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RUSSIA'S INTENTIONS BEHIND MODERN WEAPON AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE KALININGRAD OBLAST

Intencje Rosji stojące za nowoczesnym uzbrojeniem i technologią w Obwodzie Kaliningradzkim

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Abstract

States are determined to maintain or improve their position in the international arena. In order to achieve the intended position, they need the right potential to be a leader and to be able to influence and implement their own policies, or even to manipulate states. The theory of the power of states in the classical approach indicates the factors influencing the potential of the state. Adopting a list of factors from M. Sulek's formal model, the author puts forward the thesis that the Russian Federation, through the systematic strengthening of the Kaliningrad Oblast in military and technological terms, may have an impact on reducing the potentials of the states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as on reducing the level of security and destabilizing the Baltic Sea region. The article uses theoretical methods of analysis, including qualitative and quantitative data analysis, synthesis of obtained information, abstraction and inference. The collected data and analyses in the conducted research process allowed for a positive verification of the thesis.

Keywords: Russia, armament, drones, security, states' potential, Baltic States.

Streszczenie

Państwa są zdeterminowane aby utrzymać lub poprawić swoją pozycję na arenie międzynarodowej. Aby zająć zamierzoną pozycję potrzebują one właściwego potencjału, który pozwoli im być liderem i da możliwość wpływania oraz realizowania własnej polityki, a nawet manipulowania państwami. Teoria potęgi państw w klasycznym ujęciu wskazuje na czynniki wpływające na potencjał państwa. Autor adoptując listę czynników z formalnego modelu M. Sułki, wysuwa tezę iż Federacja Rosyjska poprzez systematyczne wzmacnianie Obwodu Kaliningradzkiego pod względem militarnym i technologicznym może mieć wpływ na obniżanie potencjałów państw Litwy, Łotwy i Estonii oraz na obniżenie poziomu bezpieczeństwa i destabilizację regionu Morza Bałtyckiego. W artykule wykorzystano do badań metody teoretyczne analizy, w tym jakościowo-ilościowej danych, syntezy pozyskanych informacji, abstrahowanie czy wnioskowanie. Zgromadzone dane, analizy w przeprowadzonym procesie badawczym pozwoliły na pozytywne zweryfikowanie postawionej tezy.

Słowa kluczowe: Rosja, uzbrojenie, drony, bezpieczeństwo, potencjał państwa, państwa bałtyckie.

Introduction

Since ancient times, states have been vying for position on the international stage. Being a leader provided opportunity to impose one country's vision and policies on other entities and in extreme situations, allowed it to subordinate other states to itself and to benefit from this situation. The possibilities of influencing and even dominating other actors depended, and still depend, on the power or strength of a country understood as its potential for projecting its policies. Different schools of thought in regard to international relations means that literature on the subject lacks a single, coherent, and generally accepted definition of strength or power of the state (Nye, 2011, pp. 9–24), therefore its scope and impact is difficult to compare. The above theory can be confirmed by the fact that the English word *power* can be understood in various ways and functions in parallel with terms such as *force*, *energy*, *strength*, *influence* or, *authority* (Baldwin, 1989, p. 160). Power also defines the capacity and scale of the state's exercise of authority over a territory or environment in which it operates, which, in the 21st century, means better opportunities in the context of acquisition of new markets, or cheap labour. J. S. Nye defines the power of the state as *the ability to influence others in order to achieve desired results*. At the same time, he proposed a division into "hard" and "soft" power (2009, p. 98), referring to the former as military power that emphasises conquest and the latter as highlighting the civilian aspects and conciliations. Polish literature on the subject derives from research conducted by W. Orłowski or M. Sułek. In Poland, the latter is the precursor of research related to *powernomics* and *powermetrix*, as well as the author of a universal model for estimating the power of political units. The author decided to refer to a formal model of M. Sułek, which consists in striving to grasp only those factors of power which are constant and absolutely necessary for the completeness of the description such as people, territory, army and military assets, strategy, economy (Sułek, 2011). This method traditional or classical, is represented and used by such experts as J. Frankel, S. L. Spigle, A. F. K. Organski, H. J. Morgenthau, K. W. Thompson, or finally by RAND Corporation (Kondrakiewicz, 2012).

As with the different definitions of the power of the state, different models can be used for measuring this power. Regardless of the method for measuring the strength of the state, they compile specific groups of components considered by the author of a given method to be the most relevant when considering the power of a given entity. These most commonly include: critical mass understood as population and territorial potential, military, economic, technological potential, as well as the strategic objectives of the entity and the will to pursue them. Depending on the approach and school of thought, they can be presented in different order. The XXI century has brought back the significance of the absolute and strict correlation between military potential and territorial, demographic, technological, and economic potential. By allocating large amounts

resources to research and development of new technologies, countries are trying to become world leaders. Such a policy is applied by all the major countries in the world, including the Russian Federation (RF) especially in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

The unprecedented aggression of Russian Federation on Ukraine on 24th February 2022 provoked to ask an important question: what is the real purpose of placing latest military technology and armament by RF in the Kaliningrad Oblast (KO), which is the western-most enclave of the RF? Advanced military technology, expansion of combat units and armament in the KO, can, effectively influence and threaten the security of the region and states, including Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It can also start to lower states' potential and prepare the grounds for regaining strong political position and followers. That can lead to make claims in relation to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as there is quite a large minority of Russians living there. Such an action can contribute to serious or even the worst political destabilisation, which could force a strong reaction from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members. The outcome of this situation would be disastrous to Europe and the whole world.

Referring to modern technologies, the author means technological progress, especially in the digital field, which is linked to the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones. In terms of combat units and armament in the KO, the author will point out new units, military bases and armament gathered in the enclave. Apart from that the paper would show how those elements can influence political, economic and military potential and threaten the security of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Available literature concentrates mainly on the analysis of the military and technological potential accumulated by RF in the KO, that is why the author expanded the research to show the correlation of a state's potential and its components with military technologies. She confined herself to the content analysis of relevant documents, statistical studies, media reports, and observations of current facts and events, and the use of induction, abstraction, and comparison allowed conclusions to be drawn in the context of the thesis proposed in the introduction that the Russian Federation, through the systematic strengthening of the Kaliningrad Oblast in military and technological terms, may have an impact on reducing the potentials of the states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as on reducing the level of security and destabilizing the Baltic Sea region.

State's potential and its components

The strength, or power of a state, and thus its ability to influence others and achieve its own objectives, is important for any state with a regional or global aspirations to play a key role. That enables to pursue state's efforts and build capacity through economic and technological growth. Success in these areas helps to overcome or compensate for the shortfalls in critical mass potential. Wise internal and foreign policy supported by

the abovementioned elements can bring prosperity, which will translate into economic stability and ensure the security. Population, politics, economic or military potential of one country may be negatively affected by the advancement of the military and technological capabilities of another country. The reduction of the state's potential will also indirectly concern the second component of the critical mass of the country, i.e. its territory. While the quantitative components relating to individual potential are, or should be, easy to calculate, the qualitative components can only be estimated, and additionally, these estimations may vary due to the knowledge and subjective perceptions of each researcher.

The critical mass of a state is understood as its territory and population in the context of the impact of these two factors on the state's potential. Territory, and consequently, geographical location of a country, may be considered in two aspects, the size of the territory, which may change as a result of armed conflict or partial occupation by another state. Examples of this include the 2008 conflict between Georgia and the RF. Georgia lost the South Ossetia and Abkhazia territories, although overwhelming majority of countries have not acknowledge this separation. Even worse situation has taken place with the annexation of Crimea Peninsula in Ukraine by the RF, which took place in 2014. Even though the reaction of international community has been similar as in 2008, after all it resulted in aggression of Russia on Ukraine in February 2022. The second aspect is the geographical location itself, which will determine the natural resources and its relations with its surroundings, the presence and distances to main communication lines, accessibility to maritime routes, or the surroundings of the entity itself. Depending on its location, the state may be in a privileged position and it has a positive impact on its potential, or the state has to face geographical disadvantages in this respect.

The population, in the context of the critical mass of the state, is a key component that is directly linked to the economic potential and closely correlated to other components. The population of each country determines its capacity in the context of ensuring demographic security, the ability of the nation to survive and ensure its continuity. Loss of territory or depopulation of certain areas, due to armed conflicts, civil wars, economic problems, causes a reduction or loss in ability to function by weakening its economy and finances. Less people equals less tax revenue, less consumption and possibly brain drainage of the working age population, with the remaining citizens being of post-working age. The population is also linked to the military aspect, ensuring an adequate level of personnel in the armed forces both in conscript and professional armies. The population structure which is not always consistent, is also very important and cannot be overlooked. Multinational, multi-ethnic populations, while gaining national awareness, seek to ensure cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. Sooner or later they want to grow independently of the central government, up to autonomy or complete sovereignty. The lack of an appropriate policy by such states' governments often contributes to the development of conflicts and crises weakening states and their potential in general.

In economics, potential is defined as a resource of capacity, capability, or efficiency that can be allocated to a given territorial unit or organisation (Mastalerz-Kodzis, 2018, p. 126).

The economic picture and economic potential of the country consist, inter alia, of issues such as: the state budget - specific revenue, deficit, inflation rate, investment expenditure, etc., balance of payments, import and export capacity, production level, savings rate, investment rate, economic growth, competitiveness, and unemployment. All elements are a reference to measures of prosperity which, in addition to fundamental human rights and issues related to liberty, are equated with a person's safety and security. (Zawadzki & Zietarski, 2016, p. 28)

Generally, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) meter is used as a national income indicator to present the economic potential of a state, however, it is not the only way to assess or measure it. One should also remember that interdisciplinary macro-, meso-, and microeconomic indicators can be applied, in particular with regard to assessing the competitiveness of a given economy, and this has a direct impact on its attractiveness and potential investments by transnational corporations, investment banks, venture capital funds or private individuals. A whole range of new tools, methods and forms of competition, known as geoeconomics, are being increasingly used in addition to the conventional way of fighting. This has been particularly evident in the 21st century. Firepower is often being replaced by the strength of investment capital accumulated or controlled by a particular state. A good example of that would be actions of Russian companies such as GAZPROM, ROSNIEFT or LUKOIL present in different countries supplying energy products and having at the same time control over the market. "In geoeconomics, one or more countries suffer economic destruction at the hands of unspecified forces, which may be finance markets, corporations, integration groups operating in coalition, or countries oriented towards pursuing their particular interests through deliberate policies and strategies" (Zawadzki & Zietarski, 2016, p. 30). The economic potential of a state is closely related to many actions which do not entirely depend on the government, but are crucial for its proper functioning and for its security.

Scientific and technological potential is not always listed separately, but it is almost universally recognised by researchers, although it is sometimes included in the potential of natural, economic, or industrial resources (Kondrakiewicz, 2012, pp. 257–260). In the age of information society and know-how, it is becoming increasingly significant. Competition in the field of using cutting-edge technologies is very stiff and countries wishing to have significant position should carry out scientific research, and thus incur outlays on introduction the results thereof into their daily technologies. This approach is a condition for being a part of an elite group of states-leaders, who take decisions in the contemporary world. Advanced technologies give one country a great advantage and can help to reduce the potential of other countries. That is especially true with mil-

itary technology, the need for development of which is very often the driving force behind scientific research. Advanced military technologies in one country and the inability of another to oppose that impact can be a threat to security and potentially reduce the capacity of the latter, as well as may become an effective deterrent for likely investors.

Military potential, also called military strength, depends on the previous elements and indicates the link and a certain kind of inter-dependence of all the components of the state's capabilities. That element of force cannot be underestimated and should be defined using several indicators, the most important of which are armament expenditure, both in absolute numbers and per capita. These indicators show the country's actual military capabilities, as a result of overall economic development. Another factor is the size of the armed forces. This is not the main determinant, but important and linked directly to the defence capabilities of a state (Łoś, 2018, p. 37). That refers to the number of soldiers, including reserves and those stationed outside the country, but also to the armament, all branches of the military, level of training, and the application of modern technologies, as well as the nature of potential geopolitical threats and factors. The potential itself is important, but also the correct proportions of individual branches and equipment, which is often undervalued (IISS, 2016).

Political potential is a states' foreign policy strategy, principles of which are set out and updated in relevant documents, e.g. strategies of a state, as well as the effectiveness of the government's diplomatic and propaganda efforts. The position of the government itself cannot be overlooked, both internationally and domestically. A strong domestic position means support of the citizens who identify themselves with the government thus legitimising its actions. A strong international position makes it possible to push its own foreign policy and achieve its objectives. In this respect, importance should be ascribed to the effectiveness of the government's own diplomatic service, its experience, professionalism, and knowledge, as well as the way in which it is perceived by the others. All these elements are crucial for analysing and evaluating the potential of a country in the 21st century.

All considerations point to their interdependence, which on the one hand hampers their individual analysis and the quantification of their impact on a state's potential, and on the other hand indicates possibility of impacting individual factors and their vulnerability to intentional external actions aimed at destabilising and weakening the potential of a selected state or region.

Kaliningrad Oblast – a fortified enclave

The Kaliningrad Oblast, as an enclave of Russian Federation, is an example of such a situation. The enclave, which has been regularly strengthened by extra military measures on land and in the air, with special attention to presence of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) called "drones", which can be a military advantage. Drones are defined

as multiple-use units, controlled remotely by an operator trained and certified in accordance with standards established for pilots of manned aircraft (NATO, 2019, p. 135) or programmed to fly autonomously. It should be stressed that a UAV is one component of a larger system. Due to their relatively small size, weight and an ability to station on practically any airfield, including civilian ones, or even along regular roads, drones create endless possibilities for their use. These facts significantly change the situation of BSR in term of security and their potential. Although the Baltic Fleet assets stationed in the enclave ports cannot be neglected in general overview of the regional security threats, the analysis will concentrate on offensive assets, UAVs and their impact on Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – the Baltic Sea Countries (BSC).

The Kaliningrad Oblast played a major role in the BSR as early as during the Soviet era, although its importance increased with the fall of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) and the regaining of independence by Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. This fact was of great importance for the Navy, as the RF lost access to a significant part of the Baltic Sea ports that did not freeze over in winter, leaving it only with the KO. The population of KO in 2018, according to 2017 estimates, was 994.599,000 people and over 86% of the national structure were Russians (FSSS, 2018), with Kaliningrad remaining its largest city.

It is part of the Russian territory situated on the south-east coast of the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania. It is an enclave, i.e. a territory situated within another country or countries, however exempt from their jurisdiction. The area of the enclave is clearly separated and constitutes a sovereign administrative unit, which is an integral part of another country, in this case, the RF (Bukowski, 2019, p. 106). Its circumference is 15,096 km² with 147 km of the coastline at the Baltic Sea. On the land side, it borders Poland and Lithuania and, administratively, the oblast forms part of the Northwest Federal District established in 2000. In addition, the KO currently forms part of the Western Military District, which was established in September 2010 on the basis of structures previously forming part of the Leningrad Military District and the Moscow Military District. Subordinating all units stationed in the KO to the commander of the Baltic Fleet, created the Kaliningrad Special Area. It combined elements of a military system and a non-military subsystem. Such a structure ensured a high degree of autonomy conducting combat activities and guaranteed the protection of national interests in the BSR (Żyła, 2019). According to Russians a wide range of regional actions in the BSC were interpreted as preparatory measures carried out with the support of the US and EU with the intention of destabilizing Russian interests. That includes: deployment of the armed forces in the vicinity of Russian national borders, conduct of large scale military exercises, organization of special centres concerned with the preparation of militants, as well as accretion of capabilities of forces of special operations (Sukhankin, 2019). The reorganisation, and development of its defence potential shows that the enclave could perform defensive and offensive roles.

That changes the security situation even though Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are NATO members.

As the modernisation process started, first it was associated with the progressive professionalization of troops to cope with a gradual shift towards new types of weapons and military equipment. There are 4 ships and 1 naval infantry units, 3 missile air defence units, 1 coastal missile defence unit and 1 missile unit. There is 1 air defence unit and 1 radar unit, apart from that there are 3 aviation units, an artillery, engineering and tank unit on the area of 15,000 km². The concentration of army and weaponry proves the exceptional importance of the enclave for RF. There are four active air bases: Khrabrovo, Guryevsk District, Chernyakhovsk, Donskoye, Svetlogorsky District and Chkalovsk-Lyublino-Novoye.

Modernisation efforts were undertaken with regard to the existing infrastructure for general military units, but also new facilities appeared. In 2017–2018, the Iskander missile systems were prepared, with which the 152nd Missile Brigade in Chernyakhovsk was equipped, as well as for the Bal and Bastion systems, which were provided to the 25th Coastal Missile Regiment in Donskoye (Kowalczyk, red., 2019, pp. 71–72). There will be more Iskanders in the enclave, as Russia plans to enlarge its Iskander brigades from 12 to 16 launchers each, and 32 missiles could be fired simultaneously in one salvo. Government authorities plan to deploy more advanced Iskander missiles to the enclave, among others. Typically, Iskanders-M in Russian military stockpiles have a range of 380-500 kilometers. A new-generation Iskander-K system, whose range is over 500 kilometers, is currently being test-fired and will be equipped with missiles R-500 (9M728 and 9M729). However, there is no confirmation of the deployment of this system in yet, but it is likely in the future. Both the Iskander-M and the Iskander-K can carry conventional and nuclear warheads. The Iskander launchers threaten not only air bases throughout Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, or Poland, but also in the east of Germany and almost the entire territory of the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Defence 24, 2018, May 11). General modernisation of the units included works for the support and logistic backup facilities. Particularly notable is the reconstruction of the ammunition storage facility – including nuclear weapons – whose reconstruction was completed in mid-2019. The Chkalovsk airport had been finally put into operation in October 2018. Following its modernisation and expansion conducted since 2012, it is now one of the largest military airports in Russia, capable of accommodating all categories of aircraft, including heavy transports (Kowalczyk, red., 2019, pp. 71–72). These changes assure efficient increase of offensive assets in the enclave in a very short time.

Apart from that the expansion of the armed forces groups such as reactivation of two fighter aviation regiments, a tank regiment, the restoration of the 4th Separate Naval Attack Aviation Regiment moved from Chernyakhovsk to Chkalovsk, equipped in Autumn 2018 with Su-24 and new Su-30 (multirole combat aircraft), changes of the staff

and command structures of the entire aviation contingent, show that the enclave is being seriously strengthened. It is being prepared for all types of possible activities, starting from intelligence operations and military counterintelligence activities of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Federal Protective Service (FPS), which are responsible for counter-espionage protection and governmental special communications. That fact made the enclave, a base for the performance of intelligence tasks in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia in recent years (Kowalczyk, red., 2019, p. 70). Shifting from defensive tasks and weaponry to offensive, especially by placing Iskander Missiles systems and multirole combat aircrafts capable of the delivery of tactical nuclear weapons (Su-24), reveals the true intentions of Russian leaders towards the enclave's position in the security and defence system.

The modernisation, according to Russian official statements, should be seen as an answer to EU and NATO activities in the BSR.

Kaliningrad Oblast occupies a special place: Its territorial proximity to the EU/NATO countries, experience of popular discontent with the government and lessons drawn by the Russian side from the 'Arab Spring' all urge the Russian side to elaborate measures aimed at protection of the rear territory. (Sukhankin, 2019)

On the top of that Russian plans to enhance its air and missiles forces should be added. In consequence, the Russian-built anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems will pose a far greater threat. Russia is forming two new air division headquarters in the Kaliningrad and Crimea regions. They will be in charge of monitoring air operations over the Black and Baltic seas and their adjacent areas (Defence 24, 2018, May 11).

Along with the modernisation of all units, the RF focuses on the development of UAV technologies that are to ensure its dominance, attainment of its objectives and regain its superpower status. The interest in UAVs has increased sharply after the end of the war with Georgia in August 2008. The policy pursued by RF's President in the enclave towards the BSC, is to deploy the drones so that they enable RF to influence the countries in the region, threaten the security and possibly lower their potential. As mentioned there are four military airfields which ensure convenient conditions for UAV deployment. As announced by the "Przemysł Obronny" portal in November 2019, quoting the "Izvestia" newspaper, that summer a detachment of "Forpost" drones was included as a component of the 689th Guards Fighter Squadron of the Baltic Fleet air forces. Quoting a source in the Russian Ministry of Defence, the newspaper stated that drones will patrol the Baltic Sea and its coast, and in the event of armed conflict, they will identify targets and guide the air force and coastal defence assets (WNP.pl, 2019, November 5). These are not however the only drones that the RF is planning to deploy there. In the following years "Orion" and "Corsair" type UAVs will also be stationed there. The technical specifications are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1.
List of Russian UAVs planned for Kaliningrad Oblast

UAV	Own/max mass	Range	Max flight time	Ceiling in metres	Potential armament
Forpost	325 kg/456 kg	150 to 250 km depending on the antenna	12–17.5 h	5797	none
Corsair	approx. 200 kg	160 to 250 km	10 h	6000	none
Orion	1000 kg/1200 kg armed	250 to 300 km with a retranslator	24 h	7500	May be armed with light missiles and guided bombs

Source: own elaboration based on Dąbrowski (2019, March 24) and Sabak (2020, April 26).

The “Forpost” is designed for patrol duty, identifying targets during conflict, or provide guidance for air force or coastal defence assets. Depending on equipment, they may carry out intelligence and observation tasks both in the scope of typical military tasks, as well as non-military activities. This may be observation of NATO formations’ exercises in the Baltic region, which is understandable. However, they may also be used to observe civil activity, focusing on tracing the activities of commercial ports. The range of these UAVs allows for unrestricted observation of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. In the case of the “Corsair”, which is also to be stationed in the enclave, its expected scope of missions includes reconnaissance and potential guidance of artillery fire. Furthermore, according to the available data, the army would like the apparatus to have the capability to carry out typical transport missions. Reports on this UAV to carry weapons are not confirmed, but it is expected to be used as a platform for the “Ataka” anti-tank guided missiles – Western designation AT-9 Spiral (Dąbrowski, 2019, March 24). The “Orion” is the first Russian heavy long-range drone that can be armed with both light missiles and guided bombs. In addition, work is underway on a number of variants: “Orion-E” – export version and an “Orion-2” – version with a take-off mass of 5000 kg and a lifting capacity of up to 1000 kg, which is assumed, by its creators, to be capable of flying more than 5000 km for more than 24 hours at a height of 12 000 metres. Certainly, the capabilities of such powerful drones offer a considerable potential for military applications related to their potential weapon systems and a capacity for reconnaissance, observation, but also offensive operations within their operational range.

The Russian Federation moves forward and according to information provided to TASS News Agency by Nikolai Dolzenkov, on 20 April 2020 the Ministry of Defence of the RF officially signed the acceptance documentation of the first complex of the Orion UAVs with the main designer of Kronstadt from St Petersburg. The system consists of a control station with a transmission system and three Orion units (Sabak, 2020, April 26). In terms of development of the Electronic Warfare capabilities. Among the most notable pieces to have been spotted in use are such models as the RB-341B ‘Leer-

3', the Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). The main useful feature of the Orlan-10 is the ability to use interchangeable loads. Thanks to interchangeable "fillings", UAVs in the complex can perform the different actions by creating a "fake base station" it can intercept traffic control and user connections, which means that the operator gets "the ability to generate calls and SMS messages to all subscribers entering its area of operation". In September 2019, Izvestia Newspaper wrote that the Russian RB-341B "Leer-3" electronic warfare system would be able to find the enemy by a cell phone signal and direct shock weapons at him in real time (VPK, 2022, January 26). Such potential could be used not only during conflict or war time, but also to interfere in internal matters of any country if suitable. That raises the thesis that RF by modernising, strengthening military assets and introducing of UAV technology in the Kaliningrad enclave may have a strong impact on the security of the region, and may use it to reduce the potential of countries being in the range of Russian missiles and drones such as Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

The security threat and possible reduction of the potential

The main goal of each country is the highest possible position on the international stage. These ambitions become even greater if a given state has been a world leader and a power in the past, but lost its status in result of various power shifts. Russia, and earlier the USSR, had a well-established position of power after World War II, which it lost at the beginning of the 1990s, with the collapse of the state and geopolitical changes that have taken place within its borders and the BCR. There has been a significant loss of critical mass components, the area of the USSR in 1991 was 22 402 200 km² with the population of 293 million, as a result of the collapse in 1994, the area was decreased to 17 100 000 km² and the population has been down to 148.4 million (CIA, 2020; Zawadzki, 2011, p. 39). New states have been established in the wake of the break-up of the USSR, including Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. These facts have forced a completely new policy of the RF, which was and still is intended to compensate for the lost potential and rebuild its international position. The main objectives and tasks of foreign and internal policy are included in basic doctrine documents and main concepts, such as: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation and Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

Over the years, they have been updated and amended to shape the RF policy, building on past experience. When examining these documents, particular attention should be paid to the fact that, although the RF has formally lost its territory and population to the newly created sovereign states, it has not abandoned the ability of exerting indirect or direct influence on these countries. Although sovereign, they remain in the immediate vicinity of the RF and any attempt to limit Russian influence or too

aggressive Western states expansion in post-Soviet countries, in the view of the RF is perceived as a potential threat to the Federation itself. The Security Strategy states:

Ensuring national security in the border area is implemented by expanding high-tech and multifunctional border facilities and systems at the borders of the Russian Federation, improving the effectiveness of cross-border activities, improving inter-ministerial and inter-state cross-border cooperation, activating the process of consolidating the state's border on the basis of the provisions of international law and socio-economic development of the border areas of the Russian Federation. (Strategia, 2015)

In the Military doctrine in Chapter III on military policy of the RF, in paragraph 22, can be read, that Russia reserves the right to and considers the use of its armed forces to be fully legal and justified and lists grounds for such use which include: “the right to protect its citizens outside RF borders, in accordance with generally recognised principles and standards of international law and international RF agreements”. Sub-paragraph 32 (k) states that one of the “basic tasks of the Armed Forces, other troops and bodies during peacetime is to defend RF citizens outside the RF borders from armed attacks against them” (Doktryna, 2014). The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, in general terms, subparagraph 3, (h) and (i) states that the priority of this policy is:

[...] a comprehensive effective protection of the rights and legal interests of Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad, including in various international formats, and strengthening Russia's role in the global humanitarian space, expanding and strengthening the position of the Russian language in the world, popularising the achievements of national culture, national historical heritage and cultural wellbeing of Russian peoples, Russian science and education, consolidating the Russian diaspora. (Konceptcja, 2016)

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are NATO members and as such, they are protected under the 5th article and the principle of collective defence. This fact probably allows to state that the RF would not attack the states as that would mean aggression to the whole Alliance, but they are still in the spotlight of Russians if only because of that there is quite a noticeable Diaspora living there. The example of Ukraine shows that Russian citizens living in other countries could be a good excuse for starting all kind of actions including military conflict. The enlargement and modern, new armament along with the presence of drones can be easily used in Russians favour in the region. Reflecting on the so-called ‘Arab Spring’, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia Valery Gerasimov highlighted that this is ‘the way the future wars will be waged’. Incidentally, in his subsequent analysis Gerasimov claimed that ‘the application of asymmetric measures and ways of waging “hybrid” wars allows one to deprive the opposing party of sovereignty without actual seizure of the territory’ (Sukhankin, 2019). The RF does not have to occupy Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia to take them over, would be enough to have an influence over their military, economic, demographic or political potential. Installing the advanced ballistic and cruise missile

systems Iskander-M and drones in the enclave without any reservations, would play the key element of the threat.

Military potential is an undeniable and most commonly assessed element indicating state's potential. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are all small countries with limited financial and demographic abilities in terms of their armed forces. These limited budgetary capacity resulted in restricted defence budgets in 2017, below expected 2% of GDP in NATO: Latvia – 1.7% of GDP (Defence 24, 2016.10.14), Estonia – 2.17% of GDP (Defence 24, 2016.09.28), and Lithuania – 1.8% of GDP (Defence 24, 2017.03.13); The Ukrainian war caused significant changes in the next years and forced the governments somehow to raise the budgets even higher in 2023: Lithuania – 2.52% of GDP, (BS-L, 2023), Latvia – 2.25% of GDP (DB-Latvia, 2023) and Estonia – 2.73% of GDP (DB-E, 2024). The demographic problems of these countries will be discussed later. The main branch of armed forces are land forces. Modest budgets reflect in the lack of air forces, with support in this respect provided by NATO, i.a., as part of the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission. The mission has been carried out since March 2004 within the Rapid Response Force of the Alliance and consists in monitoring and defending the airspace of the States. The main objective of the mission is to have patrols over the airspace and to prevent its violation. Navies of these countries do not play a significant role. Anti-air defence, including short- and medium-range systems, is underdeveloped. They have practically no armoured forces, and mechanisation of land troops is only incomplete. The state of their defence capabilities, given the number of professional soldiers, land forces mainly, at the time when the article was written could have been summarised numerically: for Lithuania – 8.8 thousand soldiers, and for Latvia – 5.5 thousand, Estonia at approx. 6.4 thousand soldiers. Estonia maintained a general conscription system, which was recently reinstated in Lithuania, with some controversies present about its reintroduction in Latvia for fear of provoking Russia (Małysa, 2017, p. 256). The situation has changed since the war in Ukraine and all the countries decided to raise the number of soldiers. It is highly likely that the RF in 2024 would not consider attacking one of NATO members, but the reinforcement of the KO and the introduction of modern drones, can be used to create incidents with breaching the airspace, or to conduct activities provoking NATO forces to certain reactions. It is true that this technology must be really advanced to allow to gain domination or threaten the countries, especially that the countries are modernizing their armies as well. It cannot be forgotten that the budgets, although armies are priorities after 2022, have some limitations and one needs budget revenues to make investments and purchase arms. Another issue is the fact that top technology can simply take time to acquire. Obviously the conditions to manipulate with states potentials are less favourable for RF at the beginning of 2024, but they are not impossible.

Theoretically, accidental, but intentional and continues intrusions into the airspace may result in the launch of combat aircrafts stationed as part of the BAP, e.g.: F-16s. Such actions contribute to increasing the costs of BAP and finally may result in indifference to such breaches in the future. Unfortunately, vigilance, reduced due to intrusions of unarmed drones or aircrafts, may effect in a lack of response in a situation of actual danger.

Russian drones can freely penetrate the airspace over the enclave, but they can also observe the current military situation, movement of forces, military exercises or can make the modernisation of the armies slower and more difficult as the defence companies will be anxious of possible surveillance of their technology by Russians.

It cannot be forgotten that the Baltic states, which were illegally annexed by Moscow after the second world war, are the only former Soviet nations that have joined the EU and NATO, and that is something that Russia has long viewed as a provocation. Russia's assault of Ukraine can unfortunately lead to a conclusion that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are in the danger of shutting them out because of Russia's ability to cut the Baltic states off from the rest of Europe. The only land connection with Western countries is the narrow Poland-Lithuania border stretch between Belarus and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. Taken into consideration all the facts about concentration of weaponry, dual use technology and provisions in normative Russian documents, give the ground for a statement that RF does everything intentionally and in thoughtful way to weaken the potential of the Baltic states or even disturb the position of the countries as reliable allies.

Economic potential of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is particularly important, as it is largely responsible for the economic security and translates into budgetary freedom of their governments. In essence, the country's economic security, expressed in terms of access to markets, natural resources, financial funds, all on an international level, which guarantee that a state will develop and maintain its international position (Zawadzki & Zietarski, 2016, p. 39). The analysed states are considered small and their capacity to act on the abovementioned issues is certainly very limited, however, it should be objectively acknowledged that their Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) capacity has increased over the last 5 years. Table 2 presents FDI for the last 8 years.

Table 2.

Foreign Direct Investments in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2014–2021 (millions of USD)

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lithuania	-183	1054	436	1030	1094	975	3492	2053
Latvia	895	734	258	668	994	789	1013	5325
Estonia	685	36	1059	1921	1486	3044	3395	989

Source: UNCTAD, 2020, p. 248; UNCTAD, 2022, p. 230.

The presented values indicate that all the countries between 2014–2019, before COVID-19 pandemic were in satisfactory condition. Estonia was the leading state in

terms of FDI acquisitions between 2016–2020, but in 2021 situation changed, probably because of the Ukrainian conflict. In general the government was able to convince foreign investors that its market was viable, despite the fact of facing a lack of qualified staff in recent years. When analysing the sector structure of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it should be noted that, in case of Lithuania and Latvia, it was largely based on the sector of broadly understood services, 69% and 74% respectively (IE Litwa, 2020; IE Łotwa, 2020), alongside significantly weaker sectors such as agriculture, industry, or administrative services. In the case of Estonia, this share was smaller and amounted to around 35%, alongside the equally large industrial sector 34%, as well as agriculture, and administrative services (IE Estonia, 2020).

The situation has changed after the war in Ukraine although Estonia kept her strong position of a leader but the sector structure of the GDP differs shifting into services sector in 2023 – 62,39%. The Latvian economy is characterised by high economic emigration in the past 2 years, probably connected to the ongoing war. According to OECD Lithuania has been significantly affected by the consequences of the war in Ukraine. The relatively low rate of economic growth is associated with a decline in exports and uncertainty about energy supplies (Gov.pl, Litwa, Łotwa, Estonia, 2023).

The main foreign investors in all three countries are still Scandinavian states, particularly Sweden. In terms of export, the main recipient of goods from all the Baltic states was the RF, which used it to emphasise its presence in the former Soviet Republics alongside the fact, that a large number of Russian citizenry still resides therein, which shall be analysed herein below. Even though the countries chose path of integration with the West, their trade remained and still remains closely connected to Russia. It is mainly due to historic impendence. The strongest economic ties are related to Lithuania, but in case of Latvia and Estonia they are also noticeable as Table 3 presents.

Table 3.
Participation of import and export with Russia in 2021

	Import	Export
Lithuania	11,9%	10,9%
Latvia	9,1%	7,3%
Estonia	11,5%	6,4%

Source: Gołębiowska, 2023, p. 1.

In terms of money Russia, even after the Ukrainian invasion, is still a key trading partner for Lithuania. In 2019 the levels of exports amounting to 3.1 billion euro, while imports – 4.3 billion euro. The main imports from Russia, as for many countries in Europe, were energy products 50,1% (WITS Lithuania, 2021).

Latvian situation was similar. Before pandemic and the war, according to the Latvian Bank, the amount of direct Russian investments to Latvia was 1.3 billion euro in 2016. Showing in previous years a rather steady increase. Moreover, the total

amount invested in companies with share capital originating in Russia amounts to 727 million euro. It should be added that they have been shrinking since 2018 when the audit of Latvia's financial system took place. The only country with more direct investment in Latvia was Sweden. This clearly demonstrates that at some point before year 2022 Russian business was interested in Latvian market (Bikovs et al., 2018, pp. 12–13). Obviously Latvia still imports goods from Russia such as energy resources, in particular gas and oil. They make up almost 35% of the total import in 2021 (WITS Latvia, 2021), but has decreased in the recent years.

Estonia is probably in the best position in terms of possible Russian interference because in recent years has remarkably reduced its dependence on Russia in the field of economy. Concerning Russian involvement in local businesses, based on the 2016 data, there were nearly 3000 businesses there, where Russians were partners or owners. They are mostly attracted by Estonian tax system, cheap labour force and people's ability to speak Russian. It is hard to say, how many of all registered businesses are actually involved to Russia as many Russians are operating via local businessmen. Companies with strategic importance or in IT sector are under stronger control by the state because of their possible influence on national security (Mattiisen et al., 2018, pp. 20–21), and this can be a good reason for Estonia to be in the centre of interest and the possible object of different Russian drones' activities. In a country like Estonia where almost all services, including vital ones, are connected to the Internet, the vulnerability to all kinds of cyber threats/attacks is the priority for the government. All kinds of interferences, wiretapping are much easier if one has access to modern technology – Russia does have it.

Estonia, as other states, depended on Russian gas to certain extent. Prior to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Estonian dependency on energy imports was low, but at the end of 2020 they made up 10.5%. Unfortunately the past experience with Russia shows that energy products are used by Russian authorities as a tender card very frequently. The situation has been changing after the invasion, but one must be aware that being a responsible government means taking sometimes difficult and unpopular decisions to provide stable living conditions. From 2021 all of the countries of former USSR, or neighbouring countries, e.g. Poland, have been doing everything to gain independence from Russian export or import. They also obey UE and UN sanctions. This takes place especially in terms of energy products.

Deploying new technology drones and strengthening military assets in the enclave, the RF can cause the markets to be less attractive in terms of foreign investments. A safe and secure location is what every entrepreneur looks for when deciding where to establish business, so that it will be profitable. If a forecast was to be prepared, the presence of Russian drones in the immediate vicinity, the capacity to conduct constant surveillance or cause incidents, may dissuade investors from developing, and even result in their definitive withdrawal. Having the proper

knowledge and information at an appropriate time is the basis for success, the presence of drones in the region makes the RF capable of obtaining such information and knowledge. This enables a somewhat controlled increase of the potential or may lead to decreasing it by creating an unfavourable environment for business. Military threats and incidents, which can be conducted, do not serve to motivate further investments.

This may cause a destruction or loss of an investor's capital, and in turn will cause them to withdraw from the market rather pursue further investments. The presence of weaponry and advanced technology may be a reason for a slowdown in economic development of the region, which will directly translate to lowering the economic potential and undermine the economic security of the BSC. This scenario is probable if foreign investors will signal their intentions to conduct investments that may pose a threat to Russian economic and political interests. All the documents on the goals and tasks of foreign and domestic policies include clear references to the RF's priorities in the so-called "near abroad" states, which Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia undoubtedly are (Kojala & Jakóbič, 2018, p. 20). Russia's previous actions in Georgia and present aggression in Ukraine leave no doubt that the government in Moscow will do anything and everything in order to retain its influence in these countries. On one hand that shows the ruthlessness of Russia in its actions and on the other hand it causes necessity of engagement in Ukraine first of all. In this case drone deployment should not be ignored and may be interpreted as a sign of possible unfavourable future steps if foreign investors decide to continue to engage in this part of Europe. RF showed clearly that its idea of a democratic country is far different from the view of Western countries.

Demographic potential of the analysed states is very specific due to the fact that they used to be part of the USSR and only regained their sovereignty in the early 1990s. That fact combined with the demographic policy at the time resulted in those Soviet Republics, now independent states, but having large numbers of Russians, which, compared to relatively small populations and current emigration possibilities, has a significant impact on their demographic situation. Table 4 shows the demographics and ethnic structure in the countries.

Table 4.
Demographics and ethnic structure of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2023

Lithuania		Latvia		Estonia	
Population	2 857 mln	Population	1 84 mln	Population	1 322 mln
Lithuanians	84.6%	Latvians	62.4%	Estonians	67.8%
Russians	5%	Russians	23.7%	Russians	22.5%
Others	10.4%	Others	13.9%	Others	9.8%
Emigration in thousands	15.3 (in 2022)	Emigration in thousands	8.2 (in 2021)	Emigration in thousands	9.657 (in 2022)

Source: CSB Latvia, 2023; OSP Lithuania, 2023; Statistics Estonia, 2023.

The data show that Lithuania is the most populous and simultaneously the number of Russian residents is the smallest. In absolute numbers, Latvia is at the most disadvantage, with almost half a million (436.080) Russians living within its borders, whereas in Estonia, the country with the smallest overall population, the Russian Diaspora totals 297.450 citizens. One cannot forget the fact that the rest of the population is comprised of Poles, Finns or Ukrainians, but also Belarussians who may also represent Russian interests.

A significant problem with such low populations is relatively high emigration which is the highest in Lithuania. The countries, despite what seems to be a satisfactory economic growth, face a problem in ensuring well-paid jobs to young people, who know foreign languages and are relatively well educated. That allows them to earn more money working in the EU or Norway than they would if they stayed back in their homeland. The arriving immigrants are unfortunately, neither well educated, nor a highly qualified workforce. In addition, there is the problem of ageing population which affects the labour market and is a key element in the shaping of the defence potential of the Baltic States.

Modern technologies or military strengthening of the KO do not have a direct influence on demographic situation, however, potential slowdown of the economies of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia caused by a lack of ability to provide qualified personnel along with the above mentioned, may result in an outflow of foreign investments or limitation thereof. Such a turn of events may also result in an even bigger wave of emigration, impoverishment of the population, the state's difficulty in providing social benefits, investing in healthcare, education, science or even national defence. Lower budgets will cause cuts in every ministry, increase of social discontent. This may transform into demonstrations and a willingness to change the government, which may be taken advantage of by the RF and lead to pro-Russian governments taking power. The presented scenario may evolve in these countries and the presence of modern Russian technology in the region allows Russia to monitor actual social attitudes and possible actions aimed at defending Russian interests and nationals within Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. It also gives the opportunity to affect the Russians and Russian speaking society and fuel the moods of society. The fact of presence of "Leer-3" electronic warfare system gives the possibility to control and shape people's opinions and preferences, which can be taken in advantage.

Political potential means the ability of the state to pursue its goals in terms of defending its interests on the international stage. The government may effectively pursue its policies provided that it ensures political security, i.e. a stable government that is capable of making political decisions and taking action within the framework of a democratic "Rechtsstaat". One of the aspects of ensuring political security is the ability to pass a budget that will enable the government to pursue its plans. Lack of revenue into the state budget or a decrease thereof may destabilise the situation and

lead to discontent on part of the citizens, expressed by protests and anti-government demonstrations. Such problems weaken the government's positions not only internally, but also internationally. Russian drones in the enclave allow the RF to observe events as they unfold and take certain actions, including incidents that may be conducive to a change of the prevailing political regime. A state that is internally unstable is an unattractive prospect for foreign investors, and their outflow or limitation of investments will weaken the economy and budget, which will translate into a lower level of national security and the overall potential of the state. Each incident where drones/military aircrafts violated the airspace of these countries, or where diversionary action is suspected, may deteriorate the political situation and provoke another wave of protests that will weaken the state's potential and impair its credibility in terms of being able to solve internal problems. This may be an issue as there are Russians or Russian followers, waiting to regain influence in the parliaments, local administration and ruling elites. This is especially true for Latvia and Estonia, where after the last elections 2018 and 2019 respectively, some parties popular among Russian speaking citizens won and make ruling coalition (Latvia – the Social Democratic Party “Harmony”, Estonia – the Centre Party). The situation is a bit different in Lithuania where the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, known as Conservatives make ruling coalition with the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union which are not directly associated with Russia. However, the corruption can always be a factor conducive to Russian influence in business and politics. It should be remembered that there are local businessmen with links to, and interest in Russia who may shape both politics and societal preferences in direct and indirect ways. The situation obviously is different in 2024 but the fact that the enclave is packed with modern technologies ready to eavesdrop, or send proper propaganda, should not be neglected. Russia still considers the countries as a zone of vital interests and a ground for political rivalry.

Conclusions

Modern technology and military advantage are significant elements in shaping Russian position in the region. Surely the position of RF is not the same in 2024 as earlier. In its endeavours to achieve a position of a world power, the RF takes advantage of every possibility grasp control of the neighbouring states that used to be a part of the USSR in the past. Hybrid and information warfare, disinformation and propaganda are not a novelty in Russian activities, however, due to the growing use of the Internet, social media, and high technology such as drones, they have gained a new dimension. The BS managed to regain their sovereignty and become attractive to foreign investors countries by strengthening their power, however, that may change. While assessing the reasons for which Russia deploys new technology, arms and strengthens the enclave, it should be emphasised that actions are intentional and indicate a possibility of

using them for Russia's favour. While forecasting future situation in the region, should be said that the enclave will be a priority area in terms of deployment of military assets and technologies, including drones such as the s-70 "Okhotnik". This is being done in order to control or even lower the potential of the countries by dissuading foreign investors, possibly limit NATO presence and increase its own control and influence in the region. The Russian Secret Services would have a possibility to act against the countries' defence systems, make intelligence work easier, observe military and chosen civil objects, as well as critical infrastructure and, which is probably the most important, it allows to intercept signals of military and civil origin. Unfavourable situation of Russia from the beginning of the Ukrainian aggression may force Russian authorities to seek different solutions in the BSR. In times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic difficulties facing most countries in the world it may turn out that Russian activities paired with the crisis might be successful in lowering the states' potential in order to regain a better position in these countries. Weaponry and continuous enlargement of the military forces will create tension and security threatening incidents in the BSR.

A 2019 report by the RAND Corporation indicated that the BS must and want to strengthen its resilience in the event of conventional and hybrid warfare by creating special troops capable of resisting. The authors of the report estimated that it could cost about \$125 million to set up and equip such branches, without training or further maintenance costs. This shows that the state budget must have funds for such activities thus, the market should be attractive to foreign investments (RAND Corporation, 2019).

The same the accepted thesis that the Russian Federation, through the systematic strengthening of the Kaliningrad Oblast in military and technological terms, may have an impact on reducing the potentials of the states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as on reducing the level of security and destabilizing the Baltic Sea region has been confirmed. Giving the second thought, after nearly two years of Ukrainian conflict, at the beginning of 2024, RF has probably far more difficult position to accomplish its goals in the BSC.

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