

**THE FINNO-UGRIC NATIONALISM IN THE AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AS THE OBJECT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY  
OF FINLAND, HUNGARY AND ESTONIA**

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*This article analyzes the external factors influencing the development of national movements in the Finno-Ugric republics of Russia. For its assessment the comparative analysis of Finnish, Hungarian and Estonian policies relating to the support of ethno-political movements was conducted. One of the issues highlighted in the article, is a possible threat to the territorial integrity posed by the ideology of the united Finno-Ugric world.*

For the Russian Federation as a multinational federal state, having the national-territorial autonomy in its composition, the threat of the possible autonomous regions secession will always be a problem, which requires a careful approach. For different republics such probability, based on the current situation will be far from identical. The most independent and have experience of National separatist republics are certainly Tatarstan and Chechnya. Slightly lesser extent secessionist movement manifest themselves in other republics of the North Caucasus, and to a large extent in all the above cases, it is due and the Islamic factor and the influence of foreign Muslim states and international organizations. But nationalism in the Finno-Ugric republics of the Russian Federation is not articulated in the information space generally. However, there is also a national movement with varying degrees of radicalism and supported from abroad. The theme of the external influence on the ethno-political processes in the Finno-Ugric regions of Russia is of interest to researchers.

We are faced with a number of research problems. Is the concept of a common Finno-Ugric world, promoted officials from Finland, Hungary and Estonia (FHE), a real threat to Russia's territorial integrity, or an abstract construct that is an additional lever of pressure the European Union? Either this is the accumulation of political capital elites in FHE countries and regional elites Finno-Ugric republics of the Russian Federation in order to obtain additional preferences from the federal center.

Thus, the subject of research is FHE official government policies, as well as the activities of international organizations, NGOs, aimed at supporting the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia. Objective is to determine the severity of the Finno-Ugric for Russian nationalism and to identify differences in the approaches of FHE countries. To do this, you must consider the characteristics of the ideological component of pan-nationalism than with nationalism, as well as to analyze the concept of "the Finno-Ugric world" as a special case of pan-nationalism. Second, identify the role of the international Finno-Ugric organizations (World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples with its Advisory Committee, AFUP<sup>1</sup>, YAFUP<sup>2</sup>, et al.) in the nationalist ideas promotion in the Russian Federation republics. Third, determine in which regions each of FHE countries is very active in support of kindred peoples. Fourth, determine the points of contact between local nationalists and ideologists of the Finno-Ugric world of FHE countries.

The collapse of the Soviet Union raised the issue of national self-determination of autonomous republics within the Russian Federation. It is connected with the processes of self-identification and search of its identity titular peoples of these republics and the national autonomous areas. And unlike republics such as Tatarstan and Bashkiria, in the Finno-Ugric republics was no predominance of the titular nation, so they have not sufficient demographic weight. This led to a crisis of local and national movements led them on the path of creating a supranational collective Finno-Ugric identity. Ethno-political movement that emerged in the 90s, have not yet had their own ideological constructs, so they borrowed them from their Estonian colleagues [1].

Currently, 6 Finno-Ugric national autonomies are the subjects of the Russian Federation:

- Mari El Republic;
- The Republic of Mordovia;
- The Republic of Udmurtia;
- Komi Republic;
- The Republic of Karelia;
- Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug.

Until 2005, there was the Komi-Permyak Autonomous Okrug, which after merging with Perm region received the status of a special administrative-territorial district as a part of the Perm region.

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<sup>1</sup> Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples

<sup>2</sup> Youth Association of Finno-Ugric Peoples

Currently, there are processes that may involve strengthening the position of nationalist elites. In Karelia, there is a debate about gifting to Karelian language the official status. In June 2016 the constitution of the republic has been amended to change the order of the official language status granting. Since that time, the regional parliament can make such decision and the public referendum is no longer required. This means that the elites can almost seamlessly introduce new mandatory language, because the referendum would certainly dismissed it as ethnic Karelians, Veps and Finns in Karelia no more than 7%, and not all of them speak the native language. There are similar situation in the Republic of Komi. «*Still the number of deputies in legislative branch dropped from the level reflecting ethnic composition in eighties to just a few percent at the present time. This means that Finno-Ugric national elites are in shortage of political resources, and basically excluded from the process of political decision-making. The Russian federal state has full control over ethnopolitical resources*» [2].

What is the advantage of a pan-nationalism? The main actors are the international organizations and forums, which increase nationalist group's status in the negotiations with their governments and legitimize them in the world community. In addition, it provides a social communication between national elites and promote their solidarity in common objectives pursuit.

There are main provisions of the concept of the Finno-Ugric world:

1) Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia take a subordinate position under the imperial Russian people, overwhelming their identity. The peoples gradually dissolve among Russians, lose cultural characteristics and forget their language. Federal center are quite satisfied with this situation. In recent years Russian authorities are more likely to use "great-power" rhetoric, which also makes them fear the growth of Russian nationalism.

2) In order to survive Finno-Ugric peoples should consolidate and ensure the transformation of "fictitious" autonomies to real ones, with the ethnic representation in the regional governments.

3) Political and cultural integration of republics as well as with related foreign Finno-Ugric states will contribute to national awareness increase.

4) FHE countries will provide political and financial support to their "younger brothers" in the east, to create the Finno-Ugric confederation in the future.

But there are some difficulties. The Finno-Ugric peoples are separated geographically, have a very slight linguistic community and feel of "unity" is inherent for the narrow ethnic elites only. It could be noted, that the idea of the Finno-Ugric world is a form of politicized ideology of identity [3, p.167].

In 1992, the World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples was held in Syktyvkar. As the result, International Advisory Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples was established. In addition to the Russian delegates to the congress was attended by the representatives of Finland, Estonia and Hungary. This site first appeared, and political demands voiced by the delegates of these countries: the creation in the Finno-Ugric republics the upper house of parliament, which is formed according to ethnic principles [4, p.228]. Stated objectives of the organization are cultural interaction, language preservation, etc. We can say that the political and legal section of congresses - the only platform for the discussion of ethno-political issues.

During the Congress 2008 in Khanty-Mansiysk, President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves openly urged the Russian republic separatism, after which Estonian delegation with the scandal left the conference early. In 2005, at the IV World Congress with a report on the situation of the Finno-Ugric minorities in Russia made famous Hungarian linguist Janos Puszta. In his report, he interpreted the process began in the Russian regions of association with the elimination of a number of national districts as a sharp infringement of the rights of the Finno-Ugric peoples. This process, in its opinion, will lead to further erosion of identity and the further dissolution of the national languages. Subsequently, Estonian and Hungarian delegates initiated discussion of this issue at the PACE. In 1998, the Resolution 1171 was issued, which obliges Russia to do the needs of these people as "prone to extinction".

The principle of "soft power" is used: the view of the Finno-Ugric identity prevailing over the Russian national identity is grafted [4, p.232]. ("Finno-Ugrians", brothers of European Finns and Hungarians, in the first place, and the "Russians" after that, and it is not forever). "Russian - it's the people with whom you have a lot less common than with us, so you have the right to demand self-determination."

We can identify two reasons for FHE countries interest in the Pan-Finno-Ugrism.

1) All three countries have recently joined the European Union, and facing the need to transfer part of their sovereignty to supranational structures. This causes a fear of losing their identity in the face of a common European identity. These countries hadn't independence for a long time (as Estonia), or were subordinated countries and it makes them suspicious of the deepening of European integration and contributes to the development of the nationalist discourse. So they tend to create "the Finno-Ugric world" in order to protect their culture.

2) Second, concern about the Russian finno-ugres may be the answer to the Russia's compatriots protection policy in these countries, which is often interpreted as irredentism. "The Finno-Ugric world" may well meet the interests of the EU to strengthen its eastern borders and possible expansion to the east.

These peoples are separated geographically, and therefore do not have a history of co-existence, as well as the experience of mutual claims and grievances. Therefore, in contrast to Pan-Slavism, Pan-Finno-Ugrism is a more realistic goal, because it is easier to accept the integration without having a negative bias to each other. The basis for it is the integration of a cultural community, out of borders.

What are the advantages of a pan-nationalism? The main actors are the international organizations and forums, increasing their status in the negotiations with their governments and legitimize them in the world community. In addition, it provides a social communication between national elites and promotes their solidarity in pursuit of common objectives.

In general, all three FHE countries share common EU foreign policy principles: the empowerment of autonomy, protection of national minorities' rights. As for Finno-Ugric peoples condition in the Russian Federation the general thesis of the three countries is a concern about the Russian policy, leading to a reduction in the number of people and the disappearance of their languages. However, in each of the three countries has its own approach to the problem, different objectives and rhetoric of public officials.

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