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**LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY OF STATES
AS A POLITICAL PHENOMENON
(ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE LITHUANIAN REPUBLIC)**

Specialization: 5.5.4 International Relations, global and regional studies

Abstract

of the dissertation for the degree of candidate of political sciences

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Relevance of the research topic.

Sovereignty is the most important attribute of a state, regardless of its area, state system and other characteristics. In modern political science, both in Russia and abroad, sovereignty is generally understood as the supremacy and independence of the state in foreign and domestic affairs («traditional constitutional doctrine», as defined by Yu. A. Voloshin). In other words, we are talking about the possibility of a state freely and independently implementing its foreign and domestic policy: if it has such a possibility, it is considered sovereign, and if it does not, it is considered non-sovereign.

Strategic documents that outline the need to protect sovereignty have been adopted in almost all countries of the world. The concept of foreign policy of the Russian Federation recognizes the protection of «sovereignty and independence" as one of the main areas for protecting Russia's national interests, and the protection of «sovereignty and state independence» is recognized as the basis of national security. In June 2024, at a meeting with the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Vladimir Putin said that «more and more states are striving to strengthen sovereignty, self-sufficiency, national and cultural identity».

At the same time, the peculiarities of the modern system of international relations and the growth of interdependence of states, globalization and regionalization, the spread of integration associations and global economic ties raise the question: is full sovereignty of states in its classical understanding possible at present? The overwhelming majority of modern states are to one degree or another connected with other states by international treaties and agreements, various obligations, membership in international organizations. This presupposes not only mutual rights, but also mutual obligations of participants, and responsibility for their failure to fulfill them forces states to coordinate their decisions and policies with other states. There are also precedents of interstate political associations. For example, the European Union with its formed supranational authorities, whose decisions are generally binding for all EU member states. Are the members of the European Union sovereign in terms of traditional attributes of sovereignty? For example, in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, which we reviewed in our dissertation research, sovereignty is recognized as a “vital interest of national security,”

and according to the Law on the Fundamentals of National Security, sovereignty is considered a «legal basis for defense» of the republic. However, Lithuania's actions are subject to the general norms of the European Union.

Thus, the scientific and practical relevance of the study is due to the presence of a contradiction: on the one hand, there is a need for states to ensure their sovereignty (this need explains and legitimizes many foreign and domestic policy decisions and actions of states), and on the other hand, the modern system of international relations presupposes various kinds of relationships and mutual obligations that limit the independence of states.

The scientific and theoretical relevance of the research topic is determined by the need to clarify the concepts of «sovereignty» and «limited sovereignty», which currently has a predominantly negative connotation and is often equated with the inferiority of the state (for example, Russian legal scholar V.V. Polyansky, discussing the idea of limited sovereignty of states, writes about it as a way to «camouflage» their «actual dependence» on those states that, unlike them, are capable of defending their sovereignty “under any conditions»).

The degree of scientific development of the research topic.

A large number of works and studies are devoted to the issue of state sovereignty. State sovereignty is mainly the subject of research in the field of law, in particular, international law and state law. The analyzed sources were systematized into several groups based on the purpose and objectives of the dissertation research.

The first group includes scientific works devoted to the analysis of the current position of states as the main bearers of sovereignty within the framework of the modern system of international relations. This group includes studies conducted since the second half of the 20th century, since this period saw the formation and evolution of the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, which, according to the generally accepted opinion, continues to operate to this day, despite the collapse of the USSR. Such studies include the works of Z. Brzezinski, I. Wallerstein, G. Morgenthau, L. Thurow, S. Walt, K. Waltz, G. Schwarzenberger and some others. All the studies considered recognize the preservation of the leading or significant role of states in the modern system of international relations, but at the same time do not deny the influence of globalization

processes and interstate interactions on their sovereignty, or consider such influence insignificant.

The second group includes works devoted to the theoretical conceptualization of the nature of sovereignty in the context of the modern system of international relations. The works of Russian scientists A. Karasev, E. Kuzmin, A. Morozova, G. Musikhin, D. Khudoley, L. Chernyak and other researchers contributed to the study of this issue. Some scientists in this group consider the issue of sovereignty in the context of the federal nature of the modern Russian state and are more focused on the balance of powers of the federal center and the subjects of the Russian Federation. Another part raises the question of possible changes in approaches to considering the concept of «sovereignty» in the current century due to the emergence of new subjects of international relations (for example, transnational corporations act in this role).

The third group includes works devoted directly to the phenomenon of limited sovereignty of states. A great contribution to the development of the current understanding of this term was made by researchers A. Luzan and S. Luzan, as well as E. Kuznetsova and V. Polyansky – their works are devoted to the analysis of the methods and factors of limiting the sovereignty of some modern states.

A certain contribution to understanding the phenomenon of «limited sovereignty» is also made by the works of Yu. Zverev, N. Mezhevich, I. Novikova and others, dedicated to the so-called «small countries» – we can classify these studies into a separate, fourth group.

Finally, the fifth group of studies consists of works devoted to the analysis of political processes in the Baltic republics and, in particular, in the Republic of Lithuania. This group includes studies by P. Barakhvostov, V. Vorotnikov, V. Komleva, N. Mezhevich, V. Smirnov, J. Toom and a number of other scientists. In addition, it is worth noting the contribution to the study of the geopolitical position of the Baltic republics and the features of their interaction with neighboring states of domestic (Center for European Studies IIS of MGIMO University, Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, National Research Institute for Communications

Development, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University) and foreign (Robert Schuman Foundation, Center for Geopolitics and Security Studies) analytical centers, as well as portals (RuBaltic.Ru).

Research hypothesis.

Modern trends of growth and deepening interconnectedness and interdependence of states at the regional and international levels, as well as the growth of integration associations are presumably becoming a source of limitation of sovereignty of states in its traditional understanding. Probably, the phenomenon of limited sovereignty is evolving towards the norm and is becoming a characteristic of states with insignificant own resources of their own international subjectivity in the context of their involvement in international political integration. An example of this can be the Republic of Lithuania.

The object of the research is limited sovereignty as a phenomenon of international relations.

The subject of the research is the mechanisms of limiting the sovereignty of states (using the example of the Republic of Lithuania).

The purpose of the research is to identify the factors and mechanisms of limiting the sovereignty of states (using the Republic of Lithuania as an example).

To achieve the stated goal, the following **research tasks** were solved:

- to define theoretical and methodological approaches to the study and understanding of sovereignty and limited sovereignty of states in the current international context;
- to characterize the essence, features and structure of limited sovereignty of states;
- to identify factors of limited sovereignty of states;
- to determine mechanisms for limiting the sovereignty of states;
- to develop a methodology for assessing limited sovereignty and test it using the example of the Republic of Lithuania;
- to identify factors and mechanisms for limiting the sovereignty of the Republic of Lithuania.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the research.

The methodological basis of the study was the systemic, structural-functional and institutional approaches. The systemic approach was used to describe the features of the

interaction of states within the framework of the modern system of international relations from the point of view of the internationalization of their economies and legal systems, which ultimately affects the ability to implement state sovereignty.

The structural-functional approach was used to compile a structure of characteristics of states, groups of factors influencing the fullness of sovereignty of such states and the possibility of their implementing their foreign and domestic policies (international-political, domestic, economic, military, historical, geographical, informational and cultural-civilizational groups of factors were proposed), as well as mechanisms for limiting the sovereignty of states (mechanisms for limiting political, economic and informational-ideological sovereignty were proposed).

The institutional approach was used to analyze the role of political institutions and public authorities in the state's participation in the modern system of international relations, as well as to study the communication regime of the Republic of Lithuania.

During the study, such general scientific methods of cognition as synthesis, analysis, deduction, induction, as well as methods used in political sciences (the method of international political analysis, the method of comparative analysis, the method of content analysis, the method of expert assessment) were also applied.

The method of international political analysis was applied to analyze theories and concepts of international relations (political realism, structural realism (neorealism), neoliberalism, neoconservatism, postpositivism, the theory of biopower/biopolitics, Neo-Marxism) and state sovereignty (sovereignty as the embodiment of the essence of the state in the institution of the monarch; the people as the source of sovereign state power) in order to consider historical, as well as identify modern approaches to considering the concept of «sovereignty of states».

The comparative analysis method was used to analyze the evolution of the concept of «sovereignty» (approaches to defining sovereignty by Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as well as modern researchers were compared) and research in this area (comparison of the provisions of the above-mentioned theories and paradigms of state sovereignty made it possible to form an idea of their common and distinctive features, which was reflected in their final systematization).

The method of document analysis was used in the study of normative documents governing the main directions of foreign and domestic policy of the states considered in the study, interstate relations, as well as relations between states and international organizations.

The expert assessment method was used to rank groups of factors limiting the sovereignty of states and divide them into basic and additional ones, as well as their application in relation to the Republic of Lithuania.

The **regulatory framework of the research** was formed by the normative and legal documents of the states (the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania, the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 229, March 31, 2023) and the Resolution of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on Directions in Foreign Policy (No. XIV-65, December 10, 2020), the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of November 9, 2022 No. 809 «On Approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values» and a number of others), documents of international public and non-governmental organizations (Collective Security Treaty of May 15, 1992, the Law of the Republic of Lithuania of May 6, 2004 «On Ratification of the Agreement between the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty regarding the Status of their Forces and Protocol on the Status of International Military Headquarters set up pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty», the Charter of the United Nations and some others) ceased and current regulatory and legal acts of states – constitutions and documents dedicated to the main directions of the foreign policy of states, as well as bilateral agreements between states (the current constitutions of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and the Republic of Finland of 1948, the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, the Collective Security Treaty of 1992 and some others), opinions and reports of government bodies (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Security Council of the Russian Federation, the State Data Agency and the Parliamentary Committee on National Security and Defense of the Republic of Lithuania and some others), speeches by official representatives of states on the issues of

sovereignty and the state of bilateral relations of the states under study (Presidents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania V.V. Putin and G. Nausėda, Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania J. Šiugždinienė, Director General of the International Community of Curators for Foreign Education Univibes I. Golotova and some others).

The empirical basis of the research was made up of materials from reports of international organizations and government bodies, sociological data, materials from the media, materials from annual monitoring of communication regimes in post-Soviet countries conducted by the National Research Institute for the Development of Communications, as well as the results of the expert assessment method applied by the author.

Scientific novelty of the research.

1) Political science approaches of foreign and domestic researchers to the definition of the concept, essence and role of sovereignty of states in the modern system of international relations are systematized. Directions for further development of scientific approaches to the operationalization of the concept of "sovereignty" and the author's interpretation of the concept of «sovereignty» are proposed, considering the peculiarities of the dynamics of the modern system of international relations.

2) Groups of factors of limited sovereignty of states have been developed, the calculation of indicators of which allows not only to determine the level of sovereignty of a particular state, but also to identify those areas of its activity that are most subject to restrictions by foreign states and other subjects of international relations. The method of expert assessment confirmed the author's division of groups of factors of limited sovereignty of states into basic and additional. The author's developments were tested using the example of the Republic of Lithuania.

3) The main mechanisms for limiting the sovereignty of states have been identified and grouped, and the author's conclusions have been verified using the example of the Republic of Lithuania.

4) The methodology of the study of communication regimes of the National Research Institute for the Development of Communications has been adapted to the goals

and objectives of the dissertation; in particular, it has been argued that signs of limitation of sovereignty are manifested in the communication regime established by states, including in the foreign policy communication regime.

Provisions submitted for defense.

1) The understanding of sovereignty in the meaning of the supremacy and independence of the state in foreign and domestic affairs that has developed in political science does not accurately reflect the dynamics of state sovereignty in the context of modern international processes – a number of modern states do not meet the classical criteria of sovereignty, while maintaining their statehood. Considering the changed reality, characterized by an increase in the formats of interdependence of states, it is proposed to further define sovereignty as *the ability of a state to limit the influence of external actors on domestic political, foreign policy state decisions and political institutions*. Accordingly, the loss of such ability by a state leads to a limitation of its sovereignty.

2) Limited sovereignty is one of the consequences of the growth of regional and global interdependence in the areas of politics, economics, culture and information. Limited sovereignty can be the result of the voluntary consent of individual states to limit their sovereign will in exchange for certain dividends and benefits. Limited sovereignty is, in essence, a measure of sovereignty in which forms of dependence on other subjects of international relations can be traced to varying degrees.

3) Limitation of sovereignty of states is determined by at least eight groups of basic and additional factors. International political factors determine limitation of sovereignty of states through their political interaction with other states and other subjects of international relations, as well as membership in international organizations with delegation of some powers and implementation of generally binding norms. Domestic political factors determine the influence of norms of international law on national legislation of the state, powers of subjects included in the structure of the administrative-territorial structure of the state, as well as the degree of participation of foreign citizens in the internal affairs of the state. Economic factors determine the limitation of the sovereignty of the state through the state's participation in international organizations of

an economic nature and the world banking system, the introduction of economic sanctions by and against the state, the participation of foreign states and other subjects of international relations in the economic processes of the state. Military factors reflect the ability of the armed forces to protect the state and the nature of the state's international military-political cooperation. Historical factors allow us to understand how the experience of statehood and legal succession is used to ensure sovereignty. Geographical factors predetermine the possible limitation of the sovereignty of a state due to its geographical location, the potential of its natural resource base, and the involvement of foreign states and other subjects of international relations in its development. Informational factors determine the impact of modern information and communication technologies on sovereignty, show the degree of external influence on information policy and information content within the state. Cultural and civilizational factors allow us to predict the ability of a state to become a spiritual leader at the regional or international level, the potential dependence of the state on axiological, religious, cultural identity with other states.

4) 4) Limitation of state sovereignty is manifested through at least three mechanisms: limitation of political sovereignty (arises in the conditions of actual inequality of modern states through the use of instruments of concluding treaties and agreements, refusal to conclude them, as well as membership in international political organizations); limitation of economic sovereignty (associated with participation in international economic and banking institutions and investment institutions, limited opportunities to use the geoeconomic value of their territory and its natural resource base, as well as unequal participation in the international division of labor); limitation of informational and ideological sovereignty (associated with inequality of states in technological development, absence or dependence of resources for the formation and promotion of their information agenda, vulnerability of the national information space).

5) The Republic of Lithuania is an example of a state in which all the mechanisms of limiting sovereignty identified in the course of the study are manifested. The mechanism of limiting political sovereignty is manifested in the form of the membership of the studied state in the European Union and NATO and in the formats of individual partnership with the USA. The mechanism of limiting economic sovereignty

is manifested in the aspects of accession (closure of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant) and membership (quotas, migration regulations) in the European Union. The mechanism of limiting the information and ideological sovereignty of the Republic of Lithuania is manifested both in the technological dependence of the studied state on foreign information and communication technologies (from software to technical devices), and in the dependence of the state's information policy and its media content on the interests of external subjects of international relations – mainly the USA, which is a «tutor state» for the Republic of Lithuania.

6) Signs of limited sovereignty are manifested in the communication regimes established in states. The norms and rules of domestic and foreign policy communications reliably reflect the problems of state sovereignty. In particular, in the Republic of Lithuania, insufficient information sovereignty, dependence of media resources on external actors, strict control of communication channels, socialization institutions, and censorship of information content in order to prevent the penetration of ideas and the implementation of actions that contradict the policies of the European Union and the United States have been identified.

Theoretical significance of the research.

The dissertation research contributes to the study of states as subjects of international relations and to the development of the conceptual apparatus of the study of international relations and world politics, in particular to the development of scientific and theoretical approaches to the study of the sovereignty of states and the institutionalization of the phenomenon of «limited sovereignty» in conjunction with international processes and phenomena.

Practical significance of the research.

The findings and results of the dissertation research can be used in developing the main directions of foreign and domestic policy of the Russian Federation in terms of implementing its sovereign rights in the international arena, as well as building relationships with the states of the post-Soviet space, in particular, those included in the structures of the European Union and NATO, which meets the main directions of ensuring national security of the Russian Federation. The results of the dissertation research, the

research methodology proposed by the author can be used in further scientific research. The materials of the dissertation can be used in the educational process of students and postgraduates studying in the specialties «International Relations», «Regional Studies», «Political Science».

Conformity of the research to the passport of scientific specialization.

The dissertation research corresponds to the passport of the specialty 5.5.4. – «International relations, global and regional studies», namely paragraph 1 – «Theory and methodology, methods of analysis, development of the conceptual apparatus of the study of international relations and world politics. Western and non-Western research traditions. International political analysis», as well as paragraph 2 – «Subjects of international relations. Activities of state and non-state actors. Formal and informal institutions in international relations and in world politics. Formation and implementation of foreign policy strategies, concepts and doctrines».

Approbation of research results.

The dissertation research was discussed and recommended for defense at the Department of National and Federal Relations of the Institute of Public Administration and Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

The main provisions of the dissertation research were tested by the author at the following scientific conferences and events:

- at the VI International Scientific and Practical Conference «Russia and the World: Dialogues – 2022» (Moscow, 2022);
- at the International Conference Session «Public Administration and Development of Russia: Global Trends and National Prospects» (Moscow, 2022);
- at the All-Russian Historical Forum (Third All-Russian Scientific Conference) «The Wind of Perestroika» (St. Petersburg, 2023);
- at the VIII International Scientific and Practical Conference «Russia and the World: Dialogues – 2024. Forces of Attraction» (Moscow, 2024);
- at the IX International Scientific and Practical Conference «Russia and the World: Dialogues – 2025. Strategies» (Moscow, 2025).

The methodology for studying the mechanisms for limiting state sovereignty was tested during the monitoring of communication regimes of post-Soviet countries, in particular, during the analysis of the communication regime of the Republics of Lithuania and Estonia, during the compilation and publication of the Rating of Friendliness of Communication Regimes of Post-Soviet Countries (2022-2024).

The research materials were implemented by the author in the educational process, in particular, in the preparation and conduct of training sessions for undergraduate students studying in the field of training «Foreign Regional Studies» at the Institute of Public Administration and Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration.

The **reliability and validity of the research results** are determined by the use of a set of consistent and relevant theoretical and methodological approaches and research methods, the correct application of the theoretical foundations of modern political science regarding the position of states in the modern system of international relations and issues of state sovereignty, practical verification of the methods for measuring state sovereignty formulated within the framework of the dissertation research, and expert assessment of the research results by specialists in the relevant field of political science.

The **structure and volume of the research** is determined by the stated goal and objectives and includes an introduction, two chapters consisting of six paragraphs, conclusions to them, a conclusion and a list of references.

The **text of the research** is 131 pages, the total volume of the work is 159 pages.