

EDITORIAL

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The System of Oligarchic Capitalism in Russia Is Inconsistent with the Achievement of the Goals of the Special Military Operation



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Abstract. June 23–24, 2023, Russia witnessed an attempt of an armed rebellion committed by the private military company Wagner headed by businessman Evgenii Prigozhin. Despite the rapid relief of the crisis, many experts note that it has deep and long-lasting implications for the public administration system, the President and Russia as a whole. We consider the causes and consequences of the events that occurred on June 23–24, drawing on our knowledge and experience accumulated during many years of monitoring the effectiveness of public administration, which includes the analysis of expert opinions, findings of diverse empirical studies regarding the state of Russian society, and the study of key regulatory legal acts and strategic documents adopted at the federal level. We think that the attempt to start a rebellion manifests a long-term crisis of statehood, which was caused by the clan-oligarchic structure of the public administration system flourishing in Russia in the post-Soviet period. We analyze certain aspects of the

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formation of the worldview of the modern extremely liberal ruling elite, provide concrete facts that indicate that the liberal wing of the government does not implement the President's decrees and instructions effectively, and evaluate the role of the public administration system in the formation and implementation of the Social Contract as an informal institution representing a set of mutual obligations between the state and society. We conclude that there is an urgent need for decisive action (first of all, on the part of the President) on the personnel renewal in the public administration system; it is also necessary to staff the system with people focused on Russia's national interests rather than liberal values of the Collective West, the people that have successful experience in solving complex managerial and economic tasks, especially in crisis conditions and in the context of the special military operation. Like many experts, we believe that in this case the public administration system will be able to provide an adequate response to an unprecedented range of internal and external challenges created by increasing threats to national security and global geopolitical changes that led to the special military operation.

Key words: special military operation, public administration system, President, Social Contract, oligarchic capitalism.

The special military operation has been going on for 19 months. At the celebration of the 78th anniversary of the Victory Day of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War, the RF President noted that **today there is nothing more important than the combat activities of SMO participants; national security, the future of the state and the Russian people depend on its results.**

However, in the middle of 2023, amid the ongoing military actions and increasing threats to national security on the part of the Collective West and the Kiev regime, Russia faced an event that

“We take pride in the participants in the special military operation, all those fighting on the frontlines, those who deliver supplies to the front and save the wounded under fire. **Your combat activities now are of paramount importance. The country's security depends on you today as does the future of our statehood and our people**”¹.

jeopardized the achievement of the SMO goals: on June 23–24, the Wagner Group, businessman E. Prigozhin's private military company², made an attempt at an armed revolt.

¹ Vladimir Putin's speech at the Victory Parade, May 9, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/71104>

² A brief biography of E. Prigozhin. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/person/63d280069a79473d6f5e3ce6#p2>:

Evgenii Prigozhin is a businessman, the owner of the Concord Group and the private military company Wagner Group. In 1979, he was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for theft. In 1981, he was sentenced to 13 years in prison for theft, fraud, involvement of a minor in criminal activity and robbery. He was pardoned in 1988.

In the early 1990s, Prigozhin became involved in the food business. In 1991–1997 he managed a chain of private grocery stores. In the 2000s, he became involved in the construction business in Saint Petersburg. In the 2010s, Prigozhin's company began to cooperate with the Ministry of Defense.

Prigozhin's name is associated with the Internet Research Agency created in the summer of 2013. In 2017, it became known about the creation of the media factory by Prigozhin's structures, which included the Federal News Agency, as well as other related publications. In the United States, Prigozhin was accused of interfering in the 2016 election and in the political process.

Prigozhin is the founder of the private military company (PMCs) Wagner Group, which has been known since 2015. Prigozhin himself admitted this only in 2022. The United States and the European Union stated that the Wagner Group conducted its activities in Libya, CAR, Sudan, Mozambique and Mali.

Many experts initially characterized this event³ as a “stab in the back for those who hold the frontline”⁴; demonstration of the “weaknesses of our system”⁵, “a failure of Russian statehood”⁶ and even as “the first chord of a monstrous catastrophe”⁷.

However, today, two months after the revolt, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the “failure of Russian statehood”⁸ was managed to be avoided. The acute phase of the crisis was quickly contained; authorities at all levels consolidated their unequivocal support for the head of state.

According to the results of sociological surveys conducted by federal and regional sociological centers, the attempted rebellion did not lead to negative trends in the dynamics of public support for the RF President (*Tab. 1*).

V. Volodin: **“Russia’s problems and troubles have always occurred only because of betrayal, internal division and treacherousness of the elites.** State Duma deputies, representing the interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation, advocate for the consolidation of forces and **support President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin** – our Supreme Commander-in-Chief”⁹.

V. Matvienko: **“The Federation Council – the chamber of regions – provides full support to the President** – the guarantor of the Constitution – and has a clear understanding of the importance of a responsible and consolidated position of the whole society, residents and leadership of all RF constituent entities in the current situation”¹⁰.

Table 1. Dynamics of Russian President’s approval rating in April – August 2023, % of respondents

President’s approval rating according to...	Apr.	June	Aug.	Dynamics (+/-)	
				June to Apr.	Aug. to June
VCIOM*	77.3	75.1	73.3	-2	-2
Levada-Center**	83.0	81.0	82.0	-2	+1
VoIRC RAS***	60.5	61.3	61.3	0	0

* 1,600 respondents are interviewed in at least 80 regions of the Russian Federation. Survey method – telephone interview. Average monthly data of VCIOM based on the results of the rounds of the monitoring conducted during the following periods:

- ✓ April 3 – April 9, April 17 – April 23, April 24 – April 30 (April);
- ✓ June 5 – June 11, June 12 – June 18, June 19 – June 25 (June);
- ✓ July 31 – August 6, August 7 – August 13 (August).

** Levada-Center is included in the register of foreign agents. Levada-Center surveys were conducted during the following periods:

- ✓ April 20–26 (1,633 people);
- ✓ June 22–28 (1,634 people);
- ✓ July 20–26 (1,629 people; the latest data at the time of writing the article).

Survey method – in-person interview at the respondent’s home.

*** VoIRC RAS surveys were conducted in the following periods:

- ✓ March 21 – April 11 (April);
- ✓ May 16 – June 13 (June);
- ✓ July 12 – August 14 (August).

The survey covers 1,500 people aged 18 and older. Survey method – questionnaire at the respondent’s place of residence.

³ A detailed chronology of the armed rebellion on June 23–24, 2023 is presented, for example, on the website of the information and analytical financial publication “Banki segodnya” (<https://bankstoday.net/last-articles/myatezh-prigozhina>).

⁴ Official telegram channel of A. Khodakovsky. Available at: https://t.me/aleksandr_skif/2747

⁵ Official telegram channel of A. Dugin. Available at: <https://t.me/Agdchan/10753>

⁶ Dugin A. After the mutiny. Bifurcation point. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24505>

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Official telegram channel of V. Volodin. Available at: https://t.me/vv_volodin/659

¹⁰ Official telegram channel of V. Matvienko. Available at: <https://t.me/valentinamatvienko/59>

It is also important to note that the events of June 23–24 did not have any significant negative impact on the government’s implementation of key areas of state policy in the context of the SMO.

1. The situation on the frontline has not experienced any serious changes and remains under the control of the Russian armed forces.

2. Over the past two months, a number of steps have been taken to strengthen Russia’s international relations with friendly countries, primarily with the states of the African continent, as well as with North Korea, a number of Arab countries, etc.

July 10, Sergey Lavrov took part in the Sixth Round of the strategic dialogue between Russia and members of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

July 12–15, the Russian Foreign Minister paid a working visit to Indonesia and Thailand.

July 25–27, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu paid his first working visit to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, where he held talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and also attended the parade in honor of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War.

July 27–28, the second Russia – Africa Summit was held in Saint Petersburg, the RF President held several personal meetings with leaders of African states. According to their results, experts noted that Russia “has another powerful ally, almost the entire continent, 54 countries”¹¹.

3. In the context of the SMO, ongoing economic sanctions, as well as increasing military and terrorist threats from the West and the Kiev regime, the government of the Russian Federation continues active law-making to strengthen the economic, organizational and ideological foundations of Russia’s domestic life (*Insert 1*), which, as we noted earlier, is important not only for the present of Russia, but also for its future; in fact, it represents “the contours of an upcoming new Social Contract”¹².

Thus, the attempted revolt was quickly stopped thanks to the consolidated support for the President on the part of all authorities, the army and society. **However, it would be a big mistake to ignore the very fact of an armed rebellion, which actually put Russia on the brink of civil war in the context of the ongoing special military operation.**

“...The political crisis that had been brewing in Russia for a long time broke out in the form of an attempted coup d’etat. Fortunately, the coup was prevented, **but no one says how to get out of the crisis that triggered it. It seems that there is a lack of conceptual vision of the essence of the problem**, as well as scientific courage”¹³.

¹¹ The new political pole of the world: Results of the Russia–Africa summit. Available at: <https://ren.tv/news/v-rossii/1128027-novyi-politicheskii-polius-mira-itogi-sammita-rossiia-afrika?ysclid=lxm2p7nvd82769901>

¹² 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. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2022.6.84.1

¹³ Gaponenko A. Stalin’s revolution. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/voprosi_stalinizma_8

Insert 1

Monitoring of regulatory legal acts (laws, decrees) signed by the President of the Russian Federation in the period from June 21 to August 20, 2023¹⁴

<p>MEASURES AIMED AT SUPPORTING SMO PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, DEVELOPING THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, DEALING WITH ISSUES CONCERNING MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW, ENHANCEMENT OF ANTI-TERRORIST PROTECTION OF OBJECTS</p>
<p>June 24 – Federal Law 277 “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability for violation of martial law is established in the form of administrative arrest for up to 30 days.</p>
<p>June 24 – Federal Law 270 “On the specifics of criminal liability for persons involved in the special military operation”. The law establishes legal guarantees and grounds for exemption from criminal liability for persons called up for military service on mobilization or in wartime to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (exemption from criminal liability of persons in respect of whom a preliminary investigation is being carried out; with some exceptions – persons who have committed crimes of minor or moderate gravity; persons who have a criminal record).</p>
<p>June 24 – Federal Law 281 “On amendments to Articles 19 and 24 of the Federal Law “On the status of servicemen”. Children of military personnel, volunteers and employees of the Russian Guard are given places in schools, preschool institutions and summer camps as a matter of priority.</p>
<p>July 24 – Federal Law 326 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The age limit for staying in the mobilization reserve is being clarified. For soldiers, sailors, sergeants, foremen, ensigns, midshipmen who belong to the first category, the age limit increases from 35 to 40 years, to the second – from 45 to 50 years, to the third – from 50 to 55 years. The maximum age of staying in the mobilization reserve for citizens who are in reserve is increased by 5 years. For senior officers, it will be 65 years, for junior officers – 60 years, for those with other ranks – 55 years. The maximum age of staying in the mobilization reserve for senior reserve officers remains at the level of 70 years.</p>
<p>July 31 – Federal Law 388 “On amendments to Article 2 of the Federal Law “On the specifics of fulfilling obligations under credit agreements (loan agreements) by persons called up for military service on mobilization into the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, persons taking part in the special military operation, as well as their family members and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The law is aimed at improving the effectiveness of measures of social support for military personnel taking part in the SMO. It clarifies the procedure for repayment of obligations under a loan agreement concluded for the purpose of acquiring residential premises using the funds of a targeted housing loan, in case of death while performing tasks during the SMO. In this case, the obligations of such a serviceman under the loan agreement are repaid by the authorized federal executive authority that ensures the functioning of the accumulative mortgage system of housing provision for military personnel.</p>

¹⁴ The insert is a continuation of the monitoring of the most important regulatory legal acts signed by the RF President; we have been conducting this monitoring since June 2022 (the first issue of the monitoring is presented in the article: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A difficult road after the Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41). Starting from the current issue, the adopted normative legal acts are divided into thematic blocks concerning 1) the course of the SMO and the development of the military-industrial complex; 2) regulation of the information environment and the activities of foreign agents; 3) socio-economic support for citizens, and strengthening the country's economy.

Continuation of Insert 1

<p>July 31 – Federal Law 396 “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Article 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. Criminal liability is established for violating the requirements for anti-terrorist protection of objects (territories). The condition for bringing to criminal liability for violation of these requirements is the fact of the previous repeated bringing of a person to administrative liability for violation of such requirements.</p> <p>A violation that inadvertently caused serious harm to human health or caused major damage is punishable by a fine of up to 80 thousand rubles or in the amount of the convicted person’s salary or other income for a period of up to 6 months, or by restriction of liberty for up to 3 years. If a violation entailed the death of a person, it is punished by imprisonment for up to 5 years; if it entailed the death of two or more persons, it is punished by imprisonment for up to 7 years.</p>	<p>July 31 – Federal Law 404 “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability has been established for not providing assistance to military commissariats when declaring mobilization.</p> <p>The fine for failure to appear at the military enlistment office on a summons without a valid reason increases (previously – from 500 to 3 thousand rubles; now – from 10 to 30 thousand rubles).</p> <p>Failure to provide information about changes in marital status, education, place of work (study) or position, place of residence without registration to the military enlistment office (or the primary military registration authority) will be punishable by a fine from 1 to 5 thousand rubles.</p> <p>A fine of 10 to 20 thousand rubles will be assigned to a citizen subject to primary military registration if they do not inform the relevant structure about leaving their place of residence for more than three months during the conscription period.</p> <p>The penalty for failure to submit to the military registration office a list of citizens subject to initial putting on military records will be from 40 to 50 thousand rubles, for officials and legal entities – from 350 to 400 thousand rubles.</p> <p>Fines are also being increased for evading medical examination: now they will amount from 15 to 30 thousand rubles; the fine will be from 3 to 5 thousand rubles for intentional damage or loss of military registration documents.</p>	<p>August 4 – Federal Law 432 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. Additional legislative measures have been taken to protect state secrets. The procedure for making a decision on restricting the right to leave the Russian Federation for persons who are aware of information of special importance or top secret information has been established. For example, such a decision regarding senators and deputies of the State Duma is made respectively by the Chairman of the Federation Council, the Chairman of the State Duma in the manner determined respectively by the Federation Council, the State Duma. The departure of such persons from the Russian Federation is carried out with prior notification of the FSB (its territorial body) and the SVR.</p> <p>A list of circumstances is provided (death of close relatives, the need for emergency treatment, etc.), in the event of which citizens of the Russian Federation who are restricted in the right to leave the country due to their awareness of information of special importance or top secret information can temporarily travel abroad.</p> <p>The concept of “secrecy regime” has been introduced, the powers of the Government are provided, including the establishment of the procedure for ensuring secrecy in the Russian Federation, as well as the issuance of acts on matters related to the departure from the Russian Federation for citizens admitted or previously admitted to state secrets.</p> <p>The powers of the President of the Russian Federation on issues of ensuring the secrecy regime in the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation are specified.</p>	<p>August 4 – Federal Law 437 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. Changes have been made in the field of maintaining military records and ensuring attendance on the summons to the military commissariat. It is stipulated that citizens who are subject to conscription for military service are prohibited from leaving the Russian Federation from the date of placing the summons of the military commissariat in the register of sent (handed over) summonses. A ban on leaving the Russian Federation has been established as a temporary measure aimed at ensuring the appearance of a citizen subject to conscription for military service.</p> <p>The obligation has been established for medical, general education and professional educational organizations to provide the information about citizens necessary for conducting military registration to the state authorities of RF constituent entities in electronic form.</p> <p>Another Federal Law (439), signed by the RF President on the same day, raised the upper limit of the military age from January 1, 2024 (from 27 to 30 years).</p>
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Continuation of Insert 1

MEASURES TO PROTECT INFORMATION SECURITY, REGULATE THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN AGENTS, EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS	
June 24 – Federal Law 264 “On amendments to the Federal Law “On education in the Russian Federation”	<p>Amendments have been made to the law on education. Participation in the SMO is regarded as an individual achievement of applicants, which is taken into account by educational organizations when they apply for enrollment in educational programs of secondary vocational education, as well as bachelor’s and specialty programs.</p>
June 24 – Federal Law 283 “On amendments to Article 3 of the Federal Law “On education in the Russian Federation”	<p>It is established that the Government of the Russian Federation annually, no later than May 15 of the year following the reporting year, submits a national report on the implementation of state policy in the field of education to the chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.</p>
July 24 – Federal Law 358 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”	<p>It is established that public authorities, their officials, and individuals are obliged to take into account the restrictions related to the status of a foreign agent specified in Article 11 of the Federal Law “On control over the activities of persons under foreign influence”. Actions (inaction) of such persons should not contribute to the violation of the legislation of the Russian Federation on foreign agents by a foreign agent.</p> <p>It is also envisaged that unscheduled inspections may be carried out against these persons. It is established that a foreign agent is not entitled to receive state financial and other property support, including in the implementation of creative activities.</p>
July 24 – Federal Law 379 “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the Russian movement of children and youth”	<p>It is envisaged that this movement will be given the powers of the chief administrator of budget funds and the recipient of budget funds, as well as the authority to provide subsidies to its regional offices and provide grants. It also provides for the creation of primary branches of the movement in educational institutions of higher education. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation is empowered to coordinate the activities of these departments.</p>
July 31 – Federal Law 409 “On amendments to the Federal Law “On nonprofit organizations”	<p>Amendments have been made to the legislation concerning the participation of Russian individuals and legal entities in the activities of foreign nonprofit nongovernmental organizations in the territory of the Russian Federation. Persons holding state or municipal positions, positions of state or municipal service, as a general rule, are prohibited from being members of governing bodies, boards of trustees or supervisory boards, other bodies of foreign nonprofit nongovernmental organizations, as well as from engaging in paid activities funded exclusively by funds of foreign states, international and foreign organizations, foreign citizens and persons without citizenship.</p>
August 4 – Federal Law 425 “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”	<p>Amendments have been made concerning the participation of a foreign or international nonprofit nongovernmental organization in the activities on the territory of Russia. Participation in the activities of such organizations entails the imposition of an administrative fine on citizens in the amount of 3 to 5 thousand rubles; on officials – from 20 to 50 thousand rubles; on legal entities – from 50 to 100 thousand rubles. Also, a new Article 330.3 has been introduced into the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which provides for punishment for this type of crime, in particular, in the form of a fine in the amount of 100 to 200 thousand rubles; compulsory or forced labor; imprisonment for up to 2 years. Increased responsibility is established for the organization of the activities of such an organization.</p>
August 4 – Federal Law 468 “On amendments to Articles 97 and 98 of the Federal Law “On education in the Russian Federation”	<p>In accordance with the Federal Law, regional, national and international comparative studies of the quality of general education are among the measures to assess the quality of education carried out as part of the monitoring of the education system. Regional comparative studies of the quality of general education are conducted by the decision of the executive authority of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation.</p>

End of Insert 1

<p style="text-align: center;">MEASURES FOR PROVIDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THE GENERAL POPULATION, STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, INCLUDING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA</p>
<p>July 20 – Decree 540 “On amendments to Presidential Decree 100, dated March 8, 2022 “On the application of special economic measures in the field of foreign economic activity in order to ensure the security of the Russian Federation”. The decree on the application of special economic measures in the field of foreign economic activity in order to ensure the security of the Russian Federation has been extended until December 31, 2025</p>
<p>July 24 – Federal Law 339 “On amendments to Articles 128 and 140 of Part One, Part Two and Articles 1128 and 1174 of Part Three of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation”. The legal regime of circulation of digital rubles as an object of civil rights is determined. For these purposes, it is envisaged that digital rubles are a kind of non-cash funds. Settlements in digital rubles are carried out by transferring digital rubles by the Bank of Russia within the framework of the digital ruble platform in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation on the national payment system.</p>
<p>July 24 – Federal Law 369 “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the national payment system”. Amendments have been made aimed at improving the mechanisms for countering the theft of funds from citizens’ accounts: the signs of making a money transfer without the client’s voluntary consent are clarified, as well as the procedure for suspending the acceptance of a client’s order for execution or refusing to perform the corresponding operation in the presence of such signs, etc.</p>
<p>August 4 – Federal Law 422 “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The procedure for applying special economic measures aimed at prohibiting (restricting) financial transactions and (or) freezing (blocking) funds and (or) other property belonging to blocked persons, as well as financial transactions carried out in the interests and (or) in favor of such persons, is being improved. In addition, the Federal Law expands the range of persons against whom special economic measures can be applied. Such persons include, among others, legal entities controlled by foreign organizations, and (or) foreign citizens, and (or) stateless persons.</p>
<p>August 4 – Federal Law 448 “On amendments to the Federal Law “On special economic zones in the Russian Federation and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The procedure for obtaining the status of a resident of a special economic zone by organizations and individual entrepreneurs has been simplified.</p>
<p>August 4 – Federal Law 414 “On excess profit tax”. The law on the introduction of a one-time tax on excess profits for organizations whose average profit for 2021–2022 exceeded one billion rubles. The object of taxation is the excess profit received by the taxpayer and defined as the excess of the arithmetic mean of profit for 2021 and profit for 2022 over the arithmetic mean of profit for 2018 and profit for 2019. Taxpayers of excess profit tax are Russian organizations, and foreign organizations operating in the Russian Federation. The procedure for determining the tax base for excess profit tax and the tax rate for this tax in the amount of 10 percent are established.</p>

June 24, following the armed rebellion in Russia, a special meeting of the G7 countries (at the level of foreign ministers) was held, during which “an action plan was discussed in case of destabilization of the situation in Russia, as well as threats emanating from Russian nuclear arsenals in case of destabilization... Similarly, a hundred years ago, Western countries discussed the future of Russia in conditions of revolutionary chaos, and the result of this discussion was the military intervention of dozens of states, the dismemberment of the country into separate spheres of influence, British, French, American, Japanese, occupation of a number of Russian territories and their separation from the country. Now the same countries are again waiting with lust for a new weakening of Russia.

A clear understanding is needed – **any internal turmoil, any anti-government rebellion, under whatever flag and pursuing whatever “just” goals, will automatically prompt our enemies to destroy Russia, deprive it of sovereignty, finally achieve the right of uncontrolled exploitation of our resources, divide Russia into many separate warring quasi-states**¹⁵.

In one of the previous articles, we analyzed in detail the goals and objectives set by the United States and the countries of the Collective West in relation to Russia. We noted that “the Collective West has been pursuing an overt anti-Russian policy and has been doing it quite openly and publicly for more than 70 years”¹⁶, and, of course, they perceived the attempt at an armed revolt as a chance to implement those plans.

The events that have taken place are important for an objective assessment of the state of the public administration system and the state of affairs in Russia. They allowed us to see the mistakes made in the practice of organizing the public administration system, and to be convinced of their “deadly threat

to the statehood and the nation” (as the President noted).

“... any internal revolt is a deadly threat to our statehood and our nation”¹⁷.

According to A. Dugin, it is possible to point out a number of correct and incorrect theses in the “story of the military revolt”¹⁸. In particular, as the expert notes, it was right to support the President and condemn the attempted rebellion; but at the same time, its causes should be considered seriously in order to deeply and objectively understand the whole situation, draw appropriate lessons from it and prevent similar events in the future.

¹⁵ Shapovalov V. The result of the mutiny. Available at: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27521/4785161/>

¹⁶ 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. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2023.2.86.1.

¹⁷ The President’s address to Russians on June 24, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71496/videos>

¹⁸ Dugin A. Putin – Prigozhin: Key points are highlighted. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/putin-prigozhin_aktcenti_rasstavleni

1. It was right to support Putin in a critical situation and stand up for him.

2. It was right to condemn the rebellion.

3. It was right to take Prigozhin's views seriously and note the validity of a number of his requirements and provisions.

4. It was right to wish for the strengthening of the patriotic vector.

5. It is right to always be on the side of the Russian people and the Russian state, trying to gather all the forces together in the name of the great Victory.

6. It is right to desire more justice, honesty and sincerity in society and the state.

7. It is right to condemn betrayal when there are grounds for such condemnation.

8. It is right to give Lukashenko a standing ovation.

9. It is right to actively participate in the creation of our common destiny.

10. It is right to understand correctly that in order not to make mistakes anymore, sometimes it is necessary to make mistakes. It is human to err and Russians are no exception.

1. It was wrong to rush to tear the Wagner Group to shreds, especially for those who had supported it with all their heart a little earlier.

2. It was wrong to conclude that the “patriots were let loose by the authorities” and it is necessary to end this.

3. It is wrong to talk to Putin in the form of an ultimatum.

4. It is wrong and mean to be a liberal when your country is at war with a hostile liberal civilization.

5. It is wrong to explain everything with money, clan battles and intrigues. Indeed, all this is there, but such explanations speak only about the pettiness and insignificance of their advocate themselves – the story is deeper and more complicated.

6. It is wrong to be a passive observer at a critical moment in the life of the people.

And the reasons for what happened indicate, first of all, the shortcomings of the public administration system created in the previous 30 years.

Let us recall that it began to be built, in fact, back in the mid-1950s, during the period when Nikita Khrushchev was First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee (1953–1964). According to experts it was then that “the party abandoned its role as the major (conceptual and ideological) force for the development of society, the moral and intellectual leader of Soviet civilization”; those events triggered internal “fermentation” of the elites and eventually led to the betrayal of national interests and the collapse of the USSR.

“After Stalin’s death, the party leadership did not dare to continue the work of his life. **The Party abandoned its role as the main (conceptual and ideological) force for the development of society, the moral and intellectual leader of Soviet civilization. The party elite preferred the struggle for power and gradually reborn into a new class of “masters”, which culminated in a new civilizational and geopolitical catastrophe in 1991...**

The Soviet system and economy were so stable that unjustified or destructive actions of the supreme power could not immediately cause a catastrophe... However, Khrushchev did the main thing: his de-Stalinization and “perestroika-1” dealt a **fatal blow to the ideological foundations** of Soviet civilization. The destruction processes were launched and led to the 1991 disaster”¹⁹.

¹⁹ Samsonov A. How Khrushchev destroyed the foundation of the Soviet state. Available at: <https://topwar.ru/151907-kak-khrushchev-razrushil-fundament-sovetskogo-gosudarstva.html>

After the collapse of the USSR, the elites who seized power created a system of oligarchic capitalism (or “crony capitalism”, “elite and criminal capitalism”, as some experts call it), actually bringing the country to the “edge of an abyss” by the end of the 1990s. According to experts, “the ruling class, carrying out the liberal-bourgeois reforms of the 1990s, was guided not by the desire for happiness for all Russians, but completely different motives... **the largest part of the reformers simply used liberal-market concepts for their own selfish purposes...**”²⁰

“One of the main mottos of Vladimir Putin’s first presidential term²¹ was “equidistance of oligarchs”, or rather “equidistant position of all market entities from the authorities”, as he stated on February 28, 2000 at a meeting with proxies.

The President was able to make the system manageable “in manual mode”. At least, it was no longer possible to carry out reforms similar to the 1995 “collateral auctions” reform²², when major

Vladimir Putin: “**Keeping all the players on the market at an equal distance from the authorities**, on the one hand, and guaranteeing property rights, on the other, is a cornerstone of the political and economic spheres”²³.

national corporations, industrial enterprises, etc. were “handed over” for a song to the oligarchs for their personal use. As a result, “**during this period, big business lost control over top officials (as it used to have in the 1990s)**”²⁴.

In April 1994, **34% of Russians** answered “I approve” to the question “Do you approve or disapprove of how Boris Yeltsin is coping with the duties of the President of Russia?”

By November 1999, their share decreased to **8% (the share of negative assessments increased from 66% to 92%, respectively)**²⁵.

This was a priority task for domestic policy, since without laying the appropriate groundwork it was impossible to implement a further nationally and socially oriented political course; in fact, a course to regain the public’s trust that the government had lost in the 1990s.

However, even after taking state institutions under “hands-on management” and receiving a “credit of trust” from the population for this (as evidenced by the fact that Vladimir Putin was re-elected as head of state four times), the oligarchic-clan principle of the public administration system has not disappeared and, in fact, remains to this day.

²⁰ Baklanov V.I. The formation of the Russian oligarchic capitalism of the peripheral type in the 1990s. Available at: http://historick.ru/view_post.php?cat=11&id=201

²¹ Matveichev O., Danilin P., Martynov A. et al. (2019). Putin’s mission: A report. Fund for the implementation of public projects “Vremya”. Moscow. P. 45.

²² We should note that the very idea of “collateral auctions” as one of the mechanisms of privatization was first put forward by the President of ONEKSIMBank V. Potanin on March 30, 1995 at a meeting of the Government of the Russian Federation. And already on August 31, 1995, President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin signed a decree “On the procedure for the transfer of federally owned shares in 1995 as collateral” (source: Collateral auctions in Russia in November – December 1995. Available at: <https://tass.ru/info/3114781>).

²³ Opening address at a meeting with high-level campaign workers. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24146>

²⁴ RIA-novosti. December 6, 2017. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20171206/1508182139.html>

²⁵ Source: VCIOM “Arkhiarius” database. The data present the findings of the survey when this question was asked for the first time and those when this question was asked for the last time.

Already in 2012, experts at Minchenko Consulting described the public administration system in Russia as **“a conglomerate of clans and groups that compete with each other for resources... there are a number of structural contradictions within Putin’s “big government”... moreover, the ruling elite, in addition to solving its own management tasks, is focused on ensuring its stability over a long period of time...”**²⁶ (Fig. 1).

By and large, this interpretation of the situation by experts remains in 2023 as well (although with more complex schemes of intra-elite interactions) (Fig. 2): **“In the real world, every representative of the elite has a large number of business lines, connections, interests, motives and goals... A large number of junior partners, allies, friends and enemies create intricate and complex configurations when a new support unit is formed for each serious decision or project”**²⁷. It is extremely difficult, almost impossible to reconcile these intra-elite “blocks” and “configurations”, even in a system controlled by the President in “manual mode”; and therefore, as experts note, this system is occasionally shaken by “elite and near-elite conflicts”.

Thus, “underhand games” and the struggle of clan interests within the elites have always been there and still remain. And today, in the conditions of the SMO, they are becoming more vivid, more visible, **since their consequences lead to a direct threat to national security, which is also felt by the broad strata of the population.**

“During the decades that Putin has been in power, this is obviously not the first conflict in elite circles or near them. There are too many people, too many conflicting interests. The President is used to being the arbiter in such disputes... The unprecedented nature of the current conflict lies in the degree of its publicity. One could speculate about the former ones. Here everything was stated with military directness... At the top, they understand perfectly well that it is difficult to reconcile individual people within the elite... it is much easier to marginalize an ambitious official or businessman than a paramilitary structure, which the government uses as an important tool – and is going to use further”²⁸.

“The main part of the oligarchy was dissatisfied with these actions of government officials [SMO], as it suffered from the economic sanctions imposed by the West. Someone demonstrated their dissatisfaction by fleeing Russia and withdrawing their capital from the country. And someone began to look for an opportunity to remove those government officials, and first of all President Vladimir Putin, from power. It was this group that played on the political ambitions of Evgenii Prigozhin, head of the Wagner Group”²⁹.

²⁶ Vladimir Putin’s Big Government and the Politburo 2.0: A report by Minchenko Consulting. August 2012. Available at: <https://minchenko.ru/analitika/?curPos=65>

²⁷ Shkolnikov A. Myths about clan battles. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/mifi_o_bitvah_klanov

²⁸ On the public transformation of the rebellion into an intra-elite dispute. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2023-07-12/2_8771_red.html?ysclid=lkxrj9p379535508744

²⁹ Gaponenko A. Stalin’s revolution. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/voprosi_stalinizma_8

Figure 1. Members of the “Politburo 2.0” in 2012



Source: Vladimir Putin’s Big Government and Politburo 2.0: Minchenko Consulting report. August 2012. Available at: <https://minchenko.ru/analitika/?curPos=65>

Figure 2. Members of the “Politburo 2.0” in 2023



Source: Russian elites a year after the start of the SMO: Minchenko Consulting report. May 2023. Available at: https://minchenko.ru/analitika/analitika_101.html

For example, the fact that this was one of the main causes of the crisis of statehood, expressed in the June 24 revolt³⁰ is proved by the goals of the so-called “March of Justice”, voiced by E. Prigozhin himself, and the assessments of independent experts indicating that the leader of the Wagner Group is **not an independent figure, but only representing the interests of certain “patrons”**.

The rapid relief of the crisis can be called a kind of “draw” in the battle of clans, while in the context of the common goals of national security and the struggle for sovereignty that Russia continues to pursue during the SMO, this is a clear “loss” for the President, for the public administration system and ultimately for the country as a whole, since the crisis itself demonstrated (to foreign countries, too) the

Nezavisimaya gazeta (editorial): “A month after the revolt, it is obvious that Prigozhin survived thanks to **his connections in the highest echelons of power**. Most likely, these connections, these people were and remain dissatisfied with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov. Apparently, **they used Prigozhin for an unprecedented attack on the two key figures – leaders of the Russian Armed Forces...** It can be argued that Prigozhin, in addition to his own commercial interests, fought for **someone else’s interests in a different time perspective**”³¹.

P. Skorobogaty: “It must be understood that Prigozhin is **certainly not an independent figure...** since his very vigorous activity in Saint Petersburg, **he certainly had partners, companions, and curators in various state authorities of the Russian Federation, including the Presidential Administration**. And later, when he started a very large business in Africa, which concerned not only the private military company (the campaign associated with Prigozhin was engaged in politics there, **lobbying for the interests of big business**, etc.; **a campaign in which a large number of those in power and those who make decisions were involved**). **And, of course, after he joined the SMO, these connections did not go away ... he has his own clear role; in this sense, he has connections with many figures**”³².

³⁰ See, for example (direct quotes of E. Prigozhin. Sources: Online Information Publication Kun.uz. Available at: <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2023/07/03/prigojin-zapisal-pervoye-obrashcheniye-za-nedelyu-i-nazval-tseli-marsha-spravedlivosti>; Online edition Kurer-sreda. Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/ZJnDRBjKZ377W4fC>):

1. “Our “March of Justice” was aimed at **fighting traitors and mobilizing our society**”.
2. “The purpose of the campaign was to prevent the destruction of the Wagner Group and **to bring to justice those persons who made a huge number of mistakes during their unprofessional actions. This was demanded by the public**; all the servicemen who saw us during the march supported us”.
3. “We went **to demonstrate our protest, not to overthrow the government in the country**”.
4. “In the “March of Justice”, in addition to the struggle for existence, they [civilians] saw **support for the fight against bureaucracy and other ailments that exist in our country**”.
5. Our “March of Justice” showed a lot of what we talked about earlier, **the most serious security problems throughout the country...**”

³¹ A month after Prigozhin’s revolt. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2023-07-23/2_8780_red.html?ysclid=lkct0xzc7b221294017

³² Skorobogaty P. (deputy editor-in-chief, editor of the policy department of the *Ekspert* journal, expert at the Center for Applied Research and Programs). Video interview in the “Neutral Zone” program (video blog of Israeli journalist A. Waldman). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt2qH1Sk4dc>

vulnerability of the system of oligarchic capitalism managed via “hands-on” approach.

“The damage that Evgenii Prigozhin inflicted on the Russian state with his psychopathic craving for power is also obvious. And it’s not just about the dead pilots and the loss of unique equipment.

First, it will be necessary to restore the country’s reputation abroad, both in the West and in friendly countries, where a legitimate question has arisen about the controllability of internal processes in Russia and the potential of its armed forces...

Second, difficulties may arise with our foreign operations and private military companies as their effective tool... How can we now trust people with weapons who have arrived from abroad, especially the authorities in those regions where coups and uprisings happen with enviable regularity?”³³

One of the leading Russian sociologists Zh.T. Toshchenko³⁴ in his article “Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding”³⁵ conducted an in-depth analysis of historical aspects related to the formation of the concept of Social Contract. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the entire history of humankind (including the Russian experience) shows that the **inability of the authorities to adjust their policies in accordance with the key demands of society or a purely formal approach of the state to reach agreement with the majority of the population**

of the country ultimately leads to disastrous consequences for the statehood.

We find it necessary to emphasize the author’s idea that **“unity at the moral level is especially important”, “moral unity... is based on the fundamental value orientations of the main social forces, the coordination of which is the function of the state”**.

“The Social Contract involves ensuring harmony and balance of interests not only between the whole people and the government, but also between the social communities and groups within society that make up this people; in other words, **ensuring that the diversity of interests of social communities and groups is taken into account** – and not only at the political, economic and social levels. **It is especially important to agree on the moral level, since it is the most fundamental level, ensuring the true essence and nature of the Social Contract.** Moral unity arises on the basis of observing and maintaining trusting relationships, **eliminating any attempts at confrontation, rivalry, prejudice, is built on the basis of fundamental value orientations of the main social forces, the coordination of which is largely the responsibility of the state authorities**”³⁶.

This is what underlies the Social Contract, in which the main thing is not “the actual or formal participation in addressing economic, social and political issues”, but **“the meaning universally recognized by all participants, for the sake of which the existence of the state is possible”**³⁷.

³³ Skorobogaty P. (2023). Only business or a big “scrape”. *Ekspert*, 27, p. 19.

³⁴ Zhan T. Toshchenko – Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences (Philosophy), Professor; Honorary Doctor of RAS Institute of Sociology.

³⁵ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2023). Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 6, 3–15.

Noumenon is a philosophical concept denoting an intelligible essence, an object of intellectual contemplation, as opposed to a phenomenon as an object of sensory contemplation.

³⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2023). Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 6, p. 12.

³⁷ Ibidem. P. 8.

We should say that topic of Social Contract attracts the attention of scientists more and more often³⁸. In general, worldwide, as RAS Corresponding Member V.E. Dementiev points out, referring to Google Academy data³⁹, while during the period from 2001 to 2020, about 16 thousand materials appeared on the Internet every five years on issues related to the Social Contract, “then starting from 2021, in just two and a half years, there have been 15,800 such publications”⁴⁰. And this is no coincidence, because, on the one hand, “the beginning of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine is a turning point in Russian history”⁴¹; “the situation itself causes an objective need to formulate the task of forming a new Social Contract after the completion of the SMO”⁴². On the other hand, thanks to the SMO, the whole world came into motion, many countries (China, Brazil, India, Iran, the countries of the African continent, etc.) began an active struggle to strengthen their national sovereignty against the hegemony of the United States and the countries of the Collective West.

There has already been an experience of a formal approach to the creation of a Social Contract

in modern Russian history (after the collapse of the USSR and the change of the social system). It was the “Agreement on Public Consent” signed on April 28, 1994 by the President of the Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Chairman of the upper house of Parliament V.F. Shumeiko, Chairman of the lower house of Parliament I.P. Rybkin, as well as a number of representatives of authorities, religious denominations, political parties and social movements⁴³.

The writer, historian and lawyer E.M. Strigin noted in one of his books: “Why not remember about consent, when all the power is in your hands, you can talk about peace... just before the signing of the agreement in April 1994, V. Zorkin stated: “One of the most dangerous features of the political situation in today’s Russia **is the split of the leading elite strata of society into warring ideological groups and political clans**”⁴⁴.

³⁸ See, for example:

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

2. Polterovich V.M. Competition, collaboration, and life satisfaction. Part 1. The Seven of European leaders. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(2), 31–43.

3. Polterovich V.M. (2022). Competition, collaboration, and life satisfaction. Part 2. The fundament of leadership – collaborative advantage. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 42–57. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2022.3.81.2

4. Toshchenko Zh.T. (2023). Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 6, 3–15.

5. Dementiev V.E. (2023). Communicative concept of the social contract and formation of the course of economic development. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(4), 57–70.

³⁹ Google Academy is a search engine for scientific publications. The portal is considered the world’s largest academic search engine, with a coverage rate of up to 90% of all English-language articles.

⁴⁰ Dementiev V.E. (2023). Communicative concept of the social contract and formation of the course of economic development. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(4).

⁴¹ Balatsky E.V. Russia 2022: The content of a new social contract. Available at: https://kapital-rus.ru/articles/article/rossiya_2022_goda_soderzhanie_novogo_obschestvennogo_dogovora/

⁴² 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.

⁴³ Melnikova V.A. One look back. “Agreement on Public Consent”, April 28, 1994. Available at: <https://kprf-ugra.ru/archives/13169>

⁴⁴ E.M. Strigin (writer, historian of special services, lawyer, journalist; staff member of state security agencies, lieutenant colonel; public figure, deputy of the Krasnoyarsk City Council). From the KGB to the FSB. Book 2. From the RF Security Ministry to the RF Federal Counterintelligence Service. Available at: <http://res.krasu.ru/kgb-fsb/?book>

According to experts, the authorities remembered about public consent after the events of “Black October 1993”⁴⁵ and the adoption of a new Constitution on December 12, 1993 (which, as we know, imposed a ban on official ideology in Russia).

The agreement was designed for two years; it stated, in particular, that its participants “assure that they will take all necessary measures to establish stability in the country, without which it is impossible to get out of the economic crisis”⁴⁶.

The priority tasks that the Government of the Russian Federation **undertook** to solve already in **1994**, were as follows:

- ✓ “reduce the level of inflation and control it”,
- ✓ “create prerequisites for economic recovery”;
- ✓ “ensure the elimination of budget arrears in the payment of wages”;
- ✓ “pursue an active social policy **aimed at stabilizing and subsequently improving the standard of living**, adapting the able-bodied population to new conditions, targeted protection of its most vulnerable strata from the negative manifestations of transitional processes, **reducing the level of income**

differentiation, implementing the principles of social partnership”;

- ✓ “develop a federal program to promote employment and other social programs and organize their implementation”⁴⁷.

However, as practice has shown, “many agreed to reconciliation, but not all”⁴⁸; “some of the political forces simply refused to join it”⁴⁹. In particular, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation G. Zyuganov noted that it was “**a contract not of society, but of officials**”⁵⁰.

“At the ceremony of signing the Agreement on Public Consent, Zyuganov, in accordance with the decisions of the faction, defiantly refused to sign the document, but conveyed the demands of the party and the faction to the government in writing. The agreement was also not signed by Aman Tuleyev, Grigory Yavlinsky and Mikhail Lapshin, the leaders of the irreconcilable opposition Viktor Anpilov and Viktor Tyulkin... **The absence of the signature of Zyuganov, the main opposition leader, practically disavowed the document and made it meaningless for the authorities**”⁵¹

⁴⁵ The events of the “Black October 1993” are also known as the “Storming of the White House” or the “Yeltsin Coup of 1993”. They mean the dispersal of the Congress of People’s Deputies and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, accompanied by mass riots and armed clashes. As a result of these events, there was a “violent termination of the Soviet model of power that had existed in Russia since 1917” (source: <https://ru.wikipedia.org>) and a new Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted.

⁴⁶ Text of the Agreement. Available at: <https://rulaws.ru/acts/Dogovor-ot-28.04.1994/>

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ *Kommersant*. April 29, 1994. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/77479>

⁴⁹ The following parties refused to sign the Agreement: the Communist Party, the Agrarian Party, the National Salvation Front, the Russian National Sobor, the Labor Russia movement and some other organizations and movements (source: Melnikova V.A. “Agreement on Public Consent”, April 28, 1994. Available at: <http://poznnaemvmeste.ru/index.php/9-pervyj-poslednij/2202-dogovor-ob-obshchestvennom-soglasii-28-aprelya-1994-goda>)

⁵⁰ *Kommersant*. April 29, 1994. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/77479>

⁵¹ Strigin E.M. From the KGB to the FSB. Book 2. From the RF Security Ministry to the RF Federal Counterintelligence Service. Available at: <http://res.krasu.ru/kgb-fsb/?book>

In addition, in the end, the promises of the authorities were never fulfilled or were formally fulfilled, as well as the very approach to creating a Social Contract in the country.

1. For example, the population with monetary incomes below the subsistence level in 1994, compared with 1993, decreased by 10 percentage points (from 32 to 22%), but in 1995 it increased again (by 3 percentage points, to 25%), and by 1999 it increased by 5 percentage points (up to 30%; *Tab. 2*).

2. The real disposable income of the population since the adoption of the Agreement on Public Consent (1994) by 1999 decreased by 27% (from 113 to 86%). The R/P 10% ratio has not actually changed (14–15 times).

3. The federal program for the promotion of employment of the population of the Russian

Federation for 1994 has indeed been developed⁵², but, as statistics show, the share of unemployed citizens in Russia continued to grow (from 8% in 1994 to 13% in 1999), the number of people employed in the economy decreased (from 69 to 64%).

The reaction of society to the formal approach of the authorities to the solution of such an acute issue as the achievement of public consent was, in fact, quite predictable: in 1995 and 1999 (that is, before the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms and before the creation of the United Russia party on December 1, 2001) it was the RF Communist Party (the party that had not supported the 1994 Agreement on Public Consent) that received the majority of votes in the election to the RF State Duma (in 1995 – 22.3%, in 1999 – 24.3%; *Tab. 3*).

Table 2. Dynamics of indicators of the standard of living (1992–1999)

Indicator	Year								Dynamics (+ / -)
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999 to 1994
Population with incomes below the subsistence level, million people	49.7	46.9	33.3	36.6	32.7	30.7	34.3	43.8	+11
Population with incomes below the subsistence minimum, % of total population	33.5	31.5	22.4	24.7	22.1	20.8	23.4	29.9	+8
People's real disposable income, % compared to the previous year	52.5	116.4	112.9	84.9	100.1	105.3	83.7	85.8	-27
R/P 10% ratio, times	8.0	11.2	15.1	13.5	13.0	13.5	13.8	13.9	-1
Unemployment rate, % of economically active population	5.2	5.9	8.1	9.5	9.7	11.8	12.9	13.4	+5
Number of people employed in the economy, million people	72.1	70.9	68.5	67.1	66.0	64.6	63.6	64.0	-5

Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook – 2000. Available at: <https://istmat.org/node/23792>

Table 3. Top three parties that obtained the highest number of votes in the 1995–2003 parliamentary elections

Party	Dec. 17, 1995		Партия	Dec. 19, 1999		Партия	Dec. 7, 2003	
	%	abs. people		%	abs. people		%	abs. people
KPRF	22.30	15432963	KPRF	24,29	16196024	United Russia	37.56	22776294
LDPR	11.18	7737431	Yedinstvo	23,32	15549182	KPRF	12.61	7647820
Nash dom – Rossiya	10.13	7009291	Otechestvo – Vsiya Rossiya	13,33	8886753	LDPR	11.45	6944322

Source: official website of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://old.cikrf.ru/>

⁵² About the federal employment assistance program of the Russian Federation for 1994: RF Government Resolution 683, dated June 15, 1994.

From the experience of the adoption and implementation of the 1994 Agreement on Public Consent it can be concluded that public statements (whatever form they may have) should, first, be coordinated not just with the majority, but with those participants in the political process who express the opinion of the majority of the population; second, they should not just be declared, but also supported by actual deeds, the results of which can be seen by the public.

However, it looks like after almost 20 years the “Politburo 2.0” (the new management team, the Presidential Administration, which implemented the May 2012 decrees and the 2018 national projects) has not learned this lesson. In previous articles, we have repeatedly cited expert opinions on this issue⁵³.

As statistics show, many of the key indicators identified in the May 2012 decrees⁵⁴ (including the growth of real wages, life expectancy, etc.), have not been achieved on time and, by and large, remain not achieved at the present time (*Tab. 4*).

Table 4. Summary of the achievement of targets, established by the May decrees of the President of the Russian Federation in 2012

“Increasing the share of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries in GDP by 2018 in 1.3 times compared to the level of 2011”						
Share of high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries in GDP of the Russian Federation, %	Data			Deviation (+/-), times		
	2011	2018	2022	2018 target	2018 to 2011 fact	2022 to 2011 fact
	19.6	21.3	22.6	+1.3	+1.1	+1.2
“Creating and upgrading 25 million high-performance jobs by 2020”						
Number of high-performance jobs in Russia as a whole, thousand units	Data			Deviation (+/-), thousand units		
	2013	2020	2022	2020 target	2020 to 2013 fact	2022 to 2013 fact
	17492.8	21 946.6	22 862.4	+7507	+4454	+5369
“1.4 – 1.5-fold increase in real wages in by 2018”						
Real wages of employees of organizations, rubles, at comparable prices for 2022	Data			Deviation (+/-), times		
	2011	2018	2022	2018 target	2018 to 2011 fact	2022 to 2011 fact
	49294.8	57325.6	65338.0	+1.5	+1.2	+1.3
“Raising domestic research and development expenditures to 1.77 percent of GDP by 2015”						
Domestic research and development expenditures, % of GDP	Data			Deviation (+/-), p.p.		
	2011	2015	2021	2015 target	2015 to 2011 fact	2021 to 2011 fact
	1.02	1.1	1.0	+1.77	+0.08	-0.02
“Ensure an increase in life expectancy in the Russian Federation up to 74 years by 2018”						
Life expectancy, years	Data			Deviation (+/-), years		
	2011	2018	2022	2018 target	2018 fact	2022 fact
	69.83	72.91	72.73	+5.17	+3.08	+2.90
Source: Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/						

⁵³ See, for example:

1. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2018). “Russian Federation – a welfare state?”: Assessing the results of 25 years of implementation of Article 7 of the Russian Constitution. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 11(6), p. 20.

2. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2019). “Intellectual feebleness” of the ruling elites and the “deep people” of the “long state”. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 12(2), 9–35.

3. Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Vote of confidence for the President is confirmed. Achievement of socio-economic development goals before 2024–2030 is uncertain. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 13(4), 9–37.

⁵⁴ See, for example:

Presidential Decree 596, dated May 7, 2012 “On long-term state economic policy”;

Presidential Decree 597, dated May 7, 2012 “On measures to implement the state social policy”;

Presidential Decree 599, dated May 7, 2012 “On measures to implement state policy in the field of education and science”.

Moreover, according to statistics, the same applies to the prospects for their implementation, taking into account the adjustments in the Presidential decrees of May 7, 2018⁵⁵ and July 21, 2020⁵⁶ (Tab. 5).

These facts show that the specific instructions of the head of state have not been carried out for years or were carried out inefficiently, and according to some experts, they were simply “sabotaged”⁵⁷ by the ruling elite, led by the “Politburo 2.0”.

A similar situation took place with regard to the release of a single history textbook. Let us recall that the President gave the instruction to prepare it on February 19, 2013, noting the importance of a “structured view” of the younger generation about Russia’s past, a “unified concept” and a “unified logic” of studying Russian history in order to avoid “internal contradictions” and “double interpretations”.

“... Our children’s heads are filled with a mish-mash of information obtained from a textbook, TV, the Internet, and there is no structured idea about the past of our Homeland, including the history of the peoples inhabiting it...”

It seems to me that the system for preventing the interpretations that distort the historical past has not yet been sufficiently built. Perhaps I agree that a single textbook on Russian history will solve this problem... Perhaps we should think about introducing common history textbooks for Russian secondary schools, designed for different ages but built into a single concept and following a single logic of continuous Russian history, the relations between all its stages and respect towards all the episodes of our past...”⁵⁸

Table 5. Brief information on achieving the targets set by Presidential Decree 474, dated July 21, 2020
“On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2030”

National development goal “ Increasing life expectancy to 78 years ”					
Life expectancy, years	Data			Deviation (+/-)	
	2018 (fact)	2022 (fact)*	2030 (target)	2030 to 2018 target	2022 to 2018 fact
	72.91	72.73	78.0	+5.09	-0.18
* Without taking into account statistics for the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR), Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts.					
National development goal “ Halving the poverty rate compared to the indicator of 2017 ”					
Number of people with monetary incomes below the poverty line (subsistence level)	Data			Deviation (+/-)	
	2017 (fact)	2022 (fact)*	2030 (target)	2030 to 2017 target	2022 to 2017 fact
	million people	18.9	14.3	9.5	-9.5
% of total population	12.9	9.8	6.5	-6.5	-3.1
* Without taking into account statistics for the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR), Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts.					
Source: Federal State Statistics Service. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/					

⁵⁵ On national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024: Presidential Decree 204, dated May 7, 2018.

⁵⁶ On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2030: Presidential Decree 474, dated July 21, 2020.

⁵⁷ See, for example:

1. Podosenov S. Governors that are sabotaging the May presidential decrees will be dismissed. Available at: <https://iz.ru/news/567314>

2. ONF leaders accused local officials of sabotaging presidential decrees. Available at: <https://66.ru/news/politic/172058/>

3. Chaldehy A. Why are national projects stalling? Available at: <https://regnum.ru/article/2660159>

⁵⁸ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting of the Council on Interethnic Relations, February 19, 2013. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17536>

However, as experts note, “the order was not fulfilled then: discussions within the professional community impeded the process”⁵⁹. The textbook for grades 10–11 was presented only 10 years later, on August 7, 2023; in the conditions of the special military operation that has been carried out for a year and a half.

That is, even in the context when, for many years preceding the SMO it was necessary to protect the historical memory and education of the younger generations of Russians, the President, apparently, failed to exert a decisive influence on the liberal top of the ruling elites in the implementation of such a specific, but very important tool as the preparation of a unified textbook on the history of Russia. It was possible to do this only during the special military operation that had already begun.

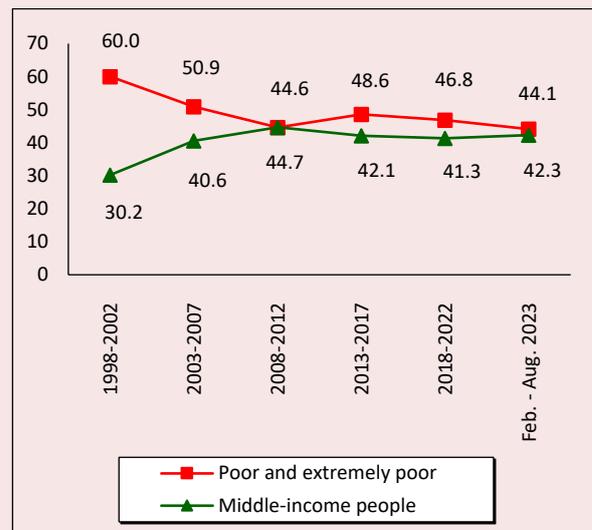
It should also be noted that the Constitution of the Russian Federation stipulates that “the Russian Federation is a social state” (Article 7), in which “everyone is equal before the law and the court” (Article 19). The Federal Law “On combating corruption” enshrines the principle of “inevitability of responsibility for committing corruption offenses”⁶⁰. The Presidential Decree “On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2030” sets the goal of “reducing the poverty level by half compared to the indicator of 2017”⁶¹. And the decree “On the approval of the foundations of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”⁶², signed by the President relatively recently (already in the conditions of the SMO), points out that justice is one of the “traditional values” and “moral

guidelines that form the worldview of Russian citizens” (pp. 4–5), which the state “considers as the basis of Russian society” (p. 7).

Nevertheless, sociological research we conducted in the monitoring mode clearly shows that:

✓ for many years, from 44 to 50% of the population subjectively classify themselves as “poor and extremely poor” (Fig. 3); moreover, from 2013 to the present, the proportion of the “poor and extremely poor” exceeds the proportion of those who classify themselves as “middle-income” people (as of February – August 2023 – 44 and 42%, respectively);

Figure 3. Distribution of answers to the question “Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?”, % of respondents*



* Data are given for each five-year period over the entire duration of the survey (1998–2023)
Source: VoIRC RAS data.

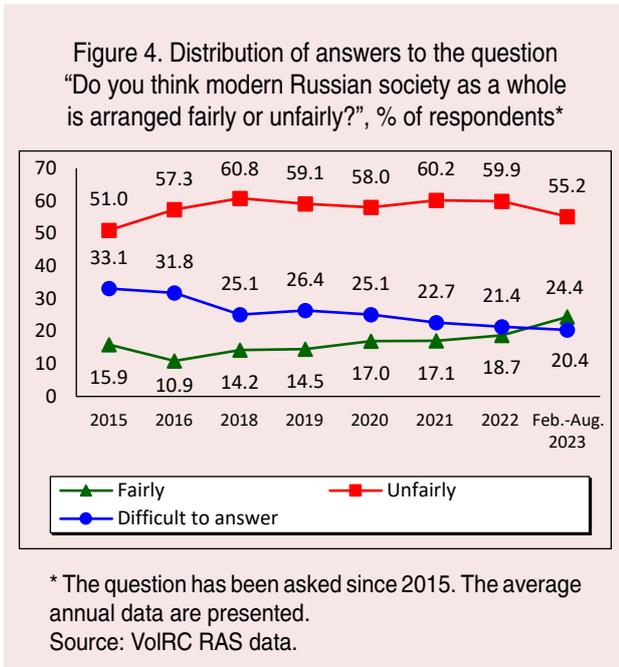
⁵⁹ Savitskaya N. The first state textbook after the collapse of the USSR. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. August 10, 2023.

⁶⁰ On combating corruption: Federal Law 273-FZ, dated December 25, 2008 (as amended July 10, 2023) (with amendments and additions, effective as of August 13, 2023). Available at: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_82959/9c25ae5432dd35c13bb140322c13ccc304cc10cf/

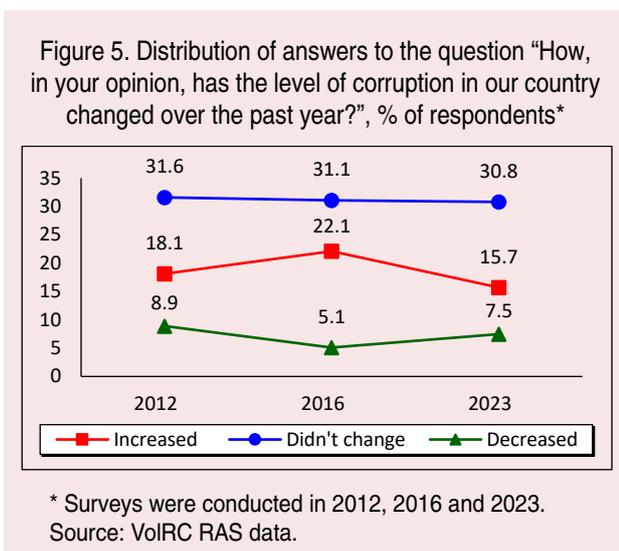
⁶¹ On the national development goals of the Russian Federation for the period through to 2030: Presidential Decree 474, dated July 21, 2020. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/45726>

⁶² On the approval of the foundations of the state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values: Presidential Decree 809, dated November 9, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502>

✓ over the past 8 years (2015–2023), more than 50% of Russians have noted that “modern Russian society is arranged unfairly”, and during this period their share has increased from 51 to 55% (Fig. 4);



✓ over the past 11 years (from 2012 to 2023), the share of people who believe that the level of corruption in Russia is growing has not actually changed (in 2012 – 18%, in 2023 – 16%; Fig. 5). The share of Russians who note a decrease in the relevance of the problem of corruption in the country, as well as 11 years ago, does not exceed 10%.



These facts demonstrate the importance of the role of the “Politburo 2.0” in the implementation of the informal essence of the Social Contract, the assessment of which cannot be reduced to citizens’ attitude toward the work of the RF President alone, but requires the achievement of public consent in many aspects:

- ✓ ensuring a socially fair organization of the state and society;
- ✓ subjective perception of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life;
- ✓ attitude toward the entire system of public administration, or rather, toward the worldview and values that guide its representatives – the ruling elites of the country.

Society remains dissatisfied with the dynamics of solving the key issues underlying the Social Contract, such as “the requirement for a new ideology”, “the requirement to define the national economic system”, “the requirement to de-bureaucratize the economy”, “combating extreme forms of inequality”⁶³. **As for the nonobservance of human rights and freedoms, “which are usually fixed in the Constitution of the country and other official legal documents”, this leads, as a rule, to the fact that such a situation “is used by destructive forces to their own benefit”⁶⁴. This is exactly what Russia actually faced on June 24, 2023.**

Of course, it should be borne in mind that as the needs are fulfilled, the level of claims of the population also increases. Experts say that “in Russia many consider themselves financially deprived and do not notice that the standard of consumption has been established at quite a high level among urban residents... Many (not all, but many) have actually raised the bar for life requirements so much that it is very difficult to

⁶³ Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. *Journal of Institutional Studies*, 3, 74–90.

⁶⁴ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2023). Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 6, 3–15.

please them”⁶⁵. That is why dynamic changes are so important in solving the problems of reducing inequality, raising the standard of living and improving quality of life, etc. **Without positive and stable dynamics between society and the state that is felt by a wide segment of the population, a vacuum is created that can only be overcome under extreme, forced force majeure circumstances (for example, an unprecedented increase in threats to national security). But this is only a temporary “tightening of knots” rather than compliance with the Social Contract.**

The June 24 revolt is not the first and, most likely, not the last manifestation of the system-wide errors committed in creating the system of public administration over the 30 years preceding the SMO. In fact, the system of public administration (and the country as a whole) faced this in 1917,

“The cardinal nature of the changes that took place in Soviet/Russian society during the years of perestroika, and then in the 1991–2000s, led to the emergence and consolidation of **new traumatic features (characteristics) of public consciousness...** First of all, there was disorientation and disorganization of public consciousness... of particular importance... was its **traumatization expressed in a split, bifurcation, inconsistency and conflict of development**”⁶⁶.

in 1991, in 1993, and almost always it led to extremely serious consequences – to the crisis of statehood and the “trauma” of society.

“...the trauma society lacks a clear and unambiguous strategy and understanding of the prospects for economic development. The planned and implemented measures taken in these societies are usually aimed at **solving current, urgent and critical problems, rather than at the long term...**

Spontaneous and/or disordered development of trauma society **is directly related to the activities of actors, i.e. organizations and persons responsible for the condition of public administration** and methods used to solve strategic problems of an economic and social nature. However, an analysis of the so-called economic elite and its activities shows that **it is concerned primarily with its own clan and caste interests**”⁶⁷.

For example, a number of experts similarly assessed the actions of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation to raise the key rate to 12% (August 15, 2023⁶⁸; moreover, “with the possibility of an additional increase in case of increased pro-inflationary risks”⁶⁹.

They called this decision nothing less than “sabotage”⁷⁰, “criminal act”⁷¹, “a sure way, in two steps, to plunge the economy into a state of clinical

⁶⁵ Birov E. Consciousness defines being. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/soznanie_opredelyaet_bitie_dokazatelstva_iz_nashej_zhizni

⁶⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2015). *Fantomy rossiiskogo obshchestva* [Phantoms of the Russian Society]. Moscow: Tsentr sotsialnogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga. Pp. 19, 37.

⁶⁷ Toshchenko Z.T. (2020). Trauma societies and their characteristics. *Humanities of the South of Russia*, 9(1), 30–50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19181/2227-8656.2020.1.2>

⁶⁸ Official press release of the Bank of Russia, August 15, 2023. Available at: https://www.cbr.ru/press/pr/?file=15082023_103000Key.htm

⁶⁹ The Bank of Russia has dramatically raised the rate. How this will affect the lives of Russians. Available at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/business/2023/08/15/17430752.shtml?updated>

⁷⁰ “This is a criminal act; in some other normal country they would have been put behind bars for such a thing long ago”. Glazyev’s tough words about the collapse of the ruble and the betrayal of the Central Bank. Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/ZNs82nPxV0kOhfFB>

⁷¹ Ibidem.

death”⁷², “a revolt of the elite” and “a special operation against the ruble, which was supervised from the outside”⁷³.

State Duma deputy O. Dmitrieva described the actions of the Bank of Russia as an “extremely harmful measure”, adding that “the current leadership of the Russian Central Bank is acting in new conditions according to old American recipes”⁷⁴. And the head of the Duma faction “Jus Russia – For the Truth” S. Mironov called the Central Bank itself “the largest foreign agent in the Russian Federation”⁷⁵.

Moreover, it is important to note what analysts have been saying for years: “The leadership of the Central Bank of Russia is engaged in subversive work inside the country”⁷⁶ and its “pests are consulting with their “senior comrades from the IMF who really want to replace Putin... for a person that suites their interests more, and therefore are consistently “playing dirty tricks” on our population, which, due to rising inflation and a reduction in income, will arrange a “Maidan” in our country”⁷⁷.

Judging by the regularity of such “elite riots”, perhaps, we can give only one answer to the question of how frequently Russia will be stepping on the same rake: in the end, everything rests on the question of what kind of state we are building; on questions of ideology.

Without a clear understanding, and most importantly, acceptance of ideological, value

changes that occur against the background of the SMO in Russian society, culture and, in theory, should occur in the ruling elites of the country, it seems extremely difficult to promote further movement toward the formation of the contours of a new Social Contract. Rather, on the contrary, there is an increasing risk of new internal crises, which are unacceptable neither in the conditions of the SMO, nor in the run-up to the presidential election.

And if an armed rebellion turned out to be permissible in principle, even in the conditions of the AFU counteroffensive continuing to gain momentum, it means that it is most likely not possible to count on any significant, qualitative changes in the worldview within the “old” Russian elites... And the essence of the current worldview (at least for a significant part of elite circles) is convincingly shown by numerous expert assessments – the elites’ worldview is comprador, dependent on the West, and uninterested in strengthening the sovereignty of the Russian Federation (*Insert 2*).

“The most odious representatives of the pro-Western social elite emigrated from Russia after the start of the SMO. **But the people defending the interests of the oligarchs remained in the civil service, in the departments, in the editorial offices of TV and radio studios, at computers”⁷⁸.**

⁷² Clinical death in two steps. Glazyev told about the murder of the Russian economy. Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/news/klinicheskaja-smert-v-dva-prijoma-glazev-rasskazal-ob-ubijstve-russkoj-jekonomiki_846820?ysclid=lli5i1lw1103944374

⁷³ Khazin M. The collapse of the ruble – a revolt of the elite? Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/news/specoperacija-cb-protiv-rublja-kurovalas-izvne-cepochku-prosledil-hazin_847657

⁷⁴ The currency crisis will continue. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/economics/2023-08-16/1_8801_disbalance.html

⁷⁵ The State Duma called the Bank of Russia a “foreign agent”: It is fulfilling the Western plan for the collapse of the ruble exchange rate. Available at: <https://newdaynews.ru/moscow/802765.html>

⁷⁶ Katasonov V. The Central Bank is conducting subversive work inside Russia. Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru/science/49211433-tsentrobank-vedet-podryvnyyu-rabotu-vnutri-rossii-ekonomist/>

⁷⁷ Khazin M. Pests from the Central Bank. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/vrediteli_iz_tcentrobanka

⁷⁸ Gaponenko A. Stalin’s revolution. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/voprosi_stalinizma_8

Expert opinions on the liberal wing of the ruling elites

1. *“The liberals from the financial block adjusted the entire tax and customs regulation so that it is oriented toward the export of capital from Russia and the suppression of production instead of developing value-added goods and technology... Outrageous liberal arbitrariness – a new edition of Khrushchev’s voluntarism – is the basis of the financial policy of modern Russia. Therefore, the existential threats that Russia has to deal with require ideological, conceptual (and only then personal) reorganization of the Bank of Russia and the Ministry of Finance”*⁷⁹.

2. *“Judging by the policy of the liberal wing of our elite (which still controls financial policy in the state), they still pursue the goal of stopping the process of economic growth in Russia”. “There has been no alternative in the financial sector for more than 20 years, and all attempts to explain something about the sabotage of monetary authorities cannot be legalized in official documents. Officially, there is neither Glazyev, nor Delyagin, nor Katasonov, nor me [Khazin] in them ...the real goal is to make it impossible to get rid of the liberals as a team. Granted, it will be possible to replace some with others, others with still others, but they will try to make sure that in any case only representatives of the liberal rhizome are in key positions. This has already happened in the early 2000s in the financial sector. Let’s hope it doesn’t work out now...”*⁸⁰

3. *“...despite the special military operation, the nature of the economic system has not changed: there has been no transition from the comprador system to the sovereign one...comprador capital still holds systemic dominance over the commanding heights of the Russian economy, which allows it to preserve and prop up the system of deindustrialization of Russia, preventing the transition to an advanced economic system... Meanwhile, the comprador Russia excludes the sovereign Russia in the same way as the sovereign Russia excludes the comprador Russia...The fate of Russia depends entirely on how the direct antagonism between privatization and nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy will be resolved. The victory of privatization is equivalent to the defeat of Russia: the victory of strategic nationalization is equivalent to the victory of Russia – such is the situation now. Either the former, or the latter: there is no third option whatsoever. Whoever is in favor of privatization is in favor of the collapse of Russia; whoever is in favor of strategic nationalization is in favor of the rise of Russia”*⁸¹.

4. *“The electoral legislation in our country is probably one of the most flexible in the world, it changes with an enviable frequency. The problem is that this legislation “bends” only in favor of one party. All legislative changes of the last decades serve exclusively to strengthen the monopolism of United Russia. In this vein, there are “municipal filters” in the gubernatorial elections, and the total abolition of direct mayoral elections, and the reduction of party lists in legislative assembly elections, thanks to which we already have single-party parliaments in some cities. That is, voters who do not support United Russia simply do not have their representatives in the city councils...”*

With such a legislative framework, unfortunately, there is no reason to doubt the “success” of United Russia in the upcoming election...

*The question is, do the state and society need these successes? Do we need this undivided monopoly, which is becoming more and more bronze, more and more reminiscent of the CPSU in its worst years...? The monopoly of United Russia is driving a wedge deeper and deeper between the government and society, and this rupture of ties is especially dangerous today. To overcome it, radical changes in the electoral system are needed”*⁸².

⁷⁹ Delyagin M. The conductors of the liberal-monetarist policy in Russia. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/191-materialy-mgd/109935-provodniki-liberal-no-monetaristskoy-politiki-v-rossii?ysclid=lkxs5myt3u27707595>

⁸⁰ Khazin M. Why is Mishustin so dangerous? Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/kolonka_mihaila_hazina_ot_2_ilyulya_2023_goda; Mishustin has waged a war against the IMF and the Federal Reserve System. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/kolonka_ot_26_ilyulya_2023_goda;

⁸¹ Grubanov S.S. (2023). Strange and monstrous: Privatization instead of strategic nationalization? *Economist*, 5, pp. 32–33, 42.

⁸² Mironov S.M. A cardinal revision of the electoral legislation is needed. Available at: <https://mironov.ru/moya-pozitsiya/neobhodim-kardinalnyj-peresmotr-izbiratelnoy-zakonodatelstva/>

It is no coincidence that many experts note that “the current situation in Russia is similar to the situation in the mid-1930s in the USSR”⁸³; thus, the popularity of the personality of Joseph Stalin has been growing for several years in almost all segments of the population, including among

young people (for the period from 2005 to 2021 – by 39 percentage points, from 11 to 50%), people with higher education (by 17 percentage points, from 27 to 44%) and people with a high level of welfare (by 32 percentage points, from 15 to 47%; *Tab. 6*).

Table 6. Dynamics of the share of people supporting the installation of the monument to Joseph Stalin, in various socio-demographic groups, % of respondents

Population group	2005	2010	2015	2021	Dynamics (+/-), 2021 to 2005
Age					
18–24 years old	11	12	28	50	+39
25–39 years old	17	26	33	45	+28
40–54 years old	33	20	37	46	+13
55 years old and older	44	36	42	52	+8
Education					
Below secondary	40	30	43	59	+19
Secondary	23	25	31	52	+29
Secondary professional	25	24	39	49	+24
Higher	27	17	32	44	+17
Financial situation					
We have barely enough money to buy food	35	27	45	56	+21
We have enough money to buy clothes	24	24	38	46	+22
We have enough money to buy durable goods	15	18	30	47	+32
Total according to the results of the survey					
Positively	29	25	36	48	+19
I don't care	28	28	29	29	+1
Negatively	37	36	25	20	-17
I find it difficult to answer	6	12	10	3	-3
<p>* The wording of the question: “How would you react to the fact that a monument to Stalin were erected on the next anniversary of the Victory?”. The survey was conducted on a representative all-Russian sample of urban and rural population of 1,620 people aged 18 years and older in 137 localities, 50 RF constituent entities. The survey method is a personal interview at the respondents' home. Source: Stalin Center and Stalin Monument. Press release of Levada-Center*. Available at: https://www.levada.ru/2021/08/04/stalin-tsen-tr-i-pamyatnik-stalinu/</p>					

⁸³ Gaponenko A. Stalin's revolution. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/voprosi_stalinizma_8

⁸⁴ Fursov A. Why is Stalin's popularity growing among young people? Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/sovetskaya_mechta_pochemu_sredi_molodih_rossiyen_rastyot_populyarnost_stalina

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

The authors of this study commented on the results of the survey that the growth in a positive attitude toward Stalin is also an idea of a “strong

hand”; not for everyone, but for those who steal, including oligarchs and ministers.

“What is a request for Stalin today? **First of all, this is a request for social justice**, for “the thief to be in prison”. In addition to social justice, **this is a request for sovereign greatness**, so that no one tells us what kind of juvenile justice we should have, how we should raise children, and Western society, which is flooded with the pus of vice, does not teach us how to behave. This is the second thing besides social justice. And finally, for many people, this is such a revenge in general terms, **a revenge for 30 years of our losses in the international arena**, a revenge in the sense of a socio-psychological feeling”⁸⁴.

And, perhaps, according to most experts, this is the main lesson that should be learned (first of all by the President) from this situation: **the extremely liberal ruling elite creates conditions under which specific instructions of the head of state are not implemented, as well as legislative norms of the Basic Law – the Constitution, supported by the majority of the country’s population. This means that the elite, in fact, does not intend to fulfil the Social Contract; it does not want or cannot comply with it.**

And such a system of oligarchic capitalism in Russia contradicts the achievement of SMO goals and sooner or later “cracks”, and, as real practice has shown, it can “crack” in various ways, up to an armed rebellion.

“There is an ongoing process of changing attitudes toward repression. More and more people over the past 10–15 years say that **these were isolated cases, against people who deserved it, against the top, rather than mass repressions**. Stalin is “good” in the mirror understanding of today: **today the president and the elite do whatever they want**. People say: there was no such corruption under Stalin, the top did not go on a vacation to the Maldives, they did not have houses with rooms full of money. **This idea is also about a strong hand, an iron fist**. People say: a strong hand is not for everyone, it’s for the top. **Today, a strong hand is needed, again, not for everyone, repression is needed against those who steal: oligarchs, ministers**. The same views are carried over to that period”⁸⁵.

“The war is being waged not only in Ukraine... this is only one of the frontlines and, perhaps, not even the most important one, **the most important one is here, inside Russia**. Taking this into account, we must be prepared that in this sense, “blows and answers will alternate more and more often”⁸⁶.

The Constitution of the Russian Federation. Article 7, paragraph 1: “*The Russian Federation is a social state whose policy is aimed at creating conditions that ensure a decent life and free human development*”.

The Constitution of the Russian Federation. Article 19, paragraph 1: “*Everyone is equal before the law and the court*”.

⁸⁵ Comment on the results of the study by the director of Levada-Center* D. Volkov (source: Return of the generalissimo. Press release of Levada-Center*. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/2021/09/13/vozvrashhenie-generalissimusa/>)

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

⁸⁶ Khazin M. Mishustin has waged a war against the IMF and the Federal Reserve System. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/kolonka_ot_26_iyulya_2023_goda

⁸⁷ Shipilin P. A new Russian elite is born. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/rozhdetsya_novaya_rossijskaya_elita

“According to a separate quota for military personnel and children of combatants in Ukraine, more than 800 people have been admitted to Saint Petersburg universities. In each educational program, 10 percent of the total number of budget places were allocated for them... what will Russia be like in 10–15 years?

Talk about liberals sitting in government offices will be a thing of the past. These offices will be occupied by those who are now fighting for the future of our country on the battlefield. They will become deputies at the federal and regional levels and be employed in ministries and departments, in district, regional and republican administrations.

Ten percent of the total number of state-funded places at universities is quite enough to form a new elite. This elite will be very patriotic, adhere to common religious values, and it will determine the fate of Russia... In this new country, those who are called relocants today will then feel very uncomfortable”⁸⁷.

A number of experts pin their hopes on positive changes in the country in 10–15 years. However, to put it mildly, this is a long time, during which the public administration system will certainly have to face more than one test of strength. And so that another crisis of statehood does not happen, **the target indicators contained in laws, decrees, strategies and other regulatory documents must really be fulfilled. Otherwise, the new Social Contract will not be fulfilled and there will be no public consent.**

And for this, a new Social Contract (the need for which, by and large, is already felt now, but the need for which, of course, will arise after the end of the SMO) must have not only clearly stated formal “points” (criteria) that meet the needs of the majority of the population, but also ideological, organizational, legal, personnel mechanisms for their self-defense against an inevitable threat of external ideological influence or internal greed of individual representatives of the ruling elites.

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