

EDITORIAL

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The Rubicon Has Been Crossed: February 24, 2022, Russia Entered a New Stage in Its Development in the 21st Century



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Abstract. February 24, 2022, after the recognition of the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic (February 22, 2022), Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the beginning of a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine. The head of state noted in his address to Russians that the purpose of the operation was “to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation”. The RF President's decision announced the beginning of a new stage in Russia's development in the 21st century and launched large-scale and irreversible changes concerning not only our country, but also the whole world. The global historical confrontation between Russia and the US-led NATO countries (between Russia and

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the Collective West) has entered an active phase, accompanied by a sharp aggravation of international political relations, sanctions policy, and armed clashes. We (relying, as usual, on expert opinions, official statistics and sociological surveys) express our own point of view on the events taking place in the world and in Russia, analyze their nature, causes, and implications.

Key words: special military operation, President of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Collective West, new stage of development.

*Russia has begun to fight for its future, for its place in the 21st century
and for its own vision of the future of the 21st century.
V. Mozhegov¹*

February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin adopted decisions that entailed large-scale implications both for our country and for the whole world. It is no exaggeration to say that the recognition of the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic² (February 21, 2022), as well as the beginning of a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine (February 24) opened a new page in the multi-century history of the confrontation between Russia and the Collective West. As the President noted, **“a collision with these forces is inevitable; it is only a matter of time”**.

The forced nature of the special operation (which the head of state has repeatedly emphasized in his public speeches) was due to deep reasons related to the history of the confrontation between Russia and the West, which escalated dramatically in late 2021 – early 2022 due to the following:

- ✓ fomenting anti-Russian hysteria in the world media around the allegedly imminent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian armed forces (which, in particular, allowed the Americans to literally “pour” weapons into Ukraine³);
- ✓ the U.S. ignoring Russia's key demands on the drafts of the treaty on security guarantees and

“... in territories adjacent to Russia, which I have to note is our historical land, **a hostile “anti-Russia” is taking shape**, fully controlled from the outside..., **For our country, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a nation... It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty.**

... **The showdown between Russia and these forces cannot be avoided. It is only a matter of time... Russia cannot feel safe, develop, and exist while facing a permanent threat from the territory of today's Ukraine.... They did not leave us any other option for defending Russia and our people, other than the one we are forced to use today... I reiterate: we are acting to defend ourselves from the threats created for us and from a worse peril than what is happening now”⁴.**

¹ Mozhegov V. Russia's special operation put an end to the end of history. *Vzglyad*. April 15, 2022. Available at: <https://vz.ru/opinions/2022/4/15/1153019.html>

² Presidential Decree on recognizing the Donetsk People's Republic. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/000120220220002>; Presidential Decree on recognizing the Lugansk People's Republic. Available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/000120220220001>

³ According to some reports, this process has been going on since April 2021, but by the end of the year it became completely open; several shipments a day were delivered to the territory of Ukraine. Available at: <https://www.5-tv.ru/news/382710/opublikovany-dokazatelstva-cto-ssa-nakacivali-oruziem-ukrainu-v2021-godu/>

⁴ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of Russia on February 24, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

the agreement on measures to ensure the security of Russia and NATO member states⁵;

✓ an actual threat of the formation of a nuclear potential on the territory of Ukraine (as a result of which, according to the RF President, “the situation in the world and in Europe will drastically change, especially for us, for Russia”⁶);

✓ the threat of Ukraine’s joining NATO, and therefore, the threat of deployment of the Alliance’s armed forces on its territory, which would be **“a direct threat to Russia’s security”**⁷;

✓ finally, new shelling of the Lugansk and Donetsk people’s republics by the armed forces of Ukraine, the intensity of which is indicated by the fact that on February 18, 2022, the leadership of the DPR and the LPR had to announce the evacuation of part of the civilian population (women, children, the elderly, about 700 thousand people in total⁸) to the territory of the Russian Federation.

Consequently, as Vladimir Putin noted in his address to Russians on February 24, 2022, announcing the start of a special operation in Ukraine, **“they did not leave us any other option for defending Russia and our people, other than the one we are forced to use today”**.

After the start of the special operation, the purpose of which, as the President pointed out, is to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine and also “to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime”, there developed a large-scale (not only military, but also economic, political, ideological) confrontation between Russia and the Collective

“In these circumstances, we have to take bold and immediate action. The people’s republics of Donbass have asked Russia for help. In this context, in accordance with Article 51 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter, with permission of Russia’s Federation Council, and in execution of the treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic, ratified by the Federal Assembly on February 22, I made a decision to carry out a special military operation. **The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation**”⁹.

West, the global consequences of which for our country are comparable to such historical events as the Revolution in 1917, the victory in the Great Patriotic War in 1945 and the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

The global crisis observed today has several deeply-rooted foundations, each of which indicates its **logical emergence and inevitability**. According to Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia V.V. Popov, such grounds include, for example, the centuries-old historical confrontation between the Russian and Anglo-Saxon civilizations. Many foreign experts have been talking about the crisis of capitalism for a long time and now raise the question of “what will replace this system” rather than “how to reform it”¹⁰.

⁵ On Russian draft documents on ensuring legal guarantees of security by the United States and NATO. Official website of the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available at: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1790809/

⁶ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of Russia on February 21, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Aggravation in the Donbass: What happened on February 18, 2022. Available at: <https://officelife.media/news/31222-obostrenie-na-nbsp-donbasse-chto-proizoshlo-18-nbsp-fevralya-2022-goda/>

⁹ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of Russia on February 24, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

¹⁰ See, for example: Wallerstein I., Collins R., Mann M., Derluigian G., Calhoun C. (2015). *Est’ li budushchee u kapitalizma?* [Does Capitalism Have a Future?]. Moscow: Izd-vo Instituta Gaidara.

V.V. Popov: “...we are talking about the largest watershed in the history of the 21st century – about the confrontation between the Russian (sometimes called the Eurasian or the Orthodox civilization) and the Western civilizations. The outcome of this conflict situation largely depends on our success in Ukraine... the success of our military operation in Ukraine will inspire most of the world community to boldly defend their independence, the right to determine their own policies and destiny”¹¹.

I. Wallerstein: “Capitalism is a system, and ... all systems have lives; they are never eternal... The question before the world today is not in what way governments can reform the capitalist system... The question therefore has become what will replace this system”¹².

Excerpt from a report of CIA Director W. Casey to the U.S. President R. Reagan (1981): “Now the situation is favorable for dealing a serious blow to the Soviets, for plunging their economy into complete chaos, and then taking control over and influence the further development of events in society and the state... we have a historic chance – and we must not miss it”¹⁴.

A. Fursov: “Gorbachev’s surrender, in fact, the surrender of the socialist camp and the USSR, which took place on December 2–3, 1989 in Malta, is the final act of a rather long process of interaction between part of the Western and part of the Soviet elite”¹⁵.

K. Semin: “...one of the most important factors that determined the destruction of the Soviet Union, and we refer to this factor constantly when discussing the reasons, is the successful sabotage and psychological war of our main enemy, aimed against the Soviet Union”¹⁶.

It is difficult to disagree with these points of view. However, in our opinion, the roots of today’s tense global situation lie, among other things, in the specifics of the history of modern Russia, in its progressive development since 2000, when Vladimir Putin assumed office as President.

In fact, this whole story (from 2000 to the present) is proof that “the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century”¹³ – the collapse of the Soviet Union that was purposefully planned by the Americans (as many experts like A. Fursov, K. Semin, etc., point out) and that drew a line under the results of the Cold War of 1946–1991, despite

the magnitude of its implications for Russia, did not turn out to be an irreversible process.

And, of course, this process (Russia’s return to the global geo-political arena, the restoration of the national identity that was seemingly lost in the 1990s) is directly related to the personality and role of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who even at the time of his first inauguration said that he was taking on “a huge responsibility”, because “in Russia the head of state has always been and will always be the person who is responsible for everything in the country...”¹⁷.

¹¹ Popov V.V. Confrontation of Russian and Western civilizations. Russian International Affairs Council. Available at: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/riacdigest/protivostoyanie-rossiyskoy-i-zapadnoy-tsivilizatsiy/?sphrase_id=90100562 (V.V. Popov – Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia, Candidate of Sciences (History), analyst at the Institute for International Studies and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies of MGIMO University, member of the RIAC).

¹² Wallerstein I., Collins R., Mann M., Derlugian G., Calhoun C. (2015). *Est’ li budushchee u kapitalizma?* [Does Capitalism Have a Future?]. Moscow: Izd-vo Instituta Gaidara.

¹³ Address of the President of the Russian Federation, April 25, 2005. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/36354>

¹⁴ Shironin V.S. KGB – TsRU. *Sekretnye pruzhiny perestroiki* [KGB – CIA. The Secret Springs of Perestroika]. Moscow: Yaguar, 1997. Available at: <https://booksonline.com.ua/view.php?book=32756&page=21>

V.S. Shironin (1939–2001) – one-star general, head of a KGB analytical center, deputy head of Soviet counterintelligence, senior consultant to the heads of the state security department.

¹⁵ The lot of those who have no ideology is a beggars’ banquet on the sidelines of History. Official website of A. Fursov. December 2, 2014. Available at: http://andreyfursov.ru/news/udel_tekh_u_kogo_net_ideologii_piknik_na_obochine_istorii/2014-12-02-384

¹⁶ The causes of the collapse of the USSR. K. Semin and E. Spitsyn. March 17, 2017. Available at: <https://aftershock.news/?q=node/499037&full>

¹⁷ Vladimir Putin’s inaugural speech on May 7, 2000. Available at: https://www.mn.ru/blogs/blog_reference/80928

In the following decades, the President repeatedly confirmed the fact that he was personally responsible for the state of affairs in Russia and for the life of the country as a whole. This idea is not only expressed in his public speeches¹⁸, but it is also contained in the key strategic documents on national development¹⁹. In fact, he built the entire system of public administration in such a way that a particular person is the main “arbiter” in it²⁰.

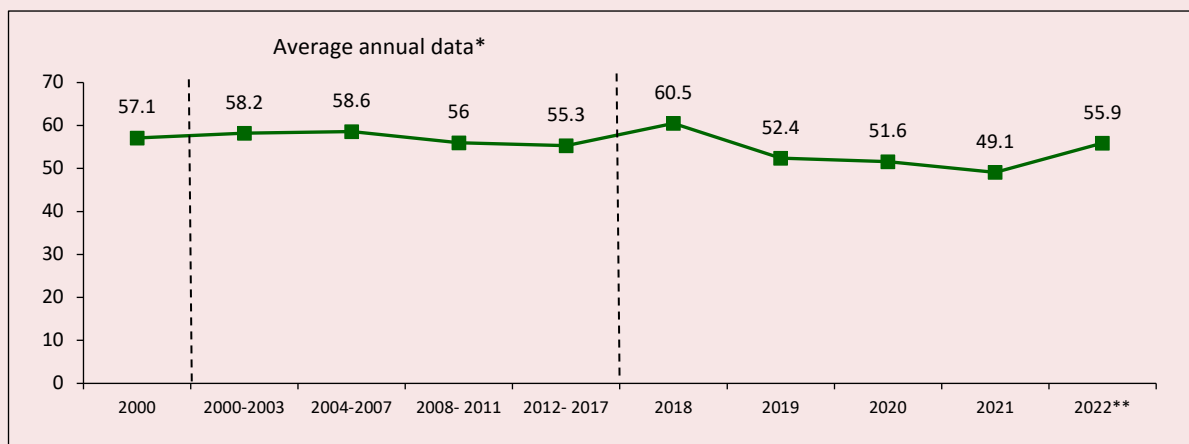
At the same time, Vladimir Putin personally enjoys the highest level of people’s trust compared to all major state and non-governmental institutions (*Figure*), and this trust did not arise from nowhere, but is rather a reflection of public support for his work and the strategic guidelines for Russia’s development that he expresses.

In general, over the period from 2000 to 2022, the level of people’s trust in any of the main governmental and non-governmental institutions

in the country has not decreased, and most of them (13 out of 21) have witnessed a noticeable increase in this kind of trust (5 p.p. or more; *Tab. 1*). This clearly characterizes the attitude of people toward the entire system of public administration created by the President. Therefore, we can say that the whole history of the development of Russia under Vladimir Putin is **the history of realization of his vision of the country’s future, the vision supported by society, the vision which he outlined in his first program article “Russia at the turn of the Millennium” (1999): a state based on three pillars: “the Russian idea. A strong state. An efficient economy”**²¹.

The path that the President embarked on in 2000 was originally designed for a long period, and the perseverance that the head of state has shown in achieving his goals over the years, in a sense, testifies to the passionate nature of his personality. Passion, as the author of this theory L. Gumilyov wrote, is

Dynamics of the level of trust in the RF President (% of respondents)



* Average annual data for the presidential terms: 2000–2003 – Vladimir Putin’s first presidency; 2004–2007 – Vladimir Putin’s second presidency; 2008–2011 – Dmitry Medvedev’s presidency; 2012–2017 – Vladimir Putin’s third presidency.

** Data as of April 2022.

Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring.

¹⁸ See, for example: Vladimir Putin’s big press conference on December 18, 2014. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47250>

¹⁹ See, for example: National Security Strategy 2015 (Article 108). Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391/page/1>

²⁰ Putin’s arbitration. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. November 17, 2016. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2016-11-17/2_6861_red.html

²¹ Putin V.V. 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

Table 1. Dynamics of the level of trust in governmental and no-governmental institutions, % of respondents

Answer option*	Year	Average annual data				Year					Dynamics (+/-), p.p.
	2000	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022**	2022 to 2000
Church	42.3	42.6	44.3	47.8	44.7	50.0	46.5	45.5	46.6	47.5	+5
Prosecutor's Office	30.9	28.9	31.9	36.8	39.5	47.1	43.6	43.1	44.6	47.3	+16
RF Government	42.7	39.3	39.3	51.7	45.5	47.3	41.0	41.0	40.1	45.2	+3
Court	31.6	30.9	33.9	37.4	39.1	45.3	39.4	38.1	42.1	44.7	+13
Federal Security Service	34.2	32.6	33.4	37.5	38.5	45.2	41.0	42.7	43.9	44.3	+10
Police	27.2	26.0	27.0	33.6	37.2	44.4	40.7	41.6	43.9	44.3	+17
Army	37.0	33.8	27.8	35.0	39.6	47.2	40.8	38.5	43.0	43.5	+7
Oblast Administration	31.3	28.6	35.3	40.3	36.6	35.4	33.5	34.2	35.6	37.5	+6
Local self-government	no data	no data	29.5	35.9	32.9	34.4	31.6	30.3	32.3	35.4	+6
Scientific organizations	no data	no data	no data	no data	no data	32.8	30.3	30.3	36.1	34.8	+2
Federation Council	28.3	27.9	31.7	39.3	37.4	37.4	32.2	31.9	30.3	33.4	+5
State Duma	23.0	22.5	27.6	35.3	33.1	33.8	28.6	27.7	29.0	32.5	+10
RF Civic Chamber	no data	no data	no data	27.3	31.2	31.0	27.4	27.8	28.3	31.5	+4
Media	30.2	29.1	29.1	30.5	28.0	29.8	26.7	26.9	29.5	30.7	+1
Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast	no data	no data	no data	25.3	28.1	28.3	25.6	25.9	27.6	30.2	+5
Trade unions	28.4	26.0	27.6	31.0	27.4	33.3	29.7	28.4	31.8	29.9	+2
Non-governmental organizations	no data	no data	11.1	27.5	25.5	28.1	24.9	24.7	28.5	28.6	+18
Directors, CEOs	19.6	20.1	23.8	24.5	23.0	25.1	20.5	21.2	24.4	23.9	+4
Banking and entrepreneurial circles	12.4	13.9	20.5	22.2	19.4	20.7	17.6	18.9	22.8	22.5	+10
Political parties, movements	20.4	12.9	17.2	23.1	19.5	22.3	19.7	18.7	20.0	20.4	0

* Answer options "RF Civic Chamber" and "Civic Chamber of the Vologda Oblast" were included in the list in 2010, answer options "Non-governmental organizations" and "Local self-government" – in 2006, answer option "Scientific organizations" – in 2018.
**Data as of April 2022.
Source: VoIRC RAS public opinion monitoring. Ranked according to the data as of 2022.

“the driving force... of history”, and passionarity, as a personality trait, is **“the ability to endure overstrain in order to achieve a set goal”**.

Each step along this path was implemented consistently and methodically, taking into account

“Passionarity is the ability to endure overstrain in order to achieve a set goal; an irresistible inner desire (conscious or more often unconscious) for activities aimed at achieving the goal... This goal seems to be more valuable to a passionate individual than even their own life...”²²

the external political conditions and the internal condition of Russian society and the state. For example, Vladimir Putin's speech at the Munich Conference in 2007 did not happen “all of a sudden”, but precisely when Russia gained sufficient strength to publicly express and, if necessary, defend its position in the international arena, that is, after the economic recovery of 2004–2007 (Tab. 2); after the Presidential administration formulated the idea of “sovereign democracy” as “our Russian model”, opposed to the Western model of “managed democracy”²³; after the strengthening of

²² Gumilyov L.N. (2001). *Etnogenez i biosfera Zemli* [Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of the Earth]. Moscow. P. 269.

²³ We are building a sovereign democracy. *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. June 29, 2006. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2006/06/29/kreml.html>

Table 2. Average annual growth rates of the main socio-economic indicators (cost indicators in comparable prices), % to the previous year

Indicator	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2008
Average annual number of people employed in the economy	-2.7	-0.5	0.7	0.8
Actual final consumption of households		0.1	8.7	10.5
People's real monetary incomes	-8.0	-2.1	11.6	10.2
Real accrued wages	-18.2	-3.8	12.6	14.3
Real size of the assigned pensions (1993–2001– including compensation)	-12.5	-5.4	11.3	9.1
Gross domestic product		1.6	6.2	7.1
Final consumption costs	no data	0.5	7.6	9.6
Fixed assets in the economy	1.2	0.0	1.3	3.0
Commissioning of fixed assets	-20.5	-1.5	12.3	12.0
Industrial production*	-13.0	1.0	5.6	4.9
Agricultural products	-7.7	-1.3	3.1	5.9
Commissioning of the total area of residential buildings	-12.1	-8.2	7.0	15.3
Retail trade turnover	-1.8	1.0	11.0	14.5
Investments in fixed assets	-22.1	-8.6	9.2	17.4
Foreign trade turnover	no data	-1.1	19.8	27.4

* The data are given according to the production index calculated by types of economic activity "Mining", "Manufacturing", "Production and distribution of electricity, gas and water". Adjusted for informal activity.
Source: Average annual growth rates of the main socio-economic indicators. Russian Statistical Yearbook – 2009. Rosstat. Available at: https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b09_13/lssWWW.exe/Stg/html1/01-03.htm

civil society in the country (in particular through the establishment of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in 2005 and the subsequent process of organizing its representative offices in all regions of the country).

During his second presidential term (2004–2007) Vladimir Putin, even despite the opinion of the majority of Russians who would like to see him as head of state in 2008 (according to sociological surveys, this point of view was shared by 60% of Russia's population²⁴), did not initiate amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, thus proving himself as a person who respects and is not going to violate the legislation in force in the country.

The period from 2008 to 2011, when Dmitry Medvedev was the head of state (a man who, as

experts note, "did not like to take responsibility for difficult decisions ..., did not play a strategic role in the government system", "whose period of prime ministership witnessed the longest drop in household incomes"²⁵); when the country was going through the global financial crisis of 2008 and when the Collective West managed to organize mass protests in Bolotnaya Square by means of the "fifth column" (in fact, the same trial that the Ukrainian statehood could not withstand and which was later "tested" on the territories of Belarus and Kazakhstan), was perhaps the most "vulnerable" for the country. However, after the Russian society supported Vladimir Putin in the presidential election on March 4, 2012²⁶, there began the second stage of Russia's movement toward achieving national sovereignty.

²⁴ According to a Romir Monitoring survey conducted in 2005, 65% of Russians said that they cannot name any worthy candidate for the post of President of the Russian Federation in 2008; 28% of Russians supported the idea of changing the Constitution of the Russian Federation so that Vladimir Putin could run for president for a third term (source: Russians want to see Vladimir Putin as President in 2008. RBK. May 8, 2005. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/08/09/2005/5703bb289a7947afa08c8771>)

²⁵ Dmitry Medvedev's time: Indecision, dependence, stabilization. *Vedomosti*. January 16, 2020. Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2020/01/16/820713-vremya-medvedeva>

²⁶ Sixty four percent (45.6 million people) voted for Vladimir Putin in the 2012 presidential election.

During this period, under the personal control of the head of state (which was proclaimed in the 2015 National Security Strategy²⁷) an active process of rebuilding the Russian army has begun; as a result, “a real breakthrough has been achieved in the field of creating new weapons, pioneering developments that no one in the world has... a serious breakthrough that provides Russia with security and does not allow it to be drawn into an arms race”²⁸.

The real “fruits” of this breakthrough, allowing Russia “to have a defense capability that would guarantee its security in the long term”²⁹, were demonstrated by the President during his Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in 2018.

“During all these years since the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty [December 13, 2001], we have been working intensively on advanced equipment and arms, which allowed us to make a breakthrough in developing new models of strategic weapons³⁰.”

Thus, over the past decades, there was an ongoing process of forming the Russian armed forces: a modern army with advanced weapons and real combat experience³¹, the army capable, if necessary, of ensuring protection of Russia’s sovereignty.

Another key condition for the implementation of national development benchmarks outlined by Vladimir Putin in 1999 was to prepare the Russian

society to the possibility (which has become reality) of escalation of the conflict with the Collective West. To this end, the President continued to take concrete steps aimed at strengthening traditional moral values, civil society and national identity.

On May 6, 2011, at an interregional conference of the United Russia party, Vladimir Putin put forward an initiative to create the All-Russian People’s Front (ONF), a “broad social movement”³², through which, among other things, “the United Russia party was renewed”³³. June 11–12, 2013, the founding congress of the ONF was held, at which Vladimir Putin was elected leader of the ONF.

In 2013, delivering his speech at the international Valdai Forum, the RF President made “**the first large-scale attempt to formulate a new political ideology for Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union**, as well as to critically consider the issue of values that should form the basis of a new Russian identity, the Eurasian world and international relations”³⁴. At the same time, as experts noted, Vladimir Putin himself acted as a “critic of the entire modern model of the development of Western civilization”³⁵.

Insert 1 contains excerpts from Vladimir Putin’s Valdai speech. We consider this extremely important, because what the President talked about in 2013, that is, almost 10 years ago, against the background of the events taking place in 2022, has not lost its relevance, but, on the contrary, gained it.

²⁷ Article 108. “The state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of national security is implemented through coordinated actions of all elements of the system of its provision **under the leadership of the President of the Russian Federation** and with the coordinating role of the Security Council of the Russian Federation”.

²⁸ Opinion of political scientist V. Shapovalov. Available at: <https://news.rambler.ru/other/44139899-glavnye-resheniya-putina-za-chetvertyy-prezidentskiy-srok/>

²⁹ Address of the President to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, March 1, 2018. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Since 2015, at the official request of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, the Russian armed forces have been participating in military operations on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic on the side of government troops.

³² Vladimir Putin’s speech at the founding congress of the ONF on June 12, 2011. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18328>

³³ Transcript of Vladimir Putin’s speech at the United Russia Congress. *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. September 24, 2011. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2011/09/24/putin-stenogramma.html>

³⁴ Makhmudov R. Valdai speech of Vladimir Putin: Critical analysis. *Informatsionnyi portal*. Available at: <http://www.12news.uz/news/2013/09/30/валдайская-речь-владимира-путина/>

³⁵ Akopov P.E. Valdai after Munich. *Vzglyad*. September 20, 2013. Available at: <http://vz.ru/politics/2013/9/20/651345.html>

*Insert 1***Excerpts from Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech at the Valdai Forum on September 19, 2013**

- 1. For us (and I am talking about Russians and Russia), questions about who we are and who we want to be are increasingly prominent in our society... 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...**
- 2. After 1991 there was the illusion that a new national ideology, a development ideology, would simply appear by itself. The state, authorities, intellectual and political classes virtually rejected engaging in this work... the lack of a national idea stemming from a national identity profited the quasi-colonial element of the elite — those determined to steal and remove capital, and who did not link their future to that of the country, the place where they earned their money...**
- 3. Russia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity are unconditional. These are red lines no one is allowed to cross...**
- 4. Practice has shown that a new national idea does not simply appear, nor does it develop according to market rules. A spontaneously constructed state and society does not work, and neither does mechanically copying other countries' experiences. Such primitive borrowing and attempts to civilize Russia from abroad were not accepted by an absolute majority of our people. This is because the desire for independence and sovereignty in spiritual, ideological and foreign policy spheres is an integral part of our national character. Incidentally, such approaches have often failed in other nations too. **The time when ready-made lifestyle models could be installed in foreign states like computer programs has passed.****

Insert 1 (continuing)

5. Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan... **I am convinced that this opens a direct path to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis.**

What else but the loss of the ability to self-reproduce could act as the greatest testimony of the moral crisis facing a human society?

6. Russia — as philosopher Konstantin Leontyev vividly put it — has always evolved in “blossoming complexity” as a state-civilization, reinforced by the Russian people, Russian language, Russian culture, Russian Orthodox Church and the country’s other traditional religions. It is precisely the state-civilization model that has shaped our state polity. It has always sought to flexibly accommodate the ethnic and religious specificity of particular territories, ensuring diversity in unity. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions are an integral part of Russia’s identity, its historical heritage and the present-day lives of its citizens.

7. In order to maintain the nation’s unity, people must develop a civic identity on the basis of shared values, a patriotic consciousness, civic responsibility and solidarity, respect for the law, and a sense of responsibility for their homeland’s fate, without losing touch with their ethnic or religious roots.

8. The years after 1991 are often referred to as the post-Soviet era. We have lived through and overcome that turbulent, dramatic period. Russia has passed through these trials and tribulations and is returning to itself, to its own history, just as it did at other points in its history. After consolidating our national identity, strengthening our roots, and remaining open and receptive to the best ideas and practices of the East and the West, we must and will move forward.

Source: Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>

One of the key steps taken by the head of state to strengthen the national identity of Russian society was the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which occurred after the residents of these territories had rejected the results of a coup d'état taking place in Kiev in February 2014 and held an all-Crimean referendum (March 16, 2014), in which 96.77% of Crimean citizens (1.2 million people) and 95.6% of Sevastopol residents (262 thousand people) had spoken in favor of reunification with Russia³⁶.

“The President’s foreign policy position, reunification with Crimea, attitude toward the situation in Donbass, categorical rejection of any revolutionary scenarios of a change of power within the country have formed **a new social organism, which today is commonly called “the Crimean Consensus” or “the Putin Consensus”**. The unity of this consensus is constantly being strengthened as a result of public reflection and an expanded understanding of the essence of the geopolitical and historical situation”³⁷.

Political scientist D.E. Kulikov notes that the Crimean Spring of 2014 formed a “new social organism in Russia... the Crimean or the Putin Consensus”, actually dividing the socio-political life of the country into “before” and “after”.

The further viability and development of this consensus largely depended on the ability of the head of state to continue the line of nation-

oriented development of the country, that is, on the possibility of prolonging the term of his presidential powers that were to end (according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation) in 2024. Therefore, the next important step of the President was to initiate amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which he announced in his Address to the Federal Assembly on January 15, 2020.

Socially and patriotically oriented amendments to the RF Constitution actually “constitutionalized the welfare state”³⁸ in Russia and also contributed to the strengthening of the state structure, in particular by introducing a new concept of “public power” and “zeroing out” Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms. This legally gives him an opportunity to run for the president two more times, that is, potentially to lead the country until 2036.

It is important to note that according to the results of the all-Russian vote on amendments to the RF Constitution (June 25 – July 1, 2020), the President’s initiative was supported by the overwhelming majority of voters (78%, or almost 58 million people), which is even more than the support Vladimir Putin gained at the 2018 presidential election (77% or 56 million people).

In order to strengthen the internal, spiritual and moral state of the Russian society, the President adopted many important decisions:

✓ intensifying the work to eliminate the possibility of the “fifth column’s” de-stabilizing the political and social situation in the country”³⁹;

³⁶ The history of the reunification of Crimea with Russia. TASS. March 15, 2019. https://tass.ru/info/6222164?utm_source=yandex.ru&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=yandex.ru&utm_referrer=yandex.ru

³⁷ Kulikov D.E. Crimean consensus: Political meaning and significance. *RIA-novosti*. March 24, 2015. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20150324/1054181774.html>

³⁸ Skorobogatyi P. Putin is creating a “deep state” in Russia (materials of an interview with A. Zudin, political scientist, lecturer at MGIMO University). *Ekspert*, 2020, March 23, no. 13, p. 44.

³⁹ In particular, in 2021, all the headquarters of Alexei Navalny* were included in the “List of organizations for which there is information about their involvement in extremist activities or terrorism”, and almost a year later the President signed Federal Law 157-FZ dated June 4, 2021 “On amendments to Article 4 of the Federal Law “On basic guarantees of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum of 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”, according to which their activities (and on the grounds that do not contradict Russian legislation) was actually terminated.

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

✓ revising the 2021 National Security Strategy (experts noted that “for the first time, the system of national values or moral and spiritual values was prominently marked in it”⁴⁰);

✓ December 2021, a draft presidential decree “On the approval of the foundations of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” was developed; it is “**an inter-sectoral strategic planning document in the field of national security of the Russian Federation**, defining a system of goals, objectives and tools for the implementation of the strategic national priority “Protection of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, culture and historical memory” in the part relating to the protection of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values”⁴¹.

All these consistent decisions and initiatives coming directly from the President have “slowly but surely” prompted public consciousness to realize that “Russia will never become part of the Western world, because we are the religious and civilizational antipode of the Anglo-Saxon unity”⁴². And this, in our opinion, was an important task implemented by the President to strengthen Russian statehood and achieve full national sovereignty.

Thus, we see that Vladimir Putin’s actions to achieve the national development benchmarks he outlined in 1999 were systematic and consistent. Importantly, throughout this period, the Russian

society supported the President: it is evidenced not only by the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections held during this period (as well as the all-Russian vote on amendments to the Constitution), but also by regular public opinion polls (*Insert 2*).

Russia’s gradual movement toward achieving full national sovereignty, the strengthening of its geopolitical status and role in the international space could in no way suit the Collective West represented by the United States and NATO members⁴³. Therefore, they have intensified systematic work to curb the development of our country. In fact, in this way a hybrid war against Russia was unleashed, which some experts named “Cold War 2.0”.

The preface to the 2015 U.S. National Military Strategy⁴⁴ states that the main threats to the U.S. are “revisionist states that are challenging international norms” and violent extremist organizations. **The countries of concern to the U.S. military leadership, according to the strategy, include Russia, China, Iran and North Korea**⁴⁵.

The 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy **names four countries as the main violators of world peace and threats to American security: China, Russia, North Korea and Iran**⁴⁶.

⁴⁰ Opinion of A. Podberезkin, director of the Center for Military and Political Studies at MGIMO University (source: Experts assessed the changes in the national security strategy signed by Putin. RBK. July 3, 2021. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/03/07/2021/60e0a1c79a7947a36edadc3d>)

⁴¹ Fundamentals of state policy for the preservation and strengthening of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values. Digital platform “Strategiya 24”. February 9, 2022. Available at: <https://strategy24.ru/rf/culture/projects/osnovy-gosudarstvennoy-politiki-po-sokhraneniyu-i-ukrepleniyu-traditsionnykh-rossiyskikh-dukhnovnonravstvennykh-tsennostey>

⁴² Odintsov A.V. 30 years of reforms: How capitalism is destroying Russia. Sulakshin Center. December 25, 2020. Available at: <https://rusrand.ru/analytics/30-let-reform-kak-kapitalizm-unichtojaet-rossiyu>

⁴³ Currently, NATO consists of 30 countries: USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia (source: official website of NATO. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/topics_52044.htm)

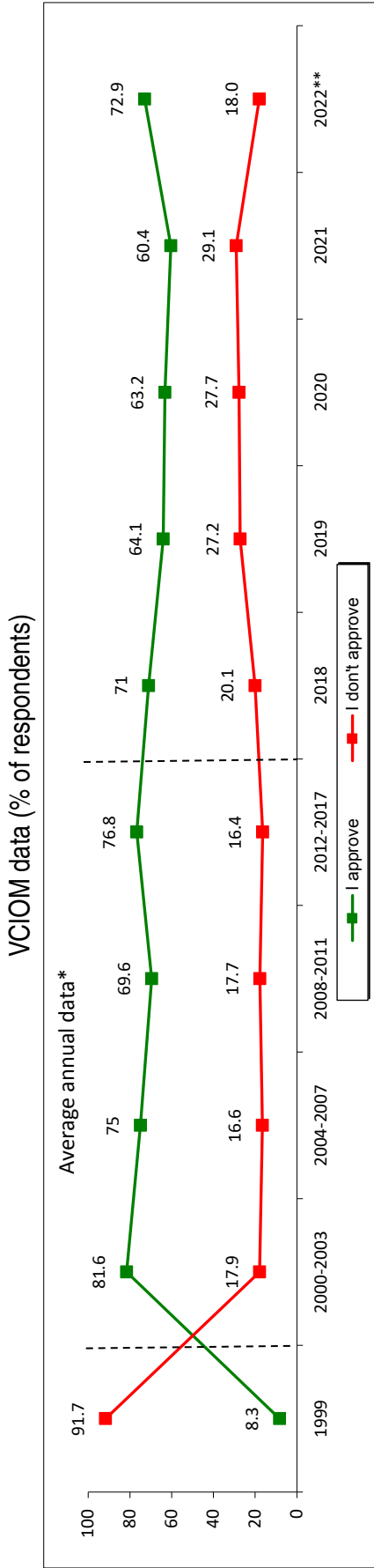
⁴⁴ The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015. URL: http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf

⁴⁵ The United States included Russia in the top five threats to national security. RBK. January 19, 2018. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/19/01/2018/5a61ccc09a7947061eb2ed36>

⁴⁶ National Defense Strategy Will Enhance Deterrence. U.S. Department of Defense. January 19, 2018. Available at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1419045/dod-official-national-defense-strategy-will-rebuild-dominance-enhance-deterrence/>

Insert 2

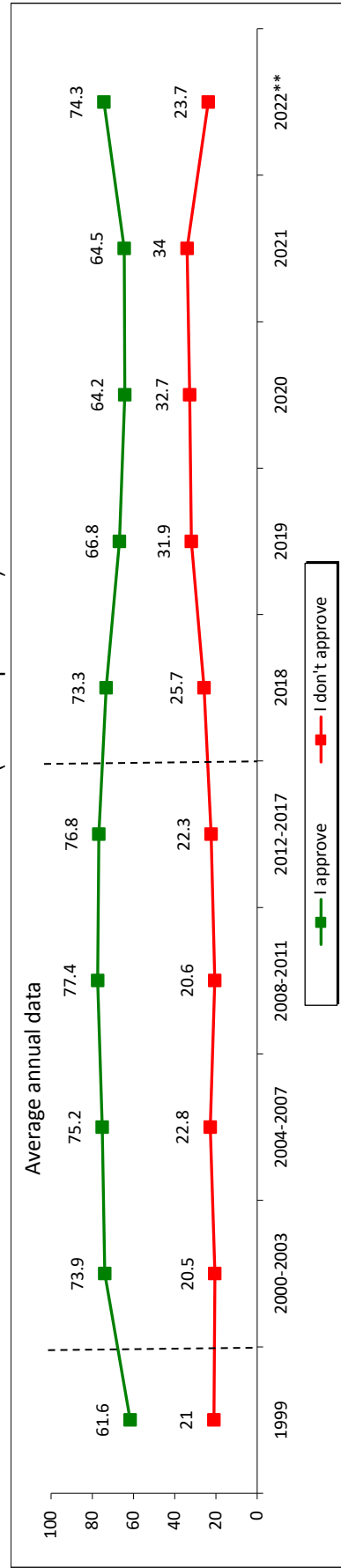
Dynamics of assessments of the RF President's work



* Average annual data for the presidential terms: 2000–2003 – Vladimir Putin's first presidency, 2004–2007 – Vladimir Putin's second presidency, 2008–2011 – Dmitry Medvedev's presidency, 2012–2017 – Vladimir Putin's third presidency

** Data for 2022 are the average for the period from January to April 10, 2022.

Levada-Center data* (% of respondents)



* included in the list of foreign agents.

** Data for 2022 are the average for January – March 2022.

According to regular polls conducted by VCIOM and Levada-Center (included in the list of foreign agents), during all of Vladimir Putin's presidential terms, the majority of Russians (more than 60%) gave a positive assessment of his activities. The proportion of negative judgments did not exceed 30–34%.

The set of measures within the framework of the U.S. foreign policy aimed at curbing Russia's development is openly specified in official U.S. strategic documents (in particular, the 2015 U.S. National Military Strategy and the 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy) and is quite wide and diverse.

It included tactical (dictated by the current geopolitical situation and the internal political situation in our country) and strategic (designed for a long-term perspective) measures of influence, and not only political, but also economic, informational, military... According to Russian experts, "China will remain an economic rival, **Russia – an enemy**" to the United States⁴⁷. **"At the same time ... the ideological confrontation with our country is very important to Washington. Russia has become the very "other" state that American propaganda endows with the most negative features.** As for China, it represents a serious competitor in the economic sphere, but China is too far away for political opposition and is poorly known to Americans"⁴⁸.

In fact, the "Ukraine" project and what we see today in the global political arena is part of the plan of the Collective West to "eliminate Russia as a real and potential subject of strategic action and turn our country into a political object, a tool for the ruling elites of the West"⁴⁹. On the territory of Ukraine purposefully, through the education system filled with NATO textbooks that distort the truth and form anti-Russian sentiments⁵⁰, for many years, a

whole generation of people has been brought up who not only disown everything Russian, but hate it fiercely and aggressively.

This, of course, is not the whole generation and not even the majority of Ukrainians, but an ideologically, politically and financially "processed" group that turned out to be sufficiently numerous and powerful to carry out a coup in 2014 with the support of the Collective West and subsequently seize power, continuing to eliminate (in every sense of the word) any dissent, including among the peaceful citizens of their own people.

Thus, an "anti-Russia" state was being created (and has actually been created) on the territory of Ukraine; this state is (as the RF President noted) placed "completely under full external control" of the United States and its allies (Inserts 3, 4). Sooner or later this project would have been launched, and it happened after the possibilities of a diplomatic settlement of strained relations between Russia and the United States were actually exhausted, as shown by the results of negotiations to ensure legal security guarantees by the United States and NATO.

In his addresses on February 21 and 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin explained the essence of the current political situation to Russians and the whole world in a logical and convincing way, noting: "If we look at the sequence of events and the incoming reports, **the showdown between Russia and these forces cannot be avoided. It is only a matter of time**"⁵¹.

⁴⁷ Opinion of national security specialist Professor D. Yonchev (source: U.S. election results: Russia is an enemy, China is a rival, Europe is a competitor. Information Site Inosmi.info. November 7, 2020. Available at: <http://www.inosmi.info/itogi-vyborov-v-ssha-rossiya--vrag-kitay--sopernik-evropa--konkurent-bnr.html>)

⁴⁸ Polonsky I. Who is the main enemy of the United States: China or Russia? *Voennoe obozrenie*. October 11, 2018. Available at: <https://topwar.ru/148186-kto-glavnyj-vrag-ssha-kitaj-ili-rossija.html>

⁴⁹ Ovchinskii V., Larina E. Cold War 2.0. *Izborskii Klub*. November 11, 2014. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/4224>

⁵⁰ Nikita Mikhalkov's program "Besogon". Episode 203 "Where is it all coming from?". Official website "Besogon TV". Available at: <https://besogontv.ru/videos/otkuda-rastut-nogi/>

⁵¹ Address of the President of the Russian Federation to the citizens of Russia on February 24, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>

Insert 3

Address of the RF President to the citizens of Russia on February 21, 2022

1. ... Ukraine is not just a neighboring country for us. It is an inalienable part of our own history, culture and spiritual space...
2. ... the Ukrainian authorities — I would like to emphasize this — began by building their statehood on the negation of everything that united us, trying to distort the mentality and historical memory of millions of people, of entire generations living in Ukraine... A role in this was played by external forces, which used a ramified network of NGOs and special services to nurture their clients in Ukraine and to bring their representatives to the seats of authority...
3. If Ukraine acquires weapons of mass destruction, the situation in the world and in Europe will drastically change, especially for us, for Russia.
4. Kiev has long proclaimed a strategic course on joining NATO. Indeed, each country is entitled to pick its own security system... There would be no problem with that, if it were not for one “but.” International documents expressly stipulate the principle of equal and indivisible security, which includes obligations not to strengthen one’s own security at the expense of the security of other states..., whereas Ukraine joining NATO is a direct threat to Russia’s security.
5. ...They will never think twice before coming up with or just fabricating a pretext for yet another sanction attack **regardless of the developments in Ukraine. Their one and only goal is to hold back the development of Russia.**
6. Russia has done everything to preserve Ukraine’s territorial integrity. All these years, it has persistently and patiently pushed for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2202 of February 17, 2015, which consolidated the Minsk Package of Measures of February 12, 2015, to settle the situation in Donbass. Everything was in vain... In this regard, I consider it necessary to take a **long overdue decision** and to immediately recognize the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Lugansk People’s Republic...

Source: Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

Insert 4

Address of the RF President to the citizens of Russia on February 24, 2022

1. Anything that does not suit the dominant state, the powers that be, is denounced as archaic, obsolete and useless. At the same time, everything it regards as useful is presented as the ultimate truth and forced on others regardless of the cost, abusively and by any means available... **This has to do with the entire system of international relations... This array includes promises not to expand NATO eastwards even by an inch...**
2. ... The attempts to use us in their own interests never ceased until quite recently: they sought to destroy our **traditional values** and force on us their false values that **would erode us, our people from within**, the attitudes they have been aggressively imposing on their countries, attitudes that **are directly leading to degradation and degeneration, because they are contrary to human nature**. This is not going to happen. No one has ever succeeded in doing this, nor will they succeed now.
6. ... In territories adjacent to Russia, which I have to note is our historical land, a hostile “anti-Russia” is taking shape... **For our country, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a nation... It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line which we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it.**
7. If we look at the sequence of events and the incoming reports, **the showdown between Russia and these forces cannot be avoided. It is only a matter of time...**
8. **They did not leave us any other option for defending Russia and our people, other than the one we are forced to use today... I made a decision to carry out a special military operation. The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kiev regime. To this end, we will seek to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation... I reiterate: we are acting to defend ourselves from the threats created for us and from a worse peril than what is happening now.**

Source: Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>

Thus, the open, acute, armed phase of the global confrontation between Russia and the Collective West, which began in February 2022, was caused not only by such historical processes as the growing crisis of capitalism, the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar model of the world order and the centuries-old “mental” confrontation between Russian and English-Saxon civilizations, but also the natural logic of restoring Russia’s sovereign status in the international political arena.

All these reasons, in fact, are interrelated and complement each other. February 2022, on the territory of Ukraine, they converged at one point, at one time and in one place, launching a large-scale process of global change for the whole world and for each country individually.

“February 2022 put an end to this scenario [the scenario of the Great Reset by K. Schwab]: **globalization is over, postmodernism is over, time has resumed its pace, history has begun again.** We can also say this: on February 24, 2022, Russia began fighting for its future, for its place in the 21st century and for its vision of the future of the 21st century. **And this future is very different from how Schwab, Soros and the U.S. Democratic Party see it.** That is why Russia is being watched so closely all over the world, which is by no means limited to the West and its media, which are in the hands of a handful of international oligarchs. **Russia returns the future to the world. This is the main essence of what is happening today**”⁵².

Inevitably, the international processes that began after February 24, 2022, lead to irreversible changes within our country. This is especially important in the context of deep internal contradictions and “stagnant” problems, which largely arose as a result of the activities of the “fifth” and, especially, the “sixth” columns, which continued to exist throughout the post-Soviet period.

Until now, according to experts, “we have measured our success on a different scale, on the scale of profitability of the business. It was believed that if it is profitable for business, then it is profitable for the country”⁵³. However, now the situation is such that all these aspects will depend on how “independent of foreign influence” they are: “The time has come when we have to start creating everything for ourselves to the maximum”⁵⁴. Trust between the authorities, society and business is becoming “a necessary condition that can ensure the successful solution of the most complex problems that public administration bodies have to address, first of all, in the field of economics”⁵⁵.

March 16, 2022, Vladimir Putin said that Russia had launched a process of “**natural and necessary self-detoxification of society**”, which “would strengthen our country, our solidarity and cohesion and our readiness to respond to any challenge”⁵⁶. Many representatives of cultural and business elites, who do not see the opportunity to link their personal lives with that of Russia, have left the country⁵⁷. Conditions are

⁵² Mozhegov V. Russia’s special operation put an end to the end of history. *Vzglyad*. April 15, 2022. Available at: <https://vz.ru/opinions/2022/4/15/1153019.html>

⁵³ Vedeneva N. Scientists announced scientific mobilization: RAS President spoke about countering the sanctions (an interview with the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences A. Sergeev). *Moskovskii komsomolets*. March 20, 2022.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Kavetskii A. Trust is a product of reputation. Is it possible to renew the interaction between the government and society? *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. March 24, 2022. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2022-03-23/7_8398_reputation.html

⁵⁶ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the meeting on measures of socio-economic support for regions, March 16, 2022. Official website of the RF President. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67996>

⁵⁷ Among them: businesspeople and entrepreneurs (M. Fridman, A. Panov, M. Prokhorov), politicians (A. Chubais, A. Dvorkovich), celebrities (I. Urgant, Ch. Khamatova, A. Pugacheva, M. Galkin, R. Litvinova, T. Bekmambetov), media representatives (L. Gildeeva, G. Pyanykh, T. Lazareva, A. Vasilyev), etc.

being created for the forced and mobilization-related reformatting of the basic principles of public administration, including management of the economy, social development, the education system and upbringing of new generations of Russians, culture, etc., that is, for what has often been declared over the past 20 years, but has not been actually implemented.

“There are good opportunities for our counteroffensive in the global hybrid war... The Western world today is on the verge of a catastrophe, which it has come close to because of the suicidal anti-Russian sanctions for Europe and the war unleashed by British and American special services in Ukraine. **We just need to stand our ground...**

If we take advantage of the positive results of the American aggression for Russia, then instead of Washington’s planned drop in economic activity by 10% of GDP this year, we can get 10% of its growth. But to do this, it is necessary to rebuild the entire system that manages the development of the Russian economy based on the principles of the new world economic order. In particular, monetary policy should become part of strategic planning; the banking system should work on investing in achieving the goals of socio-economic development planned by the state”⁵⁸.

However, in order to take advantage of these conditions, today, as S.Yu Glazyev notes, “we need to stand our ground”. First of all, it is Russia that has to stand its ground, and, together with Russia, all the states that share the idea of a multipolar world as the inevitable future of world civilization.

We are talking, apparently, about years, and this is a relatively short time for history and for the potential fundamental changes that the current situation may lead to. But this is quite a significant period for a specific country and specific people.

According to experts, the very beginning of the special operation, its economic and social implications “seemed to paralyze society”⁵⁹; “today many people in Russia are confused”⁶⁰. **However, despite this, the level of support for the head of state and for his decision to launch a special military operation, is growing in Russian society.** Thus, according to VCIOM, for the period from February to April 2022, the level of approval of the RF President’s activities has increased by 14 p.p. (from 65 to 79%); according to Levada-Center* (for the period from February to March 2022) – by 12 p.p. (from 71 to 83%; *Insert 5*). The share of Russians supporting the President’s decision to launch a special operation, from February 25 to March 24, according to VCIOM, increased by 11 p.p. (from 65 to 76%); according to the Public Opinion Foundation (from February 27 to March 20) – by 8 p.p. (from 65 to 73%; *Insert 6*).

⁵⁸ Glazyev S.Yu. To win and build a new world economic order. *Zavtra*. April 15, 2022. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/lyubopitnij_tekst_glaz_eva

⁵⁹ A divided society has lost the ability to protest. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. April 3, 2022. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2022-04-03/2_8407_editorial.html

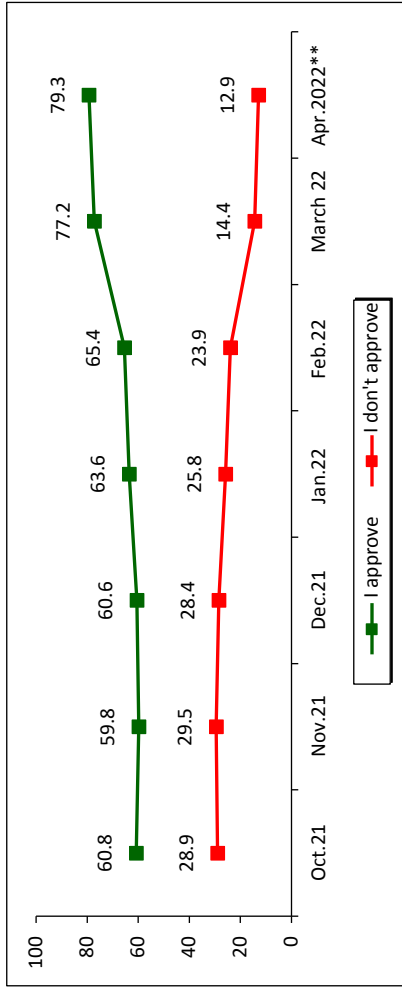
⁶⁰ Mozhegov V. Russia’s special operation put an end to the end of history. *Vzglyad*. April 15, 2022. Available at: <https://vz.ru/opinions/2022/4/15/1153019.html>

* Included in the list of foreign agents.

Insert 5

Assessment of the RF President's activities during the beginning of the special military operation (% of respondents)

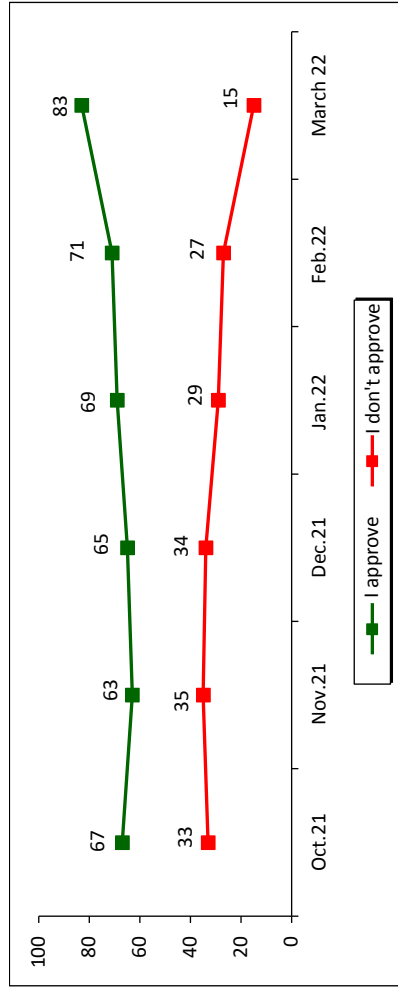
Assessment of the RF President's activities (VCIOM data)



According to VCIOM, until February 2022 (when the President announced the beginning of a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine), the share of positive assessments of the activities of the head of state was 60–64%. From February to April 2022, the share of positive assessments increased by 14 p.p. (from 65 to 79%).

The last three months of 2021 (for comparison) and the first four months of 2022 are presented. Data for April 2022 represent the average for two surveys (April 3, April 10). Source: VCIOM. Ratings. Activities of government institutions. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/ratings/dejatelnoost-gosudarstvennykh-institutov/>

Assessment of the RF President's activities (Levada-Center data*)



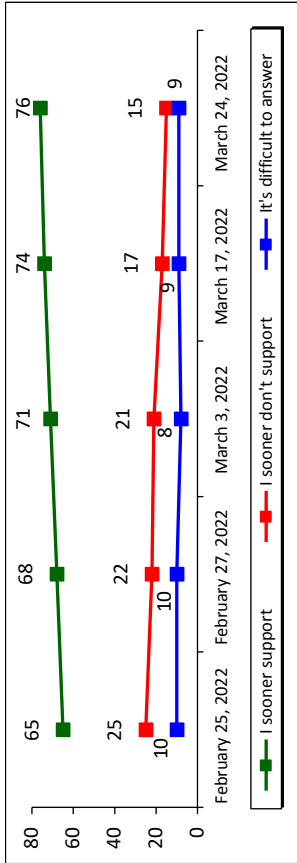
According to Levada-Center*, from October 2021 to January 2022, the level of approval of the activities of the head of state has not changed significantly and amounted to 67–69%. From February to March 2022, the share of Russians who positively assess the President's activities increased by 12 p.p. (from 71 to 83%).

The last three months of 2021 (for comparison) and the first three months of 2022 are presented. Source: Levada-Center*. Indicators. Available at: <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/>

* Included in the list of foreign agents.

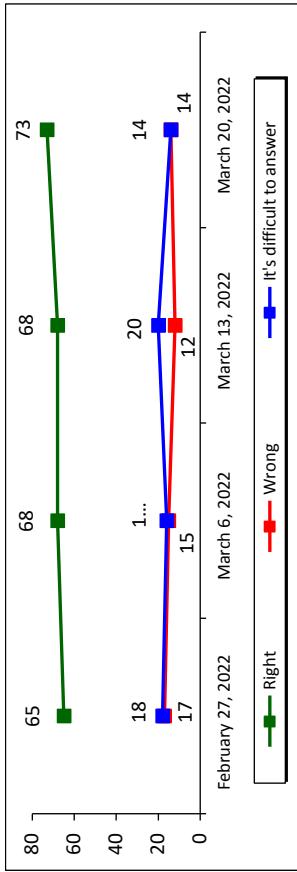
Insert 6

Russians' attitude toward the special operation on the territory of Ukraine (% of respondents)



“Do you support or do you not support the decision to conduct a special military operation of Russia in Ukraine?”

Source: VCIOM data. Available at: <https://vciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/operatsionnai-operatsijai-monitoringi-20220330>



“At the end of February, the military operation in Ukraine began. Do you think the decision to conduct the military operation was right or wrong?”

Source: FOM data. Available at: <https://fom.ru/Politika/14706>

Attitude to the special operation in the context of the main socio-demographic groups (VCIOM)

Population group	I sooner support it			I sooner don't support it			It's difficult to answer			Dynamics (+/-), March 24 to Feb.25			
	Feb. 25	Feb. 27	March 17	March 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 27	March 17	Feb. 27	March 24		March 17		
Sex	Men	68.7	71.6	74.9	79.1	25.1	22.1	18.2	12.7	6.2	6.9	8.2	+2
	Women	62.3	65.5	74.2	73.3	25.8	22.2	16.9	17.4	11.8	12.3	8.9	-3
Age	Under 30	37.4	40.7	48.9	52.4	47.1	47.3	35.8	31.3	15.6	12.0	15.2	+1
	30-55	62.4	64.4	73.3	75.5	28.6	24.7	17.7	15.2	9.0	10.9	9.0	0
	Over 55	80.4	84.4	85.7	85.5	12.5	8.8	10.2	9.5	7.1	6.7	4.1	-2
Education	Secondary and lower	69.5	61.4	80.3	71.4	20.6	26.3	15.7	16.7	9.9	12.3	4.0	+2
	Secondary vocational	71.9	73.1	76.7	82.6	19.4	17.5	14.5	11.0	8.7	9.4	8.8	-2
Financial situation of the family	Incomplete higher, higher and postgraduate	58.5	68.8	70.0	72.1	32.2	23.0	20.5	18.5	9.3	8.2	9.5	0
	Good	70.0	75.0	80.4	84.4	24.5	15.1	13.9	8.7	5.6	9.9	5.7	1
	Average	66.2	69.7	76.6	76.4	24.7	20.9	15.5	15.7	9.1	9.4	8.0	-1
Poor	55.8	58.7	62.7	68.4	29.8	31.9	27.1	19.9	19.9	14.4	10.2	11.8	-3

The share of Russians who support the RF President's decision to launch a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine for the period from February 25 to March 24 increased, according to VCIOM, by 11 p.p. (from 65 to 76%), according to the Public Opinion Foundation – by 8 p.p. (from 65 to 73% for the period from February 27 to March 20, 2022). Moreover, a significant increase in support (by 10 p.p. and above) is observed in almost all major socio-demographic groups (VCIOM).

Nevertheless, many experts are concerned about the “split within the elites, where a special operation is just an excuse for internal squabbles in the government apparatus”⁶¹, while in the current conditions, “intra-elite conflicts should go behind the scenes”⁶² and “every word of a public person in power is a weapon more terrible than the Kalibr cruise missile”⁶³.

We should note that experts’ concerns are not without reason. Careless statements of Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky, (during the negotiations in Istanbul⁶⁴) and Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov (in an interview to the French channel LCI⁶⁵), which caused a wide public response, the participation of oligarch and businessman Roman Abramovich in the negotiation process, and a number of other facts indicate that “too much depends on the task of “self-purification” of Russian society”⁶⁶.

Thus, the experts’ concerns are justified and not without reason. Comprehensive and active mobilization changes (in the system of public administration, in the economy, politics, culture) require **powerful ideological support from the state**. Effectiveness and strategic foresight are required

from management decision makers at all levels of public administration. After all, there is always a risk of “getting carried away” by patriotic populism and repeating the mistakes of the Soviet management system, which never found an effective response to the realization of needs growing from below. There also exists the risk to repeat the mistakes of the very recent past, when, on the whole, the correct and necessary decisions made by the President ultimately remained unrealized.

However, in any case, today Russia has no other way but to achieve complete victory. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted: “There is a life-and-death battle for Russia’s right to be on the political

S. Lavrov: “It’s not about Ukraine at all; it’s about aggression against everything Russian – interests, religion, culture, language, security and so on. And now, of course, the reaction of the West to our actions is so completely frenzied, I would say, if you’ll pardon the word; it shows that, indeed, this is a life-and-death battle for Russia’s right to be on the political map of the world with full respect for its legitimate interests”⁶⁷.

⁶¹ “He is not a dove of peace”: Political scientists called the attacks on Peskov a “split of the elites” (opinion of K. Kalachev, head of the Political Expert Group. Source: <https://rtvi.com/news/on-ne-golubmira-politologi-nazvali-raskolom-elit-napadki-na-peskova/>).

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Ibidem (an opinion of A. Turchak, First Vice-Speaker of the Federation Council, Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia party).

⁶⁴ “Tuesday [March 29] Medinsky retold the essence of the negotiations held in Istanbul in such a way that listeners and viewers concluded: Russia is losing ground. Firstly, it reduces activity in the Kiev and Chernihiv directions, and secondly, it seems to be going to discuss, and even at the level of the presidents of the two countries, the issues of Crimea and Donbass” (source: Prikhodko N. Vladimir Medinsky learned a lesson: Crimea remains with Russia. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. March 30, 2022. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/cis/2022-03-30/1_8404_ukraine.html).

⁶⁵ “April 6, the presidential press secretary gave an interview to the French news channel LCI. In particular, he spoke about the withdrawal of the Russian Armed Forces from positions in the north of Ukraine, specifically focusing on the role of Vladimir Putin in making this decision: “We decided to take such a step as a gesture of goodwill to create favorable conditions for negotiations. We can make serious decisions during the negotiations, so President Putin has ordered our troops to withdraw from the region.” Respectfully calling Zelensky “president of Ukraine”, Peskov emphasized: “Through negotiations we want to put an end to the military operation”... Peskov called fugitive actor Urgant a “great patriot”; he said that the attack on the oil depot in Belgorod “does not contribute to negotiations”; Peskov calls upon Ukraine to do something and declares that the withdrawal of troops from Kiev is a gesture of goodwill. Yesterday he said one thing, today he says another. It seems that Peskov always leaves the opportunity to disavow any previously expressed political position; **but what is acceptable in peacetime is now simply disorienting society and state institutions**. If Peskov spoke on his own behalf, who would care. But he speaks on behalf of the top leadership of Russia ...” (Source: Ivanov A. Is Peskov really press secretary of the Russian President? *Zavtra*. April 8, 2022. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/events/a_peskov_tochno_press-sekretar_prezidenta_rossii)

⁶⁶ Doctor of Sciences (Politics) S. Obukhov. KPRF website. Available at: <https://kprf.ru/ros crisis/209510.html>

⁶⁷ *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. March 10, 2022. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2022/03/10/lavrov-rf-vedet-boj-ne-na-zhizn-a-na-smert-za-mesto-na-politicheskoy-karte.html>

map of the world”. The Rubicon – a line after which the launched processes become irreversible and lead to irreversible consequences – has been crossed by Russia and the whole world.

* * *

In conclusion, we note that in our ideological views we have always adhered and continue to adhere to statist positions. Our brief analysis of the processes and RF President’s specific decisions

which precede the start of the special operation, in our opinion, convincingly proves, on the one hand, the regularity and inevitability of the global crisis that has arisen, on the other hand the ability of Russia and the President personally to overcome such difficulties for the purposes of national development, converting Western restraint measures in new opportunities for economic growth and mechanisms for consolidation of Russian society.

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