

Academia de Științe a Moldovei, Institutul de Istorie, Stat și Drept
Academia Română, Institutul de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”
Institutul Cultural Român „Mihai Eminescu” din Chișinău

Basarabia – 1812

Problemă națională, implicații internaționale

Materialele Conferinței Științifice Internaționale
14–16 mai 2012, Chișinău – Iași

Coordonatori:

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EDITURA ACADEMIEI ROMÂNE
București, 2014

THE PROBLEM OF THE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN THE POST-SOVIET TRANSITION

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In fact, in this large geographic region for several centuries existed political systems, comparable to the classical colonial dominions¹. This includes external colonization carried out by more powerful and aggressively at their expense expanding empires, and also severe control of the social and economic life, incorporating these territories into the commercial networks ruled by the metropolis; and sent managers or the puppet government, consisting of members of collaborating local elites; and economic exploitation of natural and human resources, production, etc., resulting the fact that local communities find themselves in a social and cultural stagnation.

Similarities with the colonial system lie in the fact that in both cases, liberation from external dependency often comes off not as a consequence of internal struggle for the freedom, but as a result of global external geopolitical changes. In this case, local elites often appear to be unable to undertake the management of independency gained countries by themselves, or due to their previous collaboration with the occupational authorities, they are discredited in the eyes of local residents. Of course, it should not be forgotten that the modern post-communist, post-colonial space as well is very diverse, and both of them also have common traits: persistence of a relatively important role of the former colonizers language in public communication and their cultural influence, significant diasporas of colonists, corruption in government, tendencies of authoritarian policy, etc.

Considering these significant parallels of different global geographic and cultural regions, the need to analyze the problem of change of post-communist elites in transitional societies arose. Elite, which, as we know, is a group of society which is most able to initiate and have influence on political and economic change. The focus of our research is relatively narrow, the key question is what happened to the political leaders of 15 Soviet republics in the period of the USSR collapse, and whether they were able to adapt to the new operating conditions and to maintain or even increase possessed symbolic and political capital.

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¹ Moore David Chioni. *Is the Post-in Postcolonial is the Post-in Post-Soviet? Baltic Post-colonialism*. Edited by Violeta Kelertas. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006, p. 16; Weeks Theodore R. *Across the Revolutionary Divide. Russia and the USSR 1861–1945*. Willey-Blackwell, 2011.

From subordination to the real leadership

Although according to the primal idea the leader of the Communist Party (CP) of Soviet Russia had to be the Congress of the Communist Party, but actually after V. Lenin's death, the supreme power gained general, in the allied republic – the first – Secretary. He was the head of the state, and government de facto was the CPSU CC Politburo. In this system, the Soviet Parliament (Supreme Council) and the Government (Ministerial Council) acted rather a secondary role.

First Secretary of the republics' CP had to be the undisputed leader and authority, a strong, vibrant, even a charismatic personality able to make independent decisions. But, as we know, acts of the first secretaries and their power were limited by the solutions of the higher instances. So the main question concerning the activities of the first secretaries is whether independence or balancing, adaptability and obedience? These issues became particularly important in a few years after M. Gorbachev initiated perestroika, and especially radical and existential they became in 1991, at the time of August coup d'état (the 20th anniversary of this event was celebrated last year). In that period "firsts" had to make very hard decision – whom are they going with? With the increasingly bustling and demanding for independence their nations or with the fading away their status quo, with the "Centre", which real repressive power at the time of USSR collapse was complicated to measure.

Their decision was very important as in the case of failure the career or perhaps even life could be in danger, or at least wrong decision could cause the loss of all privileges. But in the case of success love of the people, popularity and survival in Olympus of the power would be guaranteed. Everything was determined by the sense of particular historical moment. Thus, the "firsts" chose. As the time showed, some of them won and survived, kept the levers of the power, or even more strengthened them, while others found themselves in a wayside of the history, and sometimes even their names had become synonymous as the traitors of the nation. This divide is very sharp in Lithuania and Latvia talking about cases of Mykolas Burokevičius and Alfreds Rubiks (see table No.1). Thus we are talking about the level of the individual, his existential posture in the conditions of crisis and challenge. Political scientists (I. Matonytė², P. Krupavičius³, G. Mink and J.-Ch. Szurek⁴) were analyzing one of the factors that had considerable significance in the adoption of this the most important life decision – ideological or technocratic nature of the members of nomenclature elite.

² Matonytė Irmina. *Elites in Soviet and post-Soviet societies*. http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/M/Matonyte_I_01.htm

³ Krupavičius Algis. *Models of Post-communist Political Elites in Central Europe and the Baltics: Comparative Analysis*, Hungarian Center for Democracy Studies Foundation, Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition, no. 158, 1998.

⁴ Mink Georges, Szurek Jean-Charles. *La grande conversion: le destin des communistes en Europe de l'Est*. Paris, Seuil, 1999.

Another question would concern with the relationship between the local power and Center and their mutual competition for the influence in the local society (which is under active consideration of historiography as the problem of national communism⁵), especially bearing in mind the late Soviet period feature – in the top of Soviet Union CP hierarchy took root gerontocracy. When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in April 1985, the overwhelming majority of positions in high-level party bodies were occupied by Brezhnev nominees who were appointed during the period of “stagnation”. Perhaps the most essential features of this group of politicians were their old age, conservatism, blind adherence to the official dogmatic ideology, a lack of initiative, and inertness. Gorbachev initiated a campaign to bring “fresh blood” to the central party organs at the expense of conservative Brezhnevites. However, the conservative element remained strong in the high-level party bodies, a fact that was later proved by the failed coup organized by the Communist hard-liners in August 1991.

Estonia was the first among the former Soviet republics that experienced the downfall of the old guard of Brezhnev appointees. Changes began in January 1988 when a moderate Indrek Toome replaced R. Ristlaan, a reactionary ideology secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia (CPE). The next victim of perestroika was the First Secretary of the CPE Central Committee Karl Vaino. The new First Secretary of the CPE was Vaino Vjaljas, formerly Soviet ambassador. Immediately after his appointment, Vjaljas started a dialog with informal political organizations and initiated several important measures to promote liberalization and democratization of the Estonian political system⁶.

Similar changes in the composition of political elites took place in the other two Baltic countries. Old Brezhnevite appointees were replaced by the younger generation of reform-minded Communists. On October 20, 1988, the First Secretary Algirdas Brazauskas and the Second Secretary Vladimir Beriozov were chosen to lead the Lithuanian Communists. In September–October, 1988, the Latvian political leadership was thoroughly reshuffled. Boris Pugo was transferred to Moscow and in December, 1990, was appointed Soviet Minister of Interior Affairs. In August 1991 he took part in the attempted coup of the Communist hardliners and, after its failure, committed suicide.

Reformers took over the republican party and government. Jan Vargis was awarded the post of First Secretary of the CPLat, Anatolijs Gorbunovs and Vilnis

⁵ This question in regard of the Baltic republics had been analysed in fundamental study of R. Misiūnas and R. Taagepera (Misiūnas, Romuald J. and Taagepera Rein. *The Baltic States, Years of Dependence, 1940–1990*. Expanded and updated Editura Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Recently in Lithuania were published two new monographies, researching questions of the role of nomenclature in the political and economic of the country life, see: Ivanauskas Vilius. *Nomenklatūra biurokratinėje sistemoje. Tarp stagnacijos ir dinamikos (1968–1988)*. Vilnius, LII, 2011 and Grybkauskas Saulius. *Sovietinė nomenklatūra ir pramonė Lietuvoje 1965–1985 metais*. Vilnius, LII, 2011).

⁶ Taagepera Rein. *Estonia: Return for Independence*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, p. 148.

Bresis were elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and chairman of the republican Council of Ministers respectively. However, although newly appointed reformers succeeded in mobilizing their supporters and implemented a number of important decisions, a pace of democratization in Latvia continued to be slower and more cautious than in other two Baltic republics⁷.

The emergence of alternative political groups to the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the prospect of the formation of a competitive party system in the USSR posed a serious problem and potential threat to the CPSU. 1989–1991 is the period of high concentration of great overturns and major events. To this is reflected in sometimes very rapid change of the “firsts” (see table no. 1). Interestingly, all of them are the followers of perestroika (earliest – since the 1985). An important issue is also the question of generation – the vast majority of them were born in 1930s or 1940s, so completely formed as personalities and political (in Communist party) career they made in post-Stalinist period.

Also should be considered how in this context had to be transformed old working habits and social networks relied on by the “last firsts” in order to maintain their power and influence in the period of transition. In some cases, it seems that the collapse of the Soviet Union made even more favorable conditions for them to “create the socialism in the separately taken country”, with the loss of external control and pressure, what demonstrated the entrenchment of authoritarian regimes in Central Asian Republics, or after a short period of national revival in Belarus. So what caused the regional differences of the power retention strategies, if we can observe ones? Is it possible in this case to talk about the integral/united region of Central Asian republics, the Baltic States, Transcaucasia? We can answer ambiguously – yes and no. After all, exactly in Lithuania, already in 1992, occurs the return to the power in corpore of the former nomenclature. In this context, phenomenon of the last first secretary of LCP A. M. Brazauskas in the background of the Baltic countries looks really impressive, and more outwardly would resemble Central Asia. What can explain this phenomenon – just a personal charisma? These externally very different cases of the post-Soviet elites later we will analyze more detailed.

On the other hand, it is important to understand to what extent was sustainable forming of the new, alternative to the Soviet nomenclature political elites and how permanent were victories of their leaders in the early post-Soviet period? What part did it take former dissidents groups and representatives of ethnic diasporas? To what extent the qualitative change of leadership was influenced by such factors as a peaceful transition toward liberal democracy, or the internal and international conflicts (civil wars in Georgia, Tajikistan, separation of Transnistria from Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, etc.)? With these

⁷ Meleshevich Andrey A. *Party Systems in Post-Soviet Countries. A Comparative Study of Political Institutionalization in the Baltic States, Russia and Ukraine*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 122.

factors the phenomenon of abolition/restoration of CP in republics is connected. Trying at least to partially answer all these questions the table was made, where short biographies of all first secretaries of CP of 15 republics of the former Soviet Union are presented, and analyzing them we are looking for certain patterns and analytically valuable parallels.

Controversies of the elites transition

During the initial investigation were identified four basic categories of leaders. Red color in the table marks the first secretaries of the CP or representatives of the highest Soviet nomenclature, who became presidents of the independent states. These appeared to be 8 – including the first and the only President of the USSR M. Gorbachev, also the presidents of Moldova, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan. Two more persons from the top of the CPSU elites should be attributed to this group – E. Shevardnadze who was the first secretary of GCP in 1972–1985, in 1985–1990 he served as USSR foreign minister and Geidar Aliev (in 1969–1982 he was first secretary of the Azerbaijan CP, in 1982–1987 he pursued high position of the first vice-chairman of USSR Council of Ministers, in 1993 he became the third president of independent Azerbaijan and ruled until his death in 2003, when his son Ilham took office, thus likely starting a dynasty). Green color marks leaders of the national, separatist movements or dissidents who become presidents of independent states. There are 4 of them – presidents of Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan. We can notice that their number is more than twice less than the former nomenclature representatives.

Purple color marks the Soviet nomenclature representatives who have become organizers of anti-independence movements in republics and they either actively or passively supported the August coup d'état in 1991. Here Lithuania and Latvia can be the most excluded examples.

With blue color are marked personalities connected with the family relations. This is particularly striking in Latvia's case (President Guntis Ulmanis is relative of the interwar Latvia's president Karlis Ulmanis), and already was mentioned, in Azerbaijan is emerging new dynasty. Non-official evidence suggests that a similar dynasty, under favorable circumstances in the future may emerge in Uzbekistan and Belarus.

There are also other interesting parallels in biographies of the leaders. For example, current presidents of Tajikistan and Belarus in Soviet times worked as the heads of the Soviet state farms (sovchozy).

Another important question is how the stability or change of the former Soviet nomenclature elites influenced the turn of these countries toward democracy or authoritarianism. In this respect, the most exceptional are regions of the Baltic countries and republics of the Central Asia. In 2011 the Lithuanian magazine "IQ" made the index of post-Soviet republics (see Table 2) which revealed that by

various economic, democracy and human rights parameters the Baltic countries in 20 years after the collapse of the USSR take first three places, and four Central Asian countries, except for the 4th position in the list taking Kazakhstan – the last places. So, what factors influenced that those two regions of the former Soviet Union found themselves so far away from each other in the valuable scale of the democracy-authoritarianism and what role in this process played old/new power elites?

The case of the Baltic countries

Over the past twenty years Baltic countries, regained their independence in 1991, experienced cardinal political (transition to liberal democracy), economic (introduction of the free market) and social (the formation of the consumer society) changes⁸. Talking about the Baltic countries, many analysts use the term “transition”⁹. It may be noted that in the period of the national revival and “singing revolution” (1988–1990) Baltic countries experienced an aspiration of radical reinterpretation of the past and writing scripts for the future. In the political sphere it was soon associated not only with the needs to construct new, post-communist, identity, but also with the reconfigurations of the power owned or acquired by the political elites.

On the eve of restoration of Independence, began to form new political discourse, which still holds a certain power. As one of its tasks was the need to clearly define the attitude towards the USSR and Soviet republica’s past. Therefore, one of the main tasks for the getting free of the communist regime countries was filling the gap of the “white spots” of history, illuminating hidden, ignored, or falsified in the Soviet period events, especially connected with the loss of the statehood in 1940. The Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocols, widely presented and analyzed on the channels of mass media has allowed not only to deny the Soviet government’s claim to legitimacy in these areas, but at the same time reject the version of history on which it was based.

At that time, in the public space was rapidly formed a tendency to dissociate completely from the Soviet period and evaluate it exclusively as a clearly negative alien, and sometimes even as lost, “empty” time. Thus, the Baltic countries stand out from other Soviet national bodies by the fact that here pretty early, even in times of perestroika, formed and established on the political level strong and fairly

⁸ On these changes more detailed, see: Kirby David G. *The Baltic World 1772–1993: Europe’s Northern Periphery in Age of Change*. London, England and New York, New York: Longman, 1995; Lieven Anatol. *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Path to Independence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993; Norgaard Ole and Johannsen Lars. *The Baltic States after Independence*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1999; Baltic Postcolonialism.

⁹ Kennedy Michael D. *Cultural Formations of Postcommunism. Emancipation, Transition, Nation, and War*. Minneapolis, University of Minesota Press, 2002; Jeffries Jan. *The Countries of the Former Soviet Union at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century. The Baltics and the European States in Transition*. 2004, London, Routledge; Otfinoski Stephen. *Nations in Transition. The Baltic Republics*. New York, Facts on File, 2004.

consistent rejection of the Soviet regime, based on rejection of the Soviet past, remained stable so far. For example, in Vilnius at the European Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held in 2009, 3rd of July, by the initiative of Slovenia and Lithuania representatives, the resolution “Unification of the divided Europe: human rights and civil freedom in the 21st century in the OSCE region”. This resolution equalized regimes of Stalin and Hitler, which caused considerable resentment of Russia.

It seems characteristic in this respect that the representatives of the old local Soviet nomenclature, except the radical communist Orthodox (platformists) wing, re-orientated and supported representatives of the national liberation movement having the aspirations for these countries to gain independence¹⁰. Such internal split of local Communist parties in Lithuania and Latvia have benefited for the technocratic wing, which, unlike the another camp, representing pro-Moscow-oriented Orthodox ideologues, was not only much more abundant but also actively collaborated with the firstly for sovereignty and later for the independence seeking representatives of the nationalist movements, resulting, as it is known, Lithuania to become the first of the Soviet republics, which declared its independence in 1990, 11th of March, while most of the others have ventured to declare it only after a coup in the middle of 1991. On the other hand, both the Soviet experience in promoting a local “economic nationalism”¹¹, as well as an obvious need for reforms, like the desire to maintain power by making concessions in the situation of becoming more and more massive national movements (for example, in the first Congress of the national movement Sąjūdis the first secretary of LCP A. Brazauskas announced returning Vilnius Cathedral to faithful) allowed the cooperation of the Nationalists and local Communists. At least in the beginning. Since soon, despite the general condemnation of occupation and annexation facts in the first quinquennium of independence revealed a radical “left” (the former nomenclature) and “right” (“patriotic forces”) as the hostility of not only the politics, but also the moral categories.

LCP, which left the ranks of the CPSU in 1989, thus disrupting single-party system, and later changed its title twice (in 1990 it became the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP), and in 2001 it merged with reconstituted LSDP and assumed the latter name), had to develop new, self-legitimizing an underlying narrative, which was essentially based on pragmatism. It was argued that “in those times” Soviet system was simply rationally utilized only pretending “ideological”, at the same time looking for the benefit for their republic. This thread of the self-justification had become increasingly evident in the second decade of independence, after numerous publications of the memoirs of the former representatives of

¹⁰ Laurinavičius Česlovas, Sirutavičius Vladas. *Lietuvos istorija. Sąjūdis: nuo „persitvarkymo” iki kovo 11-osios*. XII t, I dalis. Vilnius, Baltos lankos, 2008.

¹¹ For more details see: Grybkauskas Saulius. *Industrial Management in Soviet Lithuania 1965–1985: Tensions and Conflicts. Summary of doctoral dissertation*. Kaunas-Vilnius, LII, 2007. http://www.istorija.lt/html/pdf/grybkauskas_dissertation_summary.pdf

nomenclature¹². For example, the memoirs of the last First Secretary of the LCP, which became democratically elected the first President of independent Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, namely had the title “and then we worked for Lithuania”.

The first decade of the post-Soviet Baltic countries is characterized by a trend of de-communization, which was expressed by occurring in public debates on the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Union, Communist crimes and their consequences had led to paradoxical results. For example, Lithuania, after the long lasting discussion rather late, only in 2000, adopted and repeatedly filled and repaired Lustration Law¹³ still did not identify all the categories of persons who cooperated with the KGB (including reservists), the responsibility of the different grade was foreseen, which caused plenty of still continuing and constantly renewed political problems.

In addition, in the Baltic countries, a clear and unequivocal de-Sovietization of public life failed and due to the fact that the Communist authorities here very quickly re-orientated and became not only positive disposed in respect of the independence and sociopolitical reforms, but also active participants in these reforms, thus they, unlike the KGB, in the public discourse were not clearly demonized. By comparison, in 1990–1991 the Chairman of the Lithuanian Communist Party (the part which did not agree with the separation of LCP from CPSU) Mykolas Burokevičius, for the organization of the anti-state coup in 1991 together with his party colleague, Juozas Jarmalavičius (both of them, incidentally, are historians), were sentenced to prison and were released in 2006 and 2002. A similar situation happened and to Latvian Alfreds Rubiks. A. Rubiks was member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from July 1990 until its abolishment in 24 August 1991. As head of the Communist Party of Latvia in 1991 he opposed Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union, and was imprisoned for attempting to overthrow the new democratic government. Despite his incarceration, Rubiks was a candidate in the 1996 election for the President of Latvia, but lost to incumbent Guntis Ulmanis. Rubiks was released in 1997 for good behavior, became chairman of the Socialist Party of Latvia in 1999, and was elected Member of the European Parliament in the elections of 2009.

While as some of the efforts of de-Sovietization can be considered the fact that in all of the three Baltic states, sooner or later had been elected to lead the “Soviet taintless” representatives of emigration, however, it is necessary to admit that the real de-Sovietization on the political level did not happen, maybe excluding Estonia. Certain attempts touched only the Soviet repressive structures, but essentially

¹² The content and also strategies of self-justification of the former representatives of nomenclature had been analyzed by Lithuanian historians, for example, Streikus Arūnas. *Kultūrinio ir religinio gyvenimo sovietų Lietuvoje istoriniai tyrimai: šaltinių keliamos problemos*. Darbai ir dienos, 2009, t. 52, p. 75–83.

¹³ The Lustration Law was adopted in 2000 and concerned persons who secretly collaborated with the former Soviet Special services and it embraced many aspects of their activity: registration, confession, inclusion. Earlier, in 1998, in the Republic of Lithuania was adopted the Law on the evaluation of USSR State Security Committee (NKVD, NKVD, MGB, KGB) and the organization's Permanent Employees current activity.

circumvented the nomenclature of whose members successfully completed the transitional difficulties, changing only their political rhetoric, but not habitus of the collective mentality, and also preserved former possessed network of contacts and influences. Technocratic wing of the nomenclature, detached from the “pure” ideologues just in time, remained an active policy maker, and its political opponents had failed to propose and implement coherent solutions of this problem. This suggests the fact that Lithuania had become perhaps the first state from the post-communist space, where so called “counter-revolutionaries” came to power, already in 1992 LDLP with the considerable preponderance won Lithuanian parliamentary elections, and a year later, in 1993, 60 percent of Lithuanian electorate voted for the candidacy of A. Brazauskas in presidential elections. Nevertheless the effect of the “political pendulum” denoting the elections of Parliament until the period of 2000, when the elections were won by the right, then the left powers, the party associated with the former nomenclature (although it is clear that its members had completed virtually all of the new ranks of Lithuanian political parties) later will maintain a stable political influence.

Therefore, while the Baltic countries from the former post-Soviet space moved most towards the Western democracy, but due to sharp socio-economic reforms and excesses of transition to the free market, the reaction of the society concerning former nomenclature representatives in the conditions of multi-party system helped to preserve significant political and financial positions and to harmonize rhetoric of social security and stability in with the generally established condemnation or ignoring of the Soviet past.

The case of Central Asian republics

Turning to the Central Asian (hereafter – CA) region and trying to highlight its inherent characteristics, similarities and differences, we have chosen to exclude five parameters: ideology, identity, Islam, resource and isolation¹⁴.

In particular it should be noted that in the studies of post-Soviet space the term of transition, referring to CA countries gains a little bit different meaning, depending on who uses it – local political leaders, foreign analysts and investors¹⁵. While it seems easy to identify the processes ongoing in the region simply as “authoritarian modernization”¹⁶, though the reality is much more complicated. Yet it should be noted that ideology of all five CA countries, despite their intrinsic

¹⁴ For comparison see: Krumm Reinhard. *Central Asia. The Struggle for Power, Energy and Human Rights*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn/Berlin 2007. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/04329.pdf>.

¹⁵ For more details see: Poujol Catherine. *How can we use the concept of transition in Central Asian post-soviet history? An attempt to set a New Approach*. Cimera conference proceedings 6. *The Illusions of Transition: which perspectives for Central Asia and the Caucasus?* Graduate Institute of International Studies (IUHEI), Geneva, Switzerland, 17 March 2004. http://www.cimera.org/sources/7_19.pdf.

¹⁶ Krumm Reinhard. *Central Asia. The Struggle for Power, Energy and Human Rights...*, p. 3.

characteristics of post-Soviet development, could be characterized by the need to establish national doctrine in the societies, which until then had no independent statehood, but have millennial history and experience of long-lasting and durable governance of authoritarian despotism¹⁷. Thus, research of this region is particularly relevant to understand in what paradoxical way the process of collective identity-building (constructivism) could be justified with the concepts of primordialism/essentialism. On the other hand, for the ideologies of the new CA countries tension between goals of modernization and pseudo-archaization (“antiquity”, “invention of traditions”) is inherent¹⁸. So, it is not always so simple with the collective identity newly created in those countries. Until now the direction of the development of this identity is not evident – nationalist, post-Soviet, anti/pro-Russian, Eurasian, pan-Islamist, pan-Turkish, etc.?

The Soviet national policy, as many researchers consider, was very special, choosing the middle way between the direct and brutal assimilation and real acceptance of diversity of nations¹⁹. Although the fundamental goal became the creation of new socialist collective identity, which, as it was believed, gradually and naturally would erase ethnic differences, but at different times and in different regions of the USSR in this respect ongoing processes were not identical²⁰. The paradox, but one has to admit that in spite of Russian and Russian-speaking immigration to the CA region, particularly during the Soviet period indeed were created conditions to promote national cultures of CA republics. Their political, cultural and academic elites often gained their education in the metropolis, some of them even managed to make a career there. These circumstances determined that modern national cultures, despite the increased (such as in Kazakhstan²¹) or smaller scale Russification²², formed under the influence of Soviet culture and, inevitably, took over the Soviet forms.

It is interesting that the collapse of the Soviet Union, unlike actively independence seeking Baltic and Transcaucasian republics, for the CA countries this independence seems to be simply dropped from the sky, without inserting a special effort to get freedom. For example, it is interesting to compare when the CA

¹⁷ Countries of the Central Asia have long and very complicated history. For more see: Beckwith Christopher I. *Empires of the Silk Road. A History of the Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

¹⁸ Phillips Andrew, James Paul. *National Identity between Tradition and Reflexive Modernisation: The Contradictions of Central Asia*. National Identities, 2001, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 23–35.

¹⁹ On this issue, for example, see: Bergne Paul. *The Birth of Tajikistan. National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, p. 140.

²⁰ *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Editura by R.G. Suny and T. Martin). Oxford University Press, 2001.

²¹ Забирова А.Т., *Формирование, легитимация и воспроизводство идентичности в постсоветском Казахстане*. Социологические исследования, 2003, № 12. <http://ecsosman.hse.ru/data/073/834/1231/017.ZABIROVA.pdf>

²² See: Dickens Marc. *Soviet language policy in Central Asia*, 1988. <http://www.oxuscom.com/lang-policy.htm#policy>.

countries declared their independence. Tajikistan – 1991, 9th of September, Turkmenistan – 27th of October, Kazakhstan – 16th of December, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan – 25th of December (the latter three countries – after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union during the declaration of the Bialowieza agreement between the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, in 1991, 8th of December).

On the other hand, these countries are characterized by a high degree of stability of the political elite²³. CA region researchers exploring Czech political scientist Slavomir Horak appointed several types of post-Soviet authoritarian elites: origin of the tribes and clans, which may overlap with each other: family (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan), regional (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan after the civil war, in which won and had established the power of one of the clans, Uzbekistan) and party (due to the pseudo-democracy, demonstrated to the West, parties in CA are only ephemeral, dissolved in the structures of a real power, or dwarf) and economic-social (paramafia structures, connected with the ruling elites with the bonds of corruption)²⁴.

It seems that post-Soviet transformation touched their ruling layers only very slightly (with the exception of civil unrest which overwhelmed Kyrgyzstan, as a result of it presidents had to withdraw several times). Thus, their socio-economic development is far from ambiguous, and the ratio of both the Soviet legacy, as well as the current Russia²⁵ remains quite complicated. This suggests variations of the choice of the state symbols. Some of the republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan) changed it drastically, while the rest only slightly transformed.

Thus, in some countries political leaders have chosen a critical relationship with the Soviet period, and elsewhere it remained more moderate. For example, in Tashkent, which, incidentally, in the Soviet period was an informal capital of CA republics²⁶, in 2002 even a museum of the Memory of the Soviet repression victims²⁷ was opened, and its exposition presents a paradoxical association with the current regime and ongoing persecution of dissidents. In the capital of Turkmenistan could be seen that the array of the Soviet architecture is being destroyed very actively, with the exception of the “national form” reflecting Stalinist buildings which are carefully restored. Elsewhere, a positive evaluation of those times is reflected not only in the official ideology, but also the maintenance of the Cyrillic

²³ Way Lucan. *Sources of Authoritarian Stability in the Former Soviet Union. Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-Communist world* (Editura by V. Bunce, M. McFaul and K. Stoner-Weiss). Cambridge University Press, 2010.

²⁴ Горак Славомир. *Трансформация идентичности среднеазиатских элит. Традиция и современность. Дискурс Пу*. Научно-практический альманах, Выпуск 5, Екатеринбург, 2005, s. 27–29. <http://www.slavomirhorak.cuweb.cz/konference-Perm2005.htm>

²⁵ Freire Maria Raquel. *Russian Policy in Central Asia: Supporting, Balancing, Coercing or Imposing?* Asian Perspective, 2009, Vol. 33, No. 2, p. 125–149.

²⁶ Космарский Артем. *Ташкент: от исламского к (пост)социалистическому и (пост)колониальному городу*. Р. S. ландшафты: оптики городских исследований (под ред. Н. Милерюса и Б. Коупа). Вильнюс, ЕГУ, 2008, с. 194–227.

²⁷ Экспозиция музея жертв репрессий в Ташкенте вызывает горькие ассоциации с современностью. <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=4550>

alphabet. The question of the choice of alphabet in the region under the circumstances of collapse of the Soviet Union was crucial – part of the countries followed the example of Turkey, adopted the Latin, but Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan preferred to remain in Cyrillic.

Not only the choice of Latin alphabet shows the gravitation of part CA countries toward Turkey, or at least Turkey remains for them as a significant geopolitical and cultural factor, a certain model of the eastern modernization. There are at least a few sources of such interaction with Turkey – still alive the idea of Pan-Turkism (rather cultural than political), akin to the four countries of the CA, with the exception of Tajikistan's population of the Persian origin, and kemalism. The latter became the ideological basis of reforms of the first President of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938)²⁸.

The researchers note that due to the Soviet influence, Islam in CA countries has its specific features, ranging between secularization, the pseudo-religious cult of the political leader and fundamentalism. For example, making efforts to establish their power in Tajikistan fundamentalists together with the national-democrats led a fierce civil war (1992–1997) against the clan of Soviet nomenclature. This case affected attitudes in respect of religion in entire region – even though Islam is the core of traditional CA culture, and for this reason political leaders often present themselves as the preservers of religion and the builders of mosques, but far more active expression of religion in public life is viewed with suspicion, and extremely sensitive²⁹, apparently fearing of the infiltration of radical fundamentalist from neighboring Afghanistan and Iran. With the latter, incidentally, CA countries are connected not only by historical fate, traditions but also large ethnic diasporas.

This geopolitical factor, as well as the specificity of authoritarian regimes as such, are crucial for one more whole region uniting feature – a voluntary international auto-isolation (it seems, except for Kazakhstan), although all five countries do their best to present themselves internationally as modern and progressive. However, these efforts, despite the political will of elites, are influenced by their financial capacity, defined by the disposal of natural resources (oil, gas, rare metals, cotton, etc.) or their lack. In this respect, countries of CA split into two parts – the rich (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the poor ones (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). The possibility to use the profit of the extraction of resources and their sale, which in Soviet times was unceremoniously appropriated by the “Center”, nevertheless, now is very handy to the authoritarian power consolidating its position as an “international player” (for example, the Nabucco pipeline project, etc.³⁰). The economic autonomy allows for the three countries to become significant geo-

²⁸ Kemalist ideology. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kemalist_ideology

²⁹ More on Islamic issues of post-soviet CA region, giving the example of Uzbekistan writes anthropologist Johan Rasanayagam. Žr. Rasanayagam Johan. *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan. The Morality of Experience*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

³⁰ Chow Edward C. and Hendrix Leigh E. *Central Asia's Pipelines: Field of Dreams and Reality*. NBR Special report, September 2010. http://csis.org/files/publication/1009_EChow_LHendrix_CentralAsia.pdf (žr. 2011/11/15).

political actors in the region, provoking an international opinion to close its eyes to the repressions against the opposition and the continued violations against human rights. Conversely, the absence of economic instruments make Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan hostages of the Russian and American influence spheres. In addition, funds from resource extraction are actively used for legitimation of power within countries – costly visual propaganda, which was very characteristic to Turkmenistan led by the President S. Niyazov.

Thus, it can be concluded that the ongoing nation-building process³¹ in the CA countries is devoted to fill the vacuum of post-Soviet society's identity, creating new homogeneous collective self-consciousness. In CA region, namely in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan this goal is pursued the most consistently and complex. This process is obviously enhanced, coordinated and controlled from the top, by the post-Soviet authoritarian regimes.

Conclusions

In general could be said that without the comparative perspective of the (Post)Soviet- elites the danger to conceive some phenomenon perversely, especially the phenomenon that assessment today unfortunately has become stereotyped. For example, about the Baltic countries as the most active fighters for freedom and first gainers of the independence. Here the competitor for them could be the Transcaucasian republics. On the other hand, the presented data reveal the other widespread cliché of thinking – about the scale of the total rejection of the Soviet nomenclature in the transitional period – should also be treated with caution. “Formers” not only remain, but in some places, such as in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, even consolidate absolute power. What does this show – that in the transitional society there were no strong alternatives about potential of the non-Communist leaders? This statement may make sense as where from they could emerge if only from the emigration – this factor was used in three Baltic states: they chose the Presidents from the milieu of their own diasporas abroad and in this case these countries became “an exception to the rule”. Another important aspect – the long duration of the political culture in each of the discussed countries seems to demonstrate the rebirth of the authoritarian or oligarch tradition onto ruins of communism.

Coming to power in the new circumstances, the former Soviet leaders were not going to reestablish the regime that has formed them and gave them their status. On the contrary, they easily adapted to new economic, political and ideological conditions, even if these conditions were “capitalist”, “nationalist” or “fundamentalist”.

³¹ Kuru Ahmet T. *Between the State and Cultural Zones: Nation Building in Turkmenistan*. Central Asian Survey, 2002, no. 21, p. 71–90.

This pilot study shows how complex and difficult the way towards democracy is and how to go for it or not is influenced by the political culture formed in Soviet period and by non the existence of alternatives in the period of political changes.

THE PROBLEM OF THE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION IN THE POST-SOVIET TRANSITION

Abstract

The report surveys questions connected with the transformation of the communist elites of the allied Soviet republics during and after the time of the collapse of the USSR. Did it happen any qualitative and quantitative change in the highest layers of the power or it was only nominal? What had major significance in the process of the transition of the power – peculiarities of the local party leaders or structural fundamentals and connections between leaders and nomenclature of the republics? What role in this transformation did the reconstructed societies play, entrusted with the possibility to perceive the real socio-political changes? What form gained the dilemma of the choice between the loyalty to the "Centre", more and more losing control, and a wish to gain the Independence of the republics which became especially relevant in the days of the 1991 August coup d'état?

The analysis enabled us to reach important conclusions – the transition of the power in the passage from communism to liberal democracy was not so essential in the qualitative sense. From the 15 first CP secretaries of the Soviet republics 10 of them successfully became Presidents of the independent states (some of them – even leaders-authoritarians presenting in the maintaining these days).