

# Routinising and ritualising multiple emergencies

How Lithuania dealt with three crises in 2020-2022

Prof. Dovilė Jakniūnaitė  
Vilnius University  
July 14, 2024

Association for Advancement of Baltic Studies  
Conference 2024

Project "Mobility, migration and the COVID-19 epidemic: governing emergencies in Lithuania and Poland" (together with Warsaw University), financed by Lithuanian-Polish research programme DAINA2 (Research Council of Lithuania and Polish National Science Center), 2021-2024, Nr. S-LL-21-11



Research  
Council of  
Lithuania

# Lithuania: three years, three crises → three emergencies

Covid19

Migration from Belarus

War in Ukraine

How possible and with what consequences?

# Emergency governance

Emergency

Exception

Huge (possible) harm

Management

Necessity

Temporariness

# Emergency governance

Securitization and Exception

Security management through desecuritization  
(Hansen 2012)

Change, Replacement, Rearticulation, Silence

# Lithuanian Case

# Emergencies: Legal Regime

Quarantine

Emergency situation (state level)

A natural, technical, ecological or social event that endangers society and the performance of vital state functions

State of Emergency

Threat to the constitutional or public order

State of War

	<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>Border crisis</b>	<b>Russian aggression in Ukraine</b>
<b>Quarantine</b>	March–June 2020 November 2020–July 2021		
<b>Emergency Situation</b>	February 2020–May 2021	July 2021 – ongoing	
<b>State of Emergency</b>		November 2021–January 2022 (at the border area)	February-September 2022 (whole country)  September 2022 – May 2023 (border area)



# Regulation practices: COVID19

- 1) I stage (March 2020 - June 2020): most stringent restrictive
- 2) II stage (June 2020 - October/November 2020): relaxation, non-disruption, growth
- 3) III stage (November 2020 - April/June 2020): restrictions back
- 4) IV stage (July 2021–May 2022): vaccination and “Opportunity Pass”

Overshadowed by Belarus migration and, later, Russian aggression

# COVID-19: Stringency Index, Lithuania

The stringency index is a composite measure based on nine response indicators including school closures, workplace closures, and travel bans, rescaled to a value from 0 to 100 (100 = strictest).



**Data source:** Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R. et al. A global panel database of pandemic policies (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker). *Nat Hum Behav* 5, 529–538 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8>

CC BY

# Regulation practices: migration from Belarus

Push-backs since August 1, 2021

Movement restriction at the border

Movement and communications restrictions for migrating people

# Regulation practices: Russia's aggression

Restriction on Russian/Belarussian TV channels

Limits on "spreading propaganda and disinformation"

Restricting public assemblies supporting war, Russia, Belarus

# Discursive strategies: COVID

Responsibility

Solidarity

Save lives

— — —

Responsibility

Rule-following

# Discursive strategies: Migration from Belarus

“Hybrid war”/ “hybrid aggression” and “mass influx of people”,  
yet:

— — —

Emergency: “for certain logistical reasons”

“For additional capacity”

“the technical and logistical tools, to be able to take quick and  
rapid decisions”

“will certainly not cause any inconvenience to the population”

# Discursive strategies: Russia's war

"Just in Case"

"Nobody knew what could happen"

"The fear was real"

"Possible hybrid attacks and provocations of all kinds pose a **threat to public order**, which cannot be addressed without the proportionate restriction on the exercise of the rights and freedoms"

# Surviving Multiple Emergencies

- 1) Simplification and routinization of emergencies
- 2) Pandemic emergency as a helpful framing device
- 3) Blending of the regimes
- 4) Executive power
- 5) Desecuritization through detachment
- 6) Enabling structural conditions for the future



**Prof. Dovilė Jakniūnaitė**

**Vilnius University**

**Institute of International Relations and Political Science**



**@dovilejakniunaite**



**@dovilejakniunaite**



**@djdovile**



**dovile.jakniunaite@tspmi.vu.lt**