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- AUTHORITARIANISM AND NATIONALISM
- DEMOCRACY THEORIES
- FAILED STABILITY

## Cliff-hangers

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# AUTHORITARIANISM AND NATIONALISM CHALLENGES IN POST-SOVIET SPACE: IS THERE A CORRELATION BETWEEN THEM?

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*Political regimes in the former Soviet republics have evolved towards authoritarianism and vice versa. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Ukraine became democratic; later – Georgia and Moldova; Azerbaijan and Armenia are semi-authoritarian; Russia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan are authoritarian; Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan became neo-totalitarian, with Kazakhstan and Tajikistan following them. In this article the author will try to answer the questions as to whether the main form of manifestation of nationalist contradictions in the republics of the former USSR is political confrontation, and if nationalist tendencies increase with the growth of authoritarian tendencies. The study found that there are fewer ethno-nationalist conflicts in Central Asian countries than in their more “democratic” neighbours; conflicts in autocracies are more likely to occur within the ethnic majority.*

## **Democratization in the Post-Soviet Space: What Do They Have in Common?**

«Democracy is a kind of time-limited leadership. This is a regime in which voters can regularly demand from the rulers a report on the work done, periodically forcing them to change their political course», – said the famous American political scientist Juan Linz.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, politicians who have held senior positions for many years become prone to abuse, conservatism, and corruption, lose motivation to change their course under the influence of voters,

and as a result lose sight of reality. That is why one of the indicators of democratic transition is variability of power and, more importantly, the scenario of its transmission. In the late 1980s, as the processes that led to the collapse of the USSR intensified and national democratic movements grew, the leaders of the communist parties of the union's republics faced a difficult choice: to remain loyal to the union's leadership and internationalism, competing for power with nationalist leaders, or to try to adopt the slogans of the opposition (primarily democratization, independence, national revival)<sup>2</sup>. There were two main scenarios of

1 J. J. Linz, *Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?*, [in:] J. J. Linz and A. Valenzuela(eds.), *The Crisis of Presidential Democracy: The Latin American Evidence*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1994, p. 7.


2 О. Г. Карпович, *Теория и практика демонтажа современных политических режимов* [O. Karpovich, *Theory and Practise of the modern political regimes' deconstruction*]. Москва, 2015, с. 18.

coming to power for the first leaders of the independent states:

- 1) election as head of the Republican Communist Party;
- 2) victory in the first election as a leader of the opposition (or as leader of the national democratic movement, or a representative of the party nomenklatura, who opposed the current leadership of the republic).

Among the leaders who retained power after the collapse of the USSR were Leonid Kravchuk (Ukraine), Mircea Snegur (Moldova), Ayaz Mutalib (Azerbaijan), Saparmurat Niyazov (Turkmenistan), Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan), Nursultan Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan), Kakhor Makhkamov and then Rahmon Nabiyev (Tajikistan). The common factor among all these republics was their lack of resources in the national democratic movement to overthrow communist leaders, on the one hand, and the reorientation of these leaders themselves to national democratic values, on the other.

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In Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Georgia, and Armenia, the leaders of the republican communist parties have lost power. The new leaders of Russia and Kyrgyzstan were part of the middle level republican political elite. Former dissidents became the leaders of Georgia and Armenia<sup>3</sup>. All the

first presidents of the union republics, which were still part of the USSR, gained power as a result of elections – first in parliament and then at the national level. The institution of presidential elections played a small role there; more important were the internal elite conflicts between the «conservatives» and the «reformers» in relation to the on-going liberalization of the regime.

The political scientists of the first decade of the XXI century identified four main types of political regimes formed in the former Soviet republics:

- 1) democratic: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine;
- 2) semi-authoritarian: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova;
- 3) authoritarian: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan;
- 4) neo-totalitarian: Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The difficult situation in these post-communist countries was also dictated by the fact that they had a large number of competing new political parties and interest groups; their confrontation greatly paralyzed the legislative process. This combined with the complications associated with the unclear nature of relations in government. Conflicts between the executive and the legislature have been common in post-communist countries and have had the worst impact on economic reform. For these reasons, the pace of economic transformation has slowed down significantly.

If we talk about those common processes for all post-Soviet countries, we can highlight the following:

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3 Г. И. Вайнштейн, *Закономерности и проблемы посткоммунистических трансформаций* [G. Vainshtein, *Patterns and Problems of the Post-Communist Transformations*], [in:] *Политические институты на рубеже тысячелетий*, Дубна, 2001, с.166.

1) Measures were taken to restore the political mechanisms that operated under socialism and hindered the progress of society in public life. The actual significance of such measures was to prevent the weakening of the dominant positions of the elite, the emergence of real opposition to the system and protest movements in the population;

2) There was support for and intensification of excessive property inequality, and preservation of a low-income population. There was a partial adjustment such as raising the minimum wage, but in actual fact, the socio-economic and political mechanisms of legal and illegal distribution of public funds worked in favour of the elite;

3) Resisting the efforts of various parts of the state apparatus and of many groups of the political class as a means of implementing measures to develop civilized market relations, to intensify reasonably limited, economically justified state regulation, to apply freedom from the selfish pressure of both bureaucracy and the oligarchs;

4) Often obviously ill-considered and ineffective implementation of reform measures, which threatened to provide the opposite results from those intended;

5) The formation of nationalist ideology under the influence of such factors as rejection from Russia, which was perceived as a symbol of the USSR and therefore of national oppression, and pro-Western orientation. The West actively helped nationalist movements during the «late perestroika» period, and was later perceived as the main backer of the new regimes. In addition, the new regimes apparently relied on major economic assistance from the West. The third factor was the influence

of the diasporas, which played the role of custodians of national identity, and where they were to be found – even close to the national borders of the new states (Turkey for Azerbaijan, Romania for Moldova, Poland for Ukraine and Belarus)<sup>4</sup>.

### **Transfer of Power Scenarios: «Successor» and «Coup»**

The most interesting process in the post-Soviet space is the process of transfer of power, which can be reduced to two scenarios (apart from the Baltic countries): coup (revolution) or «successor choice» (successor).

The «successor» scenario in the CIS was tested for the first time in Russia. On December 31, 1999, a phrase that went down in history was heard on television: “I’m leaving. I did everything I could.» President Boris Yeltsin quit his post early and placed the presidency in charge of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has held the post since August 1999. As a result, Putin won the first round of the presidential election, gaining almost 53% of the vote. It is noteworthy that Putin himself used a similar scenario for the transference of power. He did not remain president for a third term, and decided to nominate First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev for the presidency. The latter won the election with 71% of the vote<sup>5</sup>. The difference from Yeltsin’s scenario was that Putin, while handing over power to Medvedev, remained in politics and took a key position as head of the Russian government. A «duumvirate» was formed.


Other successful cases of the successor scenario have been Azerbaijan in 2003, Armenia in 2006, and Kazakhstan in

4 О. Г. Карпович, *Теория и практика демонтажа современных политических режимов*. [O. Karpoichv, *Theory and Practice of the modern political regimes’ deconstruction*], Москва 2015, с. 22.

5 Г. И. Вайнштейн, *Закономерности и проблемы посткоммунистических трансформаций* [G. Vainshtein, *Patterns and Problems of the Post-Communist Transformations*] [in:] *Политические институты на рубеже тысячелетий*, Дубна, 2001, с.166.

2019. For example, Heydar Aliyev, who ruled the country under Soviet rule, returned to power in Azerbaijan in 1993. He was elected president twice, in 1993 and 1998. In the late 1990s, Aliyev began to have serious health problems, which led him to consider a successor. Heydar Aliyev, already seriously ill, ran for a third term in the 2003 presidential election (in violation of the current constitution), but later withdrew it in favour of his son Ilham Aliyev. Ilham Aliyev won the election with 77% of the vote and became the first successor to the president in the CIS, in the literal monarchical sense.<sup>6</sup> In 2008, Ilham Aliyev was re-elected to a second term, and in March 2009, following a referendum, the constitutional norm banning the incumbent president from being elected for more than two consecutive terms was repealed.

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In Kazakhstan, in 2019, Nursultan Nazarbayev handed over the presidency to Kasim-Zhomart Tokayev. At that time, Senate Chairman Tokayev automatically headed the country. A few months later, he won the early presidential election, gaining the support of 71% of voters.<sup>7</sup> However, Tokayev did not wield the full power of his predecessor. Nazarbayev retained the post of chairman

of the Security Council and chairman of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan. In addition, he continued to lead the ruling *Nur Otan* party and remained a member of Kazakhstan’s Constitutional Council. This state of affairs has led to the fact that no decision of the head of state could be made without the consent of *Elbasy* (The Leader of the Nation).

In Kyrgyzstan until 2005, in Turkmenistan until 2006, and in Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, incumbent presidents handed over power to themselves. Various political and legal methods were adopted for this purpose.

One option to extend the term was to nullify the presidential term, sometimes in combination with replacing the election with referendums in order to extend the term. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, the first president, Askar Akayev, was elected in 1991 and 1995. But in 1998, the Constitutional Court of Kyrgyzstan decided not to count Akayev’s first presidential term, as he had been elected under the old constitution of 1978, not the new one of 1993. Thus, Akayev was able to be elected for a third presidential term<sup>8</sup>.

Another way to recalculate the deadlines was to adopt a new Constitution. Two years after Alexander Lukashenko’s victory in the first presidential election, a new Constitution was adopted in Belarus specifically for this purpose. This provided for a five-year presidency, but calculated the term of office of the current president from the date of its entry into force, i.e. since 1996. Thus, Lukashenko extended his term for two years, and then, in 2001, through elections for a

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6 *Azerbaijan Reportio* “RFERL”, 18 October 2003. [<https://www.rferl.org/a/1340743.html>]

7 T. Vaal, M. Gordyeva, *Nazarbayev’s handpicked successor Tokayev elected Kazakh president*. “Reuters”, 10 June 2019. [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-election-idUSKCN1TB0JA>]

8 А. А. Быков, *О русофобии в постсоветском пространстве [About Russophobia in the Post-Soviet Space]*, “Социологические исследования”, 2000, №4, сс. 128-130.

new five-year term. Following a referendum in 2004, the provision limiting presidential powers to two terms disappeared from the Constitution altogether. Vladimir Putin used the same scenario in Russia in 2021.

Four cases of «successor» can be distinguished from the cases of «succession»: Russia in 2000, Armenia in 2008, Azerbaijan in 2003, and Turkmenistan in 2007. The remaining cases are extensions of the current presidencies.

The second scenario of the transfer of power in the post-Soviet space is often called a «coup» – a (violent) change of government under the influence of mass demonstrations, sometimes involving armed conflict, violation of the Constitution, and the laws of the country.

In Azerbaijan, in 1991, the communist elite managed to stay in power solely due to the introduction of Soviet troops into Baku. The defeat of Azeri troops in the armed conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh was also a major factor. This led to the strengthening of the opposition Popular Front and the resignation of President Ayaz Mutalibov in 1992. A split in the political elite prevented the immediate election of a new president, and in May 1992, Mutalibov sought to regain the presidency through supporters in parliament. However, two days later he was overthrown by supporters of the Popular Front and the nationalist organization the «Grey Wolves». In June, the leader of the Popular Front, former dissident Abulfaz Aliyev, was elected president and earned the title of *Elchibey*, the Father of the People. Once again, the defeat of the Azeris in Karabakh became a factor for internal instability<sup>9</sup>. As a result of the revolt of Colonel

Suret Huseynov, Elchibey was forced to flee the capital. The Azeri parliament decided to deprive Elchibey of his presidential powers and hand them over to parliamentary speaker Heydar Aliyev, who was then elected president.

The events in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 were named the “colour revolutions”. All of them took place in countries with extremely fragmented elites and deep ethno-cultural divisions – the latter led to coups. The main task of the so-called elites became to control economic life and financial flows, in connection with which the ideology of post-Soviet regimes was constructed, which led to a sharp weakening of nationalism and even a struggle against it. Nationalist movements were seen as political competitors. But the interests of the clans conflicted with the needs of the nation and the nation-state. The development of the country required regime change. The main mechanism for changing the mode and dismantling the system were the so-called “colour revolutions” – the term often understood as the intervention of external forces in the development of post-Soviet countries, but external forces in this case only helped (in their own geopolitical interests) the natural processes.<sup>10</sup> The reason behind the coups and the main factor in mobilizing citizens were accusations of election fraud addressed to the authorities.

In Georgia, the 2003 “coup” was not the country’s first one: the adventurism of the country’s first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, in attempting to forcibly «subdue» Abkhazia and South Ossetia led to mass discontent and the overthrow of the president. Former party leader Eduard Shevardnadze, who was elected president

9 Гражданское общество Центральной Азии после 25 лет независимости: призыв к солидарности [Civil Society in Central Asia after 25 years of independence: call for solidarity]. “OSCE”, 21 September 2016. [<http://www.osce.org/ru/odihr/266236?download=true>]

10 С. Непесов, *К вопросу о цветных революциях* [On the question of the colour revolutions]. “UA-reporter”, 29 November 2016. [<http://ua-reporter.com/content/208441>]



twice in 1995 and 2000, became head of state. Accusations of rigging the November 2003 parliamentary elections led to a march in Tbilisi led by opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili, the seizure of parliament and the resignation of President Shevardnadze. In January 2004, Saakashvili was elected president with 96% of the vote, and in January 2008, after a briefly resigning, he won early presidential elections.<sup>11</sup>



***power in the post-Soviet space is more than just power. This power is perceived by the elites as power-property, i.e. power inextricably linked with ownership of the main economic assets of the state***

In Ukraine, in 2004, the situation was similar: President Leonid Kuchma's attempt to impose his successor, Viktor Yanukovich on the country, led to mass protests against the results of the presidential election. Ukraine was an exception to a number of the colour revolutions: here the decision to cancel the election was made by the Supreme Court, not by striking citizens. However, the judges themselves grossly violated the Constitution, calling not for a new election but for a third round of elections, which was not required by law. Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko won the third round in a real competitive election.

Common to all these scenarios was a serious violation of laws and constitutions by the ruling elite itself and the refusal of those who lost to recognize the election results. The political course of the states in question has never changed as a result of the elections – it

has changed for reasons beyond the control of the voters. The transfer of power has always turned into a problem for the ruling elites, which was solved with the help of a successor, and if this failed, the power changed through coups. There are several reasons for this course of events in the post-Soviet space.

First, this is due to the fact that power in the post-Soviet space is more than just power. This power is perceived by the elites as power-property, i.e. power inextricably linked with ownership of the main economic assets of the state. This leads to the fact that the country itself is seen by leaders as their property, which must be inherited by their successors. The loss of power in the post-Soviet states means not only the loss of political power in itself (as in the West), but also the loss of the leader's and all his relatives' income, prosperity, and sometimes freedom. That is why the struggle for power is becoming more severe, due to the refusal of the elites to voluntarily transfer power according to the rules, and to make political compromises.

Second, there is a weakness within political institutions, including the institution of elections. Disrespect for the rule of law, constant rewriting of laws and the Constitution – this is what distinguishes almost all post-Soviet political regimes. This discredits political institutions: the losing party does not recognize the results because it does not believe in the possibility of a future victory. The low-ranking role of parties has also turned politics into a struggle of clans, groups, or individuals, depriving it of institutional expression.

Third, the process of transferring power according to the rules in the context of the transformation of the political regime, led

<sup>11</sup> Saakashvili claims Georgia victory, "CNN", 5 January 2004.  
[\[https://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/01/04/georgia.election/index.html\]](https://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/01/04/georgia.election/index.html)

the ruling elites to a frightening thought, that the election could have uncontrolled political participation and lead to unpredictable results.


Fourth, coups lead to a disregard for objective political conditions and political traditions by state leaders. It should be understood that what is possible in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan is impossible in Georgia or Ukraine. The societies are too different, the degree of fragmentation of the elites is too different, and differences in the structure of the economy and the level of income of the citizens are too great. It is obvious that the elites have not yet been able to propose a clear democratic project, or to ensure the stability of authoritarianism – so both options often fail.

### **Deviant Cases of Post-Soviet Democratization: Is There A Connection Between Authoritarianism and Nationalism?**

Among the former Soviet republics is Belarus, which is trying to combine the reproduction and preservation of the regime of state management of the economy, and the strengthening of a rigid authoritarian political regime, with the slow development of market relations. Equally special is the path of evolution of Belarussian nationalism, which was historically based on the Lithuanian myth – the idea of succession in Belarus in relation to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The first conscious Belarussian Francis Benedict Bogushevich in his book «*Dudka białaruskaja*» (1891)<sup>12</sup> ties Belarus to the GDL. The second important marker of the Belarussian identity was an assertion of the ethno-genetic alienation of Belarussians

from Russians and Ukrainians. Finally, the Belarussian literary language became the third marker, and introduction or rejection of it gradually became the flag of the Belarussian opposition.

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***The countries of Central Asia differ significantly in their specificity: their political systems ranged from rigid authoritarianism to neo-totalitarianism. In the economic and social systems of these states, semi-feudal methods, and patriarchal forms of leadership, as well as the methods of capitalism in the last century play a significant role***

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Since coming to power in 1994, Alexander Lukashenko has seen nationalists as his main opponents. By the end of 1996, the national symbols were banned – the state symbols of the BSSR returned to the country.<sup>13</sup> BPF leader Zenon Pozniak was forced to flee abroad. In 2014, nationalism in the republic suddenly became a very fashionable topic; there were many circles and societies for the study of the language, history, and culture of Belarus. Embroidered shirts with national Belarussian ornamentation became sharply fashionable. A monument to the medieval prince Aliger was erected in Vitebsk. These activities prepared the way for the organized opposition rallies in 2021.

The countries of Central Asia differ significantly in their specificity: their political systems ranged from rigid authoritarianism to neo-totalitarianism. In

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12 К. Аверьянов-Минский, В. Мальцев, *Белорусский национализм против русского мира* [K. Averianov-Minskiy, Belarussian nationalism against Russian world], ММО «CIS-ЕМО»: Москва, 2015, с. 34.

13 К. Аверьянов-Минский, В. Мальцев, *Белорусский национализм против русского мира* [K. Averianov-Minskiy, Belarussian nationalism against Russian world], ММО «CIS-ЕМО»: Москва, 2015, с. 109.

the economic and social systems of these states, semi-feudal methods, and patriarchal forms of leadership, as well as the methods of capitalism in the last century play a significant role.

There are fewer ethno-nationalist conflicts in these autocracies than in their more «democratic» neighbours. Conflicts occur between groups within the ethnic majority. The outbreak of violence in Zhanaozen in 2011 was a conflict between two Kazakh economic classes – the class of managers who ran the oil and gas companies in Zhanaozen, and the class of workers. The outbreak of violence in Andijan in 2005 was a conflict between the centre and the regions, between the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley, who sought greater autonomy, and the Tashkent leadership, which does not tolerate deviations from centralized autocratic rule.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast, the outbreaks of violence in 2010 and 2012 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were conflicts fuelled by nationalism. It is believed that Tajik and Kyrgyz nationalism is neither inclusive nor predominantly externally oriented. On the contrary, it targets ethnic minorities within these countries: Uzbeks in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions of Kyrgyzstan, and Pamirs in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan.

If Kyrgyzstan were similar to Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan, the government would not feel the need to co-opt the nationalistic rhetoric of its opponents. But Kyrgyzstan is neither a strong autocracy nor an institutional democracy. Instead, it is in a grey area where four root causes of instability – a weak

presidential party, few patronage resources, a tendency to protest, and deep ethnic and regional hostility – are forcing the central government to attack all external critics of Kyrgyz nationalism.

Tajikistan has the same traits of state weakness that weakened Kyrgyz's autocratic rule. President Emomali Rahmon was able to create a dominant presidential party, misleadingly called the People's Democratic Party. But like his Kyrgyz counterpart, Rahmon has limited resources for patronage, suffers from deep regional and ethnic animosities, and is occasionally ready for protest against central government. Here, just as in Kyrgyzstan, the root causes of instability gave rise to nationalism<sup>15</sup>. Although Rahmon did not face the same degree of opposition as the Kyrgyz president, he is still forced to demonstrate his Tajik nationalist vision.


Modern Uzbek nationalism bears the imprint of the idea of pan-Turkism. The main internal contradiction of Uzbek nationalism is the contradiction between the ethnic interpretation of the nation and its actual non-ethnic nature. All elements of national ideology are strung on it: the attitude to national demarcation, the problem of the Uzbek diaspora and ethnic minorities, the ambiguous attitude to Tajiks. Take Karimov's work «Uzbekistan on the threshold of the XXI century». On the one hand, the President of Uzbekistan writes in detail about the antiquity of the Uzbek people and the revival of Uzbek statehood. On the other hand, the author criticizes the policy «pursued by the Russian Empire and continued to be pursued by the Soviet government to create

14 Т. Исламов, А. Миллер, *Национализм в СССР и Восточной Европе* [T. Islamov, Nationalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe], "ECSOMAN", 1991. [<http://ecsocman.hse.ru/data/243/219/1217/12-Islamov.pdf>]

15 *Emomali Rahmon: The Accidental Leader Who Has Stayed in Power for Decades*. "RFERL", 13 October 2020. [<https://www.rferl.org/a/emomali-rahmon-the-accidental-leader-who-has-stayed-in-power-for-decades/30890337.html>]

territorial and administrative borders of the republics in Central Asia.»<sup>16</sup> In some parts of the book it is possible to understand that Karimov is more satisfied with the previous situation when ethnic groups were not divided by national borders and existed in a kind of symbiosis with each other. There is an obvious conflict between these two positions: either the natural result of the development of Uzbek statehood is Uzbekistan, formed under the Bolsheviks in 1924-1925, or the Bolsheviks, on the contrary, violated the logic of «statehood» in Central Asia and imposed a dividing up of the nation.

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***Compared with the beginning of the XXI century, certain political regimes in the former Soviet republics have evolved toward authoritarianism and vice versa – from semi-authoritarian to democratic***

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In Kazakhstan, the factor of time, and changes in the demographic and social situation of the country need to be considered. The numerical and specific share of ethnic Kazakhs has increased, they dominate the civil service, and social and cultural differences in the ethnic environment have become enormous. Nationalists could not unite behind any idea because they are too different. Among them is *Dos Kushim*, a long-time nationalist known for his intelligent thoughts and calm character, the leader of the *Ult Tagdyri movement*. Then there is Heroichan Kistaubayev, a former member of the opposition PEC party, later

*Algae*. Kistaubayev thinks soberly and is of the opinion that no one in the current government will give way to nationalists and their ideas.

## Conclusions

Compared with the beginning of the XXI century, certain political regimes in the former Soviet republics have evolved toward authoritarianism and vice versa – from semi-authoritarian to democratic. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Ukraine remained democratic, and they were joined by Georgia and Moldova. Azerbaijan and Armenia remained semi-authoritarian, while Russia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan are authoritarian.

Kazakhstan and Tajikistan joined the neo-totalitarian Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The latter are in many ways close to «classical totalitarianism» (The Third Reich, the USSR), in particular through the strengthening of the cult of personality over the past ten years. Thus, in Kazakhstan, in 2010, Nazarbayev was officially awarded the title of «leader of the nation» (*Elbasy*, literally «head of the people») and a special status of «first president of Kazakhstan» with a number of privileges. Among others, the day of his first popular election to the presidency of Kazakhstan, December 1, was declared a holiday, and in 2019, the capital Astana was renamed Nur-Sultan after him. In 2015, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon was awarded the official title of «Founder of Peace and National Unity – Leader of the Nation,» etc.

The process of transferring power in the post-Soviet space is reduced to two scenarios: a coup (revolution) or a «successor»). Common to both scenarios

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<sup>16</sup> И. Каримов, *Узбекистан на пороге XXI века: угрозы безопасности, условия и гарантии прогресса* [I. Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the eve of the XXI century: security threats, conditions and guarantees for success*], Узбекистан, 1997, с. 17.

was the almost widespread violation of laws and constitutions by the ruling elite itself, and the refusal of those who lost to recognize the election results. The political course of the states in question has never changed as a result of elections. The transfer of power has always turned into a problem for the ruling elites, which was solved with the help of a successor, and if this failed, the power changed through coups.

There are fewer ethno-nationalistic conflicts in Central Asian autocracies than in their more «democratic» neighbours. Conflicts – to the extent that they exist in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – occur between groups within the ethnic majority. Thus, the hypothesis that nationalist tendencies are intensifying the growth of authoritarian tendencies, and vice versa, has been only partially confirmed.

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