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CYBERSECURITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION INCLUDING THE KALININGRAD BORDER (THREAT OF MIGRANT INSTRUMENTALIZATION)

Abstract

Analysis of the international environment in the context of the development and evolution of international security, including cybersecurity, allows us to state that the threat is not diminishing, and the strategy for protection against cyberattacks is insufficient for a comprehensive solution to the problem. To ensure international security, it is necessary to employ hard measures and methods, such as preemptive strikes. The intention of the researcher is to begin research on the implementation of an instrumentarium for the rapid identification of regional security threats. From a methodological point of view this is a comparative study on multiple levels. First, it is a study of the two countries dealing with hybrid threats from the Kaliningrad Oblast. Secondly, it is a comparison of different regulations, policies, strategies, methods and practices in the Baltic Sea region.

Key words: cybersecurity, Baltic Sea Region, the Kaliningrad Oblast, the instrumentalization of migrants

Introduction

In a geographical sense, it includes the countries directly bordering the Baltic Sea: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany. Due to historical ties, Norway and Iceland can also be included in the region. The latest military security system in the Baltic Sea region has shaped up after Poland (1999), Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (2004) joined NATO, as well as NATO's expansion in 2023 to Finland and in 2024 to Sweden, along with the EU's expansion to the north and east (Sweden and Finland in 1995, and Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in 2004). Almost all countries in the region are members of NATO (except for Russia) and the EU (except for Norway and Russia)[1].

The Polish-Russian border from the Polish side borders from the east almost its entire length with the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation.

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[1] J. Czaputowicz, Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe. Współczesne koncepcje, Warszawa 2012, s. 65-171.

To the north and east, the oblast borders Lithuania over a stretch of two hundred kilometers. To the west, it borders Poland over a stretch of 210 km, while 140 km is the Baltic coast. The distance from the oblast to the nearest point on the territory of the Russian Federation is four hundred kilometers by land, while by sea to the nearest Russian port it is as much as 1100 km. The Kaliningrad Oblast (formerly Königsberg) has been part of Russia since 1945. It is the northern part of the former East Prussia, which previously belonged to Germany. After Germany's defeat in World War II and the loss of territories east of the Oder and Neisse rivers, the Soviet Union effectively decided unilaterally on the division of East Prussia along a line running from the middle of the Vistula Spit to the east, reaching south of Lake Vistytis to the border with Lithuania. The southern part of the divided East Prussia was incorporated into Poland, while the northern part was annexed by the USSR, becoming an exclave separated from Russia by the territories of other republics. The region formed from this territory was named the Kaliningrad Oblast, after its largest city, previously called Königsberg (known in Poland as Królewiec), which was renamed Kaliningrad Between 1945 and 1990, the Kaliningrad Oblast was a closed zone, inaccessible to foreigners, with a significant number of military installations and a half-million-strong army intended to play a key role in the USSR's strategic plans for expansion toward Western Europe. There were no publicly accessible rail or road crossings on the border with Poland. All German place names in the oblast were replaced with Russian ones, improvised on the spot, as the territory of the oblast had never been part of Russia or a region of Russian settlement throughout its history[2].

Neighbors' experiences

For the past few months, increased Russia's hybrid activities from the Kaliningrad Oblast against Poland and Lithuania have been observed. Those provocations (Apr-May 2023) have been shaping security perception of Poland and Lithuania. Nowadays, in a new geopolitical situation of Russia-Ukraine war and the continuous instrumentalisation of migrants by the Belarusian authorities (new migration route- Eastern Land Border and "Instrumenatlisation Regulation"), the militarisation of the Kaliningrad Oblast has been seen equally, namely as a new threat to the EU Eastern External Border (at the border section with Poland and Lithuania). Geopolitical dynamics as well as the complexity of risks and security challenges have triggered public and academic discussion about the role of the Kaliningrad Oblast ("Królewiec Oblast"- 9 May 2023)[3].

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[2] P. Bukowski, Obwód Kaliningradzki w polityce Federacji Rosyjskiej, „Przegląd Geopolityczny" 2018, t. 28, s. 105-121; F. Klocek, Mocarstwowa polityka Federacji Rosyjskiej współczesnym zagrożeniem dla bezpieczeństwa Polski i regionu Morza Bałtyckiego, „De Securitate et Defensione. O Bezpieczeństwie i Obronności" 2018, nr 2, s. 144-156.

[3] In compliance with the decision dated April 12, 2023 made by the Polish Commission for the Standardization of Geographic Names beyond the Borders of the Republic of Poland acting at the Chief Geodesist of the Country, the only recommended Polish name for the city with the Russian name Kaliningrad is Königsberg. The above amendment was implemented with the date of its announcement, i.e. May 9, 2023. The recommendation applies only to the nomenclature of geographical names in Polish. The deprecation of the geographical name of

It cannot be excluded that Russia will use the Kaliningrad Oblast in order to provoke Poland and Lithuania by violating their sovereignty. Therefore, it is important to analyse the awareness and perception of present threats. The reasearch outcomes resulted from growing aggressiveness of Russian and Belarusian authoritarian regimes, escalating instrumentalisation of migrants and using migratory flows as a tool for political purposes to destabilise the EU area. All these casuses indicate not only a need for strategic policies on national level (Poland and Lithuania) but also amendements to the EU standpoint which requires determination to ensure effective control of its external borders and propose any necessary changes to the EU law and specific border management measures in response to external border crises (report with de lege ferenda recommendations)[4].

Poland strengthens its borders by building an electronic firewall, while from the perspective of Lithuania, for example, the influx of migrants is a hybrid attack by Minsk and an instrument of the Belarusian regime's actions. At the same time, the migration pressure is part of Russia's aggressive actions against Poland and Lithuania, posing a threat both to these two countries and to the entire region. In March 2023, the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior prepared a draft amendment aimed at ensuring comprehensive protection and control at the state border, effective management of migration flows and counteracting abuses in border management and the asylum system. The aim was not only to unify the two Lithuanian acts on the state border and the status of foreigners, but also to adapt Lithuanian migration law to EU regulations (The law was adopted on April 25, 2023). Despite international criticism, the amendment to the law on the border and its protection can be seen in the context of securing Lithuania's territorial integrity and sovereignty and efforts to limit threats from Russia and Belarus, which is paramount. Already in August 2022, Estonia legalized the return of migrants in crisis situations caused by migration, recognizing that it may pose a threat to public order or national security. Similarly, in July 2022, Finland amended the Border Guard Act, limiting cross-border movement in emergency situations, including due to hybrid threats. It has also started building fences on the border with Russia[5].

Analysis of social, civilization or environmental needs

The problem of Europe's security, including Poland, is a permanent element of political, social, economic and cultural activities. Ensuring security is one of the main areas of the activity of states, and also international and supranational organizations. The basic institution to ensure the security of

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Kaliningrad is a response to the aggressive policy towards the countries of the region, an objection to the concept of building "a Russian mir".

[4] A. Szachoń-Pszenny, A. Zaręba, Etapowość instrumentalizacji migrantów na przykładzie granicy z Białorusią – wyzwania współczesności, „Przegląd Geopolityczny" 49 (2024), s. 56-57, https://przeglad.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/XLIX-03-AS-P-i-AZ.pdf (access: 12.05.2024).

[5] A. Bąk-Pitucha, A. Kuczyńska-Zonik, A. Szachoń-Pszenny, A. Zaręba, Cooperation of the Lublin Triangle in the context of security threats in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, „Historia i Świat" 13 (2024), s. 467-482, https://czasopisma.uph.edu.pl/historiaswiat/article/view/3777/3501 (access: 20.05.024).

citizens is the state. Among the basic tasks of the national security system, the following are distinguished: anticipating ways to prevent threats to internal and external security, and ensuring efficient management. Growing threats, especially in the situation of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, have also resulted in grassroots organizations of citizens in Poland coming into existence to ensure the safety of their families and the state[6].

The international situation in less than a decade, especially the conflict in Ukraine and the migration crisis in Europe, have made the Polish feel threatened. Also, the increase in asymmetric threats, including above all the activities of international terrorism, regional conflicts on ethnic and religious grounds, population migration, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, make it necessary to create an integrated system of territorial defence. Poland borders Russia through the proximity of the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast. There is a militarized area that came under Russian rule after the Potsdam resolutions in 1945. The Baltic Sea region can be considered as unique taking into account geographical, historical and political criteria. There are many factors determining the security of the Baltic Sea region. They are diverse and have a diverse scale of impact. Currently, the situation at the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast is stable, but Poland does not rule out offensive actions from Russia and the influx of migrants from this area. Therefore, in April 2023, the construction of an electronic fence on the border with the Russian Kaliningrad Oblast was initiated due to fears that Moscow and Minsk would take part in supporting illegal immigrants again in order to destabilize the European Union. The fence at the EU Eastern External Border will be about 200 kilometers long and will be equipped with cameras and motion sensors. In addition, Poland is strengthening the protection of the state border and building anti-tank barriers on sections of the border with Kaliningrad and Belarus. As in the case of Poland, several attempts are still made to illegally cross the Lithuanian border with Belarus. Although the current number is much lower than last year, the states continue to strengthen their security. The permanent fence construction and a modern security control systems are an important step towards strengthening domestic security, as well as the EU External Eastern Borders. As it is believed these countries will continue to be exposed to constant hybrid attack from Belarus and Russia, it is possible that Russia will use the Kaliningrad Oblast to increase hybrid pressure on Lithuania and Poland. At the same time both countries have been already better prepared for the threat than they were in 2021.[7]

It cannot be ruled out that Russia will want to use Kaliningrad for provocations at the border, thus violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Poland and Lithuania, that is why it is important to analyse the awareness and perception of threats to states' readiness to strengthen their defence and the effectiveness of actions to prevent threats from the Russian

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[6] H. Brands, L. Gaddis, The New Cold War, „Foreign Affairs" 2021, vol. 100(6), s. 10-20.

[7] K. Żegota, The Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation as a Geopolitical Wedge of Russia in Central and Eastern Europe: Regional, State and International Context, „Securitologia" 2017, vol. 1, issue 25, s. 33-52; M. Żyła, Kaliningrad Oblast in the military system of the Russian Federation, „Security and Defence Quarterly" 2019, vol. 25, issue 3, s. 99-117.

aggressor. Illegal migration through the Kaliningrad Oblast, supported by Russian and Belarusian services, may lead to the destabilisation of the political situation and threaten the security of Poland and Lithuania and the entire European Union. The change in perception, not only within the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast, is the result of a change in the security architecture in Europe. This is a current problem that has surprised international opinion. Hybrid provocations are important in the research, but also regional cooperation between Poland and Lithuania in the Baltic Sea region or the Three Seas Initiative.

The situation on the EU Eastern External Border

Since the beginning of 2023, tensions in relations between Poland, Lithuania and Russia have been growing. This is due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, in which Russia is the aggressor, the possibility of developing another migration crisis, the potential threat from hybrid attacks and a full-scale Russian aggression. The security threat in the region of Poland and Lithuania from the side of the Kaliningrad Oblast is steadily increasing due to the militarization of the region since 2010[8].

Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine have strengthened military cooperation among Scandinavian countries. Russia's aggression against Ukraine constitutes a blatant violation of the fundamental principles of international law. By deciding to suspend Russia and Belarus from these regional cooperation structures, the countries of the region have demonstrated that they exclude any collaboration with an aggressor. Despite the suspension of Russia and Belarus, Baltic cooperation among the remaining states will continue due to its other advantages. Furthermore, joint efforts to establish a secure and stable region will help coordinate aid for refugees from war-torn Ukraine who will arrive in the Baltic Sea region countries. In October 2024, Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced a declaration regarding the temporary suspension of asylum applications. This decision was supported by the Swedish Minister for Migration, Johan Forssell, who expressed understanding for Poland, particularly in the context of the migration pressure exerted on Europe by Russia.[9]

The same group from Russia facilitated illegal migrations to the Finnish and Polish borders as a means of destabilizing Europe. The first reports of migrants without Schengen visas attempting to cross the Finnish-Russian border appeared in early November 2023. They traveled to border crossings by taxi or in groups. According to posts by the migrants themselves on social media, Russian border guards provided them with bicycles and allowed them to pass through the Russian border crossing without Schengen visas so they could reach the Finnish side and apply for asylum there. As a result, Finnish

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[8] A. Schmidt, Borders connecting and dividing – East meets West and the borders of the European Union, Eastern Journal of European Studies, „Centre for European Studies" 2022, vol. 13, s. 9-32, https://ideas.repec.org/s/jes/journl.html (access:18.12.2024).

[9] Szwedzi wspierają Tuska. „To element wojny hybrydowej", https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/szwecja-popiera-tuska-forssell-to-czesc-wojny-hybrydowej/47b0x21(access: 16.10.2024).

authorities initially tried to impose restrictions on crossing the border by bicycle. Ultimately, Finland decided to close all border crossings. According to Finnish customs officials, nearly 1,500 migrants managed to cross the Finnish-Russian border and apply for asylum in the EU since early November. Putin is using migration as a tool of pressure. Before Finland closed its borders, migrants actively recommended student visas to Russia on blogs and in online groups. These visas cost only $1,500, and intermediaries promised guaranteed enrollment at Russian universities. According to political analysts, the situation at the Finnish border is retaliation against Finland for joining NATO. Since autumn 2023, Finnish-Russian relations have been nearly completely frozen due to the border crisis instigated by Russia. At the Finnish border, Russia has been conducting a hybrid operation involving attempts by migrants from Asia and Africa to illegally cross into Finland. In response, the authorities in Helsinki decided to construct a border fence. Initially, as part of a pilot project, a fence was erected along a short section of the Russian border. Finland's ambassador to Poland stated that Russia's aggression against Ukraine has stripped Finns of any illusions about their eastern neighbor. In Finland, shelters are being built to accommodate nearly the entire population, as the country is preparing for the possibility of something serious happening[10].

Another country is following the example of Finland and Poland by distancing itself from Russia, fearing attempts to direct illegal migrants toward its border. This time, it is Norway, which shares a northern border with Russia. The Norwegian authorities have decided to consider the idea of building a fence along the entire border with Russia. In the view of not only Norway but also other Baltic Sea region countries, the situation in the area is becoming increasingly tense[11].

Denmark, on the other hand, pursues the strictest migration policy in Europe. The country is known for its restrictive asylum policies, implemented under its left-wing government. Unlike some other European nations, Danish politicians were quick to recognize societal concerns about migration and asylum. In practice, they focus on consistent repatriation, temporary residence, restrictive family reunification, and special rights negotiated with the EU[12].

Conclusions

Russia's actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine have led to strengthened military cooperation among Scandinavian countries. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a blatant violation of the fundamental principles of international law. By deciding to suspend Russia and Belarus from these regional cooperation structures, the countries of the region demonstrated their

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[10] Finlandia poszukuje artylerii nabrzeżnej do zablokowania Rosjan w portach, https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/finlandia-poszukuje-artylerii-nabrzeznej-do-zablkowania-rosjan-w-portach-analiza (access:12.11.2024).

[11] Kolejny kraj odgradza się od Rosji. Biorą przykład z Finlandii i Polski, hhttps://forsal.pl/swiat/bezpieczeństwo/artykuly/9621954,kolejny-kraj-odgradza się-od-rosji-biora-przykład-z-Finlandii-i-polski.html (access: 6.12.2024).

[12] Jak Dania ograniczyła nieuregulowaną migrację? Kluczem cztery zasady, https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/jak-dania-poradzila-sobie-z-nieuregulowana-migracja-cztery-kroki/rj3713c (access: 20.11.2024).

refusal to cooperate with an aggressor. Despite the suspension of Russia and Belarus, Baltic cooperation among the remaining states will continue due to its other benefits. Furthermore, cooperation aimed at creating a safe and stable region will contribute to the coordination of aid for refugees from wartorn Ukraine who will arrive in the Baltic Sea region countries. Russia has pursued a neo-imperial policy essentially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as evidenced by the creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 1992, intended as a counterbalance to NATO. Experience shows that it never truly served as a counterbalance, but in the realm of cybersecurity, it gradually began to pose a threat. Cybersecurity is a field in which the Russians have significant expertise (e.g., cyberattacks on Tallinn in 2007, Ukraine in 2014, or the involvement of Russian hackers in Donald Trump's campaign). While military cooperation cannot rival NATO, collaboration in cybersecurity and information warfare is a promising avenue for enhancing Russia's power and that of its satellite states on the international stage. Cooperation with China in the realm of cyberspace could prove to be crucial.

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**CYBERBEZPIECZEŃSTWO W REGIONIE MORZA BAŁTYCKIEGO
Z UWZGLĘDNIENIEM GRANICY Z OBWODEM KRÓLEWIECKIM
(ZAGROŻENIE INSTRUMENTALIZACJĄ MIGRANTÓW)**

Streszczenie

Analiza środowiska międzynarodowego w kontekście rozwoju i ewolucji bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego, w tym cyberbezpieczeństwa pozwala stwierdzić, że zagrożenie nie maleje, a strategia ochrony przed cyberatakami jest niewystarczająca dla całościowego rozwiązania problemu. dla zapewnienia bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego konieczne jest stosowanie twardych środków i metod, np. uderzeń uprzedzających. Intencją badaczki jest rozpoczęcie badań nad wdrożeniem instrumentu do szybkiej identyfikacji zagrożeń dla bezpieczeństwa regionalnego. Z metodologicznego punktu widzenia jest to badanie porównawcze na wielu płaszczyznach. Po pierwsze, jest to studium dwóch państw zmagających się z zagrożeniami hybrydowymi ze strony obwodu królewieckiego (kaliningradzkiego). Po drugie, jest to porównanie różnych regulacji, polityk, strategii, metod i praktyk w regionie Morza Bałtyckiego.

Słowa kluczowe: cyberbezpieczeństwo, region Morza Bałtyckiego, obwód kaliningradzki, instrumentalizacja migrantów