

EDITORIAL

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Voters Supported the President: On the Results of the Election to the State Duma of the Eighth Convocation



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Abstract. On September 17–19, 2021, the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation of the eighth convocation took place in Russia. The article analyzes the outcome of the vote according to official data of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation. The results of the past elections are considered broken down by federal district, constituent entity, and municipality of the Russian Federation. We analyze the dynamics of the outcome of the parliamentary elections for the period from 2007 to 2021. The results of the latest election are compared with the results of the RF presidential election (2018) and the all-Russian referendum on amendments to the Constitution (2020). We consider the latest parliamentary election in a broad context – as part of the internal Russian political process. In this regard, a significant part of the article is devoted to the analysis of specific managerial decisions made by the Russian President and aimed at addressing the issue of forming a new, post-Soviet statehood, the key

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elements of which were revealed in the President's article "Russia at the turn of the Millennium" (1999). Official statistics, independent experts' assessments and sociological research findings allow us to say that the head of state has adopted comprehensive and consistent decisions to achieve the tasks he formulated in 1999 (the Russian idea, a strong state, an efficient economy); but so far, not all the goals stated in these tasks have been achieved. At a meeting with deputies of the State Duma of the eighth convocation the President noted that the low level of Russians' income was the main obstacle to stable development and demographic future. And it is the most objective self-assessment of the effectiveness of the entire system of public administration.

Key words: President, State Duma election, public administration efficiency, nationalization of the elites, socio-political agenda.

September 17–19, 2021, the election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation was held in Russia. In our opinion, this event should be analyzed "in the context of large and small life cycles of the country's political system"¹, that is, as part of the internal Russian political process which took place in a certain context of global trends in world politics on the one hand, and in domestic political life on the other hand, along with presidential elections (in which voters have already supported Vladimir Putin four times) and the all-Russian referendum on amendments to the Constitution.

Each of these political events and forms of expressing the will of the people is a kind of large-scale cross-section of public opinion, allowing us to see trends in the key changes in the socio-political agenda at the federal level, as well as expectations of society from the government.

In other words, we, as the authors of the article, are interested in the results of the latest vote not only from the point of view of the balance of political forces in parliament; we consider the results **as markers of the changes taking place in society and as markers of the RF President's consistent efforts aimed at the formation of a new, post-Soviet statehood, as well as the framework of**

"Never in recent decades has U.S. policy been so contradictory, inconsistent and openly disastrous. This is the most important thing. Today America is weaker than ever... Biden **is just rapidly destroying America**, and the more globalism agonizes, the more clearly humanity sees the weakness of the one who recently claimed to be the undisputed leader...

Russia has a historic chance not only to make multipolarity irreversible, but also to dramatically expand the area of its influence on an almost global scale... It requires strategy, determination, will, concentration of forces. And the key point is that it requires ideology. Big geopolitics requires big ideas"².

the public administration system, which he will hand over to his successor in the future.

Speaking about the foreign policy situation, we should note that the State Duma election that took place on September 17–19, 2021 was held under relatively calm conditions. The term "relatively" in this context is most appropriate. Granted, there have been no concrete and drastic steps aimed at weakening Russia; nevertheless, the anti-Russian

¹ Skorobogatyi P. Fears and prospects of the eighth convocation. *Ekspert*. September 27, 2021. Available at: <https://expert.ru/expert/2021/40/strakhi-i-perspektivy-vosmogo-sozyva/>

² Dugin. America is retreating. It's time to advance. *Zavtra*. September 27, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/amerika_otstupaet_vremya_nastupat_

sanctions still remain, as well as regular references to the “Russian threat” in public speeches by international politicians, attempts by the Ukrainian authorities to consolidate the Western political establishment based on opposition to the Kremlin’s geopolitical influence, the ongoing tension due to occasional large-scale military exercises and attempts to make Russia the main culprit of the energy crisis in Europe.

Nevertheless, if we assess the international political situation around Russia during the parliamentary election and (for example) at the beginning of 2021, we can state with a certain degree of confidence that it has not experienced a dramatic deterioration. This is partly due to an objective combination of circumstances that does not depend on the actions of the Russian authorities (such circumstances include a continuing decline in the geopolitical status of the United States after the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, the instability of political relations between some foreign countries³, the “gas crisis” in Europe).

However, in many ways, the fact that the State Duma election campaign was as peaceful as possible and was not accompanied by any signs of a sharp deterioration, is the result of the following **purposeful and strategically verified actions of the President himself and his team:**

✓ some tension in relations with the United States (which is especially evident in comparison to the beginning of 2021) was eased after a personal meeting between Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden in June 2021;

✓ a law prohibiting persons involved in the activities of extremist organizations from being elected to any positions in power⁴ was adopted in time (or maybe it was a bit overdue); this, in fact, leveled the possibilities of the non-systemic opposition to create a situation of mass protests around the parliamentary elections, similar to the one that took place in 2011⁵;

✓ the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline was completed; today the pipeline is becoming an important tool in ensuring the economic, energy and political security of the country;

✓ the Russian economy has been gradually recovering after a crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (as announced by the President on September 21, 2021).

“Despite the general unstable situation in the global economy and the complex processes going on in world markets, the Russian economy has recovered. Just a little while ago, we said it “has recovered in general”; today we can already say that it has recovered”⁶.

³ Recall the episode when on September 16, 2021, a trilateral agreement was officially announced between the United States, the UK and Australia on the procurement of weapons and the creation of own defense alliance, which dealt a serious economic blow to France and a political blow to its president E. Macron.

⁴ Federal Law 157-FZ dated June 4, 2021 “On amendments to Article 4 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of citizens of the Russian Federation”. After its adoption on June 4, 2021, the activities of all headquarters of Alexei Navalny* were suspended; since April 30, 2021 his headquarters are on the “List of organizations with respect to which there is information about their involvement in extremist activities or terrorism”.

* The activities of A. Navalny’s headquarters are recognized as extremist and banned in the territory of the Russian Federation.

⁵ The protest campaign under the slogan “We support a just election” began in December 2011 after the election to the State Duma, when observers at polling stations reported numerous violations during the voting. The first rally took place in Moscow in Chistye Prudy area on December 5, 2011; the mass rally on December 10 on Bolotnaya Square (which gave an informal name to the entire protest movement) unexpectedly became the turning point; the most numerous was the rally on Academician Sakharov Avenue on December 24: according to organizers, up to 120 thousand people took part in it. In addition to Moscow, protest actions in December 2011 were held in 99 cities of Russia. The march on May 6, 2012 ended with a clash with the police; following the results of the march, more than 30 criminal cases were initiated, many defendants were sentenced to imprisonment for a term of 2.5 to 4.5 years. “Bolotnaya protests” have become the most massive in Russia in the 21st century” (Source: Saprykin Yu.B. Bolotnaya: Yuri Saprykin about how we left our mark in a Big History and got away with it. *Kommersant*. July 30, 2021. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4910676>).

⁶ Vladimir Putin’s speech at a meeting on economic issues on September 21, 2021. *Official Website of the RF President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66738>

The head of state made sure that foreign policy conditions did not become a force majeure circumstance that prevails on the Russians' choice of the new parliament composition. Or, in other words, the voting results reflect the internal socio-political agenda and the internal state of Russian society quite clearly.

For example, we would like to focus on some of the most significant trends according to the results of the analysis of the database of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation⁷.

First, the increase in voter turnout in 2021 in comparison with the 2016 State Duma election (Insert 1).

If we compare the results of parliamentary elections from 2007⁸ to 2021, it should be noted that over the past 13 years, the number of Russians taking part in the voting has decreased by 13 million

people (the turnout has decreased from 64 to 52%; see Insert 1).

However, in 2021, compared with 2016, nationwide turnout increased by 4 p.p. (from 48 to 52%), that is, by almost 3.8 million people. At the same time, in the 2016 election the turnout growth was noted only in four regions of the Russian Federation, while in 2021 it was noted in 60 regions (*Tab. 1*).

The increase in the voting period from one to three days, as well as the introduction of an online voting form, could hardly have produced such a significant impact. For example, the increase in the voting period up to three days at the referendum on the adoption of amendments to the Constitution did not lead to the fact that the turnout at the polling stations was greater than at the presidential election in 2018 (in both cases it was 68%).

Table 1. The number of RF constituent entities in which the turnout at the State Duma elections has increased

Turnout, % of the number of voters	2016 compared to 2011 (results of the election to the State Duma of the 7th convocation)	2021 compared to 2016 (results of the election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation)	Dynamics (+ / -)
Amount of RF constituent entities in which the turnout increased	4	60	+54
Calculated according to: RF Central Election Commission database. Available at: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom			

⁷ The work with the database of the Central Election Commission was carried out in the period from September 25 to September 30, 2021. The CEC does not contain data on federal districts. Their relative values (%) were calculated as the average for the RF constituent entities included in this district; their absolute values (people) were calculated as the sum of the RF constituent entities included in this district.

Regarding the majority of territories (53 out of 85), the CEC database does not present data on average for an RF constituent entity; rather, it presents data broken down by several district commissions of a given constituent entity. In these cases, data were collected for each district commission. Further, relative data for the entire RF constituent entity (%) were calculated as the average for all district commissions; absolute data for the RF constituent entity (people) were calculated as the sum for all district commissions. A random check of the voting results officially announced by territorial divisions of the CEC has shown that after the calculations the turnout coincides to the nearest hundredth, the results of voting by party are slightly different (the difference is no more than 1%).

⁸ When we analyze the dynamics of the voting results, we take 2007 as the base year, when, according to many indicators (in particular, those reflecting people's attitude toward the work of the President, and the consumer sentiment index, reflecting people's perception of the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation) the most favorable situation has developed, as evidenced by the public opinion estimates.

This, in particular, is shown by the results of the public opinion monitoring, which has been conducted by VoIRC RAS since 1996 on the territory of the Vologda Oblast. During the entire period of the surveys, the highest level of support for the President's activities (75%), as well as the highest value of the consumer sentiment index (106 points), was observed in 2007–2008; this means that people's ideas about the future of their well-being and the country's economy as a whole were positive at that very time.

More detailed information is provided in Insert 2.

Insert 1

**DYNAMICS OF TURNOUT AT THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA
OF THE 5TH–8TH CONVOCATIONS (2007–2021)**

Territory*	Turnout, %					Turnout, people						
	Year					Year						
	2007	2011	2016	2021	Dynamics, (+ / -)	2007	2011	2016	2021	Dynamics, (+ / -)		
Russia	63.78	60.21	47.88	51.72	+3.84	69609446	65766594	52700992	56484685	+3783693	-9281909	-13124761
North Caucasian Federal District	84.95	86.46	82.22	84.50	+2.28	4195352	4544971	4343313	4816364	+473051	+271393	+621012
Southern Federal District	63.22	61.51	48.27	55.00	+6.73	6621657	6510122	5896748	7219463	+1322715	+709341	+597806
Volga Federal District	69.13	64.30	54.44	53.69	-0.75	16043964	15100550	13083343	12614143	-469200	-2486407	-3429821
Ural Federal District	70.92	63.42	53.76	53.14	-0.62	6329229	5545692	4505820	4632619	+126799	-913073	-1696610
Central Federal District	60.98	58.78	45.29	48.62	+3.33	17546326	17049621	12270883	10326650	-1944233	-6722971	-7219676
Far Eastern Federal District	63.68	55.83	42.92	47.82	+4.90	2986327	2530907	1870528	2039513	+168985	-491394	-946814
Siberian Federal District	66.45	58.19	46.70	47.08	+0.38	9351476	8212790	6599218	6481100	-118118	-1731690	-2870376
Northwestern Federal District	58.28	55.29	40.49	42.43	+1.94	6230708	5961777	4131139	4449760	+318621	-1512017	-1780948

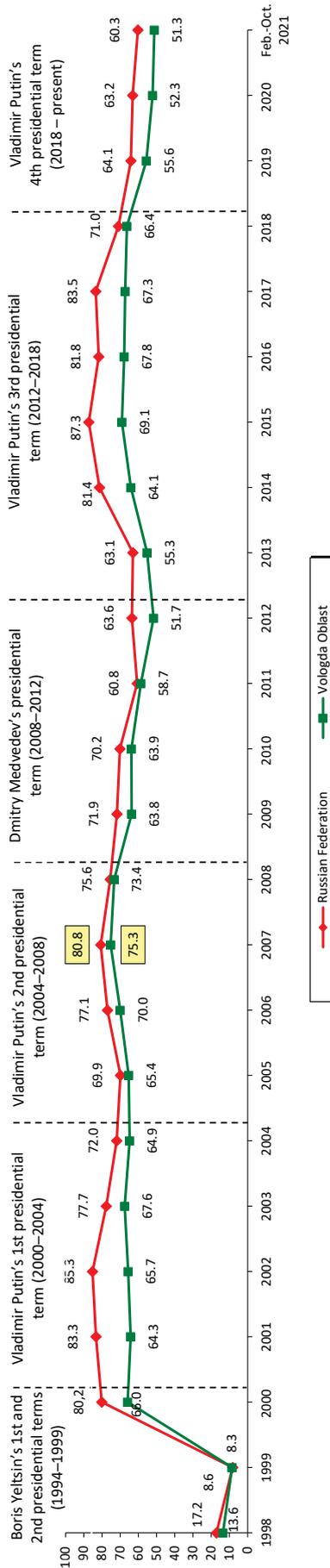
* Ranked in descending order of relative turnout (in %) for the year 2021.

At the election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation, the nationwide turnout increased for the first time in the period from 2007 to 2021 – from 48 to 52% (by 4 p.p., or 3.8 million people). The increase in the turnout is observed in almost all federal districts (except the Volga and Ural federal districts, where the share of people participating in parliamentary elections has been steadily decreasing since 2007).

At the same time, in general, over the period from 2007 to 2021, voter turnout at the elections to the State Duma decreased by 12 p.p. (from 64 to 52%); moreover, the decrease is noted in all federal districts. Thus, over the past 14 years, the number of people voting in parliamentary elections in the country as a whole has decreased by 13 million people.

Insert 2

Dynamics of the level of approval of the work of the President of the Russian Federation (proportion of positive assessments), % of respondents

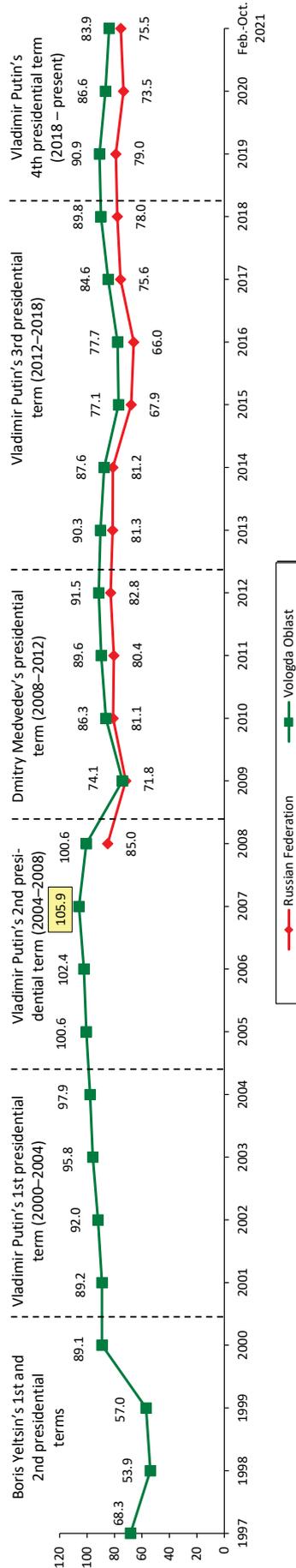


Vologda Oblast – VoIRC RAS data; Russian Federation – VTsIOM data (Source: <https://wciom.ru/>)

For the period from 1998 to 2021, the highest level of approval of the RF President’s work was noted in 2007 (in Russia – 81%; in the Vologda Oblast – 75%).

Nationwide, significant support for the work of the head of state was also registered in the periods from 2000 to 2002 and from 2014 to 2017, which was due to special circumstances for Russia – the country’s overcoming the crisis of the 1990s, and the Crimean spring of 2014.

Consumer Sentiment Index



Vologda Oblast – VoIRC RAS data; Russian Federation – Levada Center data*. Source: <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/sotsialno-ekonomicheskie-indikator> (the dynamics of the data are presented since 2008; the latest data are for February – September 2021).

*Included in the register of foreign agents.

According to VoIRC RAS studies, the highest value of the consumer sentiment index (106 points) was registered in 2007, which indicates that people’s perceptions of the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation were mainly positive.

In addition, online voting in the 2021 election took place only in seven RF constituent entities⁹, and in all these territories, the turnout was less than the national average (43–50 vs. 52%; *Tab. 2*).

Second, the internal state of Russian society is reflected in the voting results for United Russia, the ruling party.

During the period from 2007 to 2021, the share of votes cast for the United Russia party decreased from 64 to 50%, or by almost 17 million voters (from 45 to 28 million; *Fig. 1; Insert 3*).

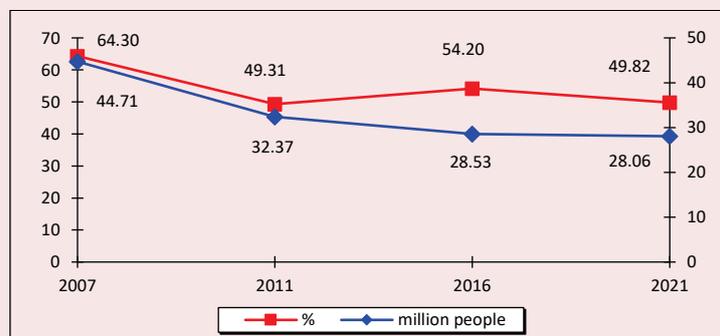
In 2021, the nationwide support for the party in power decreased from 54 to 50% (0.5 million people); deterioration of the position of United

Table 2. Dynamics of voter turnout at the election to the RF State Duma in the constituent entities in which online voting was tested in 2021

Территория*	Turnout						
	Year				Dynamics (+ / -), 2021 to...		
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2016	2011	2007
	%						
Russia	63.78	60.21	47.88	51.72	+3.84	-8.49	-12.06
Moscow	55.36	61.71	35.35	50.26	+14.91	-11.45	-5.10
Sevastopol	–	–	47.01	49.26	+2.25	–	–
Rostov Oblast	67.58	59.35	48.24	48.80	+0.56	-10.55	-18.78
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	57.28	58.87	44.49	48.48	+3.99	-10.39	-8.80
Kursk Oblast	63.27	54.74	47.02	47.01	-0.01	-7.73	-16.26
Murmansk Oblast	58.14	51.87	39.73	43.84	+4.11	-8.03	-14.30
Yaroslavl Oblast	62.38	55.88	37.80	43.40	+5.60	-12.48	-18.98
	people.						
Russia	69609446	65766594	52700992	56484685	+3783693	-9281909	-13124761
Moscow	3970859	4433781	2634377	3905133	+1270756	-528648	-65726
Sevastopol	2233577	1964245	1573413	1659674	+86261	-304571	-573903
Rostov Oblast	1591380	1601889	1196988	1246468	+49480	-355421	-344912
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	663813	590383	389313	436834	+47521	-153549	-226979
Kursk Oblast	618864	519503	443485	424788	-18697	-94715	-194076
Murmansk Oblast	411455	349647	248532	257491	+8959	-92156	-153964
Yaroslavl Oblast	–	–	147430	166555	+19125	–	–

* Ranked in descending order of the turnout in 2021.
 Calculated according to the RF Central Election Commission database. Available at: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

Figure 1. Dynamics of support for the United Russia party in the State Duma elections for the period from 2007 to 2021



Source: RF Central Election Commission database. Available at: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

⁹ Cities of Moscow and Sevastopol, the Nizhny Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Kursk, Murmansk and Rostov oblasts.

Russia compared to the previous elections to the State Duma was noted in 70 RF constituent entities (Tab. 3). At the same time, we cannot but agree with the estimates of experts who note that “if the ruling party gains 50% of the votes with a turnout of 50%, this means that only a quarter of citizens support the government”¹⁰. Nevertheless, United Russia managed to maintain a constitutional majority in parliament.

Such contradictory results for the support gained by the party in power objectively reflect the current public sentiment; **on the one hand, people are dissatisfied with the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, they do not approve of the stalling of national projects and promises voiced by the head of state in his Address to the Federal Assembly in 2018; on the other hand, society tries to address existing problems within the framework of the socio-political consensus that has developed today, supports the system of public administration created by V.V. Putin and supports the President of the Russian Federation himself.**

Third, it is worth noting that there is a growing support for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) and for the Just Russia party, while the position of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) has deteriorated; all this reflects the public’s demand for an agenda of a “leftist”

*nature (social justice, strong state power, priority of traditional spiritual and moral values)*¹¹.

Nationwide, the share of people who voted for the KPRF increased by 6 p.p. (from 13 to 19%; Insert 4). If in 2016, compared with 2011, the growth of support for the KPRF was noted only in 11 RF constituent entities, then in 2021, compared with 2016, it was noted in 79 regions (see Tab. 3).

The share of Russians who voted for Just Russia in 2021 increased by 2 p.p. compared to 2016 (from 6 to 8%; Insert 5). On the one hand, this is not much, but, on the other hand, the growth is noted in 63 RF constituent entities (while in the previous election, the increase in support for Just Russia was registered only in 11 regions). In part, the increase in support is due to the unification of the party with Z. Prilepin’s bloc; however, in our opinion, this is not the only explanation (as evidenced by the growth of support for the KPRF, and the deterioration of the position of the LDPR).

As for the LDPR, the nationwide share of those who support it has almost halved (from 12 to 7%; Insert 6). Moreover, we should pay attention to the fact that in the 2021 parliamentary election, the share of votes cast for the LDPR increased only in seven RF constituent entities, while in 2016 – in 68 (see Tab. 3).

Table 3. Number of RF constituent entities in which the support for parliamentary parties increased, % of voters

Political party	2016 to 2011 (results of the election to the State Duma of the 7th convocation)	2021 to 2016 (results of the election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation)	Dynamics (+ / –)
United Russia	52	15	–37
KPRF	11	79	+68
LDPR	68	7	–61
Just Russia	11	63	+52

Calculated according to the database of the RF Central Election Commission. Available at: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

¹⁰ Glazyev S.Yu. The future lies with open voting. *Official Website of S. Yu. Glazyev*. September 29, 2021. Available at: <https://glazyev.ru/articles/136-chelovek-i-obshchestvo/95065-sergey-glaz-ev-budushhee-za-otkrytim-golosovaniem>

¹¹ The remaining parties (the ecological party “Zelenyye”, the Russian united democratic party “Yabloko”, the all-Russian political party “Partiya Rosta”, the Russian Party of Freedom and Justice, the Communists Party of Communist of Russia, the Civic Platform party, the Green Alternative party, the All-Russian political party “Motherland”, the Party of Pensioners) could not overcome the 5% barrier and gained 8.85% of the votes nationwide (in total, 4.98 million people voted for these parties).

Insert 3

DYNAMICS OF THE RESULTS OF VOTING FOR THE UNITED RUSSIA PARTY IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE 5TH–8TH CONVOCATIONS (2007–2021)

Territory	United Russia, %				United Russia, people									
	Year		Dynamics (+ / -)		Year		Dynamics (+ / -)							
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2007							
Russia	64.30	49.31	54.20	49.82	-4.38	+0.51	-14.48	44714241	32371737	28527828	28064200	-463628	-4307537	-16650041
North Caucasian Federal District	87.16	81.52	76.88	79.12	+2.24	-2.40	-8.04	3516990	3617187	3419444	3720876	+301432	+103689	+203886
Southern Federal District	65.45	54.81	58.27	55.48	-2.79	+0.67	-9.97	4290232	3363306	3472091	4171879	+699788	+808573	-118353
Volga Federal District	67.15	52.52	55.93	47.60	-8.33	-4.92	-19.55	11120950	8472634	7903534	6931079	-972455	-1541555	-4189871
Ural Federal District	67.75	50.37	48.80	44.39	-4.41	-5.98	-23.36	4094431	2548502	2057985	1849186	-208799	-699316	-2245245
Central Federal District	59.07	42.96	49.33	43.70	-5.63	+0.74	-15.37	10237771	7422895	5882747	6228124	+345377	-1194771	-4009647
Siberian Federal District	66.32	46.12	46.69	42.80	-3.89	-3.32	-23.52	5892147	3561156	3298976	2861971	-437005	-699185	-3030176
Far Eastern Federal District	63.96	45.61	44.58	39.57	-5.01	-6.04	-24.39	1830758	1020880	767917	701537	-66380	-319343	-1129221
Northwestern Federal District	57.02	36.47	41.67	34.94	-6.73	-1.53	-22.08	3493534	2168509	1725134	1599551	-125583	-568958	-1893983

* Ranked in descending order of the share of votes cast for the United Russia party in 2021.

In the 2021 parliamentary election, the share of people who voted for the United Russia party in Russia as a whole decreased by 4 p.p. (from 54 to 50%), or by 463 thousand people.

We should note that the decrease in support for the party in power in the 2021 election, compared with the 2016 election, is observed in all federal districts, except the North Caucasian Federal District. Moreover, in five of the eight districts (Volga, Ural, Siberian, Far Eastern, Northwestern), the share of votes cast for the United Russia party in 2021 was lower than in 2016 and 2007.

In general, over the period from 2007 to 2021, the share of Russians who voted for United Russia in the State Duma elections decreased by 14 p.p. (from 64 to 50%), that is, over the past 14 years, the party in power lost 16.7 million votes.

Insert 4

DYNAMICS OF THE RESULTS OF VOTING FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (KPRF) IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE 5TH–8TH CONVOCATIONS (2007–2021)

Territory*	KPRF, %					KPRF, people					Dynamics (+ / -)			
	Year					Year					2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2007	
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2007	2007	2011	2016	2021	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2007
Russia	11.57	19.19	13.34	18.93	+5.59	-0.26	+7.36	8046886	12599420	7019752	10660669	+3640917	-1938751	+2613783
Far Eastern Federal District	10.44	18.80	14.79	24.54	+9.75	+5.74	+14.10	329501	517324	302607	568862	+266255	+51538	+239361
Siberian Federal District	15.20	26.22	25.30	23.41	-1.89	-2.81	+8.21	149796	222525	151708	1441053	+1289345	+1218528	+1291257
Volga Federal District	10.88	19.34	14.30	21.68	+7.38	+2.34	+10.80	1670231	2805144	1701616	2352460	+650844	-452684	+682229
Central Federal District	14.46	22.78	15.15	21.34	+6.19	-1.44	+6.88	2500618	3732762	1804200	2969085	+1164885	-763677	+468467
Northwestern Federal District	11.49	19.93	13.69	21.14	+7.45	+1.21	+9.65	718204	1066272	515965	860606	+344641	-205666	+142402
Ural Federal District	8.00	14.25	11.23	17.21	+5.98	+2.96	+9.21	542558	833634	524938	863635	+338697	+30001	+321077
Southern Federal District	12.40	18.52	12.31	16.39	+4.08	-2.14	+3.99	852009	1244555	730153	1150462	+420309	-94093	+298453
North Caucasian Federal District	5.19	11.07	10.47	9.61	-0.86	-1.46	+4.42	284287	523513	411364	454506	+43142	-69007	+170219

* Ranked in descending order of the share of votes cast for the KPRF in 2021.

Nationwide support for the Communist Party in 2021 compared to 2016 increased by 6 p.p. (from 13 to 19%), or 3.6 million people. The share of people who voted for the KPRF increased in all federal districts, except for the Siberian and North Caucasian federal districts.

The share of Russians who voted for the KPRF in 2021 is slightly lower than in 2011. However, in general, over the period from 2007 to 2021, the indicator of support for the Communist Party increased by 7 p.p. (from 12 to 19%). The increase is noted in all federal districts; nationwide – by 2.6 million people.

Insert 5

DYNAMICS OF THE RESULTS OF VOTING FOR THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDPR) IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE 5TH – 8TH CONVOCATIONS (2007 – 2021)

Territory*	LDPR, %				LDPR, people								
	Год				Год								
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2007	2011	2016	2021	2007 to 2011	2016 to 2021	2021 to 2007		
Russia	8.14	11.68	13.14	7.55	-5.59	-4.13	-0.59	5660823	7664516	6917063	4252252	-3412264	-1408571
Ural Federal District	10.25	15.82	17.08	10.95	-6.13	-4.87	+0.70	659564	837698	751832	452828	-299004	-384870
Far Eastern Federal District	10.68	16.32	20.46	10.69	-9.77	-5.63	+0.01	339710	438334	388029	209198	-178831	-130512
Northwestern Federal District	10.40	14.90	17.70	10.12	-7.58	-4.78	-0.28	590797	799481	650450	399259	-251191	-400222
Siberian Federal District	8.86	14.04	16.33	8.52	-7.81	-5.52	-0.34	911472	1240810	1026458	570349	-456109	-670461
Central Federal District	9.10	12.50	14.85	8.48	-6.37	-4.02	-0.62	1484559	1981760	1717350	1077023	-640327	-904737
Volga Federal District	7.56	11.25	12.78	7.89	-4.89	-3.36	+0.33	1096845	1496636	1456245	898272	-557973	-598364
Southern Federal District	6.41	9.01	12.41	6.92	-5.49	-2.09	+0.51	465735	679570	777886	511550	-266336	-168020
North Caucasian Federal District	1.86	2.62	2.90	1.85	-1.05	-0.77	-0.01	98833	166800	148813	113773	-35040	-53027

* Ranked in descending order of the share of votes cast for the LDPR in 2021.

In the 2021 parliamentary election, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) lost 5.6% of the vote compared to the 2016 election (2.7 million people). The share of people who voted for the LDPR, compared with the previous elections to the State Duma, decreased in all federal districts (especially in the Far Eastern, Ural and Central – by 6–10 p.p.).

At the same time, in the period from 2007 to 2021, the LDPR has not actually lost its positions: in all federal districts, changes are insignificant (no more than 1% of votes). Nationwide support for the LDPR decreased from 8.1% to 7.6%, or by 1.4 million people.

Insert 6

**DYNAMICS OF THE RESULTS OF VOTING FOR THE “JUST RUSSIA – PATRIOTS – FOR THE TRUTH” PARTY IN
THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE 5TH–8TH CONVOCATIONS (2007–2021)**

Territory*	Just Russia, %					Just Russia, people							
	Year					Year							
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011	2021 to 2016	2021 to 2011			
Russia	7.74	13.25	6.22	7.46	+1.24	-5.79	-0.28	8695458	3275053	4201744	+926691	-4493714	-1181895
Ural Federal District	10.60	20.24	8.53	10.33	+1.80	-9.91	-0.27	1283110	346352	463240	+116888	-819870	-268910
Far Eastern Federal District	6.44	13.62	11.09	10.17	-0.92	-3.45	+3.73	932001	575271	561372	-13899	-370629	+95272
Northwestern Federal District	8.66	14.99	6.22	8.37	+2.15	-6.62	-0.29	1440829	743362	1038162	+294800	-1374265	-402667
Siberian Federal District	7.19	11.63	5.84	7.67	+1.83	-3.96	+0.48	1102370	693700	773003	+79303	-804494	-329367
Central Federal District	6.63	12.55	6.17	6.87	+0.70	-5.68	+0.24	652649	1054682	445275	+34157	-609407	-207374
Volga Federal District	9.11	12.71	5.82	6.76	+0.94	-5.95	-2.35	555644	871830	463107	+189671	-408723	-92537
Southern Federal District	6.92	12.64	5.61	5.92	+0.31	-6.72	-1.00	241958	385589	128820	+10858	-256769	-113138
North Caucasian Federal District	3.24	3.03	3.19	5.16	+1.97	+2.13	+1.92	181143	155956	280709	+166857	+124753	+99566

* Ranked in descending order of the share of votes cast for the “Just Russia – Patriots – for the Truth” party in 2021.

The support for the “Just Russia – Patriots – for the Truth” party in the 2021 election compared with the previous elections to the State Duma has not changed significantly. A slight increase (1–2 p.p.) is observed in all federal districts, except the Ural Federal District. We note a nationwide increase by 1.2% of the vote (or 0.9 million people).

Just Russia significantly worsened its position compared to the 2011 parliamentary election (the share of those who voted for this party in 2021 decreased by almost 6 p.p., or 4.5 million Russians, it is observed in all federal districts except the North Caucasian).

However, in general, over the period from 2007 to 2021, the party managed to maintain a fairly stable level of support (approximately 7.5%, although it is less by 1.2 million votes).

Following the results of the vote, the New People party appeared in the State Duma for the first time. Apparently, the fact that the party was able to overcome the 5% barrier in most RF constituent entities (58) indicates that its program¹² reflects the interests of a certain part of Russia's population, primarily young people, who act as the "main force of the party"¹³.

"The success of the New People [Novyye lyudi] party is explained in different ways. One of the reasons can be that this political project has an advantageous name, which resonated with the people who were tired of the irremovability of the establishment. Another explanation is that **New People met the expectations of market supporters and business for a moderately liberal party**"¹⁴.

In particular, the State Duma has become more balanced after it included the New People party in its composition. According to experts, "following the results of the September election, the State Duma now consists of two accumulating structures. They include the party that attracts the extreme left-wing post-Soviet populism, that is, the Communist

"A parliamentary billet is being constructed, within the framework of which it would be possible to carry out party and personnel modernization without the loss of manageability ...

The presidential administration has already taken over the personnel issue... here we see a long-term governmental strategy to form a meritocratic corps of managers, governors, officials – and now politicians"¹⁵.

Party, and the new right-wing parties, whose task is to support liberal shifts and unpopular reforms"¹⁶.

Thus, perhaps the main outcome of the latest State Duma election consists in the fact that its result reflects objective trends in Russia's public sentiment. This includes strengthening civic consciousness, defining clear boundaries of the socio-political consensus based on the priority of national interests and the basic values of the welfare state, and strengthening the role of young generations in shaping the political agenda.

Apparently, such a result was achieved mainly due to the efforts undertaken by V. Putin and his team, who tried to reduce the severity of internal and external force majeure factors as much as possible. First, they managed to ease international political tension around Russia; second, they prevented possible attempts of the non-systemic opposition (the "fifth column") to discredit the results of the vote.

We should note that the initiatives and management decisions taken by V. Putin are aimed at the long-term perspective, at the future generations of Russians. In this sense, such significant moments of modern Russian history as the 2007 Munich speech of the President, the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, the amendments to the 2020 Constitution, etc., perform the same role as the "less visible" decisions adopted by V. Putin or his ideological associates from the patriotic, nationally oriented bloc (for example, arrests of regional level leaders¹⁷; personnel changes in key positions responsible, in particular, for the

¹² The agenda of the New People party includes, in particular, ideas such as supporting innovation, reducing pressure on business, raising teachers' salaries, reducing the amount of paperwork and reporting for doctors, voluntarily passing the Unified State Exam, reducing state control over the economy, introduction of business education at secondary schools, transferring powers and resources to local elites, abolishing censorship and punishment for extremism, etc.

¹³ The New People party presented its election program. *ORT News*. August 23, 2021. Available at: https://www.ltv.ru/news/2021-08-23/411843-partiya_novye_lyudi_predstavila_predvybornuyu_programmu

¹⁴ What does the success of the New People party mean? *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. September 20, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2021-09-20/2_8256_editorial.html

¹⁵ A parliamentary billet. *Ekspert*, 2021, no. 38, September 13–19.

¹⁶ Is the Duma moving toward a three-party system? *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. October 4, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2021-10-04/2_8268_editorial.html

¹⁷ Read more about this in: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Russian statehood in the face of the "corruption of the elites" threat. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz*, 2020, vol. 13, no. 6, pp. 24–53.

development of the education and upbringing system, which is designed to ensure a high moral level of the younger generations¹⁸, etc.).

All these steps, as well as the creation of the most peaceful internal and external political

“According to the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation in 2020 “**949** law enforcement officials, **539** officials of state and local government bodies, **58** deputies of the regional and municipal level who committed corruption-related crimes have been convicted”¹⁹.

“In total, 34 heads of regions, including 19 in office, have been prosecuted in Russia since 1996... **ten governors were convicted in the past five years**”²⁰.

situation during the State Duma election, the situation that allows Russian citizens to make the most informed and verified choice in accordance with their internal needs and beliefs, are consistent elements of a unified whole – the construction of a new Russian statehood, the main postulates of which were outlined by V.V. Putin in his 1999 article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium”.

Other concrete steps taken by the President himself and his associates, who share state priorities in the administration system were aimed at building a “strong state” and “forming an integral system of state regulation of the economy and social sphere”.

Keynotes of V.V. Putin’s article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium”²¹ (1999):

“Achieving the necessary growth dynamics is not only an economic problem. This is also a political problem and, I dare say, in a certain sense, an ideological one. More precisely, an idea-driven, spiritual, moral problem.

Chances for a decent future:

A) The Russian idea. Fruitful creative work, which our Fatherland needs so much, is impossible in a society that is in a state of disruption, that is internally divided... The main point of consolidation of Russian society is what we can call the primordial, traditional values of Russians: patriotism, sovereignty, statesmanship, social solidarity.

B) A strong state. We are at a stage when even the most correct economic and social policy fails due to the weakness of the state authorities and governing bodies. The key to the revival and rise of Russia today lies in the state-political sphere. Russia needs a strong state power and must have it. This is not a call for a totalitarian system... A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, legal, capable federal state.

C) Efficient economy.

1. I think that one of the main lessons consists in the fact that throughout all these years we have been moving gropingly, at random, without clear ideas about national goals and frontiers that will ensure Russia’s position as a highly developed, prosperous and great country. The absence of such a promising development strategy designed for 15–20 years or more is particularly acute in the economy... The country needs a long-term national development strategy.

¹⁸ For example: the change of the rector of the Higher School of Economics (the new head is N.Yu. Anisimov, former rector of the Far Eastern Federal University); change of the president of the Russian Academy of Education (the new president is O.Yu. Vasil’eva), etc. Read more about this in: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. National Security Strategy – 2021: Positive experiences and conflicting expectations. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial’nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz*, 2021, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 9–32.

¹⁹ *News Polit.ru*. February 24, 2021. Available at: <https://polit.ru/news/2021/02/24/gubernatory>

²⁰ Interview with V. Baldin, head of the Department for supervision of the implementation of anti-corruption legislation of the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation. *RIA Novosti*. March 9, 2021. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20210309/korrupsiya-1600432034.html>

²¹ Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the Millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. December 30, 1999. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

2. The second important lesson of the 1990s is the conclusion about the need for Russia to form an integral system of state regulation of the economy and social sphere... The point is to make the Russian state an effective coordinator of the economic and social forces of the country, building a balance of their interests, determining optimal goals and parameters of social development, creating conditions and mechanisms for their achievement.

3. The third lesson is the transition to the implementation of a reform strategy that would be optimal for the conditions of our country.

4. We cannot but see that for Russia, any transformations and measures that involve deterioration in people's living conditions are practically out of the question".

First of all, this applies directly to the State Duma elections. For example, if in the 2016 parliamentary election the President of the Russian Federation and his All-Russian Popular Front distanced themselves from United Russia (which, according to experts, became one of the factors contributing to a decline in the electoral ratings of the party in power²²), then in 2021 the situation has changed dramatically. Experts note that "at the last stage, the President actually led the United Russia campaign"²³, and V. Volodin, Speaker of the State Duma, openly stated that the "high result of United Russia" is due to the support of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin"²⁴.

In June 2021, the head of state participated in the 20th Congress of United Russia and presented five of its leaders (S. Shoigu, S. Lavrov, E. Shmeleva, D. Protsenko, A. Kuznetsova) who became the "face" of the party, replacing Dmitry Medvedev (who performed the role in 2016).

After the announcement of the final results of the voting, the President has initiated the creation

of five party commissions²⁵, which, according to the head of state, "will help to build the work so that

K. Kostin (Chairman of the Board of the Civil Society Development Fund): "The party has always had separate commissions and projects at different levels, **but the current commissions are structures of a different level**, among other things because they are headed by political heavyweights.

The new commissions will not duplicate the work of existing authorities, for example, the Ministry of Health or the State Duma Education Committee. **They will become points of coordination of various branches of government.** The fact is that United Russia is not only a legislative power at the State Duma level, and not only an executive power at the governmental level. United Russia also includes regional authorities (governors, legislative assemblies). And their work must be brought together. **Do not forget about responsibility. The President, as the leader of the party, and its top five members symbolize this responsibility"**²⁶.

²² See for example: Mukhametov R.S. Regional Election—2016. Available at: https://urgi.urfu.ru/fileadmin/user_upload/site_15017/politkaf/Doc/Regionalnye_vybory-2016.pdf

²³ Rodin I. After the election, the power vertical will be renovated... *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2021, October 3. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/week/2021-10-03/8_8267_politweek.html

²⁴ TASS news. September 20, 2021. Available at: <https://tass.ru/politika/12455503>

²⁵ At the suggestion of the President, "S. Shoigu will head the commission on the development of Eastern Siberia. S. Lavrov – the commission on international cooperation and support of compatriots abroad. E. Shmeleva will head the commission on education and science, D. Protsenko – on healthcare. A. Kuznetsova – the commission on the protection of motherhood, childhood, and family protection. And it will directly coordinate this direction in the State Duma" (Source: The leaders of the United Russia electoral list will head specially created party commissions. *Official Website of the United Russia Party*. September 27, 2021. Available at: <https://er.ru/activity/news/vladimir-putin-pyaterka-spiska-edinoj-rossii-vozglavit-specialno-sozdannye-partijnnye-komissii>).

²⁶ A political scientist explained why United Russia created party commissions. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2021, September 28. Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/28336/4481728>

all the instructions of the voters and the people's program of the party are fully implemented"²⁷.

According to political scientists, in this way, "points of coordination of various branches of government" were created, which, obviously, was another step in streamlining the entire system of public administration under the direct leadership of the head of state.

Apparently, a series of V.Putin's personal meetings with leaders of the Duma factions was aimed at addressing the same task, which experts assessed as "setting up the Lower House for constructive work"²⁸.

In addition, on September 27, 2021, United Russia deputies A.A. Klishas and P.V. Krashe-ninnikov (who were part of the working group on the preparation of proposals for amendments to the RF Constitution) **submitted a draft law "On a unified**

system of public power" (USPP) to the State Duma; the draft law, in particular, involves the abolition of the limit on the number of terms for the election of governors, but most importantly (as experts note) – actually leaves the role of "the only real manager" to the President, and turns everyone else into "hired managers"²⁹.

It is also important to note that on the same day (September 27, 2021), a regular meeting of the Security Council was held, at **which V.V. Putin initiated a discussion of the main directions for improving the strategic planning system.** The head of state noted that "we need a **balanced, consistent and integrated strategic planning system** to create up-to-date and well thought-out plans and programs to achieve specific results. Our planning system should encourage all government bodies, civil society in general, and the business community to follow

K. Kalachev (Head of the Political Expert Group): "The law on USPP is the cherry on the cake; all **these years, in fact, we were witnessing defederalization and the formation of a unitary centralized state, it remains only to formalize it legislatively.** The government seeks to adjust all regions to unification, despite local and national specifics; they are being levelled regardless of their differences, in order to strengthen control. At the same time, there is a goal to secure the opportunity for governors, who are effective from the Kremlin's point of view, to continue what they started. And to be re-elected in order to hold the election of 2024 peacefully, since, apparently, according to the estimates of the supreme power, many regions in which the powers of their heads are about to expire successfully coped with the elections of this year and withstood some kind of stress test. **And it is important that regions have no vacillations associated with a possible reboot of the system – the governors have received a clear message that horses won't be changed in midstream**". At the same time, the expert noted that it does not matter whether this initiative was intended for the President or for his successor, since **the chosen course of strengthening the vertical of power is being continued, any possibility of turbulence should be eliminated**"³⁰.

"The first reading of the draft law on public authority has already been scheduled for November 9... **it is quite obvious that the customer of the Klishas-Krasheninnikov draft law is the presidential administration, which carries out the instructions of the leader of the country. Judging by the text of the document, the main thing was to fulfill this instruction as soon as possible...**

One of the novelties of the future law is to create such conditions for interaction between the executive and representative authorities in regions, which in case of conflicts will lead them to dead ends, **which only the President of the Russian Federation or the State Council on his behalf will be able to overcome**"³¹.

²⁷ V. Putin's speech at a meeting with the leaders of the election list of the United Russia party. Official Website of the RF President. September 27, 2021. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66775>

²⁸ Garmonenko D. Putin will personally set up the work of the parliament. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. October 5, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2021-10-05/3_8269_putin.html

²⁹ D. Garmonenko The Kremlin has begun to overhaul the power vertical. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. September 27, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2021-09-27/1_8262_president.html

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Rodin I. The State Duma is being turned from a printer into a copier. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. October 4, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2021-10-04/1_8268_printer.html

the same logic and achieve priority goals together for the sake of a successful, prosperous future in Russia”³².

“The Government has prepared the Integrated Plan to achieve the national development goals... I would like to thank my colleagues from the Government and, considering today’s conversation, do the following.

First, bring all the indicators of the Integrated Plan in line with the results of 2020 in order to fully consider the significant changes that have taken place both in Russia and all over the world.

Second, it is necessary that our goals and indicators for the upcoming period until 2024 are in line with the level we are starting from.

Third, I would like to ask you to outline the specific plans and results that will be achieved in the next three years on every national goal based on the prepared Integrated Plan, so we can review them after 2023”³³.

Recall that Vladimir Putin spoke about the need to improve the strategic planning system at a meeting of the State Council in December 2020, after which some experts noted that Russia, in fact, “is reviving Gosplan on the example of the USSR”, and “the initiative to revive Gosplan in the country belongs personally to the President of Russia”³⁴.

However, in September 2021, after the adoption of a new National Security Strategy and the successful implementation of the parliamentary election, the task of improving the strategic planning system was set by the President in a new, more specific form. Thus, the participants of the Council considered the draft “Fundamentals of state policy in the field of strategic planning in the Russian Federation”, which (according to the Secretary of the Security Council N. Patrushev) is scheduled

to be submitted to the head of state for approval in November 2021³⁵.

Thus, over the past months, we see a clear course of actions taken by the RF President so as to strengthen the internal foundations of Russian statehood, which is a logical continuation of his initiative to amend the RF Constitution.

Today, some signs of a “recovery” in the administration system are already evident. Thus, a number of experts express a cautious “hope that the Mishustin government has become stronger to such an extent that it will really begin to limit the arbitrariness of the monopoly”³⁶. This happened after the decision was made to increase the tax on excess profits for the oligarchs. “A very serious step has been taken, and what is absolutely and fundamentally important – it has been taken upon the consent of the parties”³⁷.

“For quite a while, there has been an ongoing discussion concerning the desire of the Mishustin government to deprive the oligarchs of the part of the super profits they receive due to favorable economic conditions. The discussion went on for a long time, various statements were made, and here is the conclusion: the government will introduce an excise tax on steel – 2.7% and change the calculation of the mining tax, not only for ore, but also for coal and fertilizers. As a result, the level of withdrawal of natural rent in the relevant industries from the beginning of next year will reach a level that is officially recognized as the global average. That is, they discussed the problem regarding metallurgists, and during the discussion they expanded the scope of raising the tax on excess profits to include coal oligarchs and oligarchs who produce fertilizers”³⁸.

³² Vladimir Putin’s speech at a meeting of the Security Council on September 27, 2021. *Official Website of the RF President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66777>

³³ *Official Website of the RF President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/64736>

³⁴ Khazin. Putin revives Gosplan in Russia. January 1, 2021. Available at: <https://www.9111.ru/questions/777777771158001>

³⁵ A digital strategic management platform is being created in Russia. *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. September 27, 2021. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2021/09/27/patrushev-v-rf-sozdaetsia-cifrovaia-platforma-strategicheskogo-upravleniia.html>

³⁶ Delyagin. How Mishustin persuaded the oligarchs to share. *Zavtra*, 2021, October 1.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

However, there still remains a full range of tasks that the President has to address; and the goals he set for himself in 1999 are yet to be achieved. Apparently, this work will continue after 2024, when the next presidential election will take place in Russia.

High-profile corruption scandals are still breaking out in the administration system. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the persons involved in them are directly related to the system responsible for the upbringing of the younger generations – not only for their educational potential, but also their moral and ethical level.

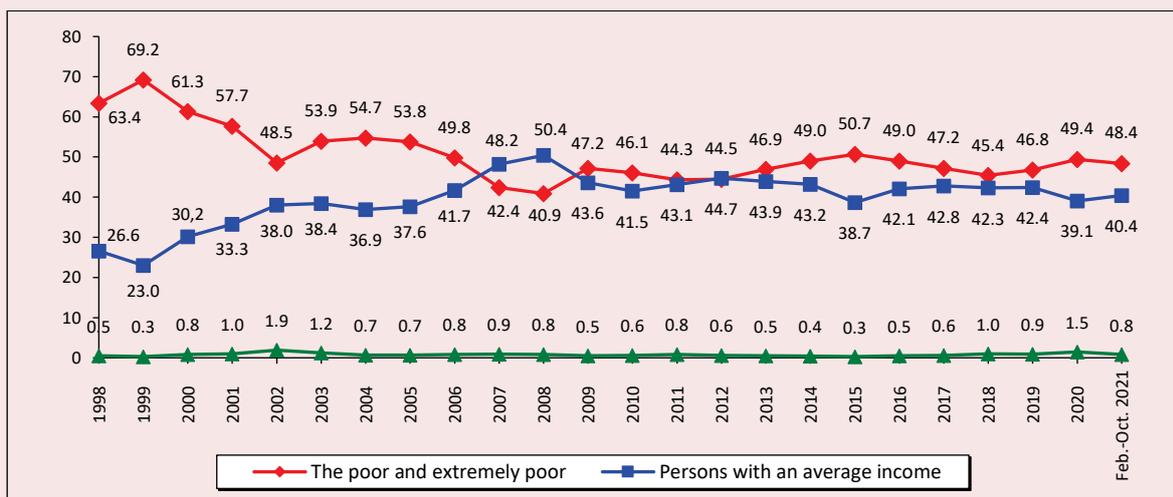
The dynamics of subjective assessments of the population regarding their own financial situation have not shown steady positive changes for many years; this fact obviously plays a key role in reducing support for the party in power in the long-term (over the past 14 years) and short-term (over the past 5 years) dynamics.

Even in the “pre-covid” period (actually since 2013), according to the results of a long-term sociological monitoring, the proportion of people considering themselves “poor and extremely poor” exceeded the proportion of people with “average earnings” (Fig. 2).

In October 2021, former Vice President of Sberbank, **Ex-Deputy Minister of Education of Russia Marina Rakova (who held this position in 2018–2020)** was charged with fraud. The case against Rakova was initiated on the fact of embezzlement of budget funds during the implementation of the state program “Education” in 2019, **when she was Deputy Minister of Education**. Suspicions were raised after an expertise that revealed inconsistencies in the performance of the work under state contracts. The damage caused to the state, according to the investigation, amounted to 50 million rubles. Other defendants in the case included S. Zuev (rector of Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences of a non-state university, better known as Shaninka), K. Kryuchkova (executive director of Shaninka) and a number of other persons.

As experts have noticed, **“under Rakova, the contractor of the project “Teacher of the future” within the framework of the Russian national project “Education” was a non-governmental university that works closely with the UK. If someone starts testifying, it may turn out that the “Teacher of the future” cost the government even more than the fifty million rubles already stolen”³⁹.**

Figure 2. Dynamics of social self-identification, percent of respondents



Question: “What category do you belong to, in your opinion?”
 Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring.

³⁹ The rector’s case: What role Sergey Zuev could play in Rakova’s scheme. *Vesti*. October 12, 2021. Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/2625574>

Many important points that characterize the current socio-political situation in the country also manifested themselves during the State Duma election. Moreover, they are noted at all territorial levels (federal, regional, municipal), which indicates their complex, system-wide and long-term nature.

The analysis of Central Election Commission data shows that voter turnout at parliamentary elections is significantly lower than for presidential elections or for the all-Russian referendum on amendments to the Constitution. For example, at the 2016 and 2021 State Duma elections, the turnout was 48–52% (53–57 million people); at the latest presidential election (2018) and the all-Russian vote on constitutional amendments (2020) the turnout was 68% (74 million people; *Insert 7; Tab. 4*).

The same applies to the support for the government represented, on the one hand, by the United Russia party, on the other hand, personally by V.V. Putin (at the presidential election) and the amendments he proposed to introduce to the Basic

Law (at the all-Russian referendum in 2020): 50–54% voted for United Russia in the parliamentary elections of 2016 and 2021 (28 million people); 77% voted for V.V. Putin in the 2018 presidential election and for amendments to the Constitution in 2020 (see *Insert 7; Tab. 4*).

Thus, Central Election Commission data show that presidential elections attract much more attention of the population than parliamentary elections; in our opinion, this indicates that Russians hope and expect that the head of state take decisive action in addressing the most critical issues. Some experts note that “it is President Vladimir Putin that is the main and ideally the only real politician in Russia”⁴⁰.

Amendments to the Constitution concerning the distribution of powers between the authorities⁴¹, the emergence of the “right wing”, the New People party, in the State Duma – these events apparently can be considered as steps toward the creation of an extensive, balanced and stable system of public administration. Moreover, these steps certainly have

Table 4. Voter turnout dynamics at key elections at the federal level

Voter turnout and support for the authorities 2007		State Duma elections				Presidential election	All-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution
		2007	2011	2016	2021	2018	2020
Turnout	%	63.78	60.21	47.88	51.72	67.54	67.97
	million people	69.6	65.8	52.7	56.5	73.6	74.2
Support for the authorities*	%	64.30	49.31	54.20	49.82	76.64	77.92
	million people	44.7	32.4	28.5	28.1	56.4	57.8

* Support for the United Russia party in the elections to the State Duma; support for V.V. Putin in the RF presidential election; support for amendments to the Constitution in the all-Russian referendum.
Calculated according to the RF Central Election Commission database. Available at: <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom>

⁴⁰ About the State Duma and the principle of selfless voting. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. October 7, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2021-10-07/2_8272_editorial.html

⁴¹ For example:

- ✓ **expanding the powers of the President** (the head of state personally appoints and dismisses federal ministers, the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation and his deputies; exercises general leadership of the Government); changes the role of parliament (the State Duma participates in the formation of the Government; the candidacy of the Prime Minister must be approved by the State Duma, and the President has no right to reject the approved candidate);
- ✓ **strengthening the role of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation** (it gets the right to check the draft law for constitutionality at the request of the President);
- ✓ **granting the Federation Council the authority to dismiss judges of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation;**
- ✓ **introducing the concept of a unified system of public power, etc.**

potential that will fully reveal itself in the future. But so far, this task still requires a solution, and it is not clear how it will be addressed further.

In addition, calculations carried out according to official CEC data in cities with major metallurgical corporations have shown that negative trends in long-term dynamics are more pronounced at the municipal level than at the national average, federal district, or regional levels.

For example, during the period from 2007 to 2021, there was a decrease in the turnout at parliamentary elections and support for United Russia:

- ✓ in Lipetsk by 20–24 p.p., and in the Lipetsk Oblast as a whole by 12–14 p.p.;
- ✓ in Magnitogorsk by 25–31 p.p.; in the Chelyabinsk Oblast by 21–27 p. p.;
- ✓ in Cherepovets by 23–27 p.p.; in the Vologda Oblast by 19–26 p.p. (*Insert 7; Tab. 5*).

At the same time, we should note that during the period from 2007 to 2021 in all three analyzed cities, both the turnout and the support for the party in power decreased more dramatically (by 20–30 p.p.) than in the country as a whole (by 12–15 p.p.).

Thus, different methods reflecting the dynamics of public opinion (which include the results of sociological surveys, expression of the will of the people at elections and referendums of various levels) prove that the historical goals that V.V. Putin has been trying to achieve consistently throughout his presidential terms still require considerable effort and time.

First of all, this concerns poverty whose dynamics have produced no positive changes for many years; this fact gradually leads to a loss of people’s trust in the party of power (as evidenced by the loss of 17 million votes by United Russia in parliamentary elections over the past 14 years) and forces the head of state to recognize low incomes of Russians as “our main enemy and threat”.

“Our country, and hence all of us, are facing many difficult challenges. I will repeat that **the low average income of our citizens, of millions of people, is our main enemy, a threat to steady development and our demographic future**”⁴².

Table 5. Dynamics of the voting results (turnout and support of the party in power) in the elections to the State Duma of the 5th and 8th convocations

Territory	Dynamics (+ / -), 2021 compared to 2007			
	Turnout		Support for the United Russia party	
	%	people	%	people
Russia	-12.06	-13124761	-14.48	-16650041
Northwestern Federal District	-15.85	-1780948	-22.08	-1893983
Vologda Oblast	-18.93	-217121	-26.07	-241500
<i>Cherepovets</i>	-23.09	-63808	-26.62	-65399
Central Federal District	-12.36	-7219676	-15.37	-4009647
Lipetsk Oblast	-12.42	-131879	-13.62	-147954
<i>Lipetsk</i>	-20.40	-80140	-24.40	-78361
Ural Federal District	-17.78	-1696610	-23.36	-2245245
Chelyabinsk Oblast	-20.72	-643878	-26.95	-715629
<i>Magnitogorsk</i>	-25.39	-92853	-31.09	-104466
Calculated according to the RF Central Election Commission database. Available at: http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru/region/izbirkom				

⁴² Vladimir Putin’s speech at a meeting with deputies of the State Duma of the eighth convocation. *Official Website of the RF President*. October 12, 2021. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/66905>

Insert 7

DYNAMICS OF THE TURNOUT AT THE ELECTIONS TO THE STATE DUMA OF THE 5TH–8TH CONVOCATIONS, THE 2020 ALL-RUSSIAN VOTE ON AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND THE 2018 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, %

Territory	Turnout at the State Duma elections					Dynamics (+ / -), 2021 to ...	Turnout at the voting on amendments to the Constitution	Dynamics (+ / -), Duma election to the voting on amendments to the Constitution	Turnout at the 2018 Russian presidential election	Dynamics (+ / -), turnout at the 2021 State Duma election to the 2018 Russian presidential election
	Year									
	2007	2011	2016	2021	2016					
TURNOUT										
Russia	63.78	60.21	47.88	51.72	-8.49	-12.06	67.97	-16.25	67.54	-15.82
Vologda Oblast	64.46	56.33	40.86	45.53	-10.80	-18.93	58.72	-13.19	66.20	-20.67
Cherepovets	65.19	55.49	38.29	42.09	-13.40	-23.09	48.10	-6.01	69.30	-27.21
Lipetsk Oblast	65.14	56.91	52.59	52.72	-4.19	-12.42	66.31	-13.59	72.16	-19.44
Lipetsk	57.27	50.64	42.76	36.87	-13.77	-20.40	44.19	-7.32	62.94	-26.07
Chelyabinsk Oblast	67.26	59.67	44.39	46.54	-13.13	-20.72	65.88	-19.34	66.41	-19.87
Magnitogorsk	73.26	66.18	48.96	47.87	-18.31	-25.39	59.64	-11.77	70.28	-22.41
PROPORTION OF VOTES CAST FOR UNITED RUSSIA, FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION, FOR V.V. PUTIN										
Russia	64.30	49.31	54.20	49.82	-4.38	-14.48	77.92	-28.1	76.64	-26.82
Vologda Oblast	60.47	33.40	37.40	34.40	-3.00	-26.07	71.16	-36.76	72.34	-37.94
Cherepovets	59.99	30.62	40.96	33.37	-7.59	-26.62	66.75	-33.38	73.24	-39.87
Lipetsk Oblast	62.30	40.09	56.01	48.68	-7.33	-13.62	78.56	-29.88	80.82	-32.14
Lipetsk	53.82	28.77	37.80	29.42	-8.39	-24.40	64.70	-35.28	73.66	-44.24
Chelyabinsk Oblast	61.14	50.07	38.15	34.19	-3.96	-26.95	69.54	-35.35	72.97	-38.78
Magnitogorsk	62.23	61.17	36.89	31.14	-5.74	-31.09	63.93	-32.79	70.89	-39.75

Since 2011, the turnout at the elections to the RF State Duma does not exceed 60%. For comparison, at the latest presidential election, as well as at the all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution, the turnout was 68%. In municipalities where large, backbone metallurgical enterprises are located (such as PAO Severstal, Novolipetsk Steel, and Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works), the difference between the turnout at presidential elections and parliamentary elections is even greater. Thus, in Lipetsk, the turnout at the elections to the State Duma of the 8th convocation proved 26 p.p. less than for the 2018 presidential election; in Magnitogorsk – 22 p.p. less.

The share of Russians voting for the United Russia party in the State Duma elections has been 50–54% since 2011. For comparison, 77% voted for Vladimir Putin in the 2018 presidential election, and 78% voted for amendments to the Constitution in the all-Russian vote of 2020. In other words, the head of state and his own initiatives find much higher support in Russian society than the party in power. On average in Russia, 27% fewer people voted for the party in power in the election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation than for V.V. Putin in the 2018 presidential election (that is, their number reduced by 28 million people). In the analyzed cities, this difference is even more pronounced: in Cherepovets – by 40 p.p., in Lipetsk – by 44 p.p., in Magnitogorsk – by 40 p.p.

The second key problem logically proceeds from the first one: apparently, the system of public administration created over the past 20 years fails to cope with the problem of poverty, which means that this system needs to be changed. Maybe this change should not be comprehensive and radical, but (in the President's usual way) careful, consistent and to the point.

At the same time, the work of the head of state aimed at making appropriate personnel decisions, as well as his initiatives on reforming **the system foundations of public administration and Russian society itself**, is largely dictated by the time factor – the need to get as close as possible to achieving the goals set in 1999 while the President remains the central figure (moderator) in the system of public administration. After Russian society supported the constitutional amendment on the “zeroing” of presidential terms, the severity of this issue somewhat reduced, but did not disappear completely.

The tasks set by the President (to strengthen traditional values in society; reform the system of public administration; ensure a steady upward trend in the standard of living and quality of life (primarily in the subjective assessments of the population); to achieve a geopolitical status of Russia as a stable, sovereign state respected by foreign partners; ensure its energy and territorial security for the long term) are of a historical nature; therefore, addressing these tasks is not limited to 2024, 2030, or any other year when presidential elections will be held and there is a chance that V.V. Putin may leave the post of head of state.

The task for Vladimir Putin personally is to “hand over” the country to his successor in a condition that corresponds to the ideological guidelines he set out in 1999 and consistently defended throughout the following decades. By the

way, they showed the consistency of the ideas of a “humanistically active social state”, expressed in the priority of the “concept of the dignity of man and citizen”⁴³, as well as traditional values as the basis for consolidation of Russian society; today they determine the boundaries of socio-political consensus, that is, the needs of society on the one hand, and the goals of state policy on the other.

What beliefs will Vladimir Putin's successor adhere to? Will he/she be able to maintain the high standard set by the President's actions in the domestic and foreign political arena (especially in the assessments of Russian society)? These are the questions that cannot be answered today; therefore, this requires the political administration system to be all set for overcoming any obstacles to the progressive development of Russia.

“We may say that current Russian society is in as hybrid-transitional condition, and its economy is a mixed one, dominated by a modernized, but still peripheral oligarchic-corporate “capitalism for the elite”. This capitalism has basically exhausted its constructive potential, and Russian society needs to continue its post-socialist transformation into a new condition – the condition of a more civilized knowledge society. It has already entered in its preparatory phase, but its further movement has slowed down. In order to successfully continue the movement that has begun, it is necessary to implement “modernization for all”, and the social state, as a humanistically active state, can become its main actor in Russia... It is necessary to promote the main directions (spheres) of the humanistically active function of the state that consists in promoting the establishment of conditions that ensure a decent life and free development of a person, as well as regional communities and the whole society on the basis of the observance of human rights”⁴⁴.

⁴³ Lapin N.I. On the disclosure of the active humanistic function of the social state in Russia. *Vlast'*, 2019, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*. P. 11.

In conclusion, we should abstract our mind from the title of the article for a while, since the parliamentary election is not the first one and not the last one for Russian society. It is important to emphasize another point – what deep changes taking place in the state, the country, the population are reflected in the results of the latest vote.

We think they indicate the following two things.

First, during the two decades of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms, the country has formed an ideological vector of movement that is shared by both society and the state. This is a vector toward a welfare state, nationally oriented values, and a sovereign foreign policy. Even despite the absence of an official ideology in Russia and the existence of a "sixth column" in the system of public administration, there is simply no other vector in modern Russia.

Second, it is premature to say that the transformation of Russian society (its historical transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet formation) has been completed. This also applies to the system of public administration. It is not yet clear how the natural change of generations will affect them; what role the inevitable transit of presidential power will play in the country's history; whether the fate of the fifth column will befall the sixth column; when (and whether) the vector of Russians' subjective perception of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life will be reversed; whether Russia will be able to resist the powerful wave of cultural and spiritual and moral decay coming from the West; whether the anti-Russian nature of the policy of key foreign countries will ever be fundamentally overcome... All these are questions that must be

A.G. Dugin about the "sixth column":

"In our society, the fifth column usually denotes only those who oppose Putin openly and completely, those who support the United States and NATO; they are against Crimea, against Russia, against Russian identity, against sovereignty, against Eurasian integration, against Russia's strengthening as a world power. This is open and pure betrayal, if we consider it on the nationwide scale; and in relation to Putin, these are his open enemies. The sixth column implies those whom we cannot yet accurately define in our political dictionary: its representatives are for Putin and for Russia, but at the same time for a liberal, pro-Western, modernized and westernized Russia, for globalization and integration into the Western world, for European values and institutions; they strive to make Russia a prosperous corporation in a world where the rules and laws are set by the global West, of which Russia is destined to become part – on as worthy and profitable grounds as possible. The sixth column is not Putin's enemies, but his supporters. If they are traitors, it is not on the scale of the country, but on the scale of civilization..."⁴⁵.

"The sixth column includes liberals and westerners who occupy a high position in the state – in the hierarchy, government, economy. They are no better than the fifth column. They also consider Russia to be the periphery of Western civilization, they also despise the people and the state, are just as cynical about Russian history and can't wait to return to the blessed 1990s.

The sixth column has been resisting Putin's course for a long time, but little by little it was forced to endure it. And even began to mumble sluggishly and insincerely about the "Crimean consensus"... And now we see how the direct adherents of globalization, Westernism, liberalism, and world hegemony are changing their ideological positions. They are already dressing up as "patriots" and wholeheartedly stand for sovereignty. And even if they do not do this and continue to express discontent – like Chubais, Kudrin or Gref, they do not directly oppose Putin, preferring to act surreptitiously"⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Dugin A.G. The sixth column is the main existential enemy of Russia. *Eurasia*. September 21, 2016. Available at: <http://evrazia.org/print.php?id=2511>

⁴⁶ Dugin A.G. The sixth column in power cannot go together with the Russian future. *Official website of the Izborsk Club*. September 29, 2021. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/21721>

answered; otherwise it will be impossible to say that the post-Soviet society has been formed, and Russia has occupied a stable and unique niche in a multipolar world.

“Of course, it is good that at the very top of the government and in the public discourse there is a strong traditionalist statist anti-liberal position. This is an absolute achievement of the period from 2014 to 2020. Some of the statements made on the main platforms of the country about the nationalization of the elites and mobilization were considered marginal until recently.

But when a word from high-ranking officials is not followed by a deed, it causes bewilderment and confusion among the people. I would very much like to hope that all this is a prolonged artillery preparation before historical changes and transition to full sovereignty, rather than an expression of the impotence of the healthy part of the government, which is in the minority; while the systemic liberals are quietly working on the decomposition of society in the interests of their “partners”⁴⁷.

Thus, the latest election to the State Duma of the 8th convocation, on the one hand, has demonstrated the growing discontent of Russians with regard to how the current party in power and the President are coping with key problems of concern to the population. On the other hand, society has given the head of state another “credit of trust”, hoping that through gradual reforms and personal initiatives he will be able to put the public administration system in order, as evidenced by steady positive changes in the dynamics of people’s subjective assessments of the state of the economy, their personal financial situation, the standard of living and quality of life in the country.

A. Ilnitskii (Adviser to the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Full State Adviser of the 3rd class): “Today, Russia is at a crossroads, trying to determine the model of the future. Moreover, for us it can only be our own – inherent and sovereign – decision. **Meanwhile, all the post-Soviet years, Russia has been moving in the paradigm of a catching-up development, trying on Western democracy. Today, this model is “bursting at the seams” – the more important it is for Russia to find its way...**

Russia has exhausted the time and social resources of inertial development. It’s time for Big Decisions and Big Projects. What is the ideology of the Big Project? ([3 of 19 points]):

- ✓ crucial importance of the leading and organizing role of the state;
- ✓ the idea of a single economic plan for the country as a key organizing document for the revival and recreation of the domestic economy based on the synthesis of best aspects of state planning and market self-organization;
- ✓ **nationalization of the elites according to the principle “whoever is not with us is against us”. Those “who are not with us” must realize that they risk losing everything...”**⁴⁸

In fact, this is what Vladimir Putin said at a meeting with deputies of the State Duma after the final distribution of seats in parliament. **Noting the fact that “low incomes of our citizens, of millions of our people” are “the main enemy” and “a threat to stable development, to the demographic future”, he actually assessed himself, as well as the system of public administration he created with the use of a “hands-on approach”, at the same time focusing it on addressing the problem of poverty as its priority task.**

⁴⁷ Birov E. A word without a deed. *Zavtra*. October 12, 2021.

⁴⁸ Ilnitskii A.M. The time of Big Decisions. *Parlamentskaya gazeta*. September 23, 2021. Available at: <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/vremya-bolshikh-resheniy.html>

The very fact of such a direct and self-critical summing up testifies to the President's awareness of personal responsibility both for his work and for the work of United Russia, but the fact remains that in order to defeat the "main enemy", the President still has to make a lot of efforts (primarily in addressing the problem of nationalization of the elites) in order to reformat the system of public administration; so that the "point" personnel changes that are currently being observed have a truly comprehensive and system-wide effect.

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