

EXCLAVITY OF THE KALININGRAD REGION: EXPERIENCE OF EXPLICATION

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The article explores the concept of exclavity using the Kaliningrad region as an example. The authors analyse the concept of exclavity, identify its key attributes and the degree of their relevance, describe indicators of exclavity as well as factors influencing it. The main attributes of the Kaliningrad region's exclavity are geographical separation and remoteness. The authors distinguish two types of exclavity, absolute (attributive) and relative (functional), identify strategies for overcoming absolute exclavity and offer functional solutions to the 'access problem'. Among these solutions are extraterritorial corridors and transit regimes. Exclaves are viewed as unique border territories where the balance between the barrier and contact functions of the border serves as an indicator of relative exclavity. The authors analyse key factors relevant to absolute exclavity and its functional state: the geopolitical context, the exclave policy of the parent state, the condition of the exclave as a territorial unit, and the identity of its population. The study employs a range of methods and approaches, including logical analysis, case studies, and comparative analysis.

Keywords:

Kaliningrad region, exclavity, geopolitical context, enclavityexclavity, exclave policy, 'exclave syndrome'

Against the backdrop of a global geopolitical crisis and shifting geopolitical dynamics in the Baltic region, the Kaliningrad region's position and role in Russia's pursuit of its national interests are evolving. This evolution is occurring alongside efforts to ensure the security and functionality of the territory as a constituent of Russia. Relevant research into these issues should employ a conceptual model with a significant heuristic component, where exclavity defines the essence of the Kaliningrad region [1–3]. A *sine qua non* here is an explication of the territory's exclavity as a notion and phenomenon alongside its conceptualisation,

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the identification of its fundamental and necessary characteristics (attribute), the definition of its place and significance and the description of principal indicators of exclavity and factors affecting this state¹ [4; 5].

Attributes of the Kaliningrad region's exclavity

Reference books define the word 'exclave' as a portion of a country separated from the main part by another state or states [6, p. 652, 618; 7, p. 571, 540]. In the literature, this term is employed with an analogous meaning² [8–10]. A special case arises when such a territory has access to the sea, facilitating maritime communication with the home country. Some authors maintain that if maritime communication is possible, the territory should not be classified as an exclave [13, p. 5]. Yet, it is widely accepted that the decisive factor in determining the status of such areas is their separateness from the home state by land borders and foreign territories [9; 14]. Therefore, such territories enjoying sea access can be designated as 'coastal exclaves'³ [15]. We tend to agree with this widely-held position, with the added observation that the term 'maritime exclave' also appears to be valid in this case. It is important to note that 'exclave' is a politico-geographical term, and its use immediately introduces a context of physical geography, where further explanations with a focus on political geography and international law may be necessary to clarify the implications of sea access for a specific exclave.⁴

Exclavity is primarily defined as the territorial separateness of a part of a country from its main territory by national borders and territories of one or more state⁵ [15, p. 22]. This separateness may be considered an attribute and intrinsic characteristic of the territory designated as an exclave. This characteristic hinders the movement of people and goods between the exclave and the home states⁶ [9, p. 18], ultimately challenging the cohesive political, economic, and sociocultural fabric of the nation, to which the exclave belongs. The focus here is not so much

¹ Different interpretations of explication are primarily but non exclusively rooted in Rudolf Carnap's ideas.

² It is worth noting that various mathematical approaches are being extensively utilised in identifying and analysing exclaves and enclaves.

³ The term 'semi-exclave', which has a similar meaning can be considered outdated.

⁴ With this qualification, we will use the terms 'coastal exclave' and 'exclave' interchangeably in this text to refer to the Kaliningrad region.

⁵ Therefore, it is difficult to agree with the proposition [15, p. 22] that territories separated from the mainland by straits can be classified as coastal exclaves if they share a land border with foreign states, as this border may not separate these territories from the mainland on land. Thus, Northern Ireland is not an exclave of the UK.

⁶ In this context, the mainland is often referred to as the 'mother state'. However, this term may not be entirely precise as it could evoke associations with the 'metropole' [9, p. 18].

on technical transport issues as on matters of international politics and law. All this highlights the level of internationalisation of the problems faced by exclaves as integral parts of their states. The issue of movement of people and goods between the exclave and the mainland is termed ‘access problem’ [8, p. 283–295; 9, p. 184–219; 10].

The separateness and the need to address the ‘access problem’ constitute the foundation of the conflict potential inherent in exclave territories [16]. On the one hand, the home states of exclaves seek primarily to ensure the unity of the sovereign territory. On the other hand, neighbouring states will be cautious, to say the least, about any attempts to address the ‘access problem’ involving their territories, concerned about their sovereignty.

Describing the specifics of the Kaliningrad region’s separateness from Russia is rather complicated. The region is not just isolated from mainland Russia by the borders and territories of several neighbouring states but is also exposed to a precarious international environment composed of Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Poland, transforming the problem of access from an issue of bilateral relations into a multilateral international problem. The problem is further aggravated by the accession of Poland and Lithuania to the EU and NATO, which has turned the Kaliningrad region into a coastal enclave in relation to these associations, which view it as an object of their coordinated economic and military policy. Moreover, the accession of the two countries to the Schengen zone in 2007 resulted in a common border policy.

All the above suggests that focusing solely on separateness as an attribute of exclavity is insufficient. The characteristic of an exclave’s remoteness from the home country, specifically the distance that must be traversed to reach the mainland via transport routes running across foreign territories, is also important [9, p. 212–213]. This type of remoteness, which inevitably acquires an international-political dimension, is fundamentally different from the remoteness observed between the core and periphery of a state. In the case of the Kaliningrad region, the distance to the nearest segment of the Russian state border in the Smolensk region, if travelling by rail or road, is approximately 660 km. For comparison, the width of the Polish Corridor, which separated the coastal exclave of East Prussia from mainland Germany between the two World Wars (1919–1939), did not exceed 200 km and was only 30 km at its narrowest point. The exclave of Cabinda is separated from mainland Angola by a 37 km stretch of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan is separated by a 43 km stretch of Armenian territory. It should be noted that the emergence of new polities can influence characteristics such as remoteness. For example, if we consider Russia and Belarus as constituents of the Union State, the minimum distance from their shared border to the territory of the Kaliningrad exclave would be about 100 km within the so-called Suwałki Gap.

As for the Kaliningrad coastal exclave, which has access to the sea, the distance by sea from Kaliningrad (the port of Baltiysk) to St. Petersburg (the port of Ust-Luga) is 860 km. For comparison, after 2014, Crimea became for a time a coastal exclave of Russia¹ [17, p. 33], separated from Krasnodar Krai by the Kerch Strait, ranging from 4.5 to 15 km in width.² Yet it is not sufficient here to merely state the presence of sea access or quantify the distance between the Kaliningrad exclave and mainland Russia's Baltic ports. Equally important is the political and legal mechanism capable of ensuring the stability of maritime traffic across the Baltic Sea, which is classified as a semi-enclosed sea with no open sea areas, as it is entirely covered by the maritime zones of coastal states [18]. The changing geopolitical situation in the Baltic renders this issue extremely pertinent.

Thus, the land-based separateness and remoteness of an exclave are essential attributes for classifying it as a distinct territorial type. These attributes underpin absolute (structural) exclavity, which persists until a reorganisation of borders and territories takes place. Technically, this reorganisation can occur in various ways. For the home state, this could involve purchasing or exchanging the territory that separates the exclave or annexing it. The neighbouring states might take similar actions concerning the exclave territory. Finally, the exclave itself could pursue secession, either to establish an independent state (independentism) or to join another state (irredentism) [19; 20].

In this work, we did not aim to encompass the entire spectrum of hypothetical scenarios related to the Kaliningrad exclave. However, we deem it permissible to make several observations. Firstly, Russia has never made territorial claims against the states it borders via the Kaliningrad region. Moreover, the country has never invoked historical reasons to challenge the preparation and conclusion of the 1997 Treaty on the State Border between Lithuania and Russia [21]. Secondly, the Kaliningrad region has never harboured any threat of separatism in any form. Furthermore, in ethnocultural terms, the region could be described as a Russian 'enclave' in the Polish-Lithuanian catholic environment, as Russians comprise 91.3% of the region's population, according to the 2020 National Census. Thirdly, since the 1990s, some politicians and 'experts' primarily from Lithuania and Poland have constantly attempted to provoke a discussion about the legitimacy of Russia's control over the region. They admit, nevertheless, that these considerations have inspired various plans for Kaliningrad internationalisa-

¹ Yuri Rozhkov-Yuryevski believes that Crimea was located in Russian territorial waters and calls it therefore a 'coastal quasi-exclave'. This position seems untenable because, at the time, an essential characteristic of an exclave was evident: being separated on land from mainland Russia by the borders and territory of Ukraine.

² Distance matters: the Crimean bridge was built in response.

tion, originating from the West and the neighbouring countries. These scenarios include division, condominium, exterritoriality, decolonisation, greater autonomy and independence¹ [22, p. 36].

On relative/functional exclavity

If a state lacks the capability, desire, or will to address the problem of absolute, or structural, exclavity, it seeks relative, or functional, solutions to sustain the operations of an exclave without altering its borders and status. There are two principal avenues of ensuring functional exclavity.

Firstly, the state can devise ways to solve the problem of ‘access’, i. e. that of the movement by land of people and cargo between the exclave and the mainland country. Such measures involve organising international transit across a neighbouring state, or states, on terms enshrined in international agreements. Sometimes the question is raised about creating a transport or exterritorial corridor, albeit such steps would solve, to a degree, the problem of absolute exclavity. Obviously, in the case of a coastal exclave, the focus will be on maritime communications.

During the interbellum, Germany’s coastal exclave of East Prussia provided a prominent example of attempts to implement all possible solutions for the ‘access problem’ while maintaining the status of an exclave, as well as addressing the problem of absolute exclavity. When envisaging the ‘Polish corridor’, the authors of the Treaty of Versailles guaranteed Germany the freedom of transit between East Prussia and the mainland (Article 89).² An agreement between Germany, Poland, and the Free City of Danzig, granting free transit between East Prussia and the rest of Germany, was signed in Paris in April 1921. According to Article 9 of this document, an arbitration court was established in Danzig as an institution for resolving disputes between the parties. Over 16 years, only five complaints, all concerning rail transport, were submitted to this court [23]. Rail communication between mainland Germany and its coastal exclave was organised by the German National Railway, which used sealed carriages for this purpose. A special company was also created to ensure maritime communication from Swinemünde (now Świnoujście) to Pillau (now Baltiysk)³ [14, p. 15; 24, p. 181–230]. However, Germany, seeking to revise the conditions of the Versailles System, raised the issue of creating a ‘corridor within the

¹ To support their position, Lithuanian intellectuals appeal to Immanuel Kant, stressing that the German philosopher would have denounced the decisions of the Potsdam Conference [22, p. 34].

² Treaty of Versailles, *Moscow*, 1925. URL: https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000199_000009_02000022441/ (accessed 05.10.2023).

³ For more on the transit conditions, see [24].

corridor', demanding from Poland in 1938 and 1939 the construction of an ex-territorial highway and railway line through the 'Polish Corridor'. This demand exacerbated the international political crisis preceding World War II [25]. At the onset of the war, East Prussia's exclave status was abolished through border adjustments. Ultimately, World War II led to the complete dissolution of Prussia as a sovereign state.

The term 'corridor' as used in diplomacy has historically stirred strong reactions and remains contentious to this day. For instance, in 1996, during a meeting between the presidents of Russia and Belarus, suggesting that Belarus could gain access to the sea via the Grodno-Suwałki-Kaliningrad road and rail route sparked considerable controversy in Poland, perceived as an attempt to discuss an extraterritorial corridor.¹ Another is negotiations between Azerbaijan and Armenia in May 2023, where the term 'Zangezur corridor', designating a transport line between Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhchivan and the mainland running through Armenian territory, caused disquiet. Armenia's leadership viewed the use of the term as laying territorial claims.²

Solutions to the 'access problem' typically refer to the conditions and procedures of transit through neighbouring/surrounding states, i. e. transit regimes, rather than exterritorial corridors, albeit the term 'corridor' is sometimes used to designate such regimes. In modern history, transit regimes have frequently been governed by international multilateral accords, which have, to differing extents, finalised the processes arising from the creation of exclaves. Above, we discussed the Treaty of Versailles and East Prussia. Yet another example is the Four Power Agreement on Berlin, concluded in September 1971 in the wake of détente. The document established transit arrangements between West Germany and West Berlin.³ In November 2002, Russia and the US issued a joint statement addressing transit between the Kaliningrad region and the rest of the country via Lithuania.

Specific transit conditions were ultimately established in each of the cases considered above,⁴ determined by particular historical circumstances. However, it is worth paying special attention to the spirit of these foundational documents. The Treaty of Versailles obliged Poland to provide transit freedom under conditions

¹ Diplomacy of associated series, *Kommersant*, 16.03.1996 ; Around the corridor through Poland. 'Corridor tensions' in the corridors of power, *Kommersant*, 20.03.1996, p. 4.

² How the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan argued over the word 'corridor' and complained to Putin about each other, *Kommersant*, 26.05.2023.

³ Four Power Agreement on Berlin, Annex 1. It was emphasised that the Western sectors 'continue not to be a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Germany and not to be governed by it'. For details on the previous period, see: Bespalov, V. A. *West Berlin Transit (1945—1971): Cold War Diplomacy*, Moscow, 2015.

⁴ This work did not set out to conduct a comparative analysis of these conditions.

‘at least as favourable’ as the national Polish regime.¹ The Four Power Agreement specified that transit through the GDR should occur without hindrance, in the simplest and fastest manner, enjoying optimum conditions.² The Joint Statement of Russia and the EU explicitly stipulated that the transit regime covered by the document would not infringe upon the sovereign right of Lithuania to exercise necessary control and deny entry into its territory.³ The latter thesis underpinned the discretionary transit arrangement between the Kaliningrad region and the rest of Russia, anchored not in the principle of international law stipulating unhindered transit between an exclave and the mainland, but in regional EU legislation [26]. The simplified transit document mechanism, which is part of the Russia-EU arrangement, operates as a discretionary visa regime where decisions are made by an anonymous Lithuanian official [26, p. 51]. Moreover, in its own right, the EU merely noted in the Joint Statement ‘the Russian proposal for visa-free transit by high speed non-stop train’, stating that such a solution ‘could only be taken after Lithuania’s accession to the EU, based on a thorough evaluation of the political and legal aspects and once the technical obstacles have been overcome’.⁴ Lithuania has been an EU member for a considerable time, but the ‘thorough evaluation’ has not yet occurred.

With the imposition of sanctions and the tightening of the transit regime, amid the growing socio-economic needs of the exclave and the development of modern modes of transport, efforts are being made to mitigate relative exclavity by altering the ratios between different types of transport. For example, by the end of 2001, the volume of passenger traffic between the Kaliningrad region and the rest of the country was estimated at 1.47 million people per year, with 980,000 carried by rail, 240,000 by air, and about 250,000 by road [27, p. 43]. With the complication of passenger transit through Lithuania and the development of fairly accessible air transport, 1.5 million out of two million passengers chose air travel in 2016 [27, p. 44]. COVID and the sanctions have popularised the Kaliningrad region’s recreational assets. In 2023, the number of air passengers surpassed four million people,⁵ despite aircraft having to adjust their usual routes and slightly extend flight times due to airspace closures by the Baltic States.

¹ Treaty of Versailles, *Moscow*, 1925, p. 43.

² Quadrilateral agreement, *Izvestiya*, 04.09.1971.

³ Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the European Union on transit between the Kaliningrad region and the rest of the territory of the Russian Federation, URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901880999> (accessed 05.10.2023).

⁴ Joint statement of the Russian Federation and the European Union on transit between the Kaliningrad region and the rest of the territory of the Russian Federation, Para. 10, URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901880999> (accessed 05.10.2023).

⁵ In Kaliningrad, the airport has surpassed the milestone of 4 million passengers per year for the first time, URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19339847> (accessed 05.10.2023).

Given the current restrictions and deteriorating transit conditions for goods through Lithuania, the development of ferry services between the ports of St. Petersburg / the Leningrad region and Kaliningrad has become the sole transport alternative for many types of cargo. The need persists for ongoing monitoring of political, legal, and military-political risks affecting Russian navigation in the Baltic Sea. Following Finland's accession to NATO, Estonian politicians have advocated closing the Gulf of Finland to Russian vessels, while NATO countries practised gulf blockade and Russian territory seizure in the Freezing Winds 23 exercises.¹

Now we will move on to describe the second way to mitigate relative, or functional, exclavity. Any exclave is a unique border territory, whose administrative boundaries usually coincide with national boundaries: the borders of Kaliningrad as a Russian region coincide with Russia's borders with Poland and Lithuania. In this context, the balance between the barrier and contact functions of the national border comes to the fore alongside the place the border regime has in the policies pursued by Russia, the neighbouring states and their supranational bodies. These considerations govern yet another crucial indicator of exclavity, i.e. the extent of the exclave's openness to global engagement in general and transboundary collaboration specifically [28–30].

It is worth noting that during the transformation of the Kaliningrad region into a Russian exclave, i.e. during the period of 'exclavisation', no specific targets were established for achieving a balance between the border functions. Throughout the 1990s, the balance was clearly skewed towards openness, with various factors affecting the equilibrium. During the initial stage of state-building in the post-Soviet era, the 'transparent' border regime enabled thousands of Kaliningraders to sustain themselves in crisis conditions by engaging in various forms of cross-border trade. The establishment of a free (special) economic zone in the Kaliningrad region spurred the development of business models that were suitable for Russia and provided a boost to numerous small businesses. In 1996, the law on the special economic zone in the Kaliningrad region was adopted, stipulating a free customs zone regime within the region² [31]. This regime proved advantageous for the burgeoning Kaliningrad businesses. At the same time, the region was losing its industrial capacity at a faster rate and to a greater extent than the Russian average, leading to the marginalisation of labour resources. By 1995, industrial production in the region had declined to 29 % of the 1990 level (compared to 52 % on average in Russia), while agricultural production had dropped

¹ NATO countries are practicing the blockade of the Gulf of Finland and the seizure of Russian territories at the Freezing Winds 23, 2023, *Military Review*, URL: <https://en.topwar.ru/231053-strany-nato-otrabatyvajut-na-uchenijah-freezing-winds-23-bloka-du-finskogo-zaliva-i-zahvat-rossijskih-territorij.html> (accessed 05.10.2023).

² For more on these processes, see [31].

to 59 % (compared to the national average of 72 %). By 1999, industrial production had further decreased to 17 % of the 1990 level, and agricultural production to 47 % [32, p. 8–9]. The metaphor of the ‘black hole’ was used at the time to refer to the Kaliningrad region in mainland Russia and the EU alike.¹ The Union and the Government of Russia took steps to create mechanisms to regulate the region’s earlier ‘openness’. Poland’s and Lithuania’s accession to the EU in 2004 and later to the Schengen area had a profound effect on the border situation. In 2006, legislation regarding the special economic zone in the Kaliningrad region substituted tax incentives for customs exemptions.

Yet another attempt to contribute to the openness of the region was made with the introduction of an agreement on small border traffic between Russia and Poland in 2012 [33], which Poland suspended in 2016. Since the start of the special military operation, the increased barrier function imposed by EU and NATO members Poland and Lithuania has been determining the degree of relative exclavity.

This radically changed the economic conditions initially associated with attempts to weaken exclavity in functional terms.

Conclusion

We believe that this attempt at an explication of the Kaliningrad region’s exclavity, including the identification of its absolute and functional aspects, sheds light on the key factors influencing its state and outlines avenues to slip out of the noose of exclavity, at least in functional terms.

The first factor to consider is geopolitical, involving an examination of the geopolitical environment of the Kaliningrad exclave. The most obvious manifestation of the current geopolitical crisis is the ‘hybrid war’ the West waged on Russia. Although the primary focus is now on the ‘Ukrainian front’ of this war, the prerequisites for the emergence of a ‘Baltic front’ are rapidly developing. These conditions involve not only the anti-Russian sanctions and the emergence of a new geo-economic reality for Russia and the Baltic region: the Nord Stream explosion marked the beginning of a movement towards the emergence of a ‘Baltic front’. A geopolitically significant act was the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO, which has not only changed the existing balance of power in the Baltic region but finally destroyed its previous security architecture, an element of which was the neutrality of these states [34]. NATO countries control over 95 % of the Baltic coast, prompting some actors to declare the water body a ‘NATO lake’. NATO forward-basing troops are being reinforced in the Baltic States and Poland, the latter state being continuously militarised. Representatives of NATO

¹ Zhukov, V. 1998, Chyornaya dyra na karte Yevropy, *Kommersant Vlast*, 28 iyulya. [Black Hole on the Map of Europe], *Kommersant Vlast*, July 28.

states, first of all, the Baltics, as mentioned above, are threatening to deny Russia access to the Baltic Sea and block the Danish Straits and the Gulf of Finland for the country. At the same time, Western experts view the Kaliningrad region as the epicentre of confrontation between Russia and NATO, linking its fate to the outcome of military operations in Ukraine.¹ In recent years, expert attention has been focused on the Suwałki Gap, dubbed the ‘most dangerous place on earth’,² which is considered a pivotal area for the West in terms of defending the Baltic States.³ This is not a security dilemma but a point of potential escalation where the threat of the annexation of the exclave will become real rather than verbal. Yet, the position of Russia’s outpost in the Baltic region is preferable to that of a besieged fortress. Therefore, strengthening military presence in the Kaliningrad exclave is a vital task.

The second critical factor is Russia’s exclave policy. In previous years, it sought to mitigate the functional exclavity of the Kaliningrad region by optimising transit arrangements and increasing the territory’s openness, with the mechanism of the special economic zone playing a key role. At the same time, timely steps were taken to strengthen the exclave’s energy and food security. The current situation, however, calls for a more radical renewal of the federal policy towards the exclave, with the possibility of partial blockade taken into account. This renewal should include not only the diversification of transport flows but also a revision of priorities and specialisations.

The region’s air communication plans should be yoked together with the development of recreational assets, which will ultimately endow Kaliningrad with a new kind of openness, sustained by the influx of tourists from the mainland. The sea ferry route should be part in providing the region’s functionality and security. A special programme needs to be developed to enhance the transport connectivity of Kaliningrad with the rest of the country.

¹ Hamilton, D.S., Pita, A. 2022, Why is Kaliningrad at the centre of a new Russia-NATO faceoff?, *Brookings*, URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-is-kaliningrad-at-the-center-of-a-new-russia-nato-faceoff/> (accessed 05.06.2023); Hedlund, S. 2023, “Lake NATO”: What’s next for Russia’s Kaliningrad?, *The National news*, URL: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/weekend/2023/07/28/russia-nato-sweden-kaliningrad-ukraine-baltic/> (accessed 05.06.2023).

² Karnitschnig, M. 2022, The Most Dangerous Place on Earth, *Politico*, URL: <https://www.politico.eu/article/suwalki-gap-russia-war-nato-lithuania-poland-border/> (accessed 05.06.2023).

³ Kallberg, J. 2024, Code Red: How Russia Conquers the Baltics, *CEPA*, URL: <https://cepa.org/article/code-red-how-russia-conquers-the-baltics/> (accessed 05.06.2023); Deni, J.R. 2022, NATO Must Prepare to Defend Its Weakest Point—the Suwalki Corridor, *Foreign Policy*, URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/03/nato-must-prepare-to-defend-its-weakest-point-the-suwalki-corridor/> (accessed 05.06.2023); Veebel, V., Sliwa, Z. 2019, Kaliningrad and Russia’s Baltic Ambitions, *Journal of International Studies*, vol. 12 (3), p. 109—121, <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2019/12-3/9>

In addition to leveraging recreational resources, a second priority for the region's socio-economic development could be its transformation into a testing ground for innovative technical, economic, and social solutions, such as electric transport and recreational medicine. A federal law on Russia's exclave territory should provide the institutional framework for an updated federal exclave policy.¹ The document should include mechanisms to support not only the region's businesses but also its population, which has found itself in entirely unique circumstances.

Finally, it is worth paying attention to the state of regional society and its identity. In the nascent phase of the Russian Federation, Kaliningrad exhibited indicators of all-Russian identity development that aligned with the national mean. However, the Kaliningrad version of all-Russian identity was shaped to a degree by a relatively long period of openness towards Europe. The rapid 'closing' of the exclave by the West may lead to cognitive dissonance and psychological discomfort caused by the clash between established perceptions of life in the region and new realities. This could give rise to an 'exclave syndrome', characterised by the feeling of isolation and detachment under harsher geopolitical and geoeconomic conditions of closure and conflict. The best remedy here may be the successful implementation of two federal priorities: the development of the recreational industry and the region's transformation into a socioeconomic testing ground. Moreover, fully leveraging the emerging infrastructure to showcase examples of Russian high culture, alongside developing preferential air links for Kaliningrad residents with the mainland, could prove beneficial.

The explication of the Kaliningrad region's exclavity offers insight into its specific characteristics as an exclave territory, its history, and ongoing processes, while also helping to anticipate future scenarios.

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¹ This issue was discussed in the previous years.

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