

# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EFFICIENCY

## Editorial

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2020.2.68.1

UDC 323.2, LBC 60.527

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### Efficiency of the State's "Manual" Management. Challenges of 2020



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**Abstract.** The following materials logically continue the chief editor's article «Another Step toward V. Putin's "Long State"», which was published in the previous issue of the journal "Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast" (no.1, 2020). Basics of a new Russian statehood, which the President has been building for the last 20 years, are tested by epidemiological and socio-economic crises, caused by COVID-19 pandemic, and the drop of oil prices. Efficiency of the state's "manual" management, which V. Putin has been implementing during all his presidential terms, is also going through challenges. The author's position on the development of the political situation in the country, based on the analysis of facts, statistical data, results of population's sociological surveys, and experts' assessments, proceeds from the fact that, in a current difficult situation, the President personally (publicly, attracting expert community and general population) get "ahead of the curve" to maintain stability and provide conditions

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**For citation:** Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Efficiency of the State's "Manual" Management. Challenges of 2020. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2020, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 9–24. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2020.2.68.1

for the long-term implementation of the prospective political course of the country's development. Such actions include timely initiation of the large-scale discussion and the adoption of the respective law on amending the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the provision of the ensured opportunity to continue national-oriented development course for the next 15 years at least. Thus, despite force majeure global circumstances and complicated domestic situation, the President takes steps aimed at the preservation and strengthening of the Russian statehood in the future. It once again shows the historical role of V. Putin and allows us to expect with cautious optimism the Russia's "withdrawal" from the current situation without, at least, losses for national security and competitiveness while keeping prospects for further sustainable development.

**Key words:** efficiency of the state's management, "deep state", pandemic, Constitution of the Russian Federation, National security strategy.

Most countries spend first months of 2020 in crisis conditions caused by a sharp escalation of the epidemiological situation due to the spread of the coronavirus infection. The pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, is not the first such test for humanity<sup>1</sup>. However, its circumstances are new, complex, and unknown.

The real practice of "closing" state borders is carried out against the background of, seemingly, the only and non-alternative path

of historical development – globalization. As experts note, "the measures for fighting the coronavirus pandemic generally **boil down to one thing: closure**. If we assume that the previous universal paradigm, at least in theory, was a global, liberal, market-based opened society where the ideology of human rights, meaning individual's rights regardless of citizenship, state, religion, race, or even gender, was dominant, then **the coronavirus represents an exact 180% change of humanity's dominant trend...**"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For reference:

According to WHO definition, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. **The coronavirus outbreak is the 18<sup>th</sup> pandemic in human history.**

The first pandemic is the "Plague of Justinian". In the 11–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, it engulfed the entire civilized world and claimed up to a hundred million lives. In the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, the plague pandemic known as the "Black Death" began in China and spread to Europe. Up to 34 million people died. Also, from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 7 cholera pandemics have been recorded. For Russia, the deadliest was the third one which occurred in the 1850s and killed a million people.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, humanity has gone through several pandemics. The worst one – the influenza pandemic – spread in 1918–1920 and took more than 20 million lives. The "Spanish flu" was caused by H1N1 virus. It affected 20–40% of world's population.

During the pandemics of 1957 ("Asian flu") and 1968 ("Hong Kong flu"), more than 1.5 million people died, and the economic damage amounted to about 32 billion dollars. In 2002–2003, atypical pneumonia spread in several countries in South-East Asia. According to WHO, during this time, 8,436 cases of SARS were registered in 30 countries with more than 900 deaths.

In 2003–2005, H5N1 virus caused the worst outbreak of bird plague in history. According to WHO, since 2003, 389 people in 15 countries were infected with H5N1 virus, and 246 cases were lethal. In April 2009, the first cases of human infection with a new H1N1 virus (swine flu) were confirmed. More than 2,600 people died because of it.

In late December 2019, Chinese authorities reported an outbreak of pneumonia of unknown origin in Wuhan. First infected people were related to seafood market. Experts tentatively identified that the causative agent was a new type of coronavirus – 2019-nCoV. **The World Health Organization declared a new coronavirus pandemic on March 11, 2020.**

(Sources: Pandemics in the history of mankind. Reference. *Vesti.ru*, dated 12.03.2020. Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=3247270>; Available at: Cases of pandemics in the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *RIA Novosti*, dated 12.03.2020. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20200312/1568463184.html>)

<sup>2</sup> Dugin A. An hour of pangolin has struck. *Official website of the Izborsky club*, dated 06.04.2020. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/19069>

Table 1. Dynamics of international tourism indicators, million units

Territory	Number of arrivals						Number of departures					
	1995	2000	2010	2015	2018	2018 to 1995, %	1995	2000	2010	2015	2018	2018 to 1995, %
<b>World</b>	<b>532.95</b>	<b>689.65</b>	<b>973.77</b>	<b>1227.87</b>	<b>1441.95</b>	<b>270.6</b>	<b>604.18*</b>	<b>733.38</b>	<b>1073.42</b>	<b>1336.35</b>	<b>1563.56</b>	<b>258.8</b>
UN countries	263.20	331.01	378.07	473.43	555.89	211.2	219.87*	268.00	337.36	369.03	445.07	202.4
East Asia and Oceania	77.68	105.03	195.02	263.42	320.27	412.3	111.03**	135.13	244.83	357.38	415.03	373.8
Latin America and the Caribbean countries	47.44	56.00	73.25	97.00	113.35	238.9	23.69	30.62	44.22	63.17	70.17	296.2
North America	60.64	71.20	76.46	95.96	101.16	166.8	69.48	80.50	89.76	106.48	118.62	169.9
<b>For reference: Russia</b>	<b>10.29</b>	<b>21.17</b>	<b>22.28</b>	<b>33.73</b>	<b>24.55</b>	<b>238.6</b>	<b>21.33</b>	<b>18.37</b>	<b>39.32</b>	<b>34.55</b>	<b>41.96</b>	<b>196.7</b>

Source: database of the World Bank. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator?tab=all>  
\* Data for 1997.  
\*\* Data for 1998.

Forced self-isolation, as the most efficient current method of preventing the epidemic, is implemented on the background of a long-time global trend of **annual increase of international tourism' flow** (Tab. 1). According to UN World Tourism Organization, "in 2019, there were 1.5 billion worldwide tourist arrivals.

"Sharp decline of oil prices and the coronavirus outbreak, which became a full-fledged pandemic, reinforced each other and **put the world on the verge of a global recession**. Counteraction against the crisis is complicated by the fact that the disintegration of society, necessary for fighting the virus, exacerbates economic difficulties"<sup>3</sup>.

**The growth of international tourism continues for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row... in 2019, it was recorded in all regions of the world"<sup>4</sup>.**

In Russia, during the last 23 years in particular (from 1995 to 2018), a number of trips abroad has almost doubled (from 21 to 42 million), a number of arrivals from foreign countries increased by almost 2.5 times (from 10 to 25 million).

The global economy was simultaneously hit by a sharp drop of oil prices due to the reduction of domestic and international traffic against the background of quarantine measures and aggressive economic policy of Saudi Arabia<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Ivanter A., Kudiyarov S., Obukhova E. Crisis we are ready for. *Expert*, 2020, no. 12, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Finmarket with reference to data from the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Available at: <http://www.finmarket.ru/news/5153745>

<sup>5</sup> In early March, Saudi Arabia with its ultimatum wanted to persuade OPEC countries and Russia to agree to serious cuts of oil production and exports in order to support prices against the background of the coronavirus epidemic and to consolidate its position as the world's leading oil exporter. Russia refused to consider itself a "junior partner" and did not support this plan. Then Saudi Arabia decided to increase production and sell its oil at huge discounts (Source: *Radio Svoboda*, dated 09.03.2020. Available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/30477085.html>). Nevertheless, on April 10, 2020, the heads of Russia, the United States, and Saudi Arabia still managed to reach a new agreement to reduce oil production. According to Russian Energy Minister A. Novak, it will operate for two years (until May 1, 2022), and it involves the reduction of oil production in the first two months by ten million barrels per day (Source: *RTVI news*, dated 10.04.2020. Available at: <https://rtvi.com/news/peregovory-posle-vstrechi-opek/>).

As a result, the world's largest publications and organizations predict a global economic recession:

✓ The World Trade Organization forecasts a drop of world trade in 2020 by more than 30%<sup>6</sup>;

✓ according to experts of the International Monetary Fund, "the recession in 2020 will be recorded in 157 countries out of 194, including Russia ... on average, the value of global GDP will decrease by 3%"<sup>7</sup>;

✓ according to Bloomberg, "the coronavirus pandemic is set to rob the global economy of more than 5 trillion dollars. Even with unprecedented levels of monetary and fiscal stimulus, gross domestic product is unlikely to return to its pre-crisis trend until at least 2022"<sup>8</sup>;

✓ according to the World Bank experts, "Global growth is expected to recover to 2.5 percent in 2020 – up slightly from the post-crisis low of 2.4 percent registered last year amid weakening trade and investment. Nevertheless, downside risks predominate, including the possibility of a re-escalation of global trade tensions, sharp downturns in major economies, and financial disruptions... A steep productivity growth slowdown has been underway in emerging and developing economies since the global financial crisis, despite the largest,

fastest, and most broad-based accumulation of debt since the 1970s"<sup>9</sup>.

"Along with globalism, the model of the world order which became the only alternative after the collapse of the USSR is falling apart. Therefore, **there is no reliable model that can be taken as a basic one in these conditions.** We know that a closed society is taking the place of an open society, but "what this society is", "what this society will be", "what this closeness means", and "what it will lead to, what it will result in", no one can answer for sure. **This is what makes our situation so critical, disastrous, and, at the same time, fascinating**"<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, due to the impact of the pandemic, trends of global development of the last centuries ("crisis of classical liberalism", "strengthening of the role of the national agenda in relation to the global one", "growing attention to issues of national security", "socio-economic consequences of a rapid spread of new (primarily digital) technologies", etc.<sup>11</sup>) sharply escalated. International organizations (WHO, UN, EU) are losing control over the situation and the efficiency of their activities is quite often criticized (in particular, WHO was criticized for the delay in the official recognition and declaration of the coronavirus pandemic, and it largely caused the lack of efficiency of quarantine measures<sup>12</sup>;

<sup>6</sup> WTO predicted a decline of world trade due to coronavirus in 2020. *RBC*, dated 08.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreeneews/5e8deceb9a7947336bff9535>; WTO press release "Trade set to plunge as COVID-19 pandemic upends global economy", dated 08.04.2020. Available at: [https://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/pres20\\_e/pr855\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres20_e/pr855_e.htm)

<sup>7</sup> The IMF predicted the worst decline of global GDP since the Great depression. *RBC*, dated 14.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/14/04/2020/5e95b16fa9a794742620aeabc>; *WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK REPORTS World Economic Outlook, April 2020: Chapter 1*. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weoiapril2020>

<sup>8</sup> Bloomberg estimated the loss of the global economy from the coronavirus at \$5 trillion. *RBC*, dated 09.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/09/04/2020/5e8ec97f9a79478537a44e47>; *Bloomberg official website*. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/09/04/2020/5e8ec97f9a79478537a44e47>

<sup>9</sup> *Global Economic Prospects: Slow Growth, Policy Challenges*. The World Bank. Available at: <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/publication/global-economic-prospects#firstLink01658>; *Global Economic Prospects: Slow Growth, Policy Challenges / 2020* International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.

<sup>10</sup> Dugin A. An hour of pangolin has struck. *Official website of the Izborsky club*, dated 06.04.2020. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/19069>

<sup>11</sup> Mau V.A. Economics and politics 2019–2020: Global challenges and national responses. *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 2020, no. 3, pp. 7–11.

<sup>12</sup> April 7, 2020. U.S. President D. Trump wrote a message in his Twitter account heavily criticizing the World Health Organization noting that "The W.H.O. really blew it", it did not do much to prevent the epidemic in the US and payed too much attention to the situation in China. *RBC*, dated 07.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/04/2020/5e8ca27c9a7947a1b70a6ec3>

the EU – for self-exclusion from problems faced by its participants at the national level<sup>13</sup>). Some states make their own decisions concerning methods of fighting the epidemic and keep the economy, the level and quality of life of population “afloat”. It contradicts basic principles of a globalized world order that prevailed throughout the post-war period.

At the national level, current relations between society and authorities, the ability of the state to efficiently organize epidemiologic measures for the coronavirus counteractions, to implement comprehensive and operative actions to support systems of healthcare, economy, business, population are all seriously challenged.

At the individual level, people’s civic responsibility is tested first of all: their readiness to change their habitual way of living for a common cause – to prevent the spread of the infection and reduce workload on healthcare system – and to overcome economic and social problems that arise during quarantine measures.

<sup>13</sup> After the refusal of the European Union to help Italy (the most affected by the coronavirus epidemic country in Europe) and its demand for “another 15 days to decide what to do, who to help, and how to help, if to help”, former Italian Deputy Prime Minister M. Salvini did not rule out the possibility of his country leaving the European Union, and he criticized the EU authorities for slowness: “A far cry from being a ‘union’, this is a den of snakes and jackals. First let us beat the virus, then think about Europe again. And, if necessary, say goodbye. Without even thanking it” – Salvini said to online-paper Affaritaliani. it. On March 27, Prime Minister of Italy G. Conte declined the project of the summary document regarding measures for overcoming consequences of the coronavirus pandemic during the meeting of 27 EU leaders. He gave his colleagues 10 days to find “an adequate solution, corresponding to the severity of the emergency” (Source: Salvini threatened the European Union with Italy’s exit”. *Izvestia*, dated 28.03.2020. Available at: <https://iz.ru/992550/2020-03-28/salvini-prigrozil-vykhodom-italii-iz-evrosoiuza>).

On April 2, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen apologized to Italy for the temporary lack of assistance in the fight against coronavirus from the EU (Source: The European Union apologized to Italy for the lack of assistance in the fight against coronavirus. *Lenta.ru*, dated 02.04.2020. Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2020/04/02/sorrybae/>)

**Thus, the nature of the challenge, caused by this viral infection, is not only epidemiological but also civilizational (political, economic, cultural and value). It tests the viability of various levels of human life organization: the entire civilization, the efficiency of public administration at the national level, people’s way of living at the individual level.**

Every country that faces this challenge chooses its own tactics for conducting foreign and domestic policy to get out of this situation not only “alive” but also competitive<sup>14</sup>.

In particular, China’s experience – the first country to face the coronavirus and, therefore, the leading state in the fight with the infection – shows that **the main condition for overcoming the epidemic is a high efficiency of public administration: a clear organization of all spheres of life, mobilization and consolidation of society and government, mass readiness to adapt mutual restrictions and change the usual way of living for common interests (prevention of the infection spread). At the same time, no social outbursts should be allowed.**

China is gradually coming back to normal life: quarantine restrictions are being lifted, people go to work, visit cultural places and events, public transport is beginning to function... Some European countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Denmark<sup>15</sup>, etc.) are also gradually removing quarantine restrictions, but, unlike them, China is really beating a viral infection, and it is not just sacrificing the safety and health of its citizens in favor of additional opportunities to support its national economy.

<sup>14</sup> Most countries (including China, the United States, Russia, and others) impose a wide range of quarantine measures that affect all major groups of population. However, in the UK, for example, quarantine restrictions primarily apply to elderly population, and, in Mexico (where some areas are not controlled by the government at all), the outbreak of the infection spreads spontaneously: people mostly rely on high temperatures, at which the spread of the virus slows down.

<sup>15</sup> Storma Ya. “Back to life”: How is Europe softening the quarantine. *Gazeta.ru*, dated 07.04.2020. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2020/04/07/13039483.shtml>

«Today, during a bacteriological war declared to all mankind, China shows wonders of resilience. A billion-and-a-half population, all its divisions: science, army, medicine, and public organizations consistently and simultaneously perform a grandiose, deadly strategic task, saving China from destruction. China has been living all these decades within a mobilization project: a powerful state, an unshakable party that is the intelligence of the nation, the regulator of all country's contradictions. **Strategic planning, the ability of a huge population to mobilize, the subordination of personal interests and whims to a common goal and task, the reliance on the state allow China to cope with a terrible epidemic among other, unprepared for this scourge peoples who are dominated by hedonism, blind consumption, thirst for pleasure, the idea of unrestrained individual freedom, the rejection of the state**»<sup>16</sup>.

It is clearly showed by the dynamics of statistic data on the spread of the coronavirus infections in countries: in April – March 2020, a number of infected people in China increased by 2 thousand. At the same time, this number increased by 87 thousand in Italy, by 80 thousand in Germany, and by 124 thousand in Spain (*Insert 1*). The mortality rate from coronavirus in March – April 2020 in China increased from 0.2 to 0.3 per 100 thousand people. For comparison, in Italy – from 19.9 to 41.6 cases per 100 thousand people; in Spain – from 16.9 to 45; in Germany – from 1 to 6.9 (*Insert 2*).

Even though China faced the epidemic earlier than European countries and, consequently, earlier reached a “plateau” of the infection, a number of infected people in China is significantly lower than in countries of the Old World. Most importantly, a number of deaths from coronavirus (as an indicator of the spread of the infection and the ability of public administration and health system to take

<sup>16</sup> Prokhanov A. Mobilization or death. *Zavtra*, dated 25.03.2020. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/mobilizatsiya\\_ili\\_smert](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/mobilizatsiya_ili_smert)

efficient measures to save human lives) in China is 4–5 times lower than in Italy, Spain, or the United Kingdom.

For Russia, the comprehensive crisis at the beginning of 2020 becomes a test of the efficiency of “manual” government control of the last 20 years; the ability of all government levels to be “maximally mobilized, to act in a coordinated way and, most importantly, to work in advance”<sup>17</sup>. It is important that the Russian Federation faces the pandemic in the middle of deep, complex, and dynamic transformations related to the President's initiatives, announced during his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2018–2020.

“Amendments to the Constitution and the transition to “breakthrough development” are separated in time, but they form a unity”<sup>18</sup>.

**The entire course of national development, which Russian President Vladimir Putin has been implementing since 1999<sup>19</sup>, is challenged. “Deep state”, which is based on special relations between society and the national leader, and the “manual” management style, implemented by V. Putin throughout all his presidential terms, are tested.**

**In these conditions, any supporting points aimed at stabilizing the future (in economic, political, cultural, social terms) become especially important for national security. From these positions, it should be noted that the President once again showed by an actual example what it means to “act ahead of the curve”.**

<sup>17</sup> Materials of V. Putin's Meeting with Government members, March 17, 2020. *Official website of the President of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63001>

<sup>18</sup> Skorobogatyi P. Putin creates a “deep state” in Russia (materials of an interview with political scientist, teacher of MGIMO MFA of the RF A. Zudin). *Expert*, 23.03.2020, no. 13, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> We discussed the President's successive steps toward building a new Russian state in details in a previous article (Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Another Step toward V. Putin's “Long State”. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2020, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 9–33).

## Insert 1

Dynamics of detected cases of infection and number of deaths from the coronavirus infection by country\* (abs.)

Position	Country	Population number, people **	Number of detected cases of infection				Number of deaths			
			January	February	March	April	January	February	March	April
1	USA	332639102	7	68	188172	860772	0	1	3873	44053
2	Spain	50015792	0	45	95923	219764	0	0	8464	22524
3	Italy	62402659	2	1128	105792	192994	0	29	12428	25969
4	Germany	80159662	5	79	71808	152438	0	0	775	5500
5	Great Britain	65761117	2	23	25150	143468	0	0	1789	19506
6	France	67848156	5	100	52128	121338	0	2	3523	22212
7	Turkey	82017514	0	0	13531	104912	0	0	214	2600
8	Iran	84923314	0	593	44605	88194	0	43	2898	5574
9	China	1394015977	9802	79356	82279	84325	213	2837	3309	4642
10	<b>Russia</b>	<b>141722205</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2337</b>	<b>68622</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>615</b>
11	Brazil	211715973	0	2	5717	49492	0	0	201	3313
12	Belgium	11720716	0	1	12775	44293	0	0	705	6679
13	Canada	37694085	4	20	8521	42739	0	0	100	2197
14	Netherlands	17280397	0	6	12595	36535	0	0	1039	4289
15	Switzerland	8403994	0	18	16605	28595	0	0	433	1308
16	India	1326093247	1	3	1397	24506	0	0	35	775
17	Portugal	10302674	0	0	7443	22797	0	0	160	854
18	Ecuador	16904867	0	0	1962	22719	0	0	60	576
19	Peru	31914989	0	0	1065	20914	0	0	30	572
20	Ireland	5176569	0	1	3235	18184	0	0	71	829

\* The table shows top 20 countries with the highest number of detected cases of infection as of April 25, 2020

Ranked by the number of detected cases of infection as of 25.04.2020.

Data for January, February, March – the last day of each month, for April – the latest data at the time of preparation of the material (25.04.2020).

Source: COVID-19 (2019-nCoV) Data Repository by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University with references to reports of World Health Organization.

Available at: <https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19>

\*\* A number of population is given according to estimations of 2020 (Source: The World Factbook. The Central Intelligence Agency. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/re-sources/the-world-factbook/>)

## Insert 2

Dynamics of detected cases of infection and deaths from the coronavirus infection per 100 thousand people of population. (in countries with the highest number of infections)\*

Position	Country	Population number, people**	Number of detected cases of infection				Number of deaths				
			January	February	March	April	January	February	March	April	
1	Belgium	11720716	0.000	0.009	108.995	377.904	0.000	0.000	6.015	6.015	56.985
2	Spain	50015792	0.000	0.090	191.785	439.389	0.000	0.000	16.923	16.923	45.034
3	Italy	62402659	0.003	1.808	169.531	309.272	0.000	0.046	19.916	19.916	41.615
4	France	67848156	0.007	0.147	76.830	178.838	0.000	0.003	5.192	5.192	32.738
5	Great Britain	65761117	0.003	0.035	38.244	218.165	0.000	0.000	2.720	2.720	29.662
6	Netherlands	17280397	0.000	0.035	72.886	211.425	0.000	0.000	6.013	6.013	24.820
7	Ireland	5176569	0.000	0.019	62.493	351.275	0.000	0.000	1.372	1.372	16.014
8	Switzerland	8403994	0.000	0.214	197.585	340.255	0.000	0.000	5.152	5.152	15.564
9	USA	332639102	0.002	0.020	56.569	258.771	0.000	0.0003	1.164	1.164	13.243
10	Portugal	10302674	0.000	0.000	72.243	221.273	0.000	0.000	1.553	1.553	8.289
11	Germany	80159662	0.006	0.099	89.581	190.168	0.000	0.000	0.967	0.967	6.861
12	Iran	84923314	0.000	0.698	52.524	103.851	0.000	0.051	3.412	3.412	6.564
13	Canada	37694085	0.011	0.053	22.606	113.384	0.000	0.000	0.265	0.265	5.829
14	Ecuador	16904867	0.000	0.000	11.606	134.393	0.000	0.000	0.355	0.355	3.407
15	Turkey	82017514	0.000	0.000	16.498	127.914	0.000	0.000	0.261	0.261	3.170
16	Peru	31914989	0.000	0.000	3.337	65.530	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.094	1.792
17	Brazil	211715973	0.000	0.001	2.700	23.377	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	1.565
18	<b>Russia</b>	<b>141722205</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>1.649</b>	<b>48.420</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>0.012</b>	<b>0.012</b>	<b>0.434</b>
19	China	1394015977	0.703	5.693	5.902	6.049	0.015	0.204	0.237	0.237	0.333
20	India	1326093247	0.0001	0.0002	0.105	1.848	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.058

\* The table shows top 20 countries with the highest number of detected cases of infection as of April 25, 2020 (authors' calculations).

Ranked by the number of deaths from coronavirus infection (per 100 thousand people) as of 25.04.2020.

Data for January, February, March – the latest data at the time of preparation of the material (25.04.2020).

Source: COVID-19 (2019-nCoV) Data Repository by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University with references to reports of World Health Organization.

Available at: <https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19>

\*\* A number of population is given according to estimations of 2020 (Source: The World Factbook. The Central Intelligence Agency. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/>)

Let us remind that the first case of coronavirus infection in the world was recorded on November 17, 2019<sup>20</sup>. Perhaps, it caused the President's unusually early Address to the Federal Assembly. He, of course, understood that "Russia, due to its geographical location, cannot isolate itself from this threat. There are states near our borders that have already been seriously affected by the epidemic, and it is objectively impossible to completely block its penetration into our country"<sup>21</sup>.

«World, indeed, changes very fast. The significance of state unity foundations only increases. Social obligations of the state are related to it. **These amendments constitutionalize a social state... And it is not necessary to oppose "social" amendments to "political" ones. Conceptually, it is a single entity**<sup>22</sup>.

**The nature of constitutional amendments, securing principles of a "social state", the priority of national interests over international ones, making a real step toward the nationalization of ruling elites, together with wide involvement of society in the discussion on amendments and the idea of all-Russian voting as a final authority of implementing it, allowed uniting and mobilizing society in the period of a serious crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic.**

**It is unknown, how a large-scale discussion on constitutional amendments would go if it had not been announced earlier – before the country**

<sup>20</sup> The first two cases of coronavirus infection in Russia were recorded on January 31, 2020 in Zabaykalsky Krai and the Tyumen Oblast.

<sup>21</sup> Putin V.V. First Address to the Nation concerning the coronavirus situation (March 25, 2020). *Official website of the President of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63061>

<sup>22</sup> Skorobogatyi P. Putin creates a "deep state" in Russia (materials of an interview with political scientist, teacher of MGIMO MFA of the RF A. Zudin). *Expert*, 23.03.2020, no. 13, p. 44.

**faced the coronavirus epidemic and its socio-economic consequences. Most likely, the political situation in the country would be much less stable if the President was in a "lame duck" situation today; if he did not timely "remove" unnecessary questions about the transit of power by initiating amendments to the main law.**

However, currently, at the peak of the epidemic, the political situation in Russia seems quite stable. Issues related to the transit of power in 2024 were, in fact, removed from the current agenda; society highly evaluates the efficiency of measures conducted by the President and government to protect people, and it follows quarantine regulations of the authorities in a fairly organized manner. Even

According to VCIOM:

✓ more than 60% of Russians are certain that "Russian authorities (epidemiological and medical services) will protect population from the coronavirus spread" (32% of population share an opposite opinion)<sup>23</sup>.

✓ 60% of citizens think that Russian authorities take "sufficient" measures to prevent the coronavirus spread (26% of population share an opposite opinion)<sup>24</sup>;

✓ 80% of Russians stopped to go out and walk or started to do it less often in the last two weeks;

✓ 84% – limited their contacts with friends, 69% – with elderly relatives;

✓ 76% – stopped leaving a house to go to stores or pharmacy<sup>25</sup>;

✓ 81% of people, assessing the behavior of their friends, relatives, acquaintances, say that "most of them keep self-isolation"<sup>26</sup>.

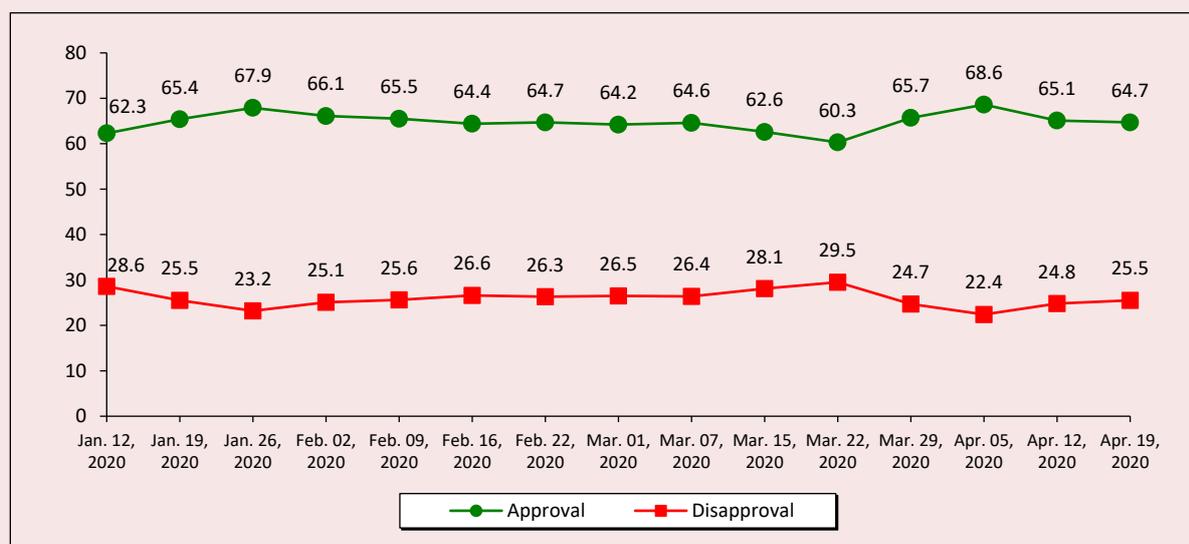
<sup>23</sup> And again on the coronavirus: What do Russians think? *VCIOM survey*, March 13.

<sup>24</sup> Russia in the pandemic: Assessing the efficiency of anti-epidemic measures. *VCIOM survey*, April 2.

<sup>25</sup> Coronavirus changes daily routine of Russians. *VCIOM survey*, April 2.

<sup>26</sup> Protect yourself from the coronavirus? It is real! *VCIOM survey*, April 2.

Weekly dynamics of the assessment of the RF President's work (VCIOM data), % from a number of respondents



though difficult times are experienced by a majority of Russians, the President's support remains stable, and it started to increase since the moment of introduction of all-Russian quarantine in the country<sup>27</sup> (Figure).

People can see that all elements of the state administration system work dynamically; the State Duma and the Federation Council make quick decisions, and, if necessary, make legislative changes, which take effect immediately after the adoption; all this work is mobilized personally by the President, who basically holds various kinds of daily meetings<sup>28</sup> with cabinet members, governors,

and experts. After such meetings, within a few days, specific decisions are adopted, and a real assistance is provided to population, business, the health system, and the economy itself.

**Another "ahead of the curve" step was the amendment to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, proposed by a deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation V.V. Tereshkova.**

It is no secret that V. Putin, who, according to the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation, was supposed to resign in 2024, is the only guarantor of the Constitution itself and of the entire course of the development focused on sovereignty and priority of national

<sup>27</sup> On Declaring Non-Work Days in the Russian Federation: The President's Executive Order, dated 25.03.2020. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63065>

<sup>28</sup> Let us remind that the first meeting on countering the spread of coronavirus was held by the President of the Russian Federation on January 29, 2020. It had happened two days before the first cases of infection were recorded on the territory of the Russian Federation.

On March 15, a working group of the State council on countering the spread of coronavirus was organized by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation.

Since then (in fact, in a month, from March 15 to April 18, 2020), Vladimir Putin has held more than 25 different meetings dedicated to preventing the epidemic, supporting the economy and various industries. He personally checked the work of the Center for monitoring the coronavirus situation (March 17) and visited a specialized hospital in Kommunarka (March 24); he addressed citizens three times.

From mid-March to mid-April, around 50 Government's resolutions and Presidential decrees on measures to support the economy and business, the population, the health system, and the organization of epidemiological (quarantine) measures were adopted.

interests. However, the amendment to “nullify” presidential terms, proposed on March 10, 2020, completely changed the situation by guaranteeing the possibility of implementing a nationally oriented development course conducted by the President. Even despite non-system opposition’s reflex protest reaction toward the fact that there were no wide public debates on the “Tereshkova’s amendment”, the logic of tense global events contributed to the fact that this amendment was included in the general Law “On improving the regulation of certain issues of the organization and functioning of public authority”<sup>29</sup>, signed by the President on March 14, 2020, and was approved by the Constitutional court of the Russian Federation (March 16, 2020<sup>30</sup>). The idea of “nullifying” V. Putin’s presidential terms was supported by a majority of Russian society: according to VCIOM, 73% of Russians knew about this initiative, while 64% of respondents said that they would vote for amendments to the Constitution<sup>31</sup>.

**The very possibility of a new presidential term for V. Putin is itself a guaranteed opportunity and a signal to elites to continue implementing a nationally oriented political course if “something**

“Political forces that dream about returning to the 90s have not been making any differences on the Russian political Olympus for a long time, but **they have not disappeared**. The “beneficiaries of the 90s” are not limited by the “non-system opposition” which the President recently called “beneficial” for the “system”. This is a part of economic and political elites who want to survive Putin’s rule and return everything”<sup>32</sup>.

**goes wrong”.** This abstract phrase refers not only to the economy or international relations’ problems but also to possible liberal forces’ attempts to take advantage of the power transit and tilt the scales of public administration in their own direction.

At the same time, it should be noted that, at least, two more potential presidential terms of V. Putin are not a “panacea” for deep internal problems that firmly rooted in the Russian system of public administration in the last 30 years.

During his previous presidential terms, V. Putin managed to do a lot. In particular, it would be impossible today to talk about the division of “centers of gravity” in the system of state administration and a higher role of society in decision-making and control of state structures’ activities without a political and civil maturation of society to the level that allows the President to make such proposals. It is no accident that a new term appeared in the political space of the country – “the system of public power” which “turns into a common denominator for all authorities” and “at the first approach, it means a power that is open and accountable to society”<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> On improving the regulation of certain issues of the organization and functioning of public authority: Russian Federation Law on the amendment to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, dated 14.03.2020. *Official website of of the President of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/news/62988>

<sup>30</sup> Conclusion of the Constitutional court of the RF on the compliance with provisions of chapters 1, 2, and 9 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of provisions of the Law of the Russian Federation on amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation “On improving the regulation of certain issues of the organization and functioning of public authority” that have not come into force, and the compliance with the RF Constitution of the procedure for entry into force of article 1 of this Law in relation to the request of the President of the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://doc.ksrf.ru/decision/KSRFDecision459904.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> VCIOM data for March 11, 2020. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=10196>

<sup>32</sup> Skorobogatyi P. Putin creates a “deep state” in Russia (materials of an interview with political scientist, teacher of MGIMO MFA of the RF A. Zudin). *Expert*, 23.03.2020, no. 13, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*. P. 43.

"In general, we may talk about changing the "center of gravity" of the political system. An "extended" version of the "center of gravity" is formed, the system's connectivity and the ability of various elements to work together increase"<sup>34</sup>.

However, the question of how the system of state administration will function without its main actor will not be removed from the "agenda" until the head of the state solves, for example, the main task – the nationalization of elites. Without it, there would be no fundamental changes in issues concerning personal responsibility, professionalism of strategic planning, moral attitude of ruling elites to the management of the country and people's lives, and, ultimately, no further construction of the Russian state based on principles of priority of national interests, social justice, and sovereignty. Without these components, it is

**impossible to make a breakthrough in solving the most relevant problems that concern the population.**

According to scientists, "there are 20 million poor people in Russia according to official data. **In fact – 57 (if we look only at incomes) and 120 million (more than 85% of population) if we look at income and housing conditions... That is, 3 million of "rich" people versus 57 million of "poor" people. This data is based solely on incomes, without considering accumulated property and assets of so-called "oligarchs".** It is a huge gap"<sup>35</sup> (Tab. 2).

Similar amount of problems has accumulated in the public administration system itself. Even though D. Medvedev's liberal government was replaced by a team of professionals "sharpened" to solve specific, functional problems, not all experts optimistically assess prospects of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by M. Mishustin.

Table 2. Distribution of Russian population by income level

Group	Number		Income level	
	mil. people*	% from total population	number of subsistence minimums	rub.
People below the poverty line	19.09	13	< 1	< 10328
People with low-income (poor)	41.11	28	≤ 2	≤ 20656
Intermediate level	33.77	23	2 – 3	20656 – 30984
People with middle-income	46.99	32	3 – 11	30984 – 113608
People with high-income	2.94	2	> 11	> 120000

According to: Exorcist Golikova will drive the poor out of the country. Interview with chief of the laboratory on problems of the level and quality of life of the Institute of socio-economic problems of population at RAS prof. V.N. Bobkov. *Argumenty nedeli*, 07.02.2019, p. 3.  
\* Average permanent number of population in Russia in 2018 was 146.830.576 people (Source: Database of the Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: <https://www.gks.ru/folder/12781>)

<sup>34</sup> Skorobogatyi P. Putin creates a "deep state" in Russia (materials of an interview with political scientist, teacher of MGIMO MFA of the RF A. Zudin). *Expert*, 23.03.2020, no. 13, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Exorcist Golikova will drive the poor out of the country. Interview with chief of the laboratory on problems of the level and quality of life of the Institute of socio-economic problems of population at RAS prof. V.N. Bobkov. *Argumenty nedeli*, 07.02.2019, p. 3.

Experts about the composition of the RF Government headed by M.V. Mishustin<sup>36</sup>:

Mel'nichenko O.V. (member of the Federation Council from the Penza Oblast): **"All new members of the government – people who have been successful in their professions, who have experience of work in regions, universities, and large enterprises. People who have actually walked the land, and who know their industries. This is encouraging"**.

Danilin P.V. (director of the Center for Political Analysis): **"Update of the Cabinet of Ministers corresponds to the staff policy of the President, who responds to the existing social request for changes. Certainly, the new government will be engaged in implementing May decrees and national projects with new strengths"**.

Badovsky D.V. (head of the foundation "Institute for Socioeconomic and Political Research"): **"The government becomes technological to achieve efficiency in the implementation of national projects at the expense of management digitalization and social policy too. These topics are very close to the Prime Minister. The government also aims to ensure a significant increase of the economic growth rate"**.

Kolesnikov A.V. (head of the program "Russian domestic politics and political institutions" at Carnegie Moscow Center): **"Mishustin has a technocratic function. He is a man, more or less, non-clanish, without especially expressed political values, who has experience of setting up a large organization and digitalization. He is a technologized person who does not cause rejection of different clans. It is good for Putin"**.

Martynov A.A. (politologist, publicist, human rights defender): **"As for the overall composition of the new government, it seems that this is a cabinet of professionals and technocrats focused on the implementation of tasks set by the President in his Address. Moreover, the implementation should be fast and energetic. Many announced measures have been in effect since January, we may say since "yesterday". This is exactly what I think these people were brought together for. They were selected according to this principle, competence, and the ability to work efficiently in such difficult, dynamic current conditions"**.

Matveychev O.A. (professor at NRU HSE): **"I assess the new government very positively. Regarding the selection of staff, it looks more professional than the previous one, and certain people are kept in the right place"**.

Delyagin M.G. (Doctor of Sciences (Economics), economist, publicist): **"The new Cabinet of Ministers will continue the socio-economic policy of the government of D. Medvedev. As the head of the Bank of Russia, madam Nabiullina is a guarantee of this. Another guarantee is the retention of such iconic government figures as Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova"**<sup>37</sup>.

Stanovaya T. (politologist, head of the analytical company R. Politik, expert of the Carnegie Moscow Center): **"The government will indeed be technocratic but in a narrow bureaucratic sense, according to the logic of "small affairs"... this is the limit of tasks – no structural reforms should be expected"**<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Sources:

Politicians and experts assessed the new composition of the Government. *RIA Novosti*, 21.01.2020. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20200121/1563696035.html>; Muhametshina E., Nikol'skiy A. "The government becomes technological". Experts on the new composition of the Cabinet of Ministers. *Vedomosti*, 22.01.2020. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2020/01/22/821231-pravitelstvo-stanovitsya-tehnologichnim>; Politologists surveyed by "real time" assessed the new composition of the Russian Cabinet. *Real'noe vremya*, 21.01.2020. Available at: <https://realnoevremya.ru/articles/163815-politologi-o-novom-sostave-pravitelstva-rossii>

<sup>37</sup> Delyagin M.G. Without illusions. *Official website of the Izborsky club*, 20.01.2020. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/18710>

<sup>38</sup> Stanovaya T. Versatility and youth. What to expect from a renewed government. *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 22.01.2020. Available at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80860>

**Putin V.V.:** "Give me 20 years, and I will give you back a strong Russia"<sup>39</sup>.

**Thus, the country still has a significant number of acute problems mainly because Russia has not had a necessary period for a calm internal development during the entire period of V. Putin's presidential term<sup>40</sup>.** The solution of these problems will largely depend on the international situation (especially, political and economic consequences of the pandemic); on the rate of national projects' implementation slowdown due to economic consequences of the coronavirus epidemic and the efficiency of authorities' solution to support most groups of population. An equally important factor will be the ability of the public administration system to function efficiently in the new political environment. It will be put into effect after the all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution if they are supported by most of the country's population.

A new National Security Strategy may become a real asset for improving the efficiency of public administration at all levels. It should be developed next year<sup>41</sup> and, let us remind, it is carried out under the personal control of the President<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Zhang M., Guen S. *Vladimir Putin's Political Economy*. SPbGU, 2018, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Over the past 20 years Russia has gone through the Chechen war (2000), the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict (2008), the global financial crisis (2008), the Ukrainian crisis (2013), the war in Syria (2015). In addition to these events, the gradual restoration of Russia's geopolitical status faced increasingly aggressive opposition from many western countries in the form of anti-Russian sanctions by the US and the UN, the targeted spread of Russophobic sentiments, etc.

<sup>41</sup> In accordance with the Federal Law "On strategic planning of the Russian Federation" (no. 172-FZ, dated June 28, 2014), the National Security Strategy should be updated every 6 years. The current Strategy was signed by V. Putin in December, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> On the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation: the RF President's Decree no. 683, dated 31.12.2015. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 31.12.2015. Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/12/31/nac-bezopasnost-site-dok.html>

Key differences between the current National Security Strategy, signed by V. Putin in 2015, and National Security Strategy – 2009, signed by D. Medvedev, were given in our previous article. We noted that practically every paragraph in it was given "a completely new content, and the general summary of these innovations is aimed at developing the level and quality of life of "ordinary" Russians and ensuring the sovereign, independent development of the country"<sup>43</sup>. Here we would like to say that, **in unison with a new (or, rather, updated) Constitution of the Russian Federation, National Security Strategy – 2021 should provide a state guarantee and a possibility to really ensure all social, political, cultural and value responsibilities taken by the state in relation to Russian society.**

It means not just maintaining main provisions of the Strategy – 2015, related to the protection of national interests at international and domestic levels, but also its development in accordance with conditions, which changed over the last 6 years, **and new (mainly social) obligations assumed by the state in accordance with a new version of the Constitution.** It includes "ensuring the provision of affordable and high-quality medical care", the formation of "a system of citizens' pension provision on the basis of principles of universality, justice, and solidarity", "indexation of pensions at least once a year", "guaranteed minimum salary not below the minimum subsistence level of able-bodied population"<sup>44</sup>. **In other words, obligations the implementation of which should be tangible for each citizen of our country.** It implies the

<sup>43</sup> Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Another Step toward V. Putin's "Long State". *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2020, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> On improving the regulation of certain issues of the organization and functioning of public authority: FZ no. 1, dated 14.03.2020. Available at: <http://duma.gov.ru/news/48045/>

formation of a **new generation of elites** focused on priorities of national development and capable of ensuring dynamic development of the level and quality of life among majority of population.

**The next decade, therefore, is the time for Putin, as the President, national leader, and guarantor of the Constitution, to build an efficient and stable system of vertical public power that can function without him, without “manual” management, and work in accordance with Russia’s national interests, including ensuring independence and competitiveness in the international arena.**

Perhaps, determining factors of Russian statehood’s further development are the President’s decisions, which remain unpredictable for many experts. V. Putin has always been aware of his historical responsibility to the country, and he has never avoided it. A voter sees that the President takes responsibility for everything that happens in the country and how it looks in the international arena.

Let us remind that, in his first official speech as the President of the Russian Federation,

**A. Khazin:** “I am not going to predict Putin’s actions. **In this sense, he is a grandmaster, and his moves are usually as unexpected as they are efficient.** Therefore, I am inclined to believe that **he still has a lot of reserves, and they will be put into action.** We do not know about them yet. But I can say one thing: any person who understands that it is necessary to return to conservative values should support Putin today”<sup>45</sup>.

V. Putin emphasized that he addresses “Russian citizens”. He began his speech with words that, by and large, may characterize all his further actions during subsequent presidential terms, including current times, 20 years later:

***“I understand that I took a huge responsibility, and I know that, in Russia, the head of state has always been and will always be the person who is responsible for everything that happens in the country”***<sup>46</sup>.

Twenty years of V. Putin’s presidency give reasons to believe that, with such ideology of responsibility of the highest official, we will withstand the challenge in 2020 and during his subsequent presidential terms.

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<sup>45</sup> Khazin A. Liberalism is dead. *Zavtra*, 06.04.2020. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/liberalizm\\_myortv](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/liberalizm_myortv)

<sup>46</sup> Putin V. V. Inauguration speech, May 7, 2000. *Official website of the President of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21410>

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