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in Central and Eastern Europe

**Politico-Administrative Relations at the Centre –  
Actors, Structures and Processes supporting  
the Core Executive**

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This book was sponsored by a grant from The Local Government and Public  
Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute, Budapest, Hungary

## Reflections on Presidency and Executive Governance

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The political role and powers of a presidency can have a profound impact on the practice of executive governance. Chapters in this section of the book look at how the centre of executive government functions in countries with constitutionally powerful presidencies in C.I.S countries. The chapters examine the sources of presidential power over executive matters, the ways in which this power is exercised, and organisational modalities employed by Presidents to maximise their influence over the executive.

The stories presented in these chapters are stories of evolution and change both in the format and the content of presidential leadership in executive matters. These stories are set, at least implicitly, in the context of transitional societies' search for answers to broader questions of governance, such as legitimacy, responsiveness, and accountability. Countries discussed in this section of the book especially face serious challenges in establishing democratic governance, which impacts in numerous ways on how the centre of executive governance is organised.

What the stories presented in the chapters convey is the process of constant adaptation that presidential offices go through in response to the political and social changes that prolonged transition entails. A number of countries discussed in this section saw their constitutional framework recently amended in ways that undermine or have the potential for undermining a very high degree of control over the executive that Presidents have enjoyed since they fought and won constitutional power battles against the legislatures in the middle of the 1990s. Even in cases that did not see constitutional changes, such as Russia, the evolution of political regimes poses questions regarding the continuity of the unchallenged dominance of presidents and their administrations in executive matters.

Setting aside concerns about how democratic the forms of governance are, in the considered countries, one can look at the chapters as informed contributions to another major discussion in comparative politics – one focusing on the benefits and effectiveness of a concentration of executive power in conditions of economic transition. The chapters on both Russia and Kazakhstan seem to endorse the view sometimes found in the political economy literature that emphasises the importance of executive power concentration for the successful launching and management of economic reforms. Both chapters see Presidents and their administrations as key actors who played a positive role in overseeing much needed economic reforms.

While examining presidential leadership in executive matters, the chapters in this section of the book try to dissect and analyse the internal workings of what have become formidably powerful organisations – presidential administrations. This task is an especially difficult one. Presidential administrations are not cabinets of minis-

## Section II Presidential Offices

ters. The latter have a degree of collegiality and openness in decision-making which is built into the system and which allows outside observers to gain better insights into the internal workings of the centre of government. Presidential administrations are much more closed organisations, which makes researchers' inferences about the workings of these organisations especially tentative and provisional.

Presidential control of executive government in the country cases discussed in the following chapters is a political matter, which is far from being settled. This issue is open to constitutional and political reinterpretations, which makes studying this topic of on-going interest.