

## SEMINAR IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

### POLS 649

#### **Some factors leading to the executive dominance in the Russian Federation with comparison to the United States of America**

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#### **Introduction**

Every country on Earth at some point in history has to face the problem of designing its political institutions. Institutional choice have been studied extensively both theoretically (Ordeshook 1997; Riker 1980; Shepsle 1989) and practically (Juan J. Linz, Arturo Valenzuela, 1994; Stepan & Skach, 1993). The process of institutional choice is inextricably linked to democratization (Levitsky & Way 2002). Twentieth century in general and, as Huntington (1992) called it, “the third wave” of democratization in particular, especially after the collapse of communism in Western Europe and the USSR, brought about different constitutional projects. Some of these projects were more successful than the others<sup>1</sup>. The European countries present promising results. However, shortly after that, many “newly born” countries “rolled back” to the dominance of the executive branches of power which threatens to undermine democracy and, therefore lead to authoritarian regimes. In some cases, we may see strong powerful presidents with the vast amount of authority which allows them to exert significant influence (formal and informal) over other governmental and non-governmental bodies. In some presidential and mixed republics, presidents have acquired more authority, than in the others.

The Russian Federation is an especially interesting case due to regime change which happened under the same constitution. Since 1999 Russia have been undergoing a series of shifts from more plural or, in Robert A. Dahl and Douglas W. Rae’s (2005) terms

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<sup>1</sup> See (Yuthakorn, 2014)

poliarchal regime, to what Guillermo O'Donnell named delegative democracy with only one center of power, that overweighs the weak and not institutionalized system of checks and balances of the Russian political system. In this research, we will attempt to answer the question about what major factors caused the shift which led to the executive dominance in the Russian Federation which is absent in the United State of America. To archive this goal, we will use historical, institutional, and neo-institutional approaches.

The USA was historically the first country to install democratic political regime with the system of checks and balances and presidential system which has proven to be stable and efficient. The US positive example has been attractive to other countries to “borrow” American political configuration. However, in our opinion, without cultural and historical conditions necessary for respect of personal autonomy of the individual and liberal democracy, presidentialism (and the executive branch) is able to become a dominant branch of government and therefore, suppress other political institutions (Levitsky & Way 2002). Russia is a good example of the latter. In this paper we will make an attempt to show that “institutional equilibrium” as Shepsle (1989) puts it, is the result of different forces, such as veto players (Levitsky & Murillo 2013), and especially previous political history (Baranov, 2003) and political culture (Elgie 2004). Therefore, comparison of main factors which lead to the executive dominance in the USA and Russia may give an understanding of that process and the reasons why the executive has prerogative in Russian political system and does not have it in the USA.

Since institutions are the key concept we will focus on in this research, it is necessary to clarify what we mean by it. In this paper we will mainly use the definition of political institutions, given by a Russian political scientists and researcher in the field of institutionalism S.V. Patrushev, who, in your opinion, gave the most comprehensive, well developed definition of this phenomenon.

“Political institutions include:

1. a political framework – a set of formal and informal principles, norms, rules and regulations causing human activities in the political field;
2. a political entity, or an agency, or an organization – in a certain way organized association of people, or the political structure;
3. a stable type of political behavior, manifested in a certain system of collective actions, procedures, and mechanisms” (Patrushev, 2001, p. 155)

It is worth noting that political institutions can be both formal and informal. Douglass North notes that, “formal constraints – such as rules that human beings devise and in informal constraints - such as conventions and codes of behavior. Institutions may be created, as was the United States Constitution; or they may simply evolve over time, as does the common law” (North 1996, p.4).

Therefore, we will use formal institutions such as the Constitutions and political systems they lay out as well as informal – such as political culture of countries which stabilizes and maintains political order and justifies and legitimizes “institutional equilibrium”. Political culture here is the main political institution. The study of the changes and functioning of the institutions is essentially a study of political culture in order to identify its features in each country (Panov, 2004, p. 15). At every stage of history as a result of institutionalization and selection practices, certain institutional arrangements are formed that reflect the essence of the era.

### **1. The Constitution of the Russian Federation and formal limits to executive power**

Russian Constitution of 1993 recognizes the principle of the power division among legislative, executive and judiciary. The essence of the principle is to ensure that “the

content of the various governmental functions are carried out in the country by self-sufficient, independent of each other structures of the state mechanism, which cancel each other out, limit each other of usurping power, the concentration of all power functions in the hands of one of the branches of government” (Hambrieva, 2005, p. 96). At the same time the legislature creates the laws, the executive ensures their application and enforcement and the judiciary resolves disputes about what is lawful and what is not. The separation of powers is a hallmark of the rule of law, which guarantees its functioning. It provides a mechanism of “checks and balances”. In addition, the separation of powers into three branches is caused by the need of a clear definition of their functions, powers and responsibilities of the various government agencies, ability of public authorities to monitor each other on a Constitutional basis, the effective fight against abuse of power (Ryan 2012). The implementation of the principle of separation of powers is always accompanied by the freedom of the media.

For the first time in history, legal provision for the separation of powers are found in the US Constitution (1787) and in the Constitutional acts of the French Revolution (1789-1794.). Today, this principle is enshrined in the Constitution in most countries. In the Russian Federation principle of separation of powers is written in the Constitution, which was adopted in a national referendum December 12 of 1993. The adoption of the Constitution was presided by Constitutional crisis of September-October of 1993 when the President Boris Yeltsin exceeded his Constitutional ability and dissolved the parliament – the highest council. Public support and high ratings gave him power to offer a Constitution which was biased toward the executive branch and gave the President broad powers and less responsibility at the same time (Shevtsova, 1999).

In Article 10 the Russian Constitution states that “the government of the Russian Federation is based on the separation of legislative, executive and judicial. The legislative,

executive and judicial powers shall be independent” (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993). The Constitution outlines the structure of the highest state authorities of the Russian Federation. Legislative power at the federal level is assigned to the Federal Assembly which consists of two branches – the State Duma and the Federation Council. Executive power is exercised by the Government of the Russian Federation. Judicial power is exercised by three independent courts – the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Arbitration and other courts of the Russian Federation.

### **1.1. The institution of presidency: an element of balancing power?**

An important institution of state power is the institution of the presidency, which exists in many forms and is a democratic political system attribute. The first Presidential republic was installed in the United States of America in 1787. However, the presidency is not a guarantor of democracy, since the imperfect counterweights can cause a turn towards authoritarian rule. Responsibilities of Presidents are not the same in different countries. So in parliamentary republics, they act as heads of state and official functions does not affect the actual course of political events. In Presidential and semi-Presidential republic Presidents act as key figures in the real state power, have enormous potential for the effective conduct of policies (Shugart & John M. Carey 1992; Arend Lijphart 1999).

Institute of Presidential power in Russia has a relatively short history. The position of a popularly elected President of the Russian Federation was established in accordance with the results of the nationwide referendum in March 1991. The first President of the Russian Federation was elected by direct popular election in June 12, 1991. The transformation of the Russian presidency in the direction of “super-Presidentialism” was

caused by the conflict between the President and the parliament, which ended in favor of the executive branch, and the victory was perpetuated in the Constitution of 1993<sup>2</sup>.

The new Constitution installed the separation of powers, but this separation, as many believe, is clearly unbalanced, securing, as a political expert O. Smolin says, “democratic in form but essentially authoritarian political regime” (Smolin, 2006, pp. 203-204). The government is headed by the Prime Minister (the Chairman of the Government ) but many ministers, especially the most important ones (minister of foreign affairs, minister of defense, minister of internal affairs and heads of special services), directly responsible to the President. The Constitution gives the President the exclusive right to make appointments in the government, to sign and promulgate federal laws, and formulate policies. The President is head of state and the “guarantor” of the Constitution (Art. 80). He or she is elected for six years (before 2009 it was four years) and the maximum duration of the tenure is two consecutive terms, without any age limits (Art. 81). The President appoints with agreement of the Federation Council (upper chamber of Russian parliament) judges of the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Arbitration, and the Attorney General. This is a very peculiar Constitutional provision because the Federation Council consists of regional nominees similar to the US Senate and, therefore is fewer in number. It makes it easier for the President to find a solution with them than with deputies of the State Duma. Even before direct elections of the Federation Council were abolished by Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin administration had found compromises on the judges and the Attorney General easy.

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<sup>2</sup> The question about whether the Russian Federation is “superpresidentialism” or “semi-presidential” republic is still relevant. See., for example, *The Russian policy: a course* / Ed. V.A. Nikonov. - M.: Publishing House of the International University in Moscow, 2006, pp 38-62.

According to American researchers Shuggart and Carey, Russia is very close to the “presidential-parliamentary” type of regime, which, in their opinion, is the most unstable. See. Shugart M., Carey J. *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The President, moreover, forms and heads the Security Council, approves the military doctrine of the Russian Federation, appoints and dismisses the high command of the Armed Forces of Russia (Art. 84). The President forms the foreign policy of the Russian Federation (Art. 86). The President in the circumstances and in the manner envisaged by the federal Constitutional law is entitled to proclaim (for a certain time) a state of emergency in the Russian Federation or in its particular areas. The Russian President similarly to his or her American counterpart reports annually to the Federal Assembly about the situation in the country and main directions of its foreign and domestic policies. However, unlike in the USA shortly after the speech is given, presidential decrees are introduced for the State Duma to implement presidential “recommendations” into law. The President has the power to issue binding decrees and orders. They, however, should not contradict the Constitution, and, in addition, they may be replaced by laws enacted in the ordinary legislative procedure. Powers of the President, thus, is a combination of the prerogatives of the appointments of officers and the formation of policies.

The American Constitution on the contrary, allows only seven major Presidential duties and powers. Thus American Presidents serve as administrative heads of the nation. The Constitution gives little guidance on the President’s administrative duties. It states merely that “the executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America” and that “he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” These imprecise directives have been interpreted to mean that the President is to supervise and offer leadership to various departments, agencies, and programs created by Congress. In practice, a chief executive spends much more time making policy decisions for his cabinet departments and agencies than enforcing existing policies. The Presidents also act as commander in chief of the military. In essence, the Constitution names the President the highest-ranking officer in the armed forces. But it gives Congress the power to declare war.

The framers no doubt intended Congress to control the President's military power; nevertheless, Presidents have initiated military action without the approval of Congress. Presidents convene Congress. The President can call Congress into special session on "extraordinary Occasions," although this has rarely been done. He must also periodically inform Congress of "the State of the Union."

One of the most important Constitutional provisions is Presidential veto power. The President can veto (reject) any bill or resolution enacted by Congress, with the exception of joint resolutions that propose Constitutional amendments. Congress is able to override a Presidential veto with a two-thirds vote in each house. Russian Presidents also have a veto power which is now used rarely because the Presidential party controls all political institutions in Russia. American Presidents appoint various officials. The President has the authority to appoint federal court judges, ambassadors, cabinet members, other key policymakers, and many lesser officials. Many appointments are subject to Senate confirmation. He or she make treaties with the "Advice and Consent" of at least two-thirds of those senators voting at the time, the President can make treaties with foreign powers. The President is also to "receive Ambassadors," a phrase that Presidents have interpreted to mean the right to formally recognize other nations. And Presidents in the USA grant pardons. The President can grant pardons to individuals who have committed "Offenses against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment." (The Constitution of the United States, 1787). It is worth noting that American Presidents do not have the ability to introduce bills to the Congress directly. They use their partisan support in the legislature. While Russian Presidents have been not members of party but enjoy ability to introduce bills to the Russian State Duma.

Another essential difference between the statuses of Presidents of the Russian Federation and the US is its dominant position in its relations with other branches of

government. The American President cannot dissolve the parliament - the Congress, which is endowed by US Constitution with the right to make laws. It is clear that under such circumstances the absence of the Presidential legislative powers largely would reduce his or her power to a fiction, turning the institution into a puppet of the Congress. But there is such a power. This is the right to veto laws adopted by the Congress. In order to overcome a Presidential veto, it is necessary to secure votes of two-thirds of the members of both chambers of the representative body. And when the Presidential party has at least a third of seats in Congress always, the possibility of overcoming the veto look quite problematic.

Formally, the Congress has the right to depose the President from office. But it can be done only through a cumbersome procedure of impeachment in the presence of proven charges against the President in crimes or treason. Neither the executive nor the legislature is allowed to encroach on each other's own Constitutional authority. This situation is fraught with conflicts but also encourages cooperation. "To reach agreement with the majority in the Congress, President uses a variety of ways: control of the ruling party, personal contact with individual members of the congregation, indirect pressure on them by "flirting" with the population of separate constituencies or appeal to public opinion in general. An important channel of the Presidential influence is its direct access to the media" (Golosov, 2001, p. 280). As pointed out by a Russian political scientist V. Nikonov, the Russian President "has the executive authority because he or she forms the government and actually leads it. The President possesses a legislative power because he or she issues decrees and introduces bills. And President has judicial powers while acting as an arbiter in disputes between the central and regional authorities" (Nikonov, 2003, p. 23).

The Constitution places Russian presidency above the system of power separation. American Presidents preside over the American executive, hence they are responsible for implementation of policies; the Russian President formally has no such a responsibility.

However, its Constitutional power to preside over government and appoint a Prime Minister makes the President to be de facto a part of executive, therefore, strengthening it and leading to executive dominance which is not found in the USA where the system of the checks and balances limits the Presidential powers. The nature of the executive dominance in Russia is found in the relationships between the President and the parliament.

Russian presidency is equipped with the Administration of the President which is a powerful institution, established by the Constitution. Article 83 states: “The President of the Russian Federation shall form the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation”. The administration of the Russian President creates the conditions for the implementation of the Presidential Constitutional powers. Herein lays another distinctive feature distinguishing the US executive from its Russian counterpart and making the latter more significant. This is expressed in particular in the drafting of bills to introduce them to the State Duma as a legislative initiative of the President. The administration prepares drafts of decrees, instructions, appeals of the President, other documents, including drafts of annual Presidential address to the Federal Assembly. The administration is a powerful political tool. During the Yeltsin’s presidency it failed to create a successful political party to support Presidential bills, therefore it had to use other mechanism to secure necessary amount of votes for crucial bills. According to L.A. Okounkov, “the Presidential Administration acts as an independent political force under the auspices of the Presidential patronage, as the “second government”” (Okounkov, 2001, p. 10). In 1995, in fact, the Presidential Administration took budgetary control away of the Ministry of Finance, and the Government of the Russian Federation. The administration of the President has not just gradually become the most significant political player but also from the staff or auxiliary apparatus of the President, it has grown to represent the presidency. During the period from 1996 to 1999, the administration of the President was in some cases even more

than the President itself (Shchipanov, 2009, pp. 3-6). After winning the 2000 Presidential elections Vladimir Putin has set his administration task of forming a party that could become a majority in the State Duma. This task was successfully implemented; the political party “United Russia” as the party in power has since won parliamentary elections with overall majority which “has eliminated almost all of the direct threat to the executive power” (V. Leybin, V. Dyatlikovich, D. Kartcev, V. Surkov, 2012, p. 36).

### **1.2. The weak parliament as an ally of the executive branch of the government**

Many researches of Russian politics would agree that the political system in country is structured to put the State Duma in the position of weakness (Shevtsova, 1999; Baranov, 2003; Smolin, 2006). The Presidential combined legislative powers to veto parliamentary bills and to issue decrees permit the head of state to rule by decree if he or she commands the support of just one-third of either house of the Federal Assembly (Parrish, 1998, p. 79). Such a condition gave reasons to call Russian political system a “fig-leaf parliamentarism”, i.e. a situation in which the State Duma “does not in any real sense share sovereignty with the chief executive” (Huskey, 1999, p. 180). In Russia, responsibilities of branches of power and their institutions are clearly not balanced, which affects the relationships between them, leading to a confrontation. In addition, as Baranov puts it, “Russia has no clear legal provisions assigned to each of the branches of government that blurs the separation of powers in organizing the structures and mechanisms of the state functioning as a whole” (Baranov, 2003, p. 143).

One of the main weakness of the State Duma is revealed in the article 111-1 of the Constitution which states that the “chairman of the government ... shall be appointed by the President of the Russian Federation with the consent of the State Duma.” (The constitution of Russian Federation, 1993). William Clark writes,

“This “consent” exercised by the Duma is, under normal circumstances, little more than the type of consent exercised by the US Senate when it confirms (or fails to confirm) cabinet secretaries nominated by the President. It is not the type of consent that defines the relationship between a Prime Minister and the parliament in either a British-style or continental European parliamentary system. In Russia, “consent” does not ordinarily mean that the head of government is “responsible to” or requires the “confidence” of the Duma” (Clark 2011, p.11).

The Constitution later states in the article 111-4, “in case the State Duma rejects three times the candidates for the post of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, the President of the Russian Federation shall appoint the Chairman of the Government, dissolve the State Duma and call for new elections”. This provision clearly favors the executive, putting the legislature into position when it has to either approve the Presidential nominee as it happened in 1999 or be dissolved by the President. Clearly, it may be the other way around, if Presidential ratings are low and new elections may bring more opposition to power and, therefore more hostile parliament.

Another worth noting idiosyncrasy of the Russian Constitution which can be used to dissolve the State Duma and favors the executive is article 117-3, “The State Duma may express no-confidence in the Government of the Russian Federation. A no-confidence resolution shall be adopted by a majority of votes of the total number of the deputies of the State Duma. After the State Duma expresses no-confidence to the Government of the Russian Federation, the President of the Russian Federation shall be free to announce the resignation of the Government or to reject the decision of the State Duma. In case the State Duma again expresses no-confidence in the Government of the Russian Federation within three months, the President of the Russian Federation shall announce the resignation of

the Government or dissolve the State Duma”. The US Constitutional design, on the contrary, does not give the President powers to dissolve the Congress; however the Congress can impeach the President.

The Russian parliamentary control over the executive is tenuous (Nichols 1998). It does not have the right to reject individual ministers. It has scant oversight powers. Although it can investigate the President and the government, it lacks the resources to do so and almost never does so. Ministers do not answer to the parliament and are not summoned to testify before it. Parliament has no ability to monitor the military, the police, or the organs of state security.

### **1.3. Neither dead, nor alive: federation in Russia as a way to secure executive dominance.**

Federalism is the theory or advocacy of federal principles for dividing powers between member units and common institutions (Follesdal, 2014). There are two main features of a federal state, without at least partial presence of which it is impossible to talk about federalism (Bogdanova, 2001, p. 166):

- Firstly, there are several levels of government whose jurisdiction extends to all citizens of the Federation.
- Secondly, these levels exist as independent power units, building the relationship with each other on a contractual basis – none of them can interfere in the affairs of another and or unilaterally deprive another level of its powers, or, on the contrary, force it to fulfill its mandate. They are not in a mutually subordinate position, and act as equal partners.

Principles of federalism are not fixed in any direct form (i.e., in the form of some established wording) in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, nor in the Constitution of the United States of America. In this respect there is a similarity, although the

Constitutions mentioned were developed and adopted in totally different historical conditions. However, the federalism in Russia and in the United States is seen as one of the fundamental principles of statehood.

However, when in the early 2000s Vladimir Putin was elected President he concentrated his efforts on what later was called “building of the vertical of power”. The reason for that was the policy of decentralization, which took place in the 1990s and led to economic decline and the debilitation of the administrative capacity of the state. According to V. Gelman, “during the Spring of 2000 the main directions of domestic policy of the new President was the reorganization of the state, aimed at strengthening the Centre as well as the entire vertical of power; suspension of business elite from the centers of political power; liberal-market innovations in the economic and social policy” (Gelman, 2006).

The reorganization involved the creation of seven federal districts – unConstitutional institutions headed by plenipotentiaries of the President, whose goals were to bring the policies and legal frameworks of the federation unites in accordance with the federal legislation and public policy. In fact, such a measure installed Presidential control over Russian regions and weakened the latter. Moreover, the Presidential administration has created their offices in every region, headed by the chief federal inspectors, who are responsible to the plenipotentiaries of the President in the federal districts and their main task is maintaining stability and supervision of the governors. Thus, Putin created a complex of institutions which are not Constitutional but the Constitutional Court abstained from making any judgments. From 2004 Russia *de facto* ceased to be federation. Gradually through party control of regional assemblies, federal districts and abolition of direct elections of governors, Putin managed to take control of the whole country.

The second important reform in the mechanism of state power was the reorganization of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Federal Assembly, also seriously infringing the status of regional leaders. The governors and chairmen of regional legislative assemblies, who were members of the upper house, had to, according to the reform, part with their seats in the Federation Council. Instead, the ordinary representatives of the regional executives and legislative bodies became members of the Federation Council. This reduced both the possibility of influence of regional leaders in the central government, and the political weight of the regions themselves. Regional leaders initially resisted reform, but in July 2000, had to give way to the efforts of the President.

The third measure was tactics of non-contractual relations between the federal center and the regions. So, 14 agreements with federal units remained in force by 2002, and the rest were one way or another denounced (Salmin, 2003).

Changes in tax legislation reduced revenues to regional budgets, making them more dependent on transfers from the center, which also stimulated the redistribution of property in the regions in favor of the financial and industrial groups.

An important step to strengthen the vertical of power was the adoption of amendments to the current legislation, which gave the President the right to suspend the governors from office as well as to dissolve the legislative body of the regions. The governors became responsible not only for the implementation of election promises but also for the execution of federal laws, Presidential decrees, government acts and court decisions.

In 2004, Putin introduced the law according to which the heads of regions of the Russian Federation were elected by the legislative assemblies of the region on the proposal of the President. The mechanism has been change only in 2009 as a measure of political liberalization of President Dmitry Medvedev. In spite of reenacting of gubernatorial

elections, it is only partially true because now candidates for office have to secure a number of signatures in their support from deputies of municipal councils which are controlled by the ruling party which makes it impossible for oppositional leaders to even run for governors.

Federal principal of the USA political system is secured by American Constitution and body of American legislature but the most importantly it is preserved by political tradition. The delegates who met in Philadelphia in 1787 tackled the problem of making one nation out of thirteen independent states by inventing a political form that combined features of a confederacy with features of unitary government. As James Madison wrote in Federalist No. 10, “The federal Constitution forms a happy combination . . . [of] the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, and the local and particular to state governments”. (Hamilton et al. 2009, p.53). American President has no formal influence on the state executives and legislations. As Peter C. Ordeshook & Olga Shvetsova write, “the political authority of a U.S. President derives from a complex balance of institutional features. The President is the sole nationally elected figure. This makes that office a potentially powerful integrating political force. But consider what would happen if the presidency were also endowed with great formal authority like that possessed by the President of the Russian Federation. In that case, it is likely that few Presidents would be able to resist the temptation to govern by the direct exercise of their authority – that is, by issuing decrees, threatening to fire regional political leaders, and strategically allocating public funds between friend and foe. Without these powers, a U.S. President must govern differently – by exercising leadership. Although the meaning of that word is vague, it does imply, in Theodore Roosevelt's words, the skillful use of “the power of the bully pulpit.” (Peter C. Ordeshook & Olga Shvetsova, 1997). The success of American federalism, then, has two interrelated sources: the structure of elections, and the Constitutional weakness of

the chief executive. The structure of elections makes political parties the critical integrating element of the state, while the Constitutional weakness of the President and the decentralization of executive authority force the President (and each state governor) to govern through leadership and to use the integrating potential of his or her party to the maximum extent possible.

## **2. Paternalism as an element of political culture in Russia: a mechanism of perpetuating the executive dominance**

Political culture defined as “a set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system”, encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity. Political culture is thus the manifestation of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics. A political culture is the product of both the history of a political system and the histories of the members. Thus it is rooted equally in public events and private experience (Aronoff, 2001).

Many political scientists, especially from Russia, would agree on the paternalistic nature of Russian political culture (Ermolenko, 1998, Naumov and Puffer, 2000; Baranov, 2003; Smeal, 2013). Nikolay Baranov sees roots of paternalistic political culture of Russians in extended Russian patriarchal family where there may be couple of dozens of members. The authority of the head of such a family – the “father” – was unquestionable (Baranov, 2003). Such an order was reasonable and explainable – Russian climate with short summer forced people to do many different types of agricultural works at the same time. The only possible and adequate mechanism which was able to reach the goal was strong authoritarianism. Baranov writes,

“The concentration of command functions of the authority, in this case the head of the patriarchal family, leaves all members of the household only a function of

obedience. In such a situation, a person has no need to feel the autonomy, he or she shifts the responsibility for their own destiny on the family, the state, the government, he or she moves away from the individual responsibility, and thus from freedom” (Baranov, 2003, p. 136).

In Russia, a head of the family had full responsibility over each member of the family but those relationships resembled ownership (Baranov, 2003). Russian Orthodox Church supported such an order. Thus, paternalism has become an axiom, a cultural archetype embodied in the Russian mentality and political culture. The traditions preserved in folk, peasant culture also characterized the culture of the educated elite of Russian society. Liberalism of the European-style, spread after the bourgeois-democratic revolutions, transformed under the pressure of internal and external circumstances. Russia's victory in the war with Napoleon strengthened national pride, consolidated society and acted as a stimulus in the search for its way of development.

Paternalism as a basic foundation of the Russian Empire was implemented in the following categories: diligence, supervision, promotion, protection, grace, helping those in need, donation, relief, and indulgence (Baranov, 2003).

Baranov continues,

“The history of the Soviet period confirms the stability of the formed paternalistic traditions. All children of primary school age were Octobrists - grandchildren of Lenin. A quarter-century the country was ruled by the “father of the peoples” – Joseph Stalin. Party bodies carried out the functions of guardianship, supervising, encouraging and punishing citizens guided by the norms of the moral code of the builders of communism, and not the Constitution of the USSR” (Baranov, 2003, p. 140).

The urgency of the problem of paternalism remains confirmed by the events of the modern days, when the prevailing situation of the post-Soviet period has demonstrated the need people have for the custody of the state, ensuring social assistance and protection that they regard as something a priori, as a mandatory feature of power. “Communist power notoriously operated to destroy civil society and even to “atomise” individuals by inhibiting the organization of social classes or local communities’ homogenization (Connor, 1988).

Paternalistic tradition can be attributed to the “collective unconscious”, that is the archetype of the culture learned in the process of socialization, and that controls peoples’ behavior at a subconscious level. Russians support Presidentialism in its Russian, paternalistic, sense. This shift is especially characteristic of socially weak strata: more elderly, educated, and financially less secure respondents. Russians understand that in real life the President controls the military, foreign policy, and compliant with the Constitution. Russians’ assessments, however, demonstrate a clear gap between the desired and the real even regarding those areas of Presidential authority. At the same time people do not trust the parliament (Ordzhonikidze 2008).

The United States of America is widely known for maintaining image of individualistic culture which has always rejected social responsibility of the state over the society. American individualism, and individualist ideas and beliefs can be traced back to the Revolutionary era (Grabb et al. 1999). In the portrayal of the early American value system, personal liberty is highly prized and encouraged, but, at the same time, is consistently moderated by a regard for civic responsibility and a respect for the rights of others (Grabb et al. 1999). Lipset contends that the historical beginnings of the United States gave rise to an exceptional society, one guided by an ideology or value system that is unique in the world. He calls this modern, bourgeois, and democratic value system “Americanism”, or “the American Creed” (Lipset 1963). He asserts that the American belief

system can be described using five key terms: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire. He argues that Americans are said to be especially averse to having their individual liberty infringed upon by “statist communitarianism” or the intrusions of government (Lipset, 1996). More generally, though, Americans are portrayed as being suspicious of any organization or collectivity that limits their personal freedom<sup>3</sup>. Desire of individual freedom is politically represented in the system of checks and balances and federal organization of the country which prevent usurpation of power by one branch.

Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba in their comparative study of political cultures came to conclusion that “civic culture” which they found in the USA is the most suitable for democratic regime (Almond & Verba 1989). Even though they never studied Russia and their method has been criticized and not once, many Russian researchers would agree that cultural dominant type in Russia is “parochial-subject”, characterized by obedience and submission to authority (Welch 2013; Whitefield 2005).

Political culture and especially paternalism play significant role in perpetuating executive dominance in the form of super-Presidentialism because Russians associate state and exact person who is solely responsible for maintaining peace and development, they associate their hopes with this person and trust him or her while assemblies and councils enjoy lesser support. That gives room for populism and appeals to people, offering easy solutions to complicated problems (Abts & Rummens 2007; Sustar 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Numerous illustrations of this alleged American resistance to communitarian restraints and regulations can be found in Lipset's analyses of the present-day United States. For example, Lipset sees this resistance as the explanation for why Americans are more likely than Canadians and other peoples to get divorced, to commit crimes, and to refrain from voting in elections. That is, he interprets these differences as evidence that collective considerations and obligations, such as maintaining a stable marriage or family life, obeying society's laws, or participating in the political system, are less important to Americans than their individual freedom to do as they wish (Lipset, 1996)

## **Conclusions**

The new political regime associated with the name of the new President, began to be formed after the Presidential elections of 2000. But even before the elections Putin began to show a new style of political leadership, which largely determined the methods and ways of exercising power. According V. Sogrin, “Putin since taking the Presidential post ... with his appearance and behavior demonstrated political independence and non-partisanship, insisting style of enlightened authoritarianism. Authoritarianism manifested itself in the demonstration of political will and the decisive role of new leader in the nomination and approval of any significant government decisions; enlightened nature of authoritarianism is seen in the desire to join the statism and liberalism.” (Sogrin, 2001, p. 238)

Some political scientists began to use the term “managed democracy” to describe the contemporary political regime. Following features may be indicated:

- A sharp weakening of the political influence of regional elites and big business;
- The establishment of direct or indirect state control over the main TV channels of the country;
- Constantly increasing use of “administrative resources” in the elections on the regional and federal levels;
- Virtual elimination of the separation of powers;
- The formation of a non-public style of political behavior.

Summing up what have been said, we would like to point on that political institutions are not stable entities in Russia, they are used to fir current political situation. The only working structure is the executive branch of government in general and Presidential institution in particular. The American political system, however, is preserved

by the 200 year-old democratic tradition and the Constitution which preserves the republic from drifting toward authoritarian direction.

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