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The Suwałki Gap: A Growing Challenge for NATO In the Baltic Sea Region

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Abstract

The Suwałki Gap, a strategically significant corridor of approximately 100 kilometers along the Poland-Lithuania border and has emerged as a central flashpoint for the security of NATO in the Baltic Sea region. As the sole land connection between the Baltic states and the rest of the Alliance, its defense is vital to the assurance of collective security and the deterrence of potential Russian aggression. Following Russia's capture of Ukrainian territory, fears of a possible armed clash in the Suwałki Gap have been reawakened because of its vulnerability to severance and its role in holding NATO's eastern flank together. The usefulness of the corridor goes beyond military defense, as it underpins important transport and energy infrastructure, including the Baltic Rail system, which is vital to regional connectivity and economic security. A Russian attack on the Suwałki Gap could sever NATO's reinforcement lines to the Baltics, undermining Alliance credibility and cohesion. The paper also highlights the strategic importance of the Suwałki Gap in the context of the Baltic Rail project and emphasizing its role in ensuring regional connectivity. Accordingly, NATO has prioritized strengthening its defensive posture in the area with heightened troop deployments and multinational exercises. This paper examines the growing strategic challenge posed by the Suwałki Gap, measuring its geopolitical importance, Russia's potential threat calculus, and NATO's evolving deterrence measures. According to its assessment of the corridor's military and logistical vulnerabilities, the analysis underscores the requirement for continued Alliance preparedness to respond to changing security challenges in the Baltic region.

Keywords: Suwałki Gap, NATO eastern flank, Baltic states defense, Russia-NATO tensions, Military deterrence, Strategic corridor



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