SISEKAITSEAKADEEMIA
Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

SECURITY SPECTRUM:

Journal of Advanced Security Research

CHALLENGES TO SECURITY ARISING FROM MIGRATION: EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN MIGRATION AND SECURITY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ACADEMY OF SECURITY SCIENCES NO 24/2024

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Tallinn 2024

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Publisher:
Sisekaitseakadeemia
Kase 61, 12012 Tallinn
Estonia

ISSN 2806-3600 (print)
ISSN 2806-3619 (pdf)
ISBN 978-9985-67-447-5 (print)
ISBN 978-9985-67-448-2 (pdf)

Printed by: *Auratrükk*

www.sisekaitse.ee

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FOREWORD

Raul Savimaa, Editor-in-Chief
Triin Rätsepp, Executive editor

The focus of the most recent and 24th volume of Security Spectrum: Journal of Advanced Security Research is migration.

Migration has been a constant throughout human history, shaping societies, economies and political systems. In Europe, its different marks can be seen across the continent, and in recent decades, it has re-emerged as one of the most significant challenges, as well as opportunities, facing the region, intertwined with issues of security, economics and geopolitical strategy. This volume is dedicated to exploring the many dimensions of migration and offers a critical and interdisciplinary examination of its impacts and implications for international security.

Historically, migration in Europe has been driven by a complex interplay of push-and-pull factors, including conflict, famine, economic opportunity and environmental change. The mass movements of populations during the 19th and early 20th centuries established patterns of global labour mobility. The first quarter of this century has likewise experienced significant labour and economic migration, and the sociopolitical integration of the migrant communities that have arisen due to this remains an ongoing challenge that continues to create tensions across the continent.

Today, migration is increasingly framed within the context of security. The influx of refugees to Europe during and after various conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, as well as the subsequent crises, has highlighted vulnerabilities in European border management and tested the resilience of EU solidarity. Irregular migration is often associated with concerns about terrorism, transnational crime and social unrest, though these connections are not directly expressed at the same quantification level. The resulting securitisation of migration has led to heightened

border controls and surveillance measures while, at the same time, raising critical questions about human rights and the ethical dimensions of security policy.

In economic terms, migration remains a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it alleviates labour shortages, supports ageing populations and spurs innovation through cultural exchange and diversity. On the other, unmanaged migration can strain public resources, exacerbate wage competition and fuel anti-immigrant sentiments. The challenge, therefore, lies in harnessing migration's potential as a driver of economic growth while addressing the socio-economic disparities that often underlie migratory movements and providing security to communities and society. A failure to consolidate the economic benefits and social cohesion can create societal tensions that must be addressed if public security and the safety of communities are to be ensured. In addition to economic migration, people's increasing need to migrate due to climate change is an emerging and major concern, as rising sea levels, desertification and extreme weather events are displacing millions globally, with significant implications for Europe.

Beyond its standard dimensions, migration is increasingly viewed as a tool of hybrid warfare, whereby human movement is deliberately weaponised to destabilise states and regions. A recent example is the mediated migratory pressure at the Belorussian border with Lithuania, Poland and Latvia, as well as at the Russian Federation's border with Finland. State. In these cases, both state and non-state actors manipulated migratory flows to exert political pressure, disrupt EU societies and communities, and challenge the union's unity while also exposing its institutional weaknesses. This strategic exploitation of migration underscores the need for comprehensive research and adaptive policy responses that integrate security, humanitarian and diplomatic considerations.

The 24th volume of **Security Spectrum: Journal of Advanced Security Research** brings together a wide range of perspectives on migration that reflect its complexity as both a long-standing phenomenon and a source of emerging challenges. **Each of the nine articles featured in this volume focuses on a different aspect of migration to address the issues facing the sector today.**

The issue begins with an article on why migration matters, its changing definitions and EU policies. **Annika Murov**, **Barbara Orloff** and **Eike Luik** examine the many-sided nature of contemporary migration, emphasising both individual motivations and the broader geopolitical dynamics that influence migration policies and international relations. Globalisation and recent crises, including the EU's 2015–2016 migration crisis and the influx of refugees from Ukraine, have significantly intensified migration flows. Migration also plays a strategic role in diplomatic negotiations, with states leveraging migration patterns to achieve political and economic objectives. The EU's response to irregular migration aims to balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations. In particular, the politicisation and instrumentalisation of migration, as seen in cases such as the Belarus-EU and Russia-Finland border situations, underline the security implications of migration when it is used as a tool for political influence. These dynamics reveal the ongoing tension between national sovereignty and the harmonisation of EU-wide policy, thus calling attention to the need for adaptive, cooperative frameworks to address the evolving challenges of migration.

The second article, from **Aida Hatšaturjan, Elen Laanemaa, Kerli Linnat, Veronika Ehrenbusch, Marju Taukar, Tiina Meos** and **Ilana Faiman**, forms part of a research project carried out between 2022 and 2023. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the reception and interpretation of the messaging of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, with a particular focus on Estonian- and Russian-speaking communities. By examining the media sources preferred by respondents from these communities for accessing news and information related to internal security and police messages, this research contributes to the understanding of media-consumption preferences and their implications for internal security awareness and public engagement. The findings from this work can inform future efforts to improve information-dissemination strategies for both locals and migrants, thus contributing to the promotion of a more inclusive and practical approach to internal security communication in Estonia.

The third article addresses the impact of migration on resource availability and security in destination countries. **Emilia Muuga** analyses the links between population growth, increased life expectancy, consumption, and changes in consumption patterns in the context of migration

influenced by environmental change and political conflicts, which in turn affect the availability and adequacy of resources in all countries involved. The article provides an overview of the main trends and highlights the problematic lack of complex analyses of the various variables and links among these. One outstanding finding is that the highest population growth is seen in areas subject to extreme environmental events, which can trigger increased migration, thus placing place greater pressure on the resources of the destination countries.

In his article, **Gediminas Buciunas** explores the potential threats migration poses to the security of Lithuania. The need for a secure living environment is essential for all human beings. Yet various events, from drought to war, can force people to leave their native country. For example, one factor pushing Belarusians to leave their country in 2021–2022 was the fraudulent election of 2020 and the repression of participants in the demonstrations that followed. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, beginning on 24 February 2022, similarly caused a massive influx of refugees from Ukraine into other countries, including the Baltic states. These two events have also brought new challenges to Lithuanian national security. This article analyses both events from the points of view of migration and national security.

The volume's fifth article, by **Gunther Hauser**, looks at irregular and illegal migration. In the 2010s, irregular and illegal mass migration of refugees escalated into a political crisis in Europe, during which some segments of societies lost patience as the number of arriving illegal migrants grew. Ten years after this wave, efforts to tackle irregular, illegal immigration and create a common asylum policy system remain dysfunctional. Several attempts to achieve this goal have already failed. Consequently, the EU is trying to strengthen early warning systems, both internally and through partnerships with third countries. Problems are also posed by the continuing exploitation of the increase of severe terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015 and 2016, as well as the lethal stabbings and gang fights caused by young migrants, by extreme right and left-wing political parties that try to link illegal migration to terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. The article outlines the challenges of irregular and illegal migration for European stakeholders and analyses the difficult path taken by European politicians in dealing with this complex situation.

The sixth article in the volume, by **Ivett Csontos-Nagy**, concerns the effectiveness of international criminal and judicial cooperation in the context of cyberspace tools. The article describes the range of possible cooperation tools with the aim of encouraging their future adoption by investigators and prosecutors in the EU Member States. To help achieve that aim, the article investigates the issue in the context of Hungary, providing insights that can help other countries better understand the cooperation tools that are, if less known, available in their own countries and can be used to address the security challenges posed by organised crime.

In her article, **Jaanika Puusalu** employs the concept of hybrid warfare from theoretical military strategy to analyse a contemporary form of intercountry migration – digital nomadism – from a cybersecurity perspective. The article elucidates the risks of digital nomadism, with a particular interest in how to prepare for and mitigate these risks. In this light, it suggests that the ICT sector should pay heightened attention to the threats that emerge from a remote and continuously migrating workforce, especially when this workforce is supporting or providing digital services that underpin state services and are, thus, primary targets for hybrid threats from hostile states and other actors. While the individual and community-level impacts of digital nomadism have been the focus of much discussion in sociology and anthropology, little attention has been paid to its security implications in a threat landscape expanded by cyberattacks and hybrid warfare means. Thus, by adopting the theoretical framework of hybrid warfare to assess these implications, the article is a novel contribution to work in security studies on the relationship between cyber threats and state security.

In the volume's eighth article, **Petteri Blomvall** suggests that contemporary security threats require law enforcement and internal security organisations to possess a comprehensive toolbox of methodologically diverse planning and design methods. These methods should be implemented depending on the environment encountered. This can be achieved by using systems thinking to identify the qualities of the environment and then identifying or constructing an epistemologically appropriate process. The article first defines a systems thinking approach to collaboration and to different environments. This approach is then used to assess the various available planning and design methodologies. The article suggests two methodological approaches, arguing that this

is better than chasing the illusion of one distinct right answer. The suggested context-dependent approach is based on making meta-decisions in response to the ontological and epistemological questions at hand, either before starting the process or at the beginning of each design phase. This mental model of a toolbox is derived from design thinking, design methodology and military design thinking.

In the final article, **Helina Maasing, Oliver Nahkur, Ave Roots** and **Mare Ainsaar** provide insights into how to measure immigration-related conflict risk in diverse societies, using Estonia as a case study. Employing the Measuring Immigration-Related Conflict Risk Index (MICRI), which was designed to measure this type of risk, the study the article is based on analysed risk scores for 75 Estonian municipalities. The findings indicate an overall low level of immigration-related risk in Estonia, but with specific municipalities showing heightened risk levels due to factors such as significant immigrant influx and discrimination. Approximately one-third of the municipalities fall into higher-risk categories. These municipalities experience significant levels of migration and already host multiple ethnic groups, and reports of instances of discrimination, perceived injustice and economic disparities within them are frequent. Regionally, all municipalities in north-eastern Estonia fall into the highest risk groups, a reflection of the long-standing grievances of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. Most municipalities across Estonia show lower risk levels due to ethnic homogeneity and a minimal influx of immigrants, although attitudes towards that group vary. The article shows how, despite the overall low risk level, critical risk factors persist in Estonian society. Understanding these vulnerabilities is crucial for informed policymaking that can foster peaceful coexistence and promote positive interactions between ethnic groups. The study, therefore, serves as a valuable monitoring tool for policymakers and security analysts that can contribute to the early identification of potential tensions at the sub-national level.

The editors of the 24th issue of Security Spectrum wish you good and thoughtful reading, forward-thinking ideas and new contributions.

WHY MIGRATION MATTERS – EVOLVING CONCEPTS AND POLICIES WITHIN THE EU

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Keywords: migration dynamics, EU's migration policy, Pact on Migration and Asylum, instrumentalisation of migration, border control

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/p3jg-w136

ABSTRACT

This article examines the multifaceted nature of contemporary migration, emphasising both individual motivations and the broader geopolitical dynamics that influence migration policies and international relations. Globalisation and recent crises, including the European Union's 2015–2016 migration crisis and the refugee influx from Ukraine, have significantly intensified migration flows. Migration also plays a strategic role in diplomatic negotiations, with states leveraging migration patterns to achieve political and economic objectives. The EU's response to irregular migration, highlighted by its 2024 Pact on Migration and Asylum, aims to balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations. Additionally, the politicisation and instrumentalisation of migration, seen in cases like the Belarus-EU and Russia-Finland border contexts, underscore the security implications of migration as a tool for political influence. These dynamics reveal an ongoing tension between national sovereignty and EU-wide policy harmonisation, underscoring the need for adaptive, cooperative frameworks to address the evolving challenges of migration.

INTRODUCTION

Migration has been a fundamental aspect of human history and remains one of the most significant global challenges today. Crossing national borders transforms individuals' legal status, often netting them the label of "migrants". This phenomenon is highly complex, driven by diverse and evolving factors. In recent decades, globalisation has significantly accelerated international migration in various forms. People move freely within regions like the European Union, migrate for education, employment and family reunification, or seek refuge from persecution. Some leave their home countries to escape poor living conditions, pursue better economic opportunities or respond to environment-related and security challenges. Beyond individual motivations, migration also plays a strategic role in international relations, as states use it in bilateral and multilateral negotiations to advance their national agendas, such as meeting labour market needs, or political goals, such as managing migration flows and offering economic aid. It has also become a key element in power dynamics, as seen in recent examples such as the Belarus-EU border crises. This highlights the complex and often politicised nature of global migration today.

1. UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION

A simplified approach to understanding migration involves push and pull factors and distinguishing between voluntary and forced migration. Push factors, or determinant factors, are negative conditions in the country of origin that drive people to leave, such as unemployment, poor quality of life, poverty, extreme weather conditions, war and civil unrest. By contrast, pull factors are the positive attributes of another country that attract individuals seeking better opportunities, such as improved economic prospects, a safer environment, political stability and possible community waiting ahead (Tataru, 2019, pp. 13–14).

The second approach to understanding migration distinguishes between voluntary and forced migration. Voluntary migration means that the migration process is free from coercion. A more nuanced understanding involves three key elements. First, migrants must have reasonable

alternatives at home that would allow them to achieve an adequate quality of life without needing to move. Second, migrants should have viable exit options, such as the ability to change employers or return home, to alter the conditions of their movement. Third, migrants need access to accurate information about their journey, ensuring that their decisions are not based on traffickers' influence or unrealistic expectations stemming from false information (Bakewell, 2021, pp. 6–7). By contrast, forced migration involves some form of coercion, which can be selective, targeting specific individuals or groups, or generalised, such as in situations of war or natural disasters. This category includes civilian or military captives, war-trafficking victims, Convention refugees[1], asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (Bakewell, 2021, p. 3).

Thus, migration can be voluntary or forced and can occur for a variety of reasons, ranging from seeking better economic opportunities to escaping environmental processes such as severe drought. Beyond the reasons prompting individuals to leave their home countries, migration can be categorised based on factors such as purpose, duration and legality. For legal and normative purposes, it is crucial to understand the intentions of a migrant, such as whether they are seeking employment, education, asylum or family reunification. From the perspective of the state, there is a fundamental distinction between regular/legal and irregular migration, which determines the policies, processes and legal frameworks that apply. This distinction influences how migrants are processed, the rights they are afforded, the duration of their stay, and the conditions under which they may remain or be required to leave. Legal migration typically involves regulated processes, such as visas or work permits, that define the duration and purpose of the stay. By contrast, illegal migration often bypasses formal channels, raising complex legal, social and security concerns.

[1] 1951 Convention defines a refugee as someone who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

2. THE DYNAMICS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Irregular migration has been a topic of ongoing debate both in Europe and globally. In Europe, it gained heightened attention during the migration crisis in 2015 and 2016, when the EU experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. More than a million people arrived in the EU, most of them fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other countries. Although most of the people arriving needed international protection, the EU shifted its focus towards improving its security at the external borders, combating migrant smuggling and increasing cooperation with third countries. Irregular migration remains a significant challenge that especially reflects geopolitical instabilities in the EU's neighbouring countries and is driven by innumerable factors.

According to Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) statistics, there was a significant increase in irregular border crossings in 2023, estimated at approximately 380,000 people, driven by economic, social and security instability in parts of Africa. Over the last 15 years, Frontex has detected 1.4 million irregular border crossings by African nationals (Frontex, 2024).

As irregular migration is a complex phenomenon, the EU will continue to face increasing migratory pressure from Africa. One reason is rural-urban migration in Africa (which has the lowest average per capita income in the world). Another reason is the continent's worsening security situation. War in Sudan (which triggered 6 million displacements in 2023), ongoing tensions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and persisting patterns of violence and instability in the Sahel are all increasing displacement and refugee flows from Africa. Risks on the eastern route, connecting the Horn of Africa to the Gulf states through Yemen, will also add pressure and lead to an accelerated escalation of security measures along the EU's external borders (Pinto, 2024).

African countries along migration routes will maintain, and likely increase, their influence over the EU, especially as regards EU states more exposed to irregular migration, like Spain or Italy. In this context, Europe will remain vulnerable to the instrumentalisation and weaponisation of migration and migration crises, triggered by economic collapse or civil unrest (in Tunisia, for example) or by tensions over the Western

Sahara (between Algeria and Morocco or between Morocco and the EU) (Pinto, 2024).

Eurostat data shows that in 2023, more than 1,250,000 persons were found to be illegally present in the EU. Given Europe's relatively secure external border controls, it is thought that most of them entered the given country legally with a residence permit or visa but are working illegally, either because the job is not declared or because their residence permit does not allow them to work or because they stayed beyond their legally permitted time in the country. But persons staying illegally may also be migrants who have entered the country clandestinely, who have no residence permit and who are staying and working illegally. In a special category are children who were born to illegal immigrants and who are illegally staying although they have never crossed an international border.

3. THE EVOLVING PERCEPTION OF MIGRANTS – REDEFINING REFUGEES

The 20th century saw a profound shift in the perception of migrants, largely due to the upheaval in Europe caused by the First and Second World Wars. Thousands were left stateless; conflicts scattered people across the continent and separated families; and the Cold War divided East from West. These events created millions of refugees, making it critical to recognise and address their plight, including by expanding the refugee concept. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention formally defined the term "refugee", established refugees' rights and set international standards for their protection. As a vital notion, the concept of refugees emphasised not why they left their country but why they could not return to it (Bakewell, 2021, p. 4). Core principles such as "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion", "non-refoulement" and minimum standards of treatment have remained the same to this day.

In response to the evolving nature of forced migration and the complexities surrounding displacement, the EU started to work towards

establishing a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) at the end of the 1990s. The main intention was to harmonise asylum policies across member states and ensure fair and effective protection for those in need. The CEAS reform also introduced subsidiary protection for individuals who did not meet the criteria of a refugee, marking a significant step towards expanding the scope of international protection and adapting to new migration challenges (European Commission, 2024).

However, the global landscape has evolved further, posing new challenges to these foundational principles. Migration has been increasingly exploited as a political tool by authoritarian regimes, exposing the structural weaknesses and possibilities for misuse of the EU's common asylum system during crises. Additionally, there is a growing need to address climate change and natural disasters as fundamental drivers of migration. Thus, the evolving landscape of migration has prompted the development of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which was adopted in 2024 and is one of the biggest migration reforms in the EU. The negotiations on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum started in 2016 as a response to the 2015–2016 migration crisis, which exposed significant shortcomings in the EU's existing migration and asylum systems. As a result, the European Commission acknowledged that a new, durable European framework was needed to manage the interdependence between member states' policies and decisions and to respond properly to the opportunities and challenges in normal times, in situations of pressure and in crisis situations (European Commission, 2020).

After years of negotiations, the official proposal of the Pact was submitted by the Commission in September 2020. The political agreement was reached in December 2023, and the final adoption of the Pact by the Council of the EU took place in May 2024. EU member states have two years (until 12 June 2026) to apply the new rules, with the exception of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation, which is already applicable.

The Pact is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at the EU level. It builds on and amends previous reform proposals in the area of migration, offering a comprehensive approach to strengthen and integrate key EU policies on migration, asylum, border management and integration. With firm but fair rules, it is

designed to manage and normalise migration for the long term, providing EU countries with the flexibility to address the specific challenges they face and necessary safeguards to protect people in need (European Commission, 2024). Whilst the Pact consists of various legislative acts, the main components are secure external borders, fast and efficient procedures, an effective system of solidarity and responsibility and embedding migration in international partnerships. At the same time, concerns have been raised by civil society as to whether the pact is indeed protecting the rights of refugees and migrants as it should.

4. BALANCING NATIONAL- AND EU-LEVEL MIGRATION POLICIES

National migration policies in Europe have been shaped by a complex interplay of historical context, domestic factors, geopolitical positioning, external pressures and, particularly in Europe, EU-level agreements. In the post-war era, migration policies were primarily driven by the need for labour to rebuild war-torn economies. This need was addressed through guest worker programmes, such as Germany's agreement with Turkey, which resulted in a significant Turkish community that remains today. Similar labour migration schemes were employed across many European countries, though there was minimal coordination of these foreign workers within a unified migration policy framework.

The 1990s marked a significant shift towards more restrictive migration approaches due to conflicts in the Balkans and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This period saw the tightening of border controls and the emergence of new immigration laws as newly independent states in Eastern Europe began to formulate their own migration policies. These policies were often conservative, reflecting a response to the large-scale immigrations that occurred during the Soviet era and aiming to manage the complex dynamics of post-Soviet national sovereignty and security.

In the EU context, key milestones in migration policy include the Schengen Agreement, which established free movement within the EU, and subsequent EU enlargements. Events such as the 9/11 attacks and the 2015 refugee crisis intensified debates about harmonising migration

policies at the EU level, while simultaneously pushing many member states towards stricter approaches focused on combating irregular migration and enhancing border security. Migration policy influences various societal aspects, including the labour market, education, housing, integration and internal security. Thus, it remains crucial for sovereign states to retain control over certain decisions, such as granting citizenship or determining the grounds for residence permits and revocation of the right to stay.

Today, the pursuit of common migration policies and minimum standards at the EU level reflects a significant effort to harmonise diverse national approaches and a somewhat fragmented legal framework. While member states have exercised caution in delegating decision-making competences to the EU, this balance allows EU-wide regulations and national adaptations to coexist. The EU's migration framework is constantly evolving, with examples of successful harmonisation such as the CEAS and strengthening the external borders.

Migration is increasingly influenced by globalisation, the race for talent in the context of entrepreneurship, education, technology and particularly the green transition, and the need to establish sustainable partnerships and coordination frameworks with third countries. In the EU, the challenges of an ageing population and a growing demand for skilled labour have highlighted that intra-EU mobility alone is not enough to meet these needs. On the other hand, there is a growing need to protect external borders, as migration has been weaponised by authoritarian regimes, posing significant security threats. Events such as the 2015–2016 refugee crisis, the 2021 Belarus-EU border crisis and the full-scale Russian war against Ukraine since 2022 have underscored the difficulty of balancing humanitarian obligations, border security and internal political pressures.

This situation has been described as the paradox of Europe's borders – where the EU and its member states are simultaneously dismantling some borders, relocating others and constructing new ones. These borders are not just physical (land, sea and air) but also organisational (governing access to the EU and its welfare systems) and conceptual (shaping questions of identity and belonging) (Geddes et al., 2020, p. 11).

5. THE WAR IN UKRAINE – EU'S RESPONSE AND COHESION

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Due to the scale of estimated arrivals, the European Commission anticipated that the asylum systems of EU countries would be unable to process applications within the deadlines set. Thus, as early as 2 March 2022, the European Commission proposed the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, enabling immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons who were unable to return to their country of origin, including access to residency, employment, healthcare and education. The EU's response to Ukrainian refugees was marked by unprecedented solidarity and swift action, in contrast to the more fragmented handling of past migration waves, such as the 2015 refugee crisis.

Eurostat data revealed that over 4.31 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine were under temporary protection in the EU as of 31 December 2023 (EMN-OECD joint inform 2024, p. 4).

However, the EU's approach to Ukrainian refugees, most of whom come from a culturally and geographically closer context, raised critical questions about the consistency and fairness of broader migration policies. The contrast between this and the handling of past migration waves, such as those from Africa and the Middle East, in which responses were more restrictive and less coordinated, highlights how migration frameworks can evolve but also be uneven in nature.

6. THE INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MIGRATION

Situations where migrants were instrumentalised for political purposes continued to be a key priority for many Eastern European countries. The instrumentalisation of migration is not a new phenomenon in history – there have been more than 60 historical cases in which states have used forced migration to put other states under pressure and to achieve foreign policy goals. More than once, they succeeded in getting

the opposing state to withdraw sanctions, increase economic aid or turn a blind eye to human rights issues (Migration Outlook, 2022, p. 19).

In 2021, Alexander Lukashenko's regime in Belarus began attracting migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other countries to encourage and even force them to cross the borders into the European Union. This was Belarus's response to EU sanctions imposed following the regime's elections in 2020 and violent repression of civil society in 2021. Each migrant reportedly paid several thousand euros for the flight, travel documents and accommodation in hotels controlled by the Belarusian authorities. From Minsk, they were transported to the EU's external borders. In all, in 2022, 43,000 illegal entries and attempts to enter were reported by Poland and 4,000 by Lithuania. Poland, Lithuania and Latvia closed their border crossing points, announced a crisis situation and implemented contingency plans to effectively tackle the illegal entry.

Since autumn 2023, Finland has been faced with a similar situation of instrumentalisation of migrants by Russian authorities. This was Russia's way of attempting to weaken Finland's national security and internal order. By the end of 2023, Finland had closed its entire eastern land border. At Finland's external borders, it was only possible to apply for international protection at open border crossing points for air and maritime traffic. In July 2024, Finland approved new legislation on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration, which aims to protect Finland against threats to its national security. The act lays down the conditions under which a government plenary session can decide to restrict the receipt of applications for international protection in a limited area on Finland's national border. Applications for international protection would not, apart from certain exceptions, be received in the area subject to the restriction, and instrumentalised migrants would be prevented from entering the country. The act will remain in force for one year, and a decision to apply the act may be made for up to one month at a time (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 2024).

Although that act has been largely criticised by migrant organisations, Finland has decided to be prepared for instrumentalisation cases, as the risk remains high. Given Finland's geopolitical location and the ongoing tensions with Russia, the threat of instrumentalised migration as a

means of exerting political pressure remains a significant concern not only for Finland but for the entire region.

CONCLUSION

Migration continues to be a multifaceted issue that transcends national borders and is shaped by economic, social and geopolitical factors. The evolving dynamics within the EU demonstrate both the challenges and opportunities of managing migration in a complex global landscape. The recent legislative responses to the instrumentalisation of migration, as seen in Finland and other EU border states, highlight the ongoing security concerns and the need for coordinated regional action. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum, adopted in 2024, represents a significant step towards a more coherent and effective EU migration framework, aiming to balance border security with humanitarian obligations and integration efforts. As migration remains a key element of international relations and domestic policies, the EU must remain adaptive, resilient and committed to finding a balance between security, humanitarian obligations and integration efforts.

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MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS OF INTERNAL SECURITY INFORMATION:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ESTONIAN- AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

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Keywords: mass media, public awareness, internal security, Estonian-speaking community, Russian-speaking community

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/8rj2-1266

ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a research project carried out between 2022 and 2023, providing a comprehensive analysis of the reception and interpretation of the messages of the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, with a particular focus on the Estonian- and Russian-speaking communities.[1] By examining the media sources preferred by respondents from these communities for accessing news and information related to internal security and police messages, this research contributes to understanding media consumption preferences and their implications for internal security awareness and public engagement. The findings can inform future efforts to improve information dissemination strategies for both locals and migrants, promoting a more inclusive and practical approach to internal security communication in Estonia.

ABBREVIATIONS

ET – Estonian-speaking respondents

RU – Russian-speaking respondents

[1] The findings of the research project have been published in Laanemaa et al., 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The media are crucial in shaping public opinion and disseminating information, particularly in internal security and police messages. Media consumption patterns are influenced by various patterns, including language, culture and individual preferences. The research underpinning this paper explores the media sources preferred by respondents from Estonia's two largest communities, the Estonian- and Russian-speaking populations, specifically for accessing news and informational content related to internal security and police communications.

A survey carried out as part of the research project between late 2022 and early 2023 gathered data from Estonian- and Russian-speaking respondents. It aimed to capture their media consumption habits concerning news and informational content on internal security and police messages. Information was collected on preferred media sources, frequency of media use and level of trust in various media. Analysis of this survey data will enable the identification of dominant media sources within each community and help explore potential differences between the two groups.

The results of this research will contribute to the understanding of the media landscape regarding news and information on internal security and police messages in Estonia. By identifying the preferred media sources of respondents from different communities, this study offers valuable insights into their information exposure, allowing for an assessment of the diversity of the media environment. Given Estonia's large influx of immigrants from Ukraine in 2022, many of whom engage with Russian-speaking media, this topic holds utmost importance for future discussions and will form the basis for further studies.

1. METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative content analysis with quantitative data collection through a self-administered questionnaire. The methodological framework drew on established works in the field, including Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and

Denscombe (2010). This paper focuses specifically on the survey questionnaire section on media consumption habits, excluding data from the other sections (further details on the complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 – Part D: Questions about information channels).

To achieve a diverse and representative sample, a non-probability convenience sampling method (Kumar et al., 2011) was used, as access to Estonian state email lists was limited. The sample comprised 630 email addresses, including those of colleagues, friends, acquaintances from both Estonian and Russian language groups, and individuals with personal email addresses. Bilingual respondents could choose their preferred language for the questionnaire. A participation rate of 32.2% was achieved, with 203 respondents completing the survey (167 in Estonian and 36 in Russian). It is worth noting that both language groups had a higher proportion of female respondents, accounting for 67% among Estonian respondents and 72% among Russian respondents. Age distribution revealed similar patterns across language groups. The Estonian (ET) group displayed a relatively even distribution between the 25–44 and 45–64 age brackets, whereas the Russian (RU) group showed a slightly higher proportion in the 45–64 age bracket (47%) compared to 25–44 (36%).

Educational attainment within the sample revealed that the majority in both groups held higher education degrees (51% for ET and 53% for RU). The RU group had a higher proportion of respondents with vocational education (22%) compared to those with secondary education (14%). In contrast, the ET group exhibited a more balanced distribution between these two categories (both at 19%).[2]

Qualitative content analysis was used to examine the data collected through the questionnaire responses and comments. A thematic coding scheme emerged during this process, resulting in the following categories: *public media channels*, *private media channels*, *social media channels*, *official state channels*, *other channels* and *circle of acquaintances*. The analysis aimed to identify similarities and differences in media consumption habits related to internal security information between the Estonian and Russian language groups.

[2] This background information on the respondents was collected in Part A of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

2. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study's theoretical and conceptual core is the assumption that relations between the media and society usually have not only a political dimension but also a normative and socio-cultural aspect. The media support national or social consensus and tend to present problems as solvable within the current rules of a given society and culture (McQuail, 2010). Therefore, the role of the media is not only to act as a carrier of information or a reflection of political trends but also as a means of shaping the socio-cultural and normative landscape.

Through the selection and framing of news stories, the media influence which issues are considered essential and how audiences perceive them. This agenda-setting function gives the media considerable power in shaping public discourse and determining political and social priorities.

Informational texts and messages posted on media platforms by public authorities (including law enforcement agencies) can inform citizens about potential threats and security risks. Clear, linguistically targeted and timely messages during emergencies can direct citizens towards appropriate actions. Such messages can influence public perception of security threats and crisis situations. However, media and cultural studies view the perception of a textual message, whether informational or otherwise, as a dynamic process of meaning production. Every text is a form of representation, and its inherent ambiguity allows for multiple interpretations. This active process of meaning-making is heavily influenced by the reader's background, experiences and social position. As Stuart Hall's well-known *encoding/decoding model* (first published in 1973) suggests, media producers encode messages with intended meanings, but audiences *decode* them based on their own cultural frameworks (Hall, 2005). This highlights the possibility of multiple interpretations arising from a single text. Furthermore, the rise of new media technologies, as explored by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006), has fundamentally transformed how audiences consume and produce meaning. Audiences are no longer passive recipients of information but active participants in shaping and sharing cultural content. This participatory nature further emphasises the dynamic and collaborative nature of meaning-making.

Another important aspect for this study is the audience that media resources target and compete to attract (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Alasuutari, 1999; McQuail, 2010). To understand media consumption patterns from the consumer's perspective, it is essential to consider what influences an individual's choices and preferences as well as behavioural patterns towards certain media. From the perspective of media resources, this problem involves identifying the content, mode of presentation and situational factors that can attract and retain the audience's attention (McQuail, 2010, p. 420). As McQuail points out, audiences are not simply passive consumers of media content but rather complex entities that are shaped by and, in turn, shape the media landscape. Audience composition reflects the social context in which they exist, with shared cultural interests, understandings and information needs fostering a sense of community. This shared context also creates a demand for specific types of media content. Moreover, media consumption patterns are not driven by content alone. They are closely linked to broader social structures. Factors such as time availability, lifestyle choices and daily routines have a significant impact on how individuals engage with media. For example, a busy professional may prioritise podcasts for on-the-go listening, while someone with more leisure time may devote more time to in-depth articles or documentaries. Audiences and media offerings thus exist in a dynamic interplay. Social contexts shape audiences and their needs, which media providers respond to by tailoring content, while media consumption patterns are simultaneously influenced by broader societal structures such as time use and daily routines. (ibid, p. 332).

Media dependency theory, developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1989), looks at the relationship between audiences, their needs and the media they use to fulfil those needs. The key idea is that people become dependent on media when these media become essential for fulfilling specific needs. Discussing dependencies between audience and media, researchers suggest that a reciprocal dependency relationship exists between audiences and media. This stems from the goal-oriented nature of individuals: people rely on media resources to achieve certain objectives. These resources, controlled by mass media, become essential for achieving those goals, thus fostering dependency (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 309). DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach identify several factors that influence the degree of media dependency. First, the availability of alternative media sources plays a crucial role. If a particular media outlet

remains the primary source for fulfilling a particular need, dependence on that outlet increases. Second, perceived usefulness is another key factor. People are more likely to be dependent on media that they believe effectively address their needs. Finally, social instability also influences media dependency. During times of social upheaval or crisis, individuals tend to rely more heavily on the media for information and direction, thus increasing their dependence. The trend identified by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, which highlighted an increasing dependence on media across various domains, such as the military, education, familial structures, religious institutions, as well as scientific and healthcare fields, persists nowadays. At the same time, as the researchers point out, the media system is becoming more complex and therefore must evolve to cultivate new relationships that are increasingly critical to its viability and sustainability. (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, p. 325).

The issue of audience media preferences is also addressed by the *uses and gratifications theory*. In essence, this approach explores the motivations behind people's active media consumption (Blumler, 1985; McQuail et al., 2010). It positions media as a readily accessible resource that audiences, the consumers, can use to satisfy specific needs, which may include social relationships, psychological well-being or simply a desire for knowledge or relaxation. Ultimately, audiences make media choices to gratify these diverse motivations, fostering social connections, relieving stress or broadening their worldview. While media dependency theory focuses on why people choose particular media and what needs they seek to fulfil, it also explores the depth of this relationship. According to the uses and gratifications theory, individuals are not simply passive consumers of media (Blumler, 1985). Instead, they actively choose media channels and content based on their preferred ways of receiving information (in the context of this paper, specifically, information on internal security).

Building on the uses and gratifications theory, the expected variations in media consumption patterns between ET and RU participants likely stem from two key factors: 1) their differing strategies for seeking gratification from media (i.e. how they use media to meet their needs) and 2) the influence of their cultural backgrounds. Language preferences, broader cultural elements and the dominant communication channels within each community are all likely to significantly shape these patterns.

Furthermore, many previous studies conducted by media scholars in Estonia (e.g. Vihalemm & Kõuts, 2004; Vihalemm, 2006; Vihalemm et al., 2012) have highlighted the influence of cultural factors on communication dynamics and information sharing habits. In this context, the preference for Russian-language media exhibited by RU respondents can be attributed to both linguistic comfort and cultural affinity.

Drawing on the concept of media dependency, as discussed earlier, we can expect variations in how people rely on media for security information. Individuals from different regions and cultural backgrounds are likely to use different media channels to meet their security information needs. This aligns with current research findings that show distinct media consumption patterns between ET and RU participants regarding their reliance on public, private and social media platforms for security information.

According to McQuail (2010), several factors influence how people choose and consume media, helping us to understand the relationship between media and individuals. These factors can be divided into two main groups: those on the audience side and those on the media side.

Audience-side factors

1. *Personal attributes:* age, gender, family life, education, income, lifestyle and personality differences.

2. *Social background:* social class, education, religion, culture and family environment.

3. *Media-related needs:* personal benefits such as companionship, distraction and information.

4. *Personal tastes and preferences* for certain genres, formats or specific content items.

5. *Media habits:* leisure time and access to media at various times.

6. *Awareness:* more engaged media users actively plan their media consumption.

7. *Context of use:* the available choices and the amount and type of information possessed also play a part in audience formation.

8. *Chance* often plays a part in media exposure, reducing the predictability of choice or audience composition.

Media-side factors

A. *The media system:* people's preferences and choices are shaped by the kinds of media available, how widespread they are, and the specific features of different media outlets.

B. *Structure of media provision:* the general types of media content available in a society, which influence people's long-term expectations about the media.

C. *Available content options:* the types of media content that are available to people at different times and places.

D. *Media publicity:* the way the media promote themselves and their products through advertising and marketing.

E. *Timing and presentation:* the timing, scheduling, placement, content, and design of media messages, which are all used to compete for audiences[3].

According to McQuail, all these factors can, to a greater or lesser extent, influence media choices and determine media consumption patterns.

When discussing the contextual framework of this research, it is important to note that several key dimensions influence information reception by the audience. These dimensions include the emotional delivery

[3] These lists are adapted from McQuail's (2010, pp. 358–359) explanation of audience- and media-side factors influencing audience behaviour.

of messages, the changing media landscape and potential gender differences in media consumption patterns.

Police messages have traditionally been associated with warnings and risk communication, often delivered in a serious or cautionary tone. However, a recent study by Rutt et al. (2022) presents significant findings that may help to adapt the process of communication between police and other law enforcement agencies and the public as the intended recipients of information in the media space. Their research suggests that adults across a range of age groups place a surprisingly high value on health-related information provided by individuals who display neutral or positive emotions, while information delivered with negative emotions is considered significantly less important. This observed preference for neutrality over negativity in interpersonal communication is noteworthy. However, the same trend does not apply to textual sources. When presented with written health information, participants of all ages showed a preference for positive over both neutral and negative framing. The abovementioned study indicates that individuals do not necessarily prefer to receive information from an emotional source (i.e. happy or angry); instead, they tend to favour neutral information sources and avoid negative ones.

These findings highlight the nuanced nature of information reception in the context of police messaging and informational texts. While negativity might be expected to increase attention and compliance, it may have the opposite effect for personal health information. Further research could explore how law enforcement agencies might use this knowledge to optimise the effectiveness of their essential communication strategies.

The advent of new online and social media platforms has transformed the way news is consumed. Unlike in the past, when individuals had to choose from a limited number of traditional media outlets, today's media landscape allows for a more diverse range of platforms for accessing news. People can now choose, for example, to follow every news event closely or avoid coverage of societal and political events entirely, with access to both online and offline media platforms (Geers, 2020, p. 335).

Studies show that news consumption patterns vary by education level. People with lower levels of education are more likely to ignore news

sources altogether (Geers, 2020). Notably, a recent study (ibid.) indicates that people with lower levels of education are more likely to ignore news sources altogether suggests that those with higher education levels are more likely to be "news minimalists", consuming less news content overall than to those with lower levels of education, who are more likely to engage with online news sources.

According to research on gender specificity in mass media consumption (Thums et al., 2021), gender differences in reading competence were observed: male respondents preferred informational texts. This is explained by their tendency to seek and obtain information, which is often associated with regular reading. Women tend to engage in leisure reading for entertainment, whereas men are more likely to read for information-seeking purposes. However, no gender differences were found in adults' reading competence regarding literary or informational texts. Furthermore, a research by Thums et al. (2021) examined whether the influence of gender on reading competence in literary texts was mediated by entertainment value. Their analysis indicated that gender does have an indirect effect on both literary and informational reading competencies, which is mediated by the preference for reading for informational purposes. The researchers conclude that the finding that reading for information holds greater significance than reading for entertainment underscores the notion that the content of reading material is not the sole factor of importance. The inclination to prioritize informational reading may be more closely linked to the everyday experiences of adults than the preference for entertainment-focused literature, particularly concerning diverse topics and experiences. Adult readers are likely to engage more deeply with the subjects presented in informational texts as opposed to those intended solely for entertainment and as a means of withdrawal from daily life. Furthermore, the preference for reading informational content is inherently connected to job-related reading activities. (Thums et al., 2021, p. 353).

3. OVERVIEW OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION IN ESTONIA

The Estonian media landscape is represented by the following major public, private and alternative periodicals and social media platforms, including the media resources mentioned in the questionnaire.

Estonian public media channels:

- *Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) news portal* (err.ee): Provides news coverage in Estonian, English and Russian on various topics, such as politics, economy, culture and sports. Known for balanced and reliable reporting.

- *ETV* (etv.err.ee): Estonia's national free-to-air television channel that offers news programmes, documentaries, cultural shows and entertainment content in Estonia.

- *ETV+* (jupiterpluss.err.ee/etvpluss): A free-to-air television channel broadcasting in Russian, catering to Estonia's Russian-speaking minority. Offers news, current affairs and entertainment programmes.

- *Pealinn*: A daily newspaper formerly published by the Tallinn City Council; its Russian-language sister publication was *Stolitsa*. Ceased publication in 2024.

- *Riigi Teataja* (riigiteataja.ee): The official website of the Republic of Estonia that publishes legislation (laws and regulations), government orders and other official announcements. The content is primarily in Estonian, with some legal acts available in translation.

Estonian private media channels:

- *Delfi* (delfi.ee): Estonia's most popular online news portal, offering breaking news, current affairs and content across various topics.

- *Postimees* (postimees.ee): A leading daily newspaper with a strong digital presence, known for its broad news coverage and regional editions.

- *Eesti Päevaleht* (epl.delfi.ee): A daily newspaper focusing on in-depth analysis and high-quality reporting, now published only online.

- *Õhtuleht* (ohtuleht.ee): A popular daily tabloid known for its focus on celebrity news, human-interest stories and sensational reporting.

- *Kroonika* (kroonika.delfi.ee): A weekly magazine focusing on celebrity gossip, entertainment and lifestyle content.

- *Eesti Ekspress* (ekspress.delfi.ee): An investigative weekly newspaper known for its critical and independent journalism.

Social media platforms:

- *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok* are widely used platforms in Estonia, offering diverse content, news updates, discussions and entertainment.

Estonian Police and Border Guard Board's channels:

- *Official website* (politsei.ee): Provides official information on police activities, crime prevention tips and contact details.

- *Facebook* and *Instagram*: Social media pages sharing news updates, safety warnings and insights into police work, and reflecting the institution's official standpoint.

Differences in media preferences between Estonian- and Russian-speakers were already evident in the first decade after the restoration of Estonia's independence (Vihalemm & Kõuts, 2004). Surveys on media preferences conducted over the years have consistently shown that Estonian and Russian speakers in Estonia have different media consumption habits. Similarly, different media repertoires are observed across different age groups and between urban and rural residents, including preferences for local newspapers, TV channels and specific TV programmes (Vihalemm et al., 2012).

Various studies on the media consumption patterns of the Estonian population over the past decade reveal certain changes, especially

among the Russian-speaking population. Over the years, the primary information channel for the Estonian-speaking population has been Estonian Television (Saar Poll, 2014; Public Opinion, 2022–2023), followed by Estonian news portals. In contrast, preferences among the Russian-speaking population have changed significantly, according to public opinion surveys commissioned by the Government Office. While Russian-speaking audiences previously relied mostly on Russian television channels, such as PBK and RTR (Saar Poll, 2014, p. 7), by 2022, after the suspension of several such channels in Estonia, a third of this group began consuming less media and nearly half switched to Estonian online news portals (Public Opinion, 2022).

The Government Office's regular public opinion surveys (Public Opinion, 2022–2023, 2024, etc.) indicate a notable shift: in spring 2022, a third of the Russian-speaking population still followed Russian media channels and considered them relevant, but a year later, this figure had dropped to just 15%. Thanks to efforts by Estonian media houses to produce content in Russian, Estonian news portals gained popularity among the Russian-speaking population (Sojonen, 2022). Interestingly, in spring 2023, survey results indicated that social media had become the primary media source among non-Estonian speakers, closely followed by Estonian news portals. In contrast, among Estonian speakers, social media ranked only fourth, after Estonian Television, news portals and radio (Public Opinion, 2023).

Another difference between Estonian speakers and speakers of other languages concerns trust. Non-Estonian respondents appear to trust neither Estonian nor foreign media channels (e.g. BBC and CNN) as much as Estonian speakers do. At the same time, Estonian speakers are more sceptical of information gathered from social media than non-Estonian speakers are (ibid).

Various studies have also shown a shift in media consumption from traditional news outlets towards digital and mobile media. For example, the "Digital News Report 2023" (Newman et al., 2023), compiled by the Reuters Institute of the Study of Journalism, collected data on 46 countries, mapping the role of various media across generational groups. Among other findings, the report highlights that while traditional news brands remain largely trusted in Northern European countries, with a

generally strong interest in news, this interest is declining among younger audiences, who are less likely to access these sites or apps directly. Also, Facebook has gradually become less important in driving reader traffic to news websites, and the younger generations are increasingly attracted by video platforms. Similarly, users of video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat tend to show less interest in news from journalists and media companies, instead favouring content from social media influencers and celebrities, whose style they find more relatable.

These observations align with the findings of an Estonian media policy overview by Kõuts-Klemm et al. (2019), which claims that users are shifting from traditional news sources towards online platforms, where content is increasingly personalised and algorithm-driven. Greater social inclusiveness leads to more critical media use, which is accompanied by higher expectations for journalism.

By the end of the last decade, Estonians still tended to get their news from television and radio, although smart devices were gaining popularity. Most Estonian speakers considered TV, radio and the public broadcaster's website important daily news sources, with the online and paper versions of daily and weekly national newspapers also remaining popular. Among Russian speakers, 70% relied on private Estonian news portals in Russian, and the Estonian public broadcaster's Russian-language TV channel and online news portal also ranked highly among roughly half of the group (53% and 42%, respectively). However, more than half of Russian speakers also considered Russian news portals, as well as TV and radio channels, important in their news consumption. Both Estonian and Russian speakers placed high trust in communication with friends, acquaintances and colleagues as a source of information (80% and 79%, respectively).

The variety of available media channels allows for diverse combinations of sources and methods of news consumption. Among the nine news repertoires dominant among Estonian speakers two rely entirely on algorithms (e.g. Facebook) or aggregators (e.g. Reddit), with no editorial selection by journalists.

The results of a survey on the media preferences of Estonian nationals and foreign citizens during the pandemic are also noteworthy. The

"Survey on the Awareness of Foreigners Living in Estonia in Emergency Situations" (Awareness Survey, 2020), commissioned by the Estonian Ministry of the Interior in 2020, analysed the information consumption patterns of newly arrived immigrants during the pandemic crisis, focusing on two groups: those who consumed information in English and those who relied on Russian-language sources. The survey revealed significant disparities in information consumption, including preferred channels, interpretation, confidence levels and subsequent actions. Importantly, the survey found that new immigrants who used Russian media had distinct consumption patterns and tended to perceive official channels, such as government websites, as more trustworthy than traditional news outlets. However, both groups identified official government channels, such as ministry websites and embassy newsletters, as the most reliable sources. In addition, the objectivity and clarity of information presentation, often incorporating visual aids and infographics, significantly influenced perceived reliability (ibid, p. 53). Meanwhile, a weekly survey commissioned by the Estonian Government Office and conducted by the market research agency Turu-uuringute AS showed minimal differences in awareness of COVID-19 and related news between Estonian and Russian speakers. Altogether, 99% of Estonian speakers and 97% of Russian speakers reported feeling well or fairly well informed (COVID-19 Poll, 2020).

4. COMPARATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey conducted as part of the 2022–2023 research project to which this paper contributes examined respondents' preferences for using media channels to obtain information related to internal security. It aimed to determine whether participants read internal security-related texts in their everyday lives and, if so, through which media channels they accessed this information. To analyse the survey findings, the following categories were created: *public media channels*, *private media channels, social media channels, official state channels, other channels* and *circle of acquaintances*.

(I) PUBLIC MEDIA CHANNELS

Figure 1 shows that public media channels (e.g. ETV, the ERR news portal, ETV+ and the newspaper *Pealinn*) are frequently used, with 38% of ET respondents and 23% of RU respondents regularly reading news related to internal security from these sources. In addition, 35% of ET respondents and 42% of RU respondents occasionally ("sometimes") read news on internal security. Regarding substantive differences between ET and RU respondents, 18% of ET respondents and 8% of RU respondents reported rarely reading news, while 7% of ET and 19% of RU respondents indicated that they do not read internal security-related news in public media channels at all.

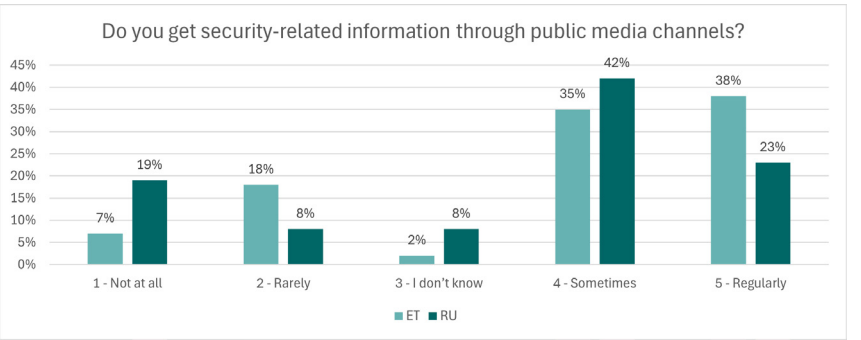

Figure 1. The consumption of information from public media channels

(II) PRIVATE MEDIA CHANNELS

Figure 2 shows that private media channels (e.g. Delfi) are frequently used, with 32% of ET respondents and 46% of RU respondents regularly reading news related to internal security from these sources. Additionally, 40% of ET respondents and 18% of RU respondents occasionally read news related to internal security from private media channels, while 21% of ET and 29% of RU respondents rarely do so. In comparison, 4% of ET and 7% of RU respondents do not read information/news related to internal security from private media channels at all.

A specific media consumption pattern can be observed, as ET and RU respondents display similar percentages in their infrequent use of private media. Specifically, 21% of ET respondents and 29% of RU respondents selected "rarely". However, regarding the consumption of public media channels, the figures are different: 18% of ET respondents and only 8% of RU respondents selected "rarely". This suggests that, even if infrequently, ET respondents use public media channels for internal security-related news more often than RU respondents do.

This indicates a significant difference in media consumption patterns between the ET and RU communities. RU respondents (46%) are more active consumers of private media than ET respondents (32%). Conversely, a larger percentage of ET respondents (38%) regularly consume public media channels, compared to RU respondents (23%).

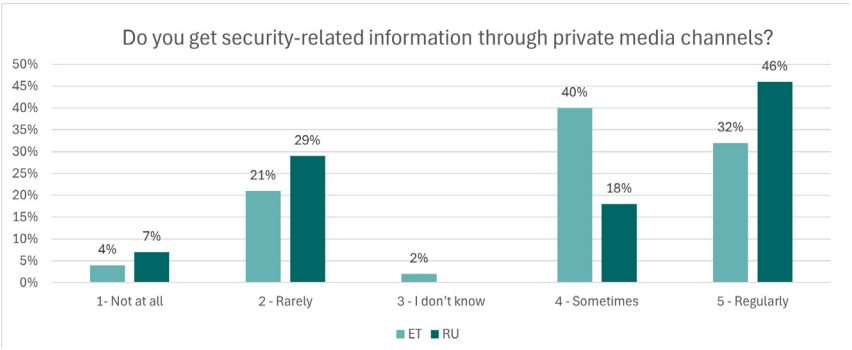

Figure 2. The consumption of information from private media channels

(III) SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Figure 3 shows that social media channels (e.g. Facebook) are frequently accessed for security-related information, with 29% of ET respondents and 42% of RU respondents regularly reading such content on social platforms. Approximately 32% of ET and 12% of RU respondents reported occasionally consuming security-related news on social media.

There is a significant difference in daily consumption patterns, with 42% of RU respondents accessing security-related information on social media daily, compared to 29% of ET respondents. Rare consumption of security-related social media content was reported by 21% of ET respondents and 15% of RU respondents. In comparison, 14% of ET and 15% of RU respondents do not access any security-related information or news on social media.

This data shows similar responses for the "rarely" indicator among both ET and RU respondents, with no significant percentage difference. It also indicates that a similar portion of both groups (14% of ET and 15% of RU respondents) do not consume any security-related news from social media. This suggests that security-related information communicated via social media may not reach the readers and that social media channels are mainly used for entertainment purposes.

When comparing public, private and social media channels, a clear pattern emerges: a significant portion of RU respondents do not read any security-related news from public media channels (19%) or from social media channels (15%). In contrast, 14% of ET respondents do not read any security-related news from social media channels, while only a small percentage of ET respondents (7% for public media and 4% for private media) reported not reading any security-related news from other channels (see Figures 1 and 2).

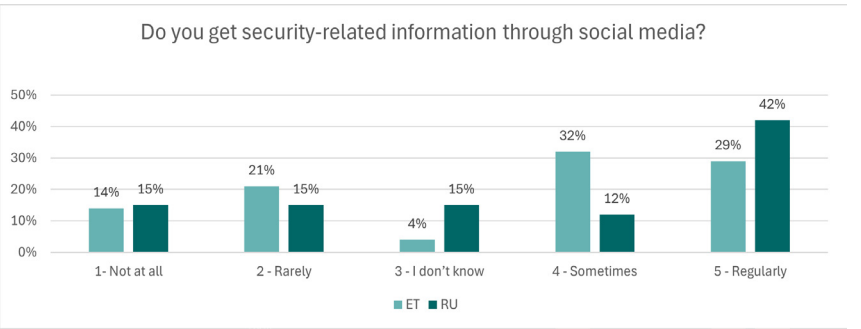

Figure 3. The consumption of security-related information through social media

(IV) OFFICIAL STATE CHANNELS

Figure 4 indicates that the official channels of the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB), such as the website, Facebook and Instagram, are mostly accessed occasionally, with similar percentages of ET respondents (39%) and RU respondents (40%) reporting occasional use. In comparison, 25% of ET and 24% of RU respondents reported rarely using these channels.

Regular consumption of security-related information from the PBGB's official channels is relatively low compared to public and private media channels and social media channels, with 25% of ET respondents and 20% of RU respondents regularly reading security-related information from these channels. In contrast, ET respondents report regular consumption of security-related information from public media channels (38%), private media channels (32%) and social media channels (29%). For RU respondents, the corresponding percentages are 38% for public media channels, 46% for private media channels and 42% for social media channels.

Overall, public media channels are an important daily source of information for ET respondents (38%), while private media channels play a significant role for RU respondents (46%), as shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

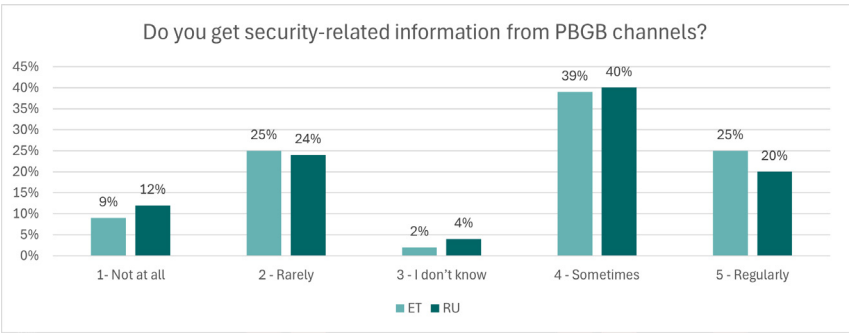

Figure 4. The consumption of information from the official channels of the Police and Border Guard Board

Figure 5 shows that 42% of ET and 16% of RU respondents do not access the Riigi Teataja portal at all. Infrequent users account for 33% of ET respondents and 20% of RU respondents. The most significant difference in media consumption patterns is observed in the "read sometimes" category. Specifically, 14% of ET respondents and 40% of RU respondents have indicated occasional reading use of the Riigi Teataja portal, which primarily publishes legal acts and court decisions. Regular readers of the Riigi Teataja portal account for 20% of RU respondents and 4% of ET respondents. A tentative explanation for this pattern could be that, since most participants in the study were educated women, the Riigi Teataja portal may be part of their daily work tools, prompting them to select the option "regularly" or "sometimes" due to work-related tasks.

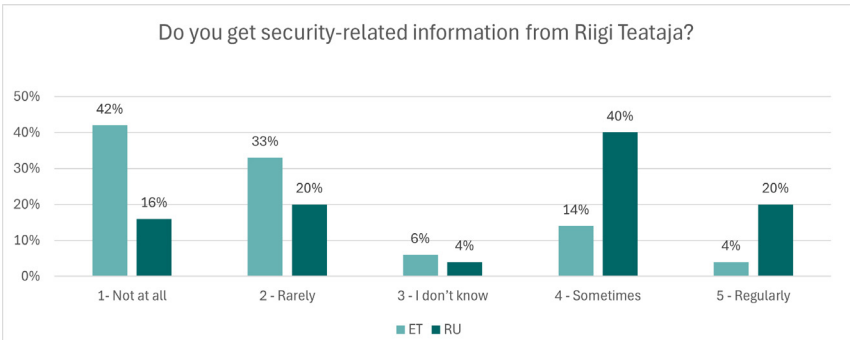

Figure 5. The consumption of information from the state portal Riigi Teataja

(V) OTHER CHANNELS

Figure 6 shows that 58% of ET respondents and 33% of RU respondents do not use other channels for obtaining information. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents (25% of ET and 48% of RU respondents) were uncertain whether they use other information channels. This percentage is considerably higher than for public, private and media channels. Specifically, for public media, 2% of ET respondents and 8% of RU respondents were uncertain, while for private media, the percentages

were 3% among ET respondents and 0% among RU respondents. For social media, the uncertainty rates were 4% among ET respondents and 15% among RU respondents. For the PBGB's official channels, the uncertainty rates were 2% among ET respondents and 4% among RU respondents, and for the Riigi Teataja portal, 6% of ET and 4% of RU respondents.

However, it is worth noting that 7% of ET respondents mentioned regularly using other information channels, but without specifying which ones. Meanwhile, 10% of RU respondents reported sometimes using other information channels, with some explicitly mentioning Russian television channels and the Estonian state Russian-language radio station Radio 4.

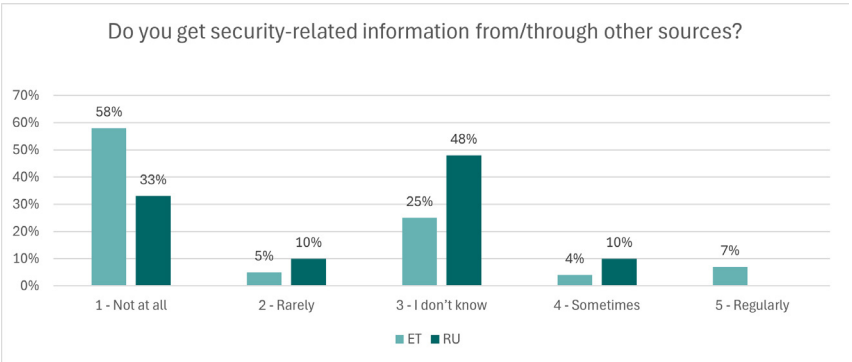

Figure 6. The consumption of information from other channels

(VI) CIRCLE OF ACQUAINTANCES

Figure 7 indicates that only 10% of ET respondents regularly receive security-related information from acquaintances, friends and relatives, while 24% of RU respondents do so. Although there are no significant differences between the two communities, considering the communication styles of the two groups, it can be suggested that information may circulate more quickly among acquaintances, friends and relatives in

the Russian-speaking community compared to the Estonian-speaking community.

Significant differences can be observed in the "sometimes" category. 67% of ET respondents and 45% of RU respondents report sometimes receiving security-related information from acquaintances. For infrequent reception ("rarely"), the percentages are 19% for ET respondents and 17% for RU respondents. In both communities, a small percentage (2% for ET respondents and 3% for RU respondents) indicated that they "do not receive" any information from acquaintances about security-related matters.

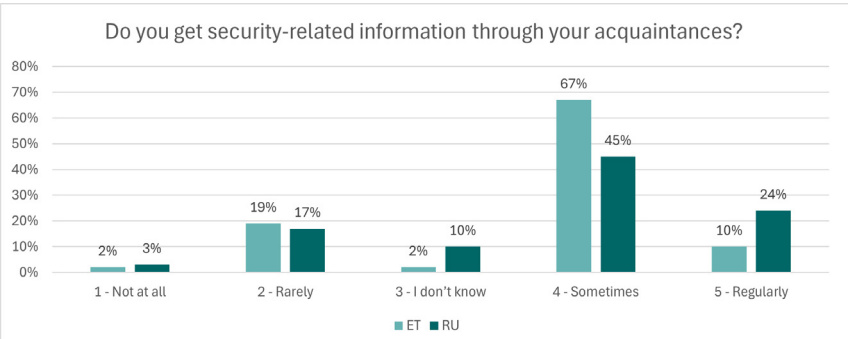

Figure 7. Receiving security-related information from acquaintances

The respondents' media consumption choices can be summarised as follows:

- ET respondents primarily rely on Delfi, Eesti Päevaleht, ETV and Facebook as their primary sources of information.
- RU respondents rely on Delfi.ru, Postimees, ETV+ and Facebook as their primary sources of information.
- Some respondents in both groups occasionally access the official channels of the Police and Border Guard Board.

- Many respondents do not actively seek security-related information, such as police announcements, but will read it if they come across it.

- Respondents see no need to use other information channels, as those mentioned in the study are considered sufficient.

The study identified the following media consumption patterns among ET and RU respondents regarding the consumption of security-related information:

(I) *Public media channels:* ET respondents show a higher rate of regular readership (38%) compared to RU respondents (23%). Both groups occasionally consume news related to internal security (35% ET, 42% RU).

(II) *Private media channels:* RU respondents have a higher regular readership (46%) than ET respondents (32%). Occasional consumption is reported by 40% of ET and 18% of RU respondents.

(III) *Social media channels:* RU respondents read security-related information more frequently (42%) compared to ET respondents (29%). Occasional consumption is reported by 32% of ET and 12% of RU respondents. A notable percentage of respondents (14% ET, 15% RU) do not consume security-related news from social media channels.

(IV) *Official state channels:* both ET and RU respondents consume information from the Police and Border Guard Board's channels occasionally (39% ET, 40% RU), with lower levels of regular readership (25% ET, 20% RU). A higher percentage of RU respondents (40%) read the Riigi Teataja portal occasionally compared to ET respondents (14%).

(V) *Other channels:* A significant percentage of respondents do not use any other channels for obtaining information (58% ET, 33% RU), and a large number are uncertain (25% ET, 48% RU). ET respondents mention Delfi, Eesti Päevaleht, ETV and Facebook as their primary sources of information, while RU respondents prefer Delfi.ru, Postimees, ETV+ and Facebook. Some respondents in both groups occasionally access the official channels of the Police and Border Guard Board. Many respondents do not actively seek security-related information but will read it when it comes to their attention.

(VI) *Circle of acquaintances:* A small percentage of ET respondents (10%) receive security-related information regularly from acquaintances, while a higher percentage of RU respondents (24%) receive such information. Occasional reception is reported by 67% of ET respondents and 45% of RU respondents. Infrequent reception is reported by 19% of ET and 17% of RU respondents. A small percentage in both groups (2% ET, 3% RU) indicate that they do not receive any information about security-related matters from acquaintances.

The main differences between ET and RU respondents are as follows:

- *Public media channels*: ET respondents have a higher regular readership (38%) than RU respondents (23%).
- *Private media channels*: RU respondents have a higher regular readership (46%) than ET respondents (32%).
- *Social media channels*: RU respondents read internal security-related information more frequently (42%) than ET respondents (29%).

In conclusion, the analysis reveals differences in media consumption patterns between ET and RU respondents, particularly in their use of public media, private media, social media and information from acquaintances. ET respondents rely more on public media channels, while RU respondents prefer private ones. Social media channels are used more frequently by RU respondents, although some do not consume security-related news from this source. Both groups use the Riigi Teataja portal less than other sources. Considering these findings, a tailored approach to content and distribution channels, based on the preferences of each group, may be beneficial.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, media consumption patterns differ between the two language groups depending on the media channels used. Public media channels are accessed more frequently by ET respondents, who are also more likely than RU respondents to regularly

follow security-related news. In contrast, RU respondents show a higher consumption of private media channels. Social media consumption for security-related information is also significantly higher among RU respondents. However, it is essential to note that social media is primarily used in both groups for entertainment purposes, and some respondents from both groups do not consume any security-related information from social media at all.

The study's results also revealed that both language groups displayed similar patterns in their consumption of the official channels of the Police and Border Guard Board (PBGB). Most respondents in both groups were occasional or infrequent readers of these channels. Only 25% of ET and 20% of RU respondents regularly read security-related information from PBGB channels. For regular consumption, ET respondents prefer public media channels (38%), while RU respondents prefer private media channels (46%). Meanwhile, 42% of ET and 16% of RU respondents do not read the Riigi Teataja portal. The most significant difference appears in the "sometimes" category, with 14% of ET respondents and 40% of RU respondents accessing the Riigi Teataja portal occasionally.

The results also indicate that most respondents do not use other channels to obtain information, but respondents who do so reported the main information channels they regularly follow. For ET respondents, significant channels include Delfi, Eesti Päevaleht, ETV and Facebook, while for RU respondents, important channels include Delfi.ru, Postimees, ETV+ and Facebook. In the RU community, respondents receive more regular information from acquaintances (24%) than in the ET community (10%). However, a similar percentage of respondents receive information occasionally from acquaintances in both communities.

The findings have significant implications for understanding the dissemination and reception of information within the ET and RU communities. The observation that a larger proportion of RU respondents receive security-related information from acquaintances and close contacts suggests a potentially more interconnected information network within the RU community. The disparities in media consumption patterns between ET and RU respondents, influenced by language and cultural preferences, highlight the need for tailored communication strategies to reach these communities effectively.

It is worth noting that further studies on media consumption among different language groups in Estonia would be valuable. Recent surveys conducted by the Government Office (Public Opinion, 2024) highlight an increasing preference for social media over official media networks, suggesting the opportunity for more research on this issue.

CONCLUSION

Considering that Estonian-speaking respondents prefer public media channels, while private media channels are more popular among Russian-speaking respondents, it would be advisable to adapt the content and distribution channels according to the preferences of each target audience.

A multi-channel approach should be considered. For example, important information channels for Estonian-speaking respondents include Delfi, Eesti Päevaleht, ETV and Facebook, while Russian-speaking respondents prefer Delfi.ru, Postimees, ETV+ and Facebook. Using multiple channels simultaneously may be an effective approach to increasing awareness and disseminating security-related information. Social media presents an opportunity for spreading security-related information, especially among the Russian-speaking audience. However, social media channels are primarily used for entertainment, and some respondents do not consume any security-related information from social media. Therefore, security-related content should be transparent (clear, easy to understand, free from hidden agendas or biases) and convey trustworthiness so that it can cut through the entertainment filter to deliver crucial information.

Measures should also be taken to increase the adoption and awareness of the Riigi Teataja portal to reach more respondents in both language groups. The Riigi Teataja portal is currently underused by Estonian-speaking respondents, suggesting the need for alternative channels for disseminating security-related information or increasing awareness about the advantages of the portal.

APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

LimeSurvey

Dear Estonian citizen! We invite you to answer a questionnaire by the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences exploring the reception and comprehension of the messages by the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board. Answering the questionnaire takes about 15 minutes and it is anonymous.

Part A: General questions

This section includes questions about the respondent.

A1. Gender:

- male ☐
- female ☐
- Do not wish to reveal ☐

A2. Age:

- 18- 24 ☐
- 25- 44 ☐
- 45- 64 ☐
- 65- 74 ☐
- 75+ ☐

A3. Level of education:

- basic education ☐
- secondary education ☐
- vocational education ☐
- higher education ☐
- other ☐

LimeSurvey

Part B: Part I Please read the following text and answer the questions.

Message 1

Inform the police of places where speeding is a problem 5 September 2022 The Police and Border Guard Board is waiting for observations on locations where drivers constantly exceed the speed limit to be posted at www.liiklustalgud.ee. Based on the given information,
the police will conduct speed checks on 22 September. Police Lieutenant Colonel Sirle Loigo invites all people to register their observations on the map application as traffic safety needs everyone's contribution. "The *Liiklustalgud* event will focus on speeding as it is the most pressing problem in traffic at the moment. Following the speed limit is highly important in preventing tragic consequences. Especially now that there are more drivers and children starting their school in traffic," Loigo stresses. The aim of *Liiklustalgud* is to take action by involving the community, make people think about the safety of their neighbourhood and understand the dangers of speeding. "It allows everyone to contribute to traffic safety by letting us know of places where following the speed limit is a problem. It is excessive speed that is the main cause of traffic accidents resulting in serious injuries or death. With the event, we steer drivers to think if the few seconds they gain is worth putting their own and other people's life at risk," the police officer added. Additions on the map application can be made until Friday, September 9. This year, the *Liiklustalgud* event will take place for the sixth time.

Annika Maksimov PBGB press officer 5655771

B1. 1. Was it easy or difficult to read the text?

- 1- It was very difficult to read it. ☐
- 2- It was quite difficult to read it. ☐
- 3- Cannot say. ☐
- 4- It was quite easy to read it. ☐
- 5- It was easy to read it. ☐

B2. 2. How would you characterise the message of the text? Please explain.

- Warning ☐
- Threatening ☐
- Commanding ☐
- Neutral ☐
- Friendly, well-intentioned ☐
- Recommendation ☐
- Instructive, didactic ☐
- other ☐

B3. Please explain:

LimeSurvey

B4. **3. Did you understand the content of the message? (select on the scale 1-5)**

- 1- did not understand at all ☐
- 2 -I understood partially ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - I rather understood ☐
- 5 – I understood very well ☐

B5. **4. The aim of the message was to:**

- 1 - uphold my safety ☐
- 2 - give recommendations on how to act ☐
- 3 - change my behaviour ☐
- 4 - frighten me with the possible consequences ☐
- 5 – other ☐

B6. **Please explain:**

B7. **5. Will you act after reading the message?**

- 1 - I do not intend to act ☐
- 2 - I probably will not act ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - I probably will act ☐
- 5 – I will definitely act ☐

B8. **Please explain:**

B9. **6. How relevant is the message for you?**

- 1 - the message does not interest / concern me ☐
- 2 - quite irrelevant ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - quite relevant ☐
- 5 – the message is very relevant to me/ I will definitely consider the message ☐

LimeSurvey

B10. **Please explain:**

B11. **7. Why do you consider the message relevant?**

- ☐ It is the official message sent by the Police and Border Guard Board
- ☐ The message concerns general safety
- ☐ The message concerns me and my family
- ☐ I do not find the message relevant
- ☐ other

B12. **Please explain:**

Part C: Part II Please read the following text and answer the questions.

Message 2 Police: Good Cyber-Hygiene Prevents Money from Disappearing Mysteriously 7 April 2022

Recently, there have been increasing cases of large sums of money disappearing from crypto-currency wallets Upon closer inspection, it turns out that their devices, such as computers or cell phones, have been infected with malware. The police recently received a report that 60,000 euros had been transferred from the cryptocurrency wallet without the owner's knowledge. "To the owner's knowledge, he had not shared his passwords or other data with anyone. There are similar cases with losses varying from a few hundred to around twenty thousand euros," says Hannes Kelt, the Head of the Cyber and Economic Crime Division of the North Prefecture. These days, investing in cryptocurrency is nothing new and also scammers have discovered a quick way to make money off gullible people. "The seemingly mysterious thefts described above are possible only if the computer is infected with malware. For this, the owner does not even have to enter his data anywhere, clicking on a suspicious link is enough. Such links are spread, for instance, in social media, via e-mails, text messages or ads, but in reality they are not sent by a specific person but by a device infected with malware," Kelt added.
There are a few simple steps to keep in mind to prevent malware infection. "The most common requests accompanying malware-infected links are, for instance: "Is that you in this video?", similarly "Look what I found," with an active link attached. Before clicking on anything, we suggest you ask the sender if he really sent it and what could it be. It is worth being critical of opening and downloading unknown files," the police officer explains. Cybercrimes have been on the rise in the recent years and only good cyber-hygiene can prevent it. Annika Maksimov PBGB press officer 5655771

C1. **1. Was it easy or difficult to read the text?**

- ☐ 1- It was very difficult to read it.
- ☐ 2- It was quite difficult to read it.
- ☐ 3- Cannot say.
- ☐ 4- It was quite easy to read it.
- ☐ 5- It was easy to read it.

LimeSurvey

C2. 2. How would you characterise the message of the text? Please explain.

- Warning ☐
- Threatening ☐
- Commanding ☐
- Neutral ☐
- Friendly, well-intentioned ☐
- Recommendation ☐
- Instructive, didactic ☐
- other ☐

C3. Please explain:

C4. 3. Did you understand the content of the message? (select on the scale 1-5)

- 1 - did not understand at all ☐
- 2 - I understood partially ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - I rather understood ☐
- 5 – I understood very well ☐

C5. 4. The aim of the message was:

- 1 - uphold my safety ☐
- 2 - give recommendations on how to act ☐
- 3 - change my behaviour ☐
- 4 - frighten me with the possible consequences ☐
- 5 – other ☐

C6. Please explain:

LimeSurvey

C7. **5. Will you act after reading the message?**

- 1 - I do not intend to act ☐
- 2 - I probably will not act ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - I probably will act ☐
- 5 – I will definitely act ☐

C8. **Please explain:**

C9. **6. How relevant is the message for you?**

- 1 - the message does not interest me / the message does not concern me ☐
- 2 - quite irrelevant ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - quite relevant ☐
- 5 – the message is very relevant to me/ I will definitely consider the message ☐

C10. **Please explain:**

C11. **7. Why do you consider the message relevant?**

- It is the official message sent by the Police and Border Guard Board ☐
- The message concerns general safety ☐
- The message concerns me and my family ☐
- I do not find the message relevant ☐
- Other ☐

C12. **Please explain:**

LimeSurvey

Part D: Questions about information channels

D1. 8. Do you read such texts in your daily life?

- 1 - do not read at all ☐
- 2 - I rarely read ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - I sometimes read ☐
- 5 - I regularly read ☐

D2. From which channels do you get information on safety?

	1 - I do not read (watch) at all	2 rarely read	3 cannot say	4 sometimes read	5 regularly read
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Riigi Teataja website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Police and Border Guard Board channels (website, Facebook, Instagram etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social media (FB, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Private media channels (Delfi, Kroonika, Postimees etc...)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public media channels (ETV, ERR online news, ETV+, Pealinn etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D3. Please explain:

D4. Do you receive information on safety from people you know?

- 1 - not at all ☐
- 2 - rarely ☐
- 3 - cannot say ☐
- 4 - sometimes ☐
- 5 - regularly ☐

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THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND SECURITY IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

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Keywords: migration, resource scarcity, population growth, migration consequences

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/3e7y-7821

ABSTRACT

Although some still dispute the scientifically proven link between human activity and environmental change, it is undeniable that there has never before existed such a large human population with such a high average life expectancy in the history of the world. There is no doubt that this entails unprecedented challenges for society, including massive waste generation, the destruction of nature for new habitats and the increasing demand for resources to meet all our needs. When factors such as environmental change and economic and political situations are combined, it inevitably leads to a significant increase in migration, which triggers various conflicts and undermines the geopolitical balance.

This article aims to analyse, based on existing secondary data, the linkage between population growth, increased life expectancy, consumption and changes in consumption patterns in the context of migration influenced by environmental change and political conflicts, which in turn affects the availability and adequacy of resources in all countries involved. The article provides an overview of the main trends, highlighting the problem of the lack of complex analysis of the various variables and linkages among these factors.

The analysis found that the highest population growth is seen in areas where extreme environmental events occur, which triggers more people to migrate to areas where people depend on the same resource bases. There is a need for further, more detailed analysis of the relationships, highlighting the growing need for destination countries to focus on the associated challenges in designing future security strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change and migration are among the world's most pressing contemporary issues (Baada et al., 2023). Year by year, human society is becoming increasingly caught up in environmental crises and conflicts. Add to this a surge in population growth, increasing life expectancy and the growing scarcity of resources, and the outlook is not bright. Rising costs of living and supply constraints resulting from extreme circumstances and events affect all countries, including higher-income developed countries. When more people rely on the same natural resources, it puts additional pressure on those resources. Consequently, there are fewer resources available per person, which can negatively impact food security as well as social and economic development.

So far, not much research has been done on the impact of consumption habits of people migrating from less developed countries to developed countries and on how this, in turn, affects resource adequacy in destination countries. In developed countries, higher consumption levels and greater resource availability lead to shifts in the consumption habits of migrants. The expected economic growth and development from the addition of people may not balance out the proportion of services and benefits consumed over their lifetimes as life expectancy rises. Misuraca & Zimmermann (2024) indicate that studies dealing with consumption in the context of migration are rare in economics. There are significantly more people consuming resources and benefits at the same time than in previous decades, and it is extremely important to analyse such links.

Various studies and reviews in this field address the different causes of increasing migration, but only a few of these examine how increasing migration affects resource[1] adequacy in destination countries. The concepts of hybrid warfare, population growth, food security and increases in migration are often addressed separately and rarely viewed as interconnected in planning for future security risks. Terrorism and the spread of crime are identified as the main negative effects and threats for destination countries (Aslan, 2022; Lidicker, 2020; Sullivan & Townsend, 2022). These developments present new hazards for national security, and present opportunities for parties looking to foment instability and

[1] The resources referred to in this article are adequate food and drinking water for all inhabitants, as well as energy, shelter, services and other resources necessary for a productive life.

uncertainty between countries and institutions. However, for the longer term, it is important to approach this issue in the context of security strategies designed from a resource-adequacy perspective.

This article focuses on whether and how these factors and the interactions between these variables have been addressed in existing studies and statistics. It also explains why it is important for destination countries to take such a complex approach to developing their security strategies. For analysis, this study uses a descriptive approach, with secondary data as its primary source. The study identifies various key indicators for population changes, life expectancy trends, migration, consumption and resource adequacy, and explains that these trends are not sustainable. On this basis, these indicators highlight the need to collect and analyse more complex data by creating better links among migration, changing consumption patterns and the available resource base, showing that migration to developed countries will lead to both greater consumption by the migrants and economic growth for the destination countries, which must be considered when forecasting various development trends.

1. POPULATION GROWTH AND INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY FORECASTS

The global population is estimated at about 8.1 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050 and 10.4 billion by 2100 (United Nations, Population; Roser & Ritchie, 2023). It is also expected that population growth will mainly occur in low income and lower-middle income nations (see Table 1). With some of the highest birth rates in the world coupled with declining mortality, Africa has seen its population grow almost tenfold, having now reached to over 1.4 billion. It is expected to near 2.5 billion by 2050, according to UN projections (Filipenco, 2024). Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to have the fastest growth – 2.4% per year – over the coming decade (OECD/FAO, 2023). This region already suffers from food shortages and violent conflicts caused by poverty and droughts (WFP & FAO, 2024). The majority of countries in this region are unable to produce enough food to meet the needs of their populations and are highly dependent on food imports.

Although forecasts of global population growth predict a slowdown by the end of this century, demographic changes highlight other factors that affect whether the needs of the population can be met. Global average life expectancy is 73 years and is projected to reach 77.2 years by 2050. This is the highest it has ever been. The gap between life expectancy in developed and developing countries has been narrowing year by year. In 1950, people in developed countries lived 23 years longer on average, but by 2021, this had narrowed to 11 years.

Table 1. Population growth and life expectancy predictions by region

	POPULATION *(IN MILLIONS)*			LIFE EXPECTANCY *(IN YEARS FROM BIRTH)*		
	2022	2050	2100	2022	2050	2100
World	7.98	9.71	10.35	71.7	77.2	82.1
Africa	1.43	2.49	3.92	62.2	68.3	74.9
Asia	4.72	5.29	4.67	73.2	79.5	85.5
Oceania	0.05	0.06	0.07	79.2	82.1	87.2
Europe	0.74	0.70	0.59	77.4	83.8	90.1
North America	0.38	0.42	0.45	78.7	84	90
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.66	0.75	0.65	73.8	80.6	87.2
Low income countries	0.74	1.37	2.27	63	68.8	75.3
Lower-middle income countries	3.43	4.49	4.99	67	74.3	80.6
Upper-middle income countries	2.53	2.54	1.87	76	81.9	87.8
High income countries	1.25	1.28	1.19	80.9	85.4	91.2
More developed regions	1.28	1.27	1.15	78.6	84.3	90.4
Less developed regions	6.70	8.44	9.20	70.3	76.2	81.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.17	2.11	3.44	60.2	66.7	73.8

Sources: United Nations, 2022; WorldData.info, 2024; WHO; Dattani et al., 2023

In Europe and the Nordic countries, the population is shrinking and life expectancy is increasing. Sustained population growth is necessary to ensure growth and development. From this perspective, migration from developing countries to countries with declining populations due to violent conflicts, persecution, human rights abuses or natural disasters can be a balancing factor. All these reasons for migration also mean that the land and areas essential to ensure the resources needed to meet the needs of the growing population will also be reduced. In practice, this leads to an increase in the consumption rate and average life expectancy of migrants from developing countries in developed societies. Given that migration is partly due to resource scarcity, we must bear in mind that developed countries are also heavily dependent on imports of food and other essential resources. It is therefore important to consider the linkages and dependencies between such changes and the resource availability and security of developed countries.

On the other hand, there is the assumption that the economies of low income and lower-middle income countries need to grow much more rapidly than their populations, and developed countries can help ensure that these countries receive the necessary technical and financial assistance for investments in infrastructure as well as increased access to affordable energy and modern technology across sectors (Wilmoth et al., 2022). However, it fails to note that this is accompanied by an increase in the population's consumption rate.

An ageing society and a growing population lead to higher demand for resources. One of the consequences of population growth is the increased pressure on natural resources: the rise in food demand puts pressure on land, water and energy supplies. Overpopulation leads to increased demand for housing, food and resources. This can lead to poverty, food insecurity and other social issues, and can create tensions between communities and countries as resources become increasingly scarce (FAO, 2020).

2. MIGRATION: ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Migration is the movement of people from their native lands to another country to live in better conditions. It is a human effort to maintain dignity, seek prosperity and achieve dreams for a better life (Kounani & Skanavis, 2019). International migration seems to give more hope for a better life, especially for migrants from developing countries (Faozanudin & Islam, 2021). People migrate for many reasons, ranging from security, demography and human rights to climate change and poverty. It is often a response to the pressing need to escape from famine, civil war or occupation (see Figure 1).

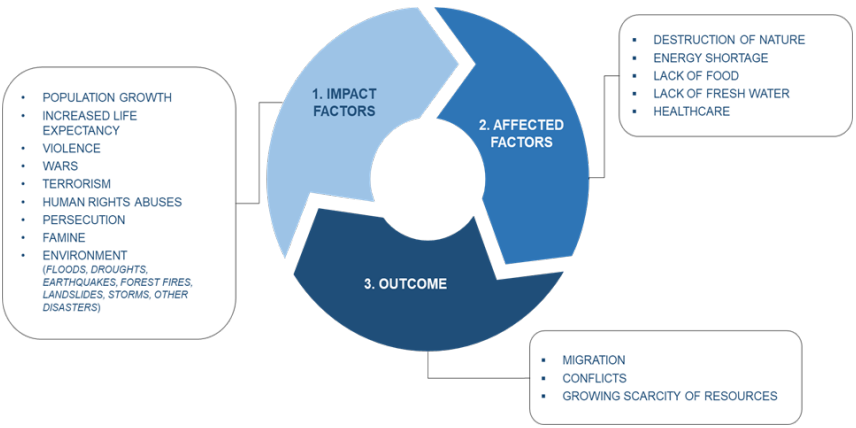

Figure 1. Factors contributing to migration and impacted by it

The World Migration Report (2024) estimates that in 2020 there were about 281 million international migrants in the world, which is 3.6% of the global population. Increasing numbers of people are also being displaced, within and out of their countries of origin, because of conflicts, persecution, human rights abuses, violence, political or economic instability, as well as climate change, and other disasters. Climate change and extreme weather are recognised as increasingly driving the internal displacement of people and communities, as well as potentially contributing to international migration (IPCC, 2023; Skeldon, 2024). While most displaced people have moved domestically, crises are also exacerbating migratory pressures on other countries. The number of people forcibly

displaced in the world stood at a record 117.3 million as of the end of 2022, and the number of asylum-seekers rose from 4.1 million in 2020 to 5.4 million in 2022, an increase of more than 30% (IOM, 2024). In 2022, the highest number of refugees continued to come from Syria, but the greatest increase was from Ukraine (Anniste et al., 2023).

Climate change is expected to lead to increasingly large-scale migration from vulnerable regions. Rising food prices, supply chain problems, domestic armed conflicts and natural disasters caused by climate change have led to food and humanitarian crises, causing displacement of people in many regions of the world (Anniste et al., 2023). Places that host displaced people experience a rapid rise in population, which has disruptive consequences for local food systems (FAO, 2022). Migration resulting from climate change in the coming decades may also lead to more food insecurity and malnutrition in less developed areas. By 2050, climate change is expected to generate up to 86 million additional migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million from South Asia and 17 million from Latin America (IEP, 2020).

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification also estimates that water scarcity could displace 700 million people by 2030 (Tsegai et al., 2022). Estimates of the number of environmental migrants vary from 25 million to 1 billion by the year 2050 (European Parliament, 2024). Noonan & Rusu (2022) state that increasing droughts, severe weather and wildfires associated with global warming are already in evidence, and if areas that are vulnerable today become uninhabitable tomorrow, it will create permanent international displacement on a massive scale. In their meta-analysis of the empirical literature on the complex links between climate and the mobility of people, Beine & Jeusette (2019) found that climate change and migration primarily concern developing countries. This might be explained by the fact that these countries face a double issue related to climate change: higher exposure to adverse climatic changes and lower capacity to cope with these. Without preventive measures, this may lead to the emergence of violent conflict or waves of migration.

Migration is a social phenomenon that has consequences for both the countries of origin and destinations (Aslan, 2022). For destination countries, the main positive effects of migration are economic development,

an increase in the young working population, gaining new knowledge and experiences, and cultural diversity. The negative effects are primarily pressure on public services (healthcare, schools, housing, etc.), ethnic barriers and increased pressure on natural resources. International migration is undoubtedly a much smaller component of population change than births or deaths, but it still has a significant impact on population in countries that send or receive large numbers of economic migrants and in those affected by refugee flows.

Large-scale, permanent, international displacement can trigger conflicts over limited resources. Experience shows that excessive stress on societies in the form of sudden or gradual crises tends to reinforce already existing vulnerability, exposure and inequality (Schaar, 2018). Experts recognise climate migration as a significant geopolitical risk. While crises are acute in their countries of origin, their impacts are not confined by national borders. Spillover effects are probable worldwide. Although Europe currently faces a relatively low ecological threat, the neighbouring Middle East and North Africa region remains particularly vulnerable. Both Europe and North America are likely to be the desired destinations for large numbers of climate migrants (Noonan & Rusu, 2022). More than half of all international migrants lived in Europe (82 million) or North America (59 million) (Faozanudin & Islam, 2021).

The coming years promise to bring more major challenges as a number of ongoing and intertwined crises will continue. The war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza will be compounded by crises stemming from climate change and natural disasters. Prolonged droughts (e.g. in the Horn of Africa, but also in Europe) and floods (e.g. in Pakistan) have exacerbated existing food shortages and led to humanitarian catastrophes in a number of countries, leading to expected increases in voluntary and forced migration, both legal and illegal (Anniste et al., 2023).

All the cited sources indicate that the analysis of the negative effects of migration does not address the interactions between population growth, increased life expectancy, disparities in regional consumption rates and growing resource scarcity.

3. DEMAND FOR RESOURCES

Population increase and resource use have a complicated relationship. As the global population increases, the likelihood of significant and lasting shifts in resource consumption also rises. Increased demand for water and natural resources, diminished food security, slower development and the resulting poverty are frequently cited as consequences of population expansion and increasing population density. It is undeniable that when more people are dependent on the same natural resource base, those resources are strained. As a result, there are fewer resources per person, which is likely to have a detrimental influence on food security as well as social and economic growth.

While population growth has many negative effects, it has a positive impact on economic development. However, if the available resources are limited and overexploited, we cannot assume that a more efficient use of resources will, according to established principles of economics, lead to a lower consumption rate. Improving people's standard of living is a desired objective, but it entails the consumption of both renewable and non-renewable resources. Population and consumption growth have led to a situation where we are also consuming renewable resources far faster than they can be replenished. In 2022, human demand exceeded the planet's regeneration rate by at least 73% (York University et al., 2023). Our total global extraction of materials from the earth has tripled in the last 50 years, and it is expected to grow by 60% in the next 30 years. More than a quarter of the increase in material use since 2000 is a result of population growth, and it is projected that by 2050, resource use per person will be 71% higher than it is today (United Nations Environment Programme, 2024b). Material use continues to grow by an average of more than 2.3% per year (United Nations Environment Programme, 2024a).

However, it is very difficult for ecologists to calculate human carrying capacity (the number of individuals in a population that can be sustained indefinitely by a given area), as that involves predicting trends in demography, resource availability, technological advances and economic development (World Population History, s/a). One way to address these challenges is to measure the human impact on the planet. Developed Ecological Footprint is a metric estimating the biologically productive

land and water area an individual, population or activity requires to produce all the resources it consumes, accommodate its occupied urban infrastructure and absorb the waste it generates using prevailing technology and resource management practices. It is measured in global hectares and has six categories (built-up land, forest land, grazing land, cropland, fishing grounds and carbon footprint) allocated to the five basic consumption components (food, shelter, mobility, goods and services) (Global Footprint Network, 2024; Lin et al., 2023). According to this framework, in 2023, the average person needed approximately 2.6 ha of biologically productive land to meet all their needs of products and services required (Figure 2).

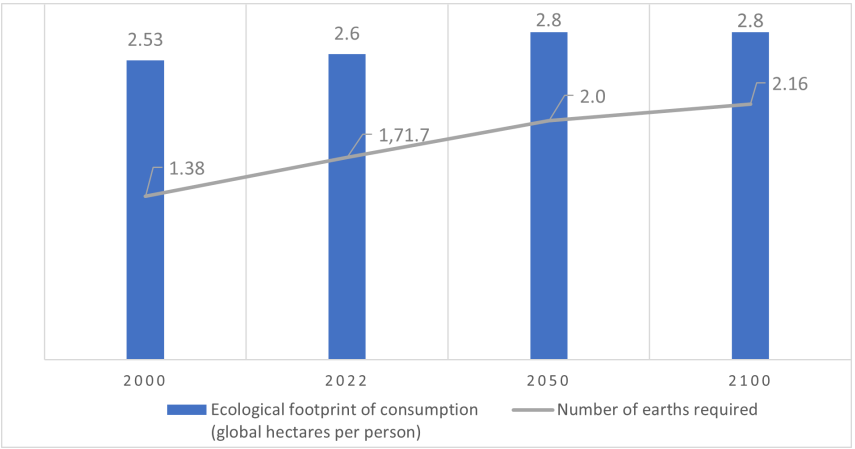

Figure 2. Population impact on the planet (2000–2100)

Source: York University Ecological Footprint Initiative & Global Footprint Network, 2023

The planet only has 12.2 billion hectares of biologically productive area, so demand is 1.7 times the area the biosphere currently renews. In more developed regions like the EU, the impact is well above the world average, reaching a level of 2.8 (Figure 3). The EU uses almost 20% of the earth's biocapacity, although it has only 7% of the world's population (Global Footprint Network, 2024).

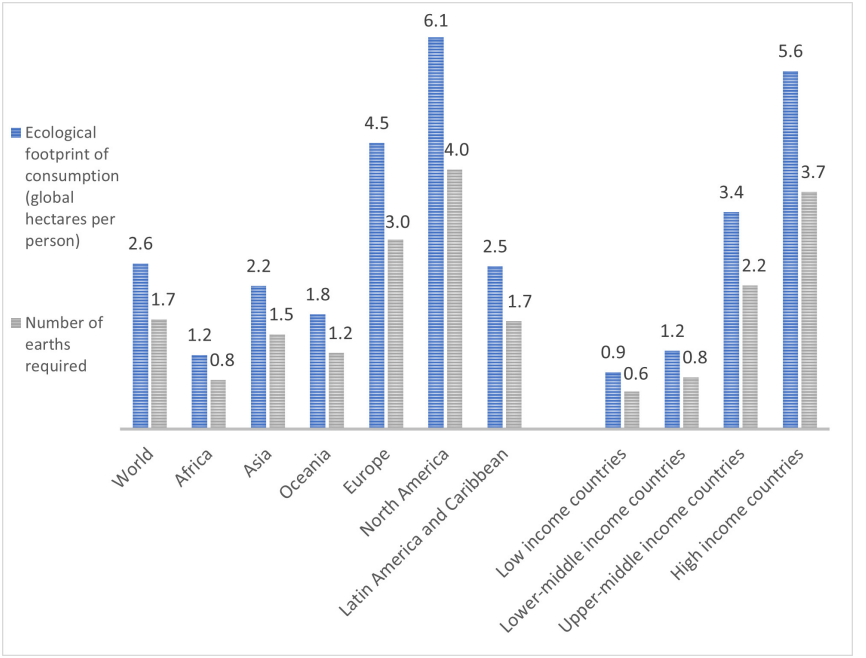

Figure 3. Population impact on the planet by regions and living standards (2022)

Source: York University Ecological Footprint Initiative & Global Footprint Network, 2023

Data from the Global Footprint Network shows that overconsumption has been going on since 1971 – more than 50 years. There is no evidence that more efficient use of resources leads to using less. Every extra mouth to feed puts more pressure on a food supply that is already under threat from multiple factors, including shortage of fresh water, soil depletion, decimated populations of insect pollinators and climate change (Population Matters, 2024).

The UN Environment Programme report (2024) found that population growth is the main driver of increased resource use in Africa and West Asia. Between 2000 and 2020, global food consumption increased by more than 37%, which is significantly faster than population growth. The sharpest increase was observed in sub-Saharan Africa, where it grew by 88%, followed by East Asia and the Pacific (52%) (FAO, 2022). Various

studies (Tilman et al., 2011; Alexandratos & Bruinsma, 2012; van Dijk et al., 2021) project that world food production needs to increase by 51–110% to feed the world population by 2050. Developing countries such as China, India and Indonesia are projected to have significant increases in consumption growth rates by 2050 – 97.96%, 76.24% and 61.06% respectively – largely driven by rapid economic development, which elevates income levels and consumer capacity for goods and services (Espinosa & Koh, 2024).

Increasing agricultural production comes at a cost to nature. If current trends of drivers affecting agrifood systems do not change, the sustainability and resilience of these systems will be seriously under threat and food crises will be likely to increase in the future (FAO, 2022; Sands et al., 2023; Sands, 2024).

The same goes for built-up areas, which have increased by 16% since 2000 in the countries that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), making up 1.1% of total area. Europe has the highest share of built-up land (2.6% of total land area) (OECD, 2024).

Freshwater availability will also be further strained, with 2.3 billion more people than today (in total over 40% of the global population) projected to be living in river basins under severe water stress, especially in North Africa, Southern Africa, South America and Central Asia (OECD, 2012).

The negative impact of climate change on agriculture and the increase in demand due to population growth are also changing the diets of people in developed countries. Most of these countries source a large part of their food from abroad, where climate change is devastating agriculture. Estonia, for example, depends largely on imported food, and growing certain foods is already becoming difficult due to the changing climate (Eestimaa Looduse Fond, 2021) and dependence on trade flows.

Most countries' economies are highly dependent on the export and/or import of primary commodities. As migrants' destination countries rely heavily on imported food, the long-term result will be competition for the same limited resources. Conventional economic theories, which assume that development and growth require a steady increase in population, do

not consider the resource constraints of exceeding a critical limit for certain consumers. From an ecological economics perspective, economic growth cannot remain a goal in itself (FAO, 2022). Lack of access to sufficient food can have several significant negative effects on the economy, including affecting the health of the workforce (Mollenkamp, 2024).

Statistical data on consumption show that in countries with a higher standard of living, the consumption rate of the population is, on average, higher than in less developed regions. Estimates also show that this trend is far from sustainable. Environmental changes, conflicts and other induced changes in the areas with the highest population growth result in shortages of resources such as food and drinking water, leading to significant migration to areas with higher living standards, which inevitably leads to even greater resource scarcity. This is largely due to the reduction in biologically productive areas and the additional population.

4. THREATS TO (NATIONAL) SECURITY DUE TO A LACK OF RESOURCES

New, escalating and protracted conflicts, extreme climatic events, and economic shocks resulted in another year of increasing numbers of people forced to flee their homes in 2023 (FSIN & GNAF, 2024). In 59 food-crisis countries/territories, the number of displaced people reached 90.2 million. Globally, there were 110 million forcibly displaced people at the end of 2022 (UNHCR, 2023). In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, rapidly deteriorating climatic conditions mean that climate vulnerabilities may be reproduced in migration destination areas as well (Baada et al., 2023). The World Bank's Commodity Market Outlook (2024) addresses food security and inflation, highlighting the growing number of people facing acute food insecurity, primarily driven by armed conflict, economic shocks and extreme weather events.

Food security is vulnerable to all sorts of crises. There is often a close link between food security and human security. It has been argued that "hunger anywhere threatens peace everywhere" (FAO, 2022). Various studies and reviews (Sullivan & Townsend, 2022; van Dijk et al., 2021;

Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023) discuss the causes of increasing migration, but very few consider how increasing migration impacts resource adequacy and, consequently, security in the destination countries. The main threats for destination countries are terrorism and the spread of crime. But the more complex impacts and effects may occur in the long term. The broader geopolitical context influences the operation of food systems, as this often affects how conflict is shaped at the local level, as well as through more macro-level impacts on trade flows because of the interconnectivity of global trade, and how this may be manipulated for political reasons. Food systems that are repeatedly put under stress by conflict tend to move from predictability to instability and volatility (FAO, 2022). Food security is likely to remain one of the critical challenges for the world, which is why the World Bank has included food and nutrition security among the eight global challenges that need to be addressed at scale (Andree et al., 2024). Organised violence and armed conflict are key drivers of acute food insecurity in most hunger hotspots. In all, the multiple impacts of conflict, including population displacement, destruction of food systems and shrinking humanitarian access, are likely to further restrict the availability of and access to food (WFP and FAO, 2024).

The growing population and geopolitical tensions are affecting all the resources people need to live a normal life. Every country in the world relies on trade to fulfil its overall resource needs. Examination of the major commodity trade networks reveals multifaceted interdependencies, with production concentrated in a handful of countries exporting to many, some of which in turn export the resources onwards (FAO, 2022). However, it is also one of the most important vulnerabilities of countries in the context of targeted and tactical offensive strategies.

The relationship between the human population, economic progress and the availability of natural resources is complex, and it will still be a challenge to meet these needs with the available resources even if all the trends described remain where they are today. Even the existing population will hasten resource consumption, waste production and environmental degradation. We cannot deny that even without significant growth, the population, given increasing life expectancy, cannot sustainably meet its needs with the resources available. This will eventually lead to resource scarcity and price increases, which in turn will

lead to resource competition and increased security risks. Consumption habits, technological improvements, particular forms of social organisation and resource management practices all contribute to the problem's escalation.

If appropriate policies are adopted, an increasing population can also spur economic expansion and result in a larger labour force, which can aid sustainable development. However, it is crucial to ensure that environmental conservation and the safeguarding of natural resources go hand-in-hand with economic progress (Filipenco, 2024). Many developed countries take the view that well-managed citizenship and migration policies foster national development while ensuring a secure living environment. From the perspective of internal security, migration and citizenship have a major impact on the holistic functioning of society, which in turn contributes to democracy, economic development and the quality of life, and thus to community security. In some approaches (Beine & Jeusette, 2019; Sullivan & Townsend, 2022; Skeldon, 2024; Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023), the positive aspects of immigration in terms of internal security are seen alongside the negative aspects of changes in the composition and identity of the population as creating the risk of conflict that could compromise internal security. In this context, however, it is important to consider not only consumption and the availability of resources but also their sufficiency to cover society's consumption patterns.

Underlying geopolitical tensions, combined with the eruption of active hostilities in multiple regions, are contributing to an unstable global order characterised by polarising narratives, eroding trust and insecurity. At the same time, countries are grappling with the impacts of record-breaking extreme weather, as efforts and resources to adapt to climate change fall short of addressing the type, scale and intensity of climate-related events already taking place. Cost-of-living pressures continue to hurt people, amid persistently elevated inflation and interest rates and continued economic uncertainty in much of the world (World Economic Forum, 2024).

The conditions, effects, and political and ethical costs of addressing immigration from a security perspective have not been defined (Ullah et al., 2010). In addition, resource scarcity, in particular food insecurity,

is exacerbated by a range of other intensifying factors, such as the manipulation of supply chains or migration flows, which are not addressed in this work. All this suggests that research should do more to address, for example, long-term development challenges in countries affected by disasters and climate change. This is also the view expressed by the European Commission (2022) in its working document, "Addressing displacement and migration related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation".

CONCLUSION

Population and life expectancy are both increasing, while extreme weather conditions and other disasters are reducing the land area from which to obtain the resources needed. Migration from these areas is increasing, preferring to move to developed countries whose resource base is also heavily dependent on imports. The needs and consumption patterns of people moving to developed countries are changing, often exceeding the value added to the national economy. It is a cycle of closely interlinked variables.

The continuous growth of the global population is likely to result in the depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and overcrowding. It is evident that if consumption patterns like those in developed nations at present persist, with the current state of technological advancements, the world will be unable to sustainably support the existing population. Population growth can also stimulate economic development and foster technological innovation. However, that creates a scarcity of resources, and weather extremes have further depleted the area under cultivation, which could lead to resource competition also in developed countries.

A growing population can exert pressure on the environment, supply chains and the availability of natural resources such as water, food and energy, particularly when governments do not engage in strategic planning or delay the implementation of necessary adaptive reforms. It can also be expected that, as increased migration is partly caused by increased living costs, food shortages and climate events, developed countries,

including in Europe, will question the extent to which they should assist countries most affected by natural disasters and rising food prices (e.g. by supporting food production, making the agricultural sector more resilient to change, etc.) (ICMPD, 2023). And it is obvious that terrorism and crime are not the only potential negative impacts of migration on the security of destination countries. The growing scarcity of resources due to population growth and increasing life expectancy, and its impact on migration, is an issue that certainly requires increasing attention and more detailed analysis.

This analysis found that the highest population growth is expected in the areas prone to extreme weather events. This triggers more people to migrate to areas where people depend on the same resource bases, which in turn means that the areas that are essential to ensure the resources needed to meet the needs of the growing population will also be reduced. Existing studies do not take these aspects into account, although doing so is necessary and can have a significant impact on security policies in developed countries. Furthermore, the change in consumption volumes is also not reflected in the statistics.

There is insufficient data and research on the interaction of various factors and linkages between variables. Existing reports and articles either consider these topics separately or analyse the links between individual variables. The studies are concentrated on one or two of these aspects, which can lead to erroneous results when it comes to predicting future trends and formulating action strategies.

Several European Migration Network member countries are increasingly studying the link between environmental degradation and migration through research projects at national institutes and research bodies to inform their policy responses (European Migration Network, 2023), but more detailed data is needed for better decision-making processes. It will be important to monitor changes and interactions among variables over time to provide input for the development of policies to cope with such changes.

In addition to the various possible further developments and scenarios in this study, it is important to consider key variables not included here, such as urbanisation and trade, as growing factors with a strong impact

on resource security. These are also important vulnerabilities in the event of hybrid attacks.

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MIGRATION: IS IT A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA?

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Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Winston Churchill

Keywords: migration, hospitality, threat, national security

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/ke48-v847

ABSTRACT

From the very beginning, human beings have been looking for a safe and secure place for not only themselves but also their families and their communities. It is an essential need throughout one's lifetime. Various causes, from drought to war, force people to leave their native country. For example, one factor pushing Belarusians to leave their native land in 2021–2022 was the fraudulent election of 2020 and the repressions against participants of demonstrations. Similarly, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, beginning on 24 February 2022, has caused a massive influx of refugees from Ukraine into other countries, including the Baltic countries. It has brought new challenges to the national security of the Republic of Lithuania. This paper aims to analyse these two events, which are closely intertwined, from migration and national security points of view.

INTRODUCTION

> *Humanism is the only – I would go so far as saying the final – resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history.*
>
> Edward Said

Migration as a social phenomenon has been known for many centuries, and it is bound by larger social, cultural, political, and economic structures. From the very beginning, human beings have been looking for a safe and secure place for not only themselves but also their families and their communities. It is an essential need throughout one's lifetime. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety is the most vital element in human life.

This paper aims to analyse the impact of migration on the national security of the Republic of Lithuania through two closely intertwined events: (a) the response of the Lukashenko regime to the sanctions imposed for the fraudulent results of the 2020 elections in the Republic of Belarus, which have led to mass migration from Belarus to European Union member states which border Belarus, and (b) the new wave of migration during the second stage of the Russian Federation's aggressive war against Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022. It has created one of the biggest migration crises in Europe since the end of the Second World War and has affected the Baltic countries from a national security viewpoint.

We consider the following questions in this research paper:

1) Is migration a weapon of soft power by hostile countries against other countries?

2) What potential threats do the migration processes from 2020 cause to the national security of Lithuania?

The research objectives are as follows:

1) To present the engine of migration through the prism of time.

2) To present the concept of hospitality in the context of the need for safety.

3) To analyse the causes of migration in Lithuania from August 2020 to February 2024.

4) To examine the capabilities of the state's institutions to handle the influx of migrants.

5) To identify possible instruments that Russia might use in cooperation with Belarus to create potentially dangerous situations within the Republic of Lithuania.

6) To identify possible threats to the national security and public order of Lithuania due to rapid changes in migration numbers from 2020 to 2024.

The author of this paper aim to present the following findings:

1) Specific features of migration through the lens of time

2) The concept of hospitality in the context of the need for safety

3) Migration and national security

4) Migration as a weapon of soft power

5) Statistical data on migration through the lens of national security from 2021 to 2024

6) Espionage through migrants and possible trends

The following theoretical and empirical research methods were used to achieve the research objectives: content analysis, archival research, analytic induction, systematic analysis, descriptive-interpretive analysis.

Content analysis is used to analyse and sort the sources of data from the official portals of the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Public Employment Service, from the database INFOLEX (Lithuanian legal database containing legislation and case law), and other online and offline databases. Archival research is used to search and extract information from original archives on espionage activity conducted by employees of Russian secret services. Analytic induction and systematic analysis methods are used to reveal the relationship between events and facts presented on the official portal of the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania for a systematic and exhaustive examination of data. It allows us to generalise and form conclusions.

1. SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MIGRATION THROUGH THE LENS OF TIME

> *The movements of wild species are shaped primarily by the constraints of their own biological capacities and the particular qualities of the geographic features they encounter on their journeys, such as the steepness of mountainsides and the speed and saltiness of ocean currents. The paths taken by human migrants, in contrast, are shaped primarily by abstractions. Distant political leaders lay down rules based on political and economic concerns, allowing some in and keeping others out. They draw and redraw invisible lines on the landscape in biologically arbitrary ways.*
>
> Sonia Shah, *The Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move*

The main aim of this research paper is to discuss one question: Is migration a real threat to Lithuania's national security? The terms migration and security, law and order seem to go together. The security of countries is particularly important nowadays. The social phenomenon of migration can be analysed from different perspectives in the light of security: the security of migrants in a new country and the kinds of obstacles and issues they face upon arrival at their destination after a long journey. Although some security concerns expressed by the local population

to national authorities are shaped by prevailing stereotypes about the negative aspects of migration, such as criminality and terror attacks, this paper also seeks to analyse the actual threats to national security posed by migration. These two contexts are closely intertwined, and hence, they cannot be explained separately from each other. However, before discussing the security issues related to migration, it is worth delving into the history of migration to better understand this social phenomenon. Such a background will allow us to have a clearer picture of the current migration trends.

For a long time, migration flows have been analysed using a materialistic and deterministic framework, in line with the idea that migrants' behaviours are generally caused both by structural constraints (push-pull factors) and self-interested economic practices of social actors who decide to move to work and, therefore, to save, remit, or invest money according to rational choice principles (Carling, 2008). Different factors, or complexity of factors, push human beings to leave their native lands and begin a new chapter of their life in another country. These factors include war, poverty, military conflicts, unrest, political instability, droughts, famine, lack of food and job prospects.

The author of this research paper is not going to analyse migration theories, including push and pull factors, in this paper. It might be a separate topic for researchers to analyse the peculiarities of push and pull factors in Lithuania, or in Latvia.

The historian Robin Cohen (1995) identified distinct migration periods or events over the last four centuries:

- Permanent settlement in the colonies (from the 1500s to mid-19th century)
- Slavery (from 1550 to the end of the 18th century)
- Migration within Europe, Africa and Asia (17th and 18th centuries)
- Indentured labour (1834–1917)
- Migration to the New World (from the 1800s to 1930)

- Post-WWII migration (late 1940s to 1960s)
- Post 1970s migration

Trade has always played an important role in people's mobility. For example, blacksmiths and religious missionaries, such as Jesuits, often travelled to other countries at the invitation of state rulers due to their specific skills. Also, persecution based on ethnicity or religion forced groups such as Jews, Huguenots, and Old Believers to migrate. The latter fled after the Russian Orthodox Church's Reformation, initiated by Patriarch Nikon in the 17th century, to avoid negative consequences in their home regions. Following the European colonisation of North and South America, Australia and Asia, there was a large-scale migration of people from Europe who settled permanently in those regions. Moreover, ongoing industrialisation in some areas of the world, as well as the geopolitics among the European powers (such as the British Empire, the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the French, Germany and other European countries in the 17th–19th centuries), accelerated migration. This was especially true if the newly discovered places were almost inhabited because migration helped to control new lands and develop industry (raw materials, mainly iron and coal, which were sufficient to start massive production). According to the historian Robin Cohen, Western cultures predominantly understand migration as driven by the search for work.

According to Ido de Haan, Juan Luis Simal and Erika Szívós (2023), from the end of the 18th century, Europeans were on the move on an increasing scale, and this movement had a profound impact on the European continent and the world at large. This increase in the mobility of Europeans first occurred within Europe itself. This increased mobility was driven by various factors, of which economic needs and opportunities, infrastructural facilities and legal constraints were the most important. Equally important were political factors which forced people to migrate, such as political activism and violent conflict.

The next influx of migration in the 19th century, according to researchers Ondřej Daniel, Ido de Haan and Isabelle Surun (2023), can be seen as the age of voluntary migration, when millions of Europeans looking for work, livelihood and freedom were on the move. The twentieth

century, however, presents a much more complicated picture. The First World War itself was an important impetus for the dislocation of people in Europe. The scale of this war led to a massive movement of people who were fleeing their homes. For example, the counteroffensive of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies during the First World War forced many Russians living in the Russian Empire – including in the former territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been partitioned in three stages by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy, the final partition occurring in 1795 – to flee eastward, contributing to a total of seven million refugees by 1917. The end of the First World War initiated yet another wave of forced migration. During the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Civil War, some two million people tried to escape the violence, fleeing to the West. Subsequently, the rise of Hitler in Germany and Stalin in the Soviet Union, the Second World War and the repressions in territories occupied by the Soviet troops caused the next migration influxes.

Therefore, each aforementioned period can be characterised by specific features. The slave trade was one of the largest mass migrations of labour in human history during the 16th to 18th centuries. Migration was driven by the search for work in the latter half of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century. From the start of the First World War till the end of the Second World War, migration was caused by violence, and it forced people to look for a safe place.

2. THE CONCEPT OF HOSPITALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEED FOR SAFETY

> *Inside the person you know, there is a person you do not know.*
>
> Syrian proverb, Christy Lefteri, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*

In many cases, the local population showed hospitality to newcomers/migrants. This central notion of hospitality within human society has ample precedent within the Western philosophical tradition. The Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant saw hospitality as the

defining element which brings people of different cultures together in a political context. According to Kant, hospitality is a natural right possessed by all humans by virtue of their rights to communal possession of the Earth's surface. He distinguished the right of hospitality, which is a natural right belonging to each of us, from the right of a guest who can make a claim only for a certain time (Siddiqui). The French philosopher Jacques Derrida reminds us that hospitality begins first and foremost in language: We only ever speak one language – because it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for the other, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other.

According to Kirillova, Gilmetdinova and Lehto (2014), Christianity and Islam view hospitality as important characteristics of being pious. In Islam, the host's enactment of hospitality reveals their strength of faith. In the Hadith, narrated by Abu Huraira, the prophet says, "Anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour, and anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain guests generously, and anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should serve his guest generously by giving him his reward" (Al-Bukhari, 1987, 8:48).

In the Christian tradition, hosts are encouraged to share what they have with people in need and treat neighbours and foreigners with kindness and generosity. In Matthew 25:37–40, Jesus says that as much as people provide food and drink to people who are hungry and thirsty and visit the sick and prisoners, they have done it to him. The Holy Bible, Romans 12:13, states that we share with the Lord's people who are in need. The Roman Catholic Church is the predominant religious community in Lithuania, with 77.23% of the population of Lithuania identifying themselves as Roman Catholic.

Norman M. Naimark stated that World War I itself generated millions of refugees. The new postwar nation-states introduced programmes of "unmixing" peoples or "ethnic cleansing". Under the nation-state regimes, states successfully usurped the *monopoly of the legitimate means of movement*. According to John Torpey, with the introduction of citizenship and identity documentation, entry regulations became more restrictive and demands for military service and loyalty to the

nation increased. At the same time, it created conditions for growing tension among different nationalities, and later between different states, within the same region. For example, tension between Sudetenland Germans and Czechs living in Bohemian lands later erupted into tension between Czechoslovakia and Germany in the interwar period.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida stated that offering hospitality is not only about being in power but also about taking risks and becoming vulnerable. According to Huysmans and Squire (2009), migration emerged as a security issue in a context marked both by the geopolitical dislocation associated with the end of the Cold War and by wider social and political shifts associated with globalisation. Migration and security might be analysed from a traditional strategic perspective (the security of the state viewpoint) as well as from a human being's security perspective (focusing on the security of individual migrants). The migration–security nexus can be broadly viewed from two angles: security studies and migration studies (Huysmans & Squire, 2009).

Huysmans & Squire (2009) stated that security studies and migration studies are intertwined and multifaceted. Many of the leading works that introduce migration into security studies have done so by defining migration as a central dimension of a well-rounded security agenda. Thus, it has been argued that migration should be factored into the calculations of national security strategy, and that national security should be factored into the calculations of migration policy (Koslowski 1998; Rudolph 2006). Such strategic approaches treat security as a value or condition that is affected by migration flows and, thus, by state policies to manage such flows (Choucri, 2002; Weiner, 1992/93).

There are two key ways in which these strategic analyses draw attention to the relevance of migration for security studies. First, these analyses calculate how far migratory and demographic developments bear upon national security questions (Choucri, 2002; Heisbourg, 1991; Loescher, 1992). Considerations here range from refugees turning to violent political actors (Loescher, 1992) to the effect of migration on social cohesion and the availability of a sufficient workforce (Rudolph, 2006). In this regard, scholars at the nexus of security and migration have opened migration studies beyond its classical economic focus on

the state's selection of migrants (e.g. Constant and Zimmerman, 2005). This has contributed to a wider process in which migration studies and refugee studies have begun to overlap.

Second, strategic analysts draw attention to the relevance of migration for security studies showing how security concerns influence a state's migration policies (Loescher, 1992; Rudolph, 2006; Vernez, 1996; Weiner, 1995; Weiner, 1992/93; Huysmans & Squire, 2009, pp. 4–5).

Migration as a social phenomenon has been known for many centuries, and it is bound by larger social, cultural, political, and economic structures. Homo sapiens, just like other biological organisms, have a survival instinct. If nature, predators or the actions of other human beings living around them create a risk to their life, health or well-being, human beings are forced to make the final decision to relocate to a better, more protected place and a safer environment.

According to Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs, people are motivated by five basic categories of needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualisation. Maslow highlighted that our safety needs are apparent even in early childhood, as children have a need for safe and predictable environments and typically react with fear or anxiety when these are not met. Therefore, safety is an essential need. For example, homo sapiens built a dwelling in an area next to the riverbank, closer to the source of the life – water. However, due to heavy rains in spring, the river often went out of its banks and destroyed a dwelling, or sometimes people lost their lives. This imminent threat pushed homo sapiens, animals and other living creatures to adopt new rules of the game if they wanted to survive in the harsh and changing environment.

According to Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change. This leads to the need to create an algorithm of action in case of a threat to survival. Choosing a safe place for constructing new dwellings and houses always accompanies human beings' relocation from one place to another. It might be called migration; more precisely, it may be called relocation within a certain territory. Due to the development of means of transportation, human beings used to migrate much longer distances than they were at the beginning of life on Earth.

Second, human beings use the advantages of terrain to protect their residences as a survival technique. For example, consider the strategic locations of thousands of castles around the world. This behaviour is not unique to Homo sapiens; other biological creatures also migrate to survive. Even those strongly opposed to relocation due to immediate threats to their lives often change their minds when faced with imminent danger.

Therefore, hospitality is an important value in the main religions, and at the same time, it creates solid ethical ground for upcoming migrants in the expectation of finding safety in the new place.

3. MIGRATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The First and Second World Wars, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Balkan wars in 1990 and the Arab Spring triggered migration crises in the world at different times. According to the World Migration Report (2022), the estimated number of international migrants has increased over the past five decades.

As of 2020, an estimated total of 281 million people live in a country other than their birth countries, a number that is 128 million more than in 1990 and over three times the estimated number in 1970. High-income countries are almost always the main source of remittances. For decades, the United States has consistently been the top remittance sender, with a total outflow of $68 billion in 2020, followed by the United Arab Emirates ($43.2 billion), Saudi Arabia ($34.6 billion), Switzerland ($27.96 billion) and Germany ($22 billion). This has led to migration being defined in scholarly research, in national security strategies and in national threat assessments as a *threat* to national security.

Securitisation theory was developed by the Copenhagen school (international relations) of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde in the fundamental book on security issues: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. This book stated that the traditional approach to societal security was designed to tackle the changing reality in post-Cold War Europe and adjust to new settings. This traditional approach dealt with

the emerging political importance of the European Union and heavily emphasised society as the focal point of European security concerns. If societies constitute the fulcrum of the security agenda, then the issues connected with migration underpin many perceived threats and vulnerabilities. States need independence to survive, but for societies, survival is determined by identity. Consequently, processes that undermine, disrupt or weaken a society's identity lead to societal insecurity, particularly when a society defines a given change, development or potentiality a threat to its survival as a community.

For example, point 26 of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by the Parliament in December 2021, states that the national security of Lithuania depends directly and indirectly on long-term threats to security and stability in the European neighbourhood. In these regions, growing religious extremism, frozen conflicts, unstable states and the power and security vacuum such states create lead to conditions that spread radicalism and terrorism, uncontrolled migration, organised crime and humanitarian crises, thus posing a serious challenge to EU unity.

According to the National Threat Assessment 2024 prepared by the Defence Intelligence and Security Service under the Ministry of National Defence and State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, the Belarusian and Russian regimes exploit illegal migration, which has become a profitable business for human smugglers, for political purposes. Their aim is to retaliate against the EU and some of its member states for political positions, criticism, sanctions, and other actions that these regimes regard as hostile. In 2023, Russia was highly likely to use migration against Finland in response to its policy towards Russia, support for Ukraine and accession to NATO. Human smugglers promote the Eastern Land Route to the EU via Belarus to migrants because the Belarusian regime tolerates this activity and creates favourable conditions for illegal entry into Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Human smugglers are continuously improving their methods, actively promoting the Eastern Land Route on social media platforms where they offer their services. In chat groups for migrants, human smugglers advertise their ability to obtain necessary documents, such as a confirmation of admission to a Russian university or a student visa. Additionally, private WhatsApp, Facebook or Telegram groups contain advertisements offering jobs for

drivers to transport migrants across the border. Typically, citizens of third countries with EU residence permits provide such transportation for migrants (p. 76).

Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, triggered new refugee movements in unforeseen numbers. At the same time, it has brought new challenges and new trends on the national security agenda in many European Union member states from hostile countries. On 31 March 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a new decree on Russia's Foreign Policy Concept. The Foreign Policy Concept is an official government document that describes Russia's perception of the world and details major national interests, foreign policy goals and implementation strategies on foreign policy. The 2023 Foreign Policy Concept is based on ideology and propaganda. For example, it marks the first official use of the term "Russian World" by the Russian government, which had not used it in prior official documents. It also revives the Near Abroad concept, historically used to describe former Soviet countries. The policy concept reflects a rebirth of the idea of restoring the Soviet Union.

It also leads to a conclusion that due to changes in Russia's foreign policy towards neighbouring countries since 2014, the Belarusian regime's actions in 2021 are creating uncontrolled migration waves, which might be considered as a real threat to the national security of Lithuania.

4. MIGRATION AS A WEAPON OF SOFT POWER

The use of migration processes of the authoritarian Belarus leader Lukashenko against Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, which are responsible for the protection of the external border of the European Union, as a weapon of soft power was a new turn in Russian and Belarusian coordinated policy during the growing geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the West. The use of migration as a weapon against other countries is not new in human history. Gaddafi used the threat of maritime migration to have the embargo lifted and continued doing so until the NATO air campaign of 2011. The unrecognised Tripoli government has similarly threatened, as Gaddafi did in 2010, that Europe would

"turn black" unless more resources and political recognition were forthcoming. In Morocco, the government has managed to extract substantial "geographical rent" (Natter, 2013) from the country's positioning on irregular migration routes in a more subtle manner. In Spain, it is widely acknowledged among border professionals that "if [migrants] pass, it's because they [the Moroccan authorities] want them to pass". By selectively opening and closing its borders, Rabat can maintain pressure on Spain and the EU while assuring a politics of recognition of Morocco as a key European partner (Andersson, 2016).

However, the uniqueness of this situation is that it was used against the EU member states, where countries bordering Belarus have a significant part of their population that is related to residents of Belarus by kinship, economic, cultural or religious ties (The Belarusian Orthodox Church controlled Patriarchate of Moscow).

Other EU member states, such as Spain, Italy and Greece, have faced, and are still facing, waves of migrant influx, but in this case, the methods of access of migrants to the external southern border of the EU are radically different from how migrants reach Belarus. With the help of the regime's repressive structures, migrants reach the external eastern border of the EU and migrants have crossed the border between Lithuania and Belarus, not through the border crossing points, which are one of the official gates to the country. Migrants crossed borders in places not designed for border crossing. In legal language, it is called illegal crossing of a state border. It brings criminal liability, set up in Article 291 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (Buciunas, 2023).

Already in 2021, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania has considered three possible scenarios for the increase in the number of illegal migrants, with 500, 1,000 or even 10,000 refugees per day. Different situations were simulated. It has been estimated that if the number of persons illegally crossing the border into Lithuania per day reached 500, all places in the Pabrade Foreigners Registration Centre would be filled. In the first half of 2021, the Lithuanian border guards apprehended more than 500 migrants. This is approximately seven times more than in 2020, when only 81 illegal border crossers were apprehended, compared to 46 in 2019. This substantial increase in the number of migrants is due to the incident of the Vilnius-bound Ryanair aircraft that was grounded

in Minsk. The imposed sanctions after that incident had a significant negative impact on the aviation sector of Belarus and the national airline BELAVIA, whose transportation service volumes from the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, to Minsk have increased significantly. Upon arrival in Belarus, migrants were purposefully routed to the borders of Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, which share a common border with Belarus. Thus, the loophole in the security of the EU external border, which was still insufficiently protected by physical barriers and video surveillance, except for small, isolated sections, was exploited. Moreover, the natural environment in some areas bordering Belarus is favourable for illegal cross-border activities: swamps and forests (Buciunas, 2023).

According to the official portal of the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, since 2021, the steadily increasing influx of illegal migrants coming from Belarus to Lithuania has become a serious challenge for Lithuania. For example, there was a 3.6 times increase in the number of foreigners temporarily accommodated at the Pabrade Detention Centre (Foreigners Registration Centre) in the first half of 2021 compared with the second half of 2020. Information on possible migrant flows has been received through various channels, starting with the movement of migrants from their countries of origin to intermediate countries – Belarus, in this case – where they wait for an opportune moment to enter EU territory. The influx of migration is part of the hybrid attack against Lithuania, Poland and Latvia that is supported by Belarus in 2021. Accordingly, Lithuania as a sovereign state has the exclusive and discretionary right to make final decisions in each situation and employ the best suitable and effective measures to handle threats to national security. Since 3 August 2022, the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania was granted the right to turn back illegal migrants.

It leads to the conclusion that geographical terrain, and perhaps the smuggling routes from Belarus to Lithuania that still exist, may be used not only by smugglers but also by Russian and Belarusian spy agencies for special operations against Lithuania and the EU.

5. STATISTICAL DATA ON MIGRATION THROUGH THE LENS OF NATIONAL SECURITY FROM 2021 TO 2024

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. As a result, millions of people have fled Ukraine. It was also the main reason for migration to Lithuania.

The second reason for migration to Lithuania from 2021 to 2024 was the violent actions of the Belarusian regime against demonstrators after the fraudulent election in 2020 and the event in 2021. The Belarussian authorities started to use migration as a soft power weapon against sovereign countries, that is, EU member states bordering Belarus.

The third reason for migration to the Lithuania is a large demand for the workforce in some areas of the economy, especially in the logistics and reconstruction sectors. The list of occupations for which there is a shortage of workers in Lithuania came into force on 1 January 2023. The list includes 110 occupations. The quotas for these occupations by type of economic activity in Lithuania were set up by law.

Based on data from the Employment Service of the Republic of Lithuania, 1.47 million people were employed in the third quarter of 2023. The number of working-age population in Lithuania in 2023 was over 1.7 million. According to the Migration Department, almost 50% of all foreigners in Lithuania have come here to work in a variety of shortage occupations. The most common occupations are long-distance international freight and passenger carriers, construction workers and workers in other industrial service sectors. A total of 97,925 foreigners held temporary residence permits in Lithuania as of 1 September 2023 for less skilled jobs. Another 6,258 foreigners worked in Lithuania in highly skilled jobs. Highly skilled professionals in Lithuania are subject to particularly favourable immigration rules, which is why Lithuania has seen a steady year-on-year increase in the number of IT, engineering and other professionals.

A total of 49,870 foreigners have benefited from the EU's activated Temporary Protection Mechanism, which is granted to Ukrainian war refugees who fled their country because of the Russian invasion. These are mainly Ukrainian citizens and their family members. According to

the Lithuanian Statistics Department, the employment rate in Lithuania reached 75.2% in the third quarter of 2022, the highest in the monitoring period since 1998.

Unemployment in Lithuania in January 2024 was higher than the EU average, according to Eurostat. Unemployment in Lithuania rose by 1 % over the year and by 0.7% over the month to 7.7%. In total, 118,000 people were unemployed, including 17,000 young people aged under 25, with unemployment rising by 3.9% points year-on-year to 16.6%. On 1 March 2024, 5,032 persons were registered as unemployed in Siauliai city, and 632 persons were preparing for the labour market. The registered unemployment rate was 7.6% (1.7% lower than the national average), but compared to the same period last year, the registered unemployment rate on 1 March this year is 0.2% higher. Siauliai city has the lowest unemployment rate among the country's major cities.

In the last couple of years, many EU member states have seen a significant boom in anti-establishment or anti-system parties. These parties are commonly referred to as the *far-right*, sometimes *far-left* or perhaps known by the term *populist parties*. The ideology of populist parties is based on ideas of protecting the nation-state from outside invaders in a given situation – migrants from different parts of the world.

According to Polish scientist M. G. Bartoszewicz (2016), these parties have one thing in common: they are parties of protest that do not want to work within the current political status quo. In contrast, their main political objectives are overturning the establishment. They want to change their governments' present strategic objectives not by a revolution but by using perfectly acceptable political means. Another peculiar feature of the anti-establishment parties is the fact that migration, for them, is now a top priority issue and a question of security. They have different political programmes and priorities. However, if there is something that binds them together, it is a negative stance on migration in its political (security), economic (re-distribution of resources) and cultural (Islamisation) dimensions. In France, the Front National is the main political force opposing the "quiet conquest" by Muslim migrants. At present, it has 27% of steadily growing support among the electorate.

The rebirth or rise of populist parties can also be witnessed in the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. For example, the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) is a nationalist, far-right political party. This situation is not in favour of security in Europe. It creates a real possibility of interfering in the activities of the populist movement, even by meddling in democratic institutes such as elections by Russian special agencies.

Analysis of statistical data on employment and unemployment rates allows us to conclude that foreigners do not cause tension in the labour market in Lithuania. It is a very important indicator from a national security viewpoint. It prevents rising populist movements with political programmes aiming "to protect" the local labour market from the invasion of migrants; it does not create tension between nationalities living permanently in Lithuania and migrants regarding workplaces.

According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania (p. 10), the number of foreigners with valid residence permits in Lithuania from 2021 to 2024 is as follows:

- 1 January 2021: 87,267
- 1 January 2022: 100,125
- 1 January 2023: 189,411
- 1 January 2024: 221,848
- 1 January 2024: 224,809

Foreigners with valid residence permits in Lithuania, by nationality, as of 1 February 2024 (the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania, pp. 10–11):

- Ukraine: 86,187
- Belarus: 62,474
- Russia: 15,824

- Uzbekistan: 8,905
- Kyrgyzstan: 6,506
- Tajikistan: 6,181
- India: 4,984
- Azerbaijan: 3,984
- Kazakhstan: 3,381
- Sa Kartvel: 2,003
- Turkey: 1,951
- Moldova: 1,363
- Others

According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania (p. 10), foreigners as a share of the total population of Lithuania are as follows:

- 2019: 2.08%
- 2020: 2.64%
- 2021: 3.12%
- 2022: 3.57%
- 2023: 6.62%
- 2024: 7.69%

An integration programme for foreigners is essential to prevent the emergence of *no-go zones*, similar to those in some European cities, such as Molenbeek in Brussels. These areas have a reputation for violence and

crime, which makes people afraid to go there. On 22 January 2014, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the Guidelines for the Migration Policy of the Republic of Lithuania and entrusted the Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania with the task of developing a policy on the integration of foreigners. According to point 7.2.1 of the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines, the Ministry of Social Security and Labor is responsible for labour policy, issues of employment of foreigners, work in Lithuania, provision of social guarantees and the formulation of the social integration policy for foreigners.

However, implementing a foreigner integration policy presents challenges, particularly a lack of financial resources. Moreover, reception centre staff do not speak foreign languages (as Lithuanian language courses are poorly funded) and lack insufficient attention towards the psychological needs of asylum seekers. These challenges are exacerbated by very low social payments, difficulties renting living space in the major cities and the lack of flexibility in the employment system. These issues on integration lead us to the conclusion that the foreigner integration programmes should receive resources for effective and efficient implementation and to achieve the aim of comfortable integration of foreigners in Lithuania. Such a lack of financing may create a risk to national security in the future.

According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania, the number of foreigners living in the Republic of Lithuania by region on 1 January 2024 is as follows:

- Alytus: 3,011
- Kaunas: 28,529
- Klaipeda: 25,192
- Marijampole: 3,210
- Panevezys: 4,159
- Siauliai: 19,976

- Taurage: 3,806
- Telsiai: 3,790
- Utena: 7,273
- Vilnius: 77,784

The population of foreigners by city as of 1 January 2024 is as follows:

- Vilnius: 60,951
- Kaunas: 18,401
- Klaipeda: 17,307
- Siauliai: 17,011
- Panevezys: 2,690
- Marijampole: 2,233

It includes data on foreigners whose place of residence is declared in Lithuania. This data does not include 45,118 foreigners who have not declared their residence in Lithuania (Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania, p. 12).

The data presented above poses a question: Why is Siauliai so attractive to foreigners compared to other major cities in Lithuania, except the capital city Vilnius? Kaunas and Klaipeda also have a large population, given their concentration of industrial parks. Panevezys is similar to Siauliai in population. However, the number of foreigners living in Siauliai is seven times more than in Panevezys and similar to Kaunas and Klaipeda. One possible explanation is that Siauliai is in the northern part of Lithuania and is well known for its particularly favourable environment for logistics. The Siauliai Cargo Airport and a well-developed railway network are important infrastructural features. The port cities of Klaipeda and Riga are located nearby. The A12 highway forms part of the road connecting Riga and Kaliningrad (highway E77). There

are roads passing through Siauliai and Taurage. Siauliai International Airport is located within Siauliai Air Base, which is a major military facility of the Lithuanian Air Force and an air base of the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission. Also, the German armament concern Rheinmetall has announced plans to open a plant to produce military ammunition in the Siauliai region.

The concentration of migrants in Siauliai, which is the transportation hub in the northern part of Lithuania, a main military air base of the Lithuanian Airforce and a base for the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission, might be considered seriously in the context of the national security of Lithuania.

According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania (p. 37), two types of documents are in place for citizens of Russia to cross Lithuania by transit: Simplified Transit Document (STD) and Simplified Transit by Rail Document (STGD).

- In 2022, Lithuania issued 11,724 STDs and 211,583 STGDs, which is a total of 223,307 documents.
    - In the same year, Lithuania refused to issue 42 STDs and 27 STGDs, which is a total of 69 documents.
- In 2023, Lithuania issued 14,667 STDs and 283,902 STGDs, which is a total of 298,569 documents.
    - In the same year, it refused to issue 170 STDs and 46 STGDs, which is a total of 216 documents.

Data analysis shows a significant increase in the number of Russian citizens in 2023 compared to those in 2022, in simplified order by transit to/out of Kaliningrad.

A. According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania (pp. 46–47), the number of decisions to refuse or modify permission for temporary residence in Lithuania in 2023 was 2,681. These are classified into categories by grounds:

B. The foreigner's residence in Lithuania may threaten state security and the public order or human health: 1,171

C. The data provided by the foreigner is not factual or there are reasonable grounds to believe that a marriage of convenience has been entered into or that an undertaking of which the foreigner is a member or manager is fictitious: 679

For a foreigner, the other Schengen state in the central Schengen Information System has entered a refusal of admission alert, and there are no grounds for issuing a residence permit on humanitarian grounds or international obligations.

According to the Yearbook of Migration 2023 of the Republic of Lithuania (p. 74), the number of foreigners who were refused entry into Lithuania in 2023 was 4,275, and Russians and Belarusians comprised most of those who were refused entry (80%; Russia (41%) and Belarus (39%)).

Data analysis shows that grounds to refuse or modify permission for temporary residence in Lithuania by Lithuanian authorities was a threat to state security, public order or human health.

The Centre for Ethnic Studies Research of the Republic of Lithuania conducted a survey in 2020 on the topic, aiming to ascertain the groups of people with whom the respondents would not want to live in a neighbourhood. Most ethnic groups are viewed favourably as potential neighbours. Fewer than a fifth of respondents would not want to live next to Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians, Poles, Moldovans, Georgians, Jews, Tatars, Turks, Syrians and Chinese. Only a few other ethnic groups – Iraqis, Chechens and Roma – are viewed unfavourably, and 21% of respondents would not want to live in a neighbourhood with Iraqis and 36% would not want to live in a neighbourhood with Chechens.

When assessing the attitudes of Lithuanians towards religious groups, we find that Lithuanians are mostly against one group: Muslims. As many as 41% of respondents would not want to live in a Muslim neighbourhood, 39% would not want to rent a house to Muslims, and 28% would not want to work in the same workplace. An Islamic culture and education centre operates in Vilnius. There are two Muftiates in Lithuania:

the Lithuanian Sunni Muslim Spiritual Centre-Muftiate, established in 1998, and the Lithuanian Council of Muslim Religious Communities – Muftiate, established in 2019. This split in the Lithuanian Muslim community can be linked to the failed coup in Turkey in 2016, according to scholar E. Racius.

6. ESPIONAGE THROUGH MIGRANTS AND POSSIBLE TRENDS

Point 4.1.9 of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by the Parliament in December 2021, states that the activities of foreign intelligence services against Lithuania pose a serious threat to national security. Such activities use conventional and unconventional methods and new technologies to obtain information, to act destructively and to influence military forces, political processes and other areas of social and economic life.

The hijacking and/or unauthorised disclosure, loss, destruction, damage, collection, purchase, sale, possession or dissemination of classified information would not only jeopardise the security of Lithuania and its partners but would also undermine confidence in Lithuania.

Espionage activities of the Russian Secret Service in Lithuania were proved by the judgement of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania in 2023. It states that A. P., acting in an organised group with a person against whom the case has been dismissed in court, D. B. and the intelligence agent of the Russian Federation – an unidentified employee of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) – acting on behalf of the intelligence organisation of the Russian Federation, and on the instructions of this intelligence organisation in the period from 16 February 2017 to 10 October 2018. On the territory of Lithuania, for pecuniary and other considerations, collected information of interest to the intelligence of the Russian Federation, i.e. spying, and on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, for pecuniary and other consideration (provision of conditions of residence on arrival in the Russian Federation, free annual visas from that country, assistance in establishing contacts with representatives of the political party Yedinaya Rossiya

(United Russia) and finding business contacts), collected information of interest to the intelligence of the Russian Federation.

According to the National Threat Assessment 2024, prepared in cooperation with the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania and the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania in the second half of 2023, several Lithuanian citizens were detained in Lithuania on suspicion of cooperating with Belarusian intelligence authorities. They are suspected under Article 119 (2) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (espionage).

The detainees were almost certainly carrying out tasks for Belarusian intelligence and were collecting and passing on information to the client for a fee. None of the persons in question had a clearance to handle classified information, worked with such information or had an opportunity to collect it. Although the information on the country's critical infrastructure and military facilities that these persons collected and communicated was unclassified, this non-public data could be used by the Belarusian undemocratic regime to plan activities against Lithuania.

It is almost certain that the information the citizens of Lithuania passed on to foreign intelligence agencies is important to the armed forces of both Belarus and Russia to prepare plans for potential military aggression against neighbouring countries. The Belarusian regime perceives Western support for the Belarusian democratic opposition, and for Belarusians fighting with Ukraine, as the main threats to its security. To counter these threats and safeguard the ruling regime, Belarusian intelligence services have expanded their intelligence operations abroad and strengthened domestic counterintelligence.

Belarusian intelligence has been focusing on the Belarusian opposition based in Lithuania as well as on a growing community of Belarusians. As a result, Lithuania has become a main target for Belarusian intelligence services.

The Belarusian diaspora in Lithuania consists of over 62,000 Belarusian citizens and grows by about 15,500 people annually. It includes members of the political opposition and non-governmental organisations,

independent journalists who fled the country because of the regime's persecution after the rigged 2020 presidential election, as well as economic migrants.

A growing Belarusian diaspora in Lithuania provides an opportunity for Belarusian intelligence services to find targets for recruitment. Contacts between Belarusian intelligence and some members of the Belarusian diaspora pose a significant threat to Lithuanian national security, particularly when maintained after their arrival in Lithuania. Belarusian intelligence services exploit former employees of Belarusian state institutions who currently reside in Lithuania. This activity is made possible due to the system of agent recruitment in Belarus that the country's intelligence services run in state institutions, strategically important entities and the armed forces. Belarusian intelligence services have recently begun establishing and re-establishing contacts with members of the Belarusian diaspora and recruiting new intelligence assets using modern remote communication methods. Belarusian intelligence services use members of the Belarusian diaspora to collect information on Lithuanian institutions as well as on the Belarusian democratic opposition and the diaspora itself.

According to available information, Belarusian intelligence intensively uses questioning of people who travel from Lithuania to Belarus and collects information about their activities in Lithuania. These questionings peaked in 2023, and while their primary purpose is ostensibly to prevent threats to the Belarusian regime, they are also used to gather intelligence and identify individuals with a potential for intelligence activities in Lithuania.

Belarusian intelligence officers inspect mobile devices and personal computers of individuals seeking to enter Belarus, checking their contact lists, social media accounts and photographs for any relevant information. While questioning and performing checks, Belarusian intelligence services collect information on the travellers' purpose for visiting Belarus, their political views and their employment. They also investigate whether individuals crossing the border have any links to the State Border Guard Service of Lithuania, law enforcement agencies, Lithuanian intelligence or the military.

Belarusian intelligence services attempt to identify current and former employees of state and municipal institutions, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies and the Lithuanian armed forces, as well as businesspeople, employees of strategic companies, journalists and individuals involved in illegal activities. Belarusian intelligence services seek to recruit individuals who have the potential to provide relevant intelligence or perform other tasks. Belarusian intelligence officers may use psychological pressure and blackmail to coerce individuals to cooperate based on various traffic accidents, violations of law, visa regulations or border crossing procedures.

We assess that the Belarusian regime's perception that Lithuania and other neighbouring countries pose a threat to its stability is the driving factor behind the increased activity of Belarusian intelligence against Lithuania. It is highly likely that Belarusian intelligence services will continue to target Lithuania, its citizens in Belarus and the Belarusian diaspora in Lithuania in the near term. Belarusian intelligence services are likely to use members of the growing Belarusian diaspora to gather intelligence in Lithuania. Additionally, they will continue to target individuals travelling to Belarus for personal, tourist or other purposes to gather information and identify potential candidates for recruitment. It seeks to maintain access to Western technology and know-how to enhance its economic competitiveness and accelerate military modernisation.

China uses both traditional intelligence capabilities and non-traditional collectors to achieve these goals. For example, by implementing the policy of military-civil fusion, China uses universities affiliated with the Chinese defence sector for espionage and covert acquisition of Western technology and knowledge. Due to the obligation to cooperate with Chinese intelligence, Chinese scientists and students working or interning abroad become potential targets of Chinese intelligence.

China has a keen interest in Western scientific innovations and their application in areas such as artificial intelligence, big data processing, quantum computing, cloud systems, semiconductors, biotechnology, telecommunications, new energy resources and aviation. China is gathering information on these technologies not only through intelligence methods but also through lawful means: by conducting joint research

with foreign scientists, setting up joint research laboratories, establishing joint capital companies and recruiting scientists to work in China.

High-tech companies and educational institutions mostly conducting research in biotechnology and information technology in Lithuania are on priority lists for the Russian, Belarusian and Chinese spy agencies. For example, the Laser Research Centre at Vilnius University conducts advanced laser research. It delivers innovative solutions to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, and companies such as IBM, Hitachi and Toyota.

Infiltration of sleeping agents and creation of spy networks or rings is the *modus operandi* of Russian intelligence agencies: Main Directorate of Military Intelligence of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (GRU), Federal Service of Security (in charge of intelligent activities, operation in the territories of former Soviet Republics) and Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation during economic, migration crisis, unrests, military conflicts and wars.

The Illegals Program (so named by the United States Department of Justice) was a network of Russian sleeper agents under unofficial cover. Edwards (2018) pointed out that the investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) culminated in the arrest of ten agents (Anna Chapman and others) on 27 June 2010, after a decade-long FBI operation (Edwards, 2018) and a prisoner exchange between Russia and the United States on 9 July 2010. The spies were sent to the USA by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). Acting like ordinary US citizens, they sought to reach out to academics, industrialists, and policymakers for access to intelligence. Russia's programme to deploy dormant agents abroad is an effective way of gathering sensitive information. In court documents, the US Department of Justice called the Russian spy group discovered in 2010 as a programme of illegals (*United States of America v. Anna Chapman and Mikhailo Semenko*):

> The spies were trained in Russia and then sent to the United States (often through Canada, where they could establish a more reliable history) to gain access to intelligence from senior government and academic officials.

> Most of these spies had lived in the United States for a long time, spoke good English, had a regular job and even had children. Sometimes they took on the identity of real people who died young. Couples were brought together in Russia "…so that they could live and work together in the country of destination under the guise of being a married couple" (*United States of America v. Anna Chapman and Mikhailo Semenko*). The Russian officials publicly admitted the usage of illegal agents for gathering information abroad (interviews with former dormant agents and acting officials presented on the social media platform YouTube).

Espionage scandals involving Russian intelligence have emerged in some EU member states in recent years. For example, a Brazilian university researcher was arrested in 2022 in northern Norway on suspicion that he is, in fact, a Russian and a spy. Norway's domestic intelligence service told state broadcaster NRK on Tuesday that it wanted to expel the researcher, who is being held in custody because he represented "a threat to fundamental national interests". The Police Security Service (PST) believed the researcher was the first Russian spy operating under deep cover to be identified in Norway. The man, now alleged to be a Russian spy, was studying at the prestigious Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, an elite graduate programme favoured by US military personnel, young diplomats and, sources say, future spies. "Muller" graduated from SAIS in 2020. In June 2022, a Dutch intelligence agency publicly identified him as Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, a Russian military intelligence officer who, in April 2022, travelled to the Netherlands to start an internship at the International Criminal Court (ICC). From there, he would have had a perch to spy on war crimes investigations into Russian military actions in Ukraine and elsewhere (Bellingcat).

Criminal cases of espionage involving Belarusian intelligence on Lithuanian territory are not so rare. For example, the director of the public institution Our Home, Olha Karach, stated at a press conference held on 7 October 2022 that there is reason to claim that a network of Lithuanian citizens recruited by Belarusian special services is operating in Lithuania. According to her, the Belarusian KGB is particularly interested in the activities of Our Home and Dapamoga, as they are the biggest patrons of Belarusian refugees in Lithuania. According to her, lawyer M. D. was infiltrated into organisations that help the families

of persecuted Belarusians in Belarus. According to Karach, M. D. was interested in stopping the escape of repressed Belarusians from Belarus through Lithuania. She claimed to have knowledge that M. D. was trying to set up connections with the American organisation Salvation Army and other structures, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. She also said that after the start of the war in Ukraine, M. D. also targeted the Ukrainian diaspora in Lithuania. Law enforcement agencies in Lithuania opened a criminal case on espionage, and M. D. was arrested before escaping to Belarus. Due to state secrecy, information about the aforementioned criminal case was presented only through public statements of the involved persons. The Vilnius Regional Court found guilty M. D., a lawyer from Vilnius, of spying for Belarus on 20 September 2024. The judgement is not final, and the convicted person has the right to appeal to the Lithuanian Court of Appeal (Perminas, 2024).

As already mentioned, the Soviet Union and, later, Russian spy agencies have always used unrest, especially the massive influx of migrants, for the infiltration of illegal agents into foreign countries. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 130,000 Russian citizens have crossed the Lithuanian border since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 until 1 September 2022. Some of them might have crossed the border several times. A total of 15,483 Russian citizens have been admitted to Lithuania from 19 September 2022 to 30 September 2022, and 244 have not been admitted. According to media outlet TV3, around 12 million Russian citizens have Schengen visas. Screening procedures and the sufficiency of funds allocated to institutions in charge of screening people from other countries, especially Russian and Belarusian citizens entering or crossing the territory of Lithuania, are important aspects.

Nowadays, specialists in information technology (IT) are in high demand in many developed countries. For a long time, Belarus was best known for its tractors, fertilisers and oil products, but after Lukashenko signed a decree in 2017 that exempted technology companies from various taxes, including corporate tax, the country's capital, Minsk, has become a regional high-tech hub in recent years. This taxation policy enabled the establishment of more than 1,000 IT companies in Belarus, which employ more than 70,000 people. Among these high-tech enterprises is

Wargaming, the creator of the globally popular computer game World of Tanks.

In 2019, the export of products and services of the Belarusian IT sector reached $2.7 billion and was 25% higher than in the previous year. In 2020, Belarus's IT sector accounted for approximately 4% of the country's GDP. Some IT specialists took part in the demonstrations against the fraudulent presidential election on 9 August 2020 and later became the target of law enforcement agencies. Thousands of IT specialists left Belarus thereafter. IT companies moved to neighbouring EU member states (Poland, Lithuania and Latvia). According to the magazine *Verslo žinios* (Business News), since 2020, Belarusian IT companies that have started moving more actively have had a great impact on the real estate market of the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. In the first half of 2022, Belarusian IT companies were the main driver in the real estate market for office spaces in Vilnius (Povilaitytė, 2022).

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

The author of this paper would like to present one of many scenarios. Many private companies, and especially state institutions, provide a lot of online services, with more e-services slated to be provided in the future. A state institution announced a public tender for the creation of a new document management system or updating or upgrading an already existing system. According to the law on public procurement, there are some exemptions, and tenders may be done under other laws. Imagine this scenario: A company won a public tender to create a new document management system for the National Health Insurance Fund under the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. The winning company will perform tasks on time, and it concluded a subcontractor agreement with an IT company, which originated from Belarus, for creating mobile applications. The information about this contract was intercepted by a Belarusian spy agency. If the family members of IT specialists are living in Belarus, such facts may be used to collect sensitive information through established SPA centres.

Another important fact is that due to the presence of Belarusian and Russian opposition members in Lithuania, Russian and Belarusian spy agencies are looking for every opportunity to recruit Belarusians and Lithuanians visiting Belarus for espionage.

According to the Polish Institute of International Affairs, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, EU states, which retain national security competencies, have taken unprecedented steps to curb Russia's espionage. As part of these activities, since February 2022, they have expelled around 490 Russian diplomats from EU territory, out of which the majority have been intelligence officers or their associates. A significant number of diplomats were expelled from Bulgaria (70), Poland (45), France (41), Germany (40), Belgium (40, including 19 accredited to the EU), Slovakia (38), Slovenia (33), Italy (30) and Spain (25).

Russia conducts its intelligence activities in the EU through many institutions, the most important of which are military intelligence (GRU), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), and the Federal Security Service (FSB). The Russian services are gradually developing cyber espionage, but their functioning is still based on the classic methods of obtaining classified information using an extensive network of spies. It mainly includes officers working as diplomats because diplomatic immunity allows them to avoid criminal proceedings, and even if they are detected, they can just announce non-grata and be expelled from the country. According to the available assessments of the EU intelligence services, a significant part of Russia's diplomatic corps in the member states are spies. Russian spy agencies, through spies with diplomatic passports, recruit informants.

Another peculiarity of Russian spies is that they operate in the target country undercover as "illegals". Russian intelligence recruits as agents foreigners who have access to classified information or who work at critical infrastructure objects. For example, officials, military personnel, journalists, analysts of research institutions and dispatchers. The Russian and Belarusian spy agencies often try to recruit informants on Russian territory from a select group of regular visitors who express a positive or neutral attitude towards the Russian authorities on social networks. In some cases, they stage fake incidents involving Russian citizens, presenting them as victims of legal violations.

Due to significant curbs on the number of Russian diplomats in the EU, Russian and Belarusian spy agencies put more effort into recruiting informants from EU citizens who are visiting Russia and Belarus. Russia even launched simplified visa procedures for foreign tourists. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree in April 2022 introducing visa restrictions for citizens of countries that Moscow deems unfriendly in response to sanctions imposed by democratic countries due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It suspends Russia's simplified visa regime with some EU countries, as well as Norway, Switzerland and Iceland.

In summary, amendments to the Law on Public Procurement of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts related to public tenders should be implemented to prevent leakage of sensitive information, and in a non-discriminatory manner. Additional attention should be paid to the involvement of IT companies originating from third countries, non-NATO members, for participation as subcontractors to provide the most important services related to the information infrastructure at state institutions and strategic enterprises run by the state or private. Due to significant curbs on the number of Russian diplomats in the EU, Russian and Belarusian spy agencies are trying to recruit informants from among EU citizens visiting Russia and Belarus.

CONCLUSION

The slave trade was one of the largest forced mass migrations of the labour force in human history during the 16th and 17th centuries. Migration was driven by the search for work in the second half of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century. From the start of the First World War till the end of the Second World War, migration was caused by violence, and it forced people to look for a safe place.

One of the essential needs for homo sapiens is safety. Hospitality is an important value in the main religions, and at the same time, it creates solid ethical ground for incoming migrants in the expectation of finding safety in the new place.

Changes in Russia's foreign policy towards neighbouring countries from 2014 and the Belarusian regime's actions in 2021 in creating uncontrolled migration waves might be considered a real threat to the national security of Lithuania.

Geographical terrain, and perhaps the still-existing smuggling routes from Belarus to Lithuania, may be used not only by smugglers but also by Russian and Belarusian spy agencies for special operations against Lithuania and the EU.

The use of migration as a soft power weapon against other countries is part of Russia's hybrid warfare. At the same time, mass migration creates favourable conditions for the infiltration of sleeping agents and the creation of spy networks or rings by Russian and Belarusian intelligence agencies.

Highly skilled professionals in Lithuania are subject to particularly favourable immigration rules in Lithuania. Analysis of statistical data on employment and unemployment rates allows us to conclude that foreigners do not cause tension in Lithuania's labour market.

Analysis of the statistical data on the exact location of foreigners by region and by city shows that Siauliai city is attractive for foreigners compared with other major cities of Lithuania, except the capital city Vilnius. This choice of migrants might be explained by the fact that Siauliai is the transportation hub in the northern part of Lithuania, a main military air base of the Lithuanian Airforce and a NATO Baltic Air Policing mission, as well as future reconstruction of a military factory by the leading company in the defence industry in Europe, German Rheinmetall. It might be considered seriously in the context of Lithuania's national security.

High-tech companies and educational institutions mostly conducting research in biotechnology and IT in Lithuania are on priority lists for the Russian, Belarusian and Chinese spy agencies.

Due to significant curbs on the number of Russian diplomats in the EU, Russian and Belarusian spy agencies are trying to recruit informants from among EU citizens visiting Russia and Belarus.

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IRREGULAR AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION – POLITICAL CHALLENGES FOR EUROPE AND THE WEST

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Keywords: irregular and illegal migration, instrumentalisation of migration, hybrid threats, EU migration policy, Turkey

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/5wgy-1673

ABSTRACT

There is no patent remedy for the chronic refugee and irregular migration crisis. War and instability in regions neighbouring Europe – often involving European powers – led to a spike in the number of refugees and irregular migrants trying to reach the continent since 2015. In response, overall EU policy, especially in recent years, has been to try to push people back from the EU's external borders and to enhance and improve external border protection. In the 2010s, the irregular and illegal mass migration of refugees escalated into a political crisis in Europe; segments of societies lost patience as more migrants arrived illegally in European countries. In the UK, the brutal killing of a Labour MP publicly praised for her work with refugees shocked the nation in 2016. Ten years after the wave of illegal migrants into Europe, there is still a dysfunctionality in trying to tackle irregular illegal immigration and create a common asylum policy system. Several attempts to achieve this goal have already failed. Therefore, the EU is trying to strengthen early warning systems, both internally and through partnerships with third countries. The increase of severe terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016, and the lethal stabbings and gang fights caused by young migrants in Europe, are still being exploited by extreme right and left-wing political parties that try to link illegal migration with terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. The aim of this contribution is to outline the challenges of irregular and illegal migration for European stakeholders and to ana-lyse the difficult path taken by European politicians in dealing with this complex situation.

INTRODUCTION

More people are on the move worldwide than at any other time since the Second World War. The reasons for this phenomenon are manifold. One reason is wars and conflicts – e.g. between Russia and Ukraine in Eastern Europe, as well as those in the Middle East (Israel/Palestine, Syria and Yemen) and in Africa (Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia). Another is disastrous social and economic conditions that cause people to emigrate (such as in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, Nigeria and Ghana). An additional reason for large-scale migration is the increasing impact of climate change, which threatens to make many regions of the world uninhabitable. Increasingly, the fear of irregular and illegal immigration is poisoning Western politics. Societies and some political parties have become split on this issue. In the United Kingdom in 2016, Jo Cox, a Labour MP who had been "praised for work with refugees", was "shot and stabbed to death" (Guardian reporters, 2016, p. 15). It was the first killing of a serving MP since Irish republicans murdered Ian Gow in 1990 (ibid). Furthermore, in the UK, one cause of Brexit was overwhelming opposition to irregular and illegal migrants (Rath, 2016, p. 5) and even to the fact that European Union member states like France, Italy, Germany and Austria were allowing them to travel across Europe. Strident nationalists wielded power in many European states and in the United States, and in the meantime, they are gaining influence elsewhere – e.g. via social media. Irregular and illegal migration became a hot issue in the EU and in the US, where in 2018, President Donald J. Trump argued that immigration was "very bad for Europe, it's changing the culture" (Rachman, 2018, p. 9). Trump's conception of "the West" is based not on shared values but on culture or even race. In the EU, many people expect the Union to be stronger when it comes to big questions, especially by tackling illegal migration together with member states. Therefore, a key element of a sustainable migration policy is to ensure effective control of European external borders and stem illegal flows into the Union.

In general, both refugees and irregular migrants cannot choose their destinations. War and instability in regions neighbouring Europe, often involving European powers, led to a spike in the number of refugees and irregular migrants trying to reach the continent. In response, overall EU

policy has been to try to push people back from external borders and to enhance and improve external border protection.

Parts of European societies were already losing patience as more migrants arrived illegally in EU member states. Thus, populist political parties have gained influence as they promise simple solutions to that complex issue. Furthermore, as far-right politicians reach positions of power, their influence is coming to bear: "Their aim is to deliberately stoke a sense of crisis and panic; to frame this form of migration as an existential threat" (Trilling, 2018, p. 18). Populists in the UK, Germany and France demand that ruling governments "regain the mastery of our borders" (Foreign Affairs, 2016, p. 7). The increase of severe terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016, and the lethal stabbings and gang fights caused by young migrants in Europe, are still being exploited by extreme right and left-wing political parties that try to link illegal migration with terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. In France, for example, Marine Le Pen demanded "to stop the arrival of migrants, whom we know terrorists infiltrate. It [France] has to put an end to birthright citizenship, the automatic acquisition of French nationality with no other criteria that created French like [Amedy] Coulibaly and [Chérif and Said] Kouachi [the terrorists behind the Paris attacks of January 2015], who had long histories of delinquency and were hostile toward France" (Foreign Affairs, 2016, p. 7).

In Germany, too, the populist AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) is exploiting the political situation to highlight examples of failed integration and asylum policies for migrants. These include a lethal knife attack in Solingen on 23 August 2024, which was carried out by a young Syrian. Additionally, on 31 May 2024, a young police officer was brutally murdered with a knife in Mannheim by a 25-year-old Afghan who came to Germany as a teenager in 2014. Thus, the success of the AfD – particularly after the September 2024 federal state elections in Thuringia (where the AfD gained 33% of the vote) and Saxony (where the AfD gained 30% of the vote) – prompted the governing parties to react. The coalition government in Berlin is calling for migrants who have committed crimes to be more rapidly deported – e.g. to Afghanistan and Syria (Middelhoff, 2024, p. 3; Die Zeit, 2024, p. 1).

The aim of this contribution is to outline the challenges of irregular and illegal migration for European stakeholders and to provide a comprehensive analysis of the difficult path taken by European politicians in dealing with this complex situation. It is based primarily on academic studies and on media contributions to public debates and will provide a better understanding of this challenging issue. This chapter focuses primarily on the political and social challenges of irregular and illegal migration and their consequences for democratic societies.

1. THE PERMANENT IRREGULAR MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE

Migration encompasses the movement of people as refugees, economic migrants or displaced persons, or for family reunification or any other purpose. A migrant is a person who chooses to leave his/her country not due to the direct threat of persecution or death but mainly to seek a better life elsewhere. Unlike refugees, migrants are free to return home at any time. In 2015 and 2016, more than a million undocumented refugees and migrants landed in the EU, mainly escaping conflicts in the Middle East, and made their way through Turkey and Greece and continued through North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Hungary and Austria to reach Germany, France and the United Kingdom. The 1.3 million irregular migrants and refugees who reached the EU in 2015 represented only 0.2% of the EU's total population. Thus, this irregular migration flow should have been manageable. Germany alone took roughly 800,000 people. That was equivalent to 1% of its own population and is the same number it absorbed in 1992, when people were fleeing the wars in the Balkans and ethnic Germans left the former Soviet Union (Nougayrède, 2016, p. 19). Demographers pointed out that the pivotal migration year for Europe in this period was 2014. That was when, for the first time, Europe surpassed the US as a destination for immigrants, according to French demographer François Héran. In 2014, around 1.9 million legal immigrants came to the EU (population 508 million) and 1 million to the US (population 319 million). With that, the European ratio became 3.7 legal immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants, while the US's was 3.1 (ibid).

In August 2015, Bulgaria began building a new fence along its border with Turkey. In September 2015, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán ordered a fence topped with razor wire along the 175-kilometre border with Serbia. This led to an increase in the flow of asylum-seekers across the Croatian border, so Hungary constructed another fence along the border (Murray, 2017, p. 183). The flow moved farther along, concentrating on the Slovenian border (ibid). In September 2015, Germany introduced temporary controls along its borders with Austria. On 13 September 2015, Germany's then-interior minister Thomas de Maizière announced that his country would reintroduce border controls. In the middle of September 2015, Hungary declared a state of emergency due to the huge number of asylum-seekers and closed its border with Austria. Then Croatia closed its border with Serbia. Soon Austria began the construction of a barrier along its border with Slovenia. The border fence was "a door with sides" (according to Austria's then-chancellor Werner Faymann) (Bastaroli, 2016, p. 3). Soon Slovenia was constructing a fence along its border with Croatia, while North Macedonia began constructing a barrier along its border with Greece. Austria began to introduce the upper limit for refugees on 20 January 2016 (37,500 refugees). In parallel, irregular migrants from Africa repeatedly tried to reach EU soil by entering the exclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. The border fortifications consist of two six-metre-high fences, with a network of difficult-to-cross steel cables in between, which is why people are repeatedly injured when climbing over the barriers. At the beginning of December 2016, 400 migrants had already managed to enter the territory of Ceuta. On New Year's Day 2017, more than a thousand people again tried to scale the barrier fence but were pushed back by the security forces (Die Presse, 2017, p. 5).

Governments in EU member states have still failed to create a common asylum policy to help frontline nations such as Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania tackle illegal migration efficiently. The EU debate initially focused on how to fairly distribute hundreds of thousands of new arrivals. However, the European Agenda on Migration, including an initial package of implementing measures, was presented by the European Commission in May 2015. This agenda took a comprehensive approach intended to improve the management of migration on all levels. It included relocation and resettlement measures, as well as an action plan against the smuggling of irregular migrants. When the EU drew up the

first recommendation in May 2015 on how to handle the refugee and irregular migration crisis and included a distribution key, it was met by stiff opposition from many states. The concept was revised at the beginning of September 2015. Thus, the EU at least had guidelines as to how the initial 160,000 refugees and irregular migrants, as well as future arrivals, could be distributed. The distribution key took into account the given country's population size, economic power, unemployment rate and the number of qualified asylum-seekers who were already in that country. The refugees and irregular migrants were to be distributed to countries that best suited them, based on whether they had family, relatives or friends there and whether the migrants spoke the local language.

At this time, the Eurosceptic governments in Poland and Hungary had refused to take in anyone under a plan agreed upon by a majority of EU leaders in 2015 to relocate migrants from the frontline states Italy and Greece to help ease their burden. The Czech Republic initially took in 12 people from its assigned quota of 2,691 but said in June 2017 that it would take no more, citing security concerns. The Czech Republic's then-prime minister Bohuslav Sobotka said at this time that the European Commission was "blindly insisting on pushing ahead with dysfunctional quotas which decreased citizens' trust in EU abilities and pushed back working and conceptual solutions to the migration crisis" (Wintour, 2017, p. 12). The three countries were firmly opposed to accepting any asylum-seekers and believed that their populations would not accept large numbers of migrants, especially if imposed by the EU. Prime Minister Orbán emphasised: "We will not give in to blackmail from Brussels and we reject the mandatory relocation quota." Additionally, Poland's then-interior minister Mariusz Błaszczak said: "We believe that the relocation methods attract more waves of immigration to Europe; they are ineffective" (ibid). However, the European Commission launched a legal case against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for refusing to take in refugees, intensifying a bitter feud within the EU about how to deal with migration.

In July 2016, the European Commission proposed to create an EU resettlement framework with a unified procedure and common criteria. Once adopted, the EU resettlement framework was intended to replace the current ad hoc resettlement and humanitarian admission schemes. As the EU Global Strategy 2016 states, the EU must support transit countries

by improving reception and asylum capabilities, and the EU must stem irregular flows by making returns more effective as well as by ensuring regular channels for human mobility (European Union, 2016, para 27). At the EU migration summit in June 2018, EU member states discussed stopping people in Africa in "regional disembarkation platforms", which had to be constructed before they got anywhere near the Mediterranean. There they would be sorted into refugees and migrants, and only the refugees would be allowed to continue to Europe. Through resettlement schemes, the most vulnerable refugees in need of protection would be enabled to reach Europe through legal and safe pathways.

Better management of legal channels for skilled migrants as part of a structured EU policy on labour mobility will help the EU member states turn illegal flows into needs-based economic migration for non-EU workers. More than ever before, Europe needs to respond to the growing needs of the ageing workforce in its societies and skill shortages in the labour markets while reducing incentives for irregular and illegal migration.

However, the EU's goal is to permanently dismantle the business model of organised trafficking. For too long, the focus has been on development cooperation and not enough on efficient cooperation. It is also important to create prospects for an economic cooperation mechanism that benefits both sides. This could give people better alternatives than to embark on the dangerous migration journey to the EU. To this end, effective external border protection, faster asylum procedures and rapid repatriation are needed to reduce pressure at the borders. Migrants continue to die at sea. Refugees flee violence in Africa – e.g. in Mali and Nigeria – where the jihadist organisation Boko Haram continues its bloody campaign (Maclean, 2018, p. 8). Migrants have accused border forces in Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Romania of carrying out violent pushbacks. For instance, policemen in Croatia beat undocumented migrants back into Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Kingsley, 2020, p. 1). According to reports from migrants, the Greek coast guard and security forces were brutally forcing asylum-seekers back onto Turkish territory at the country's border in so-called "pushback operations", without being allowed to apply for asylum (the Greek government has denied these charges). When the conservative Greek MP Giorgios Kyrtsos accused Prime Minister Mitsotakis of

"Orbanising" Greece, he was thrown out of the Nea Demokratia (New Democracy) party (Panagiotidis, 2022, p. 17).

2. THE EU DEAL WITH TURKEY

Mass resettlement was supposed to play a large part in the controversial German-inspired agreement struck between the EU and Turkey on 18 March 2016. The deal committed the EU to taking in one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every irregular Syrian migrant sent back from Greece (The Economist, 2016, p. 11). The package was the result of five months of intense diplomacy driven by German chancellor Angela Merkel, who saw Turkey as offering the only lasting solution to a crisis that had brought more than 1 million migrants to Germany, largely via Greece. The deal with Turkey was meant to be a game-changer. When the European Union and Turkey struck a deal in March 2016 to limit the numbers of asylum-seekers coming to Europe, many politicians in Germany felt cautiously optimistic. Merkel claimed it offered a "sustainable, pan-European solution". In exchange for visa-free travel for some of its citizens, 6 billion euros in refugee aid and revived talks on possible future accession to the EU, Turkey agreed to take back migrants who had made their way to Greece and to try to secure its borders (The Economist, 2016b, p. 21).

In 2020, Turkish president Erdogan announced: "Turkey's gates to Europe are open", and severe clashes ensued along the border between illegal migrants and Greek security personnel. At the time, Greek foreign minister Nikos Dendias even spoke of an "asymmetric threat" being provoked by the Turkish leadership. Dendias said on 3 March 2020: "The situation at the border was provoked by the Turkish leadership." It was a "cynical decision" by the Turkish government to abuse the fate of people to exert pressure on the EU. Therefore, Greece used tear gas and rubber bullets on a massive scale to prevent people from crossing the border. Athens also declared that, for the time being, it would no longer accept asylum applications. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considered Greece's measure unlawful. Refugees therefore needed to apply for asylum. According to Foreign Minister Dendias, Greece was merely protecting the EU's borders (Schneider, 2020, p. 2).

Since 2015, Turkey has been home to the largest refugee community in the world, numbering around 4 million people. This number includes 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees and 330,000 registered refugees from other countries. Since 2015, the EU has mobilised 9.5 billion euros for refugees and host communities in Turkey. A key component of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement is the 6-billion-euro Facility for Refugees in Turkey, of which 3 billion euros comes from the EU budget and 3 billion euros from EU member states (Europäische Kommission, 2022, p. 1).

The EU deal with Turkey seems to be working well, especially from the EU's point of view. The Turkish government is taking back people who fled to Greece before (Ferstl, Peternel & Emminger, 2024, p. 4).

3. THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND FAILED POLICY CONCEPTS

According to UNHCR estimates, in 2011, around 1,500 people died trying to reach Europe from Africa via the Mediterranean and the Atlantic off the coast of Morocco. Due to a series of protests and uprisings in North Africa (the Arab Spring), the number of boat people, most of whom came from Africa, had risen to 58,000 in the meantime. According to Human Rights Watch, smugglers supposedly had passengers thrown off board as soon as land was in sight. The aim was to reduce the weight of the boat so that it could escape more quickly if discovered by the coast guard (Bischof, 2012, p. 7).

Racist and anti-immigrant sentiment grew in Greece in 2012 when a 21-year-old Pakistani man confessed to raping a 15-year-old girl on the island of Paros. At the same time, the operation Xenios Zeus was launched against illegal immigrants. More than 6,000 foreigners were arrested in Athens. The minister for citizen protection and public order, Nikos Dendias, commented: "The country is coming to an end. We are facing an invasion" (ibid). Illegal immigration seemed to be a bigger problem than the budget deficit at this time. Between 2002 and 2012, more than 1 million people sought refuge in Greece, mainly from Africa and Asia. According to the Greek authorities, in 2010 alone, there were 128,000 irregular migrants, hundreds of whom were homeless and destitute in

Athens and other cities. At the time, Greece had an unemployment rate of 23%, and immigrants were increasingly becoming scapegoats for the crisis in the heavily indebted country. Ninety per cent of illegal immigrants entering Europe at this time did so via Greece. In Greece, the Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) party won almost 7% of the vote in the May and June 2012 elections, making it into the Greek parliament for the first time. Its party members distributed food in front of parliament – but only to those who could identify themselves as Greek (ibid).

In 2020, violent clashes broke out between residents of Lesbos and the police over new refugee camps being constructed. "Our voice must be listened to," said Tasos Balis, adviser to the mayor of Mytilini (capital of Lesbos). Since 25 February 2020, there had been strikes on the five Aegean islands most affected by the irregular migration crisis. The Greek administration stopped working. This was because new migrant camps were to be built on the islands – each camp was to accommodate 7,000 migrants. It was feared that a further 15,000 migrants would then camp in random spots in the wild. In the Moria camp, 19,000 migrants were living in trash and mud and in self-constructed plastic tents without adequate provisions. Initially, the camp had been set up for just 2,800 irregular migrants. The new camp – around 30 kilometres from Mytilini – was supposed to be a closed camp. The citizens of the islands demanded that the islands be relieved. Athens had previously sent 180 special police officers on 12 trucks to Chios to act against 5,000 demonstrators who had protested a new migration centre. Police officers wanted to remove roadblocks set up by the islanders. Lesbos was overwhelmed by the situation. At the end of February 2020 alone, 700 migrants arrived on the island. Between 2015 and the beginning of 2020, more than 1 million people arrived in Greece via Turkey, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iran (specifically, the Hazara people, who are denied basic rights in Iran). Many residents feared that Lesbos would be turned into a veritable "prison island" (Wölfl, 2020, p. 7). When prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis took office in July 2019, he announced that it was his goal to close the country's "open borders". The Greek government's policy since then has been to speed up the deportation of people without the right to asylum back to Turkey and thus deter new arrivals. Defence Minister Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos proposed floating fences in the sea to deter boats carrying migrants and refugees (Gonsa, 2020, p. 4). The government of Prime Minister Mitsotakis had further refurbished the border

facilities. As early as 2019, security measures at the fence and along the Greek riverbank of the Evros were reconstructed and equipped with thermal imaging cameras and even more barbed wire (Martens, 2020, p. 8).

The fear of irregular immigration has contributed to the rise of right-wing nationalist politics in both the EU and the US and was a major factor in the UK's 2016 vote to leave the EU. Countries like Germany also faced many cultural challenges in resettling "galvanic waves of migrants" (Lyman & Eddy, 2017, p. 1). The rapid influx shook European social structures, accelerating a rise in right-wing nationalism in many European nations. Germany led the way in the numbers of refugees it accepted and the programmes it launched to support them. In 2016, the German government spent 14.5 billion euros on refugees, and nearly as much was earmarked in 2017 (Gonsa, 2020, p. 4). Furthermore, the German Interior Ministry released figures showing that the number of criminal suspects classified as immigrants had surged more than 50% during this time. Nearly 175,000 newcomers to Germany were charged in 2016, accounting for 8.6% of all crimes, up from 5.7% in 2015. "Those who commit serious offenses have forfeited their right to stay here," warned then-minister of the interior Thomas de Maizière. Another big challenge of irregular migration is how to educate the growing number of children when reuniting families. Schools face shortages of space, especially when many children arrive in a very short time. For instance, in Vienna, Austria, in spring 2024, an average of 300 to 400 children showed up each month. Children are enrolled in local schools and adults in government-paid classes to learn the basics of the language and laws and customs.

In 2015 and 2016, the refugee and irregular/illegal migration crisis began to strain governing coalitions in Austria and Germany. In Germany, then-minister of the interior Horst Seehofer demanded that "upper limits" be fixed for numbers of migrants to be received in Germany. Additionally, Seehofer and Germany's then-chancellor Angela Merkel were split over "secondary" migrants: those who enter the EU through a country such as Italy or Greece and who then travel across the Union's open borders into Germany. Although a core tenet of the EU remains keeping borders open among member states, Seehofer demanded that Germany's borders be closed to secondary migrants (Hauser, 2022, p. 253). If Merkel refused,

he said, he might do so himself or might resign. Therefore, in early July 2018, Chancellor Merkel announced a compromise: Germany would set up camps along the Austrian border to house secondary migrants while their status was reviewed (Fisher & Bennhold, 2018, p. 5). The Social Democrats in Germany (SPD – Sozialdemokratische Partei) had criticised plans to construct "mass internment camps", which the party claimed marked an end to Europe's open-borders era: Thus, border-free travel within the EU, which has been the rule, not the exception, could become the exception and not the rule. Thus, German authorities set up checkpoints at every rail and road crossing with Austria (ibid).

In 2017, Austria's then-defence minister Hans Peter Doskozil called for a pan-European approach on migration, external application centres for refugees and "protective zones" to hold and deport illegals from the EU. According to then-minister Doskozil, the plan to fix migration problems in the EU needed to involve establishing limits on migration numbers and effective protection of the EU's external borders. The European asylum policies have all failed and need to be discontinued (Kopeinig, 2017, p. 52). During this time, the EU has shown a limited capacity to absorb more irregular migrants and thus has to stop irregular migration. The total EU migration ceiling would be based on limits set by the member states. Doskozil has been a vocal critic of the "open door" policy of Germany's then-chancellor Merkel since the beginning of the refugee crisis. "We must completely rethink the asylum system. There is a strong need for the implementation of a united EU asylum system in order to deal with the crisis," Doskozil emphasised. According to then-minister Doskozil, there should be only an orderly system of legal entry for asylum-seekers. Asylum applications should only be received outside the EU in the future (ibid).

A core tenet of the EU is to maintain open borders among member states. On the other hand, the EU has to stem irregular migration flows, together with non-EU nations. Therefore, the defence ministers of the Central European Defence Co-operation (CEDC), which comprises Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the Southeast European nations Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia met on 5 April 2016 to discuss control of the outer Schengen borders, the "closing of the Balkan route" (Bundesheer, 2016) and the broadening of information exchange on irregular migration flows. The

current solution to irregular migration is the effective protection of the outer Schengen borders. The CEDC participating states all agreed that closing the Balkan route and returning migrants to their countries of origin were key parts of solving the irregular migration crisis. It is essential to establish a common view of the irregular migration crisis and to continue to explore ways to cooperate and improve information exchange. If Plan A, which contains the agreement between the EU and Turkey to ease migration, fails, a Plan B will be required, especially relating to protecting the North Macedonian borders, said the Czech Republic's then-minister of defence, Martin Stopnicky, after the meeting. A remaining question might be: What specific measures to handle the refugee and irregular migration crisis can be recommended as part of a unified approach? Italy's then-interior minister Matteo Salvini called for reception centres to be set up on Libya's southern borders. He has sought to align himself with Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán and Austria's then-chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who called for "an axis of the willing against illegal migration" between Italy, Germany and Austria. Austria's then-minister of the interior Karl Nehammer pleaded for landing platforms: "These were decided by the heads of government in 2018; this must have fallen asleep at some point and must now be reactivated" (Purger, 2021, p. 3). Italy intended the EU to adopt a quota system for refugee settlement, while Austria was against this proposal. Thus, politicians in Austria threatened to close the Schengen borders. Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have turned down the idea of establishing "regional disembarkation centres" – holding camps for migrants (Hauser, 2022, p. 250). Salvini refused permission for rescue boats to dock at Italian ports. One of his first acts as minister was to visit Sicily and declare that the island "cannot become Europe's refugee camp" (Hauser, 2019, p. 181).

Between 2016 and 2020, 30,000 to 40,000 irregular migrants arrived in Serbia every year, according to Radoš Durović, director of the Asylum Protection Center in Belgrade. "The increased border fences have diverted and slowed down but not stopped the migration movements; fences do not stop refugees," said Durović (Roser, 2021, p. 5). But these specially designed barbed wire fences endanger lives. Croatian border guards had beaten illegal migrants in order to push them back, and illegal migrants still try to cross the Hungarian border fence with ladders or through tunnels. On the other side of the border fence, there are often

station wagons waiting to take the refugees further. In the summer of 2015, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán's government began to construct barbed wire fences. In 2020, Hungary's border police discovered half a dozen tunnels dug under the fence. In December 2020, the European Court of Justice declared Hungary's deportation practice illegal, and since then, the Hungarian NGO Helsinki Committee has registered more than 15,000 cases of so-called pushbacks of illegal migrants. Between 2016 and 2020, Hungary deported more than 71,000 people to Serbia without checking them. Smuggling networks try to undermine the long border fence either by digging tunnels or by bribing border guards and bypassing Romania altogether. One of the cab drivers put the smuggling fees for the passage from Hungary to Austria at between 4,000 and 5,000 euros (Roser, 2021, p. 5).

The increased border controls that Austria has implemented since May 2016 have led to many refugees arriving via Italy and then attempting to travel to northern EU countries via Switzerland. According to a report by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), *Risk Analysis 2017*, many migrants began to bypass Austria, making Switzerland an increasingly important transit country for illegal migrants. The irregular migrants coming from Africa arrived in Italy via Libya on smugglers' boats. France was also affected; there the number of migrants who arrived illegally via Italy or applied for asylum elsewhere in the EU in 2016 rose by 156% over 2015, to 11,000 (Bitzan, 2017, p. 5).

Due to stricter controls within the Canary Islands, smugglers chose riskier routes to other Canary Islands instead of Gran Canaria. More refugees, ever larger boats, ever more fatalities – never before did so many migrants land on the Canary Islands as in 2023. That year, more than 38,000 people arrived on the Canary Islands in fishing boats and rubber dinghies. Most of the boats reached El Hierro (which has 11,000 residents). In 2023, over 13,000 migrants and refugees arrived in El Hierro (around 500 kilometres from the African coast). "We can't take in that many people," said Alpidio Armas, the island president of El Hierro. "We don't have the means to provide for them. Not even the baker is prepared to suddenly bake 1,000 loaves of bread a day instead of 100." A tent city in the farming village of San Andrés served as a temporary reception camp. Spain is monitoring the situation in cooperation with Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia, so smugglers avoid the "landing

routes" to Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura. According to an official from the Spanish Maritime Rescue Service, smugglers try to avoid border controls by sailing as far from the coast as possible. Most migrant ships are currently setting sail from Senegal. Spain has stationed coast guard ships and aircraft in Senegal and Mauritania to monitor the sea borders with the local security forces. In all, 12,500 people were prevented from continuing their journey in 2023, according to Spanish interior minister Grande-Marlaska. According to the UNHCR, 868 irregular migrants died during this time (Schulze, 2023, p. 4).

Irregular migration is also abused as a bargaining chip in diplomatic relations, e.g. between the EU and Turkey and between Australia and Nauru, and can also be used by state leaders to destabilise states. Therefore, threats to "flood" the European Union with migrants have been frequent. At the end of 2015, Turkish president Erdogan said to then-European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker and EU Council president Donald Tusk: "We can open the gates to Greece and Bulgaria at any time and we can put the refugees on buses" (Martens, 2020, p. 8). Thus, Erdogan asked what the EU would do if it did not come to an agreement with him: "How will you deal with the refugees if you don't get a deal? Kill the refugees?" (ibid). The answer seemed to be to construct more fences and to use tear gas. The situation was similar in 2021, when the Belarusian government decided to instrumentalise irregular and illegal migration towards the European Union.

4. THE INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MIGRATION

The instrumentalisation of migration to exert pressure to achieve various goals has become a recent trend. In autumn 2021, Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko used state resources to enable irregular migrants – mainly Kurds from Iraq and Syria, as well as some Afghans – to head to the EU. These irregular migrants were first flown to Minsk airport on special visas, then bused to Belarus's western border with Poland and Lithuania, "where they were left in large, unprotected encampments as winter approached and temperatures plunged" (Greenhill, 2022, p. 155). On the border with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, violence ensued. Border guards from these three nations pushed those attempting to

enter their territories back to Belarus, employing tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets. Leaders of several EU member nations announced that they were being confronted by an entirely new security threat: "weaponised migration" (ibid). Ylva Johansson, the EU commissioner for home affairs, suggested that Lukashenko's strategy was a novel way of "using human beings in an act of aggression" (ibid, p. 156). In this context, Lithuania's foreign minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, spoke of the misuse of illegal migrants as a "hybrid weapon" (ibid). Lukashenko orchestrated a televised humanitarian crisis on the doorstep of the EU. A key objective "appeared to have been to discomfit, humiliate, and sow division within the EU for failing to recognise him as the legitimate winner of the flawed 2020 Belarusian presidential election and for imposing sanctions on his country after he brutally suppressed the pro-democracy protests that followed" (ibid). Thus, Belarusian authorities carted thousands of illegal migrants to the western border there to put pressure on Poland and the Baltic states. The EU supported Lithuania in funding reception centres but not in taking border security measures in the form of a border fence (ibid).

In using travel agents to lure migrants to Minsk, Lukashenko seemed to have stolen a page from the playbook of the leaders in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). In the mid-1980s, the GDR placed advertisements throughout the Middle East and Vietnam promising comfortable flights to East Berlin and "quick and smooth transit" into the West. This was part of a "successful scheme to extract economic and political concessions from West Germany" (ibid).

In the second half of the 2010s, Turkish president Erdogan repeatedly threatened to "flood" the EU with migrants from the Middle East and farther afield unless the EU made certain concessions. In late February 2020, Erdogan declared the land border with Greece open. Thousands of migrants were brought to the border in buses, and for weeks, they besieged the Greek border crossing point of Kastanies. Greece defended the border with Frontex. After four weeks, Erdogan called the siege off (Höhler, 2021, p. 10).

Since 2011, the EU "has directed close to" 10 billion euros "to assist refugees and host communities in Türkiye" (European Commission, 2024, p. 1). Australia has also paid Nauru and other remote islands in

its vicinity to detain would-be asylum-seekers and keep them away from Australian shores. These "warehouse" countries, however, can become weaponisers themselves, as Nauru has demonstrated on multiple occasions, demanding ever larger payment from Australia for doing its bidding (Greenhill, 2022, p. 160).

Turkey became a hub for smuggling activities via Belarus. Poland's then-prime minister Mateusz Morawecki accused Turkey of being involved in migrant transports "in full coordination with Belarus and Russia". The European Commission was considering sanctions against Turkish Airlines, which is close to 50% state-owned, until the airline company promised to stop selling one-way flights to Minsk. Additionally, Turkey has not allowed migrants to fly from its territory to Belarus since November 2021. In this way, Turkish Airlines averted a threatened flight ban from the EU. The Belarusian airline Belavia has not transported citizens of Iraq, Syria or Yemen from Turkey to Belarus since 12 November 2021. Now this airline is banned from European airspace, as Russia launched a full-scale war on Ukraine in 2022 and Belarus is a Russian ally. Since 2021, Poland has erected a well-fortified fence on the border with Belarus.

The Strategic Compass of the EU, adopted by the EU heads of state and government in March 2022, mentions the "instrumentalisation of migration" four times and mentions migration itself seven times. For example, in the chapter "Our Strategic Environment" (European Union, 2022, p. 8):

> Today, the EU is surrounded by instability and conflicts and faces a war on its borders. We are confronted with a dangerous mix of armed aggression, illegal annexation, fragile states, revisionist powers and authoritarian regimes. This environment is a breeding ground for multiple threats to European security from terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime to hybrid conflicts and cyberattacks, instrumentalisation of irregular migration, arms proliferation and the progressive weakening of the arms control architecture.

On page 9, the Strategic Compass document emphasises that the instrumentalisation of migration is directly linked to events in the Eastern Mediterranean:

> Tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean remain, due to provocations and unilateral actions against EU Member States and violations of sovereign rights in breach of international law, as well as the instrumentalisation of irregular migration, and have the potential to escalate quickly; ensuring a stable and secure environment as well as a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship, in line with the principle of good-neighbourly relations, is in the interest of both the EU and Turkey.

In September and October 2023, every day, about 100 refugees reached the German town of Eisenhüttenstadt in the state of Brandenburg on the Polish border. According to the authorities, half of the people were arriving via Moscow and Belarus. These were deliberate manoeuvres by Russia to destabilise the EU, said Rolf Mützenich, head of the SPD parliamentary group at the German Bundestag. This influx of irregular migrants had once again led to an extremely sharp increase in asylum applications in Germany. Mützenich noted: "We are experiencing a consequence of hybrid warfare on the part of Russia, in which refugees are being flown in directly from Syria and other war zones and smuggled through with the aim of destabilising Europe" (NTV, 2023). The head of the immigration office in Eisenhüttenstadt, Olaf Jansen, thought the situation in terms of capacity utilisation was similar to that of the refugee crisis of 2015/2016. However, more than 220,000 asylum applications from other nationalities were registered across Germany between January and August 2023, which was already far more than in 2016. In Eisenhüttenstadt, half of the refugees came to Germany via Moscow and Belarus, said Jansen. The other half came via the so-called "Balkans route", which now also runs through Poland via Hungary and Slovakia. Smugglers demanded 3,000 to 15,000 dollars (2,800 to 14,000 euros) from each refugee, depending on how comfortable the journey was (ibid). Thuringia's then-interior minister Georg Maier also once again accused Russia and Belarus of instrumentalising refugees. According to Maier, Syrian refugees were systematically being flown from Turkey to Russia in order to then reach Germany via Belarus and Poland. According to consistent reports from migrants, they are receiving very specific help from Belarussian state authorities in overcoming the relatively well-fortified EU border barriers. For example, migrants were given ladders and equipment to cut holes in the fence. In view of the rising number of arrivals, federal minister of the interior Nancy Faeser has agreed on more joint controls with Poland and the Czech Republic (ibid). But how

can the instrumentalisation of migration be prevented? On the EU level, the Union has to strengthen early warning systems and awareness, foster partnerships with third countries, combat smuggling activities, raise the issue of instrumentalisation in international fora, manage sustainable migration policy in order to ensure effective control of the EU's external borders and to stem illegal flows into the EU, and enhance crisis reaction and coordination.

CONCLUSION

The numerous examples above show the challenges that Europe continues to face in dealing with irregular and illegal migration. Uncontrolled migration can overburden numerous state institutions and jeopardise the stability of democracies. Moreover, the powerlessness of democratically elected governments in tackling this important issue can lead to societies becoming divided. Consequently, so-called "illiberal" parties backed by large segments of society could gain more political influence by promising to restore "law and order". Thus, the policy of welcoming irregular migration, based on the example of former German chancellor Angela Merkel (who repeatedly promised, "We'll manage it"), has strengthened extreme political parties in state and federal elections during the last ten years. In the meantime, the EU tried several times to create an effective common European asylum system but has thus far failed.

On 10 April 2024, the European Parliament finally adopted a long-negotiated migration and asylum package (with ten legislative texts in all), which had previously been agreed upon by the European Parliament and the EU member states (the EU Council) in December 2023. This overall package is likely to be applied by mid-2026 and is intended to:

- ensure faster examination of asylum applications (including in so-called fast-track procedures lasting up to seven days at the EU's external borders by means of newly established pre-screening centres) and more effective returns;

- enable improved identification on arrival, mandatory security and health checks and vulnerability assessments for people entering the EU irregularly.

In addition, EU member states can choose whether to take responsibility for asylum-seekers, make financial contributions in the form of compensation of 20,000 euros for each refugee not accepted, or offer operational support.

However, one of the trickiest questions remains: How many of the asylum-seekers who have been rejected can be returned to their countries of origin or to safe third countries immediately? Such a step requires sustainable repatriation agreements, and "this won't happen any time soon," said Michael Spindelegger, former Austrian vice-chancellor and head of the think tank ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development) in Vienna (Kramar, 2024, p. 6). EU priorities remain focused on faster asylum procedures, strong external border protection and repatriations. Specifically, the goals are the following:

- Combating the causes (push factors) of irregular migration in partnership with the countries of origin.
- Support for overwhelmed target countries close to the countries of origin.
- Optimisation of legal immigration opportunities in partnership with the countries of origin, considering the self-determined priorities of the receiving states.
- Combating human smuggling/trafficking.
- Saving lives and providing humanitarian aid along migration routes.
- Optimisation of EU external border protection.
- Establishment of a Common European Asylum System with common standards.
- Coordinated repatriation of those not entitled to remain.

- Supporting affected EU member states with distribution (relocation).

Thus, Schengen countries are obliged to deploy sufficient staff and resources to ensure a high and uniform level of control at the external borders of the Schengen area. Those countries must also ensure that border guards are properly trained. EU and Schengen countries also assist each other with the effective application of border controls via operational cooperation, which is coordinated by the EU agency Frontex. Thus, Frontex is also mandated to assist EU countries in raising and harmonising border management standards with the aim of combating cross-border crime while making legitimate passage across the external border of the EU faster and easier. The Schengen border is only as strong as its weakest link. However, the Schengen Border Code clearly states that the primary responsibility for border control lies with those Schengen countries that have an external border – including land and sea borders and international airports. One key requirement is that EU member states that have an external frontier must ensure that proper checks and effective surveillance are carried out there.

The EU is currently trying to implement long-lasting and sustainable agreements with third countries based on the model of the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, but with only moderate success. Following the EU-Turkey agreement, the EU concluded similar agreements with Tunisia (2023), Egypt (2024) and Lebanon (2024). NGOs reported that Tunisian authorities forced migrants at the border to leave the country on foot. Not every agreement with third states remains promising.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL AND JUDICIAL COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CYBERSPACE TOOLS[1]

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Keywords: cyberspace, international cooperation, migration, organised crime

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/8s98-j844

[1] SUPPORTED BY THE ÚNKP-23-3-II-NKE-107 NEW NATIONAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM OF THE MINISTRY FOR CULTURE AND INNOVATION FROM THE SOURCE OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION FUND.

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of international criminal and judicial cooperation is becoming increasingly important in today's digital world. Crimes committed in cyberspace are becoming more frequent and complex, and it is, therefore, essential to think across borders and to take into account the fact that other organised crimes may also take place on an international scale. One of the most important factors to take into consideration is time, as the aim is to exchange information and evidence as quickly as possible.

This paper describes the international cooperation tools currently available to investigating authorities and prosecutors in a European Union member state to ensure effective prosecution in terms of the collection of information or evidence. It explains what *organised cybercrime* is, how migration, migrant smuggling, human trafficking and cyberspace are interlinked in typical organised crimes, and how this poses serious security challenges.

The research methods used to conduct the study detailed in this paper were an analysis of relevant literature and structured interviews with investigators and prosecutors in Hungary.

The paper describes the range of possible cooperation tools with the aim that they will be used in the future by investigators and prosecutors in EU member states. To help achieve that aim, it provides insights into the Hungarian context that can help other countries better understand the cooperation tools that are, if less known, available in their own countries and can be used to address the security challenges posed by organised crime.

INTRODUCTION

Today, there is hardly a crime that does not involve at least one electronic device, such as a phone, a laptop, a computer or the Internet. A wide range of devices are available to offenders to commit crimes with as few traces as possible. However, while offenders try to take advantage of this anonymity, this does not always work because, at some point, all people make mistakes. It is this propensity for error that investigating authorities and prosecutors rely on when it comes to fighting cybercrime.

Research into certain categories of organised crime, such as migrant smuggling, human trafficking, drug offences and money laundering, has shown that most of these categories involve activity in cyberspace, suggesting that a complex vision is needed for this work to bear meaningful results.

The dangers of cyberspace are due not only to the wide range of possible crimes but also to the fact that criminals' motivations, such as passion, revenge, profit or ideology, can vary greatly (Leukfeldt, Lavorgna & Kleemans, 2016). An offender can target several victims at once, commit crimes more quickly and at a distance, and is not hindered by geographical location, all of which increase the risks posed by such crimes.

However, not all cases have a victim. For instance, in categories of organised crime such as migrant smuggling or drug trafficking, the groups involved provide services to each other without harm (material or moral) being done to either party. Thus, while the latency of such crimes is already high (as there is no victim), the advent of cyberspace has increased it, along with generating new security challenges. Law enforcement authorities can no longer begin their investigations by tackling offline offences alone; instead, they must adopt a completely different way of thinking. The fall in the cost of technology has made it even cheaper for offenders to commit a crime (Wall, 2015, p. 74).

The definition of *organised cybercrime* remains a divisive issue among researchers internationally. Nonetheless, in recent years, it has become increasingly accepted that cybercrime cannot be said to be less serious and dangerous than organised crime, and correspondingly, better methods for analysing the risks, harms and threats that it poses are being

proposed (Whelan, Bright & Martin, 2024). An essential element of such investigations is how to implement proper data protection on any electronic evidence obtained in their course, for instance, to meet GDPR requirements – an issue that remains difficult to legislate for and has raised concerns among the judiciary in several countries (Samdani & Malik, 2023).

One initiative to address this problem is the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime developed by the European Union, which takes into account the changes that have taken place in the field over the last 20 years. The Second Additional Protocol introduces several innovations regarding, for instance, requests for domain name registration information, the disclosure of subscriber information and the procedures pertaining to emergency mutual assistance or video conferencing (Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on Enhanced Co-operation and Disclosure of Electronic Evidence, 2022).

The Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA), published in 2021, shows that there has been a visible increase in the number of cybercrimes under investigation. However, due to the fact that most criminals commit their crimes individually, it does not establish whether there has been a corresponding increase in the number of criminal networks (Europol, 2021). What makes it so difficult to determine exactly how many criminal networks there are in cyberspace is the high degree of latency, for example, as with human trafficking networks or migrant smuggling, where the latency is increased by the lack of confessions from its victims.

When raising the issue of organised crime, the consequences of migration should also be addressed. While the protection of the state and its citizens is the main concern of any country, there are also security challenges that arise from globalisation (Milovanovic, 2023). Correspondingly, investigative authorities and justice officials must think of the specific security challenges of migration in global terms and take into consideration that aspects of organised crime are changing as a consequence and that this interconnection will pose an even greater threat in the future.

It is important to underline that both organised crime and cyberspace are transnational; hence, it is imperative that countries cooperate both

within and outside the European Union. In addition, it is important to recognise that, given that the European Union is a preferred destination for many migrants, cooperation is one of the best tools for countering emerging security threats, such as migrant smugglers and human trafficking organisations, and will remain so in the future.

The primary aim of this research is to provide justification for the use of electronic data obtained through effective international criminal and judicial cooperation against transnational cybercrime as evidence in the prosecution phase. The second aim is to provide justification for extending such cooperation to cyberspace, which serves as a kind of intersectional space between organised crime.

Accordingly, this work's research question is how to achieve these goals more effectively. The motivation for focusing on this problem is that the processes by which law enforcement authorities might obtain data stored in the cloud under the criminal jurisdiction of unknown countries are subject to jurisdictional, territorial and many other obstacles. In view of this, very few of these crimes are brought to court; thus, the majority of their victims are left without recourse for reprisal.

The scientific problem is, therefore, closely linked to the subject of the research, which also stems from the fact that, in addition to the differences in legislation between countries, cooperation is less effective due to a lack of awareness of the tools available to quickly and efficiently obtain and share reliable evidence among members of the investigating authorities and prosecutors. The main emphasis of the research is on the importance of international cooperation just because, if such cooperation is not effective enough, it is almost impossible to fight serious and organised crime.

The first part of the paper explains why effective international cooperation is essential, the threats that need to be addressed at both criminal and judicial levels, and the importance of understanding current patterns of offending in order to ensure such effective cooperation across borders. Through analysis of the relevant literature, this section clearly identifies the links between organised crime and cyberspace and the risk and threat factors associated with that. The remaining sections of the paper focus on current practice, drawing on the earlier literature review

and interviews to elucidate this. In that light, the discussion focuses on how professionals respond to the current situation, how difficult they feel it is to fight organised crime, and what the current instruments of criminal and judicial cooperation are.

1. ORGANISED CRIME IN THE MODERN ERA

Already one of the most complex and serious problems facing societies across the world, organised crime in the modern era is undergoing a clear transformation, a process that is far from complete. Now, authorities are no longer looking to uncover the classic mafia-style organisations but are focusing instead on a new kind of criminal organisation that combines several categories of crime and is open to trading in multiple products and smuggling both people and drugs at the same time. Despite the differences in the scope of their criminal activities, the aim of these new criminal entities has not changed from those preceding them – to achieve the highest possible profit – and they remain highly organised, even while the members of the organisation do not always know each other (Gyaraki, 2019).

The central characteristics of organised crime are the use of legal economic structures, the pursuit of extra profit, the creation of monopolies and the hierarchical structure of the relevant groups (Nyeste, 2023, p. 111). Organised crime represents a direct threat to the security of both society and individuals and destabilises the legal order and state power. Therefore, law enforcement authorities mobilise considerable resources in pursuit of criminal organisations, in relation to which it is important to achieve statistically well-exposed results (Vári, 2014b).

According to the website of the European Council, the priority crimes most frequently committed in the European Union are migrant smuggling, cybercrime, drug trafficking, human trafficking and excise fraud. To tackle these activities and help member states in their fight against organised crime, the European Union has introduced and is continuing to introduce an increasing range of measures and legislation (European Council, 2024).

Statistics from a 2024 Europol report on criminal networks well illustrate the seriousness of the situation. The report found that there are currently 821 criminal networks active in the European Union and third countries, with more than 25,000 people and 112 nationalities involved in those networks. 34% of the most dangerous criminal networks have been active for more than 10 years, even though some of their members or leaders have been arrested. 76% of all the organisations identified are active in at least two and up to seven countries. And 6% are involved in migrant smuggling, which means 295 people (Europol, 2024). Given these figures, it is crucial that all member states reflect on the extent to which they think globally and how open they are to cooperation with other countries when a criminal prosecution crosses international lines.

Today, migrant smuggling is one of the most common forms of organised crime with increasing significance for citizens, law enforcement authorities and the heads of state of some European Union member states – particularly since the European migrant crisis in 2015. Countries of transit and countries of destination face different problems. Migrants hope to reach their destination country as quickly as possible, whether through legal or illegal means. For example, they may seek help from organised criminal groups if they encounter obstacles at the state border (Milovanovic, 2023, p. 325). Yet, while such activity occurs in the physical world, communication takes place digitally; hence, it is still linked to cyberspace.

Given the above, it can be concluded that cyberspace has had an important part in the transformation and modernisation of contemporary organised crime groups, and it is fitting to say that such groups now operate without borders. Correspondingly, law enforcement agencies and institutions must recognise the need to work with other countries to be effective.

In investigating crimes of the kind described so far, it is important to consider how many countries may be primarily involved, whether or not the country or countries concerned are EU member states, and whether or not there are any personal connections between investigators or prosecutors in the relevant countries. Once these factors have been taken into account, further consideration of what information and evidence is needed and whether time is a factor can follow. International

organisations also have an important role to play, and it is especially worth considering leveraging the support of Europol or Eurojust, both of which can provide a material, technical and physical presence to help in the dismantling of all types of criminal organisations, whether migrant-smuggling, human-trafficking or any other kind which is an objective for Europol and Eurojust as much as it is for a given country. Reflecting this, it is therefore crucial that such international organisations not only increase the amount of statistical data they keep but also share that information with countries when necessary.

In most cases, investigating criminal activity in cyberspace requires specialist knowledge and a deep understanding of the processes involved in such activity, the ability to think like the criminal, and recognition that at least one aspect of the crime will have an international dimension.

The following section describes in more detail the various tools for cooperation that can facilitate the detection of certain organised crimes that are currently used in practice. It should be noted that most cooperation tools can also be used when investigating crimes without a cyberspace dimension, where electronic evidence is not required, and, thus, where the 24/7 data preservation request typically used when electronic evidence is required is not a factor.

2. THE LINK BETWEEN ORGANISED CRIME AND CYBERCRIME

As formerly traditional organised crime groups have realised that the chance of their being caught is much lower and their potential profits much higher if they exploit all the opportunities offered by digitalisation, they have started to seek out cyberspace experts or, increasingly, train themselves to take advantage of that.

The actual perpetrators of cybercrimes may be operating individually, working in an organisation, or they may offer their services to criminal organisations but outside of the hierarchy that is associated with the traditional form of organised criminal groups. They are characterised by

having flexible networks and expertise and using non-violent means to control the dominant market (Mezei, 2019, p. 135).

As a consequence of the above, a new concept of the *organised cybercriminal group* has emerged. This is defined as a structured group of three or more members whose aim is to commit one or more serious cybercrimes for financial gain using information systems and the Internet (Malas, 2017, p. 365). To pursue such groups, it is not only the investigating authorities and prosecutors who need to have up-to-date expertise in the digital methods they employ and, therefore, develop effective tools to fight cybercriminals and emerging organised crime networks, but also national leaders, international organisations and the European Union.

International cooperation and information exchange are key to the fight against criminal organisations and cybercrime, including in policing and at a judicial level. Therefore, cooperation is an important part of the fight against such criminal groups. To ensure effective prosecutions, the many tools of international cooperation must be used.

3. MIGRATION IN THE SHADOW OF ORGANISED CRIME NETWORKS AND CYBERSPACE

The following section expounds upon the examples of migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking to show how cyberspace has become indispensable to the criminal organisations operating in these areas, despite the fact that these activities all occur in physical space and are, indeed, not imaginable as cybercrimes.

First of all, migration – whether driven by internal armed conflict, climate change, civil uprising, poverty, or other factors – inevitably makes migrants vulnerable during their journey. It is precisely because of this that there is a link between migration and human trafficking. From the point of view of the psychology of human trafficking, it is interesting that the people who are forced to migrate and so become the potential victims of exploitation by criminal organisations may be recruited in the spirit of cooperation and the offer of better material and living conditions, even

while they are still vulnerable to cooperation being replaced by coercion (Szuhai, 2017a, p. 75).

However, in the flood of migrants to Europe since 2015, it is very difficult to identify who the victims of trafficking are, as in many cases, they do not report to the police, and so there is a high degree of latency in the statistics. Victims of trafficking are mainly girls, adult women and children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation, while men and young boys are mostly victims of labour exploitation (Szuhai, 2017b, p. 81).

In terms of cyberspace, traffickers also take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology, with processes such as recruitment and exploitation, as well as control, playing a major role. New forms of offending have also emerged with the advent of social media, such as the so-called "lover boy method", and traffickers are keen to employ these (L'Hoiry, Moretti & Antonopoulos, 2024, p. 2). The main focus of these activities is on the Internet – especially the deep web – and involves recruitment and, in some cases, the provision of services. Since the victims also use the Internet and social media on a daily basis, it is not difficult for the perpetrators to target them.

While there are elements of trafficking that must be physically carried out to be completed, such as the transport of people, there is the potential for even greater profit when operations are extended to the digital space. Today, it can be said that the Internet is involved in all the different forms of human trafficking, including trafficking for the illicit use of the human body, sexual exploitation or trafficking for labour exploitation (Ripszám, 2020).

Migration and migrant smuggling have become so intertwined in recent years that they have developed a cause-and-effect relationship. Migrant smuggling is perhaps one of the most organised criminal activities and exemplifies the concept of criminal organisation involving the most people in any area of criminal activity, even though those people are aware that the risk of being caught is greater than in other areas. According to Luigi Achilli (2016, p. 102), smuggling networks tend to organise the transport of nationals who do not have enough money to move by other means, but when any ethnic connections with the migrants are broken, the main objective becomes exploitation. These groups not only recruit

in person, but they also make use of online spaces and social media platforms. Organised crime group members not only choose to recruit in person, but also take advantage of the online space and social media platforms.

Both human trafficking and human smuggling involve security risks, though these differ depending on whether the country of destination or transit is the country of origin. Among the risks for the country of destination, for example, is illegal employment – carried out in the hidden economy or possibly involving terrorist acts – which raises the question of integration. Transit countries are also at great risk from other crimes, such as trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs. But if there is effective international cooperation between countries, more prosecutions can be pursued more effectively.

Migration to Europe is dangerous not only because it is illegal but also because it is massive, uncontrollable and unmanageable (Fábián, 2020). One consequence of this may be that other organised crimes are also committed. One possible way of avoiding this is for transit countries and destination countries to cooperate in order to at least reduce the risk of the acts described above. With combined human resources and tools, it is possible to carry out permanent monitoring activities in the online space and continuous surveillance along the borders.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES AND METHODS

4.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the study is to raise awareness of how international criminal and judicial cooperation within the European Union can be made even more effective, thereby reducing the threat and security challenges posed by criminal organisations.

The study is based on two hypotheses, which it aims to confirm or refute:

Hypothesis 1.

The entry into force of the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime will make international cooperation in the field of cybercrime easier because it aims to establish a number of different international cooperation tools, such as the transfer of subscriber data.

Hypothesis 2.

Though the activities of organised criminal groups in cyberspace are becoming more dynamic, the capacities of law enforcement institutions and judiciaries to detect and investigate the proof of crimes already detected will be more efficient if they cooperate through joint investigation teams because any evidence collected by such groups would bridge the divergent laws between member states and so be immediately usable.

4.2. METHODS

The research on which the study was based covered a 12-month period. This was preceded by basic research on the European Investigation Order and the joint investigation team as proactive international cooperation tools. The results of the basic research showed that there are still a number of tools that could be explored and put into practice that would help member states, especially in the fight against organised crime where cyberspace is involved.

As the current study falls under the purview of social science, it employed structured interviewing as its primary research method. The aim of this was to obtain as much information as possible and to compare the answers to the questions in the draft interview. The interviews were all conducted online via Microsoft Teams with the camera on, with 50 minutes allocated for each interview.

The interviews involved five Hungarian investigators and five Hungarian prosecutors, who were homogeneous in terms of interviews, the main criteria being completeness and the need to show how the research results currently compare with the jurisprudence of the member states at an international level. The main criterion for the selection of the interviewees was that each of them should work and cooperate on a daily basis with members of the investigating authority or prosecutors of another member state in cases with international implications, i.e. in certain categories of organised crime, in particular in cyberspace.

The study compared the results of the interviews on three dimensions: (i) the differences and similarities between investigators' responses, (ii) the differences and similarities between prosecutors' responses, and (iii) the differences and similarities between the responses of investigators and prosecutors.

Both groups were asked broadly similar questions; however, there were several different answers. The questions dealt with specific aspects of cyberspace, as the results of the literature analysis pointed to cyberspace as a point of intersection between criminal organisations' various forms of offending activity.

4.3. RESULTS

In line with the assumptions, research questions and objectives outlined at the beginning of this paper, the results of the study "The Effectiveness of International Criminal and Judicial Cooperation in the Context of Cyberspace Tools" were as follows:

> **Question:** In your experience, how difficult is it to detect cybercrime, and what detection and evidence obstacles have you encountered in your work? (On a scale of 1 to 5)

The investigators' scores for this question were all 4 or 5, and, in their short explanatory memoranda, all stressed that the difficulties were caused by the professionalism of the perpetrators, the transnational nature of the crimes and the lack of technical conditions.

> **Investigator 2:** *"…4, because all clues can be hidden in the commission of a cybercrime, if someone knows what they are doing, they have the advantage, but we also have the advantage that if they make a mistake, the perpetrator leaves a clue…"*

Among the prosecutors, the scores were split between 3, 4 and 5. One respondent, who gave a score of 3, commented that the difficulty is a function of how prepared the offender is and how well they can hide any clues left in cyberspace. The scores from the other prosecutors were split between 4 and 5, with the respondents listing several factors that made it difficult for them to detect cybercrime, including the barriers to prosecution between countries, the type of crime (such as overload attacks), and technical barriers, organisational workload and lack of professional skills.

> **Prosecutor 3:** *"…significantly fewer such crimes are detected and proven, especially if the perpetrator knows how to conceal his identity…"*

Talking about the difficulties with detection and evidence, one of the investigators said that "all the clues can be hidden on the Internet, and there is a lot of evidence; it is just difficult to get it". The investigators also listed the lack of appropriate software (for financial reasons), the lack of new technologies and the lack of experts as obstacles. Prosecutors said that hidden IP addresses involving intermediary service providers are very difficult to identify. Problems also include data retention time, a lack of cooperation between service providers, the unavailability of cryptocurrency providers and defensive techniques used in the judicial phase (e.g. by arguing that other people had used the same device or that data had been insufficiently backed up).

> **Question:** How much of a problem is it to investigate and prove cybercrimes involving other country/countries? (On a scale of 1 to 5)

The responses of both investigators and prosecutors to this question were almost identical, and all gave scores between 4 and 5. In most cases, the respondents explained, it is necessary to go to a foreign provider, but the attitude of providers is improving. It was also mentioned that while cooperation within the European Union and contacting an EU member state is smooth, cooperation with third countries is much more difficult.

For example, neither Singapore nor Vietnam responded to requests for mutual legal assistance. Evidence has been very difficult and time-consuming to obtain from China, or there has been no response at all. While contact with Ukraine is no easier, Ukraine has become more active and cooperative in the fight against organised crime since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war and its expression of the desire to join the European Union.

The United States was mentioned by several interviewees, as most of the service providers are American companies, but the prosecutors said that when it becomes necessary to issue a request for mutual legal assistance to the United States, they take a long time to respond, up to a year and a half, by when the response is no longer relevant. Common to all the responses was that time is a major factor as it is important to carry out investigative actions as quickly as possible, which is important for data retention, and to collect evidence as quickly as possible so that the perpetrator can be brought to justice before they cover their tracks in cyberspace.

> **Prosecutor 4:** *"…it is not so much the cooperation but the time factor that is difficult, the problem of data retention, contacting third countries and asset insurance, usually the money is not there anymore…"*

> **Investigator 1:** *"…if it is a state party to the Budapest Convention, it is easy to prove with a European Investigation Order; if not, then only legal assistance…"*

> **Question:** How well do you think countries can cooperate internationally to fight cybercrime? (On a scale of 1 to 5)

The police investigators' scores for this question were all either 4 or 5. They reported that, in their experience, countries can cooperate well, but this has mostly been within the European Union and is dependent on a lot of direct, personal contact. When there is no personal point of contact, a request sent via SIENA (Secure Information Exchange Network Application) may take several months to receive a response (depending on the country). For any cooperation, the question is always about how long it will take to get a response. For example, how soon can the investigating authority of the other country contact the service provider?

Among prosecutors, the picture was more nuanced. All gave a rating of 3 because they found that they do not follow the other country's mutual legal assistance, do not comply with the requesting country's rules of criminal procedure, and prioritise their own procedures. They had had some positive experiences but said that time is of the essence, and the time it takes to receive a response to a European Investigation Order or mutual legal assistance is not always the same. They also said that they try to rely on personal contacts and will ask Eurojust to help them connect with the country they are looking to cooperate with.

> **Prosecutor 1:** *"…3, there are good examples, and there are bad examples, sometimes countries cooperate quickly and helpfully, sometimes not; in mutual legal assistance, I see the fault in the fact that the other country does not deal with what is in mutual legal assistance, their own country comes first, it is best to go directly to the request, and unfortunately often they do it badly, not according to the procedural rules…"*
>
> **Question:** What can you tell us about the practices of the member states within the European Union?

In their responses to this question, investigating authorities said that similar tools are available in the field of criminal cooperation in all EU member states, but the question is which technology and software is available in which state (an example was given of an efficient blockchain analysis software used in Germany). One prosecutor pointed out that Romania is surprisingly at the forefront in the fight against cybercrime, as are Poland and Estonia, where a specialist unit has been set up, and continuous monitoring and risk analysis are carried out. Prosecutors were also most concerned about the differences in legislation (criminal procedure law). However, as has been said several times, the respondents unanimously answered that the fact that data is stored for different periods in each country is a major obstacle.

> **Investigator 3:** *"…about everyone is at the same level, non-EU countries are harder to cooperate with. Ukraine is like that, but since the war, they are very much together, trying to be cooperative. With Turks, it's hard; they don't necessarily respond…"*

> **Prosecutor 3:** *"…the Estonians have a cybercrime unit that monitors all crimes committed in the online space and also carries out continuous monitoring and risk analysis…"*

> **Question:** How do you think international criminal and judicial cooperation on cybercrime has changed in recent years?

According to the interviewees, within the European Union, cooperation between member states has improved a lot in recent years, facilitated by the activities of Europol and Eurojust and the development of practices and networks between law enforcement authorities and prosecutors. The willingness to cooperate is hampered by the different legal systems in the countries, which, in practice, are circumvented by alternative solutions, such as leveraging personal contact capital. In almost all cases, it was stressed that good cooperation makes it easier to obtain evidence.

> **Prosecutor 4:** *"…there is progress in this, the tools are there, people just don't know about it and don't use it…"*

> **Investigator 5:** *"…moving forward in a positive direction, bilateral relations are also getting closer…"*

To prove or disprove the first hypothesis, the following questions were asked:

- Are you familiar with the innovations contained in the Second Additional Protocol?
- What are your views on them?
- In your opinion, in what direction will the entry into force of the Second Additional Protocol advance the work of cybercrime investigators in the future?

The Second Additional Protocol is not yet in force but is now available. Interviewees unanimously agreed that there could be a number of positive aspects to this cooperation, especially regarding service providers, who will be obliged to respond more quickly and the information obtained from whom will be considered as evidence. This, they said, for

example, will facilitate cooperation with countries that are not members of the European Union but have signed the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), meaning that no mutual legal assistance will have to be sent to these countries to obtain evidence following the information received. Reflecting this, they that the European Union has noticed the shortcomings and has, therefore, reacted to them.

> **Investigator 2:** *"…good, because there will be direct data acquisition, more and more countries will sign the protocol…"*

> **Prosecutor 1:** *"…it can be used in the judiciary; it will have to react faster, it will speed it up, it is not yet in law…"*

Given the results of the interviews, the study confirms the first hypothesis, namely that the entry into force of the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime will facilitate international cooperation in the field of cybercrime.

To prove or disprove the second hypothesis, the following question was asked:

- How effective and efficient do you think a joint investigation team is when it comes to cybercrime?

One interesting finding of the research was that opinions on this question were divided into two groups. Those interviewees who had not worked in a joint investigation team before claimed that it is a lengthy and bureaucratic process, "too many people have to say yes to it", as one respondent said. The other camp, who have had worked in joint investigation teams, had almost exclusively positive things to say about the experience, saying that it speeds up the exchange of evidence, it is faster, you don't have to wait months for a response, it is supported financially and technically by Europol and Eurojust, and even prosecutors are involved, which helps to think together and make investigations more effective. This was the same among both the prosecutors and the police investigators.

> **Prosecutor 4:** *"…a question of openness, lack of knowledge, fear of the unknown…" / "…it would be very good, no need to send legal advice on who should do what, simple exchange of evidence.."*

The second hypothesis was partly supported by the research results, i.e. cooperation in a joint investigation team would make the investigation and proof of cybercrime more efficient. Efficiency in this regard means that the authorities have quick access to evidence of sufficient quality and that the investigative phase can be conducted in a relatively short time (Vári, 2014a).

Overall, the research results show that there are factors that depend on the individual and their qualifications, openness and mindset, as well as external influences, such as the time factor, that need to be addressed to conduct effective investigations.

5. THE AVAILABLE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TOOLS

For any crime, the existence of evidence is crucial, and without it, criminal proceedings will not even reach the judiciary. Obtaining or exchanging evidence – in this case, electronic evidence – becomes even more difficult and problematic, and care must be taken to ensure that the information received is converted into evidence before charges are made.

In Hungary, the tools to obtain electronic evidence and information most often used by the police and prosecutors offices are, in order: direct requests for data, data preservation requests, the European Investigation Order, and mutual legal assistance. The first two instruments are criminal cooperation instruments (providing the possibility to obtain information); the third and fourth are judicial cooperation instruments (providing the possibility to obtain evidence).

The available international cooperation instruments were examined during the interviews, with the most frequently mentioned instruments presented below.

During the interview, a separate section was devoted to the acquisition of electronic evidence from another country and asked the question:

- What tools do you use to obtain electronic evidence if the crime involves another country?

The zero-one that investigators use on a daily basis is OSINT (Open Source Intelligence), and they primarily try to obtain as much information as possible on their own, within their country's borders. The most important sources of information are social networking, grey literature, open repositories, registries, traditional media and Internet news (Nyeste & Szendrei, 2019, pp. 56–57). It is also important to take the first investigative acts towards the other country at the same time in order to reduce the loss of evidence. A complex vision is always needed to recognise and react to the characteristics of a crime.

Following OSINT, there are several tools that can be used in parallel, depending on the nature of the crime. Firstly, Europol:

Europol is perhaps one of the bodies that can most help member states investigations, both financially and professionally. The SIENA channel[1] set up by Europol is already a tool that can be used on a daily basis by investigative interviewers. It allows the investigating authorities of the member states to request information from each other or from Europol. It also enables them to ascertain whether a member state is pursuing a similar case, which is a good starting point in case of a positive response, but only information can be obtained this way.

The SIRIUS project,[2] set up by Europol and highly appreciated by investigators and prosecutors, also provides significant benefits for those familiar with the platform. All useful documents and information are available via SIRIUS, which can speed up work, and it provides a forum that makes it possible to consult with investigators and prosecutors from other member states. It also offers several sample requests and guidelines for service providers.

In the field of cybercrime, one of the tools most commonly used by investigating authorities is the direct request for data from service providers.

[1] The SIENA channel is a platform created by Europol to enable the rapid exchange of operational and strategic information. Available at https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-and-innovation/services-support/information-exchange/secure-information-exchange-network-application-siena

[2] Available at https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-innovation/sirius-project

This is said to be the quickest way to obtain information that can point the way forward. In addition this, some providers – such as Google, Paypal, Binance and Coinbase – provide a "law enforcement portal" where you can upload a request with a short factual statement and where they will respond. This saves investigators time if they are familiar with and use these platforms where, as noted, time is especially of the essence in the field of cybercrime. Some providers also support the authorities by providing an "emergency" email address via which they will respond to requests almost immediately – though this is only information and not evidence.

To obtain electronic data, investigators use the data preservation request, in practice referred to as 24/7, sometimes in parallel with a direct data request. This tool is based on Articles 29 and 30 of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.[3] Thus, any country that has signed and ratified this Convention can send and receive data preservation requests to any other country that has also signed it. Incidentally, the data thus received is also considered as information. The great advantage of the Budapest Convention is that it has been signed by more countries than there are members of the European Union, 69 in total, including African and South American countries.

The secure exchange of documents and protocols between countries was discussed in terms of the ELF (Exchange of Large Files)[4] platform for members of investigating authorities.

There are two very important tools used by prosecutors to cooperate with investigators. The first is the European Investigation Order (which can only be issued between EU member states); the second is mutual legal assistance. The digitisation of the European Investigation Order has been a great help for the prosecution service since it is faster and less costly than it was beforehand (e.g. in terms of translation and postage), so they are happy to use it where possible and if the other member state requested has digitised it. Evidence is obtained by both means.

[3] Council of Europe (2001). Convention on Cybercrime, Budapest. Articles 29 and 30.

[4] Available at https://elf.sourceforge.net/

The work of the prosecution service is also supported by Eurojust,[5] where prosecutors from the member states are available to facilitate communication and judicial cooperation between prosecutors.

The use of a joint investigation team as a cooperation tool has already been mentioned, but it is important to stress that it is also available as an option where there is no loss of time and investigators and prosecutors are able to work together effectively.

One possible tool for cooperation with third countries is to contact Interpol as well as liaison officers and embassies.

Interviewees said that there were several cases involving cyberspace where proceedings were terminated or suspended because evidence was no longer available and where time was a factor once again, whether because of slow international cooperation, a lack of knowledge of the possible means of cooperation, or different retention times between countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The conclusions of this research can be considered from the perspective of a European Union member state, how Hungarian professionals see the situation in the European Union and what their experiences with the practices of the other member states are, how other countries cooperate and what tools those countries have.

One key point that the research made clear is that the financial situation of a country is one of the most important factors influencing how much a government can fund and support the fight against organised crime. Hence, it can be seen that there are more developed and less developed countries in this field.

[5] Available at https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/

Another finding was that the retention of data varies from country to country: some countries retain data for a year (see our country), others for 8–10 days or not at all. Consequently, all the cooperation tools can be rendered useless if, for instance, evidence such as a call log or IP address is no longer available.

Finally, the research showed that some member states need to cooperate more often, others less, but it is crucial that the principle of reciprocity is respected by all. Therefore, countries should not prioritise their own prosecutions or avoid answering requests from other countries.

Any agreement to create a joint investigation team is a matter of leadership, both from the police and the prosecution. It depends on how the leader in question feels about cases with an international dimension and how well versed they are personally in international cooperation. If more than two countries are linked by a case, then countries should certainly consider setting up a joint investigation team.

It is clear that the European Union is doing its utmost to make cooperation easier and is constantly monitoring what measures and legislation are needed in the fight against organised crime. Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to initiate measures and standardise data retention as well.

In the case of the member state presented, Hungary, it is important to provide as much training as possible in the field of cybercrime, to participate in professional forums, to raise the level of professional knowledge (which varies from one country to another) to near equal to other countries, to ensure that the awareness of existing cooperation channels is as wide as possible, and to make greater use of those same channels.

Based on some of the phenomena discussed in the literature, it can be said that if countries recognise the link between cyberspace, migration and organised crime, they should definitely consider the tools presented here. At the same time, migration in itself can lead to a range of further threats, including social, terrorist and economic ones. Organised crime, such as migrant smuggling, can also take advantage of migration, though the phenomenon of migration does not automatically follow from the presence of organised crime. The dangers of the link between globalisation and migration should also be underlined, although it should also be

remembered that local, in-country management is a priority and that it is also worthwhile to cooperate at an international level.

The current research contributes to the field by identifying the obstacles to cooperation in the investigation of the offences described in the literature. By examining how the available cooperation tools could be used to make international investigations even more effective, it highlights the need to address the scientific aspects of making the fight against organised crime more effective.

The research results highlight problems that need solutions. However, they also point to new directions, making it essential that further studies on this topic are carried out in the future, including in other member states, thus helping international cooperation in theory.

SUMMARY

To sum up, in the member states discussed here, neither criminal nor judicial cooperation currently functions sufficiently smoothly (in many cases due to error on the part of those involved in the cooperation, in others due to external causes – as discussed in the research findings). The reasons for this are that the people working at the end-points are no longer informed about the current changes and that the majority are unmotivated and afraid of new opportunities because the force of habit can easily prevail if one's eyes are not open. That is why it is sometimes worthwhile to be self-critical.

While it is clear that there are organisational initiatives in the Hungarian police and the Hungarian prosecution service, they would perhaps be more effective if they were centralised under the purview of one body. Although financial support would contribute greatly to the fight against organised crime, in most areas, there is still room for independent development, which should first be developed within the country and then expanded to the international sphere. As crimes against life, limb and health are slowly becoming the only crimes that do not involve the digital sphere, there is an imperative need for a change in how cyberspace is

approached by law enforcement authorities. This places a heavy burden on professionals, but we must try to keep up with the offenders.

In international terms, Hungary's situation with regard to the fight against organised crime can be considered typical within the European Union. Nonetheless, as explained above, there are countries where, among other things, major organisational changes have already been made to cyberspace to make investigations and prosecutions more effective. In these countries, it was determined that just as the fight against organised crime is always a major challenge, when it is combined with cybercrime, even more time, energy and money need to be invested.

As far as migration and cybercrime are concerned, it is necessary to have the capacity to assess which countries are at risk, which are the destination countries, which are the transit countries and what the statistics show and to strive for maximum efficiency through continuous risk analysis, because "the pursuit of security is a basic and elementary human need" (Kondorosi, 2009, p. 112). Therefore, it is valuable to examine the practices of other countries to get a picture of the country itself and to see where there is room for improvement.

There are three things to focus on when it comes to international cooperation to increase efficiency and reduce security challenges: first, always keep the task in mind; second, good communication; and third, good relations. It is also important to focus on awareness-raising, which should start early in the professional's career.

Finally, the paper concludes with a quote calling for everyone to keep an open mind and to think broadly and globally.

> *One of the main cyber-risks is to think they don't exist. The other is to try to treat all potential risks.*
>
> Stephane Nappo

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DIGITAL NOMADS AND EMERGING CYBER THREATS

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Funding

The work that produced this article was funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme-funded project 2022-1-EE01-KA220-HED-000089329 "Cooperation for Developing Joint Curriculum on Tackling Hybrid Threats" running from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2025.

Keywords: digital nomads, cyber threats, hybrid warfare, cybersecurity, remote work

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/485r-2b15

ABSTRACT

This article adopts the concept of hybrid warfare from theoretical military strategy to address a contemporary form of intercountry migration – *digital nomadism* – from a cybersecurity perspective. The article aims to elucidate the risks of digital nomadism, with an interest in preparing for these risks and mitigating them. In this light, the article suggests that the ICT sector, in particular, should pay heightened attention to the threats that emerge from a remote and continuously migrating workforce, especially when this workforce is supporting or providing digital services that underpin state services and are, thus, primary targets for hybrid threats from hostile states and other actors. Whilst the individual and community-level impacts of digital nomadism have been the focus of much discussion in sociology and anthropology, little attention has been paid to its security implications in a threat landscape expanded by cyberattacks and hybrid warfare means. Thus, by adopting the theoretical framework of hybrid warfare to assess these implications, the article is a novel contribution to work in security studies on the relationship between cyber threats and state security.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores *digital nomadism*, or working remotely from abroad, as a contemporary form of international migration, focusing on its cybersecurity implications and broader impact on state security. Research on digital nomadism is relatively new and, so far, has primarily consisted of largely qualitative sociological and anthropological research focusing on the livelihoods of the digital nomads as remote workers as well as their impact on the communities that host them. The security implications of this phenomenon, however, have not received attention. To address that gap, this article applies the concept of hybrid warfare from theoretical military strategy, which has received wider attention in security sciences due to the growth of digitally enhanced threats, to provide a theoretical analysis of the potential cybersecurity vulnerabilities generated by digital nomadism. Its central research question is the following:

> When a state relies, to some extent, on digital nomadism to provide essential services, does that represent a new vector, or vectors, of security vulnerabilities for that state?

I argue that digital nomadism *can* generate security vulnerabilities for such a state and propose that there are three vectors along which these can arise: (i) the personal devices the digital nomads use for work, (ii) the handling and/or processing of data related to the digital nomads' work, and (iii) the digital nomads' lack of familiarity and contact with their employers as well as their lack of a shared work culture with other employees.

The discussion is in five parts. Section 1 briefly sketches the context within which the research question arises. Section 2 discusses the new vectors for cyberattacks that emerge due to digitalisation in general and outlines the concept of hybrid warfare to explain how the related vulnerabilities can be exploited to destabilise a society. Section 3 explains the vulnerabilities that can emerge, specifically via the people working with essential services, with a particular focus on vulnerabilities generated by remote work. Section 4 expands upon the phenomenon of digital nomadism and describes the three vectors along which a nomadic workforce, especially in the ICT sector, might lead to further vulnerabilities. Section 5 illustrates the foregoing theoretical discussion by considering

the potential security implications of digital nomadism for the EU and its member states.

1. BACKGROUND

As the use of digital solutions and technology continues to grow rapidly in all areas of life, jobs can increasingly be done entirely through Internet-connected digital devices. Indeed, as smartphones have become increasingly powerful, using a laptop or desktop computer is often unnecessary for completing job-related tasks. For example, you can write emails, manage team-based projects, participate in meetings virtually, pay bills, transfer money, and create slide shows, documents and spreadsheets, all without leaving your smartphone.

This digitalisation of jobs has introduced a new kind of work flexibility. An increasing number of jobs can be done from anywhere so long as there is an Internet connection and one's devices have some battery. This, in turn, presents employers and employees with new possibilities for arranging their tasks, time and workplace.

Whilst the global COVID-19 pandemic introduced some fields and individuals to the option of remote work through digital means, technology-aided remote work actually dates back to the initial mainstream adoption of computers and the Internet in the 1990s. Although the pandemic did not enable completely new life arrangements, research shows that it did serve as a catalyst for a significant rise in remote work (Šímová, 2023, p. 175).

Furthermore, new digital technologies not only make it possible to work from home or when travelling. The flexibility of a globally accessible Internet also makes it relatively easy to move to a country one prefers to live in or even move between countries without needing to change jobs – though, of course, visa requirements and other country-related considerations may limit the options. In response to the flexibility this work model offers, an increasing number of countries have taken the opportunity to attract these digital nomads as a way of boosting their economies.

This trend not only expands the possibilities for digital nomadism but also validates it as a way of working.

From the perspectives of employee and employer, there are several benefits to digital nomadism. Workers can choose where they live and change their home country based on their preferences, without that affecting the employer. Correspondingly, employers can hire talent globally without needing to provide an office or related amenities.

Despite the benefits, the increasing popularity and accessibility of digital nomadism also represents a growing security liability for the services that digital nomads use. This risk stems from the growing number of cyber threats against both private and public-sector services, as a result of which the people working with and accessing these processes and services themselves become targets for cyberattacks. The vulnerabilities are intensified by three factors: (i) the online sphere has become an extension of international political affairs and, thus, a battlefield in its own right, (ii) digital nomads are often IT specialists[1] working on the very services that an adversary might be interested in attacking, and (iii) the remote location of these workers can present easier opportunities for compromising services than if they were attacked at their origin or primary place of use.

This article focuses on these vulnerabilities, with a particular focus on digital nomads working in the IT sector – that is, not employees who just use employers' digital systems and channels for work whilst living abroad but specifically those whose work abroad involves developing and maintaining these digital systems. The discussion is motivated by three ongoing issues.

First, there is a growing use of cyberattacks as a means of hybrid warfare. Hence, any vulnerabilities to cyberattacks created by digital nomadism can become additional vectors for hybrid warfare beyond those entailed by accelerating digitalisation more generally.

[1] Recognising that IT is a vast sector with varied skills, "IT specialist" is used here as an umbrella term. In the context of this paper, the common denominator for all IT specialists is that they are not merely users of digital services (including those that enable people to live in a digital society and work remotely if preferred) but are also professionals who contribute to the existence of such services in various ways and so have some level of access to the services' operational infrastructure.

Second, the EU is currently undergoing a digital turn that envisions more services[2] being digitalised and greater uptake of and reliance on technological means across society (European Commission, 2020; European Commission, 2024). Estonia, as well as the Scandinavian countries, is at the forefront of this digital turn, especially regarding the digitalisation of public-sector services (European Commission, 2022). However, these services are largely developed and/or maintained by private IT companies, many of which have a global presence and so may have a workforce that includes digital nomads.

Third, Europe's ICT sector is struggling to fill all the positions necessary for the digital turn, which causes pressure to adopt considerably more flexible employment policies to sustain existing and planned digital services in Estonia and the EU more broadly (CEDEFOP, 2024; European Commission, 2023). Hence, any liability that digital nomads represent now is only likely to become a growing concern in the near future.

With this background in place, the next section discusses new vectors for cyberattacks emerging due to digitalisation and outlines the concept of hybrid warfare to explain how vulnerabilities in digitalised services can be exploited to destabilise society.

2. CYBERATTACKS AS HYBRID THREATS

2.1. EMERGING CYBERATTACK THREATS DUE TO DIGITALISATION

The upward trend towards the digitalisation of services is unlikely to reverse in the coming years. To understand its security implications, specifically in relation to digital nomadism, it is important to reiterate that digitalisation is not limited to the private sector. Rather, in many countries, an increasing range of services essential to state governance, industry operability and securing the well-being of the residents now also rely on digital means. Of course, the scale of digital services and technology adoption varies from state to state, as does the rate of service implementation, both of which determine the specific vulnerabilities

[2] Throughout the article, "services" will be used as an umbrella term to refer to digital means, platforms and other complex structures.

that can emerge. Yet, it is important to recognise that it is not only "digital states" like Estonia that have come to rely on well-functioning digital services – many countries and societies that do not carry this label also rely on digital services to some degree and are, therefore, susceptible to the risks that can accompany digital dependence.

At the core of digital services is the collection of data, including data collected from people's use of those services. Any disruptions in data flow can, therefore, impair or completely halt a service, not to mention the devices used to access it. Service malfunctions are at least an inconvenience for individuals, but a failure that restricts society's access to critical services can have far more severe implications.

The possible causes of such malfunctions are varied and numerous, including broken hardware, software errors and connection failures between the components supporting the service. Importantly, a service – and the data it runs on – can be undermined even when only a minor part of the system is compromised. Whilst malfunctions might be caused by accidents, natural events or just an unfortunate combination of unforeseen circumstances, they have also become a vector for hostile activity in the form of cyberattacks, including attacks conducted by or directed at states. Cyberattacks take many forms and are driven by various motivations, which is why precise definitions of the category can differ, but the common denominators are malicious intent, activity in the online sphere and disruption of services as a result.[3]

For several years, the World Economic Forum's (WEF) global risk reports have identified cyberattacks as one of the major concerns with the potential to lead to crises with a material impact on a global scale. For example, in a survey of security experts for the 2024 report, 39% of respondents placed cyberattacks among the five most likely causes of a material crisis in that year (World Economic Forum, 2024, p. 13). The reports also identify cyber-*insecurity* as a global risk – both in the short term (the next few years) and the long term (the next decade) – that can

[3] Disruptions vary in nature from data leaks to the inability to provide vital services, such as medical services. What is important in regard to cyberattacks is that a failure to make such digitally enhanced services or digital services secure can weaken state security at other levels – for example, by increasing distrust in state authorities or physically weakening state defences. The form of any such effects will depend on the nature of the cyberattacks in question.

be exploited by the "use of cyberweapons and tools to conduct cyberwarfare, cyberespionage and cybercrime to gain control over a digital presence and/or cause operational disruption" (World Economic Forum, 2024, p. 98).

Statistics show that cyberattacks are increasing in frequency, a trend that is partly driven by the broader use of digital technology and especially the rapid push to digitalisation prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evidenced by the WEF's Global Risk Report 2022, which found that malware attacks increased by 358% in 2022 compared to 2020 and ransomware attacks rose by 435% (World Economic Forum, 2022, p. 9). Similarly, Statista reports that 5.5 billion malware attacks and 493 million ransomware attacks were carried out across the world in 2022 (Petrosyan, 2024). An increase in cyberattacks against industry since the COVID-19 pandemic has also been observed (Reed, 2023).

The WEF 2022 report also partly attributes the increasing ease with which attacks can be conducted to the ever-increasing expansion of digital tools and services. This rapid growth has fundamentally undermined the ability of countries and societies to *proactively* prevent or respond to threats. At the same time, the methods by which attacks are carried out are becoming increasingly aggressive, whilst the availability of skilled cybersecurity professionals continues to decline. Combined with a piecemeal approach of patching security holes in potential target services, rather than comprehensively updating the systems they run on, these trends further heighten the potential risk of attacks (World Economic Forum, 2022, p. 9).

Whilst public awareness of cyber threats may be gradually growing, and more systematic and varied approaches to mitigate the impact of attacks are emerging (such as *data embassies* that store backups of critical state databases on servers in another country), preparing in advance to defend against attacks remains complex and challenging. Indeed, there is no consensus on whether forward-looking analysis of potential threats is even possible (see Eling et al., 2021, p. 112). Several factors contribute to this uncertainty, including: the variety, complexity and insidious nature of the attacks, which make it difficult to predict their nature and targets (Eurojust, 2022, p. 18); the diminishing need for personal skills to conduct attacks, as a result of which predicting or profiling attackers

is gradually becoming impossible (Europol, 2021, p. 38); and the great amount of publicly available information on the operational processes of digital societies that can be exploited or targeted by an attack (Zhang et al., 2022).

In short, whilst technological development and digitalisation have introduced new ways to arrange and provide as well as consume services, they have also introduced new security vulnerabilities. Crucially, digitalisation does this precisely because digitalising a service can open up new vectors for attacking it.[4] As noted, the motivations behind cyberattacks can vary widely, from personal vendettas and clashes in belief systems to profit and competitive sabotage. Yet, because of the inherent vulnerabilities of digital systems, states that depend on, or are increasingly relying on, digital services must pay close attention to cyberattacks against these services as a form of non-conventional warfare aimed at political and social destabilisation.

2.2. CYBERATTACKS AS A HYBRID THREAT

In addition to attacks aimed at financial gain or property damage – common motivations for individual attackers and hacker groups – a significant category of cyberattacks are politically motivated. A review of cyberattacks over the past nearly 20 years clearly shows that international politics, including tensions between neighbouring countries and continuing East-West antagonism, has increasingly shifted to the online sphere. One country's perceived misconduct in another commonly leads to various cyberattacks, espionage and hacking attempts (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2024). This can include, for example, attacks intended to collect information about another country's military, economy, civil protections or food security.

China and Russia may be the most active state aggressors, with well-documented histories of cyberattacks against other states, including EU and NATO systems (Mueller et al., 2023). However, many other nations also possess the means for such attacks in their arsenals (notably Iran and North Korea), especially tools that only require basic digital resources and ICT skills (Center for Strategic and International Studies,

[4] Digitalisation has also opened up a new sphere for criminal activity (see e.g. Wall, 2007).

2024). Thus, physical-world confrontations and tensions – such as those between Israel and Syria, South and North Korea, China and Taiwan, Russia and the USA, China and the USA, and Russia and the European Union – are mirrored by attack patterns in the virtual sphere. Similarly to multidirectional sanctions in traditional geopolitics, cyber deterrence has become universal, and cyberattacks will certainly remain part of international political confrontation.

In the spring of 2007, Russia launched cyberattacks against Estonia's public service websites in response to Estonia relocating a memorial symbolising the Soviet Union's victory in World War II and honouring those killed in the war from a city centre square to a cemetery. This attack is a landmark case of one state aggressively and systematically attacking another online, as opposed to in the physical arena of conventional warfare. As Azad et al. (2023, p. 91) discuss, this pioneering use of cyberwarfare allowed Russia to achieve its goals whilst avoiding significant repercussions due to the ambiguity and lack of established responses to such attacks in international relations.

Whilst Russia's 2007 attack against Estonia was an isolated incident, it is now well established that countries (or independent groups acting on behalf of or contracted by a country) no longer limit themselves to one-off cyberattacks in response to other countries' behaviours, including their internal policy decisions and domestic affairs. Rather, digital deterrence has become a means for *systematic* aggression aimed at undermining rival countries' internal functioning both as a form of hybrid warfare and as a part of full-scale warfare.

The term "hybrid warfare" has lately become prevalent in international relations discourse, especially with respect to the activities of Russia and China in the global arena. Although there is significant theoretical debate over the origins and precise meaning of the term, a key contributor to its prevalence is Russia's "little green men" strategy, which it used in the lead-up to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 (Azad et al., 2023, p. 84).

Leaving aside its exact origins, the concept of hybrid warfare points to how modern international aggression can have, as Thornton et al. (2016, p. 333) put it, more *directions*, *modes* and *variants* than those associated

with conventional warfare before the 21st century. According to this new concept, combat action (i.e. people engaging in combat) is not seen as the only form of international aggression; certain human actions not involving direct combat are also included. Conceptually, then, recognising the possibility of hybrid warfare implies that the absence of conventional war no longer means peace (Kello, 2017, p. 77). Instead, there is a *grey zone* between the two that is occupied by hybrid warfare.

Classifications of what belongs in the grey zone differ, but digital means are paradigmatic examples of the activities that reside within it. In the CAST research centre classification, for example, the grey zone between war and peace includes cyberattacks and hacktivism as unconventional means, propaganda as a political and psychological tool, and attacks on critical infrastructure (including digital infrastructure) as psychological and political means (Weissmann, 2019, p. 21). Along similar lines, Azad et al. (2023, p. 88) argue that digital means-based attacks, such as information operations, cyber warfare and proxy wars, are the most commonly listed occupants of the grey zone in the research literature.

A central feature of hybrid warfare is that the non-combat actions by the aggressor aim to *destabilise* the target. This destabilisation process, in turn, is a matter of finding ways to exploit the opponent's weaknesses and maximise one's strengths (Weissmann, 2019, p. 19), typically through prolonged attrition (Thornton et al., 2016, p. 339). Moreover, the process generates uncertainty that makes it difficult for the targeted state to determine whether the aggressor's actions constitute warfare or are merely a part of peacetime antagonism (Thornton et al., 2016, p. 333).

An advantage of hybrid warfare tactics is that they can be an efficient and cost-effective method for a state to achieve its goals. Indeed, as Najžer argues, hybrid means can serve as tools for revisionist powers "that seek to challenge the dominant world order in one form or another" (2022, p. 4). In this way, the employment of hybrid means can also explain how actors or countries relatively weak in military power can nonetheless achieve their strategic goals, at least to some degree (Weissmann, 2019, p. 19).

Given its nature, the hybrid warfare landscape cannot be evaluated without considering the vulnerabilities of states and societies that could be

exploited by antagonists. Such vulnerabilities are jointly considered as vectors where hybrid threats can appear (Kalyuzhna & Kovtun, 2021, p. 18). These vulnerabilities can emerge and be targeted at various levels: within local institutions, for example, through corruption or bribery; in the broader societal mindset, such as through false news campaigns, propaganda and foreign support of local parties; and in local infrastructure, for example, through foreign investments in infrastructure or provision of related services. Crucially, vulnerabilities can also emerge when critical infrastructure depends on digital tools to function (e.g. software for power plants or medical services) or when access to the relevant services becomes completely dependent on digital means (e.g. web pages or apps required to access services). The vectors for this last category of threats are numerous but include the following: the service software, the network used to deliver or access the service (e.g. Internet and Bluetooth), the make and model of the hardware and digital devices in question, and human activity when working with or using the service.

Although hardware, software and connection vulnerabilities are specific to each service, human activity is always a core component of both the resilience and the vulnerability of a system. For example, the history of cyberattacks across Europe, such as attacks against hospitals, vaccination centres and revenue agencies, shows that the critical infrastructure vital to society's functioning is lagging behind in cybersecurity. However, as Tasheva (2021, p. 143) points out, whilst such attacks succeed partly due to technical shortcomings, the risks also materialise because workers fail to uphold security standards in an expanding threat landscape. With this in mind, the following sections turn to discuss the service vulnerabilities that specifically relate to individuals who use or maintain these services. This group demands particular attention, as its members typically have far greater access to the service than the general user population and thus may be a particularly weak link in the face of hybrid threats.

3. REMOTE WORK AND SERVICE VULNERABILITIES

The driving forces of digitalisation are economic gain and the automation of processes and services enabled by technological advancement. Technological development can enhance the efficiency of services in

various ways, such as by reducing time and workforce requirements. However, whilst the digitalisation of physical resources requires suitable technology and software, a skilled workforce remains essential for its success. In particular, this workforce must understand the safe and appropriate use of the technology and software, be aware of possible threats to the service, and know how to mitigate those threats.

Georgiadou et al. (2020, p. 455) make an important distinction between two dimensions or levels of any service's cybersecurity: (i) the institutional level and (ii) the individual level. At the institutional level, especially for institutions that provide critical services, cybersecurity measures are defined by laws, regulations, security protocols and other guidelines. Even with this framework in place, however, as Eling et al. (2021) point out, the complexity of the cyber-risks vector makes it difficult to integrate it into overall service risk management, and not all service providers reliably report on how they have addressed possible risks and implemented necessary security features (Ferens, 2021).

Whilst the institutional level is complex, the individual level is even more so. As Cichowicz et al. (2021, p. 96) have argued, individuals face potential threats in both their professional and personal lives. Thus, the appropriate attitude, awareness, behaviour and competence are all necessary when using technology, whether privately or professionally. Because of this, ensuring well-functioning services involves more than implementing all the necessary technical cybersecurity measures. It is crucial to have a similarly systematic focus on safe *behaviour* within the organisation (Lee, 2020, p. 9; Klein & Zwilling, 2024, p. 419). Moreover, since any service, including vital services, will require employees working in different roles on a wide range of tasks, resilience can only be achieved if everyone across these roles and tasks is equally well trained to contribute to service safety in ways relevant to their specific responsibilities.

The need for across-the-board cybersecurity awareness among employees is especially acute given that attackers are increasingly targeting specific vulnerabilities and groups, whilst at the same time, workers – when given the flexibility – are becoming more liberal (or careless) in their use of work equipment and devices. This need is heightened by five additional trends. Sukel (2019) lists four of these:

First, threats and attacks are no longer limited to desktops or laptops. Personal smart devices used for work tasks, including phones, tablets and even watches, as well as work-specific tools (e.g. digital medical devices), are now also susceptible to attacks.

Second, there is a growing trend of targeted attacks against workers outside their standard job responsibilities. For example, faced with a flood of emails, a professional whose primary responsibilities do not include monitoring communications may accidentally open an email containing malware. This trend of *spear phishing* attacks has been encountered, for example, among medical professionals, whose fast-paced work makes it difficult to diligently check emails on top of their regular responsibilities.

Third, work tasks have increasingly moved to *networked* computers. Although these devices are intended for work, many institutions and companies are still quite liberal when it comes to Internet access. Employees often have access to social networks, online stores and various entertainment content from their networked work computers, even if their work does not require it. Furthermore, *cyberloafing* – engaging in non-work-related online activities during work hours – is a well-established phenomenon (Kim, 2018, p. 261). The more extensive such access, the greater the risk of compromising the entire network.

Fourth, with the rapid development of mobile and tablet technology, more and more households no longer own a laptop or desktop computer. This can encourage the use of employer-provided computers for personal errands, either at work or when the device is taken home.

The fifth trend is evidenced by Ghani et al.'s work on cybersecurity hygiene in the workplace, which found that people are more likely to engage in leisure-related Internet activities at work when their work situations are tense and stressful (Ghani et al., 2018, p. 755). This further blurs the line between spaces for productivity and entertainment. In so far as both this and the fourth trend involve the extended use of work computers and devices in less secure spaces, they pose significant risks to the network these devices are connected to and, consequently, to any services they support.

The risks inherent to these trends are exacerbated by the expansion of remote work as a relatively new working style enabled by digital devices and the Internet. As this form of work becomes more prevalent, it is crucial that public institutions as well as private companies adjust and train their personnel accordingly (Šímová, 2023, p. 175; Klein & Zwilling, 2024, p. 419). As mentioned earlier, when considering remote work, it is important to remember that the provision of many services, including vital services, requires the involvement of many people across different roles, including those responsible for maintaining and developing the digital backbone of the service. Not all roles can be performed remotely. A doctor, for example, must be physically present at the workplace to complete some of the tasks, which cannot be done from home, let alone from another country (Anderson & Ruhs, 2013). However, remote work is feasible for many other roles. Unlike doctors, hospital accountants or system managers might be able to work from home, provided they have a device suitable for the work (which may not even need to be a laptop or desktop computer). Once again, though, with this growing flexibility in the nature of work, as well as where and when it can be done, comes a potential increase in security vulnerabilities for these services.

IT specialists have identified several such threat vectors that emerge with the expansion of remote work and require mitigation:

First, the security concerns related to BYOD (bring your own device) policies at work are well documented (Olaler et al., 2015). With remote work enabling a wide range of individuals to engage with their work through a multitude of devices, software and connections, the attackable surface of the relevant services expands (Downer & Bhattacharya, 2022). This effect is even greater when individuals are allowed to use personal devices without the knowledge of how to secure them or how to ensure that the networks they are connected to are secure and suitable for work.

Second, as Rakha (2023) found, remote work affects employers' ability to monitor how employees handle data. For example, it is difficult to establish whether employees are taking screenshots that capture work data, whether others have access to their screens or whether employees store data on external devices – all crucial security questions. Of particular concern is how challenging it becomes for employers to ensure

compliance with data processing regulations, especially when data must be handled within a specific country.

Third, employees working remotely will be less connected to, and possibly less familiar with, standard communication flows, whilst their personal work environment may present many distractions. These features of the social context of remote work can combine to make remote workers more susceptible to phishing and other social engineering attacks. It has also been shown that working remotely increases the likelihood of successful AI-driven attacks, particularly due to a lack of familiarity with colleagues' behaviour (Pratt, 2024).

4. THE DIGITALLY EMPOWERED NOMADIC WORKFORCE

Whether they typically work in the office or remotely, it is now common for individuals to work whilst travelling. As technological development has provided the necessary tools, some jobs now come with a growing expectation that employees can, for example, write emails or go over spreadsheets wherever they are, whether at a conference abroad or on a beach holiday. With these expanding options, the understanding of when and where work should be done has shifted. Increasingly, this means that – when the assignment allows – people can carry out their work without being in the office, at home or even in their home country.

Perhaps the natural evolution of remote work is the phenomenon of digital nomadism – or, as Nikolaiets et al. (2023, p. 471) describe it, *virtual labour migration*. Digital nomadism (in substance, if not name) was already proposed in the 1960s, as part of visions of how digital technologies would transform society. However, it became a mainstream reality only in the 2000s. Digital nomadism is not a matter of occasionally working on the go but rather a sustained combination of travel and work that is only possible due to digitally mediated work arrangements. Once in place, these arrangements presuppose that workers can complete any assignment remotely if needed. Furthermore, in contrast to workers who have a steady home base but work during foreign trips, digital nomads' extensive travel and prolonged stays abroad amount to changes

in residency (Aroles et al., 2020, p. 115). Reflecting these points, Šímová defines digital nomads as "individuals with a mobile lifestyle that combines work and leisure, requiring a particular set of skills and equipment" (2023, p. 177).

Research on digital nomadism (Bozzi, 2020; Sanul, 2022) shows that a distinctive feature of the phenomenon is that most digital nomads are from the generation known as millennials. The term "millennial" refers to people born during the period when digital technology entered mainstream use in Western countries, roughly from the 1980s to the 2000s. What is important in this context is that this generation is fully accustomed to using digital tools across different aspects of life (with some never having even encountered analogue solutions) and entered the workforce at a time when digital technology had become intrinsic to many fields of work.

A second feature of digital nomadism is that, as Lopez (2024) shows, a comparatively high proportion of those who have adopted this lifestyle have used digital opportunities to become self-employed as business owners, go freelance or move into flexible gig work. In terms of specific fields, Sanul (2022) suggests that as well as research work, writing and other jobs traditionally considered to offer some flexibility in movement, online content creation and tech jobs such as programming, development and web design are particularly suited to this work arrangement. This suggestion is supported by user activity observed on many digital nomad websites (Lachs, 2024; The Social Hub, 2023).

A 2024 survey investigating the benefits of digital nomadism found that most respondents prefer this kind of arrangement due to the flexibility it offers with respect to time management, place of residence and choice of workplace. Financial benefits and the lack of commuting were also cited as upsides of working worldwide. Although some people seem to consider this flexibility to support their career prospects (Sherif, 2024), it has been suggested that the motivation to move abroad and keep switching countries or residences is driven less by career considerations and more by a broader quest for a good life (Hermann & Paris, 2020).

Whilst working under a tourist visa is generally illegal, several countries now explicitly provide *digital nomad visas* (Sánchez-Vergara et al.,

2023).[5] For nomads, these visas provide a legal means to reside in a foreign country whilst being employed abroad and working remotely. For the receiving country, offering digital nomad visas can boost the local economy, as most nomads will spend their wages in their country of residence. This economic imperative is reflected in two common requirements for obtaining such visas: (i) the job must be one that can be performed remotely, and (ii) the monthly salary must be sufficient to maintain a certain lifestyle. By setting these requirements, the receiving countries gain the legal leverage to be selective based on socio-economic grounds (Bozzi, 2020). In return, some countries are now also investing in facilities and services to meet the needs of nomads. Thus, catering to a foreign workforce with disposable income can become an industry in its own right and a distinctive segment of the visitor economy (Jiwasiddi et al., 2024).

Many of the countries that issue digital nomad visas are famous for their sunny weather and sandy beaches – Thailand and Cabo Verde, for example – rather than for their digital advancements. (Estonia is an exception in both regards.) In this light, as Jiwasiddi et al. explain in their research on Thailand, enabling a skilled workforce to stay in the country can benefit the local community in a variety of ways: "Digital nomads actively contribute IT and business knowledge and skills to the local community (through co-learning events, local hiring, or joint start-ups). This knowledge transfer has the potential to generate long-term community benefits" (2024, p. 28).

Beyond the individual freedom of the nomad and the local economic benefits, employers have also come to recognise the advantages of hiring remote workers based in other countries. Most importantly, this arrangement allows employers to hire talented people from a global labour pool whilst reducing overheads and travel costs (Šímová, 2023, p. 176). Additionally, hiring remote workers who reside in a different country can be bureaucratically easier for employers than hiring foreign workers locally. Given the rapid global growth of the sector, the often urgent need for specialist workers, and the fierce competition for both

[5] Sánchez-Vergara et al. (2023, p. 242) list 24 countries with policies explicitly supporting digital nomads. According to online information available at the time of writing, however, there are 48 countries in the world that have what is, in principle, a digital nomad visa programme. Out of those 48 countries, 6 have not yet implemented the visa (VisaGuide, 2024).

jobs and talent, this flexibility is particularly valued in the ICT sector (Nikolaiets et al., 2023, p. 473).

Despite the potential economic benefits of digital nomadism, it remains a form of remote working and, thus, has similar security implications as the broader category. Indeed, the risks may well be heightened in the case of digital nomads. With this in mind, I propose three principal vectors along which digital nomadism may introduce additional security vulnerabilities, specifically for the state whose services they use or maintain (this might be the nomad's country of origin but need not be):

First, just as remote workers, in general, may introduce security vulnerabilities by connecting personal or work devices to insecure personal or public networks, digital nomads expand this risk even further. There are two aspects to this. On the one hand, digital nomads, especially when hired whilst living abroad, may be even more likely than typical remote workers to use personal devices for work. On the other hand, the risk of connecting to insecure networks may be raised when digital nomads who lack a permanent home office due to frequently changing locations must rely on co-working facilities or public internet connections.

Second, with people working remotely from anywhere in the world, it may be even more difficult for employers to guarantee that employees are following regulations and best practices for handling sensitive data that they have access to, the misuse of which (deliberate or accidental) may compromise the service. At the same time, the risks of data insecurity may also be higher than with most remote work. For example, it may be harder to prevent others from seeing one's screen in a co-working space and easier to steal or compromise hardware. In light of these issues, establishing a well-grounded trusting relationship between employers and employees is seen as one of the main challenges of digital nomadism (Šímová, 2023, p. 176).

Third, despite its appeals, working from a distance and following a personal schedule can leave the individual alienated from the employer (Orel, 2019). Relatedly, distance work might never require the nomadic employee to fully engage with the work environment and communication style, even to the extent that other remote workers might (Thompson, 2019). This sense of detachment is likely heightened for nomads who

prefer gig or freelance work, which typically does not involve a long-term commitment to one employer. Without such commitment or familiarity with the workplace culture, employees working far from their employer may be less prepared and less motivated to recognise signs of threats, such as phishing scams or malware.

To summarise, since individual workers' attitudes and behaviour regarding cyber-safety and cyber-hygiene are critical to a service's security, a digitally nomadic workforce – working remotely, frequently switching places of residence and possibly employers, and lacking close connection to their employers – may be a particularly weak link in the security of the services they work on and thus a target for attacks by hostile actors. If so, digital nomadism should be recognised as a potential risk factor that can increase the vulnerability of services – including state services – to cyberattacks in an era marked by the growing use of digital deterrence.

5. THE SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF DIGITAL NOMADISM FOR A DIGITALLY ENHANCED EU

Before concluding, this section illustrates the potential vulnerabilities discussed above by briefly outlining the security implications of digital nomadism for the EU and its member states. Considering the large proportion of nomads working in the IT sector, it is crucial for the EU to address the growing shortage of skilled IT specialists in Europe, which might be thought can be mitigated by employing digital nomads in either short- or long-term capacities. However, with digital services in the member states and EU institutions increasingly subject to targeted attacks, including those by adversarial countries that explicitly target EU institutions, any vulnerabilities to ICT infrastructure that digital nomadism may introduce or exacerbate pose a major security concern.

As discussed in the first section of this article, the EU is undergoing an extensive process of digitalisation aimed not only at modernising services and industry but also at keeping pace with digital advancements in the US and several Asian countries. However, this process is only made possible by the companies that provide the relevant software, hardware and infrastructure maintenance. Whilst the member states might assign

some of the responsibilities for service development and maintenance to the public sector, establishing a local digital ecosystem is typically a collaborative effort between public bodies and private-sector companies – including international corporations.

Both the EU's digitalisation push and the inevitable growth of the ICT sector more generally require rapid workforce expansion across Europe. As evidence of past growth, statistics from the Eurostat 2024 report on the employment of ICT specialists reveal that, from 2013 to 2023, the number of ICT specialists in the EU increased by 59.3% – a rate five times higher than the increase in total employment over the same period. Nonetheless, the report suggests that, to meet the ongoing demands, 20 million ICT specialists will need to be employed by 2030. However, instead of achieving the growth needed to meet this target, evidence points to a worsening shortage of ICT workers in Europe, a trend that is likely to continue into the future. Already in 2018, 58% of enterprises reported difficulties filling ICT vacancies. Meanwhile, an analysis by the European Labour Authority predicts that, by 2035, there is likely to be a severe shortage of exactly those specialists – software developers, systems analysts and applications programmers – for whom demand is highest (McGarth, 2021).

Considering the rapid rate of digitalisation, both private and public sectors in the EU are competing for skilled workers with other technologically advanced countries, where wages and career prospects are often more attractive. In this light, the increasing population of digital nomads – who have both the required skillsets and the flexibility to work without needing to be physically in the EU – appears to be a rich resource for the EU to tap into in pursuit of its digitalisation goals. So the promise goes: skilled workers from around the world can help meet the EU's labour demands without needing to relocate or deal with complex bureaucracy, whilst retaining the freedom to choose their preferred work and life environment, tax residency, and level of commitment to specific roles (e.g. part-time or project-based work). Meanwhile, the companies and institutions providing these services can be more proactive in their efforts to pursue and retain talent without limitations on location.

Yet, as this article has discussed, in a global geopolitical context where vulnerabilities in digital services are systematically targeted and attacked

by adversary states, it is increasingly important to maintain the highest possible level of cybersecurity. This is especially true for digital services that are part of critical infrastructure and essential to both the functioning of the state and the well-being of its residents. Considering the security concerns and possible vulnerabilities that a workforce of digital nomads might introduce, however, any move to foster or expand such a workforce to meet EU demands requires careful consideration from a state security perspective.

This is not to say that new forms of work and flexible arrangements cannot be a part of efforts to address the EU's looming shortage of ICT specialists or, indeed, a way of meeting global needs. But, given the accompanying security concerns, these solutions do not necessarily offer an easy answer to that challenge.

CONCLUSION

This article provided a theoretical discussion of whether digital nomadism introduces new vectors of security vulnerabilities for the employers of digital nomads and, consequently, the states whose services they use or maintain. Drawing on sociological and anthropological literature on remote work, as well as research on cybersecurity and hybrid warfare, three potential vectors of security vulnerabilities were identified: (i) the personal devices digital nomads use for work, (ii) the handling and/or processing of data related to their work, and (iii) the digital nomads' lack of familiarity and contact with their employers and shared work culture with other employees. The potential ramifications of these vulnerabilities were illustrated by a brief discussion of digital nomadism in relation to the security of the EU and its member states and the reliable operation of their digitally enhanced vital services.

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CONTEXT-DEPENDENT PROCESSES FOR PLANNING AND DESIGNING LARGE-SCALE SECURITY OPERATIONS

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Keywords: systems thinking, operational art, design thinking, service design, planning

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/kncm-b066

ABSTRACT

This article suggests that contemporary security threats require law enforcement and internal security organisations to possess a systemic toolbox of methodologically different planning and design methods. These methods should be used depending on the environment encountered. This can be achieved by using systems thinking to identify the qualities of the environment and then identifying or constructing an epistemologically appropriate process.

The article begins by defining a systems thinking approach to collaboration and to different environments. This approach is then used to assess the various available planning and design methodologies. The article suggests two methodological approaches, arguing that this is better than chasing the illusion of one distinct right answer. The suggested context-dependent approach is based on metadecisions on the ontological and epistemological questions at hand either before starting a process or at the start of each design phase. This mental model of a toolbox is derived from design thinking, design methodology and military design thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement and internal security agencies have to be prepared for large-scale operations to address situations where the security and balance of the government are challenged. Hybrid threats, terrorism, high-level organised crime, weaponised mass migration and even military operations below the threshold of declared war can challenge law enforcement and government officials. In Western societies, events like these will also quickly involve multinational counterparts such as neighbouring countries or, in the case of European Union countries, agencies such as Europol and Frontex.

This article seeks to find an appropriate methodology for planning and designing large-scale, systemic internal security measures to address contemporary security threats. The problem statement of the article is to use design thinking theories to address the debate on how to choose the correct process to answer a large-scale threat. The debate shows that no single methodology can cover all the different demands, as each has its shortcomings. On the other hand, all of the methodologies also have their strengths, which have been shown to work, especially in certain situations.

The main research question is: which methodology should security ecosystems use to form contextually appropriate responses to contemporary threats? This question is approached from two perspectives: collaborative, human-centred service design and military design. These perspectives together cover the mental models and implicit practices of a multitude of stakeholders in security contexts, as they cut across several disciplines of government-agency, business and third-sector thinking.

This article suggests that law enforcement and internal security organisations should possess a systemic toolbox of diverse planning and design methods to pick from depending on the systemic qualities of the encountered environment. When looking at operations comprising numerous tasks, it is important not to simply scale up the ontological and epistemological approaches that are effective in tactical-level fieldwork and on individual tasks. Retired brigadier general Shimon Naveh has suggested in the context of military conflicts that "the operational domain is of different ecology and of different metaphysics" than the tactical level of military

actions, so a different way of thinking is required (Graicer & Naveh, 2017, p. 32). Large-scale operations have systemic and abstract levels of goals, audiences and preferred responses. The aim often should be to shape the uncertainty, rather than to solve a situation once and for all.

The article is divided into four sections. The introduction is followed by a section that defines the security entities and environments. The article then delves into the debate on the processes, and different methodologies are presented as being suitable for different operating environments. This is not a unique suggestion in military systems and design thinking. Zweibelson (2014) has argued that instead of focusing on using familiar processes correctly, we should also focus on thinking about why we use the tools that we use. Paparone (2013, p. 85) has suggested that different leadership situations demand different framings and courses of action. Monk (2017, p. 22) has argued that military planning doctrines should use the Cynefin framework to separate complicated and complex domains from each other, and complicated domains should then use a linear and analytical operational approach, while complex domains should embrace design thinking. Jackson (2018) has proposed that the military have a toolkit of different paradigms and suitable methods to be used after a "problem triage", and Erdeniz (2016) has recommended that NATO develop a handbook of methodology instead of doctrinal process. As can be seen, the discussion in the military context has been ongoing, but no concept has prevailed over the others so far. This article explains the difference between the concepts of planning and design, and then proceeds to explain design as a broad philosophy. Design has various schools of thought, of which two – the human-centred design (HCD) paradigm and an approach derived from military design that I propose be called the postmodern design approach – are explained.

The fourth section presents the results. It suggests two options that follow the same toolbox –the approach of taking situation-dependent meta-decisions before searching for solutions. Instead of just following your law enforcement agency's established process, the collaborating security system should either choose a situationally appropriate process or tailor one to the systemic qualities of the environment. This approach asks a lot of the group making the decisions for the security actors, but with mentally agile participants, and a facilitator if needed, it should produce a more comprehensive response.

1. THE FRAME OF AN OPERATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM

This section defines the theoretical approach and the framework of the article. This article is based on a hermeneutic approach towards military design methodologies and design approaches for complex environments. Qualitative coding was used to identify themes and define the common and divergent characteristics of design thinking as suggested by different researchers. This led to the notion of differences between the HCD and postmodern design approaches (Blomvall, 2024). The problem statement and the research question of the article are approached using pragmatic, qualitative and abductive reasoning. The aim is to answer the research question with a construct that could lead to a functional concept (Schmitt, 2002, pp. 9–10). Constructive design research suggests understanding constructs and prototypes as hypotheses, which can be further tested in real-world contexts (Koskinen et al., 2011, p. 60).

Part of this pragmatic view is reflective and critical thinking promoted by design thinking and postmodern philosophy. This view encourages a critical approach towards metanarratives in order to bring to awareness implicit assumptions and hidden unidentified epistemologies (Lyotard, 1986, pp. 60–61).

The ontology and vocabulary of systems thinking have been defined and used in different fields of research. The general systems theory focuses on the function and behaviour of systems as a whole, instead of static, reduced structural properties. This view has evolved as it was noticed that the mechanistic and reductionist approaches were inadequate to explain, for example, social phenomena, which are constantly changing and cannot be stopped for static analysis (Skyttner, 2001, pp. 31–32, 34). Systems consist of parts that constantly interacting. Further, the behaviours of the parts cause either linear or nonlinear effects (Bertalanffy, 1973, pp. 16–17).

In this article, systems thinking is used to define two separate subjects: first, the article defines different law enforcement and government officials as a systems entity of an ecosystem of collaboration. This ecosystem is also seen as a subsystem of the immediate environment it operates in (Skyttner, 2001, p. 59). The environment is then described using the

Cynefin framework, which separates the decision-making environments according to their systemic qualities (Snowden & Boone, 2007; Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). This forms the background for the debate on planning and design processes suggested in the article.

Extensive national and multinational law enforcement and security functions are inherently collaborative. In separate law enforcement emergency tasks and in field operations, there can and should be one statutory leading authority, but comprehensive nationwide operations demand collaboration and an ecosystem of different actors. Even a higher-level national approach may not have an actual unified command, even though it is often sought after. Even if the rhetoric calls for unified action, it is important to accept that this operational system aims for adequate, desired or at least positive responses from its environment, instead of hoping to solve the situation once and for all. With these mental models, the aim is to shape the environment, instead of expecting to solve it.

As already stated, this article focuses on large-scale, nationwide operations, not on tasks. A large-scale operation is understood as the abstract level that combines a multitude of tasks for a combined effect to address the security situation at hand. These security situations may demand an interagency or even a whole-of-government response. For this reason, such situations and also the responses to them can be called systemic. After studying military operational art from the systems and design perspectives, Naveh suggested that the operational level is different from the tactical level "both in quantity and quality" (Naveh, 2004, p. 3). To address this, one should see one's own forces and actions as an operational entity or a fighting system (Naveh, 2004, p. 15). Further, this operational entity should be seen as subordinate to a "complex political-national system", and there should be constant dialogue with the political level on the aims and strategic conduct of this system (Naveh, 2017, p. 42).

This abstract level of thought in security entities and the collaborative security ecosystem should be understood as operating above the mechanical, concrete level of field operations. This level can be described as operational, in military terms, or systemic (Naveh, 2004, p. 41). Operating at this level requires an emphasis on metacognition and perception (Anderson, 2012, p. 37). In systems thinking, the operating environment

of a system is defined as "the next higher system minus the system itself" (Skyttner, 2001, p. 59). Finding the appropriate methodology to shape the environment requires constant evaluation of the situation based on the systemic characteristics of the operating environment: the degree of interconnectedness and the quality of causality.

The Cynefin framework classifies operating environments according to the causes and effects present in the system (Snowden & Boone, 2007; Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). Environments with known or knowable causalities are classified as simple, if there is single causation, or complicated, if there are multiple causalities that require expertise to understand. Simple contexts benefit from best practices, whereas the complicated domain, "the domain of experts", might require multidisciplinary input and planning groups to find the right answers (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Unordered domains, where causalities either can't be spotted or do not exist, are classified either as complex or chaotic. Complex domains require decision-making by probing, sensing responses and then responding to the new information. Unexpected effects can emerge, as the contributing factors can't be modelled beforehand. Chaotic domains are ones where there really is no way to understand the causalities of the environment, and these require the actor to just survive by acting and trying to transform the situation into a complex one (Snowden & Boone, 2007). The European Commission (2021) has suggested using the Cynefin framework for decision-making and responding to crises.

2. CONTEXT-DEPENDENT RATIONALISATION

This section delves into the different process options using the Cynefin framework for analysis and argumentation. The argument is built on military design movement research to explain the different planning and design processes. First, the fundamental differences between planning and design are explained. Then, a framework is suggested for understanding the relationship between different methodologies and environments. Finally, three subsections are dedicated to these different aspects of the framework.

As a starting point, it is important to separate the concepts of planning and design. The article will delve deeper into this in the following subsections, but a starting point is needed. Planning is the use of known best practices, aiming for more efficiency (Zweibelson, 2023, pp. 6–7, 14). This type of planning has a linear sequence, from naming the problem to planning and choosing an appropriate course of action (Mälkki, 2013, pp. 2–3). This type of approach has been seen as giving decision-makers a systematic (not systemic) structure, and clearly defined functions and methodology (Paparone, 2017, p. 518).

Separate from planning, design has been seen as the conception of something that has not existed before (Buchanan, 1992, p. 14). The design approach to security gained support after the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001 and over the decades since (Lacy, 2023, p. 6). Central to this is the idea of an iterative and reflective process, where the so-called problem frame is developed concurrently with the search for possible solutions (Banach & Ryan, 2009, p. 109; Lauder, 2009, p. 44; Mälkki, 2013, pp. 2–3).

Instead of using analysis and the expectation of linear causality, the design solution can be sought through methods like modelling, pattern formation and synthesis (Cross, 1982, p. 221). In systems thinking terms, this approach can be described as aiming not for solutions but for integrating new conceptions into a system to facilitate its performance (Skyttner, 2001, pp. 39–40). Design, on the other hand, has encountered criticism for being intellectually demanding and difficult to implement (Zweibelson, 2023, pp. 123–124), but for experienced professionals at the systemic level, it is well worth studying. The need for both planning and design processes, when environments differ, is represented in Figure 1.

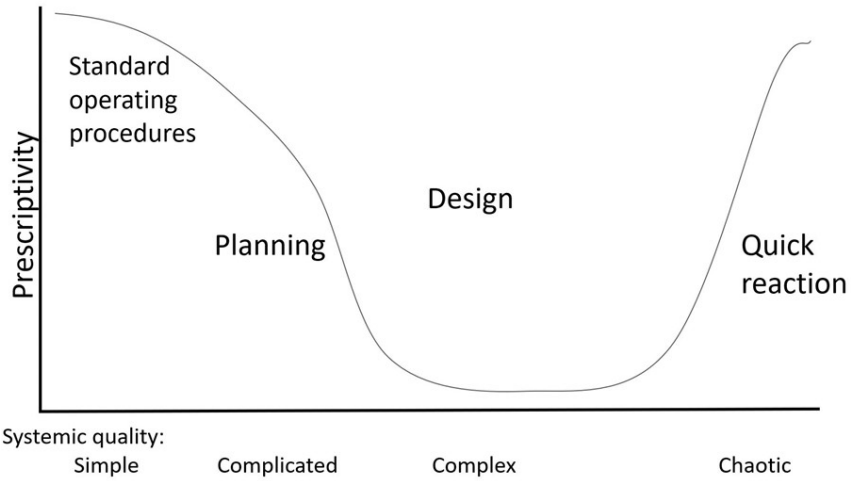

Figure 1. Methodologies suitable for systemically different environments

Figure 1 above presents systemically different environments on the horizontal axis, while the vertical axis depicts the level of prescriptivity that can be used in each environment. The vertical axis can also be understood as containing concepts of predictivity. Effective and easily implementable planning processes are needed when the causalities in the environment can be analysed. The ability to freeze and model the environment and the situation for analysis can be affected either by the complexity or the novelty of the situation, and in such cases more abstract methods are needed. A similar approach has been suggested by Snowden and Boone (2007) and Christopher Paparone (2013, p. 85). Paparone classified military processes as suitable for three different situation types, which are explained in the next subsection.

The right end of the figure presents chaotic environments, where maximum uncertainty or rapid tempo by the antagonist creates the need for a high level of control in leadership in order to somehow get a grip on the situation and act to gain more information. The takeover of Crimea or the first moments of the terrorist attacks in Paris on the Bataclan theatre are examples of this, where the tactical level was surpassed, and systemic and operational levels were also disrupted. Still, operational-level

responses should not focus on concrete field operations, and at this level, the systemic design or planning methodology should be regained.

The next three subsections explain the methodologies presented in Figure 1. First, planning is addressed in more detail, with examples from the military field of thought. After this, design is explained, first in a broad sense and then through two different schools of thought: the human-centred and postmodern approaches.

2.1. THE LINEAR AND EFFICIENT ANSWERS

For structured problems, there are lots of decision-making tools, checklists and planning processes. The simple domains should be understood as the domain of best practices, where the standard operating procedures are optimised based on experience (Rittel & Weber, 1973, p. 156). This goes for systemic-level decision-making also. For example, we should have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and revised plans to start border checks at the EU's internal borders. It is also important to have adequately critical perspectives on these methods, as these are learned from fieldwork and are often implicitly expected to carry over to the systemic level. What works in one context might not yield optimal results in others.

For methodology, simple contexts should include tools such as flow charts, where one asks needed questions or dives into past experiences to correctly categorise the problem and identify a solution. This is how most situations are first responded to in many law enforcement agencies and emergency call centres. At the systemic level, the logic is the same: there are a number of preplanned and established solutions, where the division of labour between the acting agencies is also preplanned. In the military context, these are often described in manuals, doctrines and standard operating procedures, and are often highly valuable, bringing clarity and efficiency to initiating action.

The complicated domain is the domain of experts and should also be understood as the domain of planning processes. These can be understood as engineering-type problems (Zweibelson, 2023, p. 168), unlike

complex problems where every attempted solution starts to change the problem itself from the beginning (Anderson, 2012, p. 37). In a complicated environment, the problem stays the same as we start fixing it. This often happens even in large-scale situations in which one has the initiative to decide the starting point by oneself.

This domain also includes really complicated field operations that demand highly capable and experienced units, expertise, and coordination. Examples are special intervention units conducting multiple raids at the same time with numerous assets or a law enforcement ecosystem planning security measures for high-level political meetings. Such operations can include accurately synchronised communications, diversions and cyber capabilities.

Paparone (2013, p. 85) has defined these structured situations as something either clear and seen before, or something knowable and resembling what has been encountered before. For these situations, a rational and analytical process is needed. In military contexts, he suggests this means processes such as the US Marine Corps' Decision-Making Process, the US Army's Military Decision-Making Process and Troop Leading Procedure, or the US Joint Operational Planning Process. These aim to define the problem and decide on the best course of action (Paparone, 2013, p. 85).

Cell phone company Nokia had a best practice with mobile phone buttons. Unfortunately, the game changed through disruptive touchpads, which made even the best buttons obsolete. Every VHS rental company also had the right answer from previously learned best practices, but video streaming made them obsolete. Similarly, the threat of using unmanned aerial systems has caused new security threats at the level of field operations, and at the systemic level, the highly coordinated terrorist attacks mentioned earlier and Russia's takeover of the Crimean Peninsula challenged our earlier notions of what is possible.

2.2. DESIGN MOVEMENT FOR UNCERTAINTY

When dealing with completely novel situations, a set of new mental models, epistemology and methodologies may be needed. As mentioned before, linear, analytical and reductionist processes have been found ill-suited for constantly changing, time-critical and uncertain environments (Lauder, 2009, p. 43). In these unknown, rapidly changing and uncertain environments, agility and autonomy are needed (Gilpin & Murphy, 2008, p. 41).

The design approach has built on the criticism of neopositivist and reductionist approaches (Buchanan, 1992, p. 6). Design provides a background for developing methodologies that are iterative and emphasise learning. As a part of this, the focus is often on generating a prototype solution fairly quickly, and starting to act to become part of the environment system and learn more from it (Cross, 1982, p. 224; Sorrells et al., 2005, pp. 20–21).

In commercial contexts, the theories have turned to methods such as the Double Diamond process popularised by the British Design Council in 2005, which builds on HCD ontology (Zweibelson, 2023, p. 45; The Design Council, 2024). The military design movement instead builds mostly on the military operational art of Naveh, but some countries have also incorporated commercial and industrial design concepts (Jackson, 2020, pp. 1, 37; Porkoláb & Zweibelson, 2018, p. 202). This methodology has been described by Naveh himself as building on systems thinking, operational art and postmodern philosophy, as well as mental models from architecture and the script side of cinema and literature (Gracier & Naveh, 2017, pp. 33–34).

The complex domain has been approached using several military methods, methodologies and doctrines at the military operational level of war. NATO has adopted the Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive, which aims to use the full spectrum of military as well as nonmilitary means. Still, researchers feel that it has a linear, causal and mechanistic approach because it builds on existing functionalist military paradigms (Heltberg, Krogh & Kyne, 2024, p. 8; Jackson, 2020, pp. 1, 37; Erdeniz, 2016; NATO, 2013). The US Army Design Methodology (ADM) and the US Marines 2010 design doctrines have been found to have similar

challenges of linear-causal and mechanistic processes based too heavily on earlier experiences (Zweibelson, 2023, pp. 179, 217–218, 227). For the ADM, this compromise comes from resistance to change, the difficulty of teaching the new approach and doubts about implementation (Zweilbeson, 2023, p. 183). As existing military methodologies have encountered the criticism that they are a compromise of rational and linear heritage, and at the same time there is a need to embrace uncertainty, it is important to look deeper at the theories to find where the compromises have diverged from the actual path.

The two approaches described next provide methods for critical reflection, contextual solutions and multiparadigmatic processing of problems and suggested solutions. In Paparone's (2013, pp. 85–86) framework, this area of uncertainty and complexity is described as requiring "imaginative deviance", which needs multiparadigmatic framing and reflection-in-action. This area also needs design, which is "more creative than technical" in its approaches and needs experimentation to find new ways for sensemaking (Paparone, 2013, pp. 85–86).

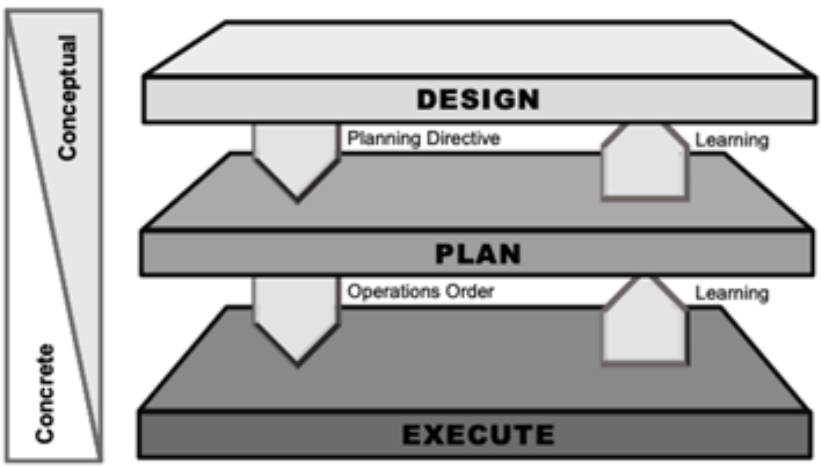

Figure 2. Design, planning and execution as interdependent interfaces (Banach & Ryan, 2009, p. 106)

To build a pragmatic solution, this critical and philosophical level of discussion needs to be turned back to applicable constructs. Zweibelson (2023, p. 167) argues that design can operate above or parallel to operational planning. Banach and Ryan (2009, p. 106) have visualised design as a separate level that is interdependent with planning and execution (see Figure 2), with design guiding the planning and learning from the execution.

In the concept in Figure 2, the design can precede and guide planning, but it may also be simultaneous to support the decision-maker in a constantly changing environment (Banach & Ryan, 2009, p. 106). This conceptual division also should use the characteristics of the personnel in its favour, as different characteristics might be needed for performing high-divergent ideation and strict analysis (Stanczak, Tallbot & Zweibelson, 2021, p. 8).

2.3. THE HUMAN-CENTRED AND POSTMODERN DESIGN PERSPECTIVES AS WAYS TO ACHIEVE MULTIPLE PARADIGMS

This article suggests that design should be understood through two distinct schools of thought, which are built on different theories. Both of these should be considered by the security ecosystem aiming for a collaborative approach to combat threats. Both HCD thinking and postmodern design thinking aim for creativity and appreciate the situational dependence of constructs. What differs is the methods – HCD aims for a multiparadigmatic approach through the collaboration of different types of experts and human-centricity, while the postmodern approach emphasises critical reflection by the participants. These perspectives are explained next, as both are valuable methodologies in the toolbox of the systemic security entity.

The basics of HCD should be implicit in the cooperation expected from the different agencies in comprehensive security approaches. As the approach focuses on the stakeholders, the vocabulary or terminology can be kept generic. Suoheimo, Vasques and Rytilahti (2021, p. 245), in their literature review of service design in the context of wicked problems, identified the methods as participatory and collaborative – and

consequently interdisciplinary and holistic – all while aiming for change. In their findings, they also summarised visualisation as a method to create shared understanding. Wrigley, Moseley and Moseley (2021, p. 111) also found collaboration and civilian-centredness to be part of the results in their literature review of military design thinking articles, but not on the scale suggested by Suoheimo, Vasquez and Rytilahti (2021).

HCD is supported by research in psychology. Groups with more than one perspective have been found to produce more original, more innovative and higher-quality results (Milliken, Bartel & Kurtzberg, 2003, pp. 34–35). This methodology can appreciate irrationality and subjectivity with empathy-based design methodologies (Zweibelson, 2023, p. 32). It can support not just "the full spectrum of human needs and wants, but also community-level events" (Mälkki, 2013, pp. 2–3). The group's diversity affects what the participants perceive as significant (Milliken, Bartel & Kurtzberg, 2003, p. 37).

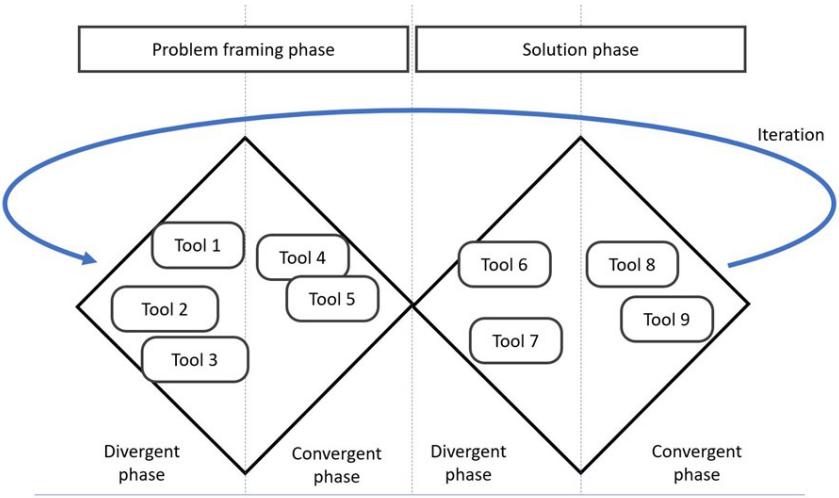

Figure 3. The Double Diamond service design process with methods presented as tools

HCD brings to the tools-based approach not just diversity and interdisciplinarity, but also the tradition of firmly separating the phases of divergent and convergent thinking. The divergent phase focuses on finding different perspectives and generating solutions, whereas the convergent phase focuses on evaluating and funnelling down the acquired knowledge to find feasible solutions (Milliken, Bartel & Kurtzberg, 2003, pp. 34–35). In the context of service design, these phases are understood to contain an implicit metaphase of choosing multiple contextually relevant methods or tools for each phase. This sequence of different phases is presented in Figure 3, with the Double Diamond process as the background (The Design Council, 2024).

The horizontal axis in Figure 3 represents the timeline from left to right, and the vertical axis presents the amount of creative thinking within the process. The diamond shapes form because the divergent phases focus on creativity, and the convergent phases focus on compressing the creativity into feasible results. The two distinct phases – problem framing and solutions – have clearly separate phases of divergent and convergent thinking. Appropriate tools or methods are chosen, taking one phase at a time, to fit the situation at hand. In the first diamond, the divergent tools used for collecting information and understanding the situation range from quantitative to qualitative methods and can include, for example, ethnography, interviews, questionnaires, statistics and different probes. The convergent tools could include methods such as theming, coding and filtering the info, mapping the stakeholders, or creating hypothetical personas expected to be affected by the result. The second diamond aims for new solutions and can include different methods of brainstorming, collaboration, subgroup work or anonymous voting to create new solutions. In the last phase, the ideas could be, for example, compared, gamed or roleplayed to form hypotheses or prototypes of a solution.

HCD might not always be enough by itself for completely novel situations, where disruption is needed. The next level of abstraction and intellectual demands, as well as uncertainty, is the postmodern school of design thought. HCD and postmodern design are usually not viewed as separate, but, for example, Jackson (2020, pp. 40) has suggested that Naveh, Zweibelson and Paparone represent postmodernism in their thinking. In this article, the postmodernism paradigm is introduced through the systemic operational design (SOD) methodology. The SOD

methodology derives from Naveh and his doctoral dissertation from the mid-1990s (Gracier & Naveh, 2017, p. 3; Sorrells et al., 2005, pp. 7–8). This methodology is not optimised for military purposes or for certain levels of action or operations only (Zweibelson, 2023, p. 122).

SOD builds on discourses rather than form and on iteration rather than linear sequences (Anderson, 2012, p. 38; Lauder, 2009, p. 41). This approach has also been described as "structured storming" and needs discipline from the performing team (Sorrells et al., 2005, p. 30). The seven discourses and components of the methodology are presented in Figure 4. In SOD, metaquestions are used as part of the design to understand the depth of understanding at any given moment (Banach & Ryan, 2009, p. 108).

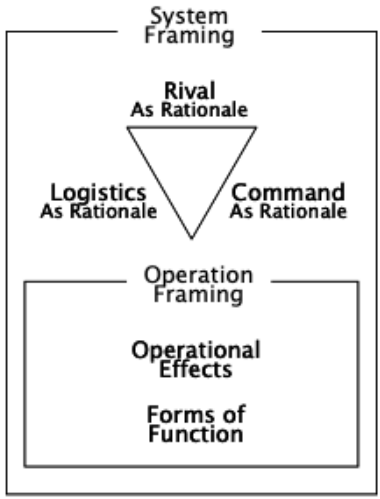

Figure 4. The discourses of systemic operational design (Sorrells et al., 2005, p. 23)

The discourses start from a broad and abstract system framing discussion, advancing towards more concrete and detailed ones, with each informing the next. The transitions between the steps should be "fluid, iterative, and recursive" (Sorrells et al., 2005, p. 22). The discourses aim to understand the enemy (rival as rationale), the command structures necessitated by the situation (command as rationale) and friendly logistical realities (logistics as rationale). After this, an operation is framed

(operation framing) to understand how to shape the environment and the system towards desired conditions. This happens through discourses about the effects desired in the system (operational effects) and the actions that could ignite the changes (forms of function) (Sorrels et al., 2005, pp. 24–28).

Postmodernism has also been applied to conflicts. For example, French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1995), in his critical essay on the perception of the Gulf War, explores how the wider audience experienced the conflict through intermediaries such as strategic communication and TV news. He describes the comprehension of reality that reached the consumers as a simulation, simulacra or hyper-reality. This critical essay by itself does not possess a philosopher's stone for security designers, but it gives an applied example of a critical approach towards perceptions. All the metaquestioning of oneself and the critical reflection of one's possibly simulated perception of the situation is definitely in tension with the efficacy of planning and design. It cannot be made simple either. On the other hand, one needs to give up on things previously considered self-evident to address radical and surprising security situations, whether they are caused by technological leaps, levels of resources or combinations of unexpected events (Lacy, 2023, p. 7).

3. RESULTS: A TOOLS-BASED APPROACH

The research question of this article was: which methodology should security ecosystems use to form contextually appropriate responses to contemporary threats? According to the theories presented, different environments and problem contexts require different planning and design methodologies. As a result, the systemic level of law enforcement and internal security organisations should possess a toolbox of methodologically different planning and design methods, which should be used depending on the systemic qualities of the encountered environment. This section presents that toolbox.

The toolbox is a context-dependent approach, where contextual ontological and epistemological metaquestions are agreed on first, before engaging in methods or processes. There are two ways to do this:

Start with metadecision-making and choose the appropriate process for the context at hand (see Figure 5).

Use a tools-based approach, which is based on metadecision-making at the start of each design phase (see Figure 6).

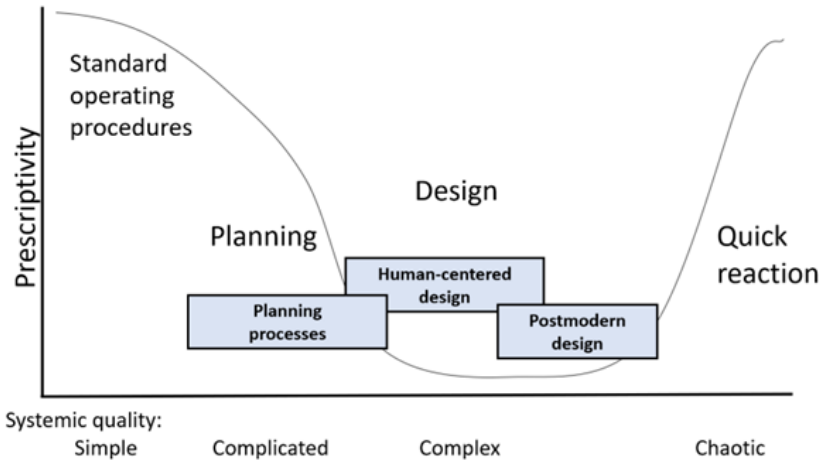

Figure 5. Context-dependent metathinking to choose a process

The solution in Figure 5 suggests that there is a need for different methodologies, and none of the epistemologies should be considered as a one-size-fits-all-answer. The figure is based on the earlier presented premises of the Cynefin framework, the differences between logic in planning and design, and the amount of prescriptivity in the environment. This article contributes to new knowledge by arguing that both human-centred and postmodern design approaches can be used for novel and original innovation and ideation, and both methods support multiparadigmatic design. Still, the approaches have their differences, which should be understood and used wittingly.

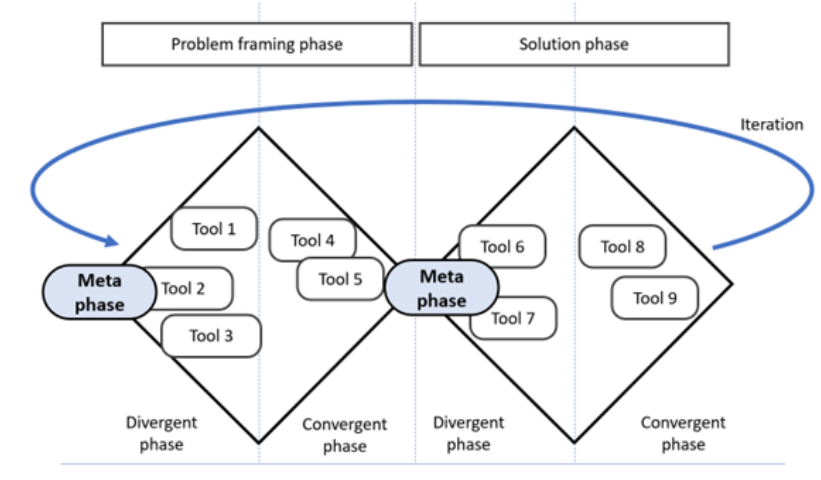

Figure 6. Context-dependent metathinking for selecting tools

Figure 6 presents the solution of using the Double Diamond model, often used in service design, adapted for security and law enforcement ecosystems. Starting a phase can be compared to answering a problem statement in research. One has to make several metadecisions before getting to work: Monotheist or pluralistic ontology? Quantitative or qualitative? What different perspectives are needed or what implicit or institutionalised beliefs need to be identified and questioned? This methodology also needs real iteration to work at its best, as the team really needs to use the benefit of learning throughout the process, which at the same time changes the premises found in earlier phases. Thus, the aim should not be efficiency, if efficiency is evaluated on the energy used for cognitive work during the design.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to find methodologies for planning and designing large-scale, systemic-level internal security measures. It was found that existing theories support a better understanding of the systemic-level approaches of security entities. The military design movement has been

debating the different processes and their relevance, often focusing on promoting complexity-based design approaches for contemporary conflicts. As a conclusion, an application aimed at security actors was constructed. This application suggests understanding design through HCD and postmodern approaches, and applying this to real-world security issues.

In the context of design thinking, this is a new construct. Even though in this article the SOD process was presented as a postmodern approach, this has not been considered as fundamentally different from HCD. Both of these methodologies emphasise a multiparadigmatic approach and collaboration, but still, either critical reflection or group diversity and empathy are seen as paramount. Also, understanding the Double Diamond with metadecisions on ontology and epistemology can offer new contributions when used in novel environments. As such, the results of the article can be seen as a new way to conceptualise and visualise planning and design methodologies.

As can be seen from the references and from the argumentation, this article can be seen as part of the military design movement, even though the applications are aimed at functioning in intergovernmental and multinational collaborative security ecosystems. The concepts do not aim for maximum simplicity or clarity; instead, they are meant to be mental models. This poses challenges for the thinking of the participants or the facilitator to overcome, as efficiency is often expected through clear and shared methods.

The applications suggested require wide knowledge of and experience in various planning and design processes. This puts a high demand on the personnel applying it in terms of prior knowledge as well as cognitive workload and the uncertainty to be tolerated. For this reason, this approach is recommended only for the operational, systemic level of law enforcement agency collaboration and for succeeding in large-scale, even nationwide or international, operations.

It is also obvious that qualitative abductive reasoning needs to be tested by the real world or challenged by further intellectual debate (Schmitt, 2002, p. 20). Novel concepts and novel thinking need new terminology to disrupt what has been thought of before. On the other hand, the

methodology of design has already been challenging purely linear paradigms for several decades, as can be seen from the works cited. In the face of the contemporary interconnected security threats of coordinated terrorism, weaponised mass migration and other threats, including state-sponsored ones, it is important to reexamine the ideas that have seemed correct in the past.

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NAVIGATING ETHNIC FRICTIONS: A CASE STUDY ON THE POSSIBLE RISK OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED CONFLICT IN ESTONIAN MUNICIPALITIES IN 2014–2018

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Keywords: immigration, conflict risk, European Social Survey, composite index, Estonian municipalities

DOI: https://doi.org/10.15158/efk3-mc48

ABSTRACT

This study provides insights into measuring immigration-related conflict risk in diverse societies, using Estonia as a case study. Employing the Measuring Immigration-Related Conflict Risk Index (MICRI), which is designed to measure this type of risk, the study analyses risk scores for 75 Estonian municipalities. Additionally, cluster analysis is used to characterise various risk typologies within these municipalities.

The findings indicate an overall low level of immigration-related risk in Estonia (6.53 on average), with specific municipalities showing heightened risk levels due to factors such as significant immigrant influx and discrimination. Approximately one-third of the municipalities fall into higher risk categories. These municipalities experience notable immigration levels and already host multiple ethnic groups, often reporting instances of discrimination, perceived injustice and economic disparities. Regionally, all municipalities in north-eastern Estonia fall into the highest risk groups, reflecting the long-standing grievances of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. Most municipalities show lower risk levels due to ethnic homogeneity and minimal immigrant influx, although attitudes towards immigrants vary.

Despite the overall low risk levels, critical risk factors persist in Estonian society. Understanding these vulnerabilities is crucial for informed policymaking to foster peaceful coexistence and promote positive interactions between ethnic groups. Therefore, this study serves as a valuable monitoring tool for policymakers and security analysts, aiding in the early identification of potential tensions at the sub-national level.

INTRODUCTION

In many nations, ethnic diversity is on the rise primarily due to significant increases in immigration. However, this growing diversity also brings the challenge of potential intergroup tensions, a phenomenon that is not unfamiliar in European and Baltic societies. Studies have shown that immigration and ethnic diversity can diminish social solidarity and generate negative attitudes toward immigrants (Karreth et al., 2015; Putnam, 2007). Building upon this understanding, this study aims to measure the potential conflict risk arising from immigration within society, using Estonia as a case study. Our focus is on understanding the risk level and its contributing factors at the municipality level to support policymakers in adjusting their strategies based on local vulnerabilities.

Immigration-related ethnic conflicts can be defined as tensions that arise from the complex interplay between immigration processes and pre-existing ethnic divisions within societies (Enos, 2014; Dancygier & Laitin, 2014; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). These tensions typically manifest between newcomers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the established population, encompassing issues from discrimination to violence.

Within this context, Estonia, a small nation with a complex historical backdrop and rapidly evolving demographics, stands as a compelling case study. Estonia already experienced significant shifts during the Soviet occupation, when the proportion of ethnic Estonians fell from 88% in 1940 to 62% in 1989 (Tiit, 2011, pp. 59–60). Thus, by the time Estonia regained its independence in 1991, over a third of the population was a Russian-speaking minority, mainly Russians (30.3%) and Ukrainians (3.1%) (Tiit 2011, p. 61). While the share of Russians has since decreased to 23.7% as of 2021 (Statistics Estonia, 2021), the war in Ukraine has led to a tenfold increase in the number of Ukrainians residing in Estonia (Arenguseire Keskus, 2023). Over the years, Estonia has increasingly become an attractive destination for immigrants, both from the former Soviet bloc and beyond (Anniste, 2018, pp. 27–28).

Another important aspect of Estonia's demographic landscape is its ethnic segregation. The country is divided into 79 municipalities. Almost half of the Russian-speaking population lives in a linguistically

homogenous (Russian-speaking) region in the north-east of Estonia. For example, the 2021 census revealed that in Narva, a city near the Russian border, ethnic Estonians make up just 5% of the population, with the majority identifying as Russians. In the capital, Tallinn, approximately 53% of the population is of ethnic Estonian descent (Statistics Estonia, 2021).

According to *conflict theory,* conflicts are more likely to emerge when two roughly equal-sized groups with opposing goals coexist (Horowitz, 1985). Following this perspective, the risk of conflict exists mainly between ethnic Estonians and Russians, the two major groups represented in Estonia. However, in light of Estonia's evolving status as a destination for immigrants from various nations, including beyond the former Soviet bloc, it becomes imperative to assess potential threats to social cohesion.

Therefore, this research investigates the following questions:

1. What is the risk level of immigration-related ethnic conflicts in Estonian municipalities?

2. How do different municipalities in Estonia vary in terms of risk factors?

To answer these questions, we analysed a sample of 75 out of 79 Estonian municipalities.[1] We then assessed their potential risk of immigration-related conflicts using the Measuring Immigration-Related Conflict Risk Index (MICRI) (Maasing et al., 2021), which is specifically designed to measure risk at the sub-national level, capturing regional differences. Given that tensions usually begin at the local level, predicting conflict risk by looking at national data is not sufficiently precise (Halkia et al., 2020). Unlike most other available indexes that measure anti-immigration attitudes (Marozzi, 2016; Hellmann et al., 2022) or conflict risks (Halkia et al., 2020; Hegre et al., 2019) at the national level, often using macro-level data, the MICRI index includes subjective indicators characterising groups' grievances. Based on the MICRI scores, municipalities were clustered into groups to describe their dominant risk factors.

[1] Four municipalities were left out of the sample because not enough data was available for them.

The data used for the MICRI index was drawn from the European Social Survey (ESS), specifically from three rounds (2014, 2016 and 2018), which gave us a sufficient sample size for analysis. Data on the municipalities' ethnic composition and immigration flows was taken from the 2021 national census.

The article begins with a theoretical exploration of the sources of immigration-related ethnic conflicts, followed by an overview of potential conflict factors within Estonian society. The third section outlines the data sources and methodology used to calculate the scores for the MICRI index, followed by its application to Estonian municipalities and the delineation of municipality typologies. The article concludes by summarising key findings and offering insights into the broader implications of the study's results.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING IMMIGRATION-RELATED ETHNIC CONFLICTS

In the academic field, there is broad consensus that no single factor or theory explains the origins of rebellion. Theoretical frameworks for understanding immigration-related ethnic conflicts often draw on *social identity theory*, Allport's (1958) *contact hypothesis* and *relative deprivation theory*. Social identity encompasses an individual's self-concept derived from their awareness of belonging to one or more social groups, alongside the significance and emotional value attached to this membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Ethnicity, religion or immigration status may be the identity markers that individuals use to categorise group memberships. The ethnic or social identities of immigrants develop through their interactions with members of the host community (contact theory). Positive interactions encourage assimilation or integration, whereas negative interactions can lead to feelings of marginalisation, increased prejudice or racialised identities that are associated with ethnic segregation and intergroup conflict (Schimmele & Wu, 2015; Allport, 1958).

Usually, individuals tend to perceive their group as superior or more favourable than out-groups, a phenomenon that contributes to the "us

v. them" mentality frequently observed in intergroup conflicts. When this mindset is combined with competition for limited resources, such as jobs, housing, social services and political representation, it can cause tensions between groups (Jo & Choi, 2019; Kern Marien & Hooghe, 2015). This concept draws from relative deprivation theory (Adams, 1965), which suggests that feelings of frustration and discontent arise when individuals perceive that their circumstances are worse than those of other similar individuals or when they experience a discrepancy between their expectations and actual outcomes (Schulze & Krätschmer-Hahn, 2014). Conflict becomes particularly likely in situations where resources are insufficient to meet everyone's needs, leading one group to view the presence of another as a threat to their way of life and security (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; Glas, Jennissen & Engbersen, 2021). Indeed, negative attitudes towards immigrants tend to rise in adverse economic situations. Isaksen's (2019) analysis reveals that poor economic performance in Europe during the 2007–2008 financial crisis correlated with a rise in pessimistic attitudes towards immigrants. Similar findings were reported by the International Organization for Migration (IMO, 2010), suggesting that perceptions of immigrants' impact on the economy tend to become more negative as unemployment rises.

Importantly, immigration-related conflicts are not solely a result of immigration but are often associated with abrupt shifts in population size, exacerbated by disparities in group size (Jakobsen et al., 2016; Costalli & Moro, 2011; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Hopkins (2010) introduced another factor into this equation: for an influx of immigrants to provoke increased hostility from natives, immigration must first become politically salient at the national level. When both these conditions – political salience and rapid immigration – are met, hostility towards immigrants is more likely to emerge.

Furthermore, the mobilisation of different groups often involves actors seeking specific objectives. Horowitz (1985) argues that conflicts frequently arise as deliberate political strategies used by leaders and groups to further their interests. Thus, conflicts are not solely the outcome of deep-rooted grievances but also calculated decisions by actors to mobilise groups in support of their interests. Historically, immigration has been strategically used to alter a country's population composition and, consequently, influence its policy or security (Bachmann & Paphiti,

2021, p. 120). Greenhill (2010, p. 117) has identified 56 instances where immigrants were used as "weapons" to exert influence over other countries' policies. For example, Russia leveraged this approach in the lead-up to its occupation of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine in 2014 and again in 2022 before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, by facilitating the acquisition of Russian citizenship for Ukrainian citizens primarily as a means to influence and destabilise Ukrainian society, ultimately culminating in territorial occupations (Gridina & Kasyanova, 2019, p. 36). Similarly, Juurvee and Mattiisen (2020) argue that the ethnic composition resulting from the occupation of Estonia played a pivotal role in the outbreak of the Bronze Night riots in Estonia in 2007.

In summary, these theoretical perspectives are not isolated; rather, they interact in complex ways to shape the dynamics of conflicts. Social identity theory sheds light on the psychological foundations of intergroup biases and perceptions (group identities, interpersonal trust deficits and disparities in fundamental values), while relative deprivation theory provides insight into the socio-economic factors driving these tensions (competition for resources). Furthermore, political strategies provide a framework for understanding how power dynamics influence the manifestation of conflicts. Specifically, when minority groups, especially those with unresolved grievances, attain a significant demographic presence, the potential for their mobilisation in conflicts becomes more pronounced.

2. PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDINGS OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ESTONIA

According to conventional wisdom, Estonia would have been a likely candidate for ethnic turmoil after regaining its independence in the early 1990s. The country's ethno-demographic composition was such that some leading experts in ethnic conflict have regarded it as a high-risk environment. The titular ethnic group – Estonians – represented just over half of the population, while the remainder belonged to another distinct linguistic and cultural community (Kolstø, 2002). In such bicultural and bipolar societies, according to Donald Horowitz (1985), ethnic peace tends to be unstable.

In the 1990s, Estonia's ethnopolitical landscape indeed exhibited pronounced conflictual elements (Kolstø, 2002, p. 4), including an attack on the parliament building in the spring of 1990 and an autonomy referendum in Russian-speaking enclaves like Narva and Sillamäe in 1993. Furthermore, non-favourable "language laws" limited the use of Russian in civic life and employment, and citizenship was withheld from thousands of ethnic Russians, which only added to the discontent felt by the Russian-speaking community. However, unlike some post-communist regions (e.g. former Yugoslavia, Moldova and Ukraine), these events did not escalate into large-scale violence or prolonged conflicts.

The most recent violent episode involving the Russian minority in Estonia, known as the Bronze Night riots, occurred in 2007 and highlighted the lingering ethnic tensions stemming from the Soviet past. Over three nights in April 2007, street riots took place in the capital Tallinn and several cities in the north-east of Estonia (Narva, Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve, Kiviõli and Sillamäe). Most of the participants in the riots were of Russian nationality or descent. Juurvee and Mattiisen (2020) described this as a hybrid conflict in which, besides Russian diplomatic pressure, media propaganda and cyberattacks, the ethnic divisions in society were exploited. Grievances among Russian speakers in Estonia, such as differing interpretations of history, as well as perceived discrimination and inequalities, were used by Russia to heighten discontent in Estonian society. Solska (2011) and Cheskin (2015), in their analysis of the event, pointed out that many protesters who waved Russian flags and shouted pro-Russian slogans felt that Estonians had better access to jobs, education, and political and community life due to their ethnic status.

Vetik et al. (2020) identify three main inequalities in ethnic relationships in Estonia: political-legal (a great number of Russian-speaking population), socio-economic (lower incomes, higher unemployment rate and lower probability of obtaining higher positions for ethnic minorities) and regional (with the less developed north-east containing a significant concentration of Russian speakers). Ethnic segregation remains high, as the majority and minority groups often live in separate linguistic and occupational environments (Petsinis, 2016). Since the 1990s, segregation has continued, and Russian speakers have concentrated more around areas with large Russian-speaking populations (Leetmaa, Tammaru & Hess, 2015), which may further influence ethnic relations.

For ethnic Russians, the main grievances are related to perceived social inequality and discrimination, low trust in government institutions, and unequal opportunities for public participation and recognition (Vihalemm & Kalmus, 2009; Korts, 2009). Russian speakers seek to protect their heritage, language and culture, and demand equal rights and a fair chance for a good life in Estonia (Włodarska-Frykowska, 2016). According to the 2020 Estonian Integration Monitoring Report (Anniste & Sepper, 2020), about 29% of ethnic minorities in Estonia felt unwelcome in the country and 38% felt like second-class citizens. More than two-thirds (73%) believed that Estonians have better job opportunities, and more than half (57%) thought Estonians have better educational opportunities. The 2017 report (Anniste, 2017) revealed that 73% of ethnic minorities felt that the preservation of their ethnic culture was endangered.

Objective indicators also indicate disparities in employment rates, with Estonians more likely to be employed. In 2019, 25% of ethnic minorities and 18% of ethnic Estonians belonged to the lowest income quintile, and 15% of ethnic minorities found themselves in relative poverty (Melesk & Masso, 2020). In 2020, only a third (34%) of the minorities considered their income fair, compared to 48% of Estonians (Melesk & Masso, 2020).

On the other hand, Estonians' concerns about ethnic conflict are often linked to loyalty and trust issues within the Russian-speaking minority. A key concern in post-Soviet nation-building has revolved around the categorisation of Soviet-era settlers, who are sometimes collectively referred to as "the coloniser" by Estonians (Peiker, 2016). Although ethnic assessments by both the majority and minority groups were rather negative in the early 1990s (Kelley, 2004, p. 95), these have softened a decade later, giving way to arguments downplaying any possibility of overt ethnic tensions and highlighting trends towards "pragmatic accommodation". However, the 2007 Bronze Night conflict revealed a deeper clash over values tied to interpretations of World War II (Peiker, 2016).

Russian imperialism continues to pose a challenge to Estonian sovereignty, particularly following Russia's aggression in Ukraine since 2014. Russia has attempted to influence Estonia's legislative processes and interethnic relations between Estonian and Russian speakers in Estonia, using Russian media channels. The Russian-speaking population

remains exposed to Russian media influence due to the widespread consumption of Russian media channels (Vihalemm, Juzefovičs & Leppik, 2019). According to the Estonian Integration Monitoring Report 2020, 61% followed Russian TV channels (Seppel, 2020, p. 74). Interethnic contact remains limited: only 36% of ethnic minorities and 38% of Estonians report engaging in conversations with individuals of different nationalities several times a month in the preceding six months (Kivistik, 2020).

While Estonia has managed to avoid major ethnic clashes since 2007, this stability is not guaranteed. As Kivirähk points out, "the present state of affairs offers plentiful opportunities for the regime in the Kremlin to deepen and exploit ethnic divisions and integration failures to its own benefit" (2014, p. 2). This statement still applies a decade later, as factors that could lead to tensions, including demographic differences, communication gaps, language issues, historical interpretations, mutual distrust, perceived discrimination and socio-economic disparities persist in Estonian society.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this article is to test the MICRI index using data from Estonian municipalities to evaluate potential vulnerabilities to immigration-related ethnic conflicts. Although MICRI is a novel index, reliability tests have yielded promising results. Internal consistency is ensured by carefully selecting indicators that measure relevant dimensions of conflict risk, such as identity, economic resources and social interactions. Cronbach's alpha was used to verify the internal consistency of these measures, showing a good level of reliability with a score of 0.698. The comprehensive methodology for constructing the index is detailed in Maasing et al. (2021).

The data for the MICRI indicators (see Table 1) were sourced from the European Social Survey (ESS) rounds conducted in 2014, 2016 and 2018, specifically focusing on Estonia. These rounds were chosen as they were the most recent available at the time of the study. Municipality-level data from the ESS encompassed indicators DT1-2, V1-3, TH1-3, IN, D,

PC, LNO and LER1. Data for indicators ID1, ID2, LER2 and IM were obtained from the 2021 Estonian population census.

First, we calculated the MICRI values for 75 municipalities in Estonia. Four municipalities were excluded due to limited data availability (these were mainly very small municipalities, such as small islands). The formula for calculating the MICRI risk score for each municipality is as follows:

$$MICRI_n = w1_n * \text{Indicator1 Score} + w2_n * \text{Indicator2 Score} + \ldots + w17_n * \text{Indicator17 Score}$$

where *w1, w2,..., wn* are the assigned weights for each indicator, and *Indicator1 Score, Indicator2 Score,..., Indicatorn Score* represent the weighted scores of each indicator. The indicators are described in the first column of Table 1.

Table 1. Indicators used to assess potential ethnic conflict risk in Estonian municipalities (minimum, maximum, arithmetic mean and standard deviation in normalised and standardised modes for risk index calculations)

INDICATOR	MIN	MAX	MEAN	ST_D
ID1: Ethnic groups (15–85% of inhabitants identify as titular ethnic group; 1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.00	1.00	0.31	0.46
ID2: Religious groups (At least two groups form 5% of population) (1 = yes; 0 = no)	0.00	1.00	0.37	0.49
DT1: Generalised trust (% of people who do not trust others / 100)	0.00	0.42	0.23	0.09
DT2: Institutional trust (Mean % of people with low (< 5) trust in country's parliament, legal system, police, political parties, politicians / 100)	0.14	0.79	0.49	0.12
V1: Negative immigration attitudes (Mean % of people allowing few or no immigrants of (1) same race or ethnic group as majority, (2) different race or ethnic group from majority, (3) from poorer countries outside Europe / 100)	0.27	0.81	0.52	0.10
V2: Negative stereotypes (% of people who believe immigrants make country worse place to live / 100)	0.20	0.86	0.46	0.14
V3: Value gap (Difference between % of locals and immigrants who disagree that gay men and lesbians should be free to live as they wish / 100)	0.00	0.88	0.23	0.21

INDICATOR	MIN	MAX	MEAN	ST_D
TH1: Cultural threat (% who think immigrants undermine cultural life / 100)	0.07	0.69	0.35	0.12
TH2: Economic threat (% who think immigration is bad for economy / 100)	0.17	0.77	0.43	0.14
TH3: Physical threat (% who feel unsafe walking alone in local area after dark / 100)	0.00	0.48	0.15	0.11
IN: Perception of injustice (% who think they belong to a discriminated group in the country / 100) * 10	0.00	3.11	0.48	0.64
D: Dissatisfaction (% dissatisfied with life as a whole / 100) * 5	0.00	1.67	0.59	0.34
PC: Poor communication skills (% who think it is of little, no or no importance at all for them to understand different people / 100)	0.00	0.50	0.15	0.09
LNO: Low norm obedience (Mean % who say it is not important to them to (1) do what they are told and follow rules, and (2) behave appropriately / 100)	0.19	0.54	0.34	0.07
LER1: Poverty (% who find it difficult or very difficult to live on current income / 100)	0.00	0.69	0.27	0.15
LER2: Average registered unemployment rate over last 4 years / 100 * 10	0.17	0.67	0.31	0.10
IM: Average international immigration rate over last 4 years / 100 * 10	0.50	2.40	0.87	0.29

Next, we used cluster analysis to group municipalities with the most similar characteristics using RStudio, we applied hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's method with squared Euclidean distance), a widely used approach for identifying natural groupings within data. This method minimises within-cluster variance while maximising between-cluster variance, resulting in distinct and meaningful clusters. The process began by computing the means for all variables within each cluster, followed by calculating the squared Euclidean distance to the cluster means for each object (municipality). The results were visualised in a dendrogram. Based on visual inspection, we identified four distinct and meaningful clusters in the dendrogram (Figure 1). Cluster analysis helped us to identify the main patterns of risk factors in different types of municipalities. The characteristic features of each cluster are described in the "Results" section.

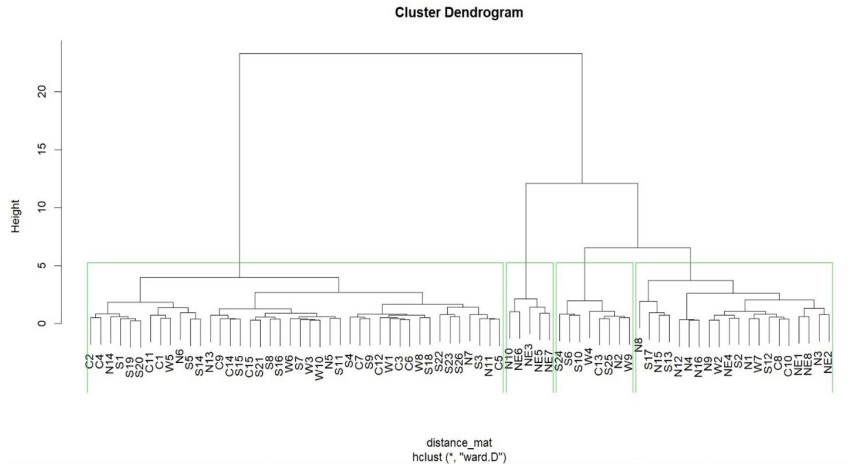

Figure 1. Cluster dendrogram of Estonian municipalities. Each municipality is assigned an ID based on its geographic region (N = north; NE = north-east; W = west; C = central; S = south).

4. RESULTS: CONFLICT RISK LEVELS AND TYPOLOGIES OF ESTONIAN MUNICIPALITIES

We calculated the levels of immigration-related risk in 75 Estonian municipalities, comprising 15 urban and 60 rural municipalities. The average MICRI value across municipalities was 6.53, with scores ranging from 3.59 to 12.80 (Figure 2). Overall, the average risk levels in Estonian municipalities are relatively low.

Several factors contribute to the overall risk index with varying degrees of significance (see Table 1). On average, immigration intensity (IM) is clearly the most salient ethnic conflict risk factor in Estonia. The external immigration rate varies from 0.5 to 2.4 across municipalities. The second most influential risk factor is dissatisfaction with life (D), which also varies greatly across municipalities (min = 0.00, max = 1.67). Other notable ethnic conflict risk factors include negative attitudes towards immigrants (V1), distrust in state institutions (DT2), perception of injustice (IN), negative stereotypes about immigrants (V2) and perceived economic threats (TH2) attributed to immigration. Among these indicators, only perception of injustice (IN) varies substantially by municipality (min = 0.00, max = 3.11).

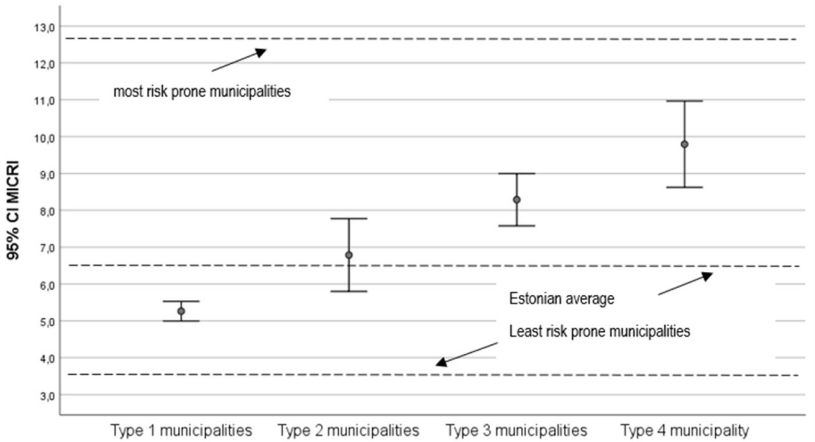

Figure 2. Risk scores of Estonian municipalities

The least influential conflict risk factors in Estonia are poverty (LER1), distrust of other people or groups (DT1), conflicting values (V3), perceived threats to physical security (TH3) and poor communication between groups (PC).

URBAN V. RURAL AREAS

A comparison of urban and rural areas reveals a slightly higher conflict risk in cities. The average index value in urban areas is 8.24 (min = 5.45, max = 12.80), while rural areas have an average of 6.01 (min = 3.59, max = 9.88). Notably, 23 municipalities (including 9 cities), mainly located in the north, north-east and some in the south of Estonia, had multiple strong ethnic groups, often accompanied by religious heterogeneity.

In urban areas, residents tended to exhibit lower levels of distrust towards others and a heightened perception of threats to their physical security compared to rural municipalities. In north-eastern Estonia, concerns about physical security threats due to immigration were nearly three times higher. Distrust of others was more pronounced in the north-eastern and some southern municipalities, while trust levels were highest in western and northern Estonian municipalities.

Furthermore, feelings of injustice and dissatisfaction were somewhat more prevalent in urban areas than in rural municipalities. City residents reported nearly four times more feelings of injustice on average compared to their rural counterparts, with the highest levels found in north-eastern Estonia. This indicator exhibited a positive correlation with economic well-being, as municipalities facing higher poverty and unemployment rates tended to report heightened feelings of injustice.

Cities also experienced a higher rate of immigration compared to rural areas, especially in northern and southern municipalities with larger, more diverse cities.

In rural areas, negative attitudes and stereotypes towards immigrants are more prevalent, as are indicators such as perceived threats to culture posed by immigrants and conflicting values. Negative attitudes towards immigrants were most prominent in north-eastern, central and southern municipalities, while negative stereotypes about immigrants were most prevalent in southern Estonia. Concerns about immigrants posing a threat to culture were relevant in some municipalities in central Estonia.

5. TYPOLOGIES OF ESTONIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Based on the cluster analysis, four types of municipalities were distinguished in Estonia. Table 2 shows that total risk levels are lowest in Type 1 and Type 2 municipalities and highest in Types 3 and 4. Close to two-thirds of the municipalities belong to Type 1 or Type 2, which are the least risk-prone groups. Only five municipalities belong to Type 4, which exhibits the highest risk on average. The Type 3 includes 20 municipalities.

Table 2. MICRI indicator arithmetic mean values and MICRI indicator values by municipality types

	AVERAGE	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3	TYPE 4
ID1: Groups with different ethnic identity	0.31	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.60
ID2: Groups with different religious identity	0.37	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00
DT1: Distrust of other people	0.23	0.23	0.18	0.24	0.30
DT2: Distrust of state institutions	0.49	0.49	0.44	0.50	0.57
V1: Negative attitudes toward immigrants	0.52	0.49	0.58	0.53	0.63
V2: Negative stereotypes toward immigrants	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.40
V3: Conflicting values (value gap)	0.23	0.22	0.26	0.24	0.19
TH1: Feelings of cultural threat	0.35	0.34	0.30	0.39	0.35
TH2: Feelings of economic threat	0.43	0.42	0.48	0.42	0.46
TH3: Feelings of threat to physical security	0.15	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.38
IN: Perception of injustice	0.48	0.26	0.19	0.56	2.43
D: Feelings of dissatisfaction	0.59	0.49	0.55	0.70	1.01
PC: Poor communication	0.15	0.14	0.26	0.11	0.12
LNO: Low norm/rule obedience	0.34	0.35	0.41	0.30	0.28
LER1: Poverty	0.27	0.24	0.29	0.25	0.50
LER2: Unemployment	0.31	0.28	0.31	0.31	0.54
IM: Municipality with intensive immigration rate	0.87	0.74	0.93	1.06	1.02
Average conflict risk	**6.53**	**5.26**	**6.79**	**8.29**	**9.79**
Number of municipalities belonging to this group	75	42	8	20	5

Four distinct types of municipalities can be characterised based on the MICRI index:

Type 4 municipalities – cities with a significant foreign population facing multiple grievances

The ethnic conflict risk level is highest in Type 4 municipalities, but it does not differ significantly (95% CI) from Type 3 municipalities (Figure 2). With an average MICRI value of 9.79, Type 4 municipalities considerably exceed the national average risk level. These municipalities can be characterised as religiously homogeneous, predominantly multi-ethnic communities with relatively high immigration rates.

Only five municipalities belong to this group, all of which are cities, primarily located in northern and north-eastern Estonia. Many are (former) industrial centres that host substantial immigrant populations, which can reach as high as 95% of their total population. These areas face ageing demographics, with a median population age close to 50 years (the national median is 42 years). Additionally, a significant portion of the residents in Type 4 municipalities lack proficiency in foreign languages, and their media consumption patterns differ from the rest of Estonia, with a preference for Russian-language media sources.

Economic well-being indicators in these municipalities lag behind other areas. The average monthly gross salary was around 1,100 euros in 2021, compared to 1,600 euros in wealthier municipalities. Notably, most of Type 4 municipalities belong to regions where the unemployment rate is nearly double the national average, standing at 11.5% compared to 6.2% (Statistics Estonia, 2021).

According to MICRI, the most prominent risk factor in Type 4 municipalities is the perception of injustice (IN), which is four times higher than the national average. General dissatisfaction with life (D) is almost double the national average. Factors such as distrust of other people/groups (DT1) and distrust of state institutions (DT2), negative attitudes towards immigrants (V1), and perceived threats to physical security (TH3) are highest in this group among all the municipalities. Alongside these grievances, economic disparities are more pronounced, with

higher poverty rates (LER1) and unemployment rates (LER2) compared to other municipality types.

In summary, Type 4 municipalities face a multitude of grievances and economic disparities. Despite having a resident population with an immigrant background, they may exhibit limited openness and trust towards newcomers. Distrust in state institutions, potentially influenced by their news sources or lack of interaction with the majority population, is a notable feature.

Type 3 municipalities – multi-ethnic and multi-religious municipalities with elevated immigration rates

Type 3 municipalities exhibit an average MICRI value of 8.29, which exceeds the national average risk level. These municipalities are characterised by the coexistence of multiple groups with strong ethnic (ID1) and religious (ID2) identities, alongside a significant influx of immigration (IM). This group includes 20 municipalities, a third of which are cities, with the remainder being rural areas, often situated close to urban centres. More than half of these municipalities are in northern and north-eastern Estonia, and some are also in the southern and western regions. Notably, this category includes several of Estonia's major cities, which are frequent destinations for new immigrants.

The composition of the existing immigrant population varies across these municipalities, with foreign-background populations reaching as high as 88% in some, though most fall within the 15–50% range. The average population age is similar to the Estonian median age of 42 years, with these municipalities averaging 45 years (min = 39, max = 52). Economically, Type 3 includes both relatively poorer municipalities, primarily rural areas, and economically prosperous ones, including cities and municipalities near major urban centres. In 2021, the average monthly gross salary in these municipalities ranged from 1,100 euros to 1,600 euros, depending on the region (compared to the national average of 1,400 euros). Unemployment rates fluctuated from 4.2% to 11.5% (compared to the national average of 6.2%).

According to MICRI, the most prominent risk factors in Type 3 municipalities are a high immigration rate (IM), high general dissatisfaction

with life (D) and a strong perception of injustice (IN). While the levels of dissatisfaction and injustice are slightly above the national average, the immigration rate is notably higher, and immigration rates from external migration vary greatly (SD = 0.45) among Type 3 municipalities. Some fall below the national average, while some reach maximum levels. Compared to other municipality types, Type 3 municipalities score lowest for poor communication (PC), suggesting that various ethnic groups within these communities engage in positive interactions. This increased social interaction with immigrants appears to mitigate negative attitudes or apprehensions towards immigration.

In summary, Type 3 municipalities are ethnically diverse and multireligious communities experiencing substantial immigration. Different ethnic groups have positive intergroup interactions and attitudes towards immigration are relatively less negative. Yet, these areas tend to exhibit higher levels of general dissatisfaction and heightened perceptions of injustice.

Type 2 municipalities – ethnically homogeneous rural areas with immigration apprehensions

With a MICRI value of 6.79, Type 2 municipalities are close to the national average risk level (Table 2). This category includes eight municipalities, most of which are rural areas in southern Estonia. Type 2 municipalities are characterised by ethnic homogeneity, being predominantly inhabited by ethnic Estonians, with no other ethnic group constituting more than 15% of their populations, but these municipalities also host various groups with strong religious identities (ID2). The age distribution in Type 2 municipalities closely mirrors the national average, at approximately 43 years. Economic conditions in some of the municipalities fall below the national average, with monthly gross salaries averaging around 1,100 euros, compared to the national average of 1,400 euros. Notably, although unemployment rates are low in these areas, averaging 5.3% compared to the Estonian average of 6.2%, monthly gross salaries remain relatively low.

According to MICRI, the risk indicators for Type 2 municipalities largely align with the national average (Table 2). However, a prominent risk factor is negative attitudes towards immigrants (V1), followed by feelings

of threat to economic resources attributed to immigration (TH2) and limited intergroup communication (PC). On average, residents in Type 2 municipalities tend to have fewer interactions with other groups, with the PC indicator nearly twice as high as in any other municipality type (Table 2). The perception of injustice (IN) is the lowest among all municipality types, and general satisfaction with life tends to be high.

In summary, MICRI results indicate that Type 2 municipalities are characterised by ethnic homogeneity, with limited interactions between native and immigrant groups. Residents of these municipalities tend to have some apprehensions about immigrants, despite experiencing relatively low levels of immigration.

Type 1 municipalities – ethnically and religiously homogeneous municipalities with low immigration rates and positive attitudes towards immigration

Type 1 municipalities exhibit the lowest ethnic conflict risk level, with a MICRI value of 5.26, which is below the national average. Out of the 75 Estonian municipalities, 42 belong to this group, primarily rural areas and some small cities. These municipalities are evenly distributed across Estonia, with the exception of the north-eastern region, which registers higher conflict risk values.

Type 1 municipalities are characterised by the ethnic and religious homogeneity of their residents, the majority being ethnic Estonians, with a relatively low level of religiosity. The age distribution in this group averages around 39 years, which is younger than the national average. Most risk indicators in these municipalities align closely with or fall below the national average. Similar to Type 2 municipalities, the perception of injustice (IN) is notably low, under half of the average MICRI score. These municipalities feature a low rate of external immigration (IM) and lack significant concerns related to immigration. Additionally, low values for economic indicators (LER1 and LER2) suggest that economic well-being in these areas surpasses that of other municipalities. A characteristic feature of this municipal type is a low score for feelings of dissatisfaction (D), which may be associated with their ethnic and religious homogeneity and economic well-being.

In summary, Type 1 municipalities pose the lowest risk as they are characterised by homogeneity, low immigration rates, predominantly positive attitudes towards immigrants and minimal concerns related to immigration.

6. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to assess the susceptibility of Estonian municipalities to immigration-related ethnic conflicts using the MICRI index and to identify factors that may contribute to potential conflict risk. The analysis involved calculating risk scores for 75 Estonian municipalities, revealing varying degrees of vulnerability. Our findings indicate that, on average, Estonia maintains a low level of immigration-related risk, but specific municipalities exhibit higher risk levels, with varying risk factors prevailing in different areas.

The MICRI index results identified four distinct municipality types in Estonia, each with a unique risk profile. Approximately one-third of municipalities fall into Type 4 or Type 3, characterised by the highest susceptibility to conflict. These municipalities experience a substantial influx of immigrants and host multiple ethnic groups with strong identities. Residents in these areas report feelings of discrimination, higher dissatisfaction with life, and, in Type 4 municipalities, economic challenges such as elevated unemployment rates and economic dissatisfaction. Studies have shown that economic disparities (Isaksen, 2019) and increased immigration (Weber, 2015) contribute to negative attitudes towards immigration, which is also reflected in our results (Type 4). Notably, positive intergroup communication mitigates some negative attitudes and fears surrounding immigration, as observed in Type 3 municipalities, whereas this is lacking in Type 4 municipalities.

All municipalities in north-eastern Estonia belong to either Type 4 or Type 3. This result is consistent with previous research by Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011), which showed that regional perceived stability was lowest in the eastern part of Estonia, where the Russian-speaking community forms an absolute majority. One significant risk factor in Type 4 is the sense of injustice, which is significantly higher compared

to other municipalities. Feelings of injustice, discrimination and distrust are core elements that, according to Adams (1965), might fuel conflicts. Particularly, we observed heightened feelings of injustice, mistrust and dissatisfaction, as well as increased concerns about physical security, in urban municipalities in the north-eastern region.

Type 1 and Type 2 municipalities, constituting two-thirds of all municipalities, exhibit lower risk levels. These areas are characterised by ethnic homogeneity and minimal immigrant influx. The key distinction between Type 1 and Type 2 municipalities lies in their attitudes toward immigrants and intergroup communication. While Type 1 municipalities harbour positive attitudes towards immigration, Type 2 municipalities exhibit negative attitudes and limited intergroup contact, reflecting the paradox of the contact hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that increased contact between different ethnic groups reduces prejudice, stereotypes and tensions, whereas limited contact amplifies fears (De Coninck, Rodríguez-de-Dios & d'Haenens, 2021). Type 1 and Type 2 municipalities are evenly distributed across Estonia, with no predominant regional concentration.

CONCLUSION

Despite variations in risk levels among municipalities, the risks generally remain relatively low. The results of this study may provide additional insights into why Estonia has avoided major intergroup conflicts since 2007. Our study shows that Estonia can be characterised as a stable and relatively peaceful country with no imminent conflict risks. However, critical risk factors are present in all municipalities, and should these factors intensify, particularly in Type 4 municipalities, the emergence of immigration-related ethnic conflicts or tensions cannot be ruled out. As highlighted by Horowitz (1985), conflicts are often a deliberate political strategy employed by leaders and groups to advance their interests. Therefore, we cannot discount the possibility of (state) actors exploiting these vulnerabilities within Estonian society. Given the difficulty of finding a stable indicator to measure an actor's intent to mobilise a group, such assessments should complement the results of this study.

Our research identified that urban areas in northern and north-eastern Estonia are the most risk-prone. This finding may explain why the 2007 Bronze Night street riots in Estonia occurred primarily in the capital city and north-eastern urban areas. Groups living in these regions have many vulnerabilities, which were exploited by the Russian regime to create instability in Estonia. Therefore, monitoring regional stability is imperative for national and public security, especially considering Russia's potential interest in influencing the politics of countries with significant Russian compatriot populations.

While acknowledging that assessing immigration-related conflict risk is inherently complex and not an exact science, the MICRI index remains a valuable tool for risk evaluation. The results of this study are consistent with previous findings regarding the interethnic landscape in Estonia, which affirms the validity of the MICRI index in this context. It could, therefore, be cautiously applied to measure conflict susceptibility in other interethnic and immigration-prone settings.

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ISSN 2806-3600 (print)
ISSN 2806-3619 (pdf)
ISBN 978-9985-67-447-5 (print)
ISBN 978-9985-67-448-2 (pdf)