PROBLEM FORMULATION

Territorial structures of states and regions are not the principal, but the constant, object of professional interest of scientists and politicians. The writings of historians chronologically describe both serious and minor changes in the territorial structure of the world, individual states, and their regions; reference books of administrative-territorial division and maps compiled by statisticians and cartographers illustrate the vast differences between potential equal-status units of territorial division and the whimsicality or, on the contrary, deliberate geometricity of state, interregional, and intermunicipal boundaries; geographers fix statistics and dynamics of space division for a variety of reasons (from physicogeographical to electoral ones); legal scholars study the legal sources of demarcation of territories and adjudication of their statuses; researchers of state and municipal governments offer different versions of the principles of territorial decentralization of power; politicians are often concerned with the resolution of problems in those specific areas, which for various reasons were at the center of their interests; etc.

In recent years, the issues of territorial divisions of states and regions have been addressed by many researchers, but among those who have made it the subject of special consideration I would like to mention A.A. Adamesku, V.L. Baburin, P.Ya. Baklanov, E.M. Bukhval’d, S.D. Valentei, L.B. Vardomskii, M.Ya. Gokhberg, A.G. Granberg, V.V. Kistanov, V.A. Kolosov, G.M. Lappo, N.S. Mironenko, P.A. Mikhailin, E.N. Pertseik, B.B. Rodoman, V.E. Seliverstov, L.V. Smirnyagin, A.S. Solomatkin, S.A. Tarkhov, Yu.A. Tikhomirov, A.I. Treivish, R.F. Turovskii, and B.M. Shtul’berg. These problems were studied by many scientists of the Soviet era, and among them we must primarily remember E.B. Alaev and B.S. Horev.

In this article, my appeal on the issues of the territorial structure of the state is due to the long-standing interest in the topic, as well as my participation as a project coordinator within the program of the Presidium of Russian Academy of Sciences “Fundamental Problems of Spatial Development: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis.”

Everything known about the territorial structure of states convinces us that this structure is both conservative and dynamic, where changes in the composition of its elements, as well as the boundaries between them, are influenced by many factors. Such changes are implemented in the form of jumps (for example, during the simultaneous introduction of a new network of municipalities throughout the country), as well as at different times and in the form of unrelated local transformations. Drastic changes in the territorial structure of states are extremely rare and are generally associated with essential reforms of the political system or national-wide reforms. Unfortunately, in post-Soviet Russia, practically none of the implemented innovations in the territorial structure of the country was a result of science-based proposals, and the decisions taken were never evaluated based on solid empirical evidence. Most often, these innovations have been explained by the “political necessity” or other causes of a conjunctural and political nature, “administration difficulties,” etc. The blame for this lies on only those who made the decisions without referring to the scientific community.

The scientific rationale for improving the territorial structure of the state is extremely difficult, because it requires the correct connection of modern ideas regarding the state system in the state theory and the theory of organizational management, political science and social geography, institutional economics,
and a number of other scientific disciplines with the use of modern diagnostic methodology of complex socioeconomic systems and spatially extended objects. At the same time, conducting such multidisciplinary research is justified not only scientifically, but also in practical terms, due to the fact that not well-grounded decisions regarding changes in territorial structures can have lasting negative consequences and returning the changed territorial structure to its original status can produce a number of additional conflict situations.

It should be noted that the territorial system of Russia used to change repeatedly and very radically and the consolidation and downsizing of units of territorial division successively replaced each other. Thus, the creation of eight large gubernias during the Peter’s first reforms had to be adjusted during his second reforms by the formation of new gubernias and their division into 45 provinces (and the latter were divided into districts). Further disaggregation of gubernias, elimination of provinces, appearance of viceregencies, segregation of uezds, and, in some cases, oblasts during Catherine’s reforms were replaced by the consolidation of the “Catherine” units of territorial division under Paul I. This was followed by the restoration of the “Catherine” division, emergence of new gubernia under Alexander I, and the establishment of the multicast (gubernias, oblasts, oblasts with rights of gubernias, general governments, governorships, and uezds and volosts) in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. All this was strongly modified during the creation of fundamentally new units of territorial division (republics, autonomies) and disaggregation of prerevolutionary units during the first years of the Soviet rule (1918–1922). This was followed by an enlargement of the earlier formed units of territorial division; gubernias, uezds, and volosts were abolished with the appearance of only oblasts, krais, and national autonomies and attempts were made to connect the principles of economic and administrative regioning (1923–1929), which was replaced by another disaggregation of the previously created units of territorial division (1930–1954). The restoration of a number of previously abandoned (so-called repressed) autonomies, another (short-term) attempt to connect (in the form of economic councils) the principles of economic and administrative regioning, and the ensuing period of relative stability of the territorial structure of the state (1955–1989) gave way to an increased post-perestroika status of national autonomies, emergence of autonomous okrugs on the territories of oblasts and krais, and emergence of enclave (the Kaliningrad oblast) with the replacement of the network of areas of grassroot public administration with a network of municipalities (1990–1999). The latest period (2000–2008) was characterized by the creation of federal districts, formation of new federal subject with the cessation of the functioning of several autonomous okrugs, and the establishment of a new network of local governments.

Analysis of the above-mentioned radical reformations of the territorial structure of Russia, as well as a number of evolutionary reformations, leads to the conclusion that these changes have always been a standard result of administrative decisions adopted taking into account national and ethnic, climatic, geographical, economic, resource, and internal and external factors in the presence of indisputable dominance of the requirement for the more efficient (in terms of the current situation) implementation of the regulatory and administrative functions of central, regional, and local authorities. The territorial division of Russia has always been a network of areas of central and territorially mediated power.

**RESEARCH SUBJECT AND KEY DEFINITIONS**

An analysis of sources on the territorial structure of Russia showed that the least available for study were both real reasons (preconditions) for the adoption of certain decisions and estimates of the actual consequences of their implementation. In this regard, there was an attempt of interdisciplinary structuring of the study subject field of the status and reformations of the territorial structure of modern Russia with the distinction of the following research objectives as the most significant blocks.

1. **Study of preconditions for transformations of territorial structure:**
   1.1. Qualitative changes in the political, economic, social, and legal space, as well as foreign political and economic conditions of functioning of the state and its regions;
   1.2. Change in the balance of centralization and territorial decentralization of power, as well as redistribution of functions, responsibilities, competencies, and resources of the regulatory and managerial activity of authorities between levels of its territorial organization;
   1.3. Proven inability to perform constitutional obligations of the state, implement investment and other projects, do business because of the existing territorial structure and presence of boundaries between units of territorial division.

2. **Study of the results of reformations of territorial structure:**
   2.1. Change in the socioeconomic parameters and qualitative status of territories (stabilization, appeared, decreased or increased depression, the manifestations of regional or national separatism, etc.) as a result of territorial changes;
   2.2. Political, economic, social, fiscal, and managerial consequences of changing the number and status of territorial division units, as well as the boundaries between them;