

EDITORIAL

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What Will Putin Bequeath to His Successor in 2024?



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Abstract. In accordance with the title of the journal *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, in the editorial article we analyze objective and real trends and facts in Russia's domestic and foreign political and socio-economic life. Trying to distance ourselves from a subjective viewpoint, we rely in our analysis on the assessments given by experts from different fields of knowledge (economists, sociologists, public figures, etc.), as well as on a long-term database of sociological data, formed on the results of our own observations for the period since 1996 up to the present time. For more than 20 years now, every two months, we analyze the data of a sociological monitoring, which shows that there are significant and largely positive changes in the President's foreign policy, but the dynamics of the domestic socio-economic situation in Russia are stagnant: during the period from 2000 to the present time, the key issues of concern to people have not changed, and the relevance of many of them has even increased. The reason for this lies primarily in the public administration system, the effectiveness of which is hindered by the dominance of private economic interests of individual elites over the national need for social justice and dynamic development of the standard of living and quality of life. On the eve of Vladimir Putin's

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fourth presidency the number of those who find the current socio-economic and political situation in Russia satisfactory becomes fewer, despite the fact that the President enjoys a high degree of support. In this situation, the government and the future President will face new challenges, the solution to which will be crucial not only for the future of Russia, but also for the preservation of its integrity as an independent sovereign state.

Key words: national security, public administration efficiency, social and economic development, quality of life, oligarchic capitalism.

The history of development of the Russian state shows that strategic thinking is the most important quality that determines the competence of government agencies and the effectiveness of the entire administration system. Any decisions that determine national security and competitiveness of the country become timely and long-term only when those who make them have the ability to foresee how the public, the national and world economy, international political establishment, etc. will react to these decisions.

Specific events and crucial historical periods that the Russian state had to overcome in the course of its evolutionary development (the Time of Troubles, the Russian Revolution of 1917, perestroika, etc.) make this obvious truth particularly relevant for our country, where over the past 17 years there emerged a clear hierarchical structure of the power vertical, with the President at the top. Therefore, the priorities of the political program of the future head of state should deal not only with the current pressing issues, but also with strategic guidelines of the future. Back in 1997, L.I. Abalkin wrote in this regard: “The ratio of tactics and strategy can be transformed as the ratio of statics and dynamics, to which completely different approaches are applied: statics is the problem of division between the center and regions, between national defense and health, between science and environment, etc. And if someone gets more, then it is only due to the fact that someone else gets less. That is, of all the rules of arithmetic, we use only two – to take away and divide. **As soon as we move to the strategy, to dynamic problem-solving,**

then, in principle, a solution according to which everyone gets more is possible. Not at the expense of each other, but by increasing material volumes, increasing efficiency, and resource saving”¹.

The ability to make strategic decisions depends on how much a person is able to see the whole picture rather than individual facts and events. And the general picture emerging in the 21st century (in politics, economy, etc.) is that the capitalist system and liberal ideology are becoming obsolete. They cease to meet the requirements of modern society and they respond to the objective challenges of the future less and less effectively. Many scientists whose authority is recognized worldwide (I. Wallerstein, R. Collins, M. Mann and others) are skeptical about the prospects of the capitalist system of values oriented toward the growth of consumption to solve such a global challenge as the depletion of planetary resources and suggest that “capitalism cannot flourish, if the institutions are not reformed, employment restored and environmental, health and other problems somehow resolved...” [1].

The growing need for social justice, equal opportunities, and dynamic development of the quality of life not only for a narrow group of “privileged” individuals, but also for the general population, makes capitalism choose: either to transform itself toward social values or give way to them completely. However, behind any system of values there are countries and elite groups

¹ Abalkin L.I. Strategy and tactics of social and economic reforms at the present stage (a speech at the plenary session of the First Russian research-to-practice conference “Strategy and tactics of social and economic reforms”, Vologda, January 22–24, 1997).

(“carriers”) lobbying its interests, and when the human factor is “engaged”, then the natural and objective historical processes face subjective obstacles such as the confrontation of the ruling establishment and the unwillingness to recognize that the world is on the threshold of a new stage of its development that requires comprehensive and system changes in society, ideology, and administration.

This confrontation of global elites leads to phenomena such as the refugee crisis and the intensification of international terrorism (caused by the aggressive policy of the United States in the Middle East), the split of current territorial and economic entities (withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union), global financial crises, etc. In other words, the signs of a decline of capitalism have already reached such a stage of their manifestation, when it is not necessary to be a great expert to see them; it is enough just to recall the main world events covered in the mass media.

For Russia, one of such events in recent months was the so-called “Kremlin list”, released by the U.S. Treasury Department in January 2018². If we do not see the general trend, then the “Kremlin list” itself is an insignificant phenomenon, but in the general picture it is another signal of “increasing pressure of global elites on the national elites”, the process that has been going on for many years and that “is based on a simple fact: in the post-capitalist future, the public pie will be not enough to feed everyone, this very future will be not enough. And it concerns not only the “bottom” and “middle”, but also the “top”³. The “Kremlin list” is the first step toward overthrowing the Russian government. For some, this list is a simple list of names of people close to the Kremlin; some

of our inexperienced politicians call this list a phonebook. In fact, the list is the first blow, which will inevitably be followed by a second one after a certain period of time”⁴.

Experts point out that in this situation “the elite, which associates itself with “Barvikha Luxury Village” and which will give up everything for this “Barvikha Luxury Village”, will lose everything... so the most important and necessary condition for victory is as follows: **the elite must associate itself with the society, of which it is part**”⁵.

“Only those ruling elites who will have a powerful magic weapon – the unity with their people will enter the post-capitalist (postcatastrophic?) world. Only the elites who identify themselves with their countries, **who are rooted in their culture and share the same values, interests and goals with their people will get a ticket to the future in the conditions of the impending crisis and war of all against all**”⁶.

However, in the system of public administration built after the collapse of the USSR, national interests have never been the priority of elite groups. On the contrary, oligarchic capitalism became its essential attribute; it was formed with the help of “a deliberate policy of the state mainly by distributing state property by the government into private hands or by creating quasi-monopolies that are subordinate to the private interests of elite groups” [2, p. 8].

Today capitalism for the few is in fact the main reason why actual changes in the country occur only in those issues that the President himself considers as priority. First of all, it is strengthening the country’s defense capability (reviving the military-industrial complex) and building a rigid hierarchy of the system of public administration; of course, these are the most important and

² The “Kremlin list” is a list of persons that are likely to be subject to U.S. sanctions. The list contains 210 names. Of these, 114 are high-ranking officials and heads of state-owned companies, and 96 oligarchs.

³ Fursov A.I. The one who wins shall live. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, January 22. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/elita_-_hhi

⁴ Prokhanov A. Defense consciousness. An enemy at the gate. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, February 7. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/oboronnoe_soznanie_vrag_u_vorot

⁵ Fursov A.I. The one who wins shall live. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, January 22. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/elita_-_hhi

⁶ *Ibidem*.

For half a century, especially since the Brezhnev times, a succession of self-deceptions has been haunting us. One and the same cycle: stagnation-crisis-stagnation. Our share in the world economy is decreasing... The system of official-oligarchic capitalism was considered doomed back at the beginning of the 20th century, at the time of Jack London and his novel “The Iron Heel”. Its birthmarks are low productivity and systemic corruption. And we are still holding on to it... Russia needs a new civilizational project headed toward the future. It is impossible to fight for a decent future while armed with a shield from the Middle Ages or with missiles from the Soviet era”⁷.

“The result of a long (about 10 years) period of low economic growth was the stagnation of the standard of living and the lack of investment incentives for business. In general, it can be stated that the entire range of risks of medium- and long-term socio-economic development increases, and less and less resources remain at the disposal of the authorities to deal with those risks” [3, p. 24].

strategic tasks for ensuring national security, but not the only ones of we speak about promoting socio-economic development and providing social stability in the country.

The key issues to be implemented in the course of socio-economic development (in particular, those set out in the Presidential Decrees of May 2012) were entrusted to the Government of Dmitry Medvedev; **which under the oligarchic capitalism actually meant “letting things run themselves”**. The editorial articles, in which we analyze actual facts and trends every two months and give expert assessments on the main problems of internal and external development of Russia, clearly show that **during all the six years of Vladimir Putin’s third presidency the key tasks to address the country’s domestic problems were not implemented: from year to year the ruling elites are confronted with the same questions, experts talk about the Government’s inertia in the implementation of national interests; the need for more decisive actions to nationalize the elites on the part of the President becomes more and more urgent...** (summary extracts from all the 24 editorial articles published in 2012–2017 are given in the Appendix).

The Government’s ineffectiveness in exercising its direct responsibility to provide for Russia’s national interests is clearly seen in the

dynamics of the standard of living and, in particular, the current state of affairs concerning social inequality. In 2012–2017, “average per capita income of citizens at the rate of the ruble to the US dollar decreased from 730 to 480; average monthly wages – from 860 to 600 US dollars. **In other words, for five years, the income of citizens expressed in US dollars decreased 1.5-fold.** The drop in household consumption expenditure was comparable: it fell from 406 to 260 US dollars in five years per household member per month”⁸. At the same time, simultaneously with the decline in the standard of living of “ordinary Russians” the number of billionaires and their personal well-being in the country continues to increase: in 2011–2016, their number in Russia increased from 60 to 96 people, and the average welfare by one billionaire increased from 153 to 230 billion rubles. In 1990–2015, the share of income of the richest 10% of Russians increased by 20 p.p. (from about 25 to 45%), while the share of income of the poorest 50% fell by 13 p.p. (from 31 to 18%). Some experts [4, p. 3, 4] point out that **the level of social inequality in Russia in 2015 corresponded to that in 1905.**

Thus, social inequality in Russia continues to increase, as well as people’s dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of public administration and their well-reasoned doubts that the ruling elites are guided in their activities by national interests and the interests of achieving social justice rather than the motives of personal enrichment.

⁷ Kirpichev V. Consolation instead of development. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 2018, January 24. Available at: <http://lgz.ru/article/-3-4-6628-24-01-2018/vzamen-razvitiya-utshenie/>

⁸ Bashkatova A. Russians have lost their consumer potential. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-01-31/1_7162_potencial.html

“Today the Russian state has no money... Its funds are empty. The accumulations have been exhausted. There is money in the hands of billionaires who keep them in the offshores, and securities of America. These untold riches are the result of shameless exploitation of the Russian people who are put on the brink of poverty and extinction. To return all this money to Russia, to direct it to development, to provide a breakthrough with this money – these are urgent tasks of the Kremlin, Putin’s tasks”⁹.

An important criterion of public administration efficiency consists in public opinion assessments measured with the help of sociological research. Therefore, analyzing the trends in the development of the domestic situation, we rely largely on the existing sociological base¹⁰.

During all presidential terms of Vladimir Putin (2000–2017), more than 100 “waves” of monitoring were conducted. Their results, first, allow us to say that the most pressing issues of concern to people (low income, high inequality, corruption, etc.) are of a long-term and aggravating nature: “By 2017, compared with the beginning of V. Putin’s first presidency (2000), there has been a significant decrease in the relevance of problems such as high crime rate, unemployment, dismissals, lack of spirituality, wild burst of immorality, delays in payment of wages and pensions, harassment on national grounds... But the urgency of the most acute problems has not weakened; on the contrary, it

⁹ Prokhanov A. Defense consciousness. An enemy at the gate. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, February 7. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/oboronnoe_soznanie_vrag_u_vorot

¹⁰ VolRC RAS carries out the public opinion monitoring since 1996 once every two months. The volume of the sample population is 1,500 people 18 years of age and older in Vologda, Cherepovets, and in Babayevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Kirillovsky, Nikolsky, Tarnogsky and Sheksninsky districts. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by the observance of the proportions between the urban and rural population, the proportions between the inhabitants of settlements of various types (rural communities, small and medium-sized cities), age and sex structure of the Oblast’s adult population. The method of the survey is a questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

“The way of studying the world of public opinion that would present an alternative to what George Gallup suggested many years ago, has not been invented so far”¹¹.

has even increased: in 2000–2017, the proportion of people concerned about the problem of inflation increased from 45 to 57%; low standard of living – from 51 to 54%; stratification of the population into “poor” and “rich” – from 28 to 39%; corruption – from 15 to 24%. **Thus, there have been no positive changes in the last 17 years with regard to the most important problems of people’s concern: the issues of social justice, property and social stratification, and poverty have become even more acute**” [5, p. 13].

Second, the results of sociological assessments show that the question “What kind of state are we building?” refers not only to the Government, but also to the President, **who not only serves as the chief arbitrator in the current political system, but also acts as a guarantor of national security**, which was recorded in the National Security Strategy in 2015.

That is why, among the various aspects of the President’s work the success of his actions to boost the national economy and the welfare of citizens regularly receives lower assessments than the success with which he deals with the

“The state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of national security is implemented by concerted action of all elements of its support system under the leadership of the President of the Russian Federation and with the coordinating role of the Security Council of the Russian Federation” [6].

issues related to the strengthening of Russia’s international status, establishing order in the country and strengthening the democratic foundations of society (*Insert 1*). Moreover, the negative trends are noted by the representatives

¹¹ A poll about polls: why and what for? *VTsIOM Press Release*, 2016, no. 3241, November 11. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115943>

of socially vulnerable groups (people with low income, pensioners), the middle and top-income groups, and also by young people (*Insert 2*).

The latter category (people 18–30 years of age) deserves special attention, because over time it is continuously supplemented by new members, and in the 17 years that have passed since the beginning of the first presidential term of V. Putin its composition has changed significantly. Nevertheless, according to the results of the research, the assessment of the President's success in solving the material problems of the population has deteriorated significantly among people in the age group 18–30: on average, for the period from 2000 to 2003, negative assessments were given by 46% of its representatives, in 2012–2017 – by 55% (an increase by almost 10 p.p.).

Thus, the current course of economic development needs to be changed for two reasons.

First, because the current economic growth rates actually mean the loss of Russia's position in geopolitical competition. The historical experience of our country shows that in such cases this loss becomes a real threat to national security (in order to eliminate a potentially powerful enemy, geopolitical competitors used the weakened state of both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union). In the 21st century, international relations are strained to the limit, the distribution of anti-Russian sentiment continues to dominate in the information policy of the United States that still preserves its status as an international leader, and, according to experts, so far there we cannot expect any positive changes in this issue: “In 2017, it became clear that normalization of relations with the West is not expected for a long time, because the basic anti-Russian attitude of Western elites, rather than negotiation and compromise, becomes the essence of international politics”¹².

Second, the current growth rate of the Russian economy could satisfy the population during the

¹² Gurova T., Skorobogatyi P. Why Putin is doing this. *Zhurnal “Ekspert”*, 2017, no. 50 (1056), December 11–17. Available at: <http://expert.ru/expert/2017/50/zachem-putin-delaet-eto/>

period of adaptation to the consequences of the crisis-ridden 1990s, but the era of “stabilization” has strengthened the middle class and naturally led to an increase in the level of needs. As a result, during the third six-year presidency of Vladimir Putin, there has been an increase in the need for changes: during the period from 2012 to 2017, the proportion of Russians who believe that changes and reforms in the economic and political life of the country today are more important than stability increased from 28 to 44%. The share of those who hold the opposite view decreased from 72 to 56%.

Nevertheless, the current political elite does not intend to change anything in the course of economic development. According to experts, “the dismantling of capitalism requires a left turn, but the Russian elites – these “children” of the 1990s, the offspring of criminal redistribution and Yeltsin's betrayal – do not want to hear these steps, they are afraid”¹³. It is therefore quite natural that society shows interest to all the new faces in the political arena, in particular to the presidential candidate from the Communist Party Pavel Grudinin whose “sudden appearance could mark not only the emergence of a new face, but also a kind of demonstration designed to be a prologue for a new consensus... It may be a signal for the beginning of the “change of generations” in the elites. The change is related not to the age, but rather it is a change in the ideological sense, i.e. it marks the beginning of a process that will make the 1990s elites and everything related to them fade away”¹⁴.

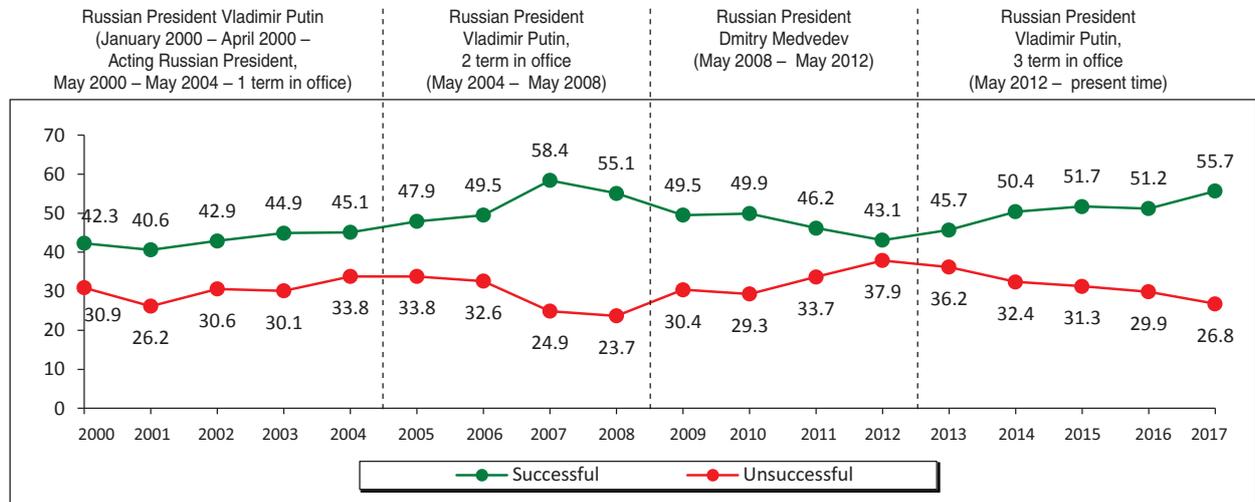
“Tunnel vision” of the current elites was demonstrated on January 29, 2018 at the Gaidar Forum, after which experts pointed out that “the Gaidar Forum today is not a discussion platform, it actually represents one point of view and this point of view is obsolete... the Forum of this year

¹³ Fursov A.I. The one who wins shall live. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, January 22. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/elita_hhi

¹⁴ Kochetkov A. Around “Project Russia”. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 2018, January 17. Available at: <http://lgz.ru/article/-1-2-6627-17-01-2018/vokrug-proekta-rossiya/>

Insert 1

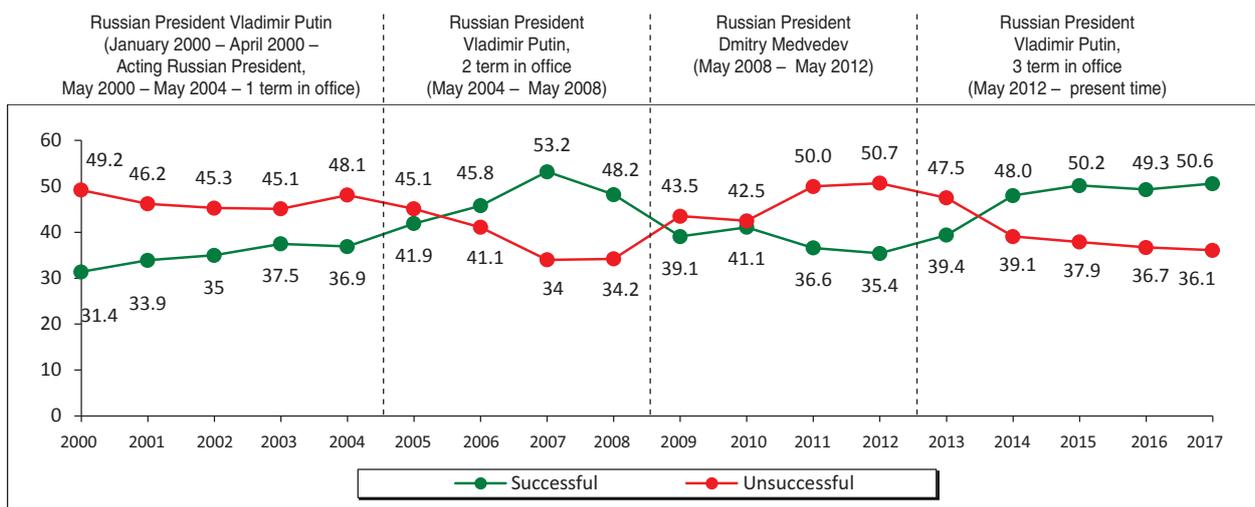
In your opinion, how successful are the RF President's efforts to strengthen Russia's international standing? (percentage of respondents)



In general, in 2000–2017, the proportion of people who consider the President's work to strengthen Russia's international positions to be successful increased by 15 p.p. (from 42 to 57%). The share of positive assessments throughout 2000–2017 was higher than the share of negative ones.

During Vladimir Putin's third presidential term (2012–2017), the share of positive assessments of the President's efforts to strengthen Russia's international positions increased by 14 p.p. (from 43 to 57%), and the share of negative judgments decreased by 9 p.p. (from 38 to 29%).

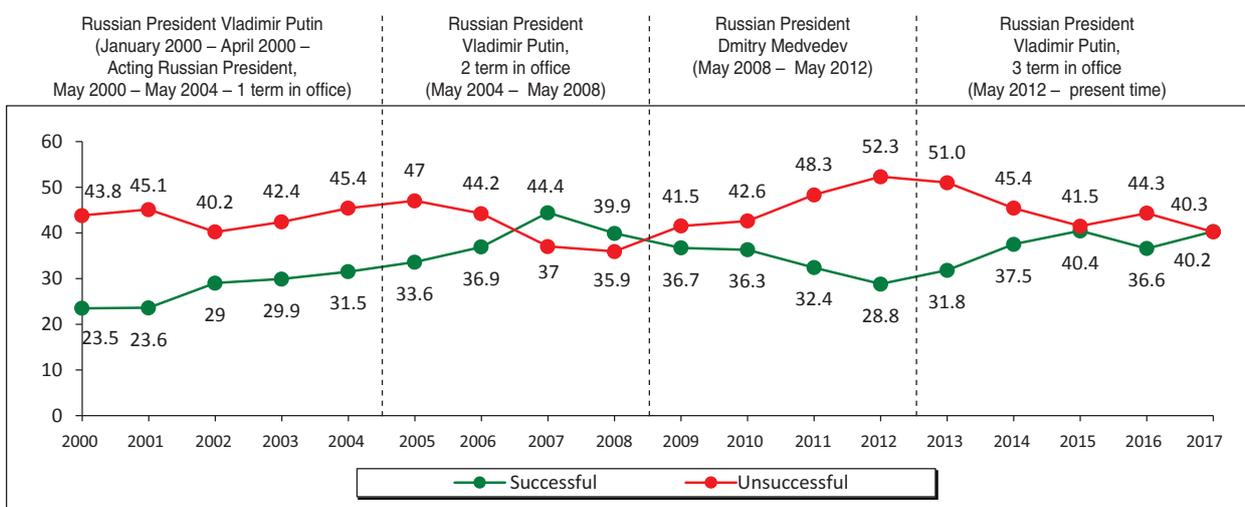
In your opinion, how successful are the RF President's efforts to impose order in the country? (percentage of respondents)



In 2000–2017, the share of those who positively assessed the work of the head of state on establishing order in the country increased by 20 p.p. (from 31 to 51%). The proportion of negative assessments decreased by 12 p.p. (from 48 to 36%).

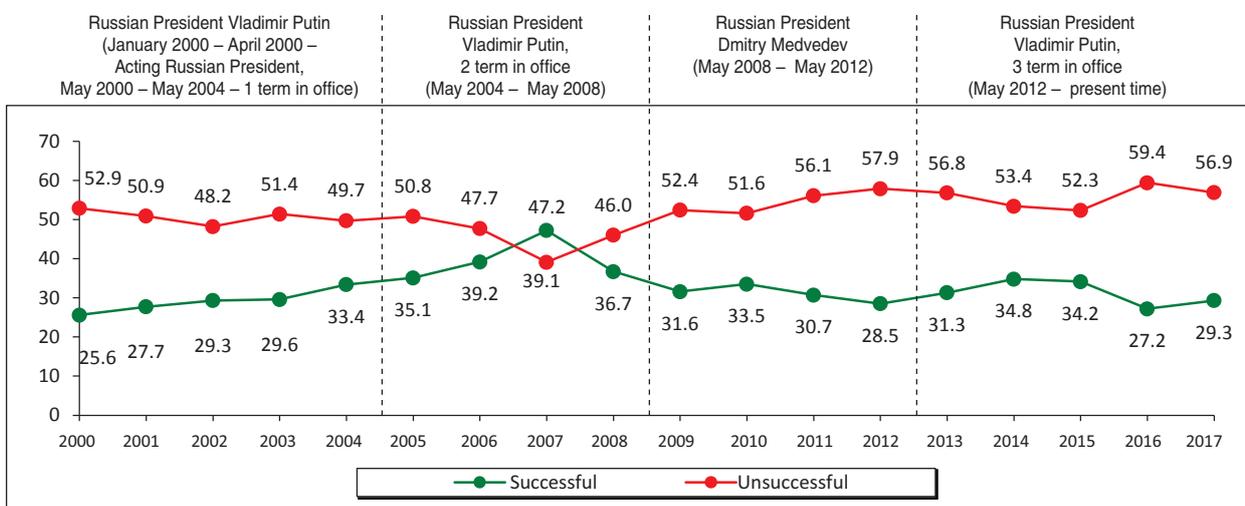
In 2012–2017, the proportion of positive ratings increased by 16 p.p. (from 35 to 51%), the proportion of negative judgments decreased by 14 p.p. (from 51 to 37%).

In your opinion, how successful are the RF President's efforts to protect democracy and strengthen citizens' freedoms? (percentage of respondents)



In 2000–2017, the proportion of people who positively assess the President's work to protect democracy and strengthen the freedoms of citizens increased by 16 p.p. (from 24 to 40%), and during the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin – by 11 p. p. (from 29 to 40%).

In your opinion, how successful are the RF President's efforts to ensure economic growth and enhance citizens' welfare? (percentage of respondents)

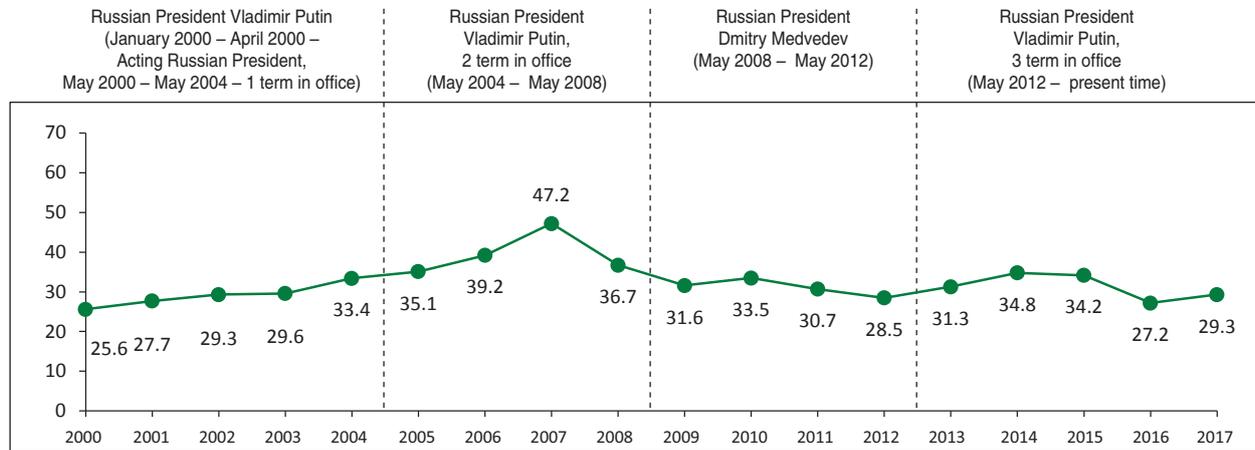


In 2000–2017, the proportion of people who believe that the President is successfully coping with the problem of economic recovery and growth of welfare of citizens did not change (26–29%). While since 2007, there has been a gradual decline in the proportion of people sharing this opinion (for the period from 2007 to 2017: by 18 p.p., from 47 to 29%).

It should also be noted that throughout the period from 2000 to 2017 (with the exception of 2008), the share of negative judgments about the President's work to address the material problems of the population was higher than the share of positive characteristics.

Insert 2

In your opinion, how successful are the RF President’s efforts to ensure economic growth and enhance citizens’ welfare?
(answer “very successful, rather successful”, percentage of respondents)



In your opinion, how successful are the RF President’s efforts to ensure economic growth and enhance citizens’ welfare? (answer “very successful, rather successful”)

Socio-demographic groups	Average for the period...*				Dynamics + / -, 2012–2017 to...		
	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2008–2011	2004–2007	2000–2003
Sex							
Men	29.5	40.1	33.1	30.5	-3	-10	+1
Women	26.9	37.7	33.2	31.2	-2	-7	+4
Age							
Under 30	34.5	43.2	33.8	30.6	-3	-13	-4
30–55	26.0	38.7	32.0	30.5	-2	-8	+5
Older than 55	25.1	34.9	34.3	31.7	-3	-3	+7
Education							
Secondary and incomplete secondary	27.7	36.5	30.7	28.3	-2	-8	+1
Secondary vocational	26.5	38.9	33.7	31.1	-3	-8	+5
Higher and incomplete higher	29.9	41.3	35.0	33.4	-2	-8	+4
Income groups							
Bottom 20%	23.6	36.1	28.5	22.1	-6	-14	-2
Middle 60%	27.1	38.6	33.7	31.5	-2	-7	+4
Top 20%	35.1	46.7	37.1	38.5	+1	-8	+3
Territories							
Vologda	30.1	36.5	32.5	28.6	-4	-8	-2
Cherepovets	26.3	41.1	32.3	34.0	+2	-7	+8
Districts	27.9	38.7	33.8	30.4	-3	-8	+3
Oblast	28.0	38.7	33.1	30.8	-2	-8	+3
Total number of changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast in general					0 / -7	0 / -15	+10 / -1

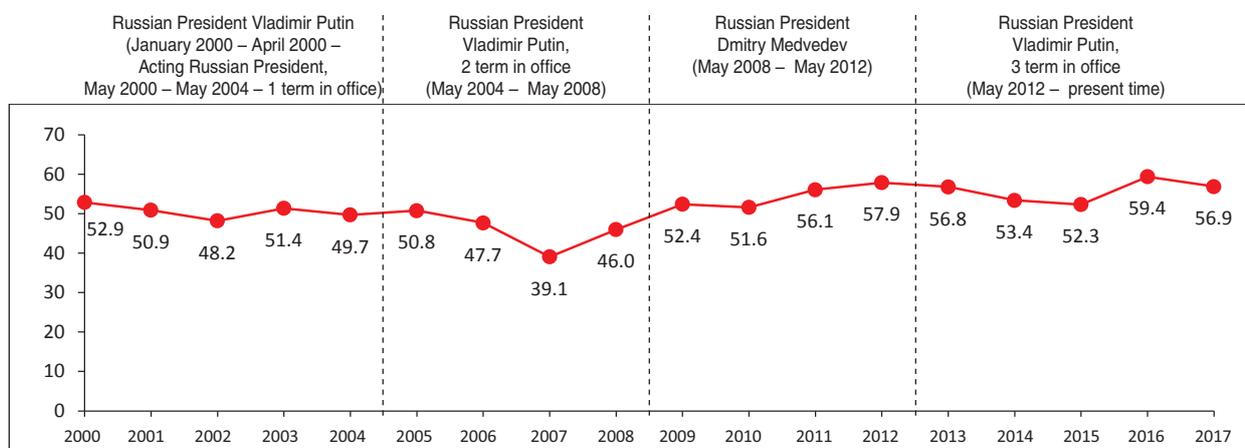
* The polls are carried out once every two months among residents of the Vologda Oblast older than 18 years of age. During each of these periods, 24 “waves” of the monitoring were conducted. The table shows average data for each period.

On average, in 2012–2017 (President Vladimir Putin’s third term in office), compared to 2000–2003 (his first presidency), the proportion of people who positively assess the President’s work to boost the economy and enhance the welfare of citizens increased in 9 out of 14 socio-demographic groups. However, this growth can hardly be called significant: first of all, the share of positive judgments increased among residents of Cherepovets (by 8 p.p., from 26 to 34%) and people older than 55 (by 7 p.p., from 25 to 32%).

Reduction in the proportion of positive judgments about the work of the President to solve material problems of the population is registered among people under the age of 30 (by 4 p.p., from 35 to 31%).

In your opinion, how successful are the RF President’s efforts to ensure economic growth and enhance citizens’ welfare?

(answer “without much success, completely unsuccessful”, percentage of respondents)



In your opinion, how successful are the RF President’s efforts to ensure economic growth and enhance citizens’ welfare? (answer “without much success, completely unsuccessful”)

Socio-demographic groups	Average for the period...*				Dynamics + / -, 2012–2017 to...		
	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2008–2011	2004–2007	2000–2003
Sex							
Men	52.0	47.2	52.7	57.1	+4	+10	+5
Women	50.1	46.5	50.5	55.3	+5	+9	+5
Age							
Under 30	46.1	41.4	49.9	54.6	+5	+13	+9
30–55	53.7	47.4	53.2	57.0	+4	+10	+3
Older than 55	50.2	50.6	50.0	55.8	+6	+5	+6
Education							
Secondary and incomplete secondary	48.6	47.0	49.4	56.8	+7	+10	+8
Secondary vocational	51.2	46.8	52.0	55.6	+4	+9	+4
Higher and incomplete higher	53.8	46.5	53.2	55.9	+3	+9	+2
Income groups							
Bottom 20%	51.2	47.9	53.8	62.1	+8	+14	+11
Middle 60%	53.3	48.0	51.2	56.3	+5	+8	+3
Top 20%	49.3	41.9	52.7	51.1	-2	+9	+2
Territories							
Vologda	51.4	48.5	50.2	57.3	+7	+9	+6
Cherepovets	55.0	46.6	59.5	56.8	-3	+10	+2
Districts	48.5	46.1	48.0	55.1	+7	+9	+7
Oblast	50.9	46.8	51.5	56.1	+5	+9	+5
Total number of changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast in general					+13 / -1	+15 / 0	+12 / 0

* The polls are carried out once every two months among residents of the Vologda Oblast older than 18 years of age. During each of these periods, 24 “waves” of the monitoring were conducted. The table shows average data for each period.

On average, for the period from 2012 to 2017 (President Vladimir Putin’s third term), compared to 2000–2003, (his first presidency), the proportion of people who consider the President’s actions to boost the economy and enhance the welfare of citizens to be unsuccessful has increased in the majority (in 11 of 14) of socio-demographic categories. In particular, among people under 30 – by 9 p.p. (from 46 to 55%); among the poorest 20% (their own assessments) – by 11 p.p. (from 51 to 62%). There have been no positive changes in any of the groups.

The growth of the share of negative assessments on average for 2012–2017 is observed in comparison with Vladimir Putin’s second presidential term (2004–2007) and Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency (2008–2011).

was more ambitious. But the desire, or rather the unwillingness, to change economic policy is becoming increasingly obvious. This policy is already being praised as ideal. At the current Forum, many have said that everything is fine and we just have to wait for something. But what we should wait for? It is a new level of candor. Here we can consider the intention not to change anything in the economic, monetary, information and educational policy”¹⁵.

It is noteworthy that at the Gaidar Forum no permission to speak was granted, for instance, to Boris Titov – a presidential candidate who has his own alternative view on how to ensure stable growth of the Russian economy and a specific program of action developed by experts from the Stolypin Club. At the same time, the Forum showed that if the “image of Russia’s future” in the minds of top-ranking officials was and remains rather vague and looks like the “preservation of the current situation”, then they are more than confident in their personal future. “The reports of the ministers showed their desire to remain in the government for the next presidential term. The proposals made by Anton Siluanov and German Gref can be regarded as some items of the program of the future government”¹⁶. Although no official announcements were made concerning either the victory of Vladimir Putin in the election or the fact that he would continue the existing course of development and support the “greenhouse” conditions for oligarchic capitalism or preserve the positions of officials themselves.

In the basic scenario, the Ministry of Economic Development expects a 2.1% growth of Russia’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018, in 2019 – a growth by 2.2%, in 2020 – by 2.3%. According to the forecasts of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, economic growth in 2018 will be in the range of 1.5–2.0%,

¹⁵ Sergeev A. The heirs of Gaidar rely on the administrative resource. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2018, January 19. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-01-19/1_7154_heirs.html (assessment of K. Babkin, Co-Chairman of the Moscow Economic Forum).

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

in 2019 – 1–1.5%¹⁷. Meanwhile, according to the representatives of the Stolypin Club, “an annual growth of **4–5% of GDP** is optimal for the country... At this rate, by 2025, Russia’s GDP per capita will be about 55% of that in the U.S. by purchasing power parity, and in 2035 – 67%. This means that the economy will grow not only in quantity but also in quality, it will become more diverse and resistant to external market fluctuations, and all this will lead to a significant strengthening of the ruble exchange rate... **Currently this growth is still not guaranteed – it has been marked, but it may remain weak**”¹⁸.

The lack of understanding of the specifics of current regularities in the Russian economy or simply ignoring them is manifested in specific management decisions of the Government. For instance, the decision to raise the minimum wage toward the subsistence level from May 1, 2018, according to Minister of Labor Maxim Topilin, “will reduce the proportion of the population with incomes below the subsistence level from 13–14% to 10–11%”¹⁹. However, due to the high level of employment in the shadow economy, wage growth in Russia does not always lead to income growth. For example, “last year, real wages increased by more than 3%, the year before – by 0.8%. And real incomes in the past year, and the year before, were still declining”²⁰.

The most important reason for criticism, according to experts, is that “the real **problem is being deliberately neglected; instead, it is discussed whether to equalize the two formal indicators that have nothing to do with the real situation of citizens**. The official subsistence level is too low. And when, thanks to the increase in the minimum

¹⁷ Rosstat reported the growth of Russia’s GDP by 1.5% in 2017. *Interfax*. 2018. February 1. Available at: <http://www.interfax.ru/business/598085>

¹⁸ Ivanter V.V. It is time to pick up speed. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2017, February 13. Режим доступа: <https://rg.ru/2017/02/13/viktor-ivanter-krizis-konchilsia-no-gosudarstvo-v-dolgu-pered-naseleniem.html>

¹⁹ Bashkatova A. The Government preserves poverty. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2018, February 8. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-02-08/1_7168_poverty.html

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

wage, official statistics registers a sharp reduction in poverty, the actual number of the poor in the country will not decrease. **The indicators will improve on paper, and in reality it is more appropriate to say only that the people balancing on the verge of poverty will move to the category of the poor. As for the officials, after obtaining a more positive statistical summary, they will no longer have to raise this painful topic in their speeches**²¹.

Today, the question of Russia's future is becoming particularly urgent. A new political season is upon us. The majority of experts have no doubt that Vladimir Putin will be re-elected for a fourth presidency. But it will be his last six-year term, which means that it will be a period that determines the condition in which Russia will pass to the President's successor: whether it will be a period of successful completion of long-term and strategic objectives, or it will be the next stage in the continuation of the existing course of development, with the preservation of the capitalism for the few, the "hands-on" approach to public administration and the ongoing "lulling" rhetoric of the government against the backdrop of lagging behind geopolitical competitors and deterioration in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life of the population.

The first scenario requires the President to take decisive action to nationalize the elites. However, we see no tangible prerequisites for this so far. Over the last years we could observe that Putin's very careful and "gentle" hints that the money should be returned home and that "they should stop idling around in California and other similar places abroad"²² have no greater effect than the directions he set out in the Address to the Federal Assembly and even the Decrees of May 2012: both are executed in imitation mode or are not executed at all. This means that only specific and clear measures can change the situation.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Transcript of Vladimir Putin's meeting with his election agents (Moscow, January 30, 2018). Available at: <http://putin2018.ru/press/putin-vstrecha/u/economics/17/05/2016/573a034a9a7947d18967193a>

In mid-2016, the Government reported that with regard to the May Decrees of the President, "about 70% of the total number of the orders were fulfilled and 88% of the number of orders that had to be fulfilled to date". However, the results of examination by the All-Russia People's Front show that "out of the 162 expert opinions on the government reports about the withdrawal of the relevant instructions from the control, it was expedient to take off the control over execution of only 24 of the instructions. **The rest have not been executed to a certain extent**"²³.

The measures that are being taken today are of a discrete nature: they do not aim to change the system as a whole, but are taken against specific individuals, who primarily exercise their powers at the regional, rather than federal, level. For example, the cases of corruption and high-profile arrests²⁴ are certainly important events especially for the population (so it is no coincidence that the anti-corruption campaign becomes a "red line" for the programs of different candidates, including Putin himself). **However, this has more effect than efficiency. Because without changing the system itself, the anti-corruption policy measures often resemble tilting at windmills.**

Even if the U.S. has created quite real and extremely uncomfortable conditions for the offshore companies of Russian oligarchs, there arises a legitimate question: what prevents the Russian President to do the same and to pay attention to the reasonable advice of experts?

²³ Volkova O., Nikol'skaya P., Tkachev I., Mogilevskaya A. The promises of the third term: how the May Decrees of the President are being executed. *Website of RBC*. Available at: <http://www.rbc.ru/economics/17/05/2016/573a034a9a7947d18967193a>

²⁴ The latest of such high-profile corruption scandals was as follows: in January 2018, the mayor of Makhachkala Musa Musaev was arrested: he was accused of exceeding his authority in allocating land to a private company. After that (in February 2018), Acting Prime Minister of Dagestan Abdusamad Gamidov, his deputies Shamil Isaev and Rayudin Yusufov were detained: they were accused of embezzlement of budget funds; in addition, criminal proceedings were launched against the chief architect of Makhachkala Magomedrasul Gitinov (he was accused of abuse of office and inflicting damage in the amount of four million rubles).

“If we look at our government and at several arrested governors, let us make it clear: after all, they were given the regions and the work of their residents to be responsible for. And the radical measures that are being taken today in Dagestan, the arrests of high officials – more likely, **it is not a systematic fight against corruption. Because corruption starts, alas, not in Dagestan, or in Kamchatka, or in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug... When embarking on a way to combat corruption, Putin must begin with the Kremlin, for all the officials who were arrested in Dagestan today, have the protection in Moscow**”²⁵.

“It is necessary at any moment to adopt a law under which any property that is not transferred to normal jurisdiction and located in the offshore zone, is ownerless and by definition subject to nationalization. Similarly, any property that has not been withdrawn from offshore before January 1, 2018 shall be declared ownerless and shall be confiscated free of charge to the account of the state”²⁶.

The answer is quite obvious and natural: under the rule of capitalism for the few, such drastic decisions aimed against “those in power” (who are supported by the forces of the collective West) turn into a real threat to the political status of the President himself. And the oligarchic-comprador elite is well aware of this, so we can again and again observe the “financial wars” of major corporations (often requiring the intervention of the President himself) against the backdrop of crisis phenomena in science and education and the abolition of flights for ordinary Russians; another Gaidar Forum is going to be held, at which incumbent officials openly present their views on the problems and prospects of the Russian economy, and experts once again state

²⁵ Ivashov L. The fight against corruption should begin not in Dagestan, but in the Kremlin! Available at: <https://publizist.ru/blogs/108984/23242/->

²⁶ Delyagin M. The U.S. issues Russian oligarchs an ultimatum to repeat the year 1996. Available at: <https://topwar.ru/127675-ssha-stavyat-rossiyskim-oligarham-ultimatum-dlya-povtoreniya-1996-goda.html>

that they have neither the former nor the latter... “Putin’s team is well known to everyone, it has not changed during all the years of his term in office. The ideas advocated by this “team” are also well known...all attempts to identify Russia with Putin, and Putin with Russia, this very ideology of “liberal monarchy” is totally unacceptable, primarily because it condemns our country, our people to total dependence on “the power vertical”, all the floors of which are filled, according to Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich, with such socially responsible businessmen like his friend Sergei Polonsky and, apparently, such non-corrupt officials like Alexei Ulyukayev; and Anatoly Chubais is probably the model of perfection in this regard. **So it’s not about Putin...it’s about the “elites” that screen themselves behind Putin, using him as a guarantor of their inviolability and the safety of all assets and bonuses that they acquired in the 1990s, while participating in the looting of our country**”²⁷.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that over time, the dominance of the interests of the elite groups can undermine the entire system of public administration, which V. Putin was building during his presidential terms. Today, the system of public administration is built so that the President is its central link providing a balance of interests of different elite groups. The many steps that Vladimir Putin has to take with the use of a “hands-on” approach support his image in the eyes of broad layers of the population. However, experts point out that at the end of V. Putin’s third presidency this system is showing more signs of instability and “with a high degree of probability it will continue to disintegrate during the first years after his re-election... The distance between Putin and the elites will grow, as well as people’s concerns and discontent with the political functionality of the President within the country. Remaining more and more often alone with the military and intelligence services, **Vladimir Putin risks losing his informal status**

²⁷ Shevchenko M. And the power is the people’s... *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, no. 4.

as a political leader of the oligarchs close to the government; and the key representatives of these oligarchs will very soon begin to play their own game, vigorously “privatizing” state functions, increasingly neglecting both the interests of the President and his very existence”²⁸.

Thus, we see that on the eve of Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term the situation in the country looks different, but it is no less difficult than 15 years ago, and in every aspect, too: in terms of compliance with the conditions of geopolitical competition, in the possibilities of establishing order in the system of public administration, and in the possibilities of preserving social stability. In the early 2000s, the main condition for ensuring national security was to overcome the complex crisis of the 1990s (in fact, the preservation of the country). The President coped with this task quite successfully. He managed to fulfill his main historical mission – to move the country away from the edge of the abyss and to provide conditions for the adaptation of the Russian society to the new, post-Soviet conditions of existence.

However, today both the logic of global trends and the critical domestic agenda that was developing for many years dictate the need to take the next step, to carry out the country’s transition to a new stage. Therefore, before his fourth presidential term starts, the head of state has another task – to ensure dynamic and sustainable economic growth, raise the standard of living, improve the quality of life, and address issues of social justice. This is a different task, but it is equally important for preserving and ensuring Russia’s future.

To implement it, the President will need a new team, which will put national interests rather than personal ambitions at the forefront of its national security strategy; the President will need people with new ideas, new concrete proposals and a qualitatively higher level of moral responsibility for

“The system of administration has reached such a degree of degradation that it resents any attempts to complicate it with both centralized directives and systemic innovations. In fact, it has lost its integrity, and some of its fragments began to serve the interests of influential clans and foreign centers of influence... As a result, the country strays from the trajectory of economic growth, falling into a stagflation trap, and “those in charge” receive astronomical revenues and hide in offshore jurisdictions” [2, p. 9].

their implementation. Because it is impossible to make effective management decisions of this kind “without developing an idea of the future nature of the society that will be implementing the new socio-economic model. And it will be very difficult for the Russian elite to develop this idea, because its vital interests are still focused on preserving the current system” [2, p. 9].

In the early 2000s, there were resources that allowed the government to consolidate society successfully, despite the existence of economic problems and external threats. The country’s economy and its geopolitical status were restored virtually “from scratch”. It was possible to say that all the troubles of that time were due to such a situation, and the society showed sympathetic understanding of the problem. But today these resources are exhausted. “It is necessary to develop mechanisms that would limit and suppress the interests of social groups, which generate a deviation from the vector of social development dictated by the requirement of social progress. It will be necessary to overcome the existing unconditional domination of excessive self-serving social and group interests of the Russian elite over social ones. Such dominance is the main reason for the actual lingering conservatism of state policy and for the enormous obstacles to economic modernization” [2, p. 7].

There is no doubt that the President sees the full range of problems accumulated in the administration system and realizes his responsibility for their solution. In particular,

²⁸ Stanovaya A. What dangers the fourth term holds. “*Echo of Moscow*” radio station. Available at: <https://echo.msk.ru/blog/planperemen/2133710-echo/>

“In order to bring the system of economic development management in line with the targets set by the President of Russia, it is necessary to restore its core: the mechanism of direct responsibility of all regulatory bodies and their officials for achieving the target parameters of socio-economic development of the country should become cross-cutting in the management system. It is necessary to start with federal authorities...”[7]

experts say that the delay of the next Address to the Federal Assembly prepared by teams led by Anton Vaino, Dmitry Peskov, and Maxim Oreshkin is due to the fact that the President is not satisfied with its initial version, the fact indicating his deep understanding of the importance of this document at this historical stage of Russia’s development. “Society expects government to make some changes, some serious positive reforms, and Putin can not declare them... Obviously, the Kremlin is not satisfied with the current draft versions of the Address. And it is unclear when the new ones will be prepared. Anyway, whatever they might say, there is still a sense that it has been already said before. And since it is difficult to talk about real problems, they will have to promise manna from heaven once again. However, we do not want it to be done in the conditions of degraded economy and social sphere, because it is obvious that what awaits us is unpopular reforms rather than grouse in champagne”²⁹.

Will the President have enough political will to adopt tough decisions? This question, which remained open throughout Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term, will apparently be the major one in the next six years.

For the time being, many experts express rather pessimistic views on the subject, suggesting that Russia is likely to have “a scenario of extension of the liberal model, a scenario of balancing on the threshold of sustainable development” [8, p. 669]. However, the President still has every opportunity to refute their views.

Returning to L.I. Abalkin (whose quote opens this article), we note that in 2007 he said: **“For a long time in Russia, as well as around the world, the question of what Vladimir Putin will leave to his successor is being discussed. Time is running fast, but it is still enough to bequeath him a National strategy as a way toward a new economy. Within its framework, Russians will get a reliable idea of the future and of what awaits their children and grandchildren”** [9, p. 12].

In the 10 years that have passed since then, there have been no changes in the system of public administration, and the question of the “National strategy as a path to a new economy” has become even more critical. Time is running inexorably, and on the eve of Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term, it is increasingly difficult to say that we have enough time left...

We shall see, six years will pass quickly...

²⁹ Gorbachev A. Putin will rewrite the Address by the end of February. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2018, February 6. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/politics/2018-02-06/1_7166_putin.html

Editorial articles on public administration efficiency published in 2012–2017

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
2012		
1(19), February 2012	To the political cycle results	Will “new” V.V. Putin lead the country (and himself, in the first place) to a new level of social and political management, which he had spoken in his election speeches and articles about and that most voters had believed in? It would possible to judge that by the real steps of V.V. Putin in the first year of his third presidency in the Russian Federation.
2(20), April 2012	Bifurcation of a new political cycle	<i>Tretyakov V. The citizens have something to worry about. Literaturnaya Gazeta, 2012, no. 12–13 (6363), March 28:</i> “...There is a feeling that everything will go on forever. Sometimes it seems that Putin gives in to the pressure of a losing party. It seems that this text, like a magnifying glass, collects all the questions in the same focus. It is a focus of the choice that will or won't be made by Putin in the coming weeks”. There is not much time before the inauguration of the President of the Russian Federation on May 7, 2012. What will Vladimir V. Putin choose?
3(21), June 2012	Expectations of the results	There are fundamental questions of development strategy of country's economy which, according to the opinion of reputable experts, should be submitted for President's consideration in the near future... Vladimir Putin will have to master these well-known policy tools of the modern state. Otherwise, he will not be able to solve his own program objectives of economic modernization and transfer it to an innovative path of development; he won't be able to provide business with long-term loans, ensure the growth in labor productivity, support economic and creative activity of the population, reduce a poverty rate and social inequality, as well as he will not be able to improve the competitiveness of the national economy.
4(22), August 2012	Dynamics of the RF Presidents' activities approval by the region's population	<i>Glazyev S.Yu., Lokosov V.V. (Assessment of the critical threshold values of the indicators of the state of Russian society and their use in the socio-economic development management. Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2012, vol. 82, no. 7, p. 600.):</i> “Actual self-estrangement of the ruling elite from the society and depriving the overwhelming majority of citizens of exercisable rights to participate in management processes impede the feedbacks between the society and the state. The latter conforms to the oligarchic interests and becomes a tool of receiving the administrative markup by a corrupt bureaucracy, protected from liability to the society thanks to the existing political system”.
5(23), October 2012	Anxious expectations	<i>Salutskiy A. (New Putin. Literary Gazette. 2012, no. 39 (6386), p. 3):</i> “If Putin is able to become such a high moral authority, then everything in Russia will go with a run. It he is still overnice to solving personnel problems, considers all the possible side interests too vigilantly and, in fact, shares his supreme authority with anyone, the people won't recognize him as a tsar and the voters, who elected him to be the President, will call for a vote of confidence”.
6(24), Dec. 2012	On the difficult way to strong civil society	Government's ignoring of traditional moral and ethical values, as well as the breach of the principles of social justice do not promote the development of civil society. The regions and, therefore, Russia in general, do not use the potential of civil society that is an important tool for increasing the efficiency of state management, ensuring sustainable economic growth with the continuous improvement of living standards of most people in the country.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
2013		
1(25), February 2013	Page unturned	The solution of the main problem of the early 1990s – unfair privatization – and it is the base in large part of political clans, will require system measures for not only “convincing” the members of the Government, but also improving moral climate in the country; and it should be done without destroying the capacity of the state, more than 45 million electors of Vladimir V. Putin voted for this. The President Vladimir V. Putin could not turn over the page of unfair privatization in 2012. It is 2013. We waited for a longer time. But the RF President Vladimir V. Putin should not stop, it is necessary to pull this thorn out of the soul of a Russian citizen. We must turn over the page!
2(26), April 2013	Anxious expectations remain	<i>Putin V.V. (at the closed meeting with the Government in Elista on April 16, 2013):</i> “...Let's raise the quality of our work. It ought to be done! If we don't do it, it will have to be admitted that it is either me working inefficiently or it is failing to do your job properly. Take notice that, judging by the current situation, I, personally, lean toward the latter. I think it's clear. No one should have any illusions”. Such an unambiguous reaction of the President to the performance results of the Russian executive power in the post-election year clearly indicates the graveness of the current situation and expresses a high degree of anxiety on the part of the Head of State concerning the future of his obligations to his voters. Those very obligations, the fulfillment of which will ensure the enhancement of the quality of life, the quality of government, the quality of the development of civil society and, ultimately, the competitiveness of the country.
3(27), June 2013	National and regional security: a view from the region	Summing up the assessment of the report by the Ministry of Economic Development, it is necessary to note that no significant measures aimed at the development of the economy and revenue potential of the budget were adopted at the federal level in 2012. Traditional methods of fiscal system management through the continuous introduction of amendments into the existing legislation are unable to solve the systemic problems anymore. In this regard, it is necessary to take measures for the significant adjustment of economic policy; the key and priority measures should be aimed at overcoming the offshore nature of the Russian economy. And that will be a serious step in the enhancement of national and regional security.
4(28), August 2013	Modernisation issues of Russia's regions	In an open letter to the RF President Vladimir V. Putin, Academician Zh.I. Alferov pointed out: “The struggle for the preservation of the RAS is not only a struggle for the future of Russian science; it is a struggle for the future of the country. And we really wanted to fight for this together with you” ¹⁸ . Will the President have enough strength to fulfil his election program? Is Vladimir V. Putin ready to run for 2018 Presidency to head the Russian Federation again? ...Anxious expectations remain.
5(29), October 2013	New agenda and state management efficiency	Undoubtedly, the overwhelming majority of Russia's citizens will support the implementation of the ideas set forth by the RF President at the Valdai International Club, the ideas that are associated with the rule of national values and social ethics in the life of all the population groups. Examples of real actions in addressing these issues should be provided by the vertical of power in its purification from “the quasi-colonial element of the elite – those determined to steal and remove capital, and who did not link their future to that of the country, the place where they earned their money” (<i>Putin V.V. Speech at the session of the Valdai International Discussion Club on September 19, 2013</i>).
6(30), Dec. 2013	What does the coming day hold for the country?	Under the influence of oligarchic corporations, it organizes the work like a circular firing squad. It is this style that has led the dynamics of the national economy development to the recession. In our opinion, the President should not only remind the political elite of the necessity to execute the formal decisions; he should also force it to do so, and eliminate the “quasicolonial part of the elite”. 2014 should not become the year of missed opportunities for the RF President V.V. Putin with regard to the implementation of strategically important state tasks on modernization of the country, set out in the pre-election articles and stipulated by the Decrees dated May 7, 2012.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
2014		
1(31), February 2014	Time factor	Speaking at the Valdai Discussion Club, the President pointed out that the political course should be focused on major social values, moral consensus in the society; but it is possible only with the nationalization of the elite. "We must return the elite and its money back in Russia, place their capital under state control, and solve tax issues, abolishing the flat scale; thereby, we must actually take the subsoil under the control of the state. After that we must begin to accumulate funds for a comprehensive recovery of the country's economy, defining the main ways of its development" (<i>Isaev A. Elite should be nationalized. Literaturnaya Gazeta, 2014, no.6, February 12–18.</i>). And here the time factor will be crucially important for implementation of V.V. Putin's new political course.
2(32), April 2014	From the Chief Editor	If we speak about the next intermediate stage, it seems that for V.V. Putin it could be May 7, 2016, when two-thirds of his presidency expire, and by this time it is extremely important for the President to update the political elite, by eliminating the influence of its "quasi-patriotic" part ⁴ , to introduce considerable changes in the government team through ideologically compatible professionals, who work to achieve the common ultimate goal – to fulfil the strategic tasks set out by President V.V. Putin that are aimed at the country's development by 2018, and at the same time to adjust socio-economic mechanisms so that the electorate would see the moving of the state towards social justice, the rule of law for all the population groups, and that the voters would feel a gradual improvement of the quality of life in their family, city, and country.
3(33), June 2014	Russia must go its own way	In the recent years, students and followers of Academician D.S. L'vov have been developing his ideas about the need for an active role of the state in economic management and give well-grounded recommendations on the enhancement of public administration efficiency. This position has a detailed substantiation in the scientific report of Academician S.Yu. Glazyev ("About the purposes, problems and measures of state policy for development and integration", Moscow, January 29, 2013), and in a new report by the Russian Academy of Sciences "Russia on the way to a modern, dynamic and efficient economy", edited by Academicians A.D. Nekipelov, V.V. Ivanter, and S.Yu. Glazyev, where many reasonable proposals in relation to economic policy are put forward. But let us face it: if an efficient administration model is not established, these proposals will remain on paper.
4(34), August 2014	Scientific analysis of global challenges for Russia (on the article "How not to lose in the war" by Academician S.Y. Glazyev)	<i>Putin V.V. (A meeting with members of political parties represented in the Russian Federation State Duma, Yalta, August 14, 2014):</i> "...Regardless of the external political and economic situation, the most important thing for us right now, as always, are our internal affairs, our goals, concerns and objectives that are set before us by the people of Russia, the citizens of Russia. We must focus on resolving our national problems and challenges. Our future is only in our hands. We must ensure high-quality governance and work by political and civil institutions. And most importantly, we must provide high living standards for Russian citizens".
5(35), October 2014	The necessity of a new development cycle	Sociologists should convince the authorities of the necessity to obtain objective data on how the population perceives socio-economic and political transformations that take place nationwide and in individual regions. Sociology will be able to fulfill its function properly, when the system basis of the research is put in legal form, when there are efficient unified mechanisms for assessing public opinion on the effectiveness of state administration throughout the power vertical. Sociology will also benefit when the mechanisms are established for analyzing the results of the response, which is enshrined in law, at all the levels of power.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
6(36), Dec. 2014	The year of tough decisions	Great concerns are raised with regard to the fact that these new guidelines set out by the President will be achieved if the current inefficient state administration system based on the extremely liberal financial-economic bloc of the Government is preserved, since “the vulnerability of Russia’s finance was already evident during the crisis in 2008, and yet, five years after that, we continue to follow the same disastrous course” (<i>Editorial article “Again and over again”. The Expert, 2014, no. 51.</i>). 2015 will most likely be a year of tough decisions for the President, for the Russian citizens and for the country.
2015		
1(37), February 2015	Alarming trends	<i>Voevodina T. (Emergency brake of the market. Gazeta “Zavtra”, 2015, no. 6, February.)</i> . “I would like to support the President’s remarks “are you crazy” and “this is not a serious approach to the matter” addressed to the Government; but I don’t think they are crazy, and I believe they treat the subject seriously; they just set targets differently, they see Russia’s future differently. Not like the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin sees it”. The President set out his vision of Russia’s future in the Decrees of May 7, 2012, and his voters still have trust in their President and believe he will fulfill the stated goals of improving the quality of life of all the segments of the population. However, for the first time last year there emerged certain alarming trends on several indicators of social well-being of the voters.
2(38), April 2015	Halfway to a fourth presidential term	We think that, taking into consideration Vladimir Putin’s life experience, his 15 years of work in Russia’s senior government positions, and the high level of trust of the voters, the President will be able to lead the country out of acute internal and external political problems to a new level of development, corresponding to the 21st century and the traditions of the “Russian world”. To resolve this problem, Vladimir Putin has three more years of his third presidential term and another six years of the possible fourth term – a total of nine years. It would seem that there is still enough time, but it is a short period for serious and drastic changes in a country such as Russia. Time is inexorably shrinking, like a magic piece of shagreen. The President must implement all that is planned in time.
3(39), June 2015	Non-systemic solutions of systemic problems	More than two years have passed. The Government still consists of the same old carriers of ideas, that is why the Federal State Statistics Service registers clearly unsatisfactory results of national socioeconomic development. According to sociological centers, the level of support of the President’s performance reached its historic maximum of 89% in June 2015 ¹¹ . But what will happen, if the same people in the Government with the same old ideas and the same performance results continue to bear responsibility for the efficiency of public administration in Russia???
4(40), August 2015	Economic policy pursued by the Government is still inconsistent with the interests of the majority of Russia’s population	Loyal attitude to the authorities today in many respects rests on the feeling of hopelessness – no one wants to go back to the 1990s, and therefore the faith in the leader under which the country stood up against difficulties is preserved; the faith is supported by the hope that it will be possible to find an effective way of economic development. However, its prospects still have a high degree of uncertainty. There still remains the outrageous socio-economic differentiation that is always accompanied by an unsatisfied need for social justice and by social tensions. Apparently, 2015–2016 will be a difficult period for the President and Russian citizens. It is therefore very important that the decisions taken by the head of state were timely and understandable for the Russians.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
5(41), October 2015	Issues of Russia's transition to the new stage of its nation-building	Obviously, without solving key problems “at home, in our own country”, the results achieved in the international political arena cannot have a solid foundation, so today, at the crossroads of a new stage of Russia's history, the main challenge facing the society, science and government is to bring national macroeconomic policy “in line with the common understanding of the principles of social justice and truth, and to make it useful for the development of the production sphere” (<i>Glazyev S.Yu. Outrageous inequality. Governmental policy is contrary to the interests of the people. Gazeta Zavtra, 2015, July 23.</i>); to improve public administration for the purpose of restructuring the economy on the principles of vertical integration; to fight corruption, to undertake real action to reduce outrageous social inequality and all that really hinders the realization of the presidential program and complicates the pursuit of an independent sovereign policy
6(42), Dec. 2015	Public administration efficiency and the aggravation of public health issues	How long will be the patience of the President and the entire Russian society? Especially when we consider the imminent change of the political cycle... Can the Government realize that its 2008 fiscal and monetary policy has led to the stagnation of the economy, and in the future it may throw the Russian society backward by ten years and return it back to the level of the 1990s? Can the ruling elite understand that it would be disastrous for the country in the current geopolitical conditions? Or will Russia find the political will to reorient its economic policy in the interests of wider population rather than narrow oligarchic groups? This ultimately will determine the future of Russia and its national security and competitiveness in the coming decades.
2016		
1(43), February 2016	National Security Strategy 2015 – a step towards the new phase of Russia's development	It is still unknown what the next step of the head of state will be; but we believe that the strategic activities aimed to nationalize the elites have been going on for many years throughout Vladimir Putin's presidential terms. Its purpose is to form a ruling class, which itself will maintain the framework of competition policy... Vladimir Putin has taken responsibility for comprehensive support of priority directions of state policy in the sphere of national security (including economic development, increase in the standard of living and quality of life), thus he has made a new significant step toward the strengthening of the Russian statehood in the process of its transition to a new stage of development.
2(44), April 2016	President Vladimir Putin's third four-year term: contradictory outcomes – an expected result	The next two years until the 2018 presidential elections may become a transition to a new stage of development of the Russian society. The stage which was talked about after the “Crimean spring” and which was delayed as a result of economic problems that have befallen the country in recent years. How long will this transition period be? Will it be completed in 1–2 years (that is fast enough from a historical point of view) or will it require much more time? It will depend on how Russia can stay on the path chosen 15 years ago. And it will also depend on the actions of the head of state: whether he will be able through active work, to implement the provisions laid down in the National Security Strategy of 2015 and move to a mobilization version of the new industrialization, without which it is impossible to reduce the widening gap between the economies of the leading countries and Russia.
3(45), June 2016	State Duma Election 2016. Economic policy of the President assessed by the people	People's support, which the President of the Russian Federation still has, opens a “window” of opportunities for the implementation of measures aimed at improving the efficiency of public administration in the new political season. But how long will the trust of the population in the head of state remain high? Will it be possible to use the foundation of people's support for the purpose of restoring order in the management system and ensure its conformity with the interests of national security? The answers to these questions depend on the President's political will.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
4(46), August 2016	The ruling elites: a problem for Russia's national security	... Public administration should create conditions facilitating the comprehensive and systematic solution of key challenges of national security at all stages of development of the Russian statehood. What will be the response of the President to the growing need for improving the quality of life and social justice in society? To what extent will Russia's historical experience in ensuring the functioning of the system of administration be taken into account? Today these questions are becoming a cornerstone of national security, because for Russian society they have acquired the nature of lingering expectations. The first months of work of the State Duma of the 7th convocation will have to show determination in the actions of a new political elite in achieving national interests and first and foremost – in the implementation of the main needs of the population, which will be essential for ensuring national security and subsequent competitiveness of Russia in the 21st century without twists and turns like those in the history of the 20th century.
5(47), October 2016	Russian President got a constitutional majority in the State Duma of the Seventh Convocation	Tactical achievement does not eliminate strategic uncertainty. The victory of the current government in the State Duma election confers on it the responsibility for solving the two most difficult issues – the withdrawal of the economy from a state of “sluggish depression” and the formation of a new ideological paradigm of spiritual and moral development... The ruling elite has no more or less weighty opposition, which could become an obstacle to the making of administrative decisions that the elite considers necessary. The only obstacle is inside it – it is a confrontation between “the statist” and the liberals who defend their own interests and the interests of the “collective West”... A crucial role in this confrontation will belong to the head of state, to his political will and the talent of strategic planning. Perhaps this will become a key factor that will affect the choice of Russians in March 2018 during the election of the President of the Russian Federation.
6(48), Dec. 2016	Thirteenth Address of President Putin to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation: transformation of power as a point for discussion	The answer to the question what prevents the President to overcome the resistance of the liberal bloc of the Government that is manifested in the failure to fulfill his May decrees and the key objectives of the National Security Strategy is still open. In the conditions when the United States and key European countries have already made the choice of their national leaders, when their team has been formed and ready to proceed with the implementation of their national interests, the need for increased responsibility and systemic transformation of the ruling elite in Russia becomes the most important factor in its national security.
2017		
Vol. 10, Issue 1, February 2017	One year left before the fourth presidential term	The general conclusion regarding the most probable future of the Russian society can be expressed in one sentence – “it is in a fog” (<i>Gorshkov M.K., Petukhov V.V. Russian Society and the Challenges of Time. Book Four. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2016. P. 345.</i>). It is hard to disagree with such expert evaluation of the present and the future of the Russian society taking into account the economic and social policy pursued by the ruling elites and ineffective for large parts of the population, the policy leading to the decrease in the standard of living and quality of life as a result of reforms in education, healthcare and housing. Sociological surveys show that Russian citizens are very concerned about the ongoing internal reforms and their own uncertain future. President Putin as the national leader, who actually has a constitutional majority in the Federal Assembly, has the opportunity to set a clear and understandable direction for pulling the country out of this sticky and enclosing liberal “fog”.

Journal's issue	Title of the article	Essence (the last – second to last paragraph) of the article
Vol. 10, Issue 2, April 2017	What a shame...	<i>Prokhanov A. (Vipers, repent! Gazeta "Zavtra", 2017, March 22.):</i> "God forbid, if one day there might be something similar to Bolotnaya Square and Poklonnaya Hill joining forces..." The country is tired of the "ugly" stories and is now waiting for the President to take decisive action.
Vol. 10, Issue 3, June 2017	Significance of the thesis "Cadres decide everything" as applied to modern Russia	<i>Sulakshin S.S., Bagdasaryan V.E., et al. (Does revolution await Russia? Russia's transition to a post-liberal model (algorithm and scenarios. Moscow: Nauka i politika, 2016. Pp. 669–670):</i> "Therefore, the latest historical process in Russia has taken a more definite shape. If we consider it from the qualitative aspect, we will not find surprising the most likely conservative options, according to research. This scenario implies the prolongation of the liberal model, and it is balancing on the threshold of sustainable development...". Whether these pessimistic forecasts of experts will be implemented, or whether Russia will be able to fully realize all of its advantages in the competition – these are priority issues on today's agenda, and a key condition for its successful solution is the political will of the President, the major person responsible for the efficiency of personnel in public administration.
Vol. 10, Issue 4, August 2017	Development of Civil society in Russia in conditions of "capitalism for the few"	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"?
Vol. 10, Issue 5, October 2017	The President's unfinished work. Public administration system is not ready to function without manual control	The last (or, speaking more accurately, the final) six-year presidency of Vladimir Putin in the framework of the current legislation will need to complete the process of nationalization of the elites, which will make it possible to switch off manual control mode in many respects. Thus, this final term in office will ultimately provide an answer to the question whether the period of Putin's presidency has been a period of lost opportunities or it was the reign of a talented leader who due to his personal qualities and with the help of manual control facilitated the country's transition to a new stage of development since the collapse of the Soviet Union, through the painful and long adaptation of society to post-Soviet conditions, the transition to a state that is a center of the multipolar world and confirms this status not only in the international political arena, but also in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life of its people.
Vol. 10, Issue 6, Dec. 2017	"Crony capitalism" – a source of social inequality in modern Russia	... Like any other resource, the support that people show toward the head of state is not unlimited: it depends on how the key needs of the population are reflected in legislation and in administrative decisions of the authorities. According to the latest nationwide sociological research ¹⁷ , in society there is a growing need for change. The value of stability is increasingly giving way to the values of development. It is possible to realize this demand only if there is an effective system of public administration aimed to implement national interests; therefore, overcoming of "crony capitalism" is the main condition for Russia's transition to a new stage of its historical development.

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