

► **Andrzej Chodubski (rec.), Wojciech Kotowicz, *Życie polityczne Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego Federacji Rosyjskiej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe GRA-DO Toruń 2012, ss. 391.**

Recognizing the cultural and civilizational reality of the Kaliningrad Oblast is purely a scientific challenge, as well as the need dictated by the practice of international relations. The challenge to show the analytical and synthetic political life of this cultural space should gain admiration. It is also important from a Polish point of view because of initiating cooperation between countries and immediate neighborhood.

The essence of the problem is outlined in 4 chapters, titled: 1. The Cultural and civilizational identity of Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, 2. The institutionalization of political life in Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, 3. The Endogenous stimulators of political life in Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation, 4. The importance of stimulators for the formation of political order in Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation.

Lecture is preceded by a carefully prepared in terms of methodology *Introduction*. It shows that in the most western entity of the Russian Federation – Kaliningrad Oblast, the Russian enclave situated on the south-eastern coast of the Baltic Sea – processes of globalization, regionalization and localism now considered the most important paradigms determining the specificity of contem-

porary international relations and the world economy, intertwined. In parallel with these processes, the impact of unification and differentiation of the political communities, such as an international organization or a state organization, takes place, which is no less important for the interaction of world order

It is noted that Kaliningrad Oblast is fundamentally different from other administrative and political bodies, such as international organizations and other countries.

It is also noted that Kaliningrad Oblast is fundamentally different from any other Russian administrative and political entities. In this region the interaction between Western and Eastern civilizations takes place. It is emphasized that, in accordance with the concept of colliding civilizations, Kaliningrad Oblast is a real place of colliding civilizations. In Russia, it is assumed that it cannot be left alone, and the necessity of cooperation with other entities is understood (p. 7).

The work attempts to scientifically demonstrate not only the political life of Kaliningrad Oblast, its nature, scope and specificity, but also the conditions thanks to which the process of changes in the region has grown. The primary aim of this study is to get the answer of how endogenous and exogenous factors influence the shape of the political life of Kaliningrad Oblast of the RF. To achieve this, the following questions were raised: 1. What is the impact of endogenous stimulators on contemporary

political life in Kaliningrad Oblast of the RF? 2. What is the influence of exogenous stimulators on contemporary political life in Kaliningrad Oblast of the RF? To endogenous stimulators, the impact of factors that are dependent on the Kaliningrad region and Russian Federation as a whole is included, while analyzing the exogenous factors, the impact of the international environment is examined.

An important challenge is also to show the relevant factors of regional socio-political space, that distinguish Kaliningrad Oblast from other regions of Russia, both in terms of the specific institutional and legal solutions, as well as political practice

It is stressed that Kaliningrad is a territory of the RF, which protects the political, economic and military interests of the Russian Federation in the Baltic Sea region (p. 12).

It is indicated that the socio-political situation of Kaliningrad Oblast is also important from the point of view of Polish foreign policy, especially in the context of NATO enlargement and the new borders of the European Union. This is due to the potential risks posed by the Oblast (military, environmental, political instability, and the impact of cross-border cooperation and economic relations with the Russian Federation). Knowledge about the contemporary political life of Kaliningrad Oblast, and thus indirectly – to understand the phenomena and processes taking place in Russia is one of the inherent elements of the Polish raison

d'état, essential in formulating priorities of Polish foreign policy.

Describing the state of research on the research conducted, it is pointed out that the issues of political life in Kaliningrad Oblast analyzed the perspective of internal and external conditions of the Russian Federation have not found a satisfactory reflection in the literature (p. 26).

Identifying the factors that generate cultural and civilizational identity of Kaliningrad Oblast, major issues are distinguished: 1. The impact of natural and geographic factors, 2. Demographic changes, 3. International conditions, 4. Level of economic development, 5. Issues of identity. It is emphasized here that it is commonly believed that geographical location has a significant influence on the development of societies. Due to the geographical location such fundamental consequences result as access to natural resources and the world of flora and fauna.

Kaliningrad Oblast area is 15 096 km², with parts belonging to the Vistula Lagoon Russia (Kaliningrad) and the Curonian Lagoon, without them, 13 404 km². It is the smallest of all the Russian regions, in terms of surface area it is 81st place in the Russian Federation (some of the North Caucasus republics, territorially are smaller).

Kaliningrad Oblast's geographical location (coast, which does not freeze – so ports in Kaliningrad are available for shipping throughout the year – proximity to major trading partners and neighbours with economies and high-

ly developed countries) creates favorable conditions for the development of many marine industries, promotes the expansion of fisheries, development of foreign trade and the spa industry.

Kaliningrad region's natural resources are abundant. The small area is located below sea level, so called "polders" (about 1 thousand km²), which is half of the former Soviet Union's polders. Polders, which are used in the development of agriculture are fenced by breakwaters (over 700 km). On the territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast there are about 4600 rivers and drainage canals, about 18% of the area is covered by forests. Among the riches of the earth it is important to mention: petroleum, peat, amber, mineral water springs, rock salt, coal, lignite, iron ore, rare metals (p. 41).

International law does not treat enclaves in a special way. It is a part of the mother country and any regulations treat it in equal measure. With the authority of the state in the territory of the enclave are a number of obligations in relation to other countries. Enclave and countries with which it borders, also applies the principle of good-neighbours.

Kaliningrad Oblast is one of the few regions of Russia, where the population has been formed as a result of organized resettlement, which began in 1945, after the occupation of East Prussia by the Red Army (in the northern part of the Kaliningrad region 139 thousand. German population is left). In the first years after World War II there were resettled (the Russians – more than 70%, Bela-

rusians 8%, Ukrainians 6%) and more than 30 nationalities from other republics of the former Soviet Union (p. 45). According to the 1989 census, the main ethnic groups in the Kaliningrad region were: 1 Russians – 78%, 2 Belarusians – 8.5%, 3 Ukrainians – 7.2%, 4 Lithuanians – 2.1%, 5 Jews – 0.5%, 6 Poles – 0.4%, 7 Germans – 0.2%, 8 Other nationalities – 2.6%.

The Belonging of Kaliningrad to Russia was established on August 2, 1945 in Potsdam. Later, the Soviet authorities revealed to the world that it was a strategic region for the country. The Potsdam agreement finished participation of the international community in the development of this land, further fate of the territory of Kaliningrad became dependent on the decision of the former Soviet Union, now on Russia, on the 16 August 1945, signed an agreement with Poland on state borders, April 27, 1947 the course of border was set (p. 69). A Border was determined on the ethnic basis; it took into account the military-strategic interests. June 29, 1946, Kaliningrad Oblast has been classified as a "prohibited zone boundary" into which entry was allowed only on the basis of passes issued by the police – local people received special passports and travel from city to city was associated with the need to obtain multiple licenses. Movement of people was strictly controlled. "Closing" Kaliningrad Oblast against foreigners was caused by deploying the Baltic Fleet, ground forces and air forces "second-line". The Port of Baltijsk has be-

come one of the largest military port in Europe (p. 73).

It is noted that the specific location of the Kaliningrad region, the separation from the main part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, was skillfully used by the Soviet authorities and contributed to the strengthening of political dominance and maintain Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. The Kaliningrad region while remaining isolated from the rest of the RSFSR, and being “closed” and inaccessible to the outside world, has become a “forgotten land” about the existence of which was rarely reminded abroad and in the Moscow offices. The growth of interest in Kaliningrad Oblast has started with the change in the geopolitical balance of power in the mid-80s.

Over the past several years there have been significant socio-economic changes in this region of Russia. It was due largely to changes in the geo-strategic parts of Europe, which took place in the early 90s. The liquidation of the Soviet Union, the rise of the independent Baltic republics, the collapse of CMEA (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) and all the socialist bloc countries were essential to these changes. Far-reaching consequences had happened at the end of the “Cold War” and there was no need to maintain the huge military base in Kaliningrad, on which manufacturing companies in Kaliningrad were mainly focused on (p. 80–81).

In determining the cultural and civilizational identity of the region it is indi-

cated that after 1945 one of the basic assumptions, which then stood in front of the authorities in the region had to deal with German cultural heritage, however, referring to the tradition and history is often regarded as a key element in the construction of identity in the period of change but in the case of Kaliningrad the history of the region has become problematic for the Soviet authorities. The basic premise of Soviet policy toward the region’s past was the total negation of it, which was realized in hating all German things. Kaliningrad’s authorities have decided not to rebuild the destroyed buildings, and they left only the best preserved fragments. The reason for this decision were not only economic considerations, but also the need to break up with the tradition of the German city. For the last days of the USSR the need for the physical elimination of the inheritance was convinced. A significant expression of this policy is the fact that 222 churches that have survived the war – 118 were intentionally destroyed. A similar fate happened to the historic estates. Approx. 90% of them survived the war intact (p. 104).

In a short time it changed the symbolic space of the city. All geographical names, regardless of their Polish or Lithuanian roots or historical considerations were changed. It was almost a rule that the new name had nothing to do with the previous German terms. They were the most neutral terms associated with descriptions of nature or were derived from the soviet surnames – Soviet military commanders, who once fought in

these areas, or had their origins in Soviet ideology.

It is emphasized that an important role in creating a new identity, new residents of the Kaliningrad region played rituals. Festival April 9 – the day of the invasion by the Red Army to Königsberg – has become the foundation of the legitimacy of Soviet power (p. 106–107).

Presenting the institutionalization of Kaliningrad Oblast's political life, analytical issues are distinguished: 1. The authorities, 2. The role of political parties, 3. Politics and local media, 4. Political influence of interest groups. It is pointed out that the main legal act regulating the structure and powers of the authorities in Kaliningrad oblast of the Russian Federation is *Statute* (the Basic Law) of the Kaliningrad Oblast, adopted by Kaliningrad Oblast's Duma December 28, 1995. The supreme organ of state power is the government of the region. It is still running the executive authority, headed by the governor, who is elected in general elections for a 5-year term and can only be a citizen of the Russian Federation, who turns 30 years old on election day. Kaliningrad Oblast Duma consists of 40 deputies.

It is noted that Kaliningrad Oblast has strong media groups. The Regional media group "Zapadnaya Priess" is a newspaper publisher of all Russian newspapers (p. 155).

Demonstrating the importance of endogenous stimulators of Kaliningrad Oblast's political life, the following issues are presented: 1. Nearest neigh-

bours, 2. Countries in the region, 3. The European Union, 4. Other actors in international relations.

It is pointed out here that the position of Russia towards the status of Kaliningrad Oblast is currently supported by the international community (p. 178).

Russia's policy reveals the contradictions that arise from concerns about the territorial unity of the country, as well as the overall specificity of Russian political traditions, which are reluctant to allow real autonomy of the regions. Since the beginning of 90.XX century in Russia and abroad different concepts about the future of Kaliningrad Oblast have revealed, including: the creation of a Free Economic Zone, the Autonomous region or republic with the possibility of incorporation into the EU economic area without disconnecting from Russia, Special federal status under the direct supervision of Moscow and with president, governor or a special representative appointed by it, the Baltic Republic "Baltica", Territory closed, Russian, German, Polish and Lithuanian Condominium, Republic within the Russian Federation, etc., and also there were plans to sell it to Germany (pp. 207–213). The issue of the status of Kaliningrad was also raised in the political framework of the European Union. In the lecture it is emphasized that political realists look at both Kaliningrad Oblast and the entire Baltic Sea region as geopolitical space of competition between Russia and the West. In contrast to the past behaviors, when the main instrument of activity was the

military factor, now the West prefers to focus on cost-effective ways to put pressure on Russia. According to these paradigms the aim of the European Union's policy is to build those economic relationships that will allow the use of natural resources and cheap labour. Realists believe that Kaliningrad Oblast should maintain its strategic importance and they criticize the Russian government for the elimination of a military infrastructure in the region. It is noted also that the Liberals are hoping that Kaliningrad Oblast will still be opened up to international cooperation with other actors. Proponents of this concept, assume that the Kaliningrad region can be a window to the West, a region that can gradually integrate Russia with the European institutions. The lecture highlights the advantages, weaknesses, opportunities and the threats of Kaliningrad RF (pp. 222–223).

It is noted that the relations between Poland and Kaliningrad are derivative of Polish–Russian relations, which are fundamentally dependent from the processes that Kaliningrad Oblast is currently undergoing, which include huge political and institutional changes in the countries of the Baltic Sea – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Polish policy towards the Kaliningrad region is determined mainly on the political climate in relations between Warsaw and Moscow (p. 229). It is pointed out that Moscow needs Kaliningrad also for the simple reason, without the presence of the enclave in the Baltic region, Russia would be weakened in this

region with world trade. Polish policy towards Kaliningrad is part of bilateral relations with Russia.

The problem was developed on the basis of carefully prepared literature, which appears both in the form of footnotes, as well as in the bibliographic list.

A general overview of the issues presented in the book shows that it is on original research study. Its positive aspects are: 1. Reference of the cultural identity of Kaliningrad Oblast to the theoretical approaches in the field of international relations, 2. Presenting the specificity of enclave in terms of its identity, and at the same time its international location, 3. Indicating the role of the so-called historical policy in building a new political identity of the political actors, 4. Showing mechanisms of shaping Russia's policy and the Kaliningrad enclave, 5. Showing the Polish position towards Kaliningrad Oblast.

The book deserves the attention of specialists in the field of international relations, European changes and Russian studies.

Andrzej Chodubski