

EDITORIAL

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At an Intermediate Stage on the Way toward Cultural Sovereignty



**Vladimir A.
ILYIN**

Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences
Vologda, Russian Federation

e-mail: ilin@vscc.ac.ru

ORCID: 0000-0003-4536-6287; ResearcherID: N-4615-2017



**Mikhail V.
MOREV**

Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences
Vologda, Russian Federation

e-mail: 379post@mail.ru

ORCID: 0000-0003-1396-8195; ResearcherID: I-9815-2016

Abstract. The past two months of socio-political life in Russia have been rich in important events: the World Russian People's Council (November 27–28), the official approval on December 7 by the Federation Council of the date of the presidential election (March 17, 2024) and Vladimir Putin's announcement of his decision to run for president (December 8), his communication with Russian citizens in the live broadcast format, combined with a press conference with journalists (December 14). All these events at the end of Vladimir Putin's 4th presidential term sum up the events of the past six years and at the same time focus our attention on the tasks that society expects the head of state to address during his upcoming presidential term. The following issues are highlighted as being of increasing importance: achieving the goals of the special military operation, forming the national idea and ideology, nationalizing the elites, increasing the effectiveness of dynamic growth in the standard of living and quality of life; these events are analyzed in the paper. We consider in more detail the work of Vladimir Putin aimed at addressing the issue regarding the nationalization of elites throughout his presidential terms. Based on

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expert assessments, we analyze the factors that prevent the President from solving this problem promptly; most likely, the solution of the problem of nationalization of elites will be postponed for 2030–2036, that is, for the possible (according to the current Constitution of the Russian Federation) sixth presidential term of Vladimir Putin. Nevertheless, according to many experts, without qualitative ideological changes within the elites (primarily in the system of public administration, culture, education), as well as without achieving the goals of the special military operation, it is impossible to make significant progress in shaping the image of the country's future, achieving the consent of the majority of the population on the essence of a new Social Contract, which is based on the image of a just social state with equal opportunities for the main segments of the population on the territory of Russia. The article provides a comparative analysis of the most significant public statements that Vladimir Putin made throughout his presidential terms: his first program article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium” (1999), the RF President's speech at the conference on international security policy (“Munich speech” on February 10, 2007), all the speeches of the head of state at the World Russian People's Council (December 13, 2001, November 1, 2018 and November 28, 2023). The conclusion is made about Vladimir Putin's key personal qualities (perseverance, strategic foresight, courage in setting ambitious goals, systems approach to their implementation) necessary for a national leader to continue the development of Russia along the path of strengthening cultural and, in general, national sovereignty.

Key words: World Russian People's Council, 2024 presidential election, nationalization of the elites, “direct line”, ideology.

The Special Military Operation (SMO) has been underway for almost two years (22 months), and during that period (as we have repeatedly noted in previous articles¹) a comprehensive transformation of the country has been going on in its economic vector, defense potential, education system.... But the main thing, in our opinion, is the cultural and ideological vector.

First, because cultural sovereignty is a key component of full-fledged national sovereignty, the struggle for which is, in fact, the main goal of the SMO (at least of those larger geopolitical processes for which it has become a “trigger”).

It is for a reason that on January 25, 2023, the President of the Russian Federation signed a decree that **unambiguously defines “cultural sovereignty”** as “*a set of socio-cultural factors that allow the people and the country to form their identity, avoid socio-psychological and cultural dependence on external influence, be protected from destructive ideological informational influence, preserve historical memory, and adhere to traditional Russian spiritual and moral values*”; besides, “**the priority of culture is established, designed to ensure further development of the potential of society and the individual, preservation of civil unity, protection of national interests, and achievement of national development goals of the Russian Federation**”².

¹ See, for example: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). The special military operation reveals new features of civil society. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(5), 9–32;

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.

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.

² On amendments to the fundamentals of the state cultural policy approved by Presidential Decree 808, dated December 24, 2014: Presidential Decree 35, dated January 25, 2023.

As experts point out, cultural sovereignty is the cornerstone of statehood. *“A country that has forgotten its past and abandoned its traditions will sooner or later perish, disappear”*³. ***This explains the fact that on January 25, 2023, the President included the protection of the cultural sovereignty of the Russian Federation in the goals of state policy***⁴.

Second, we should note that formulating the idea of the image of the future society and country

“Cultural sovereignty is the basis for the formation of cultural identity and **national security** of the country, **the cornerstone of any statehood**. The urgency of increasing attention to the sphere of cultural sovereignty today is associated with its being at the forefront of ideological and information-psychological confrontation, global competitive struggle... Cultural sovereignty is not only an integral part, but also **a necessary condition for ensuring state sovereignty**... It is culture that plays the role of the guardian of the civilizational code of the nation, its value base”⁵.

launches the process of formation of a new Social Contract, which has been going on and will probably proceed much more actively after the final achievement of all the goals of the SMO.

“People make reality” as it is described by the person expressing the Idea (journalist, expert, ideological worker, etc.) Therefore, “first there must be an Idea... and only then ... there is action”⁷.

Emphasizing cultural sovereignty and the ideological component of full national sovereignty, we should note an important event that took place in Russia in November 2023, which, according to some experts, could “change the destinies of Russia and the world radically”⁸.

“You can’t have a society without an ideology, these are elementary concepts of state and law... I propose to seriously consider this. Taking into account our historical society, taking into account the modern realities in which we live, thinking about the prospects for the development of our society, it is still necessary to formulate the ideology of our society, our goals and enshrine it in the Constitution of the Russian Federation”⁶.

³ Handus G. Cultural sovereignty of Russia. Available at: https://ruskline.ru/analitika/2023/05/02/kulturnyi_suverenitet_rossii

⁴ On amendments to the fundamentals of the state cultural policy approved by Presidential Decree 808, dated December 24, 2014: Presidential Decree 35, dated January 25, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48855>

⁵ Dzyatkovskaya E.N. (2022). Cultural sovereignty of the country: The role of ecological culture. *Bulletin of the International Academy of Sciences (Russian section)*, special issue 1, 1–8.

⁶ Speech by the Head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation A. Bastrykin at the 17th International Scientific and Practical Conference “Derzhavin Readings”. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2023/11/22/bastrykin-schitaet-chto-nado-dobavit-v-konstituciiu-polozheniia-ob-ideologii-gosudarstva.html>

⁷ V. Korovin (journalist, politician, member of the Izborsk Club, Director of the International Nonprofit Foundation “Center for Geopolitical Expertise”, member of the Eurasian Committee – deputy head of the International Eurasian Movement). Available at: https://vk.com/wall200837654_7679

⁸ A. Dugin: Many people do not understand, but on Tuesday a zemsky sobor will be held in the Kremlin. Available at: <https://katehon.com/ru/news/aleksandr-dugin-mnogie-ne-ponimayut-no-vo-vtornik-v-kremle-sostoitsya-zemskiy-sobo>

November 27–28, Moscow hosted the 25th World Russian People’s Council, its topic was “The Present and Future of the Russian World”⁹.

“The World Russian People’s Council is undoubtedly the main public organization of the Russian people. This organization embodies the most important principle without which neither Russians nor Russia exist – the principle of the unity of the State, the Church and the people. Only “sobornost” can be the foundation for a new ideological platform on which the Russian state stands... In the end, the Council, despite all the diversity of topics, is concerned with one thing: **elaboration of solutions to protect the life of the Russian people itself”¹⁰.**

“The Council, which was attended by 6 thousand people, did not just confirm the status of the main public organization of Russia and the entire Russian world. **It defined the constants of our future”¹¹.**

The World Russian People’s Council (WRPC) is the main public organization of the Russian people¹². Its scale and the forces that were involved in this event in 2023 (state, political, public, military, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, religious, etc.) are best illustrated by the level and diversity of its participants: representatives of the authorities, the RF Presidential Administration, heads of regions, heads of security agencies, representatives of the business community and civil organizations, religious denominations and scientific institutions, and many others. According to TASS, about 1.5 thousand people took part in thematic sections, and about 6 thousand in the plenary session¹³ (*Insert 1*).

Russian President Vladimir Putin also took part in the plenary session of the WRPC, which in itself speaks about the importance of this event, since during all his presidential terms the head of state did not always participate in it personally.

⁹ **Briefnote:** The World Russian People’s Council (WRPC) was established in May 1993. Since February 1, 2009, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has been the head of the Council (source: Official website of the WRPC. Available at: <https://vrns.ru/>).

The World Russian People’s Council (WRPC; until 1995 – the World Russian Council, WRC) is an international public organization formed under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church to discuss national issues, as well as the “unity of the Russian people”. The meetings of the WRPC are attended by representatives of the authorities, the highest clergy of traditional religions of Russia, leaders of public associations, figures of science, education and culture, delegates of Russian communities from near and far abroad. The goals of the WRPC are to promote the spiritual, cultural, social and economic revival of Russia and the Russian people, strengthen Russian statehood and strengthen the role of the Orthodox Church in the life of society, etc.

In 2005, the World Russian People’s Council was granted special consultative status with the United Nations (UN), and a representative office of the WRPC was established at the United Nations.

In the first ten years, meetings were held irregularly: they were not convened in 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2003. At the same time, in 1995 they were held twice – in February and December. Since 2004, the Council meetings of the WRPC have been held once a year. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, it was decided not to convene them (source: <https://tass.ru/info/19390441>).

¹⁰ Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/articles/russkie-uviteli-obraz-budushhego-otvety-na-glavnye-voprosy-gotovy_916061

¹¹ D.V. Lyubomudrov. Available at: <https://proza.ru/2023/12/12/110>

¹² Malofeev K. Victorious word – empire. Available at: https://vk.com/wall-75679763_6334419

¹³ Available at: <https://tass.ru/info/19390441>

Insert 1

Some participants of the 25th World Russian People's Council, November 27 – 28, 2023¹⁴

<u>Legislative, judicial power</u>	<u>Scientific organizations</u>
<p>Valery Zorkin, Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, Inna Svyatenco, Deputy Chairperson of the Federation Council, heads of factions of political parties in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation: G.A. Zyuganov of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, L.E. Slutsky of the LDPR, V.A. Vasiliev of the United Russia, Aleksei Zhuravlev, leader of the Rodina party,</p> <p>Olga Timofeeva, Chairperson of the State Duma Committee for the Development of Civil Society, on issues of public and religious associations,</p> <p>Pyotr Tolstoy (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC), Deputy Chairperson of the State Duma of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Mikhail Delyagin, Deputy Chairperson of the State Duma Committee on Economic Policy,</p> <p>Nikolay Nikolaev, Deputy Chairperson of the State Duma Committee on Property, Land and Property Relations,</p> <p>Anna Kuznetsova, Deputy Chairperson of the State Duma of the Russian Federation</p>	<p>Olga Vasil'yeva, President of the Russian Academy of Education (member of the Presidium of the WRPC), Sergey Glazyev, Member of the Board/Minister for Integration and Macroeconomics of the Eurasian Economic Commission (member of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Aleksandr Dugin, Director of the Tsaigrad Research Institute (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Nikolai Kropachev, Rector of St. Petersburg State University,</p> <p>Vladimir Shatokhin, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Military Sciences, Lieutenant General (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Elena Panina, Director of the Institute of International Political and Economic Strategies (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Valentin Katasonov, Chairperson of S.F. Sharapov Russian Economic Society,</p> <p>Ruslan Korchagin, Acting Director of RANEPA under the President of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Aleksandr Sokolov, Rector of Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory (member of the Presidium of the WRPC)</p>
<u>Executive power</u>	<u>Religious, nongovernmental organizations, etc.</u>
<p>Olga Lyubimova, Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Elena Mukhtiyarova, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Andrey Ilnitky, Adviser to the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Governors of Sevastopol, Nizhny Novgorod Region, Kaliningrad Region, Kaluga Region, Chelyabinsk Region, Transbaikal Territory, Novosibirsk Region, Kurgan Region; heads of the Republic of Mordovia, Komi Republic, Donetsk People's Republic,</p> <p>Aleksandr Kharichev, Head of the Department Administration of the President of the Russian Federation for ensuring the activities of the State Council,</p> <p>Igor Levitin, Presidential Aide</p> <p>Maria Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children's Rights under the President of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Igor Shchegolev, Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the Central Federal District,</p> <p>Maria Zakharova, Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,</p> <p>Oleg Veselkov, Head of the Department for Interaction with Religious Organizations of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, Lieutenant General,</p> <p>Aleksandr Bastykin, Chairperson of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation</p>	<p>Valery Fadeev, Chairperson of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights,</p> <p>Aleksandr Galushka, Deputy Secretary of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Sergey Rybaltchenko, Chairperson of the Commission of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on Demography, Protection of Family, Children and Traditional Family Values,</p> <p>Konstantin Malofeev, Chairperson of the Tsaigrad Society (Deputy Head of the WRPC),</p> <p>Aleksandr Borodai, Chairperson of the Donbass Volunteer Union,</p> <p>Kirill Kabanov, Chairperson of the National Anti-Corruption Committee,</p> <p>Yuri Polyakov, Chairperson of the National Association of Playwrights,</p> <p>Nikolai Ivanov, Chairperson of the Board of the Union of Writers of Russia,</p> <p>Anna Tsvileva, Chairperson of the Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation,</p> <p>Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia (Head of the WRPC),</p> <p>Alexander Shchipkov, First Deputy Chairperson of the Synodal Department for Church–Society Relations and the Media of the Moscow Patriarchate (Deputy Head of the WRPC),</p> <p>Grigory, Metropolitan Voskresensky, Managing Director of the Moscow Patriarchate (Deputy Head of the WRPC),</p> <p>Anna Shaftran, head of the Directorate of analytical radio programs of the Zvezda media holding,</p> <p>Sergey Perevezentsev, historian (member of the Bureau of the Presidium of the WRPC),</p> <p>Gennady Alekhin, war correspondent, etc.</p>

¹⁴ Sources: Official website of the WRPC. Available at: <https://vms.ru/news/prezident-rossii-v-v-putin-i-svyateyshiy-patriarkh-kirill-vystupili-na-ple-nar-nom-zasedanii-xxv-semi/>; Ivanov A. The 25th World Russian People's Council. "The time is coming for a new big imperial style". Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/hhv_vsemimij_russkij_narodnij_sobor_nastupaet_vremya_novogo_bol_shogo_imperskogo_stilya

In total, Vladimir Putin participated in the World Russian People’s Council three times, and each time his speech reflected the historical period that Russia, which is part of the world community, was going through.

For the first time it was on **December 13, 2001**. Back then, the RF President focused on the danger of international terrorism and the need to consolidate the efforts of world powers to combat it.

“The events of September 11 did not just shake the planet. Not only did they change the world and remind all of us of its fragility. **They also made us think about the enormous responsibility that rests on all of us. Responsibility for the future, for the creation of a democratic, fair and secure world order system ...** I am convinced that to create such a system, it is not enough to combine the efforts of states. We need public unity in the rejection of xenophobia and violence. Everything that feeds the ideology of terrorism”¹⁵.

For the second time Vladimir Putin took part in the World Russian People’s Council on **November 1, 2018** and spoke about the destructive trends of spiritual and value transformations taking place in the world, and in this regard, about the need to preserve the civilizational identity of Russia and other civilizations.

“We see what efforts are being made today to “reformat” the world, to destroy traditional values and those cultural and historical spaces that have been taking shape for centuries. **The goal is to create all sorts of faceless “protectorates”.** After all, divided peoples, deprived of national memory, reduced to the level of vassals, are easier and more convenient to manage, use as a bargaining chip in their interests ...

There are still, of course, as they say, more questions than answers. **I have no doubt about one thing for sure: Russia’s voice in the world of the future will sound dignified and confident. This is predetermined by our tradition, our inner spiritual culture, self-awareness and, finally, the very history of our country as an original civilization, unique, but not self-confidently and boorishly claiming to be exceptional. Because it is impossible to imagine the history of humankind without the same unique civilizations as India, China, Western Europe, America and many others.** This is really a multifaceted complexity, each facet of which complements and enriches each other”¹⁶.

Finally, on **November 28, 2023**, taking part in the World Russian People’s Council for the third time, Vladimir Putin briefly and meaningfully summed up the main results of today’s historical stage: the global situation, Russia’s role in the coming multipolar geopolitical future, threats to national security the country is facing, and

¹⁵ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the opening of the 6th World Russian People’s Council, December 13, 2001. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21442>

¹⁶ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Meeting of the World Russian People’s Council, November 1, 2018. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59013>

the potential that will allow Russia not only to successfully to pass this historical stage, but also to ensure its sovereignty in the future (*Insert 2*).

“... we defend the security and well-being of our people, the supreme, historical right to be Russia – a strong, independent power, a civilization state...

We are fighting now for the freedom not only of Russia, but of the whole world... It is our country that is now at the forefront of shaping a more just world order. And I want to emphasize: without a sovereign, strong Russia, no lasting, stable world order is possible...”¹⁷

Some experts drew attention to the fact that **“it was, of course, a confrontational speech. The speech of a person who understands that there is nothing more to lose, despite the fact that the situation at the front is getting better...”¹⁸**

We should emphasize that Vladimir Putin in his speech at the World Russian People’s Council in 2023 repeated much of what he had spoken about in 1999 in the article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium”¹⁹, assessing the internal situation in the country, the key problems and potential of Russian society (*Insert 3*), as well as much of what he had noted during his Munich speech in 2007²⁰, addressing, first of all, the international establishment, expressing his view of the situation in the world (*Insert 4*).

Both in the past and in the present, it was about Russia’s sovereignty; about the importance (and even priority) of ideological content over practical measures in addressing the country’s pressing problems; about the lessons that Russia should learn from its own past; as well as about the inevitability of the collapse of the unipolar world and specifically about the threats posed to Russia from the US side.

This succession of public statements by the President, stretching over decades, testifies to a systematic, consistent approach, and the commitment of the head of state to the course of national development, which he has been implementing for almost 25 years.

Thus, at the World Russian People’s Council in 2023, the President actually outlined the contours of the image of the future of Russia, shared not only by him personally, but also by representatives of the highest levels of state, political, public, and religious circles; that is, those people who first of all have to implement this image of the future in practice. As M.G. Delyagin, one of the participants of the Council, State Duma deputy and a member of the Izborsk Club, very aptly noted, **“in order to win, we need to show an image of the future that will be attractive to everyone. And this is our main task! Because a person always chooses the future, even if it is blurred and unclear. And we need to create this “future” in Russia right now so that people want to live in it. And so that people enjoy living in it”²¹.**

¹⁷ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the World Russian People’s Council. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72863>

¹⁸ Kolesnikov A. New jet installations. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6365612>

¹⁹ Putin V. Russia at the turn of the Millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. December 30, 1999. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

²⁰ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference on February 10, 2007. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

²¹ Delyagin M. The Russia of the future should come today. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/183-sobytija/105921-rossija-budushhego-dolzha-nastupit-uzhe-segodnja>

Key theses of Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech at the plenary session of the World Russian People's Council (November 28, 2023)²²

1. *...our fight for sovereignty and justice is, without exaggeration, one of national liberation, because we are upholding the security and well-being of our people, and our supreme historical right to be Russia – a strong independent power, a civilization state. It is our country, it is the Russian world that has blocked the way of those who aspired to world domination and exceptionalism, as it has happened many times in history. We are now fighting not just for Russia's freedom but for the freedom of the whole world. We can frankly say that the dictatorship of one hegemon is becoming decrepit. We see it, and everyone sees it now. It is getting out of control and is simply dangerous for others. This is now clear to the global majority. But again, it is our country that is now at the forefront of building a fairer world order. And I would like to stress this: without a sovereign and strong Russia, no lasting and stable international system is possible...*
2. *The West has no need for such a large and multi-ethnic country as Russia as a matter of principle. Our diversity and unity of cultures, traditions, languages, and ethnicities simply do not fit into the logic of Western racists and colonizers, into their cruel plans for total depersonalization, separation, suppression, and exploitation. That is why they have started their old rant again: they say that Russia is a "prison of nations" and that Russians are a "nation of slaves." We have heard this many times throughout the centuries. Now we have also heard that Russia apparently needs to be "decolonized." But what do they really want? They want to dismember and plunder Russia. If they cannot do it by force, they sow discord.*
3. *I would like to emphasize that we view any outside interference or provocations to incite ethnic or religious conflict as acts of aggression against our country, and an attempt to once again wield terrorism and extremism as a weapon against us, and we will respond accordingly...*
4. *We have a large and diverse country. This diversity of cultures, traditions and customs creates greater strength, a tremendous competitive advantage and potential.*
5. *I believe we all remember, and must remember, the lessons of the 1917 revolution, the subsequent Civil War, and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991... We will never forget these mistakes and should not repeat them...*

²² Vladimir Putin's speech at the plenary session of the World Russian People's Council, November 28, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72863>

6. *The Russian world embraces all generations of our predecessors and our descendants that will live after us. The Russian world means Ancient Rus, the Tsardom of Muscovy, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and modern Russia that is reclaiming, consolidating, and augmenting its sovereignty as a global power. **The Russian World unites all those who feel a spiritual affinity with our Motherland, who consider themselves Russian speakers, and carriers of Russian history and culture regardless of their ethnicity or religion... Being Russian is more than a nationality. By the way, this has always been the case throughout our country's history. Among other things, it includes cultural, spiritual, and historical identity. Being Russian is, above all, a responsibility. To reiterate, it is about the enormous responsibility to safeguard Russia, and this is what true patriotism is all about...***
7. ***What does sovereignty mean for our state, for each family, and for each person? What is its value and true essence? Primarily, it is freedom. Freedom for Russia and our people and, therefore, for each one of us... A free nation that understands its responsibility before current and future generations is the only source of power...***
8. *The sovereign development of the country, its economy, business, the social sector should bring well-being to all people, all Russian families, and, thus, be fair. This is not about a primitive one-size-fits-all approach. **Justice means primarily decent living conditions, modern facilities for culture, healthcare and sports in all regions of the country. This means a qualified and well-paid job and high public prestige for workers, engineers, teachers, doctors, artists, cultural figures, entrepreneurs, every responsible specialist and master. Justice means equal, broad opportunities for study, for a start in life and self-fulfillment for youth... I am convinced that the country's sovereignty and strengthening its role in the world are impossible without a flourishing, distinctive culture in all of its manifestations.***
9. ***We will not overcome the daunting demographic challenges facing us solely with money, social benefits, allowances, privileges, or dedicated programs. True, the amount of the budget's demographic spending is extremely important, but that is not all there is to it. A person's points of reference in life matter more. Love, trust, and a solid moral foundation are what the family and the birth of a child are built on. We must never forget this...***
10. ***Preserving and increasing the population of Russia is our goal for the coming decades and even generations ahead.***

Vladimir Putin’s assessment of the internal situation in the country

<p>Article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium” (1999)</p> <p>I think I would not be mistaken if I said that our people have especially strong feelings of anxiety and hope. For there are few states in the world that in the passing twentieth century would have faced as many trials as Russia did... For almost three quarters of the past century, Russia has lived under the sign of the implementation of the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to see, much less deny, the undoubted achievements of that time. But it would be an even greater mistake not to realize the enormous price that society and the people have paid in the course of this social experiment... Russia has exhausted its limit on political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms, and radical transformations. Only fanatics or deeply indifferent political forces, indifferent to Russia and the people, are able to call for another revolution...</p> <p>The experience of the 1990s eloquently testifies that a truly successful, cost-free renewal of our Homeland cannot be achieved by simply transferring abstract models and schemes drawn from foreign textbooks to Russian soil... Fruitful creative work, which our Fatherland so much needs, is impossible in a society that is in a state of division, internally divided. In a society where the main social strata, political forces adhere to various basic values and fundamental ideological guidelines. Over the past century, Russia has been in this state twice: after October 1917 and in the 1990s.</p>	<p>Vladimir Putin’s speech at the World Russian People’s Council (2023)</p> <p>I believe we all remember, and must remember, the lessons of the 1917 revolution, the subsequent Civil War, and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991... We will never forget these mistakes and should not repeat them...</p>
<p>Now Russia is faced with the question of what to do next. How can new market mechanisms be made to work at full capacity? How can we overcome the deep ideological and political split in society that is still making itself felt? What strategic goals can consolidate the Russian people? How do we see the place of our Fatherland in the world community in the 21st century? What frontiers of economic, social, and cultural development do we want to reach in 10, 15 years? What are our strengths and weaknesses? What material and spiritual resources do we have today? The questions that life itself poses. Without a clear and understandable answer to them to all the people, we simply will not be able to move forward at such a pace and to such frontiers that are worthy of our great country.</p>	<p>True, the amount of the budget’s demographic spending is extremely important, but that is not all there is to it. A person’s points of reference in life matter more. Love, trust, and a solid moral foundation are what the family and the birth of a child are built on. We must never forget this... The Russian World unites all those who feel a spiritual affinity with our Motherland.</p>
<p>It is impossible not to see that for Russia, any transformations and measures that involve a deterioration in people’s living conditions are practically excluded. Here, as they say, we have reached the extreme line. Poverty has become especially widespread in the country... This is the most acute social problem. The Government is developing a new income policy, which is aimed at ensuring sustainable growth in the well-being of the population based on an increase in real disposable incomes of citizens. Despite all the difficulties, the Government is determined to strengthen measures of state support for science, education, culture, and healthcare. For a country where people are physically and mentally unhealthy, poorly educated and ignorant will never rise to the top of world civilization.</p>	<p>The sovereign development of the country, its economy, business, the social sector should bring well-being to all people, all Russian families, and, thus, be fair. This is not about a primitive one-size-fits-all approach. Justice means primarily decent living conditions, modern facilities for culture, healthcare and sports in all regions of the country.</p>

Insert 4

Vladimir Putin's assessment of the international situation

<p>Munich speech (2007)</p> <p>Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today.</p> <p>The unipolar world that had been proposed after the Cold War did not take place either... I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world. And this is not only because if there was individual leadership in today's — and precisely in today's — world, then the military, political and economic resources would not suffice. What is even more important is that the model itself is flawed because at its basis there is and can be no moral foundations for modern civilization...</p> <p>Today many talk about the struggle against poverty. What is actually happening in this sphere? On the one hand, financial resources are allocated for programs to help the world's poorest countries — and at times substantial financial resources. But to be honest — and many here also know this — linked with the development of that same donor country's companies... And let's say things as they are — one hand distributes charitable help and the other hand not only preserves economic backwardness but also reaps the profits thereof. The increasing social tension in depressed regions inevitably results in the growth of radicalism, extremism, feeds terrorism and local conflicts.</p> <p>Together with the United States of America we agreed to reduce our nuclear strategic missile capabilities to up to 1700–2000 nuclear warheads by 31 December 2012. Russia intends to strictly fulfil the obligations it has taken on. We hope that our partners will also act in a transparent way... And if today the new American Defense Minister declares that the United States will not hide these superfluous weapons in warehouse or, as one might say, under a pillow or under the blanket, then I suggest that we all rise and greet this declaration standing. It would be a very important declaration... Plans to expand certain elements of the anti-missile defense system to Europe cannot help but disturb us. Who needs the next step of what would be, in this case, an inevitable arms race? I deeply doubt that Europeans themselves do...</p> <p>NATO countries openly declared that they will not ratify this treaty, including the provisions on flank restrictions (on deploying a certain number of armed forces in the flank zones)... But what is happening at the same time? Simultaneously the so-called flexible frontline American bases with up to five thousand men in each. It turns out that NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders... I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernization of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended?</p>	<p>Vladimir Putin's speech at the World Russian People's Council (2023)</p> <p>...our fight for sovereignty and justice is, without exaggeration, one of national liberation, because we are upholding the security and well-being of our people, and our supreme historical right to be Russia — a strong independent power, a civilization state...</p> <p>We can frankly say that the dictatorship of one hegemon is becoming decrepit. We see it, and everyone sees it now. It is getting out of control and is simply dangerous for others. This is now clear to the global majority.</p> <p>We are now fighting not just for Russia's freedom but for the freedom of the whole world... it is our country that is now at the forefront of building a fairer world order.</p> <p>The West has no need for such a large and multi-ethnic country as Russia as a matter of principle... But what do they really want? They want to dismember and plunder Russia.</p>
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Experts on Vladimir Putin's decision to participate in the presidential election on March 17, 2024²³:

B. Kamkiya (political scientist): “Vladimir Putin’s decision to run for a new presidential term is **very important for Russia, as well as on the scale of international relations...** He is a person who has accumulated huge political capital and huge opportunities to lead Russia forward. Vladimir Putin has concentrated his practical potential, and **he is really second to none...** Under the current conditions, with the threat hanging over Russia, Putin has become the leader **who can respond to these challenges with his decisions**”.

P. Danilin (political scientist, associate professor at the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation, director of the Center for Political Analysis): “**Putin feels that he has a huge burden of responsibility for the country... And the presidential election itself is actually becoming a struggle for Russia’s victory...**”

A. Asafov (first deputy Chairperson of the Commission of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on public examination of draft laws): “Society has different motives. First of all, the motives of patriotism and trust, because **in the current situation, only Putin can make decisions**”.

E. Minchenko (president of the communication holding “Minchenko Consulting”): “In the context of a large-scale geopolitical confrontation, there is no reason to change an experienced leader... **Therefore, hardly anyone thought that Putin would not nominate his candidacy**”.

Ten days after his speech at the WRPC on December 8, 2023, **Vladimir Putin announced that he would participate in the presidential election to be held on March 17, 2024**²⁴. The head of state pointed out: “I had all kinds of thoughts on this matter at different times. However, **you are right – the time to decide has come. I will run for President of the Russian Federation**”²⁵.

And we should note that for most experts Vladimir Putin’s decision did not come as a surprise: on the one hand, there is simply no alternative to the role of national leader in Russia today; on the other hand, there is a high demand in Russian society for a new presidential term of Vladimir Putin. This is evidenced not only by the opinions of experts, but also by the results of all-Russian sociological research.

According to the results of a VCIOM poll conducted on December 7, 2023, **78% of Russians are going to participate in the 2024 presidential election, 61% of them stated this with full confidence** (for comparison, 8% do not plan to vote yet, 14% haven’t made up their mind so far)²⁶. Therefore (taking into account the current high level of support for the head of state in society, as well as the results of the last elections held after the start of the SMO²⁷), **we can predict with a high degree of probability that the presidential election will take place on March 17, 2024.**

²³ Sources: *Vzglyad*. December 8, 2023. Available at: <https://vz.ru/politics/2023/12/8/1243372.html>; *Sputnik-Abkhazia*. December 11, 2023. Available at: <https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/20231211/politolog-o-reshenii-putina-vydvigatsya-v-prezidenty-vazhno-i-dlya-abkhazii-1049411089.html>

²⁴ December 7, 2023, the Federation Council approved the final date of the presidential election; December 8, Vladimir Putin announced his participation as candidate.

²⁵ Conversation with participants in the ceremony marking Heroes of the Fatherland Day, December 8, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72935>

²⁶ RF presidential election – 2024: Before the start. VCIOM analytical review, December 7, 2023. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/vybory-vybory-prezidenta-rf-2024-pered-startom>

²⁷ On the Single Voting Day, which took place from September 9 to September 11, 2022, at the elections of the heads of RF constituent entities, “in all 14 regions, acting governors and acting representatives of United Russia or self-nominated candidates supported by United Russia were re-elected” (source: Skorobogaty P. New consolidation: Results of the Single Voting Day. *Ekspert*, 2022, no. 38, p. 50).

On the Single Voting Day, September 8–10, 2023, “all current governors, as well as acting ones, retained their posts. Of these, only two heads of regions were elected from the Communist Party, all the others were from United Russia” (source: Pamfilova called the turnout of 46% record-breaking. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/13/09/2023/6501c3fe9a7947ea85beaf37>).

P. Danilin: “Russians would like Putin to run as a candidate. This is the request of the citizens”²⁸.

E. Minchenko: “There is a high public demand for Putin’s candidacy”.

According to VCIOM:

✓ **approval level for the President’s performance has been stable at 73–75% since June 2023** (according to the latest data as of December 3, 2023 – 75.8%; the share of negative characteristics – 14.9%);

✓ **level of trust in Vladimir Putin during the same period was stable at 77–79%** (as of December 3, 2023, 78.5% trust the RF President, 17.3% do not)²⁹.

According to the FOM:

✓ **70% of Russians believe that Vladimir Putin should run for a new term;**

✓ **67% say that “Vladimir Putin’s work as President of the Russian Federation meets their interests”³⁰.**

What do the broad strata of Russian society expect from Vladimir Putin’s next presidential term?

This question can be answered if we look at the results of the **“direct line” combined with the press conference that Vladimir Putin held on December 14, 2023.**

In terms of duration, it was the longest event of this format since 2018³¹. The “direct line” received more than 2.5 million questions. The key topics among those voiced in the live broadcast concerned the rights and social support of the participants of the SMO, the situation on the front line and the likelihood of the second wave of partial mobilization, healthcare, housing and utilities, agriculture, increase in price for certain goods and services, support for the domestic car industry and aviation, Russian sports, regulation of the information environment and education of future generations of Russians, prospects for the development of artificial intelligence, and much more.

“The number of questions is really enormous... **probably the largest all-Russian sociological survey took place...** it is physically impossible to answer all the millions of questions, but there are, of course, common topics. And which of them are in the lead? **No doubt, the main topic is the special military operation...** Payments, certificates, supplies... Well, there are also traditional questions about housing and communal services, sports and what not.

Many problems were solved even proactively, but there remain many unresolved ones! And most importantly, **we all now live in a completely different world, and, of course, people are concerned not only about social issues**³².

E. Glushakova (RIA-Novosti): **“Generally, the grand agenda includes extensive discussions on both the special military operation and the new regions. In principle, today’s news conference reflects this agenda”.**

²⁸ *Vzglyad*. December 8, 2023. Available at: <https://vz.ru/politics/2023/12/8/1243372.html>

²⁹ Ratings of trust in politicians, assessments of the work of the President and the Government, support for political parties. VCIOM Analytical Review. December 8, 2023. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/reitingi-doverija-politikam-ocenki-raboty-prezidenta-i-pravitelstva-podderzhka-politicheskikh-partii-08122023>

³⁰ Vladimir Putin: prospects – 2024. FOM Presentation (the survey was conducted October 21 – November 13, 2023). Available at: <https://fom.ru/Politika/14955>

³¹ In 2023, the “direct line” with the President lasted 4 hours and 4 minutes. In 2018 – 4 hours and 20 minutes.

³² Introduction by the hosts of the program “Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin”, December 14, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72994>

The international agenda was also touched upon: the present and future of Russia's relations with the USA, China, CIS countries and Western Europe; the geopolitical situation around the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, the functioning of the Russian economy under sanctions pressure from the Collective West, Russia's presidency in BRICS and CIS countries in 2024, etc.

We should note that, just as during his communication with war correspondents on June 13, 2023 (especially when answering questions concerning Russia's internal problems), the President repeatedly had to use such expressions as “there is a problem, of course. I agree”; “these are gaps that should not have been allowed”; “it is not always enough, not everything works out”, “this is a failure in the work of the Government”, etc.³³

This indicates, first of all, that the relevance of problems related to ensuring the effectiveness of public administration in the “manual mode” is still high.

And if, with the advent of Vladimir Putin's new presidential term it is indeed possible to expect the achievement of SMO goals and a more active process of normalization of geopolitical relations in the world, **then for tangible shifts in solving internal issues of improving the effectiveness of public**

administration, as well as for significant progress in solving more global issues related to achieving public agreement on the image of the future and the formation of a new Social Contract, which is based on the idea of a just social state, most likely (according to many experts), It will take the next (sixth) presidential term of Vladimir Putin³⁴, that is, the period 2030–2036.

At least, we can agree that “in the next 4–5 years (2022–2027), under the conditions of the world catastrophe, Russia's ruling stratum and elite will be forced to change”, and only by the early 2030s, perhaps, “all balances will be found and consensus will be achieved”.

“In the next 4–5 years (2022–2027)... structures and hierarchical pyramids will be destroyed within the framework of the intra-elite struggle... A new series of people from the “first waves” will make their way into Russia's upper ruling stratum and elite to become, if they succeed, the heads of power/elite groups and clans...

Another five years will pass (until the early 2030s), and the boundaries of spheres of influence will be defined, balances will be found, consensus will be consolidated. And only after that will the principles and rules... regain relevance, adjusted for the distortion of the basis and idealization. But this will be a different time and a different story”³⁵.

³³ A complete list of similar expressions from the President of the Russian Federation, voiced in response to questions from the “direct line” (source: “Results of the Year with Vladimir Putin”, December 14, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72994>):

- “There is a problem, of course. I agree”;
- “Of course, you are right, it is not always enough, not everything works out”;
- There must be failures somewhere else”;
- “I think these are gaps that should not have been allowed by the Ministry of Defense;
- “We will definitely achieve this. Anyway, I promise, we will strive for this”;
- “I'm sorry and I apologize for this. This is a malfunction in the work of the Government”
- “We will definitely look into it, analyze it”;
- To be honest, I've never really paid attention to it, this is the first time I've heard that such a problem exists”;
- “This is the first time I've heard that this exists”;
- “A lot has actually been done, but judging by what we see now, it's clearly not enough”;
- “Of course it has to be done. We will definitely strive for this. I will definitely see to it that all this is properly regulated”;
- “This is a problem that we must solve. It is being solved, but we will solve it definitively”.

³⁴ We recall that after the adoption of amendments to the Constitution in 2020, Vladimir Putin has the opportunity to run for the post of head of state two more times: in 2024 and 2030.

³⁵ Shkolnikov A. Rotation of the Russian elite in the next 10 years. Available at: <https://shkolnikov.info/articles/136-chelovek-i-obshchestvo/98670-rotatsija-rossiyskoy-jelity-v-blizhayshie-10-let>

“...who in Russia is capable of ordering the sovereignty strategy?.. The main customer for the sovereignty strategy is Putin and a few people in his entourage”³⁶.

“We believe that all the players in politics and the economy must have a level playing field so that nobody can gain any advantages by cozying up to the authorities from the left or the right. This is very important for the domestic and the potential foreign investor. Nothing can be accomplished without solving this issue. That is why the building of a legal structure and the fight against corruption take on such importance. This is not just routine work in the law enforcement field. It is, in effect, about creating a new image of the country... 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”³⁷.

Today, unfortunately, one cannot but recognize that the President, in fact, continues to be the only “customer for sovereignty” for the time being. Although Vladimir Putin has been dealing with the

problem of nationalization of the elites since the very beginning of his presidential term. If one were to describe this long-term, multi-year work in a few words, it would include the following:

1. The principle of “equidistance of all market subjects from the authorities” announced by the RF President on February 28, 2000³⁸; as a result of its practical implementation the most odious representatives of the so-called *Semibankirshina* were either arrested or forced to leave the country³⁹.

2. The anti-corruption campaign initiated by Vladimir Putin at the beginning of his third presidential term (after the 2008–2011 presidential term of D.A. Medvedev), has limited the possibilities of activity (criminal cases were initiated against some officials, others left the country or were removed from office “due to loss of confidence of the head of state”, etc.) of such persons as Defense Minister A. Serdyukov, former Minister of Agriculture E. Skrynnik, acting Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation A. Ulyukayev, coordinator of the Expert Council under the Government of the Russian Federation (where he was appointed by the former Chairperson of the Government of the Russian Federation

³⁶ Khaldei A. Transfer and the strategy of sovereignty: Customers and performers. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/transfer_i_strategiya_suvereniteta_zakazchiki_i_ispolniteli

³⁷ Vladimir Putin’s opening address at a meeting with high-level campaign workers, February, 28, 2000. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24146>

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ The term “*Semibankirshina*” (“seven bankers”) was used in the Russian media in 1996 and several subsequent years to name a group of the largest representatives of the Russian financial business (oligarchs) who played a significant political and economic role, owned the media, and informally united, despite internal disagreements, in order to ensure the re-election of Boris Yeltsin for the next term in the 1996 presidential election.

November 1, 1996, an interview with Boris Berezovsky was published in the Financial Times newspaper, in which he named seven people who control more than 50% of the Russian economy and jointly influence the most important domestic political decisions in Russia:

1. Vladimir Potanin (ONEXIM Bank),
2. Vladimir Gusinsky (Most-bank),
3. Mikhail Khodorkovsky* (MENATEP),
4. Pyotr Aven (Alfa-Bank),
5. Mikhail Fridman (Alfa-Bank),
6. Alexander Smolensky (Capital Savings Bank, since 1997 – SBS-Agro),
7. Boris Berezovsky (United Bank).

According to some media, *Semibankirshina* also included Vladimir Vinogradov (Inkombank) and Vitaly Malkin (Russian Credit) (source: <https://ria.ru/20111108/483944714.html>).

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

“With Putin’s assuming office as President once again, the power clans have regained some of the influence they lost during Medvedev’s presidency and will not miss an opportunity to use the anti-corruption campaign in their own interests... The theme of the fight against corruption was chosen because of its popularity among the people... Repressions are still of a pinpoint nature”.

“There is no example in the whole world when the fight against corruption does not have an element of intra-elite struggle for power and influence... Putin needs, on the one hand, to stay on the edge of the anti-corruption blade, and on the other hand, not to scare the elites, because there is no one to replace them with, the social elevators in the country are almost inoperative” (opinion of Evgeny Minchenko, director of the International Institute for Political Expertise)⁴⁰.

D. Medvedev⁴¹) A. Voloshin (a man whom some experts call the “ideologue of the Family”⁴² and the “brain of the liberal clan”⁴³), as well as a huge number of officials at the regional level⁴⁴.

3. Amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation initiated by the President in early 2020⁴⁵, among them were such as the priority of the Constitution of the Russian Federation over the norms of international law, the prohibition to have

foreign citizenship for persons holding positions “critically important for ensuring the security and sovereignty of the country”, etc. Some experts very mildly stressed that this “offended quite a large number of quite influential people. From Medvedev to very, very high-status liberals”⁴⁶. However, in fact, new “rules of the game” were being established for the liberal elites; the new Constitution, according to some estimates, “cut off market liberals from power”, but even if it did not “cut them off” completely, it at least created conditions under which they were forced to turn in the direction of patriotic moods.

“... The draft Constitution under discussion, with all amendments, cuts off market liberals from power in the long run.

The ruling elite was completely satisfied with the current liberal version of the Constitution, it interpreted the laws as it wanted. The changes were needed when the end of Putin’s fourth term loomed on the horizon. The elite, apparently, wanted to get a mandate to change the Constitution in such a way that would allow the current system of power distribution to be preserved through a new configuration of state institutions... But it received an actual request for a new Constitution, and of a paternalistic, Soviet type... ”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Vinokurova E. Clan cleansing: What lies behind the Kremlin’s anti-corruption campaign. Available at: https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2012/11/28_a_4871461.shtml

⁴¹ Aleksandr Voloshin became coordinator of the Expert Council under the Government of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/economics/2019-12-12/4_7751_news1.html

⁴² “Music of the spheres”: Why Aleksandr Voloshin returns to power. Available at: <https://newizv.ru/news/politics/14-12-2019/muzyka-sfer-zachem-vozhraschaetsya-vo-vlast-aleksandr-voloshin>

⁴³ Delyagin M. Voloshin came out of the shadows – the liberal clan is preparing for an offensive. *IA Realist*. December 18, 2019.

⁴⁴ Among them: Governor of the Sakhalin Region A. Khoroshavin, head of the Republic of Mari El L. Markelov, head of the Republic of Komi V. Geysler, head of the Republic of Udmurtia A. Solovyov, ex-head of the Tula Region V. Dudka, ex-head of the Kirov Region N. Belykh, ex-head of the Republic of Karelia A. Nelidov, ex-head of the Republic of Komi V. Torlopov, head of the Bryansk Region N. Denin, ex-governor of the Ivanovo Region, vice-governor of the Moscow Region and vice-mayor of Moscow M. Men, etc.

⁴⁵ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on January 15, 2020. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62582>

⁴⁶ Khazin M. Putin is burning bridges. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/putin_szhigaet_mosty

⁴⁷ Who needs a new Soviet-style Constitution (editorial). *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. February 12, 2020. Available at: https://yandex.ru/turbo?text=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ng.ru%2Feditorial%2F2020-02-12%2F2_7792_editorial.html

4. The beginning of the SMO, announced by the President on February 24, 2022⁴⁸; after which many representatives of the liberal elites left the country, and many of the important people who did not do this, but could not give up their liberal worldviews, also lost their positions. For example, Presidential Adviser V. Yumashev is Boris Yeltsin's son-in-law, a member of the executive board and the board of trustees of the Yeltsin Center; according to experts, Yumashev is "one of the few remaining links between the Putin administration and the Yeltsin government... strategist and policy guide for the remnants of the Family [actually beneficiaries of the unipolar world in Russia]"⁴⁹.

However, from the "equidistance of the oligarchs from power" to the beginning of the SMO, the solution to the problem of nationalization of the elites was complicated by the need for the head of state to "maneuver" between the interests of the general population and the interests of the ruling elites, who since the 1990s were associated with the interests of Western countries, lobbied them, tried to live and actually lived in the "fairway" of the liberal the course.

"First, a former PREMIER (Kasyanov*) and eight (!) former deputy prime ministers have fled there [abroad]. At the same time, three more former deputy prime ministers and at least one acting deputy prime minister live in two countries.

Second, if we count the ex-heads of the Presidential Administration (!) - Yumashev, Voloshin and Chubais, as well as all the ministers and their deputies (like Kozyrev, Skrynnik, Vavilov, Chuyan, Reimer, etc.) who have fled Russia, that's another 50 people. And I am not talking about dozens of ex-governors and vice-governors and hundreds of officials of the federal government alone.

Third, if we count those high-ranking officials of the Russian Federation who have sent their children abroad and, consequently, are preparing to go there themselves in one way or another, that's dozens and dozens more people.

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

The list of former deputy prime ministers and their current location: Ilya Klebanov – in Israel, Alfred Kokh – in Germany, Arkady Dvorkovich – in the USA, Aleksandr Khloponin – in Israel, Yakov Urinson – in Israel, Maksim Akimov – in Israel, Anatoly Chubais – In Italy, Andrei Kudrin – in Israel..."⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of Russia on February 24, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

⁴⁹ Yeltsin's son-in-law ("enforcer on the part of the Family") resigned as Putin's adviser. *Zavtra*. May 31, 2022.

⁵⁰ Ivanov A. Israel, Italy, Germany, the United States, etc. Where the former deputy prime ministers of the Russian Federation fled. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/izrail_italiya_germaniya_shtati_i_t_d_kuda_svalili_bivshie_vitse-prem_eri_rf

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

After the beginning of the SMO, when the so-called “former Western partners” began aggressive actions against Russia (in the broadest sense: economic, political, military), the need to always take into account the interests of elites associated with the West in the system of public

“The main part of the oligarchy was dissatisfied with these actions of the statespersons [SMO], as it suffered from the economic sanctions imposed by the West. Someone has demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the flight from Russia and the withdrawal of capital from it. And someone began to look for an opportunity to remove the statespersons, and above all President Vladimir Putin, from power. **It was this group that played on the political ambitions of the head of the Wagner Group Yevgeny Prigozhin**”⁵¹.

“It should be understood that Prigozhin, **of course, is not an independent figure...** since the days of his very active activity in Saint Petersburg, **he certainly had partners, companions, and curators in various government bodies of the Russian Federation, including the Presidential Administration.** And later, when he started a very large business in Africa, which concerned not only his 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 vanish... he has his own clear role; in this sense, he is connected to many persons**”⁵².

administration has significantly decreased, although **it has not disappeared completely.** This was clearly demonstrated by the attempt of an armed rebellion by E. Prigozhin, which, as experts noted, was an attempt “to remove the statespersons and, above all, President V. Putin from power” by a certain “group of oligarchs” and which eventually brought the country to the brink of a “failure of Russian statehood”⁵³.

Nevertheless, the further process of forming new elites in the country, capable of working more effectively and guided solely by national interests, is complicated by other factors: **first, the need to nurture a new generation of elites** (to this end, the President is taking many steps to raise not just a new, nationally oriented elite, but a new generation of Russians, from among which this elite will be subsequently created);

“... **A genuine elite can be reproduced only if its concentration in power exceeds 50%... Where will the president find such a large number of necessary personnel at one time?** Even if we assume that the entire Izborsk Club will be called up for public service, then in this case **a second problem arises – experience, the need to understand the essence and details of the organizational work of the state machine.** And this means that it will not work right to the very top; and if they do not make it to the very top right away, then they will either be devoured or face such strong resistance and sabotage that the president will have to manually guide everyone personally through all levels of government to the very top”⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Gaponenko A. The Stalinist Revolution. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/voprosi_stalinizma_8

⁵² Skorobogaty P. (Deputy editor-in-chief, editor of the Policy Department of the journal *Ekspert*, expert of the Center for Applied Research and Programs). Video interview in the Neutral Zone program (video blog by Israeli journalist A. Waldman). June 26, 2023. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt2qH1Sk4dc>

⁵³ Dugin A. After the mutiny. The bifurcation point. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24505>

⁵⁴ Korovin V. Where are you, Putin’s commissars? Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23998>

Second, the need to “adjust” the effective operation of social and personnel “elevators”, so that they could be used by people who, for example, have proven themselves in the implementation of tasks in the course of the SMO (it is no coincidence that Vladimir Putin was asked about this during his meeting with war correspondents, and the head of state’s answer makes it clear that this task has not been solved yet);

Excerpt from the meeting with the war correspondents⁵⁵:

S. Pegov: “Unfortunately, the existing bureaucratic system is set up in such a way that those who are good at serving on the parquet floor.... There are a lot of talented people now, good daring guys, but the system prevents them from rising the top. How can we resolve this issue so that we get new gems in our military affairs and in the art of war?”

V. Putin: **“Of course, we need to look for people like that. There are many of them, you are absolutely right. The Defense Minister and the Chief of General Staff completely share my position, I have mentioned this issue many times, and they say: “Of course, we must do this”. You are right in saying that, just like in any ministry, they have a multi-layered bureaucracy. Certainly, we need to create social mobility mechanisms, including those that locate such people and elevate them to the required level in the army and society”.**

“The downside of this scenario, like any other revolutionary one, is the inevitable weakening of the state and the emergence of so many vulnerabilities, which, with the current civilizational confrontation with the West, will give the latter a lot of opportunities to take advantage of the situation and come with all chances to seize power, control over nuclear facilities and part of the regions, provoke civil conflict, famine, dysfunction of centralized government, separatism and the annexation of regions with a weakening of the center and a lot of smaller problems, because the West does not need Russia at all. And whether it will be possible to rebuild it again and by what forces is the big question that stands above this whole scenario, filled with so many costs that a true statesperson and patriot of Russia will decide on it only as a last resort”⁵⁶.

Third, a rapid change of the elites in the near future is impossible due to the ongoing civilizational confrontation between Russia and the Collective West. The revolutionary scenario (rather than the conservative one, which Vladimir Putin is implementing) of reassembling the personnel base of the public administration system creates additional risks to it, which external forces that prevent the strengthening of Russia’s sovereignty will certainly take advantage of, and there is no doubt about it.

⁵⁵ Meeting with war correspondents. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/713911>

⁵⁶ Korovin V. Where are you, Putin’s commissars? Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23998>

Insert 5

Monitoring of regulatory legal acts (laws, decrees) signed by the President of the Russian Federation in the period from October 23 to December 25, 2023⁵⁷

<p>MEASURES TO SUPPORT THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE SMO AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, TO DEVELOP THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, MOBILIZATION ISSUES, ORGANIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW, IMPROVEMENT OF ANTI-TERRORIST PROTECTION OF FACILITIES</p>
<p>November 2 – Federal Constitutional Law “On amendments to Article 37 of the Federal Constitutional Law “On the state of emergency” and Articles 7 and 22 of the Federal Constitutional Law “On the martial law”. The provision is excluded that the Russian Federation informs the Secretary General of the Council of Europe about deviations from its obligations under international treaties related to the restriction of the rights and freedoms of citizens in the event of a state of war or emergency on the territory of the Russian Federation or in certain areas thereof, as well as the cancellation of these deviations.</p>
<p>November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty”. Article 1 providing for the ratification of the Treaty has been repealed.</p>
<p>November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the contract system in the field of procurement of goods, works, services for state and municipal needs”. The procedure for renting residential premises for military personnel has been simplified.</p>
<p>November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 71 and 14 of the Federal Law “On compulsory state life and health insurance for military personnel, citizens called up for military training, ordinary and commanding officers of the internal affairs bodies of the Russian Federation, the state fire service, employees of institutions and bodies of the penal enforcement system, employees of the National Army Guards of the Russian Federation, employees of the enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation”. A law is aimed at forming a unified approach to the implementation of social support measures for family members of deceased military personnel.</p>
<p>November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the state defense order”. A federal product cataloging system for federal needs is being created, which includes a federal catalog of products for federal needs, classifiers, reference books and other regulatory documents that are necessary for cataloging work, as well as information technologies that ensure the formation and maintenance of a federal catalog of products for federal needs.</p>
<p>December 1 – Decree 915 “On the establishment of the regular strength of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation”. The full-time strength of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation has been established in the amount of 2,209,130 units, including 1,320,000 military personnel.</p>

⁵⁷ This insert is a continuation of the monitoring of the most important regulatory legal acts signed by the RF President; we have been conducting the monitoring since June 2022. Thus, it has been going on for 19 months; its results have been published in 10 articles (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).

Continuation of Insert 5

December 12 – Federal Law “On ratifying the Protocol between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on Amendments to the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on Joint Provision of Regional Security in the Military Sphere dated December 19, 1997”. The Protocol between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on Amendments to the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on Joint Provision of Regional Security in the Military Sphere dated December 19, 1997, signed in Minsk on December 3, 2022 is ratified. The Protocol updates the content of the preamble of the Agreement, clarifies the terminology, including the term “functioning of a regional grouping”, which refers to the daily and combat activities of headquarters, troops (forces) from the regional grouping.

December 12 – Federal Law “On ratifying the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on the establishment and operation of combat training centers for joint training of military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus”. The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus on the establishment and operation of combat training centers for joint training of military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, signed in Minsk on March 28, 2023, is ratified. The Agreement defines the procedure for interaction between the Parties on the establishment and operation of combat training centers in the territories of the parties.

December 12 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 241 of the Federal Law “On the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Russian Federation”. The list of socially vulnerable categories of citizens is expanding, the provision of employment for which allows small and medium-sized businesses to acquire the status of a social enterprise. It includes persons who have served in military service, in the internal affairs bodies, the state fire service, institutions and bodies of the penal enforcement system, the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation, enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation and took part in the special military operation in the territories of Ukraine, the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Lugansk People’s Republic, the Zaporozhye Region and the Kherson Region and (or) those who performed the tasks assigned to them in the specified territories during the period of the special military operation, as well as combat veterans.

December 12 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 83 of the Federal Law “On the State Defense Order” and Article 31 of the Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation and suspension of certain provisions of legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. It is stipulated that, as part of the execution of the state defense order, the amount of expenses of the head contractor (contractor), payment of which can be made by writing off funds from a separate account in an authorized bank to other bank accounts, should not exceed five million rubles per month. The specified amount is increased for the next financial year based on the value of the consumer price index determined by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

<p style="text-align: center;">MEASURES TO PROTECT INFORMATION SECURITY AND REGULATE THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN AGENTS, EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS</p>
<p>November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 153 of the Federal Law “On information, information technologies and information protection” and Article 16 of the Federal Law “On freedom of conscience and on religious associations”. It provides for restricting access to information disseminated in violation of the law and containing a proposal to finance the enemy in armed conflict, military operations, counter-terrorism operations or other actions involving weapons and military equipment in which the Russian Federation participates, as well as information on possible ways to carry out such financing.</p>
<p>November 14 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On the election of the President of the Russian Federation”. The provisions of the Federal Law “On the Election of the President of the Russian Federation” are brought into line with the provisions of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to participate in a referendum”. In particular, it is stipulated that if martial law is imposed on a part of the territory of the Russian Federation, presidential elections in such part of the territory may be held in accordance with Article 10.1 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to participate in a referendum”. The CEC may establish the specifics of the preparation and conduct of the presidential elections of the Russian Federation during the period of martial law in part of the country’s territory.</p>
<p>November 14 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of citizens of the Russian Federation” and Article 1 of the Federal Law “On the contract system in the field of procurement of goods, works, services for state and municipal needs”. Changes are being made regarding the procedure for organizing and holding elections at various levels, a referendum of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation and a local referendum during the period of martial law.</p>
<p>November 22 – Decree 875 “On holding the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation”. 2024 is declared the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation. In this regard, the Government of the Russian Federation has been instructed to form an organizing committee for the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation and approve its composition by December 27, 2023; to ensure the development and approval of a plan for the main events for the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation; to determine sources of financing for the main events for the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation. Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation T.A. Golikova has been appointed Chairperson of the Organizing Committee for the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation.</p>
<p>November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The concepts of “organizers of volunteer activities”, “volunteer organization” are clarified and the concept of “resource center of volunteerism” is introduced. In addition, the legal conditions for the implementation of their activities by the specified subjects of legal relations are established.</p>

Continuation of Insert 5

MEASURES TO PROVIDE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THE GENERAL POPULATION, STRENGTHENING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, INCLUDING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA
November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 2 and 3 of the Federal Law “On gas export” . The changes are aimed at granting the exclusive right to export natural gas in a liquefied state to users of subsurface areas on land located north of 67 degrees north latitude. The implementation of the Federal Law will make it possible to monetize large gas reserves located in territories significantly remote from the Unified Gas Supply System and create conditions for increasing the production and export of natural gas in a liquefied state.
November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 3 of the Federal Law “On gas export” . The law is aimed at developing projects for the production of liquefied natural gas and expanding the list of LNG exporters.
November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On electric power industry” and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” . The law is aimed at removing administrative barriers in the field of electric power industry development.
November 2 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 5 and 105 of Part One of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation” . Taxpayers who are residents of special economic zones are included in the list of taxpayers for whom the Tax Code of the Russian Federation establishes guarantees that the provisions of legislation on taxes and fees that worsen their situation will not be applied to them.
November 13 – Decree 855 “On the transfer to the ownership of the Republic of Crimea of federally owned shares of Krymenergo Joint Stock Company” .
November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to Parts One and Two of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation, certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation and invalidation of certain provisions of legislative acts of the Russian Federation” . The federal law is aimed at improving the legislation of the Russian Federation on taxes and fees in terms of taxation of excise taxes, corporate income tax, mineral extraction tax, collection of state duties, in order to generate additional sources of income to finance the expenditure obligations of the state. Additional grounds for recognizing persons as interdependent are established, as well as the procedure for applying methods for determining income (profit, revenue) in transactions to which interdependent persons are parties, and the procedure for tax control in connection with transactions between such persons are clarified. Fines are increased for violations of certain provisions of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation, including for failure to submit documentation in relation to an international group of companies.
November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 15 and 51 of the Federal Law “On compulsory medical insurance in the Russian Federation” . Intergovernmental transfers are provided from the budget of the Federal Compulsory Medical Insurance Fund to the budgets of territorial funds for the formation of a normalized insurance reserve in order to co-finance the expenses of medical organizations for the remuneration of doctors and paramedical personnel, as well as for the implementation of stimulating monetary payments to medical workers.

End of Insert 5

November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 1 of the Federal Law “On the minimum wage” and invalidation of Articles 2 and 3 of the Federal Law “On amendments to Article 1 of the Federal Law “On the minimum wage” and on suspension of its individual provisions”. The federal law sets the minimum wage from January 1, 2024 in the amount of 19,242 rubles per month. Also, from 2025, the ratio of the minimum wage to the median wage, which is taken into account when setting the minimum wage for the next year, is determined at being no less than 48 percent.

November 27 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 10 of the Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation on the appointment and payment of pensions”. The Federal Law is aimed at increasing the level of pension provision for citizens, taking into account the level of inflation: from January 1, 2024, the cost of one pension coefficient will be 133.05 rubles, the amount of a fixed payment to an insurance pension will be 8,134.88 rubles.

November 27 – Federal Law “On the federal budget for 2024 and for the planning period of 2025 and 2026”. The Federal Law is based on the basic version of the forecast of the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for 2024 and for the planning period of 2025 and 2026. The main characteristics of the federal budget for 2024 are determined based on the projected gross domestic product of 179,956 billion rubles and an inflation rate not exceeding 4.5 percent. The projected total amount of federal budget revenues is 35,065.3 billion rubles, expenditures – 36,660.7 billion rubles, the deficit is 1,595.4 billion rubles.

December 12 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On industrial policy in the Russian Federation”. The peculiarities of the application of measures to stimulate industrial activity in the territories of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Lugansk People’s Republic, Zaporozhye Region and Kherson Region are determined.

December 12 – Federal Law “On ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman on the Elimination of Double Taxation with respect to Income Taxes and the Prevention of Tax Avoidance and Evasion and its Protocol”. The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman on the Elimination of Double Taxation with respect to Income Taxes and the Prevention of Tax Avoidance and Evasion and its Protocol, signed in Muscat on June 8, 2023, are ratified. The Agreement provides that it applies to persons who are residents of one or both of the Contracting States and to income taxes levied on behalf of a Contracting State, its subdivisions or local authorities, regardless of the method of their collection.

December 12 – Federal Law “On employment in the Russian Federation”. The Federal Law provides for a new legal regulation of employment relations from January 1, 2024, taking into account the current situation the labor market and the current system of state support measures for citizens looking for a job. The basic concepts in the field of employment promotion are defined, including: “citizens looking for a job” “unemployed citizens”, “citizens at risk of dismissal”, and the grounds for recognizing citizens as unemployed are established. The measures of state support in the field of employment promotion are systematized, the procedure for their provision is clarified, and special measures of state support aimed at promoting the employment of disabled people, persons who have completed military service, and youth are provided. The minimum and maximum amounts of unemployment benefits and the condition for their annual indexation, taking into account the consumer price growth index for the previous year, are established. The issues of the organization and activities of the employment service bodies are also regulated.

We should also note that the public administration system, which will eventually be filled with new personnel, should contain mechanisms for self-defense against “undesirable elements”. As the experience of the collapse of the USSR and, in general, the experience of the collapse of

“big empires” has shown, “the collapse is based on one common reason – **the inability of political elites to ensure sustainable development ...**” when **“the accumulation of wealth begins to displace virtue and service to the state as the main indicator of success”**⁶⁰.

For example:

September 8, 2023, Sber published the report “The Future 2035+”⁵⁸: “no less than the forecast of Russia’s development until 2035”, analyzing which some experts summarized: “This essay (which the whole Sberbank was not ashamed to sign with its name!) clearly **demonstrates the absolute mental dependence of all these experts, analysts, futurists, sociologists, economists, forecasters and whatever else they are called there – on Western thought. Russia has been and remains a colony of the West in the field of thought. We are far from embarking on the difficult path of decolonizing our own consciousness... Sberbank futurologists demonstrate this dependence in a ridiculous and caricatured form, other do it in a more veiled way, but it’s still so far from liberation**”⁵⁹.

In other words, the nationalization of elites is a long process that requires maximum caution and endurance, the traits that Vladimir Putin has always shown; and, by and large, these qualities of his largely allow him to still be the head of state. **But “there are still a sufficient number of liberal habits in certain departments (although they are gradually disappearing)”**⁶¹.

Therefore, during the new presidential term, Vladimir Putin is expected to take more vigorous actions with regard to solving the tasks of his country; with regard to bringing the real situation in the country in line with the basic provisions of the Constitution, which proclaims that “Russia is a social state” (Article 7); **finally, with regard to the further implementation of the task of nationalizing the elites and raising the effectiveness of public administration**, without which a sovereign (that is, not fixated on Western paradigms) future of Russia is simply impossible.

⁵⁸ Available at: <https://generation-startup.ru/analytics/budushchee-2035/>

⁵⁹ Vojvodina T. We will burst the void, or our tomorrow from Sberbank. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/budem_lopat_pustotu_ili_nashe_zavtra_ot_sberbanka

⁶⁰ Arbatova N. Twenty centuries of the rise and decline of empires. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2022-07-13/7_8485_empires.html

⁶¹ Dvinsky K. Russia has one last chance left. Available at: https://dzen.ru/a/ZUj8auL0CB6pV_Xc

The victory in the election on March 17, 2024 will allow the head of state to more confidently (as required by the “historical time”) “move forward faster” in realizing the expectations and hopes of the general population.

The President will not only have to withstand the onslaught of all the numerous problematic aspects of global turbulence and defend all the constituent elements of the country’s full national sovereignty (political, economic, territorial, cultural, etc.), but also continue the systematic provision of positive dynamics in the standard of living and quality of life, restoring order in the public administration system.

And most importantly, Vladimir Putin will have to achieve broad public agreement on the image of the future of Russia and a new Social Contract, which is based on a socially just organization of society, as well as protective mechanisms capable of preventing the historical tragedies of 1917 and 1991 and the mistakes of former leaders of the country (Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin), which led to considerable losses: in social relations, in human capital, in the deterioration of cultural and moral norms, in the worldview of the ruling elites and often, as a result, in the loss of public confidence in the authorities...

It is no coincidence that in his first program article, which in fact set goals and guidelines for the development of the country for decades to come, the RF President wrote: *“There should be no forced civil consent in a democratic Russia. Any public consent here can only be voluntary. But that is why*

“Probably, the thinking public agrees that the state in Russia was seized in the 1990s by enemies who established external control over it, over our entire society. The generalizing name for it is liberalism... **Putin has been gradually getting the country out of this situation since he came to power in 2000. Very slowly. Slowly. Almost imperceptibly. And we are still on this path... The networks of liberals are so impressive and powerful that it is difficult to deal with them, especially since Putin has chosen a strategy of very gradual squeezing them out. It’s not even clear who will die out first – they or the Russian population... Maybe Putin wins in general, avoiding dramatic turns; carrion leaves Russia by itself and in portions. And there are no reprisals, no responsibility for what they did. But we are definitely losing the historical time allotted to our people for rebirth, for coming to ourselves. Delaying the deliberation is tactically justified (maybe), but strategically it becomes dangerous... Therefore, we need to move forward faster. Along Putin’s way. But still faster”⁶².**

it is so important to achieve it on such fundamental issues as goals, values, and development milestones, which are desirable and attractive to the vast majority of Russians”⁶³.

Today, Vladimir Putin often admits mistakes he made in the past, and does so publicly: in the media, in his public speeches, in direct communication with people. For example, in his recent interview on

⁶² Dugin A. De-liberalization. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/pokonchit_s_liberalami_nadezhdi_naroda_na_izmeneniya

⁶³ Putin V. Russia at the turn of the Millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. December 30, 1999. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

Rossiya-1 TV channel, he admitted that in the early stages of his presidential activity he had a largely naive idea about the attitude of the countries of the Collective West toward Russia, that there was no “basis for confrontation” in this regard.

However, recent decades have shown that this is not the case; and in this sense, of course, one cannot look to the future without a certain degree of anxiety in anticipation of how effectively Vladimir Putin will cope with all the tasks facing him. **He’s human, and it is human to err.**

“...at the initial stage, after all, I had a **naive idea** that the whole world, and above all the so-called (now I speak with absolute conviction) “civilized” world understands what happened to Russia, that it has become a completely different country, that there is no longer an ideological confrontation. This means that **there is no basis for confrontation. And if something negative happens in the policies of Western countries in relation to Russia... I naively believed that this was just the inertia of thinking and acting.** They are used to fighting the Soviet Union and continue to do so...

It was a naive idea of reality. And the realities are as follows, later I was absolutely, 100% convinced that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they believed that they had to be patient a little bit so that they could ruin Russia entirely”... Only later did this realization come to me⁶⁴.

An excerpt from Vladimir Putin’s speech during the “direct line” on December 14, 2023, characterizing some of his personal traits:

“It would be good if whatever I say would happen but, unfortunately, this is not always the case. Such is the world’s practice... We talk about something, we want something to happen, and some things happen and others do not. This is normal, but it is certainly necessary to strive to reach one’s goals”.

* * *

“Over many years, I have taught myself that I need to strive to choose the most important thing and do everything to achieve my goals, without paying attention to all the fluff. Of course, this field of vision must nevertheless be wide; everything must be understood and analyzed. But you need to confidently move towards your goal if you believe in what you are doing, and I believe in what I am doing”.

* * *

“One should think today about what will happen tomorrow... I would also add, always set ambitious goals. Set goals that may look unachievable. Having set such goals, a person will strive to achieve them and will certainly succeed”.

⁶³ Vladimir Putin’s interview with P. Zarubin in the framework of the program “Moscow. Kremlin. Putin” on Rossiya-1 TV channel. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/prezident_rf_priznalsya_v_prezhnej_naivnosti_otnositel_no_kollektivnogo_zapada

At the same time, it is precisely certain human qualities inherent in the President (purposefulness, strategic foresight, courage in setting ambitious goals and a systematic approach to achieving them) that allow us to look into the future with positive hopes and expectations.

Indeed (as Vladimir Putin stressed during the “direct line” with the Russians on December 14, 2023), it is necessary to set ambitious goals”, “choose what is most important”, “be sure of what you are doing” and “think today about what will happen tomorrow”.

It is today that we need to think about how to get rid of the “liberal hegemony” in the country and among those who surround the head of state. Because the longer this problem remains relevant, the more stringent actions will be required to solve it.

In our opinion, the current situation in the country, characterized by the “deep penetration” and “totalitarian domination” of liberal forces in society, was most systematically described by A. Dugin, one of the most active participants of the Izborsk Club and a participant of the 2023 World Russian People’s Council.

We think that A. Dugin is absolutely right that it is the President “who is the main and only hope for getting rid of the liberal yoke...”, and in this sense, society expects concrete actions from him: “it’s time to open another front – in the field of ideology, worldview, social consciousness”.

“...the liberal hegemony is still very strong in Russia... Everything in our country is liberal, starting with the Constitution. Even the ban on ideology itself is a purely liberal ideological thesis...

The SMO brought many changes, because the beginning of hostilities in Ukraine finally came into conflict with liberal dogma... However, **liberal hegemony in Russia still persists. It has penetrated so deeply into our society that it has begun to reproduce itself in new generations of managers, officials, scientists and educators...**

We have now entered a new cycle of Putin’s re-election as a national leader. There is no doubt about it... After all, he is our main and only hope for getting rid of the liberal yoke... But the bulk of Putin’s opponents are not on that side, but on this side of the barricades. The liberal totalitarian sect does not even think of giving up its position. It is ready to fight for them to the end... The liberals are restrained only by Putin, with whom they will not dare to have a head-on collision. Systemic liberals are concentrated in his camp, because there is simply no other camp...

Something similar to SMERSH is needed in the field of ideas and humanitarian paradigms... right now it is time to open another front – a front in the field of ideology, worldview, and social consciousness. The totalitarian domination of liberals in Russia – primarily in the field of knowledge, science, education, culture, and the definition of values of upbringing and development – must come to an end”⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ Dugin A. Against liberal totalitarianism. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/protiv_liberal_nogo_totalitarizma

Information about the Authors

Vladimir A. Ilyin – RAS Corresponding Member, Doctor of Sciences (Economics), Professor, Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation, scientific director, Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: ilin@vscc.ac.ru)

Mikhail V. Morev – Candidate of Sciences (Economics), Leading Researcher, deputy head of department, Vologda Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences (56A, Gorky Street, Vologda, 160014, Russian Federation; e-mail: 379post@mail.ru)