

EDITORIAL

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Pension Reform and Exacerbating Issues of the Legitimacy of the Government



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Abstract. In the first months of the new political season, which began after the March 2018 Presidential Election, the Government adopted and is currently discussing measures that received a very negative response from Russian society and many experts, especially against the background of election campaign promises and long-term goals of internal development that Vladimir Putin set out in his Address to the Federal Assembly on March 1, 2018. The greatest public response was caused by a draft law on raising the retirement age, although it should be noted that it is not the only one in the list of controversial administration decisions that bring to the fore the issue of compliance of state policy with the national interests or, in other words, the legitimacy of the government. The paper discusses scientific, theoretical and historical foundations of the legitimacy of the government. We present data on Russian national and regional studies of public opinion, indicating Russians' growing discontent with the first steps of the Government in the new political season coinciding with Putin's last (according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation) presidential term. We provide calculations and opinions of experts from various

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fields of science and social activities proving the ill-considered and contradictory management decisions of recent months, which create conditions for a potential decrease in Russians' trust in the President and, in general, for the aggravation of the socio-political situation in the country.

Key words: legitimacy of the government, pension reform, social stability, public opinion.

August 8, 2018, representatives of a number of patriotic, veteran, parental, and trade union organizations of Russia made an official address to the President of the Russian Federation in their letter which was signed by active figures of the public, science, culture, and mass media; in the letter, they urged Vladimir Putin **“to denounce the course that is leading the country to an abyss”** and **“to dismiss the most odious figures of the Government, Presidential Administration, Central Bank, State Duma, Federation Council and other public authorities of the Russian Federation and subjects of the Russian Federation, who help implement the policy of Russia’s geopolitical opponents”**¹.

The very fact that such a document has been conceived largely reflects the situation of the first months of domestic political life after the election of the President of the Russian Federation. We recall that this period was marked by the reforms and draft laws on raising the retirement age, increasing fees for passports, for registration of vehicles and for the purchase of goods in foreign online stores. Draft laws on raising taxes on tobacco and alcohol products, and utility tariffs in 2019 are under discussion. At the same time, fines for abuse of the right to hold rallies were introduced...

One of the high-profile events was the decision to increase the value added tax (VAT) from 18 to 20%, although, according to the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM), 34% of Russians believe that the increase in VAT will bring the

¹ The letter is published on the website of the information portal RIA “Katyusha” (Available at: <http://katyusha.org/view?id=10398>). The address to the President was signed by 22 people, including well-known representatives of the public, science, culture and the media. Full text of the letter is given in Appendix 1.

In Russia, very little attention is paid to the well-being of the economy. And a lot of attention is paid to the well-being of the government. And the government feels good when it can collect more taxes. So they don't have enough money, then they will collect more. It's perfectly natural for them... **As long as people don't take to the streets, the government can charge them more and more... But looking for money in an empty pocket is generally a bad option. Money should be made and not looked for. We need to develop the economy so that it brings more taxes due to the growth of the tax base**².

economy more harm than good (19% held the opposite point of view); 57% of citizens believe that this reform will adversely affect their personal well-being (a different opinion is expressed by only 4% of respondents)³. According to experts, “the value added tax is one of the most convenient for the government, as it relates to easily administered (i.e. collected) taxes. No doubt, its raising is painful for business. And, of course, business will try to shift the weight of the tax increase to consumers, i.e. to citizens, by integrating the increase in the prices of goods and services. And, of course, this cannot but increase inflation and lower people’s living standards, and not once and not for a short time”⁴.

Other laws were adopted – less well-known to the general public, but no less important for peoples’ living standards and the quality of life.

² Interview with economist A. Movchan, director of the economic policy program at Carnegie Moscow Center, July 5, 2018. *Official website of Carnegie Moscow Center*. Available at: <http://carnegie.ru/publications/76757>

³ *About VAT increase: FOM press release from July 2, 2018*. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Ekonomika/14058>

⁴ Byalyy Yu. Pension farce-2018. *Information Agency “Krasnaya vesna”*, 29.06.2018. Available at: <https://rossapri-mavera.ru/article/365b3ffa?gazeta=/gazeta/284>

All these initiatives do not really make any economic sense. They pursue geopolitical and, I would say, cannibalistic goals, because the owners of money, the prototype of the world government, set the task of reducing population and especially the population in the Russian Federation, because it is necessary to “clean” our vast territory in today’s shortage of free territories. And, of course, the world oligarchy is interested in Russia’s natural resources. So everything is very logical and has nothing to do with any economic or financial considerations⁵.

MGIMO Professor **V. Solovey**: “Every day I receive several letters from correspondents from provincial Russia. They describe the same thing: “We held a rally against the pension reform. We took to the streets for the first time in ten years. There were representatives of all parties. And most importantly, they say: we are very angry. And we won’t calm down. And we’re going to get angrier”⁸.

In particular, on July 28, State Duma deputies approved in the final reading the draft law “On the creation of special administrative regions” (in fact, these are offshore zones near Vladivostok and the Kaliningrad Oblast, in which there is a zero rate on income received by an international company); on July 30, the President signed the law “On the abolition of fines for non-return of foreign currency earnings” (in fact, it is the abolition of the pre-existing requirement for the return of foreign currency earnings, or, as experts note, “you can draw an analogy: I drive a car. Speeding fines were abolished, and it turns out that this is not the abolition of fines, but the abolition of traffic rules on the permissible speed”⁶).

The above-mentioned steps the Government made in the first months of Putin’s fourth presidential term so far are poorly consistent with his election promises and fully explain the fact that in recent months people’s support of the head of state sharply decreased, and a wave of protests has swept across the country⁷.

According to the VTsIOM and Levada-Center, in April – May 2018, the level of approval of the President was about 80% (*Tab. 1*). In July – August, it declined to 63–67%. The share of people willing to take part in protests at the beginning of the year was 8–16%, in the middle of the year – 28% (an almost two-fold increase according to VTsIOM and four-fold according to Levada-Center).

Similar dynamics of public sentiment is observed at the regional level. Thus, according to the monitoring of public opinion conducted by VolRC RAS, the level of support for the President in July – August decreased from 70 to 66%, and the share of people willing to take part in protests increased from 16.5 to 20.4% (the highest rate since the beginning of the year).

The steps taken by the Government in the first months of the new political season, as well as the corresponding reaction of the general population are increasingly making us think about the problem of the legitimacy of the current government and its political, social and economic course. Here it is appropriate to recall that the author of the term “legitimacy” – German sociologist, philosopher and economist M. Weber – said that legitimacy is “recognition of the government by its subordinates, their voluntary consent to submit to it”⁹.

⁵ Katasonov V.Yu. Demo-destruction. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, no. 31, August 1. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/word_of_day/domorazrushenie_2018-08-01

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ In late June – early July 2018, in 85 cities of Russia, protests against pension reform were planned (source: Rallies against raising the retirement age: where and when. *News Agency Klerk.ru*. June 26, 2018. Available at: https://www.klerk.ru/buh/news/475452/?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com).

⁸ Program “Dissenting opinion”. Radio “Ekho Moskvy”, aired on August 3, 2018. Available at: <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/2251806-echo/>

⁹ Shpakova R.P. Legitimacy and democracy (Weber’s lessons). *Politicheskie issledovaniya*, 1994, no. 2, pp. 169-174.

Table 1. Dynamics of support for the President and protest moods

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018							
							Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
VTsIOM data														
Level of approval of the President's work	63	63	81	87	82	84	no data	no data	no data	81	80	73	64	63
Share of people ready to take part in protest actions*	18	20	17	20	24	22	16	16	16	20	19	29	no data	no data
Levada-Center data														
Level of approval of the President's work	66	64	82	86	76	82	80	76	80	82	79	no data	67	no data
Share of people ready to take part in protest actions**	16	17	13	12	13	14	no data	no data	8	no data	no data	no data	28	no data
VoIRC RAS data														
Level of approval of the President's work	52	55	64	69	68	67	no data	69	no data	68	no data	70	no data	65,9
Share of people ready to take part in protest actions***	17.9	17.3	17.0	19.0	20.6	18.6	no data***	15.1	no data	16.1	no data	16.5	no data	20.4
<p>* The wording of the question: "If in our city/rural area there are mass protests against declining living standards and unfair actions of the authorities, or rallies in defense of your rights, will you personally take part in them or not?" (answer: "I will, most likely"; % of respondents).</p> <p>** The wording of the question: "If in our city/rural area there are mass protests against declining living standards or rallies in defense of your rights, will you personally take part in them or not?" (answer: "I will, most likely"; % of respondents).</p> <p>*** The wording of the question: "In your opinion, can the protests against growing prices and low standard of living take place in your settlement? Will you personally take part in them?" (answer: "yes, most likely yes"; % of respondents).</p>														

The experience of the Time of Troubles has shown that the existence of the Russian state is impossible without legitimate, strong, and centralized government. An alternative to autocracy was the boyar strife, and then there was complete anarchy. Overcoming the consequences of the Time of Troubles was associated with the restoration of legitimate state power, able to protect the country from external enemies and ensure order and stability within its borders¹⁰.

The delegitimation of royal power in the Muscovy in the early 17th century was due not only to discontinuation of the Rurik dynasty and other attendant circumstances (natural disasters, poor harvests, and lean years). Among other things, it was the deepest crisis of public administration under Ivan the Terrible who ruled with the help of immoral and repressive methods¹¹.

In Russian history, there were many examples of how the legitimacy of the government (or rather its absence) led to the collapse of the Russian state. Perhaps one of the first such examples can be found in the reign of Boris Godunov (1587–1598) – a legally elected ruler, whose actions, however, did not become legitimate in Russian society, which ultimately led to civil unrest and the convening of Zemsky Sobor, which marked the beginning of the reign of the Romanov dynasty (1613).

¹⁰ Lantsov S.A. Legitimacy crises in Russian political history. *Vestnik SPbGU. Ser. 6*, 2014, no. 1, pp. 92-101.

¹¹ Trunov R. The vanishing legitimacy. *Information Agency "Rosbalt"*, March 20, 2018. Available at: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/russia/2018/03/20/1689721.html>

Nicholas II and his entourage did not want to notice that traditional legitimacy based on faith and traditions ceases to meet the ideas and expectations of a significant part of society. In other words, in the conditions of that time, the prerogatives of the Emperor had to be limited, and in fact backed up by real constitutional and parliamentary institutions. However, political concessions made under the pressure of the First Russian Revolution were regarded by the autocracy as a temporary respite. The Supreme power won that battle, but, deprived of public trust and support, it remained the only guilty party in all past and future tribulations – from Bloody Sunday and the Battle of Tsushima to the Lena Massacre and the great retreat of the Russian army in 1915¹².

The legal power of Emperor Nicholas II (1894–1917) did not save him from the loss of legitimacy, which resulted in his abdication and the revolution of 1917, which was the beginning of a qualitatively new era of Russian and world history and the bloody Civil War.

The election of Boris Yeltsin as President of the RSFSR and President of Russia was quite legitimate (in 1991 and 1996), but everyone knows how “legitimate” was the power in the period that was called the “turbulent 1990s” for a reason. Discrediting democracy and creating real prerequisites for authoritarianism – such were the main socio-political results of the Russian reformers of the time¹³.

Thus, we see that compliance with formal procedures that make the government legitimate does not act as a guarantor of its safety. In turn, the legitimacy of the government is a factor on which its existence depends no less than on legality. However, recent draft laws made by the government suggest that the current public administration system ignores the importance of legitimacy. Whether due to its being at the

At the final stage of “perestroika”, Yeltsin proved himself as a political leader, widely using populist methods and techniques in the struggle for power. He took into account the changes in the mood of the population, promising what was most expected of him at the moment. Of course, Yeltsin’s personal views and political goals changed, but populist political technologies remained the main means of achieving them. The interests of the struggle for power of Yeltsin himself and those who directly surrounded and supported him began to take precedence over the long-term national and state interests of the country. Having established control over the power structures of the RSFSR, Yeltsin and his entourage began to oppose their union center led by Mikhail Gorbachev. In fact, the Russian leadership acted together with the separatist elites of a number of Soviet republics, primarily the Baltic ones. Such a policy inevitably led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which broke apart along those artificial borders that had been established and repeatedly changed under the Communist regime. Neither Yeltsin nor his associates and advisors considered the fact that such a scenario was contrary to the fundamental interests of Russia itself... Through his actions Yeltsin weakened the state, democracy, and economy. It was evidenced by the tragic events of October 1993, which revealed the existence of a deep crisis of legitimacy in post-Communist Russia¹⁴...

helm for almost 20 years, or due to the lingering virtual absence of an alternative to the political choice... There are also tougher opinions: some experts believe that, to put it mildly, contradictory reforms of the government are nothing but systematic and purposeful activities of the collective West to destroy the Russian state by the hands of internal political and financial elites. That is, practically the same mechanism that worked in the early 1990s and which continues to work with other countries is now being used. Thus, experts provide a number of

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Simonyan R.Kh. Is there any special “Russian path”? (polemic notes). *Sotsis*, 2013, no. 7, p. 143.

¹⁴ Lantsov S.A. Legitimacy crises in Russian political history. *Vestnik SPbGU. Ser. 6*, 2014, no. 1, pp. 92-101

We are clearly moving according to the plans favored by the U.S....We are waiting for new unpopular tax reforms, for example, the tax on private subsidiary plots. According to the plan, all the deficits of the budget will be replenished not by the elite, but by common people. This is a return to the path of Tsarist Russia. Everything will be stretched in time, but our main path, from which we will not turn, is a complete dismantling of the social state. This is the real “multi-way” option ... We are a semi-colony of the West and China. Our policy is dual: the true vector is directed toward the West, and “patriotism” is left for internal use¹⁵.

We are not ready to raise the retirement age. Granted, we have a growing life expectancy, but for men it is 65 years. If we establish 65 years as the retirement age, then excuse me, but how will that be? You work until you turn 65 and then you just kick the bucket or what?¹⁷

facts showing that the increase in the retirement age in different countries is held in the same way and under the dictation of the International Monetary Fund¹⁶:

✓ “Fact # 1: In 2016, the IMF recommended Moldova to raise the retirement age. Moldovan President Igor Dodon called the pension reform in Moldova “social genocide” and said that the abolition of the pension reform is one of the priorities of his work. On July 1, 2017, the government of Moldova raised the retirement age to 63 years for men and women.

✓ Fact # 2: In 2016, the IMF recommends the Republic of Belarus to raise the retirement age. President Alexander Lukashenko called the IMF’s conditions for obtaining a loan humiliating and unacceptable: “We have no right to reduce the people of Belarus to poverty”. And then he signed a decree on the first stage of raising the retirement age—for three years.

✓ Fact # 3: In 2017, the IMF recommended raising the retirement age in Russia. The continuation of this story is already known to all of us...”

¹⁵ Odintsov A. Pension reform: the fatal mistake of the Kremlin. Sulakshin Center (Center for Scientific Political Thought and Ideology). Available at: <http://rusrand.ru/analytics/pensionnaya-reforma-rokovaya-oshibka-kremlya>

¹⁶ Skok A. To live up to retirement. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, June 28. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/dozhit_do_pensii

In the series of innovative ideas adopted and discussed by the cabinet of ministers, special attention should be paid to the reform of the pension system – certainly the most resonant event of the last months of domestic political life in the country. Critical articles on this occasion often quote Putin’s promise: “While I am President, the retirement age will not be raised. During my term in office, the retirement age will not be raised”¹⁸. But we would also like to draw attention to the fact that during his last live phone-in session with the nation, Putin quite clearly formulated the purpose of any steps taken by the Government in relation to the standard of living and quality of life of current and future pensioners: “**I want to emphasize once again, the key task in the entire pension system is to raise the welfare and income of pensioners considerably**”¹⁹.

The opinion of the Russian society on the draft law on raising the retirement age can hardly be called controversial. On the contrary, it is quite unanimous. The petition against the reform was signed by almost three million people. According to FOM, 80% of Russians are against the pension reform, while the proportion of those who share this opinion is more than 70% in all age groups. In most cases, people are afraid they just will not live

¹⁷ Transcript of the Direct Line with V. Putin, September 27, 2005. *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23190>

¹⁸ Transcript of the Direct Line with V. Putin, April 16, 2015. *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261>

¹⁹ Transcript of the Direct Line with V. Putin, June 7, 2018. *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57692>

to see their pension (*“We are afraid that we will not live up to our retirement age”, “in our country people don’t live so long”, “we pay contributions to the pension fund, but the men do not make it to their retirement age, and the money is lost”, “we will wear ourselves out, and then immediately die of exhaustion – who will then get those contributions from the money we earned?”*). Forty-nine percent of citizens believe that “raising the retirement age is unacceptable in principle” (27% believe that the pension reform is necessary, but “not now and not in this way). The results of the FOM study also show that 64% of Russians discuss pension reform with their friends, colleagues, etc. and in the course of these discussions, they are much more likely to hear arguments “against” (57%) than “for” (only 1%).

Interesting information can be drawn from the answers of Russians to the question of why, in their opinion, the Russian Government has decided to raise the retirement age. Here are the most common answers²⁰:

1. 26% *“the budget must be replenished”; “the budget is bursting at the seams”; “the budget does not have enough money”; “there is not enough money for subsidies to state companies”; “Russia is preparing for war, new revenues are needed” “the state has to spend a lot – on the construction of Crimea, and on Syria”; “there is not enough for Syria and Ukraine”; “it is necessary to compensate for the costs of the World Cup”.*

2. 15% *“Shortage of people of working age”; “because of the demographic situation”; “there are few people who are working, they will not be enough to provide for pensioners”; “there are few working people per one pensioner”; “now there*

²⁰ *Raising the retirement age: citizens’ response: FOM Press Release, June 29, 2018. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Ekonomika/14057>*

are few of those who work and make contributions to the Pension Fund”.

3. 11% *“It was done so as to reduce the amount of pensions”; “so that there would be fewer retirees”; “we are driven into bondage, they won’t let us live up to our retirement”; “it is done in order that the people didn’t receive pensions, they don’t care if we die at work”; they would let us die rather than let us retire”; “so that few people lived up to retirement”.*

And this is how many people share the official point of view of the Government:

1. 4% *“People now live long”; “men and women began to live longer”; “life expectancy is increasing”; “the government believes that people now live longer”.*

2. 3% *“For the purpose of raising retirement pensions”; “it is done for us, pensioners, so that we could receive more money”.*

3. 1% *“Other countries have long raised the retirement age”; “retirement age is raised all around the world”; “we are following the example of Europe”; “it is the influence of the West”.*

4. 1% *“The time has come”; “it is high time to raise the retirement age”; “it is already time”.*

Thus, the opinion of the Russian society on raising the retirement age does not need additional comments. It could be assumed that the pension reform is a really unpopular step (and rightly so), but a necessary one at that. As Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev put it, “it’s like a bitter medicine. People don’t want to drink it, but understand that if they don’t drink this medicine, everything can end much worse”²¹.

²¹ Koshelenko A. Medvedev compared the pension reform to a “bitter medicine”. *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 2018.10.08. Available at: https://www.mk.ru/politics/2018/08/10/medvedev-sravnil-pensionnuyu-reformu-s-gorkim-lekarstvom.html?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fzen.yandex.com

The official point of view of the Government (in particular, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation M.A. Topilin) comes from the fact that “Now there is the only window of opportunity... there will be no other period in the near future, when the number of entering the market is reduced. Only after 20 years, 22–23 years”²². However, this thesis is categorically refuted by numerous scientific studies and expert assessments²³ that makes it quite clear that **there is no need for this reform and the goals it pursues will not be achieved, because to achieve them we need completely different mechanisms** (some conclusions of the experts are presented in *Insert 1*).

Thus, according to experts, “in the case of pension sequestration, the Russian authorities will allow men to live on pensions **only 9% of their lives instead of the current 16%**, which will be **“an absolute world record of social inhumanity of the government”**.”

The monthly pension raise of one thousand rubles promised by the Government is also unable to improve the standard of living and quality of life of pensioners, because **for the pensioner to “return the lost money, the pension must be**

²² Topilin explained the necessity of the pension reform due to the opened “window of opportunity”. *News channel “Interfax*, July 16, 2018. Available at: <http://www.interfax.ru/business/621179>

²³ See for example:

1. Balyuy Yu. Pension farce-2018. *Information Agency “Krasnaya vesna”*, 29.06.2018. Available at: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/365b3ffa?gazeta=/gazeta/284>

2. Samsonova T. What is the injustice of the pension reform? *Portal “The Question”*, July 29, 2018. Available at: <https://thequestion.ru/questions/403263/v-chem-nespravedlivost-pensionnoi-reformy>

3. Bashkatova A. NG calculated how much money the pensioners will receive as a result of the reform. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, June 20. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-06-20/4_7248_minus.html

4. Deferred pension for those who retire early after raising the retirement age. *Portal “Tochka otscheta”*. Available at: <http://skolkozarabativat.ru/novost-dnya/otlozhennaya-pensiya-dlyadosrochnikov-posle-povysheniya-pensionnogo-vozrasta/>

5. Tsypliyev S. Pension maneuver: an interview on the radio “Ekho Moskvy” from July 7, 2018. Available at: https://echo.msk.ru/blog/tsypliyev_s/2235806-echo/

6. Obukhova E., Pakhunov K., Ivanter A. This is a reform, baby! *Ekspert*, 2018, no. 26 (1080), June 25

7. Skok A. To live up to retirement. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, June 28. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/dozhit_do_pensii

The previous “May decrees” of the President dated 2012 were safely “forgotten” for six years (one-time payments to state employees in January – February of this year before the Presidential Election are not taken into account). It is clear that the failure to execute the May 2018 decrees could lead to the growth of social tension, dissatisfaction with the leadership of the country, the emergence of protest actions, etc. Those who are standing at the helm will inevitably be reminded of the previous “decrees”. That is why such importance is attached to the implementation of the “May decrees” of the President voiced this year: in order to preserve their positions, the authorities vitally need to ensure the successful implementation of at least the visible part of at least the most important aspects of these decrees from a social point of view... It must be understood that in the absence of significant foreign investment, the country’s economy is a closed system with a certain “volume and weight”... All redistribution takes place within the system, without affecting its volume and weight²⁴.

increased by more than five thousand rubles per month”, and if we proceed from the government reform plans **“a man should live already in retirement for 70 years, and a woman – for more than 100 years”**... These are the parameters of the government’s pension reform project. **It is obvious that they are not just not targeted, but they do not even take into account the President’s goal of achieving “a significant increase in the welfare and income of pensioners”**.

It should be noted that the fact that the authorities disregard the interests of the general population is not the first time. The same experiments with the calculation and payment of pensions continue for virtually the entire post-Soviet period (*Insert 2*)²⁵. These include long-term problems of defrauded investors, the reform of RAS, optimization of health and education, etc.

²⁴ Obtaining an international passport will cost five thousand rubles: why is it so expensive? *Moskovsky komsomolets*, 2018, June 19 (opinion of A. Korenev, analyst at GK “Finam”). Available at: <http://www.mk.ru/social/2018/06/19/oformlenie-zagranpasporta-oboydetsya-v-5-tysyach-rublej-pochemu-tak-dorogo.html>

²⁵ Balyuy Yu. Pension farce-2018. *Information Agency “Krasnaya vesna”*, 29.06.2018. Available at: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/365b3ffa?gazeta=/gazeta/284>

Insert 1

Expert assessments of the pension reform

Excerpt	Source	About the author
<p>According to Rosstat, the average life expectancy of men exceeds the new retirement age of 65 years in only 37 most prosperous Russian regions out of 85! That is, in the rest 48 regions of Russia, men will basically die out, not having lived up to the prospects of future pension...</p> <p>In 2017, the WHO identified that the age of healthy working capacity (average for men and women!) in Russia is 63.4 years! That is, the majority of Russian men and women, if they live up to the new retirement age, they will already be ill!</p>	<p>Byalyy Yu. Pension farce-2018. Information Agency "Krasnaya vesna", 29.06.2018. Available at: https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/365b3ffa?gazeta=/gazeta/284</p>	<p>Yuriy V. Byalyy, candidate of sciences (physics and mathematics), vice-president for science at the International Public Foundation "Experimental Creative Center" (Kurginyan Center MOF-ETTs), deputy editor-in-chief of the journal <i>Rossiia XXI</i></p>
<p>There are no reasonable demographic arguments for an immediate increase in the retirement age for men. Given the demographic characteristics, one may discuss raising the retirement age for women only, but if the same is not discussed for men, it is unlikely to be accepted in society unambiguously. In addition, there may be undesirable indirect effects – in particular, the birth rate may decrease.</p>	<p>Shirov A.A., Potapenko, V.V. About a fair pension system <i>Ekspert</i>, 2018, no. 24, June 11-17, p. 53.</p>	<p>Aleksandr A. Shirov, doctor of sciences (economics), RAS professor, deputy director of RAS Institute of Economic Forecasting, head of the laboratory for analysis and forecasting of production potential and intersectoral interactions Potapenko V.V., junior researcher at RAS Institute of Economic Forecasting</p>
<p>The assumption that an increase in the retirement age will improve the welfare of pensioners seems doubtful. The situation of those who would soon retire would worsen. These generations will receive almost 200 thousand rubles less for each deferred year. Compensation of the "losses" for them will come after about 10 years after a delayed retirement; they will be at a disadvantage for years. Today's pensioners will receive an additional increase for the year in the amount of not 12 thousand rubles, but twice less, because these 12 thousand already "contain" the planned indexation caused by inflation. And today's working pensioners still do not have any pension raise.</p>	<p>Bashkatova A. NG calculated how much money the pensioners will receive as a result of the reform. <i>Nezavisimaya gazeta</i>, 2018, June 20. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-06-20/4_7248_minus.html</p>	<p>Anastasia Bashkatova, deputy head of the Economics Department of <i>Nezavisimaya gazeta</i></p>
<p>There are no reasons that would justify a reform that changes the retirement age so radically. Our analysis, which seems impartial, shows that the economy in this case is not only likely to win nothing, but it can even lose – due to rising costs for preferential types of pensions, unemployment and, most importantly, the potential reduction of the wage fund, which is the basis for the formation of the Pension Fund.</p>	<p>Obukhova E., Pakhunov K., Ivanter A. This is a reform, baby! <i>Ekspert</i>, 2018, no. 26 (1080), June 25.</p>	<p>Evgeniya Obukhova, editor of the "Economics" Department of the journal "Ekspert" Konstantin Pakhunov, correspondent of the journal "Ekspert" Aleksandr E. Ivanter, first deputy editor-in-chief of the journal "Ekspert"</p>
<p>There are no demographic grounds for such an increase in the retirement age. After raising the retirement age, people will enjoy their "well-deserved retirement" less than under Khrushchev, says Anatoly Vishnevsky, director of the Institute of Demography. But after the sequestration, the life expectancy of Russians after retirement will be shorter not only than that under Khrushchev, but it will be the shortest in the world. Publicist Sergei Parkhomenko proves it when comparing the indicator of "state greed" in different countries – that is, the share of life that different governments allow their people to live after retirement. Today, in developed countries, the average man lives about 20% of his life after retirement. And in the case of pension sequestration, Russian authorities will allow men to exist on a pension for only 9% of their lives instead of current 16%. And it will be an absolute world record of social inhumanity of the state.</p>	<p>Sergeyev M. Initiators of the pension reform go astern. <i>Nezavisimaya gazeta</i>, 2018, July 12. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/economics/2018-07-12/1_7264_pensia.html</p>	<p>Mikhail Sergeyev, head of the department of economics at <i>Nezavisimaya gazeta</i></p>

<p><i>The man will have five more years to work before retirement, which means that he will not receive 60 monthly pensions. Now the average size of an ordinary pension is 14 thousand rubles. So, the "pension maneuver" will deprive him of 840 thousand rubles. He will live an average of about 13.5 years (162 months). It is this value, which shows how much an average pensioner will live after retirement, should be used in the calculations, rather than the average life expectancy that is significantly dependent on mortality in childhood and adolescence. Pensions must be raised by more than five thousand rubles per month, because only on this case will the pensioners, in the course of these 162 months, get back the money they lost due to the fact that the retirement age was raised by five years.</i></p> <p><i>Exactly the same calculation for women shows they will lose 1 million 334 thousand rubles in eight years. For women, average life expectancy after retirement at 63 years is about 19 years. So, for compensation it is necessary to increase pension payments by six thousand rubles a month. These calculations do not take inflation into account. We have learned the lesson well that "money today" and "money tomorrow" is different money. The Government promises pensioners a "generous" increase of as much as a thousand rubles per month. In these conditions, to compensate for the loss, men need to live 70 years after retirement, and women – more than 100 years!</i></p>	<p>Tsyplyaev S. Pension maneuver: an interview on the radio "Ekho Moskvyy" from July 7, 2018. Available at: https://echo.msk.ru/blog/tsuplyayev_s/2235806-echo/</p>	<p>Sergey A. Tsyplyaev, candidate of sciences (physics and mathematics), professor, president of the Foundation "Respublika", dean of the law faculty at the North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Federation Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration</p>
<p><i>In European countries, the retirement age is mainly 65–67 years. However, it should also be taken into account that life expectancy is much longer there. For example, in Germany it is 81.1 years, in France – 82.7 years, in the UK – 81.6 years, in Spain – 83.4 years, in Italy – 83.5 years. In Russia, the average life expectancy is 70.6 years. If we take into account that Russians on average live 11–12 years less than people in Western Europe, then they should retire earlier in order to live an approximately proportional number of years after retirement. In this sense, the current retirement age – 60 years for men and 55 years for women – is in line with "Western" standards. If we now set the retirement age for men at 65, this means that 46% of Russian men will not live up to their retirement at all.</i></p> <p><i>The second important difference is the size of the pension. In Russia, the average pension is 14,000 rubles, the average salary is 41,600 rubles; that is, the replacement rate (the ratio of the average pension to salary) is 33.7%. In the European Union, this figure is on average 58.3%, and in some countries even exceeds 70%; for example, in Spain – 72.3%, in Italy – 83.1%, in Denmark – 86.4%. In many developing countries, the replacement rate is also significantly higher than the Russian 33.7%; for example, in Argentina – 71.6%, in Brazil – 69.5%, in China – 76%, in India – 87.4%... If we want to be equal to other countries, let us first try and reach their level in other important parameters of the pension system such as life expectancy and the replacement rate of pensions, and then we will begin to raise the retirement age.</i></p>	<p>Mironov M. What is the injustice of the pension reform? Available at: https://echo.msk.ru/blog/mmironov/2224872-echo/</p>	<p>Maksim Mironov, economist, professor IE Business school (Madrid)</p>

As we can see from the facts (see Insert 2), pensioners are not the first to become the object of various experiments, the purpose of which is patching holes in the budget or the implementation (by any means) of the “May decrees” of the President. This explains why **Russia is one of the world’s outsiders in terms of the standard of living and quality of life of pensioners.**

Thus, in the Global Retirement Index²⁶, Russia consistently ranks 40th out of 43 possible, second only to Brazil, Greece, and India (*Appendix 2*). According to the Global AgeWatch Index²⁷, Russia ranks 65th (out of 96 countries; *Appendix 3*). The results of sociological research we conducted at the regional level also reflect the quality of life of Russian pensioners²⁸. Thus, for people of pre-retirement age, the main motive for working after they have retired is “the need for

additional earnings” (84%), and the most urgent problem for current pensioners is “the small size of pensions” (68%).

For comparison, we note that “according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index, as of August 1, the fortune of the richest people in Russia increased by 14 billion USD... Oil and gas companies earned in the first half of 2018 an additional trillion rubles of pre-tax profit, which is 50% more than a year earlier ... The profit of the entire banking system in 2018, taking into account the sanitized banks, will be 1.3 trillion rubles”²⁹. Looking at these figures, it is easy to guess who the beneficiary of the entire economic course in Russia is and why the problem of social inequality has been and still remains a key disease of our country for at least 25 years. “This state of affairs is catastrophic no less and no more than everything that has been happening in the country since 1991. If we talk about whether people realize it or not, there is a great and smoothly working propaganda machine, created by the bourgeois clan and owned by it, the machine which daily, weekly, and monthly introduces horse doses of media anesthesia in the mass consciousness, forcing people to switch to anything other than their vital interests”³⁰.

The actual consumer attitude toward one of the most socially vulnerable population groups absolutely contradicts the essence of the social welfare state and Article 7 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

“In a socially responsible society, which according to the Constitution is one of the characteristics of our country, pension, proceeding from its purpose, should be understood **in a fundamentally different way**. This is not just the money to support the life of a person whose biological resources have been exhausted and who has become incapacitated, and therefore equated in this respect to the disabled and other categories that require public support. The average life expectancy after retirement, which

²⁶ The Global Retirement Index is calculated by the French company Natixis Global Asset Management since 2013, it includes developed and emerging economies that are members of the International Monetary Fund, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and BRIC.

The Index is calculated on the basis of 18 indicators that are divided into four sub-indices: finances in retirement, material wellbeing, quality of life, and health. The sub-indices reflect four key aspects of pension provision: financial means for a comfortable life in retirement, access to quality financial services to ensure the safety of savings and the increase in income, access to quality health services, and a clean and safe environment.

²⁷ The index of quality of life of the elderly (Global AgeWatch Index) is a global study of countries by quality of life and wellbeing of older people. It is calculated using the methodology of the international non-governmental organization HelpAge International since 2013 on the basis of statistical data obtained from national institutions and international organizations that are accumulated in the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The last “round” of the study was conducted in 2015.

²⁸ The sociological survey “Quality of life of the elderly” was conducted by VolRC RAS in April 2018 in Vologda, Cherepovets, and in eight districts of the oblast (Babayevsky District, Velikoustyugsky District, Vozhegodsky District, Gryazovetsky District, Kirillovsky District, Nikolsky District, Tarnogsky District and Sheksninsky District); 1,500 respondents over 50 years of age participated in the survey. 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 was a questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

²⁹ Semin K. Wool. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2018, no. 31. August 1. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/word_of_day/sherst_2018-08-02

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

plays a major part in the current argument in favor of raising the retirement age, is not a decisive regulatory principle. The motive of regulation here is different – **to provide financial support to older people not due to the fact that they have reached the age limit from which the average life expectancy of a pensioner begins, but due to the fact that these people have fulfilled their duty to society and therefore have the right not to depend on the need to have external sources of their existence through work.** This is approximately the same as the pension provision of military people, where the criterion is the length of service, and not the life expectancy after retirement. The transition to a pension in this sense does not require that a person should work till they become decrepit, which is why, in response to the increase in life expectancy, from time to time it is necessary to legally shift the retirement period in accordance with the average life expectancy, as follows from the logic of the arguments of the Government. In a truly social state, the retirement period is not extended if there are no extraordinary circumstances. It is stable and provides the people who fulfilled their duty to society with fruits of development of health care and increase of financial welfare in the form of increase in term of life, instead of using this increase in the government's own favor³¹.

However, the real actions of the Government (see Insert 2) quite fit into the idea of the future as seen by the ideologists of neoliberal reforms, according to whom “people no longer need to cling to those institutions that guaranteed survival (for example, family, church or corporation) ... the government should not guarantee the workers any rights ... capitalism and competition are the only engines of progress, the welfare state is an absolute brake on the development in the post-industrial world”³².

³¹ Lyubinin A. Pension “melodies” of the football summer. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*. 2018.06.08. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/pensionnie_napevi_futbol_nogo_leta

³² Ivanov A. Introducing the author of the pension reform. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*. 2018.24.06. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/events/avtor_pensionnoj_reformi_znakom_tes_

The risk of the pension reform lies not in the possibility of people's revolting against it, but in a step-by-step destruction of scarce skills and traditions of harmonizing the public interest. The result will be a drop in public confidence in all existing institutions. This is called the crisis of public administration, that is, the threat to statehood is stronger than the threat of rebellion. The instigators of the rebellion can be imprisoned, but it will not be possible to imprison the instigators of the fall of trust. And so, the process of decay in society will continue³³.

Such, in particular, is the opinion of V.S. Nazarov, director of the Financial Research Institute of the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, who also argues that *“the pension system is flawed. First, it undermines incentives to work: the higher the pension, the more people are motivated to stop working with the onset of retirement age and indulge in idleness. Second, the people are irresponsible and they do not accumulate funds for old age. ... Fourth, the pension system is a detriment to democracy: elections are inevitably won by those who propose pension rise through increasing taxes and borrowing. Fifth, due to the presence of the retirement age as a boundary, the potential of full functioning of a person as a labor market unit is limited”³⁴...*

Under the circumstances, the nature of the legitimacy of the government plays a fundamental role in preserving the legitimacy of the Russian government (which is of paramount importance given the ongoing de facto anti-social government reforms and the extremely negative possible consequences of such a policy, as the lessons of history show us). And, before answering the question “what is the basis of the legitimacy of the government in modern Russia?” it is necessary to make a small digression and recall the classical typology of legitimacy developed by the founder of the concept M. Weber.

³³ Ivanov A. Introducing the author of the pension reform. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*. 2018.24.06. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/events/avtor_pensionnoj_reformi_znakom_tes_

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

“Pension experiments in the Post-Soviet period”³⁵

1990: The law “On state pensions in the RSFSR”, according to which the budget ceased to be the source of pension payments, and insurance contributions of employers and employees became the source of pension payments.

1995–1998: pension was divided into the following parts: basic minimum (social), insurance (depending on the length of service and the level of insurance premiums), and non-state (formed by individual contributions of the employee) that was allowed to be managed by non-governmental funds (NGF) and management companies. Russian citizens for the first time faced sudden “losses” of the newly established NGFs together with their pension money.

2000: “Main directions of socio-economic policy of the Government of the Russian Federation for the long term” (also known as the Gref Program “Strategy 2010”). It was rejected due to its being inconsistent with Article 7 of the Constitution, but it seriously proclaimed the goal of abolishing the “welfare state” in Russia and shifting to the so-called “subsidiary state”, when the government assigned only minimum “targeted” assistance to the poorest, and the rest of the citizens were given the right and opportunity to try to earn a living and save for old age on their own.

2001: M. Zurabov’s pension reform program, according to which the pension was to be divided into distributive and accumulative parts, and the size of both parts was both uncertain and non-guaranteed. The distributive part was to depend on the state budget, and the accumulative part was to be invested in any assets and depend both on the amount of money accumulated on the individual account of a future pensioner, and on the profitability of investing this money – again, by non-governmental funds. At the same time, the uncertainty of the future pension was hidden from its recipient by the fact that it was calculated not in monetary terms, but in some kind of “pension rights”, the cost of which should be calculated annually by the government.

2005: monetization of benefits, under which key benefits (free travelling by public transport in places of residence and a free-of-charge minimum of necessary medicines) were replaced with tiny monetary compensation, which was quickly devalued due to inflation. Mass protests with the closure of federal highways and even the seizure of buildings of local administrations did not cancel the monetization, but forced the government to dramatically increase budget spending on compensation in the form of additional payments to pensions.

³⁵ Byalyy Yu. Pension farce-2018. *Information Agency “Krasnaya vesna”*, 29.06.2018. Available at: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/article/365b3ffa?gazeta=/gazeta/284>

2007: Due to the deficit (including the deficit that formed allegedly as a result of the failed “monetization of benefits”) accumulated in the Pension Fund of Russia, Zurabov proposed to cover the deficit with the money of those Russians who had not chosen a non-governmental pension fund and whose pension money is by default managed by Vnesheconombank, a Russian government-owned development bank. That meant actual confiscation of their savings money. Such a radical attempt to openly steal citizens’ money stunned even the most notorious liberals in the government, and Zurabov’s idea was rejected.

2008: The so-called pension co-financing program was introduced. Its essence was to encourage the growth of the accumulative part of the pension according to a simple scheme: the annual investment citizens make in their savings account in the amount of 2–12 thousand rubles is co-financed by the government in the same amount, that is, it is doubled. It was allowed to join the “co-investment program” until the beginning of 2015. However, in 2013, the Pension Fund of Russia changed the formula for calculating the pensions and at the same time ceased to inform the citizens about the size of their individual pension account. And in 2014, pension savings that were already on the accounts in were “frozen” altogether, and all 22% of employers’ contributions from the salary fund were directed to the Pension Fund of Russia to the general insurance pension account. This “freeze” has since been extended annually and is still in force.

2010: the formation of the basic part of the pension (that is mandatory for payment to each pensioner regardless of earnings and length of service) was finally abolished; the pension now consists only of insurance and accumulative parts.

2015: another pension innovation was introduced: the government refused to maintain personal pension accounts in rubles and actually returned to Zurabov’s long-standing idea to calculate some kind of “pension points”, which the government transfers into real rubles (and only the government-supervised accounting agencies know how and by what calculation it is done) only after a person retires.

Finally, in recent years, it has been revealed that many non-governmental pension funds (NGPFs) were engaged in outright fraud with the money of their depositors (in 2015, the licenses of several NGPFs of the bankrupt owner of “Bank Rossiysky Kredit” A. Motylev were revoked; in 2017 – the licenses of M. Gutseriev’s “Binbank”, V. Belyaev’s “Bank Otkrytie”, the brothers Ananyev’s “Promsvyazbank” were also revoked. In 2018, it turned out that the O1 Group owned by Boris Mints used the pension savings of the depositors of its NGPF to buy other pension funds and created the largest group of NGPF under the general name “Budushcheye” [the Future]. And then it began to invest the pension money in large development projects, that is, to build, run and sell luxury commercial real estate. In May 2018, when things got really tough with this scam, Mints fled to London with his family).

Weber, in whose writings the problem of domination and subordination is one of the main topics, said that “there are three pure types of legitimate domination. Their legitimacy can be:

1) of a rational nature, i.e. based on the belief in the legality of the established order and the legality of the exercise of domination on the basis of this legality (legal domination);

2) of a traditional nature, i.e. based on the ordinary belief in the sanctity of traditions and on the belief in the legitimacy of the authority based on these traditions;

3) of a charismatic nature, i.e. based on outstanding manifestations of holiness or heroic power, or exemplary personality and the order created by these manifestations (charismatic domination)”³⁶.

Modern researchers also highlight the ideological legitimacy, which is based on “the moral confidence of individuals in the value of a socio-political system and its proclaimed principles...”. American political scientist D. Easton writes that ideology as a source of legitimacy is on the one hand, a certain form of expression of the needs and requirements of individuals (the so-called expressive aspect of ideology), and on the other hand, it is an undoubted means of control in the hands of political leaders over the behavior of these individuals (the so-called “instrumental” or “manipulative” aspect of ideology). At the same time, the “instrumental” and “manipulative” aspect of ideology is predominant, because regardless of the nature of ideology (mystified, illusory or realistic), it captures the imagination of people, unites their efforts and encourages them to act in the direction that political leaders find convenient³⁷.

The traditional type of legitimacy is characteristic of the monarchic form of government,

³⁶ Weber M. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehende Soziologie*. 5., rev. Aufl. Tübingen: Mohr, 1980. Kap. III. Die Typen der Herrschaft. S. 122-176.

³⁷ Demidov A.I., Fedoseev A.A. *Fundamentals of political science*. Moscow, 1995. Available at: https://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Polit/Demid/05.php

when according to the established tradition power is inherited (a typical example – the reign of Ivan the Terrible). In the Soviet Union there was a mixed type of legitimacy, which was based on the charisma of party leaders, and a powerful ideological “machine”.

The legitimacy of the former political institutions – the Congress of People’s Deputies and the Supreme Council – in the new conditions was questionable, and Boris Yeltsin’s charismatic legitimacy was rapidly melting away as the severe economic consequences of liberal reforms were manifested. The October days of 1993 were a rare example in history: legitimacy and formal legality came into conflict with each other. With the adoption of the new Constitution of the Russian Federation in December 1993, legal and rational mechanisms of legitimation of political power were turned on. However, the question of its legitimacy remained relevant until the end of the 1990s³⁸.

There is an opinion that the adoption of the Russian Constitution in 1993 was nothing but Yeltsin’s attempt to “restore” the legitimacy of the government; to shift it to a new “path” due to the fact that the former grounds (ideological, charismatic, traditional) lost their force.

Has much changed over the past (almost 18-year) period of Putin’s presidency? **The current government in Russia has the characteristics of all the above types of legitimacy, except for rational and legal. Formal election procedures only ensure its legality (legitimacy of election), but throughout the rest of the period (from elections to elections) the actions of the Government are extremely controversial, they do not contribute to solving the key problems associated with the achievement of social justice and overcoming social inequality and therefore do not work to strengthen the legitimacy of power in the estimates of the population.**

The legitimacy of power in Russia is supported by other factors. It is known, for example, that in Russian society, the head of state has always had a special status (traditional legitimacy) in the

³⁸ Lantsov S.A. Legitimacy crises in Russian political history. *Vestnik SPbGU. Ser. 6*, 2014, no. 1, pp. 92-101.

Historically, Russia has always tended to autocracy, and therefore in the institution of the presidency there is the traditional element, some similarity with the monarchical form of power. This feature of the Russian system of power is not similar to either Eastern despotism or Western democracy³⁹.

Moreover, in the political consciousness of the people, the dominant factor is not how the country is governed, but who it is governed by. That is, not the leader is integrated into the system, but the system adapts to the leader. This is the Russian system of democracy, unlike that in Washington or Berlin, but, paradoxically, it turns out to be the only functioning and real institution for modern Russia⁴⁰.

We can discuss the division of power for as long as we want; we can discuss the nuances of their mutual deterrence and balancing, but we will always keep in mind that our country has a constitutional institution that stands above these democratic “games” and, in fact, determines the vector of development of modern Russia⁴¹.

minds of the people, while Putin himself has for many years been the most charismatic person among the top officials in the country; he exercises manual control, and citizens pin their hopes and aspirations on him (charismatic legitimacy). Experts note that “the entire political system lives under the umbrella of the President’s rating. Our entire system of government gets its legitimization through Putin, who is trusted by the majority of the population”⁴².

The signs of ideological legitimacy of the current government consist in maintaining a tense situation on the geopolitical arena. The image of

³⁹ Zuikov A.V. The institute of presidency in Russia: constitutional model, modern realities and prospects of development. *Konstitutsionnyi vestnik*, 2008, no. 1 (19), p. 171.

⁴⁰ Tretyakov V.T. A report at the round table “Institute of presidency in Russia: legal basis and role in the modernization of society”. June 8, 2011. Available at: <http://education.law-books.ru/index.php?page=kruglyj-st-ol>

⁴¹ Silvestrov S.N. A report at the round table “Institute of presidency in Russia: legal basis and role in the modernization of society”. June 8, 2011. Available at: <http://education.law-books.ru/index.php?page=kruglyj-stol>

⁴² Putin’s and Medvedev’s ratings fell due to the pension reform (interviews with VTsIOM experts). *News “DailyStorm”*. Available at: <https://dailystorm.ru/news/rejtingi-putina-i-medvedeva-upali-iz-za-pensionnoy-reformy>

“Russia as a besieged fortress” consolidates society and often justifies the absence of significant changes in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, which, in addition, is supported by fairly effective information warfare against its own people.

The manipulation of public consciousness has reached the limit: instead of thinking about development, we were forced to discuss the pension reform, which absorbed all the information space, but which will still be adopted in the way convenient to our “masters”. If people do not understand this, then the country that has no brakes will go downhill. The cost of clarification may become too high⁴³.

Let us recall, for example, that United Russia obtained constitutional majority in the State Duma, and after that, two years later, was able to carry out the pension reform, even though all opposition parties were against this draft law.

✓ Following the results of the election to the State Duma on September 18, 2016, Russian and foreign⁴⁴ experts noted that “the government

⁴³ Odintsov A. Pension reform: the fatal mistake of the Kremlin. Sulakshin Center (Center for Scientific Political Thought and Ideology). Available at: <http://rusrand.ru/analytics/pensionnaya-reforma-rokovaya-oshibka-kremlya>

⁴⁴ Foreign media on the 2016 election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation (source: newspaper Kommersant.ru, September 19, 2016. Available at: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3093506>):

“Even before the election, the Kremlin made sure that the election was held as it was desirable for it ... the election was held against the background of such a political climate, when all the oppositionists are branded as “traitors” who stab a “besieged” Russia and its President in the back” (source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Schmidt F. Keine oppositionelle Partei schafft es in die Duma. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 18.09.2016. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/in-russland-schafft-es-keine-oppositionelle-partei-ins-parlament-14442041.html>).

“The results are not expected to lead to any dramatic changes; the established political parties are all broadly supportive of the country’s president, Vladimir Putin, and the low turnout suggested more opposition-minded urban Russians simply stayed at home” (source: *The Guardian*. Russian election unlikely to loosen Putin’s grip on power. *The Guardian* 18.09.2016. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/18/russia-votes-in-election-unlikely-to-loosen-putins-grip-on-power>).

deliberately used the tactics of reducing the turnout: with a lower turnout, the share of the controlled electorate voting for the “party of power” and its candidates is greater... The United Russia party improved its relative result almost everywhere compared to the results of the vote as of December 4, 2011. However, due to the low turnout in absolute numbers of votes, the result of United Russia everywhere is lower than December 4, 2011”⁴⁵. The Communist party leader G. Zyuganov at a meeting with the President of the Russian Federation after the State Duma Election noted that “almost 45 million people voted for the party of power in 2007, this is a very powerful and an extremely important support... This year, according to official statistics, 28.5 million people voted for the party of power; and the party lost 17 million votes”⁴⁶.

✓ Our calculations (carried out according to the official data of the Central Election Commission of Russia) show that the percentage of support of United Russia in the 2016 election in comparison with the parliamentary election of 2011 increased by 5% (from 49 to 54%), but in fact it has lost almost four million votes (3.85 million people) and in comparison with the 2007 election – nearly 16 million (16.19 million people)⁴⁷.

“The lowest turnout for the last quarter of the century, in addition to apathy, is due to the fact that rather than traditionally hold the election in December, when, according to statistics, people are more likely to give their votes to the opposition, the Kremlin postponed the elections to September, when many go on vacation” (source: *The Wall Street Journal*. Ferris-Rotman M. Putin’s party shores up power in parliamentary elections amid weak turnout. *The Wall Street Journal* 18.09.2016. Available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russians-head-to-polls-to-vote-for-new-parliament-1474184676>).

⁴⁵ Lyubarev A. (expert of the Committee of Civic Initiatives). Low turnout saved the United Russia Party. *Information Portal “Gazeta.ru”*, October 16, 2016. Available at: https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2012/10/16_x_4813741.shtml

⁴⁶ Transcript of the meeting of the President of the Russian Federation with party leaders, held following the election to the State Duma. *Official Website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52957>

⁴⁷ Ilyin V.A. Russian President got a constitutional majority in the State Duma of the seventh convocation. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2016, no. 5, pp. 9–26.

In comparison with the parliamentary election of 2011, “the increase in the number of those who voted for the United Russia party on September 18, 2016 is noted only **in 15 out of 83** constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

If we compare the results of voting with the 2007 election, we will see that the increase in the number of votes cast for United Russia was noted only **in 5 out of 83** regions of Russia⁴⁸.

Thus, the election to the State Duma of the 7th convocation, on the one hand, was held according to formal rules, which ensured the legality of the constitutional majority of United Russia in the Parliament. However, on the other hand, numerous calculations and assessments of experts do not allow us to say the election was a sign of rational and legal type of legitimacy of the government.

Today the situation is similar. A classic sign of the crisis of the legitimacy of power is the strengthening of coercive methods of enforcement, but this is not necessary at present. They are successfully replaced by methods of “information management of society”⁴⁹. Therefore, it is no coincidence that experts note (and we cannot but agree with them) that “the announced broad discussion concerning pensions, unfortunately, has not begun, except for TV-stories about active elderly citizens”⁵⁰. However, it is one thing when this “weapon of mass destruction” is used, say, against ideological opponents in hybrid warfare (which has an official name – “soft power” – a form of foreign policy strategy involving the ability to achieve the desired results on the basis of voluntary participation, sympathy and attractiveness, as opposed to “hard power”, which implies coercion). It is quite another thing when it is applied against its own

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ Malinetskii G.G. Interdisciplinary ideas in sociology and the challenges of the future. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2015, no. 4 (372), pp. 152–161.

⁵⁰ On the discussion on the future transit of power (editorial). *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, August 2. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2018-08-02/2_7280_red.html

people for the purpose of justifying or disguising the reforms that go against national interests and the Constitution...

Thus, we see that the legitimacy of the modern government in Russia has many foundations, but none of them can be called strong and corresponding to the historical moment of time, which requires thinking and acting “one step ahead”. The legitimacy of the Russian government is based on anything (the leader’s personality, information-based methods of management, mental traditions...), but not on real actions that would be positively perceived in society and in the scientific community.

When the only mediator in the country is the President, the situation becomes very dangerous. And the danger lies not only in the fact that if the President is withdrawn from the negotiations, there will be no mediator and the war will be inevitable. First of all, the danger consists in the fact that the weakness of social institutions significantly reduces the level of social trust between all members of society. And the lack of trust entails the lack of those traditions, the culture that can be the only reason for normal economic growth. **Without trust there is no economy, there is no politics, without trust there is only war**⁵¹.

At the beginning of Putin’s last six-year presidency, the current government is starting to play dangerous games with legitimacy, which (as historical experience shows) can lead to very serious negative consequences. This threat is twice as strong if we recall the key “components of success” that ensured Putin’s landslide victory in the 2018 presidential election:

- 1) concrete election promises (as a necessary condition for increasing the trust of citizens);
- 2) mobilization impulse (as the keynote of the entire election campaign);
- 3) current public sentiment (people are “oriented” toward bringing the economic and

⁵¹ Khaldei A. The main problem of the pension reform. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*. 2018.09.07. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/glavnaya_problema_pensionnoj_reformi

political situation in the country in order, they are waiting for this and are ready to actively participate in it).

Today, many people expect that the President will intervene and significantly change the contours of pension reform. This, in particular, is evident from the data provided by FOM: 35% of Russians believe that the pension reform will not go according to the Government’s plan, “a softer version will be adopted (with a lower retirement age or with a longer transition period)”; the proportion of people who believe that the pension reform will take place exactly as it was planned by the Cabinet of Ministers is two times lower (19%).

The pension reform is, of course, an “unpleasant” decision, and the President decided to distance himself from it by transferring the development of the draft law to the Government. **The head of state will subsequently make “some amendments” and “maybe even punish the Government”... It has been planned that way... This is a very primitive form of governing the country...**⁵²

Political scientists dubbed Putin “president of hope”. The path that Russia will have to go through in the next six years will not be smooth. Government and society who have absolutely no trust in each other will have to find a compromise and make mutual concessions. Bureaucracy will put pressure on the people, the people will desperately resist. The role of mentor will be attributed to the head of state. Our future depends on how Putin will solve the contradictions that have accumulated in Russia⁵³.

Some experts believe that “if the situation gets really complicated in a few years, then the President will have the opportunity to make a move and just change the Government”⁵⁴.

⁵² Putin’s and Medvedev’s ratings fell due to the pension reform (interviews with VTsIOM experts). *News “DailyStorm”*. Available at: <https://dailystorm.ru/news/rejtingi-putina-i-medvedeva-upali-iz-za-pensionnoj-reformy>

⁵³ The President of hope. *Allpravda information portal*, March 9, 2018. Available at: <http://allpravda.info/prezident-nadezhdy-59257.html>

⁵⁴ Putin’s and Medvedev’s ratings fell due to the pension reform (interviews with VTsIOM experts). *News “DailyStorm”*. Available at: <https://dailystorm.ru/news/rejtingi-putina-i-medvedeva-upali-iz-za-pensionnoj-reformy>

However, if earlier such a “move” was unexpected, and it largely contributed to the strengthening of Putin’s authority in society (let us recall, for example, how this tool “worked” in 2015, when the country was experiencing a large-scale cancellation of suburban electric trains), then today such actions of the President are logical (it is no coincidence that in 2016, during a direct live TV phone-in, Vladimir Putin was asked: “Is it profitable to maintain such a weak Government?”⁵⁵). Therefore, there is no guarantee that personal intervention of the head of state and even a significant adjustment of the pension reform project could preserve the disappearing legitimacy.

Concrete and rather intensive actions of the Government in the first months of Putin’s fourth presidential term increase social tension in the country, create conditions for the development of the threat of social explosion instead of the mobilization breakthrough in the internal development that Russian society is long expecting.

In view of all the above arguments and facts that characterize the modern system of public administration in Russia, it can be stated that the question of the sustainability of its legitimacy in the future remains very unclear. And, as a result, the future of the Russian statehood itself becomes unclear.

Current actions of the ruling class in Russia are usually considered in the context of the future transit of power, which is inevitable, as some experts believe, or quite possible, as others explain. The main focus of the discussion is whether the successor will receive the full power or whether it will be distributed among the various centers, the major one of which will remain in the hands of the current group and its leader. That is why the State Council, the Security Council and some other bodies like the big KGB are mentioned periodically.

But all this is tactic, and as for the strategy, the contours of which were outlined by Putin himself – to change quickly, so as not to lag behind other countries – no one seems to be willing to undertake that. Perhaps top officials think that the main thing is to remain at the helm, and the rest will be dealt with later. However, a sharp drop in the ratings of all power institutions only because of one unpopular reform shows that there may not be enough time for all these tricks⁵⁶.

“The patience of the people is not infinite”. This phrase ends the letter, which we mentioned at the beginning of the article. This address to the national leader and guarantor of the Constitution contains all the long-term expectations, people’s impatience and, at the same time, the requirement to radically change the situation in order to implement national interests and fulfill election promises... and the President should take these words very seriously.

⁵⁵ Transcript of the Direct Line with V. Putin, April 14, 2016 (question from E. Ivanova, Nizhny Novgorod). *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51716>

⁵⁶ On the discussion on the future transit of power (editorial). *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2018, August 2. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2018-08-02/2_7280_red.html

Appendix 1

Президенту Российской Федерации
В. В. Путину

Уважаемый Владимир Владимирович!

08.08.2018 г.

Мы, представители патриотических, ветеранских, родительских, профсоюзных организаций России, выражаем свое категорическое несогласие с ключевыми направлениями экономической и социальной политики правительства РФ. Для нас очевидно, что истинная причина нехватки денег на выполнение социальных программ и обязанностей государства, в частности, на выплату пенсий — это вовсе не антироссийские санкции и даже не демографический кризис (вызванный политикой правительства РФ в 1990-годы), а, в первую очередь, система распределения доходов и бюджетных трат, сложившаяся в начале 1990-х годов под влиянием МВФ и Всемирного банка. Основу этих доходов составляет природная рента — т.е. общее достояние народа России. Между тем, по оценкам ведущего экономиста России, академика-секретаря отделения экономики РАН Дмитрия Львова, по состоянию на 2004 год «92% доходов от собственности РФ распоряжаются 7% населения, а если внимательно проанализировать дифференциацию в рамках этих 7%, то окажется, что основная доля богатства страны находится в руках 12 семей» (Вестник Российской Академии наук. Т. 74. №3. С.С. 209-218). За последние годы ситуация принципиально не изменилась, что воспринимается абсолютным большинством народа как несправедливость.

Повышение пенсионного возраста прямо предписано России в череде других стран с «формирующейся рыночной экономикой», руководящими письмами МВФ, членом которого РФ является с 1992 года. Так, в Докладе МВФ по РФ № 17/197 2017 года прямо указано, что «пенсионная реформа, в частности, повышение установленного в законодательстве пенсионного возраста, может способствовать компенсации влияния негативных демографических тенденций на рынки труда», причем эта фраза повторяется несколько раз. Хорошо известно, что практически во всех странах мира, где проводится «курс реформ» по указаниям МВФ, появляются серьезнейшие экономические проблемы. Как правило, это сильное обострение социальных вопросов, массовое обнищание народа и полная подчиненность национальных экономик «благодетелям» из наднациональных структур.

Другим ярким примером исполнения рекомендаций МВФ является т.н. бюджетное правило, согласно которому существенная часть доходов сырьевых корпораций вместо инвестирования в национальную экономику и социальную сферу отправляется на Запад. Продолжающийся, вопреки отчетам, развал промышленности и сельского хозяйства, кризис ЖКХ, катастрофическая зависимость целых регионов от банков и корпораций, в залоге у которых находятся тысячи объектов жизнеобеспечения, фактическая приватизация социальной сферы, развал системы первичной медицинской помощи с помощью т.н. оптимизации — это прямые следствия этой политики. Мало того, транснациональные корпорации через своих агентов в банковском секторе внедряют, вопреки Конституции и законам РФ, элементы тотального контроля над личностью, перехватывая функции государства под предлогом цифровизации и модернизации.

Точно таким же образом МВФ и другие наднациональные структуры навязывают России выгодную им политику в части разрушения образования, культуры, науки и социальной сферы, в которые инкорпорируются чуждые русскому народу и другим народам

нашей страны «ценности» вроде ювенальной юстиции, абортот и легализации содомии. Отсюда и очевидная беспомощность власти в области контроля за информационным пространством — в частности, телевидением и социальными сетями, которые превратились в средство манипуляции людьми, рассадник антиобщественных и антигосударственных стереотипов и ценностей, отсюда же — несамостоятельный, подражательный Западу характер нашей киноиндустрии и шоу-бизнеса.

Мы, патриоты России, категорически возражаем против продолжения этой колониальной политики, выгодной исключительно геополитическим противникам России и статистически ничтожному меньшинству сверхбогатых людей. Голосуя за Вас, народ избирал не эффективного менеджера глобального олигархата, а Президента, который будет защищать нашу страну, наши интересы, наш народ и наши святыни от агрессии «мирового правительства». Ваше решение сохранить у власти бригаду «чикагских мальчиков», слепо верующих в мантры МВФ и Всемирного банка, ведущих нас в цифровое, ювенально-содомитское «завтра», в котором уже не будет места ни свободной творческой личности, ни нормальной семье, ни вере, ни Родине, ни культуре — вообще ничему из того, ради чего живет русский человек — вызвало огромное разочарование в народе. Очевидная неспособность этой команды выполнять социальные обязанности государства (о мобилизации всех сфер жизни и рывках в новый технологический уклад с таким правительством даже говорить смешно), его откровенная зависимость от владельцев сырьевых компаний и банков создают нездоровый фон, на котором может развиваться опасная для государства революционная ситуация.

Призываем Вас отказаться от этого курса, ведущего страну в пропасть, запустив процесс национализации Центрального банка и выхода из-под контроля МВФ с отменой «бюджетного правила» по примеру стран, руководство которых реально заботится о национальном суверенитете, а также отправив в отставку наиболее одиозных деятелей Правительства, Администрации Президента, Центрального банка, Государственной Думы, Совета Федерации и других органов государственной власти РФ и субъектов РФ, обеспечивающих реализацию политики геополитических противников России. Терпение народа не бесконечно!

С уважением,

Председатель
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Патриотических Сил СПб и ЛО



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Меркулов В.А.

Global Retirement Index, %

Country	2017				2016				GRI dynamics + / - 2017 to 2016			
	Ranking	Global Retirement Index	Health	Finances in retirement	Quality of life	Material well-being	Ranking	Global Retirement Index		Health	Finances in retirement	Quality of life
Norway	1	86	89	73	92	91	1	80	90	72	91	95
Switzerland	2	84	87	77	92	81	2	84	88	77	92	80
Iceland	3	82	84	70	88	88	3	80	86	68	88	81
Sweden	4	80	88	69	91	75	5	79	86	68	91	74
New Zealand	5	80	85	79	91	66	4	80	85	78	90	68
Australia	6	78	85	77	84	66	6	78	86	77	81	70
Germany	7	77	86	66	82	76	7	78	87	67	82	80
Denmark	8	77	84	59	94	75	12	77	85	59	92	75
Netherlands	9	77	89	64	81	75	8	78	91	68	80	76
Luxembourg	10	76	92	62	77	76	13	76	92	69	75	71
Canada	11	76	87	73	81	65	10	77	87	73	82	70
Finland	12	76	81	65	92	68	11	77	82	66	91	72
Austria	13	75	85	55	86	77	9	77	86	63	86	77
Ireland	14	74	82	71	83	64	16	72	83	68	82	58
Belgium	15	73	82	62	78	70	15	73	82	61	78	71
Czech Republic	16	72	70	68	75	71	18	71	71	67	74	73
USA	17	72	87	71	78	57	14	73	87	71	79	59
UK	18	72	83	58	81	68	17	71	84	56	80	68
France	19	71	90	61	79	61	20	71	89	60	78	60
Israel	20	71	76	70	79	61	19	71	77	69	78	62
Malta	21	70	77	65	68	72	23	69	74	65	66	71
Japan	22	70	88	56	65	74	21	70	88	55	64	76
South Korea	23	68	73	76	53	69	22	69	72	76	52	79
Slovenia	24	68	78	64	66	66	24	67	79	62	63	67
Slovakia	25	66	65	68	71	60	26	64	65	68	69	56
Estonia	26	65	63	74	64	58	27	63	63	73	60	60
Singapore	27	64	70	79	60	51	25	65	68	79	60	56
Poland	28	64	62	69	63	60	29	62	63	68	61	56
Italy	29	63	82	53	69	52	28	62	83	53	68	51
Hungary	30	59	60	60	54	64	33	57	60	58	47	63
Lithuania	31	58	53	68	67	48	30	59	54	70	62	50
Portugal	32	58	74	62	53	47	34	56	74	61	48	45
Spain	33	57	87	63	77	27	37	54	81	63	74	22
Latvia	34	57	46	68	69	48	32	57	51	68	61	50
Cyprus	35	54	62	52	60	44	36	54	65	53	55	45
Chile	36	54	69	78	71	21	31	59	70	80	76	28
Mexico	37	52	51	64	74	30	35	54	52	64	75	35
China	38	50	47	66	41	49	38	47	47	66	38	43
Turkey	39	45	53	53	37	39	39	47	57	55	34	44
Russia	40	45	36	41	58	47	40	46	40	40	54	52
Brazil	41	41	52	57	82	12	41	44	54	60	86	13
Greece	42	40	70	49	52	14	42	39	75	50	43	14
India	43	12	3	53	7	17	43	12	4	49	5	18

Source: 2016 GLOBAL RETIREMENT INDEX 2016, 2017

Ranked according to the place of the country in the rating of 2017; the index is calculated on the basis of 18 indicators that are divided into four sub-indices: finances in retirement, material wellbeing, quality of life, and health. The sub-indices reflect four key aspects of pension provision: financial means for a comfortable life in retirement, access to quality financial services to ensure the safety of savings and the increase in income, access to quality health services, and a clean and safe environment.

Global AgeWatch Index

Country	Global AgeWatch Index		Income security		Health status		Capability (Educational attainment and employment of older people)		Enabling environments	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
	Top 10 countries									
Switzerland	1	90.1	27	77.3	2	81.3	2	75.0	1	83.7
Norway	2	89.3	2	89.4	16	73.5	1	76.3	4	80.1
Sweden	3	84.4	7	83.5	12	75.2	5	65.6	6	79.4
Germany	4	84.3	15	80.9	11	75.6	3	68.4	11	78.6
Canada	5	84.0	10	82.9	4	80.3	10	61.2	9	78.9
The Netherlands	6	83.0	5	85.9	13	74.8	12	59.6	5	79.6
Iceland	7	81.8	4	86.6	8	78.2	18	54.5	10	78.8
Japan	8	80.8	33	75.1	1	83.9	7	62.7	21	75.0
USA	9	79.3	29	76.3	25	70.1	4	65.7	17	76.8
UK	10	79.2	14	81.5	27	69.3	20	53.6	3	81.8
	Russia and its neighbors in the rating									
Croatia	61	44.0	67	50.5	49	55.3	56	30.0	72	58.9
Dominican Republic	62	43.7	80	30.1	39	61.0	57	29.9	43	67.3
Lithuania	63	43.2	53	63.8	65	44.2	21	50.0	90	52.6
Belarus	64	42.1	50	65.1	84	28.6	66	27.0	44	67.1
Russia	65	41.8	30	76.2	86	27.1	25	48.4	82	55.5
Serbia	66	41.7	49	65.8	62	45.3	80	21.2	67	60.2
Bangladesh	67	41.1	71	47.2	71	37.7	76	24.2	41	67.5
Montenegro	68	39.7	61	56.3	56	49.1	82	20.6	70	58.9
Paraguay	69	38.9	79	35.9	50	54.4	54	30.6	77	57.5
Nepal	70	38.2	64	53.0	79	31.2	74	24.9	59	63.2
	Bottom 10 countries									
Iraq	87	23.2	60	59.1	75	32.8	92	11.9	92	49.6
Uganda	88	23.1	92	15.0	92	22.1	45	34.4	70	58.9
Rwanda	89	22.7	93	12.0	81	30.0	90	13.8	13	78.2
Zambia	90	22.3	89	18.8	91	24.7	67	26.2	84	54.8
Tanzania	91	15.9	94	9.3	69	39.8	89	13.8	88	54.5
Pakistan	92	12.7	95	6.4	78	31.8	70	25.8	81	56.0
West Bank and Gaza Strip	93	12.3	81	24.7	73	36.6	96	1.8	63	62.3
Mozambique	94	4.5	84	22.8	94	18.9	94	4.5	96	45.1
Malawi	95	4.1	96	5.6	95	18.8	84	19.0	94	48.4
Afghanistan	96	3.6	83	23.3	96	7.1	91	12.1	95	47.0

Source: **Global AgeWatch Index 2015: insight report 2015**

The rating is based on a statistical analysis of 13 indicators of the quality of life and well-being of older people, combined into four groups:

1. Income security (access to sufficient income and the ability to use it independently to meet basic needs at an older age). Includes pension coverage, old age poverty rate, relative welfare of the elderly and GNI per capita.
 2. Health status (life expectancy at 60, healthy life expectancy at 60, и психофизическое благополучие).
 3. Capability (educational attainment and employment (ability to overcome problems, characteristics of abilities of elderly people). Includes employment, education and active life after 60.
 4. Enabling environments (older people want to have freedom of choice, to live an independent life). Includes social connections, physical safety, civic freedom, and access to public transport.
- These groups of indicators were chosen because they were identified by older persons and policy makers as key components of the well-being of the older population. For each group, countries are rated from 1 to 100 (using tenths of a fraction). The higher the score, the higher the country is ranked in this area. The overall Index is calculated as the geometric mean of the four areas and thus shows how close a country is to the ideal value. For example, the overall index value of 35.0 points means that the well-being of the elderly in the country is only 35.0% of the ideal (100).

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