

FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

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One Year Left before the Fourth Presidential Term



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Vladimir Putin has to rule the country during the difficult and volatile times characterized by the turbulence of political processes, transformation of cultural and moral values, economic crises, military conflicts, and spread of international terrorism. When Vladimir Putin became president in 2000, Russia was actually on the verge of extinction, being torn by the internal policy of the liberal democrats and oligarchs of the 1990s, facing mass impoverishment of the population, a lack of understanding of the vector of spiritual development after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Chechen

war and the regular terrorist attacks that took place even in the capital itself.

Having assumed office as President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin managed to overcome the socio-economic consequences of the reforms of the 1990s, to restore, and then significantly improve the financial situation of the overwhelming majority of Russian citizens, to restore Russia's position in the international political arena. It was clearly contrary to the wishes of those forces that in the late 1980s facilitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. After Vladimir Putin's Munich speech in 2007,

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the globalizers made at least three attempts to exclude Russia from the participants of geopolitical competition: in August 2008 (attempt of Georgia's integration into NATO, which entailed an armed conflict in southern Ossetia), in February 2012 (the rally on Bolotnaya Square) and March 2014 (an attempt to draw Russia into a war with Ukraine). Each of these attempts, and it is largely thanks to the policy of the President of Russia, ended in failure for the West and Russia "extended its possibilities in the geopolitical confrontation; its impact on global processes was increasing, and, each time, Russia failed to implement to the fullest extent its capabilities and new potential in its domestic development"¹.

In the end, during 17 years of his presidency, Putin not only managed to restore Russia's status as a full-fledged participant in a geopolitical competition but to place it in the center of the mainstream moral values that only in the mid-2010s gradually began to dominate the public consciousness of ordinary people in the United States and Europe, and after that, to transform the ruling elite and the entire political system of leading world powers.

In this sense the year 2016 provides a telling example, when many countries held the most important referendums and began a new political cycle. The United Kingdom's prospective withdrawal from the European Union, Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election in the United States,

¹ Starikov N.V. Chto delat' patriotam [What the patriots have to do]. *Ofitsial'nyi blog N. Starikova* [N. Starikov's official blog]. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/75257>

The development of socio-political and economic processes in Europe and in the world, in general, makes the issue concerning the crisis of liberal values and multiculturalism in Europe critically important².

presidential election in Bulgaria, Moldova, Italy, election campaign in France – all these events demonstrate the fact that liberal-democratic values (multiculturalism, tolerance, globalization, etc.) give way to the values of national sovereignty, social justice and national interests, which Vladimir Putin protected from the beginning of his presidential activity and not only in public speeches on international platforms (the Munich Speech of 2007, the Valdai Speech of 2013, Address to the heads of states at the 70th Anniversary Session of the UN General Assembly in 2015, etc.), but also in the struggle with the fused interests of the oligarchs and the representatives of the corrupt liberal democratic bureaucracy at all the levels of the power vertical.

By the mid-2010s, the international community understood what the Russian President had openly warned it about 10 years before in the Munich Speech about the threats and the hopelessness of a unipolar world order and the dangers of trampling the international law. This fact forced Americans and Europeans to take a new look at Russia and its president.

² About the crisis of liberal values and multiculturalism in Europe. International Project of the Public Association "For human rights". Available at: <http://thedecline.info/ru/pre2>

Vladimir Putin: “The decisions debated within the UN are either taken in the form of resolutions or not. As diplomats say, they either pass or they don’t. Any action taken by circumventing this procedure is illegitimate and constitutes a violation of the UN Charter and contemporary international law... Of course, the world changes, and the UN should also undergo natural transformation. Russia is ready to work together with its partners to develop the UN further on the basis of a broad consensus, but we consider any attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the United Nations as extremely dangerous. They may result in the collapse of the entire architecture of international relations”³.

However⁴, today, a year before the next presidential election in our country and, apparently, a year before Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term, experts say that **“global liberal financial forces are making a fourth attempt to rein in and subjugate Russia”**⁴. This time they use a mechanism that was “tested” at the collapse of the Soviet Union – the opposition between patriotic and liberal-democratic forces in the system of public administration.

The struggle of the patriots and the liberals in the ruling elite of Russia has quite deep

³ Stenogramma vystupleniya V.V. Putina na plenarnom zasedanii yubileinoi, 70-i sessii General’noi Assamblei OON v N’yu-Iorke 28 sentyabrya 2015 g. [Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s Speech at the Plenary Meeting of the 70th Session of The UN General Assembly in New York on September 28, 2015]. *Ofitsial’nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official Website of the RF President]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>

⁴ Starikov N.V. Chto delat’ patriotam [What the patriots have to do]. *Ofitsial’nyi blog N. Starikova* [N. Starikov’s official blog]. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/75257>

historical roots. In fact, it is the choice of one of the two alternative variants of Russia’s development: the “Eastern” one, in which power prevails over property, and the “Western” one, when the system of public administration is subject to the laws of business and profit. Russia has always developed via the “Eastern” path, while the **general idea of patriotism was systemic, it “permeated” not only the government sector, but all the social strata of Russian society.**

V.I. Karpets: “The order of things in Russia until 1762, when the “Decree on the freedom of the nobility” issued by Catherine II was signed, was as follows: there was the immutable rule of “villeinage”: the farmer was “villein to the land” of the aristocrat only up until the latter was “villein” to the Sovereign in his service. V. O. Klyuchevsky called it a “taxed state”... Spiritual and ideological “signs and pillows” of old Russia and the Soviet Union changed, but the structure remained almost the same. Asceticism, self-denial and selflessness were equally required in both cases”⁵.

In the Soviet period, the party nomenclature was guided by the principles of patriotism and national interests largely because of fear of political repression, but after the death of Stalin the discipline and tension characteristic of the Stalin era, gradually became the thing of the past. Having felt freedom and impunity, individual

⁵ Karpets V.I. Istoki i korni “pyatoi kolonny” [Origins and roots of the “fifth column”]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2017, February 02. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/istoki_i_korni_pyatoj_kolonni

N.V. Starikov: “The Government is engaged in direct sabotage of Presidential orders:

- ✓ The President demands a moratorium on the growth of tariffs of monopolies – the Government introduces the so-called “social norms”, which are a disguised form of increasing tariffs.

- ✓ The President speaks about the solution to the demographic problem – the Government is trying to abolish the maternity capital.

- ✓ The President sets a task to create 25 million new jobs by 2020 – the Government speaks about abandoning employment at any cost and is prepared to the fact that unemployment will rise.

- ✓ The Government requires citizens to transfer their pension accumulations to private pension funds – the President does not recommend doing that.

- ✓ The President issues an order to create a national payment system – the Government says that it is impossible to abandon foreign payment systems.

And these are just some facts of direct sabotage of Presidential orders by the Government. In reality, there are much more such facts... Russia needs a working Government that would consist of patriots. Not partially and fragmentarily, as it is today, but entirely. The liberals in power are simply dangerous for Russia”⁶.

members of the ruling elites gradually began to lift the “iron curtain”, guided by their private interests in close conjunction with the values of the Western world and consumer society. The apotheosis of the liberalization of the elites was observed in 1991, when the Soviet nomenclature actually completely stopped protecting socialism and was engaged in private appropriation and division of what was considered “public” property, including the USSR territory.

This continued throughout the 1990s, until in 1999, Vladimir Putin was appointed Chairman of the Russian Government and started to create a block that would oppose the liberal elite, advancing officers from FSB and other security services to positions in the governmental and economic structures. Throughout all presidential terms of Vladimir Putin there began a confrontation with varying success between security forces and representatives of the governmental liberal clan that consisted mainly of the heirs of the Communist Party and the liberal intelligentsia. Largely due to the fact that the main threats to the country during Vladimir Putin’s first three presidential terms were focused on the international arena, his attention was focused on foreign policy matters. In addition, strategic foresight has not allowed Vladimir Putin to embark on a radical rupture of relations with the liberal elite because it had the support of “the collective West”.

The issues of domestic economic development were a priority for the Dmitri Medvedev Government, the composition of which has remained practically unchanged. Despite the fact that new people joined his

⁶ Starikov N.V. Kto-to dolzhen uiti: libo pravitel'stvo, libo narod [Someone has to go away, either the government or the people]. *Ofitsial'nyi blog N. Starikova ot 02.06.2014* [N. Starikov's official blog, June 02, 2014]. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/40617>

economic bloc from time to time, the essence of the interests they lobbied remained the same and this was repeatedly expressed by the experts such as S.Yu. Glazyev, S.S. Gubanov, Yu.Yu. Boldyrev, A.A. Prokhanov, and others.

The priority of private interests, the fusion of the oligarchic forces and the bureaucracy or, simply, **the abuse of official position for personal gain** became the characteristic features of the Medvedev Government. In fact, in the 21st century the Medvedev Government continued the policy of Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and other members of the liberal elite of the 1980s–1990s, which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Having existed and flourished more than a quarter century at the top of the political Olympus, these characteristics of the liberal block of the Government “rooted” deep throughout the whole power vertical. This became all the more pronounced when the comprehensive work to identify corrupt officials began – first at the local level (arrests of “high-handed” governors, who believed in the impunity of their actions, lost their sense of professional responsibility for the management of the region and the personal moral responsibility toward the people⁷) and then in the Government itself (arrest of the Minister of Economic Development Alexei Ulyukayev), which took the fight against corruption to a new level, significantly reducing the range of “untouchables”.

⁷ Some heads of regions, against whom criminal proceedings were instituted: M. Mashkovtsev (Kamchatka, 2003), A. Barinov (Nenets Autonomous Okrug, 2007), A. Tishanin (Irkutsk Oblast, 2008), L. Korotkov (Amur Oblast, 2010), V. Dudka (Tula Oblast, 2011), V. Yurchenko (Novosibirsk Oblast, 2014), A. Khoroshavin (Sakhalin, 2015), N. Denin (Bryansk Oblast, 2015), V. Gaizer (Komi, 2015). N. Belykh (Kirov Oblast, 2016).

As experts noted, the arrest of a federal minister “is an unprecedented occasion. Such single, not mass, arrests helping manage the economy. As a matter of fact, the budget has become much poorer. And high-profile criminal cases are a good way to show the officials that it is simply impossible to spend public money as it was earlier”⁸.

The “closed” (especially from society) nature of decisions made became another feature of the Medvedev Government; as a result, some experts talk about a certain “super-elite”⁹ that makes all decisions “on the sidelines” of government offices, and personnel changes are not made according to the criterion of competence of newcomers, but rather result from the victories of certain groups in the struggle for power “behind the scenes”.

After the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation, in which United Russia got a constitutional majority in Parliament, there emerged a new political tandem “Medvedev–Volodin” that strengthened the position of the liberals in the Government. A concrete result of the work of this tandem can be seen in the new budget of Russia, according to which in 2017:

✓ funding for inpatient care will be reduced (in 2.5 times adjusted for inflation compared to 2012);

✓ federal spending on preschool education will be reduced (by 47.7% compared to 2016);

⁸ Solovei V.D. Zapad vernet Ukrainu v orbitu Rossii, a k vesne zhdite novykh reform [The West will return Ukraine in Russia’s orbit, and in the spring you shall expect new reforms]. *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, 2016, December 28. Available at: <http://www.vologda.kp.ru/daily/26625/3643134/>

⁹ Arbitrazh Putina [The arbitration of Putin]. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2016, November 17. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2016-11-17/2_6861_red.html

✓ the share of expenditures on housing and utilities will be reduced (from 2.6% in 2011 to 0.4% in 2017).

In addition, the Government submitted and the State Duma supported the bill to increase the excise tax on gasoline and diesel fuel, and the law of the city congestion charge. The Medvedev Government has increased the housing and utilities tariffs (by 4–6%) and refused to increase the minimum wage from January 01, 2017; however, the State Duma rejected the bill that prohibits officials from having property abroad and the bill that abolishes the Unified State Exam as a final exam in school and entrance exam to universities.

The ineffectiveness of the economic policy of the liberal bloc of the Medvedev Government creates a double threat to Russia's national security.

✓ The first threat was voiced by the President himself in one of his articles: "Today Russia depends on the global economy, it is integrated in it to a great extent – more than most other countries... It is untenable of Russia to have an economy that does not guarantee either its stability, or sovereignty, or worthy welfare. We need a new economy with competitive industry and infrastructure, with a developed services sector, with effective agriculture. The economy that is built on a modern technological basis. We need to establish an effective mechanism for economic renewal, to find and attract the necessary vast material and human resources"¹⁰.

¹⁰ Putin V.V. O nashikh ekonomicheskikh zadachakh [On our Economic Tasks]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [The Russian Newspaper], 2012, January 30. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2012/01/30/putin-ekonomika.html>

V.L. Sheinis: "Looking at the activities of the Government, analyzing its proposals and its work, we cannot but note that the lion's share of the President's direct orders remain unfulfilled. The May decrees of Vladimir Putin will soon turn five years old, and they still have not been executed. At the recent congress of the All-Russia People's Front it was said that only 16% of the may decrees were fully implemented, the others – either partially implemented or not implemented at all"¹¹.

With the escalation of geopolitical competition, the change of the old economic model is becoming an increasingly urgent task. Experts note that "it is naive to expect that the economy will develop if it is based on gas and other commodity exports, at a time when industrialized countries are moving toward a new, digital and technetronic industrialization, they are shifting from burning hydrocarbons to post-oil energy"¹².

✓ The second threat stems from the fact that in terms of inefficient economic policy Russian society is plunging deeper and deeper in its "injured" condition. According to the results of sociological research, the population negatively assesses its current financial situation and sees no prospects for

¹¹ Sheinis V.L. Istoricheskii tranzit: rossiiskaya drama [Historical transit: Russian drama]. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2017, January 27. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2017-01-27/5_6914_drama.html

¹² Gubanov S.S. Al'ternativy suverenizatsii sobstvennosti net, krome krakha Rossii [There is no alternative to the sovereignization of ownership, except the collapse of Russia]. *Delovaya elektronnyaya gazeta «Biznes Online»* [Business Online newspaper], 2016, April 19. Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/308196>

Insert 1. Share of people who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” (% of the number of respondents)

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	Dynamics (+/-), 2016 to		
							2015	2011	2007
<i>Sex</i>									
Men	39.8	42.8	45.1	48.9	49.5	47.9	-2	+5	+8
Women	44.6	45.4	48.3	49.2	51.7	49.8	-2	+4	+5
<i>Age</i>									
Under 30	32.4	39.2	42.8	44.6	47.7	42.7	-5	+4	+10
30-55	40.0	43.1	46.3	48.6	51.3	49.4	-2	+6	+9
Over 55	55.5	50.2	50.8	52.7	51.7	52.1	0	+2	-3
<i>Education</i>									
Secondary and incomplete secondary	52.6	52.5	55.7	58.0	54.6	55.5	+1	+3	+3
Secondary vocational	39.9	46.7	48.3	48.0	50.1	47.6	-3	+1	+8
Higher and incomplete higher	33.1	33.3	36.1	40.0	47.3	42.8	-5	+10	+10
<i>Income groups</i>									
20% of the poorest people	64.5	60.3	70.3	70.1	65.8	70.5	+5	+10	+6
60% of the people with median income	45.0	47.9	48.5	50.9	53.0	50.3	-3	+2	+5
20% of the most prosperous people	15.9	21.9	19.7	22.2	32.6	28.7	-4	+7	+13
<i>Territories</i>									
Vologda	32.3	44.8	49.3	50.4	53.9	46.5	-7	+2	+14
Cherepovets	31.4	35.0	34.7	39.8	44.5	47.2	+3	+12	+16
Districts	52.5	48.7	52.1	53.4	52.3	51.3	-1	+3	-1
Average in the Vologda Oblast	42.5	44.2	46.9	49.1	50.7	49.0	-2	+5	+7
<i>The total number of positive and negative changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast as a whole</i>							+2 / -6	+11 / 0	+13 / -1

* Question wording: “Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?”. Response options – “the rich”, “with middle income”, “the poor”, “the extremely poor”.

In order to calculate the index of social identity, the share of answers “the rich” is multiplied by 200, “with middle-income” – by 150, “the poor” – by 50, “I find it difficult to answer” – by 100. The sum of these products is divided by 100. Hereinafter, the sampling error does not exceed 2%, thus the change of +/- 2 percentage points was taken as insignificant.

For the period from 2007 to 2016, the proportion of people who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” increased by 6 p.p. (from 43 to 49%). Negative changes were observed in 12 out of the 14 socio-demographic categories. **In this case, none of the major social strata showed significant positive changes in the past 10 years.**

Moreover, the group of those who consider themselves to be “poor and extremely poor” now more often includes representatives of those groups that cannot be described as socially vulnerable: people of young and middle age (10 p.p.), people with high incomes (13 p.p.), urban residents (14–16 p.p.).

In 2016 in 10 out of the 14 groups almost every second person (46–55%) considered himself/herself to be “poor and extremely poor”. The figure is 70% among the 20% of the least wealthy layers of the population.

Insert 2. Dynamics of the consumer sentiment index, points*

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	Dynamics (+/-), 2016 to		
							2015	2011	2007
<i>Sex</i>									
Men	107.8	90.3	91.0	87.6	76.8	78.7	+2	-12	-29
Women	104.4	89.1	89.8	87.6	77.3	76.9	0	-12	-28
<i>Age</i>									
Under 30	115.2	95.0	94.5	93.0	82.9	83.7	+1	-11	-32
30-55	107.1	89.1	91.4	87.5	75.2	76.8	+2	-12	-30
Over 55	95.7	86.0	85.6	84.2	76.0	75.4	-1	-11	-20
<i>Education</i>									
Secondary and incomplete secondary	100.2	85.6	83.4	80.5	73.6	74.7	+1	-11	-26
Secondary vocational	105.9	87.9	88.7	86.9	76.9	78.4	+2	-10	-28
Higher and incomplete higher	113.1	95.6	99.2	96.3	81.1	80.2	-1	-15	-33
<i>Income groups</i>									
20% of the poorest people	88.2	74.8	71.2	69.8	62.5	64.8	+2	-10	-23
60% of the people with median income	105.5	89.0	90.8	87.0	77.0	76.7	0	-12	-29
20% of the most prosperous people	124.7	105.3	108.9	107.5	91.0	91.5	+1	-14	-33
<i>Territories</i>									
Vologda	104.2	90.9	92.3	90.8	75.9	77.1	+1	-14	-27
Cherepovets	114.9	98.9	97.7	95.3	83.3	78.4	-5	-20	-36
Districts	102.3	84.4	85.3	81.7	74.2	77.5	+3	-7	-25
Average in the Vologda Oblast	105.9	89.6	90.3	87.6	77.1	77.4	0	-12	-29
The total number of positive and negative changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast as a whole							+1 / -1	0 / -15	0 / -15

* The consumer sentiment index is calculated based on the answers to the questions:

1. How do you assess your family's financial situation: is it better or worse than it was a year ago? (possible answers: "it is better", "it is worse").
2. If we talk about major purchases for your home, then, generally speaking, what do you think of the present: is it a good or bad time to buy most of these goods? (possible answers: "good", "bad").
3. What do you think about your financial situation in a year: will it be better, worse or about the same as now? (possible answers: "It will be better", "It will be worse", "It will be the same as it is now").
4. Do you think the following 12 months will be a good time or a bad time or anything else for the economy? (possible answers: "good", "bad").
5. If we talk about the next five years, then, in your opinion, will they be a good or bad time for the economy? (possible answers: "good", "bad").

For each question partial indices were calculated. To do this, from the share of positive responses the share of negative ones is subtracted, then to the obtained value 100 is added so as not to have negative values. Therefore, fully negative answer would give a total index 0, and positive – 200, the balance of the former and the latter is expressed by the index value of 100, which is, in fact, a neutral mark. The arithmetic mean of the partial indices gives an aggregate value – the consumer sentiment index.

In 2007–2016 the consumer sentiment index (CSI) that reflects the dynamics of people's forecasts concerning the development of the economic situation in the country and their personal financial situation **decreased significantly in the oblast as a whole and in all socio-demographic categories of the population (by 20–36 points).**

In 2007, the value of the CSI below 100 points (which means the predominance of pessimistic judgments) was observed only among people older than 55 years (96 p.) and 20% of the poorest inhabitants of the oblast (88 p.). **In 2015–2016, the consumer sentiment index was below 100 points in all socio-demographic categories, including 20% of the wealthiest inhabitants of the oblast (91 p.). In 11 out of 14 analyzed groups the CSI "did not reach" even the level of 80 points.**

Insert 3. Proportion of people faced with the problem of uncertainty in the future (% of the number of respondents)

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	Dynamics (+/-), 2016 to		
							2015	2011	2007
<i>Sex</i>									
Men	40.1	60.0	46.3	46.5	56.8	57.9	+1	-2	+18
Women	48.5	62.8	51.7	49.6	53.1	62.6	+10	0	+14
<i>Age</i>									
Under 30	35.1	47.3	41.1	40.6	47.1	52.5	+5	+5	+17
30-55	44.7	63.9	47.9	47.6	54.4	59.7	+5	-4	+15
Over 55	53.1	69.7	58.8	54.2	59.9	66.2	+6	-4	+13
<i>Education</i>									
Secondary and incomplete secondary	41.2	66.5	53.6	55.2	63.6	60.5	-3	-6	+19
Secondary vocational	47.6	64.2	49.6	49.4	50.8	64.4	+14	0	+17
Higher and incomplete higher	45.4	54.2	44.2	40.0	49.2	56.3	+7	+2	+11
<i>Income groups</i>									
20% of the poorest people	44.6	69.7	66.2	59.8	64.3	60.5	-4	-9	+16
60% of the people with median income	47.7	63.3	50.1	48.0	57.6	59.6	+2	-4	+12
20% of the most prosperous people	39.2	50.0	35.3	29.5	39.4	59.3	+20	+9	+20
<i>Territories</i>									
Vologda	52.6	61.2	35.3	37.7	45.3	63.8	+19	+3	+11
Cherepovets	52.3	54.0	45.8	41.3	49.0	65.2	+16	+11	+13
Districts	37.5	65.5	57.9	57.7	63.0	55.9	-7	-10	+18
Average in the Vologda Oblast	44.7	61.5	49.3	48.2	54.7	60.5	+6	-1	+16
<i>The total number of positive and negative changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast as a whole</i>							+10 / -3	+4 / -6	+15 / 0

In the oblast as a whole and in all layers of the population for the period from 2007 to 2016 there was a significant increase in the proportion of those who experience uncertainty about the future (by 10–20 p.p.). In 11 out of 14 socio-demographic groups, the growth in the number of people faced with this problem is registered **annually for the past three years** (from 2014 to 2016).

If in 2007 in most groups, the proportion of those who experience uncertainty about the future was 35–45%, then in 2016 in all the groups their proportion ranged **from 56 to 66%**. This problem is especially frequent among urban residents and people older than 55 years (64–66%). In this case, as shown by the results of the surveys, a high level of prosperity “does not protect” from the feeling of fear of the future – **in all income groups the proportion of people experiencing insecurity about tomorrow is 60%**.

Insert 4. Dynamics of protest potential (% of the number of respondents)*

Population group	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015	2016	Dynamics (+/-), 2016 to		
							2015	2011	2007
<i>Sex</i>									
Men	23.6	22.6	19.3	21.7	22.6	20.4	-3	-2	-3
Women	18.3	17.5	15.7	16.6	19.9	18.5	-1	+1	0
<i>Age</i>									
Under 30	20.2	19.2	17.4	17.7	20.5	15.4	-6	-4	-5
30-55	20.8	20.8	17.3	20.1	22.9	20.9	-2	0	0
Over 55	20.9	18.5	17.4	18.0	19.1	19.5	+1	+1	-1
<i>Education</i>									
Secondary and incomplete secondary	20.5	20.5	17.3	21.4	20.9	20.7	0	0	0
Secondary vocational	21.1	19.6	18.2	17.9	20.7	18.9	-2	-1	-2
Higher and incomplete higher	20.4	19.1	16.5	17.2	21.8	18.2	-4	-1	-2
<i>Income groups</i>									
20% of the poorest people	23.9	26.8	21.7	23.3	29.0	27.4	-2	+1	+4
60% of the people with median income	21.2	19.0	16.4	19.1	20.9	18.9	-2	0	-2
20% of the most prosperous people	16.1	14.7	13.6	11.4	14.5	13.5	-1	-1	-3
<i>Territories</i>									
Vologda	21.4	21.6	20.3	20.2	25.6	21.4	-5	0	0
Cherepovets	20.3	19.7	17.6	22.7	24.7	21.6	-3	+2	+1
Districts	20.5	19.0	15.7	16.1	16.7	16.8	0	-2	-4
Average in the Vologda Oblast	20.7	19.8	16.8	19.3	21.1	19.3	-2	-1	-1
The total number of positive and negative changes in 14 groups and in the Vologda Oblast as a whole							0 / -5	0 / -1	+1 / -4

* Question wording: "What are you willing to do to protect your interests?". Answers: "I will sign a petition to the authorities", "I will participate in strikes and other protest actions", "I will participate in a rally or demonstration", "If necessary, I will take arms and go to the barricades", "I will do nothing", "My interests are sufficiently protected", "I find it difficult to answer".

Protest potential is accumulated among the respondents who chose the answers: "I will participate in a rally or demonstration", "I will participate in strikes and other protest actions", "If necessary, I will take arms and go to the barricades".

The proportion of people willing to take part in protests in the oblast as a whole and in all major segments of the population remained stable at the level of 18–20 p.p., which, according to some experts (V.L. Sheinis), is a significant figure, **showing an insufficient social stability in society.**

The relatively high protest potential (more than 20 p.p.) is observed among **men, people of middle age, those with secondary or incomplete secondary education, those who negatively assessing their income level, and those who live in urban areas.** During all the years of measurements, the willingness to take part in the protests was shown most frequently by the inhabitants of the oblast who, according to self-assessments of their income belong to the category of 20% of the poorest. **This is the most important factor in the formation of protest moods.**

its improvement in the future. Thus, over the period from 2007 to 2016, the proportion of people who consider themselves “poor and extremely poor” increased substantially in all the major sectors of Russian society. At that, since 2013, the proportion of “the poor and extremely poor” is 47–50% (i.e. almost one in two; *Insert 1*).

It should also be noted that all socio-demographic categories of the population are dominated by pessimistic forecasts about the future of the Russian economy and their personal financial situation (*Insert 2*).

Zh. T. Toshchenko: “Social consciousness is increasingly becoming an indicator of controversial and paradoxical changes in all spheres of social life: sociological analysis proves that they reflect the profound changes in the socio-economic and socio-political life after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which broke the stage-wise development of the state and society... **the injury and antinomy of the consciousness have become characteristic features of the social consciousness of the entire population of post-Soviet Russia**”¹³.

The negative perception of the economic situation and the feeling that it has no prospects affects the psychological state of society: across all social strata, more than 50% of the people say that they feel insecure about tomorrow, while the proportion of those who

¹³ Toshchenko Zh.T. *Fantomy rossiiskogo obshchestva* [Phantoms of the Russian Society]. Moscow: Tsentr sotsial'nogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga, 2015. Pp. 14–15.

share this view in the last three years has been increasing (in 2014 – 48%, in 2015 – 55%, in 2016 – 61%; *Insert 3*).

The above trend has not yet lead to the growth of protest moods, but we still cannot say that there is social stability in the country.

As shown by the results of sociological surveys, the level of protest potential over the past three years is 19–20% (*Insert 4*). In the year that marked 100 years since the revolution of 1917 we cannot but recall the warning of experts that **“critical historical turns are made, as a rule, not by society and not even by its majority. Tumultuous events often began to unfold, when not the majority of the population, but its critical mass (reaching first 5, 10, and 20%) decided that it is impossible to live like that anymore, this mass aroused the expectation of reforms and pushed the government toward them.** But abrupt changes cannot be painless and their approval cannot be total and unconditional... Peoples can live for long time with the problems still unresolved. But the world is changing right in front of our eyes, and the gap between Russia and some successful countries of the former third world is becoming more threatening and difficult to overcome”¹⁴.

In addition, the dissatisfaction of society with the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life in the country is gradually reflected in people’s assessment of the work of the Government. So, in 2011 the level of approval of the work of the Chairman of the RF Government was 59%, in 2015 – 58%,

¹⁴ Sheinis V.L. Istoricheskii tranzit: rossiiskaya drama [Historical transit: Russian drama]. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2017, January 27. Available at: http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2017-01-27/5_6914_drama.html

and in 2016 – 52%, in February 2017 – 50%.

Thus, analyzing the situation in the on the eve of the fourth 6-year presidential term of Vladimir Putin, we can come to the conclusion that the stagnation of the Russian economy, which is today a key threat to Russia as a participant in the geopolitical competition, is directly related to the inefficiency of the economic block of the Medvedev Government that is responsible for the domestic economic policy. Not being able to resist the foreign policy of the Russian President, the global political players are trying to weaken Russia from the inside by using the liberal democratic orientation of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Yet, unfortunately, it can be stated that the forecasts of some experts made after the victory of Vladimir Putin in the presidential election on March 4, 2012, are justified: *“The victory of Vladimir Putin’s and those who supported him, would be diluted or stolen...there is a feeling that everything will remain the same. Sometimes it seems that Putin is amenable to the pressure of the party that lost the election”*¹⁵.

In February 2012, a month before the presidential election, after which the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin began, our arguments about the prospects of Russia’s development ended with the following conclusion: “Will “new” V.V. Putin lead the country (and himself, in the first place) to a new level of social and political management, which he had spoken in his election speeches and articles about and that most voters had

believed in? It would possible to judge that by the real steps of V.V. Putin in the first year of his third presidency in the Russian Federation”¹⁶.

Five years later, we are forced to admit this statement and say that the 12 months remaining until the main election in the country will be largely decisive from the point of view of the answer to the question: what mark will Vladimir Putin leave in Russia’s history? Will he manage to achieve equally effective results in domestic economic policy, like those he achieved in strengthening the sovereignty of our country in the international arena for the last 16 years? Or will the fight of the patriotic ruling elites over national interests be lost once again to the liberal-democratic forces that still occupy a significant place in the system of public administration?

The confrontation between the patriots and the liberals in power is far from over and is not resolved, and as the situation in the international political arena is stabilizing, the President’s attention is shifting more to the internal affairs of the country: in 2015, Vladimir Putin signed the National Security Strategy, through which he assumed personal responsibility for resolving key issues of national security; in 2016 the Minister of Economic Development was arrested and removed from office; at the end of 2016 Putin delivered the Address to the Federal

¹⁵ Zatulin K. Kak ne dat’ ukrast’ plody pobedy [How not to allow to steal the fruits of victory]. *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 2012, March 22.

¹⁶ Ilyin V.A. K itogam politicheskogo tsikla [To the Political Cycle Results]. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial’nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz* [Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast], 2012, no. 1, p. 13..

Assembly of the Russian Federation, which was also devoted mainly to internal affairs. At the beginning of 2017 there were several personnel changes among the governors: in February, the governors of the Republic of Buryatia and Karelia and of the Novgorod, Ryazan and Perm oblasts left office. Experts say that with the help of these measures **the President “strengthens the state discipline in the field, after which he will be able to start a “clean sweep” among Russian government officials”**^{17,15}. While Vladimir Putin himself remains “the only moderator of the relations within the elite. Without Putin it is impossible to maintain the peaceful nature of the transition to the new government and new leaders; conflicting groups cannot afford to lose Putin as arbitrator”¹⁶.

However, while the “fifth column” in Russia’s state administration system exists, there remains a threat that it will be used by geopolitical opponents to destroy our country. That is why the presidential election, which will be held next year, are so important for Russian society: **in a society that feels the futility of its position and the failure of the current government to cope with the problems in the economy, there is a growing hope pinned on the head of state who possesses, in fact, monopoly power that is above the law and**

beyond the Constitution. Experts point out that “Russian power in the form in which it appeared in the middle of the 16th century and survived to the present day – is the **power above and beyond the law.** Even the current, post-Soviet power, weakened by both internal and external factors, retains the generic features. The power is concentrated in the Presidential Administration, the body about which nothing is said in the Constitution. As a result, we have a situation where the technical agency that is not mentioned in the Constitution and, therefore, is beyond and above the Constitution is the main power structure in the country”¹⁹.

A year before the fourth presidential term, Vladimir Putin created a foundation to implement decisive action in the struggle of the patriotic forces with the private interests of the liberal elite that hit the system of public administration. Experts note that “only a complete change of the ruling layer can save Russia. And it is the supreme power itself that must do this, because “the revolution from below” in the current environment will inevitably lead to the breakdown of the country and then to its foreign occupation”²⁰.

Further implementation of people’s expectations will depend on coherent and strategically considered steps of the President in the direction of nationalization of the

¹⁷ Starikov N.V. Chto stoit za cheredoi otstavok gubernatorov [What is behind the string of resignations of the governors]. *Ofitsial’nyi blog N. Starikova* [N. Starikov’s official blog]. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/75270>

¹⁸ An interview with K.V. Remchukov on the radio “Echo of Moscow” in the program “Special opinion” (live from 26 December 2016). *Official website of the radio station “Echo of Moscow”*. Available at: <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/1898516-echo/>

¹⁹ Fursov A.I. *Voprosy bor’by v russkoi istorii. Logika namerenii i logika obstayatel’stv* [Issues of Fight in Russian History. The Logic of Intentions and of Circumstances]. Moscow: Knizhnyi mir, 2016. P. 139.

²⁰ Karpets V.I. Istoki i korni “pyatoi kolonny” [Origins and roots of the “fifth column”]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2017, February 02. Available at: http://zavtra.ru/blogs/istoki_i_korni_pyatoj_kolonni

elite, and on a clear understanding of the fact that **“our problems in all spheres of life – in economy, in education, in health and in foreign policy – are largely due to the fact that our political leaders (senior and middle management), officials of different levels advocate doublethink and sit on two chairs. It is impossible to pursue a policy while sitting on two chairs. Sooner or later, these chairs will move apart and you will fall and hurt yourself real hard. And while on the one hand we have a kind of patriotic rhetoric, but on the other hand – a completely blatant anti-patriotic course, we will hardly get any further. So sooner or later this kind of thing will present our management with this dilemma: to make this choice (maybe a metaphysical choice) – what way should our country pursue?”**²¹.

“The foundations on which our country stands go so deep, and have such solid roots, that Russia’s bright and marvelous future is simply inevitable,” said Vladimir Putin at an event dedicated to Russian Science Day in February 2017²². Objectively, over the years of his work as President and Chairman of the Government, Vladimir Putin has done a lot to

²¹ Spitsyn E.Yu. Lektsiya v “Politkafe” (Moskva, 27 dekabrya 2016 g.) [A Lecture at the “Potikafe” (Moscow, December 27, 2016)]. *Ofitsial’nyi blog N. Starikova* [Official Blog of N. Starikov]. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/73788>

²² Stenogramma vystupleniya V.V. Putina na tseremonii vrucheniya premii Prezidenta v oblasti nauki i innovatsii dlya molodykh uchenykh za 2016 god (8 fevralya 2017 g.) [Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s Speech at the Ceremony of the Delivery of Presidential Prizes in Science and Innovation for Young Scientists for 2016 (February 08, 2017)]. *Ofitsial’nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official Website of the RF President]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53837>

strengthen the international status of Russia, to protect its national interests and enhance national security. His merit is also great in the fact that the forces of the “collective West” still cannot destroy the country from within through the “fifth column” in the system of public administration.

However, to make the optimism of the head of state spread to the general population (actually to the people who will come to polling stations in March 2018) requires something more: it requires tangible progress in resolving the most acute issues of social justice, the need of which has remained for many years in the public consciousness of Russians.

Assessing the current condition of Russian society and the state, the majority of experts believe the most important characteristic of the modern state – the presence of a single leader. “Russian President and his entourage, including security officials and state media are recognized as the only development factors. Experts predict that such a condition will remain in the foreseeable future and they see no other serious and resource-provided actors with the potential to influence significantly the development of the situation in the country.

The general conclusion regarding the most probable future of the Russian society can be expressed in one sentence – “it is in a fog”²³. It

²³ Gorshkov M.K., Petukhov V.V. *Rossiiskoe obshchestvo i vyzovy vremeni. Kn. 4* [Russian Society and the Challenges of Time. Book Four]. Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2016. P. 345.

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. Sociological surveys show that

Russian citizens are very concerned about the ongoing internal reforms and their own uncertain future.

President Putin as the national leader, who actually has a constitutional majority in the Federal Assembly, has the opportunity to set a clear and understandable direction for pulling the country out of this sticky and enclosing liberal “fog”.

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