

# *Kaliningrad: a special area in Central-Eastern Europe*

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this work is to analyse in detail Kaliningrad territory, focusing on the current political situation, separation tendencies and features of the national identity. The content of the work is divided into separate parts. The ambition of the first part is to define basic facts that make this area specific in the Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of the second part is to identify significant milestones in the history of Kaliningrad that substantially shaped Kaliningrad's contemporary political picture, particularly Kaliningrad after the Russian regime change. The thesis also emphasizes the inclination of Kaliningrad to the West and the EU instead of Russian Federation and attempts to define causes that led to this particular tendency. The author of the work also would like to concentrate on the considerable alteration of Kaliningrad since the first presidency of Vladimir Putin. The intention of the last part is to resolve Kaliningrad-EU-Moscow relations. The author concluded that most profitable policy for Kaliningrad would be to help balance these two seemingly antagonistic positions and attempt to urge Russia and the EU to adopt measures most convenient for Kaliningrad.

**Keywords:** Kaliningrad, Russia, sovereignty, European Union, regional policy

## **Introduction**

In this essay I would like to summarize the current political situation, the separation tendencies and the features of the national identity in Kaliningrad oblast. First I would like to lay out some **basic statements regarding to the area:**

1. Kaliningrad oblast is a small Russian *enclave* which is inhabited by 1 million people and bordered by Lithuania and Poland at the coast of the Baltic Sea. Although this

area is under Russian sovereignty, it is separated from the rest of Russia not only physically but mentally too. By the occasion of the Lithuanian and Polish connection to the EU and to the NATO, this separation led to disputes between Russia and the West, as the transport of people and goods became more difficult for Russians within their homeland in the legal consequences of eastern enlargement of the European Union's borders. These administrative difficulties could weaken the relations between the oblast and the rest of Russia.

2. The *regional policy of the Russian Federation is based on centralization*. The federal government of Russia would not like to give broader autonomy to the regional authorities in the decision making regarding to foreign affairs, economic and social issues, despite of its special position. The reason of that is the paramount intention to maintain the territorial integrity. Every important decision is made by the central government at federal level without the involvement of the regional elites. In many cases ensuring the peace in the oblast and strengthening the relations between Kaliningrad and other parts of the country cost a lot of money for the central budget. For example the state should provide subventions for the Kaliningrad citizens in travelling expenses inside Russia or make unprofitable investments by the state-owned companies.
3. Kaliningraders are absolutely opened to the cooperation with the countries of the EU and would like to improve economic and civil relations with them. Although the EU is also interested in common projects, it could not handle Kaliningrad as an autonomous partner for that and look at the oblast *as one factor of the EU-Russia relations*.
4. Kaliningrad used to be a strategic base of Russia; the *military potential is very high* in the region. Most units of the Russian fleet are deployed here, as the only ice-free port of the country could be found in this area.
5. Finally I should mention the *periodically reviving protest tendencies* in Kaliningrad, which have two reasons. First the residents are fed up with Moscow's regional policy and second they are aware of the living standards in the neighbouring EU member states. Results of comparing the economic and social situation in Kaliningrad to the EU level make them disappointed. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

## **The history of Kaliningrad**

The city of Kaliningrad was mentioned before the end of the World War II as Königsberg and belonged to Germany. In 1945 the Soviet Union occupied and annexed the city and the surrounding territory which covered the one third of the former East Prussia. According to Stalin's commandment the German population was resettled and the area was renamed after a Soviet politician, Mikhail Kalinin. The main goal of the Soviet government was to create a new, Soviet profile for the region through the destruction of the traces of the German heritage and to build the Soviet socialistic society based on "Soviet people" in Kaliningrad. Theoretically it did not seem to be unreachable, as on the one part they filled the area with Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians who had no connections to the territory before, on the other part the city of Kaliningrad was almost fully demolished, thus the new administration had the opportunity to rebuild the whole town. As a result of that most of the German architectural monuments were exploded and people, who were responsible for constructing a new, Soviet city, must be engaged to social realism. I think that the destruction of an approximately 600 years old castle, where the first Prussian emperor was enthroned, was a symbolic point of this process. Old statues of Prussian intelligence, artists and politicians, German names of roads and squares were changed for Soviet ones. (Regions and territories, 2011; Karpenko, 2006)

They transformed not only the cityscape, but also the history of the region. The Soviet historiographical publications contained that Kaliningrad was formerly inhabited by the Baltic Slavs, thus the Soviet Union laid legitimate claim to the territory after the collapse of the Fascist Germany. (Martin, 2011)

Behind the annexation of the territory there were strong military interests, which are obvious in regard to the fact, that Kaliningrad became the top strategic base of the Russian Baltic Fleet because of its ice-free ports. During the Cold War the army was the most important employee in the region and the concentration of armed forces in the local society was one of the highest there inside Russia. To make it evident and endurable for the inhabitants the central government tried to emphasize the dignity of war heroism and the significance of preparing for the 3rd world war in the ideological propaganda. (Karpenko, 2006) The military profile of the oblast came to stay after the regime change too.

## **Kaliningrad after the Russian regime change**

In the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Empire the Soviet Union transformed into Russian Federation, which meant a constitutional, political and economic transformation and contributed to the appearance and reinforcement of decentralization in Russia. As a sign of that Kaliningrad became one of the 83 federal subjects, which could have own, self-elected regional government. Although the electoral competition has been mostly dominated by the regional sections of the representative federal political parties and the winner of the elections used to be the United Russia almost everywhere in the Russian Federation, all sorts of regional political movements and parties, which had been grounded by Kaliningraders could also function in Kaliningrad due to the more permissive political climate at the end of the 20th century. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012) It meant that such organizations as the Baltic Republican Party (BRP) got the chance to take part in the political life of the region. The BRP has targeted to gain autonomy for Kaliningrad and has promoted the thought of getting closer to the EU without getting under German sovereignty. Although they respect the German past of the territory and make attempts to restore the region's original name, Königsberg, they would not like to be the part of Germany. (Strom, 2012) These points of their program have been quite popular in the local society, especially at the beginning of 1990s, but not very much at federal level. The central government is still interested in weakening of the connections between Kaliningrad and the EU, strengthening Kaliningrader's loyalty to Russia and becoming the absolute reference point for the inhabitants of the region. In 2006 the central government declared a state-financed program called „We Russians” within country trips, camps and special faculties about patriotic studies are organized for young Kaliningraders. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012) It seems to be absolutely necessary if we pay attention for an analyse of the BBC from 2002 which stated that young people rather look to Europe than to Russia as only 15% of them have been to other parts of their motherland while 80% of young Kaliningraders have already travelled to Europe. Although the culture is kind of Russian there, the proximity to Europe makes a gap between people living in the rest of Russia and the second generation inhabitants of Kaliningrad who were born in the region and have no family members in other parts of the motherland. (Wayatt, 2002) Kaliningrad does not have a well-developed economy or large tackles of row materials (gas, oil, etc.); only the amber production is notable in the region. Kaliningrad's import significantly exceeds the export of the region year by year. So the mentioned Russian intention to maintain strong relation with this territory could be only

explained with considerations referring to Russia's security policy. Kaliningrad is a strategic naval base which has a great importance as Russia is surrounded with hostile NATO allies. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

Parallel with the demolition of the USSR a severe economic crisis began to evolve in whole Russia because of its underdeveloped, post-Soviet economic structure, which implied the permanent increase of the unemployment rate. In this situation the physical separation of Kaliningrad from the rest of Russia, which stemmed from the decolonization of the Baltic states, urged the government of Kaliningrad to establish economic relations with the neighbouring post-soviet and the Western European countries. President Yeltsin ensured duty-free trade and favourable tax system referring to the interests of the region. They hoped that the conditions of the potential birth of the imagined "Baltic Hong Kong" (Martin, 2011, p.53) had been created with these measures, but at first Kaliningrad's products and services were not competitive in the Western markets, and second, none of the contractors would like to invest money in Kaliningrad because of many reasons (mentioned below). This process led to Russia's central role in Kaliningrad's economy, even though the transport of people and goods between Kaliningrad and the rest of Russia became more expensive. (It would become more complicated after Lithuania's and Poland's connection to the EU and to the Schengen system.) The economic set-back resulted in the increase of the extent of criminality, prostitution and the numbers of drug addicts. Kaliningrad could be mentioned as a disadvantaged region not only from economic but also from social aspect. This region belongs to the poorest regions inside Russia. Despite of the fact that the price of the public services is among the highest there, the average wage is among the lowest. The huge proportion of the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis diseases as a consequence of the insufficient and too expensive healthcare service, the low extent of the public security, the gruesome scale of air pollution are also among the largest social deficiencies. (Regions and territories, 2011; Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012; Martin, 2011)

Therefore the *compensation* framed the Kaliningrad-Russia relations since the regime change. This conception could be discovered in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ), formally adopted in 1996, which provided customs benefits for the region of Kaliningrad and helped the survival and improvement of the well-developed small and medium sized business sector in the region. Within the confine of the SEZ the Russian Federation ensured the duty-free import of all goods into Kaliningrad. They imported mostly semi-finished products which were

assembled in Kaliningrad and exported to other parts of Russia. Although the SEZ was beneficial for the local citizens, it was detrimental for the central budget, because international business circles used Kaliningrad to avoid the customs at the Russian borders. As a result of that the SEZ was transformed by Vladimir Putin in 2006, whose aim was to construct a production- and export-oriented economic structure in Kaliningrad and support large foreign investors, but it was not successful. This region could not attract the huge investments because of the variability of the legal environment of business, existing of restricted military areas inside Kaliningrad region, corruption and the isolation from the rest of Russia, which has severe financial consequences and could not be compensated by the offered tax- and custom privileges. Eventually Kaliningrad's economy comes to stay depended upon the Russian economy, as Russia is the main investor in Kaliningrad (due to infrastructural investments (building of highways, power plants, ports) by the state-owned companies) and the most important customer of the goods and services, which are produced in the region. Last but not least this dependence could be also originated in the lack of raw materials, a well-developed agriculture, and big businesses, industries. The income from the amber producing is not enough to a strong regional economy. Moscow tried to urge the economic prosperity by the development of tourism but the limited amount of attractions, which are in some case in the restricted areas, the poorly improved services and the complicated procedure of getting visa to Kaliningrad hinder the region to make profit this way. Business circles are really interested in the elimination of the enumerated problems and in getting new privileges from the federal government. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

It is clear now that the mentioned consequences of the regime change, the social, political and ecological features of the territory and the willingness of the Russian Federation to maintain the Russian sovereignty in Kaliningrad could give a reason to the policy of compensation, but there is one more fact notwithstanding which contributed to the appearance of these attempts. At the beginning of the 1990s the idea of Kaliningrad's separation from the Russian Federation got into focus. The first appointed governor of Kaliningrad – Yuri Matochkin – intended to hold a referendum about this question and hoped to turn into the “fourth Baltic republic”, but this desire was smashed by the central government. (Lewis, 2010) Why could the issue of secession appear in Kaliningrad after the collapse of the USSR? Why are the compensation mechanisms and other instruments necessary to integrate a group of Russians to Russia? These questions could be answered if we take into account the specialities of the national identity in Kaliningrad.

## Feel like other type of Russians

Many factors could be mentioned which blocked the evolution of the “Soviet person” in Kaliningrad. The Kaliningraders was well informed about the Western life-style during the period of socialism, as the military officers and seamen always brought consumer goods from the West to Kaliningrad when they took a journey there, so people in Kaliningrad could keep in touch with the citizens of the neighbouring countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) which were “less-sovietised”. These facts caused the failure of the Soviet identity building and contributed to the appearance of a feeling that they are only to a certain extent Soviet citizens. After the regime change it turned into insisting of assertion that they are another type of Russians, Western or more Europeanised Russians. (Karpenko, 2006) Although they are Russians, their connections to their homeland are much weaker than their connections to Europe. They used to travel as tourists to the member states of the EU (especially to Germany, Lithuania or Poland) more often than to Russia, although they share in subventions for the price of the ferry and the airplane tickets from the central government to visit other parts of the Russian Federation. The main cause of going for a Russian trip among Kaliningraders is to look up relatives there. On the other hand the short-term trips to the neighbouring EU countries are really popular in Kaliningrad. They used to go for shopping weekends in Poland or Lithuania or travel as tourists to somewhere in Western-Europe as despite of state subventions the airplane tickets are mostly more priceless to Russia than to Germany. The large number of medical tourists is also not surprising regarding to the low quality but high prices of the health care service in Kaliningrad. (I have to add that it does not work mutually, as the number of European tourists in Kaliningrad is irrelevant.) It means that the neighbouring members of the EU are the reference point for the region instead of other parts of Russia. The citizens of Kaliningrad used to compare their living standards to the existing living conditions in Poland, Lithuania and Germany. As a result of that they are much more dissatisfied with the achievements and measures of the central government and they express higher social claims than people in other Russian regions. Therefore the actors of the civil society are more active comparing to the Russian average. There are 3.6 non-governmental organizations per 1,000 capita in Kaliningrad compared to the Russian average (2.6 NGOs per 1,000 capita). It follows that the willingness for the separation from Russia could appear in Kaliningrad oblast which provoked the policy of compensation. The separation movements (for example the mentioned BRP, which was constituted in 1993 by Sergey Pasko) could operate in Kaliningrad and could present their program in the local

media. After a couple of years these intentions were frozen by the new regional policy of President Vladimir Putin (detailed below). (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

The feeling of being closer to Europe was manifested in the excessive emphasizing of the German past of the territory at the beginning of the 1990s. Despite of the Soviet government's attempts to erase the German past of Kaliningrad, people found out and preserved myths and legends about a demolished town called Königsberg. Kaliningrad is a perfect example for the fact that a culture could not be disappeared without a trace. The Prussian history ceased to be a taboo in the region thus people began to use the former name of the city of Kaliningrad or use a mixed version of the Russian and German name ("Kenig"). (Strom, 2012) Photographs, memoirs and other studies and papers referring to the World War II and the German times before were published and witnessed the story of a destroyed town, Königsberg. The schools in Kaliningrad started to hold extracurricular classes in which children could get relevant information about the history of Kaliningrad. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

Although Russians constitute the *biggest* ethnic group in Kaliningrad, they could *not* be seen as the *main* ethnic group there. How could it be possible? First of all the egalitarianism and the internationalism played a central role in the social system and in the demanded social behaviour during the Soviet period. In the second place, all of the ethnic groups which were settled into Kaliningrad had made no roots in this area before thus none of them could be mentioned as a dominant ethnic group in the region. There has been a consensus among the Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians and other minorities referring to this question. So Kaliningraders used to live in a multicultural environment, although all of the biggest ethnic groups are Slav ethnic groups and the nearness between their culture and habits is uncontroversial. At the end of the 1980s there were more than 110 ethnic groups registered in Kaliningrad who lived together without ethnic tensions. There is also a large number of migrants which emanate from the effects of the resettlement program, which encourages the citizens of the CIS countries (former citizens of the Soviet Union) to move to Kaliningrad. (Karpenko, 2006; Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

Religious confrontations are also diminished in the oblast. Between 1945 and the middle of the 1980s building of a church was prohibited by the Soviet authorities, so Kaliningrad was secularized. The foundation of the first orthodox congregation was allowed by the central



government in 1985. From the beginning of the 1990s other religious communities have been recognized step by step. Although there are more than 40 registered denominations the Russian Orthodox Church has the visible majority of believers. But the almost 40 years of socialism could not disappear without a trace. It is clearly demonstrated by the results of public opinion polls, that the number of people who believe in the existence of God is much more less than the number of people who say that they belong to an institutionalized church. The phenomena of the so called “Orthodox non-believers” (Karpenko, 2006, p.285) could be explained by the fact that Kaliningraders bind their religious identity to their ethnicity and their cultural identity. The religion is only one factor through which they can express where they ethnically belong to. Since the religion became an important instrument to attach the region identically to the rest of Russia, the central government is really active in the reinforcement of the Orthodox Church’s position in Kaliningrad. The temple of the first Orthodox congregation was earlier in the property of an Evangelical congregation. Parallel with the increase of the number of Orthodox communities the regional authorities provided the ownership of many tarnished building for them, which had been formerly used by catholic or evangelistic believers. These transactions had been in progress just before the federal act about the churches’ restitution for the takeover of their property was accepted. (Karpenko, 2006; Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

### **Kaliningrad since the first presidency of Vladimir Putin**

After his inauguration in 2000 Vladimir Putin as the new president of the Russian Federation introduced some reforms which were based on the policy of centralization and reduced the autonomy of the regions by degrees through the created administrative and direct impediments.

The *first step* towards the completion of this policy was the *financial reform* in 2001. This targeted to deprive the regional budget of some important incomes such as the VAT, the social insurance and the road fund. The whole revenue from the VAT is flowing to the central budget. Instead of economic autonomy the regions are thrown back on federal state subsidies what make the regions more dependent from the federal level and create unpredictable fiscal situation year by year because only a minimalized part of the extent of subventions is granted in federal acts, and a greater part is awarded to the regions by casual decisions of individuals

(members of the government and administration). (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

*Secondly* Putin obligated the regional elites to *harmonize the regional legal system with the federal one* thus some of them made provisions which were about sovereignty or special autonomy and was inconsistent with the federal law. This arrangement excludes the thought of a special independent area regarding to Kaliningrad and neglect the features of the territory in the legal regulation. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

The construction of federal districts could be mentioned as an *administrative impediment* of the regional autonomy. Putin aimed to merge the regions into self-determined federal districts which are going to be led by presidential deputies who are formally authorized to give advises for the region's governments and monitor their activities but in fact they are „omnipotent” envoys of the president. Kaliningrad belongs to the North-Western Federal District which is managed from Saint Petersburg. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

The next stop of the process was to *ban the functioning of the region-based political parties* or movements, such as aforesaid Baltic Republican Party. As I mentioned before the dominating party is the United Russia, but it has legal alternatives: the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Just Russia, the Yabloko and the Patriots of Russia. These parties are relevant in federal level and their regional sections are operating in Kaliningrad, but this is not typical for whole Russia. The variability of political forces is almost the highest in Kaliningrad compared to the rest of Russia and the United Russia is not omnipotent there, it is more controlled by the opposition than anywhere in the Russian Federation. The structure of political parties explains the specific patterns of their political behaviour as in many cases the directives which had been expected by the centrum of the parties to implement on regional level are vetoed by regional elites considering the local interests. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

Despite of the legal prohibition the BRP is *still active* in Kaliningrad but operating under the name of *Respublica* since 2005. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012) On the party's own blog side – where members use the original name of the movement, so I will mention them as BRP – the supporters of the movement are able to order a piece of East Prussian soil, stone or even buy a T-shirt wherewith they can make the BRP's attempt for independence from Moscow more wide-known. Old Konigsbergs cognac and East Prussian vodka are also available for people who want to clink glasses for autonomy. According to an

interview with the current head of the BRP, Rustam Vasiliev, he was born in Tatarstan, now he lives in Kaliningrad and despite of he cannot speak German, only a few word, or has Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar and Bashkir roots he identifies himself as Prussian as he loves people there and Prussian history. How could it be possible? Is it not an obvious experiment to make political capital of the Prussian tradition? Since generally the common language is one of the main components of ethnical identity it could come up that we should face the well-known “ethno-business”. They used to organize such events as the P-Russian parade which was officially banned by regional authorities, the Königsberg bicycle tours and other spectacular demonstrations in which they can wave Prussian flags, play Prussian music and express their political aims. They intend to cooperate with the popular blog side, the Amberkant which is founded by young Kaliningraders and gave place for political debates between the residents and the elites. The Amberkant invited Mr. Vasiliev for a discussion with the current governor, Nikolay Tsukanov about the future of the region which was received by Mr. Vasiliev. The chairman of the BRP also travelled to the East Prussians’ meeting in Germany as a representative of the party and residents of Kaliningrad. Since December 2012 the BRP initiated a petition to restore the former name of the region, Königsberg, but it is supported only by 400 people which can raise question about the legitimacy of the group in the case of autonomy. They look at the renaming as the first step towards getting more independence. The BRP is really serious in this question thus its members obsess the FIFA to withdraw Russia’s right to organize the football World Cup in Kaliningrad in 2018, in a city which got its name after a person who had perpetrated crimes against humanity. It sounds an admirable symbolic initiation but the region’s economic interests dictate the opposite of this approach. The issue of renaming determines the BRP’s communication regarding to another political forces, labelling all of them communists. The party’s view is based on the dichotomy of „friend or foe” so it convicts the program of all the parliamentary parties and tries to affect emotions through creating stereotypical answers why they do not agree with the political aims of the BRP. (Baltic Republican Party blog, 2013) I asserted that the BRP does not represent the majority of the society in Kaliningrad as the number of their supporters does not exceed 1,000 people. (Storm, 2012) The sociological statistics in the question of independence which are regularly referred by politicians witness only about the support of 5% of Kaliningraders. (Baltic Republican Party blog, 2013) But it is not clear that should we believe in this or can we speak about latent non-supporters if we take into account the demonstrations against Moscow’s regional policy in 2009-2010 which

were assisted by thousands of people in Kaliningrad? Should we think that the non-visible supporters do not find the BRP an attractive alternative? Maybe. At first I need to look through the happenings of 2009–2010 to answer.

At the end of 2009 a few inhabitants, mostly dockworkers and sailors protested week by week against reducing the number of hospitals and the financial restrictions in the health care service but it was neglected by the local government. As a consequence of Putin's decision wherewith he increased the tariff of importing used cars from abroad and the politics of Georgiy Boos, the former governor of Kaliningrad, who raised the rate of transport tax and the utility prices many times during his period, the residents of Kaliningrad crowded the streets to protest against the measures that deprived them of financial resources during the term of the serious global financial crisis. The disparate scale of living standards compared to the EU member states and to other parts of Russia contributed to the eruption of social tensions. In December 2009 the number of protesters came up to 5 thousands. (Lewis, 2010) The social and economic claims turned into political demands in a short time as people began to demonstrate for the resignation of Mr. Putin and Mr. Boos. Georgiy Boos was appointed as the governor of Kaliningrad oblast by Vladimir Putin in 2005 pursuant to the *last element of Putin's reform package*, which is about the *ignoring of the results of the regional elections by the setting of the governor in the region* and making it dependent only from the willingness of the state president. Mr. Boos was really loyalty to Moscow's interest as he had no connections to Kaliningrad and obviously because he was appointed, not elected by the inhabitants so his legitimacy had come from the federal elites and not from the citizens. Mr. Boos tried to withdraw his mentioned unpopular measure but it had not been enough to impede the organizing of another demonstrations. Due to the huge distance between the region and the rest of Russia it used to be more complicated for the police and security service to keep under control the demonstrations what are in progress in Kaliningrad. The main organizers of the spoken-of protest were Konstantin Doroshok (the head of the region-based Justice movement, whose used car business went smash after Putin's protectionist arrangement), Michail Chesalin from the Patriots of Russia and Solomon Ginzburg, an independent representative. This protest was attended by political movements (Solidarity group, the Other Russia, the prohibited National Bolshevik Party) and every parliamentarian party – except the United Russia – in coalition, which was named "Our Kaliningrad". It revealed to a widespread social consensus which is beyond the hostility of the two radical poles (communists and hard nationalists) of the political arena. This opposite cooperation was succeed to attract 10-12

thousands people – including the businessmen and members of the middle class with no radical political views – under its flags on 30 January 2010 despite of the extremist weather. It could be mentioned as the largest Russian protest after the demonstration against the takeover of the NTV by the Gazprom in recent years. People demanded the restoration of regional election of governors, the departure of the regional government and Vladimir Putin who served as Prime Minister on federal level that time. Closed to Europe Kaliningrader's attitude to the government or simply to the authority shows different patterns as they are braver to express their political interests, imaginations even if these views are contrary to the establishment's point. (It is coincident with my aforesaid ascertainment that the civil activism is also outstanding in the region compared to another parts of the country.) I should add the fact that many of the protesters wore facemask as they were afraid of being identified by police cameras and getting into prison. This gesture does not seem to reflect a democratic area and can be seen an instrument wherewith they drew attention for the lack of freedom of speech in Russia. (Strom, 2012; Martin, 2011; Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisnievska, 2012) That is connected to my first question about the "latent non-supporters". Large part of Kaliningraders has not been involved to these initiations probably because of fear, although it could be possible that they had supported the collective actions. One of the organizers reported that the region could be similar to the example of the Polish Gdansk, where the Solidarity movement began to function in hope of realising the regime change in Poland one time. He said: „There is a wind blowing from Gdansk.” (W. Lewis, 2010) But at the same time the central government succeeded in demobilizing the frustrated mass and resolving the frictions in a short time through such measures what did not lead to the correction of the system, only made a symptomatic treatment in Kaliningrad. The Kremlin's most important priority is to ensure the reconciliation and the territorial integrity so the central government

- replaced the hated head of the regional ministry of healthcare, labour and social affairs
- obligated the regional leaders to establish a political consultation committee with the participation of the opposition
- delayed the lifting of tax tariffs
- countermanded Mr. Boos in August 2010 and appointed Nikolai Tsukanov who was born in Kaliningrad oblast and has been emotionally bonded to the territory.

Although the protests helped the citizens to reach their main goal to dismiss the Moscow-oriented governor, Mr. Boos, such movement as the Polish Solidarity had not emerged in the

region and mainly not organized across the whole nation. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012) Notwithstanding the promise of a consultation forum came to public on 12th March there was another nation-wide demonstration on 20th March which was focused on demanding the resign of Georgiy Boos, as his resign was not sure that time. The attendants smashed tangerines (tangerine was the nickname of Mr. Boos) whereby they would have liked citing the memories of the orange revolution in Ukraine. The real political content of citizens' disappointment was the fact that their opinion, expressed in votes, had been disregarded by the forming of government, but the elections were restored only in 2012. Opposition leaders tried to use the revolutionary moods to realize other political aims regarding to the question of autonomy but as I mentioned it had not got such strong social background than the basic claim of Boos's disposal. People were satisfied with the denounce of Boos and the protest waves had been slowly smoothed down. Although the March protest was a nation-wide action with the attendance of 20,000 people in 50 towns across all Russia, it attracted just 2,000 people in Kaliningrad (despite of the restraint of authority). According to a Polish study citizens in Kaliningrad, who share separatist views, became more moderate in their imaginations and attempt to reach the lower level of autonomy regarding to Kaliningrad. It could be the answer for my second question. Though the fear can balk activism, people are mostly not as radical as the BRP is. The majority of Kaliningraders defines the concept of separatism on one hand as the efforts to convince the federal government of changing its regional policy through the reducing of centralization process and the calculating on regional interests by decision making. (The most radicals are lobbying for becoming a detached federal district.) Despite of that, the state-owned NTV, which is the communication platform of United Russia, presented a film in November 2012 on the basis of that they accused Sergei Udaltsov (one of Putin's main opposites) and Givi Targamadze (member of Georgian Parliament) of planning the secession of Kaliningrad. There is a running investigation in this case although these two men's connection to Kaliningrad has not been cleared. Independently from results the randomize charging of these people by the NTV could raise doubts regarding to the grounding of this inquiry. On the other hand Kaliningraders' main will is to get green light from Moscow for strengthening the relations with the EU. (Martin, 2011; Voloshin, 2012; Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

## **Kaliningrad-EU-Moscow. A magic triangle**

Moscow's top priority is to dominate Kaliningrad's foreign relations, set back the dialogue and connections between Kaliningrad and the EU and generally use the region to exert a pressure on the European Union. Before Lithuania and Poland joined the European Union they imposed visa restrictions which were harmful not only for the citizens of the region but also for Russia. Kaliningraders' life seemed to become corresponding to prisoners' as they did not have the chance to travel to other parts of their homeland or abroad just on strict conditions. Shortly after this decision Moscow began to lobby for the weakening of visa rules by the two Baltic countries which led to the receiver of special bilateral contracts in this topic. Polish and Lithuanian intentions to become a part of the Schengen zone refreshed these problems a couple of years ago. The citizens placed pickets around the consulates of Schengen countries in Kaliningrad and around the European Parliament and the European Commission in Brussels to draw attention for the case of Kaliningrad. The present governor of Kaliningrad oblast – considering the views of the Russian Federation and mainly the will of Kaliningraders – suggested recognizing Kaliningrad as a “pilot region”. The substance of this approach to allow the visa-free travel to the EU for the inhabitants of the region in first step but in second this agreement would have been expanded to whole Russia. The Kremlin refused to think of this recommendation and started to negotiate with Poland and Lithuania about the construction of a local border traffic system pursuant to that Kaliningraders could have been enabled to pass the Schengen borders on mutually regulated conditions but could have travelled only into these two countries. The provisions of Schengen treaty grant permission for border crossing on both sides only in the frontier area, which legally takes 30, maximum 50 kilometres from the state borders. Russia tried to convince Poland and Lithuania to spread out the effect of the agreement for the whole Kaliningrad region, which was rejected by the Lithuanians but was welcomed by the Polish partner. So Russia and Poland signed the agreement in December 2011 after they had got the contribution of Brussels and it was come into effect last year. What was the motivation of Russia to work out such a document? Perhaps Moscow intended to use these visa facilitations for getting other privileges from the EU which could be verified if we take into account that during the negotiating period Vladimir Putin raised doubts about the proclaiming of the agreement in Kaliningrad as he found it inadmissible to ensure visa facilities for only one region of the Russian Federation and now we can realize the fact that the implementing of the agreement is being protracted. The central government has already caused serious delays in many EU projects which would

have affected Kaliningrad. One example is the Cross Border Cooperation project about the development of civic relations and the infrastructure of the frontier regions between the participant actors – Poland, Lithuania and Kaliningrad. Moscow had only an observer status in the meetings which were about the cooperation's content, but once the Kremlin offered financial support in return for the right to intervene into the decision-making and budgetary questions. After it was accepted by the EU, Russia bonded the promised allocation to the fulfilment of its assertion to define the kinds and the order of programs – which would be financed from the contribution – by the participants. As the mentioned themes have not been disputed in the frame of the CBC since 2010, the project is near to going smash without any results. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)

The EU does not look at Kaliningrad as an independent actor of the international relations, only as an opportunity to intensify its relations with the Russian Federation as a whole. Although the EU would not like to hurt the territorial integrity of Russia, it should keep in contact with an entity which is embedded among two EU member states. Brussels used to provide financial support to Kaliningrad from the common budget to avoid the existing of a slums inside the EU's territory which could have been the resource of organized crime and spreader of epidemics or deathly diseases. Therefore the most important aim is to help the bringing up of the region's living standards onto the European level. Some of the EU member states do like preserving the ecosystem of the Baltic sea regarding not only to the green values but also to the economic benefits of the fishing – in the area of profit making and employment. So Sweden is the most enthusiastic supporter of ecological investments in Kaliningrad region. In the economic sphere the region could be interesting for the EU only from the aspect of export incomes as Kaliningrad is the main receiver of the EU's Russian export. Depending on the composition of Kaliningrad's government the region itself maintain more or less strong relations with the neighbouring EU member states. Georgiy Boos never took an official visit in Lithuania or Poland as the governor of Kaliningrad so the region's relations had become cold with these two countries. It has been significantly changed by the inauguration of Nikolay Tsukanov. Germany attempts to take care of the close contact with Kaliningrad because of its German roots. There are lots of German foundations for the financing of the restoration of historical buildings in the region and civic associations to help the former inhabitants of Kaliningrad to keep in touch with their relatives. (Rogoza, Wierzbowska-Miazga, Wisniewska, 2012)



Kaliningrad could have an in-between position in this situation. First of all the region is interested to enjoy the economic benefits of Moscow's subsidies and investments, but is also interested in getting closer to Europe. I think the most profitable politics in the case of Kaliningrad – which should be favoured by the regional elites – is to help balancing these two seemingly antagonistic points of view and urge the parts (Russia and the EU) to do what is the best for Kaliningrad as it is a common interest.

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