



The Belarusian operation at the border with Poland – the use of migrants

COURSEBOOK

Introduction

The subject of the course is to explain the nature of the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border as the use of demographic weapons as part of the hybrid actions of Belarus and Russia against Europe, in particular Poland and Lithuania.

The aim of the course is to increase students' awareness of the migration instrumentation and the use of migrants as a demographic weapon, as well as the accompanying cognitive operations.

The program of the course is addressed to students from the Middle East, in particular Iraq, including the Kurdistan region.

The program of the course includes 4 classes of 45 minutes, including 2 classes for the lecture and 2 classes for the seminar.

Teaching tools: projector, computer, board.

Brief description of the course:

1. The reasons for the aggression of the regime of Alexander Lukashenko (more broadly the Union State of Russia and Belarus) against Poland. What led to the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border?
2. Explanation of what Operation Sluice is and what demographic weapons and the instrumentation of migration are.
3. Discussion of the use of migrants by Belarusian services.
4. Discussion of the goals of the Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko related to his use of migrants: to divide Europe and destabilize Poland
5. Discussing the problem of illegal migration in the context of criminal (smuggling) activities and presenting legal opportunities to enter Poland
6. Discussion of the Belarusian-Russian modus operandi of manipulating in the international information space the image of their aggression against Poland.
7. Seminar



Content of the course

1. The causes of Alexander Lukashenko's aggression against Poland resulting in the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border

Since June 2021, the Belarusian regime of Alexander Lukashenko has been attracting foreigners from the Middle East, other regions of Asia and Africa who wish to live in Europe, deceiving them with an allegedly easy route through Poland, and to a lesser extent also Lithuania and Latvia. This is organized by Belarusian special services using intermediaries, who are de facto devoid of honour criminals cheating their victims and responsible for their fate, including cases of deaths on the trail. A significant part of the money collected from migrants lands in companies linked to Lukashenko and his regime. The Belarusian dictator admitted himself that this was his way of earning and making up for the financial losses suffered as a result of the sanctions imposed on him by the European Union for crimes against his own nation. **Russia is also behind Lukashenko and this practice. Belarus is part of the creation named Union of Belarus and Russia, which makes it a vassal of Russia, and its political and security structures are closely linked to Russian ones, without this being in line with the will of the Belarusian nation. Russia, on the other hand, has a centuries-old tradition of using people as weapons and treating them inhumanely, exemplified by deportations to Siberia, also known as "inhuman land". To these areas, where the eternal winter reigns, many Poles were chased under a Russian whip, along the path of death, thousands of kilometres long. In the times of the USSR, a network of labour camps was created there, called the Gulag, where people were treated as slaves. Forced migration engineering was also carried out, transporting entire nations in cattle wagons and resettling them elsewhere. This happened, among others, to the Muslim Crimean Tatars and Chechens in 1944. Earlier, between the years of 1864 and 1867, one and a half million Muslim Circassians were forced by Russia to flee across the Black Sea to Turkey and the Middle East. Modern Belarusian and Russian special forces are also modelled on these experiences, and the concept of forced migration engineering has entered the textbooks used for their training.** This is no secret and anyone can verify it.

Such actions by Russia and Belarus constitute a non-military means of combat, applied in this case against Poland. Thus, on the Polish-Belarusian border, we are dealing with

the aggression of the regime of Alexander Lukashenko (more broadly the Union State of Russia and Belarus), below the threshold of war (hybrid threats/warfare), the aim of which is to create a humanitarian crisis to then achieve political and financial goals and benefits through information services (INFO OPS) and psychological pressures (PSY OPS).

No one can therefore expect Poland to let in illegal migrants and be surprised at the use of force by Polish border guards and soldiers against those who want to invade Polish territory. From the very beginning, a significant part of these deceived and exploited migrants have come from Iraq, including in particular the Kurdistan Region. Arriving in Belarus, and storming the border with Poland afterwards, they are rarely aware that they are being used as tools in Operation "Sluice", which is directly aimed at Poland's national security. Its aim is also, in a broader sense, to destabilize Europe. Poland is determined to nullify these hostile plans against it. To this end, the Polish Border Guard, supported by units of the Polish army, resolutely prevents illegal border crossings, and people making these attempts should be aware that they will be treated as a threat to Poland's national security, regardless of their motivation.

2. Operation Sluice, Migration Instrumentation and Demographic Weapons

The concept of Operation "Sluice" was created already in 2010-2011, whereby the Belarusian regime at the time sought using the stimulation of migration towards the European Union to extort money from it (under the pretext of reimbursing the costs of border protection against illegal migration, which it organized itself). At the same time, this concept fits into the model of demographic weapons, i.e. the use of civilians, in the form of a migration stream, as a weapon against another country, in order to achieve specific strategic goals. In this model, civilians are not an attacking subject, but a tool. At the same time, the purposes of using demographic weapons may vary, e.g. obtaining a financial advantage (e.g. Turkey received 6 billion euros from the EU in 2015), concessions of political nature, destabilization of its opponent, etc.

In order to understand what objectives Belarus, and Russia behind it, intended to achieve, in the case of the operation launched in June 2021, it is necessary to know the



broader context of events. Presidential elections were held in Belarus in August 2020. He has ruled this country since 1994. Alexander Lukashenko lost them (this is confirmed by independent data) but falsified the results and declared his victory. This sparked mass protests that were eventually brutally suppressed.

Although, it may seem shocking to many Iraqi residents, Iraq is a more democratic and free country than Belarus. In Iraq, elections are not falsified and anyone can run in them, and the media are not subordinated to one political option. Already in 1999, Lukashenko ordered the murder of his political competitors: Viktor Hanchar, Yury Zakharanko and Anatol Krasouski, as well as a journalist Dzmitry Zawadski. He then abolished all independent media, began persecuting the opposition, imprisoned many of his opponents, including several of his competitors in the last presidential election, and forced the others to emigrate. Many participants of protests, if they failed to leave for Poland or Lithuania, were sentenced to many years in prison (even 15 years). Iraqi residents know that protests are not a crime, as they have taken to the streets of Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Soleimaniya and many other cities. In Belarus, this is officially considered treason and extremism.

The countries of the European Union did not recognize the results of these elections and announced the isolation of Lukashenko. The situation escalated when on May 23, 2021, a Ryanair plane flying through the Belarusian airspace from Athens to Vilnius was forced by Lukashenko's regime to land in Minsk under the threat of being shot down. This terrorist operation was carried out in order to arrest the Belarusian activist flying this plane - Roman Protasevich, who was later sentenced to 8 years in prison. The European Union responded by imposing numerous sanctions on the Belarusian regime, including a blockade of Belarusian airspace.

The launch of Operation "Sluice", i.e. the use of people brought from Iraq as a weapon, was Lukashenko's reaction to these actions of the EU. The immediate objective was to force the European Union to withdraw from the sanctions, stop supporting the Belarusian opposition, recognize the legality of his election and permit repressions. The paradox was that migrants trying to illegally cross the border and claiming to be refugees (although, apart from a few cases, they did not meet the conditions for being recognized



as such), became the same tool that was to be used against those who were actually persecuted – Belarusian oppositionists. Poland could not allow this, so it blocked the border and with all its determination decided to nullify Lukashenko's plans. Unfortunately, the migrants lured by Lukashenko into the border trap paid for this as well. Many of them came from Iraq, including from the Kurdistan Region.

However, the objectives of Operation Sluice were broader. In September 2021, parliamentary elections were held in Germany, and the spectre of a repetition of the 2015 migration crisis was of great concern to Germany's political elites. Massive, uncontrolled migration causes a number of social problems, conflicts, terrorist threats and an increase in the popularity of extremist forces. Whether specific groups of migrants pose a real threat or not is irrelevant here, as the negative effects are the result of the convergence of various sociological processes.

In particular, there was concern that the new migration crisis would increase the popularity of the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam, far-right Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) party, which is also the spokesman for Russian interests in Germany. The AfD's electoral success and the triggering of a political crisis, as well as social problems in Germany, would thus serve the interests of Russia and Belarus, and the very threat of triggering such a situation was to induce Germany, and thus the EU, to comply.

Operation "Sluice" was also supposed to discredit Poland in the eyes of international opinion and its partners, and also lead to an internal crisis through social polarization and undermining trust in state institutions. As for the first aspect, it was based on the assumption that if Poland did not fulfil its obligations as a border country of the Schengen area, it would become a frivolous and weak country in the eyes of EU partners, and therefore negotiations between Russia and Belarus and Europe to resolve the problem would take place without it. The decisive actions of the Polish Border Guard and the army thwarted this plan.

Unfortunately, this contributed to the spreading of lies about the alleged racism of Poland and the cruelty of Polish officers. Meanwhile, the Polish-Belarusian border is simply dangerous. Potential migrants must also remember that on the border there is a river in which it is easy to drown, very dangerous swamps and a dense forest in which



wild animals live and it is easy to get lost in. There are known cases of people who lost their orientation in winter and froze, and were severely dehydrated in summer. Poland is not responsible for these tragic accidents, but wants to warn against them in order to avoid similar tragedies in the future.

3. The way of using migrants by the Belarusian services

On the Belarusian side, the local services regularly beat migrants and create dangerous situations that may result in tragedies. There are also well-documented cases where Belarusian services beat a man almost to death, and then push him over to the Polish side for him to die there, and the blame to fall on Poland. All this to attract the attention of foreign media, creating the impression that the cause of the Gehenna of migrants is that Poland does not want to help them. The facts are that Polish officers are there to ensure the inviolability of the borders and defend the security of Poland, and not to organize rescue missions, because these would mean crossing the Polish-Belarusian border by Polish officers or soldiers in order to provide assistance to migrants, which would constitute an intrusion on to the territory of a foreign and, in addition, a hostile country, which is only waiting to cause a scandal and accuse Poland of aggression. Therefore, it has been and is out of the question. **Even on the Polish side, the search for the wounded is made difficult by the people in question themselves, because migrants flee from the help provided by officers or soldiers of the Republic of Poland, because this would mean interrupting their illegal journey to Germany (or further west), for which they have paid handsomely.**

Anyone who heads for Belarus must remember that the local services have guidelines to treat migrants in a brutal way and use them against Poland. No vision of a better life is worth such risks and suffering at the hands of Belarusian and Russian services. No one can blame Poland for this either.

An additional protection of the border is an electronic barrier stretching over a length of 206 km, which consists of a fence with a height of 5.5 meters, topped with barbed wire, together with a monitoring system. Any attempts to damage it constitute a crime and the perpetrators will be imprisoned for many years, then deported and will never be able to come to Poland or any other EU country. Crossing the border does not mean that such



a person will be able to stay in Poland, as the Border Guard has the right to return illegal immigrants detained in the border area as part of the so-called push-backs to Belarus. Border Guard officers do this immediately after detention. At least several dozen people are turned back every day in this way. And only in the first half of 2023, 370 criminals helping to cross the border illegally were arrested.

Migrants brought to Belarus are directed not only to the border with Poland, but also with Lithuania and Latvia. In addition, Finland has also been and is attacked on its border with Russia. Therefore, it decided, following the example of Poland, to build a dam to block illegal migration. All these actions, whether on the part of Russia or Belarus, are part of a hybrid war against NATO countries, and those who are used by these terrorist countries for this purpose should be aware that they are therefore becoming part of this war, whether they want it or not. It is therefore necessary to warn them against this.

All those arriving in Belarus with the intention of illegally crossing the border with Poland should be aware that relations between Russia and the dependent Lukashenko regime with Poland are hostile. Russia together with Belarus are seeking to destabilize the internal situation in Poland by using migrants for this purpose. It is an element of conducted by Russia combat below the threshold of war, otherwise popularly referred to as "hybrid war". The influx of illegal migrants is expected to undermine public trust in state institutions such as, in particular, the Border Guard, the army and the police. Its objective is also to cause divisions among the society and radicalization of attitudes, which is further expected to lead to various acts of violence (also against immigrants).

The operation "Sluice" is also closely related to the Russian invasion on Ukraine. Therefore, anyone who arrives in Belarus with the intention of illegal migration should be aware that they are placing themselves in the middle of a bloody conflict in which tens of thousands of people have already died. It is like heading to Mosul during the war with Daesh and later complaining that it is dangerous.

Turning a stream of migrants against Poland had one more purpose, i.e. to test Poland's ability to accept refugees before Russia's planned invasion on Ukraine. It occurred only 8 months after the beginning of Operation "Sluice". At that time, Poles took in several million Ukrainian refugees. **The Russian and Belarusian services hoped to**



discourage Polish society from helping refugees, knowing that soon millions of Ukrainian refugees would find themselves in Poland. They also wanted to involve the Republic of Poland apparatus and a large part of the services and army at the border to deprive them of their ability to respond to the situation in Ukraine and at the Polish-Ukrainian border. If Poland opened up to illegal migrants sent to it by Russia and Lukashenko, it would spend its resources on them and would not have such capabilities in relation to Ukrainians. And it is not about where some people came from and where the others did, but about the fact that in the case of Ukraine they were people fleeing the war, primarily women and children, and on the border with Belarus there were people who did not flee the war, the vast majority of them were men. **Poland is aware that in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, there are many challenges to the security of the population, but there is no war going on there. Bombs do not fall on Basra, Baghdad, Erbil or Soleimani every day, and in the case of Ukraine this is just the case. The incitement of anti-immigrant sentiments, as a result of Operation "Sluice", was supposed to make it difficult to provide assistance to Ukrainian women and children fleeing bombs. Poland could not agree to this, as it would be immoral.**

Directing a stream of illegal migrants to Poland is also supposed to serve as a veil for sabotage activities against Poland. These include terrorist activities conducted under a false flag, as well as border incidents involving Russian mercenaries. To this end, Russia has created camps of so-called Wagners in Belarus, near the border with Poland, which from the Polish perspective are bandits and terrorists. The Wagners, who carry out the orders of the Russian authorities (despite the fact that Russian leader Vladimir Putin ordered the elimination of their leader Prigozhin), also recruit a range of foreigners from the Middle East or Africa into their ranks. Their infiltration of the stream of migrants poses another real threat, and Poland must, above all, take care of the safety of its citizens. Therefore, in order to support the Border Guard, 10,000 Polish soldiers were sent to the border with Belarus, as well as helicopters and armoured personnel carriers.

Public opinion polls in Poland clearly indicate that Poles accept actions taken at the border with Belarus in order to hinder illegal migration and expect the authorities to ensure the security and impermeability of the borders. Poland is a democratic country, which means that the authorities should act in a way that meets social expectations and



take care above all of the security of the country and its citizens. This is normal for all countries, so no one can expect anything else from us. **However, Poland does not want people lured on to its border by the criminal regime of Lukashenko and the imperial Russia supporting it to die there. We also do not want the disappointed hopes and suffering of the deceived to enrich the middlemen-bandits without honour. Therefore, we call for the abandonment of comings to Belarus with the aim to illegally cross the Polish border.**

4. Alexander Lukashenko's goals related to the use of migrants: to divide Europe and destabilize Poland

Arriving in Belarus is not an easy way to migrate to Europe, but to get into the middle of the conflict between Russia and Belarus with Poland and other European countries. This conflict is part of aggressive imperial policy of Russia, the effects of which can be seen in neighbouring with Poland, Belarus, and Russia, Ukraine, where a war is underway as a result of the Russian invasion. More than 100,000 people have already died there, hundreds of thousands are injured, and several million civilians have fled, seeking refuge primarily in Poland. **Any attempts to illegally cross the Polish border in such conditions are madness, and at the same time are part of hostile actions against Poland and its security, regardless of the intentions of migrants. Is it imaginable that during the war with Daesh, the army and security services of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, freely let migrants from other countries try to illegally cross the border and ignore all security laws and rules? Therefore, it is difficult to expect Poland to act differently and not be guided primarily by its security.**

At the same time, Poland distinguishes between migrants and refugees, and this does not depend on religion or skin colour, but on the reason for crossing the border. It was the same in Iraq during the war with Daesh. The refugees were those fleeing the terrorists from Mosul, Sinjar, Tel Afar and other places occupied by Daesh hordes. They were not residents of Bangladesh, the Philippines, Georgia or Pakistan, coming to work in Irbil, Baghdad or Najaf. Nor were they citizens of various European, Asian or African countries, arriving with bad intentions, i.e. to pose a terrorist threat, spy on or join Daesh. This is what the security services and the rules of crossing borders are for to check. In a situation of threat to national security, and Poland is currently in such a



situation, as Iraq was during the war with Daesh, these rules are particularly restrictive, and those trying to violate them can expect a strong reaction.

Poland welcomed refugees from Ukraine, regardless of whether they were Ukrainians or foreigners studying or working there, including Iraqis, Kurds, Arabs, Indians, Muslims, etc. However, all of them had to cross the border in designated places, i.e. border crossings, presenting documents and obeying the instructions of the Polish border guards. It was no different in the case of people fleeing Daesh. **How would the Iraqi services, including the Kurdish ones, react if some groups or individuals tried to bypass checkpoints, flee from the officers carrying out the checkpoint, or attack them by throwing stones, rods or branches? Especially if they were on top of that commanded by Daesh terrorists? And it is the Belarusian services hostile to Poland that organize migrant militias to attack Poland and its officers and soldiers. They want to provoke bloodshed in this way.**

Migrants trying to illegally cross the Polish-Belarusian border pose a threat to Poland's security, violate the laws of Poland and the European Union, and have to account for the same reaction of Polish services that would be encountered by people trying to penetrate from Daesh areas, avoiding control. For Poland, there is no difference between Daesh and the regime of Putin and his subordinate dictator of Belarus – Lukashenko. Putin is already being prosecuted by the International Criminal Court for his crimes, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. The Russians and officials of Lukashenko's regime are responsible for numerous atrocities, rapes, murders. Therefore, anyone who fits into the plan of Lukashenko and Putin against Poland must take into account severe consequences.

5. Illegal migration as a result of criminal (smuggling) activities and legal opportunities to enter Poland

Russian and Belarusian propaganda tries to present a false image of Poland and its attitude towards refugees. The fact that Poland has taken in several million Ukrainian refugees, and has built a dam on the border with Belarus and is pulling back people trying to cross the border, is supposed to testify to double standards and racism. This is, of course, complete nonsense. First of all, people coming from Ukraine fled from war-



torn areas, as was the case with people fleeing from areas under Daesh control to the Kurdistan Region, or areas secured by the federal forces of Iraq. People who attempt to cross the Belarusian-Polish border arrived legally in Belarus, paying for it to companies associated with the regime hostile to Poland, and then they try to break Polish law, creating a threat to Poland's security. Whether they are aware of it or not is irrelevant. **It is worth noting that Poland has also welcomed tens of thousands of refugees from Belarus (citizens of that country), who were threatened with imprisonment there due to their opposition activities.** Refugees are people who are fleeing war or persecution, and not those who want to live in another country because they think they will be better off there.

From the point of view of the rules of crossing the border with Poland, it also does not matter whether people who have arrived in Belarus are in any danger there, whether they are chased there by officials of the Belarusian regime with dogs, whether they are beaten there and herded to the Polish border like animals, or whether they are treated there like subhumans. Yes, such is Lukashenko's Belarus and anyone who wants to travel there should know that they are exposed to such consequences. Companies encouraging this migration are lying and the grievances should be directed at them, not at Poland. Poland does not bear any responsibility for how migrants are treated in Belarus, and they are treated in a bestial way, as people were treated by Daesh. However, Poland will not negotiate with Lukashenko's terrorists, who treat migrants as hostages, trying to force it to change its policy by playing with human tragedy and emotional blackmail. If Poland gave way, it would only contribute to an even greater tragedy, as it would encourage Russian-Belarusian terrorists to attract even more migrants and expose them to suffering.

Therefore, Poland will not open its border to anyone who will be treated this way by Russian-Belarusian thugs. Exhibits of this practice operating in other countries, including Iraq, i.e. intermediaries organizing such migration, should be closed, and people operating there should be treated as criminals, because they are no different from cells organizing recruitment into the ranks of Daesh. It should also be a matter of honour for those criminals to be punished by the relatives of those who suffered during such a



journey. Because it is the fault of those who organize these trips and take a lot of money for it, not Poland, which defends its border as all other countries do.

It also does not matter whether Poland is a destination country for migrants trying to cross the border illegally or a transit country, as they are trying to reach other European countries, in particular Germany. The fact is, that in any advertisements encouraging illegal migration, Poland is not the country of destination, so it is not that someone wants to seek refuge in Poland. Unfortunately, if someone treats Poland as a corridor through which you can freely walk and do what you want, it not only shows disrespect for this country, but is also deeply wrong. Would anyone want strangers to walk through their house like that?

Poland's border with Belarus is the external border of the European Union and Poland is obliged to secure it. Poland, however, is fulfilling its international obligations. Therefore, even if someone manages to cross the border illegally and does not drown in the swamps or freeze in the forest, they will most likely be stopped on the way to the German border. It's a long road, and criminals transporting migrants treat them like animals, stuffing them in trunks and other unventilated containers. In such conditions, one has to travel several hundred kilometres and most of such transports are stopped by the Polish services. However, this is not the worst thing that can happen to illegal migrants along the way, as they expose themselves to death by suffocation in these inhumane transport conditions.

It is a misunderstanding to assume that Polish officials will not stop illegal migrants trying to illegally reach Germany from Poland. This is their duty, which they conscientiously perform. Leaving the territory of Poland by illegal migrants and entering another EU country is not "getting rid of the problem" for Poland. Firstly, because Poland is a serious country that takes its law seriously, as well as its international reputation. Secondly, because migration through Poland to other EU countries poses the threat of the need to change the rules for crossing the internal borders of the EU in the Schengen area and the reintroduction of border controls. Poles do not want this and have the right to do so. Thirdly, because, in accordance with bilateral agreements and European Union regulations, foreigners who illegally crossed the Polish-German border are subject to



readmission, i.e. withdrawal from the destination country to the first European Union country whose border they crossed. So in this case to Poland. Here, however, they will be sent to a closed centre and then deported if they do not meet the criteria for being considered refugees.

Even if someone meets the conditions for being recognized as a refugee, they have no right to illegally cross the Polish border. It is a crime, and in connection with the hostile actions of Belarus against Poland and the war unleashed by Russia in Ukraine, it is also an increase of threat to Polish security. People who act this way have to therefore account for the consequences, regardless of the reason for their arrival in Belarus. Statistics show that among those who try to illegally cross the Polish border, people who meet the criteria for refugee status are individual cases. Meanwhile, illegally crossing the border is punishable by a prison sentence of up to 3 years, and for organizing such crossing – a prison sentence of up to 8 years. For assaulting a border guard, you can be imprisoned for up to 12 years before being deported. Regardless of this, people deported for illegally crossing the border are banned from entering Poland and the EU (Schengen countries). Such a person will no longer be able to come legally, and the possibility of legal entry does exist.

Thousands of citizens of Iraq, as well as other Middle Eastern countries, enter Poland legally every year. These are tourists, students, employees, etc. They are welcomed as they come legally. From the beginning of 2021 to mid-2023 Poland has also issued about 570 temporary or permanent residence permits for Iraqi citizens. However, the more attempts to cross the border illegally, the more difficult it will be to enter legally. Poland also accepts refugees, and not only from Ukraine. For example, in 2022, applications for international protection were submitted in Poland by 10,000 foreigners (this does not include most Ukrainians, as they benefit from a different procedure, i.e. temporary protection), including 639 from Iraq. Positive decisions were issued against 4,962 people, including only 10 Iraqi citizens. For comparison, during the last few years Poland granted international protection to approx. 150 Kurds from Syria, Iran or Turkey. In 2022, 20 Iraqi citizens applied for permanent residence in Poland, 2 applied for EU long-term resident status, and 277 applied for temporary residence. At the same time, Poland issued 19 positive decisions on permanent residence, 7 – negative, 2 cases were



discontinued, and 1 was left unaddressed. With regard to long-term EU residents, only 1 negative decision was issued, while as for temporary residence, 181 people received a positive one, 47 – a negative one, 6 cases were discontinued, and 23 were left unaddressed. It is worth explaining that the decisions issued in a given year do not necessarily concern applications from the same year, as the proceedings take many months. Nonetheless, it is clear that Poland does not discriminate against anyone and is not closed to Iraqi citizens, provided that they comply with Polish law and their arrival and stay is legal.

Therefore, it is not worth risking trying to illegally cross the border with Poland and thus committing a crime. It is also worth understanding that every country has the right to defend its security, especially in difficult moments such as those suffered by Iraq (including the Kurdistan Region) during the Daesh threat, and Poland is currently experiencing in connection with the aggressive actions of Russia and Belarus, in particular the war in Ukraine. Criminals who encourage these journeys lie and are responsible for their tragic consequences. They should be punished for it and it is a matter not only of law but also of honour.

6. Belarusian-Russian modus operandi (operation techniques) of manipulating in the international information space the image of its aggression against Poland.

Poland has been subjected to controlled migration pressure, accompanied on an equal scale by propaganda and disinformation activities of the Union State of Russia and Belarus (USRB). Alexander Lukashenko himself as well as Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei acknowledged this, stating that support for cross-border smuggling of illegal immigrants is a response to EU sanctions against Belarus, resulting from the falsification of the 2020 presidential election and the repression of oppositionists. The actions of the Belarusian authorities are an obvious blackmail aimed at exerting such pressure on Poland and the European Union so that the sanctions are eased. However, in the emotional dimension, it is also a kind of punishment for Belarus' immediate neighbours, who supported the protests against Lukashenko. Lithuania and Poland strongly supported the protesters, as they recognized that the neighbouring nation with which they formed a common state in the past deserved the same rights as their citizens



have been enjoying. Inequality and denial of basic rights, as well as repression of those who opposed it, is, after all, a problem close to the experience of Iraqi residents.

Lukashenko and his services are recruiting these people on the basis of a project from years ago, which is called "Operation Sluice". It consists in Belarus attracting migrants from various regions of the world and pushes them to the European Union across the green border. "Operation Sluice" was initiated approx. 10 years ago Initially, the operation was aimed at forcing the European Union to pay protection fee for strengthening the border. However, the scale of this action was smaller than today. Groups of over a dozen people were brought to the border with Poland and Lithuania and transferred to the neighboring country. Initially, the stream of migrants was directed to Lithuania. However, when the authorities in Vilnius announced that Lithuania would return anyone who tried to cross the border illegally, Belarus redirected the migrants to the border with Poland and Latvia.

No war refugee is the cause of the appearance of migrants at the border. According to the information of the services, there, in fact, also is a group of Afghans among the migrants, but they previously lived in Russia, and they are not fleeing from the Taliban, so it is difficult to call them war refugees. There are also people from Iraq who also do not qualify as war refugees. Although Iraq still faces many problems in regards to security and reconstruction after the war with Daesh, now no war is fought there, and the terrorist threat is decreasing radically every year. Periodic Turkish and Iranian air strikes also affect a small and sparsely populated part of the country. The residents of Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Tikrit, Mosul or Sulaymaniyah unlike the residents of Ukrainian cities, leave the house without worrying about whether they will return to it alive or whether the house will not be bombed in the meantime. Both the inhabitants of Iraq and the Polish services guarding the border with Belarus know this very well. The authorities in Minsk, whose goal is not helping the refugees, but to destabilize the situation at the border, are also aware of this. For Russia, it is the reconnaissance of the reaction of Polish services, the reaction of our allies and the reaction of public opinion to possible aggression. So this aggression below the threshold of war is a preparation for even greater aggression, and perhaps even war.



Methodology of work of Russian-Belarusian planners of information and psychological operations

In the methodology of the work of planners of information and psychological operations, which are inscribed in the canon of eastern operations, attributed to the Russian Federation and the Belarusian services, which directly draw models of operation from Russia, the so-called active reconnaissance, i.e. reconnaissance by taking some action, in this case creating migratory pressure, actually gives the opportunity to build a dozen different reconnaissance vectors. For example, it is a question of social polarization, defining types of the media and journalists who are to a lesser or greater extent susceptible to emotions and psychological pressure, also testing of the functional systems of the security structures of the Polish state in the border area is conducted. The efficiency and functionality of these systems, the quality of supervision in the field - both that is carried out using electronic devices, as well as conducted on the basis of personal patrols of the border guards and the Polish army, up to the issues of embedding Poland in international relations (an attempt of disrupting them) are examined. This also applies to Polish-Iraqi relations and mutual perception by both nations. Traditionally, these relations have been positive. In the 70s and 80s of the 20th century, Poles built highways in Iraq, including highways from Baghdad through Anbar up to Jordan and Syria. Since 2016, Polish soldiers have been training Iraqi special forces to fight against Daesh. In turn, many Iraqis have finished their studies in Poland. Russia, however, strives to make these relations bad. There have already been signs of hostility towards Polish soldiers on the part of Iraqis, inspired by Russian disinformation on subject of the treatment of Iraqi citizens by the Polish border services. Meanwhile, Poland is still open to tourists from Iraq, businessmen as well as students. But the appearance of aggressive groups posing as refugees among migrants on the border also changes the perception of Poles and may negatively affect the existing openness to Iraqis legally coming to Poland.

Russia, through Belarus, is investigating how Poland, a member of NATO and the EU alliances, will be perceived in its external environment. Whether it will be able to manage this migration crisis in cooperation or without cooperation with partner countries. At the



moment, it seems that there is lack of inconsistency in the position regarding the migration threat in both structures (NATO and the EU).

The information now collected can be used to make a decision on further actions, such as triggering a large-scale incident at the border, which will have the potential to affect Western public opinion. Only basing on the reaction of the public the center that controls such an operation will attempt to influence or check the quality of Poland's embedding in allied relations. Both in NATO and in the EU.

The Belarusian services are pursuing the incident at all costs, including the cost of life of those they have brought. They take advantage of their situation and pay them for provoking Polish border guards and soldiers. The Belarusian services not only give them grenades, axes, stones, but also dress the immigrants in elements of uniform, which may make it difficult to distinguish whether we are dealing with a disguised man or a soldier. There are known situations when someone pointed a long gun at the Polish services. The point of this is so that Polish uniforms are not sure who they are dealing with. This may even serve to provoke a border conflict with an exchange of fire, where Belarusians will shift the blame to migrants and "wash their hands" of everything. How would soldiers and security officers in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region, react if someone provoked them in this way during the war with Daesh? Every Iraqi should answer this question before accusing the Polish services of brutality. Double standards must be rejected.

The Polish Border Guard, which supervises the border area, detects such provocations. The issue of dressing immigrants in uniform-like attire was picked-up relatively early and is an event that can be handled by the Belarusian side in two basic ways. The first way is propaganda. Belarusians suggest that they are helping migrants by giving them warm clothes. The second element is the possibility of setting in the border area a large number of people who will be visually indistinguishable from the officers of the Belarusian border guards. This, in turn, can be exploited to try to provoke a reaction of border guards in the field, by, for example, trying to penetrate such a uniformed group on to the territory of Poland, gathering information on the manner of communication and reaction time of border guards or the form of reaction itself. Such actions are to help the Belarusian services recognize in an active way how the Polish side supervises the borders. In this



context, warnings about a possible war scenario do not seem exaggerated. And in fact, everything must be done to seal the border. After all, this is a natural action of every state, especially in a situation of threat to security, and no one in Iraq should be surprised.

The Polish-Belarusian border of propaganda.

The operation conducted by Belarus and Russia exploiting the illegal migration route is primarily propaganda and disinformation activities. **Belarus and Russia meticulously use precisely selected information material, and if they do not have it, they manage activities in the field and the behaviour of foreigners so as to produce it.** If one event publicized by Belarus does not evoke an appropriate propaganda effect, inspiration and simulation in the field begin. And this is how it works. Of course, at the expense of migrants' suffering. Analysing the problem as a whole, the opponent in the field of information is perfectly oriented in the divisions of worldview in Poland. Apart from that, there are media facilities that, in addition to reporting events, enter the space of creating a narrative, i.e. the way in which the recipient is to think about specific facts.

The exhibition of the harm began with showing suffering animals that died in confrontation with the fence (concertina wires) erected by the soldiers. When the hysteria around the subject did not work in terms of deepening the polarization, the harm to children and defenceless women was put at the forefront of the propaganda.

Poland is facing the action of an opponent who bases many of his actions on empathy, which is a very strong and primary feature of man. It is not easy to oppose selectively chosen information and manipulated or simulated events that evoke sympathy in the recipients. The international public opinion should be widely informed that these emotions are evoked in them by specific countries (Russia, Belarus) and for a specific purpose.

Further instructions from the Belarusian services, further recordings of propaganda materials. Children are exposed to arouse even greater emotions:

- https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834075662405636
- https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834476310671361
- https://twitter.com/Straz_Graniczna/status/1458834730347020293

Tempted by the Belarusian authorities, the migrants blow cigarette smoke into the child's eyes to cause tears:

- <https://twitter.com/VoicesBelarus/status/1457705413898604545>

If any children know even a word of English, they are involved in propaganda activities. "Announcements in foreign languages is a huge advantage", "Give children banners, write slogans on humanitarian issues":

- <https://twitter.com/StZaryn/status/1458769057902178311>
- <https://twitter.com/StZaryn/status/1458774680064643077>

The above examples are only a fragment of the activities of Belarusian services and propagandists, but forcibly showing their modus operandi (mode of operation) and motivation: the end justifies the means. They have been and are so cynical that they did not even hide it. Such material where they are "caught red-handed" is available to the Polish Border Guard and other services in huge quantities, suggesting that the Belarusians assumed in advance that, despite the unmasking, their manipulative and propagandistic message would get where it was supposed to go.

Returning to the media reaction: Eastern models of conducting service operations lead to the expected psychological reactions. It is assumed that some of the press editors, completely unconsciously, will enter the opponent's narrative. Trivializing, they are "caught" on the hook - in this case, we are talking about the suffering of the youngest. The Belarusian regime did not take into account (and will not take into account) the victims associated with living in the forest in unfavourable weather conditions. Of this we can be absolutely sure. From the beginning, a large exposure of materials in the Belarusian media about deceased immigrants was expected, with particular emphasis on shifting responsibility to the Polish state. Thus, Belarus divides Polish society and provides greater motivation to people engaged in helping those nomadising on the Polish-Belarusian border, who, motivated by noble motives, enter into confrontational interactions with the services and, guided by frustration, fit into the narratives of Belarusian propagandists. The only way to save immigrants from death would be the sudden occurrence of internal problems in Lukashenko's regime, which would cause a sudden end to the operation (Lukashenko's



repressive apparatus would focus on internal problems) or lead to a complete marginalization (lack of interest) of Belarusian propaganda message in the world.

In addition, from the Belarusian side, there are attempts to subject Polish officers to psychological pressure: firing empty shots, throwing objects in the direction of the Border Guard, moving Belarusian "border guards" with sniper weapons, threatening to harm/rape women and/or children in front of the Polish services. These are actions calculated to create pressure, including provoking Polish officers to cross the border or engage in physical confrontation. Thanks to such an operation, the enemy's services gain as much information as possible about the ways of reacting in a foreign country. It sounds vague, but the border line consists of a specific territory, differently shaped and supervised - in addition to electronic means, there are teams of the Border Guard or the Polish Army. Each patrol, reconnaissance activity, time and reaction decision can be stimulated by Belarus with the pressure of immigrants, and the response of Poles - subjected to exhaustive analyses. This type of threat does not only have a social dimension, as there are often planning and recognition processes often taking place in the background, often with a brutal dimension.

Since the very beginning of the Belarusian operation, there has also been a wave of videos encouraging the Arabic-speaking population to come to the European Union. The recordings have suggested and continue to suggest that crossing borders illegally is easy and enjoyable. They show smiling men listening to music as they traverse one green forest after another. **The migrant films that are being disseminated achieve two objectives. First of all, they are a form of advertising and luring other foreigners.** Encouraged by such content, they enter the entire "tourist" cycle. It begins with dislocation, and then we have settlement in a Belarusian hotel, transport to the border, and finally forcing by Belarusian border guards under physical pressure to enter the territory of the Republic of Poland. **The second purpose of distributing this type of recordings is to distract attention from the fact that the regime of Alexander Lukashenko is behind the whole procedure. Public opinion's attention is temporarily focused on companies, organizations or groups that are involved in encouraging migration and helping to cross the border. Of course, such a commercial business is taking place, but it is not happening without the support, consent and supervision of the Belarusian services.**



Above all, remember and beware of one thing – easy earnings! Belarusian services are recruiting migrants for various tasks. From feigning actions, propaganda settings, to aggression against Polish officers, to even quasi espionage activities. It is not worth it! Currently, 3,000 day-night and thermal imaging cameras are operating on the Polish-Belarusian border, and another 4,500 cameras and motion sensors are expected to be created in the near future. The above-mentioned actions constitute a crime that is very likely to be detected and if a person committing such acts is identified in Poland, they will be sentenced to prison. It is not worth derailing your resume for "a few dollars". For Belarus, you are just a pawn.

7. Seminar – issues to be discussed

- a) Causes of the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border: motivations of migrants, Belarusian-Russian motivations, Polish motivations
- b) Operation Sluice vs. Demographic Weapons and Migration Inclusion
- c) Migrants as a tool of Belarusian services – methods of action
- d) A plan to divide Europe and destabilize Poland through the use of migrants
- e) Illegal migration as a result of criminal (smuggling) activities and the possibility of legal travel to Poland and Europe
- f) Discussion of the Belarusian-Russian modus operandi of manipulating in the international information space the image of their aggression against Poland.

Learning outcomes:

- a) The student knows the causes of the migration crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border and understands the motivations of individual parties: migrants using them in Belarus and Russia and Poland defending its border;
- b) The student knows what demographic weapons are and what the incorporation of migration is, and also knows what Operation "Sluice" is
- c) Student understands what are the goals and methods of using migrants by Belarus and Russia
- d) Student understands the relationship between illegal migration and criminal activity
- e) Discussion of the Belarusian-Russian modus operandi of manipulating in the international information space the image of their aggression against Poland.



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