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**ON THE PERSONALITY-CENTERED APPROACH  
TO ANALYZING RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP:  
A STUDY OF PUTIN'S PRESIDENCY**

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Over the past five decades, presidential studies have become a separate field of political psychology. Russia has a short history of its presidency but recent events in the international arena have made researchers increasingly interested in the Russian presidency, particularly its personal component.

However, the majority of Russian and international publications have focused on particular aspects of the phenomenon, mainly on the constitutional and legal features. A considerable amount of research has been devoted to the interaction between the institutions of political power, namely the relationship between the president and parliament, political parties, power elites, NGOs, lobbyists and the media<sup>1</sup>.

The researchers find the leader of the country interesting only if there are new unprecedented contradictory situations where the institutions experience problems or have a crisis in foreign policy. Once this happens, the leader has to take responsibilities and choose a political decision out of several alternatives.<sup>2</sup> The examples of this can be found during the domestic political and economic reforms (Margaret Thatcher) or the use of military force against other countries (John. F. Kennedy).

In these cases, experts say, a manifestation of a strong personality appears, e.g. "the dictator" - if the leader's political stance fails, or "hero of the nation" - if it succeeds. But in any case, the system of political institutions removes the leader, as seen in the United States with John F. Kennedy, in the Soviet Union with Nikita Khrushchev, in France with Charles de Gaulle and in the UK with Margaret Thatcher. And this is done as early as possible so that the leader does not have time to enlarge their political and human resources.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nichols T. M.* The Russian Presidency: Society and Politics in the Second Russian Republic. – N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. – 240 p.; *Robinson N.* Russia: A State of Uncertainty: Postcommunist States and Nations. – L.: Routledge, 2001. – 216 p.; *Spörer D.* Ausmaß, Strukturen und Implikationen Präsidialer Macht im Postkommunistischen Raum // Swiss Political Science Review. – 2004. – Vol. 10. – No. 2. – P. 157 – 179; *Allison R., Light M., White S.* Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe. – L.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006. – 240 p.; *Tavits M.* Presidents with Prime Ministers: Do Direct Elections Matter? – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. – 273 p.; et al.

<sup>2</sup> *CM: Greenstein F. I.* Personality and Politics: Problems of Evidence, Inference and Conceptualization. – Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. – 246 p.; et. al.

Most experts, aiming at a comprehensive analysis of the problems of the presidency, heavily rely on each other's methods and categories. Often they seek to overcome the inertia of the classical paradigm of philosophy, law, sociology, political science, and psychology, in order to understand the methodological inertia and limitations of the application. The authors represent different scientific disciplines and opposing concepts. More precisely, some take stand on the antipositivism whereas the others opposite it.

For example, if we talk about a student-centered research, we can distinguish at least three main approaches: the first group that works in the genre of psychobiography and psychohistory<sup>3</sup>, the second that explores the psychological traits of the individual, calculating their ratio on different scales<sup>4</sup> and the third that seeks to combine different properties of an individual leader into clearly-defined political and psychological profiles or certain psychological types<sup>5</sup>, and it is all conducted without incorporating the methodological reflection.

These trends do not help the development of a universal theoretical and methodological base for the study of presidential leadership. And this is not the only problem to the study of the Russian presidency. Another equally difficult

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<sup>3</sup> *Renshon S. A.* The Comparative Psychoanalytic Study of Political Leaders: John McCain and the Limits of Trait Psychology // *Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior* / Ed. by O. Feldman, L. O. Valenty. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. – P. 233 – 254; *Rubenzon S. J., Faschingbauer T. R., Ones D. S.* Assessments of America's Chief Executives: Insights from Biographers and Objective Personality Measures // *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders* / Ed. by L. O. Valenty, O. Feldman. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. – P. 105 – 134; *Gilbert R. E.* Ronald Reagan's Presidency: The Impact of an Alcoholic Parent // *Political Psychology*. – 2008. – Vol. 29. – No. 5. – P. 737 – 765; *Pfiffner J. P.* The Modern Presidency. – N.Y.: Wadworth, 2010. – 304 p.; *Førland T. E., Korsvik T. R., Christophersen K.-A.* Brought Up to Rebel in the Sixties: Birth Order Irrelevant, Parental Worldview Decisive // *Political Psychology*. – 2012. – Vol. 33. – No. 6. – P. 825 – 838; et al.

<sup>4</sup> *Dweck C. S.* Self-theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development. – N.Y.: Psychology Press, 2000. – 212 p.; *Post J. M.* The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton. – Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005. – 480 p.; *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis* / Ed. by M. Schafer, S. G. Walker. – N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. – 304 p.; *Leites N. C.* The Operational Code of the Politburo. – Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007. – 118 p.; et al.

<sup>5</sup> *Hermann M. G., Hagan J. D.* Leaders, Groups and Coalitions: Understanding the People and Processes in Foreign Policymaking. – L.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001. – 210 p.; *Immelman A.* Personality in Political Psychology // *Handbook of Psychology. Volume 5: Personality and Social Psychology* / Ed. by I. B. Weiner, T. Millon & M. J. Lerner. – Hoboken NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003. – P. 599 – 626; *Simonton D. K.* Presidential IQ, Openness, Intellectual Brilliance and Leadership: Estimates and Correlations for 42 US Chief Executives // *Political Psychology*. – 2006. – Vol. 27. – P. 511 – 639; *Winter D. G.* Psychological Factors Affecting Distortion of Threat in the Perception of the Intentions of Leaders // *Образы государств, наций и лидеров* / Под ред. Е. Б. Шестопал. – М.: Аспект Пресс, 2008. – С. 25 – 37; et al.

problem arises from a discrepancy between the accentuations of the authors representing different schools.

Russian political psychologists have usually focused on three aspects of presidential leadership: personality of the head of state, the context of their activities, and president's interaction with the political environment<sup>6</sup>.

American and European political psychologies have a similar approach to the study of this phenomenon. They do not diminish the importance of the leader's personal traits, their interactions with political partners as well as the personal traits of these partners. However, the predominant influence is attributed to the way these interactions are conducted in a particular political situation. Even the scientists, who represent the personal approach to the study of the presidency, interpret the extrapolative personality of a leader regarding their political stance, followed by their office, from the standpoint of classical situational theories<sup>7</sup>.

This might be justifiable in relation to the senior executives in the US and most European countries, where, over decades, a stable system of political institutions centered on the rebuilding of the cooperation with the civil society was developed. There, the influence of the individual leader of the country is limited to the strict regulations, and there is a clear distribution of powers between central and regional government entities<sup>8</sup>. As a rule, the core competences of the national leaders of these countries are centered around bilateral relations, issues of the use of military force, and their representative functions.

However, for Russia, as for most post-Soviet states, this is not typical. Regardless of the political regime and economic system established after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of political institutions is still under

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<sup>6</sup> См.: *Shestopal E.* New Trends in Perception of Russian Authorities in the Beginning of 2010s // *Europejski Przegląd Prawa i Stosunków Międzynarodowych*. – 2014. – No. 1 – 2. – P. 62 – 72; и др.

<sup>7</sup> *Greenstein F. I.* The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama. – Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009; *Winter D. G.* Philosopher-King or Polarizing Politician? A Personality Profile of Barack Obama // *Political Psychology*. – 2011. – Vol. 32. – No. 6. – P. 1059 – 1081; *Hermann M. G.* The Study of American Foreign Policy // *Routledge Handbook of American Foreign Policy* / Ed. by C. Jones, S. Hook. – L.: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. – P. 3 – 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Divided Power: The Presidency, Congress, and the Formation of American Foreign Policy* / Ed. by D. R. Kelley. – Chicago, IL: University of Arkansas Press, 2005. – 316 p.; *Edwards III G. C., Wayne S. J.* Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making. – 9<sup>th</sup> ed. – Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2014; *Brown A.* The Myth of the Strong Leader: Political Leadership in the Modern Age. – L.: Vintage Publishing, 2015. – 480 p.

development, and it is far from complete<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the specificity of the role of the President of the Russian Federation is that as the head of state they are constantly involved in a wide range of current issues, of both domestic and foreign policy, thus putting the fate of the whole country and each citizen in it in their hands.

The foreign representatives of political science often find themselves unable to provide an accurate interpretation of the strategy and tactics of Russian leaders or predict their decisions and actions, thus turning them into strange and unpredictable actors.

Why is that? Firstly, the American and European experts, often mechanically transfer the institutional methodology to the Russian presidency. The same logic particular for the Western politics can be observed in their approach, i.e. they believe that a democratic regime, formed in their countries over two centuries, can be exported to other countries in a short time, through both the financing of non-profit organizations and the management of the political activities of young people through social networks. Meanwhile, the Russian presidency has a high degree of personification, with its largest part of the electorate operating according to a popular tsarist archetype<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, the overused matrix of transition of their democracy to Russia is bound to fail.

Secondly, researchers from the US and Europe build their analysis of political developments in general, basing it on the English-language publications

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<sup>9</sup> *Gaman-Golutvina O. V.* The Changing Role of the State in the Context of the Reforms of the State Government // *Polis: Political Studies*. – 2007. – No. 4. – P. 24 – 45; *Russian Bureaucracy and the State: Officialdom from Alexander III to Vladimir Putin* / Ed. by D. K. Dr Rowney, E. Huskey. – L.: Palgrave Schol, Print UK, 2009. – 362 p.; *Remington Th. F.* The Politics of Inequality in Russia. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. – 234 p.; *Ponomareva E. G.* Inventing the Future: Development Scenarios of Contemporary Russia // *Almanach Via Evrasia*. – 2013. – No. 2. – P. 1 – 13; *Remington Th. F.* Presidential Decrees in Russia: A Comparative Perspective. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. – 188 p.

<sup>10</sup> *Stuerner M.* Putin And The Rise of Russia: The Country That Came in from the Cold. – L.: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009. – 272 p.; *Shestopal E., Strelets I.* Russian Presidents: Yeltsin, Putin, Medvedev. Does Personality Matter? // *Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations: Abstracts* / Ed. by D. Bondarenko, O. Kavykin. – M.: The Institute for African Studies, 2009. – P. 240 – 242; *Danks C.* Politics Russia / 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. – N.Y.: Routledge. – 2013. – 488 p.; *Donaldson R. H., Noguee J.L., Nadkarni V.* The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests / 5<sup>th</sup> ed. – L., N.Y.: Routledge. – 2014. – 464 p.; *Arutunyan A.* The Putin Mystique: Inside Russia's Power Cult / 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.. – Warwickshire: Skyscraper Publications, 2015. – 336 p.; и др.

that fall within the framework of the Russian biased "opposition".<sup>11</sup> As a rule, they are not the fundamental work of political science, history or culture, but the materials in the genre of journalism, which are distinguished not so much by their scientific and popular character, but by their negatively-charged style of journalism.

Thirdly, the European and American researchers conduct a spontaneous rhetorical content analysis, devoid of any observation. They only use the translated texts, which often convey general speeches and statements without contextual, extra linguistic and paralinguistic nuances<sup>12</sup>. In addition, the results are often not correlated with biographical information as it is the case between the experts on content analysis and psychobiography who preserve the fundamental theoretical and methodological differences. All this leads to inaccuracies, and therefore the results obtained by the Russian and foreign specialists are not the same.

Fourthly, not being bilingual, the researchers from the US and Europe use translation of speeches, press releases on the official websites or simultaneous interpreters of the broadcasts, where only a general sense of speeches is transmitted with a significant nuance of authentic text being lost. This often does not allow for an objective study of the Russian presidency to be conducted, even by the professionals who rely on methods<sup>13</sup>, that are time-tested and widely propagated among political scientists of different countries. Rare publications, that express the

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<sup>11</sup> Shevtsova L. Putin's Russia. – Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003. – 457 p. in *Herspring D. R.* Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich // Encyclopedia of Russian History – 2004 // Retrieved August 23, 2014 from Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404101095.html>; *Politkovskaya A.* Putin's Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy / Trans. by A. Tait. – N.Y.: Metropolitan Press, 2005. – 288 p. in *Pludowski T.* Putin, Vladimir (1952-) // Encyclopedia of Political Communication / Ed. by L. L. Kaid, C. Holtz-Bacha. – Vol. 2. – Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007. – P. 686 – 687; *Judah B.* Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell in and Out of Love With Vladimir Putin. – New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. – 400 p.; *Lucas E.* The New Cold War: Putin's Threat to Russia and the West. – L.: Palgrave Macmillan Trade, 2014. – 352 p.; и др.

<sup>12</sup> *Shestopal E.* Theoretical and Methodological Problems of the Study of Political Perception // Citizens and Leaders in a Comparative Perspective / Ed. by E. Shestopal. – М.: Изд-во МГУ, 2013. – С. 70 – 90; *Strelets I.* Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev: Political Psychological Insights into Pre-election Castling and Prospects of the Power-holding Tandem: Abstract // Вестн. Томск. гос. ун-та. Философия. Социология. Политология. – 2013. – № 3. – P. 189 – 190; и др.

<sup>13</sup> *Breslauer G. W.* Gorbachev and Yeltsin as Leaders. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. – 348 p.; *White S.* Understanding Russian Politics / 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. – 482 p.; *Shiraev E.* Russian Government and Politics (Comparative Government and Politics) / 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. – L.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. – 360 p.; *Black J. L.* The Russian Presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, 2008-2012: The Next Step Forward or Merely a Time Out? – L.: Routledge. – 2014. – 256 p.; и др.

author's desire for a comprehensive analysis of the problem of the Russian presidency<sup>14</sup>, largely gravitate towards the traditional leadership theories of "heroes", thus making them vulnerable to criticism.

Therefore, given our analytical review of studies of the Russian leadership, the need arises to consider it from the standpoint of an independent theoretical and methodological approach – personality-centered theory of the presidency, integrating the review of the influence of the personal component of presidential leadership in the interrelation of three aspects:

- the *personality* of the head of state, i.e. those properties of his individual personality that are of substance in his execution of the role of leader of the nation;
- the political *environment*, characterized by the constitutional status of the president, domestic political conditions and the international situation of the state;
- the leadership *role* as the individual style of the president, formed in a specific political/cultural and situational context.

### **Characteristics of research**

Empirical research involves taking into consideration a number of significant circumstances so as to avoid any error in the evaluation of the results obtained and their interpretation. Specifically, when reviewing psychological factors, it is important to determine their place and role within the constitutional, political/cultural and situational context. A conceptual model for empirical research must allow us to draw conclusions regarding presidential administration that will be based on interpretation of credible and valid results. Political-psychological analysis must be directly contingent on the utilization of systematic procedures for data search and processing.

The study of biographical and historical material presents particular difficulties. Their interpretation demands that the researcher have the necessary

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<sup>14</sup> Hill F., Gaddy C. G. Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin. – Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013. – 150 p.; Roxburgh A. The Strongman: Vladimir Putin and the Struggle for Russia. – L.: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2013. – 368 p.; White S. Russian Politics. – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. – 512 p.; King M. S. The War Against Putin: What the Government-Media Complex Isn't Telling You About Russia. – N. Y.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014. – 102 p.; и др.

psychological credentials and psychoanalytical experience, presupposes the observance of ethical standards, testing of the veracity of all the various evidence, critical evaluation of the sources of information and an independent, objective position regarding the individuals under review.

Hence, observation of the conditions indicated for political-psychological research enables the establishment of a correlation between political and psychological phenomena and later review of the presidency, for example, of Vladimir Putin. But before moving on to setting forth the results, let us describe the basic characteristics of the research.

The *topic* of research selected was Russian presidential leadership and its thematic components: the characteristics of the political socialization and personality traits of the President of Russia that determine his functioning within the given institutional, political/cultural and situational context and while fulfilling their political role as head of the Russian state.

The *subject* of the research was the political-psychological analysis of the influence of the personal component on the execution of the office of President of the RF by Vladimir Putin.

The *goal* of the empirical research consisted of discovery of the interrelationship between characteristic personality features of the Russian President and his exercise of the office of head of state.

Three basic *tasks* were performed to achieve this goal:

- the constitutional limits to the execution of the office of head of the Russian state and the characteristics of the political/cultural and situational context of the activities of the President of the RF were defined;

- the political socialization of Vladimir Putin, his significant character traits, the seminal events of his presidency and his individual style of execution of the office of leader of the nation were examined;

- an analysis of the influence of the personal characteristics of the Russian President on his execution of the office of head of state was conducted.



The personality of the president has a complex, multifaceted structure, the elements of which are found in dynamic interaction, are formed at an early age, develop in the process of socialization and the formation of his professional career and manifest themselves in interaction with the institutional and political environment.

In the analysis of the presidency, the development of the personality of the politicians in the course of their political socialization was reviewed, and the primary components of the personality of the President of RF and his biographical factor<sup>15</sup> were studied.

The structural-functional method<sup>16</sup> was used as the basis for analysis of the constitutional component of the institution of the presidency. The makeup of the institution of the presidency in the course of the transformation of post-Soviet society, the domestic political aspects of the head of state and the specific characteristics of the context of the execution of the office of President of the RF were studied based on comparative analysis methodology, substantiating the essential principles of research into political systems and international processes. Also, from the politological approaches, the typology of executive power accorded with the goals of the paper as well as the basic classifications of political leadership<sup>17</sup>, facilitating the revelation of specifics of the presidents within the context of their execution of the office of head of state.

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<sup>15</sup> *Glad B.* Contributions of Psychobiography // *Handbook of Political Psychology* / Ed. by J. Knutson. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973. – P. 296-321; *Cocks G.* Contributions of Psychohistory to Understanding Politics // *Political Psychology* / Ed. by M. Hermann. – San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986. – P. 139 – 165; *Renshon S. A.* The Comparative Psychoanalytic Study of Political Leaders... // *Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior* / Ed. by O. Feldman, L. O. Valenty. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. – P. 233 – 254; *LeVine R. A.* Childhood Socialization: Comparative Studies of Parenting, Learning and Educational Change. – Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003. – 300 p.; et al.

<sup>16</sup> *Merton R. K.* Social Research and the Practicing Professions. – N.Y.: University Press of America, 1982. – 284 p.; et al.

<sup>17</sup> *Dunleavy P. R., Rhodes A. W.* Core Executive Studies in Britain // *Public Administration*. – 1990. – Vol. 68. – P. 3 – 28; *Greenstein F. I.* The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to George W. Bush. – Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. – 320 p.; *Keller J. W., Foster D. M.* Presidential Leadership Style and the Political Use of Force // *Political Psychology*. – 2012. – Vol. 33. – No. 5. – P. 581 – 598; *Edwards III G. C., Wayne S. J.* Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making. – 9<sup>th</sup> ed. – Stamford, CT : Cengage Learning, 2014. – 533 p.; et al.

The *methodological model* was developed using proven political psychological approaches for at-a-distance study of political leaders<sup>18</sup>, reworked and adapted as necessary to the tasks set for this research and designed for determining the specifics of how Putin's personality has manifested itself during the time of his presidency<sup>19</sup>. In the course of employing such *methods* as observation, the biographical method, qualitative content analysis of political rhetoric and a *case study*<sup>20</sup> of Vladimir Putin, the paper reviews the motivational profile, self-concept and self-esteem, operational code and political values, leadership behavioural types and interpersonal relation styles of the Russian President.

The *programme* for this research thesis was determined in the process of working with the following empirical data:

- biographical materials portraying the major stages of the socialization and political activities of Vladimir Putin prior to assuming the position of President of the RF, of an average size of no less than 60 conventional printed sheets for this leader;

- specially selected texts of spontaneous appearances in the media, relevant segments of video-taped interviews, press conferences and meetings of the Russian President with the public: an overall volume of 15,000 words between 2000 and 2008 and 2012 and 2014;

- constitutional law information encompassing the basic institutional aspects of the political role, status and functions of the President of the RF, of a total size of no less than 20 conventional printed sheets, and historical and chronological

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<sup>18</sup> Runyan W. M. Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and Method. – N.Y.: OUP USA, 1984. – 300 p.; Schafer M. Issues in Assessing Psychological Characteristics at a Distance: An Introduction to the Symposium // Political Psychology. – 2000. – Vol. 21. – No. 3. – P. 511 – 527; Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior / Ed. by O. Feldman, L. O. Valenty. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. – 264 p.; Immelman A. Personality in Political Psychology // Handbook of Psychology. Volume 5: Personality and Social Psychology / Ed. by I. B. Weiner, T. Millon & M. J. Lerner. – Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003. – P. 599 – 626; Cottam M., Dietz-Uhler B., Mastors E., Preston T. The Study of Political Leaders // Introduction to Political Psychology / M. Cottam etc. – N.Y.: Psychology Press, 2010. – P. 101 – 130.

<sup>19</sup> Strelets I. The Influence of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders in the Exercise of the Office of President of Russia: Thesis in Pursuit of the Academic Title of Candidate of Political Science (Concentration 19.00.12 – Political Psychology). – M.: MSU, 2014. – 192 p.; и др.

<sup>20</sup> See: Kaarbo J., Beasley R. A Practical Guide to the Comparative Case Study Method in Political Psychology // Political Psychology. – 1999. – Vol. 20. – No. 2. – P. 369 – 391; George A. L., Bennett A. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. – Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. – 256 p.; et al.

information regarding the domestic political and international context of the activities of Vladimir Putin during his tenure as head of the Russian state, with an average of no less than 30 conventional printed sheets for him.

As for the at-a-distance methods used in the empirical part of this paper, as they are widely recognized and actively employed by political psychologists, their specific characteristics will remain outside the scope of this work. We will describe here the characteristics of the utilization of the biographical method, qualitative content analysis of political rhetoric and comments and the use of the case study comparative method within this work and its adaptation to the tasks set for this thesis, as directed to defining those specifics regarding how the personality of Vladimir Putin manifested itself in the course of his exercise of the office of head of the Russian state.

The *biographical method*<sup>21</sup> facilitated the review of the characteristics of the political socialization and development of Vladimir Putin's professional career within its corresponding historical-political context and the determination of the primary dynamic aspects of the personalities of President Putin that turned out to be significant in their exercise of the office of head of the Russian state. Along with this, attention was directed to the analysis of key events in his administration in which individual psychological traits of this political leader manifested themselves, permitting the characterization of the stylistic and typological characteristics of his exercise of the office of head of the Russian state under the corresponding political/cultural and situational context. This made it possible to discover behavioural markers of the motivational profile, dominant leadership type and interpersonal relation style.

In research of the historical and biographical materials, preference was given firstly to the politicians' recollections of his own childhood, youth student days, activities prior to election as President of the RF and his families and reference

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<sup>21</sup> *Ihanus J.* Profiling Russian Leaders from a Psychohistorical and a Psychobiographical Perspective // *Profiling Political Leaders: Cross-cultural Studies of Personality and Behavior* / Ed. by O. Feldman, L. O. Valenty. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001. – P. 129 – 148; *Glad B.* Political Leadership: Some Methodological Considerations // *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders* / Ed. by L. O. Valenty, O. Feldman. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. – P. 9 – 24; и др.

groups. Recollections of and press interviews with their inner circle, experts, political analysts and publicists of various ideological positions, in proportionate shares, were adopted as supplemental secondary sources enabling verification of facts and making necessary historical-biographical comparisons.

In order to neutralize any misrepresentations of information related to positive self-presentation by leader striving to project a positive image in the popular consciousness, basic facts were subjected to further testing against several independent printed sources that could confirm or deny them. For this reason, several sources of psycho-biographical content information were excluded from the analysis, judged to be publicity sources or even journalistic sensationalism; as they existed in only a single case, confirmation of the truth was impossible.

The *qualitative content analysis*<sup>22</sup> of political rhetoric enabled the discernment of verbal markers of the motivational profile, discovery of answers to the diagnostic questions of the operational code and definition of the political values of the Presidents of Russia in published spontaneous statements.

In order to meet the tasks set, original texts from comparable periods of Putin's administration are proportionally selected for the "first hundred days", when the politician is assuming the office of head of state, the "middle period" of his term in the highest office of the state and the "final period", when the leader is preparing for re-election or transfer of authority to his successor. Furthermore, pre-election speeches and appearances related to various types of crisis situations were excluded from the analysis, as it is well known that they do not facilitate determination of stable personality aspects; on the contrary, their form and content are always determined by the issue at hand, and related to the specific communication situation.

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<sup>22</sup> Winter D. G., Hermann M. G., Weintraub W., Walker S. G. The Personalities of Bush and Gorbachev Measured at a Distance: Procedures, Portraits and Policy // *Political Psychology*. – 1991. – Vol. 12. – No. 3. – P. 215 – 244, 457 – 464; Winter D. G. Manual for Scoring Motive Imagery in Running Text: Version 4.2. – Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. – 267 p.; Шалак В. И. Современный контент-анализ: Приложения в области политологии, психологии, социологии, культурологии, экономики, рекламы. – М.: Омега-Л, 2004. – 271 с.; Богомолова Н. Н., Малышева Н. Г., Стефаненко Т. Г. Контент-анализ // *Социальная психология: Практикум* / Под ред. Т. В. Фоломеевой. – М.: Аспект Пресс, 2009. – С. 131 – 162; Мельникова О., Хорошилов Д. Методологические принципы качественных исследований в психологии // *Вестн. Моск. ун-та. – Сер. 14. Психология*. – 2013. – № 3. – С. 4 – 17; и др.

A selection of spontaneous appearances of the Russian President transcribed via printed and electronic media was allocated for each of the periods indicated by domestic political, socioeconomic and international content and Russian or foreign target audience, and also by genre – interviews, press conferences or meetings with individuals, representatives of the press, business groups or parliamentary parties. Fragments for content analysis are divided by complete statements on a given topic, items in a general context or appearances related to a specific news item.

Several texts of the annual state-of-the-union messages of the President of Russia to the Russian Federal Assembly were used as supplementary sources for confirmation of working hypotheses, as well as additional materials: Putin's "Straight Line" – a live TV call-in broadcasts.

Qualitative content analysis of the motivational profile, the characteristics of the diagnostic aspect of the operational code and political values verbalized in the public rhetoric of the Russian President was developed on the basis of the combined methodology described in the publications of Winter, Hermann, Weintraub, Walker, as well as our Russian colleagues<sup>23</sup>.

In the course of adapting these methodologies to the tasks set for this paper, verbal markers appearing in the texts of leaders' statements corresponding to specific motives, to answers of diagnostic questions and operational codes and to political values were singled out for subsequent determination of their frequency per thousand words. Set phrases expressing action, desire, interest, etc. that the Russian President ascribed to himself, his partners at work, institutions, and groups or to the general public were treated like such verbal markers.

In the indicated context, research into the motivational profile of the Russian President contemplated the determination of the proportional correspondence of verbal markers to the three motives: power, achievement and affiliation. In the course of distinguishing what proportion in relation to each other these motives

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<sup>23</sup> Зорин В. А. Политическая психология постсоветского президентства. – Челябинск: Изд-во Челяб. гос. ун-та, 2006. – С. 225 – 235; Гиззатов Э. К. Операциональное кодирование – метод дистантной оценки личности политического лидера // Вестн. Моск. ун-та. – Сер. 12. Полит. науки. – 2006. – № 2. – С. 76 – 85; Человеческий капитал российских политических элит: Политико-психологический анализ / Под ред. Е. Б. Шестоपाल. – М.: РОССПЭН, 2012. – С. 87 – 99.

would result, the values were indicated not in the form of a factor, but rather in a percentual relationship with each other. Comparison with values of analogous variables in the political-psychological profiles of other politicians was not done, as this was not set as a task of the research.

Study of the operational code was not directed toward calculation of quantitative data based on corresponding indices<sup>24</sup>, but rather on the manifestation in the rhetoric of the Russian leader of any tendency toward a particular way of responding to the four “diagnostic” questions on the nature of political realities<sup>25</sup>. In accordance with convictions regarding whether the president’s sphere of professional activity was friendly or hostile, whether his prospects for realizing his expectations optimistic or pessimistic, whether the course of events was controllable or unpredictable or whether his goals should be general or specific, a result was obtained showing the leader’s characteristic response to political challenges and his behavioural model type.

In turn, research into the political values characteristic of the rhetoric of the Russian President was limited by the appearance in texts of spontaneous expressions of three such valuational/world view dilemmas<sup>26</sup>, namely “patriotism/cosmopolitanism” “statism/anti-statism”, “equality/individual freedom”. Furthermore, these value pairs are not treated as mutually exclusive, as determination of the frequency of one of the indicators in the binary oppositions was not contemplated in the research. In this case, it was directed toward a search for possible combinations of the indicated dilemmas that would permit us to trace their genesis in the course of political socialization, to prove hypotheses relative to the adherence of the Russian leader to authoritarian or democratic values, consistency in their statements and their interrelationship.

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<sup>24</sup> *Schafer M., Young M. D., Walker S. G.* U. S. Presidents as Conflict Managers: The Operation Codes of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton // *Political Leadership for the New Century: Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders* / Ed. by L. O. Valenty, O. Feldman. – Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. – P. 51 – 64.

<sup>25</sup> *George A. L.* The Causal Nexus between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-making Behavior: The ‘Operational Code’ Belief System // *Psychological Models in International Politics* / Ed. by L. Falkowski. – Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979. – P. 95 – 123.

<sup>26</sup> *Малинова О. Ю.* Идеологические представления элитных групп // *Человеческий капитал российских политических элит: Политико-психологический анализ* / Под ред. Е. Б. Шестопа. – М.: РОССПЭН, 2012. – С. 42 – 56.

Hence, the accumulated data obtained has a sort of averaged-out quality, as preference was accorded to qualitative content analysis of various texts related to the assumption of office or contexts addressed to specific target audiences, as qualitative content analysis enables us to describe general tendencies. Attention was focused on the subsequent comparison of data expressed in spontaneous rhetoric with indications of behavioural markers obtained in the course of analysis of biographical material.

In defining the motivational profiles, operational codes and political values for the Russian President by the analysis of his public rhetoric, preference was given to spontaneous statements in order to hold to a minimum distortions related to the influence factor of participation by speech writers and advisors in the preparation of the leader of the country for press conferences, discussions and negotiations. In this regard, the results obtained were interpreted based on the recommendations of Simonton, Winter, Hermann and their colleagues<sup>27</sup>. They emphasized firstly that the president can only articulate ideas, and in a certain form, that agree with his motives, world view, values and convictions. Secondly, speech writers are always recruited in such a way so that their personality in key aspects is in agreement with the personality of the politician with whom they will be working. Thirdly, all pronouncements by the president of a given country, regardless of the degree of participation of specialists in the preparation of public statements, is always perceived in the popular consciousness, is interpreted by colleagues and experts and resonates throughout society as the words of the leader of the country.

*Observation*<sup>28</sup> in this research was conducted using the assimilative method, which permitted the addition of data obtained in the course of study of the

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<sup>27</sup> See, e. g.: *Simonton D. K.* Presidential IQ, Openness, Intellectual Brilliance and Leadership: Estimates and Correlations for 42 US Chief Executives // *Political Psychology*. – 2006. – Vol. 27. – P. 511 – 639; *Winter D. G., Hermann M. G., Weintbraub W., Walker S. G.* The Personalities of Bush and Gorbachev Measured at a Distance: Procedures, Portraits and Policy // *Political Psychology*. – 1991. – Vol. 12. – No. 3. – P. 215 – 244; et al.

<sup>28</sup> *Соловьева О. В.* Наблюдение // *Социальная психология: Практикум* / Под ред. Т. В. Фоломеевой. – М.: Аспект Пресс, 2009. – С. 28 – 49; *Мезрабян А.* Психодиагностика невербального поведения. – СПб.: Изд-во «Речь», 2001. – 253 с.; *Ракитянский Н. М.* Методы дистантной психологической диагностики // *Личность политика: Теория и методология психологического портретирования* / Н. М. Ракитянский. – М., 2011. – С. 159 – 180; et al.

historical and biographical materials and qualitative content analysis of political rhetoric. Relevant clips of video interviews, press conferences and meetings with individuals by President Putin distributed by his press offices via media outlets and the Internet served as material for off-the-cuff, informal observation.

Observation conducted by study of official video recordings may be characterized as either open, field, selective, on-the-record or evaluative. It enabled focusing on non-verbal communicative acts: facial and hand gestures, direction of view, extra- and paralinguistic characteristics of speech and spatio-temporal organization of interaction. Conducting special protocols, quantitative fixation on categories and subcategories and subsequent creation of communicative profiles for the politicians were all beyond the scope of this empirical research.

Observation was aimed at determining leadership behavioural type<sup>29</sup> and interpersonal relation style<sup>30</sup> in order to test the hypothesis proposed regarding data components of personality in the course of research of the historical and biographical data of the Russian President.

The *case study* method<sup>31</sup> was utilized in the final stages as an additional method enabling the comparison of the degree of influence of personal characteristics of President Putin on the exercise of the office as leader of Russia based on comparable criteria. Structural and dynamic personality components of the corresponding political/cultural, domestic political and international situational context acted in this capacity. It enabled observation of the requirements presented for the utilization of the controlled comparison method, which provides for observation of *case study* procedure in the process of comparing the presidencies of the political leaders.

It should be mentioned that the primary hypothesis of the empirical research was confirmed in the course of the work. It consisted in the fact that the personal

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<sup>29</sup> *Lasswell H.* Political Systems, Styles and Personalities // Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies: Studies in Comparative Analysis / Ed. by L. Edinger. – N.Y.: Wiley, 1967. – P. 316 – 347.

<sup>30</sup> *Etheredge L.* Personality Effects on American Foreign Policy, 1898 – 1968: A Test of Interpersonal Generalization Theory // American Political Science Review. – 1978. – Vol. 72. – P. 434 – 451.

<sup>31</sup> See: *Kaarbo J., Beasley R.* A Practical Guide to the Comparative Case Study Method in Political Psychology // Political Psychology. – 1999. – Vol. 20. – No. 2. – P. 369 – 391; *George A. L., Bennett A.* Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. – Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. – 256 p.; et al.



component influences the functioning of the institution of the Russian presidency and the exercise of the office of head of state to a significant degree, manifesting the combination of individual psychological qualities of the leader of the nation that are of significance in political activities that were formed in his period of political socialization and transformed under the influence of the political context.

### **Major findings of this research**

The political/biographical analysis showed that Vladimir Putin represents the middle generation of politicians that survived the changes of several epochs and consequently built their careers without rejecting the past, accommodating themselves to circumstances. His socialization took place under various conditions. Differences between generations were a significant aspect reflected in the execution of the office of the president, which nicely matched the post-Soviet constitutional political/cultural and situational context.

Upon assumption of power, Vladimir Putin exercised the role of “hired manager”, relying on his experience as a career intelligence officer and top-level St. Petersburg functionary. He strengthened the power vertical, created a predictable system for interaction between the legislative branch and the government, forced the financial oligarchs out from being involved in government decisions and relieved those who disagreed with his policies of their control over the media market. He managed to fill the treasury, cut external debt and increase the financial reserves of the country.

During his first term (2000 – 2004) the composition of the government was practically unchanged, and after his victory in the elections of 2004, two technical premiers were changed in four years. Ministerial staffs were retained and continuity of policy maintained.

Putin built up relations with foreign states and restored cooperation with developing countries based on mutually profitable partnerships. He built up defence capabilities, economic independence and the international status of Russia. In spontaneous appearances he quoted popular lines from Soviet comedy films and

used solid military expressions, clear and straightforward, without the niceties of speechwriters, to convey the position of the head of state both to journalists and to the common man. Putin transferred presidential authority to his successor as per the Constitution of the RF, at the appointed time and as per the established procedure. And he went on to head the Government of RF (2008 – 2012).

Vladimir Putin returned in 2012 to the model of a strong presidency in a strong state, observing that politics was his life. His experience as prime minister professionally enriched him, plunging into the routine of economic affairs and allowing him to travel to practically every region and understand the everyday needs of the country.

In the beginning of his third term he emphasized fulfilment of social obligations to citizens, the refitting of the armed forces with modern technology, strengthening of fiscal discipline and anti-corruption measures and “de-offshorization” of the economy. After protest demonstrations, Putin legally initiated control of foreign financial sources for NGOs and rules for the legalization of non-system opposition to political parties and civic organizations.

In the absence of a state ideology or national concept and growth in domestic interethnic and interreligious intolerance, the President of the RF determined his political priorities, often using words like “careful”, “balanced” and “hopeful” in his spontaneous statements.

Among current tasks: setting up a border policy, developing the “spiritual ties” of society, defending traditional values legally and restoring the teaching of Russian language and literature throughout the country to permit the strengthening of economic interaction with other states by humanitarian relations.

Putin’s foreign policy, conducted in relation with foreign economic policy, acquired an aggressive character in 2012 – 2015, which led to a variety of international successes and popularity of the President of the RF as one of the most experienced and competent world leaders.

According to the research results, the three presidential terms of Vladimir Putin are characterized by a motivational profile with a reasonably stable balance

of power and achievement motives, along with a high level of affiliation motive. Some increase in power motive was noted in 2011-2012 along with a strengthening of affiliation motive, which was related to the context of the electoral cycle.

The current leader of Russia has a multifaceted and complex structured self-concept, and his self-esteem while in the highest posts in the government was substantially higher due to the success of policies he has promoted.

His operational code displays charisma, optimism, formulation of global goals and an amicable mindset towards the rest of the world without excluding displays of retaliatory hostility. Statism and patriotism combined with ideas of democracy, equality and cosmopolitanism prevail in his rhetoric, and his leadership behavioural type displays “administrator” style.

His interpersonal relation style was characterized by introversion at the start of his first term, but he showed himself confidently as an extrovert in his second term as president, and has always displayed a rather high level of domination. A strengthening of these characteristics of his interpersonal relations has been observed in Mr. Putin’s third term.

Thus, the biographical data, the historical information and the results of political/psychological research attest to the fact that the personal component plays a leading role in the development of the presidency in Russia. So, Vladimir Putin modifies the characteristics of his office, accommodating them to his individuality, and brings new features to the mechanism of power and to the nature of the interaction with other political leaders and institutions, both in Russia and abroad. Transformations of presidential leadership take place before our eyes and make the continuation of research into the personology of the Russian presidency both useful and responsive to the demands of the times.

To conclude, the personological theory of presidency, within which we have provided insights into Vladimir Putin’s leadership, allows to take into account a dynamic unity of the three components of the presidency – the personality of the head of state, the international and domestic political context, and the role assumed by the country’s leader. The personological theory of presidency bears explanatory

and diagnostic potential to understand today's political reality in Russia, both at the level of interaction among power elites and at the level of interplay among countries.

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