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The Presidentialization of a Semi-Presidential Regime: the Case of Russia

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Researchers pay special attention to the transformation of semi-presidential systems. Systems of this kind, according to Maurice Duverger, have three features: '(i) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (ii) he possesses quite considerable powers; (iii) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them' (Duverger 1980, p. 166). The formal constitutional structure is however no more than a starting point for defining the form of government. The stipulation by the constitution of the necessary conditions for semi-presidential government is no guarantee that this is actually the system in practice, since practice and conventions or a constitutional mutation may transform the system into an seemingly semi-presidentialist system (Martinez 1999, p. 46).

This chapter investigates the content and criteria of presidentialization, with a particular emphasis on the Russian form of government.

Presidentialization: theoretical explanations

The emergence of new political practices and legal transformations lead to the internal evolution of semi-presidential systems. This system acquires some untypical characteristics, becoming more presidential or more parliamentary. Operation mechanisms and the 'operational mode' of semi-presidentialism begin to change. In my opinion, international experience enables us to point out two possible processes in the frame of a semi-presidential regime: presidentialization and parliamentarization.

Each of these terms ('presidentialization' and 'parliamentarization') can be understood as either of the following:

- (i) a single-stage transfer to a new form of government (presidential and parliamentary, respectively), which is undertaken by constitutional and legal methods; or
- (ii) the gradual strengthening of the presidential or parliamentary characteristics of semi-presidentialism without changing the form of government.

It seems appropriate that the term 'changing the form of government' can be applied to the first case. I assume that presidentialization and parliamentarization are relatively lengthy political processes involving interactions between governmental bodies. By their nature, they are aimed at changing the operational rules of the form of government when elements characteristic of the purely presidential or parliamentary system become intensified without adopting either system. Primarily, these processes are found in political practice. Formal-legal presidentialization and parliamentarization take place more rarely.

At first sight, presidential, parliamentary and other forms of government seem to be qualitative concepts, and quantitative estimations or degree indicators (more or less) cannot be applied to them. However, even a fleeting glance at various countries with the same form of government makes us come to the conclusion that those countries have different qualitative parameters. Thus, some countries have a strong president (with great power), in others his power is more moderate, while in yet others, the president's power is insignificant.

Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb write: 'all regime-types can move between partified and presidentialized forms of government. How closely they approach either of the opposing poles of this continuum is determined by a wide range of underlying structural factors (such as changes in the social structure and the media system) and contingent factors (such as the personality of leaders). This movement is, of course, highly constrained by the formal configuration of political institutions' (Poguntke and Webb 2005, pp. 5–6). The authors differentiate the forms as follows: partified government means governing through parties, presidentialized government implies governing past parties (*ibid.*, p. 9). The location on the continuum is determined by the shift of the political power resources and autonomy to the benefit of individual leaders and a concomitant loss of power and autonomy by collective actors such as cabinets and political parties (*ibid.*, p. 7). Here Poguntke and Webb

perceive a very significant distinction between various forms of government: a presidential regime mainly represents personal rule (of the president), while the parliamentary form is a collegial one (government, party, parliament). Thus, the two authors build a grading system for forms of government using the approach 'individualism–collectivism'.

Presidentialism and parliamentarianism differ in several parameters – the power of the leader (range of power), the degree of the leader's autonomy and detachedness from political institutions, and the degree of control by and responsibility to the executive power. When these two forms of government are differentiated, we should focus on the actual situation of the head of the executive in the state system, political parties and electoral process. The president takes the leading position in the presidential system while the parliamentary system is led either by the prime minister or government as a collegial body, depending on the mode of government: as led by the prime minister or cabinet. In a 'two-headed' semi-presidential system, the president's leadership is indisputable when his party has the majority in parliament or weak during periods of cohabitation.

A presidential system is characterized by the extensive power resources of the president and the high degree of his autonomy from other political institutions (parliament, government or the ruling party). This is the result of a strict separation of powers and elective democratic legitimacy. A high degree of autonomy means that the leader can have a wide zone of independence within which to achieve set goals without paying attention to other institutions. By contrast, the parliamentary system is distinctive in respect of the concentration of political resources in parliament and cabinet and the low autonomy of the prime minister. A semi-presidential system provides for the following different cases:

- the president controls extensive, average or small resources;
- the relatively high, average or low autonomy of the head of the executive.

In semi-presidentialism, the power of the leader depends on the alignment of political forces (France) or common norms and practices (Finland and Austria).

There are two tendencies of an evolving semi-presidential regime: presidentialization and parliamentarization. Presidentialization means an increasing amount of resources controlled by the head of the executive as well as his growing autonomy. By contrast, parliamentarization means the decreasing power and increasing dependence of the head of

the executive branch from the parliament, government and political parties.

The main tendency for the political development of Western European countries, these days, is the presidentialization of politics. The attitude of government leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, Tony Blair, Silvio Berlusconi and others has led to discussions of 'presidentialization'. Researchers indicate that some parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies are undergoing 'silent structural change' which 'should lead to a political process which is increasingly characterized by a logic of interaction between parliament and government that is typical of presidential systems' (Poguntke 2000, p. 1). In general, 'presidentialization denominates a process by which regimes are becoming more presidential in their actual practice without, in most cases, changing their formal structure, that is, their regime-type' (Poguntke and Webb 2005, p. 1).

In the research literature, the term 'presidentialization' is used to mean different things. Literally, it means the adoption of one or more formal-constitutional features of presidentialism. However, a new regime would not meet all the criteria of presidentialism. It becomes presidential when all the characteristics of this form of government are present, such as popular election of the president, a separation of powers, individual executive power and the absence of collective cabinet responsibility. According to Webb, 'where a parliamentary democracy adopts one of the necessary elements of presidentialism in isolation it does not become a presidential regime as such, but it does introduce presidential features' (2000, p. 5). Thus, we can point out two kinds of presidentialization: legal (*de jure*) and factual (*de facto*) (Poguntke and Webb 2005, p. 5). André Krouwel uses the following terms: 'constitutional presidentialization' and 'political presidentialization' (2003, p. 14).

The literature on Western parliamentary systems isolates four important aspects of presidentialization. First, a growing concentration of executive power in the hands of the head of government; second, an erosion of the unity of action of government and supporting parliamentary parties: parliament as a whole gains independence vis-à-vis the government (and vice versa) (Poguntke and Webb 2005, pp. 7–8); third, a growing emphasis on leadership appeals in election campaigning; and fourth, the growing significance of leader effects in voting behaviour (Webb 2000, p. 7). These four elements are interrelated by the chain of causality: electoral behaviour changes so that leadership effects become more pronounced; parties respond by running more candidate-centred campaigns; this requires greater leadership autonomy of the rest of the

party; furthermore, victorious party leaders infer that their party's mandate is to a considerable extent a personal mandate, which justifies their adopting a more dominant role within the executive (*ibid.*, pp. 7–8).

In my opinion, we should emphasize two aspects of presidentialization – increasing control over resources by the head of the executive and his/her increasing autonomy. The first aspect proceeds from the literal interpretation of the term 'presidentialization' – the rise of the president (or analogue of the president–prime minister) over other power institutions. As Venturino (2000, p.1) observed, 'shortly said, presidentialization is the growth of the power of the head of the executive'. As is known, in a presidential regime, the president pursues supreme executive power as the head of state and chief of the cabinet, at the same time exercising wide authority. For this reason, the power concentration in the hands of the head of the executive (prime minister in a parliamentary system and president in a semi-presidential one) is, actually, similar to the representation of the tangible characteristic of the presidential regime in a non-presidential one.

The second aspect of presidentialization is the increased autonomy of the head of the executive. The strict separation of powers leads to the independence of the president in the presidential system. Since the president is popularly elected in this system, he is actually independent from his party, that is, from party pressure. Similarly, in a presidential system, the president acquires autonomy from executive bodies: the government does not function here as a collegial body that could somehow seriously influence the president. Finally, the executive is autonomous from the legislature. On the other hand, the parliament also develops a certain autonomy from the president since it does not have to support the government or oppose it, as the cabinet is not accountable to the legislature. If the autonomy of the head of the executive and government grows in a parliamentary or semi-presidential regime, we may regard it as presidentialization since the relative independence of the president from the parliament and political parties is a typical feature of the presidential system.

The presidentialization of Russian semi-presidentialism

From the point of formal legalism, Russia satisfies the minimum criteria of a semi-presidential system:

- The president is elected directly by the people.
- There is a dualism of the executive (which is composed of the president and prime minister who heads the government).

- The president is endowed with extensive authority; the government is however accountable to the State Duma, which can be dismissed by the president in cases strictly stipulated by the constitution.
- The appointment of the head of the government has to be approved by the lower chamber of parliament.
- State Duma deputies cannot at the same time hold governmental positions.

The key tendency in the development of the Russian form of government since the adoption of the current constitution in 1993 has been presidentialization. The 'drift' of the state machinery towards pure presidentialism was started by the first Russian president. However, under Boris Yeltsin, while this machinery was steadily increasing the president's power, there were also times, when the 'mechanic' had departed and others tried to 'fix' the device, when the system was moving in another direction. Under Vladimir Putin, the Russian regime has continued to evolve towards a purely presidential system.

The discussion of presidentialization brings forward two issues. First, can we talk about presidentialization at all if Russia already has a regime of strong presidential power? Second, how can we speak about presidentialization if, in contrast, so much is being said about the transfer to a parliamentary system? As for the response to the first question, Russia, in terms of its formal-constitutional features, can be referred to as a semi-presidential, rather than a presidential system: there is a dualism of the executive and, according to the constitution, the government is accountable to the Duma. It is obvious that in reality these two characteristics are almost non-existent. However, they are still in the constitution, implying that the Russian form of government can technically function as a semi-presidential system. Consequently, it makes some sense to expand on the presidentialization of the Russian semi-presidential system.

Since Putin's re-election in 2004, there has been considerable debate in the Russian media about a prospective switch of the form of government to parliamentarianism. At present, such a transformation is only one of a number of possible scenarios that were considered before the 2008 presidential election, and it seems doubtful that this plan will materialize since other developments are also likely. Even if there is a transfer to a parliamentary system, the presidential trends will persist since, in the new environment, the prime minister will still be a dominant player in Russian politics which, in turn, would put him at the level of the president in a presidential republic.

As mentioned earlier, presidentialism has two main aspects: increasing control over resources by the president, and increasing presidential autonomy. This power is greatly intensified in practice through formal (supplementing the law) and informal (unrelated to the law) rules. The first Russian president received tremendous authority not only according to the constitution but also in the form of real power. However, his erratic health meant that he did not fully exercise his power, especially during the last years of his presidency, and the president 'standing idle and working with documents for two hours a day' created frantic rivalry between different groups and institutions in their struggle for 'vacant' power. The following were striving to 'get a piece of the action': the State Duma, Federation Council, government, presidential administration, regional leaders, business people and, above all, 'the Family' (see below). Those actors were further fighting one another (presidential administration versus government, lower chamber of parliament versus the Executive, governors versus the federal centre, heads of regions versus mayors of their capital cities); all ultimately, striving to affect the president's power. 'Regents', as Ol'ga Kryshtanovskaia (2005, p. 231) calls them – Yeltsin's confidants and buddies (after 1995: his daughter Tat'iana Diachenko, the Head of the President's Security Service and the Head of Administration) – were taking over decision-making for the absent president.

President Yeltsin was actually pushed out of the system of separation of powers. He distanced himself from political parties and factions in the parliament and his actions were independent of the opinions of the legislature, opposition, media and public. The president's power was growing at the cost of the presidential administration, security council and other institutions. Great importance was attached to presidential elections – the principal elections in the country and those that were determining its political course.

A huge potential of presidential power under Yeltsin was poorly utilized. There were emerging institutions uncontrolled by the president (the Duma) and zones of weak control (the Russian provinces) which testified to the inability of the head of state effectively to influence political processes in the country. During the entire period of Yeltsin's regime, no strong party managed to develop that he could count on. All presidential organizations and movements resembled 'butterflies disgracefully burning up' after their poor outcomes at parliament elections. Thus, in 1993 the bloc of parties *Vybor Rossii* (Russia's Choice) and *PRES* (Party of Russian Unity and Concord) received 22.2 per cent of the vote and 104 seats in the Duma – some distance from a majority. In 1995, Our Home

is Russia took 9.9 per cent of the vote and only 55 seats in parliament while the left-wing parties (including the Communists and the Agrarian Party) took 32.2 per cent and 186 seats. Only at the end of Yeltsin's presidency, in the 1999 Duma election, for the first time did the president secure a majority among the parties and candidates that supported him in the lower chamber of the parliament, but it was the next Russian president who was to 'taste the fruit' of this electoral success of political strategy.

In the new century, the Russian system continued to evolve towards pure presidentialism. I believe that the following developments match the logic of presidentialization:

- The 2003 Duma election.
- The dismissal of the government before the 2004 presidential election.
- The 2004 presidential election.
- Further strengthening of the 'power vertical'.
- Cancellation of the direct popular election of governors.

After Putin was elected president, not only was the formal and informal authority of the head of the state extended but, what is more important, it was implemented. As a result of the president's participation in politics the 'zone' of presidential control increased. Thus, in addition to the 'traditional components' – the government, Security Council and Presidential Administration – it was supplemented by leaders of regions, the business elite, both chambers of the parliament, major TV channels, the Constitutional Court, and several political parties: *Yedinaiia Rossiia* (United Russia), *Narodnaia Partiia* (People's Party), *Partiia Zhizni* (Party of Life), and *Otechestvo* (Fatherland). The president recovered control over the regions and created a centralized executive. Naturally, the degree of the president's influence on various groups and structures is different, yet the significant strengthening (though not absolute) of the president's authority, as compared with the Yeltsin period, is beyond any doubt, as is proved by the following:

1. The creation of seven federal districts, the appointment of presidential envoys to those districts and building the vertical power-structure of 'president – presidential administration – president's representatives – federal inspectors' have changed the equilibrium between federal-regional relations to the advantage of the former.
2. The procedure for entering the Federation Council (the upper chamber) has been changed by the removal of the automatic representation

of governors. As Midkhat Farukshin has noted, this deprived regional leaders of their excessive influence on federal decision-making. He writes 'Having reorganized the Federation Council, the federal centre has actually robbed regional leaders of the organizational structure they had used or could use for joint pressure on the federal authorities' (2005, p. 46). As 'compensation', governors were offered a new lobbying opportunity – a newly established State Council. However, since this council is merely a consulting body, it cannot be a real counterbalance to the president's power.

3. Changes in economic (budgetary) relations between the federal centre and regions to the benefit of the federal budget 'have significantly limited ambitions and opportunities for regional political elites making almost all of them beg for federal assistance' (ibid., p. 47).
4. The Russian president has received the right to dismiss the legislative (representative) body in a region if it issues laws and regulations that contradict the Russian Constitution and other federal laws, or if it rejects a presidential nominee to a governorship three times or refuses to take the necessary decision on this matter. The Russian president is also entitled to dismiss governors if they lose credibility, fail to perform their duties properly and so on, as stipulated by the Federal Law. Those measures not only moved regional political elites aside but actually subordinated them to the Russian president.
5. The order of electing governors has been changed. Thus, the Russian president is now directly involved in this process by making nominations to gubernatorial positions subject only to the approval of the local parliament. This step has not only been a 'blow' to democracy in Russia but also reduced the scope of the authority of regional leaders whose appointment, from now on, is directly related to their loyalty to the Kremlin. The cancellation of the popular election of governors and participation of the Russian president in their appointment has greatly modified power relations in the regions. At present, it is hard to define the form of government in the Russian regions as it has ceased to be autonomous and is more of an extension of federal power, as in unitary states.
6. After the 2003 election, the president secured a constitutional majority in the Duma (with 306 of the 450 seats), while opposition was rendered impotent. This has brought the lower chamber of parliament under the complete control of the president.
7. An environment has been created to provide for the triumph of the 'party of power' in future elections. Thus, a new law on parties has been adopted with tougher requirements, in addition to the change in

the electoral system that removes the representation of single-member constituencies.

8. The case of Yukos together with several decisions by the Russian Constitutional Court, particularly in connection with the popular election of governors, indicate that the courts have become more attentive to the arguments of the Kremlin. It is no wonder that the term '*Basman justice*' has been coined, reflecting the subjection of the court system to the executive. As noted by Lilia Shevtsova, 'Russia has returned to a regime of *political expediency*, and informal rules receive formal justification. The paradox is that this opportunistic attitude of the authorities towards the constitution gained a foothold during the presidency of Putin who puts forward the requirement of constitutionality as the founding principle of society regulation' (2006, p. 2, emphasis added).

According to the Russian political scientist Mikhail Afanas'ev, underlying the centralization of power is the ideological and psychological narrow-mindedness of Putin and the majority of the political elite with regard to the strengthening of the president's authority: 'This strengthening has almost become a singular goal of transformations. In order to achieve it, they sacrifice the public good and the efficiency of transformed or created public institutions' (2004, p. 201).

Duverger points out several variables capable of strengthening the president's power in a semi-presidential regime: the actual content of the constitution, the combination of tradition and circumstances, the composition of the parliamentary majority, and the position of the president in relation to this majority (1980, p. 177). If Yeltsin relied on the first and the second, Putin makes use of all four of them. Furthermore, current legislation is actively applied, besides the constitution. The Constitutional Court made the following judgement in the case of the legitimacy of the new order of electing governors: 'the existing list of the president's authorities stipulated by the Constitution that does not provide for his right to nominate governors can be extended by the federal legislator since the president is a "direct representative of all the people of Russia"'. Another factor strengthening the presidency is Russian political culture and its orientation towards a dominant leader. Finally, the current president has ensured his support from the United Russia party and its constitutional majority in the Duma.

The president's power is strong but not absolute. First, the vertical power structure has not reached the base level. Governors continue to control a large share of resources in their regions, and the Duma has

some limited space for autonomous activity. Second, the federal centre has made certain concessions to the regions: thus, municipal reform has been postponed until 2009. In return for the governors' loyalty, they are entitled to have their say in appointing local leaders, including those in the police and the military. An internet article comments as follows: 'The strict vertical of federal agencies that Putin was building during his first presidency brings us back to the 1990s when federal officers in a region almost could not do anything with the governor, while the governor, on the contrary, was closely watching over them in his domain' (Titkov 2005). Third, the potential of extensive presidential authority is sapped by the bureaucratic machinery. The media have it correctly: 'All political decisions in Russia depend on the president. However, the president is also a human being who has only 24 hours a day. He has to delegate some of his authorities to different subjects of the bureaucratic system. And, actually, one-man power means the uncontrolled rule of the bureaucracy' (Vtoraia 2004).

The second aspect of presidentialism is increasing autonomy of the president from the executive, parliament, and the political party of which he is a member, or which he supports. Yeltsin's constant boast was that he was a publicly elected president and, following this logic, that he could make any decision without coordinating his intentions with anyone. Though the Russian Constitution provides for the political accountability of the government to the Duma and for control by the lower chamber of parliament over the cabinet, the government, in reality, was entirely subject to President Yeltsin. The autonomy of the prime minister and cabinet from the president was insignificant, and its degree varied depending on who was the premier. Thus there was quite a degree of autonomy during the last years of Viktor Chernomyrdin in office as well as under Yevgenii Primakov and Sergei Kirienko; prime ministers Sergei Stepashin and Vladimir Putin had the least autonomy. Though only once did Yeltsin exercise his constitutional right to preside over a meeting of the government, there still were some mechanisms providing for its subordination within the system of executive power. The president and government were not accountable to the parliament, for example, its requests that ministers come and report to deputies were often ignored. Yeltsin resisted any attempts by the lower chamber to make the government or president accountable. Finally, he distanced himself from the 'parties of power' that supported his policies *post factum*. Yeltsin's presidency can be characterized as a period of excessive freedom of disposal and disregard of the legislature, opposition, political parties, media and the public. Indeed, from 1993 to 1999, the president was like a monarch.

When a nomination for prime minister was coordinated with the lower chamber of the parliament, the opinion of the Duma was not decisive as the president's candidate was pushed into the position. Only rarely did Yeltsin listen to parliament's opinion: thus, he did not propose Chernomyrdin as premier for a third term in 1998 – hence there was Primakov, a man of compromise. In reality, there was no political responsibility of government to the Duma while the parliament's persistent demands for the premier's dismissal were ignored by the president (Yeltsin 'held on' to Chernomyrdin for a long time in spite of Duma protests). The president was actively exercising his right of legislative initiative and right of veto to fight a left-wing Duma, while the threat of a parliamentary dissolution was a whip in Yeltsin's hands though he never resorted to it.

Since Putin has been in office, the president's autonomy has remained and even increased. First, the dismissal in 2004 of Premier Mikhail Kas'ianov, who represented a power grouping formed back at the time of Yeltsin and called 'the Family', as well as the appointment to this position of Mikhail Fradkov, not only represent a break with the previous elite but also the exertion of ultimate control over the cabinet. At the same time, the head of the state is able to hold the government accountable if policies fail – such as replacing social benefits by cash at the start of 2005. The Russian government is a cabinet headed by a presiding minister – the cabinet secretary if we apply the German classification (*Vtoraiia* 2004). The press has wittily noted that 'in our system, the president is a deity responsible for foreign policy, security and similar lofty spheres. His interventions on economic matters once a year boil down to a call for greater ambition and a request to double GDP' (Piontkovsky 2003).

Second, in spite of United Russia's domination in the Duma, the president remains unenthusiastic about the parliament, which is a minor link in the mechanism 'presidential administration – government – parliament', in which power is generated by the head of state.

Third, relations between the president and United Russia are constructed similarly: the Kremlin sends down commands, and the task of Russia's major party is simply to unconditionally implement them.

The coordination of Fradkov's appointment as prime minister with the Duma turned out to be a mere formality although deputies had little knowledge of the candidate (the reason was the qualified majority of United Russia in the lower chamber). The opinion of United Russia members, initially different from that of the president, was ignored. The appointment of Fradkov as prime minister indicated the weakening of this position since the new head of the government is not an

independent player but an executor, not a politician but a manager unable to define the political course of the cabinet. The appointment of this little-known person as prime minister (Fradkov had not been named in a single forecast by politicians and political scientists before his nomination) clearly demonstrates that this position is no longer particularly significant, primarily in political terms.

The dismissal of the government just before the 2004 presidential election was another demonstration of the president's power that was devoid of common sense and out of line with the rules of any functioning regime. However, from a presidential perspective, the government is a body fully controlled by the president, not the Duma. This was a more psychological than functional move aimed at showing that the president is an absolute 'master' of the government. The dismissal of Kas'ianov showed the unwillingness of the president to have a relatively independent head of the government. It should also be considered as a message to others: cabinet membership is so unimportant that it can be sacrificed for electoral success. Finally, the possibility of a vote of no-confidence in the government by the Duma is out of the question in the present circumstances, with United Russia in full control of the chamber. The constitutional provision for the dissolution of the Duma has basically been invalidated, as it makes no sense to dismiss a parliament that would uphold any proposal by the president.

The strengthening of the power and increase in the autonomy of the president raise the questions of control over the president, and the political responsibility of the government. In the first case, the problem is one of creating an effective system of control over the president and executive agencies by the parliament and courts (the Constitutional Court in particular should not be guided by the president's interests). There is a strange situation in Russia today in which the president outlines a policy for the government but is not responsible for it. A political correspondent has described this situation as follows: France is a presidential republic in regard to foreign policy and security since the prime minister supported by the parliament has full responsibility for the economy; Russia is a presidential republic in regard to foreign policy and security and no one's republic in regard to the economy (Piontkovsky 2003).

The presidentialization trend of the Russian system of power is directly connected with the intensification of its authoritarian character. There is a risk that a limited presidential regime will turn into an unlimited presidential regime. However, at the same time, there is a trend towards parliamentarianism. Thus, the Duma will be elected exclusively by party lists; United Russia, moreover, has prepared a draft law according to

which the party that wins a parliamentary election will be entitled to propose its candidate to the position of prime minister. However, the parliamentarization trend is manifested very weakly and is in no way determinant. It is presidentialization that is the dominant tendency. In my opinion, this will continue to be the case in the future regardless of whether the Russian system of government is formally semi-presidential, parliamentary or mixed.

Even if Russia manages to switch to a parliamentary form of government, the nature of the regime will not change. In this case, the position of the president will become symbolic, while the prime minister will be the real 'president'. In practice, the parliamentary form will be subject to the 'laws' of the presidential system. Even in a parliamentary republic the prime minister will retain the presidential style in politics, and will wield great power. The prime minister and president will virtually be independent from the parliament. In electoral campaigns the focus will still be on leaders, not on parties and their programmes, while voters will continue to be guided by the personalities of the candidates. All those taken together would mean that the new Russian parliamentary system would be presidentialized in nature.

Conclusion

The Russian semi-presidential system has undergone various transformations at the legal-regulatory and practical levels, which, as I see it, can be described by the concept of 'presidentialization'. The presidentialization trend in Russia has been especially manifest in relation to Putin's reforms and the intensification of the authoritarian character of the political system. The resources under the president's control have increased, as has the degree of his autonomy from the executive, parliament and political parties. The following steps are necessary in order to return to a more balanced power model in Russia: first, creating an effective system of control over the president and executive agencies by the parliament and courts and, second, putting into operation mechanisms of government accountability to parliament.

The concept of 'presidentialization' is useful for providing an understanding of the complicated and contradictory processes currently developing within the framework of the various forms of government in different countries. It has a direct bearing, not only on Western democracies, but also on developments in Russia. It should receive the closest attention of the international scholarly community.

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