

Editorial

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Civil Society and the Transit of Power in 2024



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Abstract. The article deals with the issue of the transit of power in 2024 and the role of civil society in addressing key tasks that the head of state has to deal with in the period before the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation (2021) and the presidential election (2024). We investigate historical aspects of the transit of power in Russia that show the broad and complex scale of its implications for social development. We provide forecasts and expert assessments of the current situation in the country as a factor in the possible success of the transit of power in 2024. On the basis of the data of the all-Russian and regional sociological studies implemented in the form of a monitoring we analyze the dynamics of public opinion on key issues related to public and personal needs that are actual and expected to be implemented. The analysis reveals that the most acute problems of concern to the population are long-term and unresolved. On the background of the launch (unsuccessful in many ways) of national projects 2018 and worrying forecasts about the prospects for the future of Russia, and given the fact that Russia's economy has overcome the period of stagnation observed since 2014, this brings to the fore the issue

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concerning the effectiveness of public administration in the new political cycle in which (according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation) Vladimir Putin will not be able to take the post of head of state. In the “transit” period (the period remaining until the State Duma election of 2021 and the presidential election of 2024), the President has to deal with the tasks of a higher level. One of them is related to the implementation of the potential of civil society accumulated over the past 20 years, since civil society is an active entity representing the interests of the general population in dialogue with the authorities at all levels of government. The solution to this problem can guarantee a successful “transit” of the Russian society in a new historical period.

Key words: transit of power, President, civil society, justice, inequality, public administration efficiency.

Since the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term, the expert community has been paying increasing attention to the issue of the transit of power in 2024 and the future of the state administration system and the country as a whole after Vladimir Putin, in accordance with the current Constitution of the Russian Federation, will not be able to run for the post of head of state again.

The key task of reducing socio-political risks is the predominant influence of the “responsible class” on the formation of the national agenda. The position of the elites – the main leaders who have the ability to influence policy – is important here. Hence the task of nationalizing the elites, consolidating them, and expanding their social and political horizons... **But no less important is the consolidation of “sub-elite” groups that do not have direct authority, do not have a certain social status, and are characterized by the ability to analyze the situation rationally and responsibly.** Their opinions and positions are usually significant for the elites and influence their decisions... Strong support for changes by “sub-elite groups” greatly reduces the likelihood that the inevitable temporary discontent and unrest in local environments will turn into serious socio-political risks¹.

“The topic of the so-called transit or transfer of presidential power occupies the main place in analytical articles of domestic and foreign media”². The issues related to the readiness of the Russian political and economic system for a new period for the country are being discussed; the tactics to be followed by the party in power during the electoral cycle are predicted; scenarios are analyzed regarding the prospects for interaction between the state and society. Considerable attention is paid to the values of the current elite, which directly affects the political situation in the country, and the activity of “sub-elite groups” – responsible initiative citizens who can influence management decisions made by the authorities.

Many experts emphasize that the transit of power will take place not after the 2024 presidential election, but much earlier – in 2021, when the election to the State Duma will take place in Russia. Since there is very little time left before this event, this circumstance further “warms up” discussions about future changes that may occur in the system of public administration and in the political and economic life of the country.

The relevance of this topic raises no doubts. As the historical experience of Russia shows, **the transit of power is a phenomenon that goes far beyond the system of state administration and**

¹ Russian breakthrough and the challenges of civil society: a special report prepared on the basis of the decision of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation dated 08.04.2019. Moscow: Sovr-e inf-e sist., 2019. 60 p. *Official website of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <https://www.oprf.ru/press/news/2019/newsitem/51383>.

² Vanin G. After Putin: the future transit of power in Russia. Available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2756069.html>

V. Solovey: “The transit of the system should be carried out before 2024, in order to catch foreign and domestic enemies by surprise. The years 2020 – 2021 may be decisive”³.

A. Stepanov: “...under any scenario, one thing is clear – the upcoming 2021 election to the Russian State Duma are of key importance on the political agenda. Because they should guarantee the stability of the country’s development, which is the basic guarantee of the implementation of any transit scenario”⁴.

M. Khazin: “The topic of the transit of power in the past six months has become dominant in the socio-political discourse... In fact, all political forces (or those claiming political status) have started a game to prepare their positions for this very transit. And it is still unknown when it will happen”⁵.

V. Fadeev: “The 2021 parliamentary election is very important for organizing normal transit in 2024”⁶.

political structure; it concerns society as a whole.

The transit of power in 1917 actually led to the complete destruction of the foundations of the Russian Empire. The periods of rule of each of the subsequent leaders of the country received in history such definitions as “Lenin’s NEP”, “Stalin’s winter”, “Khrushchev’s thaw”, “Brezhnev’s stagnation”, which fully reflects the fundamental essence of the transition of power – complex changes not only of the political system, but also of the basic foundations of society.

³ Solovey V. The transit of the system should be implemented before 2024. Available at: <https://echo.msk.ru/blog/vsolovej/2293254-echo/>

⁴ Stepanov A. The transit of power and the State Duma election. Will the current political system stand the most important test? Available at: https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2019/10/19/tranzit_vlasti_i_vybory_v_gosdumu

⁵ Khazin M. A new transit of power has begun in Russia. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/v_rossii_nachalsya_novij_tranzit_vlasti

⁶ Gurova T., Skorobogatyi P. People are too independent to be bought for a grant (interview with V.V. Fadeev, Chairman of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation). *Ekspert*, 2019, no. 1–3, p. 59.

The transit of power under Gorbachev led to the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Russia’s transition to a market economy, and a change in the social order (with all the consequences for society). The transit of power in 2000 led to the end of the era of anarchy of the 1990s and the advent of the value of stability as a “common ground” between the implemented government policy and the prevailing need of the wider population. With the beginning of V. Putin’s presidential terms Russia started to organize the power vertical, overcome negative trends in the economy, address acute problems on the external borders of the country, and all this has had a positive impact on the overall psychological state of society, and its attitude toward the state.

We remember the history of the collapse of the USSR, which, of course, was prepared by the “Gorbachev team”, but was not completed by the “Yeltsin team”. **And our country will not survive another such transit.** The trouble is that you cannot explain this to power groups, they are fighting for power, and they simply do not see everything else, even when all their members are real patriots⁷.

Both of the above events in modern Russian history (the transit of power in 1991 and 2000) are united by two factors.

First, in both cases, a specific political process (the change of the national leader, the top-level management team, and the political course) was preceded by certain moods that dominated society. They consisted in a clear, growing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the country, in making claims against the ruling elite about its inability to meet the most acute, primary needs of citizens, and in the accumulation of a critical mass of public discontent.

⁷ Khazin M. A new transit of power has begun in Russia. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/v_rossii_nachalsya_novij_tranzit_vlasti

Second, after the change of the leadership the country experienced the changes in “reference points” that form the basis of consensus between the needs of society and the obligations of the state; those reference points ensured the legitimacy of the new management team and the political course it implements in people’s assessments and, simultaneously, served as the main criterion for their effectiveness. Thus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, state policy and the values of society largely found common ground in liberal ideas: citizens’ freedoms, the abundance of goods in stores, the expansion of opportunities for individual success, etc., that is, in all that was lacking for ordinary people in the Soviet period. However, the realization of the fallacy of weakening the role of the state, as well as the overall development vector that the country was moving along in the period of the 1990s, led to the fact that society and government required strong and effective state management focused on the implementation of national interests in all spheres of life.

The transit of power in 2024, in fact, has the same characteristics as the mentioned changes in the system of public administration in 1991 and 2000. Today, despite the more constructive attitude of society toward the government (in comparison with public attitudes during the “decline” and the first decade after the collapse of the USSR), there is also growing dissatisfaction with the stagnation of the economy and the unresolved most acute issues that people face in their daily lives. So, over the past three years (2017–2019), the relevance of people’s perception of the problem of low living standards has actually returned to the period of the late 1990s (1998–1999): in 1999, 57% of the region’s residents called the problem of poverty the most acute for the country, in 2005 – 29%, in 2011 – 49%, and in 2019 – 56% (*Insert 1*).

No less disturbing are the dynamics of income inequality in Russian society: if in 1998–1999 the stratification of the population into “poor” and “rich” as the most acute problem for the country was noted by 22% of people, by 2005 their share had increased to 29%, and since 2010 the share of those who share this opinion did not fall below 34%; (*Insert 1*).

As a result, the need for social justice is growing in all strata of Russian society. Over almost three years that have passed (from February 2016 to December 2019), the share of people who believe that modern Russian society is unfairly organized has increased by 10–20 percentage points in all major socio-demographic groups, including high-income groups (from 36 to 57%) and people with higher education (from 42 to 63%; *Insert 2*). According to the results of Russian nationwide sociological measurements, currently 72% of citizens “do not see that the interests of the government and society coincide”⁸, and the share of Russians who believe that “the Constitution should be revised today” is growing (in 2003 – 47%, in 2007 – 51%, in 2019 – 68%)⁹.

The dynamics of public opinion assessments, which are monitored by Russia’s major sociological centers, correlates with the results of research conducted by foreign companies. In particular, this applies to the most pressing issues – low living standards and high income inequality.

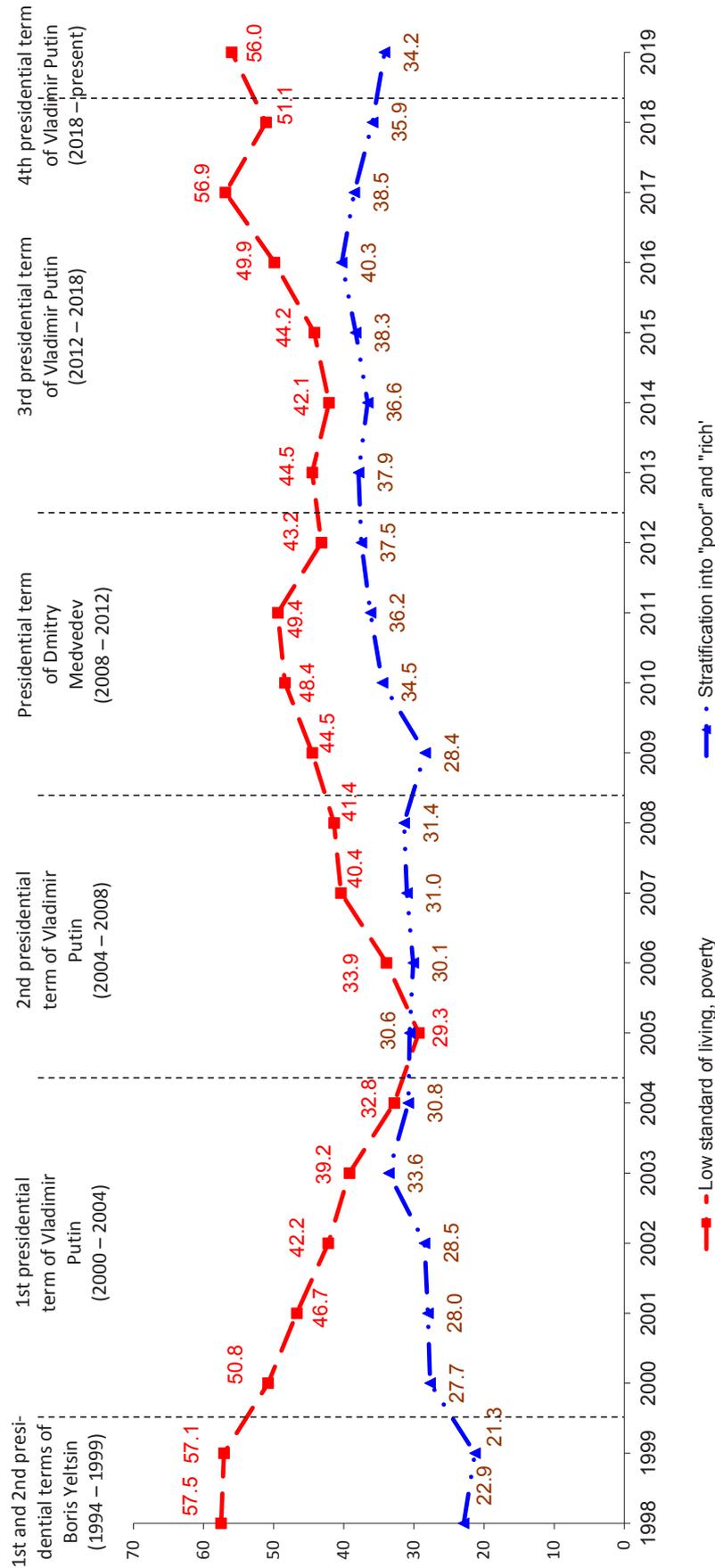
Thus, according to the annual report of the Swiss company Credit Suisse, “in the world as a whole, global wealth over the past ten years,

⁸ Society and the state: press release from 28.11.2019. Levada-Center. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/2019/11/28/obshhestvo-i-gosudarstvo/>

⁹ About the Constitution. Attitude to the main law of the country and to the possibilities of its revision: press release from 09.12.2019. Public Opinion Foundation. Available at: <https://fom.ru/Bezopasnost-i-pravo/14307>; Public Opinion Foundation database. Available at: https://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/power/pow_con/d074926

Insert 1

Dynamics of the most pressing issues of concern to the population (% of respondents)



Throughout the period from 1998 to 2019, the low standard of living and the stratification of the population into “poor” and “rich” were among the top five problems that people consider the most acute for the country.

Over the period from 2000 to 2019, the share of residents concerned about poverty increased by 5 percentage points (from 51 to 56%) and **in fact, it returned to the period of 1998-1999**. The relevance of the perception of income inequality has decreased slightly over the past 4 years (2016–2019) (from 40 to 34%); however, **in the general context of social changes that occurred during Vladimir Putin’s presidential term, we should note its increasing dynamics**: in 2000 – 28%, in 2005 – 29%, in 2019 – 34%.

Insert 2

Proportion of those who believe that modern Russian society is organized unfairly (% of respondents)*

Population group	Feb.16	Feb.19	Dec.19	Dynamics + / – December 2019 to February 2016
Sex				
Men	42.3	58.3	61.3	+19
Women	43.6	59.3	58.3	+15
Age				
Under 30	46.5	59.6	56.5	+10
30-55	42.7	57.7	60.0	+17
Over 55	41.8	60.0	60.3	+19
Education				
Secondary and incomplete secondary	46.4	64.0	57.7	+11
Secondary vocational	41.3	56.7	57.9	+17
Higher and incomplete higher	41.8	56.7	63.4	+22
Income groups				
Bottom 20%	43.8	63.0	50.9	+7
Middle 60%	46.0	58.8	63.8	+18
Top 20%	35.5	58.3	57.0	+22
Territories				
Vologda	43.3	66.0	60.8	+18
Cherepovets	51.1	66.3	73.6	+23
Districts	38.0	50.4	50.9	+13
Oblast	43.0	58.9	59.6	+17

* The wording of the question is: “Do you think modern Russian society as a whole is organized fairly or unfairly?” (variant of the answer “Unfairly”).

The question was first asked in February 2016. Over the next 4 years (February 2016 – December 2019), the share of people who believe that modern Russian society is unfairly organized increased by **15–20 percentage points in all socio-demographic groups** and especially among the relatively rich (from 36 to 57%) and highly educated (from 42 to 63%), which suggests that **the growing severity of social life organization is perceived especially acutely by not only the socially vulnerable categories of the population (low-income groups, pensioners), but also those people who are potentially more interested in political life and the state of affairs in Russia.**

by mid-2019, has increased by 70%, to 70,850 USD per adult. The median wealth level in 2019 was 7,087 USD (that is, the level of wealth of half of the world's adult population is above this level, and half – below it). **In Russia, the average figure is about 27,000 USD per adult, the median level is 3,683 USD.**

The leading positions in the geographical distribution of wealth belong to the United States (its share of world wealth is 29.4%), China (17.7%) and Japan (6.9%). **In Russia, for comparison, the share of world wealth is 0.8%. And yet, as the researchers note, “at a modest level of general welfare, 10% of the wealthiest Russians have 83% of the country’s wealth. This is more than in the U.S. (76%) and China (60%)”¹⁰.**

It is important to note that long-term increasing need to find a solution to these issues leads to the emergence of fundamentally new processes in the public consciousness – as life in Russia is moving away from the numerous perturbations of the “turbulent” 1990s, the need for stability is becoming less popular and makes room for awareness of the need for change, which, apparently, **will become the dominant trend of social consciousness in the coming years.** According to Russian research, over the past five years (from 2014 to 2018), the share of supporters of change in Russia's life has increased almost twofold (from 30 to 56%) and today it comprises the majority of Russians. The opposite view (“stability is more important than change”) was shared by 70% of Russians in 2014 and by 44% in 2018¹¹. According to the data of a monitoring conducted by VoIRC

¹⁰ All the wealth of the world. *Ekons.*, 2019, 25 Oct. Available at: <https://econs.online/articles/photo/snegokhodbatut-dzhakuzi-kak-domashnie-innovatsii-sposobstvuyut-progressy/>

¹¹ Petukhov V.V. Dynamics of social moods of Russians and the formation of a request for change. *Sotsis*, 2018, no. 11, p. 42.

RAS on the territory of the Vologda Oblast¹², the share of supporters of change also prevails over the share of adherents of stability **in all socio-demographic groups**, while over the past year it has increased (albeit slightly) in most social strata (in 12 out of 14; *Insert 3*).

Thus, **everything points to the fact that today Russia is on the threshold of changes that go far beyond the “cosmetic” changes in the system of public administration;** perhaps, on the threshold of changes of a level that “Putin’s” Russia has not yet known. We should note that the above two transits of power (in 1991 and in 2000) ended up in a completely opposite way: with the sign “–” and the sign “+” and a crucial role in this sense was played by concrete persons at the helm – Boris Yeltsin, under whom the so-called “oligarchic capitalism” emerged in the Russian system of government, and Vladimir Putin, who managed to overcome the political and economic crisis inside the country and began restoring its geopolitical status in the international arena.

It is not yet known what state the public administration system will be in in the next political cycle. According to some experts, “the actual state of the upper echelon of the elite is highly likely to determine the arrival of new people after Putin to run the country from another, lower level of power. And this, in conditions of an extremely small radius of trust in Russian society, means an automatic **radical**

¹² VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring is held six times a year 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). The method of the survey is a questionnaire poll by place of residence of respondents. The volume of a sample population is 1,500 people 18 years of age and older. The sample is purposeful and quoted. 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. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

change of the elite that makes key decisions in the state, a break in gradualness”¹³.

However, it is quite obvious that after 2024, the head of state will face tasks that are no less ambitious and fateful for the Russian state. This applies to both internal and external challenges. V. Putin prepared the ground for further development: an ordered vertical of power (although it does not always work efficiently and many of the questions require personal intervention of the President), outlined the contours of civil society (its organizational forms, purposes, scope of authority), strengthened the geopolitical status of Russia, overcame the acute phases in the demographic and economic crisis, returned the people’s confidence in government (to date, the level of trust in Vladimir Putin is 52%, it is **two times more** than the trust in Boris Yeltsin in 1996; *Insert 4*)... all this shows that a lot has been done against the background of the condition of the country when Vladimir Putin “took” it from the first President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin.

We have not just tripled the bureaucracy in comparison with the USSR. **This is not the Imperial bureaucracy, which was responsible for the result with its head, it is the service staff, which (from some level) knows perfectly well what kind of oligarch it works for, and which categorically does not want to answer for anything (except for its obligations to the oligarch).** This is very clear from the results of the so-called national projects, the main task of which is to transfer budget money to oligarchs and withdraw it from the country (the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank are responsible for this). Accordingly, the level of corruption is appropriate, since the service staff should have their share¹⁴.

¹³ Remchukov K. Analysis of the most likely scenarios for Russia’s development in the coming years. Available at: <https://echo.msk.ru/blog/statya/2540439-echo/>

¹⁴ Khazin M. on the social structure of comprador capitalism. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/o_sotcial_noj_strukture_kompradorskogo_kapitalizma

Finding a solution to these tasks, of course, on a historical scale, required specific personal characteristics from the national leader. We recall that throughout his presidential terms, Vladimir Putin had to act in conditions of both external pressure from “foreign partners” and in the conditions of a wide representation of liberal-minded elites within the country, who have held key positions in the system of public administration since the time of B. Yeltsin, have close financial and personal ties with domestic and foreign big business, and who at one time (in 1999) supported Vladimir Putin’s candidacy for the post of President of the Russian Federation.

Under the current conditions, achieving the success that can be safely attributed to the President today would be impossible without using the so-called “hands-on” approach. And although the key problems of governance are traced in the very consequences of its use, we should note that without such a regime the head of state would have failed to prevent the collapse of the country, “restrain” the oligarchs in the early 2000s, and achieve a stable high level of confidence compared to all existing state and non-governmental institutions (this is not explained solely by the traditional, socio-cultural factor because trust in President Yeltsin in 1996, according to opinion polls, was lower than trust in the Church and the Army; *Insert 4*).

We should also note that during his presidency V. Putin significantly increased the material prosperity of **all income groups**, including the 20% of least wealthy citizens (*Insert 5*), and the share of people complaining that “it is impossible to bear such plight” decreased significantly **in all socio-demographic groups**, regardless of gender, age, area of residence, level of education and income (*Insert 6*).

Insert 3

Would you like to see changes in the life of the country?*

Answer	The country needs stability, this is more important than change			The country needs significant changes; new reforms in the economic and political life of the country are necessary		
	2018	2019	Dynamics + / -	2018	2019	Dynamics + / -
Sex						
Men	39.8	34.2	-6	41.6	43.6	+2
Women	40.1	36.2	-4	40.3	43.6	+3
Age						
Under 30	34.3	29.0	-5	42.0	43.7	+2
30-55	39.2	33.8	-5	41.7	45.4	+4
Over 55	43.9	40.0	-4	39.3	41.3	+2
Education						
Secondary and incomplete secondary	37.3	30.5	-7	39.3	45.4	+6
Secondary vocational	41.6	39.1	-3	41.5	42.8	+1
Higher and incomplete higher	40.8	35.5	-5	41.9	42.5	+1
Income groups						
Bottom 20%	29.3	30.0	+1	40.7	44.2	+4
Middle 60%	42.6	36.7	-6	40.9	45.1	+4
Top 20%	44.5	40.1	-4	39.6	39.5	0
Territories						
Vologda	32.2	31.3	-1	47.4	46.2	-1
Cherepovets	40.6	32.6	-8	48.2	49.5	+1
Districts	44.1	39.2	-5	33.0	38.6	+6
Oblast	40.0	35.3	-5	40.9	43.6	+3

* In 2018, the question was asked three times: in February, June, and October. The data for the same months of 2019 are presented as the average for 2019.

Over the period from 2018 to 2019, the share of supporters of changes in Russia's life increased in 12 of the 14 socio-demographic groups, especially among people with secondary and incomplete secondary education (by 6 percentage points, from 39 to 45%), as well as in the districts of the Vologda Oblast (by 6 percentage points, from 33 to 39%). The slight growth rate of the need for change (compared to the average Russian trends) may well be related to a more traditional and conservative way of life in the region. However, as in Russia as a whole, the general trend of growing needs of residents of the Vologda Oblast for changes in the economic and political situation in the country also takes place.

Insert 4

Level of trust in state and non-governmental institutions

Institutions	1996	2000	2008	2012	2014	2018	2019	Dynamics + / -, 2019 to...		
								1996	2000	2018
RF President	26.5	57.1	65.2	45.7	57.0	60.5	52.4	+26	-5	-8
Church	37.9	42.3	51.9	41.4	44.7	50.0	46.5	+9	+4	-4
Prosecutor's office	18.2	30.9	40.9	33.9	38.6	47.1	43.6	+25	+13	-4
Government of the Russian Federation	18.5	42.7	60.2	39.6	48.4	47.3	41.0	+23	-2	-6
Federal Security Service	12.6	34.2	43.8	33.2	36.4	45.2	41.0	+28	+7	-4
Army	34.2	37.0	37.8	31.3	37.9	47.2	40.8	+7	+4	-6
Police	14.1	27.2	36.5	29.3	35.4	44.4	40.7	+27	+14	-4
Court	19.8	31.6	41.3	36.1	36.9	45.3	39.4	+20	+8	-6
Oblast Administration	14.2	31.3	48.6	34.6	37.5	35.4	33.5	+19	+2	-1
Federation Council	13.4	28.3	47.6	32.3	40.2	37.4	32.2	+19	+4	-5
Local Government*	-	-	40.9	29.3	35.1	34.4	31.6	+32	+32	-3
Trade unions	20.2	28.4	35.9	25.6	26.6	33.3	29.7	+10	+1	-4
State Duma	14.8	23.0	42.0	30.5	35.2	33.8	28.6	+14	+6	-5
Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation	-	-	-	28.1	32.8	31.0	27.4	+24	+27	-4
Mass media	15.4	33.4	35.2	29.5	28.0	29.8	26.7	+11	-7	-3
Civic Chamber of the Oblast	-	-	-	25.4	29.4	28.3	25.6	+26	+26	-3
Non-governmental organizations	-	-	32.6	26.5	25.5	28.1	24.9	+25	+25	-3
Directors, business leaders	5.2	19.6	30.5	25.1	21.9	25.1	20.5	+15	+1	-4
Political parties, movements	6.8	10.7	26.8	20.9	20.2	22.3	19.7	+13	+9	-3
Banking and business circles	8.5	12.4	26.6	21.3	18.9	20.7	17.6	+9	+5	-3

The dynamics of institutional trust based on the results of a monitoring conducted by VolRC RAS in the Vologda Oblast shows that **over the past year the level of trust in almost all state and non-governmental institutions has decreased slightly (by 3–8 percentage points)**. However, this is not a unique trend for the region. For example, according to IS RAS data, only the trust in the Army (66%), trade unions (25%) and the Russian Academy of Sciences (48%) remained stable out of 17 institutions from April 2018 to June 2019; trust in other institutions (including authorities, media, political parties, etc.) has declined¹⁶.

¹⁶ Russian society after the presidential election-2018: request for change: an information and analytical report. Moscow, 2018. P. 35; On the pressing problems of our life and the interaction of regulators, business and citizens: a report on the results of a mass sociological study. Moscow, 2019. Vol. 1. P. 82.

Insert 5

Evaluate your family's need for goods and real estate...
(answer option "We have enough"; % of respondents)*

Answer	Bottom 20%			Middle 60%			Top 20%		
	1999	2019	Dynamics + / -	1999	2019	Dynamics + / -	1999	2019	Dynamics + / -
Outerwear	22.0	45.3	+23	23.9	62.6	+39	39.6	77.5	+38
Light clothing	29.9	51.4	+22	38.6	69.9	+31	53.0	80.8	+28
Footwear	18.5	46.7	+28	24.2	62.6	+38	38.3	78.3	+40
TV	33.3	54.0	+21	39.9	64.4	+25	43.7	79.7	+36
Computer	-	32.6	+33	-	41.6	+42	-	69.6	+70
Mobile phone	-	51.8	+52	-	61.9	+62	-	80.4	+80
Vacuum cleaner	34.3	40.2	+6	44.5	54.4	+10	55.6	69.6	+14
Washing machine	49.8	50.7	+1	54.3	64.8	+11	59.0	79.7	+21
Fridge	52.3	54.7	+2	60.1	67.1	+7	67.8	80.8	+13
Furniture	33.9	49.3	+15	42.2	54.4	+12	45.2	71.0	+26
Car	4.6	18.1	+14	12.7	25.9	+13	29.3	44.9	+16
Apartment	-	33.7	+34	-	41.2	+41	-	53.3	+53

* The question is asked once a year (in February). The wording of the question is: "Evaluate your family's need for industrial goods, housing". The table lists the categories of goods that appeared in the 2008, 2012, 2018, and 2019 surveys. In 1999 and 2000, some of the answer options were not available or other formulations were used.

Over the period from 1999 to 2019, the availability of basic industrial goods and real estate **increased significantly in all income groups**. Even among the bottom 20% in the Vologda Oblast, the number of people who own a car has increased by 14%; every third (33%), according to data for 2019, has a computer; more than half (52%) have mobile phones.

Insert 6

Proportion of people who believe that “it is no longer possible to tolerate our plight” (% of respondents)

Population group	1996	1999	2000	2008	2012	2014	2018	2019	Dynamics + / -, 2019 to...		
									1999	2000	2018
Sex											
Men	37.3	45.2	22.2	11.9	16.4	13.2	15.2	16.8	-28	-5	+2
Women	40.8	49.5	26.1	13.1	15.3	12.0	17.2	17.5	-32	-9	0
Age											
Under 30	30.5	38.5	17.5	9.3	13.5	8.5	13.5	12.3	-26	-5	-1
30-55	41.2	48.4	25.6	11.7	15.7	12.9	16.2	17.0	-31	-9	+1
Over 55	41.9	54.5	29.1	16.9	17.9	14.8	17.7	19.6	-35	-10	+2
Education											
Secondary and incomplete secondary	38.8	50.9	27.8	15.3	21.2	17.6	20.9	21.5	-29	-6	+1
Secondary vocational	43.9	48.6	23.3	13.3	16.1	11.6	14.7	14.7	-34	-9	0
Higher and incomplete higher	33.5	41.4	20.5	8.4	10.6	7.9	13.6	15.6	-26	-5	+2
Income groups											
Bottom 20%	52.1	61.5	40.6	22.6	28.1	26.6	29.2	29.1	-32	-12	0
Middle 60%	40.3	48.9	23.5	12.2	15.4	10.9	14.6	15.7	-33	-18	+1
Top 20%	16.5	28.9	12.7	5.2	7.6	3.0	6.9	8.3	-21	-4	+1
Territories											
Vologda	34.0	44.4	25.4	12.7	14.3	8.5	18.5	19.5	-25	-6	+1
Cherepovets	25.5	42.7	20.2	9.0	10.2	7.5	17.4	17.9	-25	-2	+1
Districts	47.5	51.9	26.3	14.2	19.3	17.5	14.4	15.4	-37	-11	+1
Oblast	39.2	47.6	24.5	12.5	15.8	12.5	16.3	17.2	-30	-7	+1

During Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms, the share of people who say that “it is no longer possible to tolerate our plight” has significantly decreased in all major segments of the population. By 2019, the proportion of those who share this opinion has decreased by 5 to 10 percentage points compared to 2000 and by 20–30 percentage points compared to 1999.

Nevertheless, since 2008, the pace of this positive trend has decreased slightly, and in 2019, compared to 2018, no significant changes were observed in any of the socio-demographic groups.

Nevertheless, today there is virtually no disagreement in the expert community concerning the fact that the order of the power vertical achieved by the President has significant flaws, since it resembles, rather, a tangle of contradictions, the only balance of which is V. Putin personally. Other spheres of life are filled with the same contradictions: there is a sovereign democracy alongside extremely liberal ruling elites; anti-Russian sentiments are becoming more widespread with the growth of Russia's geopolitical status; against the background of optimistic prospects and achievements voiced by the media and official rhetoric of the government, people are increasingly irritated by the stagnation of the economy and the lack of real progress in the dynamics of the standard of living; while the process of rejuvenation of the Governor's corps and strengthening the potential of the Russia's personnel reserve inspires hope for a dynamic transformation of the entire management system, specific actions and words of local

The liberal and patriotic ways of life that V. Putin took control of were growing, their contradictions were smoothed out, because their growth was managed from the same center – from the Kremlin. And President Putin, patronizing both ways, himself consisted of two Putins: a liberal-Pro-Western Putin and a patriotic-centralist Putin. The development of a new Russia – Putin's Russia – took place against the background of these managed structures, between which a balance was observed. The crowning achievement of Putin's development was the return of Crimea – the fact that for a brief moment united all of Russia. **But when this moment passed, development ceased and Russia stopped, these two ways continued to grow and strengthen, but were already getting out of the control of the President**¹⁶.

¹⁶ Prokhanov A. President Putin's broad daylight. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/18204>

authorities that demonstrate a disdain for “ordinary” people cause tension. Optimism and realism in achieving the ambitious strategic goals expressed in the President's pre-election Address to the Federal Assembly¹⁷, today, they are more than “compensated” by the unsuccessful launch of national projects¹⁸.

It is not surprising that many experts give vague or even pessimistic assessments of the prospects for the development of Russian society and the state against the background of contradictions in the administration system. Thus, according to the results of an expert survey, which was attended by 154 specialists from among managers, public figures, representatives of business, media, science¹⁹ and so on, Russian sociologists have made the following conclusion: “The opinions of experts regarding the likely phenomena, events and processes in Russian society in the next five years can not be called definite... Such processes as **rising unemployment and falling political loyalty and trust in the government, state institutions, courts and law enforcement agencies** were identified as **the most likely ones...** Among **the least likely** were the spread of ideas of isolation (separatism) in certain regions of the country and **the growth of public trust, a tendency toward solidarity, self-organization** (3/4 of experts estimate their probability is not higher than 50%)...”²⁰.

¹⁷ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly 01.03.2018. *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>

¹⁸ We analyzed the expert assessments on this issue in detail in the article: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Nationally oriented rotation of the elites – the most important condition for the implementation of national projects. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2019, vol.12, no. 4, pp. 9–25.

¹⁹ The expert survey was conducted by the research center of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences with the participation of the ZIRCON research group in July – October 2015. 154 experts from 65 regions of Russia participated in the survey.

²⁰ Gorshkov M.K. et al. *Rossiiskoe obshchestvo i vyzovy vremeni. Kn. 4* [Russian society and the challenges of the time. Book 4]. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2016. Pp. 326, 331.

In general, we can say that the future of Russia is seen by experts as very bleak. Only one expert out of more than 150 respondents spoke in favor of a relatively positive scenario for the development of countries”²¹.

The main difference between the upcoming transfer is that its task is to create conditions for a soft transformation of the system, whereas the previous transfer [under Yeltsin] set out to preserve the main contours of the system as much as possible and in no case change anything in it. One successor was selected for the task of preserving the conditions, the other is selected for the task of ensuring their change”²².

Thus, in order to prevent expert forecasts from becoming true, Vladimir Putin will have to solve the problems, to which he slowly but surely approached all the years of their presidential terms, he has to overcome the “tunnel vision” views of the ruling elite, responsible for the internal development of the country, for timely and effective implementation of the instructions of the President, national projects, etc. This will inevitably require taking “long overdue, difficult but very necessary decisions”²³. In our opinion, these decisions including those related to personnel.

A significant “help” to the head of state in solving this problem can be the system of civil society institutions built by V. Putin. It is far from perfect, there are many “gaps” in it, and it cannot seriously affect the decisions made by the liberal elites. **But Putin (in addition to the**

²¹ Gorshkov M.K. et al. *Russian society and the challenges of the time. Book 4*. Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2016. P. 331.

²² Khaldey A. What is the difference between the transfer under Yeltsin and the transfer under Putin? Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/chem_transfer_pri_el_tcine_otlichaetsya_ot_transfera_pri_putine

²³ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly 01.03.2018. *Official website of the President of the Russian Federation*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>

fact that he created it in principle and supported it throughout all his presidential terms) provided it with the main thing – an ideological vector. He could not “instill” this in the ruling elite, which was created under Yeltsin. In particular, this ideological vector is to reflect the interests of broad segments of the population rather than narrow social groups; to ensure that the government is not so much legal as legitimate, that is, its positive perception in public opinion assessments; as well as the active participation of civil society institutions and initiative citizens who are not indifferent to the country’s problems in a constructive dialogue with representatives of government bodies at all levels of the power vertical.

Today, the quality of our state lags behind the readiness of civil society to participate in it. Our civil society has indeed become more mature, active and responsible. We need to update the mechanisms of our democracy. They must “accommodate” the increased social activity...

It is necessary to set up the mechanisms of the political system in such a way that it would timely capture and reflect the interests of large social groups and ensure that these interests are mutually agreed upon. It could ensure not only the legitimacy of the power, but also the confidence of the people in its justice (including in cases where they are in the minority)...

We need a mechanism with the help of which **the people can support responsible people, professionals at all levels of power who think in terms of national and state development and are able to achieve results. We need a clear, operational and transparent mechanism for developing, making and implementing decisions – both strategic and tactical...Citizens, professional and public associations should be able to “test” all state documents in advance**²⁴.

²⁴ Putin V.V. Democracy and the quality of the state. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1866753>

Vladimir Putin paid considerable attention to all these points in his 2012 program article “Democracy and the quality of the state”.

However, the development of civil society and its role as a subject that expresses the interests of the general population (and not only of socially vulnerable categories) is complicated by a number of factors, largely stemming from the liberal foundations of domestic policy implemented by some of the ruling elites for several decades. **First of all, the internal situation in the country is built in such a way as to minimize the system of limits and restrictions for the ruling political and financial elites.** Therefore, civil society institutions, although they do help socially vulnerable and other groups to live in the conditions created by the country’s ruling elites, **are “excluded” from the process of creating these conditions.** Their “point” victories on site are not able to affect the system as a whole.

From the citizen’s point of view, it is fundamental that **an institutional system that works for representative democracy should be open, accessible and accountable.** It should signal citizens about how to behave properly and who to ask for a specific area of society’s life...In Russia, as a state with an insufficiently stable economy and a poorly functioning political system, the constant interaction of society with the authorities is **necessary to ensure socio-political stability and further development**²⁵.

Key public institutions claim that “civil society is a legitimate partner of the state”²⁶;

²⁵ Krasnova A. The problem of interaction and mutual understanding of civil society and the Government of the Russian Federation at the present stage (2019–2020). Available at: <https://strategy24.ru/ru/news/problema-vzaimodeystviya-grazhdanskogo-obshchestva-i-vlasti-ru>

²⁶ Russian breakthrough and the challenges of civil society: a special report prepared on the basis of the decision of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation dated 08.04.2019. Moscow: Sovr-e inf-e sist., 2019. 60 p. *Official website of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.* Available at: <https://www.oprf.ru/press/news/2019/newsitem/51383>.

however, this remains only a theoretical position for the time being. High-profile management decisions are not submitted to a broad public discussion and are taken even when they are sharply and openly opposed by the people who are directly affected by these decisions (for example, it was the case with the introduction of the Unified State Exam in the education system, the reform of the Russian Academy of Sciences, monetization of benefits, raising the retirement age, optimizing health care, etc.). There is no practice of discussing by name the candidates of Government members who are called to bear personal responsibility for the implementation of tactical and strategic tasks of Russia’s development; this list is formed “behind closed doors” and is presented to Parliament and society only as a fait accompli.

The reason is that the Constitution of the Russian Federation significantly restricts the powers of the Federation Council and the State Duma in performing their main functions – representing the interests of the population in power and participating in the legislative process. The main activities of the Government of the Russian Federation, its structure, candidates for key positions in accordance with articles 112 and 113 of the main document of the country are determined by the Prime Minister, who is nominated by the President (Article 111). **Thus, the Constitution does not mention any personal discussion of the candidates of Ministers responsible for the state of affairs in their fields and for the implementation of the President’s instructions. The Federal Assembly is excluded from this process.**

Another important point is that during the years of “stability”, which under the liberal guidelines of the ruling elites gradually turned into “stagnation”, Russian society (which acts as the foundation of civil society, since it is from its ranks that initiative leaders come out)

began to lose the “energy of a great goal”, as sociologists warned when they noted the high level of social atomization of Russia throughout the entire period of the 2000s and early 2010s.

During the years of reforms, our fellow citizens became so immersed in their problems, and the state withdrew from the sphere of goal setting for development of the nation to such an extent that Russians gradually began to lose their previously characteristic power of the “big goal”. But it allowed them to repeatedly perform seemingly impossible things – just remember the country’s industrialization, the recovery of its economy after the Great Patriotic War, the breakthrough into space, and many other things that Russians are still fairly proud of²⁷.

It is difficult to argue that “pure consumption as the dominant goal of life leads society along a path that has no future”²⁸. However, the administration system created in the post-Soviet period was aimed precisely at growing the “service economy” out of consumer citizens and out of the domestic economy”²⁹, this was necessary for the liberal elites to maximize Russia’s “integration” into the Western world. Activities implemented in the framework of the Bologna process have resulted in the fact that the education sphere ceased to provide a system-wide upbringing and education and was transformed into a complex of institutions providing only educational services; another consequence was the long-term dissatisfaction of the population with the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life. All this has led to the fact that “our society has turned

into consumer society in many ways”³⁰; and in the absence of any ideology (which is stated in the Constitution of the Russian Federation), the vector of formation of its value norms is set today by those who possess these very material benefits – people who adhere to liberal values, including those of their representatives who belong to the ruling elites of the country.

An eloquent argument in favor of this thesis is the statistics on the growth of corruption and the number of dollar billionaires in Russia against the background of the continuing stagnation of the Russian economy and the popularity of the direct live TV phone-in with V. Putin, which provides ordinary citizens with a real chance for social justice.

The actual merging of the elite and the state apparatus is not perceived as an anomaly. This is almost a natural state of affairs ...³¹

Since the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s last presidential term, there have been no tangible changes in the psychological self-perception of society. According to Russian sociologists, “the analysis of changes in the socio-psychological well-being and level of material and social status of Russians shows that the year after the presidential election did not help to overcome the negative trends that accumulated during the economic crisis of 2014–2016, but contributed to the stagnation of most of them”³². **And when the foundation of civil society (the citizens themselves) consists of consumers and with each new generation this property of society is strengthened, then it is difficult to expect that civil society will “see” beyond private problems.**

²⁷ Gorshkov M.K., Krumm R., Tikhonova N.E. (Eds.). *What Russians dream about: ideal and reality*. Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2013. P. 312.

²⁸ Karacharovskii V.V., Shkaratan O.I. Different goals of one society. *Sotsis*, 2019, no. 1, p. 15.

²⁹ Betelin V.V. Russia needs to abandon the “service economy” and shift to the economy of industrial production. *Ekonomist*, 2019, no. 2. pp. 3–12.

³⁰ Direct live TV phone-in with V. Putin, June 20, 2019. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60795>,

³¹ The state as the “master of society” (editorial). *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 2019, 2 December. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2019-12-02/2_7741_red.html

³² On the pressing problems of our life and the interaction of regulators, business and citizens: a report on the results of a mass sociological study. Moscow, 2019. Vol. 1. P. 4.

For 8 months of 2019, the damage from the ended criminal cases of corruption in Russia amounted to about 102 billion rubles. This was announced on November 18 by the deputy head of the Department for combating offenses in the sphere of distribution and use of budget funds of the Main Directorate of economic security and combating the corruption under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia D. Sevastyanov. **Since the beginning of the year, the number of detected corruption-related crimes has increased by 4.7%.** In January – August, law enforcement agencies identified more than 3 thousand crimes committed by officials caught in bribery. Of these, 805 involved particularly large sums of money. **One thousand people were brought to criminal responsibility**³³.

And, nevertheless, we should note that it is the long-term unresolved current problems that today trigger the fact that **Russian society is changing; it ceases to be a passive object of management** (as it has been for the past 20 years). Signs of this process are already visible to the naked eye, and we should assume that

this trend will not just continue on a new page of Russian history, but will become its main, dominant trend. Therefore, we should agree with some experts who claim that **“in the transit of power, the political forces that will offer the society a unifying model of economic development of a federal state, which has long been in demand by the society, will win”**³⁴.

Against the background of the transformations that are taking place in society, the role of constructive forms of expression of its increasing political and social activity, the role of civil society, is automatically updated. In this regard, it should be noted that the President, who made a significant (perhaps even decisive) contribution to its creation and development (through the establishment of key civil society institutions³⁴, provision of active support to civil initiatives and, in general, by “tuning” civil society to function in the interests of the nation), should continue this work and move to **solving higher-level tasks – to release the potential of civil society, to give it broader powers, make the Government and other officials responsible before it.**

We cannot but agree with the opinion of experts who express the following point of view: “What can the President do in the conditions of melting social time, which is more and more like flying up time? He can only launch the development, which will include both ways of life [liberal and patriotic] and the energy that has accumulated in these ways of life. Through development, which will again be led by himself, he will be able to manage both ways. A development model must be created that excludes the current neoliberal model that has stopped Russian historical dynamics”³⁶.

³³ The Ministry of Internal Affairs: the damage in Russia from corruption in 2019 amounted to 102 billion rubles. *News Agency Eurasia Daily*, November 18, 2019. Available at: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/11/18/mvd-ushcherb-v-rossii-ot-korrupcii-za-2019-god-sostavil-102-mlrd-rublej>

³⁴ Vanin G. After Putin: the future transit of power in Russia. Available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2756069.html>

³⁵ Here we are talking about creation of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in 2005 (Federal Law dated April 4, 2005 No. 32 “About the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation”), the Russian Popular Front (ONF) in 2011, and legislative foundations of local self-government (Federal Law No. 131 of 6 October 2003 “On general principles of organization of local self-government in the Russian Federation”), the mechanisms of public control (Federal Law No. 212 of July 21, 2014 “On the fundamentals of public control in the Russian Federation”) etc.

³⁶ Prokhanov A. President Putin’s broad daylight. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/18204>

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