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 **As a manuscript**

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**FORMATION AND CIRCULATION OF POLITICAL ELITES
IN POST-SOVIET GEORGIA**

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annotation

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Relevance of the research topic. The socio-political processes that developed in Soviet Georgia in the early 1990s largely determined the political transformation of the country. The political changes that began during this period contributed to the ideological transformation of elite structures, including procedural changes in the mechanisms of circulation of political elites.

If the modernized and institutionalized political system of Soviet Georgia had a systematic, guild approach to the circulation and renewal of the political elite, then the deindustrialization and deinstitutionalization of Georgia that occurred as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to giving the process of elite interaction a personalized character. Despite the fact that post-Soviet Georgia has replaced four power elites of various formats, the use of a personalized model for the formation of elite structures continues in the country to this day.

The value transformation of the political elites in post-Soviet Georgia was reflected in the country's domestic political agenda, influencing its foreign policy vector. The decisions taken by the political elites regarding the rapid and aggressive liberalization of the political and economic system led to the deindustrialization of the country and became the reason for the deterioration of the material well-being of society.

These circumstances contributed to the destruction of functioning political institutions and the personification of the political process. The mass impoverishment of the population of Georgia today in relation to the Soviet period (up to 30% of the population of Georgia is below the poverty line) periodically gave rise to a demand in the lower stratum of society for the appearance of a “messiah” and orientation towards specific political persons. A high degree of orientation towards the political leader prevented the formation of intra-systemic balances, which are obligatory for democracy, as a result of which the political system acquired an authoritarian character.

The authoritarianism of the political system manifested itself in various forms, depending on the personal qualities of the ruling leaders. So, for example, during the

leadership of the country by E. Shevardnadze, the authoritarian political system was expressed in “soft forms”, that is, it was less repressive than during the years when M. Saakashvili was in power. This is indicated by his policy. To this we can add one passage from the speech of the third president of Georgia in 2004 in parliament: “No tolerance, everyone goes to prison.”

Authoritarian governance is also indicated by the percentage of acquittals in criminal cases handed down by the Georgian courts at that time, which was 0.01%. For comparison, in 1937, during the tenure of the first secretary of the Central Committee L. Beria, the proportion of acquittals handed down in criminal cases by the courts of Soviet Georgia varied from 8 to 10%. As for the modern period, after B. Ivanishvili was elevated by the oligarchic elite to the highest level of the power vertical, there was a more or less noticeable pluralization of the political system. Although the oligarchic style of governance allows the richest oligarch in the country and its informal "ruler" B. Ivanishvili, through various schemes, to maintain their political power and, accordingly, a political system tailored to their needs.

The value transformation of political elites in the post-Soviet period also led to a reformatting of the country's foreign policy vector. The orientation of the Georgian political elites towards the United States has undergone a gradual evolution throughout the post-Soviet period. This foreign policy directly affected the complication of interstate relations with the Russian Federation. The confrontation reached its peak in August 2008 during the presidency of M. Saakashvili, which ended in a Russian-Georgian military conflict. This fact led to the territorial disintegration of Georgia and the division of the country into three parts. Despite the failure experienced by the Georgian political elites in the foreign policy arena, which, in our opinion, was caused by their disregard for the national interests of Georgia, Georgia's geopolitical orientation towards the United States is still on the agenda.

Observations of the political system functioning in Georgia indicate that the political elites failed to modernize the country and achieve the formation of a balanced system

of political institutions based on their joint actions. The high level of personification and autocratization of the political system as a whole and the circulation of elites sometimes took non-legal forms.

The topic of the study is of particular relevance due to the factors that prevent the incorporation into the political elite of people focused on protecting national interests.

On the other hand, this topic is also becoming relevant for representatives of the academic and political circles of Russia who are interested in studying political processes in the post-Soviet space. Because there is a definite need to explain why the foreign policy moves of the Georgian ruling elites have a negative impact on Russian-Georgian relations.

The purpose of the dissertation research is to establish the objective patterns that determine the formation in post-Soviet Georgia of an elite structure clearly oriented towards a political leader, and to describe the mechanisms of their circulation.

The object of the study is the political elites of post-Soviet Georgia, and **the subject of the study** is the study of the sources and mechanisms that, in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formal restoration of independence by Georgia, influenced the formation and circulation of political elites.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the study. On the basis of political science analysis and through a comprehensive study of the issue, the theoretical basis of the dissertation research is theoretical works that make it possible to understand the theoretical schemes and concepts of elitism, which are common to the study of political elites operating within all types of political systems. General scientific and special methods of cognition of social and political processes are used. The work used structural-functional, comparative, altimetric and biographical research methods.

The scientific novelty of the research is as follows:

- It has been proven that at the transitional stage of the development of the Georgian state, the main role in the formation of the elite structure is played by a political leader endowed with charismatic features. Also, on the example of post-Soviet Georgia, the features of the process of formation of socio-political and symbolic capital, which is closely connected with the foreign career of a political leader, are revealed.
- The determining influence of the pro-American foreign policy orientation on the process of formation and circulation of political elites in post-Soviet Georgia has been proved. It is connected with one fundamental circumstance - in particular, with the international legal recognition of the ruling elite by the United States. The political processes in Georgia in the post-Soviet period indicate that without the external recognition of the United States, the Georgian ruling elite was unable to secure full legitimacy for itself.
- Based on the value orientation, foreign policy vector and management style, a typology of the political elites of post-Soviet Georgia has been developed: ethnocratic elite, neo-nomenclature elite, cosmopolitan elite and oligarchic elite.

Theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation research. The theoretical and practical significance of the dissertation research is to identify and understand the logic and trends in the formation and circulation of the ruling elite of Georgia.

The materials of the dissertation research can become the basis for further study of theoretical and empirical issues related to the interaction between the ruling elites and counter-elites. The research materials can also be used to create training courses in elitology and political science. The results of the study can also be applied to specialized courses related to the study of the problems of interaction between elite groups in the context of the personification of political power. At the same time, the materials of the dissertation research will largely help to identify the causal aspects

of the confrontation between the Russian and Georgian elites, both on the value and practical levels.