

EDITORIAL

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Evolving Threats to National Security



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Abstract. June 13, 2023, the President of the Russian Federation held a meeting with war correspondents, at which the following most pressing issues were discussed: the situation on the front line, the state of the Russian military-industrial complex, the effectiveness of personnel “elevators” of the public administration system and many others. The head of state’s public assessment of key aspects of the situation in the country was, among other things, “psychotherapeutic”, which was due to the increase in threats to national security, primarily military and even terrorist: the attack of drones on residential areas of Moscow on May 30, 2023, the beginning of counteroffensive on June 4 by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the explosion of the dam at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant on the night of June 5 to 6, etc. In the course of communication with war correspondents, the President had more than once to admit mistakes and shortcomings in the system of public administration that have accumulated over the past 30 years, primarily due to the presence of a significant part of the elites who are guided by private rather than national interests. Today, work on correcting these mistakes is already underway in forced, extreme

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conditions caused by the nature of the actual wartime. But in order for this process to be effective, so that it gives a real result, it is necessary, as many experts note, to comply with a number of conditions: the political will of the head of state; the unity of society, elites and the President around the nationally oriented agenda of a special military operation; people's awareness of the scale of threats to national security. The article analyzes the key events of recent months (May – June 2023). As an information base, we refer to the assessments of the expert community, official reports of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, decrees of the President of the Russian Federation, the results of all-Russian and regional sociological surveys, etc.

Key words: special military operation, President of the Russian Federation, threats to national security, public administration system, society, elites.

The special military operation has been going on for 17 months¹. During this period, Russia continued to face a concerted attempt by the Collective West to “tear the Russian economy to shreds”², with necessary tactical retreats on the battlefield³, with organizational “muddle-headedness”⁴, which, apparently, had been accumulating for a long time, but spilled out and stirred up a significant part of society during the partial mobilization.

Today, the prospects for the development of the Russian economy are increasingly associated with the development of the domestic market and cooperation with other countries; as for the qualitative positive changes in the armed forces of the Russian Federation (in management, equipment, tactical training, etc.), even the Western media were forced to admit that they are emerging, as compared to the situation in September 2022.

Bloomberg: “Ideas about the weakness of the Russian army are either outdated or simply erroneous. Moscow has changed tactics and upgraded weapons, and the West could have missed this fact...”⁵

New York Times: “The Russian Army has brought discipline, coordination and air support to a new level... the command of the Russian Armed Forces learns from its mistakes”⁶.

And, perhaps, the main conclusion that Russia has drawn in the course of the SMO is a shift in the semantic accents that characterize the conflict that began on February 24, 2022: what was announced by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on February 24, 2022 as a “special military operation... to protect people from the genocide of the Kiev regime”⁷, today, is increasingly supplemented with a new meaning – this is a “real war” against the West for the preservation of the Motherland.

¹ At the time of writing this article – from February 2022 to June 2023.

² Quote from the speech of the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on September 14, 2022. Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/2941494>

³ In particular, in September 2022, in the Kharkov direction for the sake of preserving the personnel and combat capability of the army.

⁴ President's speech at a meeting with elected heads of regions. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69567>

⁵ Bloomberg: The Russian army has changed its SMO tactics and upgraded weapons. Available at: <https://www.bfm.ru/news/525726?ysclid=lj85gdugw563712664>

⁶ New York Times: The Russian army has learned from its mistakes by changing its tactics for the AFU counteroffensive. Available at: <https://ruposters.ru/news/18-06-2023/rossiiskaya-armiya-viuchilas-svoih-oshibkah-izmeniv-taktiku>

⁷ Vladimir Putin's address to Russians on February 24, 2022 (on the announcement of the beginning of the SMO). Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

“A real war is being waged against our country again but we have countered international terrorism and will defend the people of Donbass and safeguard our security. ...

Their [Western globalist elites] goal – and there is nothing new about it – is to break apart and destroy our country, to make null and void the outcomes of World War II, to completely break down the system of global security and international law, to choke off any sovereign centers of development”⁸.

Threats to national security continue to grow. All the “red lines” have long been crossed; the Collective West is supplying the Kiev regime with tanks and long-range cruise missiles; many experts openly analyze tactical options for expanding the conflict zone to the territories of NATO countries⁹.

On June 13, 2023, the President held a meeting with war correspondents, at which the main results of

the entire period that has passed since the beginning of the SMO were summed up. The expediency of this event was largely due to the course of events in recent months, or rather, **the increase in threats of a military and even terrorist nature.**

Not only in the border territories, but also inside Russia, the “Kiev regime” with the coordination of NATO specialists carries out terrorist attacks against specific Russians – active public figures¹² and heads of regional administrations¹³.

According to the FSB Director A. Bortnikov, in 2022 the activities of **68 clandestine terrorist cells were suppressed on the territory of Russia; 64 terrorist attacks were prevented**¹⁰.

Since February of the last [2022] year, **118 terrorist crimes** have been prevented in Russia; their perpetrators were young people and teenagers; **28 sabotage and terrorist acts** at transport facilities were prevented as well¹¹.

⁸ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Victory Day Parade on May 9, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71104>

⁹ In particular, we are talking about Poland, which is preparing to provide the “Kiev regime” with airfields for basing aircraft expected in the next deliveries of military assistance to Ukraine from NATO.

¹⁰ Russian special services prevented 64 terrorist attacks. Available at: <https://smotrim.ru/article/3090832?ysclid=liwpc86vn405076663>

¹¹ 118 terrorist attacks were prevented in Russia during the year. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2023/04/11/aleksandr-bortnikov-za-god-v-rossii-predotvrashcheno-118-teraktov.html?ysclid=liwplajxq4551573251>

¹² April 25, 2022, the Federal Security Service of Russia prevented a terrorist attack, the victims of which could have been V. Solovyov, M. Simonyan, O. Skabeeva, E. Popov, T. Keosayan (Source: The attempt on Solovyov and other journalists was prepared on the instructions of the SBU. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/04/25/pokushenie-na-soloveva-i-drugih-zhurnalistov-gotovilos-po-zadaniu-sbu.html?ysclid=lj45v607p5299296641>);

August 20, 2022, a journalist, a public activist, the daughter of philosopher A. Dugin, Daria Dugina, was killed as a result of a car bomb attack (Source: Political scientist and journalist Daria Dugina was killed in a car explosion in the Moscow Oblast. Available at: <https://www.itv.ru/news/2022-08-21/436150-v-podmoskovie-v-rezultate-vzryva-avtomobilya-pogibla-politolog-i-zhurnalist-darya-dugina?ysclid=lj45y5zwa9193181435>);

April 2, 2023, as a result of a terrorist attack in a Saint Petersburg cafe, war correspondent V. Tatarsky was killed (Source: War correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky was killed in Saint Petersburg. Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2023/04/02/tatarskiyds/?ysclid=lj461sh6q9153141356>);

May 6, 2023 – a terrorist attack was committed against a political and public figure, writer, combatant Z. Prilepin, as a result of which his colleague and personal assistant, a veteran of military operations in the LPR A. Shubin was killed (Source: Statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry in connection with the terrorist attack organized by the Ukrainian special services against the writer Z. Prilepin. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1867854/).

¹³ September 12, the FSB stopped a series of sabotage and terrorist acts against employees of the military-civil administration of the Kherson Oblast and the government of Crimea (Source: FSB stopped the SBU terrorist attacks against civil servants of the Kherson Oblast and Crimea. Available at: <https://tass.ru/proisshestiya/15722431>).

Many constituent entities of the Russian Federation (the Belgorod, Kursk, Bryansk, Kaluga, Smolensk oblasts, etc.) are being attacked by Ukrainian drones manufactured by NATO. **On May 30, 2023, residential quarters of Moscow were attacked by drones**, which, according to several military experts, was aimed at “making the civilian population of Russia nervous”.

A. Matviychuk (military expert): “Of course, with this terrorist act, the Kiev regime is trying to create **nervousness among the civilian population of Russia**, to make our citizens afraid. Once again they created a media hype”¹⁴.

V. Shurygin (war publicist, member of the Izborsk Club): “The drone attack in Moscow **can be called belated rather than unexpected**. The following conclusions can be drawn: **in Moscow and the Moscow Oblast, as well as in the regions closest to them, there is a sabotage network of Ukrainian intelligence**”¹⁵.

On June 4, 2023, the Kiev regime launched a long-planned counteroffensive. The Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation S. Shoigu noted that “the enemy did not achieve its goals and suffered significant and incomparable losses”¹⁶.

The terrorist activity of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has intensified:

✓ On June 5, “in the area of the settlement of Masyutovka, Kharkov Oblast, a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group **blowed up the Tolyatti–Odessa ammonia pipeline**”¹⁷;

From the statement of the Minister of Defense S. Shoigu on June 6, 2023: “... **having failed in its offensive actions**, and in order to strengthen its potential, the enemy intends to transfer units and equipment from the Kherson direction to the area of its offensive actions, thereby significantly weakening its positions in the Kherson direction. In order to prevent the offensive actions of the Russian army on this sector of the front, **the Kiev regime carried out a sabotage, in fact, a terrorist act**, which led to the flooding of significant territories and will have severe and long-term environmental consequences”¹⁸.

“Given the unsuccessful start of the AFU counteroffensive, the Pentagon, NATO and the leadership of the Armed Forces, according to foreign and Russian military experts, at the second stage **are preparing a massive use of long-range precision weapons, which should lead to the disorganization of the control system of troops and weapons of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the defeat of aviation and anti-aircraft groups, the defeat of land groups, the disruption of the logistics system and destruction of operational equipment elements in the theater of military operations**”¹⁹.

✓ On the night of June 5 to 6, a “**large-scale sabotage planned in advance by the Kiev regime**” was committed at the **Kakhovskaya HPP**.

¹⁴ Gavrilov Yu. An attempt to provoke a response from Russia. What is known about the attack of Ukrainian drones on Moscow and the Moscow Oblast. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2023/05/30/reg-cfo/drony-ne-dostigli-celi.html>

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Statement by the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Army General S. Shoigu. Available at: https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12469652@egNews

¹⁷ Official Telegram channel of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://t.me/mod_russia/27177

¹⁸ Statement by the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Army General S. Shoigu. Available at: https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12469652@egNews

¹⁹ Ovchinsky V. What will the next stage of the attack on Russia be. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24432>

Thus, with a relatively stable, controlled situation at the front²⁰, threats to Russia's national security continue to grow. And this concerns the state of affairs not only on the front line, but also deep in the rear. **Almost the whole country, any constituent entity of the Russian Federation, including the capital, is under threat of terrorist attacks today;** thus, some experts come to the conclusion that the SMO has entered a new and **“psychologically very important”** stage²¹.

“Military actions certainly belong to the strongest factor contributing to changes in social conditions”²². Therefore, the tense situation

developing both on the front line and inside the Russian Federation quite naturally increases the anxious moods in Russian society.

According to the results of sociological assessments, in 2022 the trend of growth in the proportion of people who show signs of anxiety continued: against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has already increased by 7 percentage points (from 25% in 2019 to 32% in 2021); and in 2022, compared with 2021, by 3 percentage points (from 31 to 34%); moreover, it happened in the majority of socio-demographic groups (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. Dynamics of the spread of anxiety symptoms* in various socio-demographic groups, % of respondents

Population group	2019 (year before the COVID-19 pandemic)	2021	2022	Dynamics (+ /-)	
				2021 to 2019	2022 to 2021
Sex					
Men	23.8	29.4	30.7	+6	+1
Women	26.0	33.7	37.4	+8	+4
Age					
Under 30	17.1	21.4	20.0	+4	-1
30–55	21.0	28.6	28.0	+8	-1
Over 55	33.8	39.6	47.5	+6	+8
Education					
Secondary and incomplete secondary	28.7	33.1	33.6	+4	+1
Secondary vocational	24.8	28.5	35.6	+4	+7
Higher and incomplete higher	21.8	34.5	33.9	+13	-1
Income group					
Bottom 20%	27.5	41.6	37.0	+14	-5
Middle 60%	27.5	33.8	36.6	+6	+3
Top 20%	17.4	15.6	26.0	-2	+10
Territory					
Vologda	18.0	35.1	39.8	+17	+5
Cherepovets	26.0	24.3	32.8	-2	+9
Districts	28.3	34.1	32.2	+6	-2
Oblast	25.0	31.7	34.4	+7	+3
Total number of positive /negative changes in all groups				2 / 12	5 / 9
* The proportion of people showing symptoms of anxiety was determined by the hospital scale of anxiety and depression. The methodology consists of seven questions that were included in the structure of the VoIRC RAS questionnaire for monitoring public opinion. The survey was conducted once a year in the cities of Vologda, Cherepovets, in Babaevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Tarnogsky municipal okrugs and in Kirillovsky, Nikolsky and Sheksninsky municipal districts of the Vologda Oblast. The survey method is questionnaire at the place of residence of respondents. The sample size is 1,500 people aged 18 years and older. The sample is targeted, quota-based. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by observing the proportions between urban and rural populations, the proportions between residents of settlements of various types (rural settlements, small and medium-sized cities), the gender and age structure of the adult population of the oblast. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.					

²⁰ On June 20, 2023, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu noted: “Since June 4, the AFU has launched 263 attacks on the positions of Russian troops. Thanks to the competent and selfless actions of our units, all of them were repulsed, the enemy did not achieve its goals” (Source: Official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12470868@egNews).

²¹ A. Dugin's Telegram channel. Available at: <https://t.me/Agdchan/10405>; <https://t.me/Agdchan/10406>

²² Zvonovsky V.B., Khodykin A.V. (2023). Adaptation strategies of opponents and supporters of the special military operation to the current situation (based on residents of Samara Region). *Sotsiologicheskiy Zhurnal=Sociological Journal*, 29(1), p. 9.

The meeting of the President with war correspondents (which was broadcast live on federal TV channels) largely answered the most important questions that concern the entire Russian society today. War correspondents (as noted by E. Poddubny, one of the participants of the conversation) “managed to voice, **perhaps, all the issues that concern the inhabitants of our country: both military personnel and civilians ... Almost all topics are issues of life and death**”²³.

“Today war correspondents are at the cutting edge; they see the whole reality and do not hide it, whatever it may be”²⁴.

“It is important for him [the President] to understand the feeling, it is important for him to catch the nerve that exists among the people”²⁵.

“This is an important aspect for the President to receive information from the field... The President himself highly appreciates this dialogue with war correspondents and will continue it”²⁶.

The topics discussed at the meeting concerned not only the goals of the SMO, the situation on the front line and Russia’s geopolitical relations with

friendly and unfriendly countries, but also many problems of civilian life: the work of the military-industrial complex (MIC), assistance to servicemen and their families, organizational aspects of mobilization, the effectiveness of personnel “elevators” of the bureaucratic system and many others²⁷ (the key theses of the head of state, voiced at the meeting with war correspondents, are presented in *Table 2*; the most important questions of war correspondents and the answers of the Supreme Commander are reflected in *Insert 1*).

“The meeting of the president with war correspondents really attracted attention with its **most confidential nature**. And the questions that were asked were as open and direct as possible; and Vladimir Putin’s answers were meaningful, without any secondary subtext and pitfalls... The President discussed not only the positive aspects and prerequisites for the successful outcome of the special operation, **but also the difficulties that our army is currently facing**”²⁸.

²³ War correspondents shared their impressions of the meeting with the president (opinion of E. Poddubny). Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/3402476>

²⁴ The political scientist spoke about the importance of Putin’s meeting with war correspondents (opinion of political scientist N. Lindigrin). Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2023/06/14/voenkory/>

²⁵ War correspondents shared their impressions of the meeting with the president (opinion of A. Sladkov). Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/article/3402476>

²⁶ Putin will continue the dialogue with war correspondents (opinion of A. Peskov). Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2023/06/19/981179-peskov-putin-prodolzhit-dialog-s-voenkorami?ysclid=lj6wgcwibx180395160>

²⁷ A. Dugin’s Telegram channel. Available at: <https://t.me/Agdchan/10405>; <https://t.me/Agdchan/10406>

²⁸ The political scientist spoke about the importance of Putin’s meeting with war correspondents (opinion of political scientist N. Lindigrin). Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2023/06/14/voenkory/>

Table 2. Vladimir Putin's key theses voiced at the meeting with war correspondents

<p>1. On the goals of the SMO: <i>"our goals are fundamental for us. ... by and large, our principles and thus, our goals have not changed since the beginning of the operation"</i>.</p>
<p>2. On the situation on the front line: <i>"This is a large-scale counteroffensive, which uses, as I recently said publicly, reserves that had been stockpiled to this end. It started on June 4... The enemy was not successful in any sector. ...[Further developments] will depend on the potential that is left at the end of this so-called counter-offensive. ... We will wait and see what the situation is like and take further steps based on this understanding. Our plans may vary depending on the situation when we deem it necessary to move..."</i></p>
<p>3. On the introduction of martial law in Russia, including for the purpose of fighting with saboteurs on Russian territory: <i>"I don't think we need to do that now. We just need to improve and expand the work of law enforcement agencies and special services"</i>.</p>
<p>4. On the new "wave" of partial mobilization: <i>"Depending on what goals we set for ourselves, we have to solve the issues of mobilization, but there is no such need today... we have recruited over 150,000 of them (under contract) and, together with volunteers, this number adds up to 156,000.... Things that are happening took even me by surprise: after all, 156,000 people volunteered"</i>.</p>
<p>5. On the state of the Russian military-industrial complex: <i>"Of course, during the special military operation it has become clear, that we do not have enough of many things ... a lot of the groundwork has been done. Now the task is to build it up. If we did not have this special military operation we probably would not have understood how to upgrade our defence industry to make our army the best in the world"</i>.</p>
<p>6. On the personnel promotion of people who proved themselves during the SMO: <i>"Of course, we need to look for such people. There are a lot of them... both the Minister [of Defense] and the Chief of the General Staff fully share my position... We need to look for such people – with their consciousness and with their understanding of justice"</i>.</p>
<p>7. On the role of private business in achieving the goals of the SMO: <i>"We have dozens, hundreds of private enterprises that have never had anything to do with the military-industrial complex that have joined in this work: small and medium-sized enterprises..."</i></p>
<p>8. On the cases of anti-Russian propaganda in the activities of civil servants, university professors, etc.: <i>"Leaving it like this verges on betrayal..."</i></p>
<p>Source: Vladimir Putin's meeting with war correspondents. Available at: http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71391</p>

Insert 1

Answers of the RF President to the key questions of war correspondents (June 13, 2023)²⁹

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
1. E. Poddubny: The situation is changing, the position is changing, and probably the goals and tasks of the special military operation are changing as well. Can you tell us how they have changed if at all?	No, they are changing in accordance with the current situation but of course overall we are not changing anything. Our goals are fundamental for us... So, by and large, our principles and thus, our goals have not changed since the beginning of the operation. There has been no change.
2. A. Kots: how does it happen that enemy drones reach the Kremlin? And, having started to liberate Donbass, why are we now forced to evacuate our population from the border areas, which are already being entered by Polish mercenaries, and the Polish language is heard on our territory?	... As a rule, the drones you are talking about, and you are also aware of this, they are made of modern lightweight materials, made of wood, and it is quite difficult to detect them. But they are being detected... we must properly organize this work. And of course, it would be better if this had been done in a timely manner and at the proper level. Nevertheless, this work is being carried out, and, I repeat once again, I am sure that these tasks will be solved.
3. E. Poddubny: How will the Russian state fight the enemy's agents and the enemy's special services operating on the territory of Russia?	... We are fighting, we are, and some results of this work are becoming public, and the public is familiar with it: the detention of agents and special services officers of a neighboring state. The work is ongoing. But I want to point out that we, unlike Ukraine's current authorities, cannot employ terrorist methods: we still have a state, a country, while it is a regime there. They operate, in fact, as a regime based on terror: they have a very tough counterintelligence regime, martial law. I don't think we need to do that now. We just need to improve and expand the work of law enforcement agencies and special services. And in general, it seems to me that the tasks in this regard are also solvable.
4. A. Sladkov: We have sent our mobilized troops to the front.... Do you not think the time will come when they will have to be rotated and replaced...?	We have to proceed from the availability of personnel, from the situation on the frontline, from the progress of the special military operation itself. You know that in fact, and also at my suggestion, we took a decision on regular leaves...

²⁹ Source: Vladimir Putin's meeting with war correspondents. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71391>

Continuation of Insert 1

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
<p>5. A. Sladkov: Will there be another round of mobilization?</p>	<p>Some of our public figures claim that there is an urgent need to mobilize a million or even 2 million. This depends on what we want... Our troops were outside Kiev. First, we reached an agreement, which turned out to be a good agreement about how to resolve the current situation peacefully. Even though they tossed it, nevertheless, we used this time to get where we are now which is practically all of Novorossiya and a significant portion of the Donetsk People's Republic with access to the Sea of Azov and Mariupol. And almost all of the Lugansk People's Republic, with a few exceptions. Do we need to go back there or not? Why am I asking this rhetorical question? Clearly, you do not have an answer to it, only I can answer that. But depending on our goals, we must decide on mobilization, but there is no need for that today... Since January, when we began concluding contracts with contract soldiers, we have recruited over 150,000 of them and, together with volunteers, this number adds up to 156,000... Given this, the Defence Ministry says there is no need for mobilization. Things that are happening took even me by surprise: after all, 156,000 people volunteered.</p>
<p>6. A. Sladkov: My second question is about contract soldiers that we are recruiting now... We are waiting for the people to respond to the offer. We invite them but it not time for us to go to the people who can help us and make a plan based on military specialties?...</p>	<p>Contract soldiers. I talked to Mr Burdinsky recently, the work is generally moving forward, it is really going very well. He is in charge of recruiting contract soldiers. One of the deputy defence ministers is in charge of training... Naturally, there are always problems wherever one looks, but overall, the situation is changing for the better... Do technologies need replacing? Perhaps, this must be considered. What is the point? The point is that – you are right, you are absolutely right – we must have targeted recruitment.</p>

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
<p>7. A. Borodkin: What are we going to do to expand our defence industry...?</p>	<p>... It was probably about eight years ago, maybe even earlier; we launched a programme to upgrade the military industrial complex. We allocated very large funds at the time, and piece by piece began to upgrade our enterprises, build new ones, deploy modern equipment and so on. Thereby, a very significant back-log was created.</p> <p>Of course, during the special military operation it has become clear, that we do not have enough of many things. This includes high-precision munitions, communications systems... aerial vehicles, drones and so on. We do have them but unfortunately, the numbers are not sufficient... We do not have enough Orlan drones, and their quality must be improved, although they perform their function. That is, we need a lot of things. We need modern anti-tank weapons as well as modern tanks...</p> <p>... not enough of everything but a lot of the groundwork has been done. Now the task is to build it up. I mentioned the groundwork, and I should talk about what is happening now. During the year, we increased the production of our main weapons by 2.7 times. As for the manufacture of the most in-demand weapons, we increased this by ten times. Ten times! Some industrial companies work in two shifts and some in three. They practically work day and night and do a very good job... If we did not have this special military operation we probably would not have understood how to upgrade our defense industry to make our army the best in the world. But we will do this.</p>
<p>8. S. Pegov: Unfortunately, the existing bureaucratic system is set up in such a way that those who are good at serving on the parquet floor and are able to play up to their superiors in time are the ones who rise up the career ladder.... here are a lot of talented people now, good daring guys, but the system prevents them from rising the top. How can we resolve this issue so that we get new gems in our military affairs and in the art of war?</p>	<p>Before the special military operation, of course, as in any government agency, there were a lot of carpet knights... the special military operation was initiated and they quickly began to realize that carpet knights, and there are more than enough of them in any army in the world under peacetime conditions everywhere, are ineffective, to put it mildly.</p> <p>On the other hand, and you are absolutely right here, Mr Pegov, there started appearing people who seemed to be in the shadows – they were not visible and not heard, but it turned out that they were very effective and in great demand...</p> <p>Of course, we need to look for people like that. There are many of them, you are absolutely right. The Defense Minister and the Chief of General Staff completely share my position, I have mentioned this issue many times, and they say: “Of course, we must do this.” You are right in saying that, just like in any ministry, they have a multi-layered bureaucracy. Certainly, we need to create social mobility mechanisms, including those that locate such people and elevate them to the required level in the army and society.</p>

Continuation of Insert 1

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
<p>9. S. Pegov: The second issue, also a sensitive one, concerns payments to the wounded, as well as, unfortunately, for the deaths of servicemen... I do not know a single soldier who has received a payment for a tank that has been destroyed, or for a destroyed fortification. Although it has all been announced, everyone knows it and the guys are even kidding around with each other: why was it promised, but it has not happened.</p>	<p>About the payments. Yes, indeed, there, I do not remember exactly, but, in my opinion, 300 thousand for an aircraft, 100 thousand for a tank should be paid additionally. The fact that they do not pay – this is surprising to me... I will definitely be returning to this right away, today, in talks with the Defense Ministry – absolutely, 100 percent.</p>
<p>10. I. Lyadvin: The subject of payments to contract employees... for example Chuvashia pays 50 [thousand rubles], Chelyabinsk pays 50, but there are small extra payments for children, but Transbaikal pays 150–200, Buryatia 200. There is a point: don't you think there is a gap, so to say, in the regions' level of capabilities, so that someone can pay 200? ...</p>	<p>You are absolutely right, of course: there is a man who is fighting, maybe standing next to another in a trench, covering the wounded, or carrying them off the battlefield, but one gets a slightly higher bonus from the region and the other a lower one – this certainly looks unseemly.</p> <p>I repeat: this does not apply to federal agencies – these are purely regional payments, not obligatory at all. Regions could pay nothing at all, but they do it voluntarily. But, of course, it is better to have some kind of common approach here. I agree, you are right. We will work with the governors.</p>
<p>11. Yu. Podolyaka: on the repletion of the army with advanced weapons systems. Unfortunately, it so happened that before the special operation we did not know that a lot of special equipment and weapons would be needed, and today much of this equipment is being homemade... What is the problem? They prove effective at the front, the soldiers say “yes, this is what we need,” but our bureaucratic system does not allow them to be quickly introduced and used serially. That is, the opportunities that we have are scanty.</p>	<p>The problem is well-known... As you know, in addition to the fact that we have made a good start in the upgrade of the military-industrial complex, and besides the fact that now the production of the most demanded products is growing quite quickly – they have already increased tenfold – there is another very big advantage, frankly unexpected even for me. We have dozens, hundreds of private enterprises that have never had anything to do with the military-industrial complex that have joined in this work: small and medium-sized enterprises... they made, for example, pipes – and it turns out that you can do something else besides pipes. And so, it is surprisingly simple in many areas... Nevertheless, we have not solved all the problems... Believe me, I have already said what you have just said a hundred times. I will come back to this again and I will try to fix it again.</p>
<p>12. I. Ushenin: NATO countries are constantly moving and crossing our red lines. We express our concern and keep saying that this is unacceptable, but never come up with actual answers. Are we going to keep moving our red lines?</p>	<p>Is the special military operation itself not a response to them crossing these lines?... Are strikes on Ukraine's energy system not an answer to them crossing the red lines? And the destruction of the headquarters of the main intelligence directorate of the armed forces of Ukraine outside Kiev, almost within Kiev's city limits, is it not the answer? It is. We will continue to work selectively...</p>

Continuation of Insert 1

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
<p>13. S. Zenin: private military companies that are supposedly banned in our country de jure but still exist de facto on the frontline. They fight with varying success but sometimes with very good results. What should be done to get rid of this judicial or legal vacuum and return them to the legal field?</p>	<p>You are absolutely right in this respect. I asked both State Duma deputies and the Defense Ministry to bring everything in line with common sense, the established practice and the law. Of course, we should not put people in a false position... To my knowledge, the Defense Ministry is now signing contracts with all those willing to continue their service in the special military operation zone. This is the only way of providing them with social guarantees because if there is no contract with the state, no contract with the Defense Ministry, there are no legal grounds for receiving social guarantees from the state. This must be done as soon as possible.</p>
<p>14. D. Kulko: Sooner or later, the Ukrainian counter-offensive will get bogged down, or rather, our troops will force it to bog down with their heroic efforts. Clearly, no matter what losses Ukraine suffers, the Western countries will continue to supply weapons to it.... what will happen next?</p>	<p>I can only say this face to face... Well, everything will depend on the potential that is left at the end of this so-called counter-offensive. This is the key question... We will wait and see what the situation is like and take further steps based on this understanding.</p>
<p>15. D. Steshin: ... Do we need this [grain] deal? And, if our interests are not being considered, maybe it should be severed?</p>	<p>Frankly, this is a surprise question for me. I did not expect to hear it. But probably those who are fighting on the frontline don't understand why we let Ukraine ship this grain. I understand, and I agree... we are doing this not for the sake of Ukraine but for the sake of friendly countries in Africa and Latin America... There were many terms that the Westerners were supposed to fulfil under UN guidance, but nothing was done. Nevertheless, we have extended these agreements several times – and I'd like to repeat it again – in the interests of friendly countries... we think about terminating our participation in it.</p>
<p>16. I. Kuksenkova: According to open data, up to 100 military satellites are out there working for the enemy. They can see our troops and movements. Our space group is not as strong. V. Putin: Yes. I. Kuksenkova: What can we do about it and how should it be dealt with? This is a systemic issue, correct? Will it take years to improve things?</p>	<p>Without a doubt, we should have been engaging in space activities in a different manner in previous years. But we did not plan...either the events in Crimea, or the events that are taking place now... We must adjust this work accordingly. We will certainly do this. But until then we need something to take its place. What might this be? Different-purpose unmanned aerial vehicles. Our colleague has rightly said that we must increase the number of different drones, including strike and reconnaissance ones, which takes time. I agree with you, you are right, we must do this.</p>

End of Insert 1

Question asked by war correspondents, bloggers	President's answer
<p>17. D. Zimenkin: The Lugansk police who fought in the Kharkov Region last year, and their colleagues from the Kaskad tactical group who are fighting in the Donetsk People's Republic now, do not have this status either. I received a phone call from a field medic today. He has been working behind the line for four months... he is fighting. He has moved 70 men from the battlefield and has had four concussions... He serves in Unit 31135 but is allegedly not fighting. He cannot even receive an order for this reason... I think it's not fair, and the point at issue is not the additional payment, which is not that big.</p>	<p>I am aware of them, and Mr Bortnikov and Mr Kolokoltsev have been asking these questions. But it is the first time that I have heard this about military medics. I will certainly take a look at this problem. It must be a technical problem in some places. If a military medic is actually working behind the line, I do not understand what is happening. I will look into it... As for the other categories of military personnel, especially border guards and partly the police, this issue must certainly be addressed.</p>
<p>18. M. Gazdiev: Our fighters often manage to read the news, even at the frontline. To put it mildly, they are outraged to hear of another scandal where a civil servant or a university professor almost openly tries to sway young people to a pro-Ukraine position. That is, by and large, these people have no caution, they aren't afraid of fines. All right, I know, and you have been very clear that we will not act like the Ukrainian regime: a bag over the head and the person disappears forever. But, given that we are not like them, we are fighting against this, is it not a betrayal of our values to just leave the situation as it is?</p>	<p>Leaving it like this verges on betrayal... the need to promote the fighters, especially those who have proven themselves well on the battlefield, to promote them to higher ranks in the Armed Forces, but not only that. They can be promoted to law enforcement or special services. We need to look for such people – in terms of their consciousness and their understanding of justice – and entrust them with investigating the rogues you mentioned.</p>

As can be seen from the answers of the President shown in Insert 1, the meeting with war correspondents was transparent, and many problems existing both in the armed forces of the Russian Federation and in the civil life of the country were voiced during the meeting.

The President had more than once admit mistakes and shortcomings in various fields (in the space industry, in the work of the military-industrial complex, in the functioning of the bureaucratic system, etc.). Moreover, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief pointed out that it was **“during the special military operation that it became clear that many things were missing”**.

The head of state had to use the following expressions 19 times: *“There is a problem”*, *“we need to work more carefully on some issues”*, *“I agree, we should have prepared better”*, *“yes, of course. It is necessary to adjust this work accordingly”*, *“I am aware of this problem – I have already spoken about it many times at different levels... We will try to do it”*, etc. The head of state even made such statements as *“this is the first time I hear about it”* and *“this is unexpected for me”*³⁰ twice.

We should note that the ability to admit mistakes, especially in such a difficult period for the country, on the one hand, suggests that “Russia has a strong, active, capable, strong-willed leader”³¹, but, at the same time, it indicates that **over the past**

20 years, significant shortcomings have accumulated in the management system that were not eliminated in a timely manner, and therefore today they have to be corrected in the face of real growing threats to national security. This concerns, for example, the absence of any tangible positive dynamics in reducing social inequality, the actual sabotage of presidential decrees on the implementation of national projects, corruption flourishing at all levels of government and many other problems that have long been discussed in the expert community, in the mass media, on social media, etc.³² **All of them have a long-term, accumulating nature, because for the last 30 years the system of public administration has been largely saturated with representatives of elites who are guided by personal, primarily financial, interests, rather than by the national interests of the country.**

This, in particular, is evidenced by the fact that dozens and maybe hundreds of representatives of the public administration system at various levels of the power hierarchy have fled to Western countries after the start of the SMO. We should note that the direct duties of these people included the execution of the instructions of the head of state; many of them had access to state secrets; in fact, the President had to rely on these very representatives of the ruling elites until the special military operation made everything straight.

³⁰ Such answers were given to D. Zimenkin’s question about the fact that people assigned to a military unit are not registered as participants of the SMO and “it is as though they are not even fighting”, although they are actually on the front line, commit heroic deeds, etc.; and also to S. Pegov’s question about the fact that the fighters really do not receive any payments for the destroyed enemy equipment, “although it was all announced, everyone knows it”.

³¹ Prokhanov A. Leopard. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24441>

³² In our previous articles, we considered expert assessments about the accumulating problems in the public administration system and in society. See, for example:

Ilyin V.A. (2016). The ruling elites: A problem for Russia’s national security. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 4(46); Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2019). Public administration efficiency in 2000–2018 in the assessments of the region’s population. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 12(1), 9–38; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2021). National Security Strategy – 2021: Positive experiences and conflicting expectations. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 14(4), 9–32.

“First, former Prime Minister Kasyanov and eight (!) former deputy prime ministers fled there [abroad]. Moreover, three more ex-deputy prime ministers and at least one acting deputy prime minister split time between two countries.

Second, if we count the ex-heads of the Presidential Administration (!) – Yumashev, Voloshin and Chubais, as well as all the ministers and their deputies (like Kozyrev, Skrynnik, Vavilov, Chuyan, Reimer, etc.) who fled Russia, then it will be **another 50 people, not to mention dozens of ex-governors and vice-governors and hundreds of officials of the federal government alone.**

Third, if we count those high-ranking officials of the Russian Federation who have sent their children abroad and, therefore, are somehow preparing to go there themselves, then **these are dozens and dozens of personalities.**

Fourth, despite the SMO, ex-deputy prime ministers and ex-ministers continue to flee there unhindered (Chubais, Kudrin), along with the stolen money and state secrets.

The list of former deputy prime ministers includes:

Ilya Klebanov – in Israel,	Alfred Koch – in Germany,	Arkady Dvorkovich – in the USA,
Alexander Khloponin – in Israel,	Yakov Urinson – in Israel,	Maxim Akimov – in Israel,
Anatoly Chubais – in Italy,	Andrey Kudrin – in Israel...	

“**The difficulties and challenges we are facing work as incentives for all of us, incentives to increase the pace and quality of transformations ...**”³⁴, – the head of state noted on June 16 at the plenary session of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. However, the current situation, which is almost wartime, brings certain conditions for the success of the implementation of long overdue transformations: both the growing threats to national security and the need to correct many mistakes of the past in an emergency mode reinforce the importance of the task that many experts have been talking about since the beginning of the SMO – the importance of a radical paradigm shift in thinking and perception of the current moment of time for the entire Russian society and especially its elite. According to experts, “the stakes are extremely high, the question is “to be or not to be”.

“When the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Russian President Vladimir Putin, launched the special military operation to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, **the course of history was changed. Irreversibly changed. We are witnessing the case when they say “The die is cast”, “We have crossed the Rubicon” and “There is no way back”...** Now no one is able to influence anything, and no one can do it the way it used to be before... **The stakes are extremely high ... the question is “To be or not to be”**”³⁵.

It is necessary to understand: in order not to lose their “hegemonic” position, the United States and the UK together with their “vassals” (Vladimir Putin noted that “they don’t have allies, they only have vassals”³⁶) will strive to do everything so that Russia cannot emerge victorious from this civilizational conflict.

³³ Ivanov A. Israel, Italy, Germany, the United States, etc. Where the former deputy Prime Ministers of the Russian Federation have fled. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/izrail_italiya_germaniya_shtati_i_t_d_kuda_svalili_bivshie_vitse-prem_eri_rf

³⁴ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71445>

³⁵ Dugin A. Special military operation in Ukraine as Vladimir Putin’s Rubicon. Available at: https://4pera.com/news/feysbuchnye_truth/aleksandr_dugin_spetsialnaya_voennaya_operatsiya_na_ukraine_kak_rubikon_vladimira_putina/

³⁶ Source: Vladimir Putin’s meeting with war correspondents. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71391>

Therefore, today is not the time for entertainment, for calculating any individual financial benefits or discussions about the future. And this is not the time for complacency about the inevitability of a Russian victory. State Duma deputy K.F. Zatulin rightly noted that “talking about the fact that it is inevitable is just discouraging”.

On the contrary, this is a time when all the strata of society should unite in realizing that any other option, except for Russia’s unconditional victory in this war, will have the most negative impact not only on Russian statehood, but also on the individual life of each individual citizen.

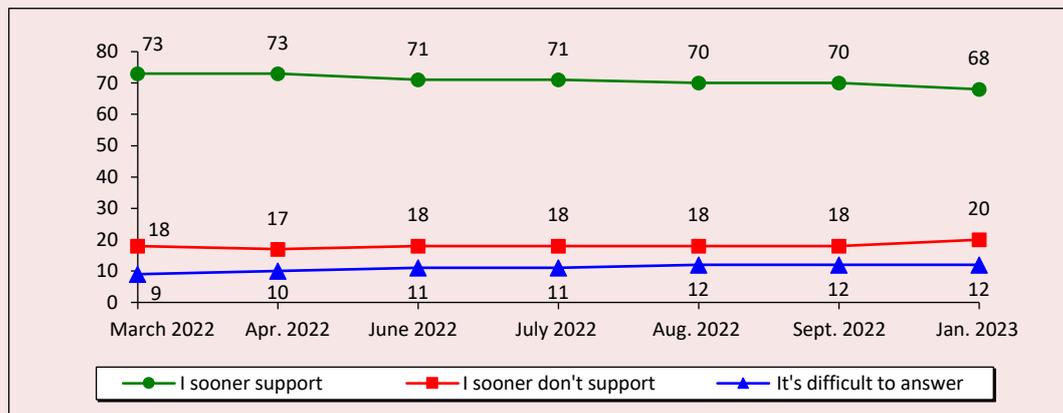
Nevertheless, according to experts, “Russian society has not yet managed to realize the depth, scale and perspective of the growing civilizational crisis in the Russian Federation (and maybe an impending catastrophe)”³⁷. According to VCIOM, the overwhelming majority of Russians (68–73%) from the very beginning support the decision of the President of the Russian Federation to conduct the

“The enemy is dangerous and armed; it can be seen with the naked eye. The question is that, in my opinion, we cannot do enough today. We don’t have enough reasons to be complacent... in fact, we are in a very difficult situation. In a situation where mobilization is required of us. It requires the transfer of not only industry, but also life on military rails, in order to have the victory that we all dream of. Talking about the fact that it is inevitable is just discouraging... we must understand that a number of issues that have not been resolved – they are still, unfortunately, not resolved when it comes to the transition to military rails”³⁸.

“After the drone attack on Moscow, I would like to ask our fellow citizens: what else needs to happen so that you understand that the war will affect everyone?”³⁹

special military operation (*Fig. 1*), but **18–20% of the population do not support the SMO.**

Figure 1. Do you support or not support the decision to conduct the special military operation of Russia in Ukraine?, % of respondents



Sources: Special military operation: Six months later. VCIOM analytical review. September 6, 2022. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/cpecialnaja-voennaja-operacija-polgoda-spustja>; Special military operation: A year later. VCIOM analytical review. February 20, 2023. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/cpecialnaja-voennaja-operacija-god-spustja>

³⁷ Lepekhin V. (2023). About the untransformed elite and the “fried rooster”. *Izborsky klub*, 4(112), 18–23.

³⁸ K. Zatulin’s speech at the foresight forum “What kind of Ukraine do we need?”. Available at: <https://zatulin.ru/vystuplenie-konstantina-zatulina-na-forsajt-forume-kakaya-ukraina-nam-nuzhna/>

³⁹ Rublevka was attacked by APU drones, the elite is in shock, the people are self-organizing (opinion of historian E. Nikolaev). Available at: <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/374657/>

These data confirm the expert opinion that instead of the unity necessary for victory, Russian society is divided into three “parties”:

- 1) “Party for the victory”;
- 2) “Party for Russia’s immediate defeat”;
- 3) “Party for Russia’s deferred defeat”.

The Party for the victory is focused on a direct confrontation with the West, in order to bring the SMO to its logical end and securely consolidate the strategic conditions of a multipolar world in which the hegemony of the West will have no place... **It is represented on a fairly large scale in Russian society; in the ruling elites, on the contrary, until very recently, this party was in an absolute minority...**

The Party for immediate defeat is the “radical liberal opposition”⁴⁰, the main resource for the “Kiev regime” to recruit saboteurs operating on the territory of Russia. For example, they carried out terrorist attacks against V. Tatarsky and Z. Prilepin.

The Party for Russia’s deferred defeat is spread primarily among the ruling elites. These are the

“The party for deferred defeat. **Here we are talking about the part of the Russian elite that professes double loyalty:** on the one hand, this group is loyal to Putin and recognizes the legitimacy of the orientation toward sovereignty and multipolarity, which means that it supports the SMO and is formally aimed at victory. But, on the other hand, **the main orientation of this group is still the modern liberal West, its culture, codes, technologies, practices and trends.** Therefore, this macro-figure considers the break with the West as a catastrophe and wants to end the conflict as soon as possible and begin restoring broken ties”⁴¹.

people who are outwardly loyal to the President and to their goals, but in fact they dream of returning to the past life that was before February 24, 2022. They are entirely oriented toward the West and therefore consider a break with the West as a catastrophe. **The West “counts on these people very much”** because they have power and do not just share the values and lifestyle of the enemy, but have specific family and financial ties with it.

Nothing other than the activities of the Party for deferred defeat can explain the fact that in conditions of unprecedented threats to national security, when the country is actually fighting for survival, it is facing the following:

✓ individual representatives of economic and ruling elites (including the highest level) continue to lobby for the idea of “Privatization 2.0” (*Insert 2*);

On April 11, influential banker A. Kostin (President – Chairman of the VTB Management Board) called for “restarting privatization”.

✓ historical archives are formed with the participation of institutions funded by the government of unfriendly countries;

“Almost all the collections to which the leadership of the Russian State Archive of Modern History was related, contain the following idea: the Soviet period of Russia’s history consists of tragedies, and the Soviet leadership consisted mainly of imbeciles...**behind most of these collections is the German Historical Institute in Moscow, which was funded by the German government for a long time**”⁴².

⁴⁰ Dugin A. Chess of war. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24292>

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ogryzko V. The right to history. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/pravo_na_istoriyu

✓ as before, the party continues to be in the legal field, openly calling the SMO “the gravest crime” that is “contrary to the national interests of Russia”⁴³;

“... what is a political party like Yabloko doing in our legal field? Why is the party not banned, while it directly and openly **denies the territorial integrity of Russia for 10 years and considers our fight against fascism a crime...?**

Yabloko demands from President Putin an immediate cessation of hostilities... and the start of emergency peace talks with international mediation.

How do we want someone to respect us somewhere, when we ourselves are trampling ourselves into the mud, allowing representatives of forces hostile to Russia to ignore our laws on our territory directly and with impunity for almost a decade?”⁴⁴

✓ despite the results of independent examinations and constant attention from the media⁴⁵, the Yeltsin Center – a state institution that is openly engaged in illegal anti-state propaganda (as the results of an independent examination showed⁴⁶) (*Insert 3*) is still functioning.

Excerpt from the report “Monitoring of the content and form of submission of materials of the Boris Yeltsin Museum, part of the Yeltsin Center”, conducted in September – October 2022 by an interdisciplinary expert group”⁴⁷:

“The Yeltsin Center carries out propaganda activities correlated with the ideological attitudes of liberalism ... **that conflict with the traditional values of Russia as a country-civilization.**

The materials of the Yeltsin Center **contradict the legislation** of the Russian Federation.

Being a **state organization**, the Yeltsin Center in its expositions and materials represents positions that **contradict the state agenda.**

Only on June 15, 2023, Deputy Minister of Justice of the Russian Federation O. Sviridenko said that the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation has begun a “deep check”⁴⁸ of the Yeltsin Center Museum on the subject of the activities of a foreign agent.

“We pay dearly for the theft and luxury parties of admirers and defenders of the Yeltsin Center and Yeltsin himself. We pay with blood, with the lives of our children. I think everyone understands what and how to do with the creators and signatories of collective appeals in defense of this legal entity”⁴⁹.

⁴³ Statement of the Federal Political Committee of the party. Official website of the Yabloko Party. Available at: https://www.yabloko.ru/resheniya_politicheskogo_komiteta/2022/02/24

⁴⁴ Delyagin M. The paradox of Russia: Free people are ruled by slaves of the West. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/1-mirovoy-krizis/109807-paradoks-rossii-svobodnymi-ljud-mi-pravjat-raby-zapada>

⁴⁵ In particular, since the beginning of the SMO, Nikita Mikhalkov in his program “Besogon TV” has criticized the activities of the Yeltsin Center four times, but the facts he provides and the questions he poses remain unanswered so far. See, for example, the following episodes of “Besogon TV”:

1. “Davos is still there” (June 4, 2022);
2. “The bloody liberty of Europe” (June 24, 2022);
3. “The wives of the Marquis of Carabas” (February 10, 2023);
4. “The romance of abomination” (May 5, 2023).

⁴⁶ Bagdasaryan V. “Yeltsin Center”. Expert assessment of activities in the focus of threats to Russia’s national security. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24093>

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ The Ministry of Justice has launched a comprehensive check of the Yeltsin Center regarding its recognition as a foreign agent. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/15/06/2023/648ac8449a79478cf5738169><https://www.rbc.ru/politics/15/06/2023/648ac8449a79478cf5738169>

⁴⁹ Sorokin N. Wet American dreams and the “counteroffensive” that has failed. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/triedinstvo_russkoj_istorii

Insert 2

Experts on lobbying for the idea of “Privatization 2.0”

“A tightly knit group of wealthy pro-regime liberals acts as a striking lobbying force. Behind it looms a significant part of our elites, who dream of plundering what they have not stolen under the sauce of a “qualitative breakthrough”, which allegedly “will give an impetus to development in various spheres” and “will allow flexibly solving the complex tasks that the Russian industry is facing today”.

On April 11, in a column for RBK, influential banker A. Kostin (President – Chairman of the Board of VTB, member of the Bureau of the Board of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, member of the Supreme Council of the United Russia Party, head of the Boards of Trustees of the Bolshoi Theater and the Russian Gymnastics Federation, full knight of the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland” and knight of the French Order “For Merits”) called for **“restarting privatization”**. He pointed out that **“in recent years, the private sector in Russia has seriously lost its positions”, which is very bad, and means that “today is the time to act”**. Kostin is convinced of the need to **“resume the privatization program”, because “the transfer of state property into private hands <...> is a tool that has repeatedly proven its effectiveness”**...

The first candidate assets for privatization are the **United Shipbuilding Corporation, shares in Russian Railways, Transneft, Russian Post, and some companies belonging to the structures of Rosatom, Rostec, and Rostelecom.**

Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation – Press Secretary of the President of the Russian Federation **Dmitry Peskov ... called this point of view “interesting”, and later added that “indeed, in the economic block of the government, many support the idea of privatization”⁵⁰.**

The Commissioner under the President of the Russian Federation for the protection of the rights of entrepreneurs (business Ombudsman) and the leader of the right-liberal Party of Growth **B. Titov called the idea of a new privatization “correct”**.

Deputy Finance Minister of the Russian Federation A. Moiseev at the 11th Saint Petersburg International Legal Forum said that **“in fact, no one is against privatization..., a large privatization should take place, but we need to understand who to sell to”**.

On May 12, in an interview with Radio 1, the proposal for a new large-scale privatization was fully supported by the **ex-chairman of the Supervisory Board of VTB Bank Sergey Dubinin⁵¹**.

On June 14, in an interview with RBK, chairman of Sberbank G. Gref said that **“the sale of some pieces of state property” “may well be considered”⁵².**

On June 15, at the Saint Petersburg Economic Forum, head of the Central Bank E. Nabiullina noted: **“I believe that, of course, it is necessary to privatize, and we have something to privatize, without infringing on strategic interests”⁵³.**

She was supported by Presidential Aide M. Oreshkin, who stated that he supports the idea of privatization, not a large-scale privatization, but the privatization of inefficiently used enterprises with benefits for the state⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Peskov appreciated Nabiullina's idea to introduce a privatization policy in the Russian Federation. Available at: https://aif.ru/money/economy/peskov_ocenil_ideyu_nabiullinoy_vvesti_v_rf_politiku_privatizacii?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop

⁵¹ Ivanov A. Head of the Investigative Committee of Russia: “Let's follow the path of nationalization”. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/glava_skr_davajte_poidyom_puti_nacionalizacii_otvet_silovikov_razduharivshimsya_privatizatoram

⁵² German Gref to RBK: “I had to learn how to plan and live for the day”. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/economics/14/06/2023/648050839a79477c585f6318?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop

⁵³ Planned economy and new privatization. The main takeaway from Nabiullina's speech at the SPIEF-2023. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2023/06/15/17139644.shtm?ysclid=iiwzuykay57403337296>

⁵⁴ <https://vz.ru/news/2023/6/15/1216692.html>

The presented facts confirm the expert opinion that a significant part of the Russian elite today is actually “anti-national”⁵⁵. At the same time, it is futile to count on the fact that a part of the elite that has sworn allegiance to the West will somehow suddenly change by itself, and a revolution from above” in the conditions of the SMO is impractical, since in such a situation “the administrative apparatus can only be destroyed, and completely destroying the state apparatus means destroying the state”⁵⁶.

“... We cannot recognize the terrorist state of Ukraine as a terrorist state, ... **because then the domestic bureaucracy will not be able to pursue its policy of “here we fight – here we trade”...** there is a firm feeling that a **critically significant** part of the Russian government still considers the events after the fascist coup in Ukraine, and the entire presidency of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, as **some kind of misunderstanding that you just have to wait out so that everything goes back to normal** – to the 1990s, blessed for them and bloody for everyone else, when Russia was a colony not only economically, as it is now, but also politically and administratively...”⁵⁷

In this regard, the pessimistic views of some experts about the renewal of the management system and the country as a whole (and, therefore, about the country’s successful resolution of the

current confrontation with the Collective West) look quite understandable and justified.

“Currently, experts do not see that the Russian “elite” contains **any significant group** that would offer the country an adequate program of transformation and would be seriously aimed at its implementation ... Speaking in the language of political science, **there are no objective prerequisites for positive changes in today’s Russia**”⁵⁸.

But we should also note that after the start of the SMO, the President and the Government actually make managerial decisions on an operational basis aimed at limiting the possibilities of the Party for deferred defeat.

✓ This, in particular, concerns the **nationalization of the property of oligarchs and assets of unfriendly countries** – a topic that was virtually taboo until February 24, 2022, and today is appearing more and more often in the public space (and among the highest-level officials) and has real precedents as well.

✓ This also applies to the measures taken by the Mishustin Government (in pursuance of the Presidential Decree) to de-offshorize the Russian economy, the measure which is hardly noticeable to ordinary citizens, but which has important political significance – **from May 30, companies that have offshore companies among their beneficiaries will not be able to receive financial support from the state.**

⁵⁵ Rambler News (the opinion of the diplomat Ya. Kedmi). Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru/other/42643777-yakov-kedmi-zayavil-chto-rossiyskaya-elita-stoit-na-kolenyah-pered-zapadom-i-perekachivaet-tuda-prirodnye-resursy/>

⁵⁶ Averyanov V. Request for commissars. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24349>

⁵⁷ Delyagin M. The paradox of Russia: Free people are ruled by slaves of the West. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/1-mirovoy-krizis/109807-paradoks-rossii-svobodnymi-ljud-mi-pravjat-raby-zapada>

⁵⁸ Lepekhin V. (2023). About the untransformed elite and the “fried rooster”. *Izborsky klub*, 4(112), 18–23.

“The topic of nationalization was taboo until February 24 last year, when the special military operation began in Ukraine, followed by a powerful sanctions war of the Collective West against Russia. That’s when calls for nationalization sounded from the mouths of many politicians and public figures”⁵⁹.

On June 30, 2022, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree “On the application of special economic measures in the fuel and energy sector in connection with the unfriendly actions of some foreign states and international organizations”. **It provided for the nationalization of Sakhalin Energy Investment Company, Ltd.**, operating within the framework of the well-known Sakhalin-2 project.

Later, another precedent arose – **the nationalization of various objects of movable and immovable property of Ukrainian oligarchs in Crimea by the decision of the Crimean State Council...**

In November 2022, State Duma deputies from the Just Russia party reported **on the preparation of draft laws on the nationalization of assets of foreign legal entities and individuals.**

On May 13, at the Saint Petersburg International Legal Forum, the chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia A. Bastrykin proposed **nationalizing the main sectors of the country’s economy. This is the first time that an official of such a high rank has spoken out on the issue of nationalization, and unequivocally in favor of it”⁶⁰.**

“The State Duma very reasonably forbade providing any kind of state support to offshore companies. However, the offshore business simply did not pay attention to this, having achieved through the obedient “majority party” an elegant formulation according to which state support could not be provided only to an offshore company directly.

If an offshore company conducted business in Russia through a domestic “gasket” (like all retail food chains, except for “Magnit”), all restrictions were not only removed, but were not even implied: “what are you driving at, how dare you suspect conscientious oligarchs... I mean, entrepreneurs, this is a flawless Russian company!”

Mishustin’s government stopped this bureaucratic anti-Russian perversion by introducing an insignificant at first glance, formally editorial clarification, thanks to which, from May 30, companies with offshore companies among their beneficiaries will not be able to receive financial state support (no matter how many “pads” these offshore companies have as their cover)”⁶¹.

⁵⁹ Lepekhin V. (2023). About the untransformed elite and a “fried rooster”. *Izborsky klub*, 4(112), 18–23.

⁶⁰ Katasonov V. Finally, we heard the word “nationalization” from a high-ranking government official. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/nakonetc_mi_uslishali_slovo_nacionalizatsiya_ot_visokopostavlenogo_gosudarstvennogo_chinovnika

⁶¹ Delyagin M. An important step toward de-offshorization. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/pravitel_stvo_mishustina_sdelalo_vazhnij_shag_na_puti_deofshorizatsii

May 29, according to the Presidential Decree⁶², the presidium of the Board of the Military-Industrial Commission was formed, which included presidential envoys in the federal districts. According to experts, the President thus “purposefully involves” his plenipotentiaries “in the realities of the military political agenda, covertly, emphasizing a more active public position of the plenipotentiaries with the help of the military-industrial complex”⁶³.

According to the decree, Presidential plenipotentiaries should ensure coordination of the activities of government agencies at different levels “to solve problems related to the implementation of investment projects to ensure the production of samples of weapons, military, special equipment, clothing and equipment, assistance to organizations of the military-industrial complex in attracting labor resources and increasing the level of social guarantees for employees of such organizations”⁶⁴.

The above facts indicate that the President and the Government are actively taking measures not only to organize the life of the country during the SMO (*Insert 3*), but also purposefully create conditions for limiting the possibilities of influencing the work of the public administration

system for those representatives of the ruling elites who still remain in the liberal past, do not want or cannot rebuild on a nationally oriented agenda set by the beginning of the SMO. And, what is very important, this work is being carried out painstakingly, without panic and without any revolutionary upheavals for both the public administration system and society as a whole.

The situation at the front “defines socio-political processes, dictates the need to abandon any liberal-collaborationist historical and historiographical concepts and, in addition, indicates the urgent need to implement long overdue personnel decisions”⁶⁵.

The Russian army, which continues to keep the situation on the front line under control, thus providing time for solving internal issues, for the internal mobilization of the country, regarding not only the military-industrial complex, but also the system of public administration, economy, and culture and society as a whole, gives the opportunity to solve current internal problems in this way, while minimizing risks to the state...

⁶² On certain issues of the activities of the Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation and plenipotentiary representatives of the President of the Russian Federation in federal districts: Presidential Decree 390, dated May 29, 2023.

⁶³ Putin included Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Ural Federal District Vladimir Yakushev in the presidium to control the military-industrial complex (opinion of political scientist I. Ananyev). Available at: <https://ura.news/news/1052653535>

⁶⁴ On certain issues of the activities of the Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation and plenipotentiary representatives of the President of the Russian Federation in federal districts: Presidential Decree 390, dated May 29, 2023.

⁶⁵ Sorokin N. Wet American dreams and the “counteroffensive” that has failed. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/triedinstvo_russkoj_istorii

Monitoring of key decisions adopted by the President of the Russian Federation (April 19 – June 20, 2023)⁶⁶

April 25 – Decree “On the temporary management of some property”. According to the document, if any unfriendly country deprives our state, company or citizen of property, and also commits actions against the national, economic or energy security of Russia, then our country takes over the management of business or movable property, as well as securities of such unfriendly countries. As some experts noted, “our country has finally realized its threat to respond to the expropriation of our assets abroad by unfriendly countries: the long-awaited decree of the head of state and the mirror arrest of foreign property followed”⁶⁷.

April 28 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 3.5 and 14.552 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability is established for the nonfulfillment or improper fulfillment of an agreement concluded for the purpose of fulfilling a state defense order. An administrative fine in the amount of 3 to 5 million rubles is imposed on legal entities.

April 28 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Article 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. The law is aimed at strengthening criminal liability for terrorist activities, sabotage and treason, as well as improving activities to counter these types of crimes. Life imprisonment is established for committing particularly serious crimes against the foundations of the constitutional system and the security of the state, as well as for treason. The term of imprisonment for a terrorist act has been increased (previously – from 10 to 15 years; now – from 10 to 20 years). More severe punishment has been established for facilitating terrorist activities, participating in a terrorist community, sabotage, an attack on persons or institutions that enjoy international protection, an act of international terrorism.

May 10 – Decree “On the procedure for entry into and exit from the Russian Federation of Georgian citizens”. The decree cancels the visa regime for Georgian citizens.

⁶⁶ The Insert is a continuation of the monitoring of management decisions of the authorities, which we have been conducting since June 2022.

All monitoring issues are presented in the articles:

1. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A difficult road after the Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41.
2. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). On the way toward crossing the inner Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(4), 9–31.
3. 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.
4. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A framework for a new Social Contract is being formed in Russia. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(6), 9–34.
5. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. The President called on the officials of all levels to “stop fooling around”. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(1), 9–34.
6. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2023). Unusual clarity. Russia is no longer the West. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(2), 9–34.

⁶⁷ Russia has begun to take away Western assets on its territory. Available at: <https://www.gazetametro.ru/articles/rossija-nachala-otnimat-u-zapada-ego-aktivny-na-svoej-territorii-26-04-2023>

May 15 – Decree “On amendments to Presidential Decree 690, dated September 30, 2022 “On granting the citizenship of the Russian Federation in a simplified manner to foreign citizens and stateless persons who have signed contracts for military service”. The decree simplifies the procedure for admission to Russian citizenship of foreigners who have signed contracts for military service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

May 29 – Federal Law “On denunciation by the Russian Federation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe”.

It was decided to withdraw Russia from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which was signed in Paris on November 19, 1990 and limited the number of conventional weapons and equipment in the armed forces of the participating states of two military-political unions: the Warsaw Pact Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (combat tanks, armored fighting vehicles, artillery, shock helicopters, combat aircraft).

Commenting on the essence of this decision of the President, some experts noted: “Many countries that have started to join NATO have not ratified the treaty, including the United States, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. Russia was put at a disadvantage when Russian quotas could be controlled by the countries included in this treaty, and the Russian Federation could not do this. It turned out that they had the opportunity to check, but we did not, because those countries did not ratify the treaty”⁶⁸. According to the expert with the Association of Military Political Scientists A. Koshkin, by denouncing the treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe Russia “throws off the dead weight”⁶⁹; “denunciation should restore order in international law, balance what is necessary and remove what does not work”⁷⁰.

May 29 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 333 of Part Two of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation”. The participants of the SMO are exempt from paying the state fee for issuing a passport of a citizen of the Russian Federation and a national driver’s license in exchange for the lost or unusable ones.

May 29 – Presidential Decree 390, dated May 29, 2023 “On certain issues of the activities of the Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation and plenipotentiary representatives of the President of the Russian Federation in federal districts”. The Presidium of the Board of the Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation was formed. It is entrusted with “the authority to make operational decisions aimed at ensuring the implementation of tasks and functions assigned to the jurisdiction of the Board of the Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation”. The Presidium includes plenipotentiary representatives of the President in the federal districts of the Russian Federation.

⁶⁸ Russia is withdrawing from the Treaty on Conventional Weapons in Europe: what it means (opinion of military expert V. Litovkin). Available at: <https://news.ru/russia/rossiya-vyhodit-iz-dogovora-ob-obychnyh-vooruzheniyah-v-evrope-cto-znachit/?ysclid=ij4cev3vxxu362718330>

⁶⁹ Federal News Agency. Available at: https://riafan.ru/24041620-_skidivaem_mertvii_gruz_politolog_koshkin_o_denonsatsii_dogovora_ob_obichnih_vooruzhenih_silah_v_evrope?ysclid=ij4cenrqlg885616698

⁷⁰ Political scientist Koshkin said that the termination of the CFE Treaty will restore order in international law. Available at: <https://tvrvezda.ru/news/20235101322-Ebod2.html>

End of Insert 3

June 13 – Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. According to the document, the norms of some legislative acts on social guarantees for military personnel are extended to citizens participating in the SMO as part of volunteer formations. This concerns the guarantees of medical and psychological rehabilitation, the provision of free vouchers according to the conclusion of the military medical commission, as well as the burial of the deceased. In addition, the participants of the SMO, their family members are exempt from the accrual of penalties in case of late and (or) incomplete payment for housing and utilities, and from paying a contribution to the overhaul of common property in an apartment building.

June 6 – Presidential Resolution 174-rp, dated June 6, 2023 “On additional measures of social support for military personnel, persons who have signed a contract to stay in a volunteer formation that contributes to the fulfillment of tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, persons serving in the National Guard of the Russian Federation, and their family members”. New measures are envisaged to support the participants of the SMO. In particular, free land plots in state or municipal ownership in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation, except Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Sevastopol (these constituent entities are recommended to adopt regulatory legal acts providing for the provision of other social support measures).

June 13 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the procedure for leaving the Russian Federation and entering the Russian Federation”. The law provides for the transfer of a foreign passport for storage to the issuing authority for those who are restricted from leaving the country in connection with conscription for military or alternative civil service. According to the same scheme, it is planned to transfer for storage the passports of those discharged from military service in the FSB for up to five years from the date of dismissal.

An official or diplomatic passport may be declared invalid if it is not returned within five working days after the completion of a business trip. Also, the grounds for invalidating the passport will be the termination of the passport holder’s citizenship, the cancellation of the decision to acquire citizenship, as well as the establishment of the fact of the absence of citizenship of the Russian Federation based on the results of verification.

June 13 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability has been established for the mass distribution of extremist materials or for their production or storage for the purpose of mass distribution.

June 13 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 20 of the Federal Law “On free legal aid in the Russian Federation”. The list of categories of citizens entitled to receive free legal aid includes the participants of the SMO. The list of cases of providing free legal assistance has also been expanded.

June 13 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 11 of the Federal Law “On days of military glory and memorable dates of Russia”. A new memorable date has been set: November 21 is the Day of the Military Oath (excerpt from the certificate of the State Legal Department: “The establishment of a new memorable date will contribute to the patriotic education of citizens of the Russian Federation and the formation of a respectful attitude toward the defenders of the Fatherland”).

In fact, the situation on the front line and the success of achieving the goals of the SMO define the conditions and the time period for which the country should “restart, reset, and, if necessary, replace the already nonfunctioning regulators with those that meet the requirements of modernity”⁷¹.

But such a “restart of regulators” of public life (especially in today’s almost military conditions) can only be carried out by a strong reformer, which means that the President will have to show political will more than once and make more than one difficult decision.

“SMERSH is not just needed, it was needed the day before yesterday. And today we need a working SMERSH. Today SMERSH would have to operate throughout Russia and have special powers in the territories that are adjacent to the combat zone, and those that have recently joined Russia. **SMERSH is something without which we will not be able to fight effectively...** we have the FSB, we have military counterintelligence agencies. **But SMERSH is an organization that has special powers.** If SMERSH says that it is necessary to evict 20 thousand people from a certain area for a month, then this decision must be implemented. If it is necessary to disconnect all communication, then it is done with one click. If it is necessary, then it is done. **Because this is the front, and life depends on it.** SMERSH should deal with all this, since it should have the right to do so”⁷².

In particular, many experts (quite reasonably, given the terrorist attacks taking place on the territory of Russia and the significance of developments on the front line) actively advocate the re-establishment of SMERSH, an organization with special powers dictated in fact by wartime and the unprecedented nature of threats to national security.

At the same time, we should note that such proposals to strengthen intelligence and counter-terrorism measures and, in general, to create tougher conditions in the country in order to ensure national security are supported not only by many specialists, but also by broad segments of the population. Thus, the results of a sociological survey conducted by VolRC RAS in May – June 2023 showed that **from 50 to 60% of people** support the proposals made by the experts of the Izborsk Club⁷³ – on the introduction of martial law on the territory of new constituent entities of the Russian Federation and the regime of counter-terrorism operations in other regions of Russia, on the abolition of the moratorium on the death penalty, on the granting of special powers to units of the National Guard and Military Police, etc.⁷⁴ (*Tab. 3*). The idea of recreating SMERSH, in particular, was supported by more than half of the surveyed population in the majority (in 11 out of 14) of the socio-demographic groups (*Tab. 4*).

⁷¹ Sorokin N. Wet American dreams and the “counteroffensive” that has failed. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/triedinstvo_russkoj_istorii

⁷² The expert explained the main differences between SMERSH and other special services (opinion of military analyst V. Shurygin). Available at: <https://voennoedelo.com/posts/id45569-ekspert-razjasnil-glavnye-otlichija-smersh-ot-drugih-spetssluzhb>

⁷³ The Izborsk Club is a club of experts established in September 2012 in the city of Izborsk, Pskov Oblast. As noted on the official website of the Izborsk Club, one of its main tasks is “to create and present analytical reports to the authorities and society of Russia; the reports are aimed at the formation of an updated patriotically oriented state policy in all spheres of national life”. Permanent members of the Izborsk Club are, for example, A. Prokhanov, S. Glazyev, M. Delyagin, V. Averyanov, A. Dugin, A. Fursov, V. Ovchinsky, etc.

⁷⁴ Statement of the Izborsk Club of May 6, 2023. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24286>

Table 3. Attitude toward measures to strengthen the set of operational search, intelligence and counterintelligence measures, % of respondents*

Answer option	I fully and mostly support	I fully and mostly don't support
Introduction of martial law in the new Russian territories (Donetsk People's Republic, Lugansk People's Republic, Kherson and Zaporozhye oblasts), as well as in the territories being shelled by the armed forces of Ukraine	63.3	11.9
Introduction of a counter-terrorism operation regime throughout the Russian Federation, except for regions where martial law is established	58.0	13.6
Severance of diplomatic relations with any countries organizing attacks on Russian embassies	57.9	14.5
The Federal Law "On operational search activities" should include a section on the specifics of the implementation of operational search activities in the combat zone during the period of work under martial law, state of emergency, counter-terrorism operations. Operational investigative measures should be carried out in these conditions without court decisions.	56.3	13.6
In the combat zone and frontline regions, to create complex operational intelligence units (departments, groups) from representatives of various subjects of operational search activity according to the SMERSH type	55.6	13.9
Create operational search units in the Military Police, which performs, among other functions, the protection of military facilities	55.5	13.1
Amendments to the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the legislation on judicial proceedings in order to create military tribunals	53.2	14.9
To make a number of units of the National Guard of Russia – military intelligence units and special rapid response units – the subject of operational search activity	52.8	15.1
Conducting trials in absentia against the organizers of sabotage with the imposition of death sentences in absentia and the execution of these sentences on enemy territory	51.7	16.4
Lifting the moratorium on the death penalty (primarily for any murders as a result of terrorist attacks and sabotage)	51.1	19.3

Source: VoIRC RAS data.

* The survey was conducted in May – June 2023 in the Vologda Oblast; 1,500 respondents over the age of 18 were interviewed in the cities of Vologda and Cherepovets; in Babaevsky, Velikoustyugsky, Vozhegodsky, Gryazovetsky, Tarnogsky municipal okrugs, and in Kirillovsky, Nikolsky and Sheksninsky municipal districts of the region. The survey method is a questionnaire at the place of residence of respondents. The sample is targeted, quota-based. The representativeness of the sample is ensured by observing the proportions between urban and rural populations, the proportions between residents of settlements of various types (rural settlements, small and medium-sized cities), the sex and age structure of the adult population of the oblast. Sampling error does not exceed 3%.

Ranked in descending order of the proportion of those who answered "I support". The wording of the question: "In May 2023, the members of the Izborsk Club made a statement about the need to take a number of measures at the state level to strengthen the complex of operational search, intelligence and counterintelligence measures to prevent sabotage and terrorist acts. Do you support the proposed measures?" (the share of those who "found it difficult to answer" for each of the proposed answer options was 25–30%).

Table 4. Do you support the creation of integrated operational intelligence units (departments, groups) in the combat zone and front-line regions from representatives of various subjects of operational search activity like those resembling SMERSH?, % of respondents

Characteristic	I support	I don't support
Sex		
Men	58.5	13.1
Women	53.3	14.6
Age		
Under 30	48.6	8.4
30–55	55.6	14.5
Over 55	58.1	15.2
Education		
Secondary and incomplete secondary	57.2	8.9
Secondary vocational	53.9	16.1
Higher and incomplete higher	55.5	17.4
Income group		
Bottom 20%	49.6	11.0
Middle 60%	56.1	12.5
Top 20%	62.9	20.6
Territory		
Vologda	44.0	22.4
Cherepovets	64.0	14.3
Districts	57.4	8.9
Oblast	55.6	13.9
Source: VolRC RAS data. The survey was conducted in the Vologda Oblast in May – June 2023.		

Thus, the expediency of a substantive discussion of measures to strengthen the set of operational search, intelligence and counterintelligence measures is explained not only by the actions of the enemy, but also by a significant number of our own internal problems. Including those which

were discussed on June 13 at the meeting of the RF President with war correspondents and which, in fact, have to be solved today in an “emergency” mode, under pressure from external and internal, virtually uncontrollable, circumstances.

Today’s time is still called wartime with reservations, but it absolutely cannot be called peaceful, and this requires appropriate changes in the consciousness and behavior of all strata of Russian society, including (or rather, first of all) its “elite” groups: **the country should be sensitive to the challenges of the time, and the elite should be in unity with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, otherwise the state cannot avoid a full-scale catastrophe.**

“Ignoring the links between the state of public life and the state of law is a manifestation of monstrous shortsightedness...

If the country is not ready to respond sensitively to the challenges of the time ...

If the elite resists the political leader who has caught these challenges and is filled with a desire to build a new type of relations between the elite and the people ...

If the intelligentsia is only able to discredit everything that comes from the leader, and at the crucial moment it turns out to be unable to solve the urgent tasks either in a reformist or revolutionary way...

How, in the presence of all these destructive “if” to avoid a full-scale state catastrophe? And who is responsible for it? ...

Only a strong reformer, limiting the arbitrariness of the authorities, can prevent an explosion and “let those healthy elements that dwell in the heart of the Russian land breathe”⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ Zorkin V. Reformer – elite – people. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2023/05/12/put-prava-v-rossii.html>

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Authors' note: this article was prepared before the attempt of an armed rebellion organized by E. Prigozhin on June 24, 2023. The analysis of this event is still ahead; any conclusions can be drawn only after its assessment by the President, legislative authorities, and society as a whole.

Therefore, here we present the opinion of three experts who, in our opinion, most objectively and accurately reflected the essence and significance of the events that took place on June 24, 2023: military and political figure of the Donetsk People's Republic A.S. Khodakovsky, Russian political scientist, philosopher, active public figure A.G. Dugin, and publicist V.P. Semenko:

A.S. Khodakovsky: “We prayed to God that the enemy would not take advantage of the situation and throw all the resources into battle – there would be almost no chance. **It's not easy for us as it is, but yesterday everything hung on a very thin thread.** And those who understood what was at stake and how close we came to defeat will never understand those who shouted glory to Wagner Group members, rejoicing that someone challenged the authorities... **Those who hold the front have been stabbed in the back.** Those whose lives depend on holding the front – experienced the darkest hours yesterday, despite the fact that these people are already under the influence of the war every day. **Millions of people were horrified yesterday by the thought that everything they have endured over the past years will be crossed out in one day**”⁷⁶.

A.G. Dugin: “**There is only one systemic solution: the immediate and real patriotic ideologization of the ruling class and the rotation of the elites.** Only an ideologized elite can be required to be heroic and behave appropriately in an emergency situation. It is useless to expect this from the current elite. We need a sovereign elite. Otherwise, everything will happen again. **The weaknesses of our system were fully revealed yesterday.** But we also saw Putin's will, Lukashenko's true friendship, and the full and uncompromising support of our President from all true patriots”⁷⁷.

V.P. Semenko: “The fact that a big disaster impending on Russia was prevented at the last moment in Putin's trademark style by peaceful means is undoubtedly very gratifying... **However, the brilliant “resolution” (once again) of an acute situational problem does not cancel out the vices of the system itself, which made this mutiny possible. For in it, let's not be afraid of tautology, corruption is systemic in nature, replacing ideals and values for the current elites.** To many officials, there are simply no other incentives to work, except for “sawing”. Prigozhin's actions indicate that “it is becoming increasingly difficult to sort out the situation. Oligarchs, especially those with a power resource, are starting to get out of control. It's time to move on to the rotation of the elites, there is no other way out”⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ Official Telegram channel of A. Khodakovsky. Available at: https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2747

⁷⁷ Official Telegram channel of A. Dugin. Available at: <https://t.me/Agdchan/10753>

⁷⁸ Semenko V.P. The fire is going according to plan. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/pozhar_idet_po_planu

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