# 1. SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICS

# KALININGRAD OBLAST AS THE FORWARD ANTI-ACCESS/ AREA DENIAL HUB

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ABSTRACT

The security of the East European NATO members in the Baltic region is an issue dependant on their geostrategic location. The Kaliningrad Oblast is perceived as challenge in that context,because of its location and developing anti-access/area denial capabilities. Those could transform the three NATO members into "security island" by slowing or denying any reinforcement in case of direct "snap" attack. The Kaliningrad is isolated from Russia by democratic nations and it causes it to be slightly different compared to the mainland; this in turn could be exploited,however, itmay be considered a challenge in short term. Kaliningrad plays and will play a role of the one challenging NATO as a security organization. It is under constant development and troops located there are reinforced with capable combat systems.

KEY WORDS

Kaliningrad Oblast, anti-access/area denial (AA/AD), Russian Federation, NATO.

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[1] Opinions expressed by the author in the article are their own point of views and they do not reflect in any way the official policy or position of the Baltic Defence College or of the governments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

The security situation in the Eastern Europe proved to be very important concern of broader European security and a challenge for NATO as key guarantor of stability for the whole continent and beyond. Particularly, the security of Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania[1] was recognized as fragile hot spot. It has been recognized as possible area that could be the next target for annexation following Russia's international policy using military power as a tool. Such behaviour was highlighted during NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016 by stating "Russia's destabilising actions and policies include: the ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise and which we call on Russia to reverse; the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilisation of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders, including the Baltic and the Black Sea regions and the Eastern Mediterranean; Russian irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric, military concept and underlying posture; and its repeated violations of

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[1] By the Baltic states expression the nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are recognized in the text.

NATO Allied airspace"[2].

The challenge for the Baltic nations is strongly related to their geopolitical location. In that context, such topics as the importance of the Kaliningrad Oblast and so called 'SuwalkiGap' have been discussed lately, as both are important geographical locations for Russia being a land bridge with three NATO members in the East Europe. They are geographically isolated small nations as their size, population and military capabilities make them fragile. Any attempt to subordinate them by Russia could harm the whole security in Europe and beyond, shaking security and unity of NATO nations and undermining the Alliance cohesion in all dimensions. In that context Kaliningrad, being a militarized oblast, is strategically important for the Russian Federation, creating a space related advantage both in peace and war time.

The paper will focus on the role of Kaliningrad Oblast which was described as follows:"all Russian regions are unique, but the *Kaliningradskaya oblast* is more unique than most"[3]; it includes the military domain. The paper will discuss its geopolitical and military importance for Russia and the concept of anti-access/area denial (AA/AD). The AA/AD will be briefly explained as defence concept, which could be both defensive and offensive in nature. The general overview of the political, economic and social situation shaping population attitude will be highlighted to indicate an importance of those non-kinetic factors as contributors to the security. Finally, military capabilities

of the Baltic Fleet are to be mentioned to present the ongoing build-up of AA/AD abilities. The main problem to discuss is the current and future role of the Kaliningrad Oblast for Russia and what is shaping the ongoing militarization. The thesis is that the importance of that military region has significantly increased after the extension of NATO to the East Europe causing investment into military capabilities. The process is and will be continued, as the country needs to preserve its strong posture for internal security reasons and due to the need to keep constant pressure on its neighbourhood, thus allowing to preserve the status of an important actor, which is a partner for US and European powers.

## The Kaliningrad Oblast – an overview

The Kaliningrad Oblast situation is an outcome of the World War II and Yalta – Potsdam agreements which made it an integral part of theSoviet Union. During post-war period it was separated from other republics,limiting negative influences coming from Russian mainland, as Poland and former Baltic republics surrounded it. Those entities were different in many aspects, impacting the perception of world in Kaliningrad. The isolation was continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the oblast lost direct land connection with the rest of Russian Federation. That isolation edured, although there were believed attempts in the second half of 1990s "of certain forces to raise territorial and other claims on the Russian enclave as well as to change its status as an indivisible part of the Russian Federation"[4]. The most important aspect of geography became the

2   Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Warsaw 8-9 July 2016, para 10,http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm(accessed: 21 January 2018).

3   I. Oldberg, *The Kaliningrad Oblast – A Troublesome Exclave*, in D.R. Kempton, T.D. Clark (eds.), *Unity of Separation. Center-Periphery Relations in the Former Soviet Union*, Praeger Publishers, Westport 2002, p. 143.

4   L. Karabeshkin, C. Wellmann, *The Russian Domestic Debate on Kaliningrad. Integrity, Identity and Economy*, Transaction Publishers, London 2004, p. 16. See also: P. Joenniemi, J. Prawitz, *Kaliningrad: The European Amber Region*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot 1998.

continued separation from Russian mainland, however,surrounded now by newly independent countries, which were seeking closer relations with the West. It was a gate between Poland andLithuania, Latvia and Estonia being potential obstacle on tightening NATO and European Union members and something to be taken into consideration[5].

In 1997 Russia published its Baltic Sea security concept with promising statements about the development of good-neighbourhood, economic, border and cultural cooperation and also non bloc status of Baltic States[6]. The Baltic Fleet leadership proposed regional conference of Navy commanders from the region as an element of confidence building measures. NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, signed in 1997 facilitated creation of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) for consultation and cooperation.In 1999 the oblast was recognized as a potential 'pilot region' for EU – Russia relations by then Prime Minister Putin. However, the Western nations policy was closely linked with perceived weakness of Russia at that period to be exploited. The periodwas linked with EU projects aiming to enhance cooperation with Moscow as an outcome of such initiatives as Russia – EU Summit in Paris in 2000. The election of Vladimir Putin in 2000 stopped the attempts and discussion about the future of Kaliningrad as the president's position toward national integrity was very decisive and clear. The concept achieved public support,as Russian leadership and population sufferedbe-causeof disgrace perception due to losing the status of a global player. Nevertheless, in Rome, on 28 May 2002 the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) replacedPJC to allow consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint actions. It was an effect of the Declaration on "NATO-Russia Relations: a New Quality" showing good will of both sides to preserve friendly relations. For EU, the region was an important partner as "the region's unique location ensures it special treatment in these relations; Brussels claims that Kaliningrad has strategic importance for both Russia and the EU"[7]. It was supported by such initiatives as EU – Russia agreement to facilitate the transit of people between Kaliningrad oblast and the rest of Russia in 2003, just before Lithuania joined the EU. Another document was EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region from 2008, followed many international programs[8]. Those prove that there was a will to cooperate, before Russia shifted toward approach that is more assertive and sanctions were introduced. It was an effect of recognizing common interests in the Baltic Sea region, including bilateral and multilateral cooperation in many fields e.g. natural environment protection, sea traffic, search and rescue capacities and others.

Russia constantly and closely observed NATO's attempts to enlarge and "although Russia was not able to prevent NATO enlargement into Visegrad, its leaders have informed the West with unmistaken clarity that they view the Baltic membership in NATO as 'red line' that should not be crossed and will consider any NATO expansion into that region as direct threat to

[5] See also: S. Dewar, *Improving infrastructure and Funding for Economic Development in the Kaliningrad Oblast*, in H-M., Brickenbach, C. Wellmann (eds.) *The Kaliningrad Challenge. Options and Recommendations*, Transaction Publishers, Munster 2003, p. 206-220.

[6] G. Alafuzoff, *Baltic Sea Security in the 21st Century*, in R. Gronick, M. Kulmala, L. Paivio (eds.), *Kaliningrad – Isolation or Co-operation*? The Finnish Committee for European Security, Helsinki 2001, p. 141.

[7] J. Rogoża, A. Wierzbowska-Miazga, I. Wiśniewska, Wyspanauwięzi, Kaliningrad międzyMoskwą a UE ,OśrodekStudiówWschodnich (Centre for Eastern Studies), No 41, July 2012, p. 58.

[8] In details see: Ibid, p. 58-61.

Russia's vital national interests"[9]. So, Baltic nations' membership granted in 2004 was criticized and it had direct implication for Kaliningrad Oblast and Baltic Fleet, where in the past the number of troops was downsizing compared to Soviet period. Temporarily, it was high as many troops were withdrawn from Germany, Poland and Lithuania to Kaliningrad and the estimated number was around 100 000 up to 300 000 soldiers and sailors. However, in 1996 it went down to 45 000[10] with reduction of navy and air force assets. The equipment quantity and quality went similarly down. The aggression in Georgia and the conflict in Ukraine changed the political position of Russia and triggered economic sanctions and it influenced Kaliningrad Oblast. As an effect "the growing foreign policy aggressiveness of the Kremlin (as well as neo-Imperial thinking), has led to the reanimation of Russian military capacities and breathed new life into the formerly formidable military 'bastion'"[11]. The modernization of armed forces, initiated in 2008, created additional impetus to make Baltic Fleet more powerful and as a factor to pressure the neighbours.

The isolation was impacted additionally by the geographical remoteness, influencing all the domains of the oblast's life. The political – economy situation of the region is closely linked to the overall situation of Russian Federation being an outcome of centralized economy. Relatively small market (about 1 million population), low foreign direct investments, low level of productivity, and reliance on external energy supplies complicated the situation. It is complicated further by "endemic corruption, then its

special system of privileges, and thirdly the specific 'Kaliningrad identity'"[12]. The latter issue is based on perception that oblast "is unique and ought to be provided for in terms of security (because it is 'encircled' by Western countries) and its economy (as successful economic development is made much more difficult due to this 'encirclement')"[13]. At the same time, economic relations with other Russian regions were essential as they were major export destination for some types of goods. It was related, as a side effect, to limitations for foreigners' access to many areas in the region due to its militarization and it was a discouragement for foreign investments and tourists to visit it. An advantage for region was establishment of the Yantar Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1996, encouraging the interest of foreign companies, especially from Germany. However, in April 2016 the SEZ privileges expired and there was no more duty-free trade export to and import from EU advantage. Kaliningrad lost competition with neighbouring SEZs in Lithuania and privileges related to trade with Poland, including cross border trade by population[14]. The government promised subsidies but those will not compensate real loses. It will affect the population which is very familiar with Western standards and will not appreciate the decline of their quality of life. Disappointment could cause real risk of protest, as oblast is "17th in the list of Russian regions in terms of protests/protest potential. Indeed, Kaliningrad is in danger of becoming one of the first Russian regions where the famous dispute between the TV and the fridge (a common saying

9  G. Alafuzoff, *Baltic Sea Security in the 21st Century*, op. cit, p. 139.
10 In details read: P. Joenniemi, J. Prawitz, *Kaliningrad: The European Amber Region*, op. cit., p. 110-116.
11 S. Sukhankin, Kaliningrad: Russia's island in Europe, the New Eastern Europe Online 29 January 2016, http://neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1876-kaliningrad-russia-s-island-in-europe(accessed: 22 January 2018).

12 S. Sukhankin, Kaliningrad: Russia's stagnant enclave, ECFR's Wider Europe Forum 31 March 2016, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_kaliningrad_russias_stagnant_enclave_6052(accessed: 22 January 2018).
13 Ibid.
14 J. Rogoża, et. al., *Wyspa na uwięzi, Kaliningrad między Moskwą a UE,*op. cit., p. 18.

referring the power of propaganda over living conditions) might result in the victory of the latter"[15]. The economic sanctions from the Western nations and Russian counter – sanctions are further complicating situation in the oblast and it suffered 7.6% GDP decline in 2015 and again some 2% in 2016[16].The main economic enterprises are linked with trade and industry (e.g. assembling cars, TV, household products). Agriculture playsthe minor role. The important issue is the ice-free port of Kaliningrad enabling constant sea trade and in combination with the developed land infrastructure, it could play important role as logistics hub. But that factor is not fully utilized due to political decisions and military reasons. Another important resource is amber,as there are significant amounts there. However, it is also one of illegal businesses and source of income for criminal organizations and is used for corruption purposes.

Kaliningrad's population is mainly composed of Russian citizens (some 87%) and in the past the support for the government was usually lower that in Russia in general. Majority of population was born in the oblast and their contacts with the mainland were limited. It has caused that many are feeling not only Russian citizens but also the Europeans and the development "in the 1990s taught them that their interests are not identical with those of other Russians"[17]. However, as an effect of information campaign supported by media and impact of the Orthodox Church,the region shifted into more conservative stance. It is supported by a narrative of being surrounded by foreign nations, which are building military capabilities trying to undermine the integrity of the nation. The efforts have been positive and "a growing alliance of secular and spiritual powers in Russian state has found its perfect reflection on Kaliningrad's soil, turning the region into both a "military" and "spiritual" bastion for Russia"[18]. The unemployment, lower wages when compared to mainland, high prices, poor healthcare system, illegal criminal organizations[19] are the source of problems and concerns of population. The population is very fragile toward external influences and it is recognizing quality of life just behind the border. Parallel, when properly shaped, it is ready to support national leadership and it has the experience from past how to motivate society against external enemies. Especially as "for the Russian public and its political elite, territorial integrity has a much higher significance than on average in the rest of Europe"[20]. Therefore, such initiatives as Lithuanian announcement to build a 2-meters high fence along 255 long land border with Kaliningrad are not recognized in positive way, causing some repercussions in the future. Next to economic and illegal migration reasons, Lithuanian Interior Minister EimutisMisiunasexplained, "there are other reasons to the construction – geopolitical. I think these reasons are also very important. I want to underline... it is for the first time that money has been allocated from the state budget for the construction of the fence to bolster the state border"[21].

The combination of political, economic and social factors could be game changer

[15] Ibid.

[16] I. Wiśniewska et al., Kaliningrad Oblast 2016 The Society, Economy and Army,OśrodekStudiówWschodnich (Centre for Eastern Studies), Warsaw December 2016, p. 10.

[17] I. Oldberg, The Kaliningrad Oblast – A Troublesome Exclave, op. cit., p. 164.

[18] S. Sukhankin, Kaliningrad: Russia's island in Europe..., op., cit.

[19] J. Rogoża, A. Wierzbowska-Miazga, I. Wiśniewska, A Captive Island Kaliningrad between Moscow and the EU, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw July 2012, p. 24-26.

[20] L. Karabeshkin, C. Wellmann, The Russian Domestic Debate on Kaliningrad..., op. cit., p. 14.

[21] Lithuania to Construct Fence of Border with Russia for Geopolitical Reasons, Sputnik News 24 January 2017, https://sputniknews.com/politics/201701241049947577-lithuania-border-russia/ (accessed: 11 February 2018).

in relation to popular support for any government and it could be polarized very quickly. For security related decision makers it is important to understand it, as the disappointment of society is influencingthe overall defence posture. This is why patriotic narratives as memories of war victories, investment into young generation are important. The latter is supported by such decisions as the activation of the 'Young Army' (rus. Юнармия России) on 1 September 2016 by Ministry of Defence or the subordination of Sholokhov's Moscow Presidential Cadet School to the National Guard[22]. That must be, however, underpinned by population's support, control of regional administration and preservation of the expected quality of life. The last constituents are among those very touchable ones,and the oblast could be a problematic area in the future if those are not sustained.

## The strategic importance of the Oblast

Kaliningrad is of strategic importance for Russia as a very important constituent of its security, defence and interests in the Baltic Sea area, which have been affected by the link between security, militarization and economy. Last years produced significant military build-up and investments into military-related infrastructure and it caused discouragement for foreign investors because of possible risks and limitations toward freedom of movement inside the region. It is linked with close control to preserve military secrets and Russia has great experiences in that field. On the other hand, Baltic Fleet is important for regional economy as it is an important employer for

citizens. The geostrategic location of Kaliningrad has many advantages to Russia. It is allowing early warning and forward air defenceoptions in combination with units from the mainland of Russia. The Baltic Fleet is possessing bases allowing control of the central Baltic Sea and the access to Gulf of Finland, thusinfluencing also Finland's and Sweden's security and freedom of manoeuvre. Former commander of the US Army Europe General Ben Hodges warned, "Kaliningrad now has the ability to deny access of our [US] Navy or any NATO Navy to come to the Baltic Sea. From Kaliningrad Russia can stop from entering coming in to the Baltic Sea, and there we have three NATO allies – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania"[23]. The Baltic Fleet location in navy base in Baltiyskallows access to all the western Baltic Sea allowing the enforcing of sea denial not only to protect own sea lines of the communication and sea trade,but to deny opponent navies to use them to deploy troops to the Baltic States. Additionally, the Baltic Sea is used for exercisesand also, for sea trials of navy vessels and firing tests of weapon systems.

The oblast is the forward intelligence and reconnaissance collection point, as it is allowing to monitor situations not only to preserve Recognized Maritime Picture, but offers good visibility of the situation in Poland and Baltic nations as well as the monitoring of any movement of NATO units there. Such updated common operational picture is important for Russia in general providing early warning for defence forces. The difficulty is of course theland isolation from Russian mainland and Kaliningrad troops alone are not strong enough to face an opponent, so in case of conflict it could

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[22] *Московскоепрезидентскоекадетскоеучилище-имениМихаилаАлександровичаШолоховавнутреннихвойскМинистерствавнутреннихделРоссийскойФедерации*, The Website of the Moscow Presidential Cadet School of the National Guard http://mpku-vv.ru/default/fa99aabb-2fcc-4632-b891-31674a2d7d84 (accessed: 11 February 2018).

[23] US General Fears Russia Can Block NATO from Entering Baltic Sea, Sputnik News 10 November 2015, https://sputniknews.com/military/201511101029 883087-russia-block-baltic-sea-nato/ (accessed: 11 February 2018).

be necessary to employ major forces from West Military District and Belarus in joint action to unify the military effort. The military forces located there were facing in the past relatively weak NATO presence, especially as the oblast troops could be supported from Russia and Belarus territory in case of conflict. Currently, due to the NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, the force ratio is changing. Deployment of battalions to Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia is not changing it significantly, but it is showing flags of many NATO nations in the region with framework nations: Germany, Canada, United Kingdom and United States are present as abovementioned framework nations. Thus, direct engagement of troops from those nations could cause reaction of NATO and it would also have impact on government and population in all single Alliance country.

Fig. 1. The location of the Kaliningrad Oblast and the 'Suwalki Gap'



Source: E. Walker, UC Berkeley, Eurasian Geopolitics, Word Press 29 March 2016, https://eurasiangeopolitics. com/2016/03/29/putins-dilemma-why-pushing-back-against-nato-encroachment-makes-russias-nato-problem-worse/suwalki-gap/#main
(accessed: 22 January 2018)

The importance of the Kaliningrad was highlighted in an article in the Wall Street Journal, which mentioned it in relation to the Suwalki Gap being "the most vulnerable spot in the Western alliance"[24]. This is why in case of hostilities "NATO forces would have to transit the 'Kaliningrad corridor,' a 110- to 150-km-wide stretch of territory between the Russian enclave and Belarus that could be subject to long-range artillery and flank attacks from both sides and would require a commitment of (scarce) NATO forces to secure"[25]. If the Suwalki Gap (see figure 1) would be closed by advancing units and long range fires from Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus, it would help Russia to "reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, in 60 hours"[26]. This is a rather optimistic scenario as the Baltics' conventional and unconventional forces and other NATO troops located in the region would fight; nevertheless, with only limited Enhanced Forward Presence's battalion size task. Such a combined effort could be important to slow down the advance and to inflict casualties. According to US planners, "the allies could have as little as 72 hours to reinforce the Suwalki Gap before Moscow would be able to effectively block access"[27]. Kaliningrad has been used as a part of 'games' within geopolitical confrontation with the West, EU, NATO and US by constantly preserving pressure on them by large scale 'snap' exercises and deploying such assets as a mobile short-range ballistic missile system 9K720 'Iskander' (SS-26 Stone). Inter alia, it was aimed to discourage NATO members in the region to support plans to continue military build-up as it could be

[24] J. Barnes, Closing the Gap: NATO Moves to Protect Weak Link in Defenses Against Russia, Wall Street Journal, New York 17 June 2016, http://www. wsj.com/articles/closing-the-gap-nato-moves-to-protect-weak-link-in-defenses-against-russia-1466205268 (accessed: 12 January 2018).

[25] D.A. Shlapak, M.W. Johnson, Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank. Wargaming the Defence of the Baltics, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica 2016, p. 4.

[26] Ibid., p. 1.

[27] J. Barnes, Closing the Gap: NATO Moves to Protect Weak Link in Defenses Against Russia, op. cit.

perceived as escalation rather than deterrence factor by Russia.

Oblast was moreover using energy security as a tool, as "Kaliningrad is currently a net energy exporter, selling power to Lithuania, among others"[28] and by plans of Kaliningrad's Nuclear Power Plant. The energy is also an exposure to the region isolated on land and Moscow is "concerned about the energy security of Kaliningrad should the Baltic states leave the... agreement and desynchronize," but as for now "it is working, but in case of desynchronization, Kaliningrad would be in a different situation than today"[29]. Kaliningrad is under strong external influences, so preserving stability there is important to avoid any public disappointment, which could be supported by internal opposition in the country, although it is weak as for now. It is linked with usually lower support for ruling party compared to Russian average results of elections. Currently, the administration and population are not questioning the integrity of the nation and they appreciate subsides, but some are questioning regional policy. It is for example an effect of suspension of cross border trade by Poland in July 2016, previously allowing trade without the necessity to possess visas. The suspension of SEZ was another source of disappointment and regional authorities condemned it. Small business was frustrated as it had already invested in economic cooperation and new laws mean losing funds and contacts with foreign partners. Former good relations with EU countries and companies from neighbouring nations have been in risk and it will have long-term influence on regional economy as to rebuild former contacts is not easy.

# The Anti-Access/Area Denial concept

The report 'Closing NATO's Baltic Gap', prepared by recognised retired officers, mentions AA/ADcapabilities, as these are a rather important factor as:

"Russia would be capable not just of sealing off the Baltic states in the "bubble" that covers air, sea and land dimensions, but also of fiercely contesting other spaces of critical importance to military operations – in the electromagnetic spectrum, cyberspace, and even outer space (by using anti-satellite capabilities)"[30].

The similar opinion is shared by General (ret.) Sir Richard Barrons who estimates that Russia could be ready for action within 48 hours and "some land and control of airspace and territorial waters could be lost before NATO's 28 member states had even agreed how to respond"[31]. The challenge is that for some years the Baltic states warnings about Russian behaviour were ignored and, as for now, battalions to be deployed are not enough as they "had no real firepower to back them up" and is the result of the assumption that "many people have lost sight of what a credible military force is and requires. They think a little posturing or a light force constitutes enough but it isn't"[32].

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[28] A. Gurzu, Baltics threaten to unplug Russian region. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia trying to shift their systems towards the European model, Politico SPRL 11 April 2015, http://www.politico.eu/article/baltics-threaten-to-unplug-russian-region-power-kaliningrad-electricity-interconnectors-lithuania-poland-sweden/(accessed: 12 January 2018).J. Rogoża, A. Wierzbowska-Miazga, I. Wiśniewska, Wyspa na uwięzi..., op. cit., p. 32.
[29] A. Gurzu, Baltics threaten to unplug Russian region..., op., cit.

[30] W. Clark, J. Luik, E. Ramms, R. Shirreff, *Closing NATO's Baltic Gap*, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn 2016, p. 13.
[31] D. Haynes, Nato has no plan if Russia invades, warns ex-general, The Times 19 September 2016, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/dh-nato-0nxssn0rr(accessed: 14 March 2018).
[32] Ibid.

The essence of the anti-access is related to "those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area"[33]. The area-denial is related to "actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area. Area-denial capabilities target forces in all domains, including land forces"[34]. The concepts are not excluding the presence of adversary forces within thetheatre of operations and the anti-access is rather focused on any follow-on-forces of an opponent to deny deploying overwhelming capabilities into the theatre of operations. If successful, it could result in such loses and delays that further operations would not create conditions to continue effectivelyoperations, creating a risk of failure and further loses.

The AA/AD concept is not new as it was used to prevent enemy to attack, deny freedom of manoeuvre and to preserve nations and alliances integrity. It is linked with operational factors: time, force and space. The importance of space factor was explained by Milan Vegoas "without the ability to conduct large-scale movements on land, at sea, and in the air, operational warfare is essentially an empty concept. The success of any major operation or campaign depends on the free movement of one's forces in the theatre"[35]. An example has been Great Britain relying on powerful navy as anti-access tool supported by Royal Air Force. The effectiveness was proved and there was no need to employ area denial capabilities. During the Cold War, both sides of the Iron Curtain recognized the importance of AA/AD developing both capabilities and defence infrastructure. It is not, however, only European-related concept as Iran's AA/AD is a concern for US interests in the region[36]. The case showsthat the concept supportsa weaker enemy by challenging a stronger one by possessing capabilities to engage effectively its armed forces. It is linked with variety of risks when deciding to conduct offensive operations as it could entangle heavy casualties and losing prestige when being involved into a protracted conflict. The mostly discussed AA/AD is linked with Pacific region and Chinese approach being developed with speed and decisiveness, causing concerns for the US and its regional allies. For China it is related to thethreat coming from sea and air approaches from the Pacific toward the mainland with the use of the variety of weapon platforms including space located assets and other non-kinetic capabilities[37]; on the mainland armed forces and People's Armed Police are ready to deny enemy freedom of action[38].

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[33] *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC),* US Department of Defence, Washington 17 January 2012, Version 1.0, p. 6.

[34] Ibid., p. 6.

[35] M. Vego, *Operational Warfare*, Naval War College, Newport 2000, p. 33.

[36] In details read in: M. Gunzinger, C. Dougherty, *Outside-in: Operating from Range to Defeat Iran's Anti-Access and Area-Denial Threats,* the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington 2011, p. 21-22.

[37] R. McDermott, PLA Displays Network-Centric Capabilities in Peace Mission 2010, Eurasia Daily Monitor 6 October 2010, Vol. 7, Issue 180, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37001&cHash=ff5fd5240d(accessed: 2 February 2018).B. Krekel, Capability of the People's Republic of China to Conduct Cyber Warfare and Computer Network Exploitation Prepared for The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Information Systems Sector, McLean 09 October 2009; and also Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington May 2006.

[38] J. Gordon IV, J. Matsumura, The Army's Role in Overcoming Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica 2013, p. 1-3.

Fig. 2. The location of the Saaremaa Island as possible location to extend AA/AD shield



Source: Based on L. Burton, Bubble Trouble: Russia's A2/AD Capabilities, 25 October 2016, Foreign Policy Association, https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2016/10/25/bubble-trouble-russia-a2-ad/ (accessed: 2nd February 2018).

Douglas Barrie claims:

"following Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea, assessment of Moscow's military modernisation and its introduction and deployment of improved conventional systems has been increasingly accompanied by voices within NATO cautioning that an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy was not just a consideration for the Asia-Pacific or the Gulf regions. As well as Crimea, the Baltic region is vulnerable or suited – depending on perspective – to such an approach. Senior NATO officials, including General Philip Breedlove, the supreme allied commander Europe, and General Frank Gorenc, commander allied air command, raised concerns over A2/AD in a European context during 2015"[39].

The threat perception is present in the region and there are suspicions that "in the long term Russia's wish is to bring the Baltic Sea and the passages leading to it more and more under its control, and to control it much like it does the Black Sea"[40]. An example could be the advantage to occupy by Russia the Saaremaa Island (see figure 2) to complete the AA/AD shield to totally isolate the three Baltic nations and to endanger Sweden and Finland. It could be related to the annexation of Crimea and conflict in Ukraine as Russia,by possessing new territory,has already extended its AA range in the Black Sea. When coupled with reinforcing Kaliningrad Oblast, developing Arctic capabilities is enhancing its AA/ADshield,contributing to "an increasingly unpredictable and unstable Euro-Atlantic security environment. In response, NATO has taken defensive measures to protect and assure its members and will continue to do so as long as necessary"[41].

As an effect,NATO decided to invest not only into military instrument of power: „in response to Russia's aggressive actions to NATO's east as well as violent instability to NATO's south, Allies agreed the Readiness Action Plan at the Wales Summit in 2014. It included reinforcements in the East Europe (assurance measures) and revision of force posture (adaptation measures)[42]. It was implemented by reinforcing NATO Response Forces (NRF) and Very High Readiness

[39] D. Barrie, Douglas Barrie: Russia and anti-access/area-denial capabilities, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 08 February 2016, http://www.iiss.org/en/militarybalanceblog/blogsections/2016-629e/february-f0ed/russia-and-anti-access-area-denial-capabilities-9b3e (accessed: 2 February 2018).

[40] General RihoTerras is the Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces, Terras: Russia demonstrating wish to control Baltic Sea area, News.err.ee, 7 November 2016, http://news.err.ee/v/news/2bd72ff4-396e-4e61-897a-d8bfe903e6c8/terras-russia-demonstrating-wish-to-control-baltic-sea-area(accessed: 2 February 2018).

[41] The Secretary General's Annual Report 2015, NATO Brussels 2016, p. 19.

[42] Ibid., p. 14.

Joint Task Force (VJTF)[43]. The Warsaw Summit in 2016 was very important, as real deployment to the East Europe was agreed within a variety of force related initiatives[44]. Therefore, the assurance and deterrence measures weretaken to enhance NATO's presence 'on the ground', boosting the readiness to establish the Alliance AA/AD-capabilities in case of Russian decision to use conventional force. It is, however, not supporting in face of thevariety of 'hybrid' threats, as national caveats and rules of engagement are the limitation. This is one of the reasons that Baltic nations and Poland are developing national capabilities following the Article III of the Washington Treaty,aimed to "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack"[45].

What is nevertheless important to remember, is that not only Russia is developing AA/AD capabilities. Baltic States, with the support of other NATO partners, are also investing in such capabilities to be ready to defend territorial integrity of the nations and NATO. Such theperception is recognized in Moscow along with the risk related to act aggressively.

## The military role of Kaliningrad as AA/AD hub

The importance of Kaliningrad proved to be much more valuable currently than before the expansion of NATO and closer relations of EU with the East European nations. Within the Baltic Sea region, the significant geographical shift occurred toward east, and Russia lost significant portion of access to that sea. In the past, Russia owned some 35% of coastline and now only 7% was left,whereas the significant portion was lost in benefit of NATO. Moreover, after 1991 Russia lost important navy bases, military infrastructure, airfields, and its air defence system was disrupted. The Baltic Fleet lost significant capabilities allowing the control of the sea lines of communication and NATO access to its critical bases and airfields was considerably enabled due to the possession of friendly navy bases and military infrastructure in the Baltic region. It was linked with reduction of manpower of the Baltic Fleet and the quantity of combat assets[46]. Such NATO initiatives as the establishment of the Baltic Air Policing mission in 2004, combine joint exercises, BALTNET (Baltic Air Surveillance Network and Control System) and military exchanges, has been criticized. As an answer, Russian armed forces conducted large scale 'snap' exercises, violated airspace, and navy manoeuvred close to nations exclusive economic zonesto show considerable capabilities to face NATO. The answers were for example the exercises 'Zapad 2009' and 'Zapad 2013' being political manifesto against NATO presence in the East Europe and three Baltic States. The latter was reaction to NATO exercises like 'Baltic Host 2013' and 'Steadfast Jazz 2013' as "example of Kremlin muscle flexing, designed to escalate concerns of NATO and especially Eastern Europe and

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[43] Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 5 September 2014, para 8, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (accessed: 20 December 2017).

[44] Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State..., op. cit., para 78.

[45] The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C. – 4 April 1949, NATO Website, last update 21 March 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm(accessed: 30 January 2018).

[46] J. Kozakiewicz, Polityka bezpieczeństwa państw bałtyckich, ed. Instytut Studiów Strategicznych (Strategic StudiesInstitute), Krakow. 2003, s. 34. Analizy natolińskie No 4(52), Strategia Federacji Rosyjskiej wobec państw basenu Morza Bałtyckiego, CEN Publishing House, Warszawa 2011. B. Lo, Medvedev and the new European Security Architecture, Centre for European Reform, London July 2009.

the three Baltic States"[47]. The significant element was planning using tactical nuclear weapon against selected targets. Those activities werein line with Russian Military Doctrine 2014, as it recognized, among main external military threats, the "build-up of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and endowing it with global functions carried out in violation of the rules of international law, bringing the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, including further expansion of the alliance"[48].

Well known werethe announcements or just deployments of mobile short-range ballistic missile systems 9K720 'Iskander-M' (SS-26 Stone) in Kaliningrad and the re-armament of the 152nd Missile Brigade stationed in Chernyakhovsk into this modern system. The country verified their deployment options using sea or air lines of communication to reinforce desired regions in short notice and to train crews to be ready for operational use. The full replacement of older missile systems will be completed in 2018 and it will enhance overall capabilities of the oblast's located units. The deployments were continued during the exercise "Zapad 2017" to "demonstrate Russia's readiness to block NATO operations in the Baltic Sea region"[49]. In combination with air defence systems coverage 'Iskander-Ms' are supporting increasing AA/AD capabilities and its declared range of some 500km allows reaching targets deep into Polish territory. The real range could however be larger and it should not be excluded.

The military capabilities are continuously enhanced by deployment of such advanced surface-to-air missile system as S-400 Triumf (SA-21 Growler), which is able to engage all existing aerial targets, including ballistic and cruise missiles within a range of 400 kilometres. The system is providing AA capabilities for the Baltic Fleet and lately "the air defence units of the Baltic Fleet have conducted drills in the Kaliningrad region, in which the crews of S-400 'Triumf' air defence systems have countered a massive attack of the simulated enemy"[50]. It confirmed that system is present there and is operationally ready being an answer for NATO troops' deployment within Enhanced Forward Presence to Baltic States. During the drill the combined short to medium range surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon systems 'Pantsir-S1' (SA-22 Greyhound) covered S-400s air defence against aircraft, helicopters, precision munitions, cruise missiles and UAVs at the low to extremely low ranges. It was a presentation of complex multilayer capabilities of units belonging to 183rd Guards Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment.

Navy capabilities of the Baltic Fleet are important, as it possesses more and more

[47] Z. Śliwa, Zapad 2013: The Russian Armed Forces Flexes its Muscles, Operational Environment Watch, Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO), Fort Leavenworth 25 September 2013, pp. 55-56 and A. Wilk, „Zachód 2013" – ćwiczenia z antynatowskiej integracji armii białoruskiej i rosyjskiej, Eastern Studies Centre, Warsaw 25 September 2013, https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2013-09-25/zachod-2013-cwiczenia-z-antynatowskiej-integracji-armii-bialoruskiej-i (accessed: 30 January 2018).

[48] Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, Offiziere.ch August 2015, https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads-001/2015/08/Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf para 12 a; *Военнаядоктрина Российской Федерации*, Moscow 26 December 2014, http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf (accessed: 9 February 2018).

[49] P. Zochowski, Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad: a constant element of Russia's policy of intimidation, Eastern Studies Centre, Warsaw 11 October 2016, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-10-11/iskander-missiles-kaliningrad-a-constant-element-russias-policy (accessed: 12 February 2018).

[50] Russian Baltic Fleet Carries Out Air Defense Drills Using S-400 Systems, Sputnik News, 7 February 2017, http://www.polit.ru/article/2009/09/03/bezopasnost/ (accessed: 10 February 2018).

newly procured combat vessels[51]. Its commander is Vice-Admiral Aleksandr Nosatov who took position in September 2016. The Fleet flagship is guided missile destroyer 'Nastoychivy' (Project 956)and it has important role as next to abilities to engage enemy warships and submarines it could contribute to enhancing air defence umbrella. There are also some frigates and corvettes allowing attack capabilities against any sea target. They could be armed with cruise missiles 3M-54 'Kalibr' allowing to engage sea or land-based targets from the distance of more than 1500km. 'Kalibr' is an important factor, as it was proved operationally and it "provides the Russian Navy with significant reach and the ability to conduct multi-axis strikes against an adversary"[52]. Their effectiveness is to be supplemented by 25th Costal Defence Brigade.Another important element of navy are mine warfare vessels supporting theutilization of sea mines which have been effective in naval warfare to support of both anti access operations and denying freedom for movement. That type of warfare could deny any movement of non-combatant vessels isolating the Baltic nations from any support using sea routes. Moreover, the fleet possesses the number of landing crafts and those could be used by specialized forces as 336th Independent Guards Belostokskaya Naval Infantry Brigade to occupy e.g. Saaremaa Island to extend AA/AD screen. The air support is enabled by a fighter squadron (Su-27 'Flanker'), a ground attack squadron (Su-24M/MR 'Fencer') and number of specialized helicopters. At the end of 2016,

the Baltic Fleet aviation received first aircraft Su-30SM, which is the 4+ generation airframe and it will support air defensive and offensive counter air capabilities. The distance to Russia mainland and Belarus is allowing constant support from air bases located there with almost unlimited number of sorties within the possessed capabilities. On land AD could be performed by units belonging to the 11th Army Corps with two brigades and one regiment supported by combat support and combat service support units and covered by 22nd Independent Air Defence Regiment. The electronic warfare systems as 'Krasukha-4' is another contributor to area denial being able to damage radio – electronic systems of an opponent supplementing kinetic systems.

The overall capabilities, in that rather small region, are sufficient to implement AA/AD concept as forward military outpost of Russian Federation. Having available assets ready to fight jointly, it is contributing to national defence and it is the location allowing to engage any target which could endanger the country. It is also ready to close access to Baltic States, especially as the Baltic Fleet forces could be reinforced and supported by air and land units operating from mainland and Belarus. It is relatively easy task, because the West Military District is the most powerful among Russian armed forces and is constantly armed with new weapon systems. The utilization of 'Kalibr' missiles to attack targets in Syria by Caspian Fleet at distance of 1500km showed that options to engage targets on Baltic Sea are much wider that only regionally and thus, it is extending AA/AD options. Both Black Sea Fleet and Northern Fleet are to be the contributor in case of war in the Baltic Sea region, not mentioning the variety of land based systems

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[51] Military Balance 2016, Routledge, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London 9 February 2016, Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia, p. 196-197.

[52] J. Bosbotinis, Russian strategy and the evolving anti-access/area denial threat in Europe, Defence IQ 6 June 2016, http://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/russian-strategy-and-the-evolving-anti-accessarea(accessed: 10 February 2018).

and long range aviation, using numerous air-launched cruise missiles like Kh-101, Kh-SD, Kh-MT with Kh-101 range,reaching even 4000km[53]. In general, the AA/AD capabilities are growing every year as military development the is priority for the government.

## Conclusions

Russia has been Baltic power throughout last three centuries and it is linked with geography, history and culture and that is to be in the future. Kaliningrad with military installations and Baltic Fleet is the core element of such presence, contributing to the guarding of national interests. Political factor is very important, as current Kremlin leadership is very concerned about national unity and integrity, so any attempts to try to influence political and social situation in Kaliningrad would cause strong reaction. Population is more modern than the rest of Russian mainland and its understanding of quality of life in the West is much broader due to cross border contacts and by watching media from neighbouring nations. It causes Moscow to keep close look into the situation there. Losing that part of the country is unacceptable, but in reality there are no threats from NATO and EU to try to undermine Russian territorial integrity, as both are defensive in their nature. Large-scale'snap' exercises are causing the tensions, but those are not necessary, as there is no real threat and will from the West to challenge Moscow militarily. The oblast is also a key location, allowing Russia to block access to three Baltic States in the case of any conflict. The Russian armed forces capabilities there are constantly developed and trained and those could be easily enhanced in short notice, causing a real threat to NATO attempts to support Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania if attacked. However,

for Russia the cost – effect ratio could be problematic as the country is already suffering from the economy sanctions and any attack against NATO and EU nations could be devastating for its economy. This is also linked with the lack of strong and credible allies in that part of Europe. The Russian focus is an effect of constant determination to keep the country under central control with limited autonomy of oblasts (provinces), republics, krais (territories) and autonomous districts. Centralization is important to preserve the control over the nation allowing political, security, financial and economical domination. Kaliningrad is just one of them and due to its location is vulnerable for external influences and potential aggression if any war should come.

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