

## **RUSSIA'S POLITICAL REGIME AND ITS FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

**Živilė Šatūnienė\***

The analysis, which includes non-formalised possibilities of ruling elite to exert its influence in a political system beside the formal attributes of a political regime does not allow to qualify Putin's Russia as a democracy. Currently, the most important political decisions in Russia are being adopted by the 'militocratic elite' moderated by Putin. The enclave resembles a coterie that has its specific structure, performs according to its own rules of the game, and is almost unaccountable to the country's electorate. According to some attributes, such enclave-based Russia's political regime resembles a mixture of the "developmental", oil exporting Asian regime and of the fascist one. However, these parallels do not imply that the future transformation of Putinite Russia will do necessarily repeat the experience of the other countries.

In a short-time perspective, the nature of Russia's political regime should not mutate in spite whether Putin himself in one way or another is going to maintain his influence over decision making process in Russia after 2008 or not. Theoretically, in a long-time perspective the political regime in Russia might be transformed 'from below'. However, for this scenario to come truth, a variety of hardly manageable conditions that are (almost) missing in today's Russia should appear once and coincide with each other in time, i. e. Russian economy should slump, at the same time its ruling elite should for some reason lose the ability to manipulate the mood of the masses, a new leader should arise, etc.

### **Introduction**

It is rather difficult to characterize Putin's Russia using the classical, i. e. dualistic, classification of the political regimes. However, being very precise, the contemporary political regime of Russia is neither purely democratic, nor to-

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\* Dr. Živilė Šatūnienė is a Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, Lithuania; e-mail: [Zivile.Satuniene@tspmi.vu.lt](mailto:Zivile.Satuniene@tspmi.vu.lt)

tally authoritarian, but a number of descriptions for this regime could be found in a number of scientific and other type papers. The authors trying to stay “politically correct” often choose rather discreet wording. For example, one of these, Sascha Müller-Kraenner underlines that the solution of South Caucasus security issues or other processes in the region will depend on the “state of development of Russia’s democracy”<sup>1</sup>. Crafting this kind of statement the author is sort of presuming that democratic regime in Russia still exists. However, at the same time he sends the “message”, that some particular events and tendencies force the fears, whether the democracy in Russia is going to be preserved.

It is also possible to find totally curious or even quasi-scientific conclusions regarding the particularity of Putin’s regime in a number of studies. For example, Oksana Gaman-Golutvina, Deputy Chairperson of the Scientific Council of Russian Political Science Association, after making the analysis on the separation of powers in contemporary Russia, comes to the conclusion that in Russia, unlike in a number Western European democracies, there exist four instead of three branches of power. Namely, the author states that in this country, above the traditional trio, i. e. the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branches of power, there has emerged the “presidential branch of power”<sup>2</sup>. Astonishing, but according to Gaman-Golutvina, this kind of institutional arrangement is virtually not incompatible with the principles of democratic rule. The presence of the fourth – presidential – “branch of power” simply marks “the particularity of Russia’s parliamentarism”. According to the researcher, under this type of institutional structure the president is not obliged to “waste time” on continuously persuading and “negotiating” with the State Duma (parliament) members on particular decisions (laws) to be adopted. Thus, the legislation of legal acts is thought to become simply more effective. On the other hand, Gaman-Golutvina acknowledges, that the current institutional set up of authority in Russia could also be used not for the sake of such a positive phenomena as the

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<sup>1</sup> Müller-Kraenner S., “The European Neighbourhood Policy: Opportunities and Challenges“ in Frobrig J. and Shepherd R., eds., *Ukraine after the Orange Revolution: Strengthening European and Transatlantic Commitments*, Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2005, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Гаман-Голутвина О., *Политическая система России сегодня – эффективный инструмент достижения целей власти* (Интервью), 2006 <[http://www.kreml.org/interview/107293756?user\\_session=226bf5aae3086277c9ebc6cc19ed7bec](http://www.kreml.org/interview/107293756?user_session=226bf5aae3086277c9ebc6cc19ed7bec)>, 25 10 2006.

effectiveness of governance, but instead, for example, for the sake of realization of specific, particularistic interests of the ruling elite<sup>3</sup>.

However, in case we are going to approach the democracy in an accustomed, i. e. procedural, but not in a sub-minimal, sense of understanding, at least four conditions for the existence of such political regime are obligatory<sup>4</sup>.

Firstly, the authority should be formed on the basis of *regular and fair elections*. The “fairness” of the latter means that the competition between the political powers or political leaders can not be limited either in fact, or potentially. Real competition for the ruling elite in democratic states could not be present for a rather long term (for example, like in Japan after the Second World War) and this does not inhibit the possibility of the existence of democracy. However, the rulers cannot imply any artificial legal or other-type means that will reduce either the existing or potential extent of the plurality within a particular political system. If such means are nevertheless employed, some of the different researches name, the regime is going to be not fully democratic, but only a “sham democracy”, the “suppressed” one, “democracy of Asiatic style” or a “pseudo-democracy”, etc. For example, David Collier and Steven Levitsky seem to be more severe – they assign this type of political regime (where the election fairness criterion is not met) already to the non-democratic ones<sup>5</sup>.

Secondly, in the democratic states the majority of their adult citizens should have a right to vote in the elections.

Thirdly, not only regular, fair and general elections should take place in a democratic political system. The ruling authority should secure the *broad range of political rights and civic freedoms* – the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of assembly, the right to be equally treated by the law, the right to presumption of innocence till proven guilty, the right to own and dispose pro-

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> These “conditions” are named according to the definition of the democratic political regimes proposed by David Collier and Steven Levitsky. According to the authors, this is an “expanded procedural interpretation of democracy” – see Collier D., Levitsky S., *Democracy, with Adjectives* (“*Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research*”), 1996, p. 8-13, <<http://www.nd.edu/~kellogg/WPS/230.pdf>>, 10 07 2006. Besides, this type of the definition of democratic political regime is started to be used by the majority of other researches – for example, see Mainwaring S., Brinks D., and Pérez-Liñán A., *Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America, 1945-1999* (Working Paper #280), 2000, <<http://www.nd.edu/~kellogg/publications/workingpapers/WPS/280.pdf>>, 10 07 2006 and other.

<sup>5</sup> See Collier, Levitsky, (note 4) p. 43.

perty and etc. In the countries where these rights/freedoms are disregarded or only some of them are properly realized (for example, in the majority of Latin American countries, especially in the 80s of the last century, namely, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru and others, as well as in Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia until now), the full-fledged democracy is not functioning. In case the above-mentioned two criteria are present, this kind of political regimes usually acquires the name of “democracy with some type of an adjective” – “elected“, “formal“, “illiberal“, “limited“ or similar. Collier and Levitsky call this type of regimes “electoralism” and do not assign them either to democratic, or to no-democratic regimes<sup>6</sup>.

Fourthly, the government formed after the fair and competitive elections should have a *real and effective power to rule the state*. In other words, the elected government *de facto* should be able to implement its policy in a number of areas of public life. Its decisions can not be limited, for example, in “specific domains” or by “authoritarian enclaves”, which constitute the “heritage” of the previous non-democratic rule<sup>7</sup>. In case such institutions are present in a political system, the regime is not going to be purely democratic, but only the “military democracy”, “client democracy”, the “supervised” one, etc. democracy<sup>8</sup>.

Analysing political regime of Putin, it is obvious that only one of four conditions for democracy is met: the right to the majority of the adult citizens to take part in the elections. It is still the matter of the discussion whether or to what extent the other three conditions for the effective democracy are met in Russia. On the other side, Putin’s Russia is not totally authoritarian regime, in case the latter we are going to treat as the regime, in which all four above-mentioned conditions are ignored plus other additional features<sup>9</sup> exist (like the absence of pluralism that articulates political demands, the lack of consistent ideology and political mobilization, the acting of a political leader or a relatively narrow group of the ruling elite within the non-defined, but more or less predictable

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> See Linz J. J. and Stepan A., “Toward Consolidated Democracies“ in Diamond L., Plattner M. F., eds., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Collier, Levitsky, (note 4) p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> See Linz J. J. and Stepan A., *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London, The Jones Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 38, 44-45.

limits of power). The hybrid type of Putin's regime is to a large extent determined by the fact that, on the one hand, a range of institutes attributed to the democratic political system formally exist in this country, the Constitution of 1993 formally guarantees all the rights and liberties required for a democratic regime, the elections take place in Russia regularly and the straightforward falsification of the results of the elections is not numerous, the elected elite acts in a sort of clearly determined limits of power and so on. On the other hand, alongside the formal rules of the game, in Russia, there exists a relatively broad space for the rulers to employ the informal, non-formalized mechanisms of the accumulation of political power. These mechanisms (for example, bureaucracy loyal to the authority, existence of a "party of power", state control of mass media, state-regulated economy, absence of impartial courts and etc.) allow the ruling elite to accumulate power in the political system that is non-proportional to the confidence expressed to it by the society. Also, the control of these mechanisms of informal power allows the rulers to use them for the sake of their personal interest while discriminating other actors of the political system. In such a situation the decisive role of the formal rules of the game in guiding the processes going on in the particular political system becomes highly compromised – such rules exist, but they are only paper-rules. In fact, the political actors try to acquire or maintain their dominant position within the particular system basing their behaviour on other (i. e. non-formal, unwritten) rules of the political game.

Taking into account that in a majority of the post-Soviet countries the informal power mechanisms are deeply rooted, some researchers (like Vladimir Gelman<sup>10</sup>) propose to correspondingly conceptualize the research of the political regimes of such the countries.

Analyzing the quality of the post-Soviet political regimes, alongside the formal institutions it is recommended to analyze to what extent the ruling elite is free to use the informal mechanisms in order to increase its power. The formal rules of the game may indicate the existence of the democracy in a country for a prolonged period of time, while in reality, neither the high quality democracy nor democracy as such have existed there since the years due to the ruling elite's intensive employment of the informal mechanisms of power.

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<sup>10</sup> See Gel'man V., "Post-Soviet Transitions and Democratization: Towards Theory Building" in *Democratization* 10 (2), 2003, p. 92-93.

Taking into account the possibility of the parallel existence of the above-mentioned both - formal and informal institutions in the majority of the post-Soviet countries, this article seeks:

- 1) to analyze the particularity of Putin's political regime;
- 2) forecast future transformation of this regime.

While analysing the specifics of Putin's regime, the most precise description for it is not being searched for. Whether it is better to call it "electoral democracy", or "electoral authoritarianism", or even finding a third name remains an open question that this article does not seek to answer. The institutional particularity of Russia's political regime is analyzed on the basis, to what extent the three above mentioned conditions characterizing the democratic political regime are present, namely, the existence of fair elections, the secured realisation of the broad range of political rights and civic liberties, and the absence of "reserved domains" or "authoritarian enclaves". As it was already mentioned, the presence of the expanded electoral rights in Russia, being the fourth condition for the effective democracy, in fact does not raise any doubts. The particularity of the Russia's political regime according these three conditions/features is analyzed taking into account the formal and informal rules of the game as well as changes in them and proportion of them in Putin's Russia.

Seeking to give the answer to the second objective of this paper, namely, to foresee the future transformation of Putin's political regime, the political regime of Russia firstly is going to be compared to the similar historical and some still existing non-democratic regimes. Comparing "the fate" of these regimes, the circumstances of their decline or continuity, it is analyzed to what extent the similar transformation of Russian political regime is possible. The external and internal factors are also taken into consideration, which could have the influence of the specific transformation of Putin's Russia's political regime as well as to what extent Russia's current political regime could be compared to the hybrid/authoritarian regimes of other states.

It should be underlined, that the dualistic classification of the political regimes is not used in this study. Indicating that the regime is "non-democratic" does not necessarily mean that it is the "classical authoritarian" one. Secondly, Russia's and other non-democratic political regimes are analyzed and compared on the institutional basis, namely, according to the existence or the formerly

presented institutional structures. Thirdly, making the analysis of the future transformation of Russian political regime, the traditional approach is going to be used, i. e. taking into account the unique features of Russian regime and its similarity to the other non-democratic regimes, three possibilities will be discussed: 1) Russian regime transformation “from above”; 2) change “from below”; 3) transformation under the influence of external factors.

## **1. The particularity of Putin's political regime**

### **1.1. Fairness of the elections**

In order to estimate whether fair elections are possible in today's Russia, it is needed to analyse if Putin has taken any special steps (either formal or informal) in order to limit the internal competitiveness of Russian political system after he was elected the President in 2000.

The formal electoral rules in Russia had not been changing much until Putin came to the President's office. A mixed voting system for the election of Russia's lower house parliament members was introduced as far back as before 1993 State Duma elections and these rules were followed by the last Duma election. Under the mixed representation system, a half of the State Duma members (225) were elected according to the proportional representation system, using 5 per cent minimum threshold, and the other part (225) were elected in the single mandate constituencies. The so-called “parties of power” had been present in Duma since the very beginning of its first term (e. g. Egor Gaidar's “Russia's Choice”, later Viktor Chernomyrdin's “Our Home is Russia”, Alexander Luzhkov's and Evgeny Primakov's „Fatherland – The Whole Russia“, Boris Gryzlov's “Unity” and etc. ). The mandates won by these parties usually did not exceed 12-16 per cent of the total number of seats in the State Duma<sup>11</sup> or in particular cases these parties went off totally unsuccessful (like, for example, Ivan Rybkin's electoral

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<sup>11</sup> Robinson N., *Russia: A State of Uncertainty*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 84-85, 94.

block in 1995). Therefore, the 49 per cent of the Duma seats won by “United Russia” in 2003 seems totally unprecedented victory<sup>12</sup>.

Two very important legal initiatives were promoted by the special efforts of Putin after he became the President. In June 2001 a new Law on Political Parties was adopted, according to which all politically active political parties in Russia were obliged to reregister. The registration criteria for them became more stringent as before and only those political parties that had an exceptionally well developed state-wide organizational structure were able to qualify these new requirements of the registration. For example, previously the political party having only 5 thousand members was allowed to be registered, while the new law foresaw the registration of the political party having 10 thousand members with the requirement to have at least 100 members in more than half of Russia’s administrative units (i. e. at least in 45 of them), while in the others having at least 50 registered members per administrative unit - region<sup>13</sup>. There were roughly 200 political parties at the time of the adoption of this law in 2001<sup>14</sup>, while after the re-registration has taken place, there were left only 35 political parties in December 2006<sup>15</sup>.

In April 2005 it was made another very important change to the electoral laws. Since the beginning of 2007 all 450 members of the State Duma will be elected according the rules of the proportional representation and only the political parties that were able to reregister will be able to present the candidate lists for voting. The new electoral rules also do not foresee a possibility for *ad hoc* electoral blocks and the minimum threshold of representation was lifted from 5 per cent up to 7 per cent<sup>16</sup>. Necessary to stress, that the new law also

<sup>12</sup> Центральная Избирательная Комиссия Российской Федерации, *Выборы депутатов Государственной Думы Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации четвертого созыва 7 декабря 2003 года*, <<http://gd2003cikrf.ru/WAY/76799124>>, 12 07 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Article 3 of the above-mentioned Law – see Russian Federation, *Federal Law “On Political Parties”*, <[http://www.cikrf.ru/\\_2\\_en/fz95\\_en\\_110701.htm](http://www.cikrf.ru/_2_en/fz95_en_110701.htm)>, 12 07 2006.

<sup>14</sup> *Changes to Electoral Laws*, <<http://www.russiavotes.org/electorallawchange3.htm>>, 12 07 2006.

<sup>15</sup> See Центральная Избирательная Комиссия Российской Федерации, *Информация о зарегистрированных политических партиях по состоянию на 1 декабря 2006 года*, <<http://www.cikrf.ru/>>, 01 12 2006.

<sup>16</sup> See the above mentioned Law, Article 82 in particular - Российская Федерация, *Федеральный закон “О выборах депутатов Государственной Думы Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации”*, <[http://www.cikrf.ru/\\_3/zakon/zakon51\\_180505/zakon\\_51.htm](http://www.cikrf.ru/_3/zakon/zakon51_180505/zakon_51.htm)>, 12 07 2006.

foresees that in case only one political party passes the threshold of 7 per cent and gets more than 60 per cent of total vote, the other political party having the second record of electoral support will be involved in the allocation of the seats in Duma, despite the fact that it has failed to pass the threshold of 7 per cent.

Summarizing the effects, which the above mentioned changes of the electoral system and electoral rules might have on the competitiveness in Russia's political system, it can be said, that the dominant political party in the present-day Russia (i. e. "United Russia") aided by the very straightforward support of the President Putin, has modified the formal rules of the State Duma elections in such a way as to guarantee for itself the dominant role in Russia's political system in the future.

Firstly, the number of competing political parties in the political system was several times reduced using the new Law on Political Parties in Russia.

Secondly, the possibilities of creation of new political parties have been totally minimized. The above-mentioned Law on Political Parties adopted in 2001 has tightened and limited the possibilities for the political parties to be supported by the commercial entities, while at the same time the Law foresaw the substantial financial support from the state to those political parties, that had taken part in either the presidential or parliamentary elections and had gathered more than 3 per cent of the votes<sup>17</sup>. Taking into consideration the before discussed high requirements for the political parties to be re-registered, only minimal possibilities for the new political parties to grow up are left in Russia.

Thirdly, the forthcoming electoral order (the foreseen high – 7 per cent – minimal representation threshold) in the elections of Duma members obviously discriminates the minor political parties. Necessary to mention, that already in 2003 Duma elections, when the minimal representation threshold was still 5 per cent, only 4 political parties managed to pass this threshold. The political parties that currently create the major ideological competition (Russian liberals) to the ruling elite, already in these elections got only several seats in Duma and these particular seats were won in the single-winner constituencies. Therefore, taking into consideration the record of the last elections of the State Duma, it could be forecasted that after the coming elections of Russian parliament (lower

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<sup>17</sup> See Russian Federation, *Federal Law "On Political Parties"*, (note 13).

house) in 2007 the number of political parties in Duma is going to range from 2 to 4.

Moreover, if we start thinking about “Unity” or “United Russia” as the offspring being artificially but deliberately created by the ruling elite in 1999-2001 (otherwise it would be difficult to explain the surge and immediate popularity of this political force while being created), then we have to agree that the objective of this new political force was to substantially limit the competition among political forces in Russian political system. The rulers were absolutely free in 1999 to choose any preferred by them ideology for the new political movement “Unity”. However, “Unity” had deliberately not described its ideological base either before the Duma elections in 1999, or later, and with its spread of ideas started to “duplicate” other influential forces in the political system, i. e. the communists that were suffering from their identity crisis; the nationalist patriots of Zhirinovskiy, as well as the moderate reformers - Luzhkov’s and Primakov’s “Fatherland – The Whole Russia” - that also were favouring nationalist ideas<sup>18</sup>. One could stress, that “Unity” artificially imitated the ideological attitudes (national patriotism) present at that time among the dominant “camps” of political elite, but at the same time adding its personal “token of quality” – would-be fight of the competent specialists with the old system, with its values, and giving a promise to create another – new and better – state. This kind of the strategy allowed the ruling elite to strengthen its status at the expense of other political forces in the system. The strategy of “Unity” was to support all the national patriotic forces<sup>19</sup> and to become itself an additional one of the kind, but at the same time “superior” and new-fashioned by promising to install the totally different view in the politics. This “novelty” was marked by the slogan “to work, but not go on politicking”.

Such an ideological stance by “Unity” ”United Russia” was comfortable for the ruling elite in a several aspects.

Firstly, it is very easy for the “United Russia” to change its ideology at any time, if needed, as the supporters of it even do not recognize the sameness of this

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<sup>18</sup> On the topic see more Hale H. E., “Origins of United Russia and the Putin Presidency: The Role of Contingency in Party-System Development” in *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2004, <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3996/is\\_200404/ai\\_n9376577](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3996/is_200404/ai_n9376577)>, 15 08 2006.

<sup>19</sup> McFaul M., Petrov N., “What the Elections Tell Us“ in *Journal of Democracy* 15 (3), 2004, p. 21, 25.

political force. For example, Michael McFaul underlines that even several days before the elections in 1999, making the analysis of the voters (respondents) preferences in the *focus* group, they were not able to describe the ideological orientation of “Unity”<sup>20</sup>. According Yury Nazdratenko, one the first members on “Unity’s” list and the governor of Primorsk Kray, “the ideology of this political creation was not to have any ideology”<sup>21</sup>. On the official website of the party it is also not possible to find any ideology of the party, but only the opinions and views by the party members on the particular national problems<sup>22</sup>. This again indicates that the founders of this political party go on persuading the society that the “real parties“ (like “United Russia“) should not devote their energy to discussing on which ideological principals the solution of concrete problems should rest (“let others bother themselves with this”), but go on with the solution of these problems.

Secondly, value attitude of “United Russia“, namely, advocacy of the national patriotic ideas, at the same time stressing its advantage over the older, but also the national patriotic political forces, creates a really substantial challenges for these parties to gain support from the voters. These parties are not in the position to change more or less their already long-lasting ideological stances. On the same ground, these parties are not able “to explain” the voters, why “United Russia” advocating the same attitudes and being more ambitious is “worse” than older systemic national patriotic parties, or, on the contrary, what makes them better in comparison with “United Russia”.

It is obvious, that the birth of “Unity” “United Russia” in Russia’s political system (already at the very end of Yeltsin era, but mainly under the initiative of president Putin) has substantially complicated the spread of ideological competition in Russia’s political system.

Taking into account the effects of all the formal and informal mechanisms used by Putin (surely including the introduction of the political movement “Unity” in the political system) on the competition in the political system of

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<sup>20</sup> McFaul M., “Explaining Party Formation and Nonformation in Russia“ in *Comparative Political Studies* 34 (10), 2001, p. 1171.

<sup>21</sup> Riggs J. W., Schraeder P. J., “Russia’s Political Party System as an Impediment to Democratization“ in *Democratizatsiya* 12 (2), 2004, <[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3996/is\\_200404\\_a\\_in9400010](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3996/is_200404_a_in9400010)>, 16 08 2006.

<sup>22</sup> See *Партия “Единая Россия”*, <<http://www.edinros.ru>>, 13 10 2005.

Russia, it is necessary to conclude that at least one of the conditions for the democracy in Russia is not met. Fair elections can not occur in the present-day Russia as it restricts both - the potential and actual inter-party competition within its political system.

### **1.2. The Security of Political Rights and Civic Liberties in Russia**

Naturally, a whole range of political rights and civic liberties should be secured in the full-fledged democracy. It is unlikely that the discussion, on which of the rights are more important than the others could be productive. Although, taking into consideration the volume of this article, we are going to analyze only the status and changes in Putin's Russia of the several rights and liberties. The criteria for their selection are first, the direct influence of the specific rights and liberties on securing the pluralistic environment for political process, and second, proactive efforts of Putin (the ruling elite of Russia) to squeeze these rights and liberties. The limitation of such rights and liberties as the right of associations, the right of expression, the right for the impartial legal treatment, etc. expands the limits of the authority. It starts representing not the will of the people, but the interest of itself, thus discrediting the possibility of the presence of the democratic political regime.

Just after Putin became the President of Russia, specific actions were taken against the so-called "oligarchs" – Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, who owned the mass-media outlets expressing the very critical evaluation of Putin's policy towards Chechnya, Putin's stance during the tragedy of the submarine "Kursk" and etc. In May 2000 Gusinsky, who was the principal shareholder of the television channel NTV, was arrested and incriminated of the NTV slow actions returning the loan to the bank. The loan was received on the guarantee from the other big shareholder of the same NTV, namely, the state-controlled gas company Gazprom. In fact the businessman was released lately. That did not require the decision of the court, but lately Gusinsky had to "voluntary" relinquish his NTV shares to the state-controlled Gazprom<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> See Shevtsova L., *Putin's Russia*, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 108.

Another “oligarch” Berezovsky, who was the owner of the then television channel ORT, did not wait until the decision of the Russian Finance Minister(!) would be carried out to make the inspections on not paying taxes in the Berezovsky-related companies Sibneft, AvtoVAZ and others. In 2001 he resigned from the State Duma, sold his property to another Russian businessman Roman Abramovich and escaped to the United Kingdom. In a due course Abramovich again voluntarily relinquished his voting rights in ORT to the state.

These separate cases could be valued on a range of aspects, but the majority of the researchers underline the selectivity of Putin’s “policy of penalties” against some businessmen and private companies. For example, according to Liliya Shevtsova, at the time of Gusinsky’s arrest there were doubts indeed whether NTV intended returning the loans, but at the same time other televisions - ORT, RTR – were even in the bigger indebtedness to the state<sup>24</sup>. These facts discredited the impartiality of Putin’s policy and allowed interpreting it in the context of the limitation of the freedom of expression (or mass-media freedom).

In nowadays the situation in Russian mass-media also looks gaunt. After the last independent television channel TVS in 2003 went to the state control, there was left no one Russian national television channel (except cable televisions) that was not owned either by the state or by state-controlled enterprises. The influence of the state is more and more felt in other branches of mass-media as well, i. e. the printed media and the radio. In case the mass-media, which is directly or indirectly controlled by the state, does not face any direct censorship, over time it starts restricting itself. For example, nearly all television channels and daily newspapers in the present-day Russia tend to present the activities of “United Russia” and the president Putin in the extremely positive light. The effect of state censorship on the mass-media also illustrates the fact, that for example before the elections of 2004 Putin refused to take part in the television debates with his opponents, but during the elections he got 71 per cent of the votes and was elected the president already after the first round<sup>25</sup>. The mass-media also feels some kind of the pressure from the state when the

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106-107.

<sup>25</sup> Freedom House, *Russia*, 2006, <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=7044>>, 05 09 2006.

latter starts threatening to withdraw or cancel the licenses to broadcast, to annul accreditations to participate in the events<sup>26</sup> and etc.

The regulation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) activities and the reaction of the authorities towards the other forms of the citizens' attempts (meetings and protest actions) to influence the political process was another field of changes that occurred in Russia during the ruling period of Putin. After the respective laws were adopted in 2002 and 2005, the authorities were entitled to stop the activities of those NGOs and even political parties, which members were engaged in the extremist activities. According to the critics, the authority was left with the broad possibilities to interpret when the particular activity would be considered "extremist" and when not. Such a permission for the authority to act as an arbiter is not compatible with the institutionalization of the democratic political regime. Besides, after the Orange revolution in Ukraine, the NGOs in Russia were prohibited to get financed from abroad, the other conditions of the NGOs activities were also tightened and even derogated (for example, the exemptions from the VAT payment were cancelled, the registration of NGOs became administratively more laden, etc.).

Moreover, during the protest actions in Moscow in 2005 Putin's regime engaged for a double-standard policy. For example, the pensioners and other individuals being under the social auspices were detained because of taking part in the protest demonstrations against the decision of the government to cancel the free of charge usage of public transport as well as other social privileges (these privileges were to be "monetised" by the payoffs which later on appeared to be inadequately small). The force was also used against the youth, which in 2005 gathered together to express the support to the former president of the Yukos company Mikhail Khodorkovsky during his trial procedure. But at the same time the other group of the youth, which gathered to express its attitudes against Khodorkovsky and the "oligarchs" in general, were left without any attention from the authorities<sup>27</sup>.

These cases disclose also other shortcomings of Putin's regime, namely, the degeneracy of the state administrative institutions and courts towards the pressure from the ruling authority, most probably insufficient protection of private property (Yukos, NTV, ORT and other cases). On one hand, this directly or

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

indirectly limits the realization of the rights and liberties of the citizens. On the other hand, this kind of non-formalized but very effective control of the courts and bureaucratic apparatus increases the moderating positions of the ruling elite in the political system. Such phenomena at the same time depress the potential political competition in the system. In some cases Putin even does not tend to look like a “democrat” and does not tend to hide the fact that in reality the authorities can control very important informal mechanisms of power. For example, after the tragedy in Beslan in September 2004, Putin declared that he is going to take the total control of the Bureau of the Supreme Court, which is responsible for the appointment and recall of the judges<sup>28</sup>. In this way it is possible to stress that not only the political rights and civic liberties are restrained in Putin’ Russia, but the public opinion is formed that this kind of authority activities are justified and inevitable while seeking sort of more important objectives than democratic rule, namely, security of the society, effective governance, “strong state” and etc.

### **1.3. The effectiveness of the power of the elected elite and the absence of the “authoritarian enclaves” within the state administration**

In the theories of democratisation the incapability of the elected government to rule effectively was first linked with the partially successful democratization experience of Latin American countries. The military people, who ruled before for years, managed to accept the democratically elected new elite. However, they made the “agreements” that in principle they agree to pass the power to the new democratic elite, but at the same time they require the specific public areas to be left dominated by the military. The presence of this kind of “reserved domains” or “authoritarian enclaves” in the state governance (in fact, the inability of the elected officials to execute their power effectively) was understood as the factor indicating that the consolidation of the democratic regime was non-successful<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Valenzuela J. S., “Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transition Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions” in Mainwaring S., O’Donnell G., and Valenzuela J. S., eds., *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, p. 70.

In fact, the origin of such the ruling elite, which creates the “alternative” to the elected elite or simply has the informal veto right on the decisions of the elected elite, could be varying. The elected officials might have no effective power because of the exceptionally high influence of the military, police, bureaucracy or party structures (for example, the Centre Committee of the Communist Party in the USSR). Similarly, the “authoritarian enclaves” could be formed by the individuals of non-state origin, namely, organized crime groupings, terrorist organizations, rich and influential businessmen (“oligarchs”) and etc.<sup>30</sup>

Following this approach, the situation in Putin’s Russia looks still unique. After taking power in Russia Putin left no space for the “oligarchs enclave” of Yeltsin’s period to express its power (“semibankirshchina” was a very influential group in the state governance in 1995-1996, later on, after Primakov became the Prime Minister, it has weakened, due to the ambitions of Primakov himself to be free of influence from the large business as well as due to the internal rivalries of the “oligarchs” and the financial crisis in 1998). Already during the first term in the office, the President Putin has created his own bureaucratic-military (it starts to gain the nickname “militocratic”) enclave, which was basically formed from the “people bearing stars on their shoulder-straps”. This group of the people loyal to Putin started control not only the governance of the state but nearly all the most important fields of power (including economic power, informational and other resources). The influence of Putin’s militocratic enclave in the present-day Russia may be compared with that of Politburo during the Soviet times. In both cases the publicly elected institutions had not stopped performing their formal functions. However, they were seized from the real power of decision making by other actors, i. e. so-called “enclave”, if to use terminology of democratization theories<sup>31</sup>.

Putin’s militocratic enclave consists of the former officers of special and intelligence services as well as President’s former colleagues from St. Petersburg municipality, university mates, other friends, etc. The publicly elected elite (ex-

<sup>30</sup> See, Yu J.-T., *Demokratie und Volk – Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Staat und Zivilgesellschaft im Transformationsprozess zur Demokratie am Beispiel dreier neuer asiatischer Demokratien – die Philippinen, Südkorea und Taiwan* (Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades eines Doktors der Philosophie vom Institut vergleichender Politikwissenschaft im Fachbereich Sozialwissenschaften der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg), 2005, p. 353, <[http://deposit.ddb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?idn=981337724&dok\\_var=d1&dok\\_ext=pdf&filename=981337724.pdf](http://deposit.ddb.de/cgi-bin/dokserv?idn=981337724&dok_var=d1&dok_ext=pdf&filename=981337724.pdf)>, 10 11 2006.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

cept Putin himself), i. e. the State Duma, in fact performs only a very formal function in the contemporary Russian government structure – it technically “translates” the ideas and initiatives of the above mentioned enclave into laws.

It could be stated that several reasons allowed/allows Putin’s militocratic enclave to emerge and then strengthen its positions in Russian government structure:

- 1) relatively high powers, according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993, given to the president to appoint other officials to various state governmental and administrative institutions;
- 2) the instrumentality of the “party of power” – “United Russia”;
- 3) the centralization of the state power achieved by the formal means (e. g. during Putin era another level of authority has been introduced into the government structure of the federal state, namely, the federal districts, which are being governed by the placemen of the President. Under the initiative of Putin, the formation rules of the upper house of the Federal Assembly, i. e. the Federation Council, were also changed, etc.);
- 4) the decrease in the quantity of the elected elite officials and the increase of the number of appointed officials (after the Beslan tragedy the appointment procedure of the governors was also changed - previously they were elected politicians);
- 5) the delay to privatize and reorganize the largest enterprises of energy, transport, finance, military complex; strengthening of the state control in some of these enterprises (for example, Gazprom); increased state regulation in some sectors of the economy, keeping away foreign capital from the strategic and exceptionally profitable sectors of Russian economy;
- 6) increased state control of mass-media;
- 7) delay to reform the court system and state administration;
- 8) derogations of the activities of the other independent political and civil institutes of society and etc.

To the above-mentioned reasons explaining why the influential militocratic enclave emerged in the political system of Russia it is necessary to add also the deliberate propaganda of Putin’s regime aimed at securing the creation of a “strong, effective, and honourable state”<sup>32</sup>. Also, the institutionalization of

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<sup>32</sup> See Robinson, (note 11) p. 126, 172; Polianikov T., “The Logic of Authoritarianism” in *Russian Social Science Review* 47 (3), 2006, p. 24–25 and etc.

Putin's enclave was further stimulated by the relatively low level of Russian people political consciousness, their nostalgia for a "firm hand" policy, basically conformist and non-protest culture of post-Soviet societies<sup>33</sup>, as well as the vivid atmosphere of fear in Russia, especially after the cases of Gusinsky, Berezovsky, Khodorkovsky and others.

## **2. The particularity of Putin's regime**

Speaking in images, the contemporary Russia is being ruled by a rather wide non-elected militocratic elite, which controls the most important country's leverages of political, economic, and informational power. At the same time, however, the institutional framework of the government in Russia maintains the formal attributes of a party democracy as well. Theoretically, such a democracy should get evidence in the course of permanent "negotiations" between the president (the executive being appointed by him) and the parliament while adopting laws. Also, the constructive debates should go on within the parliament. And the courts in an ideal party democracy model should perform the role of the "watching dogs" within this process in order to secure that none of the branches of power transcends its constitutional limits of power, and the political game is being played following the well defined, agreed-among-all formal rules.

However, after the adoption of several laws or amendments to laws initiated by Putin and the establishment of the instrumental "party of power" – "United Russia" (former "Unity"), the Russian State Duma has been transformed into a façade institution. Now it protects Putin's militocratic enclave from the possible ideological or otherwise competition from outside. Also, the State Duma provides the decisions being adopted within the enclave with the formal legitimacy in the eyes of both – the electorate, i. e. the country's "internal market", and the international political community. The non-reformed Russia's judicial system (actually, there has been no incentive for Putin to reform it) also limits itself to only an instrumental role within the current political system. To a considerable

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Greskovits B., *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998, p. 179-180.

degree, it serves the militocratic enclave's tactical and strategic political ambitions.

As was mentioned above, in theory, the presence of the "authoritarian enclaves" within the non-fully democratised political systems (such as in the former Greece, Chile, etc.) usually meant that the old authoritarian elite, in spite of the newly elected and democratic one, maintained some powers to influence the ruling of the state in some particular, limited areas. However, the situation in today's Russia seems to be pretty different. The non-elected militocratic enclave, which is being moderated by Putin, holds an effective control of nearly all important fields of power. First, it runs the most important governmental and state administrative institutions (including both – the federation and subfederal - levels). Second, the enclave has strengthened its positions in the core enterprises that operate in the strategically important, to a large extent export-oriented branches of Russian economy, such as gas, oil industry, metallurgical engineering, banking, military-industrial complex, etc. Third, Putin's militocratic enclave possesses either direct or indirect control of all the most important country's media outlets. Taking into account these circumstances, it can be stated that at present in Russia, the Putin's rallied-around-enclave with its structure, inherent values, rules of behaviour and goals in fact substitutes the formal institutional framework of the state power. Though this fact does not contradict the very concept of an "enclave"<sup>34</sup>, it must be accepted that the prospects of regime transformation in Russia will depend first of all on the processes taking place within the "boundaries" of this enclave and not on the development of other state institutions or other factors.

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<sup>34</sup> Following the arguments of Yu and other authors (see Yu, (note 30)), the existence of an „enclave“ within a particular state power structure does not necessarily mean that the role of this enclave is only a minor and restricted one when compared to the power domain controlled by the democratically elected elite. The presence of an "authoritarian" enclave in the political system supposes that the real, effective power (in total or in some particular, "reserved" areas) belongs not to the democratically elected elite, but other actors. Also, it presumes that the effective power of elected rulers is non-proportional (i. e. much lesser when compared) to their formal status and formally defined limits of their competence. For example, according to Yu, an "authoritarian enclave" could be built by a party governing bodies, such as, for example, the Politbureau of the Communist Party in the USSR. As it is generally accepted, the latter body in fact had governed the country during the whole Soviet era even though it was formally declared that all the power should belong to the people representative bodies, such as the local soviets, the Supreme Soviets of the separate republics of the USSR, the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR, etc.

As it has been mentioned above, the structure of the Russia's ruling enclave is rather specific. For example, as far back as 2002, the well-known Russian sociologist and elite researcher Olga Kryshtanovskaya stated that the military personnel comprised about 58 per cent of the employees at various state institutions (the biggest part of them were the outcomers from intelligence and/or security services who had a military rank). If to take the government ministries only, these people constituted about one third of the staff<sup>35</sup>. The average age of the outcomers from various military institutions was about 52 years. Most of them knew each other personally since the ruling period of Yury Andropov, when they started their service at the then Soviet Union's KGB.

Similarly, according to the calculations made by another Russian sociologist Anatoly Bovin, in 2002 there were about 25 per cent of the former security officers (in total about 6 thousand individuals) employed in the highest state administrative institutions<sup>36</sup>. Some sources suggest that during the last several years the above outlined numbers may have even doubled. For example, after the civilian Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov was exchanged in this office by the former "operational" Mikhail Fradkov, the former Putin's adviser Andrei Illarionov made a warning that Russia is increasingly being pushed under the total control of KGB-FSB<sup>37</sup>. However, the Freedom House in its 2006 Report on Russia continues arguing that as before, "only" 25 per cent of the current Russian ministers, vice ministers, legislators, governors and "supergovernors" stem from the militarised security agencies<sup>38</sup>.

Without any doubt, such a composition of Putin's authoritarian enclave has sprung up as a result of his own (the former KGB/FSB officer's) professional biography. Moreover, it might have been Putin's well comprehended and grounded tactics to recruit the former security officers to the highest echelons of the country's political elite. First, in 1999-2000, when Putin was appointed to head the Cabinet of Ministers and afterwards elected the President of the Rus-

<sup>35</sup> "Власть цвета хаки" и выборы в России, *Новости социологии*, <<http://Socio.Rin.Ru> - "Социология">, <<http://subscribe.rin.ru/html/b3/22170.html>>, 20 11 2006.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> Palmer G. T., "The New Russia and the New Eurasia", 2006, <<http://www.cato-at-liberty.org>>, 20 11 2006; Талхигов С., "Рассадник мерзавцев", 2006, <<http://www.chechenpress.info/events/2006/04/06/01.shtml>>, 20 11 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Freedom House, (note 25).

sian Federation, he felt a huge need to immediately start reforming the state's administrative structure, its national economy, social protection system. The population tended to trust law enforcement officers and military much more than any other societal group, e. g. political parties, businessmen or others. Furthermore, such ethics as the subordination to the higher authorities, compliance with the orders, etc. should have been inherent to most of the former officers' way of behaviour. Therefore Putin possibly relied on that segment of the elite particularly as he expected it to be not only highly reliable but easily ruled as well.

For example, Steven Rosenfelde describes the "Muscovite model" of Putin's authority as follows<sup>39</sup>: the President, being the main power holder and the "autocrat" of the system, delivers rights, entitlements, and "sinecures" to his lower-level favourites. These privileges may be revoked at any time. The president requires the favourites to serve state interests among all other things. Naturally, these bureaucrats and agents must all be loyal to their "senior" and actively participate in the informal networks of power building and decision making. However, any of them may be fired in spite whether the real ground for that exists or not.

On the other hand, the members of Putin's militocratic enclave are not strictly controlled in all circumstances. For example, they can freely enough, at their own discretion, select the tools of administrative impact when they deal with the enclave's "outsiders", namely, the non-cooperative businessmen, weaker, non-power, political parties or "general public" as such.

As it has been mentioned above, a part of Putin's militocratic enclave either formally or informally maintains within its sphere of control many strategic and highly profitable companies of the state, e. g. Gazprom, Rosneft, Surgutneftegaz, Rosoboronexport and many others. However, Putin's regime proposes an overall very specific relationship with the business. The state monopoly in the economy has been dismantled after the fall of the Soviet Union and every commercial entity made responsible for its business planning and the level of the profit gained. The managers of the companies are not infringed anymore when they decide on their companies' personal management, training, business

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<sup>39</sup> Rosenfelde S., *Russia in the 21st Century: The Prodigal Superpower*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 68-69.

strategy, profits and other internal issues. They are free to choose their business partners and negotiate contracts. However, the commercial entities in the present-day Russia may not feel absolutely free and self-reliable as the regime holds them performing in the atmosphere of the permanent suspense and uncertainty of legal regulation, at the high risk of not being capable to attain their own goals because of the unpredictable bureaucratic infringement, etc. The enclave possesses at its disposal a wide range of various administrative “sticks and carrots”, starting from the state ownership expansion or squeeze in some areas, possible attacks on private property, dismissals from work, and ending with the frequent changes in state regulation policy, granting governmental contracts, financial support, exceptional rights to enter some markets, etc. Thus, the means used by enclave with regard to the business may in fact vary from conservative authoritarian ones to liberal authoritarian ways of behaviour.

In spite the informal “statute” of Putin’s enclave proposes the disloyal members of the clan to be expelled from it immediately, some evidence may be found which illustrates that the militocratic enclave ruled (or moderated) by Putin is not absolutely solid and internally unanimous. Already at the beginning of Putin’s team building process, the analysts tended to identify at least three (and sometimes even four) groups that co-existed within the enclave, i. e. the so-called “St. Petersburg law enforcement officials”, “St. Petersburg liberals”, “St. Petersburg lawyers”, and the “Old Moscow bureaucrats” (the latter, according to some sources, had weakened and subsequently disappeared as the separate elite group already during the first term of Putin’s presidency)<sup>40</sup>. Reportedly, each of the above mentioned factions had their informal leader. However, either the rivalry among these factions during the first term of Putin’s presidency was not intensive or such facts have simply not reached the main sources of mass media. Later on, there have crystallised two large factions within Putin’s authoritarian enclave – the first one, “siloviki”, informally headed by the Deputy Head of the President’s Administration Igor Sechin, and the other group, so-called “liberals”, informally subordinated to another high-ranking President Administration official, at present – the Russian Vice Premier Dmitry Medvedev. Both factions – the “siloviki” and the “liberals” – possess their own “front companies”

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<sup>40</sup> Simonov K. (guided the collective work), *Russia 2004: Report on Transformation*, Warsaw: Instytut Wschodni, 2005, p. 8-9.

(correspondingly – Rosneft and Gazprom), the interests of which come into clash from time to time. For example, it is known from the press that Sechin in 2004-2005 was aggressively opposing the plan of merging together Rosneft and Gazprom assets. Moreover, these companies competed with each other in overtaking the assets of another Russian oil company Sibneft. Such facts have surfaced the evidence that Putin's militocratic enclave lacks homogeneity.

Usually, many publicists attribute the outcomers from the Soviet/Russian security services to the "siloviki" group, while various functionaries formerly linked to St. Petersburg mayor's office are mostly assigned to the "liberals". However, such a separation cannot be taken for granted, strict, and absolute. For example, some contemporary Russian political technologists<sup>41</sup>, taking into consideration the entire specifics of the present Russia's political system, presume that "siloviki", "liberals", and the relations between them both may be considered as the substitute for the inter-party competition taking place in a "normal" political system. However, such a comparison as well as the names given to the internal factions of Putin's authoritarian enclave may be somewhat misleading. The "liberals" within Putin's team do not propose in any shape the state to take on a liberal stance in planning and implementing its economic policy. The both "camps" fully agree that the state in Russia shall maintain its dominant role in managing the country's economy. However, their views diverge when setting the priorities for strategic directions in Russia's future economic development. "Siloviki" would prefer the funds accumulated from exporting Russian energy resources abroad to be diverted to the boosting Russia's military potential, the development of various space programmes, etc., while the "liberals" claim the state budget incomes should be better spent on the development of energy infrastructure (especially its upward segment), expanding social welfare networks, etc.

Thus, the internal competition within Putin's militocratic enclave surely exists. However, even though in the most cases there are two groups pointed out – the afore mentioned "siloviki" and the "liberals", there is probably nobody who could submit a truly "definite" list of the internal groups rivalling with each other within the militocratic enclave. Some analysts say that there are at

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<sup>41</sup> Below there is presented the approach of Mikhail Vinogradov, a representative of the Communications Technologies Centre "Propaganda". Vinogradov himself expressed such a view during his speech made in the Economic Forum 2005 in Krynica, Poland.

least several influential personalities within the current structure of Russian ruling elite who cannot be attributed to either of the above mentioned factions (e. g. Evgeny Primakov, Vladimir Yakunin, others)<sup>42</sup>. Such persons may not have their “own” separate group at all. Moreover, in the already defined Putin’s elite factions, there are at least two or even more personalities who are being ranked as potential Putin’s successors. Taking this into account, one can state that at least a theoretical possibility exists that the internal rivalry in the Russia’s ruling militocratic enclave may get sharper by the end of Putin’s second term in office. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to predict how many different and influential factions can spread out within the enclave in the future.

Putin has demonstrated that sometimes he himself acts in such a way as to purposely increase or introduce internal competition within the militocratic enclave. Surely, this allows him to moderate and balance the separate groups’ influence in the enclave or even more, to receive the reliable feedback on what is going on in his power structure and particular companies, etc. For example, it can be stated that Putin has purposely tolerated the extraordinary activity of Alexander Riazanov, the former Gazprom’s Deputy Chairman of the Board for a prolonged period of time, even though Riazanov has not belonged to any of the known Putin’s elite groups. Riazanov was entitled to promote the most important Gazprom deals including the ones directly contributing to the implementation of Russian foreign policy goals. This case let one presume that the motivation for Putin to keep Riazanov in the above mentioned position has possibly been the President’s wish to somehow moderate the growing influence over the whole enclave of Sechin and the competing to Gazprom group of “siloviki”. Another example of a purposeful introduction of competition within the enclave can be RAO EES Rossii (headed by Anatoly Chubais) clash with the St. Petersburg city administration in 2006. The former business group was in fact pushed out of the electricity generation business in Russia’s South Western region, which potentially could have become a regional centre of surplus electric power generation and its export from Russia to Scandinavian markets<sup>43</sup>. Before these events the company RAO EES Rossii was almost a monopoly elec-

<sup>42</sup> Филин В., *Преемником Владимира Путина станет Дмитрий Медведев*, *Новости*, 2006, <<http://babr.ru/index.php?pt=news&event=v1&IDE=29693>>, 13 11 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Минашин Н., *Энергомост в обход Чубайса*, 2006, <<http://www.rbcdaily.ru/archive/2006/07/20/222409>>, 15 11 2006.

tric power exporter from Russia to foreign markets. However, Putin decided to lower the economic ambitions and independence of Chubais by introducing artificial barriers to RAO EES Rossii further expansion and transferring this field of activity to another state-controlled company.

In case Putin truly keeps his word not to seek for any (extra)constitutional methods to remain in the President's office later than 2008, his ability to manage the enclaves' internal rivalries will possibly get weaker over time (a "lame duck" syndrome). In such a way, a new "super-elite" or a "peak-elite"<sup>44</sup> must arise in the enclave soon in order to secure its survival. Otherwise, as the classical elite theories presume, the elite structures break down. As regards Russia, this scenario would be hardly possible because the current state-ruling mil- itocratic enclave has been too well-institutionalized to fall. Thus the one of not many available opportunities remains to wait for a new Russian President. However, it remains doubtful, whether his/her personality will matter much in shaping Russian regime's future after Putin.

### **3. The comparison of Putin's political regime with other non-democratic regimes**

Those who attempt to compare Putin's political regime in Russia with other non-democratic regimes put themselves at the risk of being trapped in an intel- lectual pitfall. The outcomes of Putin's regime evaluation may to a large extent depend on the choice, which side of the regime – the formal or the informal one – is to be studied as the "true face" of it. This article advocates the approach that the type of a regime must be identified not according to the formal rules of the game being present in a particular political system. Various legislative initia- tives and/or the actions of a ruler should be analysed on the basis of their impact to a political system's ability to remain internally pluralist and competitive. If the formally democratic laws downgrade the quality of a political system, such a system cannot be considered as democratic. Following this logic, such Pu- tin's initiatives as, for example, transition from the mixed electoral system to a

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<sup>44</sup> Крыштановская О., *Формальная структура элиты*, 2005, <[http://www.elitarium.ru/2005/07/22/formalnaja\\_struktura\\_jelity.html](http://www.elitarium.ru/2005/07/22/formalnaja_struktura_jelity.html)>, 17 11 2006.

proportional one or the decision to appoint regional governors who have been elected by now should not be treated otherwise but the President's claim to limit the internal competitiveness of the political system. These initiatives have in fact blocked Russia's chances to institutionalise a democratic political system.

Nevertheless, the authors who defend their professedly "unprejudiced" point of view may state, that the advantages of the proportional electoral system to democracy were admitted by political philosophers already many years ago. Besides, such a system works perfectly in, for example, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland, and Spain without infringing upon these countries' democratic political performance. Therefore, according to the proponents of the above mentioned "impartiality", there is no evidence to claim that the Russia's recent decision to organise its next parliamentary elections according to the rules of proportional representation faces a threat to the country's democracy<sup>45</sup>. The same conclusion regarding Russian regime may be reached while studying the formal rules regulating the procedure of appointment of the country's regional governors. Again, the local governors in such countries as Belgium, Finland, Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic are not elected in popular elections, but appointed by the national governments. However, this fact is not being considered as impeding these countries' democratic performance. Following the same argumentation the observers, who propose looking just at the formal side of political regimes, argue that there has been no ground for many Western European countries to react in such an emotional way when Putin decided to change the rules of the appointment of governors. Purportedly, the evaluation of Russia and the rest of Europe should rest on the same principles.

Nevertheless, this study has chosen not to ignore any informal rules of the game and institutions when analysing the specifics of Putin's political regime. As a result it can be concluded that the present Russia's political elite has detrimentally restrained the pluralism in the country's political system and this has been attained mostly due to the wise manipulation of informal mechanisms. The employment of such mechanisms let Putin's militocratic enclave exert the dominance over the whole political process.

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<sup>45</sup> For more arguments and comments, see Centre for European and Eurasian Studies, *Is Russia's Experiment with Democracy Over?*, 2004, <<http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=16294>>, 22 11 2006.

At present, this enclave has almost a monopoly of effective power. At the same time, the system maintains the formally well “checked and balanced” institutional façade, though it does not reflect the true quality and the state of the competitiveness of its decision making process. In the present-day Russia the legislative, the courts and other governmental institutions tend to execute the role of a “safety umbrella” to the enduring performance of Putin’s militocratic enclave. First, they protect it from any possible outside competition. Second, the formal institutions in Russia might be subjugated to Putin’s or any other future moderator’s interest to control and neutralise the influential rivalries within the enclave if they sprang up ever. Such particularity of Putin’s regime makes it hardly comparable to other states’ non-democratic regimes.

Sometimes Putin’s Russia is being juxtaposed with some Latin American countries, which in the last century were ruled by various military juntas (e. g. Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Argentina and others during the 1970s and 80s). In most cases such a comparison is motivated by the fact that in today’s Russia the great influence on the decision making process is held by the people coming from the militarised security and/or intelligence services who bear military ranks. However, there are many other particularities that make Putin’s Russia and the above mentioned Latin American non-democratic regimes too different to be compared.

First, in most Latin American regimes the military juntas started ruling the countries after the successful overthrow of previous ruling elite (as a result of a *coup d’état*). They used to refuse from any elections and set such rules of the political process that these regimes turned into real military dictatorships. The situation in the today’s Russia does not resemble such a reality at all. Even though Putin was an outcomer from the Soviet/Russian security services, he was elected the President of Russia in the “ordinary” and more or less competitive elections. The army in Russia is absolutely subordinated to civilian control even though the latter is being de facto executed by persons who possess military ranks.

Second, another important particularity of Putin’s Russia regime lies in the composition of its militocratic enclave. As has been illustrated above, the former Soviet Union/Russia security officers comprise a significant part of Putin’s elite. However, even though these persons have military rankings, they cannot be treated as the army people or military personnel in a direct sense of the word.

According to some observers<sup>46</sup>, in today's Russia there are even some important tensions between the military people and Putin's "siloviki". The latter believe that the biggest threat to the stability of Putin's militocratic enclave might first of all come from the people representing the interests of the Russian military forces.

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union the people from intelligence and security services managed somehow to profit from Russia's economic transformation. Over time, they exerted their influence in various sectors and companies of the country's economy. Later on, when their former "colleague" Putin came to power, the "siloviki" succeeded to additionally accumulate the substantial political influence. In contrast to the "siloviki", the representatives of the Russian military forces remained the "losers" in the process of Russia's post-Soviet political and economic transformation. These circumstances and Russian military personnel discontent with the existing situation possibly motivate Putin's "siloviki" to permanently advocate the need to increase state expenditures to the strengthening its military potential.

The third obvious difference between the political structures of Putin's Russia and Latin American countries ruled by military juntas lies in the presence (absence) of a strong leftist populist segment within their political systems. In Latin America, this segment has been well developed already before the military overthrows. However, as the cycles of hyperinflation repeated there again and again, over time people got disappointed by the leftist populist policies. Therefore they welcomed the incoming military rulers who made them believe that the junta's discrete and stricter policy could finally improve the living conditions of the ordinary people. Besides, in most Latin American countries there were namely the leftist forces that in the later stages of juntas' rule managed to impel the way-back transition from the military rule<sup>47</sup>.

At the end of 1990s, especially after the financial crisis in 1998, people in Russia, similarly to Latin American countries, expected that Putin would impose a "firm hand" policy and finally re-establish "order" in the country. Russians felt strongly disappointed about the Yeltsin's period "*bezpredel*" when a

<sup>46</sup> For example, see Чертадский В., *Оранжевый Путин*, 2006, <<http://www.nazlobu.ru/publications/article1245.htm>>, 12 12 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Bruhn K., *Latin America's Year of Elections*, 2006, <<http://drclas.fas.harvard.edu/revista/articles/view/868>>, 23 11 2006.

handful of big businessmen, the so-called “oligarchs”, were allowed to rule the country according to their own preferences. However, since the elections in 1996 the possibility of the “red overthrow” has not been a real threat to Russia anymore. Putin, who almost spontaneously entered the politics had to secure the alternative not to the leftist populist rule, but all internal and external “enemies” that supposedly aimed at weakening Russia’s economic and geopolitical potential. Many actors might have been put on this list, namely the “oligarchs”, Chechen fighters, foreign countries that have conflicting interests with Russia, and etc.

The nurturance of nationalpatriotic ideology in Russia induces some analysts to put Putin’s political regime in parallel with Hitler’s Germany<sup>48</sup>. In both states the elected leaders were expanding the realms of their power covering themselves under the necessity to defend their “states’ interests” and effectively fight against the thought-to-be external enemies - either the “global Jewish conspiracy”, “Anglo-Saxon plutocracy” or, in the case of Putin, the “powers that aim to weaken Russia and infringe on its territorial integrity”. In both states, where the conservative bureaucratic authoritarianism was being created, the regimes promoted particular relations with the business community. The large-scale business that was too independent and/or control-resistant was either destroyed or rudely overtaken by the state. The rest of it was allowed expanding but only on the condition that it would collaborate with the ruling elite in implementing its internal or external policy goals. In spite of these structural similarities, the contemporary Russia and the Hitler’s Germany still seem to be hardly comparable as they have existed in the completely different international environments. One can admit that in the present-day Russia, Putin collaborates with the nationalist forces and disseminates the propaganda aiming to mobilise the people in the face of a threat coming from the thought-out Russian enemies. However, as in reality Russia does not act in the real face of the war, it is hardly believable that Putin’s Russia might ever reach the level of Hitler’s regime’s paranoia, xenophobia, and repressiveness. On the other hand, the intensity of Putin’s authoritarian rule has been permanently increasing. This fact compromises the attempts to define the level of the use of power in Russia

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<sup>48</sup> Талхигов, (note 37); Radzikhovsky L., *Putin's strong statism is still the lesser of two evils*, 2005, <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2005/06/03/2003257769>>, 26 11 2006.

that would appear still “appropriate” to its ruling elite. Nor it is obvious that such a “limit” of terror acceptability/non-acceptability exists altogether<sup>49</sup>. The recent events of the murder of the famous Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya as well as the poisoning of the Russia’s former security officer Alexander Litvinenko who tended to oppose Putin’s policy raise unambiguous thoughts. Putin’s Russia will become a truly unpredictable country, if the suspicions on its ruling elite’s contribution to the deaths of the above mentioned persons are confirmed.

Putin’s state relationships with the business to a large extent resemble the Asian model. This comparison would not encompass China due to its complete ideological and otherwise uniqueness. However, there are quite substantial similarities between the Russian and Southeast Asian countries<sup>50</sup>, especially Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea by the crisis in 1997, as regards the way of how these governments have dealt with the local big business and managed to promote the policy of rapid economic growth. During the last several decades of the 20th century, the above mentioned Southeast Asian “developmental states” managed to attain nearly fantastic records of economic growth. However, all of them were ruled either by civilian or military autocrats, and the level of their policy’s repressiveness varied from country to country. Naturally, the pragmatic economic policy and the lasting, impressive growth of Southeast Asian economies (from about mid-1960s to the crisis in 1997) have compensated the imperfections in their political regimes at large. The scientists claimed that the spectacular records of Southeast Asian countries economic growth were attained due to the specific state relationships with the business. On the one hand, the rulers in these countries managed to build a highly professional, competitive bureaucratic corps. As the latter were well paid and considered by

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<sup>49</sup> For example, Edward Lucas, the correspondent of “The Economist” to the Central and Eastern Europe, presumes that the political regime in Russia will become more and more brutal over time and thus will approach the fascist end – see Lucas E., *The One Way to Fight Putin’s Menace*, 2006, <<http://edwardlucas.blogspot.com/2006/11/rant-from-saturdays-times.html>>, 26 11 2006.

<sup>50</sup> More information on the ‘developmental states’ are to be found at Evans P., *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Evans P., “The State as Problem and Solution: Predation, Embedded Autonomy, and Structural Change” in Ravenhill J., ed., *The Sociology of Development II*, Aldershot: Aldershot Press, 1995, p. 319-361; Haggard S., *Pathways from Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries*, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990 and other.

the public as the highly prestigious service, the bureaucrats could avoid dangerous particularistic influences from outside and pay all their efforts to shaping skilful economic development strategies. The state in Southeast Asian region was not intervening directly into the activities of its big, mostly private business entities. However, their forwardness to co-operate with state authorities in implementing their long-term strategies of economic growth was being rewarded by the latter with e. g. the introduction of some laws which ban external competition, the granting special tax exemptions to some local producers, etc. Such a system functioned rather well for more than three decades. But the crisis in 1997 showed, however, that in the most Southeast Asian “developmental states” neither their political elite, nor civil servants managed to work hard only for the sake of their state’s interest and to avoid any particularistic, corrupt influences that promised them additional personal gains. Over time, the Southeast Asian rulers and high-ranking bureaucrats who were elaborating national development strategies surrendered themselves to the corrupt business influences. As a result, the state lost its ability to produce its national-goals-oriented programmes of economic development. Business entities overgrew with various non-transparent, corrupt agreements. The rates of economic development started decreasing until finally the system broke into a large-scale non-payment crisis<sup>51</sup>. The massive insolvencies in 1997 induced many Southeast Asian countries to start pursuing more liberal and transparent policies. For the time being, only in Thailand among all the above mentioned Asian countries there was re-established a hard military regime.

Putin’s Russia offers some similarities with the above described Asian model. As has been mentioned above, the militocratic enclave in Russia is expected to work for the sake of national interests. However, as it retains the elite structure which possesses no formal code of behaviour and controls all the most important leverages of the state’s political, economic, informational power, it should not come as a surprise that the level of corruption and the economic inefficiency in Russia will definitely increase over time. From time to time the information regarding the non-legitimate business interests of Putin’s environment or Putin

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<sup>51</sup> See Godement F., *The Downsizing Asia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 41-47, 162 and other.

himself is already appearing either in foreign media or Russian internet sites non-controlled by the state<sup>52</sup>.

Besides, the comparison of Putin's Russia political regime with the "developmental states" would possibly be even more adequate, if one selected only those "developmental states" (e. g. Indonesia, Malaysia), which similarly to Russia are highly dependent on their energy (oil) exports. The state of economic wellbeing in these countries depends to a large extent on the fluctuations of the global oil prices. The latter are difficult to predict, however. Theoreticians presume that any regimes in spite of their type are more prone to fall under the conditions of economic decline rather than at the time when no economic setback occurs. Logically, one could conclude that Putin's regime in Russia is vulnerable enough as any unexpected but substantial fall in global oil prices would cause its downfall.

However, the analysis of Indonesian, Malaysian and other oil-exporting non-democratic regimes shows that the economic crisis in such countries has not always caused significant changes in their political regimes' structures. The non-democratic regimes in these countries fell down under the conditions of economic decline only in those cases when they were insufficiently well institutionalised and when the ruling elite did not manage to creatively moderate societal tensions and expectations. Of course, such things are difficult to impartially evaluate and make an analysis. However, the researchers argue, that these factors substantially determine whether the particular Southeast Asian oil-exporting regimes survive economic downfalls or must be reorganised in the course of economic decline<sup>53</sup>.

Finally, Putin's political regime is sometimes being compared with other non-democratic post-Soviet political regimes. The "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine created a great stimulus for such type of analysis. The researches started looking for both countries similarities and making prognoses on whether mass protests against the well established Putin's rule could be possible and effective in chang-

<sup>52</sup> For example, see *Эстонская фирма зарабатывает нефtedоллары для первых лиц Кремля и их фаворитов*, 14.12.2005, <<http://www.newsru.com>>, 27 11 2006; Абель В., *Олигархи в Кремле*, 2006, <<http://nbp-info.ru/4746.html>>, 27 11 2006 and other.

<sup>53</sup> See Case W., "Southeast Asian Hybrid Regimes: When Do Voters Change Them?" in *Journal of East Asian Studies* (5), 2005, p. 215-237; Smith B., "The Wrong Kind of Crisis: Why Oil Booms and Busts Rarely Lead to Authoritarian Breakdown" in *Studies in Comparative International Development* 40 (4), 2006, p. 55-76.

ing the regime type in Russia<sup>54</sup>. Usually, the findings were the same – “no, impossible”, as the regimes of Ukraine and Russia are too different at the moment. Though both countries have similar historical experience, political culture and still an acute problem of “oligarchic” rule, the situation in Russia and Ukraine differs at large in some other aspects. For example, the political elite in Russia is more or less confident with the existing situation, it supports Putin’s policy initiatives. In contrast to Russia, the political elite in Ukraine was highly divided before the 2004 presidential elections and the political as well as societal opposition to Kuchma’s rule was obvious. Moreover, the opposition in Ukraine had its well-known political leaders, while in Russia neither charismatic opposition leaders, nor the viable opposition exist.

#### **4. The prospects of Putin’s regime transformation**

Putin paid great efforts during his first and second terms in office in order to institutionalise the long-lasting rule of his militocratic enclave. The ruling elite has accumulated the full control of informal means of political influence and changed the existing laws in such a way as to avoid any troubles (i. e. possible retreat into opposition) in the future even though the elections in Russia would take place regularly as before. In fact there are no doubts that Russia will not abandon organising the regular parliamentary and presidential elections in the future. Otherwise it would put itself at a high and absolutely non-wise risk of making the imputation upon its own international image. Thus, in order to make prognoses on the further transformation of Putin’s political regime, one should first of all comprehend the possible outcomes of 2008 elections when the last constitutional Putin’s term in office expires.

Will the rise of Putin’s “successor” (no matter who is going to be selected) not intensify the internal conflicts within the militocratic enclave? What are the prospects that the enclave remains undivided after 2008? Are there any possibilities that any “new-comer” (e. g. military representative, someone from the

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<sup>54</sup> Мари Мандрас: ‘Не будет в России оранжевой революции. . . к сожалению’, <<http://www.ino-smi.ru/translation/229977.html>>, 28 11 2006; Clark T., “An Orange Revolution Is Russia’s Future?“, 2005, <[http://economics.trends.blogspot.com/2005/03/orange-revolution-in-russias-future\\_29.html](http://economics.trends.blogspot.com/2005/03/orange-revolution-in-russias-future_29.html)>, 28 11 2006.

existing political parties except the “United Russia”, etc.) may seriously claim to get a piece in the “power pie”? How much is it expected that in some 1-2 years in Russia there may form up a mass protest movement which is able to promote significant changes in Russia’s regime? Are there any other (external) factors that may determine the direction of Putin’s regime change in the future? Are there any such factors that might help to solve “Putin’s dilemma” of how to remain at the peak of the present ruling elite while not being President of Russia?

The option that has least to do with the fantasy proposes that no significant changes in Putin’s political regime will occur in the mid-term perspective, which encompasses both – the next presidential and the parliamentary elections. All the conditions needed to secure the *status quo* of Putin’s regime are in fact available in the present Russia. First, the ruling elite possesses all the needed leverages of formal and informal political power. Thus it is capable to resist any external competition as well as internal rivals. Second, the societal support for Putin’s regime remains strong enough for the time being. It would be difficult to imagine what circumstances in Russia might cause people’s mass disillusionment with the rulers. As it has been mentioned before, the performance of the hybrid regimes in Southeast Asia has shown that the mere economic decline is insufficient to cause regime’s downfall. Additionally, Putin’s regime should for some unknown reasons lose its ability to manipulate societal feelings and emotions. If it happened in the circumstances of severe economic conditions, the militocratic enclave could be replaced. However, neither the sudden economic decline, nor changes in Putin’s regime ability to deal with the masses are expected, at least in the nearest future. Third, it has been mentioned that at present, the militocratic enclave moderated by Putin is not an absolutely homogeneous structure. If Putin keeps his word and does not try to find any ways to remain in the President’s office after 2008<sup>55</sup>, he will need to select a person who succeeds him in this position. As the future Putin’s successor has to become a public and well-known figure already by 2008, most likely s/he will come from Putin’s internal circles. Possibly, the selection of a presidential candidate from the current militocratic enclave may cause some disappointments of the internal groups

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<sup>55</sup> In one of the recent Putin’s addresses to foreign journalists he stated rather controversially, that ‘Russian public is in a huge need for stability’. Therefore, according to Putin, the authorities must somehow guarantee the public that the stability will be further promoted after 2008 - see Мари Мандрас, (note 54).

not involved into this process. However, taking into account that vast amount of the political, administrative, economic and other resources that the enclave's ruler has at his disposal, it could be predicted that any possible tensions arising within the enclave might be tendered by the its moderator. For example, the latter may grant the politically disadvantaged factions of the enclave with additional "sinecures", companies, offices, etc.

Thus, as the above analysis shows, there is the highest probability that the regime in Russia will remain in its present shape after Putin resigns. Besides, Putin himself can just formally retreat from his current power domain. After 2008 he can remain in fact the most influential person within the militocratic elite, even though the formal president of the country will be another person, i. e. someone selected by Putin. Presumably, the latter should be a person absolutely loyal to Putin and having only minor political ambitions of his/her own<sup>56</sup>.

One more possibility for the current Putin's regime not to change could come from the progress in establishing a union state of Russia and Belarus. Possibly, if such an entity was established, it would have its own (new) Constitution, institutional framework, etc. This could offer Putin a completely new perspective of power, i. e. to head the union state and thus remain at the very top of the ruling elite but at the same time avoid breaching the existing Russian Constitution.

Though Belarus relations with Russia have recently sharpened after the latter said it would increase the gas prices to Belarus starting from 2007, the prospects of the establishment of the above mentioned Russian-Belarus union state still remain equivocal. The newly created political entity would offer Putin a non-precedent possibility to prolong his tenure in the highest office of state authority. One can argue that such a scenario may be studied unless like any other idea belonging to the science-fiction realm. However, there are more than a few scientists in Russia as well as abroad who suggest not to cancel beforehand the possibility of establishing the Russian-Belarus union state<sup>57</sup>. According to these experts, the history does not know such facts that rulers first agreed to resign from their offices believing that they would be able to maintain their influence

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<sup>56</sup> For a similar approach presented by the famous Russian polittechnologist Gleb Pavlovsky, who is considered to be a Kremlin-insider, see Дульман П., Павловский: *Революции не будет*, 2005, <<http://www.rg.ru/2005/03/29/pavlovsky.html>>, 28 11 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Private conversation with Marie Mendras, expert on Russia. Paris, November 24, 2006.

over the power domain while being in the shadow and that later on such their calculations came true. Therefore Putin will possibly use all the means, including the attempt to establish a new political entity, in order to rule the country after his second term of Russian presidency expires.

In spite whether Putin himself remains or not in the highest position of a state authority after 2008, it can be presumed that the tendencies of authoritarian rule in Russia will neither significantly decrease nor increase. Thus, the approaching fascist regime type will hardly become a realistic scenario for Russia. Putin's elite has relied much on nationalpatriotic ideology. However, as the contemporary Russia acts in an absolutely different international environment when compared to Hitler's Germany or Mussolini's Italy, i. e. it does not face any truly direct threat of a war, nor intends to start the war itself in the nearest future, it would have much more sense to Russia itself to engage for "soft" rather than "hard" means in mobilizing societal support. Such tactics would allow Russia to retain an international image of at least a "bearable" state and not to provoke any negative reactions inside its own society.

In a short-term perspective it remains hardly possible that any existing political party could build an effective competition to either Putin or "United Russia" (correspondingly during the next presidential and parliamentary elections). First, such possibility is lowered by the already mentioned fact that "United Russia" has taken a "parasitic" ideological stance within Russian political system. This impedes other political forces' capabilities to create a viable ideological alternative to the nationalpatriotic ideology, which dominates in Russian politics at present. Second, the state controlled media will most likely support the candidate of the "party-of-power" or the party itself while at the same time expediently discriminating and discrediting the representatives of other political forces. Third, in today's Russia there is no charismatic, conspicuous person – the opposition leader, who could built an effective alternative to Putin and lead his/her political party to the next State Duma elections.

The overthrow of Putin's political regime "from below" ("Putin's regime" is not to be understood literally, but as the regime of the "Putin-style") would be possible only in a long-time perspective and in the case of time-wise coincidence of several internal as well as external circumstances which are neither predictable nor controlled. As the analysis of Southeast Asian transformations

shows, first, it is more probable that the regime will fall under severe economic conditions. Thus, either the global oil prices should markedly fall or Russia should find itself in another-type economic crisis which would have a really negative effect on most inhabitants' quality of the daily life. The change of Putin's regime might also occur in the presence of another type of crisis (not the economic one), which e. g. could emanate after a terror attack, the discovery of the deeply entrenched corruption within the ruling elite, its machinations, crimes, etc. Anyway it would be important that in the occurrence of the crisis the rulers would not be able to find any convincing excuses or arguments that this happened not because of their fault.

The second necessary condition for Putin's regime to be overthrown "from below" is the fatal mistake, which the rulers should make in a crisis situation. The ruling elite must either inadequately, inflexibly or too repressively react to public disappointment. In such circumstances, the analysts presume, the mass protest movements rise and the regimes (at least in Southeast Asia) have been overthrown as a result.

The researchers remain sceptical about the possibility to transform well institutionalised hybrid regimes (to which Putin's Russia should be attributed as well) through the regular elections, i. e. when the electoral support to oppositional parties or movements gradually grows until the party or movement finally swings an election. If the hybrid regimes get ever transformed, this happens in the result of the mass protest campaigns<sup>58</sup>. In the case of Russia, even if the above mentioned external as well as internal circumstances coincided and thus built favourable conditions for the militocratic regime to fall, most likely it would be the communists and the military who tried first of all to make use of societal disappointment with the existing regime. For the time being namely these two groups seem to be the most disadvantaged and potentially the most powerful. By the way, the effectiveness of the tandem between communist political forces and the military in overthrowing former non-democratic regime is historically proven in the case of Indonesia in 1973. Obviously, even though these forces managed to replace Putin's militocratic enclave, the changes of the Russian political regime would not be impressive. Most likely the regime would

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<sup>58</sup> For example, in Indonesia and the Philippines after the economic crisis in 1997 – see Case, (note 53).

remain non-democratic as before, but promoting another, possibly more leftist, populist ideology.

Nevertheless, Putin's regime change "from below" remains hardly possible. Over time, the defects of Putin's militocratic enclave should come on to the surface. Also, the productivity of Russian economy will unavoidably decrease. However, this may not convince Russian people that Putin's regime has already exhausted itself. All the post-Soviet societies, with no exception of Russia, are especially patient and easily accommodating themselves to the worsened quality of life. Moreover, even those Russians who oppose Putin's regime have no potential leader either in societal circles, or in the present Russian politics. Ukraine's case showed clearly that the revolutions without leaders are damned to fail. The end of 2004 was not the first time when Ukrainian people went to the streets protesting against Kuchma's policy. For example, the mass protests in 2001 (at the peak of the "tape-scandal") were absolutely ineffective as at that time the protesters acted spontaneously and had no leader who would have kept them together and guided their actions. In contrast to 2001, the mass protest movement at the end 2004 resulted in the overthrow of Kuchma's regime. This illustrated ones again that there are no revolutions without revolutionary leaders. In Russian case, this circumstance totally forbids the possibility of Putin's regime substantial change "from below", at least in the nearest future.

## **Conclusions**

This study has indicated that Putin's regime in Russia does not qualify at least three conditions that are indispensable for the democratic political regime. Firstly, there is no possibility for the fair elections in the country. Putin has artificially limited political competition in Russia by using the formal means (proposing the concrete amendments to the respective laws) and informal mechanisms of influence – fortifying the political "party of power" – "United Russia" – in the political regime of the country. Secondly, the very important political rights and civic liberties that are necessary for the quality of the regime are not secured in Putin's Russia. Formally, the authority claims that these rights are secured, but the facts of selective judicial persecution only of the particular business groups and the other elements of the regime allow claiming on the

contrary. Thirdly, the authority (firstly, the State Duma) that was elected in the formally competitive and general elections does not have any effective power in the contemporary Russia. In fact, the most important decisions related to the state administration are being adopted in the rather intimate Putin-run militocratic enclave that has not many things in common with the similar kind of structures in other countries. It is rather difficult to forecast how the current political regime of Russia is going to change as far as the information about the internal processes in the enclave is very limited, the above-mentioned elite's structure is not formalised, and this elite acts according to the unwritten rules of the game set up by the moderator Putin.

External institutional environment that was created by the efforts of Putin allows us to draw the conclusion that the current elite could feel safe at least in the nearest future (in the perspective of 5-7 years). The activities of the main institutions of the political system as well as of institutes (electoral process, activities of the political parties and NGO's, etc.) are regulated in a way that they do not pose any threat to the position of current ruling elite in the political system. Besides, the other factors that guarantee Putin's regime continuity even after Putin is gone from the current post (most probably in 2008) encompass the lack of immunity of the court system, dependence of mass-media and business on the authority, lack of ideological competition in the political system and absence of strong oppositional political leaders.

And in spite Putin's regime, according to some attributes, resembles a mixture of the "developmental", oil exporting Asian regime and of the fascist one, in fact the future transformation of this state will do not necessarily repeat the experience of the other countries. In contrast to Hitler's Germany, contemporary Russia exists in the totally different international environment. Presumably, the Russian authorities seeking to keep at least so-so international image of Russia, will avoid increasing the level of repressiveness of the regime and in any case will keep the façade democratic political system. Presumably, in a long run the regime in Russia could change in the similar to the Southeast Asian countries way - in the way of the mass protest "from below" and only after "the attacks" from the disadvantageous external circumstances. Well again, they may appear to be "not enough" to pull out to the streets the post-Soviet society, even though similar crises have provoked Asian societies to protest. A number of ad-

ditional conditions, that are missing today, are indispensable to Putin's regime change "from below". Knowing the strong institutionalization of the militocratic enclave of Putin in the political system of the contemporary Russia, it is very unlikely in the short term the additional conditions needed for the non-democratic regime to be overthrown will appear - namely, the loss of the rulers' ability to manipulate the mood of the masses, internal divisions and weakening of the enclave, etc. Therefore, it is left almost the only possibility to rely more on the visible part of Putin's regime as well as on the moods of the political elite and society rather than on the absolutely hypothetical calculations. The former induces one to forecast that no substantial changes will occur in Russia in nearest future. The character of Putin's regime discussed in this article is going to stay the same, in spite of whether Putin himself is going to keep his influence in the top level decision-making or this privilege he will pass to one of his "successors". The personality of Putin was of enormous importance while institutionalising the monopoly of militocratic enclave in the state administration. However, the importance of the personality of the leader may become more and more an inferior one in the future stages of Russian development as well as to the sustainability of "Putin's regime" (even possible without Putin) as such.