THE PARTY SYSTEM IN RUSSIA
THE TYPOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

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Abstract. The paper will discuss and verify the hypothesis that the “format” of the party pluralism in Russia will go toward the dominant party model of government or toward the quasi-dominant party model. In this respect, the analysis will consider: a) the experience of sui generis parliamentarianism in this country, given that until 1917 Duma had only a consultative role, which was a flattening factor for the functions of political parties; b) the long run manifestation of the dominant party as government party, fully controlling the state — taking place between 1917-1989 /1991; c) the crucial role of the Russian President — in law and in practice — eminently manifest in politics, society and relying — in the Republican style of the 5th French Republic — on an influential party, revolving basically around him by its ideology, program, and other affinities. By the discussion of the aspects mentioned, the hypothesis will be confirmed, in whole or in part, or, conversely, undermined, and conclusions will be drawn from the response that the paper will validate.

Keywords: Russia, party pluralism, dominant party of government, the role of the President, State Duma.

Dominant Party in Europe — Definition, Characteristics, Evolutions

The presence and the manifestation of the “dominant party of government” or “state” is a reality that has attracted the attention of specialists and that of the general public and public opinion especially around 1930 until present-day. This type of party succeeds — through — electoral and parliamentary influence, through positions and the central role it occupies in the state and society — to impose political systems in which it acts the essential characteristics and to decisively condition their dynamic. Among the representative of the definitions of this type of party — which reflect the profile of the party system in relation to long political cycles — we mention here two extracts based on the Western experiences, but

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relevant to African-Asian areas, too.

In 1951, Maurice Duverger circumscribed the essence of the dominant party starting from the existence and importance of dominance phenomena that we encounter in economy, via dominant national figures and dominant firms, and within political systems through ideas, doctrines and dominant forces (parties). "The history of ideas suggests – according to Maurice Duverger – the notion of 'prevailing doctrine': in each period, a doctrine formed the intellectual basic framework, the general reinforcement of thinking that even its opponents were unable to criticize it themselves or to demolish it, otherwise than using for this purpose the same methods of reasoning of that intellectual framework. This was the situation with Christianity in the Middle Ages, with liberalism in the 19th century. (...) Similar phenomena of dominance are found sometimes in the evolution of the political parties. Some countries do not know a "dominant party", but its presence is certain in others. The dominant party should not be confused with majority party or with the party with majority vocation. (...)"

What is, therefore, a dominant party? First, a party as big as the others, which arrives in the situation to overtake them all and that is clearly distanced from its rivals for a longer period of time. By understanding this dimension of superiority presented by the dominant party, one must consider it entirely and throughout the period considered. The dominant party may lose this leading position once or several times, exceptionally, but it does not lose its status in two-party systems. (...) in the multiparty system, which operates either with proportional representation or majority system with two rounds, this decrease of influence means usually the end of its rule. Not any party which is bigger than the others during a certain amount of time is necessarily also a dominant party: certain sociological elements complement this material characteristic. A party is dominant when it is identifying itself to a certain extent with a particular age: when the doctrines, its ideas, its methods, or its style of behaviour coincide with those of that particular era".\(^\text{1}\)

In 1970, Jean Charlot – with a much larger historical material for investigation at hand – defined the notion of dominant party not so much through its electoral and parliamentary dimensions, as through its multiplicity, the small size of his opponents and their inability to coordinate efforts against the common adversary. The phenomenon of predominance may attract – either directly or indirectly – also the atrophy of pluralism, by the actual disappearance, naturally, of some political formations, or by the transformation of other formations in mere pressure groups, in agents without any potential for coalition, nor for the influence of power, deprived of access to government's structures. "The dominant party – says Jean Charlot – earns and defends its hegemonic position through a kind of paradox that derives from the multitude, weakness and inconsistency of his opponents contrary to the unique party which bases its monopoly on repression and bans all other political parties. The idea of 'political market', in this respect, is undoubtedly – the most appropriate to capture the essence of this phenomenon:

there can be no market without competition and the market position of each firm is defined by comparing it to the others. In other words, the dominant party is defined by a certain structure of the party system. (...) From this point of view it is not about the absolute size of the party (...), but on its relative size, arising by reference to the other parties in the country."^2.

By influence, by the positions and the central role occupied in society and in the state it imposes to political systems their essential characteristics and it decisively condition their dynamic.

Dominant ruling parties have generated many common features or similar features for the functioning of political systems in the countries where they were present: a) the Christian Democratic Party — in Italy; the Independence Party (Conservative) — in Iceland; the Assembly for the Republic — in France after the establishment of the Fifth Republic, b) the Social-Democratic Workers Party — in Sweden; the Social Democratic Party — in Denmark; the Workers Party — in Norway. Reunited in a separate category of Western European party systems for decades, the examples mentioned here are especially defined by the following traits:

- The domination of the political life from the respective countries over a generation^3 and the wide dissemination of their objectives and programmes, received, in general, as the doctrines and ideas of the epoch^4;
- The acquiring of the high positions in state government, monopolizing control stations by the adherents and supporters of these parties, along with the expulsion or neutralization of the reluctant elements, the disruption of the traditional hierarchy of civil servants, the supervision and the control of the state institutions, so that, often, these parties were qualified — during their "glory" period — as "the dominant parties of the state"^5;
- The identification of these political parties with a specific constitutional and political order, which they created and preserved, through a long period of domination of political life^6;
- The location of the strategy, positions and actions of such parties at the root of nearly all initiatives and major political and socio-economic developments^7;
- The "authoritarian" definition of the objectives of society and of political system, the subordination of social and political mobilization to the permanent need to have massive support in the electorate, as a prerequisite to remain in power^8;
- The special ability to adapt, according to certain stringent requirements, such as freedom to manoeuvre, the possession of organizational, ideological, resources to develop and apply decisions with profound implications for society^9;

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^8 *Ibidem*, p. 597.

Consistent results in the range of 30-35%\(^{10}\) or slightly more than 40% of the votes properly cast, associated with a strong and persistent inequality in relation to its main adversaries\(^{11}\);

- Power to impose themselves – from the positions of certain social groups – within the main institutions of government and to reduce their political opponents to minor roles, rendering them unable to size political power unless in exceptional circumstances and usually, for every short terms\(^{12}\);

- The assurance of the stability of government for long periods of time, based on safe Parliamentary majorities, either of their own, or made with partners against which the dominant positions, so that they continuously manifest themselves as the pivot for coalitions\(^{13}\) and exclude the possibility of alternation in power for a long while, as well as the government formation without them as political actor\(^{14}\);

- The tendency to be confused with the political system and persistent concerns to impose its specific footprint on the epoch\(^{15}\);

- The exercise of a skilful control of the main mechanisms and legitimacy of the political system\(^{16}\), most often by emphasizing political pragmatism and by the instrumental character of the elections\(^{17}\).

The features, the attributes and the role of these parties differ, however, from the nature of their guidelines. Thus, some – like the Italian Christian Democratic Party, the Independence Party of Iceland, the Rally for the Republic, in France – are situated on the position of the centre-right and centre, characteristic for the stage of ‘mature capitalism’.

Others – the socialist and social democratic parties – exercise political power or struggle to neutralize opponents citing the options of the ‘salary strata’, of the social segments of the middle classes consisting of intellectuals with thorough education, become technocrats, senior officials, academics and researchers.

Political scientists’ concerns are designed to capture the sense of reality that dominant parties’ phenomenon designate and their effects on party systems in which they operate – and belong to the research centres in Western Europe and North America. Literature conclusions’, from these sources mentioned, are the main reference point for critical evaluation and lucid observations on a phenomenon with profound impact on contemporary political systems. Therefore, our perspective on them is strictly necessary. Steps that we consider explain dominant party transformations that imposed the dominant party by the crucial importance of some political processes run on the background of the contemporary mutations of modernity in certain areas in the West. Thus, specialists sustain that the

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\(^{10}\) Jean Charlot, op. cit., p. 942.


\(^{12}\) Alan Aron, Samuel H. Barnes, op. cit., p. 598.

\(^{13}\) Ibidem, p. 593.


\(^{15}\) Maurice Duverger, op. cit., p. 340-344.

\(^{16}\) Alan Aron, Samuel H. Barnes, op. cit., p. 608; Jean Charlot, op. cit., p. 947-948.

\(^{17}\) Jean Charlot, op. cit. p. 950.
elevated standards of civilization – to which a whole generation served around 1945-1950 without imagining any disadvantage – diminish the role and the importance of the protection of the citizen by the political institutions. As such, the aforementioned parties attempt, on the one hand to maintain their initial support and, on the other, to increase their sphere of sympathizers as much as possible. None of these intends to affect the interests of the key-force for the electoral and political support. Nevertheless, the trust and the support of the social body increased, following the relative community of interests among the different categories of employees and a part of the personnel with studies completed in productive companies and in public institutions. The dominant parties address to the various social forces identical political objectives and callings and accomplish a certain uniformity of opinions regarding the political system. Thus, this type of parties – although they cannot attract in their entirety all the categories of voters – they gather many voters from all the social categories that entertain similar interests and preoccupations, and to this end, these types of parties are oriented – at least in their discourse in media toward those problems “hardly meet any resistance within community”. The peculiarities of the societal environment require “electorally oriented parties”, some of which centralized, in terms of formal and informal relationships with limited operations outside these preparing elections, while the other are characterized by decentralized rich post-electoral activity. The predominant concern of the dominant party is issues of maximum generality and that trigger great interest in public opinion. “After the second World War – it is concluded – the old style bourgeois party, with individual representation has become an exception. Some of these parties have continued to survive, but they have not determined the nature of the party system anymore... A party must – in contemporary terms, as it is claimed – to be understood primarily as a customer oriented structure” (our emphasis, C.N.).

The activities and concerns of the dominant party are guided not as much by principles, as by the “arithmetical power” of the vote obtained. Thus, the pluralism of parties, the differences in options and programmes, political confrontations all bear the mark of decisive political focus, variable from one country to another, of preoccupations to maintaining an important part of the electorate around one and the same party, a pole of ideological and political orientations, with special effects in terms of centralization of power and state administration.

The transformations undergone by some party systems in the direction of constituting dominant ruling party express this mutation: a party elaborates the

19 Ibidem, p. 185.
22 Otto Kirchheimer, op. cit., p. 185.
policy of government controlling the most important state institutions, it "wins over" and "dwell" the state, it has its frames implanted into the political decision making system, accomplishing "everything" in society. Its governance activity is inseparable from Welfare State. The successes of these parties are explained by their ability to capture broad social categories using official openings meeting some of their claims. The concerns oriented to influence to a certain extent by observing such requirements, radically change the social status of those from which they capture adhesion.

The character of these parties or their typological nature does not coincide with their expanded and diversified, "popular", electoral base. The essence of these political forces – centre-right, or centre – stems from the degree in which they succeed the fulfilment of the needs mass of voters and the objectives pursued in favour of the well-off social categories.

A similar phenomenon of relative dominance of the socialist and social democratic parties in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and France (between 1981 and 1995) can be explained by specific socio-political processes and developments that are specific to these countries. The differences due to the political, ideological and programmatic orientations of these parties are the private expression of the capacity "salary classes" and their close socially related classes to express themselves politically and to act to mitigate social inequalities, limiting the control exercised by the bourgeoisie over the state institutions. Moreover, they are also a reflection of the manner in which they struggle, and of the effort and concessions made to maintain their economic positions, imposing, by extra political means, constraints on political power. Thus, these parties, promoting the strategy of "democratic socialism" adjust the interest system which has its support in the area of private property. These, with their traditions and ties in salary and popular media have become the most influential in the life of national politics, ahead of "bourgeois parties", even united, and therefore, the Scandinavian political systems fulfilled their functions and have evolved under the conditions of permanent contradictions between ideology and the social basis of the ruling parties and the capitalist nature, in what it concerns the concentration and centralization of ownership on the main factors of production.

The genesis and the developments of the dominant party were recorded in socio-economic contexts that followed the depression of 1929 and 1933 in the Nordic countries. Also, after war there were historical periods coinciding with rapid development and with social "miracles"; as well as it happened for other countries, such as: Italy, France. At the same time, they were the more or less direct result of specific premises, mostly political, but without an exclusive and determining role, contrary to what it were often sustained.

In fact, in some countries, the imposition of the dominant party is explained by a certain structure of the party system, characterized by the large number of parties and their poor electoral and parliamentary influence and by the powerful political and ideological disputes between these small parties24, in others, for

24 Jean Charlot, op. cit., p. 942.
example, in Italy, the Christian Democrat Party appeared as the main axis for the conservation and support of status quo of the Catholic Church and its pressure groups in political life and of the massive support United States. Hence, the situation in Italy differs radically from France, where the personal ascendancy of the founder of Fifth Republic, General Charles de Gaulle, against all the main political forces and state institutions was to represent an “opportunity and accelerator factor” of the blaming of the large number of political parties effects on the dynamics of political life and in what concerns the pace and directions of political modernization.

Having similar determinations – but not identical ones – some of the ruling parties had a longer existence – especially those of the Scandinavian countries and Italy – other a shorter one: see the moment of imposition of the Assembly for the Republic (1962) and the loss of this status (1981) as the moments of consecration of the French Socialist Party (since 1981), and its fall in 1995, in the case of the French Socialist Party, etc. Regardless of the time of their consecration, the record, in Norway, in 1965, of the first experience of the undeniable decline of the positions of the Workers' Party – initially appreciated as a mere accident – it would expand somewhat rapidly in other countries. The “signal” mentioned had to repeat and to emphasize in this country in 1969 and to become devoted to it in the eighth decade, with a series of almost complete disruptions of the omnipotence of the dominant parties that had to intervene in 1968 in Denmark, in 1972 in Iceland, in 1976 in Italy and Sweden. Thus, around 1970 we assess – as defining and quasi-general trend – that this type of parties, yet not encountered phenomenon of the twentieth century and of the manifestation of pluralism, entered a declining phase. The sensitive attenuation or elimination of the main attributes and performances that consecrated it, such as its removal from power is registered in all the western countries.

The forms of the decline are different: a) the slow and continuous decrease of the role and positions held in politics, in part due to a lower election share, decisively a consequence of losing the economic support other than that offered by the voters (due to political pressure and interest groups, due to the changing of certain parameters of public life, etc.); b) the reducing or cancellation of the substantial difference in electoral support between the first party and second, due to the strong advance of main political adversary, so that the possibilities for manoeuvre of the ruling and leadership party are restricted or eliminated; c) the effective removal from power, especially due to the inability to build political majority even with certain partners; d) the imposing of a new political majority through the coalition of main adversaries, traditionally in dispute (the most

typical example representing the “bourgeois” party alliance in Sweden between 1976 and 1982).

The discussion of the influence and role of dominant parties – largely identified with the political system – is caused by the disappearance of the conditions that favoured the establishment of such a privileged status associated need to overcome the “Great Depression”, privations of war, and problems of intense economic “reconstruction” between 1950-1970/1972, and 1973-1979. In the late 80s, the regularity – one can even say, the monotony – of the reconfirmation of “pole” position for the dominant party ceases almost simultaneously everywhere, the main features of the historical context interfering with the main data of each country.

The Party System in Russia — Toward Pluralism
with Dominant or Quasi-dominant Party

The party system in Russia emerged as pluralistic system, de facto, in the late 80s of last century, when – in the context of the “glasnost” politics – free press has become effective, it made breaches in political ideological monopoly of the CPSU and it became itself a power centre, both credible and attractive, uncompromising and critical to the “headquarters” of the official power. The effective expression of this mutation was the organisation of semi free elections on March 4, 1990 for the representative body, somewhat similar the parliament itself people’s Deputies Congress. The political confrontation took place between the CPSU policy and “the independent”, people with different choices from these of the unique party, some unhappy with Mikhail Gorbachev’s strategy, who did not give a clear picture of the direction to follow, while others were opponents of the political and social system imposed during 1917. “The independents” won 14% of the votes properly cast and 148 seats, while the CPSU was apparent winner – with 86% of the votes and 920 seats – so that after a year and a half would step into history.

The pluralistic system of political parties was legalized after the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and the adoption of a new Constitution for the Russian Federation, in October 1993. Thus, the December elections that year were characterized by free competition between legal parties in the latter part of that year.

Special legislation on the conditions for registration and operation of political parties was adopted later, in July 2001, consisting in Law. 91 on political parties in the Russian Federation amended in January 2006 and May 2012.

Party pluralism has experienced consolidation and a sensitive ideological and programmatic structuring; overcoming both the difficulties in the negative spirit of their perception by a large part of citizens and the constraints deriving from the difficulty of ensuring financial resources required both in electoral campaigns and in the permanent work of party structures.

“The format” of the Russian party system appears to us as multiparty during the entire historical cycle we consider for evaluation, that is, for about twenty
years, from 1993 to the present, with obvious differences between its nature and characteristics between 1993 and 2001, on the one hand, and after 2001, on the other hand.

According to the dynamics of legislative election results from 1990, 1993, 1995, 1999–2003 – so, in the hectic period following the collapse of the USSR and the transition to the market economy system, in the Duma there were four influential parties, the first two considered “large” size, revolving around 25% share of the votes properly cast, and the “small” ones fluctuating around 10 - 15% of the votes properly cast. In the first category we include: Option Russia 22.3%, and the Liberal Democratic Party, with 25.9%, in 1993, the Communist Party, with 25% of votes, and the Liberal Democratic Party, with 20.2% of the vote in 1995, Unit Block votes and 25.3% of Our Motherland – Russia as a Whole, with 21.7% of the votes, in 1999. In the category of the “small” formations there were: the Agrarian Party, with 13.4% of votes and 47 seats, and Yabloko, with 11.4% of votes and 33 seats in 1993, Our Home Russia, by 15.7% of votes and 55 seats in 1995, Our Motherland – Russia as a Whole, with 21.7% of votes and 68 seats and the Union of Right Wing Forces, with 14.4% of votes and 29 seats, in 1999.

In the elections held in 1993, 1995 and 1999, the first influential parties managed to win about 300 seats out of 450, or 287 in 1993, then fewer, 263, in 1995, and 285 in 1999. As such, other political forces obtained the status of parliamentary parties, too. Also, certain independent groups entered the parliament during the elections held in December 1999, when the first four parliamentary parties achieved the 285 seats mentioned and a group of “independents” won 105 seats based on the single vote electoral procedures.

Therefore, in the electoral confrontations of the 90s, the electorate – in search of credible interlocutors –, turned to a wider range of programmatic-ideological offers. However, the pluralism of parties in this period – reflected in parliament and the electorate by three or four similarly-sized parties, though, none of them stood out as winner; and in this the Russian case, in the period 1993-2000, is similar to the balanced European multiparty political systems in the West – such as in the Netherlands, Belgium, or Switzerland – but the similarity is first of all an “anatomical” nature, since placing party people in certain positions in administration requires neither any lengthy negotiations, nor any “accommodation” with the election results, nor “adjustments” based on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious considerations.

According to the electoral developments registered after 2000, a balanced multiparty political structure, relatively atomized, gave way to a type of one-

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30 The statistical data – the absolute figures and the percents that we include in this part of the study are centralized in the Annex “The Results of the Legislative Elections in Russia” between 1990 and 2011 (on March 4, 1990; December 12, 1993; December 17, 1995; December 19, 1999; December 7, 2003; December 2, 2007 and December 4, 2011) in C. Nica, “Sistemul de partide din Rusia”, chapter, in G. Tămașescu, D. Dungaciu (eds.), România și Rusia după 20 de ani [Romania and Russia after 20 Years], Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2013, p.108-109.

pole multi-party political system, with a dominant party, which carries on monochrome majorities in the Duma. Thus, the “United Russia” won 64.35% of the votes properly cast and 315 seats – out of 450 – in the elections of 2007 and 49.3% of the votes and 238 seats in the elections of December 2011. This was foreshadowed by the election results in December 2003, when that same party won 61.5% of the votes properly cast, but – because of poor results obtained by its candidates on the single vote scrutiny – it was in the situation that, with 223 mandates and lacking just three, it did not gain a majority of seats, half plus one (225 +1) out of the 450 in total in Duma.

The evolution of the political situation after 2000 describes the Russian party system as multiparty, with a centre-right pole, reflecting the dynamic of the Russian pluralism toward a “big party”, toward a dominant party in certain intervals of time, perhaps quasi-dominant, in others. However, this trend was somewhat shaped in the early 90s of the last century, when on the first position in the Duma were located only Option Russia — in 1993, with 22.3% of the votes and 96 seats, and the Communist Party in 1995 and in 1999, with 25.8% and 37.9% of the vote, respectively, with 157 and 113 seats, so only two parties, one of which, the Communist Party, did not have “potential for coalition”, and thus it “weighted” much less for the combinations for governing than in its influence the electorate and Option Russia has transformed after 2000, regrouping as part of stronger political bodies.

The trends towards a “big party” are imposed by several aspects regarding: a) the logic of the contemporary Russian political system, especially of the prevalence of the President in the sphere power assumption and power exercise (1) and the specific of the relations between government and Duma (2); b) the fingerprint of the political modernisation of Russia, unfolded until the early twentieth century.

The prevalence – in law or and de facto – of the President equals his quality of an almost unique, but legitimate centre of political decision and initiative. This primacy means that, in law and / or de facto, the powers of the President are significantly expanding and reflect a state of normality: the President (the Presidents) assume executive power almost in its whole, usually extensively because they hold, or he holds, under the aegis of the quality of head of administration, relevant foreign policy tasks, extended powers and military competences, a significant function political influence, so that when the Constitution does not provide, the requests of the President addressed to any minister, can hardly be denied. The differences in content between the political system of Russia and the U.S., of Mexico or Brazil would require also a distinct terminology that would help a better understanding of the comparison: why it is that the classical formula of separation and balance of powers is not used, particularly between the Executive consisting mainly of the President, the legislature, the Duma, a body that becomes sympathetic and helpful to the political will of the President, hence, a subordinate, whenever the President invokes the “reasons of state”, and why there is a special relationship between the President and the administrative executive government, that the President
influences in the name of his political program and popular support, usually, a wider support than that of any other parliamentary party.

Finally, the hallmark of Russia’s political modernization “recommends” a strong executive, centralized and partially personalised, supported by a “big party”, to respond promptly in cases of external threats in support of the doctrine of quasi-continuous “siege” on the State borders of Russia, a siege considered maintained, since the founding of Moscow principality, by various extra-European and / or European powers in the international system.

The tradition of the powerful executive – especially, the Tsar, as autocrat and absolute sovereign, and as President of the Russian federation, involved in all the spaces of the social – seems to impose as a permanent emblematic mark of the political system in Russia. The eminent and centralized executive, relatively personalized, finds its reason every time either in the preoccupations to maintain the archaic, conservative and insulated system until the final part of the World War I, or in the efforts to transpose in reality and consolidate social and democratic achievements, as well as in the orientation to accomplish supra-national projects specific for a medium sized power or for a super power assuming major responsibilities either in its vicinity or in the world system, undermining the options of the small and medium states which promote and defend their sovereignty.

Until the end of 1917, Russia was placed – next to the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires – among the last autocratic systems in Europe and its vicinity. All the state institutions were dependent on the Tsar who was as well almighty sovereign, as the “head” of the Russian Orthodox Church. Before the introduction of a few political reforms during 1905-1906, the Tsar governed with the support of several institutions, namely: The State Council, a consulting organism consisting in higher officials of the state, with the aim to discuss and prepare the projects of law and to control the administration, formed of clerks with formal degrees, similar to these in the military structures, wearing uniform, to impose to the citizens; The Senate, which – being eclipsed by the above mentioned organ – was restricted to the function of supreme court and to the exercise of symbolical attributions, related to the promulgation of the imperial acts and to the registers of aristocratic titles; The Holy Synod, which administered the Orthodox Church and, equally, influenced the citizens as well from a moral and spiritual point of view, through the specific views of the Eastern Christianity, as under the political aspect, from the perspective of Pan-Slavism; his ministers recruited by the Tsar according to his criteria and to whom they all answered for the manner in which they headed the administrative departments; Duma, conferred with the legislative powers by the fundamental laws of 1906, the Tsar reserving the role to dissolve and emit rules with the same power as the law when Duma was in parliamentary vacation, along with the control of the ministers who did not answer to the parliament of the Empire. Also, through several mechanisms artfully introduced

into the electoral system, the Tsar controlled legislative, which was effectively under his thumb during 1907-1917.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 104.}

In fact, this institutional assembly – rearranged in its form and from the perspective of Marxism-Leninism, an official globalizing ideology – has influenced the nature and the role of the political institutions during the Soviet power during 1917-1991. Thus, the absence of an hierarchy in the manner in which the juridical norms operated – from the constitutional ones, to the organic laws and the ordinary laws (hierarchy specific to the Western systems) – persisted; the tacit substitution of the executive to the legislative, substituting a specific competence to another, between the Soviets' sessions, of the Supreme Soviet and the Soviets of the Republics; the preponderant administrative function of the ministers was maintained; the traditional administrative system was, as well, preserved, with only minute and cosmetic modifications. In parallel, some new elements were introduced, in order to consolidate the status of the public function in relation with the citizens, to preserve the degrees of the public prosecutors and to strengthen their role in society, to the extent that the modern concept concerning the functioning of the institutions based on the separation and collaboration of powers become inoperable, to establish the leading role of the communists in all the state related, and also, in all the non-state related, decision-making structures, to impose a tutelary and tentacle-like mechanism of control over the state administration established by the unique party from the perspective of unconditioned centralism, conventionally named “democratic centralism.”\footnote{Ibidem, p. 105.} The similarities between the Tsarist political system and the Soviet one – both extending their characteristics way into the political system of the Russian Federation after 1990 – should be neither exaggerated, nor ignored: the Soviet system has maintained from the Tsarist system everything that was useful for its domination – as well institutionally, as functionally – and against this background some principles and institutions were adapted, mainly with in the logic of efficiency and conformity with the political theory elaborated by V. I. Lenin.

The strong executive – inflexible and firm – permanently struggles to establish social and political consensus, always indispensable, and in order to impose and preserve it relies on the particular role attributed to a faithful and influent political force which normally guarantees public affairs and the relationships of the state with society. In Russia, this force is the Great Party – either the unique political party, or the dominant one, which is in power for almost a century, as a complex assembly devised for social, political, national and cultural integration of the most part of the citizens who accept political participation. The unique party – whose experience dominated since the end of 1917 and until the first days of December 1991 – was manifested as a monopolist political force and it single-handedly determined all the political trends, via the narrow leading circle of the Soviet Union. Thus, if any political system could be understood analyzing the interactions between the authorities and the political institutions which are constitutive to the political community, the political systems in Russia after 1990
can be explained through the attentive investigation of the few great parties, which acted as bearers of all-encompassing ideologies – Leninism, Stalinism, Gorbaciovism, Pan-Russianism – functioning as continuous doctrines of government, and offering the ideate substance as well for the totalitarian Bolshevist system, as for the pluralist and democratic one found in a process of consolidation. Both were sustained by a numerous bureaucracy, deeply infiltrated into the structures of the state, as tentacles, governing the entire economy, and social organism.\textsuperscript{36} The unique party, consecrated as such through constitutional provisions since 1936, was the ruling organ of the state, in all the social organizations, establishing the confusion that was registered \textit{de facto} between the party and the personnel from the state apparatuses, at all the levels, as well as between the party and the organizations of the citizens. This logic of the functioning of the modern political system based on political parties had as a consequence the fact that, in the Soviet Union, all the decisions were taken by the party-state, excluding any opposition to the “political line” of the party, and any observations or contestations were termed “attacks” to the “revolutionary achievements of the people”, to the substance of the political system and of the social and economic order. This logic of a formal constitutionalism indicated the absence of the multiparty system and of the fundamental individual liberties, inclusively of the freedom of critical thought, as something derisory, overstating the collective and social rights. The unique party consecrates the concentration of power into a single political actor and the unique exercise of power of this actor, controlling the whole economic, ideological, cultural, military sub-systems, each of them justifying the other so that any modification triggers processes of devolution, derived in all the others. Therefore, the logic of the functioning of the state – the institutional location of power – is founded on, and through, the unique will of the party.

The discussion around the position of centrality of the unique party, as expression of the monopoly over the ruling of the social life was going to suppose, as result, the recognition of a plurality of centres of decision, which generated mutations, leading to the collapse of the political and social system. The apparition of the pluralist decision centres and of the varied political initiatives were determined by the decisions taken in the final stage of the Soviet system, concerning the “market socialism”, establishing the principles of efficiency and professional management in economy, ensuring to each unit performance, competitiveness and profit. This freedom of the act of decision transferred the responsibilities “downward”, unravelling the “unique centre of initiative”, rendering the single party system obsolete and clearing the way for pluralism. Nevertheless, the atomized political pluralism, disorderly after 1991, gave up the role of a “great party” – with the role of social, national and religious integration – preoccupied to replace the destiny of the Russian people and of Russia in the present-day political and postmodern universe, with rapid and confusing changes of roles and positions for the main actors of the international system.

\textit{Translation by Henrieta Ţerban}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibidem}, p. 19-20.
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