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## **EVOLUTION OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER IN THE NEW INDEPENDENT STATES OF FORMER USSR**

The article considers the questions of origin and establishment of an institution of the presidency in the post-Soviet republics. The author's attention is accented on the genesis of this political institution. It was noted that the attempt to implement the institution of presidency was made within the Soviet political system, at the stage of its transformation associated with the abandonment of single-party system. It was specified that the origins of the post-Soviet presidency are not in the evolution of representative democracy and not in the implementation of the theory of separation of powers. These origins are in a transformation of authoritarian power of the leaders of the Soviet republics. The conclusion is that a general authoritarian inertia of the presidency still exists in the former Soviet Union countries.

Among the researches of the institutional structure of political systems is possible to identify a number of areas of scientific survey. One of these areas is the study of public institutions. The most important meaning among these institutions has the institution of the head of state; in countries with a republican government it is the institution of the presidency. In a political scientific literature of the former Soviet Union this scientific issue is not developed enough. Indeed, neither in Tsarist Russia, nor in the Soviet Union (until March 1990) the institution of the president did not exist, that meant the absence of the object for scientific research. However, this political institution at the post-Soviet area acquires a very specific meaning, which spurs the interest of researchers. The purpose of this article is to designate certain approaches in author's point of view perspective for such type of researches, as well as to systematize a significant factual material and to make preliminary generalizations.

The attempt to implement the institution of the presidency has been taken in the Soviet political system, at the stage of its transformation, associated with the abandonment of single-party system. It became clear that in new circumstances a leader of the Communist Party, who was head of the Soviet state in fact, could not pretend for the main levers of state power. His status was necessary to reinforce with a position not related to the party hierarchy but belonging to the state hierarchy. Before the collapse of the USSR at the Congress of the Soviets Mikhail Gorbachev was elected to the post of the President of the Soviet Union. However, the rapid changes that followed the fail of the August putsch in 1991 and the ban of the Communist Party led to the breakdown of the union state and the liquidation of the union presidency. An institution of

the presidency began to establish in each of the newly formed sovereign states.

For the vast majority of the post-Soviet republics the presidency was entirely new phenomenon. Of course, the appearance of such a position as a president has not changed the attitude of the Soviet people to the power, and a personality of the new Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was identified primarily with his position of a General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Therefore, the presidency of the first secretaries of the Communist Party in the Union republics became a logical completion of the initial phase of their sovereignty and independence. The examples of such presidency are A. Mutalibov (Azerbaijan), N. Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan), A. Brazauskas (Lithuania), M. Snegur (Moldova), I. Karimov (Uzbekistan), K. Mahkamov (Tajikistan), S. Niyazov (Turkmenistan). The exception was Leonid Kravchuk, who was not the first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. First secretaries of the republican organizations actually had full power in these republics, so the introduction of the presidency only changed their status. As N. Ryzhkov, who served as the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, wrote later "... they wanted very much to be a complete masters in their republics"<sup>1</sup>.

Trends and patterns in development of the presidency at the post-Soviet area were studied by various post-Soviet and Western authors<sup>2</sup>. However, it should be noted that the issue of the presidency at the former Soviet Union countries, the institution of the presidency of the post-Soviet era are not sufficiently studied.

First of all, the institution of the presidency has to be studied from the point of personalization of power and its power functions in general. Secondly, the institution of the presidency has to be studied from the position of those constitutional processes that took place in the post-Soviet area.

Public opinion of almost all former Soviet republics has expected the appearance of the presidency. Mainly it was determined with the fact that the personalities of many presidents were not just recognizable, they generated mass habit of obedience. Authoritarian tendencies that have

<sup>1</sup> РЫЖКОВ, Н.Н. (2007). *Трагедия великой страны*. Москва: Вече, 593.

<sup>2</sup> Аслунд, А. (2003). *Розбудова капіталізму. Трансформації в країнах колишнього Радянського блоку*. Київ: Дух і літера; Батенко, Т. (2000). *Королі СНД: портрети дванадцяти президентів*. Львів: Кальварія; Кармазина, М. (2005). Деякі особливості президентства на пострадянському просторі (1991-2004 pp.). *Політичний менеджмент*, 12, 28-41.

taken place during the Communist Party dictatorship gradually passed to the presidential track.

At the same time, the election of the president was seen as a manifestation of significant democratic reforms. But the “change of scenery” in many republics did not change the general character of the authoritarian government. However, each of the republics regained the presidency on its own way. The general level of political culture of population also had considerable importance. Finally, the peculiarities of the struggle between parties, clans, politically oriented groups in the republics have also played a significant role in this process. The latter was quite common for such republics as Azerbaijan, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States.

The President as a rule represented a certain part of the political elite that strived for power. At the initial period of formation of the new state the ideological support of the fight against the Soviet regime was anti-communism, which definitely “can not be the basis for attributing his supporters to democracy; among anti-communists, were such supporters of dictatorship, as Z.Gamsakhurdia or the Tajik fundamentalists”<sup>1</sup>. Presidents in the post-Soviet republics often received dictatorial powers for strengthening of the ruling political forces and suppression of the opposition.

Each of the post-Soviet republics defined in the newly adopted Constitution the place of a president in the country’s political system in accordance with its vision of power. The general goal for a president, who should represent a state, was formulated. In accordance with the requirements of the Constitutions a nationwide election of a president was established. The first presidents were elected in the republics of Central Asia: Kazakhstan (Nursultan Nazarbayev), Kyrgyzstan (Askar Akayev), Uzbekistan (Islam Karimov), Turkmenistan (Saparmurat Niyazov); and in Belarus (Alexander Lukashenko).

Formation of the presidency for most post-Soviet republics was quite difficult. It was connected with various problems and primarily with a struggle of elites for political power. The Russian Federation has gone through a special way. Its first president Boris Yeltsin was the representative of the old party-state structures and was elected as a president of the Russian Federation at the alternative elections. Also, in Russia the Vice President office was established. In general, the transition to a new political system in Russia was completed with the adoption of

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<sup>1</sup> Абашин, С. (2007). *Национализм в Средней Азии: в поисках идентичности*. Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 104.

the Constitution of the Russian Federation on 12 December 1993 at the nationwide referendum.

Chosen form of government in Russia (presidential republic) and the new constitution gave considerable rights to the president of the country. In fact, he defines main directions of the entire domestic and international policy.

It is appropriate to quote here Russian political scientist P. Volobuiev: “In form we are given a presidential republic. In fact, we got semi-monarchy or rather an imperial presidency. The fundamental principle of the separation of powers discarded away. A President concentrated in his hands all legislative, executive and, in fact, judicial power, having a sole monopoly on the definition of the main directions of domestic and foreign policy”<sup>1</sup>.

For countries of the East a post of a president is not traditional. In a certain sense, this also concerns of post-Soviet republics in Central Asia. It is known that prior to 1990 none of the first secretaries of the Republican Communist Parties (except of Kazakhstan) was not included in the Politburo. Of course, the appearance of the presidency for Central Asian republics was a step towards democratic reforms in each country. At the same time, the first presidents immediately determined their credo in public administration. For example, Islam Karimov answered the deputies of the Supreme Council of Uzbekistan to the allegations in his dictatorial behavior: “Either democracy or order may exist in our country.” So he chose the order. Its basic idea: “The power in the East is not shared”<sup>2</sup>. President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov has also emphasized that during the transition period a strict government regulation should be preserved in a country. According to his opinion, rapid socio-economic reforms and democratic transformations will lead to absolute impoverishment of population<sup>3</sup>. The presidents of Kazakhstan (N.Nazarbayev) and Tajikistan (E. Rakhmonov) also supported strict principles of centralized policy and state building.

The Kyrgyz President A. Akaev is called “the father of Central Asian democracy”<sup>4</sup>. This did not prevent him from staying president of the

<sup>1</sup> *Внешняя политика нейтрального Туркменистана* (1997). Ашгабад: МИД, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Рудич, Ф.М. (2009). *Много ли власти нужно власти? Украина в контексте трансформации политических систем в странах СНГ и Балтии, Центральной и Восточной Европы*. Киев: Наукова думка, 94.

<sup>3</sup> Соколов, В.Н (2011). *Туркменистан: история и современность*. Одесса: Астропринт, 111.

<sup>4</sup> Батенко, Т. (2000). *Королі СНД: портрети дванадцяти президентів*. Львів: Кальварія, 27.

republic almost for 16 years (from 27 of October, 1990 to 11 of April, 2005). Nursultan Nazarbayev was considered a strong political figure in Soviet times: the former first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the permanent president of the country since 24 of April, 1990. His powers are very broad and are determined not only by the constitution of the country, but also by the authority of the president, national traditions and his prominence in international circles. Monopoly of his power is undeniable, though the violation of the Constitution is obvious. According to the constitution of Kazakhstan a president is elected by a universal suffrage for five years, should not be older than 65 years (N. Nazarbayev is 1940 year of birth) and can not stay on the post more than two consecutive terms. But now the status of the first president of Kazakhstan is determined by a separate constitutional law.

The formation of the presidency was difficult in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan has passed through the conflicts and armed confrontation of different political forces. From 1993 to 2003 the President of Azerbaijan was Heydar Aliyev. Many researchers characterize Aliyev as a very remarkable person<sup>1</sup>. H. Aliyev after his death was replaced by his son – Ilham Aliyev. In October 15, 2008, he became president for a second term having won the elections and received 88 % of the votes. In March 2009, the country held a referendum to approve the amendments to the Constitution, according to which a president of the republic could stay in office for life.

Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union on 9 of April, 1991. From that moment the country passed through very significant events. At the first presidential elections Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the president and the head of executive branch. It is important to emphasize that the president Z. Gamsakhurdia was forced to leave his post, as his authoritarian style of leadership and the nationalist politics was not supported.

In January, 1992 in a result of a military coup Eduard Shevardnadze became the head of a state, but a president's post still remained vacant. Only after the elections, held in Georgia in November, 1995, Shevardnadze became the president (was re-elected in April 2000). But in January 2004 after "Rose Revolution" he left his post, which was occupied by Mikhail Saakashvili. In 2007, he resigned but in a result of elections held on January 5, 2008 once again became the president (the inauguration took place on 20 of January, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> *Лідерство епох. Азербайджансько-українські відносини і діяльність Гейдара Алієва* (2013). Київ: Планета, 180.

Moldova is a parliamentary republic (as Lithuania and Estonia). However, the president, according to the constitution, has significant rights, in particular: the legislative initiative, determination of the convening of parliament, dissolution of a parliament, he is also Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, conducts foreign policy, appoints to public office, and so on. The term of office of a president in Moldova is four years.

Since the period when Moldova gained its sovereignty seven presidents has been elected in the country. Moldova now is in difficult economic straits, with the whole complex of unresolved social problems. And today the policy, without clearly articulated priorities does not let the country to concentrate efforts for resolution of the major issues of economic and socio-political system.

The President of Belarus remains Alexander Lukashenko. The first presidential elections took place on 10 of July 1994. In the second round with a score of about 80 % won A. Lukashenko. On November 24, 1996 the referendum was held after which amendments were made to the Constitution regarding the expansion of executive powers and specifically the president. The results of that referendum and all subsequent presidential elections were not recognized by international community as a democratic and legal. At the last election on December 19, 2010 A. Lukashenko also won, although the opposition considered the elections were rigged. From this period a fourth term of Alexander Lukashenko as a president began. Officially he took office in January 21, 2011. It is important to emphasize that in all elections he always received about 80 % of the votes (in 2010 – 79.65 %). In practice, this means that, despite the fact that Western media call the Belarusian leader “Europe’s last dictator”, he has massive support from the population of the country.

The first president of Turkmenistan in 1990 became Saparmurat Niyazov, at that moment the first secretary of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan. Later (at the general elections in June 1992, 99.5 % of voters voted for him), the referendum in 1994 extended his term until 2002, and the People’s Council offered to provide him with lifelong presidential powers. All power was concentrated in the hands of Niyazov. His authoritarian leadership was furnished with the infinite number of monuments, names of streets, companies and organizations, photographic portraits in each institution, school and university. The 12 meter monument of Turkmenbashi (he was called so, what means “father of all Turkmen”) set at 23 meter pedestal was erected in Ashgabat. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov became the head of the republic after the death of Niyazov. In February 2007, on the alternative presidential election, he defeated his rivals and received 89.3 % of the votes. From

the very first steps of his activity the new president made it clear that a new policy has began. There was a serious work on democratization of all spheres of public life and elimination of the cult of personality. G. Berdymukhamedov has proposed the establishment of a multiparty system in the country.

In Ukraine at the general elections in December, 1991 Leonid Kravchuk was elected for the post of the first president of Ukraine. Previously, he was the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR. It must be stressed that since the first presidential election, the whole company to elect the head of state (as well as parliamentary elections) took place in Ukraine in a very tough, uncompromising struggle of various political forces. Suffice it to say that there were 6 candidates for the post at the presidential elections in 1991, 7 candidates in 1994 and 9 candidates in 1999. In 2004-2005 election results were decided in the Supreme Court of Ukraine. At the elections in 2010 Viktor Yanukovych won with a minimum advantage and, ultimately, in an atmosphere of mass protests lost the presidency in February, 2014. P.Poroshenko got a majority of votes at the extraordinary presidential elections. This was largely due to the hopes of the vast majority of voters of Ukraine for the peaceful resolution of the crisis in Ukrainian East.

Thus, over the past two decades at 15 post-Soviet republics post of the president occupied 57 people (including 12, who acted as a president, as, for example, N. Burjanadze in Georgia). These people were different, but they all shared the desire for power. Someone, assessing the situation, resigned the office anticipatorily; someone tried to discover all sorts of legal possibilities (up to a change of the constitution) to save the power. Deprivation of the president's post also occurred in different ways, including a revolutionary way (revolution, uprising, the revolution of "roses" and "tulips", for example).

Time has shown that the institution of a presidency in the political systems of former Soviet republics needs legal improvement through the democratic reforms. But different national traditions, political experience, the structure of political elite and the mentality of people affect a situation in a country, and therefore the activity of each of the presidents. Therefore, such facts took place when person before a presidency act in one way, but after the inauguration in a completely other way. In such cases the laws should be very strict, including the legal procedure for removing of the incumbent president from power.

All the presidents of post-Soviet republics held a policy of national statehood (and conduct it now). Hence, a quite understandable desire of the national elite for self-sufficiency and independence exists.

All the presidents of the post-Soviet republics have a task today with a use of a variety of management techniques to combine capabilities of multiethnic and multicultural development, to preserve socio-cultural diversity on their territories, to preserve the integrity of the state, the stability of the situation, to resolve internal and international conflicts constructively.

Thus, this analysis allowed to make certain conclusions regarding the genesis and the prospects for such a new at the post-Soviet area institution as the institution of the presidency. Unlike Western political systems, here the presidency was not formed on the basis of evolution of parliamentarism or by implementation of the theory of separation of powers. The power of a post-Soviet president originally was a simply different shell for a power of a specific republican and Soviet leader. Hence, the enormous authoritarian inertia that still exists in this political institution at the post-Soviet area.