

# EDITORIAL

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## The Problem of Civilizational Choice and Its Reflection in the Key Documents Defining the Present and Future of Russia



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**Abstract.** Due to the approach of 2024, when, under the current Constitution of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin will not be able to run for President, conceptual issues related to the results of the country's development in the 21st century and, most importantly, its prospects for the coming decades, are becoming more acute. One of these issues (determined, among other things, by the specifics of the modern historical stage of development of the world civilization as a whole) consists in the problem of civilizational self-determination, which, in fact, has been discussed by the scientific community in our country since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This problem is connected with the lack of strategic goal-setting as one of the key functions of public administration; such a situation has a lot of negative implications for the population and national development as a whole: from the lingering unresolved social problems (poverty, inequality, etc.) to the regular delays in the implementation of national projects and execution of specific

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orders of the head of state. In addition, according to the results of federal and regional studies, Russian society does not have a distinct cultural and value-based vector of development; moreover, against the background of the relentless need to increase the standard of living and achieve social justice, Russian society is increasingly becoming a consumer society with all its key shortcomings such as obsession with the material component of life, the desire to achieve personal success, ignoring the historically established norms of morality, etc. In the context of the issue of civilizational choice becoming more important as well as a wide range of problems caused by its absence, we analyze the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation – the key federal documents that reflect basic principles of the existing dynamics and future prospects of national development. We come to the conclusion that the ruling elites do not work to form the spiritual and moral foundations of Russian society; consequently, the goals they set are focused on solving material problems only, which makes public administration similar to corporate governance. This poses one of the key threats to national security and national development and makes it necessary to hold a broad discussion initiated primarily by the government and aimed to consider practical possibilities and prospects for the implementation of the basic principles of the social state contained in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

**Key words:** civilizational choice, Constitution of the Russian Federation, National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, President, Russian society.

*Social development goals cannot be set without a simple and clear system of values and a simple and clear understanding of justice. An economic breakthrough cannot be planned without fundamentally substantiated mechanisms for its implementation. Nevertheless, we are trying hard to do it – trying to do it without a guiding ideology. But any society that is not bound by a set of indisputable truths for the vast majority of its members will inevitably collapse. And we do have an ideology; it is simply an ideology of survival, enough not to die, and absolutely not enough to move forward with confidence<sup>1</sup>.*

Today, we are witnessing a new paradigm, which is called “postmodernity”. **The essence of this concept consists in the designation of a new state of civilization, culture, ideology, politics, economy... Postmodernity forces us to take a fresh look at everything – including international politics.** Yesterday we used such concepts as “progress”, “state sovereignty”, “logic of history”, “progressive development”, etc. At the dawn of the 21st century, we see that progress in one area can be easily combined with regression in another within the same society; that there are countries without sovereignty; and history sometimes deviates from its ostensibly obvious course by 180 degrees<sup>2</sup>.

A number of urgent circumstances force us to address more frequently the issues related to the progressive movement of Russia on the path of market transformation. On the one hand,

the historical period of postmodernism, characterized by the rapid pace of scientific and technological progress, turbulence of socio-political processes and the erosion of the system of centuries-old cultural and moral norms and

<sup>1</sup> Noskovich O. From survival to development. Russia must change its ideological paradigm. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, April 17. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5\\_7559\\_survival.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5_7559_survival.html)

<sup>2</sup> Dugin A. Geopolitics of postmodernity. Available at: <https://www.geopolitika.ru/article/geopolitika-postmoderna#.UQP3djWlfp8/>

values, leaves no time for a “sluggish start” and makes the key participants of geopolitical competition find answers to the following questions as quickly as possible: where and at what speed they are moving? How do they see their future? What future will they create for the world civilization as a whole?

On the other hand, the historical moment of time that our country is experiencing today brings the same issues to the fore. It is no secret that almost all the achievements of modern Russia, including relative stability of the political and economic situation in the country, as well as improvement of its international status in the foreign arena, are the merit of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The President has been ruling the country using the “hands-on” approach for almost 20 years; he is the “main arbiter” who balances the interests of various families, clans and groups in the ruling elite; and only he has a sacred connection with the “deep people”. It is possible to treat the decisions of the head of state in different ways, but it is impossible to deny that V. Putin is a person of historical scale for our country.

**In 2024, when, according to the current Constitution of the Russian Federation, V. Putin will not be able to nominate his candidacy for President of the Russian Federation, a new stage of Russian history will begin, and it is very difficult to predict what it will be for our country. Will Russia still be a “besieged fortress”? What will our “foreign partners” do, having repeatedly failed in their attempts to weaken Russia and to make it look like “universal evil” in the course of the last 20 years? Will the successor of the current President have a “unique” feature, which, according to experts, characterize V. Putin personally and which facilitates “confidential communication and interaction of the supreme ruler with the**

citizens” – “the ability to hear and understand the people, to see through it, to the full depth, and to act accordingly?”<sup>3</sup> Will not the growing contradictions between the elite and the general population give rise to a purposeful policy of the collective West to destroy the Russian statehood from within, as it was in the late 1980s – early 1990s?

What will happen to us after the end of Putin’s term? The people will be drawn to a fundamental historical choice. Even if we are waved aside, it is our duty to force our way through and say “yes” or “no” to our future. The people cannot be denied this opportunity to decide – we are approaching a critical point in our history<sup>4</sup>.

Even if by 2024 the political system of the country undergoes significant changes, after which Vladimir Putin will still have full power<sup>5</sup>, the above questions will not lose their relevance, they will only be delayed for a fairly limited period of time (at least by historical standards).

**Multi-variant scenarios of the future of Russia, one of which will soon become real, bring to the fore the task of setting strategic goals of national development at a qualitatively different and deeper level than overcoming poverty, increasing life expectancy and improving housing conditions.** These and other guidelines,

<sup>3</sup> Surkov V.Yu. Vladimir Putin’s long state. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, February 11. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-02-11/5\\_7503\\_surkov.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-02-11/5_7503_surkov.html)

<sup>4</sup> Dugin A.G. The most important event of the future. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2019, May 16. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/samoe\\_vazhnoe\\_sobitie\\_budushego](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/samoe_vazhnoe_sobitie_budushego)

<sup>5</sup> According to some experts, significant constitutional changes may occur in the country before 2024: the Federation Council will be replaced by the State Council, which “will be endowed with full power” and which will be headed by Vladimir Putin. The State Council, in particular, will choose the President of the Russian Federation, who will have only representative functions. According to some estimates, D.A. Medvedev can take this post (source: Uglanov A. And Medvedev will be President, after all? *Argumenty nedeli*, 2018, no. 12, March 29)

reflected in the May Decree of the President and in the national projects, despite their importance, are only instrumental. They are unable to take public discourse and state goal-setting beyond the value coordinates of the “consumer society”; consequently, they support the situation in the country in which society exists only for the sake of “buying a new mobile phone every six months” or “in order to consume more yogurt today than yesterday”<sup>6</sup>.

The Constitution bans official state ideology. What is ideology? It is a goal. The state must have a goal and the Russian people must have a goal. And in the Constitution contains the official ban: there is no goal.

Accordingly, what does our state exist for? The Constitution does not contain an answer to this question. It is written that Russia is a social state, but it is only a statement; but what does it exist for in reality? To buy a new mobile phone every six months? To consume more yogurt today than yesterday..?

There is no goal-setting; thus, there are quite a few problems: alcoholism, a sense of loss... Because the whole nation, the whole civilization have no goal, and it is directly written in the Constitution<sup>7</sup>.

“Over the years of reforms, – as sociologists wrote back in 2013, – our citizens have become immersed in their problems, and the state has estranged itself from the sphere of goal-setting aimed at development of the nation; thus, Russians gradually began to lose their “big goal” vibes. But these vibes allowed them to do seemingly impossible deeds – it is enough to remember the industrialization of the country, the restoration of its economy after the Great

Patriotic War, a breakthrough into space and many other deeds than the Russians are still fairly proud of...”<sup>8</sup>.

Having lost our patriotism and national pride and dignity connected with it, we will lose ourselves as the people capable of great achievements<sup>9</sup>.

“Loss of personal connection with Russia”, “loss of civilizational features”, “loss of passionarity” – these are the threats that scientists warned about at the beginning of V. Putin’s third presidential term.

How much has changed since then? The key trends that characterize modern Russian society are the growing need for change and the growth of self-sufficiency, which have been observed since 2014 after the emotional rise caused by the events of the “Crimean Spring” was faced with another “round” of the economic crisis of 2014–2015. In the period from 2014 to 2018, the proportion of Russians who perceive stability as “preservation of stagnation and crisis phenomena”<sup>10</sup>, increased from 30 to 56%, **that is, today this point of view is shared by more than half of the inhabitants of our country.** Almost half of Russians (46% according to the data as of 2016) believe that in their lives they can do without the help of the state; according to researchers, this fact is “a serious social support for a stable and sustainable condition and development, which is especially important in the current socio-

<sup>8</sup> Gorshkov M.K., Krumm R., Tikhonova N.E. (Eds.). *What Russians Dream About: Ideal and Reality*. Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2013. 400 pю

<sup>9</sup> Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1999, December 30. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4\\_millennium.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html)

<sup>10</sup> Petukhov V.V. Dynamics of social sentiment of Russians and the formation of request for changes. *Sotsis*, 2018, no. 11, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Starikov N.V. On amending the Constitution. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-krK3elaezA>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

political situation in which Russia has to face new serious political, economic and socio-cultural challenges”<sup>11</sup>.

However, in the pursuit of personal success, “self-sufficient” Russians have to cross the line that distinguishes human society from the aggregation of individuals: more than half of them (54%) are guided by the belief that “the modern world is cruel and in order to succeed in life, sometimes you have to step over moral principles and norms”<sup>12</sup>. With such an attitude toward the world, oneself, and other people, it is not surprising that almost half of the “self-sufficient” (47%) say that in the modern world “many moral norms are already outdated”, while 42% prefer to decide what is good and what is bad in this world (“morality is the sphere of one’s private life, and the state should not interfere in it”).

“Experts note that half of the Russian society lives without any obvious purpose, in the absence of an embodied image of the future as such”, and then a natural question arises, which we find difficult to disagree with: **“What does the revival of the country begin with: the achievement of the goals related to increasing consumption for themselves and their families, or the goals related to creative, professional and spiritual growth? Realizing that the bias in favor of the former is a reflection of the objective and unresolved social issues of citizens, it is impossible not to understand that net consumption as the dominant life goal leads society along the path that has no future”**<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, the growing “self-sufficiency” in the Russian society testifies to the growing variety of material benefits of a modern civilization

(which is quite natural in the conditions of science and technology progress) and to the growing abilities, knowledge, and skills to use these new and more versatile goods and services (that is also quite natural, given the gradual change of generations and the coming of age of the so-called Generation Z – people who were born after 1996, they are characterized by “individualism, practicality, technological advancement, self-confidence, etc.”<sup>14</sup>).

However, society is not a collection of individuals, but, above all, the social relations that develop between them. And in this sense, the utility of life goals and values of the general population raises serious concerns about the fact whether the vector of the movement of modern Russian society is correct.

**It should be noted that this state of Russian society is a consequence of “instrumental” goal-setting. “In the conditions of abandonment of former social ideals and the collapse of the newly proclaimed ones, there began the process of self-destruction of the nation through its fragmentation due to the reduction of national interest to the parochial and family levels”**<sup>15</sup>.

In addition to other functions (economic, political, etc.), any state (and especially a social state, according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation) performs a social function, which consists not only in the development of the social sphere (health, education, culture) and ensuring a decent standard of living of citizens, but also in ensuring solidarity in society, cooperation of various segments of society, and implementation of the principle of social justice.

<sup>11</sup> IS RAS information and analytical summary, 2014–2016.

<sup>12</sup> Gorshkov M.K., Sedova N.N. “Self-sufficient” Russians and their life priorities. *Sotsis*, 2015, no. 12, pp. 4–16.

<sup>13</sup> Karacharovskiy V.V., Shkaratan O.I. Different goals of one society. *Sotsis*, 2019, no. 1, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Stillman D. *Gen Z @ Work: How the Next Generation Is Transforming the Workplace*. Translated from English by Yu. Kondukov. Moscow: Mann, Ivanov i Ferber, 2018. 272 p.

<sup>15</sup> Noskovich O. From survival to development. Russia must change its ideological paradigm. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, April 17. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5\\_7559\\_survival.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5_7559_survival.html)

**Public administration without evaluation-based reflection has no chance of self-improvement and development.**

The quality, as well as the success of public administration, cannot be assessed without an appeal to any value. The result of public administration, outside the value context of the goals, is not in itself a characteristic of quality. Depending on the targets, the same result can be evaluated in exactly the opposite way. For example, Russian privatization: when considering it from the standpoint of material expectations and interests of the majority of society – it is an absolute failure; while within the framework of the goal to achieve a rapid transition (at any cost) to a market economy – it is quite an effective management operation<sup>16</sup>.

**Therefore, neither the goal-setting nor the measurement of the effectiveness of public administration according to the classical “cost – benefit” principle, which can work quite successfully in business, is not correct, because it cannot ensure the “viability of the country”<sup>17</sup>.**

From this point of view, it is necessary to look once again<sup>18</sup> at the National Security Strategy – “the basic document of strategic planning that defines national interests and strategic national priorities of the Russian

<sup>16</sup> Sulakshin S.S. The quality and success of public policies and management. In: *Seriya “Politicheskaya aksiologiya”*. Moscow: Nauchnyi ekspert, 2012. P. 23.

<sup>17</sup> The main criterion of public administration efficiency according to S. Sulakshin (source: Sulakshin S.S. The quality and success of public policies and management. In: *Seriya “Politicheskaya aksiologiya”*. Moscow: Nauchnyi ekspert, 2012. Pp. 6, 12.)

<sup>18</sup> In January 2016 (immediately after V. Putin signed the new National Security Strategy on December 31, 2015), we analyzed this document (source: Ilyin V.A. National Security Strategy 2015 – a step towards the new phase of Russia’s development. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial’nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz*, 2016, no. 1 (43), pp. 9-25). However, at that time we were interested in the socio-economic aspect of the question: to what extent does the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation can be implemented under the current course of economic and social policy pursued by Dmitry Medvedev’s Government?

Federation” (Paragraph 1) and is “the basis for the formation and implementation of the state policy in the sphere of ensuring national security of the Russian Federation” (Paragraph 4).

This document identifies the following strategic national priorities (Paragraph 31):

- 1) defense of the country;
- 2) state and public security;
- 3) improving the quality of life of Russian citizens;
- 4) economic growth;
- 5) science, technology and education;
- 6) health;
- 7) culture;
- 8) ecology of living systems and environmental management;
- 9) strategic stability and equitable strategic partnership.

“Preservation and enhancement of **traditional Russian spiritual and moral values as the basis of Russian society**” is a “**strategic goal for ensuring national security in the field of culture**” (Paragraph 76). At the same time, the Strategy states that “traditional Russian spiritual and moral values include **the priority of the spiritual over the material**, protection of human life, human rights and freedoms, family, creative work, service to the Homeland, **standards of morality, humanism, mercy, justice, mutual assistance, collectivism**, historical unity of the peoples of Russia, the continuity of the history of our Homeland” (Paragraph 78).

Based on this, there arise the following natural questions:

1. Does the trend of the growing “self-sufficiency”, which we discussed above, correspond to **“traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”, which form the “basis of Russian society”**?

2. What is the **“cultural sovereignty of the Russian Federation”** (Paragraph 82), if Russian society is more like American “consumer

society”: every year there are more and more people who are ready to neglect moral principles for the sake of achieving their personal success without experiencing any remorse and quite rationally explaining it with some new conditions of life and the “obsolescence” of classical life values?

3. Is “external cultural and information expansion” **the only** threat to “national security in the field of culture” (p. 79)<sup>19</sup>; **or does the reason lie in the fact that over the past 20 years poverty, low standard of living and social stratification consistently occupy the top lines in the list of the most acute problems of concern to the population (which explains and in some sense justifies the “preoccupation of Russian society with the material component of life”<sup>20</sup>)?**

4. Are measures such as “providing support to the study of the Russian language”; “ensuring national, religious, and racial tolerance”; “patriotic education of citizens”; “improving the facilities and equipment of cultural organizations, creating conditions for leisure activities”; “promoting domestic cultural and educational tourism”; “strengthening state control over cultural heritage sites” and many other measures contained in the National Security Strategy (pp. 81–82) **sufficient to preserve the “cultural sovereignty of the Russian Federation”? Or should we talk about something that was not included in the National Security**

**Strategy: the formation of a “culture of wealth” – overcoming the “aggressive demonstration of material superiority and consumer opportunities, accompanied by complete disregard for the previously unshakable moral norms”<sup>21</sup>? Regardless of citizenship, nationality, religion, etc., that is, among the Russian population, as well.**

As we can see, the main points of the National Security Strategy are purely instrumental. **The Strategy does not cover a wide range of issues related to evaluation-based reflection and the specifics of goal-setting as a function of public administration.** Perhaps this is why, following the ruling elites, many young state managers in our country “at best know how to manage corporations or non-governmental organizations; they really do not know how the logic of the state differs from the logic of a corporation”<sup>22</sup>...

Perhaps that is why, once again, the implementation of the election promises of the President is going on very slowly: for the six months prior to summarizing the first results of the implementation of national projects (as Vladimir Putin stated in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2019) “only two of the nine national goals outlined in the new the May Decree of the President show at least some movement forward, and it is not enough. Three goals still do not have any indicators for monitoring their implementation; there are indicators for two goals, but the current situation is not clear. As for two more goals, there is actually a backward movement in their implementation”<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Paragraph 79 of the National Security Strategy states: “Threats to national security in the field of culture are the erosion of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values and the weakening of the unity of the multi-ethnic people of the Russian Federation through external cultural and information expansion (including the spread of low-quality products of mass culture), the promotion of permissiveness and violence, racial, national and religious intolerance, as well as the reduction of the role of the Russian language in the world, the quality of its teaching in Russia and abroad, attempts to falsify Russian and world history, unlawful encroachment on cultural objects

<sup>20</sup> Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. Economic determinants of the psychological state of society. *Monitoring VTsIOM*, 2008, no. 2, pp. 18–25.

<sup>21</sup> Zarubina N.N. The culture of wealth in the discourse of inequality: specifics of modern Russia. *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, 2012, no. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Hazin M. Beware! Political scientists. *Gazeta “Zavtra”*, 2019, May 2. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/ostorozhno\\_politologi](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/ostorozhno_politologi)

<sup>23</sup> Bashkatova A. A failure of the national scale. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, May 20.

One of the markers actively and almost universally used by the “new rich” is **their demonstrative permissiveness as a constant desire to test the strength of existing social norms, when the rich emphasized their exceptionalism by doing what is prohibited and acting according to the principle: “It is forbidden to everyone but not to me”...**

The individualism of the rich is manifested in the fact that **the owners of the greatest fortunes obtain a legitimate opportunity not to reckon with society...** Modern global capital is not opposed by the “global trade union”, and thus it can be stated that the two main social poles of capitalist society – labor and capital – were separated from each other...

After the first decade of the 21st century, not only the economic, but also the social and even spatial gap between the rich and poor has increased... In the conditions when society is disintegrating, rich social groups **no longer need to find excuse for their actions.** The rich continue to live their lives and increase their wealth even during the global financial crisis, **often with the direct support of the state.**

**The discourse of inequality is shifting toward the demonstration of prestigious models of everyday life, while the problems of the legitimacy of wealth and its responsibility to society are attracting less attention.** Therefore, it seems unrealistic to hope that getting used to wealth will lead to the growth in the level of culture; i.e. demonstration will become less aggressive, and efforts to legitimize will increase, as well as social responsibility<sup>24</sup>.

**In the end, as the year 2024 is getting closer, the question about the 24-years of Putin and his team ruling the country is coming to the fore.** And here we should note that, despite the overcoming of the negative consequences of

the “turbulent” 1990s and Russia’s return to the ranks of key participants in geopolitical competition, the goals that the President set for the long term in 1999 have not been achieved yet.

Let us recall that in the article headlined *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium* Vladimir Putin identified three fundamental grounds (three “chances for the future”), with which he links the fate of Russia in the 21st century. They are “the Russian idea”, “the strong state” and “effective economy”.

#### **Chances for a decent future:**

**(A) the Russian idea.** Fruitful creative work, which our Homeland needs so much, is impossible in a society that is in a state of division and internal disunity, in a society where the main social strata and political forces adhere to different basic values and fundamental ideological guidelines.

**(B) the strong state.** We are at a stage when even the most accurate economic and social policy fails due to the weakness of the state power and governing bodies. The key to the revival and rise of Russia now lies in the state and political sphere. Russia needs and should have a strong state power.

**(C) effective economy.** ... Russia needs to form a holistic system of state regulation of the economy and the social sphere. We are not talking about returning to the system of policy planning and management, where the all-pervading state regulated all aspects of the work of each enterprise from top to bottom. It is about making the Russian state an effective coordinator of the country’s economic and social forces, building a balance of their interests, determining the optimal goals and parameters of social development, creating conditions and mechanisms for their achievement»<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Zarubina N.N. The culture of wealth in the discourse of inequality: specifics of modern Russia. *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, 2012, no. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1999, December 30. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4\\_millennium.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html)

**I am personally convinced that the collapse of the Soviet Union and, more broadly, of all Soviet life was a phenomenon to a certain extent internal rather than external.** We somehow forgot that the USSR actually collapsed at the peak of its military and industrial might, or rather, on a stagnant slide from it. And that collapse, perceived by many citizens with enthusiasm, passed under the stormy and prolonged applause.

I remember well the final chord of the great August standing around the White House; I myself defended democracy there. So, after all the troubles people flowed to the metro station “Ulitsa 1905 goda” to go home. What happy faces the passengers had, what unity was felt! Indeed, all of these people: workers of the neighboring enterprises, of which there were many from the western industrial zone, students, scientists and bureaucrats – **all thought they had slain the dragon together, beheaded the Hydra of totalitarianism, and saved democracy. Probably, neither before nor after did I see such bright and clear faces.** The overthrow of “sovok”, if judged by all these sentiments, was neither a conspiracy nor a coup – it was genuinely the deed of the people. Although, of course, the plot, coup and betrayal were there; but without popular support or, rather, people’s live participation, nothing would happen<sup>26</sup>.

However, to date:

**1. “The Russian idea” has not been formulated.** Patriotism, which the President spoke about as a “unifying idea” that has no alternative and cannot have one<sup>27</sup> is only a shell that can be filled with completely different content. In particular, there is no doubt that

<sup>26</sup> Voevodina T. What did the Soviet people lack in the Soviet Union? *Literaturnaya gazeta*. Available at: <http://lgz.ru/article/-33-6521-26-08-2015/chego-sovkam-v-sovke-ne-khvatalo/>

<sup>27</sup> V. Putin’s speech at the meeting with the core group of the Leaders Club, February 3, 2016. *Official Website of the RF President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51263>

such events as the Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the USSR in 1991 took place largely on the patriotic motivation – from the sincere belief of people that they are doing a good thing for the country.

We should also point out that even today, that is, 19 years after the beginning of V. Putin’s first presidential term, scientists note that “the current political and economic structure of our society **is in transition** between the one that emerged spontaneously in the early 1990s as a result of revolutionary changes and the one that will be formed after these changes and their implications have been finally understood. The duration and difficulty of this transition will depend on how quickly we understand what we are and what we want. Thus we will find the social ideal of the world order and implement it in practice”<sup>28</sup>.

**2. Today the phrase “Strong state” can be applied, perhaps, only in relation to the Russian army;** this fact is fully consistent with the ideas of the head of state about patriotism (and, consequently, about the “unifying idea”): “To me, the words “army” and “patriotism” mean the same thing”<sup>29</sup>.

At the same time, while restoring its geopolitical status, Russia has acquired a wide range of external enemies, international sanctions and anti-Russian sentiments actively spreading in Europe and the United States; as for Russia’s domestic political life, only the President himself still has a relatively high level of trust (more than 50%), while all other state and non-governmental institutions have the trust of less than half of the population (*Tab. 1*).

<sup>28</sup> Noskovich O. Russia can combine the advantages of two types of world order. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, June 5. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-06-05/5\\_7591\\_ideas2.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-06-05/5_7591_ideas2.html)

<sup>29</sup> V. Putin’s speech at the meeting with public representatives on patriotic education for young people, September 12, 2012. *Official Website of the RF President*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16470>

Table 1. The level of trust in Russia's non-governmental structures and institutions (answer: "I trust completely and mostly"; % of respondents)

Answer	V. Putin's first presidential term (annual average estimate for 2000–2003)	V. Putin's second presidential term (annual average estimate for 2004–2007)	D. Medvedev's presidential term (annual average estimate for 2008–2011)	V. Putin's third presidential term (annual average estimate for 2012–2017)	Annual average estimate for 2018–2019	Dynamics of annual average estimates (+/-), 2018–2019 to 2000–2003
<i>Level of trust over 50%*</i>						
RF President	58.2	58.6	56.0	55.3	57.2	-1
<i>Level of trust from 40 to 50%</i>						
Church	42.6	44.3	47.8	44.7	48.9	+6
Prosecutor's Office	28.9	31.9	36.8	39.5	45.6	+17
Army	33.8	27.8	35.0	39.6	44.7	+11
RF Government	39.3	39.3	51.7	45.5	44.5	+5
Federal Security Service	32.6	33.4	37.5	38.5	43.4	+11
Court	30.9	33.9	37.4	39.1	43.2	+12
Police	26.0	27.0	33.6	37.2	42.8	+17
<i>Level of trust from 30 to 40%</i>						
Federation Council	27.9	31.7	39.3	37.4	34.9	+7
Vologda Oblast Administration	28.6	35.3	40.3	36.6	34.7	+6
Local governments	-	-	35.9	32.9	33.5	-
Trade unions	26.0	27.6	31.0	27.4	32.3	+6
Scientific organizations**	-	-	-	-	32.2	-
State Duma	22.5	27.6	35.3	33.1	31.4	+9
<i>Level of trust lower than 30%</i>						
<i>Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation**</i>	-	-	-	31.2	29.3	-
<i>Mass media</i>	29.1	29.1	30.5	28.0	28.7	0
<i>Non-governmental organizations**</i>	-	-	27.5	25.5	27.2	-
<i>Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast**</i>	-	-	-	28.1	27.1	-
Directors, CEOs	20.1	23.8	24.5	23.0	23.4	+3
Political parties, movements	12.9	17.2	23.1	19.5	21.9	+9
Banks and entrepreneurs	13.9	20.5	22.2	19.4	19.4	+6
I don't trust anyone	24.5	25.9	24.5	26.0	25.9	+1
* Average annual estimate for 2018–2019.						
** Answer options "Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation" and "Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast" were included in the list in 2010; answer options "Non-governmental organizations" and "Local governments" – in 2006, answer option "Scientific organizations" – in 2018.						
Source: VolRC RAS public opinion monitoring.						

**3. The effectiveness of the Russian economy can be seen if we compare the situation today with the period of the "turbulent" 1990s.** However, no less obvious is the fact that during the post-Soviet period, the Russian economy was largely transformed into a "service economy" that implements the interests of

"major companies of global markets" rather than national interests<sup>30</sup>. In many ways, therefore, our lagging behind is still our "main threat" and "main enemy", which

<sup>30</sup> Betelin V.V. Russia needs to abandon the "economy of services" and shift to the "economy of industrial production". *Ekonomist*, 2019, no. 2, p. 7.

Table 2. The structure of the most pressing issues that Russians are concerned about\* (% of respondents)

1999	2000	2008	2012	2018	2019
Low standard of living, poverty (57.1%)	Low standard of living, poverty (50.8%)	Inflation (56.3%)	Inflation (55.3%)	Low standard of living, poverty (53.7%)	Inflation (57.5%)
Inflation (54%)	Inflation (44.7%)	Low standard of living, poverty (41.4%)	Low standard of living, poverty (43.2%)	Inflation (51.1%)	Low standard of living, poverty (57.4%)
Layoff, unemployment (43.7%)	High crime rate, vulnerability to crime, hooliganism (36.9%)	Housing problem, low availability of housing (36.3%)	Stratification of society into "poor" and "rich" (37.5%)	Stratification of society into "poor" and "rich" (35.9%)	Stratification of society into "poor" and "rich" (33.2%)
Economic instability, enterprises shutting down (39.6%)	Social insecurity of citizens (34.4%)	Stratification of society into "poor" and "rich" (31.4%)	Housing problem, low availability of housing (28.6%)	Housing problem, low availability of housing (23.5%)	Housing problem, low availability of housing (23.4%)
High crime rate, vulnerability to crime, hooliganism (33.4%)	Layoff, unemployment (32.1%)	High crime rate, vulnerability to crime, hooliganism (28.4)	Growth of alcoholism (27.3%)	Political instability (23.1%)	Corruption, bribery (22.1%)

\* Ranked according to the data as of 2019. In total, the survey includes 23 issues; the Table presents the five most relevant of them.  
Source: VolRC RAS public opinion monitoring.

“will inevitably increase if we do not reverse the situation”<sup>31</sup>, and the level of poverty and inequality in the country is many times higher than the official statistics, as evidenced by many experts<sup>32</sup>; it is clearly reflected in the structure of the most pressing issues that Russians are concerned about (Tab. 2).

Once again, let us turn to V. Putin’s article *Russia at the Turn of the Millennium*, in which he writes the following: “Achieving the necessary dynamics of growth is not only an economic issue. **It is also a political and, in a certain sense, ideological issue. More precisely, it is an ideological, spiritual, and moral issue.**

<sup>31</sup> Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, March 1, 2018. *Official website of the RF President*. Available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>

<sup>32</sup> See, for example: Chuikov A. Exorcist Golikova will drive the poor out of the country (an interview with professor V.N. Bobkov, head of the laboratory for research on the standard of living and quality of life at RAS Institute of Socio-Economic Studies of Population). *Argumenty nedeli*, 2019, February 7; Istratov V. What kind of revenue growth will please us? *Ekspert*, 2018, no. 14, April 2; Zubarevich N.V. Program “Reflection” (Public Television of Russia (PTR Channel), aired February 14, 2019. Available at: <https://otr-online.ru/programmy/segodnya-v-rossii/natalya-zubarevich-35709.html>

And the last aspect at the present stage seems to me particularly important from the point of view of the consolidation of Russian society”<sup>33</sup>. This thesis remains relevant today, 20 years later; **however, “the ideological, spiritual and moral issue”, as we see, is not considered either in the Constitution that actually imposes a ban on ideology, nor in the National Security Strategy that reduces it to the status of one of the subjects of a highly specialized social sector “Culture”.**

The absence of the question concerning civilizational choice in the system of goal-setting of the current government and the absence of a specific request of the state to scientists and socio-political figures to define and clearly formulate the vector of development of the country lead to the fact that the topic of civilizational self-determination remains only the subject of broad discussions and does not go beyond theoretical reflection in scientific articles, at public forums, etc.

<sup>33</sup> Putin V.V. *Russia at the turn of the millennium. Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 1999, December 30. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4\\_millennium.html](http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html)

Responsible politicians and unbiased intellectuals are aware that **the politics and economy of modern Russia are in dire need of a new solid ideological basis.** This fact is universally acknowledged; we can provide countless bright and accurate descriptions of the dismal state of affairs in connection with the inefficiency of public administration. However, at the same time there is **not the slightest suggestion of a deeply thought-out complex of philosophical and economic ideas that can unite the entire Russian society and inspire it to new achievements**<sup>34</sup>.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scientists pointed out (and continue to do so) that Russia is developing spontaneously, without a goal and vector<sup>35</sup>, and this is not worthy either of our history or our international influence on the solution of global issues of the future. Nevertheless, so far, practical implementation of the discussions about the civilizational choice remains an unfulfilled task.

According to experts, at the last historical stage of social development there were, in fact, two successful projects: “Western” and “Red”<sup>36</sup>. In the Western project, the basic principle of economic activity is gaining profit, which is based on the constant satisfaction of one’s own interest. In this case the ideal of justice is implemented through the equality of free individuals, formalized in a society of

<sup>34</sup> Noskovich O. From survival to development. Russia must change its ideological paradigm. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, April 17. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5\\_7559\\_survival.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5_7559_survival.html)

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: Yadov V.A. Russia as a transforming society (the summary of a long-standing discussion of sociologists). *Obshchestvo i ekonomika*, 1999, no. 10–11, pp. 45–55; Golenkova Z.T., Igitkhanyan E.D. A person in changing society. Social and group preferences. *Obshchestvo i pravo*, 2003, no. 1, pp. 152–169.

<sup>36</sup> Noskovich O. From survival to development. Russia must change its ideological paradigm. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, April 17. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5\\_7559\\_survival.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5_7559_survival.html)

equal opportunities, in which the inevitable socio-economic inequality is perceived as a consequence of the natural inequality of human abilities... Indeed, the strong and successful support such an ideal of justice; the weak and losers are loyal to this ideal due to the fact that the produced material good is enough for providing them with gratuitous assistance.

In the social structure of the Red project, the domination of private interest is subordinated to the public interest, and the ideal of justice is implemented in equal ownership of public wealth and equal access to the good produced<sup>37</sup>.

In order to achieve harmonization of the social structure and effective use of the preserved human potential, there is only one means – to implement a new, socially oriented cycle of institutional and structural reforms<sup>38</sup>.

**“Our society has a unique experience of implementing both Red and Western projects; thus it can be quite ready to accept and combine the advantages of both”<sup>39</sup>. However, the priority, of course, should be made in favor of the Red project and the social state, “because this project acts in the interests of the entire population of Russia (as well as other countries) rather than any narrow group” and because it corresponds to “humanistic modernization”<sup>40</sup>, which, in fact, was mentioned by scientists throughout the post-Soviet period.**

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> Zaslavskaya T.I. To the tenth anniversary of the international symposium “Where is Russia Going?” In: Zaslavskaya T.I. (Ed.). *What Has Russia Arrived At? The Results of Social Transformation*. Moscow: MVShSEN, 2003. Pp. 12–15.

<sup>39</sup> Noskovich O. From survival to development. Russia must change its ideological paradigm. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, April 17. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5\\_7559\\_survival.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-04-17/5_7559_survival.html)

<sup>40</sup> Lapin N.I. Hybrid transition and a demand for “modernization for all”. *Vestnik Instituta sotsiologii*, 2018, vol. 9, no. 4.

In fact, post-postmodernity understands globalization as **the accentuation of social (rather than individual) uniqueness within the global social space**. Classic examples are Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, etc. All of them are present in the globalizing space **while remaining deeply national societies that preserve primarily their culture and identity**, although they absorb the inevitable elements of global culture<sup>41</sup>.

Only the so-called Red project is able to reflect fully the need of Russian society for social justice, which has mental, cultural and historical grounds and is a consequence of the social inequality that has not been reduced over the past 20 years. And only the Red project has prospects for the future, because, on the one hand, Western civilization is increasingly becoming conflict-ridden and cannot cope with the global challenges of tomorrow; on the other hand, the Red project contains the foundations of humanism, which, according to many scientists, will be the foundation of the next historical era – post-postmodernity.

\* \* \*

Thus, the question concerning the civilizational choice of Russia has been and remains relevant since the collapse of the Soviet Union and “the disruption of progressive development of the Russian state and society”<sup>42</sup>. It appears from time to time in the political rhetoric of the President, but it is not

<sup>41</sup> Fursov A.I. What will replace postmodernism. *Information resource Smionline*. Available at: [http://so-l.ru/news/y/2013\\_07\\_15\\_chto\\_pridet\\_na\\_smenu\\_postmodernizmu](http://so-l.ru/news/y/2013_07_15_chto_pridet_na_smenu_postmodernizmu)

<sup>42</sup> Toshchenko Zh.T. *Phantoms of Russian Society*. Moscow: Tsentr sotsial'nogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga, 2015. Part 1. Pp. 14–15.

sufficiently reflected in the Constitution and the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation – the key documents that determine the present and future of our country. At the same time, as we approach the year 2024 that inevitably arouses the need to summarize the 24-year period of V. Putin’s presidency, the task of civilizational self-determination is becoming increasingly acute, since it is becoming increasingly clear that the absence of a vector of development, involving the priority implementation of national interests, leads to the emergence of many factors that impede the development of the country and pose a threat to its national security: such factors are the failure of the Government to fulfill the instructions of the head of state, the lingering extreme inequality and a high level of poverty (which the broad strata of the population feel despite any changes in the methods used by Rosstat), the distrust that society feels toward the ruling elites and that is increasingly turning into estrangement of Russians from political and public life...

“Transition to **humanistically active** participation of the state in creating conditions for a decent life and free development of all members of society as a new historical stage of evolution<sup>43</sup>” is complicated by the fact that Russian elites prefer to integrate into the Western world both materially and ideologically, while ignoring national interests, and the fact that the leader of the Western world (the U.S.) has always felt as if it were the hegemon of the world order and treated other countries exclusively as vassals or promising areas for its own enrichment.

<sup>43</sup> Lapin N.I. Materials of the speech at the round table in the editor’s office of the journal *Voprosy filosofii* (March 2019).

Post-Soviet elites consider themselves to be part of the Western world and global capitalism; this feeling is an important factor in their determination to move closer to the United States in the civilizational and ideological sense. The process of convergence is facilitated by the fact that tangible assets are placed in the West and by the fact that the families of the Russian elite live in the West. In such a case, Russia's national interests are ignored<sup>44</sup>.

Largely due to the above, the National Security Strategy is filled with formulations of instrumental content; and the Constitution of the Russian Federation shows “an obvious contradiction: on the one hand, the principle of the social state is an institutional fact, as real as the Constitution as a whole, which has the maximum normative status of the basic law for members of society as citizens. But, on the other hand, the constitutional principle we are studying is far from its meaningful implementation in many spheres of the state itself, civil society and in the daily life of its citizens”<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Bartosh A. America relies on proxy wars. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 2019, June 10. Available at: [http://www.ng.ru/armies/2019-06-10/8\\_7595\\_proxywar.html](http://www.ng.ru/armies/2019-06-10/8_7595_proxywar.html)

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

**“Experts note that the most important thing consists in the fact that the elites and society lack the understanding of the need to form a new social contract between the government and society; and they lack the understanding of the role of social policy in its implementation”<sup>46</sup>.** And if the primary need of Russian society to raise the standard of living and improve the quality of life, to overcome poverty and inequality is understandable and in some sense justified by the long-term relevance of these problems due to the ineffective policy of the Government, then the absence of the issue concerning civilizational self-determination in the political agenda of the ruling elites and in the key documents that determine **the foundations of existence and strategic guidelines for the development of Russia in the coming decades** raises serious concerns about the success of its transition to a new historical stage, on which V. Putin “will have no influence”<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Tikhonova N.E. Social policy in modern Russia: new system-wide challenges. *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*, 2019, no. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Dugin A. Putin or Super-Putin. *Izborsk Club*. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/16492>

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