

EDITORIAL

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The Russian Federation in the First Quarter of the 21st Century. The President Has Set Tasks until 2030



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Abstract. March 15–17, 2024, the presidential election will be held in Russia. The election will take place in a very specific context due to the ongoing special military operation, aggravating threats to national security posed by NATO countries, and a range of internal changes that Russia has been going through since the beginning of the special military operation. Against the background of the alarming situation around Russia, the RF President delivered his annual Address to the RF Federal Assembly on February 29, 2024; he presented a program of actions and specific public policy measures for the next six years (until 2030). The Address had certain aspects reminding of an election speech and was intended not only for government bodies at all levels of public authority, but also the broad strata of Russian society. In fact, the head of state outlined the contours of Russia's future for the next political cycle, and this is important amid uncertainty and a high level of risks that the country is facing at

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the present historical moment (after the start of the SMO). The article presents our own approach to analyzing the current situation in the country (including the 2024 presidential election), based on our long-term monitoring of public administration effectiveness, the system-wide nature of which is determined by the comprehensiveness of the empirical base (analysis of national and regional statistics, including those of own compilation; sociological surveys, analysis of expert assessments and key decisions taken by the President and the RF Federal Assembly). Scientific novelty of the study lies in a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of public administration during Vladimir Putin's first four presidential terms (2000–2024), that is, during the first quarter of the 21st century. In this context, we analyze general goals, objectives, and principles of public administration formulated by Vladimir Putin as he assumed office as president for the first time; key initiatives and decisions he adopted in order to address the tasks set; internal and external conditions in which the head of state had to achieve national development goals; key stages that the country went through over the past 23 years; and the main results with which it “approached” the beginning of a new political cycle.

Key words: 2024 presidential election, Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, national development goals, civilizational crisis, sovereignty, national identity.

February 29, 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered his annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, which (as experts noted) became “**one of the most powerful presidential addresses in recent years**”¹. “Vladimir Putin has clearly set Russia's priorities on the world stage, our goals and interests, development strategy and the future of the world order”².

Addressing the Federal Assembly and the citizens of the country as a whole, Vladimir Putin stressed that “even during the most difficult periods, Russia has never given up on addressing its fundamental imperatives, has always thought about the future, and we must do the same now”³.

In 2024, the Presidential Address has a special significance for the country.

“The primary purpose of every Address to the Federal Assembly is to offer a forward-looking perspective. Today, we will discuss not only our short-term plans, but also our strategic objectives and matters which, I believe, are instrumental in ensuring steady long-term development for our country”⁴.

First, it has some features of an election campaign speech: on March 15–17, 2024, the presidential election will be held in Russia, and the assessments of almost all experts, as well as opinion polls, indicate that Vladimir Putin will be second-to-none.

¹ The time of heroes. Experts on the main theses of Vladimir Putin's Address: An opinion of political scientist Yu. Baranchik. Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/ZeCW4uD3O2gHCJ-s>

² Russia acts as a driver for the formation of a future just world order: An opinion of V. Shapovalov, project manager of the Expert Institute for Social Research. Available at: <https://vz.ru/news/2024/2/29/1255873.html>

³ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁴ Ibidem.

According to VCIOM, 76% of Russians plan to participate in the presidential election, while 75% are going to vote for Vladimir Putin⁵.

“The presidential election is, doubtless, the crucial political event in the life of the country. And it may sound dramatic, but the 2024 election will have **global importance**. It will be watched all over the world – by our friends and by our so-called partners...

The upcoming election will be unique, because never in recent history have we been at such a difficult and, perhaps, fateful phase in the country’s life... We can assume that the upcoming campaign will be one of the defining moments in the process of forming an **updated value framework of Russian society**. The country will choose both the president and the **long-term semantic and ideological trend of its future life...** Of course, Vladimir Putin will have competitors, but their role has already been largely **predetermined by the situation**⁶.

This is largely why (or, in part, as an indication of the importance of complying with the Law on Strategic Planning⁷) “the program of actions and concrete measures” voiced in the Presidential Address was considered “in the horizon of the next six years”⁸ (2024–2030; *Insert 1*).

Second, the main feature of the latest Presidential Address consists in the fact that the election of the head of state in 2024 will be held **in a very special context** due to the SMO (which has been going on for two years) and the unprecedented threats to Russia’s national security from NATO member states. This circumstance makes the results of the vote so important: indeed, the country, as experts note, “will choose both the president and the **long-term semantic and ideological trend of its future life**”⁹.

The acute phase of the Russia–NATO conflict, into which our country was drawn as a result (there is no denying that) of a rather successful U.S. strategy to foment a de facto civil war between fraternal Slavic peoples, takes place not only on the battlefield, but also in all spheres of life:

⁵ Russian presidential election 2024: The first rating. VCIOM analytical review. February 10, 2024. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/vybory-2024-reitingi-kandidatov>

⁶ RIA-novosti. December 10, 2023 (an opinion of K. Kostin, head of the Civil Society Development Fund). Available at: <https://ria.ru/20231210/vybory-1914947523.html>

⁷ Federal Law 172-FZ, dated June 28, 2014 (amended February 17, 2023) “On strategic planning in the Russian Federation” assumes the development and adjustment of key strategic planning documents **every six years**. Such documents include:

- ✓ Strategy for socio-economic development of the Russian Federation (Article 16),
- ✓ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation (Article 18),
- ✓ Long-term forecast of socio-economic development of the Russian Federation (Article 24),
- ✓ Main activities of the Government of the Russian Federation (Article 27),
- ✓ Plan of actions for the federal executive authority (Article 31),
- ✓ Forecast of socio-economic development of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation (Article 33).

⁸ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁹ RIA-novosti. December 10, 2023 (an opinion of K. Kostin, head of the Civil Society Development Fund). Available at: <https://ria.ru/20231210/vybory-1914947523.html>

Some key goals and objectives planned for the next six years (by 2030)¹⁰

- ✓ Poverty level in Russia should be below 7%; among large families, it should decrease more than twofold, at least to 12%;
- ✓ maternity capital and the family mortgage program should be prolonged;
- ✓ life expectancy in Russia should reach at least 78 years;
- ✓ by 2030 to complete the major repairs of all schools; to open 12 leadership-level educational schools, 25 university campuses; to carry out major repairs of about 800 dormitories of higher education institutions and universities;
- ✓ minimum wage in Russia should reach 35 thousand rubles;
- ✓ total investments of the state and business in research and development should be more than doubled, their share should reach 2% of GDP;
- ✓ to increase investments in science by private business at least twofold;
- ✓ the volume of production of the Russian agro-industrial complex should grow by at least a quarter compared to 2021, exports should increase 1.5-fold;
- ✓ by 2030 it is necessary to create digital platforms in all key sectors of the economy and social sphere;
- ✓ to fix the main tax parameters until 2030 and thereby ensure stable and predictable conditions for the implementation of any, including long-term, investment projects;
- ✓ by 2030 to restore at least a thousand cultural heritage sites, to improve more than 30 thousand public spaces;
- ✓ by 2030 to allocate 4.5 trillion rubles for the modernization of municipal infrastructure;
- ✓ by 2030 the tourist flow should double and reach 140 million people per year; at the same time, the contribution of tourism to Russia's GDP will also double to 5%;
- ✓ by 2030 the intensity of air traffic in Russia should increase by one and a half times the level of last year;
- ✓ to prepare a draft budget for the next three years and make up all the main expenses and investments further – for the period up to 2030;
- ✓ in the next six years more than a trillion rubles will be additionally allocated for the construction, repair and equipping of healthcare facilities;
- ✓ extension of the Priority 2030 Program until 2030, aimed at supporting the potential and quality of the higher school and universities;
- ✓ the share of Russian high-tech goods and services in the domestic market over the next six years should increase 1.5-fold and the volume of non-primary, non-energy exports by at least two thirds;
- ✓ in the next six years the level of gross value added of the Russian manufacturing industry should increase by at least 40% compared to 2022;
- ✓ average income per employee in the field of small and medium-sized business in the next six years should grow faster than the rate of GDP growth;
- ✓ to allocate at least 700 billion rubles for the implementation of the Data Economy project in the next six years;
- ✓ allocate more than 100 billion rubles for educational, historical and other popular creative projects in cinema, on the Internet and social medias;
- ✓ over the past 16 years one million 730 thousand people have moved into new apartments; in the next six years it is important not to reduce the dynamics; the Government should prepare and launch a new program for the resettlement of emergency housing;
- ✓ at least 50 sites with high environmental risks (the most dangerous objects of accumulated environmental damage) should be eliminated.

¹⁰ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

politics, economics and, most importantly, culture, in the field of moral values. In this sense, one cannot but agree with experts who claim that this conflict is of a **civilizational nature**. “Now Russia is facing not only a traditional military and political challenge, but also a threat **at the level of identity and history, which determines the existential nature of the current conflict**”¹¹.

This is also evidenced by numerous public statements made by western politicians since the beginning of the SMO and revealing the true goals of the Collective West: the goals that have nothing to do with “protecting democracy in Ukraine”; the goals that imply “cancelling Russia” and “inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia”.

“In order to effectively confront the West in the war of civilizations that Russia is already involved in, it is necessary to take into account the hierarchy of plans. The highest level is identity:

- what is the identity of the enemy (who are we fighting?);
- what is our own identity;
- what is the identity of other civilizational actors?

It is necessary to start with the above civilizational map... **only a civilizational approach allows us to talk about sovereign public consciousness, and, therefore, about sovereign science and sovereign education...** This is a final warning for Russian humanities: either we move quickly to the paradigm of a civilizational approach (Russia = sovereign civilization), or we write a letter of dismissal”¹².

In the Editorial section of our journal, we regularly present the opinions of experts (such as A. Dugin, A. Fursov, etc.) who adhere to the civilizational approach, considering the history of Russia’s development in the context of the **centuries-old** confrontation between the Russian and the Anglo-Saxon civilizations.

“The Western elite make no secret of their goal, which is, I quote, ‘Russia’s strategic defeat’... **This means they plan to finish us once and for all**”¹³.

“The whole of geopolitics is based on the consideration of the eternal confrontation between the civilization of the Sea (thalassocracy) and the civilization of the Land (tellurocracy). Vivid expressions of these principles in ancient times were found in the confrontations of land-based Sparta and the harbor city of Athens, land-based Rome and the maritime Carthage... As politics became global, these two civilizations finally acquired a spatial embodiment. Russia – Eurasia became the core of the Land civilization, and the pole of the Sea civilization became entrenched in the zone of Anglo-Saxon influence: from the British Empire to the United States and the NATO bloc. This is how geopolitics sees the history of the latest centuries...”¹⁴

“Our task is to survive and preserve ourselves as a special socio-cultural type, as a special variant of civilization... **the survival and preservation of the population, the preservation of us as a socio-cultural type, a special historical one, which is at least a thousand years old. This is, if you like, a national idea. But I would say it is a civilizational idea**”¹⁵.

¹¹ Yakovenko A.V. The world in the horizon of 2040. Horizon 2040. November 14, 2023. P. 475. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

¹² Dugin A.G. Civilizational approach. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/tcivilizatcionnij_podhod

¹³ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

¹⁴ Dugin A.G. Ukraine as an Armageddon field. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24378>

¹⁵ What awaits Russia. Opinion of Andrey Fursov. Available at: <https://proza.ru/2022/07/26/404>

However, the specifics of our approach lies in analyzing the transformation of the Russian state and society over a more limited historical period of time: in the post-Soviet period, or, rather, during Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms (from 2000 to the present), largely because this period of time is taking place “here and now”, “before our eyes”, and we are not just researchers of the past, but direct participants in the current events.

Considering this phase in Russia’s history (national and global events; key decisions made by the President; processes taking place in the public administration system; dynamics of public sentiment, etc.), we see that the 2024 presidential election is important not only in the context of the events taking place after February 24, 2022; it is also a critical stage in the **entire historical**

development of the Russian Federation over the past 24 years and a foundation for its further development in the coming decades.

It is worth noting that if Vladimir Putin wins the upcoming election, this will be one of the longest periods in the history of Russia when one and the same person is the head of state¹⁶. If such a period is interrupted, this may cause another “trauma” in society, like it was after the collapse (or rather the demise) of the USSR, a purposeful act orchestrated by the United States within the framework of the Cold War, with direct participation of Russian elites who committed national betrayal in the 1986–1990s.¹⁷

Objective data from official statistics clearly demonstrate the extent and depths of social implications of the “trauma”, which is putting the very existence of the country at risk (*Tab. 1, 2*).

¹⁶ Only six people in the history of Russia ruled the country for 30 years or more:

Ivan IV Vasilyevich (Ivan the Terrible) (January 16, 1547 – March 18, 1584; 37 years);

Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov (February 21, 1613 – July 13, 1645; 32 years);

Alexey Mikhailovich (July 13, 1645 – January 29, 1676; 31 years);

Peter the Great (April 27, 1682 – October 22, 1721; ruled jointly with Ivan V until 1696; 39 years);

Catherine II (Catherine the Great) (June 28, 1762 – November 6, 1796; 34 years);

Joseph Stalin (April 3, 1922 – March 5, 1953; 31 years).

¹⁷ In our opinion, comprehensive information about this is presented in the newspaper *Pravda* in its section “Disguises of werewolves” which publishes materials of interviews with RAS Corresponding Member Zh.T. Toshchenko. The purpose of these articles (according to the section contributors) is “to consider the personal historical guilt of especially odious traitors [Yeltsin, Kalugin, Yakovlev, Sobchak, Nemtsov, etc.], **which has no statute of limitations...**”. Some issues of the section are as follows:

1. Political nonentity. *Pravda*, 2021, no. 69, July 2–5.

2. Disguises of werewolves. *Pravda*, 2021, no. 93, August 27–30.

3. “Shock therapist” Gaidar acted recklessly and mercilessly. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 20, February 25–28.

4. How many people remember who Burbulis is? *Pravda*, 2022, no. 28, March 18–21.

5. This Kozyrev used other people’s trumps in his game. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 40, April 15–18.

6. Berezovsky’s Diaboliad. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 64, June 17–20.

7. The abyss of betrayal – Alexander Yakovlev. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 91, August 19–22.

8. An insidious knife in the back of state security. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 106, September 23–26.

9. He became a murderer of his country. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 108, October 1–4.

10. Sobchak is a narcissistic talker and poseur. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 114, October 15–18.

11. The Nemtsov family outdid Khlestakov himself. *Pravda*, 2022, no. 132, November 25–28.

Table 1. Dynamics of the spread of some social pathologies in Russia in 1990–1999, per 100 thousand people

Indicator	1990	1999	Dynamics, 1999 to 1990, %
Suicide death rate	26.4	39.3	149
Homicide death rate	14.3	26.2	183
Death rate from accidental alcohol poisoning	10.8	20.5	190
Incidence of drug addiction and substance abuse	4.3	43.0	1000
Number of persons who committed a crime, thousand people	897.3	1716.7	191

Source: Federal State Statistics Service.

Table 2. Dynamics of the standard of living indicators (1994–1999)

Indicator	1994	1999	Dynamics, %
Number of people with incomes below the subsistence level, million people	33.3	43.8	132
Number of people with incomes below the subsistence level, % of the population	22.4	29.9	133
Unemployment rate, % of the economically active working age population	8.2	13.0	159

Source: Federal State Statistics Service.

We should emphasize that the main cause of the “traumatization” of Russian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the very collapse of the USSR, which (as Zh.T. Toshchenko points out) **“disrupted the progressive development of the state and society”**¹⁸.

“Progressive development of the state and society” is a feature that can be applied to modern

“The radical changes that took place in Soviet/Russian society during perestroika and then in the 1991–2000s caused the emergence and consolidation of new traumatic features (characteristics) of public consciousness... First of all, there was a disorientation and disorganization of public consciousness... Of particular importance... was its traumatization, expressed in a split, bifurcation, inconsistency and conflict of development”¹⁹.

Russia. The unified management style implemented by Vladimir Putin since 2000 and up to the present allows us to consider the past 24 years as a **separate historical phase in Russia’s development**. This period has its own goals and objectives; it is united by the basic principles of government. It has its own periodization, logic of development, and its own results, as well (so far, they are intermediate).

The **goals and objectives** of national development were outlined by the President back in 1999 in his first program article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium”, in which Vladimir Putin noted: “The chances for a decent future are as follows: **the Russian idea, a strong state and an efficient economy**”²⁰.

These guidelines, although they seem rather broad, actually became the basis for Vladimir Putin’s practical actions, concrete legislative decisions taken by the head of state and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation throughout the period from 2000 to the present (*Insert 2*).

¹⁸ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2015). *Phantoms of Russian Society*. Moscow: Center for Social Forecasting and Marketing. Pp. 19, 37.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Russia at the turn of the Millennium. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. December 30, 1999. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html

Insert 2

Key decisions taken by the RF President during the period from 2000 to the present, for the implementation of the three national development goals outlined in the article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium”

<p>GOAL – THE “RUSSIAN IDEA” (DIRECTION / OBJECTIVES: RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT, STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY)</p>
<p>April 4, 2005 – Federal Law 32 “On the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation”. The RF Civic Chamber and civic councils have been established.</p>
<p>September 5, 2005 – the launch of priority national projects in the Russian Federation was announced; the purpose of the projects was to concentrate budgetary and administrative resources in the main areas of socio-economic development (October 21, 2005, the Council for the Implementation of Priority National Projects was formed under the head of state for the purpose of developing measures aimed at the implementation of national projects).</p>
<p>January 1, 2006 – Russia started the implementation of four national projects: “Health”, “Affordable and comfortable housing for Russian citizens”, “Education”, and “Development of the agro-industrial complex (AIC)”.</p>
<p>June 28, 2007 – Presidential Decree 825 “On evaluating the effectiveness of the executive authorities of constituent entities of the Russian Federation”. For the first time, the list of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the work of executive authorities was supplemented by assessment of the degree of satisfaction on the part of the population.</p>
<p>May 6, 2011 – RF President proposed the formation of the All-Russian Popular Front.</p>
<p>March 21, 2014 – Federal Law “On ratification of the treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on the admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the formation of new constituent entities within the Russian Federation”.</p>
<p>December 31, 2015 – Presidential Decree 683 “On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation”. For the first time, it is indicated that the main task is to prevent threats from NATO (USA).</p>
<p>June 25 – July 1, 2020 – all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution; 77.9% of voters (57.7 million people) voted for changing the Constitution.</p>
<p>July 2, 2021 – a new National Security Strategy was adopted (in which, as experts noted, for the first time, the system of national values or moral and spiritual values was “prominently marked ... and ideological leadership, which is necessary in the world, is designated as a separate priority”²¹).</p>
<p>July 30, 2021 – Interdepartmental Commission on Historical Education was created.</p>
<p>December 17, 2021 – the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry posted Russian draft documents on ensuring legal guarantees of security by the United States and NATO; the documents contain the following provision (Article 4): “The Russian Federation and all the Parties that were member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as of 27 May 1997, respectively, shall not deploy military forces and weaponry on the territory of any of the other States in Europe in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997”. These and other demands for security guarantees from Russia were ignored by the United States and NATO countries, as they announced through the media on January 26, 2022.</p>
<p>February 24, 2022 – in his address to Russians, the RF President announced the beginning of a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine.</p>

²¹ An opinion of A. Podberezkin, director of the MGIMO Center for Military and Political Studies (source: Experts assessed the changes in the national security strategy signed by Putin. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/03/07/2021/60e0a1c79a7947a36edadc3d>).

Continuation of Insert 2

July 14, 2022 – Federal Law 261 “On the Russian Movement of Children and Youth”.
July 31, 2022 – the Naval Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the Naval Charter of the Navy were approved.
October 4, 2022 – federal constitutional laws 5–8 on the entry into the Russian Federation of four new constituent entities (DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions).
November 9, 2022 – Presidential Decree 809 “On approval of the foundations of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”.
January 25, 2023 – Decree 808 “On amendments to the fundamentals of state cultural policy approved by Presidential Decree dated December 24, 2014”.
February 28, 2023 – Federal Law “On amendments to the federal law on the state language of the Russian Federation”.
March 31, 2023 – Presidential Decree 229 “On approval of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation”.
June 24, 2023 – Federal Law 264 “On amendments to the federal law “On education in the Russian Federation””.
GOAL – “ STRONG STATE ” (DIRECTION / OBJECTIVES: STRENGTHENING THE VERTICAL OF POWER AND INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY; STRENGTHENING THE STATE’S DEFENSE CAPABILITY)
May 13, 2000 – Presidential Decree 849 “On the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the federal district”. The Northwestern, Central, Siberian, Volga, Southern, Far Eastern, and Ural federal districts were formed. In 2010, the North Caucasus Federal District was added to them.
December 1, 2000 – a decree was signed on the establishment of the Committee of the Russian Federation for Military-Technical Cooperation with Foreign States (KVTS) – the federal executive authority for the regulation and control of arms exports (in 2004, KVTS was reorganized into the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation under the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation; State Defense Order – into the Federal Service for Defense Order under the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation)
March 23, 2003 – the Constitution of Chechnya was adopted, a referendum was held on draft laws on the election of the President and Parliament of the Republic. As a result, “all constituent entities of the federation were returned to a single legal field and started functioning as a single organism” ²² .
October 6, 2003 – Federal Law 131 “On the general principles of organizing local self-government in the Russian Federation”. A uniform territorial organization of local self-government was established for all constituent entities of the Russian Federation.
March 20, 2006 – the Military-Industrial Commission under the Government of Russia was formed.
March 1, 2007 – Rosoboronexport became the single state mediator in military-and-technological cooperation.

²² Reliance on the majority of Russians. March 28, 2023 (an assessment by E. Bulychev, arbitrator of the Arbitration Center at the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, member of the Academic Council and head of the Department of Research on Administrative Law Problems at the Eurasian Research Institute of Law Problems). Available at: <https://ufa.bezformata.com/listnews/opora-na-bolshestvo-rossiyan/115663442/>

Continuation of Insert 2

June 8, 2012 – Federal Law 65-FZ “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation and the Federal Law ‘On assemblies, rallies, demonstrations, marches and picketing’”. The maximum fines for violations at mass rallies were increased.
July 21, 2012 – “Law on NPOs – foreign agents”.
July 30, 2012 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation” (“defamation law”).
August 2012 – Since this year, experts have noted the emergence of the “Politburo 2.0.” in the public administration system, which is characterized as “a conglomerate of clans and groups that compete with each other for resources... inside Putin’s “big government” ²³ .
From 2014 to 2017 , there were a number of “high-profile” criminal cases against officials of various levels: on November 14, 2016, for the first time in the history of Russia, acting Minister of Economic Development A. Ulyukayev was detained. Governors V. Yurchenko (Novosibirsk Region, 2014), A. Khoroshavin (Sakhalin, 2015), N. Denin (Bryansk Region, 2015), V. Gaizer (Komi, 2015), N. Belykh (Kirov Region, 2016), A. Solovyov (Udmurtia, 2017), etc. were also arrested.
January 21, 2020 – the new Cabinet of Ministers under the leadership of M. V. Mishustin started working. Out of 11 deputy and first deputy prime ministers there are only three people from the previous team.
June 4, 2021 – Federal Law 157 “On amendments to Article 4 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum for citizens of the Russian Federation” and Article 4 of the Federal Law “On elections of deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”. The Federal Law officially prohibits extremist organizations from participating in elections, which in fact “nullified” the activities of Navalny’s headquarters*
March 4, 2022 – Federal Law 31 “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation” and Federal Law 32 “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Articles 31 and 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability was established for public actions aimed at discrediting the Armed Forces of Russia, and criminal liability for the public dissemination, under the guise of reliable reports, of deliberately false information containing data on the use of the Armed Forces of Russia.
July 14, 2022 – Federal Law 255 “On control over the activities of persons under foreign influence”.
September 21, 2022 – Decree “On the announcement of partial mobilization in the Russian Federation”.
September 24, 2022 – Federal Law 365 “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and Article 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation is supplemented with the terms “mobilization”, “martial law” and “wartime” (penalties are tightened in appropriate periods); new articles “Voluntary surrender” (Article 352.1; from 3 to 10 years of imprisonment) and “Looting” (Article 356.1; up to 15 years).
November 27, 2023 – Federal Law 555 “On amendments to the Federal Law on the state defense order”. A federal product cataloging system for federal needs is being created.

²³ “Vladimir Putin’s Big Government and the Politburo 2.0”: The report by Minchenko Consulting Communication Group. August 2012. Available at: <https://minchenko.ru/analitika/?curPos=65>

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

End of Insert 2

GOAL – “EFFICIENT ECONOMY” (DIRECTION / OBJECTIVES: STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY, IMPROVING THE STANDARD OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE)
January 1, 2001 – a flat scale for income tax with a rate of 13% was introduced (which, 20 years later, the head of the Government of the Russian Federation called “a revolutionary and tough decision for that time” ²⁴).
2001 – Vladimir Putin proposed to create a reserve of funds from oil and gas revenues.
January 1, 2002 – amendments were made to the Tax Code of the Russian Federation (a tax on mining was introduced), which forced the oligarchic clan to share its income with the state, as a result of which by 2002 budget revenues increased to 2204.7 billion rubles, that is, 3.6-fold, compared with 1999.
2004 – the Stabilization Fund was established, which provided additional stability to public finances.
May 7, 2012 – 11 “May decrees” of the RF President containing more than 2,018 instructions to the Government of the Russian Federation
June 15, 2012 – Decree “On the Commission under the President of the Russian Federation on the development strategy for the fuel and energy complex and environmental safety”.
June 18, 2012 – Presidential Decree 859 “On the Council under the President of the Russian Federation for economic modernization and innovative development of Russia”.
May 7, 2018 – Presidential Decree 204 “On national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024”.
July 21, 2020 – Decree on the national development goals of Russia until 2030.
May 3, 2022 – Presidential Decree 252 “On the application of retaliatory special economic measures in connection with unfriendly actions of some foreign countries and international organizations”.
December 31, 2022 – Presidential Decree 996 “On additional social guarantees for military personnel and persons with special police ranks undergoing military service (service) in the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation, and their family members”.
April 3, 2023 – Presidential Decree 232 “On the creation of the state fund “Defenders of the Fatherland” to support participants in the special military operation”.
September 11, 2023 – Presidential Decree 669 “On monthly compensation payments to certain categories of military personnel”.
January 15, 2024 – Decree 36 “On amendments to Presidential Decree 1666, dated December 19, 2012 “On the Strategy for the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” and to the Strategy approved by this Decree”.
January 23, 2024 – Decree 63 “On measures of social support for large families”.

²⁴ Mishustin called the introduction of a flat personal income tax scale revolutionary. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfree/news/602a28b79a79479e34c54db0>

The facts presented in *Insert 2* indicate that all the key management decisions made by Vladimir Putin over the past 24 years were aimed at the implementation of the guidelines he had announced at the very beginning of his work as president.

And during the same period, he publicly announced the **principles of public administration** that he was guided by throughout his presidential terms: **personal responsibility and state interests**.

“In Russia the head of state has always been and will always be the person who is responsible for everything in the country... my work will be guided solely by the interests of the state. Perhaps it will not be possible to avoid mistakes, but what I can promise and what I do promise is that I will work openly and honestly”²⁵.

We should note that these principles manifested themselves not in the public rhetoric of the head of state, but in practice, when the President had to deal with one of the most “painful” issues at that time – the power of the oligarchs.

February 28, 2000 (in fact, on the eve of the presidential election held on March 26), Vladimir Putin announced to the “high and mighties” the

principle of “equidistance of all market entities from power”. He stressed that nothing can be done in the country without creating “absolutely equal conditions” for all market participants and participants in the game on the political stage; and that this is “essentially the **process of creating a new image of the country**”.

“We believe that all the players in politics and the economy **must have a level playing field so that nobody can gain any advantages by cozying up to the authorities from the left or the right...** Nothing can be accomplished without solving this issue. That is why the building of a legal structure and the fight against corruption take on such importance. This is not just routine work in the law enforcement field. It is, in effect, about **creating a new image of the country**”²⁶.

At the same meeting, the oligarchs received a clear signal that work should be conducted around **the national idea, rather than a particular political figure**; this dealt a blow to the very essence of the so-called “semibankirshchina”²⁷, the most notorious representatives of which were subsequently either arrested or ousted from the country.

²⁵ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Inauguration Ceremony, May 7, 2000. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21399/videos>

²⁶ Vladimir Putin’s opening address at a meeting with high-level campaign workers, February 28, 2000. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24146>

²⁷ The term “*semibankirshchina*” (“seven bankers”) was used in the Russian media in 1996 and several subsequent years to name a group of the largest representatives of the Russian financial business (oligarchs) who played a significant political and economic role, owned the media, and informally united, despite internal disagreements, in order to ensure the re-election of Boris Yeltsin for the next term in the 1996 presidential election.

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

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

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

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

“I don’t think our campaign should center around a concrete political figure; instead, we **should effectively unite around a political theme, around ideas** that appeal to the majority of the country’s people”²⁸.

The principle of “hands-on control” manifested itself throughout virtually all of Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms:

- ✓ in the very nature of the public administration system, which experts called “Politburo 2.0” in 2012²⁹, and in which the President plays the role of “chief arbiter”;

- ✓ in making a decision on the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation (2014);

- ✓ in the amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation initiated by the head of state, which required, among other things, a change of the Government (2020)³⁰;

- ✓ during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- ✓ and, of course, in making a decision to start the SMO and in Vladimir Putin’s actions in the subsequent period, when he, as “the person responsible for everything in the country”, was required to fulfill the role of not only the head of the

public administration system, but also the supreme commander-in-chief, and the national leader around whom society is consolidating.

Thus, the goals, objectives, practical actions and principles that guided Vladimir Putin over the past 24 years were formulated and publicly announced at the very beginning of his presidential activity, and today they form the unity of the historical process within which the country was developing during this period.

Moreover, the progression of Russia’s historical development was preserved, even though the external and internal conditions were changing, and the world itself changed dramatically.

“...both Russia and the world have seen drastic, and even **dramatic, colossal changes**. Twenty years is not a long period by historical standards, but during eras when **the entire world order is crumbling**, time seems to shrink... **More events have taken place in the past 20 years than over decades in some historical periods before, and it was major changes that dictated the fundamental transformation of the very principles of international relations**”³¹.

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

²⁹ “Vladimir Putin’s Big Government and the Politburo 2.0”: The report by Minchenko Consulting Communication Group. August 2012. Available at: <https://minchenko.ru/analitika/?curPos=65>

³⁰ Voting on amendments to the Constitution took place between June 25 and July 1, 2020 (78% of voters, or 58 million people, voted in favor of amending the country’s Basic Law). But for the first time, it was the President of the Russian Federation who made this initiative during his annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on January 15, 2020.

³¹ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, October 5, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/72444>

The context in which the President implemented national development tasks prove that the **entire history of Russia over almost a quarter of a century has been the history of its struggle to strengthen national sovereignty, to revise the results of the Cold War and the positions the country had lost under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, and a struggle against the Collective West trying to hamper this process.**

1. “For a country like Russia, existence, mere existence, is impossible without sovereignty. Without sovereignty, Russia would cease to exist”³².

2. “...I think this is important for everyone that **no enduring international order is possible without a strong and sovereign Russia**”³³.

“The concentration of power in the hands of Yeltsin and his clique has led to a **historical disaster**. It brought about the **death of almost 10 million people** who did not survive the “reforms” of the 1990s; the **collapse of most of the industry and agriculture; the loss of all foreign policy positions**. **This is, in fact, an external management regime**, when American advisers were sitting in Russia’s ministries and dictating what to do and how to do it”³⁴.

In his recent public speeches, Vladimir Putin pointed out that in the early 2000s he tried to integrate Russia “into the family of so-called

civilized countries”, and “suggested Russia’s accession to NATO” (*Insert 3*).

However, the only Russia that was acceptable to the West and with which it could coexist was a Russia of the 1990s, or (in the words of Western politicians themselves) a “gas station masquerading as a country”³⁵. The reasons for this (according to experts) are “**the unwillingness to deal with Russian Federation as a global competitor, the desire at all costs to preserve the formal and informal rules of the game that were established in 1987–1994 and that are unilaterally beneficial for the Collective West**”³⁶.

“The so-called West, with its colonial practices and penchant for inciting ethnic conflicts around the world, not only seeks to impede our progress but also **envisions a Russia that is a dependent, declining, and dying space where they can do as they please**”³⁷.

The President found such a Russia unacceptable, and he openly stated this, **addressing the Western political establishment directly** on February 10, 2007, during his speech at the Munich Security Conference: “Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy. **We are not going to change this tradition today...**”³⁸

³² Results of the year with Vladimir Putin, December 14, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72994>

³³ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

³⁴ Afonin Yu. Yeltsin is a traitor and the personification of catastrophes. Available at: <https://kprfrzn.ru/analitika/jurij-afonin-elcin-predatel-i-olicetvorenje-katastrof>

³⁵ U.S. Senator John McCain. Available at: <https://russian.rt.com/inotv/2014-03-16/Makkejn-Rossiya---eto-benzokolonka>

³⁶ Belousov D.R. Socioculture-2040: A challenge to the integrity of society – a view from the side of technology development. *Horizon 2040*. P. 391. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

³⁷ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

³⁸ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference, February 10, 2007. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

Excerpts from public speeches by Russian President Vladimir Putin on attempts to build peaceful relations with NATO countries

1. "...I've already said that, no secret here, **we did offer every option to our Western partners, as I used to call them, we thought we were one of them, we wanted to be in the family of so-called civilized nations.** I reached out to NATO suggesting that we look into that possibility, but we were quickly shown the door; they didn't even bother to consider it"³⁹.
2. "I have said this publicly to both our allies and partners. There was a moment when I simply suggested: **perhaps we should also join NATO? But no, NATO does not need a country like ours.** No. I want to know, what else do they need? We thought we became part of the crowd, got a foot in the door. What else were we supposed to do? **There was no more ideological confrontation. What was the problem? I guess the problem was their geopolitical interests and arrogance towards others. Their self-aggrandizement was and is the problem**"⁴⁰.
3. "... The second point is a very important one. I want you as an American citizen **and your viewers to hear about this as well.** The former Russian leadership assumed that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist and therefore there were no longer any ideological dividing lines. Russia even agreed, voluntarily and proactively, to the collapse of the Soviet Union and believed that this would be understood by the so-called (now in scare quotes) "civilized West" as an invitation for cooperation and associatenesship. That is what Russia was expecting both from the United States and the so-called Collective West as a whole ...after 1991, when Russia expected that it would be welcomed into the brotherly family of "civilized nations," nothing like that happened... Well, I became President in 2000. I thought: okay, the Yugoslav issue is over, but we should try to restore relations. **Let's reopen the door that Russia had tried to go through.** And moreover, I've said it **publicly**, I can reiterate. At a meeting here in the Kremlin with the outgoing President Bill Clinton, right here in the next room, I said to him, I asked him, "Bill, do you think if Russia asked to join NATO, do you think it would happen?" Suddenly he said: "You know, it's interesting, I think yes." But in the evening, when we had dinner, he said, "You know, I've talked to my team, no-no, it's not possible now." You can ask him, I think he will watch our interview, he'll confirm it. I wouldn't have said anything like that if it hadn't happened. Okay, well, it's impossible now... **I asked the question, "Is it possible or not?" And the answer I got was no... If he had said yes, the process of rapprochement would have commenced, and eventually it might have happened if we had seen some sincere desire on the part of our partners. But it didn't happen**"⁴¹.

³⁹ Vladimir Putin's meeting with war correspondents, June 13, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/71391> /videos

⁴⁰ Vladimir Putin's speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, October 5, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/72444>

⁴¹ Vladimir Putin's interview to Tucker Carlson, February 9, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73411>

Subsequent events (the 2008 war in Georgia, mass protests in 2011 – early 2012⁴², which were fueled by the Western media⁴³ and which occurred exactly when Joe Biden failed to persuade the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to run for a second term so as to prevent the possibility of Vladimir Putin becoming president for the third term⁴⁴, the 2014 coup d'état in Ukraine) – **all these were attempts by the Collective West to stop the process of strengthening Russia's national sovereignty.**

Since the very beginning of his work as president, Vladimir Putin was focusing on strengthening national defense capability, the vertical of power and the national identity of Russian society. Thus, he understood that the **Collective West would not be able to accept Russia's sovereignty so easily** because its hatred (or maybe even fear) toward the successor of the USSR runs too deep; and the USSR represented an effective alternative to the liberal ideology of the Western “consumer society”.

Here it will be appropriate to recall exactly how historical documents describe the U.S. foreign policy in relation to the Soviet leadership.

Excerpt from NSC 20/1: U.S. Objectives with Respect to Russia, August 18, 1948: “Our basic objectives with respect to Russia are really only two: a. To reduce the power and influence of Moscow...; b. To bring about a basic change in the theory and practice of international relations observed by the government in power in Russia...”

December 15, 2021 (that is, 21 years after Vladimir Putin talked to Bill Clinton about the possibility of Russia joining NATO), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation handed over to the American side a draft treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on security guarantees and an agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and Member States of the

⁴² Here are some examples:

- ✓ the rallies on December 5 at Chistye Prudy and on December 10, 2011 on Bolotnaya Square in Moscow, according to estimates of the Moscow Police Department, gathered up to 25 thousand people;
- ✓ December 24, 2011, a protest rally on Sakharov Avenue gathered 29 thousand people;
- ✓ February 4, 2012, the rally “For Fair Elections” on Bolotnaya Square, according to various estimates, gathered from 36 thousand to 120 thousand participants;
- ✓ February 26, 2012, two protest actions called “The Great White Circle” and “Seeing Off Putin’s Political Winter” took place in Moscow; according to various sources, from 11 to 34 thousand people took part in the action;
- ✓ March 5, 2012, a coordinated mass rally took place on Pushkin Square, from 14 to 30 thousand people participated in the rally;
- ✓ March 10, 2012, another rally was held on Novy Arbat. According to official data, about 10 thousand people participated in it, according to the organizers – 25 thousand people;
- ✓ May 6, 2012, the action “People’s March” or “March of Millions” in Moscow gathered from 30 to 120 thousand people.

⁴³ Examples:

- ✓ White House press secretary Jay Carney called the rallies a positive sign of support for democracy in Russia;
- ✓ Reuters wrote that many were hurt by the castling in the tandem;
- ✓ The Washington Post believes that before the elections, the government made too many mistakes and the aura of invulnerability began to dissipate around Putin;
- ✓ The Los Angeles Times noted a huge number of cases of abuse of power;
- ✓ Le Figaro pointed out a popular question in Russia concerning the lack of an alternative to Vladimir Putin.

⁴⁴ “On the eve of the next presidential election in 2012, U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden paid a working visit to Moscow (March 9, 2011). According to experts, this demonstrated “the West’s support for Dmitry Medvedev’s potential candidacy for a second presidential term” or, in other words, was directed against Vladimir Putin’s return to the post of President of the Russian Federation” (source: Will Joe Biden try to dissuade Vladimir Putin from running for president of the Russian Federation in 2012? Available at: <http://www.moscow-post.com/politics/000129922924180/>).

North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Moreover, as noted on the official website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, “the American side was given the necessary explanations of the logic of the Russian approach in a detailed form, and the relevant arguments were presented”⁴⁵.

In fact, it was another attempt to come to an agreement with the United States, like the one that the President had undertaken in the early 2000s. We may call it the **second proposal for peaceful**

“... we were doing everything in our power to solve this problem by peaceful means, and patiently conducted talks on a peaceful solution to this devastating conflict. Behind our backs, a very different plan was being hatched. As we can see now, the promises of Western leaders, their assurances that they were striving for peace in Donbass turned out to be a sham and outright lies.... **Now they admit this publicly and openly, and they feel no shame about it...**

In December 2021, we officially submitted draft agreements on security guarantees to the USA and NATO. In essence, all key, fundamental points were rejected. **After that it finally became clear that the go-ahead for the implementation of aggressive plans had been given and they were not going to stop**⁴⁶.

coexistence of sovereign Russia and the Collective West. But it was an attempt to reach an agreement at a **qualitatively different level**: it was not put forward by a “post-Yeltsin” Russia, but a stronger Russia, with a high level of consolidation of society around the President and patriotic values, with an amended Constitution, with a neutralized “fifth column”, with a reviving military-industrial complex, with large-scale international relations...

Therefore, the nature of this attempt was appropriate – **from the standpoint of the national interests of sovereign Russia**, it was Putin’s “ultimatum”, as “dubbed” by the Western media (the American magazine *National Interest*)⁴⁷. In particular, one of the key conditions of this “ultimatum” was as follows (Article 4): “The Russian Federation and all the Parties that were member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as of 27 May 1997, respectively, shall not deploy military forces and weaponry on the territory of any of the other States in Europe **in addition to the forces stationed on that territory as of 27 May 1997**”⁴⁸.

However, instead of looking for compromises⁴⁹, NATO countries put into effect their “Ukraine as an anti-Russia” plan, and our country was forced, **instead of just strengthening its national sovereignty, to defend it, and to fight for its preservation.**

⁴⁵ Official website of the Russian Foreign Ministry. A message to the media. December 17, 2021. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1790809/

⁴⁶ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 21, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>

⁴⁷ Petrov G. NATO will discuss “Putin’s ultimatum” collectively. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/world/2021-12-19/1_8330_nato.html

⁴⁸ Agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. December 17, 2021. Available at: https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/

⁴⁹ January 26, 2022, U.S. Secretary of State A. Blinken stated that “the United States will not abandon the principle of ‘open doors’ in NATO” (source: Blinken: The United States will not abandon the principle of “open doors” in NATO. Available at: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/13535663>), and NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg noted: “We cannot compromise on the principles on which our security has been based for decades” (source: NATO and the United States rejected Russia’s security proposals. How will Putin respond? Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/537506>).

Therefore, the inevitability of the SMO, its forced nature (which the President has always emphasized) is perhaps the main thing that one needs to know about Russia's position in this conflict. Vladimir Putin pointed out many times: "It was not us who started the so-called "war in Ukraine." On the contrary, we are trying to end it"⁵⁰.

"We were not the ones who started the war in Donbass, but, as I have already said many times, we will do everything to put an end to it"⁵¹.

And, as we see, only a complete and in-depth analysis of the entire period of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms allows us to fully understand the essence of this inevitability: starting with his first steps to "equidistant" the oligarchs from power, through the 2007 Munich speech and the 2014 "Crimean Spring"; and, on the other hand, considering all the numerous attempts of the Collective West to stop the process of strengthening Russia's national sovereignty, to return it to the "semi-colonial" state in which it existed after the defeat in the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Thus, schematically, the entire chronology of the stages that have led to the phase of active confrontation between Russia and NATO looks like this:

1. 2000 – rejection of Vladimir Putin's proposal to build partnership relations with the West.

2. February 10, 2007 – Vladimir Putin's Munich speech.

3. 2014 – *coup d'état* in Ukraine. Accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation⁵² after a referendum held in Crimea on March 16, 2014⁵³. "Crimean Spring".

4. 2021 – Russia's demands for security guarantees (in fact, Vladimir Putin's second attempt to build peaceful relations with the Collective West, which was also ignored).

5. February 24, 2022 – present – special military operation.

6. October 5, 2022 – admission of four new constituent entities to the Russian Federation – the Donetsk People's Republic, the Lugansk People's Republic, the Zaporozhye Region, and the Kherson Region⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Vladimir Putin's speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, October 5, 2023. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/72444>

⁵¹ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁵² On the admission of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and the formation of new constituent entities within the Russian Federation – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol: Federal Constitutional Law 6-FZ, dated March 21, 2014. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/38220>

⁵³ During the referendum on March 16, 2014, the majority of the population of the Crimean Peninsula (96.77%) voted in favor of reunification with Russia. According to the head of the Crimean referendum commission M. Malyshev, turnout was 83.1% (source: <https://ria.ru/20150316/1052210041.html>).

⁵⁴ A brief chronology of the accession of four new regions to the Russian Federation:

September 23–27, 2022, referendums on joining the Russian Federation were held on the territory of the DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions. According to their results, 99.23% of residents of the Donetsk People's Republic voted for joining Russia; 98.42% of residents of the Lugansk People's Republic; 93.11% of residents of the Zaporozhye Region; 87.05% of residents of the Kherson Region.

September 29, 2022, Vladimir Putin signed the decrees recognizing the independence of the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions (decrees 685, 686).

September 30, 2022, a ceremony was held to sign agreements on the admission of the Donetsk People's Republic, the Lugansk People's Republic, the Zaporozhye Region and the Kherson Region to Russia and the formation of new constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

October 2, 2022, the Constitutional Court approved a package of documents on the admission of the Donetsk and Lugansk people's republics, the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions to Russia.

October 3, 2022, deputies of the State Duma of the Russian Federation unanimously ratified the relevant treaties on the admission of four new territories to Russia.

October 4, 2022 – the treaties on the accession of of the DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions to the Russian Federation were ratified by the Federation Council.

October 5, 2022 – the President signed the relevant federal constitutional laws.

In addition, the process of strengthening Russia's national sovereignty, implemented by the RF President over the past 24 years, has been complicated not only by the situation in the international arena (regular attempts by the Collective West to interrupt this process), but also by the internal situation in the country, which can be called the "legacy of the 1990s": the presence of a significant number of high government officials, who (here we agree with many experts) can hardly be called "elites" (*Insert 4*).

In his Address to the Federal Assembly, the President pointed out: "The word "elite" has lost much of its credibility. Those who have done nothing for society and consider themselves a **caste endowed with special rights and privileges... are definitely not the elite**"⁵⁵.

The so-called "elites" impede⁵⁶ the implementation of national projects, facilitate the inclusion of Russia in the Bologna education system, promote the optimization of healthcare, guide the activities of the Central Bank that receives instructions from the "global financial backstage" (as some experts have long noted)⁵⁷; the "elites" are behind many other processes, which are also aimed at including Russia in the system

of the Western world, **but with one caveat – on any terms, but without preserving national sovereignty.**

According to experts, before the start of the SMO, the President could only "slowly push aside the liberal 'coterie', but he could not oust it completely, so as not to quarrel with the West"⁵⁸.

"Former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov* has left Russia and now lives in Latvia. Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Dvorkovich has left for the United States. Israel was chosen as a place of residence by former deputy heads of government I. Klebanov, A. Khloponin and Ministers Ya. Urinson and M. Akimov. Former head of State Property A. Kokh lives in Germany. V. Khristenko has an apartment in Spain. Former Deputy Prime Minister O. Golodets lives in two countries, one of them is Spain. Former heads of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation live abroad (V. Voloshin, V. Yumashev with B. Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana), as well as former ministers and their deputies (A. Kozyrev, E. Skrynnik, A. Vavilov, I. Chuyan, A. Reimer, etc.), many former governors and their deputies, hundreds of federal government officials!"⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁵⁶ Extra money. Why is the implementation of national projects stalling in Russia. Available at: <https://fedpress.ru/article/2407222>

⁵⁷ See, for example:

"This is virtually a criminal act, those who did it would have been imprisoned long ago in a normal country" Glazyev is tough about the collapse of the ruble and the betrayal of the Central Bank. Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/ZNs82nPxV0kOhfFB>;

Khazin M. The collapse of the ruble – a revolt of the elite? Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/news/specoperacija-cb-protiv-rublja-kurovalas-izvne-cepochku-prosledil-hazin_847657;

The State Duma called the Bank of Russia a "foreign agent" because it is fulfilling the West's plan for the collapse of the ruble. Available at: <https://newdaynews.ru/moscow/802765.html>;

Katasonov V. The Central Bank is conducting subversive work inside Russia. Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru/sociale/49211433-tsentrobank-vedet-podryvnyu-rabotu-vnutri-rossii-ekonomist/>

⁵⁸ Delyagin M.G. The second period of V. Putin's rule: The destruction of liberal myths. Available at: <http://www.nakanune.ru/articles/17523/>

⁵⁹ Toshchenko Zh.T. Old and new faces of betrayal. *Pravda*, 2023, no. 86, January 30.

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

Expert opinion on the quality of the modern (post-Soviet) “elites”

1. “A representative of the elite is not the one who has power or capital (and the more, the better), but the one who is characterized by the necessary set of **civil and moral qualities** that allow him/her, without discounts, affectations and deception, to be called a representative and bearer of **all the best that humanity has accumulated in the process of its development... there is no elite in today’s (and yesterday’s) Russia; it is out of the question**. The elite has been gone for a long time, nor is there any at present”⁶⁰.
2. “...if we consider the true features and aspirations of the modern ruling stratum in Russia, then we should first of all pay attention to three characteristics: two obvious ones — **the possession of power and capital**, and a hidden one — **the desire to rise above the people...** The main goal of such an “elite” is **to retain power under any circumstances, preserve and increase their wealth**, no matter what the cost”⁶¹.
3. “The de facto model established in the early 1990s was a colonial system operating in the regime of external management. The 1993 Constitution was also written under these realities. **The comprador nature of the “elite” consisted in carrying out the function of mediator in dealing with the mother country...** in 2014–2022, many ties with the former mother country were severed. Some of the former compradors could not bear this breakup and fled the country, while **others remained, secretly dreaming of restoring the former intermediary relations**”⁶².
4. “In modern Russia, that part of the elite, which historically formed as a **class of preferential trade and a “great throatful”**, **remains the same at present and is not oriented toward pro-national changes**”⁶³.
5. “What do we see today? The most vocal haters of Russia, especially those who could be penalized by law enforcement agencies for various “exploits”, left the country — good riddance. A negligible number of Western agents ... were, by coincidence, taken into custody. **But after all, the bulk of potential collaborators have been keeping a low profile and waiting in the woods, and everyone knows this...** Has the danger of returning to the old course, resuming the attempts to abandon all our new achievements and submit to the Western decision-making center, as it was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, been eliminated forever? **Nothing of the sort! In order to completely protect the country and the people from a new “perestroika”, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive purge of the state apparatus so as to rid it of officials who have or had foreign accounts and real estate abroad and are seen to be disloyal to the ideology of the special operation in Ukraine, and also by many other criteria...**”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Toshchenko Zh. T. (2008). *The Paradoxical Man: A Monograph*. 2nd edition, revised and supplemented. Moscow: UNITY-DANA. 543 p.

⁶¹ Eremin V.I. Post-Soviet autocracy: Clan, nomenclature or elite? Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/Y3vqNgzH4EH8K2E1>

⁶² Bagdasaryan V. Order and power. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23984>

⁶³ Lepekhin V. The government, the elite and the people. From mobilization to modernization. Available at: <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1676868480>

⁶⁴ Sorokin N. Criteria of the future. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/kriterii_budushego

After February 24, 2022, when the situation changed dramatically and there was a surge in threats to national security, many representatives of the so-called ‘elites’, who did not see how they can link their personal lives with that of Russia, left the country on their own. As the President noted on March 16, 2022, the process of **“natural and necessary self-purification of society”** began in Russia⁶⁵.

At the same time, many experts started pointing out that the head of state should take more decisive steps toward the nationalization of the elites.

“The state has done a lot to marginalize radical liberals. **This process began in 2000 and took 24 years** with several administrations changing. **The influence of the liberals on the ideology of Russia has steadily declined, but it remains very significant, primarily in culture, education and science.** Only liberals, or those who have not received clear and precise instructions from above, can fight **liberalism so uncertainly and for such a long time.** While just as steadily, but just as slowly – sometimes freezing in the same frame for a year or more – patriotism was rising. This was demanded by “Crimea Is Ours”, and even more so by the SMO. But even here, the government acted as **cautiously and uncertainly** as it did with the dismantling of liberalism”⁶⁶.

However, while all the goals of the SMO have not yet been achieved (“demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine”⁶⁷) and while agreements on peaceful (albeit “cold”) coexistence with the Collective West have not been reached, it is hardly possible to solve the problem of nationalization of the elites.

First, the process of formation of new elites is still “stalling”⁶⁸ in Russia. As the President pointed out, a new Russian **elite must be formed from the participants of the special military operation.** “They should take leading positions in the system of education and upbringing of young people, in public associations, state-run companies and privately held businesses, federal and municipal administration. They should head regions and enterprises, as well as major national projects”⁶⁹ (to this end, in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the President announced **a new mechanism for the formation of managerial personnel – a special personnel program “Time of heroes”**).

“... today I met with students who temporarily quitted studying, many of them went to the war zone – **it these people that should form the elite of the country in the future**”⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting on socio-economic support measures for regions, March 16, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67996>

⁶⁶ Dugin A. Drone-ideology for volunteers. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/dron-ideologiya_dlya_volonterov

⁶⁷ The address of the President of the Russian Federation to the Russians on February 24, 2022. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/67843>

⁶⁸ Khaldey A. What is the nationalization of the elite? Available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2606896.html>

⁶⁹ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁷⁰ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting on socio-economic development of Saint Petersburg metropolitan area, January 26, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73329>

“Starting March 1, 2024, the veterans of the special military operations, as well as soldiers and officers who are currently fighting in active units, will be able to apply to be in the first class of a **special personnel training program. Let us call it Time of Heroes.** This program will be built according to the standards of our best projects, namely, the Higher School of Public Administration, also known as the “school of governors,” and the Leaders of Russia contest. Their graduates tend to reach high positions in many spheres, and even become ministers and heads of regions”⁷¹.

Second (according to experts), the “personnel revolution from above” will lead to the “inevitable weakening of the state and the emergence of so many vulnerabilities that, under the current civilizational confrontation with the West, will give the latter a lot of opportunities to take advantage of the situation”⁷².

Thus, today, after two years of the SMO, as well as on the eve of the presidential election, the situation inside and around Russia remains extremely tense:

✓ we see attempts to drag our country into a full-fledged war with NATO, without any reservations (at least, many Western politicians are actively “preparing” the population of their countries for such a scenario⁷³);

✓ in this regard, the forecasts of many experts about the prospects for the use of nuclear weapons are becoming more alarming;

“In fact, everything is heading toward the use of nuclear weapons and, possibly, the destruction of humanity... Liberalism and its agenda have brought humanity to a dead end. Now the choice is either the liberals or humanity”⁷⁴.

“The main customers for the sovereignty strategy are Putin and several people in his entourage... the emergence of Putin and his group is not natural, but accidental, spontaneous. If Yeltsin’s group had seen Putin through, they would never have chosen him. If there had been another person instead of Putin, we would have had a different Russia, a second Ukraine. In fact, a Yeltsin’s Russia is still alive and hidden behind Putin’s back in many ways. And everyone is scared: if Putin leaves, they will come out. Everyone understands this; therefore, the main goal of the West is to remove Putin.

They know: if Putin is removed, the elite will falter. And the people in Russia know it. The elite is deceitful and corrupt. It is dully silent and keeps up the facade. **No one has combed it out yet, and even Putin’s inner circle lacks those whom the people could trust and who could continue the struggle for sovereignty.** But there are plenty of those who either will not cope, or will bring back Yeltsinism”⁷⁵.

⁷¹ Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

⁷² Korovin V. Where are you, Putin’s commissars? Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23998>

⁷³ Some examples:

1. NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg (Brussels, January 26, 2024): “If Putin wins in Ukraine, there is a real risk that he will use force again”.

2. Head of the Norwegian Armed Forces E. Kristoffersen (interview to *Dagbladet* newspaper, January 21, 2024): “When this war is over, no one knows what Putin’s next move will be”.

3. German Defense Minister B. Pistorius (interview to *Der Tagesspiegel* newspaper, January 19, 2024): “We hear threats from the Kremlin almost every day... Therefore, we must take into account that Vladimir Putin may one day attack a NATO country”.

⁷⁴ Dugin A. The turn of history. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/25366>

⁷⁵ Khaldey A. The transfer and strategy of sovereignty: Customers and performers. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/transfer_i_strategiya_suvereniteta_zakazchiki_i_isplayiteli

✓ **in the internal situation, as before, only the President and several people in his entourage (as experts note) remain the only “customers” of Russia’s movement toward full national sovereignty. Many representatives of elite circles continue to live as they used to, hoping that everything will return to normal.**

✓ According to VCIOM, the majority of Russians support Vladimir Putin’s decision to launch a special military operation (throughout the entire period of the SMO, the proportion of those who share this opinion remains stable – 65–68%⁷⁶); however, some analysts still pay attention to the fact that 28% of citizens do not agree to live according to the principle “Everything for the front, everything for the Victory!”. This figure is a “significant indicator. It is almost a third of the respondents; it is difficult to declare them cowards, traitors, weaklings, foreign agents, to drive them out of the country”⁷⁷.

✓ In addition, Russian political scientists predict that the U.S. will tamper with the very presidential election, using technologies that began to be developed a year before the start of the special operation⁷⁸.

In these alarming conditions, it is extremely important that the head of state and the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, from the very

beginning of the special military operation, have adopted many managerial decisions that are aimed at the highest priority tasks ensuring Russia’s national security: supporting SMO participants and their family members, improving the financial situation of the population and the economy of the country, increasing the defense capability and information security of the state, etc. (*Insert 5*).

The “Horizon 2040” project was launched in November 2022 by the Agency for Strategic Initiatives and the Russian Export Center. **The supervisory board (the highest collegial management body) is headed by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. According to the authors, “the main objectives of the project are to form a vision of key challenges and trends that can occur with varying degrees of probability in major areas of socio-economic life of both the Russian and global communities, as well as identify key opportunities and threats to development on the horizon of 2040... “Horizon 2040” brought together more than 130 leading Russian experts in the fields of demography, ecology, climate, energy, technology, space, healthcare, food, socio-cultural issues and economics”⁷⁹.**

⁷⁶ Special military operation: Two years later. VCIOM analytical review. February 24, 2024. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/specialnaja-voennaja-operacija-dva-goda-spustja>

⁷⁷ On the willingness of Russians to adjust their lives according to the needs of the SMO. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. February 27, 2024. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2024-02-27/2_8957_red.html

⁷⁸ Mukhin A. External interference in the 2024 election in Russia and possible implications: Report. January 2024. 18 p. Available at: https://polit-info.ru/images/data/gallery/0_311_vmeshatelstvo_2024.pdf

⁷⁹ Horizon 2040. November 14, 2023. Pp. 3, 7. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

**The monitoring of regulatory legal acts (laws, decrees) signed by the RF President
in the period from December 26, 2023 to February 28, 2024⁸⁰**

<i>MEASURES TO SUPPORT THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE SMO AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, TO DEVELOP THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, MEASURES ON MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW, IMPROVEMENT OF ANTI-TERRORIST PROTECTION OF FACILITIES</i>
<p>January 4 – Decree 10 “On the admission to citizenship of the Russian Federation of foreign citizens who have signed a contract for military service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or military formations, and their family members”.</p> <p>February 14 – Federal Law “On Amendments to Article 121 of the Federal Law “On the civil service system of the Russian Federation” and Article 531 of the Federal Law “On the state civil service of the Russian Federation”. The law provides for retaining the position of civil servants for those undergoing military service”.</p> <p>February 14 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation”. Along with sabotage, other crimes related to sabotage activities (assistance to sabotage activities, training in order to carry out sabotage activities, organization of a sabotage community and participation in it) are classified as crimes that, in accordance with the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, are recognized as activities directed against the security of the State.</p> <p>Increased liability is established for public calls to carry out activities directed against the security of the State, committed for selfish motives or for hire, motivated by political, ideological, racial, national or religious hatred or enmity, or motivated by hatred or enmity against any social group. It provides for the possibility of punishment in the form of deprivation of a special, military or honorary title, class rank and state awards for committing not only grievous and extremely grievous crimes, but also crimes of small and medium gravity directed against the security of the Russian Federation.</p> <p>The list of crimes, the commission of which entails confiscation of property, is expanded. In particular, property obtained as a result of committing crimes for selfish motives, such as public dissemination of deliberately false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, about the execution of powers by state bodies of the Russian Federation, about the provision of assistance by volunteer formations, organizations or persons in the implementation of tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or the troops of the National Guard of the Russian Federation, and public calls for activities directed against the security of the State, will be subject to compulsory gratuitous seizure and conversion into state ownership on the basis of a guilty verdict.</p> <p>In addition, property used or intended to finance not only terrorism, extremist activities, an organized group, an illegal armed formation, a criminal community (criminal organization), but also activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation will be subject to confiscation.</p> <p>February 26 – Presidential Decree 141 “On the military-administrative division of the Russian Federation”. As of March 1, 2024, the Leningrad, Moscow, Southern, Central and Eastern military districts are formed.</p>

⁸⁰ The insert is a continuation of the monitoring of the most important regulatory legal acts signed by the RF President; we have been conducting the monitoring since June 2022. Thus, it has been going on for 19 months; its results have been published in 10 articles (the first issue of the monitoring is presented in the article: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A difficult road after the Rubicon. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 15(3), 9–41).

End of Insert 5

MEASURES TO PROTECT INFORMATION SECURITY AND REGULATE THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN AGENTS, MEASURES AIMED AT THE EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION

February 14 – Federal Law “On amendments to the Code of Administrative Procedure of the Russian Federation and Article 13 of the Federal Law ‘On countering extremist activity’”. The jurisdiction concerning the consideration of administrative cases on the recognition of information materials as extremist is changing. For these purposes, consideration of these categories of cases is provided not by district courts, but by the supreme court of the republic, territorial court, regional court, the court of the city of federal significance, the court of the autonomous region, the court of the autonomous area. It establishes the obligation of the court to involve copyright holders, publishers, authors of works and (or) translations in the case, and if an administrative claim is filed for the recognition of an extremist religious publication, then specialists in the field of the relevant religion are also involved. In addition, corresponding amendments are being made to the Federal Law “On countering extremist activity”, according to which information materials are recognized as extremist in accordance with the procedure established by the legislation on administrative proceedings.

MEASURES TO PROVIDE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THE GENERAL POPULATION, STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, INCLUDING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

January 15 – Decree 36 “On amendments to Presidential Decree 1666, dated December 19, 2012 ‘On the strategy for the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025’ and to the Strategy approved by this Decree”. V. Zorkin: “This is a very important event in the life of our country and its domestic policy... It is not only about the changes in the procedure for working with the main documents on the implementation of the state national policy, which were previously in the President’s field of vision. Today, a new procedure for working with such documents has been legally established, the range of participants to whom they will be provided has been expanded – in full, with all the attached analyses and recommendations. This will be a more analytical package covering the entire range of interethnic relations. The practice of decision-making on interdepartmental issues will be strengthened; it is known that state national policy issues are under the jurisdiction and competence of about 20 federal executive authorities. It is very important that now the government will accumulate all these materials at its level, summarize and report them to the President, as well as to the chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. In addition, these documents will be published, they can be discussed, and measures for their implementation can be proposed”⁸¹.

January 23 – Decree 63 “On measures of social support for large families”. A single and permanent status of a large family (a family with three or more children) has been legally established. Large families will be issued credentials confirming their status. Measures of social support for such families have been defined: state benefits and payments in connection with the birth and upbringing of children, support in the field of labor relations, the right to free visits to museums, parks of culture and recreation, exhibitions. Mothers with many children can count on the early appointment of an insurance pension. Social support for large families will be provided until the eldest child reaches the age of 18 or 23, if he/she is studying full-time. Regions are recommended to introduce additional support measures. It is also decided to maintain a data bank on large families.

February 28 – Decree 145 “On the strategy for scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation”. As the President noted in his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on February 29, 2024, the Strategy has been “adjusted to take into account current tasks and challenges”. It states that “Russian science serves as the basis for the sovereign development of the country”; “from 2022 to the present, the stage of mobilization development of the scientific and technological sphere is taking place”; “the purpose of scientific and technological development is to ensure the independence and competitiveness of the country, achieve national development goals and implement strategic national priorities by creating an effective system for building up and making the fullest use of the intellectual potential of the nation”.

⁸¹ Official website of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://www.oprf.ru/news/vneseny-izmeneniya-v-ukaz-o-strategii-gosudarstvennoy-natsionalnoy-politiki-na-period-do-2025-goda>

Excerpts from the article “A century of wars? Article two. What to do?” by S.A. Karaganov, Doctor of Sciences (History), scientific director of the Department of World Economics and World Politics at the Higher School of Economics⁸²

1. *An extremely dangerous world of the next two decades requires a revision of foreign policy and defense policy... they should be based on the concept of “fortress Russia” – the maximum possible independence, sovereignty, security, self-sufficiency, concentration on internal development... Reasonable openness is needed for profitable economic, scientific, cultural, and information cooperation with friendly countries of the World Majority. But openness is not an end in itself, but a means to promote internal material and spiritual development.*
2. *The role of interdependence as a tool for maintaining peace has been overestimated before, but now it is mostly dangerous. We must try to create “value chains” on our territory in order to increase its connectivity, especially with regard to the interaction of the country’s center with Siberia and, more carefully, with friendly countries. Now it is Belarus, most of the Central Asian states, China, Mongolia, the SCO and BRICS countries.*
3. *The policy of “fortress Russia” requires maximum non-involvement in conflicts that will flare up during the ongoing “geostrategic earthquake”. In the new conditions, direct involvement is not an asset, but a liability.*
4. *In the development of the only partially successful Eastern turn through the Far East, it is necessary to design a new comprehensive Siberian strategy calling forward, but also “back” to the allure of the development of the Trans-Urals.*
5. *Belatedly (it would have been better if we had done it a century earlier) completing the Western, European voyage ..., we will leave ourselves the great European culture rejected by post-European fashion. Without it, we would not have created the greatest literature. And without Dostoevsky, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Gogol, Blok, we would not have become a great country and a great people.*
6. *In the current global conditions, the development of defense consciousness in society and readiness to defend the Fatherland, including with weapons in hand, should become an absolute priority.*
7. *The vector of today’s foreign policy is comprehensive development of relations with the countries of the World Majority... In a new diverse, multireligious, multicultural world we must develop another competitive advantage – internationalism, cultural and religious openness... It is necessary to build parallel [to the UN] structures based on BRICS+, the expansion of the SCO, their integration with the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, ASEAN, Mercosur....*
8. *Beijing is the main external resource of our internal development, an ally and partner for the foreseeable future... India is another natural ally in creating a new world system and in preventing a movement toward World War III... In the North American direction, it is necessary to promote the long-term departure of the United States into its natural neo-isolationism at a new global level... the main vector in relation to the subcontinent [Europe] is moral and political exclusion.*
9. *An important element should be an offensive ideological policy, rather than a defensive one, as it used to be in the past. Attempts to “please” the West and negotiate with it are not only immoral, but also counterproductive.*
10. *The only reasonable goal of our policy regarding the lands of Ukraine is quite obvious. Liberation and inclusion of the entire South, East and, probably, the Dnieper region.*
11. *Strengthening the reliance on nuclear deterrence, accelerating the movement up the escalation ladder, is designed to convince the West that it has three options in relation to the military conflict in Ukraine. First, to retreat with dignity... Second, to be defeated... Or, third, to get all the same, but only with nuclear strikes on their territory and the accompanying collapse of societies... Without a sharp intensification and modernization of the nuclear deterrence policy it is impossible to prevent the world from sliding into a series of conflicts and a subsequent global thermonuclear war, to ensure the continuation of the peaceful revival of our country and its transformation into one of the architects and builders of a new world system.*
12. *Russia’s policy should openly proceed from the fact that NATO is a hostile bloc that has proved its aggressiveness through its past policy and is de facto waging war against Russia.*

⁸² Karaganov S.A. A century of wars? Article two. What to do? Available at: <https://karaganov.ru/vek-vojn-statja-vtoraja-chto-delat/>

Titles (thematic areas) of expert reports of the “Horizon 2040” project⁸³

- ✓ **Demography (A.V. Milekhin)**
- ✓ *Climate and ecology. The situation in the field of climate (B.N. Porfiriev, V.M. Kattsov)*
- ✓ *Climate and ecology. The situation in the field of ecology (V.I. Danilov-Danilyan, B.N. Porfiriev)*
- ✓ **Technology. Global technological trends of 2022–2040 (part 1). Scenario forecast assessment by 2040 in key areas of technology development (key theses) (D.R. Belousov)**
- ✓ **Technology. Global technological trends of 2022–2040 (part 2). Scenario forecast assessment by 2040 in key areas of technology development (key theses) (D.R. Belousov)**
- ✓ *Technology. Big growth drivers and bifurcations of catching-up modernization (E.B. Kuznetsov)*
- ✓ *Quantum technology: A general introduction (A.K. Fedorov)*
- ✓ **Healthcare and pandemics (D.V. Melik-Guseynov)**
- ✓ **Food. Global trends in food and a window of opportunity for the domestic agro-industrial complex (S.N. Ivanov)**
- ✓ *Food. Problems of world food security in the period up to 2040. Scenario forecast assessment of key trends in the food market for the period 2022–2040 (S.V. Yushin)*
- ✓ **Energy. Key challenges and priorities of Russia in the field of energy on the horizon of 2040 (team of authors)**
- ✓ **Space. Forecast assessment for 2023–2050: Supporting infrastructure, trends, key solutions, growth drivers (E.B. Kuznetsov)**
- ✓ *Space. Problems of Russian cosmonautics (I.M. Moiseev)*
- ✓ **Space-2040 (N.N. Sevastyanov)**
- ✓ **Socio-culture (E.A. Kalachikova)**
- ✓ **Socio-culture-2040: A challenge to the integrity of society – a view from the side of technology development (D.R. Belousov)**
- ✓ **Technology and social culture (E.B. Kuznetsov)**
- ✓ **Russia as a subject. Special report (A.G. Dugin)**
- ✓ *Russia on the world map. Transcript of the plenary session of the SPIEF on June 15, 2023 (A.O. Bezrukov, A.R. Belousov, D.R. Belousov, A.G. Dugin, D.N. Peskov)*
- ✓ **The world in the horizon of 2040 (A.V. Yakovenko)**
- ✓ *Review of global trends, global threats and scenarios of Russia's development by 2040 through the prism of U.S. expert opinion (A. Yu. Petrov)*
- ✓ *USA as a project (A.O. Bezrukov)*
- ✓ *Brazil (L.N. Simonova)*
- ✓ *China (P.V. Kuznetsov)*
- ✓ *China (A.A. Maslov)*
- ✓ *Türkiye (team of authors)*
- ✓ *United Arab Emirates (V.S. Eliseev)*
- ✓ *India (E.V. Griva)*
- ✓ *Algeria (P.V. Kuznetsov)*

⁸³ Horizon 2040. The White Book: Collection. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

Some excerpts from the expert reports of the “Horizon 2040” project⁸⁴

1. *“The search for a subjective position and issues of rights and grounds for asserting oneself as an “independent agent of action” (subject) by both societies and individuals are becoming one of the central tasks for social research in the 21st century”*⁸⁵.
2. *“In the context of a sharp increase in direct pressure on Russia and the “chaotic” component in world politics and the economy, it is necessary to determine the place of the country’s citizens in this process; addressing the problem of overcoming total alienation, which is forming in the context of a new round of technological development and makes a person unnecessary in a significant part of both production and creative processes; ensuring that society accepts development (scientific, technological, institutional, social, human) should become the basis for reproducing the unique Russian identity now and in the long term”*⁸⁶.
3. *“We are talking about 2040, because if it happens and we do not become a subject now, then the year 2040 will not be ours. In order for 2040 to be the Russian two thousand fortieth, we need to determine the subjectivity now, and quite clearly. And this is a very, very important challenge... the spiritual orientation of being plus traditional values, and it is the most important thing...”*⁸⁷
4. *“...the opposition of the spheres of worldview, ideology and cultural and historical identification seems inevitable. This will create prerequisites for restoring the importance of the tools of the so-called soft power in international relations, but on a balanced and truly competitive basis”*⁸⁸.
5. *“It is worth noting that both family and migration policies make sense and can be successful only if there is an attractive value principle that forms the desire to live and work in Russia. No support measures and relocation programs can be effective if a person does not have internal answers to the questions, what kind of future awaits them and their children in this country, in which society they will live and what common goal this society, the people of Russia, pursue”*⁸⁹.

⁸⁴ Horizon 2040. The White Book: Collection. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>
⁸⁵ Kalachikova E.A. Socio-culture. Horizon 2040. P. 357. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

⁸⁶ Belousov D.R. Socio-culture-2040: A challenge to the integrity of society – a view from the side of technology development. Horizon 2040. P. 391. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

⁸⁷ Dugin A.G. Russia as a subject. Horizon 2040. P. 425. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

⁸⁸ Yakovenko V.A. The world in the horizon of 2040. Horizon 2040. P. 481. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

⁸⁹ Milekhin A.V. Demography. Horizon 2040. P. 35. Official website of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives. December 29, 2023. Available at: <https://asi.ru/library/main/198226/>

We should note that not only the head of state, but also the expert community has a clear idea about the future of Russia, about the priorities of its internal development, international relations and, in general, about the role of our country in an emerging multipolar world (*Inserts 6, 7*). After the beginning of the SMO, there appeared a large number of publications on this topic⁹⁰, as well as large-scale projects bringing together dozens of experts from various fields of knowledge, such as “Horizon 2040” and “Worldview of Russian Civilization. Through Polyphony to Symphony”.

The “Worldview of Russian Civilization. Through Polyphony to Symphony” project was first presented on December 9, 2023 at a conference at the Saint Petersburg State University organized by the Izborsk Club. **Experts from the Izborsk Club are authors of the project** (A. Prokhanov, V. Averyanov, M. Maslin, A. Ivanov, A. Boldyrev, V. Bagdasaryan, etc.). According to V. Averyanov, “the goal of the project is **to formulate the foundations of the national worldview** as a result of the sum of collective efforts of many generations of thinkers, the “conciliar mind”... The successful implementation of the project will make it possible to equip the **Russian administrative and political elite with a worldview apparatus in order to manifest a more unambiguous and effective vector of state identity**”⁹¹.

A clear understanding of Russia’s future, expressed in the Presidential Address and in the assessments of many experts, inspires optimism

and urges us to focus on the present-day issues: how effectively will Russia be able to overcome this dangerous historical period in all respects? When will this happen and what position in the geopolitical space will our country have after the end of the SMO? Will the ideological, spiritual and moral trend set by the “Crimean Spring” and launch of the SMO continue and forever change the face of the country (society, culture, ruling elites ...)?

All these issues are acute, and it is still difficult to find answers to them (there are too many unknowns in the equation). But in the end, we need to remember how effectively the President and Russia as a whole have managed to cope with all the challenges that have stood in the way of the historical movement toward strengthening national sovereignty over almost a quarter of a century.

This is clearly evidenced by objective data from official statistics and indicators of subjective assessments of public opinion: according to **the key indicators of national and social development** (such as the area of Russia’s territory, population, life expectancy, objective and subjective indicators of the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, death rate from murders and suicides, assessment of activities of the authorities, etc.) **Russia under Vladimir Putin has made a significant step forward compared to the condition in which Boris Yeltsin “left” it in 1999** (*Tab. 3*).

And it is no less important that over the past 20 years **the understanding of the country’s development vector toward the “revival of the great power”, “the return of socialist ideals and values”**

⁹⁰ See, for example:

Toshchenko Zh.T. (2023). Social contract as a noumenon: The experience of sociological understanding. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya=Sociological Studies*, 6, 3–15;

Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. *Journal of Institutional Studies*, 3, 74–90;

Dementiev V.E. (2023). Communicative concept of the social contract and formation of the course of economic development. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 16(4), 57–70;

Dugin A. The basics of Russian ideology. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/25133>

⁹¹ Sources: <https://izborsk-club.ru/25060>; https://zavtra.ru/blogs/russkoe_mirovozzrenie_ot_manifesta_k_politike_vosstanovleniya_suverennosti_i_velichiya

Table 3. The results of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms according to official statistics and people's subjective assessments

Indicator	1999 (last year of Boris Yeltsin's presidential term)	2023*	Dynamics (+/-), 2022 to 1999
Official statistic indicators**			
Area of the Russian Federation, thousand square kilometers	17075.4	17125.2	+49,8
Population (at the end of the year), million people	145.6	146.4	+0,8
Life expectancy at birth, years	65.93	72.73	+6,8
Ratio of average incomes of the richest 10% to the poorest 10%, times	14.1	13.8	-0,3
Number of unemployed, thousand people	9094	2951	-6143
Number of people with money incomes below the subsistence level, % of the total population	28.4	9.8	-18,6
Number of registered crimes, thousand	3001.7	1966.8	-1034,9
Death rate from homicide, per 100 thousand people	26.2	3.7	-22,5
Death rate from suicide, per 100 thousand people	39.3	9.2	-30,1
Indicators of subjective assessments of the population***, % of respondents			
Level of approval of the RF President's work	8.6	61.4	+53
Share of positive assessments of purchasing power of incomes	27.9	62.7	+35
Share of positive assessments of social self-identification	23.3	45.2	+22
Share of positive assessments of social mood	31.0	65.6	+35
Share of positive assessments of stock of patience	43.6	76.6	+33
Dynamics of protest potential	35.2	17.7	-18
* Statistical data – for 2022; data from opinion polls – for 2023.			
** Sources: Federal State Statistics Service, Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation.			
*** Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring.			

Table 4. Perceptions of the region's population concerning the idea of uniting Russian society*, % of respondents

Answer option	2002	2023	Dynamics (+/-), 2023 to 2002
The idea of uniting the peoples of Russia in order to revive it as a great power	22.6	49.3	+27
The idea of strengthening Russia as a state governed by the rule of law	22.1	35.8	+14
The idea of uniting peoples to solve the global problems facing humanity	7.8	23.9	+16
Return to socialist ideals and values	6.6	19.7	+13
The idea of uniting all Slavic peoples	5.0	17.4	+12
The idea of confrontation with the West, self-reliance	3.2	13.7	+11
The idea of individual freedom, the priority of the interests of the individual over the interests of the state	3.9	8.5	+5
The idea of national uniqueness, a special historical mission of the Russian people	2.3	9.0	+7
The idea of rapprochement with the West, Russia's entry into the pan-European community	3.9	4.4	+1
The idea of cleansing society through the Orthodox faith	4.1	3.1	-1
Other idea	0.2	2.3	+2
Difficult to answer	31.9	22.1	-10
The wording of the question "What idea, in your opinion, is capable of uniting our society?" No more than three possible answers. Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring.			

and “confronting the West with our own means” has strengthened in society and in public consciousness (and not only in strategic documents or targets set out by the head of state) (Tab. 4).

In our opinion, the change in Russian society over the past 20 years (strengthening its national identity) is the overall result of the entire period of Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms (including his Munich speech, “Crimean Spring”, amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, etc.), and not only a consequence of the growing threats to national security in the context of the SMO.

Thus, a fact-based analysis of the political course pursued by Vladimir Putin over the past 23 years shows that it has always been based on the task of restoring Russia’s sovereignty, which it lost after the collapse of the USSR. In order to continue to fulfill this task in the face of threats and obstacles purposefully created by the Collective West so as to slow down the process of strengthening our country’s national sovereignty, the head of state had to radically change the course of the Russian Federation’s foreign policy: from sincere intentions and real attempts to integrate Russia into the Western world to a direct opposition to the NATO bloc (and the only reason for such a “U-turn”

was the refusal of the Collective West to recognize Russia’s national sovereignty).

Currently (after the beginning of the SMO), Russia is going through an extremely difficult and dangerous, but crucial historical period accompanied by comprehensive internal changes, which should be considered **exclusively in the context of the entire historical path of Russia’s development in the first quarter of the 21st century.** And the 2024 presidential election is one of the important intermediate stages of this path.

Ultimately, at stake in the civilizational conflict between Russia and the Collective West is the possibility of our country moving toward the future, the guidelines of which were announced in the Presidential Address on February 29, 2024. The question is whether this movement will be interrupted, and Russian society plunged into another state of “trauma”...

Therefore, it is for a reason that the head of state ended his Address with what is the crucial point at the moment: “Today, making good on all these plans **directly depends on our soldiers, officers and volunteers – all military personnel that are now fighting at the front...** It is our fighters that are creating today the **absolutely essential conditions for the future of the country and its development**”⁹².

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⁹² Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, February 29, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73585>

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