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How political power changed from the Brezhnev to Putin. A comparison of the Central Committee Apparatus and Presidential Administration, 1965-2016.

The Central Committee and the Presidential Administration occupy the same buildings in Moscow at Staraya Plochshad – the Old Square, a Russian symbol of political power. Are there any other similarities between them? The paper will compare the Central Committee apparatus with the Presidential Administration and examine their respective role and function in Soviet and Russia's political systems. The key research question will be the extent to which Russia has retained or reverted to some elements of Soviet authoritarian model.

The paper argues that differences between the Central Committee and the Presidential Administration reflect those between the USSR and the Russian Federation, with important difference that the modern system is less efficient, more corrupt but less authoritarian. The key element is the new elements in the socio-political system of private property and popularity ratings, which replaced Soviet nomenklatura privileges. However, the contemporary system is less stable because it's based on patrimonial type of relations, as it blurs the public and private spheres, a problem the USSR did not have.

A theoretical perspective draws on various theories to explain Russia's transition from the Soviet system. These include transitology theories (cf. Huntington 1991) and contemporary debates about the nature of the Russian political system such as transitional democracy (Carothers 2002), authoritarian modernization (Sakwa 2005), low calibre democracy (Fish 2001), managed democracy (Surkov 2005) or soft authoritarianism (White 2011). The paper aims to provide a concrete case study to test these theories of political transformation in the Soviet Union and Russia.