



TEACHING HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

A HANDBOOK FOR HISTORY
AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Edited by Alexander Formozov, Leonie Sichtermann

RUSSIA: "POLITICAL WHIRLWINDS OF THE 1990S"

Author: Andrey Suslov

I. Overview

This class is focused on Russian political life in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union. Some of the problems are described in comparison to similar processes in Eastern Europe. Students are encouraged to engage with the lesson material by using interactive media such as Kahoot!⁹⁷, working with documents and group discussions.

II. Students' age

High-school students (9th – 11th grade) or technical education students.

III. Objectives

- Creating an environment that will help to understand the controversial political processes of the 1990s in Russia.
- Creating an environment that will help to understand democratic values and the supremacy of law.

Values and skills through the high school program, according to the Federal State Educational Standard:

- **Personal:** "Russian civil identity, patriotism, respect for one's people, a sense of responsibility to the Fatherland, pride for your land and your Fatherland, the past and the future of Russia's multinational population"; "one's civil position as an active and responsible member of Russian society, who is conscious of her constitutional rights and responsibilities, respects law and order, possesses a sense of self-respect, a member who consciously accepts traditional, national, and universal humanistic and democratic values".
- **Meta-disciplinary:** "the ability to productively interact and cooperate during teamwork, to take into account the position of other teamwork participants"; "the ability to reflect cognitively in the sense of understanding one's actions and thinking processes".
- **Disciplinary:** "the possession of systematic historical knowledge, an understanding of Russia's place and role in world history"; "the ability to work with historical sources, the ability to independently analyse documentary evidence associated with a certain historical theme".

⁹⁷ Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform.
For more information see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_game.

IV. Step-by-step description of the lesson

Preparation process

Before the class the students should read through the corresponding part of the textbook. They should also bring their smartphones or other devices with internet access to the class.

The Class

ACTIVITY 1 (15 minutes)

After a brief introduction, the teacher invites the students to play *Kahoot!* To do this, she logs into <https://kahoot.com> and starts the *Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s* game. In order to start the game, the teacher has to register on the website, then open the menu, press *Discover* and type in the name of the game (*Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s*) in the search bar. After the game has appeared, press *Play*, choose the *Teach* option and select the classic mode, after which the game's password will become visible. From the teacher's computer, the image will be projected on a screen which is visible to the students. The students, in turn, access <https://kahoot.it>, enter the password and their name or nickname. The teacher puts the questions on the screen one by one (20 seconds per question), then shows the correct answers and gives her comment on each question. The full text of *Kahoot!*, including the answers and commentary (See APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 187). These comments are extensive. To make the game more dynamic, the teacher should provide much shorter commentary to each question, including the parts that she considers most important.

ACTIVITY 2 (20 minutes)

The teacher divides the class into three groups. Each group receives a set of documents related to a certain problem and a few questions that they need to discuss after reviewing said documents (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 193). Each group is given four minutes to do this.

Next, the students work on the three historical problems that they studied in groups. Before each group's presentation, the teacher shows a short video that presents the problem visually. The teacher can download the video from <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EhndENVgDr5YiaNX0oIj5Do1oZjOI73n?usp=sharing>. For the first group: Yegor Gaidar's dismissal.

For the second: The elections of 1996.

For the third: Boris Yeltsin's New Year address.

The groups answer the questions in turns, while the other students are welcome to express their own opinions. After that, the teacher gives her commentary

(They can be found in the APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 197). Each group is given five minutes for their presentation, including the video and the teacher’s commentary.

ACTIVITY 3 (5 minutes)

During this final reflective part, the students must answer two questions: “What impressed you the most while studying the history of the 1990s?”, and “How did these events influence the state of modern Russian society?”

Assessment. The teacher should provide feedback during the class, noting the student’s success in understanding the concepts (listed above). Assessment must be based on the knowledge of the pre-studied material shown in the student’s answers during the class.

APPENDIX

SOURCE A: *Kahoot!*, “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s”.

The 1990s in Russia are called “wild” or “the time of hopes”. Do you know the most important details of the key political events of that period?

1. In December 1991, Boris Yeltsin gave Yegor Gaidar powers to lead the government, and Gaidar organized the “government of reforms”. Many of its members called it “the kamikaze government”. Why?

- A. They wanted to use the chaotic conditions for their personal profit.
- B. In the face of the breakup of the government’s power, most of their efforts went into preventing economic collapse while paying less attention to reforms.
- C. Boris Yeltsin promised to execute them if they didn’t reform the economy in one year.
- D. They were afraid of being torn to pieces by an outraged crowd.

Comments: The catastrophic situation at the end of 1991 resulted from the actions of previous regimes and the fall of the USSR. Gaidar, along with many of his government’s members, later stated that the majority of their efforts were dedicated to preventing a full stoppage of the economy, noting that any responsible manager would have done the same. Little time was left to regulate the reforms, which were painful for the population, as any dramatic social change would be. There was also resistance from the conservative majority of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, and the so-called “red directors” largely blocked the reforms. Because of these two factors, the members of this government felt that their dismissal was inevitable.

2. On October 2nd, 1993, the radio station, *Echo of Moscow* broadcast the words one of these then-popular politicians addressing the military pilots: “Comrades, get in your planes, go bomb the Kremlin!” Who was it?

- A. Boris Yeltsin, the president of Russia.
- B. Alexander Rutskoy, Russian vice-president.
- C. Albert Makashov, a general.
- D. Anatoly Chubais, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

Comments: By the autumn of 1993, the political struggle between the president of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation had become a political crisis. The crisis was made worse by a legal impasse, since the Supreme Soviet tried to preserve the Soviet model of combining the executive and the legislative branches, and by the fact that the political forces were not keen on dissolving the conflicts using democratic procedures. In October, armed confrontations started in Moscow. The White House defenders successfully stormed the City Hall and tried to capture the main TV Centre Ostankino. The attack on the White House by tanks was a turning point. Even though the tanks shot blanks, the rebels were scared and immediately surrendered, and this dramatic picture settled in the historical memory of the Russian people. The effect of this confrontation was serious. Over the course of several days, at least 150 people were killed, according to officials. The political leaders lost the trust of the people, and the power system was transformed radically. Violence became an acceptable way to solve political conflicts.

3. The Russian Constitution of 1993 stated that

- A. The president possesses general leadership over the Government of Russia.
- B. If the president wishes to, the Federation Council can fire any judge.
- C. Russian international agreements have more power than local law.
- D. Government agencies can appoint local officials.

Comments: The Russian Constitution of 1993 created a legal foundation for building a modern democratic state. It became a constitution of direct action, which is especially important for the implementation of human rights and liberties. It strengthened the division of power, even though presidential power was still dominant, and became the base for the creation of local government systems. It is with this constitution that the Soviet power system in effect since 1917 was finally abolished.

Article 15 of the Russian Constitution, which gave the international agreements priority over local Russian law, did not disappear even in 2020. The new amendments state that the “decisions of international authorities, made based on the international treaties of the Russian Federation are not to be executed in the Russian Federation if they contradict the Constitution of the Russian Federation”.

Such wording does not refute the authority of international norms but makes it possible to ignore them in certain situations, even if it contradicts international law.

The most important amendments of 2020 are ones that expand the president's authority while narrowing the power of the government, and the legislative and the judicial branches of the state. The president's immunity now continues even after his presidential term. He gained general leadership over the government and the power to appoint and fire federal ministers and the attorney general. The president can now be re-elected twice more, in addition to his previous terms.

It is only with the 2020 amendments that the judges of the Constitutional Court, as well as of any other court, can be fired based on the president's will. Before the amendments, the courts had the power to elect and fire officials themselves.

The power of local governments was, in fact, nullified. A unification of the state and local governments was declared. The state authorities can now take part in creating the local government bodies, appointing, and firing the local officials, etc.

4. How many political parties took part in the State Duma election in 1995?

- A. Less than 10.
- B. 11-30.
- C. 31-50.
- D. More than 50.

Comments: The formation of a modern party system, a process which started in the 1990s, was never finished. During the first five years of the 1990s the number of parties grew radically, but in the second half of the decade it declined. 13 parties took part in the State Duma election in 1993, 43 in 1995, and 26 in 1999. In 1995, there were 258 registered political parties, but in 1999 there were only 139. The parties were weak mainly because they didn't have the time to become organizations representing the interests of large population groups. The limitation of the Federal Assembly (according to the Russian Constitution of 1993) and the people's inexperience with voting in a party system also weakened these parties. The liberal leaders of the early 1990s could not create a strong "party of power". Their party, *The Choice of Russia*, received 16% of the vote in 1993. In the State Duma election of 1995, the "party of power", *Our Home – Russia*, which included more officials and heads of enterprise, received a mere 10% of the vote. During the second half of the decade and especially after 2000 the natural development of the party system became more and more deformed. The party of power acts less and less like a political party that represents the interests of a large group of people, but as a corporation of officials that brings the will of the executive branch

into life. Real political parties are few, unpopular, and unable to become a part of the legislative branch.

5. Viktor Chernomyrdin, who became the Prime Minister of Russia after Yegor Gaidar's dismissal,

- A. Continued liberal reforms.
- B. Began cancelling liberal reforms.
- C. "Froze" liberal reforms.
- D. Did nothing about economic problems.

Comments: Viktor Chernomyrdin is remembered mainly for his malapropisms. He was seen as part of the old *nomenklatura*⁹⁸ connected to production, which is why the deputies voted for him. To their surprise, Chernomyrdin's government continued with the reforms. The government's priorities in 1993 included the strengthening of the Russian ruble, financial stabilization and fighting inflation. Altogether, these policies followed Gaidar's approach, and the liberal economic reforms continued. Despite the disadvantageous economic conditions, the basis for the development of the new economic and political foundation was created in an unprecedented time frame – less than ten years. However, while the transition to the market economy, albeit with some deformation, was performed, a real democracy could not be built. No real separation of authority, no independence of courts and no competitive party system has been established/implemented. A reform of the law enforcement system never took place.

6. Which of today's oligarchs was linked to the *semibankirschina* of the 1990s?

- A. Oleg Deripaska.
- B. Vladimir Potanin.
- C. Roman Abramovich.
- D. The Rotenberg brothers.

Comments: *Semibankirschina*, a folk word, was introduced by journalist Andrey Fadin in 1996, after Boris Berezovsky arrogantly named the seven people who controlled more than a half of Russia's economics and influenced the most important political decisions in the country. Those seven were Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven, Vladimir Gusinsky, Alexander Smolensky and Vladimir Potanin. The presence of oligarchy in the 1990s is partially a myth invented by the media since one cannot insist on any direct influence of the richest people on politicians or political institutes. There was,

⁹⁸ The *nomenklatura* were a category of people within the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries who held various key administrative positions in the bureaucracy, running all spheres of those countries' activity, whose positions were granted only with approval by the Communist Party of each country or region. The *nomenklatura* formed a de facto elite which had some specific privileges in the former Eastern Bloc.

obviously, some influence, most clearly seen in the oligarchs' financial support of Boris Yeltsin during the 1996 election. Despite the war on oligarchs declared by Vladimir Putin, the wealthiest capitalists still influence the government, although not in the way they did in the 1990s. Out of the former seven only Fridman and Potanin can be considered oligarchs now. On the other hand, others, such as Roman Abramovich, Oleg Deripaska, Viktor Vekselberg and Vagit Alekperov, who gained influence and wealth in the 1990s, are still present. They are accompanied by Vladimir Putin's friends, Arkady Rotenberg, Igor Sechin and others.

7. The Treaty of Federation was signed on March 31st, 1992, by all the republics except for Chechnya and Tatarstan. This treaty
- Helped strengthen the unity of the Russian Federation.
 - Provoked the decay of the Russian Federation.
 - Encouraged some territories to separate from the Russian Federation.
 - Tried to keep the Soviet Union intact.

Comments: Intending to attract the support of the autonomous regions, Boris Yeltsin rashly said in August 1990, "take as much sovereignty as you can eat". This phrase, which he later admitted was a mistake, encouraged separatist sentiments in autonomous regions and led to many of them declaring sovereignty and making their own laws. Much of the content of statements made by regional politicians was political speculation. According to some experts, real potential for separation was only present in Chechnya and Tuva. However, in the complicated situation of 1992, the threat of the country's breakdown was considered very seriously. The Treaty of Federation allowed the autonomous regions to move towards more centrist tendencies by setting the legal basis of the division between federal and local authorities. The federal centre sought favour with certain territories in 1992-1994, mostly with national autonomous regions, and built an asymmetric federation, in which some territories gained exclusive rights. This allowed the preservation of state unity. Later, the local authorities lost, little by little, their relative independence.

8. What was the immediate reason for the First Chechen War?
- Dzhokhar Dudaev's proclamation of the Independent Republic of Ichkeria.
 - Russia's ultimatum to disarm the "illegal warring factions" in Chechnya.
 - Russia's demand to free the hostages in Budyonnovsk.
 - The murder of Dzhokhar Dudaev.

Comments: Chechen leaders and people were eager to be more politically independent than other regions. However, the main factor that led to the worst possible scenario of relations between the federal centre and the autonomous region was the constant urge of Russian political leaders to use or threaten force. The

state of emergency declared by Boris Yeltsin as a response to the declaration of the Independent Republic of Ichkeria led to stronger Chechen loyalty to Dudaev, the formation of a national guard, the blockade of the Russian army, and, finally, the criminalization and loss of control over the republic. When the federal army entered Chechnya on December 10th, 1994, before the expiration of the ultimatum, it led not to the supposed quick victory, but to the far-reaching and tragic First Chechen War which took many lives. The war ended in the defeat of the federal army. On August 31st, 1996, the Russian and Chechen delegates signed the Khasav-Yurt Accord, which ended the First Chechen War and established the following: Chechnya gained the status of an independent republic making up a part of Russia. Russia had to pay compensation for the buildings destroyed in Chechnya and withdraw its army from the region, while the Chechen side had to dissolve illegal armed groups.

To put this in historical perspective, we can say that Dudaev's project of an independent Chechnya would have been a secular autonomous republic within Russia, while in the present-day Chechnya is an Islamic dictatorship, which is harsher than the Russian dictatorship, with federally funded authorities that are absolutely independent from the federal centre.

9. As a result of the 1995 presidential election, the president of Poland, Lech Wałęsa
- Won the election because of the scale of his campaign.
 - Retired as president after losing to a Democratic Left Alliance candidate.
 - Led a successor to power.
 - Did not run in the election and retired.

Comments: The defeat of Lech Wałęsa, a symbol of Polish reforms, and the victory of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a social democrat, is not only a sign of change in the people's loyalties, but also an illustration of the success of the democratic process in Poland in the 1990s. This bigger success, in relation to Russian political reforms, was due not only to the better initial conditions (less of a totalitarian legacy, stronger help from the West, "Solidarity" leaders' authority, etc.), but also to a stronger attention to the cultivation of democratic practice. The free competition of political parties was encouraged, and efforts were directed to form an independent judicial branch. A key factor was the political support of liberal reforms conducted by the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Leszek Balcerowicz. This "shock therapy" gave the first positive results in half a year, supporting the acceptance of the democratic reforms. An administrative and tax decentralization (unseen in Russia) also played a big part in the political and economic reforms. The new Constitution, accepted on May 25th, 1997, which limited the role of the president and the Sejm, led to a further strengthening of democracy. The Council of Ministers became the main element of the executive branch, but the programs proposed by it must be approved by a parliamentary majority.

10. How many people were killed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s?

- A. 100-200 people.
- B. 10,000-20,000 people.
- C. 100,000-200,000 people.
- D. 1,000,000-2,000,000 people.

Comments: According to Leszek Balcerowicz, “the peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Union looks like a miracle” compared to the Yugoslav civil war. This war or, to be precise, wars, claimed between 100,000 and 200,000 lives. Such a high casualty rate makes them some of the bloodiest wars in Europe, second only to World War II. These wars were fought in the territories of five (out of six) republics of the former Yugoslavia. From 1991-1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina separated from Yugoslavia, while Serbia and Montenegro created the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The battles with the most bloodshed happened first in Croatia and Bosnia, and then in Serbia (mainly Kosovo). This can be explained by the fact that in these regions people of many different ethnicities lived next to one another. Nationalist leaders of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian and Croatian Serbs wanted to join their territories to Croatia and Serbia, respectively. The Kosovo Albanians tried to gain independence.

NATO intervened in the conflict twice. The first intervention was in 1995, when NATO intended to stop the ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Serbian army. This intervention led to peace negotiations. Because of these negotiations, an agreement to create a united state of Bosnia and Herzegovina was made. In this state, three nations, Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, would have equal rights, and each administrative entity would have its own government. NATO intervened for the second time in 1999, bombing Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, in order to make the president, Slobodan Milošević, withdraw the Serbian army from Kosovo, where the fight against armed separatists turned into the ethnic cleansing of Albanians and led to the mass displacement of Kosovan citizens as refugees. The Serbian army left Kosovo and KFOR, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force, moved in. In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence.

SOURCE B:

Documents for the “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s” class.

1. On December 10th, 1992, the 7th Russian Congress of People’s Deputies fired Yegor Gaidar, who, by then, had been in charge of the Russian government for about a year. He received 467 votes out of the necessary 521. As a result, Boris Yeltsin offered Viktor Chernomyrdin the position of First Deputy Prime Minister as a compromise.

Ruslan Khasbulatov (in 1992 – Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation):

...the day before Yeltsin was begging me, he was saying, “let’s keep him”. I was very angry with them, but still I told him, “Alright, I won’t bring up the question of Gaidar’s dismissal, but that means nothing, after all, I only have one vote, and there are about a thousand deputies at the congress”.

...Yeltsin realized that he’s not almighty, that his rating is not what it once was.

...this parliament [2002] doesn’t play the role of the centre, as the principal power of the democratic process anymore. When we talk about democracy, we need to first keep in mind what kind of power the central democratic authority holds, which is exactly what a federal parliament is.

Gennady Burbulis (in 1992 – First Deputy Prime Minister and State Secretary of the Russian Federation):

...the difficulties with the economic changes were perceived as a weakness by the people, as flaws of the democratic changes.

...Yeltsin manoeuvred nicely, as always, [...] if Chernomyrdin didn’t exist, he would have to be made up.

...we completely lost the loyalty of society, of the people in 1992.

Viktor Scheinis (in 1992 – People’s Deputy of Russian Federation):

...the fight, indeed, happened over economic issues. But the central question was the question of government, who will be in charge of it. Actually, our main goal was to grab the government from the president’s hands.

...the 7th congress had to show both the president and the democrats that the time of tempest and attack has gone, that we have to learn how to manoeuvre instead of going straight.

...with all its costs, in 1992, in 1993 and in the first years after the new constitution... public politics existed all the same, the society’s interest in political affairs was one of the factors that influenced political decisions. Today, all political decisions are hush-hush. The parliament, indeed, doesn’t play any serious role. [...] Society’s will to control their deputies, to go to elections and achieve certain results has changed. The elections are now controllable, just as democracy is controllable.⁹⁹



Discussion questions:

1. What was the main factor leading to Gaidar’s dismissal?
2. What are the main differences between the political life of the early 1990s and of today?

⁹⁹ Ten years later. Yegor Gaidar’s dismissal. December 8th, 2002.
Available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/24203420.html>.

2. The presidential election of 1996 became, in many ways, an iconic event. By the beginning of 1996 the current president, Boris Yeltsin, lost his popularity, and in February 1996 his approval rating was no higher than 4%. However, in the first round of the election, on June 16th, in which 11 candidates took part, he gained 32% of the vote. His rival, Gennady Zyuganov, received 32%. In the second round of election, on July 3rd, Yeltsin won in a landslide, gaining 54% of the vote, while Zyuganov received 40%.

Journalists and politicians discuss how this result was achieved.

Valery Khomyakov (Political scientist, former member of Yeltsin’s campaign):

“There are no miracles, and there was no ballot falsification. The first and the main thing was that we managed to create the spectre of the return of communism with all its attributes: lines, alcohol, cigarette and soap shortages... “Vote or lose!”, “God forbid!”, “Buy some food for the last time!” – these mottoes worked. On the other hand, we cannot forget about the huge amount of non-public work with the regional elites done by Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin. The governors then had more weight than the Kremlin. Most of them were rather evasive, but he spoke their language and made them decide. He would often ask one of them to stay after a government meeting. “Well, who do you support?” “Boris Nikolaevich, of course!” “And what do you say back home? That you support the continuation of reforms? Well, go and meet ORT’s film crew in the corridor and tell them this!”

This was, of course, an administrative resource. But it wasn’t the same as today when they pressure retirees and state employees. Nobody touched simple voters.”¹⁰⁰

Igor Malashenko (Responsible for the media coverage of Yeltsin’s campaign):

“The president ensured his own victory. If, after several heart attacks, with a malfunctioning heart, Yeltsin didn’t find it in himself to go around the country, to speak at demonstrations, to give interviews, to dance at concerts, nothing would have happened.”¹⁰¹

Alexander Loktev (in 1996 – Editor-in-chief of the newspaper, *Kommersant*):

“I was at the famous meeting that took place in the LogoVAZ reception house, which was then owned by Boris Abramovich Berezovsky. [...] I think that all the chief editors of all the important publishers were there, all the people that were responsible for the TV information broadcasting – ORT, NTV, etc. There were about 25-30 people. During that meeting we were told that if we didn’t support Yeltsin, the whole country will become “red” again. That’s why we must sacrifice our principles and support Yeltsin.”¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-36714981>.

¹⁰¹ Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/forbes/issue/2006-06/14939-kak-delali-prezidenta>.

¹⁰² Available at: https://slon.ru/russia/ya_vzhivuyu_nablyudal_kak_hodorkovskiy_iz_hishhni-508974.xhtml.

Arkady Ostrovsky (Journalist):

“Chubais is not sorry, he doesn’t regret that he was the author of the most controversial process of privatization: with loans-for-shares auctions, during which the largest and most valuable Russian assets were handed over to a group of magnates in exchange for loans and their support of a very sick Yeltsin during the 1996 election.”

Anatoly Chubais (Played a key role in the privatization process during his time in the Russian government):

“We didn’t have a choice. Had we not gone through with the loan-for-shares scheme, the communists would have won the 1996 election, and that would’ve been the last free election in Russia, since these guys never give their power away for nothing.”¹⁰³



Discussion questions:

1. Was the acting president’s victory in the 1996 election predetermined?
2. According to the experts, what are the main factors that ensured Yeltsin’s victory?
3. On December 31st, 1999, during his New Year’s speech, Boris Yeltsin announced his retirement. The Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin became acting president. In March 2000, he won the first run of the presidential election with 53% of the vote.

On August 9th, 1999, Boris Yeltsin addressed the people on the TV, saying that he was appointing the FSB director Vladimir Putin as acting prime minister. He clearly stated that it is Putin who he saw as his successor: “...there will be a presidential election in a year. Today I have decided to name the man, who, in my opinion, can consolidate society. To ensure, with the support of a wide range of political forces, the continuation of reforms in Russia... This is Vladimir Putin, Secretary of the Security Council, Director of the FSB.”¹⁰⁴

Valentin Yumashev (Advisor to the president of the Russian Federation):

“Yeltsin left his office half a year in advance to give Putin a leg-up against Primakov and Luzhkov, to guarantee, even more, his victory in the election... he (Yeltsin) saw him as a man who would continue his reforms. The liberal reforms, the reforms associated with the way of the market economy that Russia took, that Putin will continue with these reforms and will not turn from this main course.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Available at: <https://rg.ru/2004/11/19/chubaj.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/435055>.

¹⁰⁵ Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2019/11/22/816979-on-videl-cheloveka-prodolzhit>.

Leonid Parfenov (Journalist):

“To put a loyal candidate into the president’s chair through appointing him prime minister – operation “Successor” (this name is attributed to Boris Berezovsky) must preserve “Yeltsinism” without Yeltsin. For Yeltsin’s closest entourage that would guarantee wealth and personal safety in Russia. If Luzhkov came to power, redistribution and repressions would be inevitable. Stepashin is considered “decent” (“loyal”, “honest”, a man of his word), “but weak”. That means he will not be able to handle either the Caucasus or his political rivals in the *Centre*. Someone “loyal and strong” is needed... The new prime minister focuses on the Caucasian campaign. Putin’s main public allies – *ORT*, controlled by Berezovsky, and the government channel *Russia* – promote the image of a “strong hand” that will put everything in order. A little over a month after his appointment as prime minister, Putin formulates the slogan of his presidential campaign. Promising to “pursue the terrorists everywhere”, he gives a radical example: “Pardon my language, if we catch them on the toilet, we’ll whack them on the loo, after all!” The crowd adopts his words, turning it into a categorical imperative “Whack them on the loo!” This is the motto with which the country pledges allegiance to the new hero.”¹⁰⁶

Sergey Aleksashenko (Economist):

“Boris Yeltsin naming his successor was a very important, key moment. By doing so, he crossed out all the republican basics... today, in our country, if we put away what’s written in the constitution, we have absolute monarchy. Not a limited one, not the British monarchy, we have a monarchy like one in Saudi Arabia, where one man decides everything.”¹⁰⁷

**Discussion questions:**

1. Was there any real alternative to Putin during the 2000 presidential election?
2. How serious was the outcome of the “careful” disruption of democratic procedures with the help of political technology?

SOURCE C: Suggested comments to the “Political whirlwinds of the 1990s” class.

Group 1: Summarizing the discussion, typical features of the political situation of 1992 should be noted. First, a struggle between political parties, and second, a violent struggle between the executive branch (the president and his administration) and the legislative branch (the Supreme Council). Both these things were

¹⁰⁶ Available at: <https://namednibook.ru/operaciya-preemnik-putin-mochit-v-s.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27342743.html>.

not an illusion, the struggle went on in the then-existing legal field. In the end, the majority of the Supreme Council, which consisted mainly of Soviet *nomenklatura*, won. Throughout 1992 it sabotaged the radical market reforms made by the government and, finally, dismissed the prime minister despite the president's support of him.

Group 2: To summarize the discussion, it would make sense to draw the students' attention to the fact that, in 1996, the presidential election was incredibly competitive, with a real choice and an unknown result. Moreover, at the beginning of 1996, most experts thought that Yeltsin would lose the election. The effects of falsification, which experts think was marginally present, were minor. It was new PR techniques and the money invested in them by big business that worked. **Georgy Satarov** (in 1996 – an advisor to the president of the Russian Federation) stated:

“The “Vote or lose!” campaign was a massive project to manipulate people's opinions and set the foundation for mass zombification for decades to come. The propaganda of today is a child of “Vote or lose!”. But the manipulation of public opinion, which required control over TV, was not the only source of Yeltsin's “victory”. The sale of the state and its resources to support groups (the “loans-for-shares scheme”) was also a very effective way to keep Yeltsin in the Kremlin. It largely determined the unification of power and wealth as one of the key elements of today's state and power model.”¹⁰⁸

Group 3: To summarize the discussion, it is worth drawing the attention of students to the fact that, in the naming of Yeltsin's “successor”, the result of the presidential election in 2000 was largely predetermined.

Gleb Pavlovsky, a political scientist, characterized it: “The 1999-2000 election created a controllable democratic model... Putin's victory was achieved during a controlled manipulation of democratic procedures and (almost) according to democratic rules.”¹⁰⁹

The aftermath was fatal to democracy. A gradual narrowing of the citizens' abilities to control the state led to a virtual autocracy in just 20 years.

As can be seen from the three examples discussed, the degree of political competition fell during the 1990s. The desire of the leaders of the executive branch to control the political process led to the formation of an authoritarian regime.

¹⁰⁸ Available at: <https://tv2.today/TV2Old/Golosuy-ili-proigraesh-20-let-spustya>.

¹⁰⁹ Available at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75808>.