

Abstract

Russia's Constitutional Revision in 2020: Political Background and Implications

JANG, Seho

(Institute for National Security Strategy)

This research report analyzes the background, purpose and political implications of the 2020 constitutional revision in Russia. The four-step process of preparing the constitutional amendment showed a significant level of qualitative change in its content. In particular, Putin's previous term was nullified in the final constitutional amendment, making it legal for him to run again in the next presidential election. The referendum was held for a week from June 25 to July 1, winning an overwhelming 77.92 percent of support.

The following were the main reasons behind Putin's surprise push for a constitutional revision. Increased fatigue over the regime and external achievements in Russia. Rising

discontent over the falling quality of life due to economic stagnation and regression. Drop in approval ratings for the entire national body. Rising uncertainty over the 2021 parliamentary elections in Duma. Falling expectations for national unity with Belarus. Intention to effectively utilize the U.S. presidential election schedule in November 2020.

For Putin, the constitutional revision was both a "mean value" to extend his power and a "purpose value" to establish Russia's long-term identity. In view of this, Putin and the Kremlin have taken a strategy of preparing for constitutional amendment in a very covert manner, deliberately creating confusion, and finalizing it in a lightning war and speed battle manner. In particular, it sought to enhance its political legitimacy by holding a referendum, not a necessary procedure. Through this, Putin has achieved the results of proving his leadership and control, maximizing options for future operations, preventing early lame duck and securing the irreversibility of the Putin regime.

In the future, Putin is expected to maintain a thorough strategic ambiguity in relation to his future position, and the possibility of his long-term rule is also expected to increase.

In the end, this will contribute to the short-term stability of Russian politics, but will be a factor causing long-term instability.

Keywords
Constitutional Revision, Plebiscite, Vladimir Putin, Long-term Rule, Power Structure