



Geopolitical Dimension of Exclave Crises in Europe (The Kaliningrad Exclave as A Modal)

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Abstract

The Kaliningrad Territory, of which the Russian Federation is part, is a specific region located in Central and Eastern Europe. It is geographically separated from the body of Russia. The region can be understood as a zone of cooperation and conflict between Russia and the West. The Kaliningrad region is considered as a spearhead in Central and Eastern Europe because it directly overlooks the Baltic Sea, as it constitutes a direct contact point for the Russian Federation in light of the geopolitical conditions for security in the Baltic Sea region. Hence, Russia considers Kaliningrad State a crucial region for the security of the Baltic Sea region and an indispensable base no matter what it costs. It represents a challenge for the Baltic region and European unity on the one hand, and an urgent necessity for the Russian geopolitical dimension in the region on the other.

The geographical location is not only the main reason, but the region constitutes a field for a future extension that is drawn by the Russian Federation, especially since in its geopolitical plans, which implement a project to reintegrate the post-Soviet region and Kaliningrad, as the region is one of the main elements for the success of this project. The Kaliningrad Oblast will play a role as a special tool for the Russian authorities to threaten the states of the Baltic Sea region, as do other separatist regions in the post-Soviet space. It is likely that the importance of the Kaliningrad Oblast for the security of the Baltic Sea region will increase in the future with the increase in the process of integration in the post-Soviet region. This is what Russia's foreign policy seeks with regard to the Baltic states as well as the countries of northern Europe, especially since Russia has succeeded in diverting European and NATO attention from this project for a long period of time to implement it quietly, especially after it has gained global weight.

Key words

Kaliningrad, Russia, Exclave, Crises

Introduction

The concept of crisis is one of the concepts that have gained great importance in geopolitical analysis, especially crises with a geopolitical dimension, this is in addition to the concept and importance of the exclave from the political, economic and military aspects. The Kaliningrad exclave is one of the regions whose importance has emerged as an advanced location for active forces in the international system. The study is talking here about the Russian Federation, which pays special attention to this region (the exclave) due to its location, its proximity to the European Union countries, and its being a strategic corridor for transporting gas to European countries.

Problem statement

The current study tries to answer the following questions:

- How did the geographical location of the Kaliningrad enclave affect the relations of the Russian Federation with European countries?
- What is its strategic importance?

Hypothesis of the Study

The study hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

The Kaliningrad pocket has great strategic importance and its geographical location is influential and ruling in Russia's relationship with European countries. The concept of international crisis and political borders of exclave.

Significant of the Study

The importance of the study lies in the fact that this geographical exclave is a leaping point for Russia, a military depth area that it can use in the event of a military conflict with European countries.

Aims of the Study

The study aims to shed light on the concept of exclaves crises in political geography, their historical importance and how they affected and affected the relations between the neighbouring countries.

The concept of international crisis and political borders of Exclaves

The problems of political borders and exclaves are among the topics that get the attention of political geography because of their great influence on the entity of the state, which in turn is the main field of political geography. Although political borders are characterized by relative stability, they are subject to modification in some countries. Some adjustments in the political borders do not pose little problems. Sometimes, they are done quietly if they are based on a friendly agreement without violence or clash, which is in the border areas that have not yet crystallized as the border areas, those linked to historical ties and common interests, or A union between two neighbouring countries amicably without wars or threats. Sometimes, the political borders are changed by using violence and threats between

unequal parties as a result of wars that lead to an adjustment in the political borders in accordance with the desire of the victor over the vanquished, as a result of population pressure in one of the countries that pushes it to expand at the expense of neighbouring countries, or as a result of the great powers' efforts to extend areas of influence as what happened when the Soviet Union expanded at the expense of neighbouring countries in the hope of reaching the waters (Haroun, 1998; Moshood et al., 2020).

In the twentieth century, the word exclave came to a broader indirect use when it designated a unique and different area. A well-known example is this cliché: "Switzerland was an exclave of peace in war-torn Europe". In the 21st century, the exclave concept has become popular with foreign policy makers and statesmen.

The concept of exclave linguistically refers to the word Exclaves surrounded by more than one country and the surrounding countries cannot call them exclaves on their territory. Examples of this type can be found in the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation (which is surrounded by the territories of Lithuania and Poland and has an exit to the Baltic Sea), Croatian Dubrovnik (surrounded by Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and has access to a body of water) and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan, which is located among the three countries of Armenia, Iran, and Turkey, but it does not have an exit to a body of water (Alaev, 1983; Noor et al., 2020; Nuseeb et al., 2021).

The political exclave is part of the area of one state and is completely surrounded by the territory of another state. The term Exclave is used interchangeably. For example, West Berlin is a political exclave inside the former East Germany as well as a political exclave outside West Germany. Many of these exclaves are remnants of past political history or as areas of special status in the aftermath of a war between two or more countries. The area under study has the characteristics of a political exclave, or a semi-exclave due to its view of the Baltic Sea.

As for the concept of crises, it is a concept that has many definitions:

Crisis is a critical and decisive moment related to the fate of the administrative entity that is affected by it. It is also a problem that represents a severe difficulty for decision-makers that makes them extremely confused so that any decision they take becomes within a circle of uncertainty, lack of knowledge, mixing causes with results, and the successive collapse that increases the degree of unknown in the developments of what may result about the crisis (Salim, 2013).

In another definition, crisis is defined as a sudden change from the usual behaviour that means the collapse of a series of interactions that result in the emergence of a sudden situation that involves a direct threat to the fundamental values or interests of the state, which necessitates taking quick decisions in a tight time and in conditions of uncertainty so as not to erupt the crisis (Jadallah, 2010). Crisis is considered as a defect that materially affects the whole system as it threatens the main assumptions on which this system is based. Crisis is characterized by shock, lack of time, and lack of knowledge, in addition to factors of human and financial threat (Abdulhameed, 2000).

Mitroff defines it as the process that includes five basic stages, which are the detection of early warning signals, preparation and preparedness to prevent the crisis, containment of danger, reduction of negative effects, increase of pros, restoring activity and eventually learning, and gaining experience (Mitroff & Persone, 1991).

It is also defined by Webster's Dictionary as a situation that represents a turning point for the worse or the better. It is a situation facing countries, individuals, groups, and organizations of all kinds (Webster, 1999). Ruling regimes work on managing crises that arise from threats and challenges in a way that ends in avoiding, solving, mitigating, or reducing their consequences (Huwaidi, 1993).

Natural and human foundations of the Kaliningrad region

Historical dimensions of the area

The history of Königsberg, present-day Kaliningrad dates back more than 8 centuries. It was founded in the thirteenth century (1255 AD) by the Teutonic Knights. Later, Kaliningrad became one of the cities of the Hanseatic League. From 1454 to 1455, the city became under the name of Karolek of the Kingdom of Poland. From 1466 to 1657, it was a Polish fief. Respectively, it became the capital of the state of the Teutonic regime, then the Duchy of Prussia between (1525-1701) and East Prussia. Königsberg remained the crowning city of the Prussian monarchy although the capital was moved to Berlin in 1701 (Kaplan & Jouni, 2002).

After World War I, the region became under the rule of the Germans within the Weimar Republic and the German Third Reich. But, between 1919 and 1939, it was separated from the rest of Germany by the independent territories of Poland. Then, it gained an outlet on the Baltic Sea. Königsberg was the largest city in the far east of Germany until World War II.

During World War II, the city was badly damaged by Allied bombing in 1944 and during the Battle of Königsberg in 1945; After the end of World War II and the defeat of the Germans, in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, the northern part of East Prussia (about a third of its territory) was transferred to the Soviet Union, and the remaining two-thirds to Poland. Then, it was seized and annexed by the Soviet Union on April 9, 1945. For a brief period of time, it was Russified and was renamed Kaliningrad in 1946 in honour of Soviet leader Mikhail Lenin. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Kaliningrad region became a Russian exclave in Europe, separated by a distance of 300 km from the territory of the Russian Federation as in Map (1), which shows the development of the region over a hundred years.



Map (1) Historical development of Kaliningrad over the past 100 years. Alexander Diener, 'Geopolitics of the Kaliningrad Exclave: Russian and EU Perspectives', Marshall University, p: 569.

Geographical location:

The former city of Kaliningrad was a province geographically adjacent to the former Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the secession of the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Kaliningrad separated geographically from the rest of Russia, and they no longer shared a common border with the Russian Federation. So, today, Kaliningrad is located in the far west of the Russian country, in the middle of Europe. From the south, it is bordered by Poland, from the north and east by Lithuania, and from the west by the Baltic Sea. It is separated from Belarus by the Suwalki Land Corridor, which is the only common border between Poland and Lithuania. The region is connected to the motherland Russia through the Suwalki Corridor, passing through Belarus as shown in Map (2).

With an area of 15,125 thousand km², Kaliningrad has the only ice-free port in the Baltic Sea all year round, which bears the name of the region itself. So, the port city is vital to Russia, to ensure transport and trade across the region, as temperatures are usually below zero during most of the winter (<https://www.almayadeen.net/news/politics>).



Map (2) Geographical location of Kaliningrad in relation to Russia and neighbouring countries: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

Demographics of Kaliningrad

The phenomenon of population in Kaliningrad is almost rare and unique in terms of demographic structure and a large demographic that happened when the Soviet Union took over it after the fall of Berlin in 1945 and emptying Kaliningrad from the remaining Germans, with the aim of repopulating this strategic region with Russian-speaking people that are loyal to the communist regime (Archer & Etzold, 2010). By 1959, approximately 611,000 settlers had moved to Kaliningrad. Russians made up about 80 percent of this total, and the rest were mostly Belarusians or Ukrainians, but they tended to identify themselves as Russian Soviet, Ukrainian Soviet, or more like Soviet citizens. Large is from the "Black Earth" region of eastern Ukraine and central Russia, while the city-dwellers hail from Moscow, Leningrad, Smolensk or Riga. The lack of German population made it easier for new Kaliningrad residents to imagine themselves and the region as an integral part of the historical homeland of Russia. To provide roots and legitimacy to the newly arrived residents of Kaliningrad, Soviet officials sought archaeological evidence of an imagined Slavic occupation of the region preceding the Teutonic invasion, while local histories in schools tended to begin with the Soviet invasion in 1944 (Brodersen, 2007).

Especially since the city was affiliated with the Berlin government and the demographic change occurred in it between the past six decades (1939-2010) as shown in Table (1) and Figure (1).

Table (1) The change in the population structure of Kaliningrad for the period 1939-2019

Years	Germans	Russians	Other nationalities
1939	1033220	-	80061
1959	890543	469771	141114
1979	675431	632717	175268
1999	8340	786885	160224
2019	unpublished	900342	145000

Sources: Compiled by authors from Statistischen Reichsamt, 1943; TsSU SSSR, 1961, pp. 34-35; 1962, pp. 20-21; 1984, p. 94; Goskomstat SSSR, 1992, p. 9; Vserossiyskaya, 2004, 2011; Rademacher, 2006; and Kabuzan, 2009, 78-82, 143. 2019-

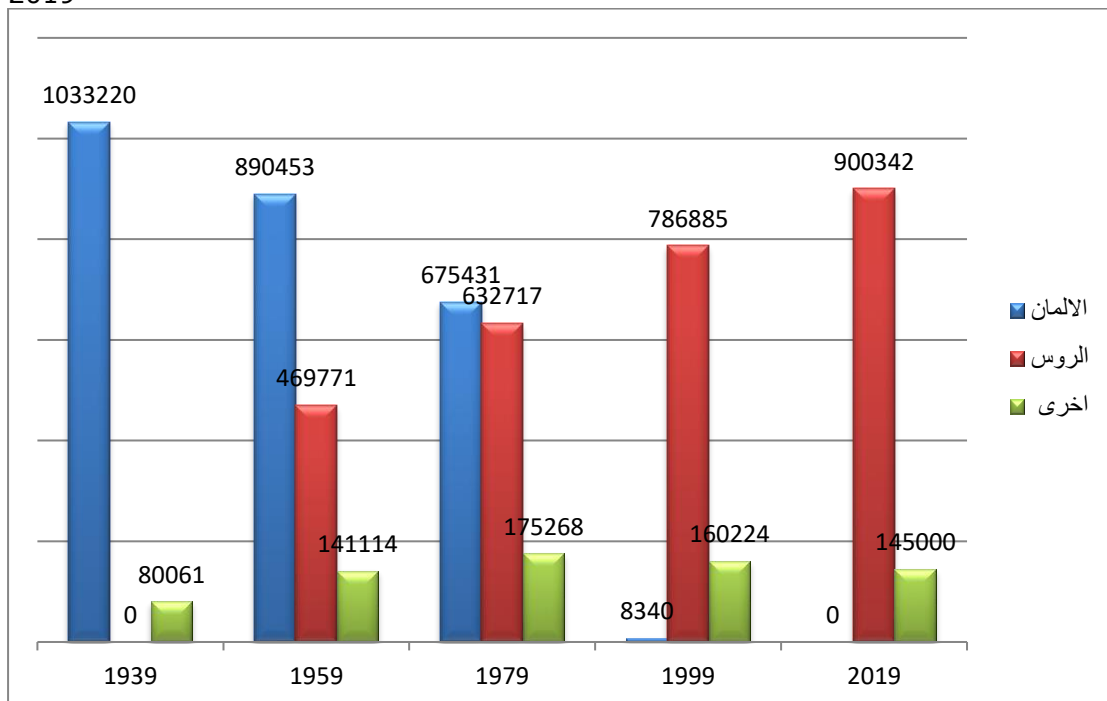


Figure (1) Change of population structure of Kaliningrad for the period 1939

Sources: Compiled by authors from Statistischen Reichsamt, 1943; TsSU SSSR, 1961, p. 34-35; 1962, pp. 20-21; 1984, p. 94; Goskomstat SSSR, 1992, p. 9; Vserossiyskaya, 2004, 2011; Rademacher, 2006; and Kabuzan, 2009, 78-82, 143

When analyzing the above table and figure, it becomes clear that the change that occurred to the population of Kaliningrad was not a natural change due to the fact that the region was part of Germany until its annexation by the Soviet Union after World War II when it witnessed bitter fighting and suffered extensive destruction. A large number of its residents were killed during the war. The German population was expelled from it or fled after the end of the war, as the Soviet authorities reluctantly carried out a major demographic change for it. This is evident during the years 1939-1979 when the Germans were evacuated from the city and replaced by new Soviet residents. The change developed the demographic in it as follows.

In the period 1959, that is, about fifteen years after its annexation to Russia, it becomes clear that there is a clear beginning of the expulsion and displacement of the Germans and the opening of the door to demographic change with a new Russian population replacing the Germans, amounting to 469771 people. In the period 1979, it is noticed that the Russian population has reached The stage of near-equilibrium with the German population in the city with a census of (632717) people. While the period that followed the fall of the Soviet Union in 1999 and the arrival of Russia to the hand of the current President Putin in his first term, the Russian population has swept the city with a census of (786885) people and that the Germans did not remain There except only very few of them, which means that the former Russian and Soviet policy was very effective in creating a new demographic region. In 2019, Russia effectively obliterated the German nation from existence in the population census to historically erase the city's landmarks from the German population and not openly include them in the population census even with other nationalities, such as Ukrainians, Poles, or Lithuanians.

The geopolitical significance of the Kaliningrad region in Russian politics

First: Strategic Significance

The geopolitical importance of the Kaliningrad region in the Soviet Union, as well as in the Russian Federation, has developed appropriately due to the geopolitical changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe. Talking about the location comes at the forefront of strategic priorities for Russia. It is located at a distance that seems to be closer to the capitals of some Western European countries than to Moscow in terms of distance. Warsaw, Berlin, and Kiev are closer to Kaliningrad than Moscow, which makes it an advanced military base for Russia in Western Europe from a military and geostrategic perspective, but also behind enemy lines. On the other hand, it is a front line of defense for it in the event of any comprehensive conflict on the continent (Affek, 2014).

Therefore, in 2004, when the Baltic states joined NATO, Kaliningrad became a hostile Russian region in the depth of the Western Alliance, which made it combine two opposites. On the one hand, it is in a state of extreme weakness due to its geographical distance from Russia. On the other hand, it is considered a mortal military threat in the heart of NATO, which prompted Polish officials to claim it. In addition to being a very important energy supply and transport area that Russia can use as a pressure card in any negotiations it undertakes or a military operation it undertakes in the region, it is well known to everyone that energy supplies are important to the European continent. It also represents an important choking point for any military action. These features gave it great privacy. The geopolitical development of the region can be understood in detail in three stages:

The first stage is linked to the work of the region within the Soviet Union. It had geopolitical and military importance, especially as it was the gateway of the USSR to the southern part of the Baltic Sea. This is proved by the fact that the

region was not included in the Lithuanian SSR, but directly in the RSFSR. In the era of the Cold War, from the point of view of the military doctrine of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Baltic Fleet and large ground forces were stationed there (Chmykov, 2009).

The second stage is immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical significance of the Kaliningrad Oblast fell seriously. After 1991, it became a gathering point for Russian forces that moved from East Germany and the Baltic republics to Russia. Russian strategic concepts of the time did not foresee any particular role of the region in relation to the geopolitics or defense of the Russian Federation. However, most of the Russian Baltic Fleet was assembled in the region at the same time, which increased its military importance even more (Browning et al., 2008).

The third stage is after 2000 to 2022. It concerns Russia's internal unification and its return to the concept of reintegration in the post-Soviet region. In the time of the Soviet Union, the third stage, after the year 2000, is associated with some intensive attempts by the Russian authorities to reintegrate the post-Soviet region and curb Russian influence on the Baltic Sea. Here the Kaliningrad region became the decisive element of Russian policy in the post-Soviet region, which witnessed in 2009 Intense Russian actions aimed at increasing their influence as before, which will lead to persuading them to participate in a number of integrative initiatives in the post-Soviet region: The Eurasian Economic Union, the Customs Union, or other initiatives of a political and defense nature. It is now important to distinguish among three crucial groups of states. The reintegration of the former Soviet republics offered different levels of acceptance to the idea of reintegrating the post-Soviet region. The core of the integration processes should include Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, which to date have shown their willingness to participate in the mergers. The second group includes the former Soviet republics that show a relatively bivalent attitude towards projects for the reintegration of the post-Soviet region and their attitude towards those processes depends, to a large extent, on the current political conditions of those countries. The third group - comprising Ukraine, Moldova and the countries of the South Caucasus, as well as, to a lesser extent, the Baltic states - poses a major challenge to Russian goals associated with post-Soviet reintegration (Affek, 2014).

The geopolitical future of the region and its role in Europe

What Europe is witnessing after the Russian-Ukrainian war, which occurred on February 24, 2022, has changed the balance of geopolitical thinkers in Europe and the Western world. Everyone believes that Russia is too weak to launch a war or even a limited attack on Ukraine, in the mistaken belief of NATO that Russia was not Able to lead wars or armies, as its predecessor was the former Soviet Union. After the Ukraine war, the scene today brings to mind scenes and nightmares that had disappeared during World War II in 1945. Therefore, the present study takes two future paths for Kaliningrad in particular and Europe in general, considering

that the study area is part of intertwined events that surround the continent as a whole and reflect its events on Kaliningrad. Russia seeks in one way or another in peace or war with a soft or hard force for the post-Soviet neighborhoods to establish a new Russian Federation. Russia looks to the Soviet past to achieve this dream. Accordingly, it is possible to anticipate the Russian role in Kaliningrad in the following scenarios:

The first scenario; Kaliningrad may be the fuse of a war and a direct conflict between NATO and Russia. NATO is willing to do so, which would drag Russia into a long-term conflict from the Eurasian theater on the one hand, and open a second front after Ukraine on the other hand, as a response to it in Kaliningrad after the fall of Azov-Stal in Ukraine. From here, Lithuania, apparently with a Western push, began to impose a ban on the geopolitical Russian city of Kaliningrad. It gradually escalated to prevent the transit of Russian oil and gas in its direction. It seems that this ban represents a turning point in the course of the ongoing war On Europe's doorstep. According to the Kremlin, it constitutes an "unlawful and unprecedented" violation that may push Russia, as it appears so far, to take dramatic steps, which would drag it into an unwanted conflict with "NATO", against the background of the start of Lithuania. What is like a siege on Kaliningrad, the strategic exclave Russian city in Eastern Europe, surrounded by Lithuania, Poland and the Baltic Sea, where there is no land corridor connecting it to the rest of Russian geography, which is linked to it exclusively through the Gulf of Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea connected to the Gulf of Finland De and the city of Saint Petersburg. This embargo, which also appeared to notify the Lithuanian Railways Administration of its counterpart in Kaliningrad, to stop the transit of some goods subject to European Union sanctions to it starting from June 18, 2022, represents a violation of international agreements concluded with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which may give Russia The power to respond to a violation of one of its sovereign rights. It is worth mentioning here that Russia recognized the independence of the Baltic republics after the fall of the Soviet Union in exchange for not impeding safe access to Kaliningrad, which was also confirmed in the joint statement between Russia and the European Union in 2002. With the last Lithuanian step, the agreements and treaties regulating Russian transit through Kaliningrad, which is a major hub and connection node for highways, railways, sea and river ports, and hosts the headquarters of the Russian Navy's Baltic Fleet, has been subjected to a grave breach, which raises many questions about the nature of the Russian response, which continues to unfold. militarily, despite the fact that the Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, considered the Lithuanian Decision within the framework of the process of mobilization led by "NATO" on the borders of Russia, and the maximum Western pressure exerted on Moscow, except for referring to work on "taking appropriate measures in the near future", he did not clarify their nature, but warned that their repercussions will be negative and strong on the people. Petrushev's words came during his visit to the Kaliningrad region, where he met with its governor, Anton Alikhanov.

The second scenario; It seems that Russia has started a geopolitical planning far beyond what we can imagine. The Russian decision maker began planning for the world after the Ukraine war. It took a dialectical curve. The geopolitical schools of thought cannot understand its repercussions, but they clarified its style and goals. Russia works to prolong the negotiation on the issue of the siege. Russia knows that Europe today was not the Europe of yesterday in terms of strength and unity of decision-making and economy. Most of the somewhat distant evidence indicate that Russia is trying to form a new union like the former Soviet Union, but it is one of the rich countries with high economic output while excluding the weak from That union. Exclaves, including Kaliningrad, are nothing but political stakes in the middle of NATO. The concept of a geopolitical wedge must be placed among the previous theories of the geopolitical conditions of the world system associated with the concept of choke points and geopolitical axes mentioned by Zybignino Brzezinski for whom the choke point is a geographical object or an element of infrastructure, the possession of which gives a significant military and economic advantage, as well as a geopolitical advantage. From this point of view, a narrower concept is that the geopolitical wedge model refers to a specific geostrategic condition observed in a specific area. Conceptually, however, the Kaliningrad region shares a number of common features of geopolitical wedges. First, although it is characterized by a relatively small area, it is of decisive strategic importance; secondly, due to its important geostrategic role, it is used to concentrate military potential (forces and army infrastructure); Finally, having a choke point makes it possible to influence neighboring regions/states.

What makes the second important idea related to the issue of geopolitical stakes is the concept of geopolitical axes developed by Brzezinski and according to his claim that "geopolitical axes are countries whose importance does not stem from their strength and motives, but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of a possible state of weakness on the behavior of other geostrategic players. In most cases, geopolitical hubs are defined by geography, which in some cases gives them a special role in either denying access to important areas or depriving an important player of resources. In some cases, a geopolitical hub may act as a defensive shield for a vital country or even a region. The mere existence of a geopolitical axis has very significant political and cultural consequences for a more active neighboring geostrategic player, this means, according to Brzezinski's opinion, that Russia employs the Kaliningrad exclave as a geographical political peg which will be used in the future to fill the void between the mother lands and the land of that exclave according to the control over the areas between them. Accordingly, it can be expected that the world will hold its breath if the "new tsar" decides to continue the policy of his predecessors, and go to a new adventure to seize the Sualki Pass to make a new road for Russia to the Baltic Sea at the expense of Poland and Lithuania.

Results

1. The exclaves are still important and influential in political and military geography.
2. The Kaliningrad exclave has historical and military importance from the Russian perspective.
3. The importance of the Kaliningrad exclave lies in its important geographical location towards Europe.
4. The population of the Kaliningrad exclave is an important element in controlling Russia is in this region, which has witnessed a major demographic transformation in favor of Russia.

Conclusion

At the end of the study, it became clear to us that the exclaves still enjoy great importance in the perspective and vision of political geography and influence the course of the conflict between the active forces in the international system. The Kaliningrad exclave is a fulcrum for the Russian strategy towards the countries of Europe, especially that the population structure of this exclave was an important factor in Russia's control of it. In addition to this, the importance of its geographical location, which controls Russian energy supplies to Europe, is considered a decisive and influential element in the politics of the countries of the Union. Europe towards the Russian Federation.

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