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**INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT OF STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN  
KABARDINO-BALKARIA (1989-1991)**

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***Abstract***

This work is devoted to the study of the political struggle in Kabardino-Balkaria during the late Soviet period (1989-1991). The institutional approach and the conception of social orders of limited access allowed analyzing the strategies of selecting modern political actors with the violent potential and, therefore, capable of struggling for the redistribution of political resources: the Soviet ruling class, Kabardian and Balkarian ethno-oriented organizations affiliated with counter-elites, “democratic” politicians of the republican and all-Russian level. The study is based on the neo-institutional approach developed by D. North, which regards the institutions as “the rules of the game in society”. In addition, these events were greatly affected by the political centers of the Soviet Union and the RSFSR, which were able to change the formal structure of political institutions and set incentives for other actors by their actions. The analysis shows that in the events of the studied period, the violent potential of the conflicting organizations was not used (except for the events of August 1991 that happened after the putsch of the State Committee on the State of Emergency). This fact indicates the resistance of formal and informal institutions of the republican political field to the usage of violence. The article concludes that the Kabardino-Balkarian ASSR (later – SSR) belonged to the basic type of natural polities.

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## 1. Introduction

“Institutions matter” – in the social sciences this expression indicates the dependence of social processes and people’s actions on established rules. There are formal rules supported by the public constraint, and there are informal rules supported by the convictions of social groups; all of them present a social construct that determines the behavioral strategies of political and economic agents – individuals and organizations.

The importance of the influence of institutions on the political process means that the struggle for power also occurs in accordance with certain norms developed in this particular socio-political unit. Thus, the study of the struggle for power and its fundamental components reveals the other dimensions of social processes through the prism of institutionalism.

## 2. Problem Statement

During the post-Soviet period of political science development there is a problem of assessing the political transformation of Russia and its regions (in particular, Kabardino-Balkaria) in view of emerging power relations and struggle for power. Besides, the approach to the study of the political processes did not stay the same. In the 1990s the transitological approach prevailed in the literature (Borov, Dumanov, & Kazharov, 1999); its main task was to study the transition from the authoritarian system to democracy. In the 2000s due to the switch of the vector of the country's political development, the opportunities of the “transitional” model regarding the assessment of the Russian political process were revised, and the studies were focused on using a combination of structural and procedural approaches and researching the current political regimes (Borov & Tumov, 2017). The specificity of studies of the political process and struggle for power in the republics of the North Caucasus and Kabardino-Balkaria, in particular, lies in the fact that they fit into ethnopolitology (Gugova, 2002; Kazenin, 2009; Takova, 2010; Shorova, 2010). The research conducted in the context of institutionalism (Kokorkhoeva, 2012; Litvinova, 2011) pays more attention to the public authorities’ transformation in the post-Soviet period.

Thus, the analysis of the literature covering the subject of the political process directly in Kabardino-Balkaria reveals a “gap” in this area – lack of works analyzing the institutional conditions in which the existing political forces had to act.

## 3. Research Questions

The subject of the article is the struggle for power in the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the late Soviet period (1989-1991). At the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s the republic faced a number of upheavals referred to as “ethnopolitical clashes” in the literature; their essence consisted in the clash of the Soviet nomenclature trying to retain its power and ethno-oriented public associations that emerged in the republic in the period of “perestroika”. Each side appealed to the Center and used different mechanisms of mobilizing supporters.

The violent potential of the main current actors (the nomenclature in power, the counter-elites consisting of the leaders of public associations) was not used during this period; this fact conditions the logical question of the resistance degree of Kabardino-Balkaria institutional structure to the usage of violence.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the scientific work is to study the process of political struggle in Kabardino-Balkaria during the late Soviet period with the usage of the institutional approach. It is argued that the choice of strategies of opposing forces and mechanisms of mobilizing supporters is determined by the established institutional structure.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The study is based on the neo-institutional approach developed by D. North, which regards the institutions as “the rules of the game in society” – a number of formal and informal restrictions, time determining the behavior of actors and the choice of strategies and procedures used by individuals and organizations to achieve their goals.

The process of political struggle is studied in the article through the prism of the recently proposed conception of social orders of limited access (North, Wallis & Weingast, 2009). According to this conception, the struggle for the access to rents, resources and privileges among the actors with violent potential leads to the emergence of a ruling coalition redistributing resources. The access of the other individuals and organizations to resources is limited; this order of limited access is initially supported by the monopoly of the ruling group, and it is gradually becoming a stable institutional structure, in other words, the “natural polity”.

The authors of the conception mention fragile, basic and mature orders of limited access. The social order existed in Kabardino-Balkaria during the late Soviet period is considered to be basic in this work; it is opposed to the fragile one, as it was more resistant to the violent outbreaks, the state-related organizations existed for a long time and were not personal. The main characteristics of a mature state are its ability to support organizations of elites outside the state as well as the rule of law (the elite’s self-restraint in accessing to rent); however, they were either absent or just starting to develop. The political struggle was conditioned by the social order prevailing in the republic; it was determined by the resistance of the institutions to violence and the dependence of the elite’s and counter-elite’s strategies on the established rules.

#### **6. Findings**

At the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s political dynamics in Kabardino-Balkaria as well as in other autonomous republics of the North Caucasus developed in the context of institutionalization of the ethnic movements. In the second half of the 1980s, the ethno-oriented public organizations representing the Kabardian and Balkarian national movements began to appear in the KBASSR; initially they positioned themselves as cultural societies, however, by the end of 1989 they had become entirely politicized and entered the field of competitive politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). Thus, on October 1, 1989 the organizations *Ashamaz* and *Adyghe Khase* representing the Kabardian national movement held an unauthorized rally at the stadium *Spartak*; it was devoted to the problems of interethnic relations. The Balkarian organizations *Nygysh* and *Birlik* also put forward their demands for the government of the republic. At the rally on October 28, 1989 the representatives of *Nygysh* demanded the creation of the bicameral Supreme Soviet of the Republic, which would involve the equal number of Kabardian, Balkarian and Russian representatives

(Shorova, 2010). A distinctive feature of the Balkarian ethnic movement implied that it united not only intellectuals and ordinary activists, but also the representatives of the government of the republic (authorities and party) of Balkarian nationality (Takova, 2010).

By the autumn of 1989 the country's authorities had recognized the acute importance of the nationalities question threatening the existing public system, which was reflected in the discussion of this issue in September Plenary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the approval of the programme *National Policy of the Party under the Modern Conditions*; in November the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR *On the Illegal and Criminal Status of Repressive Acts Against Peoples Suffered from Forcible Transfer and on Ensuring their Rights* was adopted, which met the requirements of the Balkar national movement.

In the meantime, the electoral campaign of the elections of the People's Deputies of the RSFSR and the KBASSR began. In the literature there is common perception of the elections of 1990 as fairly free and competitive ones, and there are reasons for it – for the first time the public policy elements were introduced into the public life of the republic, many candidates' speeches were oppositional (some of them demanded the repeal of Article 6 of the USSR Constitution), and 36 candidates competed for 8 mandates for the Congress of People's Deputies of the RSFSR. However, the free “participation” in the elections was, in fact, restricted – only 289 candidates competed for 160 mandates of the People's Deputies of the KBASSR, and there was an alternative only in 77 districts; 114 candidates were registered in 51 election districts in Nalchik, but there was only one candidate in 15 election districts (Borov, 2016). The general tone of the publications in the media creates an impression of public discontent with the course of the election campaign.

The similar situation allowed the public associations to become very active, during this period they occupied a niche of political opposition. On February 24 at the rally the representatives of *Adyghe Khasa* demanded a postponement of elections in the single-member constituencies, the resignation of the regional committee and the government, the creation of an interim committee to govern the republic, holding an emergent party conference and an unscheduled session of the Supreme Soviet of the KBASSR. At the same time, the Balkarian organizations were involved in the political struggle – for example, the activists of *Nygys* came into conflict with the chairman of the Chegem district committee of the CPSU, M.I. Toguzayev; on March 8 at the rally devoted to the Remembrance Day of the Victims of the Balkars he was accused of preventing the participation of a candidate from the organization in the elections. At that time the catalyst of the Balkar social activists' activity, and later – of the political class representatives' activity was the acute issue about the representation of the Balkars in the government of the republic after the elections (Borov, 2016). A number of subsequent events influenced the aggravation of this issue.

Firstly, on February 21 (two weeks before the elections) E.A. Eliseev quitted as the first party secretary of the regional committee, the position was taken over by the former second party secretary V.M. Kokov; B.M. Zumakulov became the second party secretary. It may seem that strengthening of the Balkar elite's positions occurred, as it gained one more position in the nomenclature “hierarchy”, especially given that the institution of governmental positions distribution according to the ethnic quota was always of great importance in the republican political process (Akkieva, 1998). However, under the conditions of 1990 and

changes initiated by M.S. Gorbachev in the power structure the status of the party and its regional branches was no longer so significant.

Secondly, the Balkar elites could interpret the results of the election of the RSFSR people's deputies as a "step back". For instance, B.K. Chabdarov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the KBASSR, who participated in the elections on March 4, suffered a relative defeat against P.M. Ivanov in the first round (42.2% and 47.4% respectively). It should be noted that other top regional authorities – V.M. Kokov, the first party secretary of the regional committee, and M.Sh. Mamkhegov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers – were declared as non-alternative candidates in their election districts. Further, during the re-elections held on March 18 no Balkarian candidate won in any of the districts. As a result, one Russian and five Kabardians became people's deputies of the RSFSR from the republic. Only in the Urvan district, where the re-elections were held several times, and the regional committee bureau made a special appeal to the voters, A.N. Akhmetov won an edge in the elections. Nevertheless, the overall effect of this "instability" of the Balkar elite's positions was ambiguous.

Thirdly, in the elections of people's deputies of the KBASSR held on the same day only 18 mandates out of a possible 160 were won by the Balkar's deputies. During the re-elections on March 18 and April 22, this figure increased to 21. This share was no so large as the share in the previous convocation of the Supreme Soviet of the KBASSR (39 places) (Akkieva, 2002).

Fourthly, at the very first meeting V.M. Kokov was elected the Chairman of the newly created Supreme Soviet, Yu.V. Chepurkov and B.K. Chabdarov (the chairman of the previous convocation) became his deputies. Though, the arrangements of the top three leading positions, commission authorities and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet hinted at the distribution according to the principle of the ethnic setting quotas, the fact that the Balkar elites lost leadership in the representative body of power – the Supreme Soviet (M.Sh. Mamkhegov, a Kabardian, remained the Chairman of the Council of Ministers) was another reason of the elites' split on an ethnic principle.

The factors listed above influenced the Balkar elites' perception of their disadvantaged position and pushed them to consolidate and mobilize supporters. On March 25, 1990 the conference of voting representatives of the Balkarian population of the KBASSR was held in Nalchik, 740 people took part in it. The conference participants declared the abuse of the Balkar people's rights because of the "unarticulated application of the law" and instructed the Supreme Soviet of the KBASSR deputies of the Balkar nationality to initiate the establishment of a bicameral parliament with the parity principle of forming one of the chambers. On July 11 the organizations *Nygys* and *Birlik* merged in *Tyore* (Forum), which was officially registered and became the main representative of the interests of the Balkarian elite (Kazenin, 2009). On August 19 the Conference of people's deputies of the Balkar nationality was held, it represented the councils of all levels. The resolution adopted at the Conference stated that Kabardino-Balkaria was formed by two sovereign subjects – Kabarda and Balkaria, but the distorted state system that existed at that time prevented the sovereignty of both subjects. According to the deputies' opinion, this problem had to be solved before considering the issue of the republic state sovereignty, and one of such solutions was a project of transforming the KBASSR into a federation on the basis of the agreement between Kabarda and Balkaria.

The problem of state sovereignty was extremely important because of the processes taking place at the All-Union level at the same time, they made significant adjustment to the situations in the regions of

the country. The struggle between the all-Union and Russian authorities was reflected in the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Russia, which made the power contradictions in the country even more confusable and led to the management system crisis, which in turn affected the economic situation. The Russian autonomies demanded equal rights with the union republics, and the request for sovereignty came rather from the authorities than from the public associations (Litvinova, 2011), for example, from the deputies of the RSFSR from Kabardino-Balkaria. The search for the main form of sovereignty became an important factor of the further intensification of the competitive policy in the KBASSR.

Primarily, it was reflected in the institutionalization of the national movements – the Charters and Programmes of *Adyghe Khase* and of *Tyore* were officially adopted. The analysis of the programme provisions of both organizations allows drawing two conclusions. Firstly, the lack of political parties caused the national organizations assume the role of the main representative of the interests of the population and political mobilization; the mere fact of the existence of these organizations testified the elements of public policy. Secondly, the postulates of the programme documents of both organizations make it possible to identify them as advocates of ethnic fundamentalism ideas, which both contradicted the promotion of democratization stated in the same programmes and limited the “window of opportunities” in the struggle for power: the future events would show that the organizations faced the dilemma of choosing either a strategy of violent struggle, or the authorities’ concessions for the sake of the possibility of cooptation in the ruling coalition.

The combination of the above mentioned problems along with the issues of economic and social nature manifested itself at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the KBASSR on August 27-30, 1990. The discussion of the state sovereignty conception of the KBASSR took an important place in the meetings, this issue was submitted for public discussion. Soon, the *Adyghe Khase* and *Tyore* projects appeared in the official press, and the difference between them was fundamental. It began with the names – in the first one it was written about the Kabardino-Balkarian Soviet Socialist Republic, in the second one – about the Federal Republic of Kabarda and Balkaria (FRKB). The project of *Adyghe Khase* was practically devoid of ethno-centrist theses, it described the KBSSR as a unitary liberal-democratic state representing a single civic nation. On the contrary, in the *Tyore* project the republic (FRKB) could exist only on the basis of the federal agreement of sovereign Kabarda and Balkaria, which were the subjects of both the FRKB and Russia with the peoples’ right to self-determination and seceding from any subject. The draft of the Declaration was a direct “successor” of the resolution of the Conference of Deputies of the Balkar Nationality, as it reduplicated the thesis about the need to form sovereign Kabarda and Balkaria in the first place, and the Federation in the second one (Shorova, 2010).

At the regular session of the Supreme Soviet on January 29 – February 1 the issue of adopting the Declaration took the most important place. The most acute discussion was devoted to the following issues: if the KBSSR "provides the necessary representation of the Russian, Kabardian, Balkarian ... peoples in the elective bodies of the USSR, the RSFSR and the KBSSR", as well as that of a bicameral parliament with a parity principle of forming one of the chambers. The representatives of the Kabardian national movement and the democratic deputies from the group *Radical Reform* opposed the provision of the ethnic representation in elections and a bicameral parliament; they were in opposition with the group of the deputies of the Balkar nationality that was supported by the representatives of the republic authorities and

the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The deputies of the Balkar nationality left the meeting-hall threatening with a rise in protest activity among the Balkar population. As a result of the negotiations between the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Balkarian deputies, a revote was called for, which resulted in the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the KBSSR.

The progressive status of the adopted Declaration in the political process of the republic is controversial. The compromise laid in the Declaration did not take into account the entire interests of either the Kabardian or the Balkarian national movement. It led to the increased dissatisfaction among the opposition activists of both movements.

On March 30, 1991 the 1st Congress of the Balkar people was held in Nalchik. The meetings were chaired by the leader of *Tyore* Z.Sh. Zukayev and the deputy of the Supreme Soviet D.A. Miziev (Shorova, 2010). The congress resulted in the adoption of the resolution demanding "the total rehabilitation of the political, economic and socio-cultural rights of the Balkar people." The congress decided to restore the administrative districts of Balkaria of 1944; define Balkaria as an equal subject of the KBSSR in the Constitution and provide its participation in the signing of the Union and Federal Treaties; specify the formation of a bicameral Supreme Soviet of the KBSSR in the Constitution; create a mechanism of "the constitutional ordering of compulsory election or placement of a Balkar representative to one of the highest government positions including the rotation of the highest state officials"; in the case of the signing of the agreement between the RSFSR and the KBSSR until these requirements are met, "the Balkarian people ... consider themselves not to be bound by this treaty". Besides, at the congress it was partially said about the Law on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples, which was adopted shortly after; the movements leaders regarded the Russian parliament as an ally in the political struggle. The congress made the conflict develop and caused a response from the other opposition forces.

On April 6, 1991 the conference of the Kabardian people was held, which discussed the issues of reviving the national self-consciousness of the Adyghe and the national-state structure of the KBSSR. The first question of the conference was the Law on languages and the participants appealed to Moscow to recognize the Russian-Caucasian war as an act of genocide and to create the conditions for the return of the Muhajiruns. These statements are reflected in the Conference resolution; the document defined the conditions indicated in the resolution of the Balkarian congress to be unacceptable, although the right of the people to self-determination was recognized. It can be noted that the ideas of the Kabardian ethnic movement were close to democratic ideals, although the reason could be the common numerical superiority of the Kabardians, thus, the provisions about the parity and borders redistribution did not meet interests of Kabardian political leaders.

At the same time there was mobilization of other political forces in the republic; they tried to constitute themselves through formalization, all of them were somehow related to the Kabardian national movement including the Democratic Party. The proximity of the Democratic Party to *Adyghe Khasa* was difficult to deny, as the leader of the party was Zh.M. Gubachikov, a member of the Congress of the Kabardian People. Besides, in May 1991 the World Congress of the Adyghe held in Nalchik decided to establish the World Circassian Association. The actuation of the Kabardian ethnic organizations was undoubtedly associated with the political processes in Kabardino-Balkaria and the growing struggle for power. The "tug of war" between the official authorities and the opposition was reflected in the decision of

the Supreme Soviet to condemn the genocide of the Adyghes during the Russian-Caucasian war (Babich, 1993).

In June 1991 the first elections of the President of the RSFSR were held. According to the results of the elections the winner was B.N. Yeltsin; in Kabardino-Balkaria 63.9% of the population voted for him (whereas in Russia – 57.3%) (Borov, 2016). It showed the attitude of the population of the republic to the direction of political reforms in the country. Yeltsin's victory boosted the consolidation of pro-democratic movements throughout the country; the movement *Democratic Kabardino-Balkaria* emerged in Kabardino-Balkaria; it included *Tyore*, *Adyghe Khasa*, the Terek-Malkinsky Cossack Society, the Democratic Party, a number of deputies of the Supreme Soviets of the RSFSR and the KBSSR, including those from the group *Radical Reform*.

The events of the putsch of 1991 were the point of the highest confrontation between the ruling groups in Moscow and had a great impact on the regional processes. During the putsch the authorities of the KBSSR did not take any actions for or against the State Committee on the State of Emergency; only on August 21 in the Appeal to the people they announced about the support of the democratic reforms and the need to refrain from actions destabilizing the social and political situation and leading to the ethnic hatred (Akkieva, 2002). However, this situation allowed the social movements to challenge the government of the republic. On August 24 a number of people's deputies of the KBSSR demanded to convene an unscheduled session of the Supreme Soviet with the single agenda item – *On the Current Situation and Political Assessment of the Position of the Republic's Authorities during the Putsch*. At this session V.M. Kokov made a report, in which he explained that they together with B.K. Chabdarov and M.Sh. Mamkhegov were in Moscow to participate in the ceremony of signing the Union Treaty on August 19-20, so they did not have complete information about the current events; his position was as follows: the meaningful actions of the authorities “prevented from serious incidents in the republic”. M.A. Khachetlov, a representative of the *Radical Reform* speaking after him, accused the republic authorities of supporting the State Committee on the State of Emergency and resisting the democratic reforms. He demanded the resignation of the government and the removal of the leaders of the Supreme Soviet. However, the majority of the votes adopted the resolution of the Supreme Soviet, in which the decisions of the republic authorities were recognized as “mostly correct” and ensuring the work of the legal authorities.

In the morning of August 24, the members of *Democratic Kabardino-Balkaria* organized a rally on the square in front of the House of Soviets in Nalchik; 40 people who were present there started a hunger strike, and the number was increasing. In a few days the number of protesters rose to 2-3 thousand people; the representatives of *Democratic Kabardino-Balkaria* were holding the campaign in the villages of the republic urging the people to join the protest. The rally spread to the other localities of the republic (Dokshokov, 1998). In their statement the protesters demanded the self-resignation of the Supreme Soviet and the removal of the authorities of the republic. On August 27, in response to the statement of the rally participants the emergency session of the Supreme Soviet was convened, where V.M. Kokov trying to reach a compromise with the protesters proposed to establish the post of President of the KBSSR, form a new government, amend the Constitution and re-elect the Supreme Soviet. According to Kokov's opinion, these measures would ensure a peaceful change of power. Nevertheless, the rally forced the authorities of the



republic to resign; the letters of resignation were taken from V.M. Kokov, Yu.V. Chepurkov, Kh.M. Karmokov and M.Sh. Mamkhegov on August 28.

However, a number of events allows questioning the victory of the democratic opposition. At the fifth session of the Supreme Soviet the majority of the deputies expressed their disagreement with the pressure of the hunger strikers on the leaders of the parliament and the government. Further, in the re-election of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Kh.M. Karmokov was elected in two rounds; M.M. Ulbashev and Yu.A. Larin became his deputies (the principle of ethnic quoting was complied with). V.M. Kokov was appointed the first deputy of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the KBSSR, and M.Sh. Mamkhegov was nominated to the Council of Representatives of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Seventhly, the commissions of the Supreme Soviet and the Prosecutor's Office of the RSFSR that arrived in Nalchik did not establish the facts of recognition of the legitimacy of the actions of the State Committee on the State of Emergency by the republic's leaders; although, the opposition considered the commissions to be a tool of the final overthrow of the ruling group. As it can be seen, even "the Center did not intervene in the internal situation in the KBSSR" and preferred to support the line of the ruling elite (Akkieva, 2002).

One of the most important measures taken by the Supreme Soviet at the fifth session was the establishment of the post of the President of the KSSR. This issue was discussed during several days and attracted the attention of the main mass media of the republic; the main point of discussion was the question "Do we need a president?". On September 26, 1991 the Law on Amendments to the Constitution was adopted; according to it, the posts of the President and Vice President of the KBSSR were established. By the adopted law the President was declared the highest authority and chief executive with broad powers: in the Supreme Soviet he represented candidates for the prime minister, chairpersons of the Supreme and Arbitration Courts, the prosecutor; together with the Supreme Soviet he formed the Cabinet of Ministers; the term of election of the president was determined by five years. The date of the presidential election was set for November 24, 1991.

The introduction of the institution of the presidency and the first election of the highest authority became an important conflict factor in the subsequent political dynamics. For the republican elite the presidency was not only a confirmation of the sovereignty of the republic, but also a tool of consolidating the existing political system and a way of legitimizing the status quo in the face of growing centrifugal forces; this was the main reason of the establishment of the post. Apparently, the Kabardian national movement and its supporters also understood the obvious benefit of the presidency for the ruling coalition; that is why the representatives of the movement demanded that the elections be postponed to 1992 and held only after the re-election of the Supreme Soviet. For the Balkar opposition the attitude towards the presidency was determined primarily by the possibility of occupying the position by a representative of the Balkarian nationality and solving the problem of restoring the Balkarian regions as they were in 1944. Though, the subsequent events showed that Balkar political leaders did not hope to solve these problems.

The unscheduled session of the Supreme Soviet, which began its work on November 16, was forced to work taking into account the actions of the Balkarian elite. On November 17, 1991 the II Congress of the Balkarian people was held in Nalchik, where the Declaration of the National Sovereignty of the Balkar People and Establishment of the Republic of Balkaria was proclaimed. Besides, they made an appeal to the Supreme Soviets of the RSFSR and the KBSSR about the official status of the republic until February 1,

1992, they also adopted the resolution about holding the elections to the authorities in March 1992. In addition, the congress elected the National Council of the Balkar people chaired by B.K. Chabdarov, and it announced that no elections of the President of the KBSSR would be held on November 24 in the territory of Balkaria.

At the unscheduled session on November 19, the Supreme Soviet officially supported the decisions of the congress of the Balkar people, however, in its resolution it indicated that the Constitution of the KBSSR, Laws of the KBSSR and legally elected state authorities would be in effect in the republic until the issue was finally settled; it was a kind of declaration of its dominant position. The election of the President was postponed to December 22, 1991. Moreover, the parliament announced the convention of the Congress of the Kabardino-Balkarian SSR, although, the majority of the Balkarian villages did not send their delegates there. Obviously, in the latter case, it was an attempt of the Supreme Soviet to exploit the contradictions of the Kabardian and Balkarian movements and slow down the process of dividing the republic and the subsequent redistribution of power; besides, the mechanism used – holding of a congress of peoples – was borrowed from the arsenal of the opposition. With the same purpose they initiated the creation of the *Movement for the Preservation of the Unity of Kabardino-Balkaria*, which involved the republican politicians of different levels.

On December 22, 1991 the first presidential elections were held in the republic. 53.6% of voters took part in the voting, the votes were distributed as follows: P.M. Ivanov – 13.5%, Kh.M. Karmokov – 14.5%, V.M. Kokov – 39.3%, F.A. Kharaev – 19.8%. The second round was scheduled for January 5, 1992 between the two candidates who gained the majority of votes – V.M. Kokov and F.A. Kharayev, however, a week before the vote, Kharayev announced that he had withdrawn his candidacy – obviously he hoped to disrupt the elections, since the democratic activists suspected the authorities of the republic of using administrative resources in favor of Kokov (the candidate from the government).

The activities of the NSBP was aimed at disrupting the elections. In the majority of the Balkar settlements the precinct electoral commissions were disbanded and they did not work on the election day (Dokshokov, 2015). The referendums held by the NSBP were officially illegitimate, nevertheless, they influenced the general perception of the presidential elections – it can be considered that these elections were held without the participation of the Balkar population. Subsequently, this would serve as the reason of accusing Kokov of being an illegitimate president elected only by one of the “subjects” of the republic

On January 5, 53.8% of voters took part in the voting; 88.86% voted for V.M. Kokov, 11.1% - against him (Borov, 2016). The increase in voter turnout in the second round under the conditions of “non-alternative” voting and the increase in the level of Kokov’s supporters more than doubled contest the transparency of the election procedure and tallies.

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis of the power struggle in Kabardino-Balkaria during the late Soviet period makes it possible to draw important conclusions about the possibility of the social institutional structure to regulate the procedural relations between the participants of the political process, as well as to respond to external challenges. The last point is of great importance in view of the variety of the reactions of the regional policies of Russia to the processes of perestroika and democratization of the political system. If some

regions succeeded in resisting a surge of violence with a certain degree of success, then some subjects (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Ossetia, etc.) had to face military conflicts and civil wars, which indicated the existence of various institutional systems that reacted differently to the same impulse coming from the political center.

The institutions structuring various aspects of life of the KBASSR allowed creating long-term agreements in the internal state organization (in this case, the republic is regarded as a state). These institutions were able to offer a solution to the problem of succession of the leader and elites, as well as making agreements within the ruling coalition. Thus, the successive transition of V.M. Kokov from the post of first secretary of the regional party committee to the post of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and then, his election of the president of the KBSSR despite the confrontation between the Kabardian and Balkarian oppositions show the degree of consolidation and informal agreements stability within the ruling elite.

The other institutional manifestation was that only those organizations that were connected with the state had relative stability. It can be well seen in the analysis of the Soviet nomenclature's situation, which had power during the described period, and the counter-elites' situation that challenged the ruling coalition, but were defeated, as in the beginning of 1992 the main ruling bodies of the state power (the post of President, the Supreme Soviet, the Council of Ministers of the KBSSR) – were controlled by incumbents. Even the events of August 1991 when the opposition leaders managed to mobilize their supporters for vigorous action for the first time did not lead to a radical change in the arrangement of the ruling elite.

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