

FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

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Development of Civil Society in Russia in Conditions of “Capitalism for the Few”



**Vladimir Aleksandrovich
ILYIN**

Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of Russian
Academy of Science
Vologda, Russian Federation, 56A, Gorky Street, 160014
E-mail: ilin@vscc.ac.ru

Civil society is a term known since ancient times and a problem that preoccupied thinkers and managers throughout the history of mankind since the emergence of first civilizations and government. With each new step the development of mankind (be it science and technology, a change of political regime, a reform or revolution) inevitably faced issues related to civil society, since man is the engine of all the new, and society – the recipient of all the new.

Civil society constitutes one of the value categories, which (along with such concepts as capitalism, market economy and democratic state) is typical of Western civilization. According to experts, “civil society has a fundamental, historically conditioned, ethnocentric Western sense, which is not very successfully transmitted to non-Western parts of the world”¹.

In different eras and civilizations, civil society assumed its own unique character in

¹ Howard M. *Slabost' grazhdanskogo obshchestva v postkommunisticheskoi Evrope* [The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe]. Moscow, 2009. P. 63.

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accordance with the spirit of the times and national cultural specifics². However, there are two characteristic features that unite all the cultural and historical variations of the interpretation of the very concept and methods of civil society organization.

First, civil activity, its vector, degrees and forms of expression have always been closely associated with public administration efficiency; and in our opinion its major criterion is “the ability of the state to improve the quality of life, to meet people’s interests by increasing the rate and ensuring the sustainability of economic growth and increasing people’s real incomes”³.

Civic engagement has always been based on a certain layer of social needs. What were those needs and to what extent was the state able to implement them? The answer to these questions determined the nature of civil society development. The protest movement of the Luddites⁴, the Pioneer and Komsomol organization created in the Soviet times – all

this can be called civic participation. Both of these examples that occurred in different historical periods and are opposites in their essence reflect the attitude of the government to the issues that are of concern to the population. **History shows that if the ruling elites are not focused on the national interests, this leads to the unification of people on the basis of protest sentiment. In turn, high moral responsibility of the elites for a progressive and dynamic development of the country and for fulfilling their obligations to the people leads to the establishment of constructive dialogue between government and civil society, which ultimately is the key to social stability and national security and provides positive dynamics for the country’s competitiveness in the external environment.**

Second, historically there are two traditions of forming civil society: “from the top” (where the state initiates the creation of civil society institutions in order to organize various social groups and layers, obtain

² “The development of civil society is characterized by national and cultural features, which were, for example, in England, France, Northern Europe, and Germanic principalities. For example, in the Anglo-Saxon world, civil society and the state were usually considered to be complementary rather than mutually hostile forces. On the contrary, in France, Spain and Portugal, civil society had to win its rights in the fight against the government (even if it was enlightened) that did not want to share its power. In the German-speaking Central Europe of the 18th–19th centuries, the idea of civil society was supported and spread, especially in lodges and associations, in correspondence and communication circles, parties and movements in the household living conditions and culture of the urban bourgeoisie, which included not only merchants, entrepreneurs and bankers, but also educated officials, professors, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and clergy. Thus, each national culture gradually formed minor but still existing features of civil society” (Source: Naletova I.V. Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo i osobennosti ego formirovaniya v kul'ture Rossii [Civil society and the features of its formation in the culture of Russia]. *Vestnik Tambovskogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnye nauki* [Tambov University Bulletin. Series: Humanitarian Sciences], 2013, no. 5 (121), p. 174).

³ Ilyin V.A., Povarova A.I. *Problemy effektivnosti gosudarstvennogo upravleniya. Tendentsii rynochnykh transformatsii. Krizis byudzhetnoi sistemy. Rol' chastnogo kapitala. Strategiya-2020: problemy realizatsii* [Public administration efficiency. Market transformation trends. Crisis of the budget system. Role of private capital. Strategy-2020: implementation issues]. Vologda: ISERT RAN, 2014. P. 10.

⁴ The Luddites were participants of spontaneous protests of the first quarter of the 19th century against the introduction of machinery during the industrial revolution in England. The Luddites were named after their leader Ned Ludd, who was supposed to have broken two stocking frames that produced cheap stockings and undermined the business of experienced knitters, and whose signature is on the Manifest of the Workers of the time (although historically the existence of Ned Ludd is not confirmed). From the point of view of the Luddites, machines would replace the role of people in the industry, which led to technological unemployment, so that often the protest of the Luddites was expressed in riots and destruction of machinery and equipment.

feedback and maintain social stability) and from the bottom” (when civil activity is initiated by representatives of society itself – individuals or groups that unite different social strata for the purpose of forming public “response” to certain state reforms). In both cases civil society should strive to be **an independent subject of social development and lead a full-fledged dialogue with representatives of the ruling elites in the framework of democratic procedures and legal basis**. In other words, civil society should be neither a panacea for the state nor a forced necessity for social groups.

The development of civil society, its forms and mechanisms is a problem the relevance of which is difficult to overestimate in modern conditions characterized by tense international relations and complications in the interaction between society and the authorities within the countries involved in geopolitical competition. The results of the latest 2016 national referendums in the Netherlands and the UK, as well as the U.S. presidential election clearly show that **if the ruling elites create effective legislation and comply with it, then society makes its own contribution to the formation of political course of the country’s development**. Thus, the results of voting in the UK (June 23, 2016) led to its withdrawal from the European Union and the resignation of its government, and in the U.S. (November 8, 2016) – to Donald Trump’s victory in the presidential election. Perhaps these events have not changed fundamentally the political establishment in these countries, but obviously these are significant steps for a gradual transformation of the political course, and it is not less obvious that this is a significant victory for civil society, the facts that prove the real possibility of civic

engagement in shaping the system of public administration.

In other words, a relatively peaceful procedure of transforming the political course according to national interests becomes possible only when the government creates appropriate conditions. In particular, when it moves beyond simple rhetoric about the need to create efficient institutions of civil society and develops legislative mechanisms, adopts them, strictly observes and controls them, which provides conditions not only for effective functioning of civil society institutions, but also for improving the motivation and manifestation of civil activity by wider population.

The influence of citizens on the political situation in the country is a critical issue for Russia, which over the past 100 years accumulated a unique but, unfortunately, negative experience of violent change of its policy. The overthrow of the tsarist monarchy in 1917 and the toppling of the Soviet government in 1991 eventually led to comprehensive large-scale consequences, which pushed the country to the brink of an abyss.

Can we compare these two examples from the history of the 20th century with the current domestic political situation in Russia? On the one hand, as noted in the Report of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, in 2016, the country is experiencing “increased activity of citizens in the sphere of public control, from procurement monitoring to analyzing parliamentary and ministerial declarations. There is also a notable increase in the activity of youth movements and projects: numerous forums involve an increasing number of young people from across the country. It is important for the Russian civil society that there is an emerging

M. Buev: “From a regulatory point of view of economic theory, government should look after the welfare of society by adjusting the so-called market failures. The meaning of existence of officials is to make our life better where the market cannot do it. However, **when in practice the state is corrupt and inefficient, then government failures are adjusted by charity, that is, at the expense of citizens. This shows the cohesion of civil society, especially when political freedoms are limited.**

The unprecedented growth of funds and initiatives helping children, the elderly, and stray animals, the spread of voluntary movements – all this is both good and bad news for us. It is bad, because we ourselves do the job of the government, having been disappointed in its capacity. It is good, because we still have civil society”⁵.

trend of civil activity and projects of active citizens in rural areas, from purely local initiatives aimed to improve social and living conditions in one’s community to organizing federal competitions for the title of the most beautiful village of Russia”⁶.

However, this is only one side of the coin... The already mentioned Report on the development of civil society contains another equally important part in which experts draw attention to the fact that “the state

of civil society is determined not only by the dynamics of quantitative parameters of development of its institutions and social bases. **No less important is the value of the very range of issues within the focus of attention of society, participation of the public in addressing the challenges that the country is facing”⁷.**

What is the “focus of attention” of modern Russian society? For many years key problems of concern to the population are concentrated around the issues related to ensuring sustainable and dynamic increase in the standard of living and quality of life, achieving social justice, overcoming the shocks in the functioning of domestic economy. Another aspect that attracts the attention of society is the fight against corruption, which not coincidentally, according to some experts, can claim the role of an idea that consolidates the general population and that therefore may be central in the program of Vladimir Putin in the upcoming presidential election⁸.

According to the results of sociological surveys, the top five most acute problems for the population include inflation (as of 2017, it is of concern to 57% of people), low standard of living (54%), high degree of social and income inequality (39%), corruption (24%), and economic instability (24%; *Insert 1*). Some steps behind them are the problems of social insecurity (22%), housing affordability (22%), and poor quality

⁵ Buev M. Apolitical civil society. Charity in Russia corrects the failures of the state. *Vedomosti*, 2016, November 28. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/columns/2016/11/28/667126-apolitichnoe-grazhdanskoe>

⁶ *Doklad o sostoyanii grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2016 god* [A report on the state of civil society in the Russian Federation for the year 2016]. Moscow: Obshchestvennaya palata RF, 2016. P. 6.

⁷ *Ibidem*. – P. 129.

⁸ Rozhkova N. The ONF is considering the election. *Newspaper “Izvestia”*, 2017, June 26. Available at: <http://iz.ru/610214/natalia-rozhkova/onf-primeriaetsia-k-uchastiiu-v-prezidentskoi-kampanii>

of housing and utilities services (19%). It should be noted that for the last 17 years (from 2000 to 2017) the relevance of most of these problems has not decreased, but rather increased. Thus, the degree of concern about the dynamics of inflation increased from 45 to 57%; the degree of concern about population stratification into the “rich” and the “poor” – from 28 to 39%; corruption – from 15 to 24%, etc. In general, “social insecurity” (4–6th position), housing affordability (7–9th position), and unfair taxation (15–18th position) maintain their positions in the ranking of the most urgent issues.

If we compare the situation in the current year and in 2012 (the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term), then we see a roughly similar pattern: the relevance of the problem of inflation has increased from 55 to 57%, poverty – from 43 to 54%; and property stratification – 38–39% (these three problems, like in 2012, occupy a leading position in the rating), unfair taxation – from 8 to 12% (moving upward in the rating from the 18th to the 15th position).

Thus, it is necessary to note positive results of Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms: restoring order in the country, reduction of dismissals and delays in the payment of salaries and pensions. **However, in the most important issues of concern to people there have been no positive changes over the last 17 years: the problems of social justice, property and social stratification, and poverty became even more acute.**

The above problems form the basis of the agenda for the Russians; and their cause, according to many experts, lies in the fact that **the commanding heights of the economy are concentrated in the hands of the oligarchic-comprador part of the ruling elite, by which is meant “the part of the national bourgeoisie that irrevocably submits to the foreign capital of imperialist countries in economic and political terms and is used by them in their imperialist interests. The compradors act as vassals of imperialistic capital and help them keep the country in the state of enslaved colony”**⁹.

Many experts (S.S. Gubanov, S.Yu. Glazyev, N.V. Starikov, Yu.Yu. Boldyrev, V.I. Dobren’kov, K.V. Remchukov, etc.) speak about the ineffectiveness of government reforms. A characteristic feature of the compradors in power is the construction of “capitalism for the few”, or “crony capitalism” initiated by the reforms of privatization and loans-for-shares auctions, when the former party nomenclature actually “exchanged” the power that was inevitably slipping from their hands to national wealth. As a result of privatization “500 largest enterprises of Russia with the total cost of not less than 200 billion US dollars were actually sold for nothing – for about 7.2 billion US dollars. The base was established for the formation of the phase of oligarchic capitalism. The era of “capitalism for the few” started”¹⁰.

⁹ Gubanov S.S. Zamechaniya o sistemnykh osnovakh ekonomicheskoi bezopasnosti Rossii [Observations on the system foundations of economic security of Russia]. *Ekonomist* [Economist], 2017, no. 6, p. 3.

¹⁰ Dobren’kov V.I., Ispravnikova N.R. Rossiiskaya versiya “kapitalizma dlya svoikh”: est’ li vykhod iz tupika? [The Russian version of “crony capitalism”: is there a way out of the impasse?]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18: Sotsiologiya i politologiya* [Moscow State University Bulletin. Series 18. Sociology and Political Science], 2013, no. 3, p. 30.

A.I. Fursov: **“Catastrophic social consequences are largely due not to the actions of the West, but to the decisions made by persons in power in Russia... A war was declared on Russia, the goal is to overthrow the power and then to eliminate Russia and the Russian people. But such are the historical targets of the invaders, they have always been present. And this strategy has always been based on a strong “fifth column” in Russia. Our country has won no war in its history without getting read of the “fifth column”. Today is no exception.**

The “fifth column” is specific institutions and officials, who are preparing for the invasion of the West. In particular, the Central Bank is collapsing the ruble and the Russian economy. The Central Bank simply implements the will of the IMF. Officials at the regional level carry out their policies, not all of them, but the representatives of the “fifth column”.

Representatives of the “fifth column” act not on their own, but as a component of a foreign power in Russia. They have a cover, support, and real power. And we have no legal state institutions that could deal with them. We will not be able to solve the problem of the “fifth column” without a proper assessment of events of 1991 as a year of defeat. If we disclose this truth, we will automatically get a solution to this problem. That is, we will get rid of the “fifth column” and develop a national standard of power...

Now the advantage is on the side of the “fifth column”. To shift the advantage to the side of the national forces, they must be joined by the people, but the people do not want it yet. Accordingly, it is possible to expect the realization of a negative scenario. Americans will drop the standard of living of Russians with the help of the Central Bank, they will raise prices in two-three-four times, and organize mass unemployment. And then people will go either by the path of destruction of Russia, or by the scenario of national liberation forces and rid the state of the “fifth column”.

We must follow the path of the thousand-year-long Russian national state-building. **The format of power is determined by only one factor: who the government works for. Russia will be either a vassal colony or an independent metropolitan country. What is important is not so much the architecture of power as its orientation. If the power is nationally oriented, then the architecture adapts to the historical model, in our case – to the Russian model of state-building.**

Solution to many Russian problems is connected with political and tools to suppress the “fifth column”. **The question is either we hold out, or the “fifth column” will sweep Putin’s regime, that would mean the break up of Russia.** But if we win, we will face a new problem, because our confrontation with the West will not end. In order to cope with it, we need to have a good economy, a strong army and adequate media. But for this we need to solve the problem of the “fifth column”.

Now Russia is at a crossroads, we are at a critical moment in our history. The West is confronting us and is ready in case of need even to engage in armed conflict with Russia. But the military path is a last resort. So far the problems are being handled in a peaceful way. The sanctions trigger a conflict inside the elites. We don’t know how acute this conflict may become. **But we face a choice: to become a colony of the West or to defend our sovereignty.**

It is necessary to form a new government of real professionals. In 1998, the Primakov – Maslyukov government was formed. Today something similar has to be done”¹¹.

¹¹ Fursov A.I. “Pyataya kolonna” gotovitsya k pobednomu marшу [The “fifth column” is getting ready for a victorious march]. *Ofitsial’nyi sait A. Fursova* [A. Fursov’s official website]. Available at: http://andreyfursov.ru/news/pjataja_kolonna_gotovitsja_k_pobednomu_marшу/2014-12-19-390

Most critical issues of concern to people*

Issues	1999		2000		2003		2004		2007		2008		2011		2012		2017		Average for 1999-2017			
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank												
Inflation	54.5	2	44.7	2	46.9	1	39.5	1	43.8	1	56.3	1	56.0	1	55.3	1	56.5	1	56.4	1	50.4	1
Low standard of living, poverty	57.1	1	50.8	1	39.2	3	32.8	4	40.4	2	41.4	2	49.4	2	43.2	2	54.2	2	45.4	2	45.4	2
Population stratification into the "rich" and the "poor"	21.3	9	27.7	7	33.6	5	30.8	5	31.0	4	31.4	4	36.2	3	37.5	3	39.0	3	32.1	3	32.1	3
Corruption, bribery	14.8	11	15.4	11	17.8	10	18.7	10	15.0	12	17.5	9	21.8	8	19.8	9	23.9	4	18.3	9	18.3	9
Economic instability, shut down of enterprises	39.6	4	29.1	6	17.3	11	14.8	13	14.5	13	16.9	10	19.2	9	16.5	11	23.5	5	21.3	11	21.3	11
Social vulnerability	32.5	6	34.4	4	33.4	6	28.7	6	26.7	7	24.8	7	23.1	7	22.3	8	21.5	6	27.5	7	27.5	7
Provision with housing, low affordability of housing	11.8	14	16.8	9	21.2	8	23.1	9	31.8	3	36.3	3	24.8	6	28.6	4	21.5	7	24.0	6	24.0	6
Poor quality of engineering infrastructure (housing and utilities, roads, transport, etc.)	no data	19.0	10	25.3	7	19.3	8	21.2	8	21.2	8											
Political instability	21.9	8	16.0	10	9.9	14	8.7	17	7.9	15	7.8	15	8.8	18	11.2	16	18.9	9	12.3	16	12.3	16
Increase in alcoholism rate	15.8	10	22.2	8	37.7	4	36.1	2	30.9	5	26.5	6	27.1	5	27.3	5	17.3	10	26.8	5	26.8	5
High crime rate, insecurity from crime, vandalism, etc.	33.4	5	36.9	3	39.5	2	34.2	3	30.2	6	28.4	5	29.3	4	25.5	6	16.7	11	30.5	4	30.5	4
Firing, unemployment	43.7	3	32.1	5	29.4	7	24.4	7	25.0	8	24.6	8	15.4	12	11.1	17	15.9	12	24.6	10	24.6	10
Poor environment, pollution	8.7	16	11.6	14	15.7	13	16.5	12	15.9	9	14.4	13	16.2	11	14.1	12	15.2	13	14.3	13	14.3	13
Inaccessibility of health care, low quality of medical services	12.4	13	14.6	13	21.0	9	24.0	8	15.2	11	15.8	11	13.8	14	18.5	10	13.5	14	16.5	12	16.5	12
Unfair taxation	7.5	17	7.4	18	7.9	17	7.2	19	5.0	17	5.0	16	9.6	17	8.4	18	12.1	15	7.8	19	7.8	19
Lack of opportunities for ordinary people to influence the situation in the country, region, place of residence	no data	12.5	16	11.5	14	10.8	16	11.6	17	11.6	17											

Issues	1999		2000		2003		2004		2007		2008		2011		2012		2017		Average for 1999-2017	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank										
Lack of spirituality, surge of immorality	11.6	15	15.1	12	16.9	12	18.2	11	11.9	14	11.0	14	12.9	15	12.2	13	9.3	17	13.2	14
Incompetence of authorities	14.1	12	9.4	16	9.6	15	9.6	14	4.5	19	5.0	17	8.1	19	7.2	20	9.1	18	8.5	18
Low life expectancy, population decline	no data	15.8	10	14.6	12	15.1	13	11.4	15	9.1	19	13.2	15							
Delays in payment of salaries, pensions, scholarships	27.2	7	10.6	15	8.5	16	7.7	18	3.3	20	2.7	20	7.4	20	6.9	21	7.3	20	9.1	20
Inaccessibility of educational services, poor quality of education	5.1	19	6.3	19	7.7	18	9.1	15	4.7	18	4.4	18	5.6	21	7.4	19	5.5	21	6.2	21
Harassment on ethnic grounds, ethnic conflicts	6.5		8.8	17	6.8	19	8.8	16	6.6	16	4.4	19	5.0	22	4.2	22	4.3	22	6.2	22
Lack (shortage) of conditions for rest and leisure	no data	4.4	23	3.9	23	2.7	23	3.7	23											

* Ranked according to the data as of 2017. The data are taken for the years preceding the presidential election (1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011), as well as for the years of the presidential election (2000, 2004, 2008, 2012), when the country started a new political season. The top five and top ten most relevant issues that matter to people are highlighted in brown and yellow respectively, the top ten and top five least urgent problems are highlighted in blue and green.

Inflation, low standard of living, poverty and stratification of the population into the poor and the rich – these issues topped the list of most relevant issues throughout the period from 1999 to 2017.

It is important to note that by 2017, compared with the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s first presidential term (2000) there was a significant decrease in the importance of such problems as high crime rate (from the 3rd to the 11th position), unemployment, firing (from the 5th to the 12th position), lack of spirituality, rampant immorality (from the 12th to the 17th position), delays in payment of salaries and pensions (from the 15th to the 20th position), harassment on ethnic grounds (from the 17th to the 22nd position).

However, the relevance of the most acute problems has not diminished, but even increased: the share of people concerned with the problem of inflation for the period from 2000 to 2017 has increased from 45 to 57%; low standard of living – from 51 to 54%; stratification of the population into the poor and the rich – from 28 to 39% (an increase in the ranking from the 7th to the 3rd position), corruption – from 15 to 24% (an increase in the ranking from the 11th to the 4th position).

August 31, 1995, Boris Yeltsin issued Decree 889 “On the procedure of pledging shares in federal ownership in 1995”. Thus a legal “cover” was provided for the transaction on mortgage auctions, in which “at costs tending to zero, the oligarchs acquired property worth at least 40 billion US dollars”. Experts called it a “speculation, which had no precedent in our history...”¹²

Over the past 25 years the “capitalism for the few” was firmly rooted in the ranks of the ruling elite. **It became “the basis of the political and economic structure of the country”**. According to the results of international studies in 2016 Russia topped a ranking of countries by volume of “crony capital”, which for the period from 2004 to 2014 increased by 385%, reaching two trillion US dollars¹³.

It is important to note that this is not only a key obstacle to socio-economic development of Russia and to addressing critical issues that matter to people. **Today, “capitalism for the few” is also a factor that discredits Russia at the international level, a reason for an information campaign to spread Russo-phobic sentiment and, in particular, to continue the sanctions policy of the United States.**

August 2, 2017, the President of the United States Donald Trump under pressure from Congress signed the law on the continuation of sanctions against Russia (and Iran and North Korea). In this document, in particular, it is said that the U.S. intelligence services within 180 days will be required to prepare two reports.

The first one is “a detailed dossier on Russian elites”, which “will list the names of prominent businessmen with ties to the Kremlin, the value of their assets, including those that belong to the family and relatives of the businessmen; indicate the degree of closeness of contacts of large businessmen with Russian President and his entourage”. In addition, the U.S. Congress suggests to find out “whether the oligarchs were implicated in corruption, and to study their relationship with companies from abroad”, and also “intends to get more information about Russian enterprises with participation of public capital”.

The second report “concerns illicit financial activity associated with Russia. It will be prepared by the same representatives of the executive power. To do so, they will have a year after the entry of the bill into force”¹⁴.

¹² Dobren'kov V.I., Ispravnikova N.R. Rossiiskaya versiya “kapitalizma dlya svoikh”: est' li vykhod iz tupika? [The Russian version of “crony capitalism”: is there a way out of the impasse?]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18: Sotsiologiya i politologiya* [Moscow State University Bulletin. Series 18: Sociology and Political Science], 2013, no. 3, p. 30.

¹³ The rating is based on the results of studies conducted in 22 countries. The top five countries include Malaysia (13%), the Philippines and Singapore (11%), Ukraine (7%). At the bottom of the rating are South Korea, Poland and Germany (less than 1%). The Crony-capitalism Index is compiled by the Economist magazine. The authors estimate the total wealth of billionaires whose business lies mainly in industries prone to monopolization, state regulation and state participation (gambling, oil and gas and defense sectors, coal industry and metallurgy, real estate and construction, infrastructure projects, banking), and compare it with the country's GDP (source: Godfather to the king as the foundation of the economy. Crony capitalism for the most part is legal, but it is always unfair (editorial). *Vedomosti*, 2016, May 9. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2016/05/10/640443-kum-korolyu-kak-osnova-ekonomiki>).

¹⁴ Pudovkin E. Congress seeks for the secrets of the Russian elites. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2017, July 24. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/world/2017-07-24/1_7035_usa.html

The achievements of Russia in the international political arena, which was achieved by the President’s team for the last 10 years (since the Munich conference, 2007), are now among the “pillars” of national support of Vladimir Putin and among the aspects of his activities that have earned high ratings among experts¹⁵.

Sociological studies show that the President’s dealing with foreign political affairs finds approval in the society, while the solution of material problems has been, and continues to be, mainly negatively evaluated by

people. Among the key problems of the country, the activities of the head of state aimed to strengthen the international position of Russia are considered successful by 50–55%; his actions to restore order in the country – by about 50%; his actions to protect democracy – by 36–40%, his actions to promote economic recovery – by 28–34% (*Tab. 1*).

Thus, the “capitalism for the few” is the problem of not only internal but also external character, which, on the one hand, aggravates the condition of uncertainty and risks (which cannot but interfere with the readiness of

Table 1. In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with challenging issues?* (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Indicator	2000	2003	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	1 half-year of 2017	Dynamics 1 half-year of 2017 to...	
															2000	2016
<i>Strengthening Russia's international standing</i>																
Successfully	42.3	44.9	47.9	58.4	55.1	49.5	49.9	46.2	43.1	45.6	50.4	51.7	51.2	54.1	+12	+3
Unsuccessfully	30.9	30.1	33.8	24.9	23.7	30.4	29.3	33.7	37.9	36.2	32.4	31.3	29.9	26.7	-4	-3
<i>Imposing order in the country</i>																
Successfully	31.4	37.5	41.9	53.2	48.2	39.1	41.1	36.6	35.4	39.4	48.0	50.2	49.2	48.9	+18	0
Unsuccessfully	49.2	45.1	45.1	34.0	34.2	43.5	42.5	50.0	50.7	47.5	39.1	37.9	36.7	37.1	-12	0
<i>Protecting democracy and strengthening the citizens' freedoms</i>																
Successfully	23.5	29.9	33.6	44.4	39.9	36.7	36.3	32.4	28.8	31.8	37.5	40.4	36.6	38.2	+15	+2
Unsuccessfully	43.8	42.4	47.0	37.0	35.9	41.5	42.6	48.3	52.3	51.0	45.4	41.5	44.3	41.5	-2	-3
<i>Economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare</i>																
Successfully	25.6	29.6	35.1	47.2	36.7	31.6	33.5	30.7	28.5	31.3	34.8	34.2	27.2	26.8	+1	0
Unsuccessfully	52.9	51.4	50.8	39.1	46.0	52.4	51.6	56.1	57.9	56.8	53.4	52.3	59.4	57.9	+5	-2

Source: ISED T RAS public opinion monitoring.

¹⁵ For example (source: Putin’s “four-year period”: foreign policy achievements and “capricious” economy. *RIA-Novosti*. Available at: <https://ria.ru/politics/20160506/1427638180.html>):

I.I. Mel’nikov: “A brilliant, considered foreign policy in the spirit of all the most glorious and powerful pages of the great Russian history, and the Crimean triumph, and the power of the Syrian operation, and the struggle for the truth about the Victory, and the modernization of the Russian Armed Forces... as a consequence – the transformation of Russia into a leading player on the world stage”;

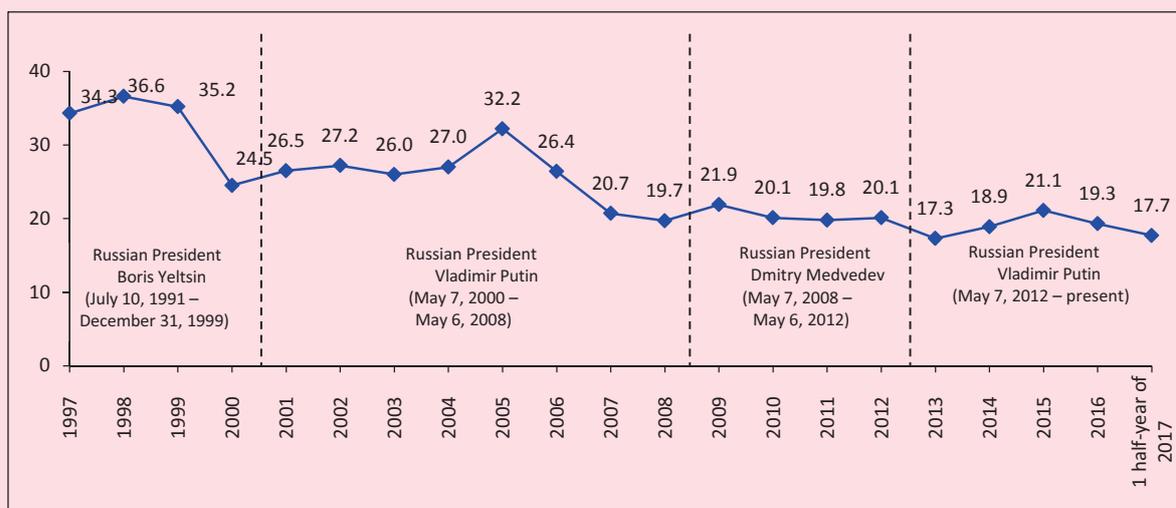
F.A. Klintsevich: “One of the most important results of the past four years can be considered the transformation of Russia into a leading player on the world stage. In this context, we should regard the steps to strengthen and modernize the Russian Armed Forces. The last four years were really breakthrough in this regard. We now have one of the most modern armies in the world”;

V.V. Ryazanskii: “Despite the tough blockade and severe sanctions, we managed to solve the problems of war and peace as equals... Russia has managed to make the SCO and BRICS the tools for political dialogue in international life. This gives us grounds to say that we managed to restore the parity, without which Russia can not live. In addition, our philosophy of a multipolar world finds more and more supporters. As an example, we can mention the decision of the French Parliament to encourage the government to abandon the practice of anti-Russian sanctions”.

wider population to exercise their civic activity and interest in major social and political issues that go beyond their ordinary everyday problems); on the other hand, this problem weakens Vladimir Putin's personal political achievements and achievements of his team (which is important in light of the approaching presidential election). **The roots of this phenomenon are found in the fused interests of individual representatives of the ruling elite and big business, and in Russia they are as constant, as the nature of the problems forming the basis of public requests (inflation, low standard of living, stratification of the population, corruption, social insecurity). And this circumstance cannot be called accidental.**

We have repeatedly cited expert evaluations and the facts that demonstrate how the ineffective (and if we speak more precisely – contrary to the national interests) actions of government officials lead to serious consequences for the Russian economy, science and all key spheres of public life; as a result, the problems of Russian society become long-term and perennial¹⁶. This is evidenced by the level of protest that has been stable over the past 10 years (17–20%; Fig. 1), and the relentless demand of Russians to “live in a more just and reasonably ordered society”, to be able “to live and not just scrape a living”¹⁷.

Figure 1. Dynamics of protest potential* (% of respondents)



* Protest potential is formed by the respondents who answered the question “What are you ready to do to protect your interests?” as follows: “I will come to a rally, a demonstration”; “I will participate in strikes, protests”; “If necessary, I will take arms, take to the barricades”.

Source: ISED T RAS public opinion monitoring.

¹⁶ See, for example: Ilyin V.A. Aktual'nost' tezisa “Kadry reshayut vse!” dlya sovremennoi Rossii [Significance of the thesis “Cadres decide everything” as applied to modern Russia]. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz* [Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast], 2017, no. 3, pp. 9–31.; Ilyin V.A. Nekrasivaya istoriya... [What a Shame...]. *Ibidem*, no. 2, pp. 9–21; Ilyin V.A. God do chetvertogo prezidentskogo sroka [One Year Left before the Fourth Presidential Term]. *Ibidem*, no. 1, pp. 9–24.

¹⁷ Gorshkov M.K., Krumm R., Tikhonov N.E. (Eds.). *O chem mechtayut rossiyane: ideal i real'nost'* [What Russians dream about: the ideal and reality]. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2013. P. 11.

Policy of building the “capitalism for the few” influenced the formation of civil society in post-Soviet Russia. It develops according to a familiar pattern: **the comprador elites’ catering to their own private interests to the detriment of national priorities is accompanied by simulating the implementation of strategic guidelines for the development of the country, approved by the President.**

In this context it should be noted that Vladimir Putin from the very beginning of his presidential terms clearly denotes his intention to develop civil society institutions. In the article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium” (1999) he talks about three “chance of a decent future” and one of them is called “strong state” that creates conditions for the formation of **“full-fledged civil society that balances and controls power”**¹⁸.

Vladimir Putin: “Worldwide there is a trend to enhance the executive power. And therefore it is no accident that the society strives to strengthen control over it in order to avoid arbitrariness and abuse. That’s why **I personally attach utmost importance to establishing a cooperative relationship between the executive power and civil society, to the development of institutions and structures of the latter, and to the deployment of active and hard fight against corruption**”¹⁹.

Focus on the development of civil society and achievement of consolidation in a society fragmented after the “turbulent 1990s” can be traced not only in the President’s words, but in his specific decisions.

For example:

1. In 2002, he introduced a tax on mineral extraction (MET) that forced the oligarchic clan to share their profits with the state. As a result, by 2002, budget revenues rose to 2204.7 billion rubles, that is, in 3.6 times compared with 1999.

2. In 2003, Federal Law 131 “On general principles of organization of local government in the Russian Federation” was adopted.

3. In 2005, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and public councils were established²⁰. Ten years later, Vladimir Putin noted that “we had originally intended to establish the Civic Chamber of Russia with its principles and activities **in order to expand the base of democracy in the truest sense of the word, without any big talk...** It should not replace either the Government or Parliament, it should have its own niche, and it occupies the niche. It is public control over the executive and representative powers, it is an expert evaluation of what is generated as immediate and more distant plans, it is an assessment of how these plans are implemented, and it is a direct link with the people, a direct link with those who feel the efforts of the authorities aimed to improve life in the country”²¹.

¹⁸ Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the Millennium. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 1999, December 30. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ On the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation: Federal Law of April 4, 2005 No. 32. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2005, no. 3739, April 7. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2005/04/07/obshestv-palata-dok.html>

²¹ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting with members of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on June 20, 2017. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54831>

4. In 2011, the Russian Popular Front (ONF) was established, and the President set before it the task “to supervise the execution of decrees and orders of the head of state and to fight against corruption”²². In October 2012, at the first meeting with core members of the ONF Vladimir Putin said that “with the creation of the ONF he proceeded not so much from political reasons, but was guided by the necessity of creating a broad public coalition”²³.

5. In 2012, the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “About assessing performance efficiency of the executive authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation” No. 1199 was issued, according to which one of these indicators was “People’s assessment of the performance of the executive authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation”²⁴. In 2014, Federal Law 2012 “On the fundamentals of civic watch in the Russian Federation” was adopted, etc.

However, neither the strengthening of democratic foundations of the management system nor civil society institutions that work efficiently and reflect the opinion of the general population could be among the interests of the comprador elite, which the President continues to “tolerate”. Therefore, the development of civil society in Russia is faced with the same example of simulation activities of the Government with which it

Vladimir Putin: “The Russian Popular Front must become a truly broad-based public movement that gives all citizens the chance to set their goals and aims, reach these goals, take action on issues that often get bogged down in the bureaucratic swamp, and directly propose ideas that could go on to become laws and government decisions. We need to give people the opportunity to use existing instruments for influencing public processes, look for new instruments, and put them to skillful use. We need to promote new people, new candidates, take part in elections and put forward the right kind of people for them. Most important of all, this work must be real and alive, directly linked with people, their interests, and resolving their problems”²⁵.

regularly “reports” on the implementation of the May Decrees of the President: the Civic Chamber and the civic councils (at the regional level, as well) have been created, but they were endowed with the right of advisory vote, which can be ignored given an appropriate level of “responsibility” of management personnel. Key representatives of regional civic chambers and councils were determined by regional authorities and funded by the same authorities; that is, in fact, civil society institutions have been forced to find fault with those on whom they depended financially.

²² History of the Russian Popular Front. *Official website of the Russian Popular Front*. Available at: <http://onf.ru/structure/istoriya-onf/>

²³ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting with core members of the Russian Popular Front on October 18, 2012. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16680>

²⁴ On assessing the efficiency of the work of the executive authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation: the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of August 21, 2012 No. 1199. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/35958>

²⁵ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Founding Congress of the Russian Popular Front on June 12, 2013. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18328>

Thus, the implementation of a generally correct rhetoric of the President aimed to overcome a huge gap of mistrust that has developed between the society and the state in the 1990s is in the hands of officials who are not interested in it. This led to two sustainable trends in the Russian society.

The first of them is the **skepticism that people feel toward civil society institutions**, as illustrated by the results of sociological surveys (see *Appendix*). Thus, the index of trust of people to the media during Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term (2012–2017) declined from 102 to 89 p., to political parties and movements – from 89 to 80 p., to local authorities – from 104 to 99 p., to non-governmental organizations – from 102 to 94 p., to the Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast – from 103 to 98 points²⁶.

But the main thing is not the negative dynamics, but the fact that **among many state and public institutions it is the civil society institutions that enjoy the least trust among people** (for comparison: the index of confidence in the President, according to the data as of 2017, is 147 p., in the Church – 135 p., in the Army – 128 p., in the FSB – 126 p., in the Court and Prosecutor’s office – 121 p. for each, etc.). That is, the Russian society has developed a level of confidence in the institutions of civil society that is comparable with the trust in banking and business communities (80–90 points). The only difference is that in relation to entrepreneurship there is the mental

commitment of Russians to the conservatism and traditionalism, as well as their desire for stability generated by the numerous facts of fraud on the part of elites dominating in the 1990s. As for civil society institutions, **we are talking more about the lack of faith in their ability to exercise a real impact on individuals who make management decisions.** It is no coincidence that these motives (“lack of faith in the possibility of influencing the decisions of the authorities”, “indifference to common causes, individualism”, “the habit of pinning one’s hopes on what already exists, including the power”) are frequently recognized by people as the main obstacles to the manifestation of civic activity (*Tab. 2*).

The second trend logically follows the first one. It consists directly in the decline of civil activity of wide layers of the population or in social atomism, the presence of which in the Russian society is recognized by many researchers who study public sentiment.

In 2008, RAS Academician V.I. Zhukov pointed out that “in the modern Russian society the priority of work for the benefit of society and other people is being transformed into the priority of work for the sake of personal interests. In modern Russia in conditions of crisis and instability of culture there forms a personality type with a predominance of the orientation toward individual norms of behavior and activities”²⁷. In 2012, RAS Academician M.K. Gorshkov wrote: “In the face of increasing anxiety, and often hostility of the external environment

²⁶ According to the methodology of calculating the index (see *Appendix*), its value below 100 points indicates the predominance of negative judgments in the estimation of population, or, in other words, people often speak about their distrust of the above mentioned forms of organization of civil society.

²⁷ Zhukov V.I. Rossiya v global’noi sisteme sotsial’nykh koordinat: sotsiologicheskii analiz i prognoz (doklad na II s’ezde Soyuza sotsiologov Rossii) [Russia in the global system of social coordinates: sociological analysis and forecast (the report at the 2nd Congress of the Union of Sociologists of Russia)]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological studies], 2008, no. 10, p. 39.

Table 2. What obstacles do you consider to be most important for the manifestation of people's civic position? (% of respondents)*

Indicator	2008	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Dynamics (+ / -) 2017 to...	
								2016	2008
Lack of faith in the possibility of influencing the decisions of the authorities	20.7	24.3	27.2	22.7	21.0	22.3	20.0	-2	-1
Indifference to common causes, individualism	43.5	26.2	24.1	23.5	19.6	24.5	19.5	-5	-24
The habit of pinning one's hopes on what already exists, including the power	24.8	19.1	22.0	21.9	19.5	19.6	19.1	-1	-6
Lack of knowledge, incompetence	20.9	15.2	19.1	15.9	15.4	19.7	16.4	-3	-5
Lack of time, excessive employment	9.9	12.3	15.5	15.0	14.4	18.5	14.8	-4	+5
Fear of punishment, harassment by superiors, authorities, law enforcement agencies	–	15.9	19.9	19.7	11.8	13.2	14.6	+1	–
Lack of organization ability	9.5	8.3	11.1	10.7	9.5	10.9	9.6	-1	0
Fears of negative reactions from others	–	6.7	9.4	7.4	6.5	5.3	5.9	+1	–
Other	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	0	0
Difficult to answer	14.9	27.3	29.7	29.9	35.1	35.3	37.0	+2	+22

* Question is asked once a year. Ranked according to the data as of 2017.

and in conditions of the lack of the ability to significantly influence the emerging situation, the Russians are concentrating their efforts on creating a comfortable microenvironment of their habitat...”²⁸

Speaking about the Russian society today, experts say: “People adapt to poverty. This usually occurs in two stages. The first one continues for a year or two. During this time, the changes are not perceived as critical. A shortage of funds represents only a lack of resources, nothing more. The second stage begins after about five years of poverty. **To this point value orientation and social circle have changed. The process of getting used to poverty is not just completed, but leads to external changes in life and also to internal changes. If a person is in a state of**

despair for too long, they develop a sense of hopelessness. They are not inclined to fight for their interests, but think only about how to survive”²⁹.

A VTsIOM poll conducted in May 2017 shows that “in the case of declining revenues, only 4% of families expect help from the state, about a third of families rely on their relatives, every fourth family is counting on its own savings and **more than 40% of families do not count on anyone's support**” (Fig. 2)³⁰.

Regional studies of the dynamics of public opinion clearly demonstrate the fears of Russian scientists:

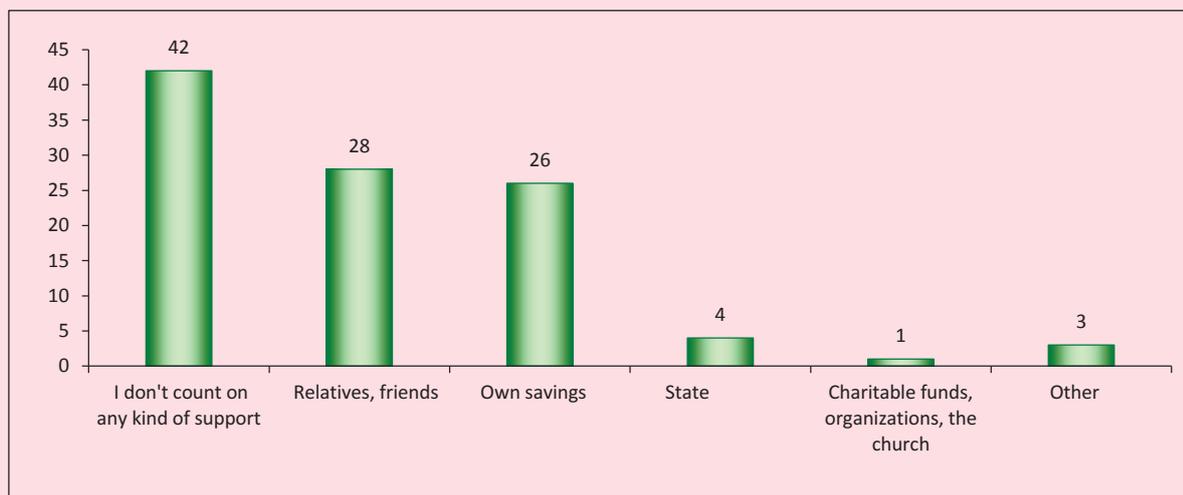
✓ a sense of harmony and cohesion at the micro-level (family, immediate circle) is noted by 62% of the population in the country and in the region – three times less (22%);

²⁸ Gorshkov M.K. “Russkaya mehta”: opyt sotsiologicheskogo izmereniya [“Russian dream”: an experience of sociological measurement]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological studies], 2012, no. 12, p. 3.

²⁹ Granina N. The habit of poverty: Russians cope with the crisis by gradually getting used to poverty. *The information resource Lenta.ru*. Available at: <https://lenta.ru/articles/2016/03/09/poverty/>

³⁰ Ovcharova L.N. (Ed.). *Naselenie Rossii v 2017 godu: dokhody, raskhody i sotsial'noe samochuvstvie. Monitoring NIU VShE. Iyul' 2017* [The population of Russia in 2017: revenues, expenditures, and social well-being. Monitoring of HSE. July 2017]. Moscow: NIU VShE, 2017. P. 5.

Figure 2. Distribution of answers to the question “If the income of your family decreases for some reasons, on what or whom will you rely in the first place?” (% of respondents, calculations by the HSE according to the data of the opinion poll, May 2017)



Source: Ovcharova L.N. (Ed.). *Naselenie Rossii v 2017 godu: dokhody, raskhody i sotsial'noe samochuvstvie. Monitoring NIU VShE. Iyul' 2017* [The population of Russia in 2017: revenues, expenditures, and social well-being. Monitoring of HSE. July 2017]. Moscow: NIU VShE, 2017. P. 26.

✓ 87% do not trust anyone or trust only their closest friends and relatives;

✓ 84% assess the degree of their influence on the situation in the family as high (understand and accept their responsibility), but only 4–10% say they can influence the situation in the country, region, city;

✓ the proportion of people willing to unite to achieve common goals (45–50%), prevails over the proportion of those who share the opposite view (20–25%); however, as we know, people can unite for various reasons, including for the purpose of participating in protests, which is clearly demonstrated by the protest actions organized by the non-system opposition in March 2016;

✓ 33% do not participate in various activities of public and political life (their share over the past six years has increased by 12 percentage points); we cannot but mention the decline in the share of people who do not participate in social activities in 2017 (from 50 to 32%), but (as we noted earlier) it also can mean only that in this way people “do the job of the government, after they became disappointed in its capacity”³¹.

All of the above facts showing a low level of civic activity are typical not only of the Russian society of 2017. A similar ratio of assessments of interpersonal trust, degree of cohesion, ability to influence the situation, etc. is observed over the entire period under consideration, i.e. at least in the last six years.

³¹ Buev M. Apolitical civil society. Charity in Russia corrects the failures of the state. *The Newspaper Vedomosti*, 2016, November 28. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/columns/2016/11/28/667126-apolitichnoe-grazhdanskoe>

Events of the “Crimean spring” have played a positive role in the development of civil activity of the population. They have led to a sharp increase in consolidation sentiment (the level of cohesion in the country in 2014 increased from 14 to 29%) and to more active participation of people in different social and political events (in 2015, the share of those who do not participate in these events for the

first time during the study period decreased from 44 to 37%; *Tab. 3*). However, these positive changes proved to be short-term. The following year the proportion of people who point out a high level of agreement and cohesion in the country decreased (from 29 to 22%); and the percentage of people who do not participating in political and social activities increased from 37 to 50%.

Table 3. Dynamics of indicators of civic engagement and interpersonal trust
(% of the number of respondents; answers for each question are ranked according to 2017)

Answer options	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Dynamics (+/-) 2017 to...	
							2016	2011
Proportion of people who believe that “today there is more harmony and cohesion than disagreement and disunity...”								
In your immediate circle	46.9	52.1	61.4	57.7	58.0	62.3	+4	+15
In the place of your residence	24.1	28.4	39.1	32.2	33.4	38.5	+5	+14
In the country	14.2	14.1	28.9	22.0	21.6	22.8	+1	+9
In the oblast	19.3	15.9	26.9	19.9	20.3	21.7	+1	+2
Distribution of answers to the question “Who can you trust?”								
Only my close friends and relatives	58.1	52.5	53.4	55.7	60.2	62.7	+3	+5
You can trust no one these days	26.1	27.9	27.9	23.5	25.1	24.2	-1	-2
You can trust most of my acquaintances	12.8	15.2	12.2	12.6	10.8	9.7	-1	-3
You can trust all people without exception	2.3	1.6	3.1	2.5	2.3	1.0	-1	-1
Proportion of people who believe that they can “personally affect the state of affairs...”								
In my family	77,1	76,9	77,5	75,7	84,5	84,4	0	+7
At work	50.7	42.9	40.9	35.1	39.9	46.1	+6	-5
In my house, yard	35.6	34.5	33.5	34.1	32.9	35.5	+3	0
In my city, neighborhood	12.3	7.1	9.4	7.1	7.1	9.8	+3	-3
In my oblast	7.7	3.0	4.1	3.7	4.7	4.5	0	-3
In country in general	6.6	2.5	3.7	3.3	3.9	4.5	+1	-2
Distribution of answers to the question “Are you ready to unite with other people for any joint action to defend common interests?”								
Ready and sooner ready	47.1	43.0	54.6	50.6	38.3	45.8	+8	-1
Not ready and sooner not ready	25.2	19.9	15.1	18.9	26.1	21.6	-5	-4
Difficult to answer	27.7	37.1	30.3	30.5	35.5	32.6	-3	+5
Participation in various activities of public and political life*								
I didn't participate	20.6	29.0	43.7	36.6	50.1	32.7	-17	+12

* Answers (events): election, collective beautification, subbotniks; work of housing and utilities services, house committee, council of self-government; collecting donations, funds, items for the needy; signing petitions to the authorities; trade union activities; election campaign; activity of public organizations; rallies, demonstrations, pickets; activities of religious organizations; activities of political parties; strikes.
The survey is conducted since 2011 once a year (in April).
Source: ISEDT RAS public opinion monitoring.

Thus, the Government essentially represents the interests of the ruling elite engaged in the construction of “crony capitalism”. Therefore, the fact that the officials pretend they work for the common good (and in fact they are not interested either in addressing the key issues that matter to people, or in the efficient development of civil society institutions) leads to the fact that the President’s policy of rapprochement between government and society is not implemented to the fullest extent. Instead, real-life conditions contribute to the fact that the Russian society is facing social atomism, apathy, and disbelief in the possibility of influencing the situation in the country.

In this context one should mention the growth of political apathy among Russians. As shown by the results of sociological surveys, more than 40% of the population find it difficult to determine which of the current parties reflects their interests, or think

that none of the political forces represented in Parliament does. For the period from 2007 to the first half of 2017, the percentage of those who share this view increased from 40 to 44% (Tab. 4). For comparison, this is more than the percentage of those who support the ruling party (30–35%) and support all the other parliamentary parties combined (about 20%).

Of interest is also the dynamics of voter turnout in Russia at the election of the federal level (in particular, to the State Duma), which we analyzed in detail in one of our previous articles³². Overall, the turnout of Russians at the election to Parliament has shown a continuous downward trend since 2007 (in 1999 – 61.9%, in 2003 – 55.8%, in 2007 – 63.8%, in 2011 – 60.2%, and in 2016 – 47.9%). For the period from 2007 to 2016, the number of voters coming to the polls declined by 17 million people (from 70 to 53 million; Tab. 5).

Table 4. Which party expresses your interests? (as a percentage of the number of respondents)

Party	2007	Election to the RF State Duma 2007, fact	2011	Election to the RF State Duma 2011, fact	2013	2014	2015	2016	Election to the RF State Duma 2016, fact	1 half-year of 2017	Dynamics (+/-) 1 half-year of 2017 to		
											2016	2011	2007
United Russia	30.2	60.5	31.1	33.4	29.4	32.8	38.8	35.4	38.0	33.2	-2	+2	+3
LDPR	7.5	11.0	7.8	15.4	7.2	7.6	6.2	10.4	21.9	10.7	0	+3	+3
KPRF	7.0	9.3	10.3	16.8	11.3	9.7	7.1	8.3	14.2	7.3	-1	-3	0
Just Russia	7.8	8.8	5.6	27.2	4.6	3.5	3.6	4.2	10.8	4.7	+1	-1	-3
Other	1.8	–	1.9	–	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.3	–	0.3	0	-2	-2
No party	17.8	–	29.4	–	34.9	34.4	31.8	29.4	–	31.5	+2	+2	+14
It is difficult to answer	21.2	–	13.2	–	10.2	11.7	12.2	12.0	–	12.3	0	-1	-9

Source: ISED T RAS public opinion monitoring.

³² Ilyin V.A. Konstitutsionnoe bol'shinstvo v Gosudarstvennoi Dume VII sozyva poluchil Prezident RF [Russian President got a constitutional majority in the State Duma of the Seventh Convocation]. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz* [Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast], 2016, no. 5, pp. 9-26.

Table 5. Dynamics of voter turnout at the election to the State Duma of the 5th–7th convocations, broken down by federal districts of Russia*

<i>people</i>					
Territory	2007	2011	2016	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007
Russian Federation	69609446	65766594	52700992	-13065602	-16908454
Central Federal District	17546326	17049621	12270883	-4778738	-5275443
Volga Federal District	16043964	15100550	13083343	-2017207	-2960621
Northwestern Federal District	6520540	6234123	4378759	-1855364	-2141781
Siberian Federal District	9351476	8212790	6599218	-1613572	-2752258
Ural Federal District	6039397	5273346	4258200	-1015146	-1781197
Far Eastern Federal District	2986327	2530907	1870528	-660379	-1115799
Southern Federal District	6621657	6510122	5896748	-613374	-724909
North Caucasian Federal District	4195352	4544971	4343313	-201658	+147961
<i>%</i>					
Territory	2007	2011	2016	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007
Northwestern Federal District	61.23	57.65	43.18	-14.47	-18.05
Central Federal District	60.98	58.78	45.29	-13.49	-15.69
Southern Federal District	63.22	61.51	48.27	-13.24	-14.95
Far Eastern Federal District	63.68	55.83	42.92	-12.91	-20.76
Siberian Federal District	66.45	58.19	46.70	-11.49	-19.75
Ural Federal District	65.51	59.07	48.83	-10.24	-16.68
Volga Federal District	69.13	64.30	54.44	-9.86	-14.69
North Caucasian Federal District	84.95	86.46	82.22	-4.24	-2.73

* Ranked by reduction in turnout in 2016 compared to 2011.

It should be noted that since 2007, voter turnout in Russia at the presidential election has been also decreasing: in 2007 it was 69.7%, in 2012 – 65.3%, and who knows what it will be in 2018...

Trends of civic activity of the population registered by sociological assessments, the level of trust in key institutions of civil society, the dynamics of voter turnout at the election at the federal level – all these indicators show that **an imitation of activity with which the government has started to implement the President's tasks to bring government and society closer to each other has not**

produced effective results, but has only aggravated irritation and apathy among the population. By and large it could not lead to the implementation of the tasks, since the key issues of concern to the population remain unresolved. In the first place, due to the fact that most of the ruling elite has no interest in the realization of national interests, and because in the Russian system of government, at all levels of government, the tradition of responsibility of the officials and their punishment for the performance of their professional duties has not been formed (either organizationally or psychologically).

The question whether the President agrees with the state of affairs in the field of public administration or whether he is forced to continue to endure an actually open non-performance of his direct orders is difficult to answer, but the fact remains: the liberal bloc of the Government continues to carry out its activities contrary to Russia’s national interests.

Perhaps one of the forms of influence on the liberal bloc of the government and officials at the regional level can be found in the civil society institutions actively supported by the President. Today, they effectively solve many problems. In particular, the ONF succeeds not only in addressing local issues (such as the resettlement of people from dilapidated houses, commissioning of kindergartens, repair of roads, liquidation of illegal dumps, etc.), but also effectively implements one of the key objectives noted in its Charter: “public monitoring and civil control over the execution of laws, presidential initiatives and other priorities of government decisions and programs”³³. **It is no coincidence, that the inspections carried out by the ONF initiated the arrests of the governors of the Volgograd, Novosibirsk, Bryansk, Chelyabinsk, Ryazan, and Sakhalin oblasts. And it is the estimates of ONF members that allow us to see the real picture concerning the implementation of the May decrees of the President.** According to

In mid-2016, that is four years after publication of the May presidential decrees, the Government reported on the implementation of “about 70% of the total number of the orders and 88% of the number of orders that are to be executed to the present time”. However, as noted by the representatives of the Russian Popular Front, “out of 162 our opinions on government reports about the withdrawal of the relevant instructions from control, we confirmed the feasibility of withdrawing only 24 instructions. The numbers are exact: we believe that 24 instructions were actually executed, the rest in varying degrees, have not been executed”³⁵.

experts, the ONF today “can play a very striking role” in the presidential campaign if Vladimir Putin announces his candidacy for the 2018 presidential election and “if the scenario “Vladimir Putin with people” is chosen”³⁴.

We should also note some new developments in the work of the State Duma of the 7th convocation:

first, the Duma arranges wide parliamentary hearings with the participation of “not only the opposition but also citizens

³³ Charter of the ONF. *Official website of the Russian Popular Front*. Available at: <http://onf.ru/2013/06/10/ustav/>

³⁴ Volkova O., Nikol’skaya P., Tkachev I., Mogilevskaya A. The promises of the third term: How the May Decrees of the President are executed. *The official website of RBC*. Available at: <http://www.rbc.ru/economics/17/05/2016/573a034a9a7947d18967193a>

³⁵ Rozhkova N. The ONF is considering the election. *Newspaper “Izvestia”*, 2017, June 26. Available at: <https://iz.ru/610214/natalia-rozhkova/onf-primeriaetsia-k-uchastiiu-v-prezidentskoi-kampanii>

united to defend their interests”³⁶, and it also intends “to discuss with the voters the directions of improvement of parliamentary control”;

second, the Duma expresses an intention “to carry out discussions with the Cabinet most strictly – even given the fact that the ruling party is headed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev” (in particular, to exercise tighter control over the executive power, together with the Accounts Chamber);

third, the Duma “lays aside party differences for the sake of consolidating the status”. It is no accident that during the first year of the work of the deputies of the 7th convocation out of the 225 initiatives supported by the Duma 173 were “adopted by consensus, i.e. by the votes of all four Duma parties”, which, according to Speaker V. Volodin, means that they “are supported by the vast majority of the population of our country”, and in this case a large part of these laws is “not a technical correction, but topical solutions to modern problems”³⁷.

But even amid the cautious optimism that can arise when looking at the actions of parliamentarians and successes of civic

activists in the fight against corruption and in addressing specific problems of Russian regions, their efforts may not be enough to develop civil society efficiently. **Because this development is based on civic participation of wide layers of the population, and it cannot be achieved without compliance with two conditions:**

1) tangible progress in addressing the issues of standard of living and quality of life;

2) people’s belief that civil society institutions are able to defend their opinion on the most important issues that can affect managerial decisions of the authorities.

So far these conditions in Russia remain unfulfilled. A stable level of protest potential and sustainable nature of the problems plaguing the population suggest that in Russian society there are certain social needs, which promote the accumulation of critical mass. While the unsatisfied social needs of the population can become the basis for constructive dialogue between civil society institution and the authorities as well as the basis for destructive targeted activities of certain forces seeking to destabilize the situation prior to the presidential election.

³⁶ For example: June 6, 2017, the State Duma held parliamentary hearings of a bill on renovation of residential buildings in the city. The discussion was attended by deputies of relevant committees, heads of parliamentary parties, members of government, Mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyenin and the residents of the houses included in the program of renovation (about 300 people).

July 3, 2017 the State Duma held parliamentary hearings on the topic “Formation of effective legal mechanisms to protect the rights and legitimate interests of participants of shared construction”, organized by relevant committees in preparation for the second reading of draft federal law 139186-7 “On amendments to the Federal Law “About participation in shared construction of apartment houses and other real estate and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” (in terms of protection of the rights of participants of shared construction). The discussion of the government bill was attended by deputies of the State Duma, participants of shared construction, defrauded real estate investors from troubled regions (Novosibirsk Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, Samara Oblast, Moscow and the Moscow Oblast, Saint Petersburg, Chelyabinsk Oblast, etc. – a total of about 227 people), as well as representatives of the Bank of Russia, the Agency for Housing Mortgage Lending, the Ministry of Construction and Housing of Russia.

³⁷ Rodin I. Deputies will work on parliamentary control in the fall. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2017, July 25. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2017-07-25/3_7036_duma.html

Thus, long-term expectations of the population concerning the solution of issues of social justice become a resource for which there is a war between the non-systemic opposition (to “shake” social stability and create an explosive situation before the presidential election) and civil society institutions, first of all, such as the Russian Popular Front and the Civic Chamber, the new chairman of which (V. Fadeev) rightly noted that “the agenda should be from the bottom to the top”³⁸. The key areas on which the Civic Chamber of the new convocation plans to focus its attention are as follows: “protecting social rights of citizens such as the right to work, to housing, to health care”; struggle for increasing the independence of regional public chambers; creation of an “automatic system of public control”³⁹.

The wave of protests that swept Russia in the spring and summer of 2017⁴⁰, has shown that professional organizational work and information “input” that performs a role of a “match” is enough to unite representatives of different social groups for a short time. And the growing dynamics of people’s readiness to come together in pursuit of common objectives (which is shown by the data of long-term sociological research carried out

by ISEDT RAS) can prove it: it proves not the strengthening of consolidation processes in the society, but an exhaustion of the stock of patience.

This is confirmed by the results of nationwide surveys: thus, according to the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, “two-thirds of Russians today talk about unsolvable contradictions between the people and the government. At that, the demand for stability in the country is gradually replaced by the demand for change”⁴¹. For the period from 2014 to 2017, the share of Russians who believe that “the country needs significant changes, it needs new reforms in economic and political life” increased from 30 to 41%, while the share of those who believe that “the country needs stability; it is more important than the changes”, decreased from 70 to 56%.

It should be noted that the very fact of the struggle for “popular support” among the non-systemic opposition and social activists is forced in nature. It suggests that **the social issues are not solved by those whose job is to do so.** This, in particular, was confirmed by the recently held direct live TV phone-in with Vladimir Putin: “the President himself had to tackle the problems that no one paid any attention for months or even years. But the

³⁸ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting with members of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on June 20, 2017. *Official website of the Russian President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54831>

³⁹ Civil society institution. Agenda. *Journal “Expert”*, 2017, August 4. Available at: <http://expert.ru/expert/2017/29/institut-grazhdanskogo-obschestva/>

⁴⁰ March 26, 2017, protest actions (rallies, marches, pickets) against corruption in the highest echelons of Russian power were held in 82 Russian cities. They were triggered by the lack of reaction to the film “He is not Dimon to you”, which is an investigation by Alexey Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation, it tells about the alleged corrupt ties of the Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation Dmitri Medvedev. According to some foreign and Russian media it was the largest protest in Russia since the protests of 2011–2013. The second “wave” of protests took place on June 12, 2017. Rallies were held in more than 150 cities of Russia and attended by 50 to 98 thousand people.

⁴¹ Solov’eva O. People are tired of stability. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2017, July 13, no. 143. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2017-07-13/4_7028_people.html

President of Russia, even if he laid aside his duties and dedicates all his time to dealing with private matters, will never have time to solve everything”⁴².

At the same time, the President’s attention to the development of civil society and, in particular, his direct involvement in the management of the ONF indicate his interest in using this institution as an effective mechanism for fighting corruption, for implementing the objectives of nationalization of the ruling elites. Not being able to carry out drastic reshuffle in the Government, which, according to some experts, is largely because of Vladimir Putin’s reluctance to engage in open conflict with the West and its “liberal agents in Russia”⁴³, the President does not estrange himself from domestic issues, but tries to solve them by acting “in a roundabout way” and using power structures and mechanisms of social control.

However, until the President takes decisive steps to nationalize the ruling elite that continues to work on the construction of “crony capitalism”, it is still premature to talk about the effective development of civil society and its control functions, as well as about the creation of conditions for a natural, democratic transformation of the management

system in accordance with the dynamics of national interests, which causes a risk of repeating tragic lessons of history.

Further development of civil society and improving the quality of public administration in Russia, in our opinion, depend largely on two circumstances:

- first, the dynamics of international political events, which (in case of any force majeure event like the Ukrainian crisis or a new round of the Cold war 2.0.) may require priority attention of the President to the issues of foreign policy;

- second, answers to the questions: will the President maintain the role of “regulator” of the processes occurring in the internal political life in the country? Will he be able to ensure the quality functioning of public administration system in order to implement national interests and national security? Does he have enough political will, personal strength and strategic thinking in order to not get bogged down in a swamp of political intrigue, corruption schemes and behind-the-scenes games, which accompany the construction of “crony capitalism”?

In order to create a solid foundation of civil society and ensure that its institutions fulfill the function of public control to the fullest extent, strong action will be necessary

⁴² Civil society institution. Agenda. *Journal “Expert”*, 2017, August 4. Available at: <http://expert.ru/expert/2017/29/institut-grazhdanskogo-obschestva/>

⁴³ M.G. Delyagin: “If we defend Russia’s national interests – then we will have to quarrel with the West, to quarrel really and not like it is now. And in this case, a huge number of representatives of the Russian “offshore aristocracy” will lose their houses in Paris, their palaces in London and castles in Austria, Scotland, etc. And what can be done with them? **They will be discontented and as a whole, as wise, energetic and efficient people, will fight quite skillfully against the policy of protection of national interests of Russia, which threatens their property in the West.** To prevent this war, they should be punished preemptively. But the main problem of Putin is that he is a humanist and a democrat, and he would not punish without direct and personal guilt. But he understands that if we wait for the occurrence of such a fault, it may be too late, because the revolt of the elites so desirable by the West and its liberal agents in Russia will have already started” (Source: Delyagin M.G. The liberals treat Russia as if it were a cutlet – an object of consumption. “*Biznes Online*” Newspaper. Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/327971>).

(not just from the President, but from the security and civil agencies that he supports). Otherwise, the role of civil society in Russia can be reduced to the solution of specific problems of narrow social groups (the disabled, pensioners, young people, etc.).

And in this scenario the “niche” of the force able to unite the demands of various population groups to improve the quality of life and the standard of living will remain vacant, and we will only have to wait and guess about who is going to occupy it...

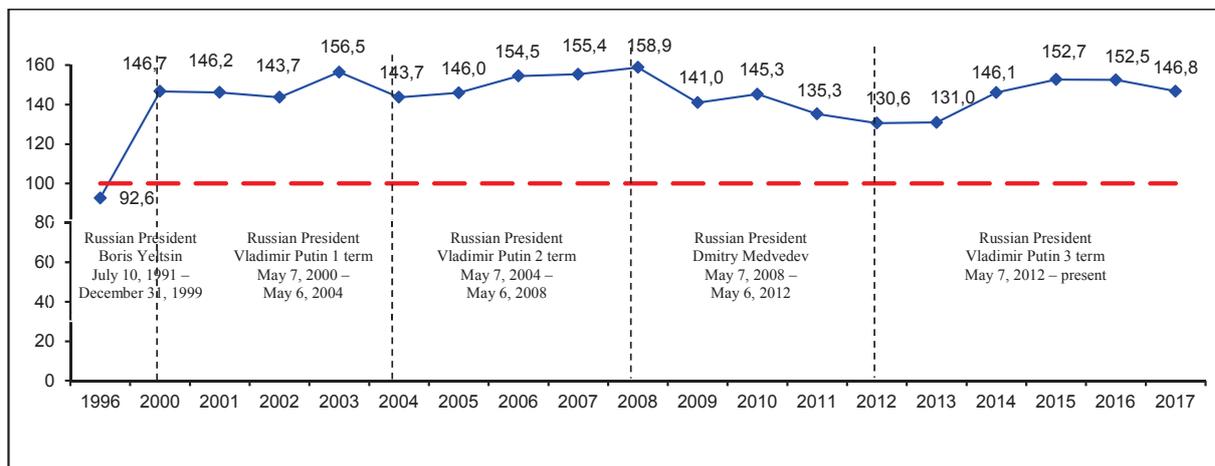
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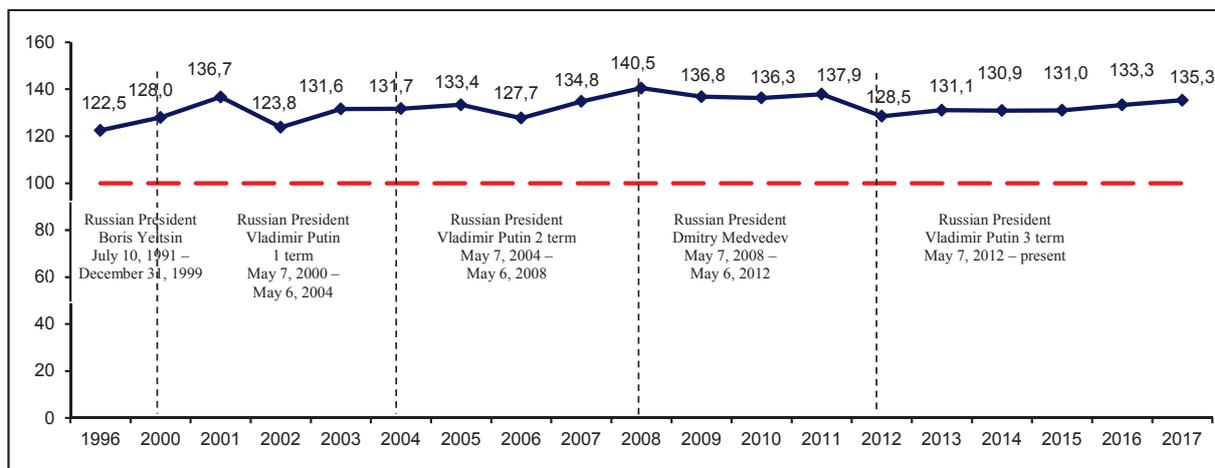
Appendix

Dynamics of the index of trust in governmental and non-governmental institutions*

1. Institutes that enjoy people's trust
(according to 2017 data)



1.1. Index of trust in the RF President



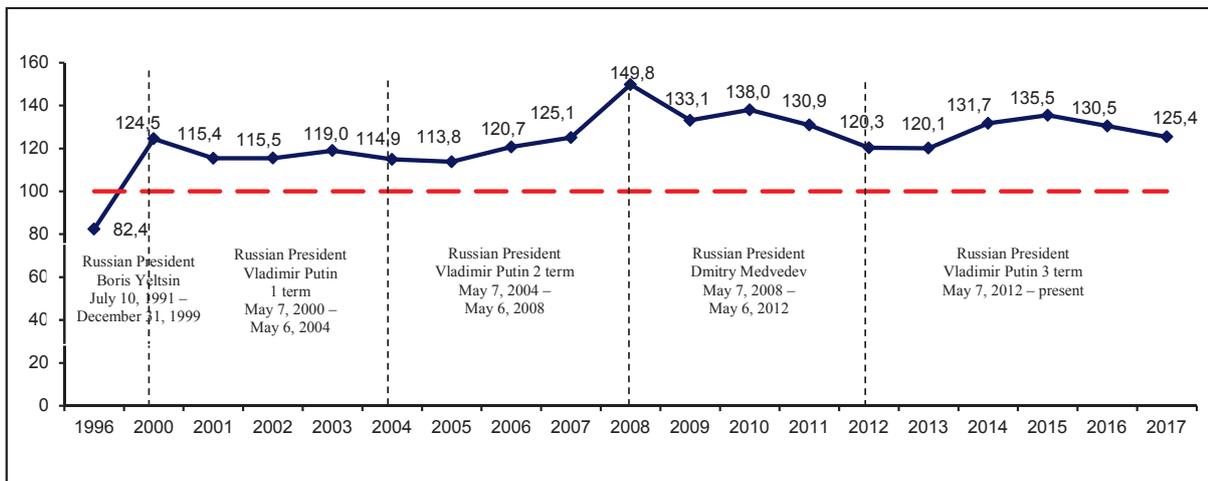
1.2. Index of trust in the Church

* The Appendix is divided into two units:

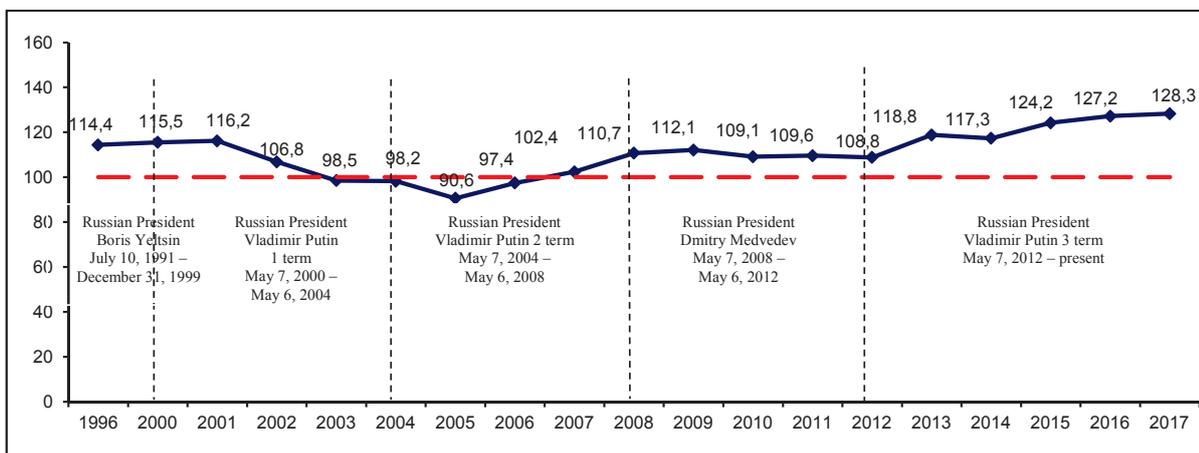
1. Institutions that enjoy trust among the population (according to 2017 data).
2. Institutions that do not enjoy trust among the population (according to 2017 data).

All the institutions presented in the Appendix are ranked by the degree of reduction of trust among the population. The criterion for distribution of the institutions in two blocks is the value of the index of trust. According to the methodology of calculating the index for its calculation the share of negative responses is subtracted from the share of positive responses, then value of 100 is added to the obtained figure so as not to have negative values. Accordingly, 100 points is a neutral mark, indicating the equilibrium proportion of positive and negative assessments; the index value above 100 points indicates the predominance of positive judgments over negative ones; below 100 points – the opposite situation.

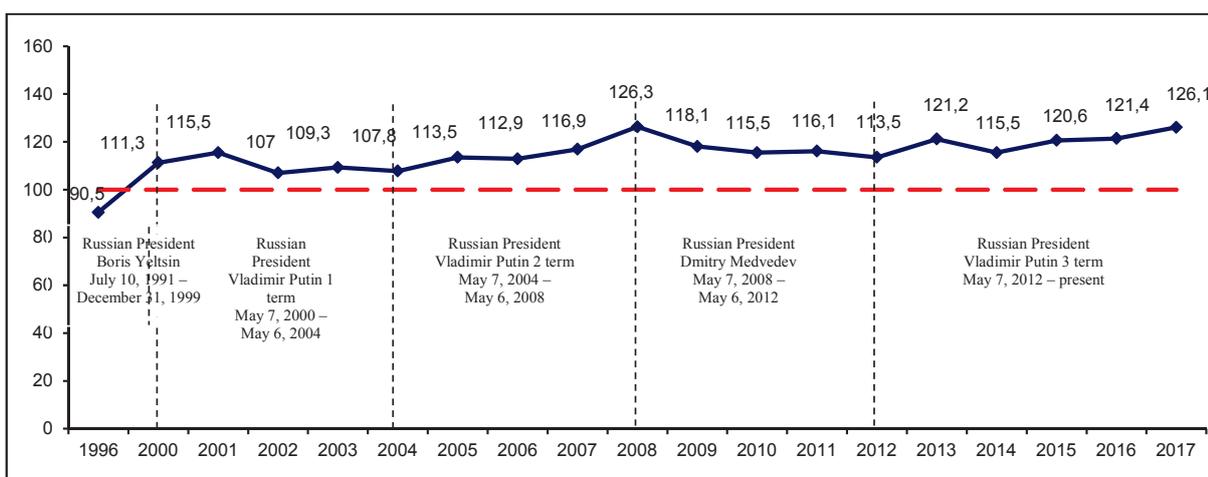
The level of trust is measured by ISEDT RAS in the Vologda Oblast since 1996. The wording of the question is “Please indicate your attitude to existing structures and institutions of power...” (answers: “I trust completely”, “I mostly trust”, “I mostly don’t trust”, “I don’t trust at all”, “I find it difficult to answer”). The question is asked twice a year (in April and October). The data for 2017 presents the results of the survey conducted in April.



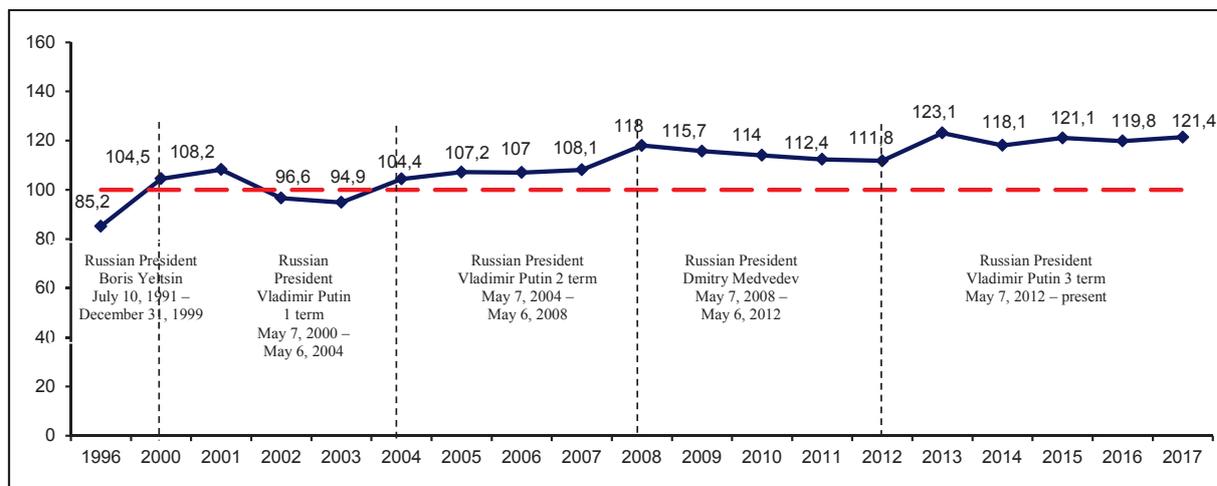
1.3. Index of trust in the RF Government



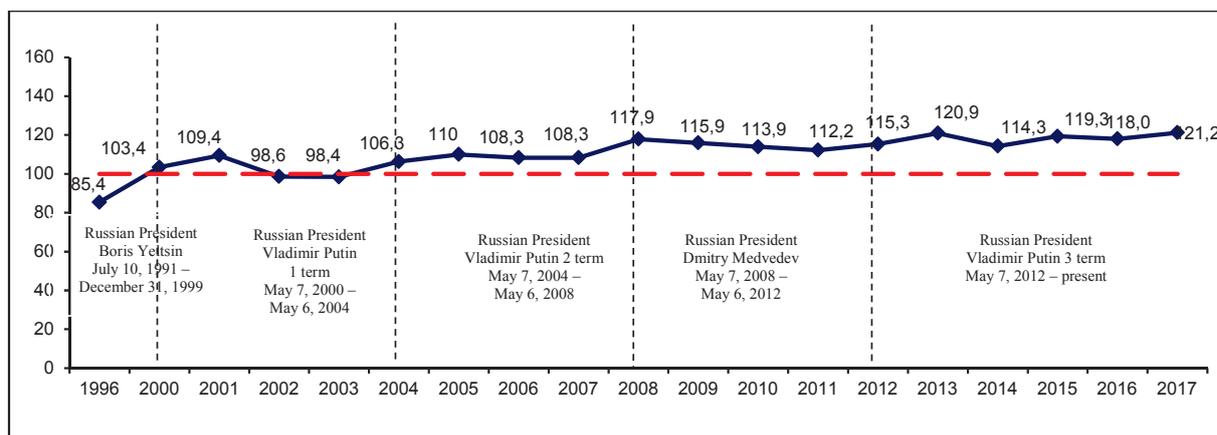
1.4. Index of trust in the Army



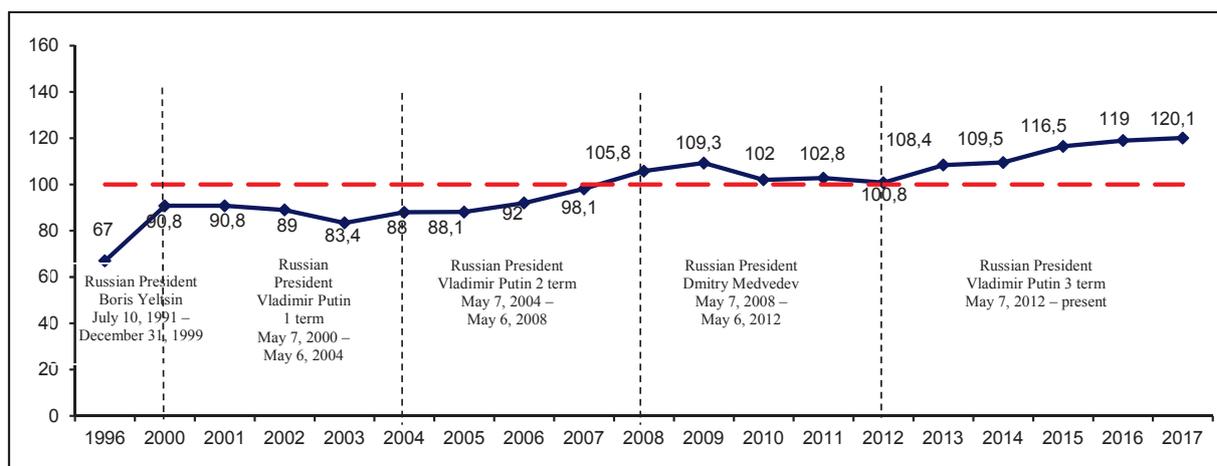
1.5. Index of trust in the Federal Security Service



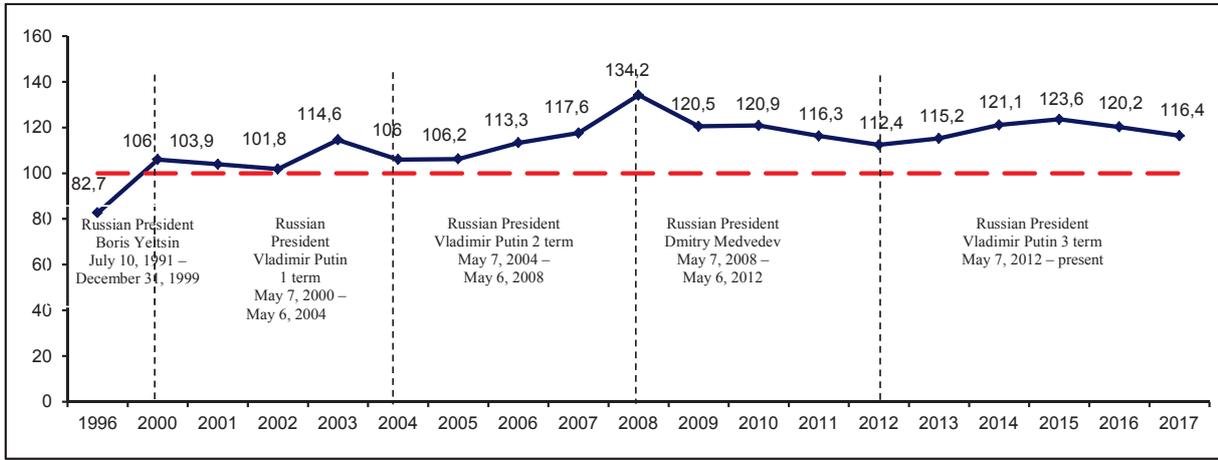
1.6. Index of trust in the Prosecutor's Office



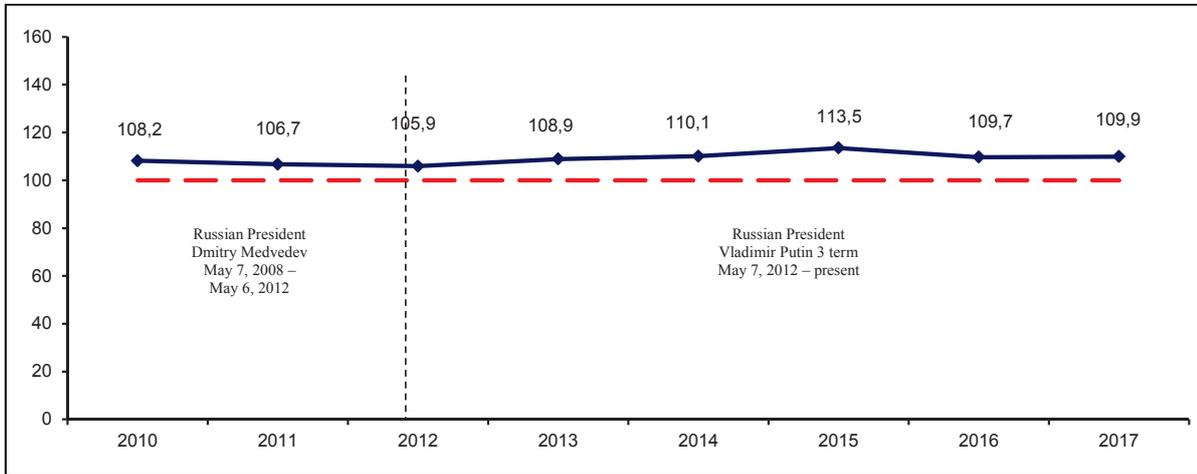
1.7. Index of trust in the Court



1.8. Index of trust in the Police

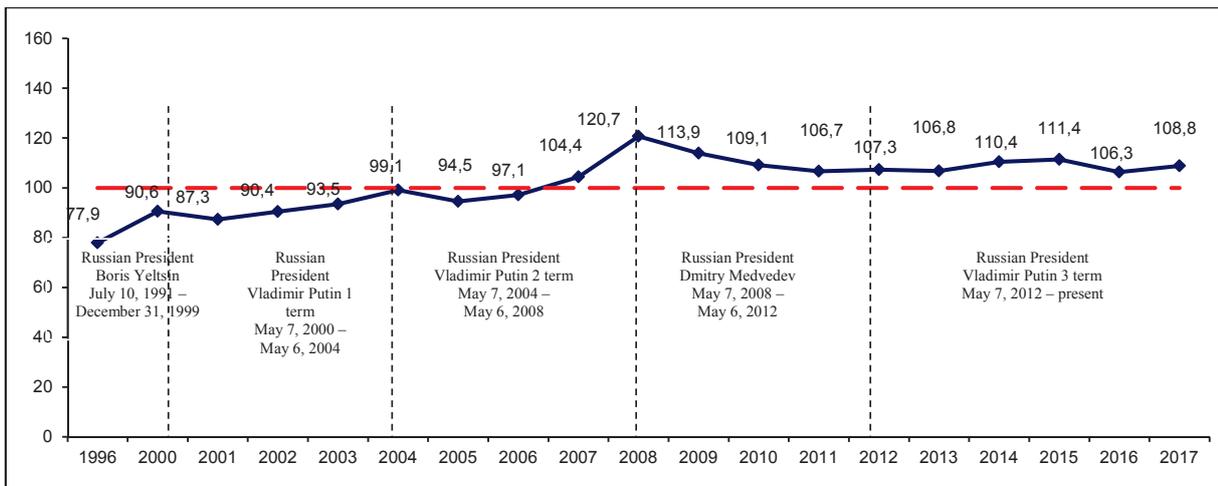


1.9. Index of trust in the Federation Council

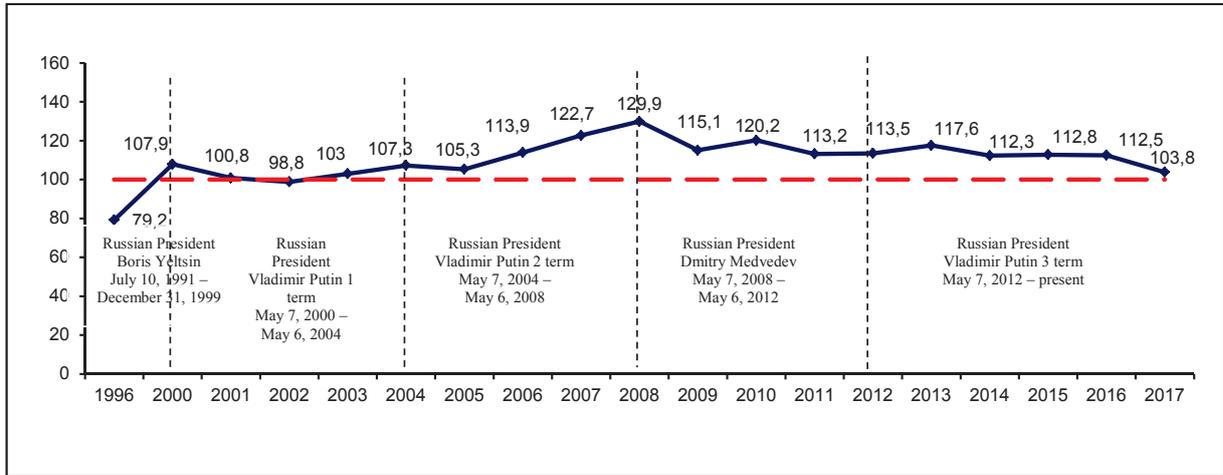


1.10. Index of trust in the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation*

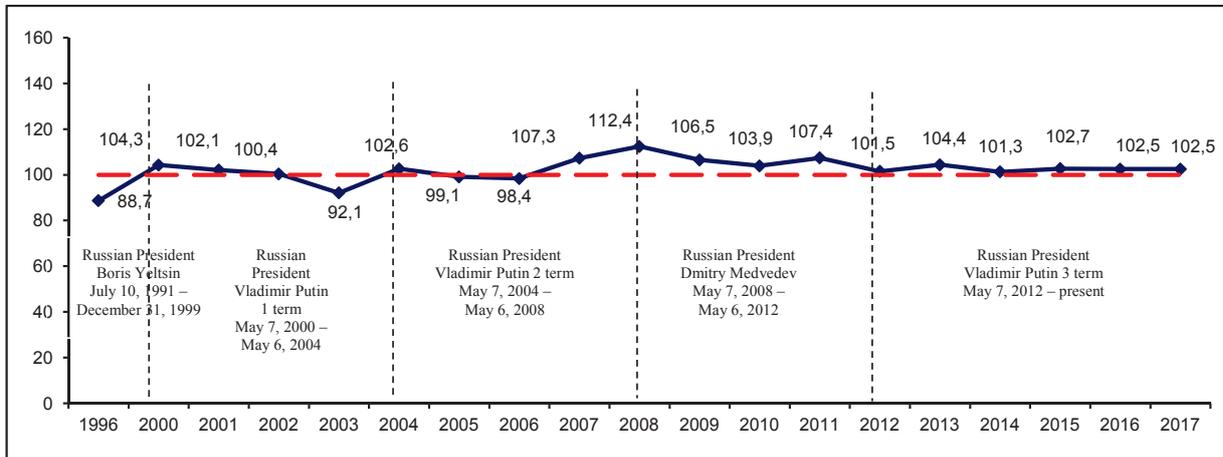
* Included in the survey since 2010.



1.11. Index of trust in the State Duma

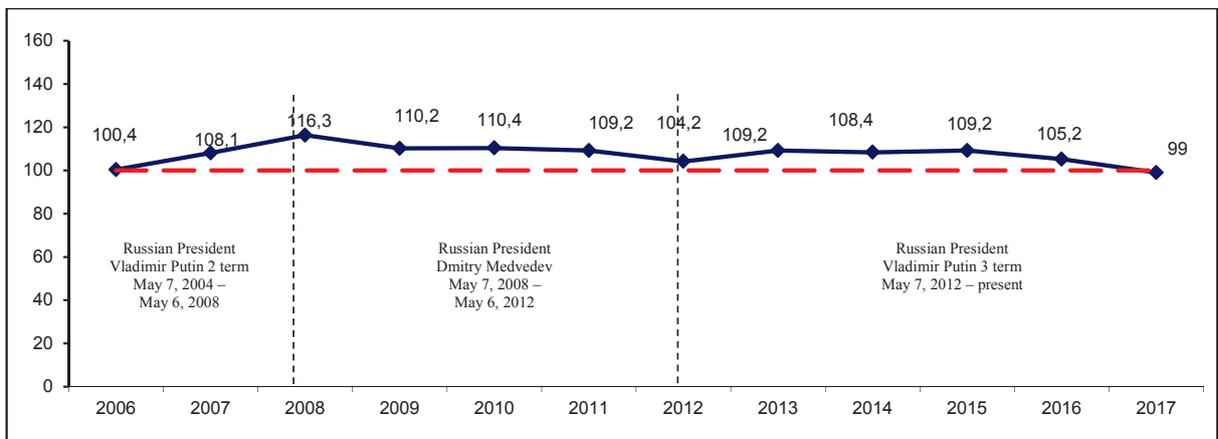


1.12. Index of trust in the Volloga Oblast Government



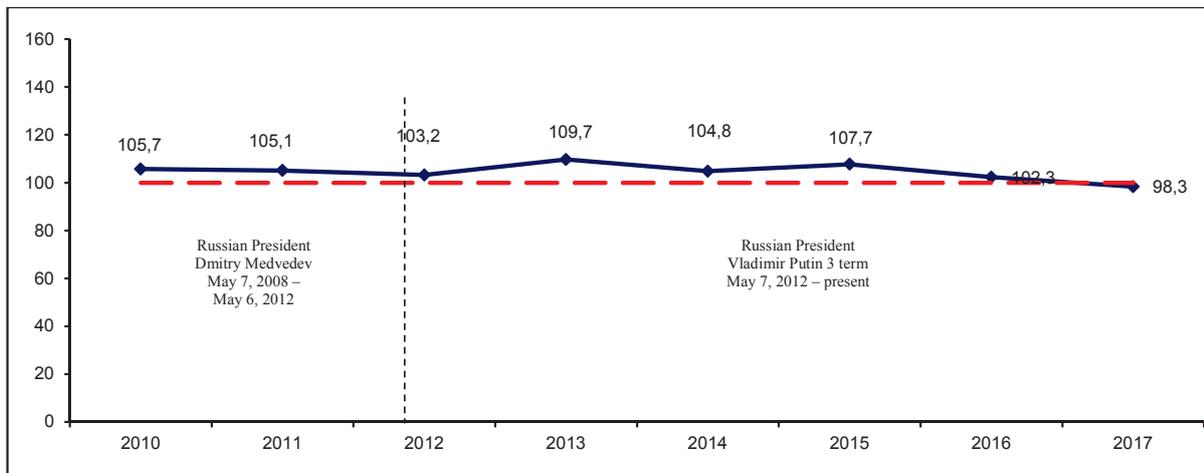
1.13. Index of trust in the Trade Unions

2. Institutions that do not enjoy people's trust
(according to 2017 data)



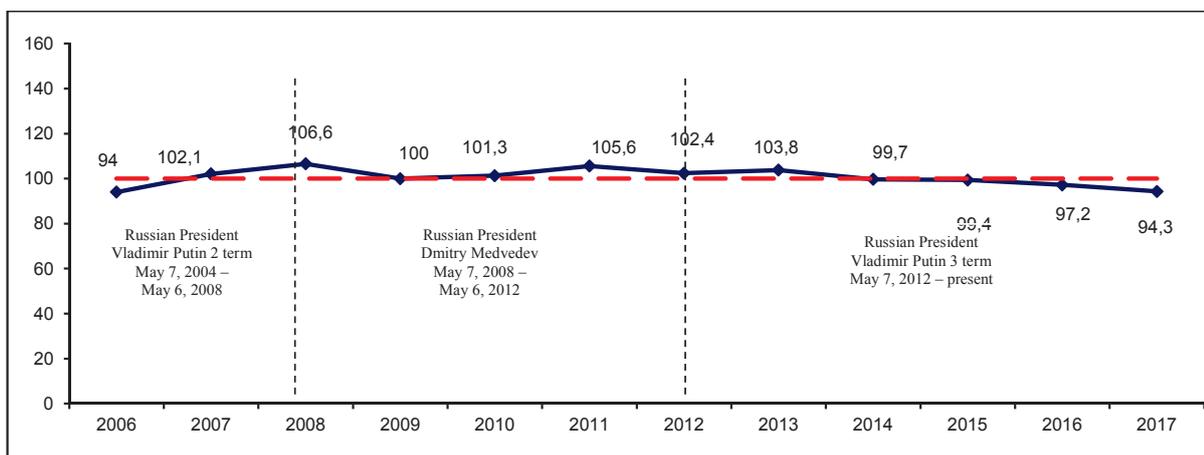
2.1. Index of trust in the local government *

* Included in the survey since 2006.



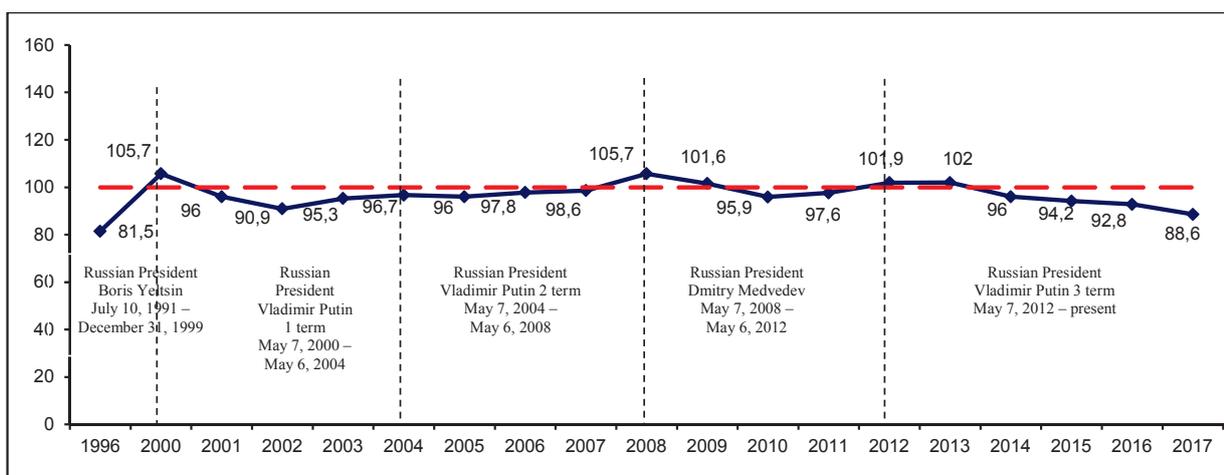
2.2. Index of trust in the Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast*

* Included in the survey since 2006.

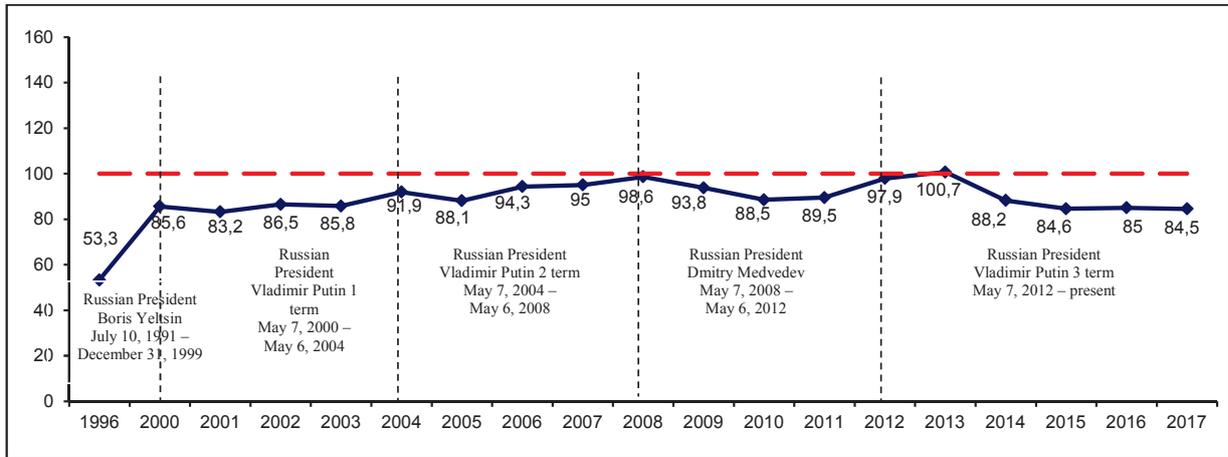


2.3. Index of trust in non-governmental organizations*

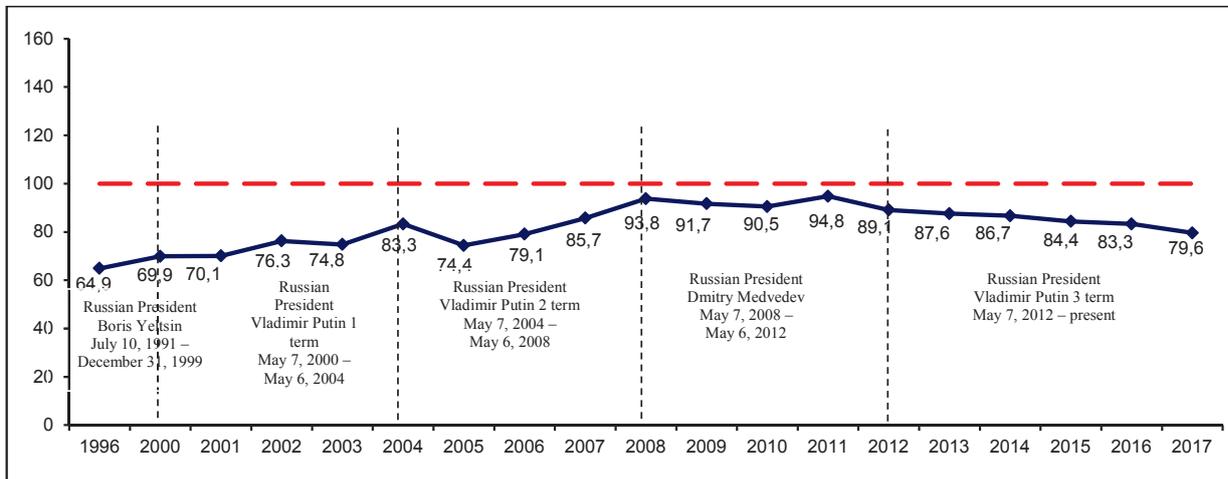
* Included in the survey since 2006.



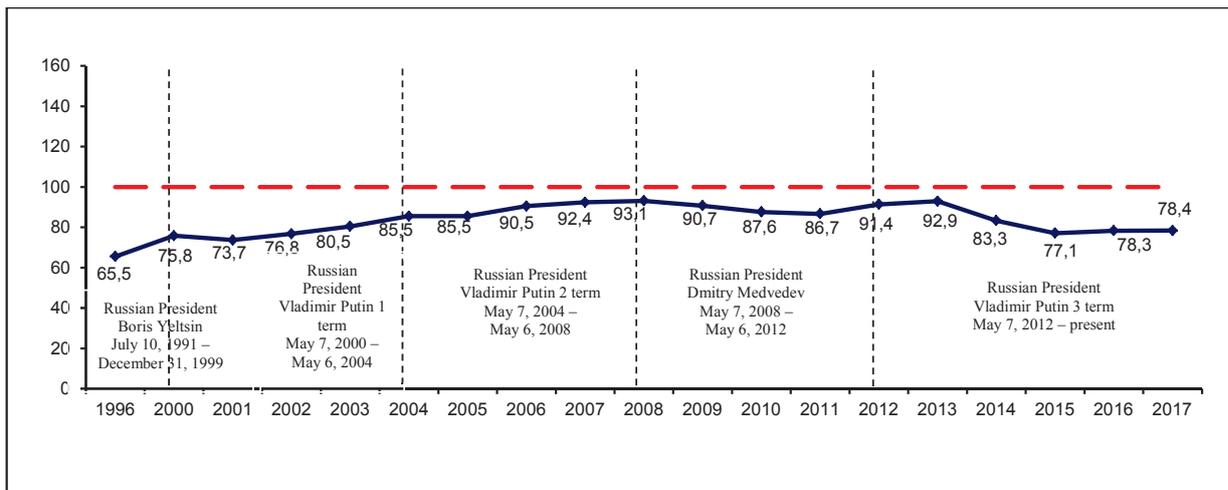
2.4. Index of trust in the mass media



2.5. Index of trust in CEOs and heads of enterprises



2.6. Index of trust in political parties, movements



2.7. Index of trust in banks and entrepreneurs

Information about the Author

Vladimir Aleksandrovich Ilyin – RAS Corresponding Member, Doctor of Economics, Professor, Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation, Scientific Director, Institute of Socio-Economic Development of Territories of Russian Academy of Science (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: ilin@vscc.ac.ru)