

GEPOLITICAL FACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF A NEW SCHOOL OF CRIMINALISTICS IN THE INTERMARIUM REGION OF EUROPE

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Abstract. The idea of an alliance between Central and Eastern Europe and parts of the Balkans, otherwise known as the Intermarium or the Three Seas Initiative, is not a new one, but it has been given new impetus in our time as this region has developed substantial common interests – not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in other areas. If we look at the idea of the Intermarium, or more specifically the Three Seas concept, we see that 12 European Union countries are formally involved (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Greece was admitted to the Alliance in Bucharest in September 2023, while Ukraine and Moldova became associate members. In April 2024, an Intermarium Summit took place in Vilnius where important resolutions were adopted, including on security. The division of criminalistics into four main traditional schools (Germanic, Romance, Anglo-Saxon and Eastern European) which emerged in the second stage of its development in the 20th century is well known. There are no purely national ‘schools of criminalistics’, since each country is in the process of analysing the positive experiences (scientific and applied) of other countries and adapting them to its own purposes. This scientific term is therefore significant first and foremost as a basis for scientific classification, but also reflects the geopolitical vectors of each country. In regard to the development of a specific science such as criminalistics in the context of public security, we need to consider the influence of various factors on this process. In each country, criminalistics, as both a science and an applied field, begins based on the paradigms of one of the main schools before being further saturated with national content. The latter process depends not only on the existing law and its doctrine, the functioning system of law enforcement institutions, and the economic and social conditions, but also on the history, culture, traditions, and geopolitics of the country. The aim of this article, written by authors from three Intermarium countries, is to show, on the basis of an analysis of the most important developments in the forensic sciences of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe in recent

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decades, the prerequisites for the formation of a new school of criminalistics in the Intermarium countries. It also seeks to provide insights into the future directions of this process in the context of geopolitical changes.

Keywords: criminalistics, public security, geopolitics, Lithuania, Eastern and Central Europe, Intermarium, The Three Seas Initiative, criminalistics schools, new school of criminalistics.

Introduction

We first began discussing the possibility of a new school of criminalistics in Lithuania several years ago, when the concept of our criminalistics model started to move away from the Eastern European school of criminalistics. Although our model acquired new features, it did not identify itself with other schools, and we also observed similar processes taking place in neighbouring countries. These reflections led us to prepare this article and to invite colleagues from Central and Eastern European countries to speak on this issue. The idea underlying this article was conceived in 2020, and we hope that it will lead to broader discussion at our 20th Congress on Criminalistics and Forensic Expertology: Science, Studies, Practice, which will take place in September 2024 in Vilnius.

In today's globalised world, where key decisions in politics, economics and other areas depend on several centres of power, it is virtually impossible for most countries to pursue their national interests independently. The only way forward is to seek like-mindedness and to build regional alliances that can ensure common problems and interests are publicly raised and made visible. Even within the European Union, the voices of small, individual states are not heard when their interests are not aligned with those of Germany or France. The most relevant example is Nord Stream 2, which is opposed by the Baltic States and Poland. The idea of an alliance between Central and Eastern Europe and parts of the Balkans, otherwise known as the Intermarium or the Three Seas Initiative, is not a new one, but it has been given new impetus in our time as this region has developed substantial common interests – not only in the political and economic spheres, but also in other areas. If we look at the idea of the Intermarium, or more specifically the Three Seas concept, we see that 12 European Union countries are formally involved (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). We see this concept from the perspective of criminalistics and public security in a broader context, with the strong potential to include the Eastern Partnership countries: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the first instance, before other Balkan countries seeking integration with the EU become involved in this informal structure. We would like to point out that on 18 November 2020, the US House of Representatives adopted by consensus a resolution supporting the Intermarium idea, including recommending the inclusion of not only EU countries, but also Ukraine, Moldova and the countries of the Western Balkans region in this act of cooperation. US President Joe Biden and his administration also support the Intermarium idea. Recently, the Intermarium Alliance has attracted even more interest, with the participation of representatives of the US, German and EU institutions as observers, as well as Greece, France, the UK and Japan. It is also important to note that Greece was admitted as a full member at the Bucharest Summit in 2023, and Ukraine and Moldova were granted associate status.

Other areas requiring closer cooperation in the region include public security issues, of which criminalistics (both its science and application), broadly defined, is one of the key elements. Criminalistics science began to emerge in the second half of the 19th century in Europe, and from the outset had several main epicentres (the Austro-Hungarian Empire, France, Germany and Great Britain). In the scientific literature, we come across various criminalistics theories that explain these processes. The division of criminalistics into four main traditional schools (Germanic, Romance, Anglo-Saxon and Eastern European) which emerged during its second stage of development in the 20th century following World War I (Malevski, 2009, 2010) is well known. Among the pioneers who contributed to the formation of these schools are the Austrian Hans Gross, the Frenchmen Alphonse Bertillon and Edmond Locard, the German Robert Heindl, the Swiss Rudolph Archibald Reiss, and the Englishman Francis Galton. It should be stressed that the concept of schools of criminalistics is a scientific category that allows different countries to be grouped according to the complex of paradigms of criminalistics theory that they use and the application of recommendations, methods and tools based on them in the processes of interpreting, investigating and preventing criminal offences. There are no purely national schools of criminalistics, since each country is in the process of analysing and adapting the positive experiences (both scientific and applied) of other countries to its own purposes. This category is therefore significant first and foremost as a basis for scientific classification, but also reflects the geopolitical vectors of each country. The models of criminalistics schools chosen by different countries are linked not only to the methods, techniques and tools applied for the interpretation, investigation and prevention of crime, but also to research (conceptual

issues of theory and methodology) and didactics in this field. In regard to the development of a specific science such as criminalistics in the context of public security, we need to consider the influence of various factors on this process. In each country, criminalistics, as both a science and an applied field, was first based on the paradigms of one of the main schools before being further saturated with national content. The latter process has depended not only on the existing law and its doctrine, the functioning system of law enforcement institutions, and the economic and social conditions, but also on the history, culture, traditions, and geopolitics of the country.

The changes in criminalistics in these countries may have reached a critical mass, where we can say that the existing national models do not fit into the established framework of the general paradigms of the Eastern European school of criminalistics. While acknowledging the achievements of the Eastern European school of criminalistics, representatives of Central European countries have also hinted at its weaknesses and the need, in the context of new geopolitical conditions, to debate its paradigms. For example, some authors in Poland emphasise the need to revise existing theoretical paradigms of criminalistics theory (Kasprzak *et al.*, 2006, p. 46; Kasprzak, 2015). It should also be noted that in countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan or Belarus, which traditionally belong to the Eastern European school of criminalistics and are considered to be its bastion, there is an increasing number of opinions regarding the necessity of looking at the established paradigms of criminalistics theory and methodology from new positions (Aleksandrov, 2011; Filippov, 2010; Zorin, 2017; Sokol, 2017).

Therefore, are we not **already at the stage of the formation** (or evolution) **of a new Intermarium school of criminalistics**? The answer to this question is not straightforward, as the countries in the region have different cultural (civilisational), religious and historical (including criminalistics) memories and experiences. During and prior to the 19th century, these peoples often did not have their own states or had lost their independence due to the aggression of powerful neighbouring empires. For centuries, the regions of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans were seen by the Turks, Russians and Germans as targets of expansion, or at least spheres of influence. We must not forget that even between these wars the countries of this region experienced a number of problems, disagreements, territorial disputes and conflicts with each other at different levels, including those of a military nature. This prevented the Intermarium alliance from materialising in those days, which was supposed to be a response to the aggressive policies of neighbours from either side. After the Second World War, some of these countries were directly occupied by the USSR, while others (indeed, most, with the exception of Austria) were more or less integrated into the so-called community of socialist countries. At the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, following the collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the so-called union of socialist countries, a completely new geopolitical environment emerged which enabled the countries of the region to choose their own independent paths of development, including in the field of criminalistics. It may be noted that US geopolitician and visionary George Friedman, who devoted considerable attention to Eastern and Central Europe, did not overlook the processes involved in the revival of the Intermarium idea when he wrote the following:

The Interzone (also known as the *Intermarium*) is a concept – or rather a possibility – that I have been talking about for almost a decade. I have been predicting that this concept will be revived when Russia inevitably re-emerges as a major regional power. This is logical, given that the Interzone concept would consist of the former Soviet Union or its satellite states in Eastern Europe: the Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and perhaps Bulgaria. Its aim would be to contain any potential Russian movement westwards. The United States would support it. The rest of Europe would suffer for it.’ (Friedman, 2017)

To extend and clarify Friedman’s point, it is necessary to state that it is not only the countries of the European Union mentioned above that are promoting the idea of an Interzone, but also some of the countries of the Balkans and the Eastern Partnership.

The aim of our paper is to highlight, on the basis of an analysis of the most important developments in the forensic sciences of the Eastern and Central European countries over the last few decades, the prerequisites for the formation of a new school of criminalistics in the Intermarium countries, and to provide insights into the future directions of this process in the context of geopolitical changes.

To achieve this, the main objectives are:

- to assess the main historical preconditions and causes of this process, to show the vector of development taken by the Central and (some) Eastern European countries at the end of the 20th century, and to carry out a pilot survey of the opinions of Central and Eastern European scholars (interviews);
- to highlight trends and provide insights into the formation of this school through a study of the influence of geopolitical factors on public security and the development of forensic science in the Intermarium countries.

The methods used in this paper are historical, comparative, systematic, content analysis, and interview. The historical method is used to highlight the genesis of forensic science and its individual schools. The comparative method is used to assess changes in the content of security in light of contemporary threats, their nature, and the influence of forensic science. The systematic analysis method is used to construct the conceptual content of the future Intermarium School of criminalistics. The content analysis method is used to clarify important concepts and analyse scientific sources and legislation. The method of interviews with eminent forensic scientists from eleven countries is of great value in demonstrating the relevance and reality of the scientific idea of the Intermarium School of criminalistics.

1. Geopolitical factors of public security and the development of criminalistics in Intermarium countries

Ensuring national security is one of the main priorities of every country, and this includes not only military, economic and energy security, but also other areas, including public security. In dealing with the general issues of ensuring the public security of the people, we are dealing with the science of criminalistics, which studies the functional side of crime as a social phenomenon, the ways, methods and means of committing crimes, and the forms, ways, methods and means of the relevant state institutions that respond to these processes. Criminalistics is not only a cognitive and theoretical, but also an applied (practical) activity aimed at the explanation, investigation and prevention of criminal offences. It must be said that in some countries (e.g., in Western Europe or the USA), the theoretical and methodological aspects of criminalistics are not considered as independent parts of the science. This fact is linked to the underdevelopment of academic criminalistics in comparison with the countries of the Eastern European school of criminalistics. The cognitive praxeological function of criminalistics theory is aimed at introducing scientific methodology into the field of fighting crime. The applied tasks of criminalistics are directed towards the development of recommendations, methods and tools for the investigation of crime, ensuring the effectiveness of the activities of certain state institutions (prosecutor's offices, interrogation and quarantine, or, as is currently the case in Lithuania, pre-trial investigation institutions, expert bodies, etc.). This is the methodological field of criminalistics, which combines science with practical activities. The methodological function of criminalistics can be realised, first of all, through criminalistics didactics during the course of studies and through the development of professional competences. In the era of globalisation, crime has become not only a hazard of daily life for the statistically average citizen, but also a factor that threatens national security, and its new forms of manifestation require closer international cooperation, which is linked to the political decisions of states (Malevski, 2013; Malevski *et al.*, 2016; Malewski *et al.*, 2017; Kurapka & Malevski, 2019). Ensuring public security requires not only appropriate decisions in national and international politics, but also the active involvement of non-governmental organisations in these processes (Ackermann *et al.*, 2020).

Each state adopts appropriate strategies and programmes to address national security issues. Thus, in 2021, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania revised the National Security Strategy, stating that the national security interests of the Republic of Lithuania are:

- 11.1. state sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic constitutional order.
- 11.2. peace, the well-being of the population and a secure environment for the development of the State.
- 11.3. the viability and unity of the Euro-Atlantic community.

The implementation of this strategy involves the use of various instruments, including the potential of criminalistics. In addressing public security issues, there is a need for ever closer international cooperation, including the coordination of cooperation between the countries of our region in the field of criminalistics, both in its theory and its applied components. We need to find a common denominator to achieve these goals.

Winnicki formulated the following question: Is there a territorial-cultural, civilisational, economic formula for a commonwealth that we can apply to the East-Central European region? Winnicki offered the following answer: ‘Yes, there is, as a category which sociology calls the “Commonality of Destiny”. From the Middle Ages to the present day, the countries (states) and peoples of Eastern and Central Europe have had similar experiences, most often involving external interference, and particularly significant have been the experiences associated with the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century’ (Winnicki, 2017, p. 17).

As far as the modern world is concerned, the processes of finding one’s own way were particularly pronounced at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, when the geopolitical changes that had taken place redrew the European map. Geopolitical changes, the restructuring of the institutions of the states that regained their sovereignty and the reform of the legal system could not help but leave their mark on the field of public security, including criminalistics. It is impossible to understand the logic of certain processes without at least a simple schematic historical assessment of them in light of civilisational, geopolitical, economic, cultural and religious factors. We can safely say that since the end of the Middle Ages, most of the peoples and states of our region have been subject to the destructive effects of several powerful neighbouring empires (Wirpsza, 2018). Only relatively recently – in the 16th and partly in the 17th centuries – was the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, which then had an area of around 1 million km² and a population of approximately 11 million, a powerful political, military and economic entity in Europe, capable of influencing the political processes of the region. Later, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth gradually lost its power (and territory) and was overshadowed by the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Holy Roman Empire (which was based in Germany, and even its name emphasised its German origin – *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation*) and the Habsburg monarchy. These negative processes culminated in the loss of the independence of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century. The Balkans and Southern Europe in general were heavily influenced by the Habsburg monarchy and especially the Ottoman Empire, which flourished in the 14th and 17th centuries, while some of the peoples of the Southern European region were enslaved and remained part of the Empire for almost five centuries. The geopolitical processes of the 19th century and especially the first decades of the 20th century showed that the conflicting interests of these and other empires were growing, often giving rise to serious conflicts, including those of a military nature. The territories of the Central European nations have often been the focus of these conflicts, as the main geopolitical players have considered these countries to be their spheres of influence. In 1914–1918, the First World War was the culmination of this confrontation. However, the collapse of empires and the regaining of independence in a number of enslaved nations after World War I did not fundamentally change the geopolitical strategic doctrines of the USSR and Germany, which continued to regard the East-Central European region as their sphere of influence. Even in the immediate post-war years, attempts were already being made to implement the idea of an Intermarium alliance as a counterweight to powerful neighbours, but due to serious disagreements and conflicts, this was not possible (Kornat, 2013; Paruch, 2016).

The emergence of the Eastern European school of criminalistics (rather than the term *criminalistics* itself, which came much later) is associated first with Russia and then with the Soviet Union, and was often referred to as *Russian criminalistics* or *Soviet criminalistics*. It should be noted that the emergence of criminalistics can be traced back to Western Europe, while its development in the Russian Empire came later. Before the beginning of World War I, according to well-known Russian criminalists, there were no major scientific works in this country, except those by Burinsky and Brazol (Averyanova *et al.*, 2007, p. 6).

Then, after the Second World War, the term *socialist criminalistics* was used to reflect the specificity of the science of criminalistics in the USSR and its satellites (Koldin, 1986). After the collapse of the so-called socialist Commonwealth at the end of the Cold War, there was an opportunity to take stock of a new reality, when the liberated countries were seeking their place in the new geopolitical climate and looking to the West (the process of westernisation), including in criminalistics. We then began to use the term *Eastern European school of criminalistics* more broadly, to mark a distinction from the former Soviet or socialist criminalistics while emphasising that it was developed not only by scientists from the USSR (later Russia), but also by scientists from other countries in the region. The Eastern European school of criminalistics was (and to some extent still is) represented not only by Russian and Belarusian criminalists, but also by criminalists from some of the other republics of the former USSR (Ginzburg & Rossinskaya, 2007). In the past, this school included all criminalists from the republics of the USSR and, more often than not, the socialist countries (and, to some extent, also from the socialist-oriented countries). This is because the socialist commonwealth system, offered little room for manoeuvre, even in a science such as criminalistics.

The official established system of the Eastern European school of criminalistics consists of a fourfold structure: the theory (and methodology) of criminalistics, the technique of criminalistics, the tactics of criminalistics, and the crime investigation methodology. It must be acknowledged that the separation of theory and methodology into a separate part of the science of criminalistics is one of the key achievements and distinctive features of this school, and not only allows knowledge to be consolidated and the perspectives of the development of science to be predicted, but also enables the priorities of research to be selected. Theory and methodology have become a kind of strategic tool for assessing the needs of practice and the development of criminalistics. The distinction between criminalistics theory and methodology avoids the haphazard and eclectic incorporation into the discipline of at least some of the methods, techniques and tools that can be applied to the investigation of criminal offences and the pursuit of preventive objectives (as we see in other schools of criminalistics). Thus, not all methods or tools that are used in the interpretation and investigation of crime should be considered part of criminalistics and included in its framework. We can therefore speak of a bloc of ancillary criminalistics disciplines that use the paradigms of criminalistics theory and the achievements of other sciences to solve the tasks of explaining, investigating and preventing crime. For example, Professor Hubert Kołdecki (2009, pp. 27–36), on the basis of an analysis of the works of foreign scholars, mentioned around forty auxiliary criminalistics disciplines, which he divided into traditional criminalistics disciplines such as forensic anthropology, forensic biology, forensic phonoscopy, etc. On the other hand, scientific theory must constantly be verified by life, as certain processes of suspension and the emergence of dogmatism can be detrimental to the development of science. Some old dogmas, enshrined in scientific publications and textbooks, may be out of step with the needs of real life. **Therefore, not only because of the change in our axiological hierarchy of values, but also because of the new situation brought about by civilisational progress (including Industry 4.0), it is necessary to look at the theory and methodology of criminalistics from a new perspective.**

After regaining independence, the former republics and satellites of the USSR began an intensive search for ways to integrate with Western democracies. This was also evident in criminalistics (Kurapka & Malewski, 2000; Malewski, 2012). Since then, fundamental changes have taken place in criminalistics in the countries of the region, and this has not been limited only to the sphere of application. In this way, the countries of the Intermarium area are moving away from their former epicentre – Russia. At the same time, it must be stressed that the orientation of the countries that regained their independence towards the West did not mean the mechanical abandonment of the achievements of the Eastern European (and Russian) school of criminalistics, especially in the fields of the theory and methodology of criminalistics. When analysing any process, we must first take into account its place and links in a much wider context and then demonstrate them. This is the only way to understand its essence and causes. Thus, we must ask: What factors have been important for the development of criminalistics in different European countries?

Geographically, the European continent is divided into Western, Central, Eastern, Northern and Southern regions. In civilisational, cultural and even legal terms, this geographical division of European countries is not sufficient. It must be stressed that the geopolitical factor has been particularly important for the development of criminalistics and its application in different European countries at different times – especially at the end of the 20th century, when there was even talk of ‘the end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1992). Fukuyama’s primary thesis was linked to the end of the Cold War and his optimistic vision that the world’s states would move towards a universal, global and modern civilisation. Unfortunately, the reality was (and is) much more complex, as we are confronted with different interests, contradictions and conflicts between individual states or groups of states (Huntington, 1996). Contrary to Fukuyama’s thesis, a number of conflicts have emerged in the 21st century, including those of a military nature. One such conflict that is causing great concern in our part of Europe is the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine. The Eastern Partnership project has been and remains very important for the countries of our region, and that is why the idea of the Intermarium is being revived. This idea is vital not only for Ukraine (Zagrebelnyi, 2019), but also for the other countries in the region, because even such an informal commonwealth can become a stronger voice without ever threatening to fragment the European Union. The informality of such a commonwealth makes it possible for countries from outside the EU or the Eastern Partnership to be part of it (EFNSI is a good example of this). The realisation of economic projects such as Via Baltica and Via Carpathia can also stimulate cooperation in other fields. The close – and, in some cases, common – geopolitical, economic, legal and other interests of these countries encourage us to look at public security in the region, including through the prism of fighting and preventing crime. In times of globalisation where crime (and its various transnational manifestations in particular) is becoming a prominent factor affecting public security, the importance of criminalistics and its applied recommendations in ensuring the security of

society and people is becoming one of the highest-priority objectives of states. Are the geopolitical interests of the Intermarium states a sufficient factor for the emergence of a new school of criminalistics? In our opinion, the existence of common goals and interests in the economic and political spheres will naturally lead to the search for closer cooperation in the field of public security, which is not possible without the harmonisation of theoretical paradigms and applied methods and tools of criminalistics.

Changes in the national security concepts of most of the states that regained independence or autonomy in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe at the end of the 20th century emphasised the goal of integration into the EU and NATO. Public security concepts naturally evolved alongside this transition, with the Western vector also becoming central. Criminalistics and its applications are thus also on the verge of serious change. The attractive vision of westernisation encouraged the rapid introduction of Western standards into practical areas of fighting crime. On the other hand, the desire to distance oneself from the dominant position of the Russian school of criminalistics and the paternalistic attitude of some of its scholars towards post-independence countries required a rethinking of the situation, an assessment of the dominant concepts of criminalistics in the West, a comparison of them with the paradigms of the Eastern European school of criminalistics, and the elaboration of ideas for the development of a model of criminalistics for one's own country. Eminent Russian criminalist Rafael S. Belkin regretted that the links between Russia and the former republics of the USSR that had regained independence had been broken in the 1990s. He wrote that the problems in criminalistics had become much worse with the disintegration of the USSR, when the joint allied scientific centres ceased their activities, direct scientific contacts were cut off, and the Baltic countries, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Armenia and other republics, which no longer had support from the centre (i.e., Russia), practically ceased their scientific research in criminalistics (Belkin, 2001b, pp. 17–18). Belkin perhaps did not want to understand certain laws that govern the development of societies. For example, in the face of a critical complex of contradictions, institutional and structural separation is necessary to understand the essence of certain deep processes and to gain the perspective of harmonising the criminalistics of different countries in the future at a new stage in history.

In independent Ukraine, significant changes have taken place in society, including the abandonment of totalitarian (repressive) methods of state governance, the elimination of the ideological component of science, and a shift from 'criminalistics in the service of investigation' to 'adversarial criminalistics'. The Constitution of Ukraine speaks of 'the European identity of the Ukrainian people and the irreversibility of Ukraine's course of European and Euro-Atlantic integration'. Russian aggression and the war in Ukraine have forced Russian and Belarusian researchers to withdraw from the process of the formation of a common European criminalistics space and step back from the scientific debate on changes and new trends in the Eastern European school of criminalistics. This role was successfully taken up by Ukrainian scientists as some of the strongest representatives of the Eastern European school of criminalistics, who actively engage in the scientific debate on the possibilities and trends of the formation of a new school of criminalistics.

In the current context, the development of Ukrainian forensic science is characterised by the change in its course of development and its approximation to the common European criminalistics space. The formation of a common European space in the field of criminalistics and forensics requires the application of the latest methods and technologies, the introduction of international standards of evidence in criminal proceedings, and the improvement of the scientific language and the unification of terminological apparatus. At the same time, we can observe the necessity of discussing the need for a new interdisciplinary school of criminalistics.

There are two further key points to note:

1. The Three Seas Initiative Summit in Vilnius on 11 April 2024 resulted in a declaration aiming at a more resilient Europe and a stronger transatlantic partnership. Security issues were a major focus. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda observed the following:

The Three Seas Summit adopted a declaration that I hope will be a catalyst for moving forward in all priority areas. In the Declaration, we expressed our strong commitment to the fundamental objective of the Three Seas Initiative: to strengthen regional cooperation for a more resilient Europe and a stronger transatlantic partnership. (Pikelytė, 2024)

2. On 16 May 2023, the Three Seas Universities Network (3SUN) was established in Lublin. Thirteen universities from ten countries, including two Ukrainian universities and Mykolas Romeris University, signed the declaration affirming this network. The aim of the initiative is to strengthen international cooperation

between universities, intensify exchanges and develop research. Such cooperation will result in prestigious publications, major projects and European grants (MRU, 2023).

In our view, these are recent additional factors that not only encourage the development of the idea of an Intermarium school of criminalistics, but that also see its realisation as a reality that will help to achieve the main objectives of the Intermarium. In a networked world, security is increasingly based on a new understanding of the interactions between all the elements involved. This requires a common and systemic understanding of security and new common strategies to deal with risk and uncertainty. The new security culture must therefore be agile, mobile and flexible; it must provide quick answers to, for example, new cyber (in)security challenges. Lithuanian researchers have already begun to explore the links between security and the criminal sciences, including forensic science, and it would be logical to continue this research. University researchers will find their place here too.

2. Contemporary features of Intermarium criminalistics

If we look at the criminalistics of these countries from a purely national perspective, it is difficult to identify any common features of the Intermarium region through the enormous mosaic of elements. One of the most important factors is the geopolitical context, which unites many of the countries in the region, as some are already members of the European Union and others are striving for membership. The verification of the hypothesis put forward regarding the creation of an Intermarium school of criminalistics requires extensive work by an international team of researchers. Our aim is to stimulate such a debate. We will try to carry out an initial analysis and to verify a number of milestones that are significant for the evaluation of the scientific paradigms of criminalistics and their application in the interpretation, investigation and prevention of criminal acts.

As we have already mentioned, one of the strengths of the Eastern European school of criminalistics is its theory and methodology, which was and continues to be linked to a strongly developed academic doctrine and the didactics of criminalistics. Therefore, in Lithuania (Kurapka & Matulienė, 2012), Latvia, Estonia and Ukraine (Shepitko, 2019), we possess a similar concept and system of criminalistics, and its doctrinal achievements are similarly perceived (Malevski & Shepitko, 2016). It should be emphasised that the scientific theory and methodology of criminalistics has been developed in particular by the scientific community of the former USSR, led by Belkin (2001a). Although the post-war doctrines of criminalistics in Slovakia, Czechia, Romania, Bulgaria (Belensky, 2006) and other countries in the region were also strongly influenced by so-called socialist science, they retained certain elements that were present in the interwar period and did not feel the process of unification that was being imposed as strongly as it was felt elsewhere. The doctrine of criminalistics in these countries concentrated more on the applied aspects of the fight against crime, and their criminalistics paid less attention to purely theoretical issues. As a result, their definitions of criminalistics and the system of criminalistics they presented had certain differences from the system prevailing in the USSR. In most of these countries, there is no independent theoretical component of the criminalistics system, although the importance of theory and methodology is emphasised by all, as can be seen from their criminalistics textbooks. Polish criminalistics has its own specificity, not only because of the size of the country, but also because of certain historical consequences. After gaining independence in 1918, Poland had to merge the parts of the country that had been seized and occupied by the three empires into a single viable organism, to establish a national legal system and to set up a unified system of law enforcement institutions after 123 years of fragmentation (Hołyst, 2018, pp. 31–49). In Poland, we have concepts almost identical to the classical Eastern European school of criminalistics, concepts which are close to the Germanic school of criminalistics, and our own original concepts.

On the one hand, the development of criminalistics incorporates into its field of knowledge the methods, techniques and tools of other sciences. On the other hand, it gives these apparatus the status of an autonomous theory or scientific discipline, in which a certain critical body of ideas and concepts is formed that contradicts the fundamental principles of this science. Thus, a new scientific discipline has emerged from criminalistics: forensic science (Averyanova, 2006; Volchetskaya, 2016; Rossinskaya *et al.*, 2019). Forensic science as an independent scientific discipline was first discussed by criminalists of the former USSR, and this opinion is now shared not only by criminalists from Russia and Ukraine, but also those of other countries, including Lithuania. The concept of criminalistics policy is beginning to emerge on the basis of criminalistics, although criminal policy as an element of the criminal science system was first mentioned by Hans Gross at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Gross, 1908/2002).

In Western countries, criminalistics has often been considered as a police discipline, although this has changed in recent times, as Europe has come to realise that without a solid scientific foundation, it is impossible to fight crime effectively. Taking into account the significance of this declaration for the development of criminalistics, Mykolas Romeris University researchers conducted a study and evaluated the steps taken by the country's institutions in realising the goals set (for more information see Kurapka *et al.*, 2016).

The creation of a common European criminalistics (or rather forensic expertology) space was only presented to the EU as a form of declaration in 2011, although public security issues, and in particular the fight against organised crime, had been emphasised much earlier. European institutions were set up to fight crime (ENFSI, Europol, OLAF, Eurojust, etc.). At the same time, it must be stressed that in Western countries there is a very strong emphasis on the applied aspect of criminalistics, with insufficient attention paid to its theory and methodology. In Germany, for example, the criminalistics system is now generally understood as a triad: technique, tactics and criminal activity (or strategy). In some cases, criminal diagnostics (the diagnosis of criminal activity) is also referred to. In a new textbook on criminalistics, an interesting and original approach to the criminalistics system can be found, where criminalistics is divided into (Ackermann *et al.*, 2019, p. 22):

- 1) theory/methodology/history;
- 2) criminalistics tactics;
- 3) criminalistics techniques (natural science criminalistics);
- 4) special criminalistics (resembling the methodology of criminalistics as we understand it in Lithuania);
- 5) criminalistics psychology/logic/thinking;
- 6) criminal strategy.

Renowned criminalistics scientist Prof. Rolf Ackermann has repeatedly stated, with some regret, that at the end of the 20th century in Germany, criminalistics was 'pushed out' of universities and existed only in police schools as an applied discipline. At the same time, Ackermann observed that criminalistics has an established status as an independent science in Europe, and especially in Eastern Europe (Ackermann, 2009–2010). The Roman school of criminalistics usually refers to field criminalistics (*police technique*) and scientific criminalistics (*police scientifique*), and in some cases also uses the term *criminalistique* (criminalistics). Scientific criminalistics is often understood in the Roman school of criminalistics as the laboratory-based investigation of certain traces (evidence). Academic criminalistics, with the exception of didactics in police schools, has no independent place in this concept, and exists more as a means of ensuring laboratory research and, more often than not, as a tool for adapting the methods of other sciences. Here, the focus is on the development of certain skills and competences of officers, primarily the police. Academic criminalistics exists fully within the school of criminalistics in Eastern and Central European countries. In the Intermarium region, academic criminalistics is closely linked to the legal sciences, which is, in our opinion, a great advantage. In the Germanic school, this has been the case since the beginning. In the Anglo-Saxon school, criminalistics is first and foremost related to the natural sciences.

Returning to the criminalistics of the Intermarium countries in recent decades, it is necessary to emphasise that its applied components, especially in the field of forensic expertology, are becoming increasingly similar to Western models, which is linked not only to the westernisation of these countries, but also to their accession to European structures such as ENFSI, Europol, etc., and to the support they receive from Western countries for the modernisation of the relevant national criminalistics institutions. For example, the financial support provided to the Lithuanian Police Criminalistics Investigation Centre has enabled it to become a modern criminalistics expert institution capable of providing methodological and practical assistance in the reform of other countries' criminalistics institutions. An example of this is the support provided to the Croatian police expert service (CILC, 2016).

In the era of globalisation, we are not only experiencing the positive effects of this phenomenon, such as modernisation in various areas of life, free access to virtually unlimited sources of information, etc., but are also facing new challenges, dangers and threats. Globalisation has facilitated organised crime and international terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and a rapid increase in cybercrime. In light of these processes, Lithuanian criminalists were well aware at the turn of the millennium that without deeper international cooperation it would be impossible to effectively combat manifestations of crime and ensure public security. Lithuanian criminalists not only saw, but also took steps to improve this situation. Realising that public security, the prevention of crime and, above all, the fight against various forms of crime are not possible without comprehensive knowledge of these phenomena and effectiveness in the activities of state institutions and NGOs, they have long searched for

various forms of international cooperation in this field. The Lithuanian Society of Criminalists, with the involvement of representatives of the academic community, proposed an effective platform for communication between scientists and practitioners in various fields: the ongoing international scientific practical conference entitled ‘Criminalistics and Forensic Expertology: Science, Studies, Practice’, which has been held in various Lithuanian cities since 2001 and has been held abroad every second year since 2012.

3. Initiating a discussion on insights into the developments of Intermarium countries towards the creation of a new school of criminalistics

We have already observed that the concept of a school of criminalistics is a scientific category that allows different countries to be grouped according to the set of paradigms of criminalistics that they employ and the application of recommendations, methods and tools based on these paradigms in the processes of interpreting, investigating and preventing criminal offences. Until now, we have been able to classify all countries under one of the main schools of criminalistics, in spite of the specific features of each of them. We have observed on more than one occasion that the processes of globalisation are encouraging us to follow the path of modernisation and to strive for the convergence of theoretical paradigms in criminalistics and the harmonisation of the processes of investigating and preventing crime in Europe. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons (political, legal, economic and even historical or psychological), this will not be possible immediately, but must be done gradually, with harmonisation starting in certain regions and with the aim of synchronising the entire system. The emergence of a new school of criminalistics requires certain motivating factors and preconditions. We have already written about the research undertaken in 2019 by conducting interviews (50 respondents, including 44 with a scientific degree) on the issue of international cooperation with scientists from 11 countries (Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Estonia, and Czechia) (Ackermann, *et al.*, 2020, pp. 358–359).

Additionally, in 2020 we carried out a further study, and are now presenting in parallel the opinions of 50 academics from Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Slovakia as potential Intermarium countries. This study assessed the directions that need to be pursued at present in order to establish a common European criminalistics space (not only forensic expertology), including problems and trends in the development of schools of criminalistics.

Table 1. Key findings from the benchmark study on what should be done next

Statement	Number of affirmative responses, 2019 study	Number of affirmative responses, 2020 study
Activate existing international law enforcement structures.	24	19
Prepare a new EU Directive on a common European criminalistics space.	13	27
Strengthen cooperation between scientists in order to converge the theoretical and methodological paradigms of the different national schools and to harmonise the processes of investigating criminal offences.	29	30
Promote cooperation between criminalistics NGOs and integrate these organisations into European structures.	31	31
Develop mechanisms based on criminalistics policy to improve the performance of law enforcement agencies in order to ensure public security.	19	31
Foster joint international research projects.	34	33

These studies reinforce our view that the search for new platforms for international cooperation on the basis of scientific discussions – and, in the future, scientific projects – is long overdue due to the protracted nature of the search for mechanisms for the creation of a common European criminalistics space.

This influenced our next initiative: to use the format of forensic congresses to launch a study of the opinions of scientists on the possible formation of an Intermarium school of criminalistics, its preconditions, the factors that affect it, and its significance for the development of criminology. To this end, further steps were taken.

In 2022 in Vilnius, at the 18th International Congress on Criminalistics and Forensic Expertology: Science, Studies, Practice, interviews were conducted with 22 scientists from 6 countries (Czechia, Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Germany). One question in this study was as follows: ‘Can it be said that in the countries of the Mediterranean region (Intermarium), between the Eastern European and Germanic schools of criminalistics, a new school of criminalistics is being formed, which combines the theoretical and methodological achievements of the Eastern European school of criminalistics with the technological and IT achievements of other schools?’ Half of the respondents said that such assumptions exist, three responded negatively to this question, and three noted that they do not have the competence to answer this question. Interestingly, five emphasised that the paradigms of forensic science are converging in the global world, but considered whether this serves as a basis for talking about the emergence of a new school. In their opinion, there is insufficient data for this conclusion. Therefore, we extended the survey of scientists’ opinions to 2023, with an additional survey conducted during and immediately after the 19th Congress in Brno (Czechia). This survey of well-known criminalistics scientists was conducted regarding the assumptions and possibilities surrounding the formation of a new school of criminalistics: such assumptions were positively evaluated by two thirds of the respondents. Taking into account the results of these studies, on the agenda of the 20th Congress in 2024, a separate topic on the Intermarium issue is included.

What are the factors and preconditions that indicate, or could indicate, that we are in the process of establishing a new Intermarium school of criminalistics? Is there a niche in which a new school of criminalistics may be formed? In our view, it is worthwhile to open a scientific debate on what factors could lead to this:

- the incomplete development of a strategy for criminalistics within EU institutions, alongside the declarative and one-sided nature of the Common European Criminalistics Space 2020, which is now particularly pronounced in 2024;
- new geopolitical formations and the ambitions underlying them as a reaction to inflections in common EU policy;
- the formation of regional crime control policy and the related possibilities for the emergence of a real criminalistics policy (research on criminalistics policy in the strategies of law enforcement agencies is planned in Lithuania);
- the development of criminalistics and the strengthening of academic criminalistics in individual regions, in response to a science-based understanding of the importance of criminalistics;
- the weakening of the influence of the traditional schools of criminalistics and the factors behind it, ranging from the trajectories of political regimes from sovereignty to shared solutions, the manifestations of authoritarianism and the instability of political solutions (Brexit; Make America Great Again; etc.), to errors in the assessment of the relevance and significance of criminalistics, the lack of attention paid to the didactics of criminalistics, and the training of researchers, which could be the starting point for the stagnation of criminalistics;
- the unmet need for scientific communication, the suspension of traditional communication platforms and over-commercialisation;
- the generation of new ideas in criminalistics and the emergence of attractive, high-quality communication formats in non-traditional regions (20 annual international scientific-practical congresses including Criminalistics and Forensic Expertology: Science, Studies, Practice, International Days of the Archibald Reis, etc.);
- the emergence of non-governmental criminalistics organisations and their initiatives in establishing regional associations – the International Criminalistics Association in Zagreb, the Lithuanian Society of Criminalists, the Polish Society of Criminalists, the initiative of the Ukrainian International Forum on Criminalistics – to set up a Federation of National European Criminalistics Organisations, and possible others;
- pilot studies on the need, prospects and directions for the creation of a common European space for criminalistics and not only for forensic science, and the need for a criminalistics policy concept.

At the close of this article, we would like to point out that this topic is widely known and is becoming increasingly important in the current international scientific discourse of criminology, which is evident from the

statement of the editor-in-chief of the *Problemy współczesnej kryminalistyki* [Problems of Contemporary Criminology] journal, Prof. Tadeusz Tomaszewski (2023), who observed the following:

However, before we briefly review the content of this issue, we would like to draw attention to the contributions of the Lithuanian authors H. Malewski, S. Matulienė, and V. E. Kurapka, who write about the growing cooperation between Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian forensic scientists in recent years and about the plans to create a broad platform enabling such cooperation in scientific, didactic and practical fields between scientific institutions and non-governmental forensic organisations from many countries in our region, which would even allow us to talk about the emergence of a new school of criminalistics in the future. (p. 11.)

Conclusions

The current geopolitical background of Europe; the research and development of forensic science in the Intermarium countries; the scientific potential and the ideas it generates; the level of academic forensic science; the original platforms for international cooperation in the region and the extent to which they have been developed; and the consolidation of nongovernmental activities – all of these factors make it possible to envisage the organisation of the forensic science sector and the perspectives that lie ahead, enabling the creation of an Intermarium school of criminalistics.

The main assumptions and factors behind this are:

- The unfinished strategy for the development of forensic science in EU institutions, the declarative and one-sided nature of the Common European Criminalistics Space 2020, which is now especially pronounced in 2024, new geopolitical formations and their ambitions in response to EU common policy, the formation of regional crime-control policies, and the related possibilities regarding the emergence of a realistic forensic science policy (in Lithuania, research on forensic science policy in the strategies of law-enforcement institutions is foreseen).
- The development of forensic science, the strengthening of academic forensic science in individual regions in response to a science-based understanding of the importance of forensic science, the weakening of the influence of traditional forensic science schools and the factors behind it. These factors range from the trajectories of political regimes, from sovereignty to shared solutions, the manifestation of authoritarianism and the volatility of political solutions (Brexit; Make America Great Again; etc.), to errors in the assessment of the relevance and significance of forensic science, the lack of attention paid to the didactics of forensic science and the training of investigators, which could be the starting point for the stagnation of forensic science.
- The generation of new ideas in forensic science, the emergence of attractive, high-quality communication formats in non-traditional regions (20 annual international scientific-practical congresses including Criminalistics and Forensic Expertise: Science, Studies, Practice, International Days of Archibald Reiss, etc.), the emergence of non-governmental forensic organisations and their initiatives in establishing regional associations – such as the International Association of Criminalists in Zagreb, the initiative of the Criminalists Association of Lithuania, the Polish Forensic Association and the Ukrainian International Congress of Criminalists – to establish a Federation of National European Criminalistics Organisations.

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