

THE BEGINNING OF A LARGE-SCALE POLITICAL REFORM IN RUSSIA: A NEW TURN IN 2020

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The subject. The article is devoted to the analysis of the draft political and constitutional reform that was announced in the last Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly at January 15, 2020.

The purpose of the article is to try to predict the positive and negative consequences of changing the legal status of the highest Russian authorities.

The methodology of the study includes analysis and interpretation of Presidential Addresses to the Federal Assembly and Russian Constitution as well as dialectical approach and methods of political science.

The main results and scope of their application. For a long time there was a clear request for changes in the government, and various expert platforms discussed issues related to changing the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which was adopted at a national referendum in December 1993.

On January 15, 2020, Vladimir Putin addressed his 16th message to the Parliament. In accordance with the Constitution, the President of Russia annually addresses the Federal Assembly with a message on the situation in the country and on the main directions of domestic and foreign policy. The last address turned out to be a landmark and historical one, as it announced the main provisions of the upcoming large-scale political and constitutional reform in Russia. Heads of constituent entities, members of the State Duma and the Federation Council, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers, Federal Ministers, heads of Federal bodies, judges will no longer be able to have foreign citizenship or a foreign residence permit. He proposed even more stringent requirements for a candidate for the post of President: no foreign citizenship or residence permit even in the past, as well as permanent residence in Russia for at least 25 years. The position of the State Council is being strengthened and it is reflected in the Constitution of the Russian Federation as an institution of power in the country. The position of the Federal Assembly is strengthened by the fact that the Parliament is given the right to approve the candidacy of the Prime Minister, as well as all Deputy Prime Ministers and Federal Ministers. The status of local self-government and the role of governors in the regions is being raised.

The main reason for the reform is the desire to reduce the powers of the President and transfer part of them to the Parliament, so that the next President is no longer endowed with virtually absolute power, and, in turn, can not initiate another reform without the approval of all branches of government.

The author of the article identifies the reasons for the political reform and gives forecasts for the future after its implementation.

Conclusions. The author links these changes to the upcoming transfer of presidential power after 2024. The reform does not mean the transition of the Russian Federation to a parliamentary republic, since the head of state retains the status of a key figure in the political system, and it is he who has concentrated key functions. Fixing a number of social obligations in the Constitution in terms of salaries and pensions will not have a significant impact on the socio-economic situation.

1. Introduction. Permanent political changes in the country.

Modern Russia is permanently living in a state of political change and reform. Administrative, tax, customs, and pension reforms are far from an exhaustive list of significant government changes that we have experienced recently. As you know, the main goal of any political reform is to strengthen the vertical of power in order to preserve the territorial integrity of the country and conduct a centralized unified policy to combat various threats, including terrorism [1-4]. As a rule, all changes are related to issues of security, political stability, preservation and creation of additional guarantees of the country's political unity. However, the irremovability of power in our country over the past 20 years has created a sense of stagnation in the field of politics.

How many times have we asked ourselves: "When will there be any changes in our country's politics? How long will Vladimir Putin remain at the head of our state?". And now this long-awaited time of epiphanies has come, something has become clear, moreover, such changes have begun, for which many were not ready, and some do not understand what is happening in the country at all.

In accordance with the Constitution, the President of Russia annually addresses the Federal Assembly with a message on the situation in the country and on the main directions of domestic and foreign policy. According to tradition, deputies of both chambers of the Federal Assembly and invited guests are present at the announcement of the message. Members of the government, the presidents of the constitutional and Supreme courts, the Prosecutor General, the Chairman of the Central election Commission, the head of the accounts chamber, members of the State Council, heads of major faiths and representatives of the Public chamber of Russia are invited to the Kremlin.

It should be noted that since 2008, the message was submitted at the end of the year, in November or December, which is logical, based on the nature of this document. It is a political and legal document that reflects the President's vision of

strategic directions for the country's development in the near future, usually for the next year. It includes both provisions of a political, economic, and ideological nature, as well as specific proposals concerning the legislative work of the Parliament [5, p. 121; 6; 7; 8]. The last message was moved to the beginning of the year, which in itself caused the expert community to have some suspicions about the impending political changes of a global nature.

2. Time for political change

On January 15, 2020, the President of our country addressed the Federal Assembly with his annual address. The first hour of the address for many present in the hall caused even a sense of déjà vu, only the figures on social policy and social payments sounded very specific, which was not the case before, creating the illusion of a certain "high cost" of the President's address this year. Subsequently, the head of the accounting chamber Alexey Kudrin estimated the 16th message of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly as "the most expensive" in his memory, according to his calculations, the measures announced by the President will require from 400 to 500 billion rubles a year. They must ensure that the minimum wage is not lower than the subsistence level of the working-age population, ensure decent pension provision and indexation of pensions, increase maternity capital and introduce its payment for the first child.

And then the most interesting thing began, something that was long talked about and even dreamed of-making changes to the Constitution of the Russian Federation - became a reality overnight. The President made a whole package of proposals on amendments to the Basic law of our state. After their introduction, the heads of regions, members of The state Duma and the Federation Council, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers, Federal Ministers, heads of Federal bodies, and judges will no longer be able to hold foreign citizenship or a foreign residence permit. He proposed even stricter requirements for a presidential candidate: no foreign citizenship or residence permit even in the past, as well as permanent residence in Russia for at

least 25 years. At first glance, this is a remarkable requirement for candidates, which will make the future President a real irreproachable citizen of the country, but upon closer analysis, it restricts the rights of residents of our returned territories—Crimea and Sevastopol, none of which, with all their desire, can become President of the Russian Federation.

But the main thing is that this message launches political reform in the country. Vladimir Putin, who from the first days of his coming to power strengthened the power vertical, strengthened the role and significance of the President, leading us away from the parliamentary Republic towards the presidential one, suddenly proposed to entrust the State Duma with not just approving, as now, but approving the candidacy of the Prime Minister. After that, according to him, the Duma should approve all Deputy Prime Ministers and a number of Federal Ministers. And the President will be charged with appointing them to office. At the same time, the President, at the suggestion of Vladimir Putin, retains direct leadership of the armed forces and the law enforcement system. It can appoint the heads of law enforcement agencies. But at the same time, a mitigating clause is proposed - based on the results of consultations with the Federation Council. The same principle Vladimir Putin suggested in the appointment of public prosecutors of regions. "Today, they are appointed in consultation with the regional legislative Assembly... This may in practice lead to informal obligations to local authorities," the President explained.

3. Reasons for political reforms

The political reforms carried out by Vladimir Putin since 2000 were clear and aimed at strengthening the vertical of power in the country. As part of these reforms the following major changes have taken place:

1. Creation of 7 Federal districts, which were an intermediate and, at the same time, a link between the center and the regions of Russia. The Central, North-Western, North-Caucasian, Volga, Ural, Siberian, and Far Eastern Federal districts were formed. The task is to bring the actions and

decisions of regional authorities in line with Federal legislation and policy [9, 10]. The introduction of Plenipotentiaries to the security Council of the Russian Federation elevated them above all governors and above the majority of Federal Ministers and legislators.

2. In order to strengthen the position of the Federal government and reduce it, the Federation Council was reorganized, which also seriously affected the status of regional leaders. Since 1996, the heads of Russian regions and the chairmen of regional parliaments have been members of the upper house (senators). Instead, ordinary representatives of regional Executive and legislative bodies (2 from each subject of the Russian Federation) became senators [11]. As a result, the influence of regional leaders on the Central government, as well as the political weight of the regions themselves, decreased.

3. The State Council of the Russian Federation has been created – an Advisory body under the President that considers pressing issues of the country's life. The state Council includes the heads of Federal subjects. It is not a public authority, since it does not have any authority [12].

The construction of the administrative vertical led to the establishment of a more developed and focused political and economic control of the Federal center over the regions [13]. Another characteristic feature of this process is the increase in the powers of the Executive authorities and the reduction in the role of representative bodies at both the Federal and regional levels.

The large-scale political reform in 2020 made us wonder why Vladimir Putin suddenly decided to reduce the power of the President and to strengthen the position of the Parliament in the country. The reasons for this became clear, and even obvious, a little later, when the President touched the State Council. Many citizens of our country have heard for the first time about such an existing institution of government, and this is understandable. The fact is that there is not a word about this authority in the Constitution, although it actually exists! In the expert community, it is called a paraconstitutional Institute, along with the Public chamber, the Institute of Plenipotentiaries of the President of the Russian

Federation in Federal districts, which are also not mentioned in the main law of the country. Let me remind you that the State Council of Russia was established on September 1, 2000, in accordance with a decree of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and on his own initiative. According to its regulations, the state Council is an Advisory body that promotes the implementation of the powers of the head of state on issues of ensuring the coordinated functioning and interaction of state authorities; it includes the heads of the Federal subjects, and its first meeting was held on November 22, 2000. Few people in our country heard about it before January 15, 2020, and even less understood what kind of tool of power it is and what its purpose is. In his message to the Federal Assembly, the President proposed expanding and strengthening the powers of The state Council and introducing a provision in the Constitution on its status when considering the most important issues for citizens and the country.

After that, it became clear to the expert community that Vladimir Putin is going to leave the top of the political Olympus of our country, giving it to the next candidate, but at the same time to dismantle and take this very top with him to install in another place. The desire to reduce the powers of the President and transfer part of them to the Parliament, obviously, is caused by the fact that the next President was no longer endowed with virtually absolute power, and in turn, he could not carry out another management reform without coordination with all branches of government. Thus, the current President wants to preserve the ability to influence decision-making in the country, for which he legalizes and strengthens the power of the state Council and the position of its Chairman. Apparently, it is preparing a "springboard" for itself, otherwise it cannot be explained from the standpoint of logic.

4. Legitimation of political reform

Vladimir Putin suggested holding a national vote on the package of proposed amendments to the Constitution. Its date is still unknown, but from the statements of the head of the CEC Ella Pamfilova that followed almost immediately, it became clear

that this may happen before the single day of voting, which this year will fall on September 13.

In itself, increasing the importance of the Parliament in our country is a reasonable decision. This will lead to a balance of all branches of government and increase the importance of parliamentarians, but not as much as is required. In fact, what the President has proposed are only minor amendments. If the State Duma could nominate a candidate for the post of Chairman by its majority, this would be significant, and the proposed changes are more imitative in nature.

However, the third part of the message, which dealt with foreign policy issues, gave a new historical and political emphasis to this message. Vladimir Putin stated that the requirements of international legislation and decisions of international bodies can only be applied on the territory of Russia if they do not entail restrictions on the rights and freedoms of Russian citizens and do not contradict the country's Constitution.

In our country, foreign policy has always determined domestic policy, and this historical statement sets priorities in reverse order. Boldly, and most importantly, correctly, but somewhat belatedly. This measure was overdue 15 years ago [14].

The message became a message that was followed by an immediate real political "tsunami": the resignation of the Russian Government, which, as it turned out, no one expected, although there were certain harbingers, of course. The message, since 2008, was read out at the end of the year (November, December), because it lays the main vectors for further development in the country for the next year, this time it was moved to January, apparently due to its special significance, which required additional preparation, or rather, the subsequent 15-minute resignation of the entire Cabinet of Ministers, along with its Chairman Dmitry Medvedev. In addition, all the recent reports of the Government showed its inefficiency. At first, the pension reform initiated by the Medvedev government made it one of the most unpopular in recent history, after which the label "anti-social" was attached to this government in the expert community. Then the Deputy Prime Minister of the

Russian Federation Tatyana Golikova openly admitted to the failure of the health care reform, and the demographic figures clearly showed us the growing crisis and became, in fact, a control shot. It became clear to everyone that the government had passed into a state of "sacred sacrifice", and the "sacrifice" took place !

The processes that followed the message are going so fast that even the most politicized citizens do not have time to track them. The day after the address, the new Prime Minister was announced and approved by The state Duma. a working group was set up to prepare a package of amendments to the Constitution, and the process of preparing for the vote is in full swing. A new government was quickly formed, with 12 Ministers retaining their posts and 8 reappointed. There are still figures that are unpopular with the population of the country, and the new ones, although they do not have an anti-rating, but they do not have any political weight. However, no one has canceled the political technologies that can be used to create a rating for the new government in the shortest possible time [15]. There is a feeling that a General political mobilization has been declared in Russia, and this month risks going down in the history of our country as the most saturated with political changes and historically significant events.

5. Conclusions.

Today, everyone is discussing how the new amendments to the Constitution will affect the political and constitutional system in our country. Let us also make some forecasts with reference to expert opinion. The amendments are intended to make the political system of the Russian Federation more balanced, with a clearly differentiated system of checks and balances between branches and levels of government. Particular attention should be paid to the strengthening of the role of the regions by increasing the significance of the Governor's institution. This is in contrast to the previously dominant trend of centralizing power. It is important to strengthen the legislative branch of government by transferring certain powers to the state Duma for Government approval. But

this does not mean the transition of the Russian Federation to a parliamentary Republic, since the head of state retains the status of a key figure in the political system, and it is he who concentrates key functions . As for fixing a number of social obligations in the Constitution in terms of salaries and pensions, they will not have a significant impact on the socio-economic situation, since these norms are currently within the framework of Federal laws. We would like to hope that these changes are not populist in nature, but will create real social guarantees for the citizens of our country [16].

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