

EDITORIAL

DOI: 10.15838/esc.2021.2.74.1

UDC 354, LBC 66.03

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Where Does the Soullessness of the Ruling Elites Lead?



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Abstract. On April 21, 2021, President V.V. Putin once again addressed the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation and outlined the country's key upcoming development areas. Presidential Address was mostly social and aimed at solving domestic problems: comprehensive support for population and business in the “post-covid” period, restoration of the economy and social sphere's normal functioning, as well as the ability of the Government to maintain health of citizens and improve the demographic situation. The President touched upon many important issues that were demanded by a wide range of Russian society, gave instructions to the Government of the Russian Federation and regional authorities, and announced specific measures to support people in difficult life situations. Meanwhile, the issues of Russia's foreign policy and its positioning within the framework of international relations remained basically outside this Presidential Address. The President only hinted that “those behind provocations that threaten the core interests of our security will regret what they have done in a way they have not regretted anything for a long time”, “we ourselves will determine in each specific case where the red line

For citation: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Where does the soullessness of the ruling elites lead? *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2021, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 9–28. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2021.2.74.1

will be drawn with regard to Russia”. However, as many experts note, after the victory of J. Biden in the US presidential election, there was the beginning of the culmination of the struggle between global forces for the return of dominant positions in the world that they have gradually lost over the past decades, for a unipolar or multipolar form of the future world order, prospects for the transition of world civilization from modernism to postmodernism. In these conditions, the issues related to Russia’s civilizational self-determination and awareness of a kind of the state we are building, reasons that prevent us from effectively implementing the welfare state principles in the country, many of which were embodied in the amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation in July 2020, become more relevant than ever.

Key words: ruling elites, geopolitical relations, soullessness, state, postmodernism.

Considering the concept “soullessness” in relation to the effectiveness of public administration, first of all, it is necessary to outline the subject field of this category. We would like to note that spirituality or soullessness is a property of a person, and not a feature of any social group. In this sense, this concept is closer to psychology, rather than sociology, and, therefore, analyzing the degree of spirituality / soullessness of the ruling elites, their motives and actions, we are talking about certain personal qualities that, nevertheless, have complex (social, economic, cultural-historical, etc.) consequences, including a wide spread of soullessness – from certain social groups (in particular, the ruling elites) into the general population.

“A soulless society – as some experts note – is a society with no high ideas, no dreams, no hopes for the future, a society with illuminated high moral ideals and values. In a soulless society, culture, cinema, theaters, literature are primitive, education is disfigured, but crime, aggression, lawlessness, and violence flourish. This is a society with only material values rule, and the demands of the

“Spirituality is a morality unfolded in time. In motion. But if morality is a social concept, **then spirituality is, first of all, an entity belonging to an individual**”¹.

“Spirituality is a property of a human soul, **consisting in the predominance of spiritual, moral, and intellectual interests over material ones**”².

“It seems to us that the process of spiritual and ethical development of a person can be defined **as the process of formation of his personality**”³.

human spirit and soul are completely ignored. **Soullessness is an environment where the ruling elites, who do not possess moral and spiritual qualities, feel themselves great and comfortable, guided only by their immorality**”⁴.

Thus, in the context of issues of the effectiveness of public administration, soullessness can be interpreted as a personal feature of individual members of the ruling elites who have lost their sense of moral responsibility to society, to the vocation to protect and defend the national interests of the country in connection with the priority of personal, selfish interests.

¹ Buzmakova T.I., Kirilina T.Yu. Spirituality and morality of Russian youth in the sociological dimension. *Social Policy and Sociology*, 2013, vol. 1, no. 3 (94), pp. 169–183.

² Ozhegov S.I., Shvedova N.Yu. *Dictionary of the Russian Language*. Moscow, 1992.

³ Vinogradova I.E. Morality. Moral. Spirituality. Looking for meaning. *Vestnik of Kostroma State University*, no. 3, 2006.

⁴ Mamychenko A.V. *Replacement of Destructive Elites. New People of the Creative State. Professional Parliament*. Book 2. P. 90.

It is also important to note that soullessness is an integral part of the “consumer society” as a stage of capitalism, where the modern world and Russia stand at. It is also a vivid attribute of the postmodern era, where the global community is moving to under the pressure of global elites. In this sense, soullessness should be analyzed from a geopolitical point of view – as an aspect of a purposeful hybrid policy that has been implemented by members of global elites for several centuries. The process of forming a liberal ideology “dates back to the Middle Ages, reaches maturity in Modern times with the emergence of capitalist society, and reaches its final stage today”⁵.

It is the geopolitical aspect of the Russian elites’ soullessness that makes us pay attention to this problem. Throughout the centuries-old history, Russia has repeatedly faced the lack of spirituality among the elites that each time led to the destruction of statehood with the direct participation of foreign countries interested in it.

✓ In the “Time of Troubles” (1598–1613), soullessness of the ruling elites, aggravated by the Swedish-Polish intervention, led to the onset of a period of “anarchy, discord in all layers of society, famine, and general misfortunes”⁶, when the holders of the royal throne in Russia alternately replaced each other (B. Godunov, False Dmitry I, V. Shuisky, False Dmitry II) until the first representative of the Romanov dynasty (Mikhail Romanov) came to power.

✓ During the collapse of the Russian Empire (early 20th century), it was about the

inability of the elites to cope with a complex of internal and external contradictions, largely due to heavy economic, social, political, and military losses during participation in the First World War, which led to the First Russian Revolution of 1905, the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, and, ultimately, to a total change of the ruling regime.

“World leaders, heads of major corporations – Big Tech, Big Data, Big Finance, etc. – have united and mobilized to defeat their opponents – Trump, Putin, Xi Jinping, Erdogan, Ayatollah Khomeini, and others. The beginning was snatching a victory from Trump using new technologies – through “capturing the imagination”, introducing Internet censorship and mail-in voting fraud. **Biden’s arrival in the White House means that the globalists are moving on to further actions. This should affect all areas of life – the globalists are returning to the place where they had been stopped by Trump and the other poles of the rising multi-polarity...**”⁷.

✓ The collapse of the Soviet Union (late 1980s–early 1990s) was the result of a **deliberate betrayal** of the country’s national interests by the ruling elites for their own personal goals. With an active participation of the United States, with which the USSR was in a state of the “Cold War”, the statehood collapsed.

As we see, in different historical periods, the ruling elites’ soullessness acquired different forms, but it was always there, accompanied by foreign intervention and ended with the collapse of the state.

⁵ Dugin A. Manifesto of the Great Awakening. *Zavtra*, March 7, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/manifest_velikogo_probuzhdeniya

⁶ The Time of Troubles in Russia in 1598–1613. Tsars and their deeds. *Историиземли.рф*. October 23, 2020. Available at: <https://историиземли-рф.turbopages.org/xn--e1adcaacuhnujm.xn--p1ai/s/sample-page?>

⁷ Dugin A. Manifesto of the Great Awakening. *Zavtra*. March 7, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/manifest_velikogo_probuzhdeniya

Recent events, taking place in the geopolitical arena, force us to draw historical parallels. According to experts, since the announcement of the course for the “Great Reset”⁸ at the Davos Forum in May 2020, global, supranational⁹ elites have actually announced their aggressive revenge on the events that have become increasingly obvious throughout the 21st century: formation of a multipolar world, strengthening of international positions of Russia, China, exit from the Western influence of Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, etc., Trump’s win in the US presidential election in 2016.

The starting point for the practical implementation of the “Great Reset” policy can be considered the victory of J. Biden in the US presidential election in 2020. The subsequent escalation of the conflict in Donbas and, in general, Russian-American relations (including the bilateral expulsion of diplomats, harsh public statements by the American president against Vladimir Putin, bilateral economic sanctions, large-scale troop movements to the site of potential hostilities) are not accidental. They are a direct consequence of the purposeful policy of global liberal elites to strengthen their positions in the world.

Therefore, their goal is not just Russia, but world domination in all spheres of life: politics, economy, business, culture, information and value field, etc. The purpose of the global elites is total control over humanity as such, regardless of its national, religious or any other affiliation; the transformation of a “reasonable person” into a “service person” (Insert 1).

For this purpose, they take specific steps to erase the boundaries of national, religious, gender, and socio-cultural identity. Depopulation values are intensively cultivated (for example, the priority of material well-being as the purpose and meaning of life success; as a result, the birth of several children becomes burdensome, which creates conditions for minimizing a number of children in a family; or permissiveness, which leads to disregard for moral and ethical norms that ultimately cause illegal behavior, same-sex marriage, spread of specific negative social phenomena, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, etc.). The world community is artificially brought to a global existential crisis, so that society “loses a clear idea of what it wants”, and, consequently, the global elites have an opportunity to dictate their own rules to humanity (Insert 2).

⁸ The “Great Reset” idea was first mentioned in K. Schwab and Charles, Prince of Wales report at the World Economic Forum in Davos (May 2020).

⁹ “The presence of supranational elites and their structures is an immanent feature of capitalism as a system. The bottom line is that, in economic terms, capitalism is a single whole without borders, and it is the sum of divided states in political terms. **The big bourgeoisie, especially the financial bourgeoisie, always has interests outside their countries, and their realization requires breaking political boundaries. Systematically, this is possible only if there is a structure that has a closed supranational nature and affects states in a closed mode...** In the early 21st century, with the end of the Napoleonic wars, the supranational structures of the West were closely intertwined with each other, and they formed an unprecedented global network – not just international one (unions of states were international)”. (Source: Fursov A.I. To survive, we need a more sophisticated elite. Kultura. November 10, 2020. Available at: <https://portal-kultura.ru/articles/country/329883-istorik-andrey-fursov-chtoby-vyzhit-nam-nuzhna-boleeslozhnaya-elita/>).

Insert 1

**Materials of the round table of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation
“Psychological defense. War for History – War for Survival” August 25, 2020**

... the pre-war is going on today and we are not winning it. This pre-stage is the preparation of the second stage of this war-direct enslavement. Today, the situation of colonization and enslavement has been replaced by technological enslavement. You used to do it with military force, but today you do it technologically. A simple example is the Internet. What is the Internet? This is a digital gulag, in its purest form. Only if earlier people were seized, placed behind barbed wire and guarded, then all these people came here themselves. They themselves came to this digital gulag and live very comfortably there. They explained to the person that everything is written in Wikipedia, there is no need to learn, everything is on the Internet, and then we build a society of people whose heads can be cut off through a simple thing – by cutting off the switch. And that’s all, there is no more question.

The second thing is cognitive. What is a color revolution? This is **the use of cognitive technologies to control the mass consciousness.** What should be done first? Fooling. Simplification of the whole system to the Unified State Exam-education, so that you answer the questions, that is, to fool you to the maximum, then give you iPhones, and hang up the satellite. You can counteract this in a very simple way – a switch. One action, and then nothing works ...

Today, the system of basic moral principles is being scrapped, and alternative norms are being imposed. This is happening everywhere by destroying the traditional systems of family and marriage, reducing the authority of religion. Instead, these basic systems offer the absolutization of individual freedom: children are more important than parents, there are no authorities, respect for elders disappears, you can talk and call for anything on the Internet – from a terrorist attack to suicide, because this is an individual freedom.

Such absolutization of an individual freedom is used as a “sledgehammer” to destroy state sovereignty. And the sovereign state, in fact, is the only instrument, the institution that can ensure the rights of an individual and a personal freedom. **As a result, the organized civilized community is replaced by a set of easily managed individuals. In parallel, there is a reduction in the birth rate by introducing ideas into the mass consciousness that deny the natural continuation of life. This is the ideology of LGBT people, families without children, etc.**

The dream of the elites ruling the world has always been to bring out a certain subspecies of “service” people who would have limited self-awareness, less needs. Today, for the first time in the history of civilization, there is a technological possibility of bringing out such, let’s call it, a “service” person.

Source: M.V. Kovalchuk’s report at the round table of the Ministry of Defence “Psychological defense. War for History – War for Survival”. August 25, 2020. Available at: <https://ok.ru/mirovozren/topic/152400692997072>

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Existential crisis in the modern world

According to a report by the authors of the Edelman Trust Barometer study conducted in October – November 2019, **most of the world's population have lost faith in the benefits of capitalism, and they are afraid that Western democracy is losing its effectiveness.** The survey studied more than 34,000 people in 28 countries, and 56% agreed that capitalism does more harm than good in its current form.

More than half of respondents from such seemingly benevolent countries as France (69%), Italy (61%), Spain (60%), the Netherlands (59%), Ireland (57%), Germany (55%), Singapore (54%), and the United Kingdom (53%) expressed their disillusionment with modern capitalism. In Russia, 55% of respondents agree that capitalism does more harm than good. Among the studied countries, only Japan has less than half of pessimists (35%).

The authors of the study note that **pessimistic views on capitalism prevail among representatives of all ages and with any income level, and men and women share nearly the same pessimism (57% and 56%, respectively).** **The growth of general pessimism is accompanied by a decrease in confidence in the main social institutions.** 57% of the survey participants said that the authorities serve the interests of “a few”, while only 30% believe that the government works in general interests.

The authors of the study believe that the reason for the decline in the level of trust is the growth of inequality and people's fear for their future. On average, only 47% believe that they and their families will live better in five years than now... In developed countries, however, barely one of three people is waiting for an improvement in their lives. In some of the most developed countries, the share of optimists is even lower: in Japan – 15%, in France – 19%.

Source: Most people in the world are disappointed with capitalism and their future. RBK. January 21, 2020. Available at: <http://worldcrisis.ru/crisis/3526130>

“In the modern world, the United States has only two major adversaries – China and Russia. At the same time, we cannot discuss Russia as a serious economic competitor to the United States. However, for Washington, the ideological confrontation with our country is very important. **Russia has become the “other” state that receives the most negative features from the American propaganda.** As for China, it is a serious economic competitor, but China is too far away and poorly known to the Americans for political opposition”¹⁰.

“... China will continue to be an economic rival, **Russia will remain an adversary,** and Europe will be a more or less hidden competitor”¹¹.

Russia, along several other countries, is only an obstacle to the global elites in destroying Human identities and turning it into a “gray mass” of homogeneous plebs serving the interests of the “golden billion”. However, the obstacle is perhaps the most dangerous, since Russia has the parity of nuclear weapons and represents the most real force opposing the establishment of a unipolar world. In this regard, in the public rhetoric of the United States, Russia is not an economic rival, but an ideological enemy.

Thus, the aggravation of international political relations, we have seen in recent years and months, is not just a struggle for the territories of Ukraine, not only a showdown between Russia and the United States, **but another (perhaps the culmination) stage of a**

centuries-old struggle for the future of the world, its multipolar or unipolar form of existence, the dominant system of values, which will later be adhered to by most and perhaps all of humanity.

A logical question arises: what do the Russian elite and a general internal situation in the country have to do with the ambitions of the “collective West” to establish world domination and an ability of Russian diplomacy and the military-industrial complex to resist them? If the culminating phase of the historical process of clarifying relations in the international arena is unfolding today, then what does it have to do with numerous representatives of Russia’s economic and political elites who pursue purely personal interests of material enrichment (as the experts, whose assessments we have given in previous articles, have repeatedly drawn attention to¹²)?

“According to the media content analysis, 34 governors, including 19 active ones, were brought to criminal responsibility in 1996–2021.

In 2020, the Investigative Committee of Russia referred criminal cases to the courts against 466 high-ranking officials, including 130 mayors, 116 municipal and 10 regional deputies, 48 members of election commissions, 38 investigators of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and 17 of the Investigative Committee, 15 prosecutors and 7 judges... only 18% of the 8,000 convicted corrupt officials were sentenced to actual imprisonment, 35% – to conditional imprisonment, and 40% – to a fine”¹³.

¹⁰ Polonsky I. Who is the main adversary of the United States: China or Russia? *Military Review*. October 11, 2018. Available at: <https://topwar.ru/148186-kto-glavnyj-vrag-ssha-kitaj-ili-rossija.html>

¹¹ Opinion of the national security specialist, Prof. D. Yonchev (Source: US election results: Russia – adversary, China – rival, Europe – competitor. *Inosmi.info*. November 7, 2020. Available at: <http://www.inosmi.info/itogi-vyborov-v-ssha-rossiya--vrag-kitaj--sopernik-evropa--konkurent-bnr.html>).

¹² See, for example:

Mikulski K.S. On the political economy foundations of modern Russian society. *Society and Economy*, 2017, no. 12, pp. 5–9; Korotaev S.A., Shkaratan O.I. Post-Soviet statehood and society. Part 3. The strengthening of statehood as social contract between society and authorities. *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*, 2018, no. 1, p. 70; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. What will Putin bequeath to his successor in 2024? *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2018, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 9–31.

¹³ Sukharenko A. Governor’s springboard: from the chair to the bunk. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. March 23, 2021. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/kartblansh/2021-03-23/3_8109_kartblansh.html

The answer to this question leads us to the disclosure of the essence and modern specifics of soullessness among the ruling elites. Indeed, it is unlikely that at least one of the dozens of corrupt officials had the goal of weakening the economic potential of our country, hardly thought about national interests, historical confrontations, the future of the country, and even more so of humanity.

Just as in many broader and longer-term problems of Russia, such as “oligarchic capitalism”, which led to extreme inequality, stalling of national projects, reform of science and education, growth of anxiety and uncertainty about the future among population¹⁴, we should look for traces of the “fifth” and “sixth” columns.

“The sixth column includes the liberals in power, the oligarchs, and a significant, if not a main, part of the Russian elite, which, being formally loyal to the patriotic course of the President Putin, is organically connected with the West and is immensely burdened by this course...

A cunning plan of the sixth column is **to maintain ties with the West at all costs. It was clearly not Putin who was behind the plan, but Putin accepted it.** It could not have led to anything, and it did not. We lost 7 years, and our opponents gained them...

Since the sixth column actually won, the spiritual transformation of Russia did not begin. Ideology was put aside, technical issues were taken up, and control over political processes was in the hands of technocrats. The meanings were removed from the equation. Stagnation began, when primitive entertainment and corruption, which was rapidly growing out of boredom and lack of ideas, came to the fore”¹⁵.

These phenomena of modern life did not arise as a result of a deliberate undermining of national interests, but as a result of their elementary disregard, inability or unwillingness of the ruling elites to see far-reaching consequences for the sovereignty and other national interests of the state behind their actions. Profit-making is the main element in the value system of capitalism, and no national interests can outweigh it for people who share, profess, and actively lobby for a liberal-capitalist value system.

Thomas Joseph Dunning (1799–1873; British trade unionist, publicist): “Capital is afraid of no profit or too little profit, just as nature is afraid of emptiness. But once there is sufficient profit available, capital becomes bold. Secure 10%, and capital agrees to every use; it becomes animated at 20%; it is positively ready to break its head at 50 %; **it tramples on all human laws at 100%; there is no crime it would not risk at 300%, even if it were on pain of the gallows”**¹⁶.

The Russian elites feel themselves, and they actually are, a part of the global elites, because they have financial and family ties with them; they share and actively lobby their interests, lifestyle, integrate into international monopolies, thus “infecting” Russian society with soullessness and leading it along the capitalist path – from the stage of “consumer society” to the postmodern stage.

By blindly copying innovations that supposedly improve the efficiency of the organization of life, health, and education, they

¹⁴ See:

Ilyin V.A. “Crony capitalism” – a source of social inequality in modern Russia. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2017, vol. 10, no. 6, pp. 9–23; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Nationally oriented rotation of the elites – the most important condition for the implementation of national projects. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 9–25; Ilyin V.A. What a Shame... *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2017, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 9–21; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. Public administration efficiency in 2000–2018 in the assessments of the region’s population. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2019, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 9–38.

¹⁵ Dugin A. Geopolitics of Novorossiia 7 years later. *Official website of the Izborsky Club*. April 9, 2021. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/20918>

¹⁶ Dunning T.J. *Trade’s Unions and Strikes: Their Philosophy And Intention*. London: Published by the author, and Sold by M. Harley, No 5, Raquet court Fleet street, E.C., 1860, pp. 35–36.

forget or ignore the fact that for global forces, Russia has always been simultaneously just an “ideological enemy” and a “tasty morsel” as a territory with huge reserves of minerals and natural resources. Therefore, it is not surprising that in many key aspects of national development and national security, post-Soviet Russia significantly “loses” to itself from the Soviet period. In particular, **according to the social inequality issue, the Russian Federation reached the level of 1905 in 2015¹⁷ (Table).**

A very important point that explains exact purposeful strategy of global forces to “plant” soullessness among the Russian elites and then among general population is **the latent nature of the process. This is a game of stimulating not anti-patriotic sentiments (which can always be detected and limited with legislative activity),**

Dynamics of the share of incomes in Russia

Population category	1905	1990	2015
10% of the richest	45	25	45
40% with average income	35	45	40
50% with low income	15	30	18

Own compilation according to: Novokmet F., Piketty T., Zucman G. *From soviets to oligarchs: inequality and property in Russia, 1905–2016*. National Bureau of economic research. Cambridge, MA August, 2017. P. 4.

but certain personal qualities inherent to capitalism and postmodern society: selfishness, greed, unrestrained desire to increase income, surrounding oneself with luxury and comfort items, and at the same time – permissiveness, individualism, willingness to ignore the norms of morality and ethics in order to achieve personal goals.

In a real, empirical dimension, this is reflected in the incomparable size of financial and other types of inequality among population: starting conditions for development, opportunities to rely on the fairness of social (including legal) protection. **Ultimately, it increases dissatisfaction of society with the effectiveness of public administration. There is a growing need for change or, in the worst case, supporting actions organized by the non-systemic opposition. As with any other disease, you can fight this only by working on the causes, and not the consequences of the developing pathology.**

“[The state will] is eroded by two streams. The first one is a corruption – everything is clear with it. The second one, adjacent to the first one, is much worse. **This is the desire to be friends with the West, to be an “enlightened European”, fear of being called “undemocratic”, an “authoritarian strangler of freedoms”.** Such representatives of the elite want to go to the West to travel, “eat the most delicate craft cheese in the mountain alpine villages” (nearly an exact quote), buy property there, teach children “for real”, and so on.

If the state was not blurred by all this, then we would have something similar to China... We must understand that China is a country governed by the Communist Party, and it lives according to five-year plans. **There, a prop with these kinds of private companies is needed only to create a facade for the West.** Nearly all billionaires, effective “startups”, and leading private managers in China are members of the CPC... and they comply with all party regulations”¹⁸.

According to FCTAS RAS, in 2012–2019, the share of Russians who believe that “the country needs changes, new reforms in financial and political life” increased by 29 p. p. (from 28 to 57%). The share of those who believe that “the country needs stability that is more important than changes” decreased by 29 p.p. (from 72 to 43%)¹⁹.

¹⁷ Novokmet F., Piketty T., Zucman G. *From Soviets to Oligarchs: Inequality and Property in Russia, 1905–2016*. National Bureau of Economic Research. Cambridge, MA August, 2017.

¹⁸ Fefelov A., Ashmanov I. Digital battle has begun. *Zavtra*. January 14, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/tcifrovaya_bitva_nachalas_

¹⁹ *On Relevant Problems of Our Life and Interaction of Regulators, Business, and Citizens. Report on the Results of a Mass Sociological Study. Vol. 1*. FCTAS RAS. Moscow, 2019. P. 9.

A specific example and consequence of the soullessness “infection” is the growing dynamics of a number of dollar billionaires. Their number over the past 14 years (2006–2020) has increased in Russia from 60 to 102 people, and their capital grew up from 153 to 278 billion rubles on average per billionaire (*Ins. 3; Tab. 1*). At the same time, there are **ten- and even a hundredfold** gaps between the level of average wages of ordinary employees and an amount of remuneration of management representatives in key banks and metallurgical companies of the country (*Ins. 3; Tab. 2*), the amount of dividend payments to their top managers exceeds the budget revenues of the regions where the corporations are based (*Ins. 3; Tab. 3*). The situation has not changed for many years, and numerous expert opinions on the unacceptability of such blatant inequality in Russia simply remain “behind the scenes” of the current agenda of the ruling elites, who themselves are the beneficiaries of the current situation.

The deeper consequences of this are the steady upward trend of negative assessments of population about most of the main aspects of life, including not only the economic and social situation, but also the moral state of society (*Ins. 4; Tab. 4*), as well as a high level of apoliticality among population, which concerns, in addition to real participation in socio-political events, the very idea of people about the possibilities of influencing the political situation in the country (*Ins. 4; Tab. 5*).

Against the background of the destroyed Soviet system of values by the elites of the 1990s, and the absence of a new post-Soviet

“...we should prepare for an active “expansion of values”: “Who is not with us is against us” in a completely standard form, and it is enough to disagree on any of the many points for the opposite conclusion. The outcome of this expansion is, of course, not predetermined in either direction. But the willingness to meet it as one of, if not the most important, forms of confrontation in the coming years is all the more necessary”²⁰.

Russia’s system of values, the mechanism of latent instillation of soullessness works virtually without any obstacles. The hybrid war that Russia has been involved in since 2000 (since the beginning of V. Putin’s presidential term), which became even more evident in 2007 (after the “Munich speech” of the President of the Russian Federation at the international conference on politics and security²¹), includes not just various insinuations, such as the situation in Ukraine, information stuffing, economic sanctions, scandals around Russian sports, harassment of the Russian-speaking population abroad, attempts to rewrite history, etc., **but also the implantation of the values of “consumer society”, postmodernism, including soullessness as the main attribute of these capitalism stages. If Russia is an “ideological enemy”, then the victory over it must be mostly the same.**

“The specificity of spirituality and soullessness in Russia, especially in the 21st century, is associated with the fundamental changes in its economic and social life that occurred at the end of the 20th century. As a result of these changes in Russia, first of all, there is more freedom, but there is also more arbitrariness. Secondly, on the ruins of the Soviet Union, a Western-style consumer society was formed”²².

²⁰ Mukhin V. USA is changing the adversary in the new Cold War. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, no. 44–45, March 5, 2021.

²¹ Annual Munich Conference on Security Policy. February 10, 2007. *Official website of the President of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/240344>

²² Sterledeva T., Sterledev R. Spirituality and inspirituality as challenges and risks for Russia. *Power*, 2013, vol. 21, no. 8, pp. 78–82. Available at: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/duhovnost-i-bezduhovnost-kak-vyzov-i-riski-dlya-rossii>

Insert 3

Table 1. Dynamics of the number and condition of dollar billionaires in Russia

Year	Number, people	Fortune, bil. doll.	Fortune, bil. rub.*	On average, per billionaire, bil. rub.
2006	60	337.3	9168.4	152.8
2007	100	521.7	13355.5	133.6
2008	32	102.1	2542.3	79.4
2009	62	265.0	8400.5	135.5
2010	101	432.7	13141.1	130.1
2011	96	376.1	11057.3	115.2
2012	110	426.8	13269.2	120.6
2013	111	422.2	13426.0	121.0
2014	88	337.0	12940.8	147.1
2015	77	282.6	17224.5	223.7
2016	96	386.3	25882.1	269.6
2017	96	386.4	22565.8	235.1
2018	106	417.7	26189.8	247.1
2019	100	425.1	27504.0	275.0
2020	102	392.3	28371.1	278.1
2020 in % to 2006	1,70	1.16	3.09	1.82
Average annual data for 2006–2020	89	367.4	16335.9	177.6

* A fortune, stated in Forbes in dollars, has been converted to rubles at the exchange rate set by the Bank of Russia.
Source: data of Forbes; calculations of VolRC RAS.

In 2006–2020, the number of dollar billionaires in Russia increased from 60 to 102 people, and their capital increased from 153 to 278 billion rubles on average per person.

Table 2. Comparison of the monthly income of managers of metallurgical companies and banks with the income of workers (employees), 2019

Company	Remuneration per employee of the Management Board per month, mil. rub.	Average monthly salary of one employee (worker), thou. rub.	Remuneration to an average salary, times
Gazprombank	21.5	22.1	972.9
Sberbank	52.7	104.8	502.9
VTB	16.8	145.0	115.9
Alpha-bank	17.2	161.2	106.7
Severstal	5.8	62.0	93.5
Otkrytie	10.1	121.3	83.3
NLMK	4.1	60.8	67.4
Mechel	1.3	37.6	34.6
MMK	2.6	61.5	42.3
Tinkoff	5.7	140.0	40.7

Source: *Expert*, 2020, no. 10 (1154), pp. 36–38; open corporate governance reports.

Remuneration paid to members of the Management Board of Gazprombank exceeds average salary of employees by 973 times; Sberbank – by 503 times; Severstal Corporation – by 94 times.

Table 3. Ratio of the region's own budget revenues to corporate dividends in 2011–2020

Enterprise	Dividend payments, bil.rub.*			Region	Own revenues of the regional budget, bil.rub.			Ratio of dividends to the budget's own income, %
	Overall for 2011–2020	Average annual data for 2011–2020	2020 to 2011		Overall for 2011–2020	Average annual data for 2011–2020	2020 to 2011	
PAO "Severstal"	631.9	63.2	6.4	Vologda Oblast	578.3	57.8	2.0	109.3
NLMK Group	585.9	58.6	10.8	Lipetsk Oblast	490.8	49.1	1.8	119.4
MMK	242.2	24.2	3.3	Chelyabinsk Oblast	1368.8	136.9	1.8	17.7

Source: open corporate governance reports.

Total amount of dividends of PAO "Severstal" for 2011–2020 was 9.3% more than the Vologda Oblast's own income; NLMK dividends are 19.4% higher than the Lipetsk Oblast's own revenues. Share of the Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works' dividends amounted to 17.7% of total own income of the Chelyabinsk Oblast.

Insert 4

Table 4. Dynamics of the assessment “deteriorated” in relation to the state of affairs in various spheres of Russian society, 2014–2020, % (ranked by assessments of “deteriorated” in 2020)

Spheres of life of Russian society	October 2014*	June 2019	September 2020	Change (+ / –) 2020 to...	
				2019	2014
Standard of living of population	30	60	68	+8	+38
State of the country's economy	24	41	62	+21	+38
Moral state of society	38	46	56	+10	+18
Situation in the social sphere (health, education, culture)	34	45	49	+4	+15
International status of the country	40	37	41	+4	+1
Situation in the field of rights and freedoms, development of democracy	18	24	32	+8	+14
Anti-corruption, law and order	25	28	31	+3	+6

*In 2014, Russians were asked to assess the changes that have occurred in various spheres of society over the past 10 years, in all other cases, the estimated period ranged from 2 to 5 years. The table shows the response options (areas of life) with the highest share of negative ratings according to data for 2020 (without considering the response option “Pension provision”, for which there is no data for 2014).
Source: *Russian Society in the Conditions of the Pandemic: Information and Analytical Report of the FCTAS RAS*. Moscow, 2020. P. 13.; own calculations.

In 2020, compared to 2019 and 2014, the share of negative assessments of the state of affairs in all major spheres of life, especially the financial situation of population and the country's economy, increased in Russia (over the past 6 years – by 38 p. p.; from 30 to 68 and from 24 to 62%, respectively), as well as moral state of society (from 2014 to 2020) – by 18 p.p., from 38 to 56%.

Table 5. Attitude of population to the political system, 2018, %

Question, answer	Russia	Germany	France	Great Britain
<i>For reference: population, million people.</i>	<i>144.37</i>	<i>83.13</i>	<i>67.06</i>	<i>66.83</i>
To what extent, in the current political system, can people like you influence politics? (response options: “not at all”; “very little”)	80	50	69	61
To what extent does the current political system of our country allow people like you to have a say in deciding which direction the government should take? (response options: “not at all”; “very little”)	70	50	65	56
Have you contacted a specific politician, national or local government? (response option: “no”)	93	81	87	81
Did you vote in the last election? (response option: “yes”)	49	79	58	74

Source: data of the European Social Survey. Available at: http://www.ess-ru.ru/fileadmin/templates/doc/Wave_9_2018/Comparative_labels_wave9-2018_rus.xls
Among 20 countries that participated in the study, the countries with the largest population were selected (according to the World Bank data for 2019). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

According to the latest data of the European Social Survey (2018), residents of Russia, compared to citizens of the most populated countries in Western Europe, are significantly more likely to say that they cannot participate in politics (80%), influence actions the government (70%), do not contact specific representatives of local authorities (93%), and are less likely to participate in elections (49%).

Unfortunately, it should be stated that Russia does not win this part (the “invisible front”) of the hybrid war. If earlier we could say that society was a victim of “phantom” elites²³ who seized power in the 1990s, actually plundered the country, and categorically undermined the public’s trust in the state, today society itself (especially the young generation that grew up in the post-Soviet period) puts personal interests at the forefront. It is more ready to violate the law and the norms of morality to achieve personal success.

This, in particular, can be seen in the moral attitudes of “self-sufficient”²⁴ Russians, who **“cannot succeed without abandoning moral guidelines”**²⁵. More than half of them believe that “personal interests are the main thing for a person” (67%), “to succeed in life, sometimes you have to step over moral principles and norms” (54%).

Is it not an indicator of the penetration of the “metastases” of soullessness deeper and deeper into the state “organism”, gradually spreading from the higher, elite strata of Russian society to general population? Moreover, we leave out the scope of the analysis of the grotesque forms of soullessness that are increasingly appearing on television screens: from the growing virtual fraud, when more

enterprising citizens, using high technologies, “fool” their less enterprising fellow citizens (especially pensioners), to online murders of animals and people for the sake of the so-called “hype” in a virtual environment...

In other words, we cannot ignore the increasingly obvious trend associated with the growth of egoism, individualism, and permissiveness in Russian society, even though it still retains traditional spiritual and moral values (family, patriotism, justice, power, which were proved by the large-scale support of the amendments to the Constitution on

“In the first six months of 2020, a number of phone and Internet fraud cases in Russia increased by 76% compared to the first half of 2019. In 2016–2020, the number of bank card fraud cases increased from 96 to 8,053”²⁶.

“In 12 months, to November 2020, fraudsters could receive at least 0.8–1 billion rubles from users of ad sites and delivery services in Russia...only the largest fraudulent groups could receive more than 660 million rubles due to 111 thousand transfers from bank cards of deceived Russians. Now it is the second largest segment of fraud after banking. DLBI studied the Telegram channels of 116 active groups – despite the fact that there are more than 200 of them, according to the company’s calculations. These channels publish all transactions of transfers from bank cards of victims of fraud. 78 banks were affected, and 81% of transactions pass through Sberbank²⁷”.

²³ Toshchenko Zh.T. *Phantoms of Russian Society*. Moscow: Tsentr sotsial’nogo prognozirovaniya i marketinga, 2015. 668 p.

²⁴ Brief description of “self-sufficient” Russians:

✓ people who “aim to live and provide for themselves and their families independently, without a purposeful appeal to the state” (source: Gorshkov M.K., Sedova N.N. “Self-sufficient” Russians and their life priorities. *Sociological Studies*, 2015, no. 12, pp. 4–16);

✓ “a significant social group, expressing a trend toward the formation of an activist dominant in Russian society” (source: *Russian everyday life in the context of the crisis: how do we live and how do we feel? Information and analytical summary based on the results of the All-Russian study*. Moscow, 2015. P. 16.);

✓ “self-sufficient part of society is localized mainly among young and well-off Russians... the distinctive features of “self-sufficient” Russians are youth, activity, business entrepreneurship, material and social success” (source: *Ibidem*).

²⁵ Gorshkov M.K., Sedova N.N. “Self-sufficient” Russians and their life priorities. *Sociological Studies*, 2015, no. 12, p. 13.

²⁶ Fraud cases rise to record high amid the Pandemic. *RBK*. August 31, 2020. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/society/31/08/2020/5f48ea169a79477e21e25d9d>

²⁷ Tairov P. Experts estimated the volume of fraud for the year on ad services in the amount of up to 1 billion rubles. Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/newsroom/finansy-i-investicii/413309-eksperty-ocenili-obem-moshennichestva-za-god-na-servisah>

July 1, 2020). And even despite the leveling of gender boundaries, gender identity, and other “values” of postmodernism, which in the West have almost become the norm, it is alien and categorically unacceptable for most Russians today.

According to experts, “collective Biden” (even if individually he cannot think clear, it does not matter) has general rational strategy²⁸, therefore, as concrete as the goals of the global elites are, so are the results they have achieved in “eliminating the forms of collective identity”²⁹ by erasing gender, age, national, and other differences to turn a “reasonable person” into a “service person”. The main, and perhaps the only, obstacle to the further penetration of the pro-Western values of the “consumer society” into Russian society is the ideology, which in the Russian Federation is under an official constitutional ban³⁰. In many ways, therefore, the Russian idea is still an amorphous understanding of patriotism, which works flawlessly only in crisis situations.

There are attempts to formulate the main postulates of the Russian ideology, and it is difficult to disagree with them: “spiritual bonds”³¹, “Russian peace”³², “deep state”³³,

“Russian codes”³⁴ – these concepts are related to the ideology of the new post-Soviet state. But they are disparate concepts; they lack unity and consistency (including due to the constitutional ban on official state ideology); they do not “sit in the heads” of ordinary citizens, so, even though they are largely consonant with each other, they do not work as a Large Ideology for a Large Country should – to consolidate society, and not only in crisis moments of history.

The President’s concerns about the dominance of a single ideological point of view are quite understandable and justified. In his first program article, V.V. Putin noted that “if there is a state ideology as something officially blessed and supported by the state, there is, strictly speaking, practically no room for intellectual and spiritual freedom, ideological pluralism, and freedom of the press. And, therefore, no political freedom”³⁵. Nevertheless, in the same article, he calls the “Russian Idea” the primary “chance for a decent future”, and it also says that “achievement of a necessary growth dynamics is not only an economic problem, but also, in a certain sense, an ideological one. More precisely, ideological, spiritual, and moral”³⁶.

²⁸ Dugin A. Geopolitics of Novorossiia 7 years later. *Official website of the Izborsky Club*. April 9, 2021. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/20918>

²⁹ Dugin A. Manifesto of the Great Awakening. *Zavtra*, March 7, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/manifest_velikogo_probuzhdeniya

³⁰ Art. 13 of the Constitution states that “The Russian Federation recognizes ideological diversity. No ideology can be established as a state or mandatory one”.

³¹ V.V. Putin’s speech at Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. September 19, 2013. *Official website of the president of Russia*. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>

³² This term appeared in ancient Russian sources, and its modern interpretation is most often attributed to the first half of the 1990s, and it is associated with the names of P. G. Shchedrovitsky and E. V. Ostrovsky. In modern understanding, there is no precise definition of the concept of the “Russian peace”. At first, it was a cultural and historical idea of an international, interstate, and intercontinental community, aimed at uniting disunited Russian-speaking compatriots; since the 2000s, it has been characterizing not only cultural, but also geopolitical reality.

³³ Surkov V. Putin’s long state. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. February 11, 2019. Available at: https://ng-ru.turbopages.org/ng.ru/s/ideas/2019-02-11/5_7503_surkov.html

³⁴ Prokhanov A. Ideology as a revelation. *Official website of the Izborsky Club*. March 5, 2021. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/20746>

³⁵ Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. December 31, 1999. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

According to experts, following the “Marxist” understanding of ideology as a “manipulative technology of public administration”, the ideology that is **an instrument of “consciousness of society as a total, integral society” is being eliminated in Russia...** This very ideology defines and reproduces the basic model of the unity of a given society, its members’ main models of behavior and thinking, main patterns of coordinated interaction of classes, social groups and strata with each other, the most important patterns of social communication. Besides, it ensures the survival and development of society in history, and it is the most important component of the total system power of a given state³⁷”.

“In 1991, the Soviet state still had a powerful army with nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, numerous divisions, strategic missiles, tens of thousands of tanks, strong special services with rich experience in countering internal and external enemies, it was the second economy in the world, and the CPSU had 18 million members... **But since the consolidating ideology in the Soviet society disappeared, evaporated, the USSR collapsed... and its tens and hundreds of millions of residents watched with indifference and open mouths as they quickly turned from a “great people” into a crowd**”³⁸.

Putin’s personal attempts to formulate the foundations of the state ideology (or national idea), despite his role in the political system and public opinion assessments, are **limited to the elite and remain only public rhetoric against the background of the ideology of “crony capitalism” that they actually build.** In this regard, Russia is

“China is a socialist country. In the materials of the last party congress, they recorded that the main enemy for them is capitalism. What are we building? What kind of friendship can we talk about?”³⁹

“For 25 years, the so-called crony capitalism has been built in Russia. The economic model was imposed on us, and, in fact, we gave our future into someone else’s hands...

Ideologically, we decided to move to a market economy. And we were imposed a certain model of the transition economy. The phrase “transition economies” appeared even in statistics: there were economies of developed countries, developing countries, and instead of socialist economies, transition ones appeared. **This false philosophy led us to a dead end... You see, there were less parasites back then. Today, under the guise of top managers, various servants, protocol, personal planes and palaces, as a result, one with a bipod has seven with a spoon... instead of American modern capitalism, we got something that is well known the literature – crony capitalism, when neither the state, nor the market work...**

The arrival of V.V. Putin saved the country from a collapse. He restored the vertical of power, managed to return constitutional powers to the state, and ensured the unity of the country. There was a small miracle in the economy then – oil prices rose, and suddenly it turned out that we could so easily ride the wave of the world economy on purely raw materials... We were given stabilization. Stabilization in the administrative system, in management, in politics, and in the economy. But this stabilization **consolidated the vicious elements of the economic management system that were formed at that time**”⁴⁰.

significantly inferior to China, and the country can hardly count on a deep ideological tandem with it in the context of increasing geopolitical

³⁷ Sultanov Sh. *Mystique of Ideology. Zavtra*. March 3, 2021. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/mistika_ideologii

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Interview of the President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, Colonel-General L. Ivashov to the newspaper “Argumenty Nedeli” (source: Uglanov A. Russia can still stop the Donbas war. *Argumenty Nedeli*. April 6, 2021).

⁴⁰ Glazyev S. Yu. We have put future in the wrong hands. *Official website of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. December 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.ras.ru/digest/showdnews.aspx?id=08375c9b-f9a9-46ad-972d-ee33c182ded2&print=1>

tensions. The situation in the country is further aggravated by the instability of the internal political situation associated with the new political cycle that will come after the State Duma elections in 2021 and the presidential elections in 2024.

Thus, the answer to the main question, which we put in the title of the article, can be analyzed from two angles:

1. The first angle is tactical. It is the fact that currently (namely, after the victory of J. Biden in the US presidential election), supranational elites start the implementation of an aggressive policy to regain the power over humanity that they were gradually losing. In this context, the lack of spirituality of the Russian elites poses a threat to national security as an inability to effectively respond to the most important demands of society – in achieving social justice, dynamic development of the level and quality of life, as a result of which the internal potential for the consolidation of society and power is lost.

2. The second perspective to look at the consequences of soullessness of the ruling elites is a strategic, deeper one. It is the fact that all the successes achieved in the process of building a new, multipolar model of the world order are in danger of disappearing. From this point of view, we can say that soullessness of the Russian elites is a phenomenon that accompanies the country throughout the entire period of building a new post-Soviet statehood, as a result of which its roots have already begun to spread deeply into all layers of Russian society.. **Soullessness becomes a part of an everyday life**

largely due to the lack of a clear, well-ordered, ideological (or ideological) system shared by the majority of population. While there is no such system, “Russian society continues its hybrid transit to a socio-cultural nowhere” – along the track of “crony capitalism”⁴¹.

“With low moral qualities (and sometimes their complete absence) and a hypertrophied craving for the appropriation of material wealth, **the ruling elite does not need high spiritual values (such as humanity, idealism, self-sacrifice), it prevent them from being in power... Based on this, the ruling elites inculcate total lack of spirituality in its environment and in the surrounding society, depriving people of high human qualities.**

The elite does not need people asking them uncomfortable questions about the immorality of the government itself and making loud statements about the immorality of “high society”. For this purpose, **the ruling elite creates a soulless space around itself**, which, like a poisonous field, spreads among people, seeking to poison social relations. **Citizens who find themselves in a corrupting atmosphere of soullessness, as well as the elite, should become unprincipled, greedy, aggressive, but only in relation to each other.**

It is not difficult for the ruling elite to create mass soullessness throughout the country, since all the mass media-television, radio broadcasting, the press, and the Internet are concentrated in its hands. The ruling elite controls all the key ministries that regulate the spiritual life of people in the state. The elite appoints its protégés to the ministries of education, science, culture, social development, etc., initially defining for them a destructive policy aimed at the decomposition of society in specially created conditions of soullessness”⁴².

⁴¹ Lapin N.I. Finding ways to substantial life changes for the better: professional discourses and algorithm to study ways preferred by the population. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2018, vol. 11, no. 4, p. 83.

⁴² Mamychenko A.V. *Replacement of Destructive Elites. New People of the Creative State. Professional Parliament*. Book 2. Astrakhan: Volga, 2018. P. 90.

In this situation, the optimism is inspired by the fact that the problem of ideology and civilizational identity of Russia, as one of the leading centers of the multipolar world, is increasingly recognized and articulated by domestic scientists, economists, and public figures⁴³. Their specific proposals are not always heard, but it is obvious that they form a certain critical mass, reflecting, among other things, the demand of Russian society for confidence in the future (both within the country and in the external political situation).

This critical mass, in our opinion, led to the change of the liberal Constitution of 1993, making it more social, aimed at the realization of national interests and supporting general population. This was an important step for not only consolidating society in the period of the epidemiological crisis associated with the spread of Covid-19 and stabilizing the country's political system in the conditions of the constitutional restriction of V. Putin's presidential terms, but, in the global historical context, **for forming a barrier to the further development of the values of the "consumer society" in Russia and automatic progress along the path of the "postmodern stage" that is frankly disastrous for the country.**

“Nationalization of elites in a broad sense is the strategic goal of these decisions and actions – to form truly nationally oriented elite that can make the country strong and well-equipped...”

Nationalization of elites is a vital need, which is dictated by objective reality, economic expediency, and nature of the geopolitical situation. Its essence is simple: if you want to remain in an elite environment, be successful in large business, feel confident in the status of a person of a high political or socio-civil level, you must be ready **to significantly restrict your political, economic and civil liberties, be able to consciously subordinate your private interest to the public interest.** This is the main social purpose of a democratic state governed by the rule of law, socially oriented business, civil society, and a spiritually mature creative community”⁴⁴.

Currently, we need a real transition from the declared goals and objectives of development to their practical implementation, which requires **an active continuation of the nationalization of elites as “a set of systemic solutions and actions aimed at reorienting the status positions, lifestyle, and actions of specific representatives of the elite to the interests of society and solving vital problems of their country and their own state”**⁴⁵.

⁴³ See, for example:

Lapin N.I. Hybrid transition and a demand for “modernization for all”. *Bulletin of the Institute of Sociology*, 2018, no. 27, pp. 105–136.

Delyagin M. G. New Russian Ideology. *Official website of M. Delyagin*. February 5, 2021. Available at: <https://delyagin.ru/articles/191-materialy-mgd/88332-novaja-russkaja-ideologija>

Glazyev S. Ideology or death! *Zavtra*. August 20, 2020. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/ideologiya_-_razmishleniya

Prokhanov A. Ideology as a revelation. *Official website of the Izborosky Club*. March 5, 2021. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/20746>

⁴⁴ Latov Yu.V. Discourse on the “nationalization of elite” as an object of sociological analysis. *Sociological Studies*, 2020, no. 11, pp. 128–138.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

This is the only way to make a 180-degree turn from a postmodern society to a society of “real humanism”⁴⁶, from a state of oligarchic capital to a social state “based on Russian (general and regionally specific) and taking into account historically tested foreign forms and methods”⁴⁷.

“... It seems to me that the new Russian idea will be born as a fusion, as an organic combination of universal, universal values with the original Russian values that have stood the test of time...

The key to the revival and rise of Russia is currently in the state-political sphere. Russia needs a strong state power and must have it... A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, legal, and capable federal state”⁴⁸.

It seems that today only the President is able to continue strengthening the foundations of the Russian idea, which he voiced back in 1999 (in the article “Russia at the turn of the millennium”) and which was implemented for real 20 years later in the amendments to the Basic Law initiated by him.

In 2012, the report of the Communication Holding “Minchenko Consulting” was published. It showed the current scheme of the upper level of the ruling elites, called “Politburo 2.0” by experts.

Probably, over the past 10 years, there have been no significant transformations in the “Politburo 2.0”, since there are no radical changes in the efficiency of economic development and improvement in the quality of life among general population.

“The ruling elite of Russia can be described in the model of the Soviet collective power body – the Politburo of the CC CPSU. Informal network structure of the coordination of interests of the main elite clans, in which the arbiter and most influential figure is Vladimir Putin...

In the 2000s, under the influence of several factors... a style of political decision-making has emerged into something that increasingly resembles the model of the Soviet Politburo, or “Political Bureau 2.0”. The transition to this model was facilitated by the emphasis on the creation of state corporations – “national champions”, made in politics and in the economy.

The specifics of the “Politburo 2.0” are that it, first of all, rarely meets at general meetings. Second, the formal status of its members does not always correlate with a real influence on the decision-making process. Third, several elite circles have formed around the “Politburo 2.0”, which can be conditionally designated as “power”, “political”, “technical”, and “entrepreneurial”. These circles, on the one hand, are the mainstay of the “Politburo 2.0” in the process of power, and, on the other hand, they themselves compete with each other for influence on the “Politburo 2.0”...”⁴⁹.

Today, it is difficult to predict the further development of the international situation and the upcoming decisions by the President regarding the modernization of the public administration system. However, it is obvious that modern conditions display the need to implement new tasks to ensure the worthy competitiveness of the Russian Federation in domestic socio-economic development and in external political arena.

⁴⁶ Lapin N.I. Humanist choice of Russian population and focuses of Russian sociology. *Sociological Studies*, 2016, no. 5, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Lapin N.I. Formation of a social state as a way of successful evolution of society. *Sociological Studies*, 2018, no. 8, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Putin V.V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. December 31, 1999.

⁴⁹ V. Putin’s Big Government and the Politburo 2.0: Report. Communication Holding “Minchenko Consulting”. 2012. Pp. 3–4.

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