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SCENARIOS OF STABILITY AND VARIABILITY OF THE RUSSIAN INSTITUTE OF PRESIDENCY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

In the article, the authors reviewed some scenarios for the development of the institute of presidency in modern Russia. The attention is focused on the fact that in the future the institute of the presidency will strengthen. The expert community explores the prospects for the development of the political system in modern Russia during V.V. Putin's fourth presidential term and the issue of prospects and possible change in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Key words: *Russia, V.V. Putin, president, the institute of presidency, political system, development scenarios, power.*

The relevance of the study is due to the fact that the establishment of the institute of presidency in Russia was associated with the internal political and socio-economic situation. The popularly elected president, as the guarantor of the Constitution, was called upon to stabilize the political situation and to restrain the outlined centrifugal tendencies, to promote the development of a multi-party system in the conditions of the formation of ideological pluralism and rejection of political monism. The introduction of the institute of presidency in Russia was aimed at strengthening the legitimation of political power, at contributing to the establishment of a mechanism for coordinating relations between sovereign

republics, as well as strengthening Russia's independence in the face of declining authority and influence of the central government.

The works by Russian scholars [4; 8; 9. P. 8-22; 10. P. 501-502] published in recent years cover a wide range of issues in this subject area.

The development of the institute of presidency in modern Russia is mainly associated with the figure of V.V. Putin. According to A.S. Barsenkov and A.I. Vdovin, V.V. Putin spoke at the beginning of the 2000s as a person who was able to morally and psychologically unite Russian society, and it was with him that many pinned their hopes on the restoration of stability, order and gradual improvement in life. V.V. Putin's popularity was accompanied by the success of the "Unity" political movement supported by him, which took second place in the State Duma elections, gaining 23.3% of the vote.

Years have passed. In 2018, V.V. Putin was re-elected president and researchers began to show interest in the course of development and adaptation of the political system of modern Russia as a whole.

So, Russia is entering a new political cycle, officially V.V. Putin's fourth term has already begun. He is remaining in power for almost 18 years. We believe that during that period of time not only the structure of the state, but also Russian society has changed dramatically.

What to expect from the next six years? Will the existing political institutions and political forces retain their present day status? What will the socio-political mood be like? Will we then recall the "golden times" when there were no blockers of messengers in Russia, there was a relative freedom of entrepreneurship, an opposition and even big plans for the future?

The expression "expects us" in the social and political context is always hard to understand. You can form a parliamentary republic and that would be optimistic, but as a rule there is no such process. Further implementation of the 1993 Presidential Constitution is possible ... Under V.V. Putin, consent and non-resistance continue.

In the decisions that seem rational to the president, habits, inertia, risks and fears of various kinds are sometimes mixed with the desire to put an end to the painful uncertainty for Russia. G.O. Pavlovsky believes that V.V. Putin's consent to run for a new presidential term was a mistake, which he himself partially guessed without admitting it. That decision made him finally a slave of his own apparatus and courtiers, drove him into a narrowing corridor of weakness, depriving him of a political maneuver [2]. From the expert's point of view, a positive strategy would be creation of initial conditions for the implementation of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, that is, reanimation of the three branches of power: judicial, representative and executive [2], that are usurped today.

V.T. Tretyakov views the situation in the country in a completely different way. His assessments are disappointing: the top of the ruling class is uncontrollable, reforms are either unsuccessful (except for demographic reform) or have become

a business, the economy has not become innovative and there are no prospects of such transformation. The population increasingly hates the greedy ruling class [11].

It is the high personal popularity of V.V. Putin among the Russians that formed the basis of the power relations of the current political regime. The head of state today has a significant impact on the legitimization of the political system as a whole and on the prospects of its evolution. At the same time, V.V. Putin, as a pragmatic politician, prefers to work with the structures that are designed to increase the efficiency of public the administration and control and are managed through presidential orders.

The realistic rating of trust in the President can be estimated only by comparing a number of sources. Considering the availability of electronic markups, the biased audience samples, the use of software bots for voting, a figure close to the real one can be obtained only by analyzing a whole array of information.

Let us consider the current V.V. Putin's rating figures in Russia in 2019. The sample is done in three traditional areas, as well as the internal survey of the sites. V.V. Putin's rating today is as follows (this is, the percentage of people approving of his activities):

Table 1

Current V.V. Putin's rating in Russia in 2019.

	FOM	VTsIOM	Levada-Centre	Online news
Trust level	46%	32,8%	64%	9,98%
Dynamics	+1%	-0,7%	0%	+0,00%
Date	17.02.2019	24.02.2019	22.02.2019	04.03.2019

According to the table, an average level stands at 38,20% (-0.17%) [7].

Conclusions of the experts who have presented their vision of the Russia's near future are not optimism. In their opinion, Russian political system has less and less economic and public resources, it is not going to change towards greater pluralism or democracy and any ways to survive can be chosen up to the military ones [1].

In our opinion, a "personalistic" regime has emerged in the country, which cannot always contribute to the development of democracy, as it sometimes does not contribute to: creation of equal opportunities for political representation; implementation of the principle of separation of powers; political competition; development and adoption of important state decisions based on the coordination of interests.

As a rule, concentration of strong power in the hands of one institution-personality, sometimes protected from almost any checks or balances, leads to the devaluation of parliamentarism and creates a bureaucracy that does not allow society to control power. As a result, society is often excluded from the participation in political processes. Political competition is replaced by rivalry of political

groups and clans and rotation of political leaders as a rule stops. The retirement of the incumbent political leader can become a big stress for the society.

Although the president is elected by general vote, the electorate is always divided into his supporters and opponents. Thus, he becomes the cause of the radicalization of the opposition, unable to find legal ways for making its views to be taken into account. In the future, there can be a vacuum of power in the country, facilitating transition to authoritarian rule or to the same rule, bypassing the stage of anarchy.

In our opinion, the artificial elevation of the institute of presidency over the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of power is away outwardly attractive, but internally contradictory and even dangerous for the social development and structure of the state power. The concentration of supreme power in one body (even collegiate) leads to stagnation, lack of control and appropriation of power by the leader's inner circle. Therefore, it does not provide sufficient grounds for confirming the advantages of undivided authority of the executive power and sometimes in the entire state power. Unlimited power in the hands of one person can be a threat to the development of democracy in the country.

In order to become a self-regulating and effective democratic political and governmental structure, the political system of Russia needs to ensure real separation of state powers and political competition, independence of the court and the media [5. P. 307-309].

It should be noted that in the expert community the opinion that there is a noticeable split in the Russian authorities is becoming more and more distinct. The experts notice that the government often sabotages execution of certain Presidential orders, as a rule, those relating to the internal social policy. In this way, analysts believe, certain influential groups within the Russian authorities are trying to damage the President's ratings of trust and redraw the balance of power in the highest echelons of power in their own way. It is difficult to judge how close to the reality such an assessment of what is happening. However, apparently, the next few years will be full of revelations for the overwhelming majority of Russians. It is possible that the first major changes in the structure of the Russian government will become evident even before the end of this year.

Speaking about the scenarios of the development of the institute of presidency in the Russian Federation, we note that many of them proposed by various researchers do not exclude that in one way or another the most important role in that process will be played by the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin. For example, Russian political scientist D.A. Yezhov singled out three scenarios for the evolution of the Russian presidency:

1. The first scenario implies a "soft" change of political scenery in the system of state power and administration, implying improvement of the established forms of interaction and cooperation between the president and the prime minister, both according to formal and substantive features.

2. The second scenario assumes evolution of the institution of presidency in the direction of strengthening the power of the president against the background of a visible weakening of the functions of the prime minister. As a result, there will be a rejection of the current management model and a transition to a strong presidential power, based on the clearly expressed principle of monocentrism. The presidency will be transformed into autocracy regulated by the constitution, which would entail the rejection of the democratic path of development and transition to authoritarianism.

3. The third scenario is pessimistic. It assumes the self-destruction of the foundations of an established power configuration due to a decrease in public support and the growth of radical movements. In this case, there is a high probability that the current President of the Russian Federation will resign ahead of time, until 2024 [12. P. 32].

It is quite obvious that the institute of presidency in Russia has evolved towards the strengthening of presidential power, as a result, there is a certain dissatisfaction with the political regime built by V.V. Putin among certain groups of the Russian society. On top of this, the socio-economic situation in the country is not easy. The above circumstances can affect the prospects of the institute of presidency in Russia and it is reflected in the scenarios that we are considering below.

The first scenario assumes that there will be a further strengthening of the presidential power. This is most likely to happen if V.V. Putin is re-elected President of Russia in 2024. However, it should be noted that according to the 1993 Constitution, the President can hold his post only two times in a row. Will the head of state amend the basic law? The question remains open ...

Below are V.V. Putin's comments regarding his fifth term made at a meeting with the heads of news agencies: "I have always strictly adhered to and will adhere to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Constitution clearly spells out: no more than two terms in a row. It is my second term in a row. As you remember, I was president twice before, then I left the office of president, because the Constitution does not allow to be elected a third time. That's all. I intend to adhere to this rule in the future [6]." It means that the fourth term is V.V. Putin's last term.

The second potential scenario is a temporary weakening of the position of the President of the Russian Federation and strengthening of the powers of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. This can happen in case of a new casting and an appointment by V.V. Putin of a new "successor." By the way, it can be said that the nomination of "successors" or "heirs" by the outgoing presidents has become a kind of a political tradition in modern Russia.

Some experts believe that V.V. Putin is preparing to transfer power in the country in the same way that B.N. Yeltsin did in his time when transferring power to him. However, in his plans, the incumbent head of state does not take into account a number of important details.

According to M. Egorov, Russian leader V.V. Putin is not looking for ways of preserving his presidency, on the contrary, he is already preparing a successor to whom he can transfer power closer to the end of his presidential term. The expert is confident that the transfer of power will be similar in the scheme to that which Putin's predecessor B.N. Yeltsin used as president of Russia. However, until the end of his presidential term, the president may not hold out [3]. V.V. Putin is not going to hold power after the end of his fourth term in office. That is why he is already engaged in the preparation of a successor, to whom he can transfer the ruling of the country before the term of his presidency expires. The expert named an estimated date of the transfer of power, in his opinion, it will happen closer to 2023 [3].

The third scenario implies stabilization of the institute of presidency and possibly the strengthening of its role in the system of state power. This scenario is derived from the second one and implies that in case of casting, prime minister will become president and V.V. Putin will take his place.

The fourth scenario is associated with an early departure of V.V. Putin as President of the Russian Federation, which will lead to the global changes in the entire political system of Russia.

Each scenario presented by us is indicative of the fact that not all of them can preserve the legitimacy of the existing political regime. Moreover, the implementation of the first three scenarios implies certain intraelite casting without serious consequences either the political system or the institute of presidency itself. The fourth scenario implies cardinal changes of the established political regime and, consequently, structural and functional changes of the authority. It should also be noted that all of the above scenarios for the development of the institute of presidency in Russia are directly associated with the name of V.V. Putin and his activities in the situation of an on-going systemic crisis.

Thus, in our opinion, the second scenario is a more likely development scenario. V.V. Putin will not run for the fifth presidential term and during the next five years he will prepare a successor for the transfer of power in 2024.

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