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Lithuanian Intelligence Services' Strategic Communication: 2012–2022 National Threat Assessments, Activity Reports and Recruitment Videos

This study examines the communication of the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania and the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence in 2012–2022. It identifies the aspects relevant to the strategic communication of the intelligence services, analyses specifics of the texts and tendencies in national threat assessments and activity reports, and examines how these institutions present themselves. The study applies the theory of securitisation and critical discourse analysis. It includes other research related to the topic, practices of foreign intelligence services in publishing annual reports and using the YouTube social media platform, media publications and other sources. The study concludes that strategic communication for intelligence agencies is essential for the long-term success of their operations. By focusing on strategic objectives, they inform and educate the public about themselves and national security and develop a cooperative relationship, contributing to deterrence. Both institutions examined in this study are becoming not only formally more open to the public, but also aim to build and maintain a high institutional reputation, connect with their audience and create an image of professionalism, modern accountability and openness to the public.

Keywords:

intelligence services, annual reports, strategic communication, securitisation, critical discourse analysis

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Introduction

The State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, or VSD (Lith. *Valstybės saugumo departamentas*) and the military intelligence service, the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence, or AOTD (Lith. *Antrasis operatyvinių tarnybų departamentas*) have a legal obligation to provide the public with non-classified annual reports. The Lithuanian intelligence community publishes public documents (National Threat Assessment and activity reports) in accordance with the provisions of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Intelligence, adopted on 17 October 2012, which entered into force on 1 January 2013 (Lietuvos Respublikos žvalgybos įstatymas, 2012, p. 4, 10). This obligation is vital to (at least partially) promote the accountability and transparency of intelligence services.

VSD published their first Activity Report in 2012, while for AOTD this was in 2013. AOTD published a non-classified National Threat Assessment Report in 2013, and VSD did so in 2014. Since 2016, a joint assessment of threats to national security has been published in Lithuanian and English. Intelligence services in other democratic countries meet the public's right to know by publishing annual reports and threat assessments, and information about themselves on their websites and social networks, but only limited information is made public, because intelligence services operate with sensitive, classified information. Information about VSD or AOTD activities and agents' duties can only be assumed based on other available sources (e.g. the media, books or films about secret agents, including historical examples).

However, in 2022–2023, the national media published articles about successful secret agent operations (Beniušis, 2023, February 2); the crimes of a Lithuanian agent (Steniulienė, 2022, September 5); that Belarus detained their national for spying for Lithuania (Delfi & BNS, 2022, December 15); and about intelligence legislative processes (BNS & Lrytas, 2022, April 24; Skėrytė, 2021, December 23, 2022, December 29). Most discussions of intelligence-related matters were on national and social media platforms after an investigative journalism book was published by Pancerovas and Davidonytė (2023), and their anonymous source (a former VSD official) was identified (Bakaitė, 2023, March 1; Delfi, 2023, March 1).

Very few studies have been published so far that focus on contemporary Lithuanian intelligence services, and all are from the political science perspective, e.g. Urbelis (2009), Petrauskaitė

and Šaltenis (2018). Research on the topic of intelligence services' communication is lacking not only in Lithuania. In the academic journals *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* and *Intelligence and National Security*, by searching for articles using the keywords 'communication', 'public' and 'media', and selecting those with at least some focus on contemporary intelligence agencies' communication, only in recent years have a few such publications been found. Publications from the discipline of communication studies are particularly rare, e.g. Bakir (2016) explored whether intelligence accountability is lacking in the press, and Petersen (2019) analysed Danish, the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) intelligence agencies' communication practices.

The scholarly journal *Press/Politics* devoted a special issue to the systemic approach from the perspective of communication sciences in 2015: *News, Agenda-Building, and Intelligence Agencies Understanding Manipulation and Methodologies*. In its introductory article, Bakir (2015) discussed an analysis of sixteen journals (from the discipline of journalism, media, and communications) from the start of each journal up until December 2014, showing that from the total number of published articles – 16,987 – only 23 at least partially addressed the intelligence agencies-related field, which amounted to 0.1 per cent of all publications (p. 135–137).

Lithuanian intelligence services have been informing the public about themselves for more than ten years and have recently started applying strategic communication elements. It is, therefore, important to look at how these institutions present themselves to the public, represent their work and construct their image. Since research on the topic of intelligence communication is lacking, intelligence services will likely develop their own communication guidelines, conveying the most favourable versions of their activities.

The object of this paper is the intelligence services' communication with the public. The focus is on discursive communication practices applied by Lithuanian intelligence institutions over a ten-year period. This is the first communication science study that examines the publicly released content by VSD and AOTD, published in the Lithuanian language, aiming to analyse their communication in the 2012–2022 National Threat Assessments and Activity Reports and VSD recruiting videos. The analysis was limited to the textual content. Videos were published on YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn (other VSD content on these social media platforms was not analysed). The collection of

information published on YouTube by other countries' intelligence services was completed on 25 March 2023.

First, is a general theoretical approach to the research, identifying the aspects relevant to the intelligence services' strategic communication. Second, using critical discourse analysis, the specifics of the texts and the tendencies in annual reports are analysed. Third, information AOTD and VSD provide about themselves and what self-representation they want to portray is examined. Finally, the broader context of intelligence services' communication is explained.

1. The importance of fostering understanding of security issues

The focus is on publications that write about and define strategic communication, involving the specifics of intelligence services. Zerfass et al. defined **strategic communication** as one that 'encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an organisation or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals' (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493).

Scholars argue that the term 'strategic communication' in some cases has replaced the term 'public relations' since the second decade of the twenty-first century, and the term 'public relations' is complicated to translate into other languages without major changes in its meaning. In some languages, 'public relations' translates into 'relations with the public', 'which contradicts most definitions that public relations is about management and/or communication between an organization and its various publics' (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 490). The term 'strategic communication' is used in a wide range of fields and sectors, including security and military institutions (p. 491).

However, NATO Strategic communications (StratCom) universe is very complex. NATO countries and their institutions understand and implement strategic communication, depending on the member state's legislation and the political will, although common agreements are approved (Bolt & Leonie, 2019, p. 21–29). It is agreed that allies' communication should raise awareness and understanding among audiences, fostering support for NATO to maintain the confidence

of the Alliance. 'The Alliance employs a multi-faceted and integrated approach in communicating and engaging with the wider public' (NATO, 2022, October 3). StratCom focuses on long-term, complex, effective solutions for influencing discourses in a highly competitive environment, while at the same time maintaining values. StratCom are 'a holistic approach to communication, based on values and interests, that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives' (Bolt & Leonie, 2019, p. 31).

Strategic communication involves owned, earned, paid and shared media and channels (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 493, 500) and the aims of individual goals (p. 491). 'Every communication activity by any member of an organization could be designated as strategic communication, and those activities should be geared and evaluated towards the goals of the organization, as well as all of its stakeholders' (p. 492).

Strategic communication campaigns include different communication processes, with a clear agenda or a plan to influence the behaviour of target audiences (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2016, p. 4). The NATO and European Union (EU)'s concept of strategic communication encompasses actions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It is developed in a competitive environment and aimed at target audiences through the most appropriate channels, aligned with the overall objectives of the state or its organisation, and focused on short- and long-term goals (Tarin Quiros et al., 2021, p. 19).

Lithuania is a member of the EU and NATO, so it is assumed that StratCom is relevant to the purposes of intelligence services. It is likely that intelligence services, while communicating about themselves or national security issues, use, reinforce or support what may be publicly agreed upon, politically and strategically expected, recognisable, and thus contribute to securitisation.

The definition of **national security** here is the same as that by Janeliūnas (2007): 'the ability of the state to control a particular environment, to be independent of pressure from external forces' (p. 33).

This study applies the theory of securitisation. The theory claims that security is a speech act (identifying problems as security issues) – a socially constructed concept. Securitisation issues are articulated by elites, mostly political actors, in an institutional voice. National security policy is not naturally given, but rather formulated

by politicians and decision-makers who have the formal power, including security professionals (e.g. police, customs, border guards, military, intelligence services) who are defining the security landscape and influenced by media, academia, non-governmental organisations, etc. (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 107–108). Securitising actors might differ – depending on the security object and the level of the analysis (Janeliūnas, 2007, p. 57–58).

Scholars argue that securitisation theory is not so much about *why* an issue has been securitised – it is more important to be concerned about asking *how*. For example, a specific language enables the actor to convince the audience of a threat (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 107). When the formal actor in power frames a security issue, moving it beyond the casual political sphere, this process is strategic and pragmatic so it must not be excluded from the wider contexts of power relations (Janušauskienė et al., 2017, p. 12–13). When the audience collectively agrees on the nature of the threat that supports taking urgent extraordinary measures, an issue becomes securitised (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 106; Janeliūnas, 2007, p. 14). In the economic, societal, political, environmental, and military sectors, a specific threat is articulated as threatening a referent object, but only in the military sector is the referent object the state (Eroukhmanoff, 2017, p. 105).

Taking this into account, it is worth paying attention to the deterrence practices. ‘Deterrence is a powerful political tool for mobilizing support to different strategic moves’ (Lupovici, 2019, p. 177). Lupovici (2019) incorporated securitisation theory into the study of deterrence and argued that it provides direction for exploring deterrence practices, actors and their activities, which matter a great deal to the politics of deterrence. Therefore, essential interactions among various securitising moves and the speech not only represent deterrence, empowering actors to communicate about the threats, but also shape deterrence practises (p. 177–184).

As an example of securitisation criticism, Janeliūnas (2007) claimed that security issues in some cases might only mean communication practises to achieve desired goals, excellent communication and public relations management. The securitisation might not necessarily mean actions taken to ensure security – cases are known when the actors in power seek to solve an issue while hiding it in a casual politic agenda (p. 64). This theory is more suitable for a specific analysis, for example, ‘when the aim is to delve into the development of a single problem’ (Janeliūnas, 2007, p. 76).

It is important in this study to examine how intelligence agencies communicate (linguistically express, articulate) about themselves and the specifics of their activities. Lithuanian intelligence services' communication is organised in terms of securitisation: the importance of security is emphasised and communicated to the public by securitising actors — government decision-makers and intelligence agencies. Issues according to their importance and specificity are identified as national security issues and are addressed by specific measures; special attention is given to referent objects — the Lithuanian state, its interests and national security. In this study, the continuous focus is on VSD and AOTD securitised communication content.

Based on a theoretical approach, 'the securitisation outcome depends not only on the universal linguistic power of threat statements, but also on the context, the psychological and cultural attitudes of the audience, the formal and informal power' (Janušauskienė et al., 2017, p. 13).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) helps to understand the interrelationship between language, power and ideology, to describe practices and conventions outside the text, and to highlight the political and ideological endeavours — that which is hidden and not obvious. CDA applies to written, spoken, visual, or mixed texts.

'For critical discourse analysts, discourse is a form of social practice which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices. As social practice, discourse is in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions. It does not just contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them' (Jorgensen & Louise, 2002, p. 61). Discourse not only describes the reality that already exists, but it also shapes the understanding of reality, determines whether ideologies and practices are transmitted, and how meanings, values and identities are taught and learned (Cameron & Panovic, 2014, p. 66).

Dominant, socially and culturally universal, common, seemingly 'common sense' practices become naturalised in society and function ideologically as universal or are taken for granted in discourse and social relations where the aim is to preserve, affirm or consolidate existing power relations (Fairclough, 1989, p. 33–37). Fairclough (1989) uses the term *discourse* 'to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which text is just a part. This process includes in addition to the text the process of production, of which the text is a product, and the process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource' (p. 24).

Discourse involves social conditions that determine how texts are produced and interpreted in society. In seeing language as discourse and social practice, it is important not only to analyse texts and the processes of production and interpretation, but also to analyse the relationship between *texts*, *interactions*, and *contexts* (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25–26).

The language used by the object of analysis (text, rhetoric) reveals the formal features of the discourse, which is why one part of the analysis must be a *description of the text*. The analysis also requires *an interpretation of discursive practice and the text*, and an *explanation of the broader context and social environment in which meanings are acquired and circulate is needed*. For the CDA, different sequences of analysis, analytical tools, questions, and sub-questions might be used. Still, it is important to conduct a *description, interpretation, and explanation* — the three-dimensional, interrelated analytical processes (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25–26, 109–110; Janks, 1997/2006, p. 329–330; Jorgensen & Louise, 2002, p. 67–69, 76; Titscher et al., 2000, p. 150–153) (See Figure 1).

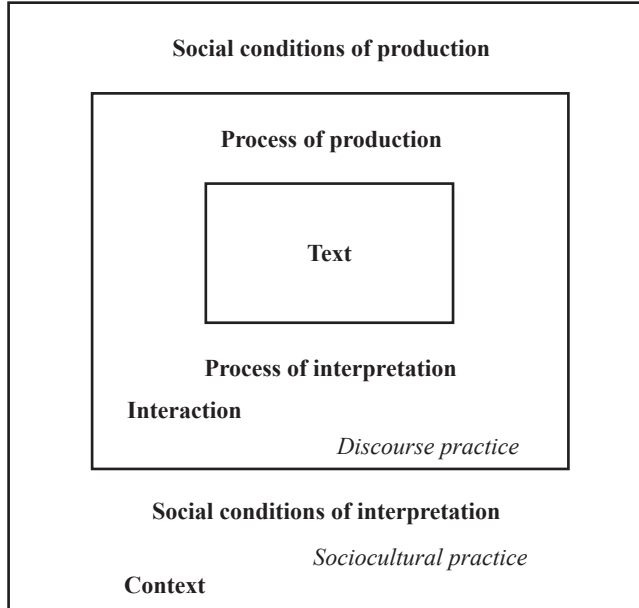


Figure 1. Fairclough's dimension of discourse and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25; Janks, 1997/2006, p. 330; Jorgensen & Louise, 2002, p. 68; Titscher et al., 2000, p. 152).

Fairclough (1989) outlined the steps and specific questions for CDA, focusing on text vocabulary (analysing the meaning of the words), grammar and the structure of the text (p. 110–112), describing how to implement the *description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation* elements of the analysis (p. 140–167) and illustrating it in the case study (p. 169–196). This is the basis for the analysis in the rest of this paper.

Intelligence services' strategic communication is developed in the context of securitisation as part of the threat discourse. This study focuses on those parts of the content that highlight aspects of why, according to Lithuanian intelligence, the information they publish should be relevant to *the ideal* reader or viewer, and why publishing information is relevant to Lithuanian intelligence. What information VSD and AOTD provide about themselves, how it is argued and articulated is analysed — what words and rhetoric are used, and how it relates to the wider context and values of institutions and society, aiming to see how this is compatible with the principles of accountability, transparency and openness in a democratic society.

2. Communication practises in annual reports

The AOTD Activity Reports have become more coherent, with relatively similar themes and sub-themes throughout the period under review: only the first report (2012) started with an introduction from the director, and all subsequent reports began with only a few introductory paragraphs. VSD reports differ not only in the length of the texts but also in an increased amount of textual themes, content titles, and paragraphs. The director's introduction is usually published (VSD, 2012, p. 3–4, 2013, p. 4, 2014, p. 3–4, 2015, p. 3–4, 2016, p. 5–6, 2017, p. 5–6, 2022, p. 5).

The introductions of the VSD (VSD, 2012, p. 3–4, 2013, p. 4, 2014a, p. 3–4, 2015a, p. 3–4, 2016, p. 5–6, 2017, p. 5–6, 2018, p. 2, 2019, p. 1, 2020, p. 1, 2021, p. 2, 2022, p. 5) and AOTD (AOTD, 2013a, p. 1–2, 2014a, p. 3, 2015a, p. 2, 2016, p. 2, 2017, p. 2, 2018, p. 2, 2019, p. 2, 2020, p. 2, 2021, p. 3, 2022, p. 3) Activity Reports and National Threat Assessments (AOTD, 2013b, p. 3, 2014b, p. 3, 2015b, p. 2–3; VSD, 2014b, p. 3, 2015b, p. 3; VSD & AOTD, 2016, p. 3–4, 2017, p. 1, 2018, p. 3, 2019, p. 3, 2020, p. 3, 2021, p. 3–6, 2022, p. 3–6) have been analysed. This is with the expectation that it begins with the document's purpose and importance or with a brief description of the outlining issues, aiming

to engage the readers and familiarise them with what is contained in the reports.

In CDA, it is important to see how actions and processes are formulated, whether sentences are active or passive. Nine questions were used (Fairclough, 1989, p. 110–112) to analyse the text of the reports, paying careful attention to word phrasing, grammar and text structure.

1. Are administrative, formal or impersonal language and words used?
2. Is there rewording or overwording?
3. What figurative language and literary devices are used?
4. How and what kind of relationship is being established with the readers? What words are used to address them? Are the pronouns 'we' and 'you' used and if so, how?
5. Are there words that are ideologically contested?
6. Are sentences active or passive? What types of processes and participants predominate? How is intelligence work described as well as its duties or the processes leading it?
7. Does the text express values that reflect the author's attitude, and if so, how?
8. How do the words reveal the authors' assessment of the experiential world? How is this influenced by social identity and status?
9. What interactional conventions are used, and how do they refer to historical, social, cultural and political contexts expressed through words and text structure?

In text analysis, the main words are identified, focusing on verbs (V) and associated processes and actions, nouns (N) and adjectives (A). N are often the subjects (grammar) of a sentence, the actors, subjects or objects themselves. A in the Lithuanian language describe characteristics or qualities — 'what', 'which', 'what kind' — and indicate an action that is actively or passively performed. Lithuanian grammar has more parts of speech than English. Adverbial participles such as *padalyvis*, *pusdalyvis* and *būdinys* are closely associated with processes and actions. Also, focus is placed on the main parts of the sentence, grammatically active or passive voice, the agent and the pronoun in sentences, and sentence structures — that which is inherent in VSD and AOTD texts.

To summarise the texts of VSD Activity Reports, there is less formal and administrative language than in AOTD's, but readers are

addressed formally. Where the director's word is published (2012–2017, 2022), the introduction is reminiscent of a personal letter to the reader, expressing the importance and values for VSD, Lithuania, the ideal reader, or the director.

Emotions are expressed differently by different directors. Director Gediminas Grina expressed personal frustration because of unjustified criticism towards VSD (2012–2015). VSD is identified as being 'important', working 'efficiently' and 'invisibly'. Therefore, the Department 'should not react' or 'get involved' in 'resonant events' and 'myths'. Criticism of the Department is 'unjustified (only because of)' the information 'that has appeared in the media'. Agents are described as 'ordinary', 'they put in a lot of effort'. Director Darius Jauniškis wrote about the war in Ukraine using emotional language, adjectives and similes, emphasising emotion, personal experience and values (2016, 2022).

Less frequently, or only in exceptional cases, the following words are mentioned in the context of values: 'patriotism' (2015, 2016, 2017), 'accountability' (2012, 2015, 2022), 'cooperation' (2012, 2016), 'competence of staff' (2012), 'responsibility of service, citizenship, loyalty to one's state' (2014), 'discipline' (2015); the personal value of the director — family and children (2016).

The words used to describe VSD include 'Western-standard', 'modern' or 'contemporary'. The word 'democracy' is mentioned ten times (2013–2017, 2022), 'Europe' — eleven times (2013–2014, 2016–2017, 2022) and 'NATO' is mentioned four times (2013, 2017, 2022).

The director uses an active voice in their sentences — often, VSD is in a grammatically active voice. Intelligence 'is accountable to the public', and the Department 'acts within the law' (proactive action). Tasks for VSD 'are formulated'.

Exclusively, the word 'society' is mentioned thirty-eight times, rewording it to 'citizens' ten times and 'Lithuanian people' seven times. This is an abstract way of naming the audience of the reports, which is addressed as if in a condescending tone, expressing politeness towards the ideal reader. The public is not necessarily understood in the abstract as the ideal addressee, but rather as part of the report's aim to encourage 'public activism on national security'.

The word 'we' is used not only in sentences about VSD, but also when referring to an audience with which 'common ground' and 'trust' are being built. 'Common goal' is expressed implicitly as being

security. The relationship of trust is identified as crucial, and in 2022 was formulated for reassuring the public in the context of the war in Ukraine.

It is also crucial for VSD to comply with applicable laws and regulations. The word 'law' was mentioned twenty-one times (2012–2014, 2016–2018, 2020–2022). 'Secrecy' – which, according to legislation, is very important, is mentioned ten times (2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2021, 2022).

VSD sentences are not formulated from a higher, hierarchical position, in relation to the reader – the aim is to 'be accountable', 'to present reports for evaluation', but the authoritative tone of the director is typical. The use of adjectives, comparisons and figurative meanings of words to convey an emotional tone and values are key, both to describe the challenges at hand and to describe the work of intelligence agencies. 'Democracy' is presented as if in opposition to the examples of the states from which the sources of the threats originate. The sentences examined are abstract, without detail or specificity. Historical context is used to refer to Lithuanian intelligence work since 1918.

To summarise the texts of AOTD Activity Reports, only the first report addresses the reader personally; in all subsequent reports, formal, impersonal language is used. The Republic of Lithuania Law on Intelligence (hereafter – Law) is mentioned in all the reports, mostly as the reason why the report is published. NATO is mentioned eleven times in total, the EU – ten times.

AOTD is grammatically active in sentences: 'reports', 'presents' (V of the present tense), 'carrying out tasks', 'having to maintain and strengthen' the relationship of cooperation or respond to the needs of the institutions, which are determined for the department, and its positions and capacities are affected (by other main active actors, decision-makers, formulated in the sentences). Sentences are abstract and lack specificity.

In the introductions of the Activity Reports, both VSD and AOTD mentioned **sources of threats that arise from** Russia, Belarus and China. VSD mentioned the word 'Russia' nineteen times in total (2014–2015, 2017, 2022), AOTD – six times (2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022), most of the time indicating an active action in the sentences. 'China' (AOTD, 2019, p. 2, VSD, 2022, p. 5), 'Minsk' (VSD, 2022, p. 5) and 'Belarus' (AOTD, 2019, p. 2, 2020, p. 2, 2022, p. 3) appear in the context of the threats.

The same trend is visible in the National Threat Assessment Reports (Table 1). Russia and its media, which influence the security situation, are usually active actors in sentences from the reports, while the Lithuanian intelligence community is guided (passive voice) by hierarchically defined resolutions by decision-makers.

Table 1. **Frequency of the use of the words mentioned in the introduction part2 of the National Threat Assessment Reports (2013–2022)**

	Russia	Moscow	Belarus	Minsk	China	Beijing
AOTD 2013	3	–	1	–	–	–
AOTD 2014	13	–	–	–	–	–
VSD 2014	–	–	–	–	–	–
AOTD 2015	21	–	2	–	–	–
VSD 2015	7	–	1	–	–	–
Joint 2016	22	–	–	–	–	–
Joint 2017	*	*	*	*	*	*
Joint 2018	*	*	*	*	*	*
Joint 2019	*	*	*	*	*	*
Joint 2020	*	*	*	*	*	*
Joint 2021	3	–	2	1	–	–
Joint 2022	1	1	1	2	1	1

The analysed sentences about Russia are abstract, without detail or specificity. The phrasing of almost all the sentences, especially the subject ('Russia, its policies, ambitions, aggressiveness') and the object ('is, is rising, grew, was increasing'), describes the context of the threat. The main active actor is 'Russia'; its 'ambitions' and 'aggressiveness' have increased (as shown using the past, present and future tenses). Meanwhile, the security situation in the region 'has remained' ('remains and will remain') tense, showing the grammatically inactive form (the situation is not acting itself but being acted upon). By highlighting the threats at the beginning of the published texts in this way, it may be sufficient for the reader to not only learn about the context of the threats but also to perceive and evaluate them critically.

² For 2017–2020, the introduction is shorter and does not identify the sources of threats, which is why they are marked with an *; in these reports, the sources of threats are identified for the first time in the Executive Summary.

Without seeking to assess why Russia is securitised (or to question the validity of the threat), it is worth focusing on how and what the document's authors tend to highlight. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the geopolitical and historical context. It is important to remember that national security issues are often inseparable from historical context. Lithuania was in Russia's neighbourhood for centuries and, for many decades, was not only a part of the Russian Empire but also part of the Soviet Union. The image of the occupation is still alive in the memory of Lithuanian society. It is likely that the discourse of Russia as a threatening state has generally become historically close, familiar, influential and securitised in Lithuania, more so than for those who have not experienced occupation in Western European countries.

Fairclough (1989) refers to **interpretation as the analysis phase** and the interpretation by the participants in the discourse. This emphasises the similarity between what the researcher does and what the discourse participants do themselves; however, the researchers must clarify how they will perform the interpretation and explanation (p. 141, 167). The following text identifies indicative analytical questions for interpretation.

Where are activity and threat assessment reports published?

Both institutions publish these on their websites, and National Threat Assessment reports are also published in print every year. Presumably, how and what to write in the report mostly depends on what their authors want to reveal to the public, share, mention or highlight. However, reports must contain only non-classified information. Public information must be implicitly approved by the intelligence services director — as determined by the Law (Lietuvos Respublikos žvalgybos įstatymas, 2012, p. 10).

For what purpose are activity reports published and how is the communication aim formulated?

In each of the AOTD Activity Reports (2013–2022), there is a reference to the Law. It serves as an example of accountability to the public, indirectly stating that it is important because of the Law. VSD mentioned the Law as a basis for publishing activity reports (2013, 2014, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). This Law, beyond other legislation, describes in which areas VSD and AOTD operate. It is, therefore, probably no coincidence that AOTD started their threat assessment reports (2013–2015) with a reference to Articles 8 and 26 of the Law as the reason why the report is published. This tendency is maintained

across all the joint National Threat Assessment Reports (2016–2022). Differences between intelligence services and their activities are not explained; the readers are left to find certain articles of the Law by themselves.

Where there is no director's introduction, the written purpose of the VSD Activity Report is: 'To inform society about how the aims and objectives, set by the Law, have been achieved' (VSD 2018–2021). These aims are written as follows: to collect and provide information related to risks and threats to national security, to neutralise threats and to supply information to decision-makers (VSD, 2018, 2021). The purpose of the AOTD report is formulated abstractly – to present the activities.

The formal purpose of presenting its activities may be given more substance by identifying related public communication objectives. Why the information published in their reports should be relevant to the ideal reader may coincide with the objective of why the publication is relevant to the department itself.

VSD sentences in which these indirect objectives were found were categorised. The category TO INFORM (about intelligence aims, work and activities: in total, ten different sentences) and the category TO EDUCATE (about national security importance: two sentences). The objectives for both categories (INFORMATION AND EDUCATION) were divided into two parts: about VSD (eight) and about threats (sixteen). Being informed and knowing, especially how to identify threats, can be relevant in reports to the ideal reader.

VSD and AOTD seek to educate and inform about the work they do, as well as national security and the threats that intelligence agencies are addressing. These might contribute to rising public awareness of national security issues, identifying threats or perhaps even preventing them from happening. However, identifying communication objectives does not necessarily indicate their implementation or, even more so, their success. Moreover, the context is complex and cannot be limited to a single institution.

Who is formulated as the ideal reader of the reports, who is expected to read the report and how is the relationship with the audience formulated?

Both institutions name the reader in the abstract – *society* – and a formal relationship is being built. That might be the standard or a professional habit, as in communicating with other institutions, politicians and decision-makers. It should be noted that the word 'institution' was mentioned in the Activity Reports' introductions a

total of 58 times (17 AOTD, 41 VSD).

However, in joint National Threat Assessments Reports for 2021–2022 (VSD & AOTD, 2021, p. 5–6, 2022, p. 5–6), the audience and readers are formulated in a relationship of mutual dependence — ‘our society’, when addressing the audience: ‘Dear readers, we are introducing’ (2021); ‘It gives great pleasure to present’ (2022) the National Threat Assessment. The target audience is named: our country, society, decision-makers, officials, diplomats, security experts, NATO and EU partners, and the foreign media (VSD & AOTD 2021, p. 5). The audiences named in the text are not exhaustive; since it is published online, it is easily available for opponents, those who contribute to the threats and risks that Lithuania’s national security is facing.

VSD directors in the Activity Reports’ introductions are trying to create a more personal relationship with the reader; their ambition to improve the institution’s reputation, develop its relationship with the public and create an image of VSD that is accountable and more open to the public is ongoing. An impression of an authoritative person addressing the reader is given, and the first-person language reinforces it, especially when the director’s values, personal views or opinions are revealed (in line with the institution’s principles). Underlining the congruence of the director’s and the intelligence service’s values helps create a closer relationship with a similar audience. It is likely intended to bring the audience closer to the VSD value base. Emotional language, using adjectives to emphasise values and attitude, is common to all AOTD and VSD reports in which the director’s words are published.

This might raise doubts about whether the institution, shrouded in secrecy, is resorting to propaganda techniques, likely aiming to win favour. White propaganda is involved in the contrast between good (Western values) and evil (undemocratic, hostile operating principles).

The basis of white propaganda is the dissemination of real and open information, and the presentation of non-fabricated information to persuade the audience or to gain their trust. ‘White propaganda, like any other kind of propaganda, seeks to have an impact, but that impact is positive, aiming to make peoples’ lives and the world better’ (Denisenko, 2021, p. 15). This type of propaganda is ‘characterised by an effort not to distort facts and to provide reasoned explanations’ (Martišius, 2022, p. 91).

VSD and AOTD reports maintain an orientation towards the patriotic Lithuanian audience. In the first reports, there is

more administrative language, historical context, intelligence professionalism being mentioned (experience, education, reliability, discipline, loyalty, cooperation). Later, especially in VSD Activity Reports, for maintaining a relationship with the reader, universal constants are invoked: democracy, state and family.

How, according to both institutions, are accountability and transparency principles combined?

Transparency (VSD 2013, 2014a, 2022), *accountability* (VSD 2012, 2015a, 2022; AOTD 2015a) and *openness* (VSD 2017, 2022) are mentioned; however, all activity reports explicitly or implicitly refer to the secrecy of intelligence.

In the first report, VSD writes: 'The intelligence and security service is obliged to protect not only information obtained during intelligence and counter-intelligence activities, but also information on intelligence officers, capabilities, methods and tools used, and objects of interest' (VSD, 2012, p. 17). In the second report it is said that 'disclosure of such information would entail risks to ongoing operations, to national security and to VSD officers and agents' (VSD, 2013, p. 7).

One of the elements of transparency and accountability is funding, since institutions are given money from the national budget, collected from taxpayers' contributions. In every AOTD report, there is a paragraph on 'budget'; however, the abstract percentage representation is given only sometimes. VSD Activity Reports do not touch on this topic at all, but some include graphical illustrations of the budget, e.g. VSD, 2012, p. 11–12, 2013, p. 11; director Gediminas Grina writes that funding is sufficient (VSD, 2015a, p. 3). The intelligence services' budget is identified as being a state secret.

At first, only through the formal implementation of accountability to the public (as the VSD director noted — 'as annual practice' [VSD, 2013, p. 4]), later both institutions not only formally respond to the principle of accountability to the public but also continuously try to build trust. VSD and AOTD explicitly name the relationship of trust as being very important, the desire to become more transparent and accountable is mentioned while maintaining secrecy. The public's right to know is followed only to the extent that it does not conflict with secrecy principles.

3. Building and maintaining trust

For VSD and AOTD, communication with the public is needed for developing strategic communication and increasing trust in the state and democracy. In doing so, different aspects of the intelligence specifics might be highlighted. Focusing on how VSD and AOTD communicate in Lithuanian about themselves, the introductions (first pages) of 2012–2022 National Threat Assessment Reports (AOTD, 2013b, p. 3, 2014b, p. 3, 2015b, p. 2–3; VSD, 2014b, p. 3, 2015b, p. 3; VSD & AOTD, 2016, p. 3–4, 2017, p. 1, 2018, p. 3, 2019, p. 3, 2020, p. 3, 2021, p. 3–6, 2022, p. 3–6) and recruitment videos were analysed. This was done using CDA and focusing on the text — what was told about the agency itself, and what was claimed to be done by intelligence agencies.

In AOTD reports (2013–2015b), it is said that it is a ‘defence’, ‘politico-military’, ‘military-economic’, ‘military-technical’ and ‘military information’ external threats and risks assessment — noting that AOTD is a military intelligence service. The VSD specificity focused on Lithuania’s energy, economic, social and information security (VSD, 2014b).

It is clear in VSD and AOTD texts that these institutions analyse, evaluate and assess information, but there are no further details about how the data are collected. In 2021–2022 it was implied that the active actor in the sentences was ‘intelligence service’, and continuous work is emphasised: ‘Every day we analyse and assess’. What the intelligence community focuses on is also highlighted: external and internal threats ‘posed to our state and society by hostile foreign states, their armed forces, intelligence and security services, economic influence, disinformation, and individuals willing to engage in radical extremist or terrorist activities — all of which are the subject of the work of intelligence services’ (VSD & AOTD 2021, p. 5, 2022, p. 5). Social exclusion, demographic, environmental or educational problems are not considered (VSD & AOTD, 2022, p. 5).

Credibility is aimed for by basing on public trust and the authority of the institution, and the objectivity and reliability of the published information are emphasised (here and below only, Lithuanian adjectives are underlined):

‘We cannot provide detailed information related to threats, as a considerable scope of intelligence information is classified; the assessment reflects the most significant trends of the threats to

Lithuania. By informing our society we intend to enhance confidence and trust in the intelligence services, the lack of which would make an intelligence officer's work impossible' (VSD & AOTD, 2021, p. 6).

'Intelligence work is classified and cannot be disclosed. Consequently, some of our assessments do not reveal the most sensitive details and thus may sound sketchy. Nevertheless, this review presents the essence of threats and challenges that Lithuania is facing; in representing it we are as objective and open as possible' (VSD & AOTD, 2022, p. 6).

The limitations of these publications are described. In summarising the CDA analysis of the National Threat Assessment Reports, it can also be presumed what is not directly stated: intelligence services also contribute to deterrence actions important for Lithuania's national security.

Similar competencies, skills, education or personal qualities are needed for the security services — both institutions compete as a potential employer. During the period covered by this study, no data have been found about how AOTD attracts employees. VSD director Darius Jauniškis has emphasised that the willingness of young people to join institutions that protect national security is decreasing, mentioning that VSD participates in career days, communicates on social networks and on job portals. Former VSD director Gediminas Grina mentioned that during his leadership a voluntary offer to apply for a position in the intelligence services might have raised suspicions (Narkūnas, 2023, March 25).

In 2022, from 10 March to 4 November, VSD published 13 videos on YouTube (also on Facebook, LinkedIn, and the VSD website) as a part of the communication campaign 'Discover your path in intelligence'. Stories of intelligence officers were published (VSD, 2022, p. 14–16), although – according to VSD – in their retelling of stories, names have been changed. In texts about careers, it is written that applicants, Lithuanian citizens, 'of diverse educational backgrounds and qualifications, motivated, honest, committed to teamwork, flexible, innovative, dynamic and of impeccable reputation' are welcome to apply to the open positions and work experience is not a decisive criterion (VSD, 2023, January 25). From the data provided on the VSD website about open positions (VSD, 2022a), it can be concluded that VSD is a competitive institution in the labour market and pay compares favourably to the average salary in Lithuania (Oficialiosios statistikos portalas, 2023; Zitikytė, 2023, p. 3, 23).

The shortest (10 seconds) video appeared on the VSD website showing (presumably on the premises of VSD) a woman and a man dressed as business professionals, accompanied by the words 'discover your career path in intelligence' (VSD, 2022, October 26, October 27). This video (or a very similar one) was shown on outdoor LED screens in the streets of Vilnius through October 2022; it was intended to attract the attention of drivers or passers-by. The campaign was linked to the Day of Intelligence, celebrated on 27 October.

VSD intelligence officers' stories fulfil institution values (VSD, 2022, p. 14; 2022, March 10, April 15, May 16b) in their narratives, revealing and relating them closely to their own lives. Aiming to see what is not obvious, the videos' texts were analysed, focusing on how VSD presents itself.

VSD intelligence officers' stories told by text and videos that encourage the viewer to read have been analysed in detail. Stories were told by Lina (VSD, 2022, April 19), Gabrielė (VSD, 2022, June 8), Akvilė (VSD, 2022, July 15), Lukas (VSD, 2022, May 3), Matas (VSD, 2022, August 18) and Andrius (VSD, 2022, August 30); further in the analysis, only the names of the officers are used. Akvilė, Matas and Andrius, according to their stories, are intelligence officers. Lina works in cyber and information security; Lukas is a counter-intelligence officer; Gabrielė claims to do analytical work.

The following quotations follow the principle of capitalising words as they are capitalised in the videos. All the stories start with a similar sentence, either by naming the person (whose) or by using the personal pronoun *my* 'PATH TO THE INTELLIGENCE WORLD'. The distinction is drawn in a way that such a world metaphorically differs from the rest of the world. The word *path* seems to indicate that steps have been taken towards something before this work began. All employees answer questions: why did they choose this job and what motivates them at work. Lukas and Matas are also asked, what skills are needed for intelligence work? Gabrielė asks herself, what am I doing at the State Security Department? Since the officials' stories are said to be true, it can be assumed that the same questions have been asked and that the most appropriate answers were chosen for the video storyline.

For the CDA analyses, two types of questions are used:

1. How is the speaker experiencing the world, how is it represented by grammatical features (which processes and events are attributed to which character, which characters are grammatically

active or passive in the sentence), how are the intelligence work or the processes that lead to intelligence work described?

2. How do the words reveal the speakers' assessment of the experiential world and how do their social identity and status influence this?

Lina is not a grammatically active character; her sentences are formulated in the second person *you* as if indicating that she is addressing someone: 'you are given UNIQUE TOOLS'; the opportunity to see 'what you will never see with the naked eye'; 'your efforts must be directed not to catch up, but to be one step ahead'; 'it takes a lot of PATIENCE, EFFORT, RESILIENCE, determination to see the result. Much more than elsewhere'. In other words, it shows the uniqueness of the work and the specificity of the job, emphasising the need for strong motivation. Lina grammatically does not say that she has experienced this herself, but she gives implications and indicates the intentions addressing *you* as if *you* were an ideal viewer.

The view of the world she experiences is highlighted in the following sentences: 'It is very important to understand that we are not here for personal goals and personal glory. Here you are part of a TEAM that has one goal ahead of them and everyone is committed to working towards that goal'. The beginning of the sentence with 'it is very important', and the mentioning of the word 'personal' twice, highlights acting towards the determination for one common intention, which is identified at the end — 'to keep our country safe and free'. By emphasising the personal commonality (both for VSD and the viewer), the implied 'our country' is Lithuania.

This is also evidenced in Lukas' sentences: 'WORKING IN A TEAM IS CRUCIAL'; 'I FEEL PRIDE that I am a member of a professional team dedicated to Lithuania'. Lukas identifies what is personally important to him: 'A SAFE and STRONG COUNTRY for me is also about the safety of my family and loved ones. That's why I strive every day to do my work impeccably'. Akvilė also speaks about similar aspects of the specifics of the job personally: 'I know that I am part of a STRONG and PROFESSIONAL TEAM, united by common goals and values'. Andrius says: 'In intelligence, you see how to ACHIEVE UNBELIEVABLE RESULTS BY BRINGING DIFFERENT PEOPLE with different TALENTS together'; he then adds a sentence about personal motivation: 'What matters most to us are the events that could have happened but did not'. On his motivation, Matas says: 'I contribute to the public's understanding of threats. Because of today's

geopolitical challenges, the WAR IN UKRAINE, I am even more aware of my daily work'. Gabrielė expresses her motivation: 'I FEEL THE MEANING of getting in touch with new things, experiencing new and unique challenges'. She continues phrasing in terms of the self-evident convention of an *ever-changing world* and identifying a commonality with the audience: 'There will never be a lack of it in intelligence, because we live in an ever-changing world'. All the stories of the VSD employees end with an identical sentence: 'Every intelligence officer contributes to our mission and the overall result'.

Work is implicitly anonymous in a hierarchical structure, and individually valued only when it is focused on a larger and unified team goal. Intelligence officers are bound by a strict 'need-to-know' principle — this principle means that classified information 'may only be entrusted to persons who have appropriate authorisations to work with or have access to classified information and who, in the performance of their official duties, need to have access to and to work with this information' (Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės ir tarnybos paslapčių įstatymas, 1999, p. 5). In other words, it is not enough to have a permit to work with classified information, it can only be provided if there is need-to-know that information during official duties.

Although the stories give the impression that the focus is on young professionals, it is stated that a wide range of candidates are welcome, regardless of education or previous work experience; the impression is given that the main criterion is loyalty to Lithuania. Attention therefore should be paid to what employees say about selection and vetting procedures.

Gabrielė: 'I was very surprised when I was asked to join'. Matas decided to apply after a classmate told him about an intelligence analyst job. Lina highlighted that during the selection process, 'your MOTIVATION is tested. It must be strong from the start. Of course, there is also the value aspect — PATRIOTISM and PUBLIC SPIRIT, loyalty to one's country'. The information on the VSD website caught Akvilė's attention. She began her answer to the question about her motivation with a sentence: 'I realised during the selection process that long and carefully considered PROCEDURES HELP TO SELECT THE BEST EMPLOYEES. When I started working, this was 100% true'. Andrius and Lukas did not touch on this topic.

The analysis of the stories told by intelligence officers shows that the discourse practices are determined, giving the impression that

they were answering questions knowing that they will be reviewed by the employer and made public. Stories focused on the ideal viewer, only the one whose inclusion in the team would be beneficial, and who might be motivated to look further or apply for vacancies in VSD. This communication campaign can be assumed to create the image of a contemporary institution for ideal potential employees. Hierarchy, discipline, trust and belief in authority are not explicitly mentioned but are implied by the wording of personal experiences and the context of intelligence activities. It is assumed that the value base is most important, and that professional competencies, knowledge and skills will be taught to new recruits when they start working. While videos convey the experience of the professionals, the personal language aims to establish a relationship with the viewer. The image of VSD is being created, supporting the impression of a reliable, professional institution, where all the employees love Lithuania and work for its interests.

The VSD communication campaign consolidates the employer's competitive advantage, and it is noteworthy that the word 'intelligence' here is specifically linked only to VSD.

What is published in National Threat Assessment Reports (the content) and how it is published is a strategic element of national security, based on the trustful and collaborative relationship which is desirable to be built with society. Intelligence services provide consolidated threat and risk assessment, and it is the only public format of both institutions' cooperation and self-presentation (2016–2022). However, it provides reserved information on the institutions themselves and their work, hardly representing VSD and AOTD differences even though they are two different intelligence services.

4. The broader context of an intelligence service's discourse

Aiming to explain the broader context and social environment, seeking to understanding the meaning of the discourse, a question arises — what factors influence, determine and shape an intelligence service's discourse?

Focusing on national contexts, the realisation of security to which VSD and AOTD are referring, first and foremost, is defined

in legislation and regulations. Politically, the perception of threats to national security is shaped and formulated in the legislative framework as a duty, which requires preparation and cooperation of the society — individual citizens and institutions. For example, it can be seen in the National Security Strategy (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo nutarimas Dėl Nacionalinio saugumo strategijos patvirtinimo, 2002) and in the Strategy of preparing the citizens of Lithuania for civil resistance (Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių rengimo pilietiniam pasipriešinimui strategija, 2022), approved by the Seimas. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania states: ‘The Nation and each citizen shall have the right to resist anyone who encroaches on the independence, territorial integrity, and constitutional order’, including the right and duty of each citizen to defend Lithuania against a foreign armed attack (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 2019, p. 7, 64).

Intelligence institutions participate in the threat discourse by providing insights or expertise to the public and responding to national security priorities. In Lithuania’s national and international security and defence policy, it is agreed which threats the intelligence community should focus on. Threat assessment reports are the focus of the media, political scientists, politicians, institutions and the public. The media conveys threat assessment to the public in a journalistic manner, with some emphasis and some highlighting. Certain intelligence insights and issues are moved into the tactical debate and political agenda. Both institutions highlight in their annual reports that a detailed report is submitted to the National Defence Council and the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence, and other intelligence products for the authorities and decision-makers are developed. The National Threat Assessment has been provided in English since 2014, showing the international community what kind of threats Lithuania faces, potentially demonstrating that the state can identify, assess, and counter them (including deterrence).

VSD focuses on the importance of strategic communication and its active development of it in the future: ‘The Department has stepped up its activities in the field of strategic communication’ (VSD, 2017, p. 9). The VSD director wrote in 2016: ‘The report is not, and should not be, part of public relations. It is a factual document on the Department’s activities in 2015, insofar as the institution’s non-publicity principle allows it’ (VSD, 2016, p. 5). While it is a step away from *public relations*, the elements of strategic communication are being developed.

As an element of strategic communication — to measure if

communication is effective — VSD published the results of a conducted public opinion poll in its Activity Reports (VSD, 2014a, p. 21, 2017, p. 9, 2018, p. 6, 2019, p. 8, 2020, p. 8). Presumably this was not only to present how much the institution is trusted by the public, but also as an argument to build trust. VSD states that public confidence and favourable perception are growing, and that it is very important for the institution; AOTD underlines its focus on the quality of intelligence products, including the public ones (AOTD, 2015a, p. 3, 2016, p. 3, 2017, p. 3). However, there is no further detail on these surveys, the respondents and other indicators. It can be assumed that surveys are an ongoing process, and only a subset of the surveys' sections is likely to be reported to the public.

In VSD Activity Reports, additional tools that have been developed to build a closer relationship with the audience are outlined. The educational publication *Who, How and Why is Spying in Lithuania* was published in 2014 (VSD, 2015a, p.11). Since 2016, anyone can use the VSD Trust Line (VSD, 2017, p. 9). VSD collaborates with various institutions and NGOs on strategic communication, and participates in events and lectures (VSD, 2016, p. 12, 2017, p. 9, 2018, p. 6, 2019, p. 8, 2020, p. 8, 2022, p. 17). In 2016, a public information campaign was organised on the hostile activities and spyware of foreign intelligence agencies (VSD, 2017, p. 9). On the centenary of Lithuanian intelligence, educational projects were initiated, including a virtual exhibition, a historical book, and a historical documentary (VSD, 2019, p. 8, 2020, p. 8). With the Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science, the project for students has been organised since 2019 (VSD, 2020, p. 8). The values of the institution were clarified (VSD, 2022, p. 14).

In the activity reports, institutions illustrate the percentage of men and women in service (AOTD, 2021, p. 12, 2022, p. 12; VSD, 2013, p. 10, 2014a, p. 16, 2015a, p. 26, 2017, p. 10, 2018, p. 5, 2019, p. 7, 2021, p. 11, 2021 p. 13), illustrating the percentage by gender in executive positions (VSD, 2016, p. 18). According to these illustrations, almost twice as many men as women work for the Lithuanian intelligence community. Given that strategic communication is central to the strategic objectives and values, VSD and AOTD published information on this subject (AOTD, 2020, p. 11; KAM, 2022, June 22, 2023, March 9; VSD, 2022, February 8, December 9).

Not mentioned in the reports, but also notable, is that since 2022, students have been awarded by VSD for the best final research thesis relevant to national security (VSD, 2022, May 16a, 2022, December 1).

Strategic partnerships with universities have been established by both institutions (KAM, 2021, March 26; Kauno technologijos universitetas, 2021, March 26; Vilniaus universitetas, 2022, January 12). Intelligence services compete with other employers in the public and private sectors. Lithuanian media portal Delfi published an article discussing external employer image campaigns and trends in the private sector in 2022 (Delfi, 2023, January 2). YouTube videos are used in both sectors as a means of not only attracting employees, but also building employer image.

Lithuanian intelligence authorities have an opportunity (e.g. through their administered websites, social media and publications) to control their information (for example, to prevent leaks) and to check through surveys on whether the communication is effective. Strategic communication has slowly improved over the past 10 years, although it remains fragmented. This meets formal and legal criteria, while on the other hand, there are clear efforts to potentially create a favourable public perception desired by these institutions. VSD announced the existence of a Strategic Communication Unit, but regarding who is responsible for AOTD communication, no information was found.

Relying on the insights of other authors to answer the question of what factors lead to and contribute to intelligence institutions' discourse is necessary in **the context of foreign intelligence services' communication practices**.

The public must know what roles and powers the intelligence services have, and when and under what conditions the intelligence services have the right to restrict the rights of individuals based on national security objectives. However, information about operational methods, actions and technologies used is not accessible to the public (Butorac et al., 2020, p. 54).

Petersen (2019) identified three concepts of intelligence communication. The first is communication as information to raise awareness, which refers to democratic accountability. The second is communication as advice, by providing intelligence threat assessments or warnings to help the public take collective or individual actions. The third is communication as co-production, expressing the need for public engagement. The role of the public is different for these three coexisting concepts of intelligence communication. All three concepts are common in Danish, US, and UK intelligence communication practice (Petersen, 2019, p. 318–319).

Another study analysed the public dimension of Finland's

intelligence culture and noted: 'When actions are not hidden, when they are known to be in accordance with the national and international laws and regulations, they are naturally more easily perceived as legitimate' (Teirila & Nykanen, 2016, p. 280).

Public intelligence service reports vary in form and scope. The researchers identified three types of reports:

1. Relatively short and less informative annual reports that provide information focusing on the work of a service;
2. Reports in which an assessment of threats from foreign actors is briefly provided or a specific threat issue the state is facing is presented, such as a cyberattack;
3. Reports presenting comprehensive assessments of the threats faced by the state and its decision-makers (the authors in this category included reports published by Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy, Slovakia, the Netherlands, the USA, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) (Vaage & Stenslie, 2021, p. 969).

To gain familiarisation with the foreign institutions' reports and to seek more information, the sample provided by Vaage and Stenslie was supplemented and included other intelligence services from Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark and Sweden that provide threat assessments (Table 2). Additions are highlighted.

Vaage and Stenslie (2021) highlighted that by making the information public, intelligence services can avoid further questions from the public or the media. By publishing annual unclassified reports, the intelligence services can help lay the premises for the public exchange of views on important aspects of foreign and security policy, to build and to maintain trust and to gain external input (p. 973–977).

Aiming to attract new employees and maintain the image of a professional institution is also a part of strategic communication. The specifics of an intelligence service are closely related to classified information. Smith (2022) emphasises that the waiting time for security clearance is a problem for many potential employees, because they cannot wait months. This is also a factor in a candidate's decision, which includes 'a strong organisational culture and a high reputation, as well as opportunities for future development and wider career prospects' (p. 684).

Table 2. **Intelligence and security service publishing of public Annual Reports**
(Vaage & Stenslie, 2021, p. 969; Säkerhetspolisen, 2020; Tilsynet med
Efterretningstjenesterne, 2022; Kaitsepolitseiamet, 2023)

Country	Service	Since
Australia	ASIO	1995
Belgium	VSSE	2018
Czech Republic	BIS	2004
Denmark	TET	2016
	FE	2004
Estonia	KAPO	1998
	VLA	2016
Spain	CNI	2008
Italy	All security services	2007
United Kingdom	Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament	1995
United States of America	U.S. Intelligence Community	2006
Canada	CSIS	2004
Latvia	VDD	2013
Lithuania	AOTD	2013
	VSD	2014
Luxembourg	SRE	2019
New Zealand	NZSIS	2002
Norway	NIS	2011
The Netherlands	AIVD	Late 1990s
Slovakia	SIS	2012
Finland	Supo	2018
Sweden	MUST	2002
	Säkerhetspolisen	2020 ?
Switzerland	FIS	2012
Germany	BVF	1968

Some institutions publish information on career opportunities on their websites, for example, in the UK (Security Service, MI5, 2022; Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, 2022). Shahan (2021) noted that recently, intelligence services have been using social media for their communication (p. 573).

To check whether intelligence services of other countries upload videos on YouTube to attract new employees, the content of at least ten different agencies on this social network was reviewed. The content units for each intelligence agency (all videos) were counted, reviewed and categorised according to subject matter into four categories: 1) content about career opportunities; 2) threat assessment; 3) educational content; 4) other content. The content published by

the intelligence services is listed in the bibliographic references and the analysis is presented by the year in which the institution started publishing content on YouTube (Table 3).

Table 3. The YouTube content published by the intelligence services up to 25 March 2023

Country	Service	Since	Total videos	Career	Threat assessment	Educational content	Other
USA	Central Intelligence Agency	2006	86	40	–	–	46
Israel	Israeli Security Agency (תור"ם יללכה ןוחטיבה)	2008	54	52	–	–	2
Canada	Canadian Security Intelligence Service / Service canadien du renseignement de sécurité	2012	28	14	2	8	4
Ukraine	Security Service of Ukraine (Служба безпеки України)	2014	2400	*	*	*	*
Lithuania	State Security Department of Lithuania (Valstybės saugumo departamentas)	2016	27	14	4	6	3
Germany	Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst)	2018	19	8	–	1	10
Poland	Foreign Intelligence Agency (Agencja Wywiadu)	2018	19	10	–	–	9
Italy	Intelligence System for the Security of the Republic (Sistema di informazione per la sicurezza della Repubblica)	2018	29	1	6	–	22
Finland	Finnish Security Intelligence Service (Suojelupoliisi)	2020	13	1	–	5	7
Australia	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation	2020	17	10	4	2	1
Denmark	Danish Security and Intelligence Service (Politiets Efterretningstjeneste)	2022	10	–	–	10	–

Recruitment videos have been published by security services in Finland (2020), Australia (2021–2022), Germany (2018–2022), Poland (2018–2021), Canada (2012–2014), Italy (2019–2023), Israel (2022–2023) and the USA (2015–2022). In Denmark (2022–2023) only educational content was posted, while the Security Service of Ukraine has a particularly large number of videos, which makes it difficult to distinguish the subject matter of the content.

Recruitment videos are very different, but often situations are shown as if in action (especially the Israeli Security Agency). The Polish intelligence service video (Agencja Wywiadu, 2018, January 12) and VSD (VSD, 2022, November 4a, November 4b) are very similar. In some videos, intelligence employees talk about their personal career experiences, while hiding or not hiding their faces (exclusively the

Australian Security Intelligence Organisation presents their stories using animation techniques). The stories are presented by highlighting previous experience and skills (e.g.- foreign language skills) as well as the balance between personal and professional commitments. Especially in Australia, the USA and Canada the diversity of intelligence officers is highlighted, avoiding stereotypes or prejudices of gender or sexual orientation (Central Intelligence Agency, 2022, June 16; Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, 2021, August 26). Prejudices against disability are highlighted with a woman in a wheelchair talking about her work (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017, February 6); another woman in a wheelchair is shown working, while the narrator tells about the activities of the staff (Agencja Wywiadu, 2019, January 25).

The question remains whether these stories correspond to reality as it has tried to present it, or whether they are very different from what is happening behind closed doors. However, it does help to create the desired public image of the intelligence institutions.

Based on the insights of other researchers, examples of foreign intelligence communication, and analysis of VSD and AOTD information, attention is drawn to the fact that the communication of both intelligence services is developed similarly to other intelligence services in democratic countries. The Lithuanian intelligence community is seeking to engage with the public (particularly VSD; AOTD has so far provided information to the public in a reserved manner). Lithuanian intelligence institutions publish two types of annual reports: relatively short activity reports, providing information about the institutions themselves, and comprehensive annual threat assessment reports. Three concepts of Lithuanian intelligence communication are present: aiming to inform, to advise (to raise awareness of threats identification) and to cooperate (in particular, VSD seeks to encourage joint action). In communicating about themselves and threats, VSD and AOTD articulate a desire for public trust and seek to represent, create and maintain an image of an authoritative, credible and trustworthy intelligence service. They seek to achieve their strategic objectives.

Conclusions

VSD and AOTD state the importance of accountability, transparency and openness, arguing that they only provide the public with what they are allowed to say publicly; however, the ability of the public audience to assess transparency or accountability is limited. The Lithuanian intelligence community is building up favourable evaluations, trying to maintain a high institutional reputation and public trust, consistently emphasising human rights, integrity and convincing the public that intelligence methods are in strict accordance with the law. Over a ten-year period, strategic communication has been developed slowly. AOTD's information is published in a reserved manner, only a few times per year. VSD provides more information, develops more tools to build and maintain relationships with its target audiences, and consistently makes information about it publicly available.

Institutions have control over the content of information and strategic messages that they publish. Communication is useful not only for representing the specifics of the intelligence agency and legitimising its methods, but also for informing and educating the public, and developing collaborative relationships. By focusing on strategic objectives, partnerships are being built and strengthened, feedback is being sought and new employees are being recruited. The VSD communication campaign 'Discover your path in intelligence' aimed to establish contact with a patriotic audience, thus attracting potential employees and representing an image of a professional, trustworthy, modern institution, and presenting the officer's work as highly meaningful. Public communication is also useful in other ways, such as avoiding additional unexpected questions and managing potential crises by publishing information on their own initiative. Sharing information consistently implicitly suggests discourse and desired topics for discussion or aspects on which one or another issue can be addressed publicly. Strategic communication and public trust are essential to intelligence institutions for the long-term success of their activities.

The analysis was aimed at words, sentences and constructions that show patterns in VSD and AOTD texts. In annual activity and national threat assessment reports, information about intelligence was presented in a reserved, rather vague, abstract way while maintaining secrecy but still using historically familiar and influential concepts.

In annual reports, introductions where first-person language (*I, we*) was used instead of more impersonal language indicated the desire to develop and maintain a trustful relationship with readers. At the same time, it is a way of expressing personal views and the values of the institution. Honesty, professionalism and dedication to their work were emphasised with adjectives, descriptive wording and by formulating arguments, in relation to the value base and confirmation bias that is naturalised in the society (democracy and the Lithuanian statehood). Aspects of white propaganda are becoming apparent, not only by appealing to readers' emotions or by using cultural and historical motives and arguments, without providing sources or indicators of information credibility, but by emphasising that the information is reliable. Aspects of national security, power, hierarchy and state governance were mentioned (whether intentionally or not), and the historical context for Lithuania and its intelligence activities was also focused on. The linguistic accents used reflected the values, identity and attitudes of the institutions towards the representative's experience.

Perceptions of security, on the basis of which AOTD and VSD conduct and communicate their activities, are defined in legislation and conveyed in the national security policy agenda and public discourse involving Lithuanian citizens. The intelligence service, while publishing securitised content, emphasises to the audience the importance of being able to identify and prepare to deal with threats. The goal of educating the public is formulated, seeking a cooperative relationship and synergy with society. Naming threats is also a way of building public support — not only to earn trust, but to draw attention to intelligence insights that may have a practical value for future challenges (e.g. for representatives of different government sectors, international partners or individuals). Deterrence is an important aspect of intelligence communication, showing the level of professionalism. Threat assessments are important in the context of the awareness of the Lithuanian public and the international community. The broader national security context must be considered; this context is complex and cannot be limited to the intelligence services.

Other intelligence services mentioned in this study have been publishing information, annual reports, or using social media for the past two decades; however, the communication of intelligence institutions has received only sporadic attention from communication

scholars. Because of the lack of research and structured critique, there is a risk for intelligence institutions creating their own communication guidelines and new contemporary myths. Studies on intelligence-related communication to address transparency issues could be combined or analysed in an interdisciplinary way, requiring broad social, cultural, historical, political, media, visual and other aspects relevant to national security issues.

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