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CONTENTS

THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF POLICY

- Pyzh V. V., Frolov A. E.** Political Security of the State
and Political Stability of the Society as an Object of Political Analysis 4
- Medvedev N. P.** Effectiveness of Political Decisions:
Consensual and Representative Models..... 14

POLITICAL INSTITUTES AND PROCESSES

- Medvedev N. P., Glebov V. A., Madatov A. S.** To the Question
of Typologization of the Russian Regions 20
- Grishaeva O. N., Grishin O. E., Popov S. I.** Dynamics in the Development
of the Institute of Presidency in Russia..... 27

POLITICAL CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY

- Stepanov S. A., Ivanova E. A.** "Twitter Policy" as a Phenomenon
of the Modern Political Process 34
- Shangaraev R. N.** Ideology as a Soft Power Tool in Turkish Foreign Policy 42

ETHNOPOLITICS

- Hajiyev M. M.** National Traditions of the Peoples of Dagestan
and their Role in Social Cohesion..... 48

POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

- Mikhailenko A. N.** TNCs and Diplomacy in the Conditions of Global 57

POLYCENTRICITY

- Murovih A. I., Nikitenko E. G.** The Point of Bifurcation
for the World Community and Russia 75
- Chernyavskiy S. I., Mehdiyev E. T.** Southern Gas Corridor in EU Energy Policy..... 83

REVIEWS

- Irkhin Yu. V.** Review of the Article by Rodionova M. E.
"Features of the Presidential Campaign in France: Results And Prospects" 89
- Medvedev N. P., Slizovsky D. E.** Review of the Article by Pyzh V. V.
and Frolov A. E. "Political Security of the State
and Political Stability of Society as an Object of Political Analysis" 91

- OUR AUTHORS..... 95

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DYNAMICS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF PRESIDENCY IN RUSSIA

The study analyzes the dynamics of the Institute of presidency in the Russian Federation at the present stage. The authors note that a new stage in the development of the Institute of presidency in modern Russia is associated with the political personalization of V. V. Putin. Such period becomes highly dependent on the need to constantly respond to the challenges in order to maintain the stability of the political system. Institutional choice in favor of the presidency, which acquires unique features in subordination from the political traditions of a particular political system, is almost always the result of a certain consensus between the key political actors.

Key words: *Institute of presidency, president, dynamics of development, internal and external challenges, V. V. Putin's rating, political system, political elite.*

The emergence of the institute of presidency in the political design of many countries comes as a response to the challenges that are relevant both to the state itself and to the political elites. Challenges can be associated with a variety of causes and are both endogenous and exogenous. Any challenge, as a rule, is an incentive for the development of the institute of presidency, and almost always has a mobilizing effect, forcing the system to invent new ways of institutional adaptation. The institutional choice in favour of a presidency that acquires unique features, depending on the political traditions of a particular political system, is almost always the result of a certain consensus among key political actors.

The establishment of the Institute of presidency in Russia was connected with the current internal political, social and economic situation. V. T. Tretyakov notes that the genetic feature of the Russian system of power leaves a big imprint on the formation of the Institute of presidency in Russia.¹ At the time, the popularly elected President, as the guarantor of the Constitution, was called upon to stabilize the political situation, to restrain the emerging centrifugal tendencies; to promote the development of multiparty system in the conditions of ideological pluralism and rejection of political monism. According to S. V. Gordienko, the constitutional design of the Institute of presidency in Russia resulted from borrowing foreign experience² Its introduction was aimed at strengthening the legitimacy of political power and its strengthening that was supposed to contribute to the establishment of a mechanism for coordinating the relations between sovereign republics, as well as strengthen the independence of Russia in the conditions of the fall of the authority and influence of the central government. The very fact of the general presidential elections also served as a significant basis for the legitimization of this political institution. On the one hand, the elections confirmed the fairness of B.N. Yeltsin's claims for presidency and on the other hand, it was a chance for other political actors, which consolidated the right of the opposition, to be present in the political space.

In Russia, in fact, the fullness of the supreme state power, despite its constitutional limitation, is concentrated in the hands of the President of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the formed institute of the presidency in Russia fully fits into the society and meets its social expectations. The results of sociological research show that at the present stage of development of the Russian society citizens positively assess the activities of the institute of presidency, personified by the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin. According to sociological surveys carried out by VTsIOM, the work of V. V. Putin is highly appreciated by Russians, and in that survey showing the trust rating of various politicians that of the President has been growing for several weeks in a row.

Table 1

Dynamics of weekly evaluations of trust to politicians for the last month (in) %³

Trust	Nov 26, 2017	Dec. 03, 2017	Dec. 10, 2017	Dec. 17, 2017
V.V. Putin	52.4	53.0	53.5	54.8

¹ Institute of presidency in Russia: legal basis and role in modernizing the society. Round table discussion. – URL: <http://pandia.org/text/77/436/2074.php> (accessed: 15.12.2017).

² Gordienko S. V. Institute of presidency in Russia, USA, France: conceptual framework and political-administrative practice (comparative analysis): Abstract of thesis to the degree of the candidate of sciences. 23.00.02. – M., 2004. – P. 3.

³ Trust in politicians. – URL: https://wciom.ru/news/ratings/doverie_politikam/ (accessed: 23.12.2017).

*Table 2***Dynamics of weekly assessments of approval or disapproval of the activities of state institutions over the last month (%)¹**

Approval	Nov. 26, 2017	Dec. 03, 2017	Dec. 10, 2017	Dec. 17, 2017
President of Russia	83.0	82.4	84.6	84.8
Disapproval	Nov. 26, 2017	Dec. 03, 2017	Dec. 10, 2017	Dec. 17, 2017
President of Russia	10.9	11.0	9.4	9.3
Index of approval	Nov. 26, 2017	Dec.03, 2017	Dec.10, 2017	Dec. 17, 2017
President of Russia	72	71	75	76

Currently, the President of the Russian Federation is V. V. Putin again. His third presidential term does not seem to have surprised either the Russian public or the community of political researchers.² At the beginning of the third presidential term, he initiated the adoption of a law permitting citizens to elect governors. He changed his own approach to power: he used the language of values and ideas, emphasized respect for the rights of various structures of state power and the policy of non-interfere in the activities of other branches of power, which he constantly stressed.

V. V. Putin's third presidential term was based on a broader public consensus than the previous terms. Such attitude, it would seem, contradicted the protest experience preceding V. V. Putin's political legitimization in 2012.³ It can be assumed that the new challenges provoked resistance, the resistance had to be massive and the society had to be strongly consolidated.

Vladimir Putin said at a concert dedicated to the 85th anniversary of the automobile plant in Nizhny Novgorod that he would run for President in the 2018 elections.⁴ He made his first campaign speech on 19 December 2017 at the Forum of the Popular Front.

The high level of support and approval of V. V. Putin's activities can be associated with a certain stabilization of the domestic political situation in the country. Of course, this trend can hardly be called really stable, because after a certain time the domestic political situation became much more difficult. On the other hand, for the vast majority of Russian society domestic political problems receded into the background against the challenges of the international politics and the

¹ Activities of state institutions. – URL: https://wciom.ru/news/ratings/odobrenie_deyatelnosti_gosudarstvennykh_institutov/ (accessed: 23.12.2017).

² Grishaeva O. N. V. Putin's third presidential term: on the question of legitimacy // Historical, philosophical, political and legal sciences, cultural studies and art history. – 2014. – № 3. – P. 61.

³ Skiperskikh A. V. Right to resistance: political and philosophical retrospective // Socium and vlast. – 2015. – № 5. – P. 45.

⁴ Vladimir Putin has put forward his candidacy for President. – URL: <https://esquire.ru/articles/34962-putin-elections-2018/> (accessed: 23.12.2017).

way people identified themselves with Vladimir Putin's achievements, his firmness and intransigence in the international arena.

Despite the effects that testify to the authoritarian results of Putin's presidency for the political system of modern Russia, the prerequisites begin to emerge, partly justifying such authoritarian shift.

The institute of presidency in Russia is in constantly changing. Its structures may change depending on both: the current political situation and the impact of various challenges that may become relevant to the political system of Russia as a whole in the near future. Political practice shows that the institution of the presidency is strongly dependent on the need for constant response to the incoming challenges that ensures its close connection with the current political agenda.

The importance of the head of state as a central component of the political and administrative system of Russia increases in the conditions of political and socio-economic reforms in the country. All this demonstrates the need for the sustained and focused efforts on the part of the supreme authority.

Vladimir Putin has become a symbol of stability in Russian society, and society expects him to become a leader of future progress. Apparently, it is no coincidence that the hashtag "stability" (#stability) that appeared in its time in the Internet space has now penetrated the political speech practices. Despite the abundance of negative connotations, it should be noted that Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin still demonstrates a more stable political development if compared to a number of other political systems (Ukraine, for example). Indeed, some challenges facing modern Russia, as well as its institute of presidency are a kind of a test for its stability. Will it be eroded and loosened? In our opinion, this question can already be answered in the near future.

Along with "stability," which is often mentioned when it comes to the presidency of Vladimir Putin, there is also his personal political experience, his leadership traits. There is also a certain political reputation, which is inherent to the incumbent President of Russia.

In our view, there are internal and external challenges facing Russia that threaten the stability of its political system. External challenges include economic and financial sanctions, investment outflows, pressure from international courts, cultural depletion, serious reputational costs, etc.

The prospect of further external challenges may gradually lead to the formation of even greater distrust on the part of the Russian ruling class that may provoke its closure solely on the problems of personal survival and institutional adjustments to the situation with the account for the existing domestic political agenda.¹ The decline in the price of oil and the weakening of the Ruble leads to an increase in retail prices felt primarily by the poorly protected social strata.

¹ Glebov V. A., Davydov V. N. Legal framework for the development of civil society // Issues of politology. – 2017. – № 4. – P. 45.

The growth of tariffs and food prices, an increase in the prices for travel and utilities, unemployment, reduction in the number of medical workers in a certain way significantly increase the protest potential, expanding it to those social groups that were not previously noticed in the protest activity, but, on the contrary, acted as a social support base for V. Putin and the United Russia political party. Instead of radical groups, the power confronts conformal enough state employees which obviously indicates that the degree of public discontent begins to increase significantly. The protest potential is also pushed to the online sphere, which partially contributes to the formation of a sense of calm and consensus.

Further development of the institution of presidency will largely depend on how Russia will overcome the existing internal and external challenges and how sensitive such challenges will be. Some experts believe that the development of the institution of the presidency should be carried out through a direct improvement of the legal framework governing the activities of this institution.¹

In our opinion, sooner or later, there may be a situation when the institution of the presidency will take responsibility for the situation in the country, because each time it is more and more difficult to effectively use the mechanisms of shifting the blame to lower authorities. Speaking about the internal challenges for the institute of presidency in Russia, we should also name the issues connected with placement of elite around the figure of V. V. Putin. As a result of sanctions, many oligarchs have lost their wealth, which makes us to assume that it is the entourage of the Russian President that can become an important actor in the future changes of the institution of the presidency itself and transformation of its structures and meanings.

It should be emphasized that the main condition for the successful functioning of any state institution are positive assessments of its activities by the society, as the public legitimacy allows Russian authorities to be more confident in their political practices.

An important factor that strengthens power in modern Russia is the outright weakness of its political opposition, whose activities do not significantly affect the dynamics of V. Putin's rating.² Moreover, the government is trying to minimize the influence of the opposition on political processes, knowing full well that the amended legislation narrows the prospects of protest. S. V. Ustimenko notes that the current political system is not able to ensure the arrival of new bright leaders from senators, deputies of the State Duma or governors to the state power.³ At the moment, the legislation of the Russian Federation, rigidly suppressing

¹ Andreeva I. E. Formation and development of the institute of presidency in Russia // *Army and society*. – 2013. – № 2 (34). – P. 59.

² Skiperskikh A. V., Tolochko A. V. Opposition parties in Russia and Uzbekistan: specific features of institutionalization in the post-Soviet period // *Legal policy and legal life*. – 2009. – № 1. – Pp. 72-79.

³ Ustimenko S. V. Problems of modernization of the political system in today Russia // *Vlast*. – 2012. – № 4. – P. 13.

the non-forced protest manifestations, is an important support for the political regime. In our opinion, the evolution of the institution of presidency towards strengthening the power of the President is obvious in modern Russia.

To date, the government pays great attention to its own rating as it represents an eloquent evidence of public reaction to the policy it is waging. This is fully applicable to the dynamics of V. V. Putin's rating, whose rating is tied up to both the international agenda and the socio-economic crisis in the country.

Currently, in Russia, the reserve of reliability of the political system is much greater than the margin of economic system safety. The fall in the population's living standards, taking place now, can provoke a stream of claims to the authorities, including, personally to V. V. Putin. Therefore, a new agenda should emerge, based not only on stability, but also on real concrete progress in all spheres of Russian society.

The potential of the further development of the institute of presidency in Russia will depend, on the one hand, on the ability of the government and society to maintain consensus on the perception of the policy of the Russian President. On the other hand, the prospects for the development of the institute of presidency may be related to the behavior of the Russian President's entourage. It is the Russian ruling class that can become an important actor in the future changes of the institution of presidency and transformation of its structures and meanings. They will have to propose an optimal candidate for the post of president in 2024.

Thus, in the near future, there will be certain tendencies to strengthen the position of the institute of presidency. It will be facilitated by a number of factors: the need for a strong government to ensure the security and integrity of the country in the face of the negative impact of Western countries on domestic political processes; the demands for stability existing in the society; the low level of trust in most state power institutions, political parties and public organizations, business, economic and political elite, and the high level of trust in the personality of the President.

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