



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE



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This project has received funding from the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT), agreement No S-VIS-23-16



# The impact of the recent poly-crisis on public-sector governance: strategic and operational responses of Lithuanian authorities

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# CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Many European countries have encountered such transboundary crises as the COVID-19 pandemic or the still ongoing crisis of security and energy

As these crises overlap in time and space, their events can be defined and analysed as a single poly-crisis

Poly-crisis are characterised by:

- the simultaneous occurrence of several crisis events in different policy fields
- the interconnected nature of individual crises within a poly-crisis
- spillover effects across different crises
- uncertainty and complexity due to having many interconnected parts and involving multiple stakeholders

# PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Scientific knowledge about multiple overlapping crises remains shallow (Homer-Dixon et al., 2022; Anghel and Jones, 2023)

Despite some previous research on dual crises, we lack compelling explanations how managing two or more crises at the same time conceptually differs from dealing with one crisis

Crises and disaster studies are dominated by single case studies and exploratory research, with a specific focus on the phases of preparedness and immediate response (Wolbers et al., 2021)

There is a need for more longitudinal approach that would allow capturing shifts between different phases of a crisis and grasping its spillover effects (Kuipers et al., 2022)

**PURPOSE:** to explore how governments and public sector organisations respond to poly-crises that entail multiple and overlapping events during all stages of crisis management

**SUBJECT MATTER:** the reaction of Lithuania to the recent poly-crisis encompassing the COVID-19 pandemic, the migration crisis and other crises (including the energy crisis) during the period 2020-2023

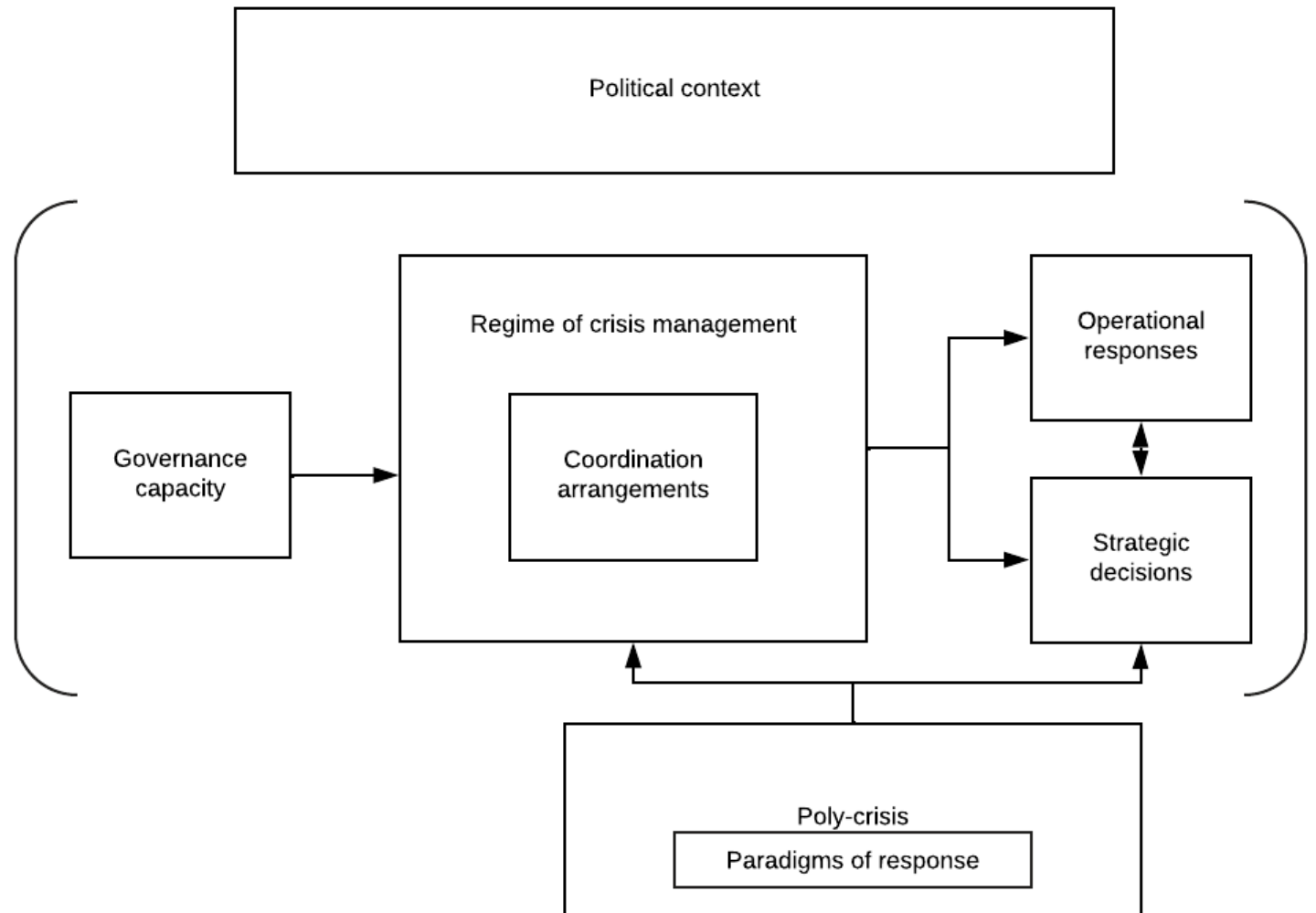


# STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

	Operational responses	Strategic decisions
Scope and focus of decisions	Operational responses to crises have a narrower scope and focus on tactical and immediate execution	Strategic decisions usually have a broader scope and focus on the overall direction of change
Time horizons	Operational decisions are adopted based on short-term horizons during the response phase	Long-term perspectives (sometimes employing such methods of anticipatory governance as strategic foresight) are considered while adopting strategic decisions,
Responsible decision-makers	Operational responses can be made by responsible executives as part of day-to-day crisis management	Strategic decisions are usually adopted by authoritative decision-makers and involve high-level decision-making



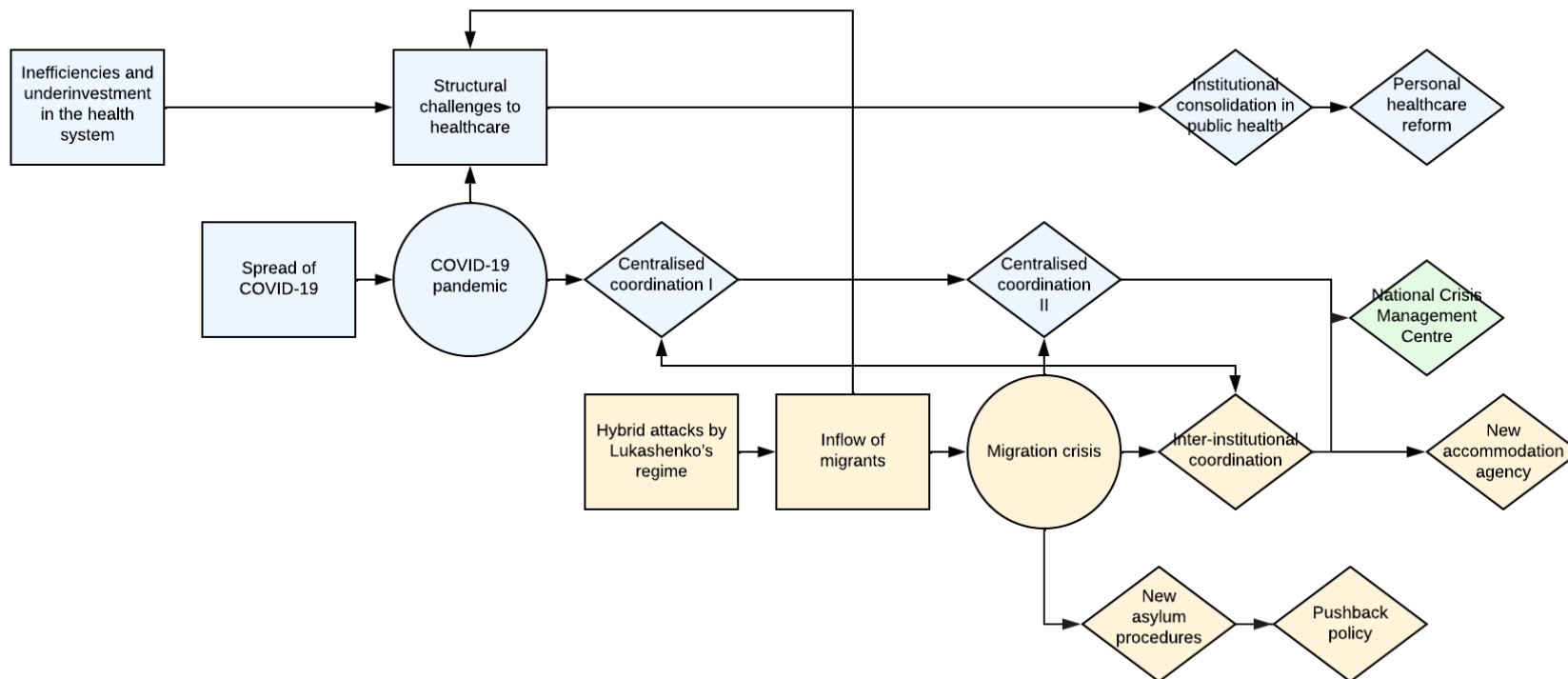
# THEORETICAL APPROACH



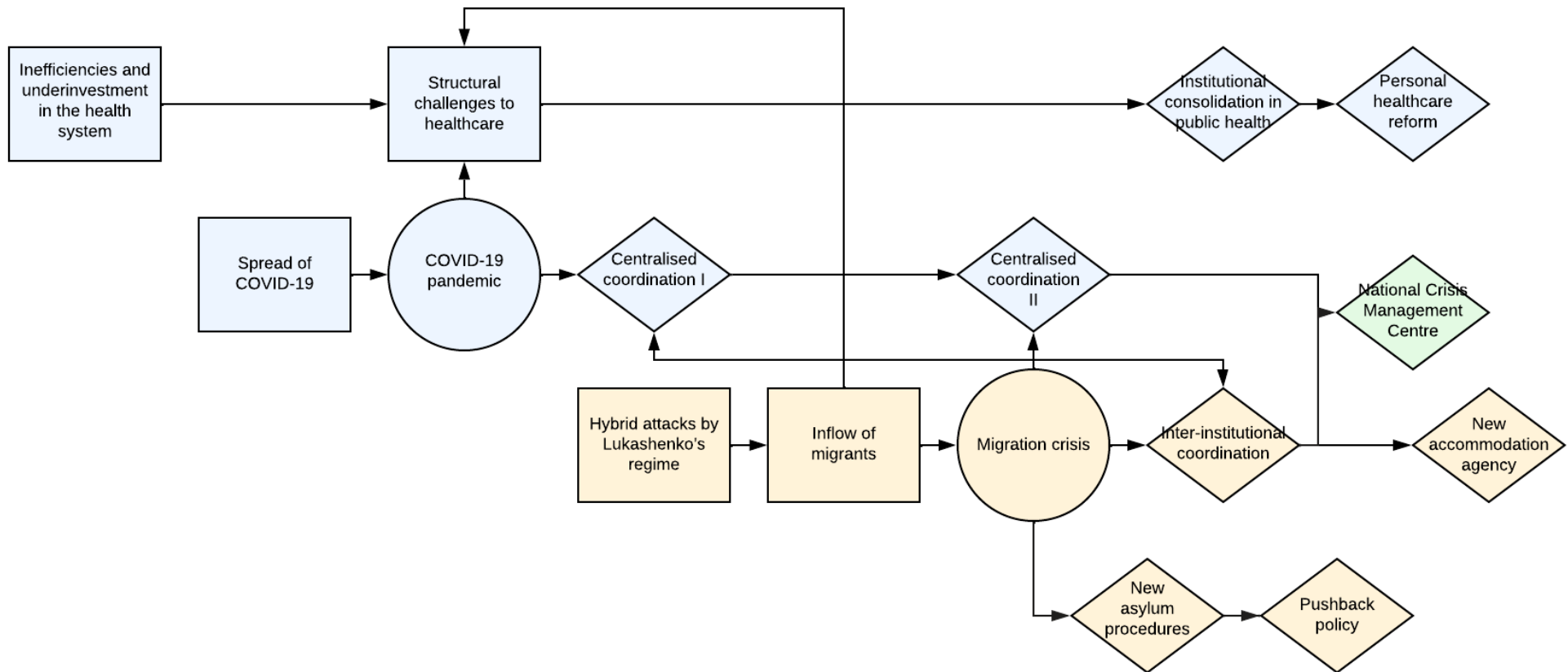
# SPILOVER EFFECTS

The spillover effects are the effects of individual crises that extend beyond the original scope and their policy field, thus affecting other domains and policy actors

Such spillover effects might increasingly strain the limited physical, financial or human resources of public sector organisations



# EVENTS, DECISIONS AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS IN THE LITHUANIAN POLY-CRISIS



# MECHANISMS OF CHANGE: COORDINATION AND POLICY RESPONSES

Governments follow standard procedures of crisis management (based on **the logic of appropriateness**), unless the existing crisis severely amplifies/accelerates or a new major crisis emerges in the scenario of negative crisis dynamics

In this situation, it is likely that governments will make their responses based on **the logic of consequentiality**, encompassing the reform of crisis management particularly through stronger centralisation and enhanced inter-institutional cooperation

But the continued evolution of complex systems can be shaped by interdependence and non-linear interactions among its elements (**based on complexity theory and the 'emergence' idea**)

Policy responses depend on **prevailing paradigms of change**:

- strategies of suppression and mitigation with regard to COVID-19
- rights-based approaches vs pushback policies to migrants

Depending on the crisis and its political context, response strategies could be de-politicised (learning pathway) or politicised (exploitation pathway) (Boin and Hart [2022](#))

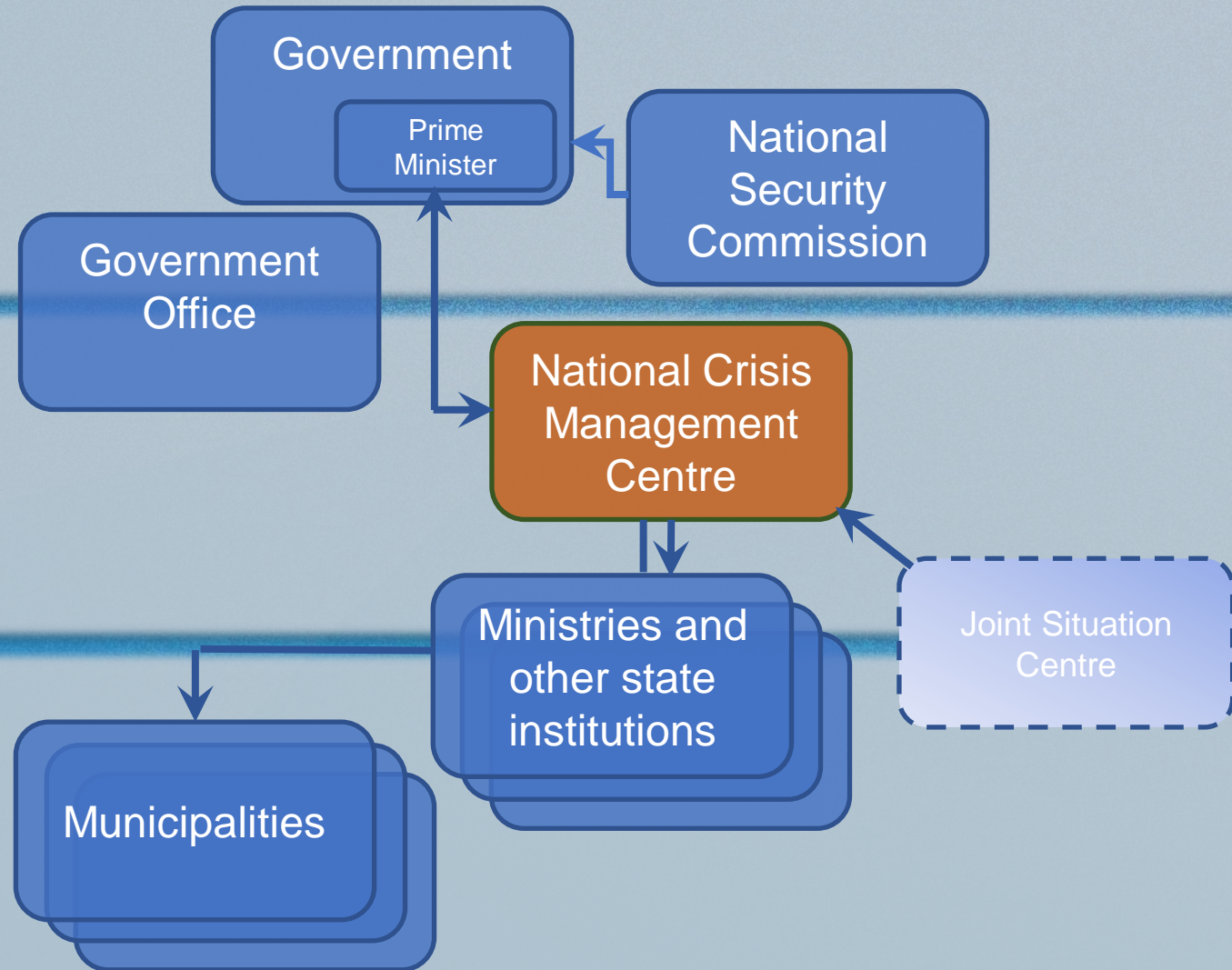


# NEW CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MODEL

Political–strategic level

Decision-making/coordination level

Operational-tactical level



# CAUSAL CONFIGURATIONS EXPLAINING THE RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL CRISES

Crisis	Independent variables		Intermediate variables		Dependent variables	
	Crisis events and paradigms	Political context	Governance capacity	Coordination arrangements	Main operational responses	Main strategic decisions
<b>The COVID-19 pandemic</b>	Four waves of the pandemic (with the strategies of suppression and mitigation)	Change of government at the end of 2020, political tensions between the ruling majority and opposition	Limited governance capacity to apply the mitigation strategy during the surge of COVID-19 cases	Centralised coordination from the centre of government from March 2020 to December 2020; from July 2021 to May 2022	Networks of laboratories and hospitals, additional funding for the management of the disease, etc.	The consolidation of public health institutions; the adoption of a major healthcare reform; the establishment of the National Crisis Management Centre
<b>Illegal migration</b>	Sudden and major increase of illegal migrants crossing the border (rights-based approach vs migrant pushbacks)	No change of government, initial political consensus followed by some disagreements	Limited capacity to register migrants and process their asylum requests, as well as to provide accommodation and other social services	Inter-institutional coordination from November 2021 to May 2023	A new policy of pushing back migrants, amending the asylum procedures	Building a physical barrier; the establishment of the National Crisis Management Centre; the establishment of a new agency for accommodation



# PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS (ON COORDINATION)

Overall, both Lithuanian governments led by Prime Ministers Skvernelis and Šimonytė initially attempted to rely on existing arrangements and standard routines to manage the individual crises, in line with the logic of appropriateness. However, as these approaches proved to be ineffective, it became necessary to urgently develop new solutions for crisis management

In response to the new reality, the Lithuanian authorities created the separate system of managing the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 and the special arrangement to coordinate the crisis of illegal migration in 2021. They eventually led to the creation of the integrated system for crisis and emergency management in 2022. This highlights a shift to the logic of consequentiality, as well as the development of a new crisis management system emerging from the individual crises and their interaction

More specifically, our research results also confirm our expectations that during major and/or multiple crisis events that spill into other domains, governments not only tend to adopt a centralised approach to crisis management but also to develop joint and integrated solutions for crisis management

# OTHER PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: NEW GOVERNANCE PRACTICES

**New forms of coordination and collaboration** (Nohrstedt et al., 2018) facilitated through networks and stakeholder engagement: **to a large extent**

**Agile or adaptive management methods** (Janssen and van der Voort, 2020) employed to respond promptly to rapidly changing situations: **to a large extent**

Governments can also embrace **emerging technologies and new information solutions** to drive innovation (De Nigris et al., 2020): **to a large/moderate extent** (depending on a policy area/individual state institutions and their capacities)

Public sector organisations can integrate **such practices of anticipatory governance as strategic foresight** (OECD, 2019): to a little extent (with policy actors drawing their lessons from the ongoing crises)

The Migration Department *“has acquired the ability to swiftly establish reception and registration centres, rapidly mobilise supplementary resources and create new positions”*



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# Thank you for the attention!

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