

EDITORIAL

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2023.1.85.1

UDC 354, LBC 66.03

© Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V.

The President Called on the Officials of All Levels to “Stop Fooling Around”



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. February 2023 marks one year since the beginning of the special military operation (February 24, 2022). February 21, 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered his annual address to the Federal Assembly. The head of state noted: “This is not only a time of challenges but also a time of opportunities... And our future depends on the way we realize these opportunities. We must put an end – and I want to emphasize this – to all interagency conflicts, red tape, grievances, doublespeak, or any other nonsense. Everything we do must contribute to achieving our goals and delivering results. This is what we must strive to achieve”... And here the President is certainly right, since the principle of “everything must contribute to achieving our goals and delivering results” is hindered by the activities and managerial decisions of individual representatives of bureaucracy who are unable or unwilling to comply with the new conditions in which the country found itself after the start of the special military

For citation: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. The President called on the officials of all levels to “stop fooling around”. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(1), 9–34. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2023.1.85.1

operation. In the article, we carry on analyzing the situation in Russia, key steps taken by the President in the face of increasing threats to national security, trends in public opinion and individual facts of real life that contradict the dominant national-patriotic trend of social sentiment and the tasks set by the President after February 24, 2022. The information base for our research includes assessments by experts from various fields, results of monitoring sociological surveys, and public speeches of the head of state since 2000. One of our main conclusions is that the future of Russia, the real formation of a new Social Contract, which is possible only after Russia’s victory in the special military operation and which consists in building a sovereign social state based on traditional spiritual and moral values and the principle of social justice, should begin with the mobilization of elites, elimination of “contradictions, formalities and other nonsense”; and the head of state can and should be the initiator of this process.

Key words: President of the Russian Federation, special military operation, public opinion, new Social Contract, 2024 presidential election.

Recently, it has become a frequent practice to broadcast live meetings of the President with members of the RF Government. Thus, people have an opportunity to see in an online format the joint work of the head of state and members of the Cabinet of Ministers: how prepared they are for a particular meeting, how they communicate, what questions are being asked, how clear the wording of the tasks is, what the situation regarding deadlines is, etc. On the other hand, people can see for themselves how officials behave and what level of responsibility they demonstrate when it comes to the fulfillment of the tasks set by the President.

January 11, 2023, one of such meetings of the President with members of the Government took place, and it was broadcast live by Rossiya 24 TV channel. The agenda of the meeting, as Vladimir Putin himself indicated, was “social support measures in the new regions – arranging the payment of all social benefits to the local population”. However, apparently, after a preliminary conversation with enterprises’ directors, the first question of the President was: “How the instructions are being carried out to implement long-term programs to upgrade the aircraft fleet

and the water transport fleet?”; the question was addressed to Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Minister of Industry and Trade Denis V. Manturov.

Here is a direct excerpt from the conversation held between the President and the Deputy Prime Minister, which, in our opinion, shows all the inconsistency between the tasks clearly formulated by the head of state and the attempts the officials (of the highest rank) make to sidestep the question.

The above episode clearly shows how the President sometimes has to resist a “huge and suffocating wave of inertia”¹. In the words and behavior of the head of state there was a sense of accumulated emotional dissatisfaction with the fact that throughout the entire power vertical there are officials who do not understand Russia’s current situation and are often “fooling around”, finding some excuses, showing a hidden unwillingness to adapt to the demands of the time, when in the context of aggravating external threats to national security the role of clarity and efficiency in fulfilling the tasks of the President is significantly increasing.

¹ Dugin A. We have approached the year 2023 balancing on the brink of an abyss. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23744>

An excerpt from the meeting of the President of the Russian Federation with Government members, January 11, 2023

Vladimir Putin: “As for today’s agenda, we agreed to focus on social support measures in the new regions – arranging the payment of all social benefits to the local population... But before we begin, I would like to ask Mr Manturov to tell us **how the instructions are being carried out to implement long-term programs to upgrade the aircraft fleet and the water transport fleet.** We worked on this a lot last year, and **we all realize how critical these issues are, especially with regard to air transport**”.

In his report, D. Manturov pointed out that “in 2023–2025, Aeroflot will receive 63 aircraft, including 34 Superjets under the import substitution project, 18 MC-21 and 11 Tu-214 aircraft... separate passports will be approved this year under orders placed by other airlines to ensure the implementation of a comprehensive program for developing the aviation industry... Our shipyards plan to build 260 civilian vessels in 2023–2027... Overall, the program for upgrading the civilian fleet has been drawn up for 231 billion rubles”.

D. Manturov ended his report by clarifying the tasks at hand: **“Today, the key task is to rapidly approve the investment project passport.** We are ready to submit it to the Government and hope that my colleagues will quickly resolve procedural issues, which will allow us to start financing in this quarter as you, Mr President, have instructed us...”

Vladimir Putin: “Mr Manturov, **as long as there are no manufacturer’s specifications (passports), as you mentioned yourself, and companies do not have those, just like they have no contracts, there is no understanding of what they will do or what they need to do. It is taking too long. Please, I ask you to speed up this process.** Enterprises do not have contracts for 2023, what can I say to that? As you said, there are no manufacturer’s specifications. When will they be ready? And there are no contracts yet”.

Denis Manturov: “Here is the instruction, Mr President. We have the contracts, as I reported, from the Defense Ministry, from the civilian customers, the State Transport Leasing Company and other leasing companies – this is in terms of helicopters. **And we have all the plans drawn up for aircraft.** They take into account the technical trials, certification and import substitution programs – the Superjet and MC-21. Everything has been fully drawn up”.

Vladimir Putin: “Mr Manturov, **you say everything is ready to go, but there are no contracts.** This is what I am telling you. Let’s discuss this after the meeting. There is no point in our splitting hairs at this point. I know no contracts have been signed with the enterprises, the directors told me so. **What are you fooling around for?** When will the contracts be signed? This is my point. Directors of enterprises are telling me there are no contracts while you are telling me that everything is ready to go. When will the passports be available? When will the contracts be signed? These are the questions I need answers to”.

Denis Manturov: “With regard to the aircraft passport which I just reported on, the instruction was issued **strictly in accordance with the task that you set.** Other passports will be ready **during this quarter based on the funds available under the budget, including under the preferential National Welfare Fund program**”.

Vladimir Putin: “**I want all of this to be done within a month. What quarter are you talking about? Do we not understand the circumstances we are in?** Please complete this work within a month. Okay?”

Denis Manturov: “We will try to do our best with our colleagues from the economic bloc. Thank you”.

Vladimir Putin: “**No, do not try to do your best; please get it done in a month. It must be done in a month, no later.** Agreed?”

Denis Manturov: “Yes”².

² Meeting of the President of the Russian Federation with Government members on January 11, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70338>

Russia’s current situation represents a **culmination** of the country’s long-term struggle to preserve its national sovereignty, which began **in 2007**, after the President declared at the international level that Russia was not going to change the traditions of pursuing an independent foreign policy.

“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”³.

The long way toward the beginning of the special military operation (SMO) was marked by the year 2014, when, following a coup d’etat in Ukraine, the Collective West began working methodically on the implementation of its “anti-Russia” project, including eight years of Donbass shelling.

Vladimir Putin has taken a number of effective steps to prepare the country (society, public administration system) for the potential possibility of the worst-case and quite likely scenario for the development of relations with the Collective West:

✓ **March 21, 2014** – the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol were admitted to the Russian Federation⁴;

✓ **January 15, 2020** – an initiative to amend the RF Constitution was introduced⁵ (amendments were aimed at strengthening traditional spiritual and moral values and organizational foundations of the public administration system);

✓ **June 4, 2021** – Presidential Decree banning extremist organizations from participating in elections⁶ (which brought to nought the activities of Navalny’s headquarters*);

✓ **July 2, 2021** – a new National Security Strategy was signed (according to experts, the system of national values, moral and spiritual values was for the first time “prominently marked ... a separate priority was given to “ideological leadership, which is necessary in the world”⁷);

✓ **December 15, 2021**, during a meeting at the Russian Foreign Ministry, the U.S. party received drafts of the treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on security guarantees and the agreement on security measures for the Russian Federation and the member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization⁸.

This agreement included Russia’s demand that NATO “shall not deploy military forces and weaponry on the territory of any of the other States in Europe in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997”; “shall refrain from any further enlargement of NATO, including the accession of Ukraine”; “shall not conduct any military activity on the territory of Ukraine as well as other States in the Eastern Europe, in the South Caucasus and in Central Asia”.

³ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference on February 10, 2007. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

⁴ Federal Law 36 “On ratifying the agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on the admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the formation of new constituent entities within the Russian Federation”, dated March 21, 2014.

⁵ The initiative to change the Constitution was first voiced during the President’s Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on January 15, 2020. The all-Russian vote was held in the period from June 25 to July 1, 2021.

⁶ Federal Law 157 “On amendments to Article 4 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights of citizens of the Russian Federation and on their right to participate in a referendum” and Article 4 of the Federal Law “On elections of deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, dated June 4, 2021.

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

⁷ Opinion of A. Podberyozkin, director of MGIMO Center for Military and Political Studies. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/03/07/2021/60e0a1c79a7947a36edadc3d>.

⁸ On Russian draft documents on legal security guarantees from the United States and NATO. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1790809/

Main provision of the agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization⁹:

- Article 4. “The Russian Federation and all the Parties that were member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as of 27 May 1997, respectively, **shall not deploy military forces and weaponry on the territory of any of the other States in Europe in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997**”.

- Article 5. “The Parties **shall not deploy land-based intermediate- and short-range missiles** in areas allowing them to reach the territory of the other Parties”.

- Article 6. “All member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization commit themselves **to refrain from any further enlargement of NATO, including the accession of Ukraine as well as other States**”.

- Article 7. “The Parties that are member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization **shall not conduct any military activity on the territory of Ukraine as well as other States in the Eastern Europe, in the South Caucasus and in Central Asia**”.

“In December 2021, we officially submitted draft agreements on security guarantees to the USA and NATO. In essence, all key, fundamental points were rejected. **After that it finally became clear that the go-ahead for the implementation of aggressive plans had been given and they were not going to stop**”¹⁰.

However, all these demands made by Russia were ignored. **January 26, 2022**, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that “the U.S. will continue to uphold the principle of “open doors” in NATO”¹¹; moreover, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted: “We will not compromise on the core principles on which our security has been based for decades”¹². In fact, this meant NATO has rejected the basic requirements of security guarantees that Russia insisted on complying with.

After that, it became clear that the RF President had “**no other option** for defending Russia and our people”¹³, except to announce the recognition of the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics on **February 21, 2022**, and the launch of a special military operation (SMO) on **February 24, 2022** in order to “protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime”¹⁴.

⁹ Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Available at: https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/

¹⁰ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

¹¹ Blinken: The U.S. will not abandon the principle of “open doors” in NATO. Available at: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/13535663>

¹² NATO and the United States rejected Russia’s security proposals. How will Putin respond? Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/537506>

¹³ 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>

¹⁴ Ibidem.

After February 24, 2022, it became clear that a return to the former relations between Russia and the Collective West was simply impossible. The Rubicon has been passed, and then Russia has no other choice but to realize its designated goals. **This has become a matter of not just a struggle for sovereignty, but a struggle for existence, “for Russia’s right to be on the political map of the world”¹⁵.**

“The Western elite make no secret of their goal, which is, I quote, ‘Russia’s strategic defeat’... This means they plan to finish us once and for all”¹⁶.

Today, when exactly a year has passed since the start of the SMO, there is no longer any doubt about the fact that, essentially, was obvious from the very beginning: the conflict that Russia has entered into is not local, but global, civilizational; and our country’s opponent in this confrontation is not only the current Kiev regime, but, first of all, the NATO bloc, the so-called “Collective West”, which publicly declares that Russia “must be eliminated” and that “free and independent states must be created in the post-Russian space”¹⁷.

According to the philosopher, political scientist, and public figure A. Dugin, the beginning of the SMO “became the culmination of modern Russia; we entered the war with the West, or rather, we admitted openly and honestly that the war is already underway and realized the scale of the fundamental confrontation... the president and the state did what was vital, what we should have done a long time ago, and when we didn’t, we only made the situation worse”¹⁸.

And despite numerous public assurances by senior NATO officials that “we are not going to get involved in World War III ... directly getting involved in the conflict”¹⁹, “neither NATO nor NATO allies are part of the conflict”²⁰, it was obvious to Russia that this was just “forgery, fraud and distortion of the truth”.

“... we were doing everything in our power to solve this problem by peaceful means, and patiently conducted talks on a peaceful solution to this devastating conflict.

Behind our backs, a very different plan was being hatched. As we can see now, the promises of Western leaders, their assurances that they were striving for peace in Donbass turned out to be a sham and outright lies... **Now they admit this publicly and openly, and they feel no shame about it”²¹.**

¹⁵ *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. March 10, 2022. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/03/10/lavrov-rf-vedet-boj-ne-na-zhizn-a-na-smert-za-mesto-na-politicheskoy-karte.html>

¹⁶ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

¹⁷ Excerpts from the article “The collapse of the Russian Federation is much less dangerous than leaving it under the control of criminals” by Anna Fotyga, Chairperson of the Subcommittee of the European Parliament on Security and Defense, former Polish Foreign Minister. Available at: <http://veche-info.ru/news/11124>.

¹⁸ Dugin A. We have approached the year 2023 balancing on the brink of an abyss. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23744>

¹⁹ U.S. President Biden’s press conference on November 10, 2022. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/10/11/2022/636c432d9a794764b2cd21b0>

²⁰ Press conference of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on February 14, 2023. Available at: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/17042559>

²¹ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

M. Zakharova: “From the point of view of the West, it was all just a fabrication in order to pump up the Kiev regime with weapons, to prepare politically to start the very fighting that we saw at the beginning of 2022, when the Kiev regime began to inflict deadly strikes on Donbass. **This confession of Chancellor Merkel, former Chancellor Merkel, has a terrible message: the West is using forgery, machinations, manipulations, all kinds of distortions of the truth and law that can only be imagined.** Even then, in 2015, during many hours of negotiations, they already knew that they would never fulfill their promises and that they would pump the Kiev regime with weapons”²².

S. Glazyev: “The Germans remember that **it took eight years for the formation of the Hitler regime and the militarization of Germany, its preparation for war.** They, along with their patrons, have now applied this experience in Ukraine. All we are left to do is wonder at our own naïveté and complain that **they have deceived us again**”²³.

E. Satanovsky: “... From the very beginning, no one intended to implement the Minsk Agreements, and their only goal was to save Ukraine from military defeat, to gain time to gather forces against Russia in the North Atlantic Alliance itself... and in general, to get prepared for the complete and final destruction of our country...”²⁴

The 12 months of the SMO have shown that both geopolitical adversaries (Russia and the countries of the Collective West, led by the United States) underestimated each other’s capabilities in some aspects. Thus, despite an unprecedented scale of the sanctions attack by NATO countries on the Russian economy, they have not been able to carry out the “sanctions blitzkrieg”; the RF President points out publicly and regularly when he gives an open assessment of the state of the Russian economy: “The idea was clear as day – they expected to suddenly and violently crush the Russian economy..., but this blitzkrieg did not happen... Everything is working, everything is functioning, everything is stable” (*Insert 1*).

As for Russia, the deep internal consequences of the country’s existence in a “viscous, enveloping liberal fog”, which we wrote about five years ago in the article “One Year Left before the Fourth Presidential Term”, were underestimated: “The general conclusion regarding the most probable future of the Russian society can be expressed in one sentence – ‘**it is in a fog**’. It is hard to disagree with such expert evaluation of the present and the future of the Russian society **taking into account the economic and social policy pursued by the ruling elites** and ineffective for large parts of the population, the policy leading to the decrease in the standard of living and quality of life as a result of reforms in education, healthcare and housing”²⁵.

²² Angela Merkel’s statement on the Minsk Agreements confirms that the West was not going to implement them. Available at: https://www.itv.ru/news/2022-12-08/443077-zayavlenie_angely_merkel_o_minskih_soglasheniyah_podtverzhdayut_chno_zapad_ne_sobiralsya_ih_vpolnyat

²³ Merkel’s confession is revenge on US accomplices and a bitter lesson for Russia. Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/news/priznanie-merkel-mest-podelnikam-iz-ssha-i-gorkij-urok-rossii_682537

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ilyin V.A. (2017). One year left before the fourth presidential term. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 10(1), p. 22.

The President’s assessment of the economic situation in the country after the start of the SMO

1. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the joint news conference with President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko, April 12, 2022: *“The blitzkrieg that our ill-wishers hoped to achieve was unsuccessful, of course. It is obvious. Our financial system and industrial sector are operating as normal... As it turns out, the Russian economy and its financial system are standing quite firmly on their feet”*²⁶.
2. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum, June 17, 2022: *“The idea was clear as day — they expected to suddenly and violently crush the Russian economy, to hit Russia’s industry, finance, and people’s living standards by destroying business chains, forcibly recalling Western companies from the Russian market, and freezing Russian assets. This did not work. Obviously, it did not work out; it did not happen... Step by step, we will normalize the economic situation... The dire forecasts for the prospects of the Russian economy, which were made in early spring, have not materialized”*²⁷.
3. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the Eastern Economic Forum, September 7, 2022: *“Many have already returned and realized that nothing terrible is happening here, even taking into account the sanctions aggression of some countries against Russia. Everything is working, everything is functioning, everything is stable”*²⁸.
4. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club meeting, October 27, 2022: *“By countering the sanctions imposed against it, Russia actually is creating a certain space of freedom so as to have no fear of sanctions pressure and freely develop economic ties between the most diverse regions of the world and different countries... They imposed these sanctions on Russia and they expected a total collapse of the Russian economy... But this blitzkrieg against the Russian economy did not happen”*²⁹.
5. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects, December 15, 2022: *“As you know, an unprecedented sanctions aggression has been launched against Russia. It was aimed at crushing our economy, wrecking our national currency — the ruble — by stealing our currency reserves, and provoking a devastating inflation in a short span of time. As we can see — in fact, this is common knowledge — this plan has fallen through”*³⁰.
6. Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting with representatives of the aviation industry, February 9, 2023: *“...for many people — for those who were and are trying to create problems for us, it was surprising to see how effectively we countered the threats created for us in the economy and in some manufacturing industries. It appears that our financial system is fully functional, all manufacturing industries and services are operating — they are working rhythmically, without disruptions”*³¹.
7. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, February 21, 2023: *“As I have already said, the West has opened not only military and informational warfare against us, but is also seeking to fight us on the economic front. However, they have not succeeded on any of these fronts, and never will... They want to make our people suffer, which is designed to destabilize our society from within. However, their gamble failed to pay off. The Russian economy, as well as its governance model proved to be much more resilient than the West thought”*³².

²⁶ Joint news conference of Russian President Vladimir Putin and President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68182>

²⁷ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/68669>

²⁸ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the Eastern Economic Forum. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/69299>

²⁹ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Valdai International Discussion Club meeting. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69695>

³⁰ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70086>

³¹ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting with representatives of the aviation industry. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70484>.

³² Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

A concrete fact (example) of “liberal fog”

Norilsk Nickel is Potanin’s main asset, which he received in the mid-1990s as a result of the operation “collateral auction”... **Yeltsin’s team estimated the plant at 170 million USD. The price of the plant was underestimated by at least an order of magnitude. In just one difficult year of 1995, Norilsk Nickel received a net profit of about 730 million – more than 4-fold exceeding the total value of the controlling stake of the plant.** “It was in fact a deal to alienate state property into the hands of the friends of the current government...”, – says Yuri Boldyrev, deputy chairman of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation in 1996–2003.

What was the fate of Norilsk Nickel after the plant has found a new owner? **The enterprise began to be “squeezed like a lemon”. Norilsk, whose infrastructure was on the balance sheet of the plant, also began to degrade.** A lot has been written about this in recent years. And one of the consequences of degradation was a large-scale environmental disaster. It occurred on May 29, 2020...

The amount of dividends paid to Norilsk Nickel shareholders significantly exceeds the volume of capital investments in the company’s fixed assets. Over the five-year period, the total amount of dividends paid amounted to **903 billion rubles**, and capital investments – **518 billion rubles**. The amount of dividends is comparable to the budget of Krasnoyarsk Krai, whose population is almost three million people and whose area is larger than the territories of many European states. The amount of dividends paid to Norilsk Nickel shareholders in 2015, 2017 and 2018 even **exceeded the amount of net profit**³³.

“Norilsk Nickel is not an exception:

According to open source data, capital investments of the Novolipetsk Steel (beneficiary – Vladimir Lisin) for 2017–2021 amounted to **318.8 billion rubles**. And the dividend payments for the same period amounted to **662.2 billion rubles, that is, more than twice as much**.

Another example is PJSC Severstal (beneficiary – Aleksey Mordashov). In 2017–2021, capital investments amounted to **333.4 billion rubles**, dividend payments – to **603.3 billion rubles**³⁴.

One concrete example of the implications of this “liberal fog” can be found in the development of the mining and metallurgical company Norilsk Nickel, which (as experts note) was “squeezed like a lemon”, which eventually led to a large-scale environmental disaster.

After the RF President’s decision to begin the SMO (February 24, 2022) the external “fog” largely dissipated: it became clear who is Russia’s friend and who is its enemy; which way the country should go, and which way it should avoid... The head of state very accurately felt and formulated the opinion of the majority of the Russian population when he noted that “not a single ordinary citizen in our country felt sorry

for those who lost their assets in foreign banks, lost their yachts or palaces abroad, and so on. In their conversations around the kitchen table, people have all recalled the privatization of the 1990s, when enterprises that had been built by our entire nation were sold for next to nothing and the so-called new elites flaunted their lavish lifestyle”³⁵.

But the internal “fog” that is contained in specific people at all levels of government, “at the helm” of the economy, business, and culture, is still very dense. **In this sense, the task of the President to form an understandable image of the future of Russia and the system of public administration, which is based on social justice, remains unresolved.**

³³ Katasonov V. Russia’s economic development is hampered by oligarchs – we need nationalization. Available at: <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2023/01/27/ekonomicheskoe-razvitiye-rossii-blokiruetsja-oligarhami-nuzhna-nacionalizacija-58329.html>

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

The specific feature of the current situation in Russia is also connected with the fact that there is a little more than a year left before the presidential election. We recall that the election of the head of state (according to the current electoral legislation³⁶) are to be held on March 17, 2024. Head of the Federation Council Commission for the Protection of State Sovereignty and Prevention of Interference in the Internal Affairs of Russia A. Klimov pointed out that “the West will try to destabilize the presidential election in 2024, using a special operation as a pretext for interference in our internal affairs”³⁷.

Taking into account the nature of the current international situation and relying on expert opinion and the results of mass sociological surveys, we can state the following.

First, the upcoming 2024 presidential election has not only internal, but also external (global, international) significance, because over the past 22 years Russia under Vladimir Putin’s leadership has been a subject that really opposes the “distortion of the world order caused by the so-called unipolar agenda and the suppression of the world by Western domination for at least three centuries”³⁸.

Second, there is every reason to assume that after the election in March 2024, Vladimir Putin will serve his fifth presidential term, which means that the line of further severing the ties between Russia and the West will continue. Some experts,

“After the start of the special operation, according to the idea of the Americans, our country was supposed to be overwhelmed by anti-war rallies... however, the special operation in Ukraine, instead of a split and protest sentiments, only united our society even more... **It is obvious that the anti-Russian strategy of the Collective West has failed. At the same time, the main miscalculation of the Americans was that they did not take into account our mentality**”³⁹.

emphasizing the importance and necessity of Vladimir Putin’s new presidential term, say that “now it is quite obvious there is no one to replace the current President”⁴⁰.

The most important point is that the trust of Russian society in the current President (ultimately, the decisive factor on which the results of any vote depend) has been strengthening over the years.

In this sense, the Collective West has clearly underestimated the mental features of Russian society as “an integral characteristic of the people living in a particular culture, with their special way of perceiving the world, way of thinking, hierarchy of life values, forms of everyday and social behavior”⁴¹. Back in 2016, Vladimir Putin noted: “In the mentality, in the soul of a Russian person, there is always a desire for some high moral ideal, for some high moral values”⁴².

The results of a public opinion monitoring conducted by VoIRC RAS show that in response

³⁶ On the election of the President of the Russian Federation: Federal Law 19 FZ, dated January 10, 2003 (as amended December 5, 2022; with amendments and additions effective as of January 1, 2023) Available at: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_40445/c3b8b1b1845f4b4bcb6bfc2a1514d8cc0bacc74/

³⁷ Opinion of A. Klimov, head of the Federation Council Commission for the Protection of State Sovereignty and Prevention of Interference in the Internal Affairs of Russia (source: <https://ura.news/news/1052619323>).

³⁸ Yakovenko A. The world has entered the phase of searching for a new balance of development. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2022-12-15/3_8617_kb.html

³⁹ They did not take into account the mentality: The anti-Russian strategy of the West has failed. Available at: https://politobzor.net/247473-ne-uchli-mentalitet-antirossijskaja-strategija-zapada-poterpela-neudachu.html?utm_source=topwar.ru

⁴⁰ Opinion of S. Stepashin, former Prime Minister, head of the Association of Lawyers of Russia. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20221013/stepashin-1823562381.html>. A number of experts noted that Stepashin expressed “exactly the general opinion” (A. Makarkin, director of the Center for Political Technologies); that this is “probably a consolidated position” (political scientist A. Nemtsev) and “the opinion of a respected and authoritative politician” (K. Kostin, chairman of the Board of the Civil Society Development Fund, ex-head of the Presidential Office for Internal Policy).

⁴¹ Artemova V.G., Filippova Ya.V. (2008). Mentality of Russian people: Traditions and evolution. *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo. Seriya: Sotsial'nye nauki*, 2(10), 1–12.

⁴² Vladimir Putin’s interview in Vladivostok. September 5, 2016. Available at: <https://nikatv.ru/news/vlast/vladimir-putin-nazval-otlichitelnyu-chertu-rossijskogo-mentaliteta>

to the aggravation of threats to national security, society is consolidating around patriotic values and the head of state. In the conditions of the SMO, on average, in 2022, compared with 2021, the level of popular trust in Vladimir Putin has increased significantly (by 7 p.p., from 49 to 56%; *Insert 2*). In addition, the level of trust in the RF Government of the Russian Federation has increased significantly as well (by 6 p.p., from 40 to 46%), the level of trust in the Federation Council also increased (by 5 p.p., from 30 to 35%), as well as the level of trust the majority (16 out of 21) of key governmental and non-governmental institutions in general (*Tab. 1*).

Table 1. Governmental and non-governmental institutions that citizens of the Russian Federation began to trust more often in 2021–2022, %*

Group of institutions	List of institutions
Institutions, the trust in which has increased by 11% or more	1. RF President 2. RF Government 3. Federation Council 4. State Duma 5. Local self-government bodies 6. RF Civic Chamber 7. Vologda Oblast Civic Chamber
Institutions, the trust in which has increased by 6-9%	1. Prosecutor's Office 2. FSB 3. Non-governmental organizations 4. Directors, heads of enterprises 5. Banking, business circles
Institutions, the trust in which has increased by 5% and less	1. Court 2. Oblast government 3. Mass media 4. Political parties, movements
Total: 16 institutions	
* Detailed data are provided in <i>Insert 2</i> .	

“Many people believe that the aggravation of relations between Russia and the countries of the Western world occurred after the famous speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. However, this is not the case... **The West realized even earlier that “he is a real Russian patriot” who will not grovel either to the United States or to Europe. This was the reason why they don’t like Putin**”⁴³.

Thus, the data of sociological surveys and expert opinions indicate a high degree of probability of Vladimir Putin becoming President for the fifth term, and this can in no way suit the political elite of the Collective West, which has been at war **with him personally for many years and with the direction in which Russia is developing under his leadership**. That is why, in the period remaining before the presidential election in Russia, NATO countries can undertake certain steps that will lead to an escalation of hostilities during the SMO, and an increase in social tension within Russia.

In such circumstances, it is obvious that in the next 12 months the President will have to make the necessary decisions related to improving the country’s defense capability; strengthening discipline (primarily in implementing the priority needs of the armed forces); ensuring the functioning of the Russian economy in the new realities of international relations that have changed since February 24, 2022; maintaining the standard of living and quality of life of the broad strata of population and social protection of certain categories of citizens; improving the functioning of the information and cultural space, which is acquiring a particularly important role in the context of the SMO.

“Gradually, Russian people come to understand that there will be no former world: its internal content is deformed, the former structure of the economy is changing. **The war forces us to re-adjust comprehensively and in everything**”⁴⁴.

At the same time, it is very important how these forced decisions will be perceived by society. The results of 2022 showed that the resource of public trust in the President is significant. Not only public rhetoric, but also specific decisions of the head of state are aimed at the realization of national interests and fully correspond to the nature of the present time (*Insert 3*).

⁴³ A true patriot of Russia: When the West turned against Putin. Available at: <https://freedom-news.ru/nastoyashhij-patriot-rossii-kogda-zapad-opolchilsya-protiv-putina/> (with a reference to the material by Mike Whitney, a columnist at *The Unz Review*).

⁴⁴ Pereslegin S. Rhythms of war. Available at: <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1676701680>

Insert 2

Dynamics of the level of trust in governmental and non-governmental institutions in 2000–2022

Governmental and non-governmental institutions	Average annual data										Dynamics (+/-), 2022 to...			
	2000	2004	2008	2012	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022**	2021		2000		
										p.p.	%	p.p.	%	
RF President	57.1	54.4	65.2	45.7	60.5	52.4	51.6	49.1	55.7	+7	+13	-1	-2	
Church	42.3	42.9	51.9	41.4	50.0	46.5	45.5	46.6	46.7	0	0	+4	+10	
Prosecutor's Office	30.9	28.8	40.9	33.9	47.1	43.6	43.1	44.6	46.7	+2	+5	+16	+51	
RF Government	42.7	35.2	60.2	39.6	47.3	41.0	41.0	40.1	45.6	+6	+14	+3	+7	
Court	31.6	31.0	41.3	36.1	45.3	39.4	38.1	42.1	44.5	+2	+6	+13	+41	
FSB	34.2	28.4	43.8	33.2	45.2	41.0	42.7	43.9	44.4	+1	+1	+10	+30	
Police	27.2	23.7	36.5	29.3	44.4	40.7	41.6	43.9	44.1	0	0	+17	+62	
Army	37.0	27.1	37.8	31.3	47.2	40.8	38.5	43.0	42.5	-1	-1	+6	+15	
Oblast government	31.3	30.0	48.6	34.6	35.4	33.5	34.2	35.6	38.5	+3	+8	+7	+23	
Local self-government bodies***	-	-	40.9	29.3	34.4	31.6	30.3	32.3	36.7	+4	+14	-	-	
Scientific organizations****	-	-	-	-	32.8	30.3	30.3	36.1	35.7	0	-1	-	-	
Federation Council	28.3	27.1	47.6	32.3	37.4	32.2	31.9	30.3	34.9	+5	+15	+7	+23	
State Duma	23.0	26.0	42.0	30.5	33.8	28.6	27.7	29.0	32.7	+4	+13	+10	+42	
RF Civic Chamber****	-	-	-	28.1	31.0	27.4	27.8	28.3	32.4	+4	+14	-	-	
Mass media	33.4	27.3	35.2	29.5	29.8	26.7	26.9	29.5	31.6	+2	+7	-2	-5	
Oblast's Civic Chamber****	-	-	-	25.4	28.3	25.6	25.9	27.6	30.9	+3	+12	-	-	
Trade unions	28.4	26.5	35.9	25.6	33.3	29.7	28.4	31.8	30.6	-1	-4	+2	+8	
Non-governmental organizations***	-	-	32.6	26.5	28.1	24.9	24.7	28.5	29.4	+1	+3	-	-	
Directors, heads of enterprises	19.6	21.5	30.5	25.1	25.1	20.5	21.2	24.4	24.7	0	+1	+5	+26	
Banking, business circles	12.4	17.6	26.6	21.3	20.7	17.6	18.9	22.8	23.9	+1	+5	+12	+93	
Political parties, movements	10.7	17.4	26.8	20.9	22.3	19.7	18.7	20.0	21.7	+2	+9	+11	+103	
Dynamics of the number of positive and negative changes (for 21 institutions), %										14 / 3	14 / 2	14 / 2	+103	

The wording of the question is “How would you describe your attitude toward current Russian governmental and non-governmental institutions?” (answer options are “fully trust” and “mostly trust”). The question is in the survey since 2000. The table shows the average annual data for 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2018 (the years of presidential elections), as well as the average annual data for the period of Vladimir Putin's 4th presidential term.

* 2020 – the year when the coronavirus pandemic started.

** 2022 – the year when the special military operation on the territory of Ukraine started.

*** The answer option has been included in the survey since 2006.

**** The answer option has been included in the survey since 2010.

***** The answer option has been included in the survey since 2018.

In the context of the SMO, on average for 2022, the share of those who trust the RF President increased by 13% (by 7 p.p., from 49 to 56%).

At the same time, the level of trust in all government institutions has increased: trust in the RF Government – by 14% (by 6 p.p., from 40 to 46%), Federation Council – by 15% (by 5 p.p., from 30 to 35%), State Duma – by 13% (by 4 p.p., from 29 to 33%), Oblast government – by 8% (by 3 p.p., from 36 to 39%).

Besides, on average, in 2022, the level of trust has not decreased with regard to all the major non-governmental institutions and institutions representing the “power bloc” (the police, army, etc.).

Insert 3

Overview of key decisions made by the President of the Russian Federation (December 21, 2022 – February 21, 2023)⁴⁵

<p>December 28, 2022 – amendments have been made to the legislation prohibiting foreign agents from serving in the prosecutor’s office.</p>
<p>December 28, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 4 of Part 1 and to Part 2 of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The specifics of calculation and payment of certain taxes and fees on the territory of the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Lugansk People’s Republic, the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts are established.</p>
<p>December 28, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation and invalidation of certain provisions of legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. The federal law increases the size of pensions for non-working pensioners. From January 1, 2023, the average amount of pensions for non-working pensioners will be 21,054 rubles.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to the federal law “On the procedure for foreign investments in business entities of strategic importance for ensuring the country’s defense and state security”. It provides for the need for coordination with the authorized body of transactions to establish control by a foreign investor over a business company that has a license and (or) other permits to carry out activities of strategic importance for ensuring the defense of the country and the security of the state, and also establishes the procedure for obtaining such licenses and (or) other permits by a business company under the control of a foreign investor.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – an amendment has been made to the Decree on the application of special economic measures in the field of foreign economic activity in order to ensure the security of Russia. The Decree provides for the establishment of increased rates of export and (or) import customs duties in respect of products and (or) raw materials exported outside the territory of the Russian Federation and (or) imported into the territory of the Russian Federation, according to the lists determined by the Government of the Russian Federation</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Articles 239 and 3301 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation”. It is envisaged to strengthen criminal liability for the creation of destructive organizations (including those recognized as foreign agents), whose activities involve violence against citizens and other harm to their health, with the encouragement of citizens to refuse to perform civil duties. Evasion from the performance of duties provided for by the legislation of the Russian Federation on foreign agents and violation of the procedure for the activities of a foreign agent are criminally punishable, provided that a person has been brought to administrative responsibility for similar acts twice within a year.</p>

⁴⁵ The Insert presents a continuation of the monitoring of management decisions of the authorities, which we started 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), 29–32.

<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On Information, information technologies and information protection”. It is prohibited for individual legal entities, in cases provided for by Federal Law, to use information systems and (or) programs for electronic computers belonging to foreign legal entities and (or) foreign citizens, which are intended and (or) used for the exchange of electronic messages exclusively between users of these information systems and (or) programs for electronic computing machines in which the sender of an electronic message identifies the recipient or recipients of an electronic message. The Federal Law establishes separate prohibitions and obligations for owners of ad placement services.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. The commission of any crime for the purposes of propaganda, justification and support of sabotage is recognized as an aggravating circumstance. The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation is supplemented by articles establishing increased liability for such acts as facilitating sabotage activities (inducing, recruiting or otherwise involving a person in committing sabotage, arming or training a person in order to commit the specified crime, financing sabotage), organizing the commission and financing of sabotage, undergoing training in order to carry out sabotage activities, organizing sabotage communities and participation in it. Persons found guilty of committing these acts may be sentenced to life imprisonment.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 6 of the Federal Law “On the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation”. The number of representatives of the civic chambers of constituent entities of the Russian Federation in the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has been increased from 85 to 89 in connection with the admission to the Russian Federation of the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Lugansk People’s Republic, the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to articles 5 and 12 of the Federal Law “On combating corruption”. Amendments were made to the Federal Law “On combating corruption”, giving the RF President the authority to determine the specifics of compliance with restrictions, prohibitions and requirements, and the performance of duties established in order to combat corruption by federal laws.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On Amendments to Article 6 of the Federal Law “On countering the legalization (laundering) of proceeds from crime and the financing of terrorism”. Amendments were made so that the list could include organizations and individuals in respect of which there is information about their involvement in extremist activities or terrorism. Rosfinmonitoring exercises mandatory control over their operations with cash or other property.</p>

Continuation of Insert 3

December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation”. Amendments were made, according to which the court is obliged to suspend judicial proceedings in the event of a citizen’s participation in hostilities, in conducting a counter-terrorism operation, conscription for military service on mobilization, conclusion of a contract for voluntary assistance in performing tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as in the case of performing tasks in an emergency or military provisions. In addition, federal laws “On enforcement proceedings”, “On the specifics of fulfilling obligations under credit agreements (loan agreements) by persons called up for military service on mobilization into the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, persons taking part in the special military operation, as well as their family members, and on amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” were amended, which provides for the suspension of enforcement proceedings against the relevant categories of persons. In this case, the bank or other credit institution suspends the execution of claims for the recovery of funds of these persons aimed at repayment of debt under the loan agreement.

December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 38 of the Federal Law “On privatization of state and municipal property”. The amendments are aimed at improving the legal regulation of issues related to the adoption by the RF Government of decisions on the use of a special right (“golden share”) in relation to joint-stock companies not included in the list of strategic joint-stock companies approved by the Presidential Decree “On approving the list of strategic enterprises and strategic joint-stock companies”, but of strategic importance to ensure the defense of the country and the security of the state.

December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 3 of the Federal Law “On privatization of state and municipal property”. The legislation has been amended to simplify the procedure for transferring weapons for state defense orders. It is envisaged to simplify the procedure under which federal executive authorities transfer weapons, ammunition, military and special equipment, spare parts, components and devices for them, explosives, explosives, gunpowder, all types of rocket fuel, as well as special materials and special equipment for their production, special equipment of personnel of paramilitary organizations, regulatory and technical products for their production and operation, to Russian organizations for the implementation of the state defense order, creation of weapons and for other purposes determined by the legislation of the Russian Federation,

December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. The provisions of the Code providing for administrative responsibility for the dissemination of information about foreign agents in mass media and in messages and materials of mass media in information and telecommunication networks (with the exception of information placed in unified state registers and state information systems provided for by the legislation of the Russian Federation) or materials produced by them without indicating the status of a foreign agent are clarified, as well as for organizing the activities of a nonprofit organization, included in the register of foreign agents, in respect of which a decision has been made to suspend its activities, or participation in such activities.

December 29, 2022 – A law was signed allowing transport companies from the EAEU to engage in internal Russian cargo transportation.

<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 5 of the Federal Law “On state support of cinematography of the Russian Federation” and articles 1 and 17 of the Federal Law “On protecting children from the information harmful to their health and development”. It is established that the rental certificate for the film must contain information about the prohibition of the distribution of the film among children in cases where the film contains information prohibited for distribution among children, or information about the restriction of the distribution of the film among children of certain age categories in accordance with the Federal Law “On protecting children from the information harmful to their health and development”. It is stipulated that the Federal Law “On protecting children from the information harmful to their health and development” does not apply to relations in the sphere of circulation of works of literature, the study of which is provided for by federal state educational standards and federal basic general education programs, as well as in the field of distribution of the Bible, the Quran, Tanakh and Ganjur.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Federal Law “On narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances”. It is legally permitted to use narcotic drugs for medical purposes without a license in military units.</p>
<p>December 29, 2022 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 19 of the Federal Law “On freedom of conscience and on religious associations” and the Federal Law “On education in the Russian Federation”. Changes are being made concerning the implementation of programs for the training of scientific and scientific-pedagogical personnel in postgraduate studies and the abolition of the procedure for suspending the state accreditation of educational activities. Special rights are also established for admission to higher educational institutions for bachelor’s and specialist degree programs for Heroes of the Russian Federation, persons awarded three Orders of Courage, children who took part in the special military operation on the territory of Ukraine, the Donetsk People’s Republic, the Lugansk People’s Republic, the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts, military personnel and their children, persons, signed a contract on voluntary assistance in the performance of tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, etc.</p>
<p>December 30, 2022 – Amendments have been made to the Decree on a one-time cash payment to military personnel undergoing military service under a contract in the Armed Forces. The amount of a one-time cash payment is 195 thousand rubles.</p>
<p>December 31, 2022 – Decree “On additional social guarantees for military personnel and persons with special police ranks undergoing military service (service) in the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation, and their family members”. In the event of the death of a serviceman, a one-time payment of five million rubles is made to family members. In case of injury or contusion, a one-time payment of three million rubles is provided to the serviceman. One day of completing tasks in two days is counted in the length of service for assigning a pension on preferential terms to military personnel; the time of continuous treatment in medical organizations in case of injury or contusion when performing tasks is counted at the rate of one month of military service (service) for two months.</p>

Continuation of Insert 3

<p>January 25, 2023 – Decree 808 “On amendments to the Fundamentals of the State Cultural Policy approved by the Presidential Decree dated December 24, 2014”. The amendments, in particular, contain the following new provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “The basis of the all-Russian civic identity is the historically established system of Russian spiritual and moral values that unites the distinctive cultures of the multinational people of the Russian Federation”; ✓ “The approval of the priority of culture is designed to ensure the further development of the potential of society and the individual, the preservation of civil unity, the protection of national interests, the achievement of national development goals of the Russian Federation”; ✓ “The main goals of the state cultural policy are the formation of a harmoniously developed personality sharing traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, and strengthening the unity and cohesion of Russian society through priority cultural and humanitarian development”.
<p>February 17, 2023 – a number of laws related to the regulation of legal relations in the DPR, LPR, the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts were signed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ the law on the specifics of legal regulation of relations in the field of healthcare; ✓ the law establishing the specifics of pension provision of citizens; ✓ the law establishing the procedure for providing social protection measures to citizens; ✓ the law on the specifics of legal regulation of relations in the fields of education and science; ✓ the law establishing the specifics of the implementation of payments for compulsory social insurance of citizens.
<p>February 17, 2023 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 22 of the Federal Law “On strategic planning in the Russian Federation”. It is established that the forecast of scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation is developed on the basis of decisions of the RF President, taking into account data provided by federal executive authorities, executive authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation and the Russian Academy of Sciences. Coordination and methodological support for the development and adjustment of the forecast of scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation is provided by the Presidential Council for Science and Education. The forecast of scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation is approved by the RF President on the recommendation of the Presidential Council for Science and Education. The procedure for developing and adjusting the forecast of scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation is determined by the RF President.</p>
<p>February 17, 2023 – Federal Law “On amendments to Article 211 of the Code of Civil Procedure of the Russian Federation and Article 244 of the Code of Administrative Procedure of the Russian Federation”. A change is being made, according to which court decisions on the inclusion of a citizen of the Russian Federation in the list of voters, participants in the referendum are subject to immediate execution.</p>
<p>February 17, 2023 – Decree “On amendments to Presidential Decree 412, dated December 19, 2022 “On additional measures of social support for military personnel and their family members”. The list of recipients of additional social support measures includes persons serving in the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation.</p>

February 21, 2023 – Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Key proposals of the head of state are as follows:

- ✓ to create a state fund, its task will be personal assistance to the families of servicemen who died in the course of the SMO; a personal employee should be assigned to each family; already this year the fund should be deployed in all regions of Russia;
- ✓ from January next year, in addition to the planned increase in the minimum wage, to carry out another one – by an additional 10%; thus, the minimum wage will increase by 18.5% and amount to 19,242 rubles;
- ✓ this year, constituent entities of the Russian Federation will be able to receive funds reserved for financing national projects in 2024 through the mechanism of interest-free treasury loans;
- ✓ to increase the amount of social tax deduction for expenses on children’s education from the current 50 thousand to 110 thousand rubles per year, and for expenses on own education, as well as for treatment and purchase of medicines – from 120 to 150 thousand rubles;
- ✓ to provide maternity capital in the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics, the Zaporozhye and Kherson oblasts to families in which children were born since 2007, that is, from the moment when this program began to operate throughout Russia;
- ✓ the government should find reserves to expand the program for issuing housing certificates to young scientists;
- ✓ to return to the traditional Russian basic training of specialists with higher education; the duration of training can be from four to six years;
- ✓ attracting capital to fast-growing high-tech businesses on the domestic stock market will be supported by tax benefits for companies and buyers of such shares;
- ✓ Russia suspends participation in the Strategic Offensive Arms Treaty; as the President stressed, “it does not withdraw from the treaty, namely suspends its participation”.

February 21, 2023 – Decree 111 “On invalidation of Presidential Decree 605, dated May 7, 2012 “On measures to implement the foreign policy of the Russian Federation”. The text of the document notes that the decision was made in order to “ensure the national interests of Russia in connection with the profound changes taking place in international relations”

The decree on measures to implement the foreign policy course was signed on May 7, 2012. It stated that Russia’s foreign policy is aimed at ensuring its national interests based on the principles of pragmatism, openness and multi-vector approach. In particular, in accordance with the decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, federal authorities were instructed to strengthen Russia’s position as an equal partner in world markets, firmly defend the central role of the UN in world affairs, and actively engage various forms of multilateral diplomacy, including BRICS, G20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Also, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation was aimed at promoting international efforts to counter global challenges and threats, including the danger of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international terrorism and regional conflicts.

But, as the President himself noted during his first inauguration on May 7, 2000, **“in Russia the head of state has always been and will always be the person who is responsible for everything in the country”**⁴⁶.

And in this sense, there exists a “weak spot” for the resource of public trust in the state and the authorities, since the **legitimacy of any government is determined primarily by how much the public rhetoric of its representatives does not diverge from what is being actually done.**

The fact is that some representatives of the power vertical, when implementing a number of decisions visible to the general public (through the media, social networks, personal experience), contradict Russia’s goals in the global conflict with the West and thus discredit themselves, demonstrating their unwillingness to conform to the contours of a new Social Contract being formed in the country. And, no less important, they discredit the entire system of public administration, showing that they are simply “out of place”, and often it is an important place that requires quick and specific management decisions to implement the tasks set by the President.

Concrete examples of managerial decisions and actions of officials, which sometimes represent **“incredibly dangerous duality”**, sometimes purposeful **“destructive work”**, and sometimes are **“the pinnacle of cynicism and inhumanity”** and thus **“discredit the authorities”**, **“undermine trust in the**

state”, create conditions for “internal protest in society”, are presented in *Insert 4*.

“In modern Russia, the part of the elite that was historically formed as a class of preferential trade and a “big grab” **remains such to this day and is not motivated for pro-national changes.**

A significant part of Russian business representatives seek to leave Russia, restructure their companies taking into account the sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, save or withdraw their assets abroad. **A significant part of the bureaucracy is also paralyzed**⁴⁷.

For example, in his program “Besogon”, the film director Nikita Mikhalkov, who holds an active pro-governmental position, regularly raises the question of contradictory and ambiguous statements by Dmitry Peskov, Spokesperson for the RF President (in particular, about Russians who left the country), as well as about the “destructive work ... the underlying provocative imposition of the idea of dismemberment of Russia”, which is conducted by the Yeltsin Center. Over the past 17 episodes (starting with the emergency issue of March 5, 2022, which became the first one after the start of the SMO) Mikhalkov has quoted Peskov five times⁴⁸ and spoke about the activities of the Yeltsin Center three times⁴⁹; but so far nothing has changed in real life.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Putin’s inauguration ceremony as President of Russia on May 7, 2000. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21410>

⁴⁷ Lepekhin V. The government, the elite and the people. From mobilization to modernization. Available at: <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1676868480>

⁴⁸ Episodes:

1. “The Titanic effect” (April 15, 2022);
2. “Is there a noble rage?” (April 29, 2022);
3. “Davos is still there” (June 4, 2022);
4. “Howling among strangers” (November 11, 2022);
5. “The wives of the Marquis of Carabas” (February 10, 2023).

⁴⁹ Episodes:

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

Insert 4

Some examples of managerial decisions and actions of elites that contradict the President’s policy and the main agenda of public opinion after the beginning of the SMO

<p>1. The episode of “Besogon” aired on February 10, 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “Again, we don’t know who should be held accountable. This bifurcation in society is incredibly dangerous. On the one hand, regarding the cultural figures, celebrities, etc., who have fled Russia, this is what State Duma officials say: “Most of the departed celebrities regarded Russia as a fodder base, rather than a Homeland. So it is necessary to methodically cut off their fodder sources” (E. Yampolskaya, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Culture). On the other hand, here is an opinion of Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov: “They are all our citizens, all equally. And everyone could have different reasons for leaving. But those who have not chosen the path of a truly hostile attitude toward our country are our citizens, and we need to fight for them”. ✓ “How ready are we to resist all this, if we cannot even prevent the infamous Yeltsin Center from spreading its destructive influence. We’ve been talking about this for many years; take, for example, a terrible cartoon in which they show our children that everything is mediocre, everything is bloody, everything is false in Russia, except for the time when the first president of Russia Boris Yeltsin appeared... Not only we, but in general, our society expresses this internal protest that the Yeltsin Center spreads Russophobia and calls for the dismemberment of our country”. 	<p>2. “Investigators of the central criminal investigations directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Moscow have completed a preliminary investigation of the criminal case against former Deputy Minister of Education of the Russian Federation M. Rakova, Rector of the Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences S. Zuev, as well as former employees of the Foundation for New Forms of Education Development E. Zak, M. Inkin and others. They are accused of committing five episodes of fraud on a particularly large scale. During the investigation, evidence was collected confirming the guilt of the defendants in the criminal acts. At the same time, information appeared about the employment of M. Rakova in the Agency for Strategic Initiatives (ASI), a structure created by the Government of the Russian Federation. ASI is headed by S. Chupshева, member of the Presidium of the Presidential Council for Strategic Development and National Projects, D. Peskov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on Digital and Technological Development, and A. Vaino, son of the head of the Presidential Administration of Russia. Allegedly, Ms Rakova was officially accepted as an adviser to the Director General of ASI on December 13 last year, the monthly salary is said to be three times the salary of a State Duma deputy”.</p> <p><u>Kirill Kabanov</u>, Member of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, Chairman of the National Anti-Corruption Committee: “The decision to appoint ex-Deputy Minister of Education M. Rakova to the position of adviser to the director of ASI after accusations of systemic multi-million dollar embezzlement of budget funds as part of the group is not just shameful. One such decision discredits the authorities, people have a stable feeling that the fight against corruption in Russia has collapsed, as pro-Western experts constantly broadcast. And when they also pay her a salary in the amount received by 10 fighters in the zone of the SMO, it goes beyond all imaginable limits...”</p>
--	--

Aleksey Leonkov, editor of the *Arsenal otechestva* magazine: *“ASI managers have at least level 2 access to state secrets. As, indeed, do their advisers. By definition, Marina Rakova, the girl under investigation, cannot have it. There is no way to explain this to anyone from the deep state. There exists such term as “high treason”⁵⁰.*

N. Mikhalkov: *“Doesn't such a decision taken by ASI undermine trust in the state, in the authorities? Especially if we know that the Supervisory Board of this organization is headed by the President of Russia. But the most piquant thing is that V. Mau, rector of the RANEPa under the President of the Russian Federation, was involved in the case of Ms. Rakova, that is, it is one of the leading universities that trains personnel for the management of our country”⁵¹.*

3. *“The investigators from Moscow have suppressed the criminal activities of a transnational group, which, according to preliminary data alone, has taken over 1 trillion rubles abroad. In addition to Russian citizens, the group also included citizens of Ukraine... Using the “Bank-Client” keys of fictitious companies, the participants carried out illegal financial turnover directly on the territory of Ukraine and Cyprus...*

The criminals had been operating for about ten years, and the survivability of their illegal business, unfortunately, was explained quite simply: by the presence of patrons among law enforcement officers, the Federal Tax Service and employees of the banking sector. The group had a highly structured, organized hierarchical structure, highly technical support, a high degree of secrecy. One of the patrons of the group was Colonel Dmitry Zakharchenko (he was sentenced to 16 years of strict regime for corruption crimes, his assets, estimated at 10 billion rubles, were confiscated)...

In total, several hundred people participated in the shadow business, the role of each was clearly regulated... In total, the group controlled more than one and a half thousand legal entities and entrepreneurs. The attackers also had their own bank — “Novoye Vremya”. Using it and a number of criminal schemes, the defendants, according to the estimates of the investigation, cashed out or brought abroad more than 1 trillion rubles, having received criminal income in the amount of 32 billion rubles... to date, about 3 billion rubles have been returned to the budget of the Russian Federation”⁵².

4. *At the beginning of January 2023, a video showing M. Vasiliev, deputy of the Kursk Regional Duma, on vacation in Mexico appeared on the Internet. Secretary of the General Council of United Russia A. Turchak called this video inappropriate against the background of how “the whole country is working for the needs of the front, helping the families of mobilized and deceased fighters”, and “residents of the border Kursk Oblast are being shelled” S. Turchak noted: “It is pure cynicism and inhumanity. No Homeland, no flag. No honor, no dignity. No brains”⁵³. On January 24, 2023, M. Vasiliev resigned as deputy chairman of the regional parliament committee on budget, taxes and economic development.*

⁵⁰ Ivanov A. Ms Rakova, accused of embezzling 50 million from the budget, is employed by the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/rakova_obvinyaemaya_v_hishemii_50_millionov_trudoustroilas_v_agentstvo_strategicheskikh_initiativ

⁵¹ Mikhalkov N. “Besogon TV”. Episode 217 “The wives of the Marquis of Carabas” (February 10, 2023). Available at: <https://besogontv.ru/videos/zhyeny-markiza-karabasa/>

⁵² Dmitry Zakharchenko opened a “Portal” for the investigation. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5772247>

⁵³ What is the scandal with the Kursk deputy who recorded congratulations from Mexico? Available at: https://aif.ru/politics/world/chto_zh_s_kandal_s_kurskim_deputatom_zapisavshim_pozdravlenie_iz_meksiki

A similar story happened with the deputy of the Legislative Assembly of the Vologda Oblast D. Dolzhenko, who on January 6 posted a video of his vacation in Dubai. As the governor of the Vologda Oblast O. Kuvshinnikov noted, “sometimes the permissiveness of officials and people’s deputies crosses all boundaries... When fellow countrymen risk their lives and defend the interests of our country with weapons in their hands, someone considers it permissible for themselves, as before, to carelessly go on vacation to luxury resorts and post the videos on the social media... **There is a social demand for justice. It is a hundred times tougher when it comes to officials and deputies than bloggers and other celebrities. It is surprising that during the years of being a deputy Mr Dolzhenko did not understand this. In such difficult conditions, it is simply stupid and unethical to continue to engage in posturing and self-admiration**”⁵⁴.

Dolzhenko was removed from the post of deputy chairman of the Committee on Economic Policy and Property of the Vologda Oblast Legislative Assembly, from the post of regional coordinator of the Green Economy party project, and also excluded from the party’s supporters by the decision of the Presidium of the General Council of United Russia”.

5. “At the end of 2022, Vladimir Putin signed a law banning the propaganda of perversions. On January 10, the information emerged about the first case initiated under a new article on LGBT propaganda against the scandalous publishing house Popcorn Books, which released the infamous pedophile novel “Leto v pionerskom galstuke” (Summer in a Pioneer Tie), its sequel “O chem molchit lastochka” (What the Swallow Is Silent About) and many other perverse “masterpieces” ...

The owner of Popcorn Books, Denis Kotov (President of ANO “Sotvoreniye”, co-owner of the united retail chain “Chitay-gorod – Bukvoed”) ... joined the updated Public Council under the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. The corresponding order was signed by the Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova... “it turns out that the person whose efforts corrupt the Russian youth, the person who fulfills the ideological narratives of our geopolitical opponent, will “advise” the Ministry of Culture how the state should adjust humanitarian policy. Isn’t this ironic?”

Nina Ostanina, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Family, Women and Children, in an interview with NEWS.ru. expressed her opinion as follows: **“The problem lies precisely in the fact that public councils are created behind the scenes, without the involvement of society. But the council is called public because it must represent the interests of society. I would be interested to know which society’s interests are represented by the publisher Denis Kotov. I am also interested to know the criteria for granting membership in the Public Council under the Ministry of Culture”,** Writer, ex-chairman of the Public Council under the Ministry of Culture Yuri Polyakov believes that **“the only way to fix the situation is a personnel revolution in the Ministry of Culture. Without permutations, nothing will change”**⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ The Vologda Oblast Governor reacted to the scandal that involved Denis Dolzhenko, deputy of the Vologda Oblast Legislative Assembly. Available at: <https://vologdaregion.ru/news/2023/1/10/gubernator-vologodskoy-oblasti-otreagiroval-na-skandal-s-deputatom-zso-denisom-dolzhenko>

⁵⁵ Ivanov A. The person involved in the case of LGBT propaganda joined the Council of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/figurant_dela_ob_lgbt-propagande_voshyol_v_sovet_ministerstva_kul_turi_rf

Such facts suggest that many officials still hope that “it will be possible to return everything as it was, at least in some form ... Such sentiments exist both in the business elite and among officials (especially the corrupt rent beneficiaries)”⁵⁶. But, as experts note, “in order to be adequate to the modern world and, most importantly, to serve Russia, we must try to make a **moral choice** even in the current difficult circumstances... **the only way to live a decent life is to live in accordance with the principles of social justice**”⁵⁷.

Social justice is the cornerstone that unites Russian society. The majority of citizens have been experiencing the need for social justice for many years. Over the past seven years (from 2015 to 2022), the share of people who consider modern Russian society unjust has increased by 9 percentage points (from 51 to 60%), and it is observed in most (13 out of 14) socio-demographic groups (*Insert 5; Tab. 2*).

It is for a reason that justice (in fact, as an indicator of the **effectiveness of public admini-**

stration) was included in the list of traditional Russian values, which **were legislated** by the RF President in November 2022 and which are “the basis of Russian society”, “moral guidelines that form the worldview of Russian citizens”⁵⁸. But making this principle dominant among officials at all levels of government is a difficult task, designed for a long-term perspective. And in order to address this task, first of all it is necessary to achieve victory in the SMO.

“Traditional values include life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, **justice**, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, unity of peoples Russia”⁵⁹.

Table 2. Categories of population groups in which the sense of injustice of society increased for the period from 2015 to 2022, %*

Categories of population groups	Population groups
Categories in which the sense of injustice of society has increased by 20% or more	1. Men 2. Persons under the age of 30 3. People with secondary and incomplete secondary education 4. 20% of the least well-off 5. Residents of districts
Categories in which the sense of injustice of society has increased by 11-19%	1. Women 2. Persons aged 30–55 3. People with secondary vocational education 4. 60% of the middle-income people
Categories in which the sense of injustice of society has increased by 10% and less	1. Persons over 55 years of age 2. People with higher and incomplete higher education 3. 20% of the most affluent 4. Residents of Vologda
Total: 13 population groups	
* Detailed data are provided in <i>Insert 5</i> .	

⁵⁶ Chadaev A. Fear of victory and hope of defeat. On the sentiments of a significant part of the Russian elite. Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/experts/strah-pobedy-i-nadezhda-na-porazhenie_710246

⁵⁷ Fursov A. How to survive in the 21st century. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23754>

⁵⁸ Presidential Decree 809, “On approval of the foundations of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”, dated November 9, 2022.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

Insert 5

Do you think modern Russian society as a whole is just or unjust?*
(answer option: “sooner unjust”; VoIRC RAS data, % of respondents)

Population group	Average annual data							Dynamics (+/-), 2022 to...			
	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2021 p.p.	%	2015 p.p.	%
Sex											
Men	49.4	59.2	59.7	59.9	59.9	62.3	60.2	-2	-3	+11	+22
Women	52.3	55.8	61.6	58.4	56.5	58.5	59.7	+1	+2	+7	+14
Age											
Under 30	43.8	53.5	55.5	57.6	55.7	59.6	59.9	0	+1	+16	+37
30–55	51.2	57.9	62.2	59.7	59.8	61.2	60.6	-1	-1	+9	+18
Over 55	55.0	58.7	61.2	59.0	56.7	59.3	59.1	0	0	+4	+7
Education											
Secondary and incomplete secondary	45.1	52.9	63.7	58.9	60.3	61.3	62.9	+2	+3	+18	+39
Secondary vocational	51.0	57.8	58.5	57.0	53.8	58.1	57.1	-1	-2	+6	+12
Higher and incomplete higher	56.7	61.9	60.5	62.0	61.0	62.1	60.0	-2	-3	+3	+6
Income group											
Bottom 20%	42.1	47.1	56.5	53.6	52.2	51.0	60.6	+10	+19	+19	+44
Middle 60%	54.8	59.1	62.5	62.2	57.9	63.5	60.7	-3	-4	+6	+11
Top 20%	53.3	63.5	58.4	57.4	61.3	61.4	54.1	-7	-12	+1	+2
Territory											
Vologda	56.5	64.8	64.5	64.3	62.8	64.4	62.2	-2	-3	+6	+10
Cherepovets	68.5	68.9	73.0	70.8	69.6	69.0	67.4	-2	-2	-1	-2
Districts	37.7	46.4	51.4	49.3	48.4	52.7	54.3	+2	+3	+16	+44
Oblast	51.0	57.3	60.7	59.1	58.0	60.2	59.9	0	0	+9	+17
Dynamics of the number of positive and negative changes (in 14 groups), %								8 / 5		1 / 13	
*The question has been asked since 2015. In 2017, the question was not asked.											

Over the period from 2015 to 2022, in all major socio-demographic groups (with the exception of residents of Cherepovets), the proportion of people who believe that modern Russian society is unjust has increased. Especially among those who, according to self-estimates of income, belong to the category of bottom 20% (by 44%; or by 19 p.p., from 42 to 61%); people with secondary and incomplete secondary education (by 39%; or by 18 p.p., from 45 to 63%); residents of districts (by 44%; or by 16 p.p., from 38 to 54%); as well as persons under the age of 30 (by 37%; or by 16 p.p., from 44 to 60%).

Thus, according to the data presented in *Insert 5*, since 2015 the proportion of people who consider modern Russian society unjust has been increasing in almost all major segments, **and if society does not see justice from the state, more precisely, it sees that “justice is not for everyone”, then the legitimacy (trust) of the authorities is under threat.**

“We proclaim that we are fighting for justice, but our society lacks it so much that the hair stands on end. We talk about honesty and purity, and our heroes, our people, our church, our history, our identity really embody honesty and purity, but our ruling class does not meet these criteria in any way...

We see a president who fights almost alone, there is a group of people who support him politically, there are people who are ready to rise up and wake up to save Russia. But a huge suffocating wave of inertia does not allow us to recover”⁶⁰.

Therefore, a protective mechanism should be laid down in a new Social Contract, which protects the statehood as much as possible from managerial personnel who put their personal interests above the interests of national security and national development. **In order not to lose the resource of public trust, it is necessary to make people clearly aware of the direction in which we are moving and the state we are building.** And this cannot be done without the appropriate focus of managerial personnel. According to experts, **“the task of modernizing the personnel policy is now super-urgent”⁶¹.**

We cannot but agree with such a statement and we are aware of the urgency of the task of the “personnel revolution from above”: “... we need not only a strong, powerful, modern army... **we need a completely different state**”⁶². A state in which all elements of the ruling hierarchy are aimed at the realization of national interests and in which the actual deeds of officials do not diverge from the tasks formulated by the President.

“...now the main task is how to implement personnel changes, that is, how to push the elite clans away from power and systematically replace incompetent officials or agents of Western influence with competent and patriotic professionals... The existing clan elite in Russia is not voluntarily transformable, evolutionarily transformable... the issues of inefficiency of the society’s management system can be peacefully resolved by a **personnel revolution from above (i.e. a new personnel policy) followed by political reform...**

If Putin wants to and will act wisely and cunningly, decisively and consistently, then he may well rein in all the oligarchic clans without demolishing the entire power system”⁶³.

It is unacceptable to continue “fooling around” even in peacetime, because it slows down the process of national development and aggravates the internal situation in the country. But in today’s conditions, when the “war is no longer hybrid, but almost real”⁶⁴, this is simply unacceptable, because it poses a threat to the very existence of Russia.

⁶⁰ Dugin A. We have approached the year 2023 balancing on the brink of an abyss. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23744>

⁶¹ Papayani F. Transformation of the elites. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23813>

⁶² Dugin A. We have approached the year 2023 balancing on the brink of an abyss. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23744>

⁶³ Papayani F. Transformation of the elites. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23813>

⁶⁴ Talks with South Africa’s Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20230123/rossiya-1846778090.html>

According to experts, **“it is impossible to fight by half... When we fight by half and not completely, then we lose.** We actually win only the patriotic wars when the whole people are engaged, the whole state is engaged, when everything is for the front, everything is for victory, when there is not a single element in the state, in society, that is not included in the system of struggle for victory”⁶⁵. **Only under these conditions can victory be won. And only after the victory will it be possible to talk about the real formation of a new Social Contract in Russia.**

Perhaps we can agree with one of the expert opinions expressed by V.A. Lepekhin, Russian sociologist, political scientist, director of the Institute for the Study of Development Problems of

the Eurasian Economic Union; he gave a concise assessment of the prevailing social sentiments in society: “What is the way out? And what do we see as guarantees of Russia’s victory in another clash with the West and serious systemic problems within the country?.. If we try to build an algorithm for the way out, it should look like this: **“From the mobilization of elites to economic modernization, and further on to a solidary state”... The head of state in modern Russia can be the subject of positive changes. Actually, this is exactly what the majority of the country’s citizens expect from the President of Russia: they expect wise and effective decisions. But whether there will be a harsh purge of the elites, a change in the economic model, and when this will happen, we do not know yet**”⁶⁶.

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)

⁶⁵ Dugin A. We have approached the year 2023 balancing on the brink of an abyss. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23744>

⁶⁶ Lepekhin V. The government, the elite and the people. From mobilization to modernization. Available at: <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1676868480>