

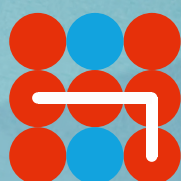
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## Russia's policy towards Belarus: Controlling more, giving back less

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VIKTORIJA RUSINAITE



Hybrid CoE

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# Russia's policy towards Belarus: Controlling more, giving back less

*Belarus is already dependent on the Kremlin. In order to step up the existing dependence, the Kremlin is now relying on a classic transactional triangle: It portrays Belarus as a politically and economically disabled victim, the West as the villain, and itself as a big brother saving Belarus. However, Russia is first and foremost furthering its own strategic goals in the neighbourhood, including military-strategic dominance on its Western Flank and the possible state capture of the main Belarusian industries. When aligned more closely with Russian strategic goals, Belarus will likely pose more severe hybrid threats to its European neighbourhood.*

## Introduction

Since August 2020, Belarus has become the biggest headache for European policymakers dealing with hybrid threats. In the space of one year after the rigged election, Alexander Lukashenko's Belarus is exhausting the list of hybrid threat tools: Lukashenko has threatened military conflict, expelled diplomats, thrown political opponents out of the country and into jail, weaponized thousands of migrants by pushing them through its Western border, threatened to smuggle nuclear material, hijacked a civil aircraft, and welcomed Russian military personnel to conduct exercises together monthly, as well as established a joint military training centre. All of this is wrapped up in domestic and internationally targeted disinformation, claiming that these are just some steps that Lukashenko is taking to defend the country from external meddling by Poland, Lithuania, the Transatlantic Alliance, and the EU, which are all allegedly looking to organize a colour revolution to overthrow his regime.

Domestic affairs in Belarus have also suffered dramatically. The independent media have been targeted by a wave of raids and closures. Hundreds of thousands participated in the post-election protests in 2020. Approximately one in ten adults headed for the protests, despite the prevalence of police violence and torture. Over 36,000 were

detained. According to the Viasna Human Rights Centre, there are 835 political prisoners in Belarus at the time of writing. In addition, there is a looming financial crisis. During the past year, the stagnant and ineffective Belarusian state-run economy was further burdened by shrinking Russian subsidies and COVID-19. Due to the political crisis, state-run businesses were hit by strikes, and numerous private businesses left the country.

Belarus is already dependent on the Kremlin. In order to step up the existing dependence, the Kremlin is now relying on a classic transactional triangle: It portrays Belarus as a politically and economically disabled victim, the West as the villain, and itself as a big brother saving Belarus. Beyond diplomatic, political and state-controlled media discourses that are guided by such transactions, a more worrying situation is developing, characterized by the increased militarization of Belarus and the piecemeal surrender of economic power to Russia.

It is argued in this paper that behind the Kremlin's official narrative of Russian and Belarusian brotherhood and support, Russia is first and foremost furthering its own strategic goals in the neighbourhood, including military-strategic dominance on its Western Flank and the possible state capture of the main Belarusian industries. The paper first addresses Russia's main foreign policy tropes<sup>1</sup> vis-à-vis Belarus (Belarus will not survive

1 For the purposes of this paper, 46 articles published from 20 August 2020 to 20 March 2021 on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation ([www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru)) were analyzed. The articles were selected based on their mentions of Belarus, using a website integrated search engine. The main tropes used in this article have been identified based on this analysis.



alone, the West is the villain, and a Union State with Russia is the way forward), and then looks at the actual policy initiatives beyond them. It is argued that when aligned more closely with Russian strategic goals, Belarus will likely pose more severe hybrid threats to its European neighbourhood.

### **Trope 1: “Belarus will not survive without Russia”**

Russia has been helping Lukashenko to sustain the Belarusian economic model for a long time, with cash and loans in exchange for supporting the Russian strategic direction and surrendering some of its industries. After all, without Belarus, it would be much harder for Russia to pose a kinetic threat to NATO’s Eastern Flank.

Some have estimated that during the past two decades, Russian subsidies have amounted to \$100 billion. They have allowed Lukashenko to avoid modernizing the Belarusian economy and to keep state-owned businesses afloat. In return, Lukashenko has ensured that Belarus stays in the Russian sphere of influence. Lukashenko has promoted a pro-Russian identity throughout his 26-year-long dictatorship. He has sustained bilingualism in public services, making Russian the most spoken language in Belarus, promoted ideas of friendship and a common history between the Russian and Belarusian people, and clung to the same national milestones as the Russian regime, including the victory over Nazism, and the Great Patriotic War.

In addition, Belarus is part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the Moscow-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); the Belarus-Russia supranational Union State; and the single economic space, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). The fact that Minsk votes in the UN Security Council along with Moscow on key security issues speaks for itself. Belarus has recognized Crimea as part of

Russia in December 2021, but has yet to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia (two regions in Georgia occupied by Russia).

In the Russian foreign policy narrative, Belarus is often presented as inferior to Russia in one way or another (older brother Russia,<sup>2</sup> younger sister Belarus<sup>3</sup>), and in need of help or support. Despite public proclamations of a common history and identity, and friendship among their people, Russia has consistently bullied Belarus to give up its gas infrastructure and sell its industries to Russian investors. One example of this is the Yamal pipeline responsible for gas transit from Russia to Europe, which was the focus of numerous food wars and energy disputes from 2004 to 2011, when Belarus finally transferred its full ownership to Gazprom. Another example is Belaruskali, one of the biggest potash producers in the world, which has long been eyed by the Russian potash industry. Lukashenko claimed in 2012 that he had been offered five billion US dollars in kickbacks if he agreed to sell Belaruskali to Russian oligarchs. In the oil industry, Russia’s Rosneft and Lukoil already hold a significant part of the shares in major Belarusian companies Mozyr and Naftan.

### **Trope 2: “The West is the villain”**

Under Lukashenko, Belarus has never had aspirations of joining a pro-Western alliance, but it has rekindled its relationship with the EU, especially in instances when Russia has sought to curb its subsidies. Despite these periods of reactivation, the relationship with Western partners has been continuously strained, not only due to widely cited human rights violations and manipulated election results, but also due to the fact that the European Neighbourhood Instrument and other EU instruments and programmes were not designed to fund dictatorships, and demanded the development of civil society, media freedom, modernization of the economy, decentralization, and transparency of governance.

2 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Интервью Посла России в Белоруссии Д.Ф.Мезенцева телеканалу РБК от 9 марта 2021 г’ [Interview with the Ambassador of Russia to Belarus, D. F. Mezentsev, for the RBC TV channel, 9 March, 2021], mid.ru, 10 March, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset\\_publisher/IJwp6wJEbzl0/content/id/4615351](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset_publisher/IJwp6wJEbzl0/content/id/4615351). [Unless otherwise indicated, all links were last accessed on 2 December 2021.]

3 Pryakhin, Vladimir Fedorovich, ‘Замечания по белорусской ситуации’ [Notes on the Belarusian situation], mid.ru, 17 August, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/about/social\\_organizations/association/-/asset\\_publisher/w6CkleKcy2bQ/content/id/4285785](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/about/social_organizations/association/-/asset_publisher/w6CkleKcy2bQ/content/id/4285785).

Lukashenko was less risk-averse and gravitated more towards Europe after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, likely fearing a similar fate for Belarus. His administration started to ease up on the restrictions imposed on civil society and the media, and throughout 2016–2020 civil society activities developed at a pace unseen for 20 years. The reactivation of civil society very likely contributed to the scope and penetration of the 2020 post-election protests. Lukashenko's repression of the protests, as well as rigged elections and his refusal to step down, caused the EU to redirect its funding from government to civil society, and to suspend EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities until new free and fair elections were held. Lukashenko's administration suspended participation in the Eastern Partnership in summer 2021.

Russia has not reacted well, irrespective of whether relations between Belarus and the EU have improved or worsened. Since autumn 2020, sentiments against the EU and the collective West have turned increasingly sour in Russia. Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov accused NATO, the EU and Western leaders of a lack of diplomacy regarding Belarus,<sup>4</sup> while on another occasion he claimed that the situation in Belarus was tense because the West-supported opposition was trying to dispute the election results.<sup>5</sup> In a joint press conference with him on 26 November 2020, Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei said

that the West was continuing to “use dirty methods of colour revolutions” in Belarus.<sup>6</sup> Sergei Lavrov claimed in his speech during the inter-ministerial collegium the same day that there were plenty of facts that proved Western meddling in Russia and Belarus,<sup>7</sup> and in a subsequent press conference he referred to the EU, NATO and the US as hostile.<sup>8</sup> In an interview for BelRos TV, former Russian Ambassador to Belarus Dmitry Mezentssev (promoted to Secretary of the Union State by Lukashenko in March 2021) even went as far as to metaphorically equate the West with evil, saying that this was something that one could overcome if one has allies such as Russia.<sup>9</sup> In an interview for the RBK TV channel, he claimed that the main goal of the West is to separate Belarus from its “older brother” Russia.<sup>10</sup>

### Trope 3: “Integration is the only way forward”

Along with hostile rhetoric towards the West, Belarusian and Russian counterparts present the Union State as a positive way forward. The Union is a legal entity composed of only two states and has largely been on standby for its first 21 years. It acts as a legal veil for Russia's seizing of critical parts of Belarusian sovereignty, especially in the economic and military domains. The sudden raising of its profile in Russia and Belarus is a tool of lawfare that

4 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Выступление и ответы на вопросы Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова перед студентами и профессорско-преподавательским составом МГИМО по случаю начала учебного года, Москва, 1 сентября 2020 года’ [Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech and responses to questions from the students and faculty of MGIMO on the occasion of the beginning of the academic year, Moscow, 1 September, 2020], mid.ru, 1 September, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/adernoe-nerasprostranenie/-/asset\\_publisher/JrcRGi5UdnBO/content/id/4307068](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/adernoe-nerasprostranenie/-/asset_publisher/JrcRGi5UdnBO/content/id/4307068).

5 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Интервью Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова телеканалу “RTVI”, Москва, 17 сентября 2020 года’ [Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov's interview for the RTVI TV channel, Moscow, 17 September, 2020], mid.ru, 17 September, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/ua/-/asset\\_publisher/ktn0ZLTvbbS3/content/id/4340741](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/ua/-/asset_publisher/ktn0ZLTvbbS3/content/id/4340741).

6 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Выступление и ответы на вопросы СМИ Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова в ходе совместной пресс-конференции с Министром иностранных дел Республики Беларусь В.В.Макеем по итогам совместного заседания коллегий МИД России и МИД Белоруссии, Минск, 26 ноября 2020 года’ [Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks and responses to media questions at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus Vladimir Makei following a joint meeting of the collegiums of the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Minsk, 26 November, 2020], mid.ru, 26 November, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/-/asset\\_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460604](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460604).

7 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Вступительное слово Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова на совместном заседании коллегий министерств иностранных дел Российской Федерации и Республики Беларусь, Минск, 26 ноября 2020 года’ [Opening remarks by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov at a joint meeting of the collegiums of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, Minsk, November 26, 2020], mid.ru, 26 November, 2020 [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/-/asset\\_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460580](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460580).

8 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Заявление для СМИ Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова по итогам встречи с Президентом Республики Беларусь А.Г.Лукашенко, Минск, 26 ноября 2020 года’ [Statement for the media by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov following a meeting with President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, Minsk, 26 November, 2020], mid.ru, 26 November, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/-/asset\\_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460443](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meroprivatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460443).

9 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Interview with the Ambassador of Russia in Belarus, D. F. Mezentssev, for the BelRos TV Channel, January 14, 2021, mid.ru, 25 January, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/nota-bene/-/asset\\_publisher/dx7DsH1WAM6w/content/id/4541912](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/nota-bene/-/asset_publisher/dx7DsH1WAM6w/content/id/4541912).

10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, ‘Interview of the Ambassador of Russia to Belarus, D. F. Mezentssev, for the RBC TV channel, 9 March, 2021’, mid.ru, 10 March, 2021 [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset\\_publisher/Uwp6wJEBzr1O/content/id/4615351](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset_publisher/Uwp6wJEBzr1O/content/id/4615351).

serves to deter some Western policymakers from supporting the Belarusian opposition and civil society, activities that Russia would not approve of. These activities are immediately labelled by the Belarusian and Russian administrations as meddling in the internal affairs of the Union State, a country that most had never heard of before August 2020.

However, Russia now subsidizes Lukashenko's regime at a much slower pace than before. In September 2020, Putin promised Lukashenko a \$1.5 billion loan with \$1 billion delivered by summer 2021. But looking at the history of Russian subsidies through cheap oil and loans, this sum seems miniscule. Even in 2019, when subsidies were at their lowest, according to Kamil Kłysiński at the Polish Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), they amounted to \$3 billion, twice the amount of the 2020-2021 Russian loan. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic recession in Belarus, shrinking foreign investment and the size of the Belarusian public sector, this loan would not only fail to refinance earlier loans, but would barely keep the regime afloat for the coming year.

Moscow uses the Union State format mainly to deter the West from supporting the Belarusian opposition. As Sergei Lavrov said after meeting with Lukashenko in January, "We see active efforts to meddle in internal affairs," but "we have the Union State, and we have nothing to fear".<sup>11</sup> It is evident from the Union State narrative that Moscow expects Minsk to mobilize behind its strategic outlook to the greatest possible extent, by implying that both countries face similar problems. At the beginning of 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its replies to journalists' questions stated: "Unfortunately, real information warfare is now being waged against Minsk and Russia [...]"<sup>12</sup>

But overall, the Union State narrative focuses on sentiments and broad descriptions instead of concrete plans. For example, Mezentsev in his interview for RIA News evoked imagery of Greater Europe: "It is important for every one of us [Russians and Belarusians] that the motherland would extend from Brest to Vladivostok."<sup>13</sup> In his interview for RBK in March, instead of talking about roadmaps in detail, in the context of the Union State he talked about feelings of commonality between Slavs based on faith, language, a common history, and the Great Patriotic War.<sup>14</sup>

However, while the substance of the Union State integration remains obscure, integration is actually taking place in the military and security domains.

### **Beyond the narratives, military alignment deepens**

Before 2020, Russia and Belarus were aligned through the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, had integrated air defence systems, and an integrated regional group of forces comprising Belarusian and Russian military personnel. Russia also rents out two military facilities in Belarus – a strategic ballistic missile defence site operated by Russian Aerospace Forces in Hantsavichy, and a global communications facility for the Russian navy in Vileyka.

Russia has long lobbied for a permanent airbase in Belarus. Before autumn 2020, for Lukashenko, the Kremlin's wish for an increased Russian military presence in Belarus was a bargaining chip to ensure Russian economic subsidies, while simultaneously manipulating the EU and NATO for concessions in order to ensure that Belarus would continue to be a "buffer state" between NATO and

11 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Заявление для СМИ Министра иностранных дел Российской Федерации С.В.Лаврова по итогам встречи с Президентом Республики Беларусь А.Г.Лукашенко, Минск, 26 ноября 2020 года' [Statement for the media by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov following a meeting with President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, Minsk, 26 November, 2020], mid.ru, 26 November, 2020, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/-/asset\\_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460443](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/4460443).

12 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Ответы Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации на вопросы СМИ, поступившие к пресс-конференции по итогам деятельности российской дипломатии в 2020 году' [Replies by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation to media questions received at the press conference on the results of the activities of Russian diplomacy in 2020], mid.ru, 27 January, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4590069#5](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/ckNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4590069#5).

13 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Интервью Посла России Дмитрия Мезенцева международному информационному агентству "РИА Новости", 10 февраля 2021 года' [Interview with Ambassador of Russia Dmitry Mezentsev for international news agency RIA Novosti, 10 February, 2021], mid.ru, 10 February, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset\\_publisher/Uwp6wJEbzrLO/content/id/4565867](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset_publisher/Uwp6wJEbzrLO/content/id/4565867).

14 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 'Интервью Посла России в Белоруссии Д.Ф.Мезенцева телеканалу РБК от 9 марта 2021 г.' [Interview with the Ambassador of Russia to Belarus, D. F. Mezentsev, for the RBC TV channel, 9 March, 2021] mid.ru, 9 March, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset\\_publisher/Uwp6wJEbzrLO/content/id/4615351](https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/by/-/asset_publisher/Uwp6wJEbzrLO/content/id/4615351).

Russia. With EU and NATO countries (except Turkey) not recognizing Lukashenko's presidency, he continues to isolate himself by intensifying hybrid threats against EU neighbours, including weaponizing migrants. Meanwhile, military cooperation with Russia is as close as ever since September 2020. The two countries have conducted exercises together monthly since October 2020 in and outside the frameworks of other scheduled exercises.

To all intents and purposes, the constant rotation of Russian forces in Belarus already signifies a permanent Russian military presence. Belarus has not agreed to host a Russian airbase yet, but in September 2021 Russia sent an unspecified number of Sukhoi-23 fighter jets to Belarus to "patrol the two countries' borders",<sup>15</sup> and Russian Air Force personnel arrived at the new joint military centre in Hrodna. A further indication that Moscow feels increasingly comfortable with the formal alignment of Belarus is the Russian readiness to supply Belarus with S400 missile defence systems at subsidized prices reserved for the Russian internal market<sup>16</sup>. Depending on where these would be deployed, they could offer substantially larger coverage of Ukraine and Poland, and would effectively enhance Moscow's offensive capability against NATO.

## Conclusions

Exploiting the shaky foundations of the Belarusian dictatorship in order to exert economic and power structure-based control, Russia is looking to strengthen its strategic presence on its Western Flank. This sits well with the Russian theory of competition, where Russia plays the role of one of the three great powers by exerting its will on its spheres of influence. The three analyzed tropes – Belarus will not survive without Russia, vilification of the West, and integration as the only way forward – all support the Russian theory of great-power competition. It also serves to draw red lines for the West and indoctrinate the domestic populations in Russia and Belarus.

Belarus's intensification of hybrid threats against its Western neighbours implies dynamics in which new foreign policy opportunities might open up for Russia to be seen as constructive, peaceful and, most importantly, powerful enough to save the EU from the "mad dictator" at its gates, likely in exchange for something more important. The most immediate gains could be the alleviation of sanctions regimes, but also the West abandoning the Belarusian opposition and letting new pro-Russian political actors assume power in Belarus either through the Union State, constitutional reform, or other avenues. Longer term gains could include new arms control regimes favourable to Russia, or European security concessions, for example, regarding accession of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to pro-Western alliances.

Connected to the Russian understanding of the strategic environment through military and intelligence service integration, Lukashenko's administration is highly likely to intensify the severity of hybrid threats against its Western neighbours. However, his desire to cling to power by all means, even by undermining Russia, will very likely open up vulnerabilities in the relationship between the two.

The three main pillars of deterrence strategies against Belarus and Russia rest on reassurance, punishment, and resilience. The EU, NATO and individual member states should support Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in all of these:

1. Reassurance should continuously be practised with the EU and NATO as well as individual states supporting Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Diplomatic and political support is important, not to mention financial support mechanisms to alleviate the repercussions of hybrid attacks and provide grounds for building resilience Union-wide and Alliance-wide. The joint strengthening of border patrol efforts and military instruments such as a change of military posture will convey that attacking one calls for a response from many, and will make a hybrid attack potentially more costly for those who inflict it.

<sup>15</sup> 'Russia moves Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets to Belarus to patrol borders, Minsk says', Reuters, 8 September, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-moves-sukhoi-su-30-fighter-jets-belarus-patrol-borders-minsk-says-2021-09-08/>.

<sup>16</sup> Глава ФСБТС сообщил, что Белоруссия пока не подавала заявку на поставки С-400 [Head of FSMTC informed that Belarus has not yet applied for S400], Interfax.ru, 14 November 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/802898>.

2. Punishment should follow immediately after a hybrid threat operation. More work needs to be done to target the weaponization of migration and Russian economic aims in Belarus by sanctioning individuals and sectors. Political attribution of the proxy patron relationship between Russia and Belarus could unlock further punishment tools. Russia's economic stakes in Europe such as Nord Stream 2 could be used to influence this relationship. In the medium and long term, punishment should rely on economic and legal tools, with diplomacy and the military providing a stable basis. Beyond sectoral sanctions, and sanctions on those close to the regime, private and state-owned entities participating in hybrid attacks should be sanctioned, and individuals leading those legally prosecuted.
3. To improve resilience to hybrid threat operations, the EU should work to adopt legislation to narrow legal ambiguity. If there is sufficient proof that the attack has been carried out by a hostile actor, this should roll out a process for further targeted political, diplomatic, information, cyber, economic, and legal punishment, reassurance and resilience-building measures. To allow this, credible intelligence capabilities and effective intelligence-sharing should be ensured between the EU member states. Belarusian civil society in and outside Belarus should be continuously supported by the EU and individual states because they will form the basis of a safer European neighbourhood after Alexander Lukashenko.

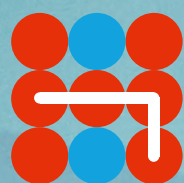


### **Author**

**Dr Viktorija Rusinaite** is a Senior Analyst at Hybrid CoE in Helsinki, working in the Community of Interest for Hybrid Influence. She leads the Deterrence project, focusing on promoting skills for a strategic approach to hybrid deterrence. Before joining Hybrid CoE, she served as the Head of the European Security Programme at the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VIPA). Her research and activities are focused on European security issues, Belarus and Russia, with a specific emphasis on hybrid threats.







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