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REGIONALIZATION OF UNITARY STATES: CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES

The author analyzes the processes of regionalization of unitary states. This problem is very urgent. Globalization and regionalization bring to the international arena regions of not only federal, but also of unitary states. These processes require scientific understanding. Based on the relevance, the author aims to show the qualitative transformation of the political system of unitary states under the influence of globalization and regionalization.

The main task is to characterize and show the features of the regions of unitary states entering the international arena.

In the process of research, the author used the system methodology in which the object of research is presented as an integral complex state system and the method of comparative analysis.

The following results were obtained in the course of the work: characteristics were given to unitary states and their types, models of decentralized cooperation were presented, the experience and features of international relations with centralized, relatively decentralized and decentralized states were shown.

In the course of the study, the author came to the following conclusion: in the context of globalization and regionalization, even unitary states are forced to implement a more flexible policy towards their regions in the sphere of international relations, offering them wider rights and opportunities.

Key words: *globalization, regionalization, regionalism, regions of states, international relations, international ties, international cooperation, unitary states.*

In recent decades, there has been a transformation of the global system of international relations, in which subnational regions are beginning to play a significant role. In today's world, economic, financial and other issues are intertwined with political ones, as a result, domestic regions are increasingly acting on the international scene. International cooperation at the subnational level has become so necessary for the development of the countries that even unitary states have to recognize the right of their territorial communities to some independence, including in the sphere of international activity.

It's worth noting that many countries of the world today are unitary states in their form of government. Such countries constitute about 170 of the 193 UN member – states.

The main feature of a unitary state is that it is divided into administrative-territorial units and the state management is based on the principle of centralization of the basic state powers and the vertical line of power.

The unitary form of government is characterized by two main features: first, the legal status of the administrative-territorial entities that make up the unitary state is determined by the central government and second, the central government exercises direct or indirect control over the activities of the local authorities.

From the point of view of the organization of public power in the center and in the field, as well as the nature of the relationship of central and regional authorities, all unitary states can be divided into three types: centralized, relatively decentralized and decentralized.

In centralized unitary States, which include Poland, Sweden, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Hungary, Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries, administrative-territorial units are solely managed by officials appointed from the center, and elected regional bodies, as a rule, are absent. For example, in Poland and Bulgaria the regional unit of the territorial structure does not have elected representative bodies, and administrative management is carried out by officials appointed by the government (heads of regions – In Bulgaria, voivodes – In Poland).

Relatively decentralized unitary States, which include France, Greece, Portugal and other countries, are characterized by the existence of officials appointed from the center along with the regional bodies elected by the population. The rights of elected bodies in the field are significantly limited, and government representatives have not only extensive administrative powers, but also the right to intervene in the affairs of regional governance.

In a decentralized unitary state, there are no government-appointed administrators, and the regions are governed by elected bodies. In such states, autonomy may exist and, depending on the scope of the rights granted to the regional bodies, political and administrative autonomy may be distinguished. The decentralized unitary states include Great Britain, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Finland, etc.

If we talk about centralized unitary states, it should be noted that the implementation of international relations is strictly in the hands of the central authorities. Nevertheless, in some European countries, such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland and other, a certain degree of freedom is granted to the regions in the implementation of international cooperation. For example, in Sweden, landstings (county councils) have broad powers in this area. They develop relations with their foreign partners in various areas. This includes foreign economic cooperation, the strengthening of humanitarian contacts and cooperation in the fields of culture, health, education and even regional planning. The county councils have the right to request funding from the Swedish Department of international coop-

eration and development (SIDA), which is a government organization acting as a structure of the Swedish Foreign Ministry, with a budget of about 500 million kroner per year for the purposes of international cooperation. The main economic partners of landstings in Sweden are the regions in Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany and the UK¹.

In discussing the Russian-Swedish interregional relations, it should be noted that at the moment bilateral cooperation is experiencing a decline due to foreign policy reasons. But, despite this, Swedish landstings are actively cooperating with Veliky Novgorod, Tula region, Tver and other regions of Russia².

Swedish companies are interested in cooperation with Russian regions in the field of pharmaceuticals and engineering, waste processing, automotive industry, agriculture, low-rise wooden house building, etc.³.

Swedish landstings carry out an active cooperation with the regions of the Nordic countries, and in particular, with the regions of Russia in the framework of international organizations aimed at interregional cooperation such as the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea states, the Council of Barents/Euro-Arctic region⁴.

In the case of the Netherlands, the regions of the kingdom have an extensive program of international cooperation and are free to choose the direction of their activities. This freedom is not restricted by the government, nor is it regulated by any law. The regions pay special attention to the cooperation in the field of education and culture. At the same time, international relations are carried out with the account for historic features and local traditions. Various funds are specially created in the country to finance projects in foreign countries, including Russia. In order to coordinate their activities, regions in the Netherlands have merged into an organization called the Arnhem dialogue, where they regularly consult and exchange information⁵.

The Netherlands is Russia's leading trade partner. In recent decades, there have been many successful projects, profitable for both sides, in the field of energy, agriculture, transport and logistics. Dutch and Russian regions cooperate in the field of innovation, research and development. Cooperation in high-tech sectors, such as life sciences, health and information and communication technologies, is increasingly becoming a key element of bilateral relations. Cooperation is actively carried out within the framework of the Joint program of actions signed for the period from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2019, in which much attention is paid to inter-

¹ Dubrovina O.Yu., Plotnikova O.V. International relations of the regions of the states: characteristics and features. – M.: Norma, 2016. – P. 95.

² See: – URL: <http://tass.ru/pmef-2017/articles/4277638> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

³ See: – URL: <http://tass.ru/pmef-2017/articles/4277638> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

⁴ See: – URL: <http://www.hyno.ru/tom1/1968.html> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

⁵ Dubrovina O.Yu., Plotnikova O.V. International relations of the regions of the states: characteristics and features. – M.: Norma, 2016. – P. 96.

regional relations in the economic, scientific, technical and environmental fields. In the interests of developing bilateral cooperation, the regions of Russia and the Netherlands establish joint ventures and interregional business cooperation groups and exchange bilateral missions at the regional level¹.

As to the relatively decentralized states and the international cooperation of their regions, their characteristics can be examined on the example of France. In France, a region (fr.: région) means a top-level administrative-territorial unit with a defined territory and its own cultural or social identity. The country is divided into 18 regions, 13 of them are in the metropolis² and five are overseas territories³.

International activities of French territories, called decentralized cooperation, started after France carried out its management reform of 1980-1990-ies. The aim of the reform was to create an effective and coherent system on the ground, combining decentralized state and local self-government. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the main tool of modernization was the redistribution of powers between the central and local authorities. Decentralized cooperation received a strong impetus after the adoption in France of a number of laws. Thus, law No. 92-125 of 06.02.1992 introduced the concept of decentralized cooperation and initiated the formation of its legal framework. The law allowed local authorities international cooperation and international agreements with the territories of foreign countries⁴.

Law No. 95-115 of 04.02.1995 allowed French territories to join foreign public organizations and participate in the capital of foreign legal entities, while acting within the limits of their powers and in compliance with the international obligations of France⁵.

Law No. 2005-95 of 09.02.2005 "On international cooperation of local authorities in the field of water supply and sanitation" played an important role in the development of international cooperation of local authorities⁶.

¹ See: – URL: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/41d4ba4e56e0d2bfc357.pdf> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

² Burgundy-France-Comte, New Aquitaine, Normandy, Grand Est, Occitania, O-de-France, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Brittany, Center-Loire Valley, Corsica, Ile-de-France, Loire, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

³ In 2014, French President Francois Hollande presented a project to reform the regional division of France, which includes merging parts of the regions and reducing their total number. In the same year, the French Parliament (the French National Assembly and the Senate) approved a law (published on 16 January 2015) that reduced the number of French regions from 22 to 13. The new territorial division came into force on January 1, 2016.

⁴ Loi № 92-125 du 6 février 1992 relative à l'administration territoriale de la République. – URL: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006078688> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

⁵ Domenac J. Territorial collectives of France. – N. Novgorod, 1999. – P. 116.

⁶ Loi № 2005-95 du 9 février 2005 relative à la coopération internationale des collectivités territoriales et des agences de l'eau dans les domaines de l'alimentation en eau et de l'assainissement. – URL: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000628190&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

According to Law No. 2007-147 of 02.02.2007, the territories may, in accordance with France's international obligations, enter into agreements with the local authorities of foreign states for cooperation and assistance in development¹.

The formation of French legislation was greatly influenced by European instruments adopted in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the European Framework Convention on cross-border cooperation adopted in 1980 and its two protocols of 1995 and 1998. On April 16, 2008, France adopted Law № 208-352, that ratified Protocol № 2 to the European Framework Convention and permitted cooperation of local authorities not only with foreign cross-border territories. This has strengthened cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation².

At the beginning of the 21st century, political modernization in France ended with the creation of a decentralized system of public administration. The new version of the French Constitution enshrines the right of the territories to self-government, establishing that "no administrative-territorial entity has the right to exercise guardianship over another territorial-administrative entity"³. The expansion of the powers of territories coincided with the establishment of a new world order after the collapse of the "world system of socialism", the Soviet Union, the bipolar system of international relations, the expansion of the European Union, etc. in the conditions of powerful global processes and the strengthening of regionalization, the state's monopoly on international relations began to collapse, and international relations became to be understood as an interaction of various actors⁴. Local and regional authorities had to respond to external pressure in order to find their place in the architecture of international relations and strengthen their positions in the context of global competition.

Today, 18 French regions, 80 departments and 400 municipal associations are involved in decentralized international cooperation. The French territories cooperate with the regions and municipalities of 141 countries⁵. It should be noted that

¹ Loi № 2007-147 du 2 février 2007 relative à l'action extérieure des collectivités territoriales et de leurs groupements. – URL: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000820338&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

² Loi № 2008-352 du 16 avril 2008 visant à renforcer la coopération transfrontalière, transnationale et interrégionale par la mise en conformité du code général des collectivités territoriales avec le règlement communautaire relatif à un groupement européen de coopération territoriale. – URL: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000018656025> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

³ Constitution de la Cinquième République française à jour de la révision constitutionnelle du 23 juillet 2008. – URL: <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/la-constitution/la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-de-1958.5074.html> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

⁴ Bek U. What is globalization? The errors of globalism-answers to globalization / Translation from German by Gregoriev A., Sedelnik V. – M., 2001. – P. 86.

⁵ Djeflat A., Boidin B. Coopération décentralisée et développement durable // Développement Durable et Territoires. – 2010. – Vol. 1, 11. – URL: <http://developpement-durable.revues.org/8387> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

the peculiarity of the French decentralized cooperation is that it involves more local authorities than the regions¹. As a result of the management reform, another dimension, “territorial diplomacy”, was added to France’s international relations. Cross-border cooperation has developed at the fastest pace.

The main instrument of cooperation is bilateral agreements with the territories of foreign states. The main partners of the regions and local authorities of France are the regions and local authorities in Europe. To date, 8527 agreements have been signed with them, while only 4% were signed with the regions, the remaining 96% – with French local authorities². The main partners of the French regions are the regions and municipalities of Germany, Spain, Italy and Great Britain. The leading positions of these countries look natural, since they are all long-standing partners of France in the European Union and border with France, which facilitates cross-border cooperation within the framework of Euroregions. The decentralization of France is also influenced by the fact that such processes have been carefully studied and deeply developed in the EU countries. The cooperation of the European regions is provided with a strong legal, institutional and financial base. Recently, such countries and their regions as Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Russia have attracted the interest of French regions. Among the countries outside the European Union and Europe, we can distinguish the area known as “Priority solidarity”, including the former colonies of France, as well as regions of the USA, Canada, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Argentina, China, India, Vietnam, etc. As for the main areas of cooperation, they include the economy, education and culture.

Such a wide geography of international relations of the French regions allows us to distinguish three models in the strategy of decentralized cooperation.

The first model assumes equal cooperation of territories with developed economy, political and social infrastructure. This model includes international relations between the regions of France and the regions of the European Union, the USA and Canada.

The second model is implemented in Asia and Latin America and is focused on scientific, technical and cultural cooperation.

The third model is based on cooperation with the regions in the developing countries. The main projects are related to the cooperation in the field of agriculture, education and the development of local self-government³.

¹ From time to time, the issue of granting some legislative autonomy to the regions is raised in France, but such proposals are always subject to harsh criticism. It was also proposed to abolish the councils of the départements (General Councils) and transfer their functions to the regional councils, while maintaining the departments as administrative units of a lower level, however, concrete steps have been taken so far.

² Atlas français de la coopération décentralisée et des autres actions extérieures. – URL: <http://www.cncd.fr/frontoffice/bdd-monde.asp> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

³ Husson B. La coopération décentralisée pour le développement, un facteur de crédibilisation des collectivités du Sud? // Cites Unies France. – 2006. – P. 207.

When we talk about decentralized unitary states, Finland can be cited as an example. In Finland, the international activities of the regions are not regulated by laws, as there is no separate legislation regulating the implementation of international relations by the regional authorities. They enjoy complete freedom of action. In practice, the governorates are guided in their international activities by the Charter of the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe, Declaration of the Assembly of European regions, the European Framework Convention on cross-border cooperation of territorial communities and authorities and other documents regulating interregional and cross-border cooperation. In case of a dispute in this area, the decision on it is taken by the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland.

Regional authorities have the powers to conduct negotiations on the implementation of international cooperation projects, as well as the right to officially represent their regions in intergovernmental international organizations¹.

As for the Russian-Finnish interregional cooperation, it should be noted that the nature of the relations between the two states is largely determined by their geographical location and common border. The legal basis for interregional cooperation between Russia and Finland is the Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation in the Murmansk region, the Republic of Karelia, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region of January 20, 1992.

As a part of cooperation between Russia and Finland, more than 200 joint projects are being implemented in the neighboring regions. Priorities in cross-border cooperation are: mutual trade, economic development, use of natural resources, development of agriculture and food industry, improvement of transport and communication means, improvement of information exchange, environmental protection, improvement of administration, health and social welfare, research and development, tourism, education, culture, sports and youth contacts².

The development of cross-border cooperation is carried out with the consideration for the interests of the population of the border areas of the neighboring states. These relations have formed a wide network of mutually beneficial contacts.

Regions of Russia and Finland actively cooperate in international organizations, such as the Barents/Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) to stabilize the climate system in the Northern and Arctic regions, to preserve the forest fund, to establish networks of specially protected natural areas, to combat illegal logging and trafficking in illegally extracted wood.

The Northern Dimension of the European Union (ND) is the next priority area of cooperation between Finland and Russia. The Russian Federation is fun-

¹ Dubrovina O.Yu., Plotnikova O.V. International relations of the regions of the states: characteristics and features. – M.: Norma, 2016. – Pp. 95-96.

² See: – URL: <https://ar-ar.facebook.com/MIDRussia/posts/793042384128538> (accessed: 20.09.2018).

damentally interested in the comprehensive development of this European region. The peculiarity of Russia's participation in ND is that it is represented in the area of the most dynamically developing border region – the North-West. Under the leadership of Russia and Finland, as the main curators of the project, a strategic plan for the protection of the Arctic marine environment was developed. Russia and Finland were the main beneficiaries of the Environmental partnership program¹.

The regional partnership is addressing the issues of sustainable socio-economic development of adjacent territories, ensuring the safety of residence and business, environmental protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

Carrying out cross-border cooperation, the regions strive to create the most comfortable conditions for attracting private investment, funds of international programs for the implementation of mutually beneficial projects.

The Republic of Karelia, St. Petersburg, Leningrad and Murmansk regions are the most active actors of the cross-border cooperation between Russia and Finland. The development of foreign economic and international activities has revived trade and passenger flows and stimulated the development of customs and border infrastructure. The main projects implemented in these regions can be divided into the following areas: restructuring and development of enterprises, financial market, energy, transport, telecommunications, education, ecology, training, social security, health, environmental protection, nuclear safety.

However, despite the variety of partnerships between Russia and Finland in cross-border partnership, there are also weaknesses, such as the difference in the levels of cross-border communications and information, raw material orientation of the industry of the border areas, environmental problems².

Summing up, it should be noted that the process of regionalization of unitary states is characterized by its own features.

Unitary states are divided into administrative-territorial units, and the states are governed according to the principle of centralization of the basic state powers and along the vertical line of power. Regions of unitary states do not have state-legal characteristics. In unitary states, the status of administrative-territorial units is determined either by the acts of central authority or by the organization of state power at all levels from top to bottom. This determines not only the system of public authorities, but also the powers of each level of government, including in the field of international relations.

Having analyzed the development of international relations between the regions of centralized, relatively decentralized and centralized unitary states, it can be concluded that even unitary states under the influence of regionalism are forced to implement a more flexible policy towards the regions in the sphere of international relations, giving them more rights and opportunities.

¹ See: – URL: http://lawtoday.ru/razdel/biblo/kpzs/DOC_099.php (accessed: 20.09.2018).

² See: – URL: http://lawtoday.ru/razdel/biblo/kpzs/DOC_099.php (accessed: 20.09.2018).

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