

# PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

## RUSSIA FACES UNFAVOURABLE CONDITIONS TO SEEK POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN LITHUANIA

Russia's military aggression in Ukraine and its exposed attempts to meddle in foreign elections mobilized international community. The increased awareness of decision-makers and the public of the threats posed by the Kremlin has considerably reduced its ability to influence Lithuanian political system. Conditions to impact on strategic political decisions are limited, but Russia does not abandon its objective to interfere with Lithuania's domestic political processes.

Russia monitored the 2019 elections and other political processes in Lithuania, however there were no large-scale attempts to influence their outcome or manipulate public opinion. During the election campaign Russian propagandists did not focus on campaigning for any particular candidate, but rather ran slander campaigns against Lithuanian politicians who were most critical of actions of Russian authorities.

## RUSSIA USES INTERNATIONAL EVENTS TO LOOK FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN REPRESENT ITS INTERESTS

In order to reduce its international isolation and to pursue its strategic foreign and domestic policy goals the Kremlin is interested in developing ties with decision-makers at all levels of government. International events organized by Russia provide ample opportunities to recruit their participants and engage them in a process of non-transparent lobbying of Russian interests.

Lithuanian politicians and public figures also receive invitations to attend conferences and forums on social and political issues, including those organized in Crimea. The events on the peninsula are aimed at justifying and consolidating its annexation. For several consecutive years certain Lithuanian political figures have been invited to attend the International Yalta Economic Forum in Crimea. Since 2015, the annual forum has been organized by the Crimean Council of Ministers and the Foundation of the International Yalta Economic Forum, and sponsored by the Russian Presidential Administration. The organizing committee of the event is led by the Russia-appointed head of the annexed Crimea Sergei Aksionov. The Livadia Forum, another large-scale event in Crimea to which leaders of foreign non-governmental organizations are invited, is an integral part of the international slavic festival 'The Great Russian Word', organized in Crimea since 2015.

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The Kremlin organizes international events looking for individuals who can represent its interests



The Kremlin covers all travel expenses for individuals attending such events. Representatives of the Russian authorities show exclusive attention to foreign guests and seek to establish and maintain contacts. Therefore, very often those who attend the event for the first time later receive similar invitations to other not necessary related events.

By organizing events that correspond to its agenda Russia seeks to create a fiction of international solidarity and neutrality. Russia presents the participation of politicians and other public figures from foreign countries in such events as alleged evidence of strong international support for the Kremlin's policies. In some cases attempts are made to conceal the Kremlin's links to such events or their participants' links to the Kremlin, especially when it concerns international organizations. For instance, the Kremlin exploits OSCE events to 'defend' the rights of allegedly persecuted Russian speakers in the Baltic States and elsewhere. In these venues individuals acting on behalf of the Russian interests often take the opportunity to disseminate false information and further Russia's agenda.



# INFORMATION SECURITY

RUBALTIC·RU  
АНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОРТАЛ

## ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ РЕПРЕССИИ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ ЗАКЛЮЧЕННЫЕ ПРИБАЛТИКИ

Карательная юстиция на страже политических режимов Литвы, Латвии и Эстонии

АНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДОКЛАД



Rubaltic.ru distributed a propaganda publication on alleged political persecution in the Baltic States



## THE BALTICS' POLITICAL REPRESSIONS

### The Punitive Justice System of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

#### Chapter 1

### Lies about the 13<sup>th</sup> of January: The Ones Truly Responsible for the Mass Murder of 1991 in Lithuania

The clashes on the night between the 12 and 13 of January in Vilnius were not just the turning point of Lithuania's recent history, but also an important link in the tragic events in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Clearly, the Baltics had a special role to play in these processes. The Perestroika course gave wings to the national elites of the Soviet Republics fostered by Moscow. In the late 1990s, these elites clearly saw the opportunity to distance themselves from the Union center.

This trend could be easily seen in Lithuania: in order to hasten their split with Moscow and amass all of the power in their hands, the newfangled "democratic" leaders were ready (or rather passionately wanted!) to spill the blood of their compatriots.



Photo: tssk.ru

## RUSSIA USES PROPAGANDA TO DISCREDIT LEGAL PROCESSES IN LITHUANIA

The Kremlin uses information policy as an instrument of influence against foreign countries, including Lithuania. Russia's information policy is coordinated at the highest level and is implemented through targeted dissemination of propaganda and disinformation. The Kremlin's propaganda creates images that portray Russia as a better and more credible alternative to the 'failing West'. It presents allegedly 'alternative opinions' and concurrently aims to sow distrust in information unfavourable to the Kremlin by immediately providing a number of 'alternative' but false versions of the event.

One of the main goals of Russia's information policy is to disparage Lithuania's statehood and to discredit anti-Soviet resistance (for example, the June 1941 uprising, Anti-Soviet Armed Resistance Movement, dissident movement, etc.). Therefore, in 2019, the masterminds of the Kremlin's propaganda spared no effort to discredit the January 1991 attempted coup case and pre-trial investigations on espionage in favour of Russia. To that end they created and disseminated propagandistic narrative about alleged "politically motivated persecution and fabricated political cases in Lithuania", which was supposed to justify the Kremlin's policy.

The propaganda campaign based on this narrative intensified after the Vilnius Regional Court announced its ruling in the January 1991 coup case. At the time of the announcement, representatives of the pro-Kremlin media came to Lithuania with the purpose to produce propagandistic coverages. In their comments on the court ruling Russian officials emphasized allegedly politicized trial and denied the validity of the ruling.

Propagandists sought to convince foreign and domestic audiences that those convicted or detained in the January 1991 coup case and in the case concerning espionage in favour of Russia were political prisoners. They used different means to spread this propagandistic narrative. Individuals holding radical attitudes and acting on behalf of the Kremlin organized propaganda events in Lithuania and abroad in support of 'political prisoners' in Lithuania. Petitions, articles and videos against alleged political persecution were actively circulated online, particularly on the most popular social networks.

## RUSSIA'S RESPONSE TO THE 13 JANUARY 1991 CASE

Criminal prosecution is one of the instruments used by the Kremlin to control Russia's political and economic processes. Opponents of the regime are prosecuted both directly for their activities and based on fabricated criminal charges. In addition, criminal pre-trial investigations are initiated as blackmail on individuals to stop their activities, to transfer assets, or to fulfill other demands. In case of compliance charges are usually dropped.

Russia started to use this method in its foreign relations. In 2018, the Russian Investigation Committee launched a pre-trial investigation against Lithuanian officials who investigated the January 1991 coup case and judges who heard and decided it. They are accused of illegal persecution of Russian citizens.

Russia publicly announced the launch of the pre-trial investigation in early 2019, before the announcement of the ruling in the January 1991 coup case in Lithuania. The Investigative Committee published a propaganda video titled 'Lithuanian Justice' on their official *YouTube* channel. Defendants of the January 1991 coup case living in Russia and Belarus speak in the video. Russia was thus seeking to influence the decision of the Lithuanian court by indirectly threatening the judges with the actions of Russian law enforcement, in particular to launch international prosecution.

Russia has not yet taken actions against the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, but the investigation of the case gives Russia the opportunity to put pressure on Lithuania and on the Lithuanian citizens involved in the January 1991 coup case proceedings, as well as to assert its interpretation of the January 1991 events.

Following Lithuania's restoration of independence in March 1990, in January 1991 the Soviet Union tried to suppress it by sending armed forces and the KGB special units to seize government and other public buildings. The ensuing clashes in Vilnius between the soviet forces and peaceful civilians resulted in 14 civilian casualties. In 2019, 67 former soviet officers were convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, most of them in absentia. Russia denies the soviet occupation of Lithuania, holds the actions of soviet military in Lithuania legitimate, and considers the trial in Lithuania over January 1991 events harmful to Russian interests.

The dissemination of Kremlin propaganda was accompanied by intimidation aimed at influencing investigators and judges in these cases. Russian officials have unequivocally and publicly stated that they will respond to the court ruling in the January 1991 coup case.

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**Russia sought to discredit legal proceedings in Lithuania in the eyes of the international community. On 20 February 2019, *rubaltic.ru*, a Russian online propaganda outlet, announced its so called investigation on political repressions in the Baltic States in the European Parliament. Most of it was devoted to the January 1991 coup case. Later, Russian GONGOs supporting Kremlin's aggressive foreign and domestic policies addressed the OSCE urging it to draw attention to the alleged political persecution in Lithuania.**

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## CYBER-ENABLED INFORMATION OPERATIONS AGAINST LITHUANIA

Most cyber-enabled information operations target national defence system. These attacks have the aim of polarizing society, discrediting the Lithuanian armed forces and Allies, and diminishing trust in state institutions. On average, 4 to 5 incidents of this type are identified in Lithuania every year. Creators of fake stories strive to be more compelling and sparsely use techniques that failed in the past. The new attacks differ in quality from the ones in previous years – stories are more often based on real events, messages are more widely spread in foreign media, new institutions and social groups are involved, which facilitates the spread of the disinformation. Publicly available information about current events in the country as well as contacts of civil servants and media are actively used. However, these efforts do not bring desirable results as dissemination of fake stories is low and does not generate much interest.

It is highly likely that the targets of the attacks will not change significantly in 2020. In the near term, entities in Lithuania and abroad will contribute to organization of cyber-enabled information operations or dissemination of fake information.

Topical issues, for example, environment protection, will be used to provoke a negative public sentiment. As long as unavailable to a wide range of users, the advanced technologies (Internet of things, artificial intelligence, deep fake) contribute to evolution, but not revolution of information manipulation. A critical approach to information, self-restraint in sharing sensations, and the security of information networks are among the most effective ways to increase resilience to various forms of manipulation.

## POTENTIAL TARGETS OF CYBER-ENABLED INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN 2020

- Lithuanian Armed Forces' capabilities (upgrades and funding)
- Allied forces in Lithuania
- International exercise Defender 2020

The collage consists of three overlapping screenshots:

- Top Left:** A screenshot of a U.S. Department of State press release titled "Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praises Lithuania's President for his offer". The URL is "kaunas.kasvyksta.lt/wp-content/2019/10/17/stategov.jpg".
- Top Right:** A screenshot of a social media post from "media@urm.lt" with the text "PRESS RELEASE BY THE MINISTR..." and "LITHUANIA PROPOSES TO BUILD A U.S. MILITARY BASE IN LITHUANIA".
- Bottom:** A screenshot of a Change.org petition titled "Stop German troops desecration of Jewish graves in Lithuania". It features a photo of a cemetery with a red circle around a specific grave. Below the photo is a sign-up form with fields for "First name", "Last name", and "Email". To the right is a snippet of a Times article titled "U.S. soldiers suspected of attempted car theft in Vilnius".

Cyber-enabled information attacks in 2019 disseminated fake news about allied forces in Lithuania

## KREMLIN AGGRESSIVELY RESPONDS TO RESTRICTIONS ON THE RUSSIAN HISTORY POLICY PROJECTS THAT SERVES THE SPREAD OF KREMLIN'S IDEOLOGY

The most important goal of Russian history policy in Lithuania is to form consistently an exceptionally positive image of the Soviet influence on Lithuania's development, while simultaneously denying the occupation and annexation of Lithuania. Such a goal is based on the Kremlin's geopolitical outlook in which the Baltic States have always belonged to Russia's sphere of influence and therefore cannot be independent states.

The alleged positive soviet influence on the development of Lithuania is embedded in the propaganda narrative of the Great Patriotic War which is pivotal in the Russian history policy. In attempts to shape and disseminate this narrative the Kremlin makes extensive use of the soviet memorial sites in formerly occupied territories. The Kremlin finances the maintenance of soviet soldiers' cemeteries and the restoration of military monuments and other memorial sites. Russia also provides funding for events that underpin its history policy and are often organized at these sites. Any attempts to challenge the Kremlin's ideologically-charged history policy is met with intimidation and aggressive response. For instance, Russian diplomats threatened Lithuanian municipal officials who refused to bypass national regulations on the use of soviet symbols while restoring soviet memorial sites.

## RUSSIA WILL COMMEMORATE THE 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE VICTORY DAY

Russia portrays the second Soviet occupation which began in the summer of 1944 with the entry of the soviet armed forces into Lithuanian territory as 'liberation from fascism'. In 2019, activists coordinated by Russian diplomats organized events dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Kaunas and Vilnius in Lithuania. In 2019, the Russian Ministry of Defence also launched a series of 17 events to commemorate the 'liberation' of other Eastern European cities.

In 2020, Russia will commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory Day which will contain many propaganda events. The Kremlin is interested that such events fulfill the objectives of Russian history policy and reach out to the international community. Not only the Russian state institutions, including the intelligence services or the regime-controlled media, are used for this purpose, but also international cooperation formats. It is highly likely that Russia will seek to attract multiple dignitaries and state officials from abroad to attend these events.



In denial of the soviet occupation, an event dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation of Vilnius took place in 2019 in Moscow  
*ITAR-TASS / Scanpix*

The Kremlin is also in denial of those historical facts that attest to executions, imprisonments, and deportations perpetrated by the soviet authorities. The Kremlin restricts initiatives of Lithuanian non-governmental organizations and individuals to commemorate these events and pay respect to their compatriots who perished. For the second consecutive year, Russia did not issue visas to participants of the 'Mission to Siberia' who were planning to take care of the graves of Soviet repression victims. Russian officials also detained, interrogated, intimidated, and later fined Lithuanians in Russia, Perm region, who were taking care of the graves of Lithuanian and Polish deportees.

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**In 2019, the Russian Ministry of Defence initiated a draft law and amendments to the Russian Criminal Code, introducing sanctions and criminal liability for those responsible for the destruction of Russian 'combat glory' sites abroad. The draft law provides for the establishment of a special list of foreign nationals who have been involved in the destruction, damage or desecration of monuments, publicly agitated to do so or made decisions to do so in the exercise of their administrative powers. Listed persons would be barred from entering Russia, any property and funds held in Russia would be seized, all real estate and investment transactions would be banned, and any legal entities owned by them would be suspended.**

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# **ECONOMIC AND ENERGY SECURITY**



*Scanpix Baltics*

## THE RISK OF INCIDENTS AT THE BELARUSIAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IS INCREASING

Stakeholders and contractors of the Belarusian nuclear power plant (BelNPP) project in Astravyets continue to ignore international nuclear safety standards. In the beginning of 2019, the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention concluded that Belarus commenced the construction of the BelNPP without proper site selection procedures and environmental impact assessment. Experts analysed the BelNPP stress test report and identified significant deficiencies. Although the Nuclear and Radiation Protection Department of the Belarusian Ministry of Emergency Situations has announced a plan to eliminate the deficiencies identified during the stress tests, the construction contractor, the company Atomstroyexport owned by Rosatom, has taken no real action. Rosatom gives priority to the on-time schedule over the security of the BelNPP. At least since mid-2018, Belarusian authorities have been under pressure to allow the delivery of nuclear fuel, even though BelNPP's facilities have not been properly prepared.

Rosatom representatives flippantly consider the demands of the Belarusian authorities overseeing the construction and ignore the findings of Belarusian experts. Rosatom considers Gosatomnadzor, the Belarusian agency responsible for project oversight, as an incompetent institution that only impedes smooth construction of the BelNPP. Even when Belarusian experts took a tougher stance, Rosatom was reluctant to follow their recommendations. On the contrary, they made claims about allegedly delayed construction, putting pressure on Belarusian authorities and seeking political leverage.

On the other hand, Gosatomnadzor lacks not only the competence (without the necessary experience its experts cannot manage without the assistance from the Russian agency Rostechнадzor), but also the will to properly supervise the work of Rosatom. Gosatomnadzor often failed to ensure contractor's compliance with the requirements and decisions or recommendations of Belarusian experts. During the implementation of the project the regulations for drafting documentation and licensing of equipment were constantly violated and the supply of adequate equipment for the BelNPP was not ensured. Some equipment was not properly certified and in some places equipment parts were installed that did not conform to the project.

Due to the rushed construction work, the negligent approach to nuclear safety, and the poor work ethics, numerous incidents in the BelNPP have occurred which could have a negative impact on its safe exploitation. The most significant incidents occurred in 2016, but incidents and violations continued in subsequent years, including in 2019. At the end of June 2019, workers' negligence caused a fire in Unit 1 of the BelNPP near the reactor building. Despite the fact that the Unit 1 is already in preparation for loading nuclear fuel, the Belarusian authorities have not provided information on the incident. This fact shows that the situation in the BelNPP has not changed after the incidents in 2016 – information about the real situation in the BelNPP is concealed to avoid publicity. Therefore, it is highly likely that the information will be further withheld after commissioning the BelNPP.

The approaching deadline for the launch of the BelNPP raises tensions between the Belarusian institutions, project stakeholders, and representatives of Rosatom – they all fear responsibility for potential incidents in the hastily-built BelNPP. In early July 2019, the construction manager of the BelNPP Dmitry Romaniec, resigned. He quitted and left Belarus in a very difficult period – at the start of major preparations for Unit 1. It is highly likely that his departure was not accidental – the former construction manager resigned avoiding responsibility for previous incidents, malfunctions, and further preparations for commissioning. Moreover, the Belarusian Investigation Committee had earlier opened a pre-trial investigation into incidents at the BelNPP construction site. Over the course of that investigation, several people working for Russian contractors were detained. However, due to Russian diplomatic pressure, the cases were terminated.

In our assessment, Rosatom favours the approach to hide information about defects in the BelNPP project, as it fears for its international reputation as a reliable partner in nuclear power plant construction projects.

## RUSSIAN ENERGY COMPANIES STRIVE TO SECURE THEIR INTERESTS IN LITHUANIA

In 2019, Russian energy sector companies actively sought to maintain and strengthen their position in the Baltic States' energy market and paid close attention to strategic energy projects developed by Lithuania.

Since the beginning of 2019, Russian energy company Novatek sought to enter the Lithuanian liquefied natural gas (LNG) market. The company's main business activity is the supply of LNG from Vysock, including to the Baltic States via the Klaipėda Terminal. Novatek is able to offer low LNG prices only because of preferential conditions for LNG exports granted by the Russian government. Therefore, by increasing its trade turnover via Klaipėda Terminal Novatek is playing a part in Russia's long-term game to restore its dominant position in the regional gas market.

Although Novatek presents itself as a private and one of the most transparent companies in Russia, there is no doubt that its strategy and goals are coordinated with Russia's top authorities. Gennady Tymchenko, a Russian oligarch belonging to Putin's entourage and one of the Novatek shareholders, is subject to US sanctions. State-controlled company Gazprom also owns part of Novatek shares.

As Lithuania diversified its natural gas supply, Gazprom lost its position in the Lithuanian market and could no longer manipulate prices. In 2019, Gazprom refrained from making direct influence, but sought to strengthen its activities through loyal intermediaries – businessmen with connections to Gazprom and involved in gas trading schemes via companies registered in Lithuania and abroad. Those intermediaries receive Gazprom privileges and thus can gain a competitive advantage. In the hope of even more favourable terms they reward Gazprom with loyalty by coordinating their activities with Russian representatives and providing them up-to-date information on developments in the Baltic States' gas market.



In August 2019, a company registered in Lithuania and involved in Gazprom trading schemes, organized an event – a gala concert which was attended by Ryazanov, the former Vice-President of the Board of Gazprom; Jemelianov, Deputy Chief for Trade with CIS and Baltic region of the International Business Department of Gazprom; and Oruzhev, a former Tymchenko’s business partner.

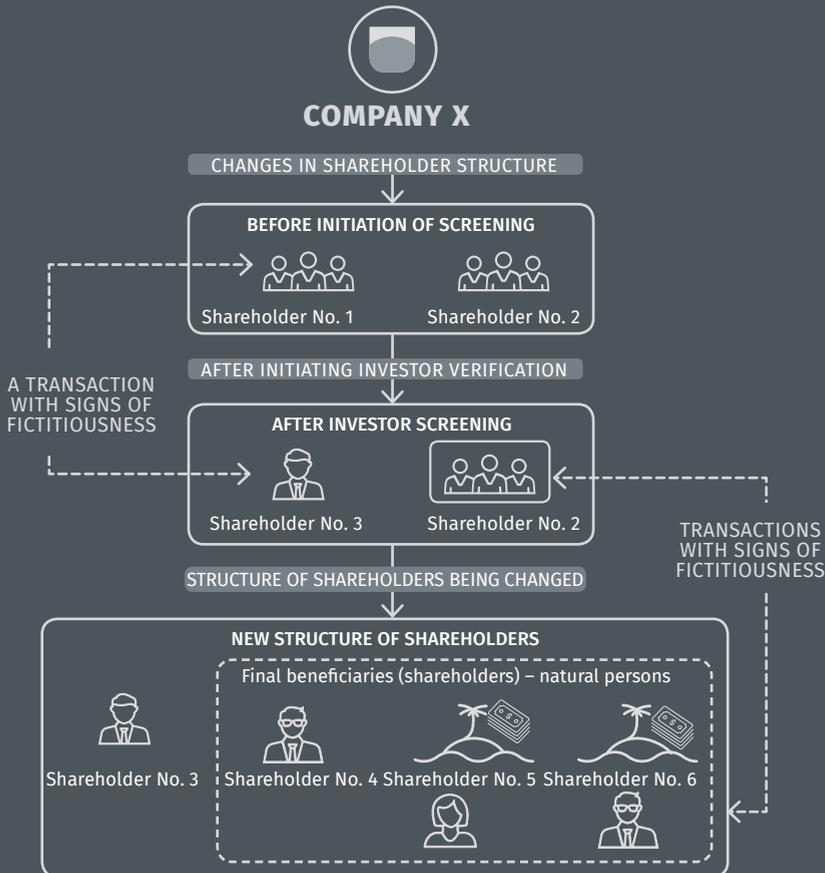
In 2019, the Russian energy holding Inter RAO UES (IRU) also tried to strengthen its position in the Baltic States. The holding is not only interested in maintaining its positions in the electricity trading markets, but also in influencing decisions concerning the synchronization of the Baltic power systems with the Continental European Network. The IRU has an interest in maintaining and increasing the volume of electricity traded in the region. IRU representatives also tried to establish contacts with representatives of the EU institutions hoping to win their favour.

## INVESTORS WHO DO NOT CONFORM TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS TRY TO AVOID THE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON THEM

The Law on the Protection of Objects of Importance to Ensuring National Security contains criteria for assessing the compliance of investors with the interests of national security. In most cases, investors are recognized as non-conforming with national security interests due to their risky relationships with entities of the third countries.

Entities not conforming to the criteria of national security take the following actions in order to avoid statutory restrictions on their activities:

- Make fictitious share sale transactions with allegedly unrelated entities;
- Use public relations to announce alleged withdrawals from business in third countries and / or sale of shares to allegedly unrelated entities;
- Increase the number of shareholders hiding the actual beneficiaries through offshore structures, mutual funds, and management companies;
- Investors' partners operating in third countries and posing a direct threat to national security change their legal entity names and company logos.



In 2019, the largest flow of potential investors consisted of individuals seeking to invest in the financial and credit sector. There has been a growing interest from third-country investors in setting up financial technology, payment, and electronic money companies. It turned out that a significant number of third-country nationals seeking to invest in the financial and credit sectors were simply testing their capabilities and safeguards applied to foreign investments. Some investors immediately abandoned their investment plans after learning about an ongoing screening regarding their compliance with national security interests or following a negative decision by the Commission for Coordination of Protection of Objects of Importance to Ensuring National Security.

# TERRORISM AND MIGRATION

## THE THREAT OF TERRORISM IN LITHUANIA IS LOW

The level of terrorist threat in Lithuania remains low. In 2019, no organized groups motivated by Islamist ideology with the intent and ability to plot terrorist acts have been identified. The risk of international terrorism to Lithuania may originate from external factors related to the intentions of Islamist terrorist organizations and their supporters to carry out attacks against Western countries. Lithuania is not a direct target for the terrorist organizations ISIL and Al Qaeda (AQ) or the extremists who support them. However, as an ally Lithuania supports international anti-terrorist coalitions, which may be sufficient to justify an attack. Supporters of extremist ideologies also take advantage of the freedom of movement within the Schengen area thus extremists may intend to use Lithuania for transit, hiding, and planning attacks against other countries. In foreign countries, especially those where terrorist organizations are active, Lithuanian citizens can become accidental victims of terrorist acts at tourist venues or other public spaces.

## THE THREAT OF TERRORISM TO EUROPE REMAINS HIGH

Since 2018, terrorist attacks by Islamists in the EU have been declining and this trend has continued in 2019, with five attacks perpetrated by lone extremists inspired by jihadist ideology in France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Other attacks planned by extremists, including potentially highly dangerous ones, were prevented. In most of these cases extremists autonomously planned and funded the attacks. Efforts of the EU member states' law enforcement and intelligence agencies to strengthen prevention and counter-terrorism measures made a positive impact on the security situation in Europe. However, the threat of international terrorism to the EU member states remains high.



*Reuters / Scanpix*

The death of ISIL commander Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi in October 2019 during a US special operation was a major symbolic blow to ISIL. For the past 5 years, he has been the most prominent leader of the 'Holy War', having managed to establish the 'Islamic Caliphate' for a short time. In the near term, his death could trigger a jihadist movement to react vengefully, including in Western countries.

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Chances of the most influential global jihadist groups ISIL and AQ to carry out coordinated terrorist acts against the EU member states have diminished in recent years. Home-grown individuals who were radicalized and inspired by these terrorist organizations pose the main threat to the EU member states. ISIL's ideology remains the major source of inspiration for extremists. It is highly likely that this inspiration has rooted for a long time online, so its impact on extremists in the EU and in other parts of the world will remain viable in the long term.

It is possible that in the near term, some foreign fighters and their relatives will try to return from Syria to Europe. This could negatively affect the security situation in the EU, as these radicalized individuals may be inclined to conduct terrorist attacks. In the short term, AQ could attempt to be more active in conducting terrorist attacks in the West in order to gain visibility and recognition as a leader of the global jihadist movement.

### **THERE IS A GROWING THREAT OF TERRORIST ATTACKS BY RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS IN EUROPE**

Over the last few years groups and individuals promoting right-wing extremist ideologies have become more active world-wide. Proponents of these ideologies are perpetrating more terrorist attacks and ideologically motivated crimes. Many attempts to commit such crimes are thwarted by intelligence or law enforcement agencies and do not gain greater public resonance.

In 2018 and 2019, in Europe the number of individuals sympathizing to one of the most radical forms of neo-Nazism – the so-called 'Siege' ideology – increased. This trend increases the likelihood of terrorist attacks and other violent crimes, as 'Siege' supporters consider violence, terror, sabotage, and guerrilla warfare as the only means of achieving their goal of undermining the democratic order and establishing 'white supremacy'.

The tactics used by proponents of the 'Siege' ideology have many similarities to the methods used by ISIL. It calls to conduct independent terrorist attacks and other acts of violence using the 'lone wolf' or 'lone cell' tactics. Conspiracy methods and IT tools enabling anonymity are widely used. The list of potential targets of 'Siege' violence is very broad: and encompasses not only members of racial, ethnic or religious minorities, but also all those who do not propagate right-wing extremist ideologies.

## THE RISK TO NATIONAL SECURITY POSED BY ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Monitoring illegal migration flow and identifying potential extremists remains a priority security task for countries hosting migrants. Although illegal migration flows to Europe have declined significantly over the last three years, the risks associated with this phenomenon remain. Small part of foreign fighters fleeing conflict areas use illegal migration to make their way back.

Persons associated with terrorist organizations, facilitators of extremist movements, and third-country nationals posing extremist threat to the EU countries are constantly seeking ways to enter the EU. They try to make use of various forms of migration, including fictitiously obtained visas, fake businesses, studies and marriages, forged documents, and fraudulent asylum seeking.

In 2019, Lithuania continued to implement the asylum seeker resettlement program and Lithuanian intelligence screened 13 applicants – nationals of African countries – resettled from Italy and Malta. One asylum seeker was denied the entry to Lithuania. So far, only seven asylum seekers of those screened have arrived to Lithuania, but have not been granted refugee status.

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Illegal migration flows to European countries from the Middle East and North Africa decline for the fourth consecutive year. By 1 December 2019, more than 117,000 illegal migrants had arrived in Europe (in 2018, over 132,000; in 2017, over 189,000).

The main entry route for illegal migrants in 2019 was the eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey (more than 73,000). More than 14,000 illegal migrants took advantage of the central Mediterranean route to Italy and Malta. More than 30,000 illegal migrants used the western Mediterranean route and arrived in Spain.



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In 2019, in Lithuania the number of asylum seekers, mostly women with minor children, from Tajikistan and Russian Federation (North Caucasus origin), increased significantly. Arriving from Belarus territory, some of them used Lithuania as a transit country and did not wait for decisions in their asylum cases, secretly leaving the Foreigners' Registration Centre and departing to other European countries.

# GLOBAL SECURITY



*Russia is expanding its cooperation with African states  
AFP / Scanpix*

## RUSSIA SEEKS TO MEET ITS GLOBAL AMBITIONS AT THE LOWEST COST

Russia seeks to expand its influence in almost every region of the world in order to regain its status as a global power.

Although Russia increasingly expands its activity into the global arena, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has remained its key area of influence. The Kremlin seeks to halt **Ukraine's** rapprochement with the West and return it to the Russian sphere of influence. Russia is trying to realize this strategic goal by putting pressure on Ukraine to recognize special status to the *de facto* Russia-occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk, to negotiate directly with representatives of the so-called 'republics' and thereby legitimizing them. A near-term breakthrough in the settlement of the Donbass conflict is unlikely. There are no indications that Moscow would be ready to withdraw its-controlled troops and hand over border control to Ukraine.

In **Moldova**, Russia remains an active participant in the domestic political process, seeing it as an opportunity to pursue its long-term interest to halt Moldova's European integration. In the short term, the Transnistrian conflict is unlikely to break the deadlock as there is no consensus on reintegration.

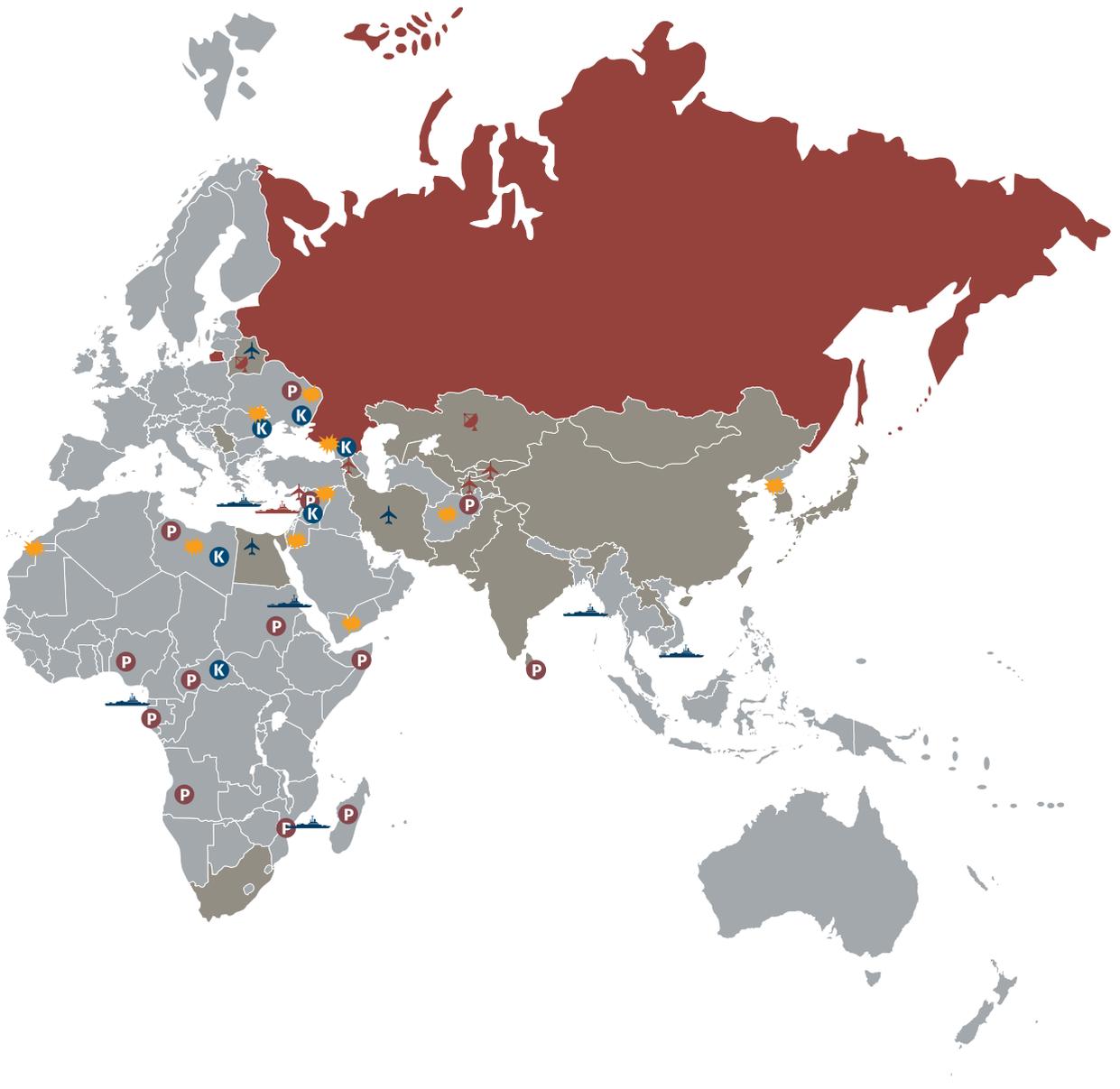
Russian armed forces sustain constant tension in **Georgia** – at the administrative borders with the occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia – and at the political level, Moscow blocks direct contacts between Tbilisi and the leaderships of the occupied regions. Moscow purposefully pursues gradual integration of the occupied regions, but there is no indication that Russia will formally incorporate them. In the short term, it will be more beneficial for Russia to maintain status quo thereby preserving an important leverage.

In the **Middle East, North Africa and South America**, Russia pursues a low-cost strategy, seizing every opportunity to expand its influence. Moscow is well on its way to developing contacts with all – even conflicting – Middle East states, taking a seemingly neutral stance. For example, the Kremlin refused to blame Iran for attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure, but offered to sell Riyadh Russian air defence systems. Moscow has also been balancing among conflicting groups in Libya and Yemen.

**RUSSIAN MILITARY POWER PROJECTION**

	Russian military base/facility
	Short-notice access to use the infrastructure
	Conflicts exploited by Russia
	Russian Armed Forces abroad
	Private military companies abroad
	Combined military training with Russia (2019)





Particularly beneficial to Russia is the power vacuum in Syria that emerged from the diminishing role of the West. Russia took advantage of the withdrawal of US forces from the Kurdish territories and signed an agreement with Turkey on control of the Syrian border area. Using Ankara's disagreement with the US, Russia began supplying S-400 air defence systems to NATO member Turkey.

Russia exploits unrest in Libya, Sudan, Mozambique, the Central African Republic and other countries and offers to 'export' the Syrian model – protection and support to authoritarian leaders in power. Russia is not only the largest supplier of arms to this continent, but also deepens political cooperation. This gives Moscow access to the natural resources of the countries in the region and provides an opportunity to create the image of Russia as a reliable partner in fight against terrorism and a 'security provider'.

In competition with the EU, Russia develops ties with Serbia. To Venezuela, Russia sends military specialists and mercenaries of private military companies, not officially recognized, but controlled by the Kremlin.

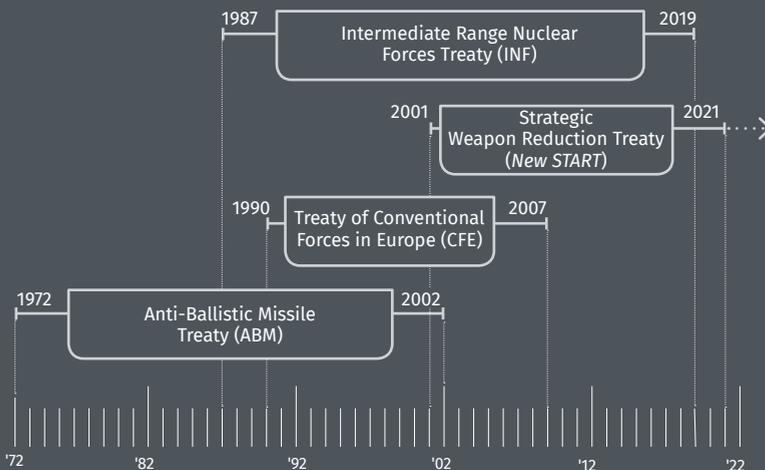
In the Arctic, Russia consolidates its economic and security interests. Melting of polar ice opens up the Northern Sea Route – a strategic shipping lane that cuts the distance in half compared to a seaway through the Indian Ocean for Russian LNG vessels that need to travel from Arctic gas fields to Asian markets. The Northern Sea Route is important to Russia for the export of energy resources to Asian consumers. Therefore, Russia seeks to impose legal restrictions on the navigation of foreign vessels along this route. Russia seeks to ensure its long-term military dominance in this strategic direction and strengthens its nuclear icebreaker forces, air and coastal defence systems, and nuclear capabilities.

## THE FUTURE OF ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS HAS BECOME BLURRED

On 2 August 2019, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty expired. An agreement signed in 1987 between the US and the Soviet Union prohibited the use of any mobile ground-based missiles capable of carrying nuclear or conventional warheads within 500 and 5500 km range. The US has withdrawn from the Treaty due to Russia's noncompliance – its cruise missiles 9M729 are capable of ranges banned by the Treaty. However, Moscow tried to cast blame for the demise of the Treaty on Washington. Russian President proposed other parties to join a voluntary moratorium on the deployment of similar missiles in Europe, but the proposal came after Russia had already deployed the missiles in the European part of its territory.

Russia is interested in new medium-range arms agreements, but only if they restrict the West and are tied to the use of nuclear weapons. Russia seeks to involve other European countries in the negotiation of a new agreement. Although China's involvement in a similar arms control treaty would also correspond with Moscow's interests, such an agreement is highly unlikely.

After demise of the INF, the only remaining international arms limitation agreement is the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (*New START*). The agreement signed between the US and Russia in 2010 will remain in effect until 2021, unless both parties agree to extend it for another five years, or to replace it by another treaty on control of strategic nuclear weapons. Even before the demise of the INF, Russia threatened not to renew this agreement. However, the *New START* is useful to Russia, as it allows to preserve its nuclear deterrence capabilities and prevent an arms race that would be too expensive for Russia.



## CHINA'S QUEST FOR DOMINANCE WILL CHANGE THE GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In the long term, growing expansion of China's economic and political clout will lead to major changes in the security environment in EU and NATO members, as well as other regions of the world.

Through technological development and economic leverage, China increases its geopolitical influence and creates preconditions for vulnerability of the states involved in its economic projects. China's Belt and Road Initiative and other strategic development projects are aimed at achieving global economic dominance and technological advantage. State officials, state-owned and private companies, intelligence agencies and Chinese communities abroad are involved in this process. The active penetration of Chinese investments in foreign countries carries the risk of losing control over resources and infrastructure, market manipulation, and political influence.



Through economic leverage, China seeks to exert pressure and secure political support from certain European countries on issues such as the independence of Taiwan and Tibet; meetings of top state officials with Dalai Lama; reform of the World Trade Organization granting China market economy status; issue of Xinjiang Uighurs; and Chinese presence in the South China Sea. Rapid economic development also enables China to promote its political and social governance model abroad.

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**In August 2019, a wave of campaigns in support of Hong Kong and pro-Chinese counter-protests swept through the world and did not bypass Lithuania. On 23 August 2019, the Chinese Embassy in Lithuania organized a protest in Vilnius disrupting the rally in support of Hong Kong. A majority of the participants in the pro-Chinese protest were members of the Association of Chinese Expatriates living in Lithuania. The Chinese intelligence services also play their role in arranging and coordinating such protests.**

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In the military sphere, China actively defends its strategic interests, participates in the United Nations missions, establishes military bases abroad, and rapidly develops military-industrial complex. In the long term, it will pave the way for the projection of military power around the world. In the short term, China will seek economic and technological dominance in strategic sectors.

Due to partially overlapping strategic interests, China develops political and military cooperation with Russia and coordinates positions on certain international issues. Relations between Moscow and Beijing are fuelled by their aspirations to reduce the global influence of the West (especially the US), Russia's economic needs, and China's growing military ambitions.

## DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THE SITUATION IN THE CONFLICT REGIONS IS NOT IMPROVING

By sending troops to international military operations and missions Lithuania contributes to conflict resolution in geographically remote regions of the world – Afghanistan, Mali and Iraq. Prolonged conflicts in Syria and Libya also have a negative impact on the security of NATO and EU countries.

Despite direct talks between the US and the Taliban in 2019, and a nearly achieved initial agreement, the situation in **Afghanistan** remains complicated. Taliban fighters conduct intensive attacks against Afghan security forces in various parts of the country and carry out attacks in the capital, Kabul. The Taliban feels strong enough to continue hostilities and is currently not interested in negotiations with the Afghan Government. In the short term, the prospects for ceasefire and peace in the country are vague. Threat of attacks on local and international forces remains significant.

Despite foreign countries' efforts, the security situation in **Mali** continues to deteriorate. Government forces in the northern part of the country are weak, while former rebel groups retain their influence. In large uncontrolled areas, radical groups thrive. They conduct attacks and expand the geography of their activities. This leads to increased instability in Burkina Faso and in the western part of Niger. Successful expansion of radical groups is determined by their ability to establish themselves in local communities, exploit weaknesses of state institutions, poverty, and ethnic conflicts. Radical groups publicly declare themselves to be defenders of a marginalized ethnic group thus attracting new members for rather pragmatic than ideological reasons. The threat of terrorist attacks in the Sahel is likely to increase.

At the end of 2019, **Iraq** was shaken by spontaneous protests against the country's government and the ruling elite. Peaceful demonstrations quickly escalated into bloody clashes between protesters and security forces. The government fails to get the situation under control as promises about reforms no longer satisfy protesters. Prolonged unrest threatens the stability of the country and could be used by ISIL fighters.

In **Syria**, fighting between the Damascus regime and rebel groups has largely calmed down. The situation of rebel groups, dominated by radical Islamists, is very difficult. They fail to effectively resist regime forces, therefore, in the near

term, the end of hostilities between pro-government forces and militant opposition is highly likely. Turkey conducted a military operation in Syria against the local Kurdish fighters. Following the Russian-Turkish deal, Kurdish fighters were obliged to leave the Turkish border area and the Syrian regime returned its troops to north-eastern Syria after more than seven years.

ISIL has lost its last controlled territories in Syria and all fighters have gone underground. Nevertheless, the group conducted terrorist attacks to show that it has not been defeated. It is likely that ISIL will continue the intense terror campaign in Syria and Iraq striving to get stronger.

In 2019, intensified military actions over control of the capital Tripoli further deteriorated situation in **Libya**. Fighting factions are unlikely to come to an agreement. Driven by various political and economic interests, foreign assistance provided to some warring parties also sustains the conflict. The international community does not have common approach towards the conflict and does not put pressure on the warring parties to resolve it. It is unlikely that negotiations will resume and that a united government will be formed in 2020. The instability in Libya will remain a long-term challenge in the region as it poses security threats to neighbouring countries, impels migration, and creates enabling environment for radical groups to operate.



After seven years, Syrian regime forces returned to the northern part of the country  
AFP / Scanpix





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