holding positions in law enforcement, military, politics or business. Having identified a proper target, Russian intelligence services find and direct retired or active duty Russian or Belarussian military officers to renew (directly or remotely) the relationship with their former comrade in Lithuania. Russian intelligence officers seek to lure their targets out to Russia or Belarus under the pretext of military occasions and commemorations, comrade reunions etc. If it succeeds, Russian intelligence tries to gradually engage them in spying against Lithuania.

RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY AGAINST CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN LITHUANIA

Russian intelligence and security services pay particular attention to intelligence collection on the Lithuanian infrastructure of strategic importance. They collect intelligence on industry companies, infrastructure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (AF), Lithuania's communication

systems, naval ports and airports, railway and road networks. Recently, Russian intelligence became exceptionally interested in the objects of Lithuanian energy sector.

Russia constantly exploits missions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), aimed to build mutual confidence and transparency between the states-parties by sharing information on military capabilities. Russia's representatives gathered intelligence on Lithuanian critical infrastructure during observation flights within the framework of the OSCE Open Skies Treaty and arms control inspections

according to the Vienna Document. Russian residents visiting Lithuania were used to collect information on the Lithuanian AF infrastructure and objects of strategic importance by observing them, taking photos and recording videos. Lithuanian citizens recruited by the GRU also received tasks to collect information on critical infrastructure in Lithuania. Since 2016, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) has been observed. The UAVs are able to enter Lithuanian airspace unnoticed at low altitude and conduct aerial photography.

In 2016, a Russia-related reconnaissance UAV was found in the territory



Russia-related UAV found in the territory of Lithuania

of Lithuania. Same type of aircraft conducted intelligence collection flights over the territories of Syria, Libya and Eastern Ukraine, where Russia supported the ongoing combat actions. The components of the found UAV were made in several countries. However, it contained Russian software and corresponded to known UAV analogues used by the Russian intelligence and security services. The purpose of UAV is to take photos of ground objects. The UAV contained a high-precision gyroscope and accelerometer module that enables it to conduct a flight on preplanned route even if its GPS is jammed.

In 2017, a Russian reconnaissance UAV was also found at the Polish border. Both cases prove that Russia uses UAVs for intelligence collection not only in conflict zones but also in peacetime in neighbouring NATO countries. Russia collects intelligence on objects of strategic importance in Lithuania for its military planning. Russia's usage of UAV technology significantly expands its possibilities of operational-tactical intelligence collection abroad in peacetime, while defensive measures against it are difficult to implement. Therefore, it is likely that in the near to mid term the intensity of Russian intelligence activity against critical infrastructure in Lithuanian will not decrease. Technological progress will make this activity even harder to trace.

SOVIET PAST AND TRAVELS TO RUSSIA AND BELARUS – IN SIGHTS OF HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE

Russia and its intelligence services make use of the common experience in the Soviet Union and the nostalgia to Soviet past both when spreading propaganda against Lithuanian statehood and recruiting Lithuanian citizens. To develop a network of agents in Lithuania, Russian intelligence services are particularly keen on finding individuals who are ideologically close to Russia or regularly visit Russia or Belarus for certain reasons (business, tourism, visiting relatives and friends).

Russian and Belarussian intelligence services are particularly interested in Lithuanian politicians and civil servants who have ties to Russia and Belarus. When an individual with family or other ties to Russia or Belarus assumes an important position, he / she becomes subject to investigation of the intelligence services. Their relatives in Russia or Belarus receive visits from local security services; intelligence officers under diplomatic cover approach the targeted individuals other means are used to gather information about them. Intelligence services assess all available information about such Lithuanian citizens, including their regular visits and potential positive attitude towards Russia or Belarus and plan further actions against them.

Russian and Belarussian intelligence services have well developed intelligence from the territory against foreign citizens. Consistent trends show that Russian and Belarussian intelligence have particular interest in all Lithuanian citizens with intelligence access (especially, politicians, law enforcement and military officers, businesspersons, journalists) who have relatives in Russia or Belarus or travel there for other purposes. Such individuals may become targets for recruitment depending on their intelligence access, vulnerabilities, benevolence and dependency on Russia or Belarus.



Russian intelligence services search targets among Lithuanian citizens crossing the border. The Queen Louise Bridge connects Lithuania with Kaliningrad Oblast.

15 min / Scanpix

CHINESE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES EXPAND THEIR AREA OF INTEREST IN LITHUANIA

Growing China's economic and political ambitions in the West resulted in the increasing aggressiveness of Chinese intelligence and security services' activities not only in other NATO and EU countries, but also in Lithuania. Two Chinese intelligence services operate in Lithuania: Ministry of State Security and Military Intelligence Directorate.

When abroad, Chinese intelligence traditionally operates under diplomatic cover, utilises state-funded Confucius Institutes, Chinese companies and news agencies, use Chinese students studying abroad.

Primarily, China's domestic policy issues drive Chinese intelligence activities in Lithuania. For example, it seeks that Lithuania would not support independence of Tibet and Taiwan and would not address these issues at the international level. However, Chinese intelligence has broader interests in Lithuania: Lithuanian foreign policy and economy, defence sector, information accessible to Lithuanian citizens about foreign countries' international cooperation projects and future plans with China. From Lithuanian citizens Chinese intelligence may seek to obtain sensitive or classified national or NATO and EU information.

Chinese intelligence looks for suitable targets – decision-makers, other individuals sympathizing with China and able to exert political leverage. They seek to influence such individuals by giving gifts, paying for trips to China, covering expenses of training and courses organized there. Chinese intelligence officers treat those gifts as a commitment to support political decisions favourable to China. Chinese intelligence-funded trips to China are used to recruit Lithuanian citizens.

Given the growing threat posed by Chinese intelligence and security services in NATO and EU countries, their activity in Lithuania in the long term is also likely to expand.



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REUTERS / Scanpix

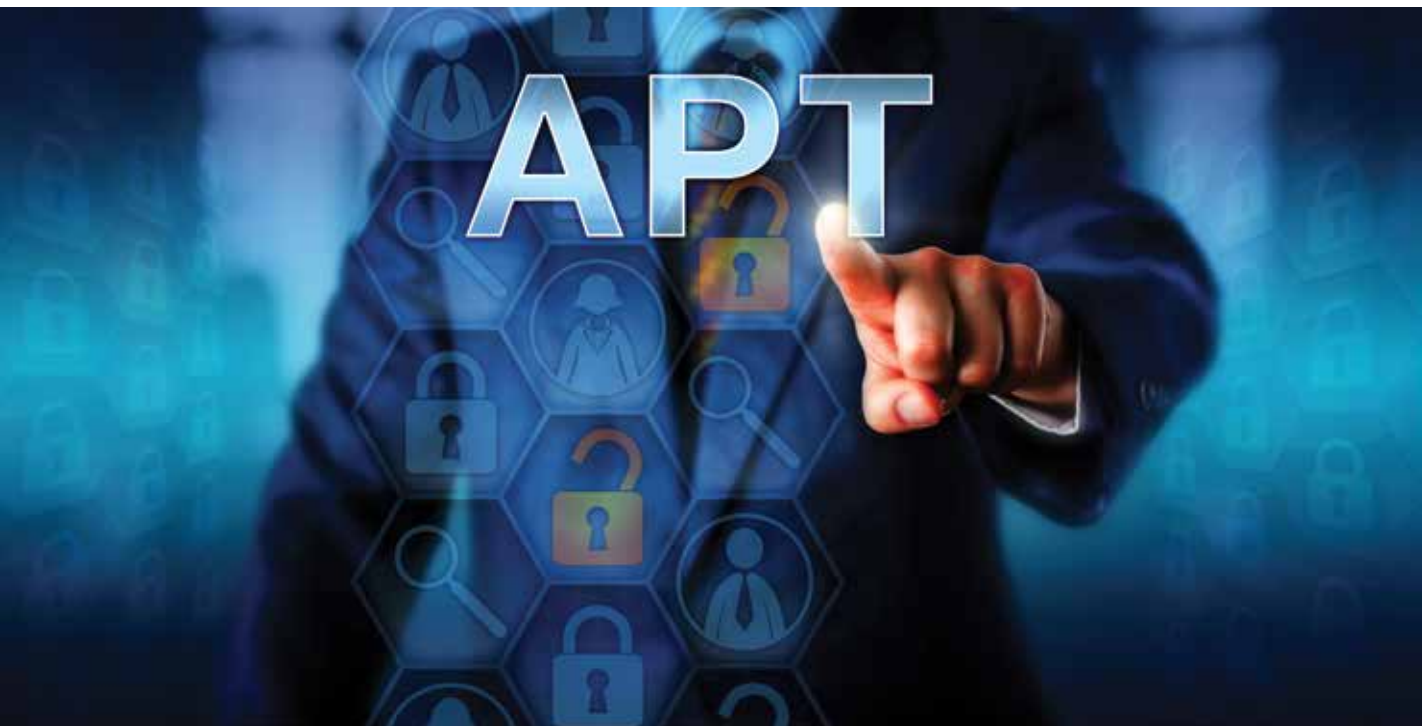
CYBER ESPIONAGE

THREATS POSED BY RUSSIAN CYBER CAPABILITIES

In 2018, hostile activity, which can be associated with both state and non-state related actors, was observed in Lithuanian cyber domain. Chinese industrial spying, North Korea's and Iran's actions raise serious concerns in the world cyber domain but so far have been assessed as unfocused and accidental activity in Lithuanian information systems. Meanwhile, Russian intelligence and security services pose major threat to Lithuanian cyber domain: they conduct intelligence gathering, disturb the performance of IT systems, and contribute to influence operations.

The activity of Russian cyber espionage groups is identified in almost all countries of the world, yet the main attention is devoted to NATO and the US as well as other regions geopolitically important to Russia. Russia's cyber activity is becoming one of the major tools used to accomplish Russian geopolitical goals not only during a conflict, but also at peacetime. Russian cyber activity has also been used as a deterrence element against the states in conflict. By pursuing hostile activity in cyber domain Russia does not restrict itself neither geographically, nor in terms of target significance, while hoping to avoid responsibility. The benefit for Russia obtained from cyber operations so far has been valued as more important than the potential response of Western states.

RISS hackers' intelligence gathering activity against Lithuanian information systems has been constantly observed. Highly advanced cyber tools are used in cyber spying operations against Lithuania. They cannot be identified by usual system security programmes, therefore they are able to conduct hostile activity within the infected networks unnoticed for a long period of time. GRU group *Sofacy / APT28* and FSB cyber group *Agent.btz / Snake* have been the most active in conducting cyber espionage in Lithuania. Politics, military and economics are their main



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areas of information collection. While conducting intelligence activity, the groups penetrate not only information systems of state institutions, but also those owned by private organizations or individual persons. The obtained data is usually used for conducting influence operations and infiltrating other systems, such as more secured networks, dedicated to processing sensitive information or critical state infrastructure related systems.

THE USE OF CYBER TOOLS TO SUPPORT RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC-POLITICAL LEVEL OPERATIONS

- In 2015–2018, amid Russian athletes doping scandal, information systems of international sports organizations were penetrated with the aim to discredit the persons who investigated the the Russian athletes' offences and other states' athletes.
- During 2016 US and 2017 France presidential elections Russian hackers infiltrated information systems of the candidates and their campaign offices and used the obtained data in disinformation campaigns in order to discredit them.
- In December 2017, an attempt to obtain information related to investigation of MH17 aircraft hit over Ukraine was made in Malaysia.
- In spring 2018, Russia made two attempts to infiltrate the laboratories in Switzerland and the Netherlands investigating the case of poisoning of Skripal and his daughter.
- In 2018, it was revealed that Russian hackers tried to intercept correspondence from the Orthodox Church leaders, who supported granting of autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church.
- Despite so much attention from the Western states to Russian cyber-attacks, a new Russian cyber-attack related to the mid-term elections in the US was observed in 2018.

Russia's strive to take control over foreign states' critical infrastructure's industrial control systems has been increasingly noticed. Through these systems the physical processes, such as traffic, water supply can be remotely controlled. Over the recent years, Russian cyber groups' penetration or attempts to penetrate hundreds of energy sector's industrial control systems have been identified in the United Kingdom and the US. Access to energy sector's industrial control systems provides Russian hackers with a potential possibility to sabotage industrial processes, i. e. disrupt electricity supply or cause irreparable damage to facilities. Lithuania's energy sector is also one of the targets of Russian cyber groups. In 2018, repeated Russian attempts to conduct intelligence of Lithuania's energy sector systems were observed.

Russia exploits the cyber space in order to make an impact on political processes in the West, seeks to influence the election results and reduce society's trust in democratic processes as well as reliability of political systems. In their response, the Western states publicly identified Russian cyber operations' targets, methodology, and participants. The US has imposed sanctions and issued charges against GRU officers, whereas organizations in control of social networks have been engaged in prevention of Russian influence operations. All these measures notwithstanding, it is highly likely that the benefit received from cyber tools – obtained intelligence information and tested possibility to affect political processes – will offset all the potential negative outcomes to Russia.

VI ВСЕМИРНЫЙ КОНГРЕСС
СООТЕЧЕСТВЕННИКОВ, ПРОЖИВАЮЩИХ ЗА РУБЕЖОМ
РОССИЯ И СООТЕЧЕСТВЕННИКИ: НОВЫЕ ВЫЗОВЫ И НОВЫЕ РУБЕЖИ



МОСКВА 2018
31.10-01.11



6th World Congress of
Compatriots Living Abroad held
in Moscow

Sputnik / Scanpix

PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

RUSSIA MANIPULATES DEMOCRACY IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

The Kremlin perceives the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent Euro-Atlantic integration path chosen by the Eastern and Central Europe countries as one of the greatest geopolitical catastrophes. Russia seeks to change the choice of these countries, including Lithuania, by gaining influence over these societies and their political decisions. In Lithuania, Russia abuses the democratic freedoms and rights guaranteed by the Lithuanian Constitution to conduct subversive activity which poses threat to national security.

The Russian ruling elite, under the veil of attention to its diaspora – an objective intrinsic to democratic countries – implements subversive compatriot policy aimed at fomenting ethnic discord in the Lithuanian society. During his address at a plenary session of the 6th World Congress of Compatriots Living Abroad, held in Moscow in October 2018, Putin criticized allegedly growing Russo-phobia in the Baltic States, extreme nationalism and violations of Russian speakers' rights. To protect the latter, Russia sponsored two centres operating in Lithuania. Representatives of these centres participated in international forums for protection of human rights, disseminated disinformation and accused Lithuania of allegedly violating Russian speakers' rights.

To discredit Lithuania, the Kremlin uses events that are not linked with purported violations of Russian speakers' rights. In 2018, following a several year-long break individuals related to informal extreme right groups engaged in violent incidents in Lithuania. These single crimes were not Russo-phobic and did not indicate a rise of political extremism. Same individuals, well known to law enforcement, usually engage in incidents that attract public attention and serve Russia in its unfounded accusations.

Russia manipulates the freedom of speech to spread propaganda disparaging Lithuanian statehood. The Kremlin abuses this fundamental democratic principle and portrays its propaganda as journalism, which represents an alternative opinion and allegedly builds on criteria of objectivity and need to convey information to society. Therefore, in response to any attempts of Lithuanian institutions to limit propaganda Russia accuses Lithuania of censorship and restriction of freedom of expression. In 2018, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission, due to continuous incitement of ethnic discord and war propaganda, repeatedly suspended rebroadcasting of the Russian TV channel 'RTR Planeta' for one year. The Kremlin escalated the case as an aggressive attempt to restrict the freedom of expression. However, the European Commission examined the case and decided that the suspension of rebroadcasting of 'RTR Planeta' was compatible with EU law.

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE OPERATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

In democratic societies, freedom to express ideas and engage in discussions is distorted if paid trolls or bots that follow a preprogramed algorithm get to initiate and moderate these discussions. Private structures that are close to the Russian authorities establish a dissemination network of fake news and commentaries in the social media. It is likely that one centre coordinates directions and topics of Russian activities in social media. The US special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and charges brought against employees of the Internet Research Agency and its sponsor, Russian oligarch Prigozhin, for interference with the US presidential election indicate that Russian information operations in the social media are an important component of Russian influence activity ('active measures') abroad.

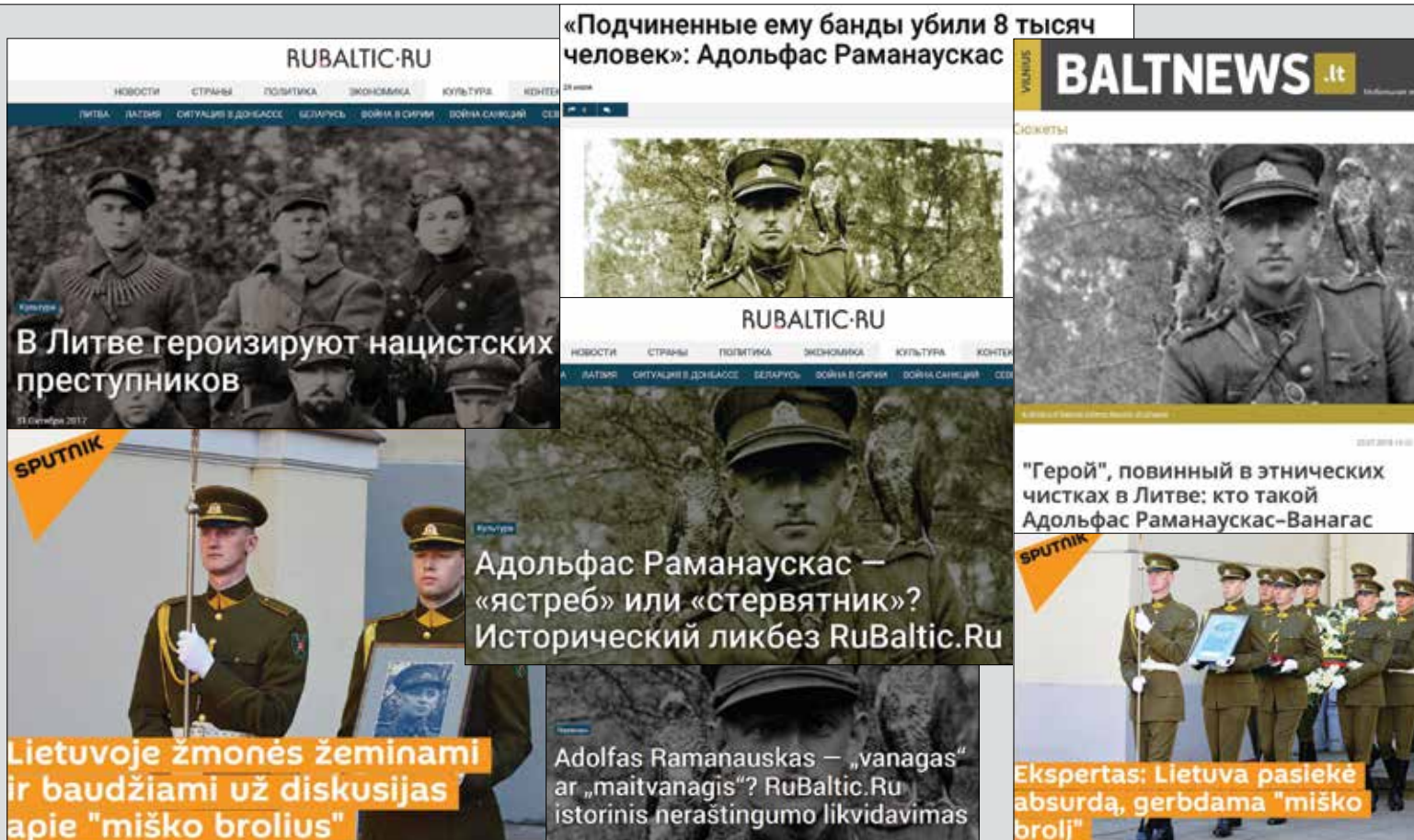
Russian meddling in electoral process in the US shows that Kremlin-related companies and intelligence services seek to establish operational platforms in foreign social media that could serve as a tool to destabilize the situation in a foreign country. Available data indicates that Russia possesses required capabilities to disseminate propaganda and disinformation in the Lithuanian social media. It is possible that Russia will use these capabilities during the 2019 election cycle in Lithuania.

Russia is particularly interested in legitimizing the annexation of Crimea. It organizes large international events in the occupied territory and invites foreign politicians and public figures to attend them. In 2018, marginal political actors from Lithuania were invited and attended the 4th International Yalta Economic Forum and the Livadia Forum. Lithuanian representatives participating in these events contribute to the legitimation of the occupation of Crimea, which contradicts the Lithuanian foreign policy.

While conducting aggressive foreign policy, Russia's representatives use the cover of cultural cooperation among democratic countries to sponsor events that spread pro-Kremlin ideas, seek to make contacts with Lithuanian politicians, businesspersons and public figures. Russia's representatives seek to use these contacts in implementing the Kremlin's information, history and ideological policy that disparages Lithuanian statehood. Russia employs networking and international cooperation to reduce its international isolation, while the involvement of Lithuanian representatives in ideological events serves to legitimize Russia's aggressive foreign policy.

The Kremlin manipulates democratic freedoms and rights in order to influence Lithuanian political processes. Russia's representatives liaise with leaders of sparse pro-Kremlin social and political movements and individual politicians. Russia employs available propaganda means to support favourable politicians and seeks to discredit those opposing its aggressive foreign policy. Moreover, in international organizations the Kremlin disseminates disinformation about Lithuania and tries to use it to harm Lithuania's interests.

Interference with Lithuanian domestic political processes is Russia's persistent objective, but the upcoming elections in 2019 and 2020 provide an opportunity for Russia to seek influence in the Lithuanian political processes from the municipal to the European level. The Kremlin is interested to gain influence in supranational organizations, which make decisions relevant for the entire region. Currently, there are no well-founded presumptions to indicate that Russia has achieved influence over Lithuanian strategic political decisions. However, the Kremlin makes constant attempts to meddle in Lithuanian political processes, to reduce trust in democratic procedures, elected politicians and the sovereign will of society.



Lithuanian armed resistance movement – a target of Russian propaganda in 2018

INFORMATION SECURITY

UNABLE TO PERSUADE, THE KREMLIN SEEKS TO RAISE DOUBTS ABOUT INCONVENIENT TRUTH

The Russian ruling elite considers propaganda one of the main elements of its subversive activity. The Kremlin seeks to dominate information space and drown opinions that oppose its position. A well-developed propaganda dissemination system – state-owned or controlled by the Kremlin-close oligarchs TV channels, internet news portals and state-funded NGOs – generates an intense propaganda stream targeting different audiences.

The Kremlin aims to raise doubts about truth by presenting a myriad of versions. This *modus operandi* was particularly visible in cases of the attempted assassination of the Skripals in Salisbury, use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, and the downing of the MH17 over Eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin disseminates different versions to disguise propaganda and create an image that the provided information is objective and of equal value. Should the audience not buy the Russian version, it will at least question all the other. This became particularly relevant as NATO and EU countries turned more cautious about Russian presentation of events.

In 2018, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zakharova actively participated in propaganda campaigns against Lithuania. In her statements, she sought to discredit members of the Lithuanian resistance against the Soviet occupation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also disseminated false information about deteriorating situation of Russian-speakers in his statements.

High-level Russian politicians and public officials actively engage in such propaganda campaigns. Generally, their public statements indicate the outset of larger and more intense propaganda campaigns against Lithuania and serve as an ideological basis for the Kremlin's propaganda narrative.

The Kremlin uses the constant stream of propaganda to mislead and set society at variance. Propaganda messages targeting Russian domestic audience portray Lithuania as an unreliable and dependent country lacking origin of its statehood. In particular, the Kremlin actively constructs the image of Lithuania as an adversary and a threat to Russia. It paints the deterrence policy implemented by Lithuania and NATO as a preparation for aggression against Russia. The Kremlin creates the adversarial image of Lithuania by spreading disinformation about persecuted Russian speakers and resurgent Nazism. Propaganda messages targeting Lithuanian audience play on Soviet nostalgia, present Lithuania as a country of economic break-

down and constant social unrest.

In pursuance of long-term goals, the Kremlin not only maintains a constant stream of propaganda, but also expeditiously reacts to events unfavourable to the ruling elite. In 2018, Russian propagandists intensified their actions after Lithuania took responsive measures against Russia's aggressive foreign policy. The commemoration of occasions important to the Lithuanian statehood also became target of Russian propaganda attacks. Employees of the Russian media holdings 'VGTRK'



Sputnik / Scanpix

In 2018, the number of purposeful information attacks against NATO eFP and Allied forces in Lithuania decreased but Russia maintained a constant stream of information targeting NATO and Lithuanian defence system. Its aim was to discredit state institutions and undermine trust in the Lithuanian defence and security policy. In 2018, the information attacks that reached society did not stand out in terms of innovative technological or psychological impact solutions. Despite the flow of equivocal messages and due to society's consciousness, support and trust in the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the Alliance remained high.

(Rossiya 1), 'Gazprom-media' (NTV) and the joint-stock company 'Pervyj Kanal' visited Lithuania and made propaganda coverages of Lithuanian centennial events portraying them as manifestations of resurgent Nazism. The above-mentioned TV channels broadcasted at prime time (in the following shows: 'The Venue', '60 minutes hot on the trail', 'Let them have their say') the biased and misleading reports about Lithuanian ambitions to curb Russian propaganda and history policy. These broadcasts featured pro-Kremlin individuals from Lithuania as guest speakers.

RUSSIAN HISTORY POLICY AIMED TO JUSTIFY AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS ABROAD

Russia's confrontational strategy towards the West and the Eurasianism ideology emphasizing Russia's superiority against the West increased the need for politicized history. Russia's history policy became one of the key instruments of its confrontational strategy and ideology. The Kremlin manipulates the Soviet victory in the Second World War (WWII) seeking to justify its claims to control the post-Soviet space.

The Kremlin accuses those opposing its narrative of history falsification and alleged support for neo-Nazism or fascism. The Kremlin often selectively employs these accusations to justify both the Soviet role



Commemoration of the 9th May in Lithuania
15 min / Scanpix

and Russia's current aggressive actions (including military ones). Russian propaganda justifies the annexation of Crimea and actions of Russia-supported separatists in Donbas with historical arguments and its duty to protect Russian speakers from alleged Ukrainian Nazis. Selective application of this narrative materializes in the Kremlin's support to openly xenophobic political movements that helps Russia enhance its leverage in the EU countries.

The main objective of Russia's history policy in Lithuania is to deny the Soviet occupation and to propagate a positive image of Soviet influence on Lithuania's development. The Kremlin's propaganda portrays Soviet invaders as liberators from Nazi Germany and argues that Soviet repressions were necessary to modernize Lithuania and achieve prosperity. The Kremlin purposefully seeks to disparage Lithuanian statehood and shape the attitude that Lithuania historically belongs to the zone of Russian interests.

These reasons explain why the Soviet victory and the perpetuation of Soviet heritage are among priorities of Russian history policy in Lithuania. In pursuance of these aims, Russia implements and actively promotes projects of history policy, particularly seeking to attract the youth. Leaders of the Soviet veteran and Russian compatriot organizations in Lithuania implement this activity under coordination of

One of the main targets of the Russian history policy is the Lithuanian armed resistance movement, as it denies clichés of the Kremlin's narrative about the positive Soviet influence to Lithuania's development. Russian officials and subordinate propagandists seek to shape the attitude that only Nazi collaborators and Holocaust-complicit criminals supported the resistance against the Soviet occupation. To compromise the Lithuanian resistance the Kremlin cynically manipulates the Holocaust tragedy to achieve the goals of its history policy. Russian propagandists further intensified this activity as the Lithuanian Parliament declared 2018 the year of Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas – one of the leaders and symbols of the Lithuanian resistance movement. For the same reasons Lithuania's aspirations to render legal assessment of Soviet crimes against Lithuanian people and the claim to compensate damage suffered during the Soviet occupation trigger furious reaction from the Kremlin.

Russian diplomats. Every year on 9 May, they organize marches of the Immortal Regiment in Vilnius and Klaipeda, where its participants carry pictures of their relatives who took part in the WWII.

Russia exploits the preservation of the Soviet heritage in propagating the image of Soviets as liberators. Russia sponsors various works in this domain – mainly search and reburial of the remains of Soviet soldiers, maintenance and restoration of their graves, monuments and memorial sites. Lithuanian legislation prevents the emergence of false, scientifically unfounded and propagandistic notes and symbols at the burial sites of Soviet soldiers. In response, in 2018 Russia organized propaganda campaigns and denied access to Russia to participants of Lithuania's annual expedition Mission Siberia who travel to Russia to take care of deportees' graves.

The narrative spread by Russian propagandists disparages Lithuanian statehood, whereas their accusations of history falsification and support to Nazism effectively shape the adversarial image of Lithuania in the Russian society. Thus Russia's history policy lays basis for the Kremlin's destructive actions against Lithuania and poses threat to Lithuania's national security.



Belarus NPP – the nuclear energy
project of Russia and Belarus
REUTERS / Scanpix

ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY

BELARUS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IS IMPORTANT TO BOTH RUSSIA AND BELARUS BUT THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS IS NOT SMOOTH

Construction of the Belarus nuclear power plant (BelNPP) in the neighbourhood of Lithuania is a commercially groundless project, which does not comply with international nuclear safety standards. Russia provides funding and technologies to the BelNPP project that serves to enhance Russia's positions in the region. Representatives of the Russian State Atomic Energy corporation Rosatom and Belarusian institutions have publicly announced that the first reactor will be launched as early as in late 2019, the second – in 2020.

Although the general contractor of the BelNPP, Rosatom subsidiary company Atomstroyexport, makes every endeavour not to fall behind schedule and Belarusian nuclear regulatory authorities tolerate disregard for safety requirements with their 'liberal' attitude, BelNPP construction process is not smooth. In September 2018, after a meeting between Putin and Lukashenko, the Belarusian President announced that the general contractor of BelNPP falls behind the schedule and expressed a concern that the implementation of the project might take longer than expected. Lukashenko demanded that Russia extended

the term of the loan for BelNPP construction and reduced the interest rate. In defence of Rosatom reputation, Russian representatives promised that the first reactor will be launched by late 2019, as announced publicly. After the above-mentioned statements of the Belarusian President, the general contractor of BelNPP communicated that the construction process of the plant is smooth and corresponds with the agreed schedule.

Belarusian and Russian (Rosatom) representatives focus their attention on shaping the opinion of international community, primarily seeking to secure a favourable position of experts of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In July 2018, ENSREG endorsed the Peer Review Report of the EU Stress Test in Belarus. Belarusian and Rosatom representatives manipulate results of the report: they disregard arguments suggesting that the BelNPP does not comply with international safety requirements, ignore identified shortcomings, and do not fulfil recommendations.

Belarus amplifies every positive review of IAEA experts and deemphasizes or conceals every criticism of international experts. Belarus seeks to create an image that the BelNPP construction complies with nuclear safety requirements and pays respect to recommendations of international experts but the Belarusian nuclear regulatory authorities do not possess required expertise to supervise the BelNPP construction properly.

Despite Putin's jokes that Russia is building a NPP for Belarus regardless of its own interests ('instead of supplying gas we build a nuclear power plant'), this project is very important for Russia. Firstly, its implementation would enhance Russia's influence in Belarus – Rosatom would be able to control the exploitation, provision of nuclear fuel and, ultimately, the decommissioning of the BelNPP. Secondly, these long-term processes would grant Russia another tool of political influence not

only in Belarus but also in the whole region. Thirdly, after commissioning of the BelNPP Russia would seek to regain a leading position in the regional energy market. Finally, the project is important for Rosatom, which actively seeks to enhance its positions in the market of nuclear technologies.

Belarus has an ambition to become an important electricity provider but the BelNPP project is commercially groundless. After commissioning of the BelNPP Belarus will generate a huge power surplus but has not secured export markets for it. Belarus would like to export electricity not only to the region of Eurasian Economic Union but also to the Baltic States. Belarusian officials declare that Belarus successfully trades electricity in the Nord Pool power market. Therefore, it is highly likely that Belarus will seek to circumvent Lithuanian legislation preventing electricity generated in unsafe nuclear power plants from entering the Lithuanian electricity market.

SHADY INVESTORS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES OPERATE THROUGH OFFSHORE STRUCTURES AND EU-REGISTERED COMPANIES

On 1 March 2018, the Law on the Protection of Objects of Importance to Ensuring National Security came into force. It provides criteria for verification of an investor's conformity to national security interests. One of the main criteria are investor's connections – relations with foreign intelligence and security services or third countries' authorities that increase the risk or pose threat to Lithuania's national security. In this regard, not only potential investors from third countries but also Lithuanian companies and business entities of other EU and NATO countries' investing in Lithuania are subject to verification.

In 2018, a number of companies seeking to operate in the Lithuanian financial sector has increased. Such possibilities also attracted attention of controversial figures – Lithuanian and foreign citizens many of whom engage in financial operations through banks and other financial institutions based in preferential tax zones. The increasingly widening geography of potential investors in financial sector ranges from Cayman Islands to Vanuatu. Seeking to conceal the actual beneficiaries and reduce the tax burden, these actors employ sophisticated and shady business management schemes that are implemented through legal entities based in preferential tax zones.

The possibility to obtain the cover of EU-registered companies also attracted third-country companies operating in other strategic sectors. In 2018, a Lithuania-registered company was possibly used for attempts to collect data relevant for the Russian Armed Forces. An EU-registered investment company, a subsidiary of a Russian holding AFK Sistema, purchased the shares of the company. Russian oligarch Vladimir Yevtushenkov owns the controlling interest of the holding, while his son, Felix Yevtushenkov, heads the above-mentioned subsidiary company. AFK Sistema controls Kronstadt Group, which a few years ago won the bid to establish digital cartographic data centres.

Russian Defence Ministry commissioned 'Kronstadt Group' to establish a system of digital cartographic data that enables the use of cartographic data for development of battlefield simulators and planning of military operations. The project was a part of the State Armament Programme of the Russian Armed Forces (2008–2020), which is coordinated by the Military-Industrial Commission. Since 2014, the Commission is subordinate to Putin. 'Kronstadt Group' companies also design UAVs and their control systems, develop software to collect and process geographical data and other technologies required by the Russian military. Kronstadt Group closely cooperates with Russian military industry entities and fulfils orders of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).

Russia seeks to collect cartographic data which would enable an efficient use of the new missile launching systems. For this purpose Russian entities made contacts with a Lithuanian company dealing with aero-scanning and mapping in Lithuania and other EU countries. The company uses helicopters or UAVs to collect cartographic and other geographical information. Subsequently, it digitalizes the collected high-definition video data and geographical information (landscape and infrastructure inspections) and loads it onto 3D computer simulations. Their cooperation started after a shareholder of the Kronstadt Group invested in the Lithuanian company. It is highly likely that Russian entities sought to obtain the cover of an EU-based company and to conceal the collection of data for the Russian Armed Forces. The scheme corresponds to modus operandi of the Russian intelligence and security services that employ local (EU) companies in their activities against national security interests of EU countries.

The above-mentioned Lithuanian company operates in an economic sector of strategic importance to ensuring national security. In accordance with provisions of the Law on the Protection of Objects of Importance to Ensuring National Security, a competent national authority decided that this investor does not conform to national security interests of Lithuania.

Battlefield simulator by Kronstadt Group (based on accurate cartographic data)
Source: Kronstadt Group



Aero-scanning from an UAV
Source: Kronstadt Group



Online terrorism propaganda and instructions for staging attacks

TERRORISM

ISIL INSPIRED STRIKES IN EUROPE REPLACE DIRECTED TERRORIST ATTACKS

The US-led international coalition against the terrorist organization Islamic State (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq achieved success. In 2017, the allies defeated Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's pseudo-state (Caliphate). ISIL lost its potential and resources to carry out and coordinate terrorist operations in the West, which led to a decrease of terrorist attacks in Europe in 2018. ISIL still poses a major threat to Europe but its character has changed.

ISIL METHODS TO CONDUCT TERRORIST ATTACKS

Directed – terrorist attacks, planned and coordinated by ISIL. Good tactical preparation, sophisticated planning, significant damage, many victims. Some of these attacks were carried out by foreign fighters returned from conflict regions in Syria and Iraq to Europe. ISIL coordinated its last successful terrorist attacks in Brussels (in 2016) and in Manchester (in 2017).

Enabled – radicalized lone individuals and groups that act independently. They had contacts with ISIL terrorists online, discussed possible actions and received approval. Usually poor tactical preparation, no experience, unsophisticated attacks.

Inspired – radicalized lone individuals and groups that act independently, merely inspired by ISIL propaganda. Possible contacts with local extremists; support of accomplices. Usually poor tactical preparation, unsophisticated attacks, use of available means, low damage. Exceptions: terrorist attacks in Nice (France) in 2016 as well as in Barcelona and in Cambrils (Spain) in 2017.

Individuals carrying out terrorist attacks in Europe on behalf of ISIL plan their actions independently, usually utilize simple and easily accessible means. Most of them have no direct links to terrorist organization, but are not completely independent either, as they communicate with members of ISIL or like-minded radicals in Europe who assist in carrying out the attacks. These terrorists have chosen law enforcement officers and random civilians as their targets in Europe.

Over the past three-four years, active ISIL propaganda has strengthened the trend of lone actor terrorism. During this period, ISIL distributed a considerable amount of terrorism propaganda (mainly intended for youth), interpretations of religious texts and instructions for terrorist and paramilitary activity. This material will remain available to the supporters of the jihad ideology for a long time.

TERRORISM THREAT LEVEL IN LITHUANIA REMAINS LOW

Terrorism trends in Europe affect security situation in all countries within the Schengen area, including (indirectly) Lithuania. Terrorism threat level in Lithuania remains low. In 2018, no activity of lone extremists or organized groups adverse to Lithuania has been identified. No indications of individual 'jihad' terrorism propagated by ISIL online and topical in Europe have been observed in Lithuania.

No trends of radicalization in the Lithuanian Muslim Community (LMC) have been identified. Radicalization of the LMC could be externally induced by representatives of foreign controversial Islamic organizations and movements exploiting its division and eager to alter local traditions, promote radical interpretation of Islam, attempt to seize the leadership of the Muslim communities and create isolated groups.

ILLEGAL MIGRATION POSES RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND PUBLIC ORDER

For three consecutive years, flows of illegal migration from the Middle East and North Africa to European countries continue to decrease. According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 132,000 illegal migrants arrived to Europe in 2018 (in 2017, more than 189,000). Major illegal migration paths to Europe were the Western and Eastern Mediterranean routes – from Morocco to Spain and from Turkey to Greece, respectively.

It is possible that ISIL would attempt to exploit migrant flows to dispatch its members to Europe. Since 2014, around 50 refugees and asylum seekers who arrived as illegal migrants took part in terrorist activity in Europe – carried out a terrorist attack or participated in its planning. Some of these foreigners resorted to such actions after denial of their asylum application by a particular EU country.

In 2018, 18 Syrian citizens were relocated from Turkey to Lithuania within the framework of the EU Relocation Programme. One foreigner was denied access to Lithuania after vetting procedure.

Third-country nationals who are linked to terrorist or extremist organizations, international organized crime and intelligence services of non-democratic states or pose threat to national security and public order could use the services of so-called ‘grey migration’ facilitators. ‘Grey migration’ is an arranged arrival of third country nationals to Lithuania or other Schengen Area country and / or legalization of their further stay by facilitators for a fee. Some suspected foreign radicals and extremists used the schemes of ‘grey migration’ to arrive to Lithuania. They obtained visas on false grounds at the invitation of companies or individuals.

CRISIS REGIONS

The long-running civil war in Syria approaches the end. In 2018, Damascus regime fully dominated the battlefield in Syria. Pro-government forces supported by Russia and Iran defeated or forced to surrender militant opposition groups that operated in southern and central parts of the country. The Idlib province in the north-west of Syria is the last rebel stronghold. It is possible that in the short term pro-government

forces will try to attack it as the regime seeks to regain control of the entire country. Fighting between the regime and rebels is likely to end in 2019.

In 2018, ISIL in Syria still controlled few minor territories but the majority of active fighters both in Syria and Iraq, were forced to operate underground. ISIL has become a much weaker organization but conducted terrorist attacks in Iraq

and Syria targeting civilians and members of security services. Forces opposing ISIL, including Syrian Kurds and Iraqi Shia fighters, also gained strength. Therefore, ISIL ability to regain control of larger urban areas in the short term will be minimal. It is highly likely that ISIL will confine to underground activity and organizations of terror acts. It will seek to survive this downfall and restore its capabilities in the future.

The fighting groups in Libya fail to find an agreement on the country's future. Considerable power is concentrated in the hands of various



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militant factions and their unwillingness to give up the power poses a threat to a long-term stability in the country. The ongoing chaos in Libya will pose security threats to the whole region and create favourable conditions for activity of radical groups. Amid disagreements of the International Community about the resolution of Libyan crisis, Russia will possibly take more active role in Libya.

The security situation in the northern and central Mali remains complicated. The implementation of the peace agreement has been progressing slowly, as the ethnic conflict continues. The activity of radical groups poses the biggest security threat. Although international forces based in the region conduct antiterrorist operations, radical militants remain strong. Ability to infiltrate into local communities through family connections, trade relations and to exploit ethnic disagreements and inaction of central authorities determine their resilience. Consequently, it enables the extremist groups to spread their influence, ideology, attract new members, and continue smuggling activities. Terrorist threat against international forces and in the region of Sahel will persist.

In 2018, the Taliban fighters continued on pushing the Afghan Security Forces in different provinces and succeeded to take temporary control of several provincial centres. The ongoing strategic stalemate increases perception that the by military resolution of the conflict will fail. In 2018, the Afghan Government and the US made efforts in bringing the parties to peace negotiations. So far, the Taliban has rejected the proposals to negotiate with the Government and declared its intention to enter direct talks with the USA. It is unlikely that in the short term the Taliban would accept the proposal and halt the armed fighting. Security situation in Afghanistan will remain fragile. It is highly likely that the Taliban and other radical groups will conduct attacks against members of the Afghan Government, local and international forces. After parliamentary elections in October situation remains unstable, political forces will devote their primary attention to the presidential elections scheduled in April 2019.



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CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

In 2019, changes are unlikely in Russian domestic policy. In the mid term, the Kremlin will prepare to address the problem of 2024 – the end of Putin's term. Whatever the solution will be, it is highly likely that neither the nature of the regime nor its implemented policy will change. There are no real threats to the ruling regime in Russia but in the mid term economic difficulties and international isolation will increase tensions within the elite and the social discontent in the society.

Both deteriorating domestic situation and Russia's attitude towards international relations could encourage the Kremlin to resort to foreign policy adventures. Russia strengthens its military power, develops foreign influence toolkit, and enhances its presence in various regions worldwide. Such Russian policy results in better awareness of Russian threats in the Western countries and tightening of sanctions. However, Russia is not willing to change its policy, as it perceives making any concessions as a defeat. The Kremlin is set to a long-term confrontation with the West. Russia will use every opportunity to incite conflicts in other countries or provoke international crises if it perceives that as a chance to increase its influence.

There are no indications that Russia would try to adjust its military and security policy towards de-escalation and tension reduction. Both Russia's domestic and foreign policy are heavily militarized. It is highly likely that Russia will seek ways to enhance its global positions and expand the network of military bases abroad. Ability to start execute combat orders with 24–48 hours' notice, build-up of Russian military capabilities and the determination to use them will be one of the main factors negatively affecting Lithuanian national security.

In 2019, Russia will retain focus on post-Soviet countries and will strengthen its influence over their domestic policies. In the Moldovan parliamentary election in February 2019, the Kremlin will seek to secure the victory of political parties seen as more favourable to Russia's interests. Russia will tighten control over Belarus to ensure that Belarusian decisions and domestic processes would conform to the Kremlin's interests. Currently, Russia cannot influence Ukraine as much as before the annexation of Crimea, in particular by the means of 'soft power'. It is highly likely that the Kremlin will seek opportunity to destabilize situation in Ukraine and discredit Kiev in the eyes of the international community.

Despite unfavourable conditions to increase influence in Lithuania Russia does not relinquish its ambition to manipulate Lithuanian domestic processes and society. It is likely that in the short term Russia will intensify attempts to discredit and increase disappointment with democracy, state institutions and officials. The 2019–2020 election cycle will likely be the main object of Russian interests. It is possible that Russia will seek to sway the course of elections by information and cyber means.

It is highly likely that the intensity of activities of Russian and Belarusian intelligence services will remain high. Russian intelligence will step-up its activity during the 2019–2020 election cycle. In short to mid term, Russian intelligence services will increasingly employ non-traditional intelligence methods and means in the EU and NATO countries. Lithuanian residents with personal, business or ideological ties to Russia and Belarus will remain permanent intelligence targets. Russia will continue to employ its cyber capabilities for intelligence and influence operations. It is highly likely that despite the condemnation and sanctions applied by the West in response to Russian cyber operations Russia's activity in cyber space will not decrease but may become less discernible.

In the short term, Russia's aggressive information and history policy will aim to disparage Lithuanian statehood and polarize society. The Kremlin will likely increase the variety and amount of projects that implement its history policy. It is highly likely that Kremlin's main focus will be on the case of attempted January 1991 coup and the respective court ruling in 2019. On this occasion, the Kremlin will likely intensify its propaganda campaigns spreading the 'friendly fire' narrative. Provocations are possible against former or incumbent Lithuanian officials or law enforcement officers related to the January 1991 coup case. The Kremlin will also embark on the long-term propaganda activity seeking to impede initiatives that enhance NATO and Lithuanian security.

It is highly likely that in the near term the stream of investors who operate in third countries, often concealing their actual beneficiaries and seeking to invest in Lithuania, will not decrease. This negative trend will create additional risks to Lithuania, while some potential investors with ties to hostile intelligence and security services will pose threat to Lithuania's national security.

Considering the growing activity of Chinese intelligence and security services in NATO and EU countries, it is likely that in the long term Chinese intelligence activity in Lithuania will also expand.

It is highly likely that ISIL will go underground and seek to regain strength. It is likely that due to the lack of resources and capabilities ISIL will not be able to conduct directed terrorist attacks in the West, but it will encourage its followers and sympathizers to conduct independent attacks. The flow of foreign fighters and other residents of the 'caliphate', including women and children, returning from conflict areas is not significant. However, it is possible that some of them will join radicalized individuals in Europe and carry out terrorist attacks. Terrorist organization Al-Qaeda will seek to regain the leadership of 'global jihad' from ISIL. It is likely that in order to be more visible Al-Qaeda will more actively try to conduct terrorist attacks in the West. In the near term, the terrorism threat level in Lithuania will remain low.

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