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«BALTIC SEA REGION: COOPERATION WITHOUT LIMITS?»

**РОЛЬ ОТНОШЕНИЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ БЕЛАРУСЬ И НАТО В
РЕГИОНЕ БАЛТИЙСКОГО МОРЯ**

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В статье рассматривается роль отношений Республики Беларусь и НАТО в регионе Балтийского моря. В качестве объекта исследования выступает геополитическая позиция Республики Беларусь в изучаемом регионе: важность территории Беларуси. Цель данной статьи – оценка роли сотрудничества Беларуси с НАТО и результативности сохранения текущей позиции по выстраиванию общеевропейской архитектуры безопасности. Новизна статьи заключается в выявлении ключевых точек соприкосновения государств-соседей Республики Беларусь, входящих в регион Балтийского моря. Данная проблематика недостаточно изучена в отечественных исследованиях. Следует отметить высокую научную и практическую значимость и актуальность изучения данного вопроса. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в том, что оно позволяет выявить особенности формирования отношений стран Балтийского региона и Беларуси с НАТО и оценить их важность.

Ключевые слова: Республика Беларусь; НАТО; Регион Балтийского моря; Сувалкский коридор.

**NATO–BELARUS RELATIONS’ ROLE IN THE BALTIC SEA
REGION**

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The article examines the role of the relations between the Republic of Belarus and NATO in the Baltic Sea region. The object of research is the geopolitical position of the Republic of Belarus in the region under study: the importance of the territory of Belarus. The purpose of this article is to assess the role of cooperation between Belarus and NATO and the effectiveness of maintaining the current position on building pan-European security architecture. The novelty of the article lies in finding the key points of contact between the neighboring states of the Republic of Belarus, which are part of the Baltic Sea region. This problem is not sufficiently studied in domestic research. High scientific and practical significance and relevance of the study of this issue should be noted as it allows

us to identify the features of the formation of relations between the Baltic States and Belarus with NATO and assess their importance.

Keywords: Republic of Belarus; NATO; Baltic Sea Region; Suwalki gap.

The Baltic Sea Region is quite ambiguous definition which has a lot of interpretations depending on the scientific approach chosen (historical, regional, geopolitical, economic, etc.) Despite the fact that the Republic of Belarus doesn't have access to the Baltic sea the state is included into certain programmes of regional cooperation as the country plays an important role in many spheres of activity of this region. For instance, the implementation of the Baltic Sea Region programme in 2007–2013 was based on 4 priorities and 21 out of 90 projects were realized in Belarus (40 organizations participated, 6.3 mln euro granted). The next programme (2014–2020) is also continued and has the positive contribution to the development of the country [1].

The Republic of Belarus is the bridge between West and East, the platform for realization of new initiatives and sometimes the new idea's generator. But certain neighboring countries (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia) are NATO members and this factor is greatly determining the framework of regional cooperation.

In 2009 Belarus was granted the observer status in the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS). In 2019 O. Kravchenko, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus, addressed the CBSS high-level meeting and spoke about the matching priorities, Belarus' contribution to the development of regional cooperation to solve common problems, and suggested a number of mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. The foreign ministers of Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, and Russia's deputy foreign minister contributed to the discussion on the cooperation between the council and Belarus [2].

Still interaction with NATO is one of directions of Belarusian multivector foreign policy through which Belarusian side tries to ensure security on western frontiers, on the one hand, and to increase its own importance in alliance with the Russian Federation, on the other hand. The NATO security infrastructure is approaching to Belarusian borders and bilateral interaction is the element of Belarusian security policy, one should not underestimate the role of NATO in the context of regional security and the existence of the Union State with the Russian Federation.

According to Head of the Main Intelligence Directorate, Deputy Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Belarus P. Tikhonov, three operations are in progress in Europe in 2020: NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence with four battalions deployed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the USA's Atlantic Resolve, and NATO's airspace defense mission [3].

Western policymakers have increasingly started to grasp the strategic importance of Belarus as an East-West invasion corridor. Belarus also strategically sits astride the eastern edge of the Suwalki gap, the narrow 60-mile stretch of territory connecting Poland and Lithuania that is flanked on the other side by Russia's highly militarized Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad. This is why from 2016 NATO has begun to rotate four multinational battalions of 4,500 personnel to the Baltics and Poland. The NATO forces closest to the Suwalki gap is a US battalion-sized squadron in Orzysz. It partners Poland's 15th mechanised brigade and a British light reconnaissance company plus some air-defense missiles and a battery of rocket artillery [4].

Moreover, the 2nd Battalion of the 69th Regiment of the US Army will train with Lithuanian and other NATO troops in the Pabradė, close to Vilnius, according to the Lithuanian Defence Ministry. The US troops are part of the US Army operation Atlantic Resolve, which is aimed at deterring Russia's aggression in the region. American troops have been training in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe since Russia's annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014. Of course, this situation poses a threat, at least risk for Belarus so the country should take responsive measures (military on combat readiness).

Since certain events in Ukraine in 2014, the Republic of Belarus has got strategic importance to NATO and is rapidly becoming a strategic buffer between the North Atlantic Alliance and Russia. Wedged between the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, Belarus has also increasingly become the subject of Kremlin attention. The republic tries to balance the Union State with Russian Federation where it maintains close economic and political relations with its large eastern neighbor, and Belarus has been careful to avoid military domination by the Russian Federation and has tried to keep a careful distance from Moscow by seeking stronger economic relations with the European Union and China.

Nowadays it is evident that both sides (NATO and Belarus) need no more static defense in-depth presence but more mobile forces. Belarus is important in all this because it provides the land mass from which the Suwalki gap can be cornered by Russian forces. Without Belarus Russia cannot have a land corridor through the Suwalki pass to Kaliningrad and cannot stop NATO forces accessing the Baltic states by land [5].

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ОПЫТ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ СТРАТЕГИИ УСТОЙЧИВОГО РАЗВИТИЯ В УО «ГРОДНЕНСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ИМЕНИ ЯНКИ КУПАЛЫ».

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В статье рассматривается организация сетевой деятельности в сфере образования как одна из важнейших форм реализации стратегии устойчивого развития. На примерах нетворкинга проанализировано прямое участие УО «Гродненский государственный университет имени Янки Купалы» в национальном и европейском образовательном пространстве. Акцент сделан на важность реализации приоритетов университетской сети, направленных на содействие образованию в интересах устойчивого развития в сотрудничестве с белорусскими университетами.

Ключевые слова: образование для устойчивого развития, высшее образование; университетское сотрудничество; сетевая активность; университетские сети; сети ассоциаций.

EXPERIENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN YANKA KUPALA STATE UNIVERSITY OF GRODNO

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The article deals with the organization of network activities in the field of education as one of the most important forms of implementation of the strategy of sustainable development. The direct participation of Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno in the