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RUSSIAN EXCLAVE ON THE BALTIC SEA



Andrey Klemeshev

RUSSIAN EXCLAVE
ON THE BALTIC SEA:
EVOLUTION OF EXCLAVITY
AND WAYS TO OVERCOME IT



The author considers peculiarities of the emergence and evolution of exclavity of the Kaliningrad region. The article analyses the influence of exclavity on the connections of the region with the Russian mainland, its economic development, exclave administration, and Kaliningrad identity and examines the ways the existing disadvantages can be overcome. Methods of overcoming these disadvantages are suggested in the article.

Key words: exclavity, the Kaliningrad region, disconnection of the exclave, economic development of the exclave, Kaliningrad identity, overcoming disadvantages of the exclave position .

The origin of exclavity

The Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation was formed on April 7th, 1946 following the decisions of the Potsdam Conference after the end of the Second World War. The newly formed region occupied one third of the territory of the former Eastern Prussia. The population of the region was formed as a result of a massive voluntary resettlement which began in 1949. This resettlement became even more massive after a special decision of the Soviet Council of Ministers was made in August 1946. The indigenous German population of the region was either evacuated, following the retreating German troops, or was forced to leave the region for Germany in 1947-1951.

Since the majority of the new settlers moved to the Kaliningrad region from the so-called ‘Russian’ regions of the country, the newly formed exclave shows a definite predominance of ethnic Russians. However, according to the census of 2002, 18% of the population of the Kaliningrad region belong to other nationalities – Belorussians, Ukrainians and Lithuanians, etc. At the beginning, the exclavity of the region within the territory of its mother state was minimal: during the Soviet period it did not seem to have any considerable influence on the social and economic development of the region.

During the Soviet times, the exclavity of the region, when regarded from a purely economic point of view, was almost non-existent, since all the major branches of the regional economy were subordinate to all-Union ministries. However, the military, or “garrison” character of the region, being closed to foreigners, predetermined all the major peculiarities of the region.

The basic characteristics of the Kaliningrad region population did not result from the “separation”, or disconnection of the region from the Russian Federation, but rather from the peculiarities of the formation of the population composition (‘the region of migratory socialism’), which was certainly influenced by the German period of the history of the region, as well as the region’s narrow specialization (military, fishery and fish processing) in the national economy.

The situation began to change drastically at the beginning of sovereignization of the former Baltic socialist republics at the turn of the 1980s – 1990s. The most drastic changes took place on the 6th of September 1991, long before the formal demise of the Soviet Union. On this date, the USSR authorities officially recognized the independence of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The geographical separation of the Kaliningrad region from the main part of Russia turned from a secondary characteristic into a characteristic of primary importance, defining the character of the region as well as influencing its daily life. There was a need to define the new status and position of the region. The following geographic notions - enclave (or half-enclave) and exclave - were used to refer to such isolated territories.

From exclavity de jure to exclavity de facto

Exclavity as a basic characteristic defining the specificity of the Kaliningrad region does not remain unchanged but evolutionizes with time. One can speak about the process of gradual strengthening of exclavity as a result of sovereignization of both the Baltic States and the Russian Federation.

The Kaliningrad region became first an exclave of the Soviet Union and, after the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, an exclave of the Russian Federation being surrounded by the territories of independent states. The changed geographical, economic and geopolitical position of the region created considerable difficulties in the functioning and reforming of the regional economy. Traditional economic links between enterprises were broken, and border barriers were created. All these changes led to the weakening of competitiveness of the traditional industrial production of the region. The machine building, fishery, pulp and paper producing industries began to shrink.

Not only the development of the region but even its viability was at stake. The distance from the border of the region to the nearest Russian region – the Pskov region - exceeds 370 km. In order to get from Kaliningrad to Moscow by train, one has to cross the territory of two independent states – Lithuania and Belarus.

Cross-border shuttle trade softened the adverse social and economic position of the region during the first half of the 1990s. This kind of trade developed owing to the “transparency” of the border and the difference in prices in Poland, Lithuania, and the Kaliningrad region. Thus, the transparency of the state border softened (at least to some extent) the consequences of the exclave position of the region and eased the daily life of a considerable part of the population of the region under the new economic conditions. At the same time shuttle trade led to such problems as smuggling, tax evasion etc.

At the beginning, the situation with the Kaliningrad region did not attract the necessary attention of the federal authorities because back then, a far more important problem – that of the formation of the Russian stateness - was being solved. Besides, the region did not face any acute problems pertaining to passenger and cargo transit via the territory of the former Soviet republics, being *de jure* independent states but *de facto* retaining some of the previous Soviet economic links. The formation of sovereign states does not happen overnight. One can speak about a more or less continuous process of sovereignization which began only after Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had proclaimed their independence and following its recognition by the USSR. The sovereignization of the former Baltic Republics took place under the conditions of winding off economic ties with Russia and preparing for the accession to the EU and NATO.

The border-crossing regime and procedures gradually became stricter. Until 2003, the residents of the Kaliningrad region had been able to go to Poland having only their national passports for traveling abroad, no visa was required. Any resident of the Kaliningrad region could go to Lithuania having his or her national (USSR) passport with a special stamp, showing their Kaliningrad residence, and a special passport supplement proving that the passport holder is also a citizen of the Russian Federation.

Nobody could have expected any transit problems then – until 1995 the Schengen agreement was not signed and nobody could have foreseen such a rapid accession of Poland and the three Baltic States to the EU and their joining the Schengen Agreement.

Even within the Kaliningrad region itself there was no complete awareness of its exclavity: rather the exclave position was considered as a prerequisite for the accelerated economic development of the region, its joining the single economic space and borrowing western experience for the development of market economy. Having this purpose in mind, the authorities decided to use the thoroughly tested mechanism of the free economic zone in the region. The mechanism was expected to attract foreign investment and the most advanced technologies in order to modernize the regional economy.

On 25 September 1991, the whole territory of the Kaliningrad region (with the exception of strategically important territories) was announced a free economic zone called “Yantar”. A new federal law “On the special economic zone in the Kaliningrad region” was adopted on 22 January 1996. The regime of the SEZ “Yantar”, given economic difficulties following the demise of the USSR and transition to market economy, proved to be only partially effective. It failed to prevent de-industrialization of the economy of the region resulting from the breakage of external economic links of the exclave. Moreover, duty-free import of cheap but high quality consumer goods led to a decrease in their production in the region.

In the 1990s, the SEZ became a survival mechanism for the economy of the region. Customs preferences, at least to some extent, compensated Kaliningrad enterprises and the population of the region for the growing transit costs during the shipment of cargoes from the mainland Russia to Kaliningrad and back.

The EU and NATO enlargement facilitated the deepening of the exclavity of the Kaliningrad region. The transit problem faced by the region seriously worsened the EU-Russia relations in 2002. At the EU-Russia Summit in Brussels in November 2002, a solution to the problem of passenger transit was found – the facilitated transit document was introduced.

The introduction of the facilitated transit document for the transit via Lithuania and the introduction of the visa regime for Poland and Lithuania in 2003, turned the Kaliningrad region into a real exclave without any “if”s and “but”s. The spatial separation of the exclave from the mainland Russia became more noticeable in January 2005, when Kaliningraders were asked to produce the national passport for traveling abroad (and not the national one as it used to be) when applying for a facilitated transit document.

On the 1st of May 2004, after the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU, the Kaliningrad region turned into an enclave of the enlarged European Union. Because of the existing differences in opinion, the EU and Russia failed to come to a mutually accepted agreement on the transit of Kaliningrad cargoes to the mainland Russia and back. As a result, the transit procedure at the border became very complicated and rather expensive, and the very transit via Lithuania became 1,3 -1,5 times as expensive because of the phyto-sanitary and veterinary control and the introduction of other services offered by Lithuania on fee-paying basis. The problem of cargo transit between the Kaliningrad region and mainland Russia still remained unsolved.

Further deepening of exclavity is related to the agreement on mutual visa facilitation coming into force. The agreement eased visa application procedure for residents of all Russian regions on the one hand, but on the other, it resulted in the introduction of a visa fee for multiple visas to Poland and Lithuania for Kaliningraders in 2007. From 2003 to 2007, these visas were issued free of charge. Moreover, in order to obtain a Schengen visa Russian citizens have to have a special letter of invitation. The facilitated transit document for Kaliningraders and residents of other Russian regions is still in force when traveling by train and by bus.

Lithuania and Poland joined the Schengen Agreement on December 21, 2007. It didn't seem to have any effect on the Kaliningrad cargo transit; however it complicated the application procedure for getting the Lithuanian and Polish Schengen visa. It used to be much easier to get national Polish and Lithuanian visas, though the Schengen visa allows its holders to visit all Schengen states. So the Kaliningrad region found itself inside another “alien” space – the Schengen space, having its own rules and regulations. The Schengen Union member states stick to the union legal provisions regulating their communication with the outside world. So the Kaliningrad region had to take into account these provisions when building up its trans-border cooperation.

Thus, it can be stated that the exclavity of the Kaliningrad region has considerably deepened, negatively affecting both passenger and cargo transit to and from the territory of the region, as well as trips of Kaliningraders to the neighbouring countries. The region turned from a *de jure* exclave to an exclave *de facto*. It impeded the further development of the region and affected the content and character of its links with the mainland Russia.

Four aspects of exclavity

The problem of exclavity, generally understood as a disconnection of a certain territory from the economic, political and socio-cultural space of its “mother” state by borders, cannot be narrowed only to the problem of cargo and passenger transit. Four major groups of problems resulting from exclavity can be identified:

- 1) further disconnection of the Kaliningrad region from the mainland Russia. The notion of “disconnection” is a purely political one, unlike the geographical notion of “remoteness”;
- 2) a need for the elaboration and introduction of the adequate tools for solving economic problems faced by the exclave;
- 3) region management and administration problems, since a specific geopolitical location of the region presupposes specific management mechanisms;
- 4) the problem of identity of Kaliningraders.

Let us consider each group of problems separately.

Disconnection of the region from the mainland Russia

The link to the mainland Russia is of vital importance for the Kaliningrad region not so much from a purely economic point of view, but rather politically, socially and culturally. The problem of geographical separation of the region has led to some serious conflicts, which arose in the EU-Russia relations in 2002. Although the problem of access to the region was solved and the offered compromise solution more or less satisfied both parties, the general situation is still far from being resolved. Recent contradictions resulting from the application of the Schengen Union regulations and norms to Kaliningraders are another proof to it.

Exclavity considerably strengthens the dependence of the Kaliningrad region on the neighbouring countries, their legislation, regulations and norms. It should be mentioned that it concerns not so much the legislation of Poland and Lithuania, but rather the legislation and norms of the enlarged European Union. Though being a Russian territory, Kaliningrad has to play according to other rules, not being able to influence these rules in any way even, when supported by the federal authorities.

Economic development

Having a relatively small population, the Kaliningrad region faces the problem of an insufficient capacity of the regional market, the fact that hampers the development of the regional economy. Taking into account high transportation costs and complicated customs procedures when crossing several borders, it becomes quite obvious why the regional producers find it so hard to get through to the all-Russia market. It is equally difficult to get to other markets, bearing in mind numerous tariff and non-tariff barriers, a relatively low quality of Kaliningrad goods and their failure to meet international standards. As a result, the introduction of a free economic zone and later special economic zone mechanism was a way to overcome the negative consequences of the region's exclavity.

It is very difficult to evaluate the efficiency of the mechanism of SEZ unequivocally. But in any case, it was owing to this mechanism that a new type of economy, import-substitution economy, was created. The regional economy started developing rapidly and gradually became more and more oriented towards export of goods to the Russian domestic market. Thus, at least one of the problems pertaining to exclavity – that of autarchy – has been overcome.

However, the influence of exclavity on the economic development of the region is not completely eliminated. Exclavity leads to higher consumer goods prices and longer shipment time in order to bring consumer goods from other Russian region to Kaliningrad. Another negative factor is the necessity to undergo complicated customs and phyto-sanitary control during cargo transit via the territory of Lithuania. No wonder, there are fewer Russian goods available in the region today and their price is higher than in other Russian regions. Consequently, the price of the basket of consumer goods is also higher and there are more imported goods in it. As a result, according to the data provided by ROSSTAT [3], in June 2009, the price of a fixed set of consumer goods and services in the Kaliningrad region was 9% higher, than the average consumer basket price in Russia. The price of a fixed set of staple foods exceeded the Russian average by 15%. It should be borne in mind that the average monthly salary in Kaliningrad in the first half of 2009 was 10% lower than the average monthly salary in Russia¹.

Exclavity is a factor which increases the dependence of the region's economy on external environment. The global economic crisis of the second half of 2008 had more serious consequences for the economy of the Kaliningrad region compared to other regions of the country. During the first six months of 2009, the output of industrial production in the region was only 74,7% compared to the same period of 2008, whereas the average corresponding figure for Russia was 78,7%, the index for housing construction in Kaliningrad was 81,4% (the average figure for Russia was 99,7%). According to the statistical data provided by the Regional Employment Service, the general unemployment level in the region reached 11,6% in May 2009 (8,5% in Russia). The population increase due to migration decreased 1,5 times, whereas in other parts of Russia it went up [3].

In order to drastically change the situation in the region, we think it is important to launch new large-scale "flagman" projects which would be beneficial for Russia as well. These projects would also facilitate the participation of the region in the all-Russia and international division of labour. This does not exclude providing support to SMEs. It is these "flagman" projects that would allow the region to overcome the threat of being a "double" periphery (that of Russia and the EU), reach economic

¹ One has to take into account the development of SMEs in the Kaliningrad region, as well as trans-border trade. The revenues from these types of activity are difficult to statistically account for. In reality, the income of the population of the region is much higher.

sustainability, form a positive image of the region, and generate the necessary resources for the implementation of a number of social programmes. This work is already being done in the framework of the “Strategy for social and economic development of the Kaliningrad region for a medium- and long-term perspective” [4] and the “Programme of social-economic development for the period of 2007-2016” [1].

Both documents are based on the new law “On the special economic zone of the Kaliningrad region” aimed at attracting large investment into the economy of the region. All plans being implemented, the Kaliningrad region will turn into one of the leading regions on the Baltic Sea.

There are many examples of such large-scale projects such as Primorsk highway ring road, Baltiisk-Ust-Luga ferry line and the modernization of Pionersk Port. One of the most ambitious projects is the construction of a new Baltic Nuclear Power plant which will not only meet the growing energy needs of the region but also allow the region to reach a new position in the international division of labour (mainly due to the export of electric energy to the Baltic Sea Region countries).

The management and administration of the exclave

Managementwise, it is important to note that it is very difficult to separate domestic policy from international policy when speaking about the Kaliningrad region, since the development of the region depends on Russia’s relations with other countries. For example, the decisions of the Federal government aimed at introducing changes into the Customs Code and at limiting the import of meat from Poland, etc. negatively affect the economy of the region. However, the same decisions may have a positive for other Russian regions.

The Kaliningrad region is a territory of Russia, implementing the Russian domestic policy. At the same time, being surrounded by independent states, the region is directly dependent on Russia’s external policy: the implementation of Russia’s external policy often leads to finding solutions to the region’s social and economic problems. For instance, sustainable and relatively cheap passenger and cargo transit via the territory of Lithuania and Belarus (or Latvia) is one of the pre-conditions for normal life and development of the Kaliningrad region. So the traditional division of authority and responsibilities, typical of “inner” Russian regions, either fails to work in the Kaliningrad region, or proves to be inefficient.

All 270 exclave territories of the world face numerous problems and their ‘mother’ states have to look for acceptable solutions to them. However, all attempts to use international experience of exclave management and administration have proven to be inapplicable in Russia. Every exclave is unique and has its own problems and its own way of solving them.

There is a discussion on how to perfect the exclave management and administration in Kaliningrad. Adherers of two directly opposite approaches to the problem interpret the “special status of the region” in different, directly opposite ways. The first group proceeds from the need to grant the regional bodies additional authority (particularly when dealing with the neighbouring states). It would allow the region to rapidly react to the constantly changing external environment. The second group propagates strengthening the role of the federal centre. In our opinion, this discussion has tailed off, because another promising approach, not connected in any way with the “special legal status of the region”, has been found. This approach is based on the strengthening of the role of the “Federal target programme of the development of the Kaliningrad region”. It has to be mentioned that similar programmes have been adopted and amended many times. In 1997, the “Programme of the development of the special economic zone in the Kaliningrad region for the period of 1998-2005” was adopted, but it was implemented only to a minimum extent [8]. In 2001, the “Programme for the development of the Kaliningrad region for the period 2010” was adopted. The programme was implemented more effectively compared to the previous ones. Significant amendments were made in 2008 and the duration of the Programme was extended to 2014 [5].

The new programme was more oriented towards the building of the necessary infrastructure, thus attracting private (both Russian and foreign) investments. Besides, the programme shows potential investors that the region is being constantly monitored by the federal centre. It gives an additional impetus to the improvement of the investment climate of the region. Further strengthening of the role of the Federal Programme and the implementation of its large-scale projects inevitably result in a changed relation between the Federal centre and the Kaliningrad region which is now turning from a recipient region into an economically self-sufficient region.

Kaliningrad identity

The identity of Kaliningrad population is largely predetermined by the historical specificity of its formation and ethno-demographic characteristics of the population. This is a region of new settlers, which was formed as a result of several waves of migration. As it was stated above, the population of the Kaliningrad region, being a region of 'resettlement socialism' [9] was formed as a result of voluntary resettlement of people from Russia, and to a lesser extent, from Belarus and Ukraine. This social and territorial entity (socium) – Kaliningraders – is still being formed and is not stable in its character and composition. The stratum of intelligencia, forming the regional mentality is not big enough. In the Soviet times, it almost did not exist, since the Soviet intelligencia was mainly technocratic.

The migration of the 1990s, when the Kaliningrad region received thousands of people from the former Soviet republics, did not facilitate the formation of the regional identity. Ethnic Russians prevailed in the composition of resettlers. The Kaliningrad region was not their "little motherland" and it took quite some time for them to perceive themselves as Kaliningraders.

However, the influx of migrants had some positive consequences: the majority of settlers were of working age; they had a certain social status and were motivated to raise their standards of living, as well as their social status. The new settlers compensated for the natural decreases of the population numbers until the beginning of 2000. The influx of settlers coming from different parts of the former USSR brought ethnic and cultural tolerance to the Kaliningrad region. That is why there have never been any serious clashes or ethnic conflicts in the region. The disconnection of the exclave from its mother country weakens intellectual, social and cultural links between them. No wonder, the majority of the residents of the region have experience the so-called "exclave syndrome" – a certain anxiety over the disconnection of the region from the mainland Russia. Numerous sociological surveys proved it. In order to prevent this situation, the regional authorities have to implement social programmes facilitating the movement of people from and to the mainland Russia. An example of such programmes is the "Russian children visit Russia", which however, has not been implemented on a systematic basis.

Though being geographically separated from the mainland Russia, the Kaliningrad region does not have any ground for social and cultural separatism, since all its residents are ethnic Russians, whose native language is Russian. The so-called Slavic nucleus – Russian, Ukrainians and Belarussians account for 94% of the population. One should not overestimate the "specificity of Kaliningraders", the Russian identity in the region is unquestionable. However, there is one major problem: if some social and economic mistakes occur, then social tension may rise. This, in its turn, may lead to separatism under certain negative development scenarios. This is particularly dangerous in the exclave, being surrounded by independent states. Consequently, the Kaliningrad region is more prone to conflict compared to other regions of Russia. Consequently, the Kaliningrad region should be given special attention.

It does not make any sense to speak about the "Germanization" of the region. The number of ethnic Germans does not exceed 1% of the total number of the population. These ethnic Germans are descendents of the so-called Russian or "tsarina Ekaterina's" Germans, who have been a part of the political and ethnic socium of Russia. There have been some frantic attempts of radical organizations of former East Prussians and their followers from "the Union of Exiles" in Germany to revive the problem of Eastern Prussia. Though these attempts had some resonance in mass media, they had little influence on the Kaliningrad region, its position and the discussion of the future of the region.

An outburst of interest to the German past of the region was observed in the 1990s. Then this interest was replaced by a more leveled attitude, which later flagged. The population of the region has gradually become more aware of the fact that it is not worth "cultivating a Prussian in themselves". It is better to be a Russian, speaking Russian and belonging to Russian culture, but at the same time respecting and understanding the complicated history of this former Prussian region. Young Kaliningraders discuss the same topics and are interested in the same things as their peers in other regions of Russia.

The problem is not in the much talked about "Kaliningrad separatism", but rather in the social and economic conditions the population of the region lives in. A decline in the standards of living and the quality of life during the recent world financial crisis may lead to a growing discontent with the authorities, consequently resulting in some sort of protest behaviour and separatist slogans. It is these slogans that the authorities are so much concerned about.

Another important issue is the neighbouring countries and their growing demand for labour force. The openness of the Kaliningrad region and the end of the world economic crisis may lead to a number of consequences, similar to an outflux of qualified labour force and young people from Lithuania. Already now, Poland (offering salaries almost twice as high as those in Russia) is ready to receive labour force

from the CIS countries [2,10]. That is why there is a need to provide support and assistance to these categories of the Kaliningrad population and facilitate their 'rooting' in the region.

Bridging the difference in the quality of life, social differentiation and the standards of living in the Kaliningrad region and the neighbouring regions of Poland is a prerequisite for turning the Russian exclave into a centre of economic and cultural cooperation, rather than an isolated island in the sea of seemingly alien European culture. But in order to achieve this aim, the region should be granted long term stimuli for its economic development. It can be done provided competitive advantages of the region are used to the full and the role of the region in the all-Russia and the Baltic sea region division of labour is defined.

Ways to overcome the negative consequences of exclavity

The exclavity of the Kaliningrad region is developing. But the understanding of the essence of exclavity, the situation inside and outside the region is becoming deeper. The region is gaining more and more experience in overcoming the negative consequences of its exclave position. It is learning to use the benefits of its close proximity to the EU to a greater extent. With time, researchers, the regional authorities and the population of the region have developed a quieter attitude to the formal aspects of exclavity (the region's territorial disconnection from the mainland Russia). They are more concerned about the real situation in the region - employability, standards of living, and transport connections with other regions of Russia.

Given globalization, exclave territories have two ways of development – (self)isolation and integration, incorporation into global processes. Quite obviously, isolation is a dead end route, which may only worsen all the hardships of exclavity. However, integration should not result in the 'dissolution' of any exclave in a certain supranational entity. A new balance of interest between the 'mother state', the exclave region, all the states concerned and new global actors (transnational corporations, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, etc) should be maintained.

The Kaliningrad region is not an exception to the exclave development regularities and rules. So it is the incorporation of its economic and cultural interests into the national interests of Russia, its participation in all processes in the Baltic sea region that is the region's only opportunity to provide for its sustainable and dynamic development. This, in its turn, will facilitate the implementation of the National Strategy of Russia both in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region.

The federal and the regional authorities are very-well aware of it. For instance, the mid-term and long-term strategy of social and economic development of the region sets the task of increasing the region's competitiveness in the Baltic macroregional space, the region's successful integration in the major social and economic processes in the Baltic Sea region. It is not enough just to have special customs and taxation privileges to fulfill the task. The region has to drastically restructure its economy, relying on an increasing productivity, growing assets and capital, making better use of new sources of growth, and a new 'resource portfolio'.

The geographical proximity of the Kaliningrad region to the EU member states predetermines its greater adaptation (compared to other regions of Russia) to the demands of the world market. It is in the Kaliningrad region that a new type of enterprises can be set up. These enterprises will be able to successfully compete on the world market after Russia joins the WTO. Thus, the economy of the region will change its outdated economic profile of purely assembling production, using imported raw materials and components and will start exporting its own production to other regions of Russia.

In order to reach these goals and overcome the negative consequences of exclavity, the federal authorities have to define the role the Kaliningrad region can play both in the economic development of the country and in the development of international cooperation. It is the federal authorities who are responsible for overcoming the consequences of the region's economic separation from the mainland Russia.

It is necessary to sustain a dialogue with the EU, thus solving the problem of the freedom of movement for Kaliningraders, traveling to Russia and residents of Russia traveling to Kaliningrad. Another problem that has to be solved is cargo transit between the Kaliningrad region and the mainland Russia. It is necessary to return to the idea of making Kaliningrad an air hub, the plan that should have been implemented by the federal authorities.

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