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Mechanisms of Public Administration in Post-Soviet Societies

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Abstract--This article focuses on the problem of public administration in the countries of the former Soviet Union. It reveals the economic development issues of the states of the post-Soviet space, considers the main common and distinctive features for the newly independent states. The central problem raised in the article is the determination of the current state of the modernization process in post-Soviet societies. The author assumes the presence of demodernization and presents an argument in confirming his opinion. In addition, the article reveals the issues of the modern political state of such countries of the former USSR as Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The author traces the process of demodernization and dependence of political and social development on the governing elitist groups, leading to authoritarianism as opposed to the supposed democracy and modernization.

Keywords--authoritarianism, demodernization, governing elite, modernization, post-Soviet space, social structure.

Introduction

Today we see a constant growing interest in the post-Soviet space, and not only theoretical, but also practical and political. The post-Soviet space is represented by independent states that left the Soviet Union after its collapse in 1991. And they are currently the subject of study and research in various fields of science, history, politics and economics. All post-Soviet states are usually divided into several groups, and each is characterized by its own social structure and the peculiarities of the modernization of society, politics and the economy. Thus, there are five groups: the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan), Transcaucasia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) and Russia. Note that the principles of categorizing a state as a certain group are based on geographical and cultural factors, as well as based on relations with Russia. To understand the features of the modernization process, it is important to study the main characteristics of the post-Soviet space (Mennicken, 2008; Casciaro, 1998; Sumtaky et al., 2018).

First of all, the countries of the post-Soviet space have different geopolitical and foreign economic orientation. For example, Moldova's foreign policy is focused on Romania today, and Georgia and Azerbaijan want to join the European Union and NATO, while the Baltic States have been part of the EU for several years. Many countries are interested in cooperating with Russia, including Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and, until recently, Ukraine. However, it should be noted that in this situation, everything is not so clear, since Moldova and Ukraine are oriented towards the EU, and Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan are aimed at the Islamic world, as for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, their foreign policy is aimed at integration with Asian values and American market efficiency (Gricenko, 2011; Emel'yanov Yu, 2011; Nepomnyashchyy et al., 2020). In addition, an important feature of the post-Soviet space is that 27 years after the collapse of the USSR, there is still no single economic integration space. It was not possible to create it, even regardless of the existence of strong and interdependent economic ties and relations that developed between such territorial and economic spaces of the former republics. The signed agreement on the formation of the Economic Union in 1993, as well as other regulations in subsequent times that were aimed at strengthening integration ties, did not lead to the creation of a single infrastructure.

Unevenness in the economic development of the states of the post-Soviet space should also be taken into account. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, these countries have different degrees of disintegration of the single economic space, which has a negative impact on national economies, together with different levels of adaptation of national economies to the existing conditions of the world market. Secondly, each country is characterized by its own pace of market reforms and the level of decline in economic manageability. And thirdly, the states of the post-Soviet space differ in the degree of their lack of effective mechanisms for regulating foreign economic relations, while having a certain level of socio-economic instability. Further, attention must be drawn to the fact that an important key feature of the states of the former Soviet Union is their incompatibility of economic potential, along with the absence of a single

geostrategic space (Piras et al., 2021; Rudolph & Brade, 2005). At the same time, the military-strategic space has been lost. The initially signed Collective Security Treaty in 1992, was prolonged only by six countries, including Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Some countries, namely Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, suspended their membership in the treaty, directed attention of geopolitics to other NATO and GUUAM member states (Gricenko, 2011; Emel'yanov Yu, 2011; Nepomnyashchyy et al., 2020).

There is also no united air defence space, which significantly reduces the level of security of states in general. Despite the fact that the GUUAM countries are aimed at creating their own military and strategic space. Ukraine and Georgia are part of NATO's plans, and US military bases have been located in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan for a long time. And the final feature for the post-Soviet space is the lack of a unified legal system. After the demise of the legal system of the USSR, a new consistent system was not created. Thus, one of the most fundamental consequences associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union is the unprecedented transformation and modernization in scope and in depth. A huge unified space receives a different, fragmented configuration, which is formed by new independent states, with their focus on their own formation.

Problems of modernization and transition in post-Soviet societies

Having gained independence, the former republics of the USSR were in the interweaving of the political and economic interests of many countries, which were attracted by the rich resources of the regions. The very formation of the foreign policy of the states of the post-Soviet space took place in rather difficult conditions, when one can observe a kind of balancing between different centres of power that pursue their interests in each particular region. Thus, this quickly led to an understanding of the problem of disengagement in the post-Soviet space, which is conditioned by state-political interests and has no benefit, especially for new national economies, which previously were a single unit and lost production and trade relations due to the collapse of the USSR. Objective needs quickly revealed the problem for the emerging States, which was to reintegrate within the former Soviet Union space, taking into account the realities of the new times and relying on new mechanisms and principles (Takala & Piattoeva, 2012; Azarova et al., 2017).

Understanding the complex and contradictory specifics of the democratization process of the countries of the former Soviet Union reveals the extreme identity of the forms of democratic transition itself, as well as the forms of the newly formed political regimes that were established in independent states. The growth of various forms and models of the structure of the post-Soviet type political regime, which became evident by the end of the 2000s (for example, the political regimes of Putin, Medvedev, Yushchenko, Lukashenko or Aliyev), has a stimulating effect on the revision and refinement of many stagnant conceptual schemes and approaches to the analysis of the process of modernization and post-Soviet development (Sych et al., 2020). A very important deterrent to the conceptual understanding of modern undemocratic alternatives, such as faced by post-Soviet societies, one can call the dominant trend of their research within the framework of the traditional dichotomy "democracy and totalitarianism", "democracy and

authoritarianism", which lead researchers to various kinds of conceptual stretches, and sometimes even to the theoretical oxymoron, which suggests that such constructs cannot act as an adequate key to solving them. The dogmatic search for the struggle of democratic and anti-democratic principles, the clash of different political forces, democrats and non-democrats, will not bring us closer to understanding the society in which we now live, nor will it give us the opportunity to understand the real meaning of the political struggle, the dynamics of elite confrontation or the trends of the political-regime development of post-Soviet societies ([Romanenko, 2016](#)).

In our opinion, today we have several ways to solve the problems of democratic transition. First, based on diplomatic motivations, it is important to increase the use of humanitarian technologies to influence processes and policies, creating public opinion for countries near abroad based on various instruments that have a high level of effectiveness, proved by recent events. Among such tools, we highlight support for friendly media, grant programs for non-profit organizations, opportunities for free training and retraining in Russia for citizens of the CIS countries, etc. It is important to note that when generations change, the Soviet mentality leaves, but at the same time the connection of generations is broken and mutual understanding and the values of past generations are reduced. First of all, this may be attributable not only to political and intellectual elites, but also to all citizens of the independent countries of the former Soviet Union. In this regard, it is important to develop a system of measures that will be aimed at supporting traditional society ([Leung, 2008](#); [Ingram, 2001](#)). This is especially true for those countries that tend to, or are already in, EU membership, since the influence of Western traditions and the characteristics of their social life is quite strong.

Modern geopolitics and political scientists note that many countries of the former Union today can be considered failed states. So, A.A. Gusev, an international expert and political scientist, proposes such a concept as a "failed state," which is an important problematic element of the new world system, and because of which a hidden struggle always unfolds between large states ([Lelechenko et al., 2020](#)). So, first of all, Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia and Sudan belong to this type of state, and today we see Ukraine, Moldova, Tajikistan and Georgia among the post-Soviet states. Over the past decades, these countries cannot show nominal signs of sovereign states, which leads to the disintegration or surrender of their interests to the west. In fact, today there is a special kind of bureaucratic capitalism in the countries of the former USSR, in which the ruling state officials monopolized power, and also, they actually control the key assets of national economies through various organizational and legal forms. Obtaining administrative, budgetary and natural rents becomes an important source of prevalence of this elite in the economic sphere.

At the same time, the ruling layer not only maintains its power, but also receives property. Despite the alternation of different groups of power, such a process remains controllable, and the development paradigm itself does not change. In case of loss of controllability, the change of power provides an opportunity for a new round of redistribution of property, since control over power institutions gives access to other resources. When such resources are limited, regardless of

their classification, the struggle becomes tougher. So, in those states that do not have a consolidated elite, conflicts over property go into public policy, in which often professional propagandists give them an artificial ideological colour. In the case of the consolidation of the elite around one authoritarian leader, the struggle for power becomes more deideologized.

Mostly, in the existing independent states, the governing elite focuses more on maintaining the existing socio-political system, which provides them with privileges and dominance, not paying attention to the development of their countries and social status. Thus, we can observe the limited access of new actors to the political market and the insignificant possibility of the influence of society on power in most countries. Therefore, the concentration of power and property in the same hands does not provide space for public competition of ideas and political actors. In countries characterized by the preservation of such a space, competition acquires a formality and does not affect the very content and quality of policy (Diegtar et al., 2020). Thus, the concentration of resources at one extreme prevents powerful political alternatives from emerging, which in turn causes difficulties for the development of the democratization process.

Modernization or demodernization in the post-Soviet space

The modernization process involves replacing the social, economic, political, environmental, demographic and psychological changes experienced by a traditional-type society in its transformation into a modern-type society. At the same time, there is a different typology of modernization. In the most general terms, it can be organic and inorganic. The organic type of modernization is characteristic of countries in which the modernization process was carried out due to endogenous factors. As for inorganic modernization, it is a kind of response to the external irritant from the more developed countries, while being carried out through borrowing of other people's technologies and investments from the outside. Relevant changes take place both in the social and political sphere, when there is a change in the system of governance, the introduction of new social institutions, up to a change in the entire system of value. Note that the inorganic type of modernization always stems from a change in economy and politics, and not from the cultural sphere. In other words, it can be called more of a catch-up modernization, rather than going in an independent exceptional way (Kuzmenko et al., 2020).

Mikhail Minakov in his lecture "Post-Soviet Demodernization: is there a chance to break out of the "rut"?" notes that the idea of modernization in the early 1990s ultimately led to the rapid demodernization of the world in the 2010s. The present reality is that instead of the freedom of entrepreneurial activity, we see a continuous oligarchy, and political freedom is subordinate to authoritarianism (Kuzmenko et al., 2020). Initial theories of modernization noted the integrity of its character assuming changes in all areas of society. However, the criticism of the theory of modernization reveals the continuous and partial natures of modernization. Referring to the essence of partial modernization, it is possible to imagine that formation of new institutes and the modern organizational principles won't lead to regeneration of society without fail, and will be followed rather by strengthening of a traditional system by means of influence of new forms of the

organization. Based on such understanding, it is possible to define modernization rather as the adoption of values, institutions and cultural models of our time, as well as a kind of desire to completely become a leader in characteristics significant for its cultural model. However, significant cultural variation can also be maintained, along with numerous traditional elements.

Speaking of political modernization, it is always accompanied by a certain conflict between national political cultures and socialized values. Each country will inevitably encounter the problems of choosing its own path, whether to copy certain models of development and socio-political images, or to create the optimal version of a political system that will be adequate for the entire complex of specific conditions of a certain society (Diegtar et al., 2020). So, today you can also get the opinion that the post-Soviet space is united by the CIS and the free trade zone. But, in our opinion, such a combination does not quite correlate with reality. Since only a few individual examples, in particular Belarus with a close connection of the economy with Russia, define the CIS space as the main trade priority. But in practice, we see that even within the EAEU, domestic trade is much lower than foreign trade. Not to mention Ukraine, which has recently reduced trade with the CIS countries for its political reasons, despite the fact that it has not formally left the free trade zone. At the moment, almost all countries of the former Soviet Union are characterized by multi-vector policies. Moreover, there is an active influence from external players on the countries of Russia's nearest abroad. China is an example in Central Asia, which becomes the main trading partner, or Ukraine and the West, which, along with trade, determine political moments (Kuzmenko et al., 2020).

As for the humanitarian unity of the post-Soviet society, almost the only one that has survived today, is retained by the Russian language, despite the fact that its spread over the past decade has significantly decreased. This can especially be seen in the example of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, together with Moldova and Ukraine. This situation is based on several factors. First of all, we can include the development of new nations and the formation of a national elite, as well as the disappearance of a single educational space. Some influence was also exerted by the facts of internal migration of countries, which led to a kind of ruralisation of cities. However, the most important factor, in our opinion, is that today the generation of people who were not born in the USSR has already grown, but in independent states that have their own political and cultural characteristics. Today we see the allocation of three macro-regions – the western part, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. However, there is no unity in these regions, since countries have quite different capacities, and are characterized by the frequent occurrence of conflicts, both internal and foreign policy.

Recently, the socio-political processes of the countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR have been the focus of attention, and a separate place of such research is devoted to the transformation of Russia. This can be explained by the significant influence of Russia on neighbouring countries. However, it cannot be said that the space of its influence remains post-Soviet in essence. So, we can see that today the construction of the post-Soviet discourse has less and less effect. And this avoids fears of the collapse of the post-Soviet space in its former form, since integration, different in degree and speed, together with a higher detail of

foreign policy in Russia in the near abroad, can give new opportunities for its development. Moreover, as 2016-2017 showed, Russia remains one of the most important actors in the region, its influence on other countries remains quite high, despite all the problematic relations with the West and their sanctions (Chirumbolo, 2002; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002).

We can say that the process of modernization in Russia should be considered as a way of returning the country to its natural history. However, there are some difficulties in the fact that there is not only a change of regimes, but also a change of the entire social system when political democratization began before the elements of the modern market were put together. In this regard, the realization of the important tasks of the modernization process proceeds simultaneously with the solution of current problems, which are characterized by a change in the old political system and the implementation of economic reforms that can ensure the most effective transition to a market economy. While today, democratic institutions still lack the economic foundations that make it difficult to build a stable political system. Russia chose the path of rapid and radical modernization, and the governing elite relies on a liberal American type of market, which sometimes cannot comply with the social reality and tradition of Russia (Gricenko, 2011; Emel'yanov Yu, 2011; Nepomnyashchyy et al., 2020).

An important feature of Russian civilizational development is that Russian society was not subjected to the special fundamental spiritual and intellectual coups that were characteristic of the West at the time (for example, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the human rights movement), which thereby laid the foundations for rationalistic forms of economic activity and the modern structure of the political system and government. In addition, certain segments of the social structure of post-Soviet Russia have their own specific features, which arose through the complex interaction of historical, ethnic and cultural-religious factors of the country (Romanenko, 2016). It should be noted that the nature of the tipping point always has contradictions and is characterized by duality. Therefore, together with the emergence of the features of democratization at the present stage of Russia, we see complete authoritarian power. The complexity of the situation is reflected in the fact that there is no strong counterweight to such a deepening trend, which could guarantee the gradual nature of the transition to a socially oriented market economy and a democratic type of political system. All this is compounded by the fact that Russia does not have an organized form of state that could ensure civil peace, so achieving social compromise remains quite problematic (Lelechenko et al., 2020).

As for the modernization of Ukraine, the process has long been stopped. Regardless of the fact that important world events take the Ukrainian crisis into the background, it continues to be the most important for post-Soviet society. There is a persistent feeling that it is quite profitable for the governing elite to prolong the frozen conflict. However, the question arises whether the effect of anti-Russian sanctions and the lending facility to the Ukrainian economy will remain. Today, the development of the Ukrainian economy largely depends on the contracting of loans. Based on most scenarios, it may be said that the provision of a new tranche will facilitate the stabilization of the exchange rate, thereby ensuring a small growth of the economy (Diegtar et al., 2020). The main position

of Ukraine is the definition of Russia as an aggressor, and the whole conflict is characterized by a strictly external invasion. At the same time, the implementation of the Minsk Agreements is determined by several circumstances, primarily security issues. The government assumes that initially it is necessary to demilitarize the region, disarm the militias and transfer borders, and only after that resolve political issues through elections according to the Ukrainian scenario. However, today we can see that changes in the international situation do not benefit Ukraine. First of all, the reason for such situation is the desire of many countries of the European Union to repair ties with Russia. In addition, the governing elite of Kyiv could not achieve serious success in building bilateral relations with the EU countries, and the position of Brussels does not compensate for this. The organization of a referendum in the Netherlands on Ukraine's association with the European Union shows that Kyiv diplomacy has not been able to attract voters through of its European ideas and its role as a victim. The results of the referendum still affect the issues of ratification of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU by the Netherlands. In general, the disappointment in the political elite of Ukraine, as well as its internal unstable situation, cause a rather negative impact on the image of the country in the West. The situation also has worsened by the fact that last years the expert community and the political class relied on the tactics of their relations with Washington owing to the unilateral support of H. Clinton, and with the coming to power of D. Trump, it will be much more difficult to get financial assistance. A Republican administration characterized by less exposure to ideology is always more pragmatic. Therefore, the lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements by the Government of Ukraine puts these issues in the background of the international agenda.

So, today we can observe an increasingly freezing conflict. Sanctions against Russia are gradually weakened by the EU side, recognizing the fact that the Minsk agreements are not implemented by both parties. However, such a situation could yield positive results under certain circumstances. Despite the fact that Kyiv will remain in the sphere of interests of the West and the European Union, relations between Moscow and Kiev may begin to move towards large contacts, despite the fact that the frozen situation in the Southeast will continue. The new Concept of Russian foreign policy provides for the need to resolve ethno-territorial conflicts that arose in the post-Soviet space. At the same time, the way to solve such problems lies through the negotiation process. In the near term, however, most conflicts are unlikely to be resolved through a negotiation process. Thus, we can say that the past 27 years demonstrate to us that the process of the collapse of the USSR continues to this day. The presence of frozen conflicts is largely a heritage of the Soviet Union or even pre-Soviet times. And after the collapse of the USSR, new conflict lines also appeared in the post-Soviet space, among which constantly flaring controversial points in Central Asia (Kuzmenko et al., 2020). To resolve the existing frozen conflicts quickly is almost unrealistically. But the problem is also in that what we can consider a solution to the frozen conflict today. For example, in the situation of Karabakh, minimizing outbreaks of violence will already be both the solution and the main task. In the case of Transnistria, the settlement is more apparent, since the conflict does not have such a heavy character and a huge number of refugees, despite the fact that there is economic and financial-industrial interaction between groups of the right and

left banks. So, we can say that in the entire post-Soviet space, only this conflict has a great chance of a real settlement (Gricenko, 2011; Emel'yanov Yu, 2011; Nepomnyashchyy et al., 2020). An important point will be how the Ukrainian conflict will be resolved, which determines the development of relations between the West and Russia. As for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, no dramatic progress is expected, but it is important that today Georgia and Russia have moved away from the heavy confrontation of 2008. There are hopes that the same mild transformation will occur with Ukraine, which is more dependent on the evolving situation in the international political arena.

Another important trend that represents the transition of power in Central Asian countries should be considered. Such a process was expected in Kazakhstan, while there was no guarantee that it would be held according to the scenario of Uzbekistan. The transition of the authorities to the new leaders, including in Uzbekistan, should be considered only on a long-term basis, since there are many risks of a clan struggle, liberalization of the economy and relations with neighbouring countries. However, in 2016, we saw one example of a calm transition of power in one of the most closed countries of the post-Soviet space, except for Turkmenistan. With high probability, Uzbekistan's new political elite will continue to build relations with both the East and the West, playing on the contradiction between Russia and China, despite the fact that it will not show a clear preference for either side. The situation around Uzbekistan may well be an indicator of how China and Russia, will be able to maintain stability in the republic, acting as external forces, and ensuring stability at the border and a general balance of forces in the region, which may be exposed to escalation of the situation on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. Obviously, Uzbekistan's new diplomacy will receive a wide range of problems, but there is a high probability of Uzbekistan's readiness for the transition period of reforms. But its implementation requires a consensus of major clans and elite groups of influence (Sych et al., 2020).

In addition, attention should be paid to the economic and political influence of China and Russia on Central Asia, despite the fact that it often manifests itself much more than influence from the West. But for Russia, its interaction with China has several important questions. What we are referring to here is the economic expansion of China, the need to reorient the way of transportation of hydrocarbons to China, as well as China's infrastructure projects in some countries of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. All this leads to the fact that, together with the penetration into the economy, the strengthening of China's military and political influence in the region is inevitable (Cherep & Bondar, 2015; Zaloznaya & Reisinger, 2020; Kovbasiuk, 2014). An important point is that Russia or China does not need the destabilization in Central Asia, since the appearance of certain escalations will immediately affect Beijing's instability in its north-eastern borders, as well as the appearance of the prospect of transferring an unstable situation to a troubled region for China, Xinjiang Uygur, populated by Muslims dissatisfied with Beijing. Today, China's main geopolitical tension line is the sea line in the East. Therefore, there's not much chance that the Central Asian region will become a battleground between Russia and China (Solomakha, 2018; Vasylieva et al., 2020; Zarubei et al., 2020; Shkarlet et al., 2020). Despite the fact that the new ruling circles of Uzbekistan are trying to establish relations with their neighbours Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which will largely determine its

development and modernization. There's a good chance that this year will bring noticeable changes in the overall international environment. There is also an assumption that this will make it possible to defuse tensions in the Eurasian space. Already today, it becomes clear to many people that without building close relations with Russia, it is almost unrealistic to achieve the constructive development of the post-Soviet space. In the current circumstances, modernization is possible only if the open format of cooperation between regional and global players in the international arena is observed (Andreiev et al., 2019; Fedulova, 2020; Kutsenko et al., 2020; Revak & Yavorska, 2018).

Conclusion

When analysing the main processes, institutional structures and patterns of behaviour in the post-Soviet space, it is important to take into account the ratio of centrifugal and centripetal trends. So, in post-Soviet societies, the process of differentiation is more or less freely, but often unstable, and the distancing of some countries from Russia or the rapprochement of others is the result of such situation. Almost all countries of the post-Soviet space are zones for open international competition, whose problems often become acute due to resource or military and political problems. Having formed a separate, in most cases independent platform for international activity over the past decades, the political and geographical complex of the former republics of the Soviet Union, and now independent states, remains quite receptive to any trends in world development. The modern stage of modernization and development of independent states is fully determined by their inclusion in continental and global processes as objects of external influence. However, each of these countries has significant potential to act independently. The main question is the desire of the governing elite in such a process.

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