

# FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

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## Russian President Got a Constitutional Majority in the State Duma of the Seventh Convocation



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September 18, the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation were held; it is the main political event of 2016 in Russia, which opens a new political cycle. According to the Central Election Commission, the current party of power, “United Russia”, strengthened its positions in Parliament, having gained a constitutional majority.

Today many experts discuss the election results and how and why they were achieved. However, much less attention has been paid to the historical significance

of the outcome of the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation.

**Meanwhile, historical parallels between modern Russia, the Soviet Union during its collapse and Tsarist Russia in the era of the revolutionary events of the early 20th century, in our opinion<sup>1</sup>, convincingly show that the election held on September 18 may be another important step in Russia’s transition to a new stage of development.**

This transition began in 2000 when Vladimir Putin first took office as head of state and took decisive action that

<sup>1</sup> Ilyin V.A. Pravyashchie elity – problema natsional’noi bezopasnosti Rossii [The ruling elites: a problem for Russia’s national security]. *Ekonomicheskie i sotsial’nye peremeny: fakty, tendentsii, prognoz*. [Economic and social changes: facts, trends, forecast], 2016, no. 4, pp. 9-34.

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contributed to the country's recovery from the comprehensive socio-economic and cultural-moral crisis: efficient anti-terrorism campaign and resolving the conflict in Chechnya, introduction of mineral extraction tax that helped increase federal budget revenues in 3.6 times (from 615.5 billion rubles in 1999 to 2,204.7 billion rubles in 2002), etc.

In 2000–2007 the rise in oil prices favored a positive dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life. During this period of stabilization Russian society was able to understand and compare the historical experience of its existence, during the periods of the Soviet Union and the “turbulent 1990s”.

In the 2007 Munich speech at the international conference on security policy Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke about the threats of a unipolar world, and also about the fact that Russia would continue pursuing independent foreign policy aimed to improve its sovereignty. It was a clear signal to foreign countries (especially the U.S.) about Russia's intentions to participate in global competition.

The end of Vladimir Putin's second presidential term and the beginning of Dmitri Medvedev's presidency accompanied by tough economic consequences of the global financial crisis (2008–2009) did not allow Russian society to realize and appreciate the conceptual nature of V. Putin's Munich speech.

A second (after the Munich speech) attempt to formulate basic provisions of a new state ideology was undertaken by V. Putin six years later (in September 2013) during his third presidential term, at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. In this speech, the leader of the country formulated an ideological paradigm of development, which the state plans to adhere to: “It is evident that it is impossible to move forward without spiritual, cultural and national self-determination. Without this we will not be able to withstand internal and external challenges, nor we will succeed in global competitions”<sup>2</sup>.

The next step in the transition of Russia to a new stage of historical development is connected with the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation. This event (against the background of the “Ukrainian crisis” and strained relations with the United States) united all the layers of Russian society. During this period, leading Russian scientists spoke about the fact that “after almost 15 years of waiting, a “new and resurgent” Russia finally made the transition into a new bright and life-affirming age... If only we did not miss this chance!”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Putin V.V. *Vystuplenie na zasedanii mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba “Valdai” 19 sentyabrya 2013 g.* [Speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>

<sup>3</sup> Osipov G.V. *Ne upustit' predstavivshiisya shans! [Do not miss this chance!]. Sotsiologiya i ekonomika sovremennoi sotsial'noi real'nosti. Sotsial'naya i sotsial'no-politicheskaya situatsiya v Rossii v 2013 godu* [Sociology and economics of contemporary social reality. Social and socio-political situation in Russia in 2013]. Moscow: ISPI RAN, 2014. Pp. 6-18.

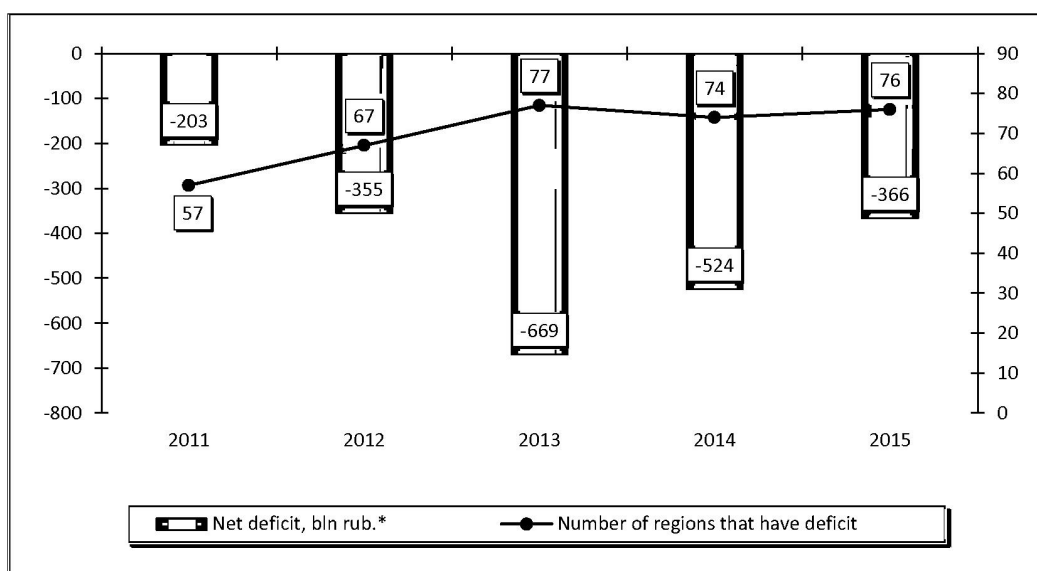
However, the achievements of the President’s international policy aimed to strengthen Russia’s sovereignty and promote its national interests were not supported by the course of domestic economic policies pursued by the Government of the Russian Federation. After the global financial crisis, the domestic economy has not achieved steady positive trend, and in 2011 a budget crisis started in Russia’s regions, and it is still going on: for the period from 2011 to 2015, the number of subjects of the Russian Federation with the budget deficit increased from 57 to 76 (Fig. 1).

Under the economic crisis that has been going on for quite a few years the following issues became more and more urgent: increasing the efficiency of state control, nationalization of the elites, staff reshuffle

in the administration system aimed to meet the essential needs of the population more efficiently – to increase the standard of living and quality of life, to ensure stability, economic growth and social justice.

The election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation on September 18, 2016, in our view, should be considered from this historical viewpoint. Further development of the political system, staff changes, new people coming to power, and, most importantly, the fact whether the **President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin will be able to use the constitutional majority of the United Russia Party in the Parliament in order to implement the strategic objectives he set out in 1999 in the article “Russia at the turn of the millennium”** – all this will determine the life of the country in the coming years

Figure 1. Deficit of consolidated budgets of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, billion rubles



\* Excluding surplus.

Source: Data of reports of the Federal Treasury of Russia. Available at: <http://www.roskazna.ru/>

and, in particular, the nature of public sentiment during the presidential elections of 2018.

In this major article, Vladimir Putin noted that the most important strategic tasks in Russia's development include the need to improve public administration efficiency, to strengthen state authority, and to overcome the split and internal division among major social groups and political elites. The importance of achieving these goals was emphasized by the President in his subsequent policy statements and strategic documents: the 2007 Munich speech, the 2013 speech at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, and the National Security Strategy 2015, etc.

I am convinced that achieving the required growth dynamics is not only an economic task. This issue is also political in nature and, I dare say, in a certain sense, ideological. **More precisely, it is an ideological, spiritual and moral issue. Moreover, the latter aspect at the present stage seems to me especially significant from the point of view of consolidation of Russian society.**

**Fruitful creative work, which our country needs so urgently, is impossible in a society that is split and internally divided.**

The key to revival and the rise of Russia today lies in the public-political sphere. **Russia needs strong state power and must have it<sup>4</sup>.**

Today, the greatest positive trend is observed only in the solution of the first of these key objectives: in order to strengthen the statehood, the President actively implements personnel reshuffle at all the levels of the administration system<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Putin V.V. Rossiya na rubezhe tysyacheletii [Russia at the turn of the millennium]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [Russian Newspaper], 1999, December 30.

<sup>5</sup> For example:

March 3, 2016, Russian President signed the Decree "About the members of the Central Election Commission", according to which E.A. Pamfilova, former Chairman of the Council under RF President on the development of civil society and human rights was included in the CEC. March 28, 2016, she was elected Chairperson of the Central Election Commission.

July 28, 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin united two federal districts, and replaced several governors and plenipotentiary representatives:

- the Crimean Federal District became part of the Southern Federal District (V. Ustinov was appointed its head);
- S. Melikov was appointed First Deputy Director of the Federal National Guard Troops Service and his post of Plenipotentiary Representative in the North Caucasian Federal district was given to O. Belaventsev;
- N. Rogozhkin was relieved from the post of Plenipotentiary Representative in the Siberian Federal District. His place was taken by S. Menyailo;
- D. Ovsyannikov was appointed Acting Governor of Sevastopol (instead of S. Menyailo);
- N. Tsukanov was appointed Plenipotentiary Representative in the Northwestern Federal District having replaced V. Bulavin on this post;
- D. Mironov was dismissed from the post of Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs and was appointed Acting Governor of the Yaroslavl Oblast;
- N. Belykh lost the trust of the President and was dismissed from the post of the Governor of the Kirov Oblast, he was replaced by I. Vasiliev, former auditor of the Accounts Chamber and head of the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rossreestr).
- October 5, 2016, Vladimir Putin signed a decree on appointing S.E. Naryshkin Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia (he replaced M.E. Fradkov).

On the same day, V.V. Volodin (former head of the Presidential Administration) was appointed Speaker of the State Duma. And his post was taken by S. Kiriyenko).



However, with regard to overcoming the split in Russian society and within the ruling elite, it is still premature to talk about obvious successes in this direction: in Russia, there remains an acute issue of social stratification and wealth inequality; and as for the public administration system, it seems that **“there exist two Russias: one is “deeply embedded in the Western world”, the other is represented by “a new generation of Russian statesmen that inevitably accompany the sovereign growth”**<sup>6</sup>.

In our opinion, special attention should be given to the features that the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation will be remembered for:

**1. On 18 September, Russian society demonstrated a very low turnout at the polling stations: 47.9% of voters (52.6 million people).** For comparison, voter turnout for the Duma election in 2011 was 60.2% (65.7 million people), and in 2007 – 63.7% (69.5 million people).

**2. United Russia, due primarily to the revival of a mixed electoral system (voting on party lists and single-mandate districts),**

**received the constitutional majority in Parliament**<sup>7</sup>. **This gives the President of the Russian Federation qualitatively new opportunities for the implementation of domestic and foreign policy (including the policy aimed to enhance public administration efficiency) and corresponds to the President’s highest historical responsibility before his country, the responsibility he assumed when he secured his personal responsibility for the implementation of state policy in the sphere of national security (Decree No. 683 dated December 31, 2015 “On the national security strategy of the Russian Federation”)**<sup>8</sup>.

Assessing the final results of the vote, Vladimir Putin noted: “At a time of difficulties and many uncertainties and risks, people certainly choose stability and trust the country’s leading political force... The election result was also an expression of people’s reaction to attempts to exert foreign pressure on Russia, and to the threats, sanctions, and attempts to destabilize the situation in Russia from within”<sup>9</sup>.

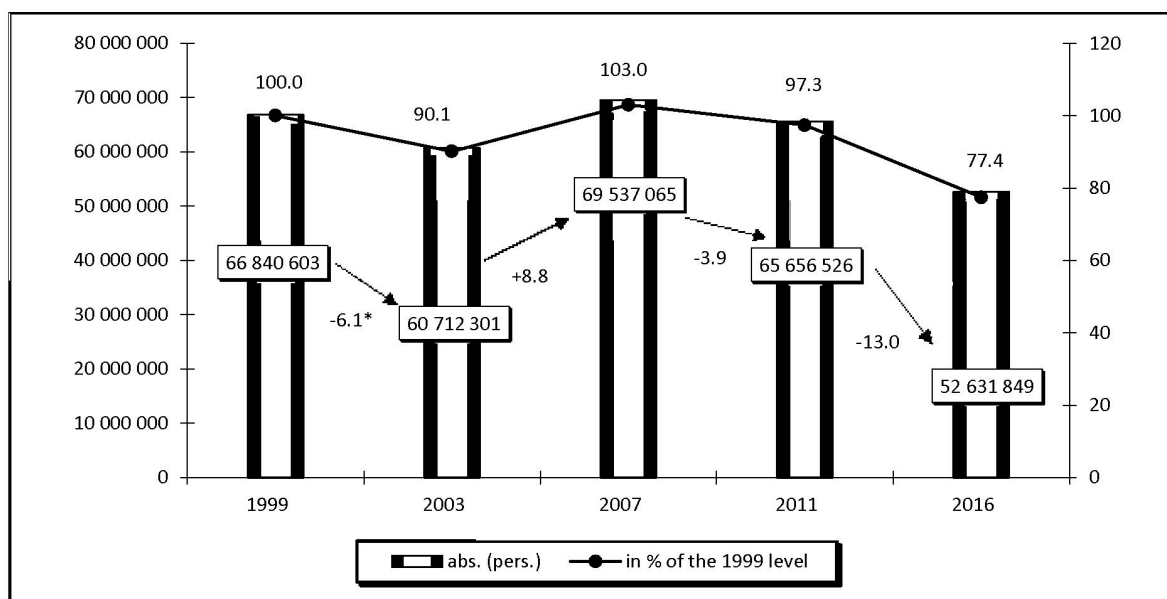
<sup>6</sup> Prokhanov A.A. “Gosudarstvo Polyamoi zvezdy” [“The state of the Polar Star”]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2016, March 17.

<sup>7</sup> In the State Duma of the seventh convocation, the United Russia Party received 343 mandates out of 450: 140 seats (out of 225) on the federal list and 203 seats (out of 225) in single-member districts.

<sup>8</sup> The National Security Strategy–2015 stipulates that “the state policy of the Russian Federation in ensuring national security is carried out through the concerted action of all the elements of the system under the guidance of the President of the Russian Federation and with the coordinating role of the Security Council of the Russian Federation” (source: Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii ot 31 dekabrya 2015 goda №683 “O Strategii natsional’noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii” [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of December, 31, 2015 No. 683 “On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation”]. *Rossiiskaya gazeta* [Russian Newspaper], 2015, 31 December. Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/12/31/nac-bezopasnost-site-dok.html>). Thus, the President takes up personal responsibility for ensuring the implementation of priority directions of state policy in the sphere of national security.

<sup>9</sup> Stenogramma soveshchaniya Prezidenta RF V.V. Putina s chlenami Pravitel’sтва RF 19 sentyabrya 2016 g. [Transcript of the meeting of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin with members of the Russian Government on September 19, 2016]. *Ofitsial’nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official website of Russian President]. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52913>

Figure 2. The dynamics of voter turnout for the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation for the period from 1999 to 2016



\* Increase/decrease in voter turnout for the RF State Duma election (million people).

However, the dynamics of indicator such as voter turnout clearly indicates that a significant number of Russians are not satisfied with the situation in the country. The turnout for the State Duma election has been declining since 2007; moreover if in 2011 compared to 2007, the turnout fell by only four million people, then in 2016 compared to 2011 – by 13 million that is three times more. In general, in 2007–2016, the turnout of Russians for parliamentary election decreased by 16.9 mln people (Fig. 2).

Experts point out many reasons for a low turnout for the election to the State Duma of the seventh convocation: absence of political competition, people's dis-

trust in the transparency of electoral procedures, the fact that the election was held in September and not in December (as usual), poorly organized information campaign, etc. However, it is important to note that despite all these nuances **the turnout was and still is a “litmus test” of public sentiment and civic consciousness.** Experts from the Russian Academy of Sciences regard the voluntary refusal from participation in one of the fundamental democratic procedures as a latent form of protest: “*It is non-participation* rather than protest vote that is becoming the most common means for citizens to express their political discontent”<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *Dvadsat' let reform glazami rossiyan (opyt mnogoletnikh sotsiologicheskikh zamerov): Analiticheskii doklad Instituta sotsiologii RAN v sotrudnichestve s Predstavitel'stvom Fonda imeni Fridrikha Eberta v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Twenty years of reforms in the eyes of Russians (an experience of sociological measurements): Analytical report of RAS Institute of Sociology in cooperation with the representative office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in the Russian Federation]. Available at: [http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Doklad/20\\_years\\_reform.pdf](http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Doklad/20_years_reform.pdf)

Insert 1.

In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with the problem of economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare? (answer option: "successful and fairly successful")\*

Socio-demographic categories	2000	2004	2005	2008	2009	2012	2013	2014	2015	Feb.– Oct. 2016	Dynamics + / –					
											2004 to 2000	2008 to 2004	2012 to 2008	Feb.– Oct. 2016 to 2012	Feb.– Oct. 2016 to 2015	
<b>Sex</b>																
Men	26.9	35.3	37.3	36.0	33.7	27.5	31.3	33.6	34.0	27.3	+8	+1	-9	0	-7	
Women	24.7	31.9	33.4	37.2	29.9	29.2	31.3	35.8	34.3	27.6	+7	+5	-8	-2	-7	
<b>Age</b>																
Under 30	28.5	39.7	38.0	37.5	31.8	26.7	29.9	34.8	34.7	29.6	+11	-2	-11	+3	-5	
30-55	24.8	32.7	34.8	36.2	30.8	28.1	31.6	33.4	34.6	26.4	+8	+4	-8	-2	-8	
Over 55	24.2	28.7	33.3	36.7	32.7	30.5	32.1	36.8	33.1	27.1	+5	+8	-6	-3	-6	
<b>Education</b>																
Secondary and incomplete secondary	27.5	32.5	35.5	32.8	31.3	26.2	30.0	32.6	31.9	24.4	+5	0	-7	-2	-8	
Secondary vocational	26.2	32.8	34.5	37.7	30.9	28.6	31.0	36.1	34.3	26.4	+7	+5	-9	-2	-8	
Higher and incomplete higher	22.1	35.0	35.6	39.9	32.5	30.1	33.1	36.0	36.3	31.6	+13	+5	-10	+2	-5	
<b>Income groups</b>																
20% of the poorest people	21.4	28.0	40.6	35.0	31.0	20.6	24.2	24.6	20.4	18.3	+7	+7	-14	-2	-2	
60% of the people with median income	25.7	33.3	35.7	36.5	31.6	30.5	31.8	35.7	36.1	26.8	+8	+3	-6	-4	-9	
20% of the most prosperous people	30.7	42.5	36.3	37.7	32.9	34.6	37.1	43.6	41.8	36.3	+12	-5	-3	+2	-6	
<b>Territories</b>																
Vologda	28.3	32.2	30.7	34.9	30.7	26.3	27.3	30.5	30.8	27.6	+4	+3	-9	+1	-3	
Cherepovets	21.8	32.7	36.3	34.3	25.4	30.9	32.1	40.2	37.5	30.5	+11	+2	-3	0	-7	
Districts	26.3	34.4	36.6	38.7	35.0	28.2	33.0	34.2	34.1	25.2	+8	+4	-11	-3	-9	
Oblast	25.6	33.4	35.1	36.7	31.6	28.4	31.3	34.8	34.1	27.2	+8	+3	-8	-1	-7	
January 2000 – May 2004 – V. Putin's first presidency; May 2004 – May 2008 – V. Putin's second presidency; May 2008 – May 2012 – D. Medvedev's presidency; May 2012 – present – V. Putin's third presidency.																
* Excluding the share of those who found it difficult to answer.																

In your opinion, how successful is the RF President in coping with the problem of economic recovery and increase in the citizens' welfare? (answer option: "without any considerable success and completely unsuccessful")\*

Socio-demographic categories	2000	2004	2005	2008	2009	2012	2013	2014	2015	Feb.– Oct. 2016	Dynamics + / –				
											2004 to 2000	2008 to 2004	2012 to 2008	Feb.– Oct. 2016 to 2012	Feb.– Oct. 2016 to 2015
<b>Sex</b>															
Men	54.1	50.1	50.0	47.8	51.7	60.0	57.6	54.7	52.6	59.0	-4	-2	+12	-1	+6
Women	52.2	49.4	51.4	44.6	53.0	56.3	56.2	52.4	52.1	59.1	-3	-5	+12	+3	+7
<b>Age</b>															
Under 30	52.8	43.6	47.2	45.2	51.1	57.6	55.3	52.2	50.1	56.9	-9	+2	+12	-1	+7
30-55	55.0	51.2	51.3	47.1	53.7	59.0	57.5	54.8	52.9	60.6	-4	-4	+12	+2	+8
Over 55	48.7	52.7	52.7	44.9	51.5	56.5	56.9	52.3	52.9	58.2	+4	-8	+12	+2	+5
<b>Education</b>															
Secondary and incomplete secondary	49.1	48.5	49.8	43.6	48.7	57.4	57.0	54.6	52.8	59.3	-1	-5	+14	+2	+7
Secondary vocational	51.6	49.1	50.3	45.7	55.1	57.5	57.1	52.5	51.6	59.1	-3	-3	+12	+2	+8
Higher and incomplete higher	60.1	51.6	52.3	49.1	53.9	59.0	56.4	52.9	52.6	58.5	-9	-3	+10	-1	+6
<b>Income groups</b>															
20% of the poorest people	53.8	52.2	45.8	46.8	50.7	63.1	61.8	63.4	61.8	63.1	-2	-5	+16	0	+1
60% of the people with median income	53.6	51.7	50.9	45.8	53.0	57.6	56.7	52.6	51.4	60.1	-2	-6	+12	+3	+9
20% of the most prosperous people	52.6	43.4	52.7	50.4	56.4	53.6	53.8	47.4	47.3	55.4	-9	+7	+3	+2	+8
<b>Territories</b>															
Vologda	55.7	54.4	53.6	46.8	49.8	58.8	61.3	53.2	54.8	59.3	-1	-8	+12	+1	+5
Cherepovets	52.8	51.8	52.2	56.4	65.3	58.6	57.5	51.7	51.8	62.5	-1	+5	+2	+4	+11
Districts	51.7	46.4	48.8	40.5	47.2	57.2	54.2	54.4	51.3	56.9	-5	-6	+17	0	+6
Oblast	53.0	49.7	50.7	46.0	52.4	57.9	56.8	53.4	52.3	59.1	-3	-4	+12	+1	+7
January 2000 – May 2004 – V. Putin's first presidency; May 2004 – May 2008 – V. Putin's second presidency; May 2008 – May 2012 – D. Medvedev's presidency; May 2012 – present – V. Putin's third presidency.															
* Excluding the share of those who found it difficult to answer.															

In this sense, low voter turnout on September 18 clearly reflects the dissatisfaction of the population with the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, which is reflected in the sociological research data. So, in February – October 2016 compared to 2015 the share of positive ratings of the success with which the President promotes economic recovery and growth of citizens' welfare decreased in all major socio-demographic groups (by 2–9 p.p., *Insert 1*).

The proportion of people who negatively assess the work of the President in dealing with economic issues for the period from February 2015 – October 2016 also increased in all the main groups, this increase was the greatest (8–9 p.p.) among men 30–55 years of age who have secondary vocational education and, according to their own assessment of their income, are among the 60% of those having average income and 20% of the most wealthy citizens. Thus, today hidden protest potential is accumulated not only

in socially vulnerable categories of society (persons of retirement age, the poorest segments), but among people with average and high levels of financial well-being.

Some Russian and foreign<sup>11</sup> experts note that **“the power in this election consciously used a tactic to reduce turnout: when the turnout is low, the proportion of manageable electorate voting for the “party of power” and its candidates is bigger..** The United Russia Party almost everywhere improved its relative results compared to the results of the voting on December 4, 2011. However, due to the low turnout in absolute numbers of votes, the overall result of United Russia is lower than on December 4, 2011”<sup>12</sup>.

Communist party leader Gennady Zyuganov at a meeting with Russian President noted: **“What we all have to analyze is the fact that the party in power had 45 million votes in 2007, this is very powerful support, and exceptionally crucial. In the crisis, critical moments the widespread support of the society**

<sup>11</sup> Foreign media on the 2016 election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation (source: Newspaper “Kommersant” of September 19, 2016. Available at: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3093506>):

“Before the election, the Kremlin has ensured that the election was held in a way that was convenient for it...the election was held against the background of such a political climate when the entire opposition is labeled as “traitors” that stab a “besieged” Russia and its President in the back” (source: the German edition of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Schmidt F. Keine oppositionelle Partei schafft es in die Duma. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2016, September 18. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/europa/in-russland-schafft-es-keine-oppositionelle-partei-ins-parlament-14442041.html>).

“The results are not expected to lead to any dramatic changes; the established political parties are all broadly supportive of the country’s president, Vladimir Putin, and the low turnout suggested more opposition-minded urban Russians simply stayed at home” (source: the English edition of *The Guardian* (Russian election unlikely to loosen Putin’s grip on power. *The Guardian*, 2016, September 18. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/18/russia-votes-in-election-unlikely-to-loosen-putins-grip-on-power>).

“Turnout was the lowest since Russia became an independent country a quarter of a century ago – showing palpable voter apathy... The Kremlin also brought the vote forward from December, when urban residents more inclined to vote for opposition parties would more likely be at home and able to go to the polls instead of vacationing” (source: the U.S. edition of the *Wall Street Journal* (Ferris-Rotman M. Putin’s Party Shores Up Power in Parliamentary Elections Amid Weak Turnout. *The Wall Street Journal*, 2016, September 18. Available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russians-head-to-polls-to-vote-for-new-parliament-1474184676>).

<sup>12</sup> Lyubarev A. Nizkaya yavka spasla “Edinuyu Rossiyu” [Low turnout saved the United Russia party]. *Informatsionnyi portal “Gazeta.ru” of 16.10.2016* [Information portal “Gazeta.ru” of October 16, 2016]. Available at: [https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2012/10/16\\_x\\_4813741.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2012/10/16_x_4813741.shtml)

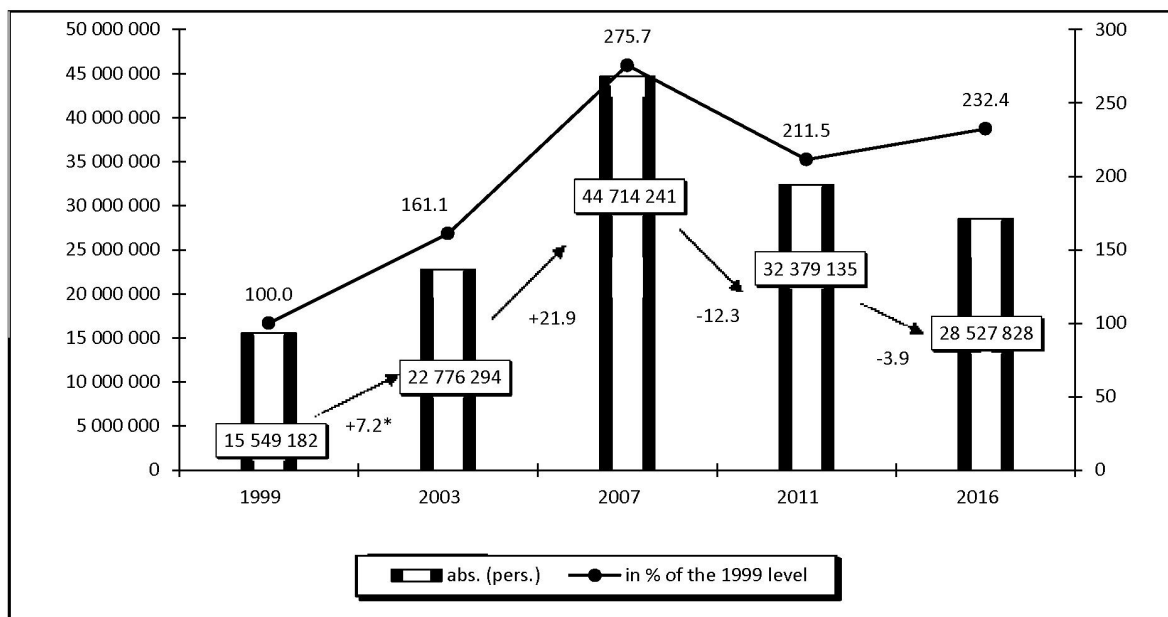
is crucial. **This year the party in power received 28.7 million votes; they lost 17 million.** I understand that there are issues and reasons: if the GDP growth in 2012 was 3.4 percent, last year it was minus 3.7, and we are still in a recession. Losing 7 percent in five years means nearly 90 trillion rubles less in the budget. That amounts to two current budgets”<sup>13</sup>.

According to the Central Election Commission, the percentage of support of United Russia in the 2016 election increased by 5% (from 49 to 54%), but in fact it lost almost four million votes (3.85

million people), and compared to the 2011 election – almost 16 million (16.19 million people; *Fig. 3*).

**Only in 15 out of 83 Russian constituent entities there was an increase in the number of those who voted for the United Russia Party on September 18, 2016. In other regions, the support for the ruling party decreased in comparison with 2011. If we compare the voting results with those of the 2007 election, we will see that the increase in the number of votes in favor of United Russia is observed only in five out of 83 Russian regions (*Insert 2*).**

Figure 3. Dynamics of the share of those who voted for the United Russia Party (in 1999 the party was called the Unity Block) in the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation for the period from 1999 to 2016



\* Increase/decrease in the number of those who voted for the United Russia Party at the election to the State Duma of the Russian Federation (million people).

<sup>13</sup> Stenogramma vstrechi Prezidenta RF s liderami partii, proshedshikh po itogam vyborov v Gosdumu [Transcript of the meeting of Russian President with leaders of the parties, held after the State Duma election]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official website of Russian President]. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52957>

Dynamics of the votes for the United Russia party at the State Duma election in 2007, 2011 and 2016 (CEC data)\*

Territory	%					People				
	2007	2011	2016 **	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007	2007	2011	2016 **	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>64.30</b>	<b>49.32</b>	<b>55.22</b>	<b>5.90</b>	<b>-9.08</b>	<b>44714241</b>	<b>32371737</b>	<b>28527828</b>	<b>-3843909</b>	<b>-16186413</b>
Chechen Republic	99.36	99.48	96.33	-3.15	-3.03	574101	607909	635729	27820	61628
Republic of Buryatia	65.59	49.0	89.38	40.38	23.79	267776	186953	126461	-60492	-141315
Republic of Tatarstan	81.07	77.8	85.77	7.97	4.70	1950839	1777189	1941068	163879	-9771
Republic of Mordovia	93.41	91.6	84.78	-6.82	-8.63	580894	565597	440108	-125489	-140786
Republic of Tuva	89.21	85.3	83.52	-1.78	-5.69	118255	119705	116372	-3333	-1883
Karachay-Cherkess Republic	92.90	89.8	81.84	-7.96	-11.06	262308	267475	233498	-33977	-28810
Kabardino-Balkar Republic	96.12	81.3	77.72	-3.58	-18.40	481583	428171	375942	-52229	-105641
Kemerovo Oblast	76.82	64.6	77.69	13.09	0.87	1258100	931474	1363181	431707	105081
Republic of Ingushetia	98.72	91.0	72.65	-18.35	-26.07	159496	151257	129222	-22035	-30274
Republic of Kalmykia	72.43	66.1	71.67	5.57	-0.76	100170	90089	85923	-4166	-14247
Saratov Oblast	64.81	64.9	68.74	3.84	3.93	800272	863047	854702	-8345	54430
Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug	78.35	71.7	68.01	-3.69	-10.34	243337	209327	177428	-31899	-65909
Republic of North Ossetia – Alania	71.60	67.9	67.43	-0.47	-4.17	204132	297704	303794	6090	99662
Penza Oblast	70.31	56.3	65.19	8.89	-5.12	556210	410858	427283	16425	-128927
Bryansk Oblast	61.77	50.1	64.73	14.63	2.96	368750	312620	357780	45160	-10970
Tambov Oblast	59.79	66.7	64.60	-2.10	4.81	325732	399705	268116	-131589	-57616
Chukotka Autonomous Okrug	78.13	70.3	61.56	-8.74	-16.57	24206	19037	11266	-7771	-12940
Republic of Adygea	70.97	61.0	60.64	-0.36	-10.33	142627	136612	108778	-27834	-33849
Krasnodar Krai	62.06	56.3	60.14	3.84	-1.92	1522005	1527253	1211518	-315735	-310487
Rostov Oblast	71.89	50.2	59.75	9.55	-12.14	1604372	985470	924004	-61466	-680368
Voronezh Oblast	57.46	49.5	59.35	9.85	1.89	739269	614484	600109	-14375	-139160
Nizhny Novgorod Oblast	60.63	45.0	59.20	14.20	-1.43	964302	713289	694713	-18576	-269589
Tyumen Oblast	73.57	65.1	58.75	-6.35	-14.82	603230	494437	511529	17092	-91701
Lipetsk Oblast	62.30	40.3	56.99	16.69	-5.31	382341	218095	279969	61874	-102372
Republic of Bashkortostan	83.12	70.5	56.88	-13.62	-26.24	2170241	1684953	1195246	-489707	-974995
Stavropol Krai	62.20	49.2	55.87	6.67	-6.33	672070	495691	446630	-49061	-225440
Belgorod Oblast	65.39	51.2	55.59	4.39	-9.80	585723	465571	410373	-55198	-175350
Ryazan Oblast	57.10	39.8	55.33	15.53	-1.77	318581	202638	220944	18306	-97637
Tula Oblast	61.72	61.3	54.03	-7.27	-7.69	459366	562073	291219	-270854	-168147
Kursk Oblast	62.74	45.7	52.96	7.26	-9.78	387829	237415	229092	-8323	-158737
Chuvash Republic	62.27	43.4	52.70	9.30	-9.57	428160	262526	283568	21042	-144592
Samara Oblast	56.04	39.1	52.21	13.11	-3.83	736838	531254	653139	121885	-83699
Udmurt Republic	60.57	45.1	51.79	6.69	-8.78	453248	311721	268070	-43651	-185178
Volgograd Oblast	57.74	36.2	51.60	15.40	-6.14	647137	366888	410656	43768	-236481
Leningrad Oblast	59.23	33.7	51.54	17.84	-7.69	419701	224332	293758	69426	-125943
Altai Republic	69.46	53.3	49.80	-3.50	-19.66	68573	51342	35065	-16277	-33508
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug	65.96	41.0	49.45	8.45	-16.51	464999	243431	213426	-30005	-251573
Ulyanovsk Oblast	66.24	43.6	49.36	5.76	-16.88	455666	277048	256438	-20610	-199228
Oryol Oblast	59.85	38.9	49.15	10.25	-10.70	281992	166642	164864	-1778	-117128
Smolensk Oblast	53.92	36.2	48.53	12.33	-5.39	248128	147111	155001	7890	-93127
Kamchatka Krai	63.67	45.3	48.32	3.02	-15.35	98695	62240	44849	-17391	-53846



Territory	%					People				
	2007	2011	2016 **	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007	2007	2011	2016 **	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2011	Dynamics (+/-) 2016 to 2007
Republic of Mari El	67.54	52.2	47.46	-4.74	-20.08	287333	198570	134998	-63572	-152335
Moscow Oblast	60.26	32.5	47.29	14.79	-12.97	2047427	167251	989418	822167	-1058009
Republic of Sakha	63.99	49.2	47.27	-1.93	-16.72	275856	184552	141128	-43424	-134728
Jewish Autonomous Oblast	66.22	48.1	46.68	-1.42	-19.54	56871	33933	23819	-10114	-33052
Kaluga Oblast	61.65	40.5	46.60	6.10	-15.05	284219	185508	156802	-28706	-127417
Sakhalin Oblast	62.96	41.9	46.18	4.28	-16.78	139295	81419	66712	-14707	-72583
Vladimir Oblast	56.75	38.3	46.13	7.83	-10.62	416375	230059	200175	-29884	-216200
Pskov Oblast	56.73	36.7	46.05	9.35	-10.68	221253	112581	104976	-7605	-116277
Tver Oblast	59.71	38.4	45.99	7.59	-13.72	401115	234104	202855	-31249	-198260
Magadan Oblast	55.31	41.0	45.77	4.77	-9.54	42284	25895	19780	-6115	-22504
Arkhangelsk Oblast	56.72	31.9	45.21	13.31	-11.51	312249	157599	152836	-4763	-159413
Kaliningrad Oblast	57.38	37.1	44.78	7.68	-12.60	246120	156131	154668	-1463	-91452
Perm Krai	62.06	36.3	44.53	8.23	-17.53	721729	369944	311774	-58170	-409955
Republic of Dagestan	89.19	82.8	44.48	-38.32	-44.71	1163300	1368980	1294629	-74351	131329
Astrakhan Oblast	58.00	58.1	43.50	-14.60	-14.50	273921	256994	117631	-139363	-156290
Murmansk Oblast	55.11	32.0	43.26	11.26	-11.85	226582	111676	104181	-7495	-122401
Ivanovo Oblast	60.76	40.1	43.07	2.97	-17.69	298590	180730	136756	-43974	-161834
Kurgan Oblast	64.43	44.4	42.16	-2.24	-22.27	326566	190519	125058	-65461	-201508
Toms Oblast	58.41	37.5	42.11	4.61	-16.30	267289	148082	108028	-40054	-159261
Nenets Autonomous Okrug	48.78	36.0	41.89	5.89	-6.89	8315	7176	6993	-183	-1322
Orenburg Oblast	60.31	34.9	41.88	6.98	-18.43	563489	294249	270594	-23655	-292895
Sverdlovsk Oblast	62.04	32.7	41.81	9.11	-20.23	1327711	586298	574059	-12239	-753652
Krasnoyarsk Krai	60.68	36.7	41.64	4.94	-19.04	768099	397941	322136	-75805	-445963
Novgorod Oblast	63.13	35.3	40.98	5.68	-22.15	218812	103232	81216	-22016	-137596
Zabaikalsky Krai	n.a.	43.3	40.94	-2.36	n.a.	n.a.	190756	128964	-61792	н.д.
Saint Petersburg	50.33	35.4	40.66	5.26	-9.67	971272	703209	495230	-207979	-476042
Irkutsk Oblast	58.50	34.9	40.56	5.66	-17.94	620673	312709	262030	-50679	-358643
Primorsky Krai	54.87	33.3	40.35	7.05	-14.52	476318	246059	217859	-28200	-258459
Novosibirsk Oblast	59.07	33.8	39.32	5.52	-19.75	726328	408209	285700	-122509	-440628
Chelyabinsk Oblast	61.11	49.4	39.29	-10.11	-21.82	1128588	32371737	456485	-31915252	-672103
Yaroslavl Oblast	53.17	29.0	39.14	10.14	-14.03	352568	171326	149492	-21834	-203076
Komi Republic	62.06	58.8	39.06	-19.74	-23.00	305906	316916	106426	-210490	-199480
Republic of Khakassia	59.53	40.1	38.98	-1.12	-20.55	129321	84843	59357	-25486	-69964
Kirov Oblast	55.38	34.9	38.94	4.04	-16.44	451719	212389	171833	-40556	-279886
Amur Oblast	69.75	43.5	38.85	-4.65	-30.90	316190	154129	103010	-51119	-213180
Karelia Republic	57.28	32.3	38.50	6.20	-18.78	177322	90942	79446	-11496	-97876
Moscow	54.13	46.6	38.44	-8.16	-15.69	194027	2053156	991676	-1061480	797649
Khabarovsk Krai	60.68	38.1	38.33	0.23	-22.35	401043	213616	139494	-74122	-261549
<b>Vologda Oblast</b>	<b>60.47</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>38.03</b>	<b>4.63</b>	<b>-22.44</b>	<b>386002</b>	<b>184715</b>	<b>145404</b>	<b>-39311</b>	<b>-240598</b>
Omsk Oblast	60.14	39.6	37.48	-2.12	-22.66	608208	344713	218577	-126136	-389631
Kostroma Oblast	56.36	30.7	37.20	6.50	-19.16	200963	99283	78106	-21177	-122857
Altai Krai	54.69	37.2	35.95	-1.25	-18.74	666941	384429	273105	-111324	-393836

\* Ranked according to the share of votes for the United Russia party in 2016.

\*\* Data for 2016 are preliminary (as of October 15, 2016).

The constitutional majority of United Russia in the Parliament is due to several factors. The major ones are as follows:

✓ **return to a mixed election system**<sup>16</sup>, which, and it was expected<sup>17</sup>, has allowed the ruling party to gain an absolute majority of votes in single-seat districts (*Table*);

✓ **creating conditions that contribute to the decline in voter turnout** (in particular, shifting the date of the single voting day from December to September);

✓ **amendments to the Federal Law “On political parties”**<sup>18</sup>, leading to the emergence of “knowingly failing” political forces that took away some votes from the opposition parties;

✓ **smart PR campaign** calling voters’ attention to the fact that United Russia is the party of the President (though, actually, “the party that calls itself the “President’s

The transition to a mixed system of parliamentary election is more convenient for United Russia, because it is no longer able to win the election and get a majority by party lists. In total, all these parties can collect 10–12% that will go to United Russia. They can get the entire 100% by single-seat districts<sup>14</sup>.

Under the Medvedev model, the party in power, having gaining 30%, could get a maximum of 150 deputies. Under the new model, even if they get 30% of 225 seats, it will comprise 70 deputies. But by single-seat districts, using the administrative resource, they will be able to put through the representatives of the ruling party and the All-Russia People’s Front, taking the maximum number of districts. Under this scheme they will be able to gain not just a simple, but a constitutional, majority<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Soloviev V. (Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Deputy of the State Duma of the Russian Federation; source: Duma under the new rules. *Gazeta.ru* of March 01, 2013. Available at: [https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/03/01\\_a\\_4993629.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/03/01_a_4993629.shtml))

<sup>15</sup> Nilov Ya. (Deputy Head of the LDPR faction in the State Duma; *ibidem*).

<sup>16</sup> Federal’nyi zakon ot 22 fevralya 2014 g. №20 “O vyborakh deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumy Federal’nogo Sobraniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii” [Federal Law of February 22, 2014 No. 20 “On the election of deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”]. *GARANT.RU* [Garant.ru]. Available at <http://www.garant.ru/hotlaw/federal/526816/#ixzz4Lq0DppDP>

<sup>17</sup> Expert opinion (Source: Duma under the new rules. *Gazeta.ru* of March 01, 2013. Available at; [https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/03/01\\_a\\_4993629.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/03/01_a_4993629.shtml)):

1. Lyubarev A. (expert from the Committee for State Initiatives): “Given the current level of support, the United Russia can get much more seats in the parliament with the help of single-member districts, than it gets on party lists. The purpose of this bill was to ensure the composition of the State Duma remains the same and the majority of seats were left for the United Russia.

2. Golosov G. (Professor of the European University at Saint Petersburg): “Medvedev’s bill has changed almost nothing in the existing system. And Mr. Putin apparently reasoned that it was high time to make a change, it is clear why he so judged: because the United Russia has ceased to win the election under the proportional system. The old electoral system returns in order to preserve the situation with the political monopoly of the United Russia at the level of the State Duma”.

<sup>18</sup> Federal’nyi zakon ot 2 aprelya 2012 g. № 28-FZ “O vnesenii izmenenii v Federal’nyi zakon “O politicheskikh partiyaakh” [Federal Law of April 2, 2012 No. 28-FZ “On amendments to Federal Law “On political parties”]. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2012/04/04/partii-dok.html>

## Official results of the elections to the State Duma of the seventh convocation\*

Party included in the State Duma according to the results of the voting on September 18, 2016	Number of seats obtained on the lists	The number of seats obtained in single-mandate constituencies	Total number of seats
United Russia	140	203	343
KPRF	35	7	42
LDPR	34	5	39
Just Russia	16	7	23
Total number of seats:	225	225	450

\* Three seats in the State Duma of the seventh convocation were obtained by A. Zhuravlev, Chairman of the Rodina party, R. Shaikhutdinov, head of the federal political Committee "Civic platform" and B. Reznik, an independent candidate who was part of the United Russia faction in Duma of the sixth convocation.

Source: Central Election Committee announced final results of the State Duma election. *RBC* of September 23, 2016. Available at: <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/23/09/2016/57e458999a7947b5f68a8268>

party", has collected only one-quarter of those who respect Vladimir Putin, despite a huge propaganda campaign"<sup>19</sup>).

A key question that will determine the relationship between society and the government in the near future is whether the strengthening of positions of United Russia was a result of an increase in public trust in the ruling party and in the President personally or whether this strengthening proceeds from the reasons mentioned above. So far we can definitely say that the victory of the current government in the election on September 18, 2016 is the **"credit of trust" issued by the Russian society to the Russian President**. However, this "credit of trust" does not mean

that people are satisfied with the status quo in the dynamics of the standard of living and quality of life, social inequality and social justice; this does not mean that people voted for the "stability" of the current situation.

On the contrary, the election results mean that the President is given *carte blanche* to prove himself in real action

We all know it very well that success at the election always means a new challenge and a new frontier, because **people pin their hopes on the election, and these hopes need to be fulfilled**, because the Parliament is elected in order to solve country's problems, the problems that voters put before the authorities, including the supreme legislative authority of the country<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> N. Starikov: "84% of the population trust Putin. A little more than half of these 84% came to vote in September 2016 (turnout was 47.9%), and only half of those who came voted for the United Russia" (source: Starikov N. The results of the 2016 election campaign. *N. Starikov's blog* of September 19, 2016. Available at: <https://nstarikov.ru/blog/70943>)

<sup>20</sup> Stenogramma vstrechi Prezidenta RF s liderami partii, proshedshikh po itogam vyborov v Gosdumu [Transcript of the meeting of Russian President with leaders of the parties, held after the State Duma election]. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Prezidenta RF* [Official website of Russian President]. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52957>

corresponding to national interests and strategic lines identified back in 1999<sup>21</sup> and continued in subsequent speeches – in the Munich speech (2007) and at the Valdai forum (2013), in the Address to the Federal Assembly (2014), and in the National Security Strategy (2015).

“In the government there are people who do not flatter themselves with the election performance of United Russia; they realize that the people who did not come to vote send out a very serious message. Because **passivity can easily change to another political sign. All the more so that the anger in society is growing. Therefore, there emerges an idea that it is necessary to change something**”<sup>22</sup>. In this regard, there are many new persons in the ruling party now; the President has implemented a number of personnel reshuffles and appointed new people to key positions in the system of administration; as many respected experts note, the situation is moving toward a comprehensive reset of the political system. We cannot rule out the option that Russian public administration is moving toward a two- or one-party system<sup>23</sup>.

**However, whatever the person-nel changes in the government may be, it is necessary to remember that they should not be an end in itself.** If they are not accompanied by satisfying people’s needs for social justice, then it becomes yet another manifestation of imitation, which scientists talked about many times and which Russian society has already faced in its recent history.

In addition, many experts have considerable doubts about the fact that the current government can change the present-day economic trend – whether

Imitation becomes the fruit of activity (conscious or unconscious) when an artificial environment is created for processes and phenomena designed to achieve specific (selfish), putatively socially relevant, group and corporate goals... it thrives in those conditions when there is no steady feedback from the people, when their opinion is not taken into consideration, but they are proposed to follow the decision of the functionaries in power<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Strategic goals and objectives of Russia’s development for the next decade are given in more detail in V. Putin’s program article “Russia at the turn of the millennium” published in *Rossiiskaya gazeta* of December 30, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> An interview with MGIMO Professor Vladimir Solovey on the radio “Komsomolskaya Pravda” on September 30, 2016. Available at: <http://www.kp.ru/radio/guest/823390/>

<sup>23</sup> “It is obvious that Russia now is forming a system with the so-called dominant party. It is the United Russia party, which will have not just a monopoly in politics, but it is ready to declare itself as the avant-garde of society. Just like the Communist party used to be the avant-garde of the Soviet Union...” (source: *ibidem*).

<sup>24</sup> Toshchenko Zh.T. Novye liki deyatel’nosti: imitatsiya [New faces of activity: imitation]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological Studies], 2012, no. 12, p. 23.

because of a basic misunderstanding of laws of modern economics, whether from the unwillingness to understand them due to a personal interest in the existing state of affairs<sup>25</sup>.

Another important issue that the current government will have to deal with is as follows: the events of “Crimean spring” stirred in the Russian society a powerful layer of spiritual needs, which “are the basis of the Russian civilization project”, though they were “dormant”<sup>26</sup>. Today this effect is fading away, it gives way to socio-economic problems; but it is clear that the need for a new ideological paradigm of development will not be able to remain without response from the state.

Russia’s position in the international arena requires this as well, because none of the centers of a multipolar world cannot exist without ideological rod as strong as the American “consumer society”. At the same time, neither socialism nor capitalism

will dominate in Russian society, because the experience of both was lived through. “We have already lived under the socialist system and we remember its strengths and limitations well... Restoration of anything (especially in politics) rarely opens up new horizons”<sup>27</sup>. That is why it is necessary to adopt a completely new ideological content based on a deep, mental feeling uniting the majority of social strata of Russian society, the sense of social justice and high moral ethics.

Thus, “tactical achievement does not eliminate strategic uncertainty”<sup>28</sup>. The victory of the current government in the State Duma election confers on it the responsibility for solving the two most difficult issues – the withdrawal of the economy from a state of “sluggish depression” and the formation of a new ideological paradigm of spiritual and moral development. After United Russia got a constitutional majority in Parliament and in the entire power vertical (President, Government, State Duma, governors), the ruling elite has no more or less weighty opposition, which could become an obstacle to the making of administrative decisions that the elite considers necessary. The only obstacle is inside it – it is a confrontation between “the statist” and the liberals who defend

<sup>25</sup> “The economic bloc of the government and the Bank of Russia will never admit to making an error. After all, their price is huge – only in the past two years due to the fact that the Central Bank, after the withdrawal of external sources of credit due to the Western sanctions, reduced domestic credit as well, the underproduction of GDP amounted to about 10 trillion rubles, and the decline in investment was more than two trillion. The ruble incomes and savings of citizens and businesses devalued twice” (S.Yu. Glazyev’s opinion on D.A. Medvedev’s article “Social and economic development of Russia: Finding new dynamics” published in the journal *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 2016, no. 10 (source: источник: Glazyev S.Yu. Chego ne khochet znat’ prem’er? [What doesn’t the Chairman of the Government want to know?]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2016, September 29. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/chego\\_ne\\_hochet\\_znat\\_prem\\_er](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/chego_ne_hochet_znat_prem_er))

<sup>26</sup> Gorshkov M.K. “Russkaya mechta”: opyt sotsiologicheskogo izmereniya [“Russian dream”: an experience of sociological assessment]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya* [Sociological Studies], 2012, no. 12, p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> Savel’ev D. Zachem idti nazad v sotsializm? [Why go back to socialism?]. *Literaturnaya gazeta* [Literary newspaper], 2016, no. 36 (6566), September 14.

<sup>28</sup> Kon’kov N., Nagornyi A. No porazhen’ya ot pobedy... [But the defeat from the victory...]. *Gazeta “Zavtra”* [Newspaper “Tomorrow”], 2016, September 22. Available at: [http://zavtra.ru/blogs/no\\_porazhen\\_ya\\_ot\\_pobedi](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/no_porazhen_ya_ot_pobedi)

their own interests and the interests of the “collective West”. The first group accumulates “strong positions of pro-Western “agents of influence”, those comprador forces, whose interests and assets are within the sphere of influence of the “collective West” and who at any cost, “dead or alive”, need guarantees from the West that these interests and assets will be inviolable”. The second group is “ready

to get such guarantees “from a position of strength”, using Russia’s military-political potential”<sup>29</sup>.

A crucial role in this confrontation will belong to the head of state, to his political will and the talent of strategic planning. Perhaps this will become a key factor that will affect the choice of Russians in March 2018 during the election of the President of the Russian Federation.

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