

EDITORIAL

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A Framework for a New Social Contract Is Being Formed in Russia



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Abstract. The development of the foreign policy situation and the course of actions in the area of the special military operation indicate that the SMO is becoming protracted. This was emphasized by the President of the Russian Federation at the meeting of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights (December 7, 2022) and at the expanded meeting of the Board of the RF Ministry of Defense (December 21, 2022). Therefore, the situation itself urges the Russian leadership and the entire ruling vertical to set goals and tasks aimed to comprehensively change the Russian society so that the country could achieve full national sovereignty and competitiveness in the 21st century. In this regard, many experts say that currently in Russia in the context of the SMO the prerequisites are being created for the formation of a new Social Contract, as well as new criteria for the coexistence and interaction of society and government, which will become relevant after all the goals of the special military operation have been achieved. In the article, we consider new features of civil society that are evolving into the outlines of a new Social Contract; factors that contribute to and hinder this process; conditions that need to be implemented in

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order for these still disparate contours to develop into concrete, real-life points of the Social Contract, supported by the majority of the population and determining the legitimacy of power at the new historical stage of Russia's development.

Key words: President, special military operation, new Social Contract, Board of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, collapse of the USSR, public opinion.

December 21, 2022 (the date is the birthday of Joseph Stalin, symbolically¹) an expanded meeting of the Board of the RF Ministry of Defense was held; at the meeting, the President of the Russian Federation summed up the interim results of the past 10 months of the special military operation (SMO) and identified key areas for further development of the Russian armed forces, taking into account current relations with NATO.

“It is well known that the military potential and capabilities of almost **all major NATO countries** are being widely used against Russia. Still, our soldiers, sergeants and officers are fighting for Russia with courage and fortitude and are fulfilling their tasks with confidence, step-by-step. **Without a doubt, these tasks will be fulfilled in all territories of the Russian Federation, including the new territories, and a safe life for all our citizens will be ensured.** Our Armed Forces' combat capability is increasing day by day, **and we will certainly step this process up.... Today, our goal is to implement the entire scope of necessary measures to achieve a qualitative renewal and improvement of the Armed Forces**”².

Perhaps, taking into account the geopolitical situation that has developed around Russia in 2022, we can agree with experts who compared the speech of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief at the Board of the RF Ministry of Defense to the President's

Address to the Federal Assembly that did not take place this year. This “corresponds to the priorities at hand”³.

In the context of Russia's active confrontation with NATO countries and taking into consideration the ongoing SMO, the state and society understand the importance of achieving complete victory on the front line and are ready to “provide the army with everything it needs”. This allows us to count on the fact that all the key goals and objectives announced by the President will be implemented in full.

“I would like to draw the attention of the Defence Minister, the Chief of the General Staff and all the commanders here: **we have no funding restrictions. The country, the Government will provide whatever the Army asks for, anything.** I hope that the answer will be properly formulated and the appropriate results will be achieved”⁴.

Boris Rozhin, an expert with the Center for Information and Geopolitical Research, noted the following key points in the speech of the Russian President at the Board of the Ministry of Defense:

“1. The war with the West in Ukraine will be long. The course toward achieving the goals of the SMO does not change. You can find the official list of the goals in Putin's speech on February 24 (plus the Kherson and Zaporozhye oblasts). Unofficial goals can be interpreted quite broadly.

¹ December 21, 2022 marks the 143rd anniversary of the birth of Joseph Stalin.

² Vladimir Putin's speech at an expanded meeting of the Board of the Defense Ministry. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70159>

³ Instead of the Address to the Federal Assembly, Putin delivered an address to the Ministry of Defense; this measure is generally in line with the priorities set. Available at: <https://rus-republic.com/2022/12/21/vmesto-poslaniia-federalnomy-sobraniu-pyitin-vystypil-s-poslaniem-k-minoborony-chto-v-celom-sootvetstvyet-rasstavlennym-prioritetam/>

⁴ Vladimir Putin's speech at an expanded meeting of the Board of the Defense Ministry. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70159>

2. There will be no back door deal, because the West is not ready to recognize Russia's right to equal agreements with it. We haven't fit into the "civilized world". Good riddance.

3. The army will receive more resources – material, financial, human. But without fanaticism, so as not to strain the economy. The concept of "guns instead of oil" is not our choice. A reasonable balance will be sought for. Next year, the army will receive many different weapons, much more than in 2021–2022. There will also be more drones.

4. Various pre-war mistakes related to the military logistics, the mobilization system, repair facilities, underestimation of the role of drones and concepts of multi-domain operations have been admitted, though not always openly. It has been considered desirable to criticize the related drawbacks.

5. The Russian army is to undergo a fairly significant reform, which is both a consequence of the various drawbacks revealed during the SMO, and the growing threat from the United States and NATO. Russia's sovereignty will be based on the growth of the capabilities of our nuclear triad as the only reliable guarantor of military and political sovereignty"⁵.

In general, the President confirmed that the goals of the special military operation continue to be implemented, but the process is protracted, and this also means the long-term nature of threats to national security and an alarming situation in society against the background of ongoing economic sanctions, the Collective West pouring weapons into Ukraine, the continuing threat of direct military conflict between Russia and NATO, in fact, daily shelling of Russian territories by the Armed Forces

of Ukraine, public statements by representatives of the Western political establishment about the need to abolish Russian culture, the possibility of information fakes aimed at strengthening anti-Russian sentiment and escalation of the conflict.

Some experts point out that "the beginning of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine is a turning point in Russian history. It is quite natural that at this crucial time, the social contract of the previous period is now largely dated, leading to the emergence of new imperatives among various population groups"⁶.

In other words, the situation itself, following the SMO, puts forward an objective need to formulate the task of designing a new Social Contract as "a set of mutual obligations between the supreme power (state) and the population (society), which are accepted by both sides and thereby provide consensus for the further peaceful existence of the nation"⁷; the need for comprehensive changes in the system of public administration, information agenda, civil society, public consciousness in order to develop an adequate response to the nature of the threats hanging over the country after February 24, 2022. **All this is necessary and vital for the formation of a sovereign competitive state in the 21st century.**

In fact, Russia has found itself in this situation not because of the events unfolding after February 24, 2022, but because of the betrayal of the ruling elites, which led to the collapse of the USSR, the turbulent 1990s and, in general, the subsequent 30 years of the country's existence within the framework of the liberal-capitalist development paradigm, characterized today by many as a period of "paradigmatic mental occupation"⁸ resulting in the "loss of historical time"⁹.

⁵ Opinion of B. Rozhin, an expert with the Center for Information and Geopolitical Research. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/vistupleniya_v_v_putina_i_s_k_shojgu_na_rasshirennom_zasedanii_kollegii_minoboroni_rf

⁶ Balatsky E.V. Russia 2022: The content of a new social contract. Available at: https://kapital-rus.ru/articles/article/rossiya_2022_goda_soderzhanie_novogo_obschestvennogo_dogovora/

⁷ Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social Contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. *Journal of Institutional Studies*, 14(3), 76.

⁸ Dugin A. The SMO and the change of the world order. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23426>

⁹ Khubiev K.A., Tenyakov I.M. (2022). The fractured vector of development of the Russian economy. *Voprosy politicheskoi ekonomii*, 2, 22–39.

Our monitoring shows that individual strokes of a new Social Contract are already being formed today, in the conditions of the SMO. And they are not just being formed, but also enshrined in normative legal acts of the RF President, the Government, the Federal Assembly (laws, decrees, resolutions, etc.), which bind separate strokes of a new Social Contract into its general contours due to the fact that they have real legal force and thus have a direct impact on people's lives; they form the "rules of the game" of life in the country; and every citizen, no matter what views they adhere to, is obliged to observe these rules.

Therefore, in our opinion, the state policy in the context of the SMO can be named the first and main emerging contour of a new Social Contract.

First "contour" – state policy in the context of the SMO

The monitoring of the key steps taken by the authorities in the context of the SMO (we launched the monitoring in June 2022¹⁰) allows us to say that from February to December 2022, about 70 significant managerial decisions were made at different levels and in different spheres of public life (we show not all the decisions, but only those we consider key ones; *Insert 1*).

Summarizing the results of their analysis, we can say that public policy in the conditions of the SMO assumes a mobilization character. Thus, after February 24, 2022, three vectors are clearly traced in the management decisions taken by Vladimir Putin, approved by the Federal Assembly and the Government of the Russian Federation:

✓ socio-economic support for broad segments of the population (motherhood, childhood) and certain categories of citizens (military personnel participating in the SMO, members of their families)¹¹;

✓ stricter discipline and personal responsibility in various spheres of life (primarily in the army, in the defense industry, in the field of culture, including the media)¹²;

✓ concretization, the most clear delineation of the boundaries of the image of the future of Russia and work with young people; that is, in fact, the society and the general population receive a clear idea of the direction in which the country is moving, what it is fighting for, what it should become after it emerges from the civilizational conflict with the Collective West¹³ (*Insert 1*).

¹⁰ Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). The difficult road after the Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41.

¹¹ For example:

✓ RF Government Resolution 1677 "On the preservation of jobs for mobilized citizens" (September 22, 2022);
 ✓ Decree on a lump sum payment of 195 thousand rubles to servicemen undergoing military service under a contract in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (November 4, 2022);
 ✓ equating the status of volunteers participating in the SMO with the status of military personnel (November 4);
 ✓ introduction of a new monthly allowance in connection with the birth and upbringing of a child into the unified system of state benefits for families with children (November 21, 2022), etc.

¹² For example:

✓ establishment of administrative liability for public actions aimed at discrediting the Armed Forces of Russia and criminal liability for public dissemination under the guise of reliable reports of deliberately false information containing data on the use of the Armed Forces of Russia (March 4, 2022);

✓ Federal Law 255 "On control over the activities of persons under foreign influence", according to which "a foreign agent is not entitled to carry out educational activities in relation to minors and pedagogical activities in state and municipal educational organizations" (July 4, 2022);

✓ Federal Law "On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Article 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation" (September 24, 2022);

✓ Decree on the introduction of martial law in the territories of the DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts; Decree "On measures implemented in constituent entities of the Russian Federation in connection with Presidential Decree 756, dated October 19, 2022" (October 19, 2022), etc.

¹³ For example:

✓ Federal Law 261-FZ "On the Russian Movement of Children and Youth" (July 14, 2022);
 ✓ approval of the Naval Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the Naval Charter of the Navy (July 31, 2022);
 ✓ Presidential Decree 611 "On approval of the Concept of Humanitarian Policy of the Russian Federation Abroad" (September 5, 2022);

✓ Decree on the approval of the Fundamentals of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values (November 9, 2022).

Insert 1

Monitoring of the key decisions adopted by the RF President (October 21 – December 20, 2022)¹⁴

October 21 – Decree on the Coordination Council under the Government to meet the needs of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, military formations and bodies. The Council was formed to “organize the interaction of federal executive authorities and executive authorities of RF constituent entities in addressing issues related to ensuring the needs of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other troops, military formations and bodies during the special military operation”. The Chairman of the Coordination Council is the Chairman of the RF Government. The composition of the Coordination Council is approved by the RF President. According to experts, “this is done in order to efficiently allocate limited resources to key tasks”. At the beginning of 2020 the government created a coordination council to combat coronavirus, and it “proved to be an effective structure”¹⁵.

October 26 – the list of Russian credit institutions, in respect of which a ban is imposed on transactions with their shares and equity stakes, is approved. The list comprises 45 organizations, including not only foreign, but also Russian credit organizations with parent structures abroad, including “systemically significant Raiffeisenbank and UniCredit, as well as Citibank, which is in the top 30”¹⁶.

November 3 – Decree on a lump sum payment of 195 thousand rubles to servicemen undergoing military service under a contract in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

November 4 – amendments were made to the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses. It is now established that the refusal or evasion of a supplier (contractor, contractor) from concluding a state contract for a state defense order, a contract necessary to fulfill a state defense order, entails administrative liability if these actions do not contain a criminally punishable act.

November 4 – amendments were made to the legislation defining the status of volunteer formations that contribute to the fulfillment of the tasks assigned to the Armed Forces. Russians serving in volunteer formations receive the status of military personnel.

November 4 – a law aimed at improving the legislation on the state civil service is signed. The law provides for the possibility of extending civil service beyond the age limit of 65 years and up to 70 years for managers from the main group of positions in federal departments subordinate to the RF Government.

November 4 – amendments were made to the law on mobilization training and mobilization. The law defines the procedure for alternative civil service after the announcement of mobilization. The document also approves that during the mobilization there is a possibility of conscription of convicts who have an outstanding conviction or criminal record for a number of serious crimes.

¹⁴ The Insert is a continuation of the monitoring of management decisions of the authorities, which we started in the article “The difficult road after the Rubicon” in *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41.

¹⁵ How will the coordination council work for the “economics of military operations” (opinion of the Director of the HSE Center for Market Research G. Ostapkovich). Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/19/10/2022/63500e719a79471d547078d8>

¹⁶ Putin banned transactions with shares of 45 banks without permission. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/finances/26/10/2022/635910419a794725725385f1>

November 9 – Decree approving the foundations of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values. The document defines traditional values (moral guidelines that form the worldview of Russian citizens, transmitted from generation to generation, underlying the all-Russian civic identity and the unified cultural space of the country, strengthening civic unity). **The document lists traditional values** (life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate; high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of the spiritual over the material, historical memory and continuity of generations, unity of the peoples of Russia); **threats to traditional values** (including the United States and other “unfriendly countries”). The destructive ideology includes the cultivation of selfishness and immorality and the propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations.

November 14 – Decree on the procedure for coordination with federal public authorities on the implementation of public authority in the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts. As experts noted, this law “introduces, in fact, direct subordination of two new constituent entities of the Russian Federation to the federal center... A strict procedure has been introduced for the heads of these entities to coordinate appointments to all positions with the Presidential Administration and the Government. A unified system of public authority will be immediately organized in the new territories...”¹⁷

November 14 – Decree on amendments to the Regulation on the procedure for military service. The Regulation determines the order of military service in peacetime... for citizens who have citizenship of a foreign state or a residence permit or other document confirming the right to permanent residence for a citizen on the territory of a foreign state, and for foreign citizens – in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

November 15 – The cities of Melitopol and Mariupol were awarded the honorary title “**City of Military Glory**”. The honorary title “**City of Labor Valor**” was awarded to Astrakhan, Vologda, Gorlovka, Zlatoust, Kaspysk, Lugansk, Norilsk, Orsk, Yakutsk.

November 17 – Presidential Decree 832 On amendments to the composition of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights” approved by Presidential Decree 691, dated December 3, 2018. Ten people were excluded from the Council (A.G. Asmolov, A.V. Babushkin, M.A. Bolshakova, A.M. Verkhovsky, E.V. Vinokurov, N.L. Evdokimova, I.I. Zasursky, I.A. Kalyapin, G.A. Osokina, N.K. Svanidze). Ten people were also included in the Council: Yu.A. Belekova, Ya.V. Vlasov, O.Yu. Demicheva, N.F. Ivanov, V.Yu. Ikonnikov, A.I. Kotz, A.V. Melnikov, S.E. Rukshin, E.V. Smoroda, E.N. Shishkina. As D. Peskov noted, the leaders of public opinion are changing, the process of rotation is underway... “In the new circumstances, other persons can best represent civil society; they are the most correct reflection of civil society”¹⁸.

November 21 – amendments were made to the legislation establishing the right of volunteers to receive support in the form of payment for communication services. Also, Article 217 of Part Two of the Tax Code has been amended, according to which the list of income not subject to personal income tax includes income received by volunteers.

¹⁷ Garmonenko D. Russia is integrating new territories without acceleration. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2022-11-14/3_8589_polit02.html

¹⁸ Putin signed a decree on changing the composition of the Human Rights Council. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20221117/spch-1832189632.html>

Continuation of Insert 1

November 21 – amendments were made to Article 4 of Part One and Part Two of the Tax Code, as well as to certain legislative acts. For 2023, the validity of the norms granting the RF Government the authority to issue regulatory legal acts is extended in the sphere of regulation of tax legal relations in terms of changing the deadlines for payment of taxes, fees, insurance premiums. It establishes the possibility of applying a 0 percent tax rate on value added tax for the sale in 2023 of ships owned by a Russian leasing company and registered in the Russian International Register of Ships.

November 21 – the law on easing the budget rule for 2023–2024 was signed. According to the document, the Budget Code contains the defined volume of basic oil and gas revenues that can be spent in 2023–2025 in absolute terms at the level of 8 trillion rubles with further annual indexation of 4% starting from 2026. This volume corresponds to moderately conservative estimates of external conditions with a stable exchange rate in the range of 65–75 rubles per dollar. This will ensure the stability of budget expenditures regardless of the variability of the conjuncture and minimize the impact of oil and gas rental income volatility on the economy, the explanatory note said. The Cabinet of Ministers will also be able to make decisions on the provision of state guarantees of the Russian Federation in 2023 that are not provided for by the programs on such guarantees, and in the manner and on the terms established by the Cabinet itself¹⁹.

November 21 – the law on the status of combat veteran for members of volunteer formations participating in the special military operation was signed. Volunteers participating in the special operation to liberate Donbass will receive the status of combat veteran. In addition, the document establishes the status of combat disabled for volunteers who were seriously injured.

November 21 – features of conformity assessment of space technology for various purposes, as well as processes related to its development, creation and use were established. The Government of the Russian Federation will approve the procedure for assessing the conformity of space technology intended for use in scientific and socio-economic purposes. The Government will also approve the procedure for accreditation in the field of space activities.

November 21 – a new monthly allowance in connection with the birth and upbringing of a child was introduced into the unified system of state benefits for families with children. The right to such an allowance is granted to pregnant women in need of social support and persons with children under the age of 17, provided that they are citizens of the Russian Federation and permanently reside in the territory of the Russian Federation. If there are several children under the age of 17 in the family, an allowance is assigned for each such child. The RF Government is authorized to establish the procedure and conditions for the appointment and payment of allowances.

November 21 – the Air Code was amended. The authorized body in the field of defense receives the power to approve federal aviation regulations governing activities in the field of state aviation. The RF Government is vested with the authority to establish the procedure for using state aviation for testing aviation equipment.

¹⁹ Putin signed a decree on softening the budget rule for 2023–2024. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20221121/byudzhet-1833112507.html>

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| <p>November 21 – amendments were made to the legislation concerning the preferential right of admission to study in basic general education programs in a state or municipal educational organization. The law provides that a child “who is under guardianship in a family, including from a foster family, has the right of preferential admission to study in the basic general education programs of preschool education and primary general education in a state or municipal educational organization in which a child who is brought up with him/her in the same family is studying”.</p> |
| <p>December 5 – amendments were made to certain legislative acts concerning, in particular, the civil service. Amendments are being made to the federal law “On the system of public service of the Russian Federation”, providing for the grounds and procedure for suspending public service. In particular, such grounds include conscription of a civil servant for military service on mobilization, their conclusion in accordance with paragraph 7 of Article 38 of the Federal Law “On military duty and military service” of a contract on military service or their conclusion of a contract on voluntary assistance in performing tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.</p> |
| <p>December 5 – amendments were made to the law on information and certain legislative acts. The federal law is aimed at preventing the dissemination on the territory of the Russian Federation of information promoting nontraditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, pedophilia, sex change. In addition, it provides for the procedure for monitoring information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet.</p> |
| <p>December 5 – amendments were made to the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses. Administrative liability is established for the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations and (or) preferences, sex change, pedophilia propaganda, as well as for the dissemination among minors of information demonstrating nontraditional sexual relations and (or) preferences or capable of causing minors to desire to change their sex. Increased administrative liability is provided for the commission of these administrative offenses with the use of mass media and (or) information and telecommunication networks (including the Internet). In case of committing such administrative offenses by a foreign citizen or a stateless person, an administrative penalty is provided in the form of administrative expulsion from Russia.</p> |
| <p>December 19 – administrative liability for providing false information about critical information infrastructure objects was introduced by law. Administrative liability is established for providing false information about the results of assigning an object of critical information infrastructure of the Russian Federation one of the categories of significance provided for by legislation in the field of ensuring the security of critical information infrastructure of the Russian Federation, or about the absence of the need to assign it one of such categories... Until December 31, 2023, the term is extended for the regulation granting officials of the executive authorities of the RF constituent entities, the list of which is approved by the highest official (head of the supreme executive body of state power) of the RF constituent entity, the right to draw up protocols on administrative offenses provided for in Article 20.61 of the Code on Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (failure to comply with the rules of conduct in an emergency situation or the threat of its occurrence).</p> |

Continuation of Insert 1

December 19 – the deadline for the application of a set of measures to preserve the stability of the Russian economy in the face of external sanctions pressure is extended by law. In particular, in 2023, the following legislative provisions concerning the authority of the RF Government remain in effect:

- ✓ organizing and implementing the types of state control (supervision), municipal control;
- ✓ licensing, accreditation, certification, state registration, conducting qualification examinations, inclusion in the register, as well as other permissive regimes established by the legislation of the Russian Federation;
- ✓ implementation of urban planning activities;
- ✓ regulation of certain issues related to the shared construction of real estate;
- ✓ regulation of labor relations, as well as relations in the field of employment promotion;
- ✓ admission to study, state final certification, recognition in the Russian Federation of education received in a foreign state, in relation to citizens forced to interrupt their studies abroad due to unfriendly actions of foreign states;
- ✓ the procedure for entering into circulation, turnover and withdrawal from circulation of goods subject to mandatory labeling by means of identification, without applying identification means to them.

December 19 – a law was signed that reduces the tax burden on NPOs in the implementation of federal projects. Operations on the implementation of works (services), property rights performed (rendered), transferred by nonprofit organizations within the framework of their implementation of federal projects, the source of financial support for which is a subsidy from the federal budget provided on the basis of the federal law on the federal budget for the current financial year and planning period, are exempt from value added tax. In addition, the list of income not taken into account when determining the tax base for corporate income tax includes income in the form of works (services), property rights received free of charge from organizations that carry out activities for the implementation of federal projects at the expense of subsidies provided on the basis of the federal law on the federal budget for the current fiscal year and the planning period.

December 19 – a law was signed aimed at optimizing the requirements for the charters of NPOs. The mandatory inclusion in the charters of information on the procedure for making amendments and additions to them, sources of formation of funds and other property, as well as on the procedure for reorganization and (or) liquidation of nonprofit organizations is canceled. The requirement of the need to determine the conditions of retirement from members of public associations by age in the charters is excluded.

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| <p>December 20 – the resolution “On the working group on ensuring interaction between public authorities and organizations on issues of mobilization training and mobilization, social and legal protection of citizens of the Russian Federation participating in the special military operation, and their family members”. The working group includes 31 people. Its head is the Vice-Speaker of the Federation Council A. Turchak. Tasks of the working group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ensure the interaction of legislative and executive authorities on the preparation of mobilization; ✓ organize the placement and provision of mobilized citizens; ✓ monitor social support for families of mobilized Russians; ✓ prepare proposals on the legal regulation of mobilization; monitor the law enforcement practice on conscription; ✓ promote mobilization; ✓ analyze the course and results of patriotic education of young people; ✓ prepare proposals for the creation and development of mobilization capacities, production of products necessary for the armed forces and the needs of the population. |
| <p>December 21 – an expanded meeting of the Board of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation was held, at which the RF President and the RF Minister of Defense gave a general assessment of the course of the SMO and identified the key goals and objectives of the development of the Russian Army for the coming years. Some of them are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ when recruiting the Armed Forces, gradually increase the age of conscription of citizens from 18 to 21 years, and raise the limit to 30 years; ✓ create two interspecific strategic territorial associations of the Armed Forces – the Moscow and Leningrad military districts; ✓ increase the responsibility of the main commands for the preparation and use of associations and formations; ✓ increase the number of the Armed Forces to one and a half million military personnel, including military personnel under contract – up to 695 thousand people; ✓ increase the number of military personnel under contract, taking into account the replacement of mobilized citizens in the groups of troops and the recruitment of new formations by the end of 2023 to 521 thousand people; ✓ introduce federal state civil service in military commissariats with an increase in the number of military posts in them; complete the digital transformation of military enlistment offices, etc. |
| <p>December 22 – amendments were made to the decree on the application of retaliatory special economic measures in connection with the unfriendly actions of some foreign states and international organizations; and a decree was signed on the application of special economic measures in the field of natural gas supplies in connection with the unfriendly actions of some foreign states and international organizations.</p> <p>The RF Government was granted the authority to issue temporary permits for certain transactions (operations, actions) with persons under sanctions. It is prohibited for PJSC Gazprom and its affiliates to fulfill obligations to foreign persons associated with foreign states who commit unfriendly actions against the Russian Federation. The RF Government was instructed to set a price limit for the payment of supplies and services related to the production of natural gas, gas condensate within ten days.</p> |
| <p>December 23 – Order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation 1014 “On approval of the federal educational program for secondary general education”. It includes elementary military training in the classes on health and safety training, as well as such topics of history lessons as the accession of Crimea to Russia; Russia’s foreign policy and assistance to Syria; events in Ukraine in 2014 and Russia’s position; the Minsk Agreements on Donbass and humanitarian assistance to the DPR and LPR; the section about the special military operation.</p> |

Simultaneously with the implementation of these key areas of state policy in the conditions of the SMO, the work has intensified on removing those representatives of elite groups who could not or did not want to accept the agenda of the SMO, change their lifestyle and their activities, from power (in the system of public administration, business, culture)... In this sense, the liberal elites are experiencing the real “time of troubles”. So, after February 24, 2022, Presidential Adviser V. Yumashev resigned²⁰ (a man whom some experts called the “ideologue of the Family”²¹ and the “brain” of the liberal clan”²²); former Deputy Prime Ministers A. Chubais²³, A. Khloponin²⁴, A. Dvorkovich²⁵, I. Klebanov²⁶ have left Russia.

Significant personnel changes have also taken place in the field of culture. For example, on June 29, 2022, artistic directors of several theaters were removed from their posts (K. Serebrennikov from the Gogol Theater, J. Reichelhaus from the School of Modern Play, V. Ryzhakov from the

Sovremennik). Earlier (May 16, 2022), R. Tuminas, former artistic director of the Vakhtangov Theater, was excluded from the list of persons who were awarded the 2021 prize of the Government of the Russian Federation in the field of culture.

In recent months, this list has been supplemented with new names:

✓ November 29, 2022, A. Kudrin announced his resignation from the post of Head of the RF Accounts Chamber; according to experts, he is “an ideologist of systemic liberals” and “one of the key emissaries of globalism in the Russian Federation”²⁷;

✓ December 1, the Magomedov brothers businessmen were sentenced along with the whole criminal community of major entrepreneurs²⁸; moreover, such people as billionaire G. Timchenko and ex-head of Ingushetia R. Aushev stood bail for the brothers before the court; president of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, president of the National Research University Higher School of Economics, member of the bureau

²⁰ According to RBK, Yumashev left the post around the end of April – beginning of May 2022 (source: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/30/05/2022/629507469a7947e575bb39cf>).

²¹ “Music of the Spheres: why Aleksandr Voloshin returns to power. Available at: <https://newizv.ru/news/politics/14-12-2019/muzyka-sfer-zachem-vozvraschaetsya-vo-vlast-aleksandr-voloshin>

²² Delyagin M. Voloshin came out of the shadows – the liberal clan is preparing for the offensive. *IA Realist*. December 18, 2019.

²³ A. Chubais, the former head of Rusnano, was spotted in Turkey on March 23, 2022, the day after the current head of Rusnano, S. Kulikov, submitted an application to the Prosecutor General’s Office with a request to check the work of the state corporation for the period from 2010 to 2020 (source: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27380.5/4574001/>).

²⁴ The first reports of emigration from Russia emerged in April 2022 (source: <https://regcomment.ru/regions/altai/pokinul-stranu-i-brosil-komandu-pochemu-hloponin-mozhet-ispodit-kareru-ryadu-gubernatorov/>).

²⁵ Former Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation A. Dvorkovich resigned from the post of chairman of the Skolkovo Foundation in March 2022, after giving a resonant interview to the American publication *Mother Jones*, in which he criticized the special military operation (source: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/543843>). He did not speak about emigration, but, according to various Telegram channels, he lives in Israel (source: <https://sibkrai.ru/news/2127/954638/>).

²⁶ In May 2022, the State Duma adopted a protocol instruction to the Security and Anti-Corruption Committee to request information from the FSB, the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Investigative Committee and the government on the reliability of information about the departure from the Russian Federation of persons with access to state secrets, as well as on the legality of such departure in the context of the special military operation in Ukraine. The document mentioned I. Klebanov (source: <https://www.tek-all.ru/news/id8811-gde-zhivet-chlen-soveta-direktorov-pao-transneft-ilya-klebanov/>).

²⁷ Kudrin resigned. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/kudrin_podal_v_otstavku

²⁸ Artur Maksidov, former CEO of Intex, which was part of the Summa Group, and Sergey Polyakov, former director of United Grain Company JSC, were sentenced to 12 years imprisonment in a penal colony, Roman Gribov, former head of the Department of Economic Security of the UGC, was sentenced to 10 years in a general regime colony and a fine of 1 million rubles, CEO of the Energia-M enterprise Yuri Petrov was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment in a general regime colony and a fine of 700 thousand rubles. Someone is beyond the reach of Russian justice; this is, for example, former director of the Podolsk Electromechanical plant Murman Zakaradze (ex-adjutant of the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation; fled to Georgia) and former co-owner of the Lithuanian bank Snoras David Kaplan (ex-executive director of Stroynovatsiya LLC, ex-chairman of the Board of Directors of Intex LLC, co-founder of the Magomedov charitable foundation “PERI”, ex-director for development at the International Chess Federation and ex-director of the FIDE representative office in the Russian Federation, ex-member of the extremely violent gang “Vilnius Brigade” under the nickname “Dodik”; fled to Israel).

of the Supreme Council of the United Russia Party A. Shokhin asked the court to remit the sentence for Ziyavudin and Magomed Magomedov²⁹;

✓ December 9, D. Muryshev, head of the anti-corruption department of the Federal Customs Service of Russia, was arrested; he was the “chief anti-corruption officer and the closest creature of Vladimir Bulavin, head of the RF Federal Customs Service”; according to investigators, he received three bribes totaling several tens of millions of rubles (and was preparing to receive another one) through subordinate intermediaries³⁰.

From the point of view of the formation of prerequisites for a future Social Contract, it is important to note that Vladimir Putin’s article “Russia at the turn of the millennium” (1999) has been especially relevant in the conditions of the SMO. In fact, its main ideas that had been maturing for almost 25 years, were concretized in Presidential Decree 809 of November 9, 2022 “On approving the Fundamentals of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”; the Fundamentals significantly (from 4 to 17) expand the list of traditional values as “moral guidelines, shaping citizens’ worldview” (paragraph 4). According to the Fundamentals ..., these include “life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, unity of the peoples of Russia” (paragraph 5; *Insert 2*).

We should also note that Presidential Decree 809 sets out the goals of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional values (“preservation and strengthening of traditional values; countering the spread of destructive ideology; formation of the international image of

the Russian state as a guardian and defender of traditional universal spiritual and moral values” (paragraph 23). In fact, they represent major areas of practical implementation of the “Russian Idea”, which Vladimir Putin wrote about in 1999.

In general, we can point out the following: despite the fact that it will be possible to talk directly about the formation of a new Social Contract in Russia only after the end of the special military operation, the current managerial decisions of the authorities in the context of the SMO already set the appropriate vector of changes in society; work is underway for the future.

The results of this work are manifested in the second “contour” of a new Social Contract – in the consolidated support of the head of state by society and in the assessment of public administration effectiveness.

Second “contour” – public opinion dynamics

According to the results of sociological surveys, society shows consolidated support for the activities of the head of state. According to VCIOM, on average in Russia during the period of the SMO (from February to December 2022), the share of positive assessments of the RF President’s activities increased by 9 percentage points (from 65 to 74%); negative – decreased by 8 percentage points (from 24 to 16%). For comparison, over the same period of 2021, the shares of positive and negative assessments regarding the work of the head of state have not actually changed (61 and 28%, respectively).

Similar dynamics are demonstrated by the data of the public opinion monitoring conducted by VolRC RAS on the territory of the Vologda Oblast. From February to December 2022, the share of positive assessments of the President’s activities increased by 12 percentage points (from 48 to 60%); negative – decreased by 8 percentage points (from 33 to 25%). During the same period of the previous year, the level of approval of the work of the head of state has not actually changed (50–51%; *Tab. 1*).

²⁹ Ivanov A. Sentence: long imprisonment terms for the Magomedov brothers. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/prigovor_dlitel_nie_sroki_dlya_brat_ev_magomedovih

³⁰ The head of the Anti-Corruption Department of the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation was arrested on charges of corruption. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/nachal_nika_antikorruptcionnogo_upravleniya_fts_arestovali_po_obvineniyu_v_korruptcii

Insert 2

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Presidential Decree 809 of November 9, 2022 “On approving the Fundamentals of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”</p> | <p>Putin V.V. “Russia at the turn of the millennium” (1999)</p> |
| <p>“4. Traditional values are moral guidelines that form the worldview of Russian citizens, passed down from generation to generation, underlying the all-Russian civic identity and the unified cultural space of the country, strengthening civic unity, which have found their unique, original manifestation in the spiritual, historical and cultural development of the multinational people of Russia</p> <p>5. Traditional values include life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, unity of the peoples of Russia.</p> <p>7. The Russian Federation considers traditional values as the basis of Russian society, which makes it possible to protect and strengthen the sovereignty of Russia, ensure the unity of our multinational and multi-confessional country, preserve the people of Russia and develop human potential</p> <p>23. The goals of the state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional values are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) preservation and strengthening of traditional values, ensuring their transmission from generation to generation; b) countering the spread of destructive ideology; c) formation of the image of the Russian state in the international arena as a guardian and defender of traditional universal spiritual and moral values”. | <p>“Our country’s genuine renewal without any excessive costs cannot be assured by a mere experimentation in Russian conditions with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign text-books. The mechanical copying of other nations’ experience will not guarantee success, either. Every country, Russia included, has to search for its own way of renewal...</p> <p>Such are the main lessons of the outgoing century. They make it possible to outline the contours of a long-term strategy which is to enable us, within a comparatively short time, by historic standards, to overcome the present protracted crisis and create conditions for our country’s fast and stable economic and social headway:</p> <p>A) Russian Idea. Fruitful and creative work which our country needs so badly today is impossible in a split and internally disintegrated society, a society where the main social sections and political forces have different basic values and fundamental ideological orientations... The main point of consolidation of Russian society is what can be called the traditional values of Russians. Today, these values are seen quite clearly: patriotism, statesmanship, sovereignty, social solidarity.</p> <p>B) Strong State. A key to Russia’s recovery and growth is in the state-policy sphere today. Russia needs a strong state power and must have it... A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, workable federative state.</p> <p>C) Efficient Economy. The country needs a long-term national strategy of development... The lack of a long-range development strategy for the next 15–20 and more years, is badly felt in the economy. Another important lesson of the 1990s is the conclusion that Russia needs to form a wholesome system of state regulation of the economy and social sphere”.</p> |

Table 1. Dynamics of assessments of the RF President's work in February – December 2021–2022 according to VCIOM and VoIRC RAS, % of respondents

| Answer options | Feb. 2021 | Dec. 2021 | Dynamics (+/-), p.p. | Feb. 2022 | Dec. 2022 | Dynamics (+/-), p.p. |
|---|-----------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------|
| VCIOM data (national average)* | | | | | | |
| Share of positive assessments | 61.4 | 60.6 | -1 | 65.4 | 74.2 | +9 |
| Share of negative assessments | 28.7 | 28.4 | 0 | 23.9 | 15.5 | -8 |
| VoIRC RAS data (for Vologda Oblast)** | | | | | | |
| Share of positive assessments | 50.1 | 50.6 | +1 | 48.0 | 59.5 | +12 |
| Share of negative assessments | 30.9 | 33.8 | +3 | 32.9 | 25.1 | -8 |
| * Wording of the question: "In general, do you approve or disapprove of the work of the RF President?" Survey method – phone interview. For December 2022, the average data for two surveys are presented (as of December 4, 2022 and December 11, 2022). Source: Ratings. Activities of governmental institutions. Available at: https://wciom.ru/ratings/dejatelnost-gosudarstvennykh-institutov/ | | | | | | |
| ** Wording of the question: "How do you currently assess the work of the RF President?" Survey method – questionnaire at the place of residence of respondents. | | | | | | |

In addition to supporting the political course implemented by the head of state, in the context of the SMO (as we noted in the previous article³¹) new features of civil society are being formed: "Without waiting for draft summons, more than 20 thousand people joined the military as volunteers ...; the Yunarmiya [Youth Army] movement covered all regions of Russia and united more than 1,251 thousand children and adolescents; in cooperation with the authorities of RF constituent entities, work continued on the development of the "Avangard" network of educational and methodological centers for military-patriotic education of youth. In 2022, 20 regional centers and 25 urban centers will be opened in cities with a population of over 100 thousand people. In total, more than 150 thousand high school students have been trained in 88 "Avangard" centers"³².

It is also important that in the conditions of the SMO and the political decisions taken by the state, certain ideas about the image of the country's future are formed in Russian society. Thus, according to an all-Russian research conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IS FCTAS RAS), the main

and most desirable characteristics of the image of the future of Russia, according to citizens, are "social justice" (despite the fact that from 2021 to 2022, the proportion of those sharing this opinion decreased by 4 percentage points, from 51 to 47%), "strong power" (increased by 9 p.p., from 31 to 40% compared to 2021, "respect for human rights" (decreased by 2 p.p., from 41 to 39%), "traditional values" (increased by 6 p.p. compared to 2021, from 33 to 39%; *Tab. 2*).

According to VoIRC RAS monitoring data, over the past 20 years (from 2000 to 2022), there has been an increase in the share of people who believe that the ideas uniting the country should be as follows: "unity of the peoples of Russia" (by 29 p.p., from 23 to 52%), "strengthening Russia as a country with the rule of law" (by 17 p.p., from 22 to 39%), "uniting peoples to address global issues (by 18 p.p., from 8 to 26%), "returning to socialist ideals and values" (by 13 p.p., from 7 to 20%). Moreover, it is important to note that over the same period, the share of those who find it difficult to answer this question has significantly decreased (by 11 p.p., from 32 to 21%), that is, people have become more confident in their choice of the main vectors of Russia's development (*Tab. 3*).

³¹ Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). The special military operation reveals new features of civil society. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(5), 9.

³² Speech of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu at an expanded meeting of the Board of the RF Ministry of Defense, December 21, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70159>

Table 2. Desired image of the future of Russia in the mass consciousness of Russians (IS RAS national average data)*, %

| Answer option | 2021 | 2022 | Dynamics (+/-) 2022 to 2021 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| A country where social justice is ensured | 51 | 47 | -4 |
| A country in which there is a strong government that ensures order and development | 31 | 40 | +9 |
| A country in which human rights, democracy, and freedom of personal expression are ensured | 41 | 39 | -2 |
| A country that has preserved national traditions, moral and religious values | 33 | 39 | +6 |
| A great world power, uniting different peoples | 27 | 35 | +8 |
| A country with a free market, private property, and minimal state interference in the economy | 16 | 21 | +5 |
| A country where social inequalities and social stratification are limited | 20 | 17 | -3 |
| An active partner of the West | 15 | 14 | -1 |
| The Russian State is a country first of all for Russians (Russian nation-state) | 12 | 8 | -4 |

* More than three answers were allowed; ranked according to the data for 2022.
 Source: Russian society in the context of new challenges and threats (context of sociological diagnostics). Information and analytical report of IS RAS. Moscow 2022. P. 187.

Table 3. Perceptions of the region's population about the idea of unification of Russian society (VolRC RAs data for the Vologda Oblast), % of respondents

| Answer option | 2000 | 2022 | Dynamics (+/-) 2022 to 2021 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| The idea of uniting the peoples of Russia in order to revive it as a great power | 22.6 | 51.9 | +29 |
| The idea of strengthening Russia as a state governed by the rule of law | 22.1 | 38.5 | +16 |
| The idea of uniting peoples to address global issues facing humanity | 7.8 | 25.9 | +18 |
| Return to socialist ideals and values | 6.6 | 20.1 | +14 |
| The idea of uniting all Slavic peoples | 5 | 18.2 | +13 |
| The idea of opposition to the West, self-reliance | 3.2 | 12.1 | +9 |
| The idea of individual freedom, priority of the interests of the individual over the interests of the state | 3.9 | 9 | +5 |
| The idea of national uniqueness, a special historical mission of the Russian people | 2.3 | 6.7 | +4 |
| The idea of rapprochement with the West, Russia's entry into the Common European Home | 3.9 | 3 | -1 |
| The idea of cleansing society through the Orthodox faith | 4.1 | 2.7 | -1 |
| Another idea | 0.2 | 3.2 | +3 |
| I find it difficult to answer | 31.9 | 20.5 | -11 |

Ranked according to data for 2022. Wording of the question: "What idea, in your opinion, is capable of uniting our society?"

Thus, sociological surveys, which are the main tool for measuring the “temperature” of society and the dynamics of social attitudes, convincingly show that the majority of the country’s population supports Russia’s active struggle to achieve full national sovereignty; moreover, the decisions taken by the authorities in response to the challenges that arise in the course of the SMO change society, consolidate various segments of the population around such concepts as “traditional values”, “social justice”, “strong state”, “national culture”, etc. All this, of course, is one of the contours of the future of a new Social Contract.

There also emerges the third “contour”. It consists in raising the question of the need for the preparation of a new Social Contract by the expert community.

In the expert environment there emerge practical proposals for the formulation and discussion of specific points of a new Social Contract. For example, according to E.V. Balatsky, its foundations can be as follows³³:

- ✓ **new ideology;**
- ✓ **determining the national economic system;**
- ✓ **providing the means of professional social mobility and personal responsibility;**
- ✓ **integrating the Bank of Russia into the general system of public administration** (the Bank of Russia should become a full-fledged element of the national system of economic regulation rather than act contrary to the interests of the national producer);
- ✓ **de-bureaucratization of the economy** (it is necessary to fight against all kinds of bureaucracy, and this should become a national task);
- ✓ **alleviating extreme forms of inequality** (fighting against extreme forms of inequality should be complemented by a system of popular capitalism, when the largest possible part of the population is involved as owners of public and private enterprises);
- ✓ **stopping uncontrolled immigration** (ignoring the interests of indigenous representatives of the labor market and Russian culture can lead to outbreaks of violence and loss of control of the authorities over the situation);
- ✓ **introducing responsibility for political sabotage** (Russia’s SMO in Ukraine gave rise

to a new phenomenon for the country – mass emigration of public figures who continued anti-government propaganda from abroad; the overwhelming part of the population was outraged by such behavior of these persons; thus, society is expecting fair punishment of people who left the country in difficult times and who took the side of the enemy).

A.G. Dugin’s proposals on the formation of an “original ideology in Russia”³⁴ are less specific, but still important from the point of view of forming the prerequisites for a new Social Contract. The main features of this ideology are as follows:

- ✓ **sharp divergence from liberal democracy, which the Collective West seeks to impose on all mankind... is an alternative model of the socio-political system;**
- ✓ **continuity of cultural and ideological constants (both in traditional society and in Soviet times) in Russian history;**
- ✓ **difference from any previous ideology, each of which is historically limited, but offers an original and original synthesis of what was most essential in each of them;**
- ✓ **inviting all Russian citizens to the free creative construction of a truly just, spiritual, honest moral society on the other side of narrow dogmas and artificial axiomatics – in a sense, this is an open ideology aimed at the future;**
- ✓ **disclosure of the essence of Russia’s civilizational uniqueness and the dialogue with other civilizations in the context of a multipolar world order.**

³³ Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social Contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. *Journal of Institutional Studies*, 14(3), 74–90.

³⁴ Dugin A.G. Decree 809. The foundation of the sovereign ideology is laid: 14 points of the sovereign ideology of Russia. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23617>

Thus, in the context of increased threats to national security accompanying the period of the special military operation and, in fact, the period of Russia's open struggle to achieve full national sovereignty, we can talk about the formation of at least three contours of a future Social Contract – directly related to the activities of the state, to the changes occurring under the influence of specific management decisions, and to the request (specific proposals) for a new Social Contract from the expert community.

However, the mere presence of certain contours does not guarantee that they will become a system. There are a number of very significant circumstances that prevent this.

First, the goals of the SMO have not yet been achieved, and without this, neither a new Social Contract within the country nor an attitude toward Russia as a full-fledged, sovereign geopolitical partner in the international political arena is possible. At the same time, we can agree with experts who note that “there is no predetermination in the future of Russia, and there cannot be any”³⁵; everything depends on us.

Second, in order to implement the provisions of a new Social Contract formulated by experts and fulfill the main criteria of the image of the future formulated by Russian society, **there are still not enough specific organizational mechanisms and tools**; in particular, it is evident from the effectiveness of achieving the goals stated by Vladimir Putin in 1999 in the article “Russia at the turn of the millennium”: the goals represent

a triad of “Russian Idea”, “Strong State”, and “Efficient Economy”, which the President named as “outlines of a long-term strategy designed to... create prerequisites for rapid and sustainable economic and social development”. For example:

✓ Many experts have been talking about the necessity and essence of the “Russian Idea” in recent years (A. Dugin, N. Starikov, S. Sulakshin, A. Fursov, etc.). The President himself expressed his understanding of the “Russian Idea” when he said that “the national idea of Russia is patriotism, I think there can be nothing else... But patriotism should not be leavened, musty and sour. Patriotism consists in devoting oneself to the development of their country, its movement forward”³⁶.

However, the Constitution of the Russian Federation still contains a ban on state ideology³⁷, and this prevents the transition of the “Russian Idea” to a new level – to the level of its clear formulation at the state level and bringing it to understanding and unambiguous interpretation by the broad strata of Russian society.

Over the past 20 years, much has been done to implement such an element as “Strong State” (“strong state power”). This is especially true concerning the amendments to the 2020 Constitution, many of which are aimed precisely at strengthening the power hierarchy in Russia³⁸.

In fact, the entire system of public administration built by the RF President is centralized, and Vladimir Putin plays the role of “chief arbiter” in it.

³⁵ Balatsky E.V. (2022). Russia in the epicenter of geopolitical turbulence: Signs of eventual domination. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(5), 51.

³⁶ Interview with the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in the program “Moscow. Kremlin. Putin”. Available at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/8438743>

³⁷ Article 13, paragraph 2 of the RF Constitution: “No ideology can be established as state or mandatory”. The Constitution of the Russian Federation as amended on July 1, 2020. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/constitution/item#chapter_start

³⁸ For example, introducing a ban on foreign citizenship and a residence permit for the Prime Minister, ministers and heads of federal bodies, governors, senators, deputies and judges; strengthening interaction between state and municipal authorities; introducing a provision on the State Council into the Constitution; the right of the State Duma to approve the Prime Minister, and upon their proposal – all their deputies and federal ministers; “zeroing” of presidential terms; the President of the Russian Federation gets the right to personally appoint and dismiss federal ministers (Article 112), may dismiss the Prime Minister (Article 83, paragraph “a”), etc.

Table 4. The share of Russians who voted for Vladimir Putin in the presidential elections in the period from 2000 to 2018

| Presidential elections | March 26, 2000 | March 14, 2004 | March 4, 2012 | March 18, 2018 |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| million people | 39.74 | 49.56 | 45.6 | 56.4 |
| % of turnout | 52.94 | 71.31 | 63.60 | 76.69 |
| Source: RF Central Election Commission. | | | | |

Table 5. The share of Russians who voted for the United Russia Party in the elections to the RF State Duma in the period from 2003 to 2021

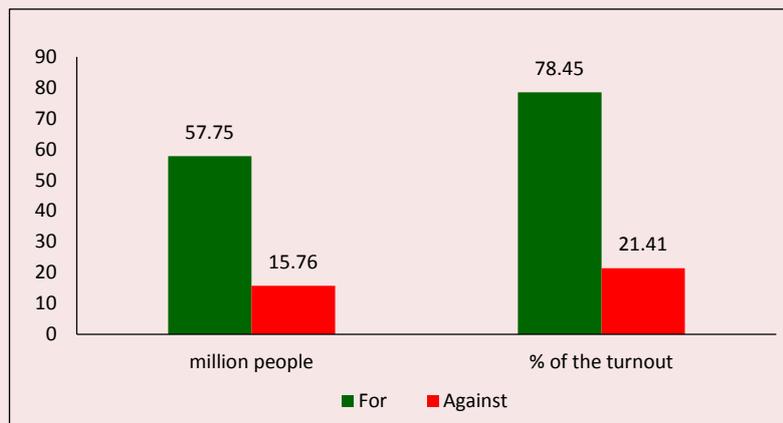
| State Duma elections | Dec. 7, 2003 | Dec. 2, 2007 | Dec. 4, 2011 | Sept. 18, 2016 | Sept. 19, 2021 |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| million people | 22.78 | 44.71 | 32.37 | 28.53 | 28.06 |
| % of turnout | 37.56 | 64.30 | 49.31 | 54.20 | 49.82 |
| Source: RF Central Election Commission. | | | | | |

At the same time, we should emphasize that the “credit of trust” that the society regularly “issues” personally to the President and the party in power at the presidential elections (*Tab. 4*) and parliamentary elections (*Tab. 5*), as well as the results of the all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution, which showed that 79% of the

population support the consolidation of traditional spiritual and moral values in the Basic Law of the country and the strengthening of the organizational foundations of the public administration system (including in the form of strengthening the powers of the head of state; *Fig. 1*), allow us to say that the course of strengthening the power announced by the President in 1999 received support in Russian society.

In times of crisis, such a system of “hands-on” control of the state plays a significant positive role. For example, in 2020, against the background of force majeure and extreme conditions caused by the first “waves” of the coronavirus pandemic, the centralized nature of the public administration system allowed it to adapt to new challenges: the personnel composition of the RF Government has changed; operational meetings and specific decisions on the implementation of complex tasks started to take place on a daily basis (including with the personal participation of the President); in the fight against coronavirus and maintaining the socio-economic situation, the role of the heads of RF constituent entities has significantly increased.

Figure 1. Results of the all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution (June 25 – July 1, 2020)



Wording of the question: “Do you approve of the amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation?”

Source: RF Central Election Commission.

This experience is largely reproduced in the conditions of 2022. Thus, during the special operation:

✓ a number of laws have been adopted aimed at strengthening the powers of the RF Government³⁹;

✓ after the “stupidity” revealed during the partial mobilization⁴⁰, on October 21, 2022, the Coordination Council under the Government was established to meet the needs of the RF Armed Forces, other troops, military formations and bodies (the chairman of the Coordination Council is the chairman of the Government of the Russian

Federation; the composition of the Coordination Council is approved personally by the President);

✓ according to the decree “On measures implemented in RF constituent entities in connection with Presidential Decree 756, dated October 19, 2022”, the heads of RF constituent entities received additional powers to make decisions on carrying out certain measures for territorial and civil defense, measures to protect the population and territories from natural and man-made emergencies, and also the authority to implement measures to meet the needs of the Armed Forces.

And nevertheless it is premature to talk about a “strong state” in Russia with a significant part of liberal elites in power, occupying various (including high) positions in the public administration system. In previous articles, we have repeatedly given concrete examples of how officials of various stripes (from federal ministers to municipal-level civil servants) raised in conditions of liberal ideology demonstrate their ability to bypass legal and moral laws in order to achieve personal gain⁴².

According to experts, “the Coordination Council headed by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has been entrusted with mobilizing the state for the special military operation. The governors are also strengthening their powers – and thus **Vladimir Putin repeats the scheme of division of responsibility used in the fight against COVID**”⁴¹.

³⁹ For example:

June 7, 2022, amendments were made to the law on the use of pension savings of liquidated nonstate pension funds (NPFs) remaining after settlements with creditors. As experts noted, “the fundamental meaning of the amendments is simple: the President of Russia can do anything in the financial sphere... liberals of all stripes formally remain in their places, but their actual capabilities are reduced to operational, tactical, routine management... the real power in the field of finance will go to professionals who are not visible in the presidential administration (it is no more engaged in economics for quite a long time), but are quite obvious in the Mishustin government” (source: Prime Minister Mishustin provided the legal framework for ensuring financial stability and comprehensive modernization. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/183-sobytiya/102696-prem-er-mishustin-obespechil-juridicheskie-ramki-obespecheniya-finansovoy-stabil-nosti-i-kompleksnoy-modernizatsii>).

November 4, a law was signed aimed at improving the legislation on the state civil service. The law provides for the possibility of extending civil service beyond the age limit of 65 years and up to 70 years for managers from the main group of positions in federal departments subordinate to the RF Government.

November 21, a law on softening the budget rule for 2023–2024 was signed, according to which the Cabinet of Ministers will be able to make decisions on granting state guarantees of the Russian Federation in 2023 that are not provided for by the programs of such guarantees, and in the manner and on conditions that he himself will establish (source: Putin signed a decree on softening the budget rule for 2023–2024. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20221121/byudzhets-1833112507.html>), and others.

⁴⁰ Speech of the RF President at a meeting with the elected heads of regions. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69567>

⁴¹ Rodin I. Putin introduces Russia into a paramilitary situation. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2022-10-19/3_8569_securitycouncil.html

⁴² See, for example:

Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2018). “...And most importantly, there will be no destitute people in Russia”. “Capitalism for the few” – a key problem of national security. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 11(2), 9–23; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2020). Russian statehood in the face of the “corruption of the elites” threat. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 13(6), 24–53; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A difficult road after the Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41.

Real life today, during the period of SMO, shows that many representatives of the ruling elites still continue to behave the way they used to behave in the era of the liberal 30 years that is obviously becoming a thing of the past; they continue to make decisions that in the new conditions only cause outrage among the general population⁴³.

To put it mildly, the idea of “strong state” is undermined also by some reports criticizing managerial decisions made by the authorities⁴⁴, as well as statements of some representatives of the elites, including people from the Presidential Administration and their family members, contradicting the public’s ideas about those celebrities who left the country after the start of the SMO⁴⁵.

⁴³ See, for example:

1. The story of the Russian gymnast I. Kulyak (May 2022), who was suspended by Russian officials from participating in national competitions for one year for public support of the special operation. “If we allow Kulyak to participate in competitions, then sanctions may be imposed on the entire federation”, said Valentina Rodionenko, senior coach of the Russian national gymnastics team (source: Soshenko A. Sports officials: Behaving like goats going after carrots. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/sportivnie_chinovniki_kak_kozli_za_morkovkoj). The official decision is as follows: “In accordance with the decision of the disciplinary commission of the Gymnastics Ethics Foundation (GEF) dated May 17, 2022, Ivan Kulyak is not allowed to participate in events held under the auspices of the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG), as well as in competitions organized by an affiliated FIG member federation, for one year from the date of this decision” (source: https://aif.ru/sport/dvazhdy_nakazanny_za_z_gimnastu_kulyaku_zapretili_vystupat_v_rossii)

2. The case of Kh. Pirogova, an independent deputy of the Novosibirsk City Council (July 2022), who spoke unethically about the servicemen who died during the special operation; her statement led to the initiation of criminal proceedings against her. On July 25, Pirogova was supposed to come for questioning, but instead left Russia for Kazakhstan, and then for Georgia. Since August 4, she has been put on the international wanted list (source: https://www.oml.ru/news/society/290711-svadb_a_kleveta_vzjatki_top-5_gromkikh_politicheskikh_skandalov_novosibirska_v_2022_godu/).

3. The scandal with the sale of the book *Leto v pionerskom galstuke* (Summer in the Young Pioneer Scarf), which contains explicit LGBT propaganda (the book received sharp criticism from Z. Prilepin, N. Mikhalkov, State Duma deputies A. Balberov, V. Milonov, Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Moscow Oblast K. Mishonova, etc.); however, after conducting an appropriate check, Roskomnadzor explained: “Since the book is marked “18+”, it means that its turnover does not violate the law “On the protection of children from information that harms their health and development” (source: <https://iz.ru/1375659/ekaterina-korinenko/lvpg-tematika-roskomnadzor-proveril-roman-letov-pionerskom-galstuke>). Nevertheless, Roskomnadzor proposed to the Russian Book Union to withdraw the works of fiction about child non-traditional love relationships from sales (source: <https://news.rambler.ru/community/49235259-dilogiya-letov-pionerskom-galstuke-ostaetsya-v-prodazhe-posle-preduprezhdeniya-roskomnadzora/>), and currently, the online copies of the book are being withdrawn from online stores (source: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5707669>) and from the bookshelves of many regions of Russia (sources: <https://bel.ru/news/2022-12-08/vot-i-konchilos-letov-kniga-o-geyah-pionerah-bolshe-ne-prodayotsya-v-belgorode-2610787>; <https://msk1.ru/text/business/2022/11/26/71848241/> and others.). In Khabarovsk, all the available printed copies of the book were bought up and destroyed by the public organization “Council of Fathers” (source: <https://news.ru/regions/ya-schastliv-eto-delat-v-habarovske-unichtozhili-knigi-s-lgbt-propagandoj/>).

4. A scandal at the intellectual literature fair “Non/fictio№24” (November 2022). Several writers and poets who write about the Donbass (I. Karaulov, O. Starushko, A. Gasparyan; A. Revyakina, a poet and member of the DPR Writers Union, and others) were denied participation in one of the main events of the Russian book world, which traditionally gathers hundreds of authors and tens of thousands of visitors. This caused a flurry of criticism against the organizers, and immediately after the scandal they made changes to the schedule of the fair and reported that there was no problem anymore (sources: <https://dailystorm.ru/kultura/patrioticheskie-pisateli-otvoevali-pravo-na-uchastie-v-knizhnoy-yarmarke-non-fictiono24>)

⁴⁴ See, for example: VCIOM message containing criticism of the law banning LGBT propaganda (November 2022). After the RF State Duma adopted a package of draft laws banning LGBT propaganda, pedophilia and transgenderism, a message appeared in the VCIOM telegram channel containing, among other things, the following lines (direct quote): “Now all the sexually “wrong” people will be doing this on the sly, as they always have been doing (until the last 30 years). And if they don’t want to hide, they will simply go somewhere where there is no need to hide! Therefore, one might call this law differently: the Law on the Promotion of Emigration. And to be more precise – on encouraging the emigration of creative people. After all, it is in this area, as we all know perfectly well, that nontraditional sex, like everything nontraditional in general, is much more widespread. But on the other hand, why do we need creative people, this vaunted “creative class”? All they bring is unrest!” (source: Ivanov A. Coming-out of VCIOM? We are waiting for explanations from the management of the eminent state corporation. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/kaming-aut_vtcioma_zhdyom_ob_yasnenij_ot_rukovodstva_imenitoj_goskontori). December 2, A. Khinshtein, head of the State Duma Committee on Information Policy, in his telegram channel made a request to clarify the situation (source: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/02/12/2022/638a2e3e9a7947024c7c7b95>).

⁴⁵ See, for example: Dmitri Peskov, press secretary for the Russian President, called Ivan Urgant a “great patriot”; Peskov’s wife Tatyana Navka spoke in support of the showman: “I respect Ivan very much and he should not disappear” (source: Ivanov A. The wife of the press secretary for the RF President declared great respect for Ivan Urgant. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/supruga_press-sekretarya_prezidenta_rf_zayavila_o_bol_shom_uvazhenii_k_ivanu_urgantu).

Thus, in achieving the goal of having “strong power” in Russia, as the President wrote in 1999, there are still quite contradictory results.

✓ The results of achieving the task of building an “efficient economy” in Russia are also contradictory. On the one hand, the Russian economy managed to overcome the difficult period associated with the acute phase of the coronavirus pandemic (2020–2021), accompanied, among other things, by large-scale quarantine restrictions throughout the country, financial costs to meet the needs of the healthcare system, etc. Russia’s economy also managed to withstand the unprecedented pressure of the Collective West’s economic sanctions that hit it after February 24, 2022, which allowed the President to openly declare that “the strategy of economic blitzkrieg has failed”⁴⁶.

On the other hand, postponement of the implementation of national projects⁴⁷, absence of tangible positive changes in the dynamics of poverty and inequality⁴⁸, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation acting autonomously from the state (and, accordingly, from the goals of national development) and the still existing system of “crony capitalism”⁴⁹ – so far, all this does not allow us to say that the goal of creating an “efficient economy” in Russia has been fully achieved.

Thus, practice shows that the Russian economy is able to mobilize and respond to external “shocks”, but in the absence of tangible and long-term success in combating poverty and inequality it cannot be considered a “pillar” of Russian statehood based on a new Social Contract, in which social values and social justice occupy a significant place.

We should also note that the stability of a new Social Contract, its viability for decades directly depends on the extent **to which an element that prevents the threat of destruction from within is introduced into its informal structure.** This is clearly evidenced by the historical experience of the collapse of the USSR, when, despite the quite unambiguous opinion of the majority of citizens of the country (90% of voters voted for the preservation of the Soviet Union⁵⁰), individual representatives of the ruling elites (namely S. Shushkevich and V. Kebich on the part of the Republic of Belarus, B. Yeltsin and G. Burbulis on the part of the Russian Federation (RSFSR), L. Kravchuk and V. Fokin on the part of Ukraine) signed the Belovezha Accords on December 8, 1991, which stated that **“the USSR as the subject of international law and the geopolitical reality ceases to exist”**⁵¹...

⁴⁶ The RF President’s speech at a meeting on economic issues, April 18, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68228>

⁴⁷ Decree on the national development goals of Russia until 2030. July 21, 2020. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63728>

⁴⁸ According to Rosstat, the share of the Russian population with monetary incomes below the subsistence level has not actually changed since 2015 and amounts to 12–13% of the total population: in 2015 – 13.4%, in 2020 – 12.1%, in the 1st half of 2022 – 13.1% (sources: Official statistics. Standard of living. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13397>; Information and analytical materials. Short-term economic indicators of the Russian Federation – 2022. Available at: https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b22_02/Main.htm).

The R/P 10% ratio (showing how many times the average level of monetary income of 10% of the population with the highest incomes exceeds the average level of monetary income of 10% of the population with the lowest incomes) in Russia for the same period decreased from 15.5 to 14.1 times: in 2015 – 15.5 times, in 2020 – 14.4 times, in January – September 2022 – 14.1 times (source: Socio-economic situation of Russia: Report. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/compendium/document/50801>)

⁴⁹ Dobrenkov V.I., Ispravnikova N.R. (2013). The Russian version of “capitalism for the few”. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 18. Sotsiologiya i politologiya*, 3, 26–55.

⁵⁰ The turnout for the All-Union referendum on the preservation of the USSR on March 17, 1991 was 97.8% (1233858 people). 89.8% of voters (1107980 people) voted for the preservation of the USSR; 9.2% (113283 people) voted against its preservation. Source: Message of the Central Commission of the USSR Referendum “On the results of the USSR referendum held on March 17, 1991”. Available at: https://www.gorby.ru/userfiles/file/referendum_rezultat.pdf

⁵¹ The text of the agreement on the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States on December 8, 1991. Available at: <http://www.rusarchives.ru/statehood/10-12-soglashenie-sng.shtml>

There are many books and articles on the subsequent raider seizure of power and the transfer of national wealth and state property (natural resources, economic entities, financial capital, etc.) into the hands of individual representatives of economic and political “elites” for a song. The main thing is that both the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent establishment of the system of “oligarchic capitalism” in Russia were carried out by **a very limited number of people in power**, whose names have already been made public, and the historical assessment of their actions (at least in the expert community), by and large, has been given: “national betrayal, which has no statute of limitations”.

The Russian sociologist, RAS Corresponding Member Zh.T. Toshchenko gives the following characterization to those people who stood at the origins of the collapse of the USSR, which led “to the collapse of the established way of life, revision of orientations and values of tens of millions of people... and the gap in the progressive development of the state and society”⁵²:

“...They have specific characteristics; first, **their behavior is completely (or significantly) at variance with (and even contradicts) the interests and concerns of the population**; second, these people propose (and even implement) such actions, which **can be called shocking (to put it mildly)**; third, they have specific personal traits...:

First, many of them have **irrepressible, unlimited and even pathological craving for power. Power for these people becomes an end in itself, for which they are ready to change their ideological positions, go over corpses, turn friends into enemies and vice versa.**

Second, phantom types are characterized by an **explicit or hidden (undeclared) desire for fame, fame, publicity**. They need to be in the limelight, to claim that they express public opinion, to be influential in politics and the social field.

Third, the indicator of the phantom personality type is **pathological thirst for wealth**, which is gained through various frauds and sometimes criminal actions; various loopholes and gaps in legislation were used, personal and group connections were mobilized. And if in the rest of the world wealth was achieved by long and hard work, then in post-Soviet Russia various ways of achieving it were used: financial pyramids were created, voucher and collateral auctions were organized, threats and violence were practiced in every possible way, up to the physical elimination of competitors or people just standing in their way, false bankruptcy was carried out, unjustified benefits were obtained.

And finally, one should not ignore the personality traits – **love of power, vanity, unbridled ambitions. These characters easily changed their political ambitions and preferences by “putting on different masks”**.

⁵² Toshchenko Zh.T. (2015). *Fantomy rossiiskogo obshchestva* [Phantoms of the Russian Society]. Moscow: Tsentr sotsial'nogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga. Pp. 14, 64.

The newspaper *Pravda*, under the heading “The disguises of werewolves”⁵³, published an interview with Zh.T. Toshchenko, the author of the monograph *Phantoms of the Russian Society* in order (as the authors of the heading note) “**to consider personally the historical guilt of especially odious traitors [Yeltsin, Kalugin, Yakovlev, Sobchak, Nemtsov, etc.], which has no statute of limitations...** If it had been possible to prevent or stop in time the beginning of the country’s defeat, officially named Gorbachev’s “perestroika” and Yeltsin’s “reforms”, then the great Soviet Union would have celebrated its 100th anniversary in December this year. However, the plan of the enemies of socialism in the fateful 1991 was put into action. And a colossal role in this, as our people are becoming increasingly aware of, was played **by the betrayal in the highest echelons of the leading party and state bodies...**

The man-made nature of our tragedy and its consequences should already be clear to everyone today. After all, if you come to think of it, the current military operation in Ukraine is a forced result of treacherous actions of the very “fifth column” aimed at eliminating the Soviet power. That is why there is no statute of limitations for the crime committed by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, A.N. Yakovlev and others like them”.

“... the dark shadows of the treacherous past hover in today’s reality, they are in no hurry to completely disappear. **Conducting the special military operation requires a clearer and sharper approach to assessing the figures responsible for everything that our people have experienced over the past thirty years. We will be able to go along the right way into the future only if we make fair assessments of the behavior of the destroyers of the Soviet power**”⁵⁴.

Nevertheless, considering the prospects for the formation of a new social contract, it is fundamentally important that the events of 30 years ago be critically evaluated at the state level. And not only the very fact of the collapse of the USSR (which the President has already called “the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century”⁵⁵), but also the people who arranged it.

After all, in fact, it was the collapse of the USSR that predetermined the further development of Russia in line with the liberal-capitalist paradigm, which ultimately forced it to take up arms and defend its right to the future and to the preservation of national sovereignty; it also led to the emergence on December 17, 2021 of official draft documents of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the

⁵³ See, for example:

1. Political nonentity. *Pravda*, 2021, no. 69, July 2–5.
2. The disguises of werewolves. *Pravda*, 2021, no. 93, August 27–30.
3. “Shock therapist” Gaidar acted recklessly and mercilessly. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 20, February 25–28.
4. How many people remember who Burbulis is? *Pravda*, 2022, no. 28, March 18–21.
5. This Kozyrev played with someone else’s trumps. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 40, April 15–18.
6. Berezovsky’s Diaboliad. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 64, June 17–20.
7. The abyss of betrayal – Aleksandr Yakovlev. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 91, August 19–22.
8. An insidious knife in the back of state security. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 106, September 23–26.
9. He became a murderer of his country. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 108, October 1–4.
10. Sobchak is a narcissistic talker and grandstander. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 114, October 15–18.
11. The Nemtsov outdid Khlestakov himself. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 132, November 25–28.

⁵⁴ An insidious knife in the back of state security. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 106, September 23–26.

⁵⁵ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly, April 25, 2005. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/36354>

requirement to ensure legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO⁵⁶ (what the West called nothing else than “Putin’s ultimatum”⁵⁷); and a little later (February 24, 2022), when it became obvious that all diplomatic opportunities for ensuring Russia’s sovereign development were reduced to “zero”, the special operation began – a symbol and a real Rubicon, which indicated that in its struggle for a new, sovereign and nationally oriented Social Contract, Russia would go to the end...

In other words, it is impossible to build a new Social Contract without a critical, full and open assessment of the previous contract (at least so as not to “walk into the same trap twice” in the future), and the state has not provided this assessment so far.

Thus, we agree with experts that it is impossible for Russia to achieve full national sovereignty without comprehensive changes at the national level and without a new Social Contract that would define key criteria of the relationship between society and government; in this regard, the following two points should be noted.

1. The presence of the contours of a new Social Contract indicates that the course of the national policy of the head of state, implemented in fact since 1999, can ultimately help Russia to achieve full national sovereignty, competitiveness and find its own place, worthy of Russian culture and history, in the system of international relations in the geopolitical reality that is being formed before our eyes.

Russia’s demands to ensure legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO:

- “exclude the further expansion of NATO and the accession of Ukraine to the alliance;
- abandon any NATO military activity in Ukraine, Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia, Central Asia;
- do not deploy medium-range and shorter-range missiles where they can hit the territory of the other party;
- give an obligation not to create conditions that can be regarded as a threat by the other party;
- not to deploy weapons and forces in areas where it will be perceived by the other party as a threat to national security;
- the United States undertakes to exclude further expansion of NATO to the east and to refuse post-Soviet countries admission to the alliance;
- the United States undertakes not to create military bases in post-Soviet countries, not to use their military infrastructure and not to develop military cooperation with them”⁵⁸.

2. However, the presence of many factors (external and internal) that hinder further development of separate and so far disparate elements of a new Social Contract indicates that the right course is being implemented at an insufficient pace.

Currently, the President has to act in extremely difficult conditions. At the same time we should emphasize that against the background of, one might say, extreme geopolitical threats (and having a direct impact on the internal socio-economic

⁵⁶ About Russian draft documents on ensuring legal guarantees of security by the United States and NATO. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/international_safety/1790809/

⁵⁷ “Putin’s ultimatum”: How will NATO’s undertaking in Ukraine turn out for the world. Available at: <https://www.ntv.ru/novosti/2648130/>

⁵⁸ About Russian draft documents on ensuring legal guarantees of security by the United States and NATO. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1790809/); RIA Novosti. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20211217/bezopasnost-1764226189.html>

situation in the country), both international contacts and internal meetings of the head of state continue to be conducted using a “hands-on approach”. The recent meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects has shown⁵⁹ that the issues of investments in technological development projects, social support, modernization of primary health care, development of preferential and family mortgage mechanisms and many other aspects of domestic policy, determining the living conditions of citizens and ensuring the national sovereignty of the country, continue to remain in the attention of the head of state. The President noted that “we will do it **calmly, routinely and consistently, without haste**. We will attain our objectives to strengthen our defense capability in general as well as meeting the goals of the special military operation”⁶⁰; and this cannot but inspire optimism and confidence in the decisions he makes.

However, the Rubicon that Russia crossed on February 24, 2022, as well as the protracted nature of the special operation, dictates the need to take a significant number of difficult but important steps related to achieving the goals of the SMO.

It will be possible to start designing a new Social Contract only after the goals of the SMO have been achieved and only after a public and comprehensive assessment has been conducted with regard to the period of the “turbulent 1990s” (including persons

involved in the collapse of the USSR) and the liberal elites who still continue to implement activities that do not fit into the rhetoric and the goal-setting of Russia’s struggle to achieve full national sovereignty and competitiveness of the state.

Nevertheless, the head of state, through his specific decrees, continues to implement a purposeful movement toward the development of civic responsibility and patriotic self-awareness in new generations of Russians. Thus, December 23, 2022, a history course was introduced into the federal educational program for secondary general education, containing the section “Russia in the 21st century”, which reveals such topics as “economic recovery in 1999–2007; crisis in 2008; President Dmitry Medvedev; election of Vladimir Putin; “The Immortal Regiment” and celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory; accession of Crimea to Russia; Olympic Games in Sochi and the World Cup; Russia’s foreign policy and assistance to Syria; events in Ukraine in 2014 and Russia’s position; Minsk Agreements on Donbass and humanitarian assistance to the DPR and LPR; fight against coronavirus and the global oil crisis; special military operation and sanctions against Russia; and many others”⁶¹.

The society is waiting for the next concrete step from the head of state and the Government, since “Russia no longer has either the right or the time to doze”⁶².

⁵⁹ Meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects on December 15, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70086>

⁶⁰ Vladimir Putin’s speech at an expanded meeting of the Board of the Defense Ministry. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70159>

⁶¹ Ivanov A. The school curriculum that includes initial military training and the study of the SMO has been approved. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/utverzhdjena_shkol_naya_programma_s_nachal_noj_voennoj_podgotovkoj_i_izucheniem_svo

⁶² Dugin A.G. Dromocracy. Speed as power. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/dromokratiya_skorost_kak_vlast_

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