



PISM

POLSKI INSTYTUT SPRAW MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH
THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

STRATEGIC FILE

NO. 2 (110), FEBRUARY 2022 © PISM

Editors: Sławomir Dębski, Patrycja Sasnal, Wojciech Lorenz

The Border Crisis as an Example of Hybrid Warfare

Anna Maria Dyner

The crisis on the border of Belarus with three EU and NATO countries—Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia—that started nearly a year ago, in spring, was caused by the Belarusian authorities on purpose. Initially, they wanted to divert attention from the country's internal situation and undermine the international position of their western neighbours while forcing the EU to negotiate the sanctions. During the crisis, these goals evolved into a multi-faceted hybrid operation backed by Russia. Considering that provoking a conflict below the threshold of war is an effective way to significantly engage an opposing party's forces and resources, it is expected that hybrid activities against EU and NATO members will only increase in the future. The Union and Alliance can oppose such tactics by strengthening their own resilience and cooperating with allies to counter hybrid threats.

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

The Development of the Border Crisis

The crisis on the border of Belarus and EU and NATO countries can be divided into two phases. The first one was a relatively small-scale operation against Lithuania and Latvia that began last spring, while the second, which was carried out from the beginning of August 2021, was aimed mainly at Poland. The second stage has been the much longer and more demanding phase because of the intensity of the Belarusian and Russian propaganda, as well as the scale of attacks by migrants on Polish border infrastructure and the number of attempts to cross the border irregularly in 2021. The Polish Border Guard puts it at 39,700 cases.

The conflict began in mid-May 2021 when the Lithuanian Border Guard began recording the first, intensified attempts to cross the border irregularly from the Belarusian side. Initially, these were small groups, but the number began to increase rapidly. From the very beginning, Lithuania indicated that the Belarusian services were engaged in the transfer of the migrants to its border, which was confirmed by detainees.

These actions were preceded by changes in Belarusian law regarding staying in the border zone. On 1 February 2021, Alexander Lukashenka approved the state border protection plan for 2021 and talked about the migration challenges that Belarus will have to face. He emphasised that the Belarusian services are responsible for protecting the border of the Union State of Belarus and Russia.¹ A month later, on 1 March, Belarus changed the code of administrative offenses and abolished penalties for illegally staying in the border area, among other changes.² With the border crisis already building, on 28 June 2021 and officially in response to EU sanctions, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the suspension of the implementation of the readmission agreement with the EU.³

That the growing crisis on the Belarusian-Lithuanian border was being coordinated by the Belarusian authorities was seen in the significant involvement of state-owned companies or other entities associated with the authorities in the transport of migrants to Belarus⁴ from countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Once in Belarus, they received initial accommodation and then transport to near the border with EU countries. Moreover, the migrants who attacked the border infrastructure (such as fences) were openly supported by the Belarusian services (mainly officers of the State Border Committee and interior ministry troops).

The migrants who attacked the border infrastructure were openly supported by the Belarusian services.

The crisis on the border with Poland began at the beginning of August. The Polish Border Guard registered more than 3,000 attempts to cross the border irregularly with Belarus throughout the month, compared to only 170 such attempts in July. The timing of the start of the migration operation to the Polish border can be partially connected to the evacuation from the Tokyo Olympics of Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, a Belarusian runner turned dissident who received a Polish humanitarian visa. For her

¹ "Lukashenko utverdil resheniye na okhranu gosgranitsy v 2021 godu," Belta, 1 February 2021, www.belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-utverdil-reshenie-na-okhranu-gosgranitsy-v-2021-godu-426546-2021/.

² "Izmenena otvetstvennost' za narusheniye pravil poseshcheniya prigranich'ya," <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2021/mart/60342/>. In Belarus, a border zone and a border belt are distinguished. The first covers a strip up to 30 km wide from the border, and the latter one up to 10 km.

³ "Zayavleniye press-sluzhby Ministerstva inostrannykh del Respubliki Belarus", Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Belarus), 28 June 2021, https://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/e0c39160d2580d78.html.

⁴ Social media played an important role in recruiting the migrants, serving as the primary source of knowledge about the migration route opened by the Belarusian authorities. However, the information provided via these channels was mostly deliberately manipulated and indicated that it would be possible to get directly to Germany via Belarusian territory, which was mentioned as a destination by most migrants. Messages about the real situation at the border were to be reported to the administrators of social networking sites as untrue, and then blocked.

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

criticism of the national sports authorities, she was expelled from the national team and only thanks to an appeal on social media did she manage to avoid “deportation” to Minsk.

Additionally, tensions were raised in August by the Belarusian-Russian preparations for the active phase of the Zapad drills planned for September. In NATO states bordering Belarus, there were fears that there would be an “accidental” or deliberate military incident that would serve as a pretext for Russia and Belarus to, for example, move regular armed forces towards the border with NATO and EU countries. Moreover, the crisis at the border led to the introduction of states of emergency for parts of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Polish territory.

After the end of the *Zapad* manoeuvres, the efforts to bring migrants to Belarus intensified. The activity of tourism companies, both those based in Belarus and others operating in the Middle East, increased. The presence of Middle Eastern migrants was more and more visible in Minsk, which raised the risk that a large group of them would be transported to the border with Poland at one time to provoke an incident. At that time, an intense anti-Polish propaganda campaign was carried out in Belarusian media. The border crisis was further exacerbated in the first half of November 2021 when there were two significant attempts by a large group of migrants, provoked by the Belarusian services to cross the border by force.

In the broader context, this attempt to cross the border was preceded by the signing of 28 integration programmes by Belarus and Russia on 4 November and the announcement that the military doctrine of the Union State of Belarus and Russia and its migration concept would soon be signed. During the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Union State, Lukashenka talked with Russian President Vladimir Putin about the situation on the border with Poland. From that moment, there was clear synchronisation of media coverage and diplomatic activities by Belarus and Russia.

The operation has been accompanied by nearly joint Belarusian-Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns aimed at the societies of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia.

The operation has been accompanied by nearly joint Belarusian-Russian disinformation and propaganda campaigns aimed at, in particular, the societies of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, along with military and diplomatic activities. The Belarusian side also has threatened to stop the transit of gas and oil to the EU. All of this taken together indicates that the border crisis is a full-scale hybrid operation.

Hybrid Threats as a Comprehensive Challenge for State Security

Hybrid activities are most often defined as any hostile activity conducted below the threshold of war, based on a combination of military and non-military instruments. As a result, the argument that all modern armed conflicts are hybrid is often raised because military activities are accompanied by economic and diplomatic pressure, disinformation and psychological operations against the opponent’s society, etc. Nevertheless, the essence of the problem of hybrid threats is to conduct such activities in peacetime, using military instruments to strengthen them, but refraining from the unequivocal and open use of force.

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats defines hybrid threats as “an action conducted by state or non-state actors, whose goal is to undermine or harm a target by influencing its decision-making at the local, regional, state or institutional level. Such actions are coordinated and synchronised and deliberately target democratic states’ and institutions’ vulnerabilities. Activities can take place, for example, in the political, economic, military, civil or information domains. They are

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

conducted using a wide range of means and designed to remain below the threshold of detection and attribution.”⁵

The vast majority of such activities are aimed at achieving political and economic concessions or causing social destabilisation. Quite often, however, the purely military aspect is deliberately detached from the action by the attacking party in order to hinder or prevent an international reaction. Hybrid activities are most often chosen by non-democratic countries against democracies.

NATO recognises that “hybrid threats combine military and non-military, as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, and deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces.”⁶ It also points to the importance of methods such as sabotage, disinformation, and cyberattacks to influence the internal situation of the opponent.⁷

NATO recognises that “hybrid threats combine military and non-military, as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, and deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces.”

The PMESII methodology is used to analyse hybrid threats, to check the ability to act and/or conduct hostile activity by the adversary in areas key to the functioning of the state, such as: politics, military, economy, society, information, and infrastructure. Very often, these elements will overlap: for example, activity in the area of disinformation will have an impact on the economy, society, or even political decision-making. Similarly, active actions in cyberspace can have serious consequences for many areas of economic, social, and political life. It is this methodology that can be used to analyse the crisis on Belarus’s border with the three EU and NATO states. It makes it possible to present a broader context of the events on the border, which were only an element, albeit the main one, of the wider campaign of Belarus and Russia against the West.

Political Context

The hybrid operation undertaken by Belarus was primarily a response to the policy of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. Ever since the rigged presidential elections in August 2020, these countries have been pursuing very harsh policy towards the Lukashenka regime. Lithuania and Poland welcomed large groups of Belarusian opposition activists who had to leave Belarus for fear for their health and life. Moreover, Poland, along with the Baltic states, opted for the introduction by the EU of further packages of sanctions against the Belarusian authorities in connection with their violation of human rights.

The aim of Belarus was therefore to undermine the position of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia in the international arena as countries reluctant to accept refugees and migrants. It was also an attempt to test the position of these three countries within the EU and NATO.

In addition, Belarusian diplomacy has undertaken a number of activities aimed at discrediting mainly Poland and Lithuania in other international organisations, including the UN and the OSCE. In the case of the latter organisation, it was also about spoiling the image of Poland, which took over the chairmanship in 2022.

⁵ “Hybrid threats as a concept,” The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats-as-a-phenomenon/.

⁶ “What is NATO doing to address hybrid threats?”, NATO, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183004.htm.

⁷ “NATO’s response to hybrid threats,” NATO, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm.

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

Maintaining the border crisis is also aimed at diverting the attention of world public opinion from the situation inside Belarus, including the very high number of political prisoners (more than 1000⁸), the announced changes to the constitution and the “referendum” planned for February 2022 on this matter, and the deepening integration—including militarily—with Russia. The Belarusian authorities

The Belarusian authorities must have had to obtain permission from Russia to start the operations on the border.

must have had to obtain permission from Russia to start the operations on the border. The more so as this concerned the border of the Union State with three NATO members, and the uncontrolled development of events could have had consequences for the Russian authorities. For Russia, it was an opportunity to check the political unity of NATO and EU countries. Considering the dynamics of the events and the fact

that the Belarusian side suggested possible Russian support in border protection, this may in future give Russia an additional opportunity to take over supervision of Belarus’ borders, which would entail increased political and military control over the country.

The border crisis can also be perceived as an additional instrument of Russia’s influence on NATO and EU countries. It forces the three countries of the Eastern Flank to increase the efforts of state services to protect their borders; introduces an element of uncertainty about the security situation that is easily exploited to influence public mood; and partially diverts attention from Russian activities in other regions, such as in the neighbourhood of Ukraine and in the South Caucasus.

The Military Dimension and the Test for Border Infrastructure

The border crisis also has a very clear military aspect. Activities on the border with Poland began a month before the active phase of the *Zapad* drills, the largest Russian-Belarusian manoeuvre in Russia’s western strategic direction in 2021. The scenario of these exercises assumed that the beginning of military operations conducted by three states referred as “Western”—“Neris”, the “Polar Republic”, and “Pomoria” (*de facto* Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia)—against the “Republic of Polesia” (Belarus) and the “Central Federation” (Russia) was preceded by a border crisis. Therefore, in the countries of NATO’s Eastern Flank, especially Poland and Lithuania, there were fears that Belarus would decide to provoke a military incident during the manoeuvres. These fears were all the greater because the vast majority of training activities in Belarus were carried out on grounds in the western part of the country, including ones located near the Polish border, which suggested the possibility of a quick military response by Belarus and Russia to a possible military incident.

The aspect of the growing tension on the border between NATO and the Union State was emphasised in Belarusian and Russian reports related to the exercises. After the manoeuvres ended, Russian and Belarusian propaganda began to suggest that Poland, in response to the border crisis, undertook actions disproportionate to the scale of the threat, including by designating components of three mechanised divisions to protect the border.

The protracted border crisis and the temporary increase in its intensity (the significant attacks by the migrants on border infrastructure on 8 and 16 November) can also be interpreted as testing the potential of the border protection, including in particular the cooperation of the military with other uniformed services. For Russia and Belarus, it is also an attempt to check what military units can be used operationally in the eastern part of Poland, how quickly and by which paths the dislocation of equipment and people go, how logistic support will be organised, and how large the forces—both in terms of the number of troops, as well as weapons—will eventually be used. Provocations and

⁸ Data from the independent Belarusian human rights organisation Viasna, <https://prisoners.spring96.org/be#list>.

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

incursions by armed persons (mainly officers of the Belarusian services) were also to check the preparation for a quick response of the units protecting the border on the Polish side.

Maintaining tension at the border is also aimed at forcing NATO's Eastern Flank countries to bear the costs of intensified border protection and to weaken the morale of the services responsible for maintaining it, both through the exposed use of migrant women and children, as well as fatigue from long-term stress related to the conducted activities.

The protracted border crisis and the temporary increase in its intensity can also be interpreted as testing the potential of the border protection.

The military dimension has also included testing the reactions of NATO countries. In this case, it was about checking the political and military reaction of the Alliance countries to the threat. It was important whether the states of the Eastern Flank would ask for help from NATO and whether and which members would decide to support them by, for example, sending troops and equipment to states struggling with the crisis. It was also about examining (and possibly also causing) possible discrepancies in the way the crisis was assessed among the Allies.

Moreover, the Belarusian side repeatedly used threats of a military response to the situation on the border during the border crisis. In the statements of the Belarusian Ministry of Defence and Lukashenka, it was often mentioned that activities of this kind would be carried out with the participation of the allied Russian armed forces. The crisis that has been ongoing since May 2021 is also a test for the border infrastructure of Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. For the first two countries, the task of the Belarusian services was made easier by the fact that the borders were former internal demarcations of the USSR, which were not equipped with modern infrastructure, and due to geographical (forests, swamps) and social issues (often the border runs through the centre of towns) in many places they were not protected. In the case of Poland, the situation was different: the border with Belarus was an external border of the USSR, and therefore shaped differently, equipped in large sections with equipment allowing it to be properly secured.

Coordinated point attacks on infrastructure were therefore a test of the weakest points on the border. It was also a test of the possibility of the quick construction of security measures (even temporary) to increase protection. Moreover, it was a test of which elements of the border are protected in the first place, which could indicate importance. For Belarus and Russia, it was also a test of the ability of the Eastern Flank countries to secure their border.

An element of the military response of Belarus and Russia can also be considered the planned February 2022 Belarusian-Russian exercises codenamed *Allied Resolve*, which are officially a reaction to the concentration by Polish and Lithuanian military units on the border with Belarus.

The Economic Sphere

The hybrid operation conducted by Belarus in cooperation with Russia also had an economic dimension. On 11 November 2021, shortly after the first escalation of the situation on the border, Lukashenka threatened to suspend gas transit via the Yamal pipeline to Poland and Germany in response to EU policy and the announcement of the imposition of further sanctions. He repeated these threats in an interview with Russian journalist Dmitry Kiselyov on 30 November. However, taking into account that the Belarusian transmission infrastructure is entirely owned by Gazprom Transgaz Belarus, which is owned by the Russian Gazprom, the gas transit to Poland and Germany could only be prevented with the consent of Russia.

What is more, after the second significant deterioration of the situation on the border, on 17 November 2021, Belarus reduced the transmission of crude oil via the *Druzhba* pipeline going to Poland and Germany. The crude oil imported from Russia via the territory of Belarus satisfies 60% of the Polish demand for this raw material, which in the event of a longer suspension of supplies could

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

cause problems on the fuel market (according to EU requirements, Member States must have stocks allowing 90 days of operation in the absence of sources of supply).

In both cases, Belarus wanted to prove that it was able to adversely affect the key elements of the Polish and German economy, such as energy security and stability of supplies. It was also an attempt by the Belarusian side to respond to Poland's warnings that in the event of a prolonged crisis, it would be ready to fully close the border, which would mean tangible economic losses for Belarus.

Social Impact and Information Warfare

Disinformation played an important role during the crisis. According to the definition of hybrid activities, it is of key importance for the impact on both the society of the country being the subject of the hybrid operation and the international community. From the moment the Lithuanian border services took decisive measures to seal the border, they were subject to attacks by Belarusian propaganda. Over time, the Belarusian media and state institutions have expanded the scope of attacks on the Latvian and Polish border services. Messages about the mistreatment of migrants, beatings, deaths, and the inhumane treatment of those who have tried to cross the border was disproportionately exaggerated. In addition, in connection with the construction of fences on the border by Lithuania, and later also by Poland, there were accusations of the death of animals and loss of habitats. In addition to traditional media, an important role was played by social media, in which false photos or video materials were often published, most often in a way that made it impossible to verify the content they conveyed. A mechanism of giving artificial credibility to information by duplicating it across numerous sources, mainly social networks, was used. It was hoped that such information would have a significant impact in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia.

One of the most important goals of Belarus and Russia related to the border crisis was to stimulate these messages in such a way as to increase public polarisation and trigger discussions about the reception of refugees in all three countries. Since the migration crisis of 2015–2016, in the EU this topic has been perceived as controversial and evoking significant emotions among the public of the Member States. For this reason, Belarus, and later also Russia, conducted a campaign showing the difficult financial situation of the migrants, aimed at exposing the suffering of women and children in particular.

One of the elements of the activities was also an attempt to undermine the image and social trust in the uniformed services that protect the borders, in particular in the army. Disseminating information according to which these services cruelly dealt with migrants (including suggesting murders, beatings, intimidation, stealing money) accompanied the border crisis from the very beginning. The most important source of information for the Belarusian and Russian media—and then also international media that Belarus allowed into the border zone—was the website of the Belarusian Border Committee. During the escalation of the situation on the border in November, coordination and increased negative media coverage in Belarus and Russia were also visible. It intensified again in December after a Polish soldier defected to Belarus, and claimed that Poland was guilty of crimes against migrants. Citing him, Russia even proposed to conduct an international investigation at the Polish border.

The countries of Western Europe and NATO were also the subject of attacks in the information sphere.

The countries of Western Europe and NATO were also the subject of attacks in the information sphere. Russian and Belarusian media accused them of conducting military operations in various regions of the world that led to crises in which people were forced to look for a better place to live and then they were later reluctant to accept migrants and take responsibility for them. The propaganda was partially reflected in the public mood in Russia. As shown by the November research of the state-owned Russia Public Opinion Research Centre (VCIOM), the

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

majority (66%) of interviewed Russians knew about the crisis, and 36% of them believed that it was the EU that was responsible for it.⁹

The aim of the disinformation campaign was also to influence the public in other EU countries, such as Germany, and aimed at weakening the image of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia in those societies. Here, the message focused mainly on the alleged brutality of the border services, the migrant victims, and bad decisions made by the authorities of these three countries. An important aspect was the portrayal that despite the intensive actions taken by the services of the countries bordering Belarus, a large number of migrants had managed to get to Germany. This was intended to create a feeling that mainly Poland was unable to protect the EU external border, with the goal to trigger discussions on the introduction of temporary controls on the German-Polish border. Belarusian propaganda also tried to take advantage of the two talks held with Lukashenka by the outgoing Chancellor Angela Merkel. However, the lack of reaction from other Western countries did not allow for the conclusion that the EU had finally recognised Lukashenka as president.

An important element of the information warfare was also the use by Belarus and Russia of international media (including American, British, Turkish) to undermine the position of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The complexity of the border crisis shows that it cannot be reduced solely to the migration and humanitarian aspects, although this is one of its key elements. Due to the artificially induced migration pressure, the party conducting the activities—Belarus, in coordination and with the significant participation of Russia—tried and is still trying to test the resilience of the three countries on NATO's Eastern Flank in the political, military, economic, social, and information spheres, as well as to test their protection of critical infrastructure, including at the border.

The complexity of the border crisis shows that it cannot be reduced solely to the migration and humanitarian aspects, although this is one of its key elements.

The border crisis has evolved, and in its course, the catalogue of goals that Belarus and Russia wanted to achieve and the methods of influencing the EU and NATO members subject to the operation and their allies expanded. Some of what they've learnt, such as checking the ability to protect borders and support allies, will be an important political and military signal for Russia and Belarus.

At the same time, at the present stage, most of the political goals, such as the easing of the sanctions policy by the EU, the recognition of Lukashenka as president or the undermining of the position of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia within the EU and NATO, have not been achieved. This does not mean, however, that Belarus and Russia, in agreement or separately, will cease to conduct further hybrid operations or discontinue the current one, meaning they may resume in spring when weather conditions improve. Considering that the prolongation of the crisis is beneficial for Belarus and Russia (the need for increased efforts to defend the borders, provoking public discussions), it can be expected to continue, even on a small scale, with temporary escalations.

The triggering of such a serious crisis shows that coordinated hybrid actions conducted against EU and NATO countries will intensify because they are an efficient form of weakening opponents and testing their resilience in areas of key importance for the functioning of the state because they use relatively few resources. This trend will be favoured by the continued use of social media, other modern sources of spreading information, and the lack of knowledge and skills of societies to verify information

⁹ "Nad granitsej tuchi khodyat khmuro," VCIOM, <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/nad-granicej-tuchi-khodjat-khmuro>.

PISM STRATEGIC FILE

sources. The lack of good security of information infrastructure also increases the effectiveness of cyberattacks and makes them easier to conduct. What is more, the effectiveness of hybrid operations largely depends on internal factors in the country(s) against which they are directed. It increases in the event of dissatisfaction with the way the state functions, which applies to both the authorities and the administration; in countries with high social polarisation; and where there are many influential interest groups, including those that favour the interests of the attacking party or that can be easily manipulated into doing so.

Thus, in order to effectively counter hybrid threats, the EU and NATO states should take steps to build the resilience of their own societies. Education is of particular importance here, both as part of general education and activities aimed at the entire society in the form of social campaigns. The aim should be, above all, to build the skills of verifying information and checking its sources. An important element will also be raising awareness of cyberthreats and shaping safe behaviours on the internet, especially on social networks. The more so as the manipulation of public sentiment very often takes place via the most popular platforms of this type. An additional risk factor is that even deleting malicious accounts does not reduce the harmfulness of the message, because new ones are created in their place. In this context, it is also very important to care for the security of one's own data as it may be used in an unauthorised way (this especially applies to service officers and soldiers).

It will also be very important to develop strategic communication capabilities on the part of state and local government bodies. The aim should be to develop genuine trust in these institutions and to cooperate with media. Strategic communication also plays a very important role in warning against threats.

Building resilience in the above-mentioned areas should be based on international experience, in cooperation with other EU and NATO countries and institutions created within these two organisations, such as the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki.

Building resilience to hybrid threats at the national level will also mean the need to expand intelligence and counter-intelligence cooperation within the EU and NATO.

Building resilience to hybrid threats at the national level will also mean the need to expand intelligence and counter-intelligence cooperation within the EU and NATO. This is especially about increasing the exchange of sensitive information, such as that related to the protection of critical infrastructure or cybersecurity. It will also involve increased financial outlays for countering hybrid threats by NATO, the EU and member states.

It is worthwhile for the member states to take into account the growing importance of hybrid activities as part of the work on the new Alliance strategy. NATO may also, for example, update its strategy against hybrid threats from 2015 and extend the provisions of the 2016 Warsaw summit (Point 72) to threats other than cyber. Developing a strategy to combat activities of this type will be a clear sign that the Alliance and its members are not only aware of the threats, but will react decisively to them. Moreover, at the EU level, it is worth it for the Member States to accept ambitious goals regarding cooperation in NATO in combating hybrid threats and strengthening the EU's own potential in this regard (EU Hybrid Toolbox), as indicated in the Strategic Compass, and to implement them quickly.