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## TO OLIGARCHY THROUGH DEMOCRACY OR TO DISORDER THROUGH ORDER

**Abstract:** Three decades ago, peoples of post-Soviet republics began building liberal democratic states according their historic and cultural demands. The state-building process was painful and accompanied by conflict, and it resulted in a different construction-oligarchy. In this article, I analyze the network of the problem's national, regional and global conditions at the theoretical level because of similar tendencies. I notice that one of the main conceptual problems of democratization in the region is the absence of an appropriate transitional pattern that considers its social and regional pillars. In this region, authoritarianism was a bridge for the oligarchy as well as a natural result of mass democracy. I also explain that a liberal system, having inherent "soft violence", moves toward authoritarianism, weakening the middle class. I argue that the region's process is not unusual but is an organic part of the present global problem of liberal democracy.

**Key words:** Liberal democracy; oligarchy; post-Soviet; democratization; inequality.

**Language:** English

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### Introduction

At the Cold War's end, with the absolute victory of liberal democracy, everyone, including the peoples of Eurasia, believed in building new democratic systems in the region. This belief was based on serious factors: the cultural level of the post-Soviet peoples, particularly their mass educational level, unlike other global regions; the history of statehood most of them possess; the presence of a system and experience of the republican form of government; the existence of a democratic republic in most of these countries before the USSR's creation; and the post-Soviet peoples' desire and perseverance for the Western liberal democratic model to be implemented in their countries and for their states' liberal-democratic courses.<sup>1</sup> However, after a short period time, processes and trends moved in a different direction—the establishment of authoritarian regimes and then

the formation of oligarchic systems.<sup>2</sup> The most interesting fact was that the peoples of Georgia and Ukraine, who overthrew authoritarian governments through colour revolutions, elected the oligarchs at the next stage immediately after some democratic reforms had been enacted.<sup>3</sup> And in both countries, these oligarchs came to power with the blessing and support of regional and global powers. Therefore, I can argue that either conditions at all levels—national, regional, and global—or actors, interests

<sup>2</sup> In these countries, the process of creating and strengthening this regime was presented as a transitional period (toward democracy). However, the emerging system with the transitional period's end is fully oligarchic.

<sup>3</sup> Bidzina Ivanishvili (businessman, richest person of Georgia, who was succeeded by Irakli Garibashvili and Giorgi Kvirikashvili—both businessmen who worked with Ivanishvili in the Cartu Group) in Georgia and Petro Poroshenko (prominent oligarch, owner of Roshen and Bogdan groups and other several estimates) in Ukraine.

<sup>1</sup> Formation of republican constitutions based on liberal-democratic values.



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and activities (for various reasons, willingly or unwillingly) contributed to such a course of action in the post-Soviet space. The process developed in parallel with liberal democracy's present, generally deadlocked situation (Diamond, Plattner, Rice 2015; Diamond, Plattner, Walker 2016; Cooley 2015; Hajiyeva 2014), and perhaps, in its context or as a prominent fact of the entire case. During this period, we followed scholarly works (See at: Shleifer and Treisman 2005; Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O'Halloran 2006; Basora and Boone 2010; Declour 2011) and state and international organizational activities (SECURITY POLICY. Brussels 18.11.2015) concerning liberal democracy's implementation in the region. Notwithstanding, we observe that obstacles were strengthened, systematized and settled rather than weakened, thereby complicating the problem. Moreover, in parallel with that process in the post-Soviet region, we see such tendencies as alienation of values (Dahl 2000), radicalism and growth of populism in the context of increasing inequality in the liberal democratic West.<sup>4</sup> If in the post-Soviet space, radicalism and populism brought authoritarianism and then oligarchy, then in the West's liberal democratic societies, inequality's growth, class difference (See at: World Inequality Report 2018; Sommeiller, Price and Wazeter 2016), and the richest stratum's emergence as being more powerful (both economically and politically) led to a political arena in which leaders had authoritarian features and made radical and populist statements (See at: Norris and Inglehart 2018; Thomas Wood 2017). This phenomenon means that democratization in the post-Soviet region, along with its regional characteristics and the development of a distinctive dynamism, is not only a regional problem. This fact means, first of all, that our (scientists) conceptual mistakes must be clarified through a fundamental approach to the question, and the chain of practical challenges and their rooted reasons must be researched at the theoretical level.

### **Failure of democracy and democratization in the post-Soviet space: common tendencies and reasons**

Like the sword of Damocles, democratization in most of the world's regions, including post-Soviet Eurasia, has encountered impassable barriers on political systems in the context of internal and external contradictions, especially conflicts and their pressures. Internal problems are usually political, economic and social, and sometimes mental and demographic and are mainly associated with

<sup>4</sup> The growth of right-wing populism in the US and Europe (France, Italy, Austria, Germany) and its results in the last election.

society's weakness, that is, a lack of stratification support. External obstacles are mostly geopolitical challenges related to conflicts, as well as factors of global economic interests that exceed democratic values and interests of ideological and political security, including prospects of democratization of regions. Systematized internal and external factors influence processes in a certain historical epoch. In this case, processes move toward the alienation of democratic values, the collapse of their mutual harmony, the creation of contradictions between principles, and then the settlement and strengthening of construction, which is democratic in form but incompatible in content.

The problems and processes of democratization and the dynamism of their tendencies in post-Soviet republics can be presented in several directions consistently and systematically.

### ***Local political obstacles to the democratic ideological system***

Carriers of government's system and culture, formed during the USSR, were distributed among active politicians and occupied the entire bureaucratic system. At present, the bearers of this political culture retain their positions in the government. Moreover, they cannot abandon traditional power principles and directly apply liberal democratic values. In addition, other subjective<sup>5</sup> and objective<sup>6</sup> conditions support their attitude. Therefore, some principles of liberal democracy were alienated, and between some principles, paradoxical and conflict situations were created. One example is the paradox of authoritarian power's legitimacy (Frye and Borisova 2016; Hale, McFaul and Colton

<sup>5</sup> The communist generation's political and economic interests that survived Soviet times and retain strong positions in the system of political power: on the one hand, the implementation of liberal-democratic values opens the doors of power to the younger generation, and this condition causes the loss of their positions; on the other hand, this value system requires transparent activities, and this feature does not allow the official position to become stronger or opportunities to be used. At the same time, the various post-Soviet republics support each other, in particular, Russia's geopolitical course, which considers the region's democratization a threat to its imperialist interests and even to its territorial integrity with the possibility of being a precedent.

<sup>6</sup> The absence of an independent national bourgeoisie, which is the leading layer of liberal democracy, is implied. It also implies inadequate conditions for regional security and their open threats to stability and territorial integrity.

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2004; Treisman 2011; Colton 2017)<sup>7</sup> and people's expectations for political liberties (Freedom House Report 2012; Petukhov and Ryabov 2004; Robertson 2009). On the one hand, we have the search for an alternative ideology aimed at restoring the former superpower, with psychological dependence on nostalgia for the totalitarian USSR (Dugin 2012); on the other hand, we see the bewilderment created by formal representations of certain elements of principles and mechanisms belonging to the liberal democratic Western model.<sup>8</sup> Thus, democratization's fundamental ideological problems arise as a result of social, mental and demographic contradictions, and they are deliberately developed in the context of various interests and political motivations. The processes of the destruction and breakdown of a democratic ideological structure occur in a certain country or region. Democratic principles occupy the political arena in different senses. Political power—seeking to implement, strengthen and sustain an anti-democratic system, even to export it to neighboring countries—can assume the role of a supporter of democracy and its values in the initial period and can achieve alienation of democracy through “democratization”.<sup>9</sup> In the beginning, political players hold the principles of “the will of the people” and “legitimacy of government” as priorities in

<sup>7</sup> Putin's support of public opinion (See at: Hale, McFaul and Colton, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the 2018 Russian presidential race, on the one hand, the anti-democratic ideological direction and political culture of the majority of candidates, including Putin; on the other hand, their interest in election campaigns based on the Western model's liberal democratic values. In addition, see: Colton, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Despite the fact that the regime Yeltsin implemented was different from Putin's regime (Colton and McFaul, July/August 2003), this model of “democracy” in post-Soviet Eurasia was established by Yeltsin in Russia through the constitution adopted in 1993. Yeltsin ensured the deployment of Russian army bases in other post-Soviet countries by expanding conflicts with the participation of the Russian armed forces, creating authoritarian regimes by overthrowing the powers formed by democratic groups and preventing the integration of the post-Soviet space into the Euro-Atlantic space. In a weak Russian period, accompanied by a conflict in Chechnya, Western support was needed, and it was obtained with the image of a democratic leader. He declared undemocratic Putin an heir and set him an obligation (Putin's inauguration speech, 7 May, 2000. BBC NEWS).

democratic values and then replace them with all values and norms (BBC NEWS 7 May 2000). However, after power is strengthened, a strong leader with strong power is popularized as the only guarantee of national security and the state's integrity (in particular, if this state is a great power located at the center of global processes) who “returned them ‘stability’ and self-respect” (Shestopal 2016, p.17; Hale 2016, p.33). Shestopal explains this process using Russia as an example: “The major part of the society consolidated around the national leader. Moreover, people united around one national idea (to restore the USSR: author), one common value system... The President became the heart of Russia's consolidation... Putin, as a politician, became of primary importance for the country” (Shestopal 2016, p. 34). Thus, people were threatened with a choice between democracy or unity and security (unity and security of Putin: author) (Shestopal 2016). Such a threat to small states is usually made from great power through conflicts created for them.<sup>10</sup> Any reform, any step toward democratization, can be seen and presented as a danger to the integrity, stability and security of the state and the nation, as well as for existing democratic achievements, even generating distrust and fear in public opinion in these countries, where alienation and exploitation of values becomes a trend.

Another problem of democratic state building is that democracy does not have sufficient political power or the necessary support within the political elite despite its legitimacy in the country because it contradicts the interests of ruling political groups. This circumstance even concerns “democrats” who came to power democratically and who struggle with the “communist” group. Therefore, democratization's main problem in the context of internal political interests is the refusal to implement democratic principles in the superstructure at the initial stage.<sup>11</sup> At the next stage, a problem arises

<sup>10</sup> For example, on the Russian side, every step taken by other post-Soviet governments toward democratic reforms is perceived as integration with the West, a way out of the circle of Russian influence, and a “betrayal” in Russian political vocabulary. Therefore, the democratic reforms of the post-Soviet republics are threatened not only by conflicts but also by the ignition of new foci of separatism, and “betrayal” receives an answer in accordance with traditional Russian political culture.

<sup>11</sup> For example, former human rights defender and democratic leader Zviad Qamsaxurdia, after coming to power democratically in 1991, abandoned democratic principles in governing and in parliamentary elections. This circumstance in multi-

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with a closed elite, creating an undemocratic situation within political groups and parties. This situation also exists in opposition political parties.<sup>12</sup> If the first-stage solution does not lead to the second-stage solution, democratic progress can be directed back after a certain period. However, these circumstances are formed not only through internal factors but also with the support of regional and international interests. In democratization, the correlation between internal and external factors must also be considered. In addition, the powers that carry the mission to spread and globalize democracy, the democratic world, determine where to search for obstacles to and responsibility for democratization in different countries (Cornell, Starr, Tsereteli 2015, p.44; Ambrosio 2009). This correlation seriously depends on the state's place in the world system.<sup>13</sup>

### *The economic monopoly of the political elite*

Joint development of the above-mentioned factors creates unique conditions for the illegal economical strengthening of political power (Stefes 2006, p. 91-105) and the application of control over all economic resources. Political power makes the political elite (formed by it) also the economic elite (Frye and Yakovlev 2016), creates a centralized system of corruption, and does not allow the existence of any business structure and capital beyond its control. In a word, political power achieves complete economic monopolization (Cappelli 2008; Pirani 2010; Kononczuk, Cenuşa and

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ethnic Georgia was used by Russia to escalate conflicts and bring Soviet cadres to power. Also in Azerbaijan, the democratic leader of the Popular Front, Abulfaz Elchibay, who came to power democratically in 1992, failed to fulfill the promise to dissolve the parliament, which was composed of obedient communists and easily used for coups, or to form a new parliament through democratic elections immediately after his coming to power. Russia, using this gap for his overthrow, prepared a military uprising in Ganja and again achieved a change of power through the same parliament.

<sup>12</sup> Authoritarianism in most opposition parties in Russia and other post-Soviet countries is stronger. These parties do not have internal dynamism. Over three decades, not only the leaders but even the main functionaries have remained the same.

<sup>13</sup> Barriers for the democratization of small states are mainly related to their regions and interventions, threats and influence of the region's great states, but in the great states the problems are related to unfavorable demographic (especially ethnic) compositions and historical factors threatening integrity and imperialistic goals.

Kakachia 2017) because capital outside control can work for the opposition's activities. Economic monopoly smooths the path for a political monopoly and its sustainability. In this sense, and for this purpose, the ruling group regularly and systematically creates barriers to the possibility of society's strengthening. Support (at various levels, open or secret) of the foreign political powers is also undeniable here, whether for successful close-term economic agreements focused on domestic policy (Tepavcevic 2013, p. 170-187)<sup>14</sup> or for political lobbying activities of cooperation created by transnational companies with these governments (Smith 2010; Rapoza 2016).

### *"Disarmed" society and the invisible problems of the opposition*

Strong political power actually creates a political system without a real democratic opposition by monopolizing the economy and controlling all economic resources, as the independent opposition needs financial resources for political activities and must receive these resources from society. Because a society's lack of capital is beyond the control of political power, *society is deprived of power and "disarmed" economically and politically*. In such societies, formal political opposition not only claims political power but is even considered insincere in its position, under governmental rule and one of the means of control over opposing social groups. However, the real opposition and political struggle exist in the government (Sedelius and Mashtaler 2013).<sup>15</sup> Strengthening the members of the elite by collecting giant illegal capital and eliminating all copulative threats (opposition) naturally helps to polarize the political elite. In the post-Soviet countries, foreign actors are fighting for their interests in the region over these elite polarized groups, and the main role and resources in these countries belong to Russia because in these countries, the 5<sup>th</sup> column of Russia remains—vestiges from the USSR period—and Russia tries to make the most of them. The struggle between polarized elite groups is not official or open; therefore, it has different rules and principles, is more ruthless, and its results cannot be predicted by democratic principles. In such conditions, the leader's loss of power, even the position of other members of the elite, means losing everything. It is a question of life and death for him and for his

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<sup>14</sup> For example, the direct investment in Germany and Hungary from Russia, which has given political support to governments aimed at domestic policy (Tepavcevic, September 2013).

<sup>15</sup> For example, the political struggle between the president and the prime minister in Moldova (Sedelius and Mashtaler 2013).



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relatives. In fact, undemocratic rules that were initially strengthened with the support of a local-regional-global situation and that created the opportunity to establish absolute power and their oligarchic result eventually became a great danger for these leaders and elites. In some countries,<sup>16</sup> the struggle between polarized elitist groups has moved to the legal level (through official opposition), but in other countries,<sup>17</sup> imitation of this development has been observed to divert attention from true polarization, and in most countries, the struggle is carried out with informal and strict rules. Such a situation approximates the prospects for a power coup and terror within the elite<sup>18</sup> and increases the likelihood of a revolution on the people who lack the opportunity to form a true opposition for a peaceful political struggle.<sup>19</sup> Revolutions occur in weak societies that are deprived of the middle class. Thus, moving the struggle to the legal level achieves compliance with the legal norms within the constitution's framework. This move is important not only for the state's security and sovereignty, preventing loss of national interests in the context of an illegal struggle, but also for the safe future of members of the elite and their families.

### **Regional and global conditions of the problem**

The network of regional and global conditions of post-Soviet republics is the main indicator of the success of liberal democratic state building. In general, democratic state building is a regional rather than a national process. It is also a regional order formed from regional conditions and the correlation between global order and global powers, based on the principles and agreements of the world order in a certain historical age, represented by the results of a global political, economic and ideological struggle. Together with the synchronous regional cultural factor, regional security is a condition that is more important for democratic regimes than other political regimes. In a democracy, the system of centralized control over society is weak because the democracy guarantees liberties in all spheres. This situation is favorable for the open threat of foreign agents with regard to fragile stability when regional security is not ensured, and the internal security system is not strong (because the state did not have the opportunity and time to create it). Another issue is that democratization can influence the region; create a precedent; and make cultural, ideological, political and geopolitical changes. Therefore, regional states,

depending on their democratic or undemocratic course and in accordance with their requirements for political and ideological security, support and promote this process or create complex obstacles to it. The presence or absence of a regional system also has a positive or negative impact on the democratization process within the state.<sup>20</sup> A strong regional system is an objective factor for determining statehood's course. This factor can also direct the social system and all its spheres and classes. The region's systematization creates a certain environment, and this environment, with its cultural and mental indicators, plays a role in all social and political processes.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the absence of strong regional systems of democratic states in the region or in the neighborhood creates gaps and impossibilities for democratic state building.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, *regional systematization had be conducted in the post-Soviet space, which supports the post-Soviet states' independence and creates a regional umbrella for the liberal democratic state-building process outside of Russian control.* Unfortunately, the democratic-transition process' regional context in the post-Soviet space was not sufficiently considered after the Cold War's end. Yes, the republics of East Europe and South Caucasus were admitted to the Council of Europe and the OSCE, attracted to cooperation with NATO. Cooperation with these organizations played a certain role in strengthening the independence of

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the accession of post-socialist Eastern European states to the EU, on the one hand, provides some support in the spheres of security and economic partnership. On the other hand, it plays the role of a locomotive for democratic reforms and building the rule of law in these countries. Even now, a serious obstacle to authoritarianism and the main guarantee of liberal democratic values in these states is the factor of belonging to the EU. In addition, after the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and especially in Kyrgyzstan, not being a subsystem of the relevant regional system and depriving regional support played big roles in the failure of democratic state building.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the Baltic States with an important measure of the Russian-speaking and pro-Russian population; in particular, Latvia with 40 percent of the Russian and other Slavic population and Estonia with 30 percent of the Russian and Russian-speaking population.

<sup>22</sup> In this case, the advantage created by the location of the Eastern Partnership republics in the relevant regional situation in comparison with the countries of Central Asia can be affirmed with the existence of the same Eastern Partnership Program.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Georgia and Ukraine.

<sup>17</sup> Like Novalny's opposition in Russia.

<sup>18</sup> The terrorist act in the Armenian parliament on October 27, 1999.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

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these post-Soviet republics, but this was insufficient regional support for the application of Western political values. The creation of GUAM by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova in 1997 was an attempt to fulfill this gap in the region.<sup>23</sup> As Tsereteli says, "Starting from 1996, both (Georgia and Azerbaijan: author) became part of a group of countries that focused on the negotiation process in the so-called Flank Agreement to reduce Russian military presence in areas that included the South Caucasus and Moldova" (Tsereteli 2013; OSCE 15-31 May 1996). This organization could not play its desired historical role, becoming an "orphan" under the threat of Russia, which was an excellent partner of the West, especially Europe, even recognized as a promising ally in the West's vision (NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson 13 Dec 2002; Joint Declaration by President George Bush and President Vladimir Putin 24 May 2002) until 2008.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the EU Eastern Partnership Program and the increased attention to its activities in recent years creates hope for the necessary systemic regional support in this part of the post-Soviet space.

Another important aspect of the democratization process is its dependence on the international system's order and rules, the power of the principles, interests and behavior of political actors and modern international strategic processes. As a basic problem of democratization, concrete states and regions' activities and selected courses were concentrated, although democratization is a global trend (Levitsky and Way 2015) and an indicator of mankind's development rate. This process is also an expression of the result of the global power struggle over the regions. The activation of the great powers in the regions, gradually disregarding the order and rules, calls for studying the problem of a democratic state building in the context of the question of liberal democracy's global order and disorder.

### **Rough realization of Aristotle's view on democracy and the new type of disorder through order: parallel ways of transitions to oligarchy**

In the first part, I focused on the participation of local, regional, and global political, economic and strategic interests in the failure of the democratization process in the post-Soviet space. The next task is to study the key links of the developmental process aimed at forming systems with an oligarchic essence. I am mainly interested in the problems at two levels: 1) Why was oligarchy's

path so short in the post-Soviet space? What are the specific national and regional conditions for this short path? 2) Why is the result achieved in this region accompanied by growing inequality and a strengthening of the populist right movement in the democratic world? This question means that the problem is not only related to the region's specific characteristics but also to the general deadlock of liberal democracy and its time achieved. Thus, *the problem is not an "orphan" and has unresolved theoretical roots, an upper system and a global umbrella.*

The oligarchy, as Aristotle expresses, is a "deviant" order (Aristotle 1998, p. 75-77) that is not derived from nature, is not honest, is reactionary, and looks after the ruling group's interests. Yes, Aristotle also includes democracy on this list, but a democracy that does not have a middle class (mass democracy: author). He sees the source of a threat to the state's security in an economically polarized society and the deprivation of most people's rights; therefore, he considers order with a strong middle class closer to democracy than to the oligarchy because for Aristotle, democracy, in comparison with oligarchy, is safer, more stabilized, and freed from revolutions and coups (Aristotle 1998, p.120, 1296<sup>a</sup> 10-15). Aristotle notes the transition of a democracy (in which society does not have a middle class) to an oligarchy or a tyranny (Aristotle 1998, p. 68, 1276<sup>a</sup> 5-10). This transition means that, on the one hand, democracy (mass democracy: author), in which the middle class is not in power, is not safe or stable, and passes to tyranny or oligarchy. On the other hand, because oligarchy is contrary to natural laws and therefore disorderly, it is not safe or stable because it cares for the interests of the smallest class—the richest strata.<sup>25</sup> This fact leads to the exploitation of

<sup>25</sup> I would like to note that the ideal is to embrace all strata equally and together as a source of power, but this fact does not comply with the laws of nature and society. Therefore, its implementation is impossible. In any case, one stratum or one community has superiority. Despite the fact that in Aristotle's ideal construction, the expression of all classes' interests occurs, and the middle class has regulating and controlling power, here, the progressive situation is regarded as a case of the monarch or aristocracy's superiority, but the regressive situation is regarded as a case of a rich class' superiority. I think that in this sense the rich layer differs from the aristocratic layer in the existence of power (strength) and the mission of owning. *Thus, if aristocracy's existence of power and the mission of owning are connected with the land and population living on this land, but in the case of a rich class, the existence of power and the mission of owning are connected with capital.*

<sup>23</sup> Uzbekistan also joined this organization in the initial period.

<sup>24</sup> Russia's occupation of Abkhazia and Ossetia as a result of the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 was the beginning of a turn in the current relations between the West and Russia.



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most people economically and the actual restriction of their political rights in support of the longevity of exploitation. Apparently, violence (we can call it “soft violence”) is the nature of an oligarchy. It does not matter whether the violence violates the legal system and the constitution. Obviously, in this case, violence is illegal, based on hard power. We can see this “soft violence” even in liberal democracies that have the legitimacy of values and legal systems,<sup>26</sup> creating a tendency to monopolize political power by the richest strata by increasing economic inequality.<sup>27</sup> In this case, violence occurs through the participation of all, despite the fact that most are not satisfied with the current situation’s outcome and conditions. However, no one sees an illegal or violent circumstance in this process; on the contrary, it is understood and perceived as the life of a society in which freedom is completely in power. However, in essence, this trend is violent because decisions are determined by the relationship between the strong and the weak. In addition, the absolutizing legal freedom of the strong does not leave a place for equality. This fact means that the order and support racks are loosened, and the system proceeds in a dangerous manner. At present, this trend is the main problem of societies in which inequality is growing. However, the question I pose is the transition from mass democracy to oligarchy through the construction of authoritarian regimes in the post-Soviet space. *If in societies with the richest classes, a liberal democracy tends to increase inequality through the freedom of the arena of interests and their clashes, then the gradual political superiority of the richest stratum over the whole of society results. However, in post-Soviet societies where the national bourgeoisie had been repressed, the ruling group that achieved political supremacy also owned economic resources, using bureaucratic resources by implementing an authoritarian regime.* Authoritarianism created a huge fruitful circumstance

<sup>26</sup> In preparing the liberal-democratic legislation, given the propensity of people to sin, one interest was met by other interests to regulate various interests (for the purpose of balancing social groups: the author). In my opinion, we do not see a balance of interests, because confrontation of interests occurs as in a free market, that is, by giving freedom to both them and the area where they meet (in the free market, the strong collides with the weak, which leads to easy exploitation of the weak by the strong).

<sup>27</sup> I argue that *the system of laws and norms, which absolutizes freedom and leads to inequality, already contradicts democracy’s essence.* Since, as Aristotle says, if the first principle of democracy is freedom, the second supporting principle is equality (Aristotle, 1998, p.176-177, 1317<sup>b</sup> 5-15).

for the ruling clan to turn into an oligarchic group in countries without a national bourgeoisie. Thus, the oligarchy, constructed through an economic and political monopoly, was formed.

The initial democracy’s tendency toward an easy and rapid transition to authoritarianism occurs in countries in which the democratic system is not strengthened and the middle class does not possess sufficient economic capital compared to its cultural capital. Additionally, in great states with democratic traditions, oligarchic families’ partnership activities with these ruling political groups seriously support this process. As a result, the following processes have easily and shortly made their way into unsettled democracies: growing inequality; monopolization and its political support; the direct participation of the government’s richest stratum (which, in the very essence of the power and mission of possession, does not have lands and population (in aristocracy) or intellect and professionalism (in the middle class) but materiality)<sup>28</sup>—in a word, the process of forming an informal oligarchy, that has gone its way in democratic states for 50, 100 or 150 years.

One important condition is that a society with weak economic support and stratification cannot exert strong resistance to power peacefully, and this weakness creates conditions for systematic corruption and increasing contradictions between strata. The ruling groups, using this situation and seeking to maintain a weak position of society, pursue a policy of economic monopolization to monopolize political power. The political elite also becomes an economic elite and, with the help of centralized corruption, continues the policy of the “disarmed society”, continuing to systematize exploitation and forcing people to insolvency. The possibility is thus prevented of society’s political organizing, which is without economic strength and with the belief in the impossibility of independent economic activity beyond the elite’s threat and monopoly. These corrupt political powers are easily supported by corrupt circles of relatively democratic states, and this fact creates fertile regional and global conditions for democracy’s opposite development: authoritarianism in these neighboring states.<sup>29</sup> It may

<sup>28</sup> According to Devereux’s notes, “Aristotle points out that ... the economic status of those who hold power is a defining criterion of democracy and oligarchy (1295<sup>b</sup> 34–9)” (Devereux, May 2011).

<sup>29</sup> This circumstance shows the loss of the scientific character of the presented indications of political theory to authoritarianism as “the limit of political freedoms and the provision of economic freedoms” in comparison with a new model based on corruption, economic monopoly, and political monopoly’s superstructure.



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even be democracy's opposite—authoritarianism already threatens Western democratic societies—and now this is not only a problem faced by political theorists (Norris 2017; Norris and Inglehart 2018) but also the main topic on the agenda of the international scientific community (IPSA President's Plenary 2018).

Another branch of the policy of “disarming” society is the brain drain from the post-Soviet countries, mainly from Russia: the migration of part of the intellectual layer and an important part of the talented youth. This process led to the cultural “disarming” of society and created the syndrome of hopelessness and helplessness as a mass psychological opportunity for monopoly. However, anger and rage, exacerbated by hopelessness and helplessness, despite the necessary opportunity for a monopoly in the near future, became a big threat to the elite.

Another indicator is conflicts that threaten these states' political lives, independence and sovereignty. Conflicts and the geopolitical situation activate and further the issue of internal stability. The regional powers, which are the creators of conflicts, threaten national governments and peoples through conflicts.<sup>30</sup> However, to maintain stability, selflessness is required from people, and obviously, first of all, the unification of people around the government is expressed. This situation dictates authoritarianism, and the ruling group uses it for political and economic monopolization.

All these national and regional indicators as objective and subjective conditions of authoritarianism also supported this regime in the formation of oligarchic constructions. However, in different world regions—especially in Eurasia, which has strong cultural bases for democratization—the main, and sometimes the only obstacles, to building a democratic system are the internal conditions and authoritarian regimes. Even in scientific literature, authoritarian power and its implemented regime are accepted as a fundamental political reason (Schofield, Levinson 2008; Svolik 2012; Huskey 2016). However, as a social cause, the main focus is either on the population's passive political culture or on civil society institutions' insufficiency (Soest and Grauvogel 2015; Lukin 2009; Foa and Ekiert 2017). These approaches play a role in the problem's solution failing due to incorrect directions.

In the post-Soviet space, authoritarian regimes did not result in unsettled democracies; on the contrary, mass democracies (Zakaras 2009) led to authoritarian powers and established them

legitimately.<sup>31</sup> In the first years of their independence, most of the post-Soviet region's republics formed democratic governments. Obviously, geopolitical factors, conflicts, and especially Russia's role (with respect to the post-Soviet republics) played large parts in their failure. However, another key indicator noted above was the problem of stratification and the scarcity of social resources that provide peaceful dynamism for strengthening democratic power and creating a democratic system. These resources were eliminated because of the repressed national bourgeoisie and the intellectual stratum in the USSR's first decades, and society was united only in bureaucratic institutions and state organizations, formed as a mass without any other material and organizational resources. This process occurred despite the fact that this mass was more educated and cultured than the lower strata of some democratic states.

However, the situation of Western democracy's first period was different. A strong national bourgeoisie was the social subject of the democratic system's realization. This democracy was a bourgeois democracy, and the unification of all people into a democratic process occurred gradually, step by step. This process had its own internal dynamism, which lasted hundreds of years. Even now, despite the right populism of authoritarian politicians, supported by the masses, and the efforts of the rich circles, who have a tradition of benefitting from every social and a political tendency to use these tendencies for their utilitarian purposes, the democratic system's main support and authoritarianism's main obstacle is this powerful class. In addition, a strong middle class is an obstacle to the system's reverse path, that is, again to make it only a bourgeois democracy. However, unfortunately, even in Western democracies, the general tendency is aimed at weakening the middle class, widening the gap between the layers, and increasing the richest stratum's role in the formation of political power and decision-making, even their direct participation in governance. This fact means that *we observe a change in the direction of the historical process of democracy's development*,<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> In 1992, democratic leaders began to rule the eastern European part of the post-Soviet space, including Russia, and the masses that brought them to power very soon needed strong and charismatic leaders.

<sup>32</sup> The change in this process' direction began with the Cold War's end. Thus, the end of the “cold war” with the Western bloc's victory, on the one hand, solved the great global problem, ensuring the independence of the Eurasian peoples. On the other hand, as a result of the complete victory of capitalism

<sup>30</sup> In the post-Soviet space, the main player in this role is Russia (Nazarenko, May 2017).





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which began as a bourgeois democracy and reached liberal democracy within social boundaries and in balance with social values, moving toward the bourgeoisie dictatorship through political and economic monopoly. Therefore, the question can be considered as separate parts of one global problem of liberal democracy: theoretical and practical.

### Is the scholar's approach to the question right? On what should we focus?

When analyzing the reasons for the result achieved in the failure of the liberal-democratic state building in the post-Soviet space, I realize the scale of these results is very broad and multistage. On the one hand, the issue's regional and global political complexity, and on the other hand, the global ideological crisis observed with the backwardness of democracy around the world, focuses attention on the problem's methodological side.

Additionally, the analysis of this study's first and second parts makes topical the issue of methodological errors in the direction of democratization of this region and regional states. Thus, a democratization policy and its conceptual framework—based on a precise analysis of the historical, geopolitical, security and socio-economic indicators of the post-Soviet space—should be prepared. One of the errors in the problem's methodological basis is that the powerlessness of post-Soviet societies due to weak stratification, which is deprived of a fundamental stratum of liberal democracy (free national bourgeoisie),<sup>33</sup> was not considered when thinking about democracy's realization, although the literature analyzes the Soviet period's social and economic legacy. Mass democracy's fragility, riskiness and destructiveness, its ability to guide the process to different outcomes, were to be considered at the process' beginning.

At the same time, special attention should be paid to a sensitive geopolitical situation. Unfortunately, when studying the problems of democratization, the main attention was paid only to economic and political obstacles and cultural heritage within the national borders, at best similar manifestations of post-communist legacy were chosen (Carter, Bernhard, Nordstrom 2016, p. 832), although the problem's geopolitical aspect is one of its most important features. Thus, special attention

over socialism, liberal democracy was free from its opposite, which systematically forced its integration with social values, regulating its measure and boundaries (Hajiyeva 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Unlike other global regions, in each of these countries, tens of thousands of the national bourgeoisie were killed and the rest were deported in the USSR's first decades.

should have been paid to the “canned” threats of the Russian geopolitical traditions that constitute the pillars of the imperial political culture, founded by Peter I, for implementation of alternative political values in the region around Russia.

A very important issue is the object of the focus. The optimal theoretical model of the transitional period, based on these abovementioned national and regional conditions, should have been prepared and implemented before introducing models of the democratic system. Actors involved in the application of democratization are derived from concept of a democratic system that is a model of the last goal, trying to establish its principles in the system and demand from governments. Nevertheless, the main issue here is to ensure a successful transitional phase to achieve the last goal, meaning that it is necessary to ensure an adequate social and geopolitical circumstance along with the formation of social pillars that support the alleged democratic system's security and stability, preventing geopolitical threats to democratization. Therefore, this transitional phase should be a model in focus. The Western school of democracy and the guarantors of this ideological system had the necessary resources and time to prepare this transitional model. Unlike the West, Russia prepared and implemented its own model to preserve its interests and keep this region in its future sphere of influence; to create a hotbed of conflicts and realize political, economic, and cultural pressure, even coups through these conflicts; and to form centers of political and economic powers serving Russian interests within countries. Clearly, Russia was more prepared for its regressive intention in the region and could apply its “successful” transitional model for this regressive intention. In addition, the West's liberal democratic school, on the one hand, did not represent a suitable and special model of transition for the region; on the other hand, it was powerless over the new situation created by Russia.

One mistake in the problem's methodological aspect is to take a special approach to states and regions outside democratization's general context. However, democratization and democratic state building have common tendencies and general laws, despite the various problems and peculiarities of states and regions.

Currently, democracy and the democratization process experience major problems not only in the post-Soviet countries but also in other global regions. Even in Eastern European countries, which are member states in the EU, democratic order is fragile and could not continue outside the EU's umbrella. We cannot solve the main problems of democratization and maintain the democratic order in our countries separately. While single case studies are important, they are not sufficient. Since most democratization problems in different countries are



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similar and interconnected, comparative studies with a macro theoretical approach are needed. In approaching the issue, systematizing theoretically the problems and processes is expedient, at first, regionally and then globally as dependent on a system. The discussion is about a theoretical system with the goal of globalization. Therefore, obstacles to democratization can be prevented if this problem is perceived as a question of democracy's globalization, the problem's origins will be boldly researched at a theoretical and fundamental level, and reforms at this level will be implemented to stimulate the historical process of democratic development.

### Conclusion

A theoretical description of the dynamism of the post-Soviet republics' formation—which are democratic in form, but oligarchic in essence—can be explained in two directions: the failure of liberal democracy and the formation of oligarchic systems of power. In each direction, the fundamental causes at national, regional and global levels are systematically involved.

In the first direction, the reasons for the failure of liberal democracy in these regional states can be grouped as follows:

1) Weakness of society in the face of political power. As the Soviet period's legacy, the deprivation of the national bourgeoisie, the middle class with material freedom, informal institutionalization, organizing and adequate traditions of society play a fundamental role here. At the next stage, the gaps created by the negative effect of emigration (especially the brain drain) also reduced societies' natural strengths. Democracy's basis can only be mass democracy, established in such a society with its social stratification, and through a rapid transition to authoritarianism these societies have created stable and orderly states.

2) Conflicts created in the region and artificially, fomenting separatism.

3) In the first decades after the Cold War (these decades were the most important initial period, playing a fundamental role in the implementation of liberal democracy), the democratic world's trust in the "new" Russia that began with Yeltsin and was transferred to Putin and the excellent conditions of this confident situation for strengthening it. The Russian factor has not been considered as still carrying a potential imperialist threat to all of Eurasia, including other post-Soviet republics and Eastern Europe. This fact is due not only to the legacy of Soviet ideology and Bolshevism but also to deeper and unchanging psychological, historical and cultural bases, created by and rooted with the consciousness of their owning the largest territory.

4) Apparently, post-Soviet countries have specific local and regional features inherited from the USSR and continuing Russian imperialist policies.

Therefore, plans, requirements and recommendations<sup>34</sup> for democratization before these countries' governments could not ensure the success of democratic state building. Even these plans cannot be considered as elements of a well-prepared transitional policy. The absence of a transitional model for democratic state building, considering national and regional conditions and proceeding from their solution's direction, can be taken as one of the main reasons for the present result.

In the second direction, the main reasons for the formation of oligarchic constructions in the post-Soviet space are the following:

1) The deprivation of society from economic resources and the national bourgeoisie, the insufficiency of the organizational culture, the weakness created by the flow of a serious part of cultural capital (the intellectual layer) and the psychological blow received from conflicts. All these factors have helped political ruling groups in their unambiguous control over economic resources.

2) The Russian pressure on the post-Soviet states politically and culturally from the inside through the 5th Kalon and directly as a foreign policy act, the policy of preventing the ideological and systemic integration of these countries into the Euro-Atlantic space, using all the resources (energy, economic, political) and the conflicts that it has created.

The global circumstance and its contribution to the oligarchy's formation in all post-Soviet countries, including Russia, along with the growth of inequality by overcoming the measure of economic liberalism in relation to social values even in democratic countries, the tendency of turning a rich layer into a powerful global network on a global scale. The growing right populism accompanied by an authoritarian trend in the context of increasing inequality in the liberal-democratic West was a fruitful circumstance and a valuable basis for the rapid and easy formation of oligarchic construction in other global regions, including the post-Soviet space. *The legitimized illegality, that is, the rules of the jungle in the anarchist international system (Allison 2009), supported by the agreement between the strong and the weak (interest origin), are transferred to the social level, which is ordered by laws (justice origin), more precisely, manifested as a growing inequality in the social system based on "soft violence". This tendency legitimizes the freedom of relations between strong and weak (as a struggle and "consensus" of interests) through its gradual acceptance in public opinion as liberal democratic, also adequate to natural laws; that is, it restores public order and its normal systems that developed thousands of years before the level and boundaries of basic natural order and rules.*

<sup>34</sup> EU Action Plan.

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