



VILNIUS INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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www.vilniusinstitute.lt
info@vilniusinstitute

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VIPA) – a think tank established in 2017. Its experts continuously analyse and comment the most relevant events in Lithuania, prepare recommendations for public policy, organise discussions, conferences, and trainings. VIPA analyses the problems inside Lithuania as well as issues in foreign policy, and encourage citizens to actively take part in the process of solving policy issues. VIPA promotes an open, civic, and active society, advocates the principles of law, equality, and liberal democracy.

POLICY PAPERS

“Lithuanian Railways: Attack from the East. How the Kremlin Carries out Geopolitical Expansion under the Guise of Businessmen in the Baltic States”, Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis, Marius Laurinavičius

Although Russian plans for geopolitical expansion in the Baltic States exploiting the transport infrastructure, leaked to the public in 2010, resonated in Lithuania, but without a few episodes in public, this problem has not been on the national security agenda for many years.

The study reveals and examines the strategic approach of the Kremlin to transport and, in particular, the railway sector as a weapon and expansion tool for Russian foreign policy, as well as a network of interconnected individuals and companies, which co-ordinated acts in Estonia and Latvia, and suggests that despite Lithuania’s readiness to stand up the threat of this expansion, the fight is far from complete.

The study touches upon the military aspect of the national security problems in the field. It concludes that, when considering the possible development of Russia’s influence over the railways, military threats must not be forgotten. Especially at this time, when Russia is becoming increasingly aggressive and is preparing for a large-scale military conflict with the West, as both the Estonian intelligence and the analysts of the FOI Centre of the Swedish Ministry of Defence admit.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Lithuanian-Railways-Attack-from-the-East-1.pdf>

“The Baltic Risk Landscape. Baltic Expert Assessment of Risks and Trends Facing the Baltic Region”, Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis and Estonian Foreign Policy Institute at ICDS, Justinas Mickus and Piret Kuusik

The policy paper analyses major risks and trends in the period of the next five years, based on the point of view of academics, analysts and civil servants from the three Baltic States.

Hybrid warfare, slowdown of economic development, the growth of populism in the politics were named among most relevant risks for the Baltic States. The authors emphasize that it is the right time to integrate climate and digital dimensions into strategies of foreign and defence policy, to strengthen regional collaboration, to invest in international institutions and to promote the importance of rules and norms in the international law.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Mickus-and-Kuusik-The-Baltic-Risk-Landscape.pdf>

“Lithuanian Grand Strategy and EU Defense Integration” by Justinas Mickus is among the best policy papers in the world. It was included in the prestigious index of the best policy papers of the world in 2019 compiled by University of Pennsylvania, „2019 Global Go To Think Tank Index“.

The study “Lithuanian Grand Strategy and EU Defense Integration” analyses scenarios of Lithuanian and EU defence integration under development of EU defence policy. It presents and discusses Lithuanian grand strategy, analyses Lithuanian political preferences in the context of EU defence policy, and presents four major scenarios on how Lithuanian and EU defence policy integration will develop in the future.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/J.-Mickus-Lithuanian-Strategy-and-EU-Defence.pdf>

“Strategic Communication and Crisis Management: Analysing the Cases of Georgia and Lithuania”, Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis and Georgian Institute of Politics, Donatas Puslys and Levan Kakhisvili

In the context of democratization and democratic consolidation internal political crises, caused by either external shocks or dynamics in the domestic arena, pose a significant challenge to the stability of the Georgian political system. Such crises can jeopardize not only internal order but also Georgia’s relations with external actors. Consequently, analysing the government strategies of crisis management and identifying lessons from failures or successes is key to improving the level of national resilience. This paper aims at evaluating the Georgian government’s responses to domestic political crises. It also provides insights, based on the Lithuanian experience, on how such responses can be improved in order to strengthen national resilience.

The paper discusses two cases from both Georgia and Lithuania. The first case from Georgia is the protest wave that started on June 20 as a result of a Russian MP from the Communist Party, Sergei Gavrilov, addressing the delegates of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO) in Russian from the seat of the speaker

of the Georgian parliament. The second case is the recurring incidents of borderization, i.e., land grab and the construction of physical barriers, such as barbed wire fences, trenches, fences, etc. along the occupation line by the Russian border guards and de-facto authorities. Such incidents lead to public unrest, especially since the government cannot actively prevent these incidents. In this paper Georgian government's handling of these cases is considered a failure in terms of efficient crisis management and strategic communication. The paper identifies the failures and lessons to be learned from these incidents.

The paper also overviews Lithuanian experience and specific cases as a demonstration of successful crisis management. The first case concerns the 2018 teachers' strike regarding reform in the teachers' salary model. The new system and the method how it was introduced aroused opposition from one of the teachers trade unions and started wide protests that resulted in the resignation of the Minister of Education. The second case relates to how Russia portrays Lithuanian freedom fighters, who were active after WWII when the Soviet Red army "liberated" Nazi occupied territories. In 2017 when NATO presented a movie about Lithuanian freedom fighters, the Kremlin intensified its disinformation campaign, which required an urgent response from the Lithuanian government.

Over the course of the research, in-depth interviews with principal stakeholders, i.e., representatives of government institutions, were conducted in order to evaluate the crisis management strategies employed by the respective government. Additionally, for the Georgian context, data from public opinion polls was analysed in order to evaluate how the Georgian public assesses the government's strategy of managing crises. Finally, public statements by key political figures were evaluated in order to explore what sort of discursive strategies politicians employ when dealing with internal political crises. Based on the evaluations of both successful and unsuccessful crisis management cases in Georgia and Lithuania, the paper draws lessons to be learned for the government of Georgia.

<http://gip.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/StrategicII.10.2019.pdf>

EUROPEAN SECURITY

Vilnius Consultations 2019

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis organised the annual event "Vilnius Consultations 2019: Europe on the Edge: Politics of Grey Zones" on the 3rd of October. The conference was focused on three topics that are currently destabilising Europe: Russian influence

operations, data vulnerabilities in social networks, and the possible political implications of Chinese investments.

“Vilnius Consultations 2019” provided an extraordinary opportunity for experts and the public to discuss foreign policy and security issues with high-level professionals from the United States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Germany, Israel and Russia.

The conference will be opened by Lithuania’s Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis.

The panels consisted of many influential guests, including José Grinda González, a Spanish prosecutor who has been investigating Russian organised crime networks for more than two decades; Dmitry Adamsky, an Israeli security expert who has recently published a book on how the Russian Orthodox Church has worked its way into the nuclear forces; Anastasia Kirilenko, journalist investigating top-level corruption in Russia; Jacques deLisle, expert on Chinese affairs, Program Manager for Asia at the United States Institute for Foreign Policy Research (FPRI); Rolf Fredheim, senior scientist at NATO's StratCom investigating the phenomenon of robotrolling and many others.

Events of this kind are usually reserved for representatives of ministries and diplomatic corps only, and we wanted to change that. Hence, we turned “Vilnius Consultations” into an open event, easily accessible to each and every one interested in the most acute security and foreign policy issues.

“Vilnius Consultations 2019” were dedicated to the 15th anniversary of Lithuania's membership in NATO.

<https://www.vilniusconsultations.lt/>

Reviews in Media:

<https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50401794/desimtmeti-pinigu-plovima-ispanijoje-tiriantis-prokuroras-rusija-yra-mafijos-valstybe>

https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/mokslas-ir-it/11/1103466/nyderlandu-mokslininkas-kompiuteriai-gali-buti-saliski-ir-diskriminuoti-zmoniu-grupes?fbclid=IwAR1KzuDymSJGLCbW4AyVVwp7fDxKa5_GU1sx2BnWSVSdPeWf_kLedQ-Y-uI

https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/pasaulyje/6/1105064/ekspertas-kinija-mokesi-is-sovietu-zlugimo-o-rusija-nesekmingai-mokosi-is-kinu?fbclid=IwAR3pzwY_9Khfv1xQuWIGsvqrYSad-MziKmDvmD9vU38DnDkFgw_ADCULDoE

Contribution to Kremlin Watch

Kremlin Watch is a strategic programme of the European Values Centre for Security Policy which aims to expose and confront instruments of Russian influence and disinformation operations focused against Western democracies. Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis contributes towards a programme-related newsletter on a bi-weekly basis. VIPA's contributions feature latest news and stories primarily focused on Russian propaganda and its activities in the Baltic media sphere.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/kremlin-watch/>

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

Media and Information Literacy Network (MIRT)

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis initiated and has been leading the non-formal national network of Media and Information Literacy (MIRT) that brings together various institutional and NGO initiatives dedicated to advancing media and information literacy in Lithuania. It consists of NGO/NPOs active in MIR area in collaboration with strategic communications departments at the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior. The purpose of the network is to coordinate, share information and possibilities of activities and cooperation in this field of exceptional importance to every democracy of the world. More than 20 organisations and institutions have joined the network so far.

Activities of the MIRT network are of crucial importance to Lithuania, because it is the only cooperation platform for coordinating initiatives in this field in the country. VIPA will start cooperation with Germany's public international broadcaster's „Deutsche Welle“ academy, whose function is to strengthen competence and cooperation of projects and organisations in the field of media and information literacy, build bridges between initiatives, related to this subject, between our region (Eastern EU and Eastern neighbours) and the countries in Central and Western EU. In cooperation with the DWA Vilnius Institute plans to expand the relevant contents for the “Būtent!” festival in 2020, as well as strengthen and increase the number of MIRT initiatives in the whole Baltic region.

Project of Public Discussions “Resilient Lithuania”

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis has participated in the annual Discussion Festival „Būtent!” in Birštonas for the third year in a row. This year, the team from the Vilnius

Institute for Policy Analysis initiated, organized and cofinanced a separate space with the programme consisting of 11 discussions named „Resilient Lithuania“ – and also participated in other separate discussions at other Festival spaces. Relevant problems related to internet and electronic medias, national and EU security, the clashes of the values of the democratic society were among the presented and discussed topics. Vilnius Institute initiated a non-formal network of media and information literacy (MIRT) in 2017, and has been leading it ever since. „Resilient Lithuania“ programme consisted of 11 discussions and 6 side events staged by VIPA and partners from MIRT.

Discussions NOT About the Theatre

In partnership with the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre VIPA organised a series of discussions "Conversations Not About the Theatre". These discussions, which were reflecting the repertoire of the theatre and the content of the plays, were aimed at analysing such topics as woman rights, historical memory conflicts, protection of the heritage etc. VIPA invited different experts to debate these topics and also discuss the role that cultural institutions can play in helping to advocate the idea of open society and analyse the challenges that arise underway.

Media Analysis

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis announced a call for experts to apply for individual and group grants for media research projects analysing such topics as media freedom, disinformation and media literacy, media transparency, the state of regional media, transparency of media financing and etc. In total two individual and two group grants were given to prepare the following analytical papers:

- **Qualitative research about the state of the local media outlets in Lithuania.** This study is being prepared by the associate professor of Vilnius University Jolanta Mažylė.
- **Journalistic Exemption under the European Data Protection Law.** This study is prepared by the lawyer Natalija Bitiukova who is a specialist in data protection issues.

https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VIPA_Bitiukova_2020_v5_LTsum_f.pdf

- **Analysis on how disinformation narratives about Lithuania as a failed state are being spread through the comment sections of the most popular online dailies.** This study is prepared by the sociologist and lecturer of Vilnius University Karolis Jonutis.

https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-01-31-TYRIMAS_Jonutis_FINAL_true.pdf

- **Analysis on the amount and transparency of the public money being diverted to the private media via different governmental contracts in 2017 – 2018.** In this research Viktoras Bachmetjevas tries to systemise and summarise publicity projects of Lithuanian state institutions (ministries and their institutions): the financial volumes and distribution of budgets. Many analysts notice that the risk of conflicts of public and private interests is higher in this particular field, when high level politicians use public money for “buying” positive or neutral image in the media. There is a need for data base systemising “public” money spent by the government in order to analyse the reasons of these phenomena or at least correlation between them.

Media and Informational Literacy Trainings

The experts of the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis carried out trainings of media literacy in 2019 for the high school students, university students, journalists, clerks from governmental institutions and municipalities. The trainings are aimed at raising the level of civic, media and information education necessary to raise resilience against malign Russian propaganda and disinformation.

Apart from trainings on this topic in the schools of smaller Lithuanian towns Nemaškiai, Vievis, Šiauliai, Vilnius Institute organised training in Vilnius led by Dutch journalist Robert van der Noorda who has been professionally researching activities of “trolls” in social media financed by Russian regime. These trainings were aimed at teaching journalists of how to recognise contents and activities of those “trolls”.

<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/pasaulyje/6/1062667/olandas-pradejo-medzioti-trolius-ukrainoje-isingirdes-absurdiska-mela-ta-problema-niekur-nedings?fbclid=IwARoyXBvTowiAnxxuFFOH5QoPi0Acowvi2-Z8EhlizUHe5rLiGdfbmYs4sjQ>

Project “Bridges of Democracy”

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis in partnership with Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (Serbia) successfully implemented the project „Bridges of Democracy: in 2019. The project was co- financed as part of Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme. Main goal of this project – building the capacity of the citizens and experts of Western Balkans to

recognize propaganda and disinformation, adequately informing society thus strengthening its resilience.

8 analytical articles analysing key challenges faced by the Balkan states on their way to Euro-Atlantic integration, particularly focusing on third parties' (mainly China's and Russia's) interference and the strategies to prevent and address it were written and published in cooperation with Serbian partners within the framework of the project. VIPA experts organised three trainings in Belgrade for local experts on success stories addressing fake news, disinformation related to EU that is spread by Russia, and Russia's interference in democratic processes. There was also an expert level seminar on key challenges of the Balkan countries on their way to Euro-Atlantic integration organised in Vilnius with participation of experts from both Lithuania and Serbia.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/bridges-of-democracy-serbia/>

Project „Youth Opinion and Opportunities for EU Public Diplomacy“

Participants of this international project met on 25-28 August in Vilnius, the meeting was hosted by the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis. 14 researchers from 6 different countries participated in this meeting, where they discussed the narratives constructed by the media in describing conflicts in Ukraine, the importance of those narratives and its perceptions, as well as youth opinions about the relationship between EU and Ukraine in different countries. The results of the analysis carried out in Lithuania were presented by the expert of Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis Gintaras Šumskas along with the team of the international project „Youth Opinion and Opportunities for EU Public Diplomacy: Youth Narratives and Perceptions of the EU and EU-Ukraine Relations in Ukraine and the three Baltic States“ (E-YOUTH).

The results of analysis revealed that the image of Ukraine is first associated with was, conflict, and occupation. This idea is mostly constructed by the media, where Russian aggression against Ukraine is one of the priority topics not only in the region, but also in the news of the world politics.

There is significant support for cooperation with Ukraine, however, the preferred forms of aid are rather selective. According to the young respondents (18 – 30 years old), Lithuania should continue forms of cooperation in „soft power“: aid for development of civic society, expanding cooperation in the fields of economy and culture. Meanwhile, the forms of cooperation requiring actual financial or political commitments (financial or military aid) is looked upon with caution by the youth.

In the broader geopolitical perspective EU and Lithuania are considered Ukraine's advocates in protecting interests of the country in the conflict with Russia and continuing European integration processes. In youth's opinion, Lithuania should seek

for unanimous position of European Union, supporting Ukraine and restricting Russia's influence in the region.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Index of Well-Being in Lithuanian Municipalities

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis presented in December the Index of Well-being in Lithuania Municipalities of the year 2019 to the public, experts and politicians. This is a composite index, covering a broad range of thematic measures. Similar indices are used widely in EU countries for monitoring and analysis of regional developments. VIPA has reviewed the Index of Human Development for Sweden's Municipalities and the Quality of Life Index of Municipalities of the Czech Republic.

The purpose of the Index, rather than providing a mere rating, is to ensure the longitudinal monitoring based on the objective contextual information for timely informing policy and decision makers and increasing awareness of general society on regional disparities in Lithuania. Next to this, recommendations and consultations by VIPA encouraged local discussions and prompt civic engagement initiatives at local level.

Index of Well-being uses official statistics as of the year 2018 thus showing the up-to-date trends of Lithuania's regions. It entails 5 subcomponents, i. e. social security, physical safety, viable economy, quality education, and integral demography. Final rank of each municipality is computed as an average of these rankings.

Together with the renewed index of the year 2019, changes of the indicators in the indices from 2015 – 2019 were also presented, allowing to monitor change of the indicators of well-being in municipalities during the period of four years. Interactive tool for analysis, programmed by VIPA, is now available for use for representatives of municipalities and other persons concerned, allowing to compare parameters of the index in time perspective.

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis will run the Index annually aiming at monitoring and assessing the changes of well-being in Lithuanian municipalities. It is also planned that new relevant components will be added every year.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/savivaldybiu-geroves-indeksas-2019/>

Study on Perceptions of Nepotism

VIPA's long term goal to contribute to the civic countering of state capture by democratically unaccountable interest groups was brought a step closer to fruition

back in 2018 by conducting literature, expert and public opinion research on problems of nepotism in Lithuania – what are the levels and nature of acceptance of this controversial mode of social networking, what is the scope of this difficult challenge for our fledgling democracy. Public survey gave a picture of real urgency with up to 70 percent of respondents naming nepotism as a significant hindrance in job market, careers and work relations. The results were publicized through social media, distributable infographics, live debates with experts and specialized seminars/lectures for several institutions concerned (Public Service Ethics Board, Special Investigation Service of Lithuania) and local entrepreneur clubs (Vilnius Club). In 2019, the seminars and lectures on nepotism were continued to various business and municipality organisations, also recommendations for decision makers from private sector, NGOs and governmental/municipal institutions were published.

The research will be expanded in 2020 in order to include potential risk groups of nepotism in the public sector. A survey of members of municipality councils will be carried out, the clerks from municipalities and central government will also be surveyed in April 2020. There is an intention to carry out similar research with partners from Latvia and Estonia in order to perform comparative analysis of all Baltic States.

https://vilniusinstitute.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/VPAI_Nepotizmas_2020_V.pdf

Elections Watch 2019

Study on Democratic Participation of Voters

In 2019, VIPA performed a research about decisions of the citizens on voting at the referendum regarding preservation of Lithuanian citizenship to all the people of Lithuanian descent despite of them having acquired another citizenship, and also analysed Lithuanian public opinion about participation of the public election committees at the municipal elections. Both researches were based on the results of representative public surveys.

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis analysed how potential voters perceive and evaluate the images of the candidates at the 2019 Presidential election. Qualities attributed to the candidates (portraits) helped to know the preferences and expectations of the electorate. The results were based on the representative public survey of Lithuanian citizens.

<https://vilniusinstitute.lt/kandidatu-abecele/>

Debates on Results of Elections – Municipal and Presidential

Along with partners from Vytautas Magnus University VIPA organised live-streamed expert discussions on the nights of municipal and presidential elections. 4 discussions were live-streamed in one of the biggest news portals in the country – 15min.lt. Donatas Puslys, Head of Media and Democracy Programme at VIPA developed scenarios for the discussions that comprised not only election results, but also programmes of different political parties, socioeconomic situation in different regions of Lithuania in the context of municipal election; programme of every candidate, legacy of the former president, and international situation in the context of presidential election. The group of experts formed an unofficial „Balzac Club“ that gathered again for a cycle of discussions on what awaits Lithuania in 2020 in the fields of politics, economics, culture, and education.



*Then-contender G.Nausėda (now President of Lithuania) is interviewed by
VIPA's Donatas Puslys*

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdU6YOhqgEYQL-qsiitXjPvkwksBEq7mi>

VIPA EVENTS

January 30

“Public Election Committees: More Democracy or Less Transparency?”

Does society trust public election committees that are representing society? How is this trust related to funding political parties? Do current legal requirements for

election committees ensure equal rights to all participants of political campaign? These and other related question were discussed at the event, organised by VIPA, with participation of Gintaras Šumskas, VIPA's Head of Research; Rima Urbonaitė, researcher at Mykolas Romeris University; Ovidijus Lukošius, Senior editor of the magazine „IQ“; discussion was moderated by VIPA's expert Algis Davidavičius.

February 27

„Ukraine before Election“

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, by majority vote, adopted amendments of the constitution consolidating Ukraine's direction to European Union and NATO. Before the presidential election in Ukraine, the question arose, what direction should be expected from the new leader. Is there a possibility that West-oriented Ukraine will turn to East? The situation before election in Ukraine was commented by the former Ukraine's Minister of Economic Development and Trade Aivaras Abromavičius. Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis had also carried out a public opinion survey that included questions: to what extent Lithuanian citizens care about the fate of Ukraine, what, according to the opinion of respondents, should Ukraine do in order to join the EU and NATO. VIPA's Head of Research Gintaras Šumskas presented the results of the survey.

February 28

“Politics and Religion in Ukraine: What is the Meaning of Autocephaly?”

The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople handed over the Tomos of Autocephaly to the leader of the newly formed Ukraine Orthodox Church Metropolitan Epiphanius I and president Petro Poroshenko over a month ago in Istanbul. What does the Autocephaly mean to Ukraine and congregation of the Ukraine Orthodox Church? Why the document is received not only by the Metropolitan, but also by the President of the State? What kind of relationship the Autocephaly will constitute between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church? The discussion with professor Cyril Hovorun was moderated by VIPA Council Chairman, professor Šarūnas Liekis. Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun is an Associate Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and Acting Director of Huffington Ecumenical Institute. A graduate of the Theological Academy in Kyiv and National University in Athens, he accomplished his doctoral studies at Durham University under the supervision of Fr Andrew Louth. Then he was a Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the

Ukrainian Orthodox Church, First Deputy Chairman of the Educational Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church, and later a Research Fellow at Yale and Columbia Universities, Vice-Dean of Sankt Ignatios Theological Academy in Sweden.

April 4

“Ukraine’s Election Meddling 2019: After the First Round”

VIPA organised a discussion with the former adviser to the Ukraine’s Defence Minister, presidential candidate in 2019 election in Ukraine, one of the prominent leaders of 2014 Euromaidan, coordinator of the “Spilna Sprava” (Eng. “common cause”) movement Oleksandr Danilyuk. The discussion covered the election results and election meddling in Ukraine right after the first round of the Ukrainian presidential election. What kind of hybrid threats are brought into light during these elections? What are the main destabilization scenarios that Ukraine is facing from Russia? What is the possibility of the third Euromaidan and what would it bring to Ukraine? Professional lawyer Danilyuk is the Head of Defence Reform Centre. He is an activist and the main coordinator of “Spilna Sprava” movement, which occupied three ministries during 2014 Euromaidan. In 2014, Danilyuk was hired as an adviser to the Minister of Defence Valery Heteley on Ukrainian army reforms and war in Donbass. Since 2015, Danilyuk is a research fellow at the US based policy think-tank Potomac Foundation. He is running for the president of Ukraine in 2019 election. Discussion was moderated by Moderated by VIPA’s senior expert Marius Laurinavičius.

April 9

“Referendum Regarding Dual Citizenship: Expectations and Reality“

Lithuania has held 12 referenda since the restoration of independence. Only 5 of them were actually accomplished. Looking back to the not very successful history of referenda the question arises – what is the perspective of the referendum regarding dual citizenship? Would presidential election help mobilize the right number of the voters? Would Lithuanian citizens support this initiative? What are the reasons for the choice of the citizens? What are the possible legal outcomes of this change in the Constitution? VIPA carried out a public survey in March about the choices of the citizens in the future referendum regarding dual citizenship. VIPA organised the presentation of the survey results along with the discussion about the problems and insights of the dual citizenship. Participants of the discussion: Dr. Gintaras Šumskas, Head of Research at VIPA; dr. Aušrinė Jurgelionytė, Communication coordinator at Vilnius University; Andrius Valuta, lawyer; Skirma Kondratas, Board Member at

VIPA; prof. dr. Šarūnas Liekis, historian, political scientist. Discussion was moderated by Donatas Puslys, Head of Media and Democracy Programme at VIPA.

May 6

„About China: Case of Tibet“

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis organised the meeting with the leader in exile of Central Tibet administration Lobsang Sangay. After Dalai Lama XIV left this office and became religious leader of Tibet Sangay was elected to become a leader of Tibetan government in exile. Lobsang Sangay was born in India, studied in the universities of Delhi and Harvard; he is a professional lawyer. He supports the peaceful regulation of Tibet's autonomy in China. The discussion was moderated by Algis Davidavičius, VIPA's Expert at the Good Governance Programme.

May 21

„Moldova: Eastern Partnership's Good Student Gone Bad“

Discussion with Dumitru Alaiba, who is Member of the Moldovan Parliament, with the pro-European block ACUM (translated as “NOW”). He is an economist and project manager, educated in Moldova and Finland. Having started his carrier in international consultancy, Dumitru returned home in 2009 to join the pro-European Government. In 2013 he established the Prime Minister's Economic Council, an initiative supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, dealing with business climate reforms, heading a team of five professionals to streamline reforms. He quit his job in 2016, to protest the way the present government, led by Pavel Filip as Prime minister, was sworn in. He considers the current government as the most illegitimate government Moldova has ever had. In February 2019 he became Member of Parliament. In his campaign he openly advocated for international sanctions against the perpetrators of state capture, individuals responsible for high-level corruption, human rights abuse in Moldova, including those public servants who are obstructing the investigation of these crimes. He also advocates for an international investigation of financial crimes that originated in or transited through Moldova in the last years. According to Dumitru Alaiba, Moldova is a textbook example of how corruption, if not tackled on time, can destroy a democracy and compromise its EU path. While five years ago Moldova was labelled a “success story”, “the good student of the Eastern Partnership”, and most advanced to achieve sustainable democracy; the same country now is a captured state where one oligarch calls all the shots. Moldova has laundered over 22 billion USD towards Europe, one billion USD was stolen from its Central Bank

reserves, has passed a controversial tax amnesty, and is selling passports defying the advice against doing so. Moldova is a money laundering hub in becoming, and risks to become an even bigger security threat for the region. While corruption advanced, basic democratic freedoms are under threat, and human rights abuses are ever more often. To advance, Moldova needs to eliminate oligarchic influence from its institutions, and it needs help in doing so. There are lessons to learn for other countries in the Eastern Partnership and maybe beyond the region.

May 24

“Map of „ Trolls “. How are Social Networks Used for Russian Propaganda?”

Robert van der Noorda, a well-known journalist from the Netherlands, having performed a number of interesting researches and having published reports and articles about fake news, troll factories and Russian propaganda, presented his research, its dissemination, and reactions of society to the revealed manipulations in social media. Participants of the discussion shared their experience on how to recognise Russian trolls in Lithuania, its’ activities on Facebook and other social networks, the presenter compared available data about existing “troll factories” in Lithuania, the Netherlands, and other countries. Robert van der Noorda is a representative of freelance investigative journalism, analyst, exploring the problems of Russia and Ukraine – hybrid warfare, propaganda, persecution of dissidents, troll armies in social networks etc. – for more than 15 years.

June 20

„Lithuanian Railways: Attack from the East. How Kremlin Conducts its Geopolitical Expansion Covered up by Businessmen from the Baltic States”

Marius Laurinavičius presented his new policy paper about Russia’s influences in Lithuania. This time mechanisms of Kremlin’s influence in strategic area of Lithuanian economy, namely railways, was analysed. “Lithuanian Railways” has been called “a state within the state” for a long time, and the interest of this “state within the state” were not always identic with those of Lithuania. Scandals related to Russia even forced the former leader Stasys Dailydka to leave the office. There are attempts to reform the company and free it from the Russian influence. But will it be sufficient? Are there other possible ways and tools that could be used to influence “Lithuanian Railways”? Why does it seem that railways are becoming a more important sector than the energy? What measures should be taken to take precautions against Russia’s

influence? After the presentation of the policy paper the above mentioned topics were discussed between the member of Parliament's Committee of National Security and Defence Arvydas Anušauskas and the author of the study Marius Laurinavičius. Discussion was moderated by the journalist Rira Miliūtė.

November 21

„Talking Belarus: Time to Reload Lithuanian-Belarus Relations?“

Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis organised a discussion on Lithuanian-Belarusian relations. Is there a binding link between Lithuania and Belarus in modern-day political landscape? What could bring the two countries together? Could it be centuries of shared history or a common border? Three decades of freedom from the Soviet Union or Belarusian activists seeking for asylum in Lithuania? From the official position of Minsk, it might seem that country is at the continuous crossroads between the East and the West, especially since the Crimean Crisis. Though economy tells a different story. Belarus is heavily dependent on the Russian Federation and two thirds of Belarusian exports earnings depend on Russia. Do Belarusian citizens themselves are keener to go hand-in-hand with Europe or stay under Russian umbrella? What does the parliamentary election in Belarus show? Is Lithuania-Belarus neighbourhood safe in the context of the renewed interest in the Belarus-Russia Union State. In 2013 Anais Marin called military cooperation between Russia and Belarus “standing out as the main achievement of the Union State”. Does this mean that beyond the Lithuanian border with Belarus, Russia has been very active all this time? What kind of position should Lithuania choose vis-à-vis Belarus? Participants of the discussion were Anaïs Marin, University of Warsaw (via Skype); Tatsiana Chulitskaya, Vytautas Magnus University;

Laurynas Jonavičius, Vilnius University; Marius Laurinavičius, Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis; Dzianis Kuchynski, Commemoration of the rebels of 1863-1864 Belarusian Public committee. Discussion was moderated by Viktorija Rusinaitė, Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis.

December 18

„The Baltic Risk Landscape. Baltic Expert Assessment of Risks and Trends Facing the Baltic Region“

VIPA's Associate Analyst Justinas Mickus and Piret Kuusik from the International Centre for Defence and Security in Estonia presented a policy paper "The Baltic Risk Landscape. Baltic Expert Assessment of Risks and Trends Facing the Baltic Region" which was presented during the event. The policy paper is based on the interviews with the foreign policy experts from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The study describes what main risks for the Baltic states were mentioned by the academics, analysts, and government officials, and how these risks are related to the most important trends of global policies. The study reveals that the influence of hybrid warfare and economic risks on the politics of the Baltic States is growing, and it also forecasts the expansion of political fragmentation.

VIPA IN THE MEDIA

The analysts and associate experts of the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis have published articles in the magazine „IQ“ every month in 2019. These articles analysed the problems of democracy in Lithuania and other countries (namely, Ukraine), discussed other relevant topics of home as well as foreign affairs, like the politics of grey zones and resistance to hybrid threats, positions of the newly elected President of Lithuania, unemployment, regional politics.

VIPA analysts and experts also constantly write articles and comments on various relevant topics related to politics, thus contributing to the largest news portals of the country, they participate in radio and TV programmes, participate in different discussions and events in Lithuania as well as abroad.

60 Articles

52 Radio interviews

43 Interviews in the press

58 Interviews and comments on television

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info@vilniusinstitute.lt



+370 612 25727



www.vilniusinstitute.lt



Didžioji g. 5, LT-01128
Vilnius, Lietuva,