

EDITORIAL

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What a 30-Year Absence of State Ideology Leads to: “Great Nations Are Not Built Without Great, Guiding Ideas, and Having Lost Them, They Collapse with a Thunderous Crash”



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Abstract. This article is the third in a series of editorial publications released in April – August 2025 and dedicated to analyzing expert opinions on the necessity and feasibility of creating an official state ideology in the country. The relevance of this issue is driven, on the one hand, by national security concerns, which have sharply intensified since the start of the special military operation in Ukraine, and on the other hand, by the goals of national development related to the need to define a vision for Russia’s future in the context of the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. A synthesis of expert assessments, facts, statistical data, and monitoring sociological studies, which reflect the state of society and people’s subjective opinions about the situation in the country, leads to the conclusion that one of Russia’s key internal problems is the unsatisfactory quality of its ruling elites. A significant portion of them are unprepared for change, continue to live by the principles of the country’s departing era of “liberal

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fog”, and in every way, willingly or unwillingly, hinder Russia’s transition to a new stage of historical development, thereby jeopardizing its present and future. In this sense, the ideology proposed by many experts, which would be “mandatory for those who aspire to join the cohort of leaders of the Russian state” (S.A. Karaganov), appears to the authors as a completely logical and necessary step on the part of the President and the ruling political party. As long as there is no clear answer to the question “What kind of state are we building?” at all levels of government, such an answer is also absent among the general public, and as a consequence, people’s real lives often diverge from the public rhetoric of the authorities. The article focuses on the practical possibilities of implementing an ideology that could take on the character of a “philosophy of a common destiny” (Zh.T. Toshchenko) and form the basis of a new Social Contract, the need for which many experts have noted for our country. The authors’ contribution consists of the systematization of expert opinions, statistical data, and public opinion polls covering Russia’s historical development from the late 1990s (from the final years of Boris Yeltsin’s presidency), as well as actual cases of corruption and high treason within the country’s ruling elites (which primarily indicate that many of their representatives cannot be relied upon, as they are guided by personal interests that differ from the interests of the country, state, and society), and the administrative decisions made by the President, the Government, and the State Duma of the Russian Federation in the context of the pressing task of developing an ideology and forming a new Social Contract in Russia.

Key words: ideology, national idea, new Social Contract, public administration effectiveness, special military operation.

This article is the third part of a series of editorial publications united by the common title **“What a 30-year absence of state ideology leads to”**.

The first article published in April 2025¹ discusses objective historical processes that led to the “clash of civilizations” in the first quarter of the 21st century², due to the fact that the West, which is “at the peak of its power,” is faced with the “growth of civilizational self-awareness” and with the fact that non-Western countries are “returning to their own roots”.

In fact, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned the countries of the Collective West about the same thing in his Munich speech on February 10, 2007, when he said that **“for the modern world,**

a unipolar model is not only unacceptable, but even impossible”³. And not as a forecast, but as an established fact, he noted this in his speeches in the mid-2020s, stating that **“the countries of the world community are increasing their potential, changing the balance of power and the entire economic picture of the planet”⁴**.

Indeed, the struggle of civilizations is an eternal process. “The world is a zone of constant conflicts, endless and ruthless competition of small, medium and large social communities (tribes, peoples, nations, civilizations) with plunder, humiliation and destruction for the losers. That’s how it was created... there was always a critical resource that one group wanted to take away from another”⁵.

¹ Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2025). What the 30-year absence of a state ideology leads to: “The enemy is not only on the other side of the frontline”. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 18(2), 9–38.

² Huntington S.P. (1993). The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3).

³ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference on February 10, 2007. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

⁴ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 20, 2025. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/77222>

⁵ Tyurin A. The war of civilizations. Western civilization versus Russian civilization. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/vojna_tcivilizatsij_zapadnaya_tcivilizatsiya_protiv_russkoj?ysclid=me5qwfdt94202354193

In these conditions, it is extremely important what internal condition a country, civilization, its system of government, the state of society, etc. is in; how much it is internally ready to protect its national security and its national interests.

Especially when we consider the fact that **“the West has never had and will never have a more long-term enemy than Russian civilization. Hatred of Russia has always united Western civilization. The war against Russia has been waged by the West for at least 1,000 years”**⁶.

Therefore, in the first article (with the subtitle **“The enemy is not only on the other side of the frontline”**), attention was focused on the fact that for Russia, **the key internal threat to national security in this historical period is its own elites**; more precisely, that significant part of the elite on all levels of government that has been created and matured over the past 50 years and during the 25 years of Vladimir Putin’s presidential terms has not gotten rid of Western liberal dogmas in its worldview, as a result of which it does not want or cannot meet the new demands of the time, which are formulated by the President and have become key since the beginning of the special military operation (state sovereignty based on the principles of social justice and traditional values); thus the elite endangers the present and future of the country.

The real facts of corruption and high treason occurring at all levels of government are the clearest confirmation of this thesis. Some of them are presented in *Insert 1*. Note that these are only facts that have occurred over the past two months (from June 10 to August 12, 2025), not to mention the much larger “accidents of the Russian statehood”⁷, which the country has had to face in recent years (such as the attempted armed coup carried out by the head of the Wagner Private Military Company E. Prigozhin on June 24, 2023, the arrest of deputy defense minister T. Ivanov on April 23, 2024, a series of detentions in late 2024 – early 2025 of persons involved in the activities of the Kursk Region Development Corporation (including ex-governor A. Smirnov, who was detained on April 15, 2025), which caused the invasion of the Kursk Region by the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) – **“the first case of invasion of Russia since the Second World War”**⁸. The Russian region was under the control of the AFU for 8 months and 20 days⁹. About 70 civilians were killed and 300 people were injured¹⁰, 1,174 residents of the region were on the wanted list¹¹, the material damage caused by the AFU’s attack on the Kursk Region exceeded three billion rubles¹²)...

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Dugin A. After the mutiny. The bifurcation point. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/24505>

⁸ The first invasion of Russia since the Second World War.” How does the world react to Ukraine’s attack in the Kursk Region? Available at: <https://dzen.ru/a/ZrXkdxJirVnevuRc?ysclid=m9qos8dxf763086902>

⁹ The invasion took place on August 6, 2024. On April 26, 2025, the head of the General Staff, V. Gerasimov, reported to the President of the Russian Federation that the operation to liberate the Kursk Region from the Armed Forces of Ukraine had been completed. Available at: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/07/08/2024/66b34e289a7947b960522eb6?ysclid=megtzfzads380256797>.

¹⁰ Such data was provided on October 8, 2024 by R. Miroshnik, Ambassador-at-large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on crimes of the Kiev regime. Available at: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/22068355?ysclid=megu0fxzns391934045>.

¹¹ These data were provided by the governor of the Kursk Region A. Khinshtein on January 10, 2025. Available at: <https://russian.rt.com/russia/news/1419434-rozysk-kurskaya-oblast?ysclid=megu30vq3u432258677>.

¹² These data were provided by chairman of the Investigative Committee A. Bastrykin on August 4, 2025. Available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7941286?ysclid=megu65s91a40555496>.

Detentions and arrests of representatives of the ruling elites (June 10 – August 18, 2025)¹³

August 11 – N. Tokarchuk, deputy mayor of Salekhard, was detained. He was charged with fraud by a group of persons by prior agreement, the damage from their actions amounted to more than three million rubles.

July 30 – an official of the Ministry of Education and Science was detained in Ingushetia on suspicion of large-scale fraud and abuse of official authority. The amount of damage amounted to more than 10.7 million rubles.

July 25 – head of Millerovsky District administration was detained in the Rostov Region. He is suspected of abuse of authority in handling municipal property. The damage to the budget of Millerovsky District amounted to more than 25 million rubles.

July 24 – former head of the Tambov Region, Mikhail Egorov, was detained in connection with a bribe of 84 million rubles.

July 24 – N. Simonenko, vice-governor of the Bryansk Region, was arrested; he became a defendant in a criminal case on abuse of office with damage of at least 818.8 million rubles.

July 23 – former deputy governor of the Chelyabinsk Region, A. Bogashov, was detained as part of an investigation regarding abuse of office during the construction of a health complex. The manager of the governor and the government of the Chelyabinsk Region, R. Menzhinsky, and the minister of property of the region, E. Belousov, were also detained. According to investigators, the officials, using connections with the director of a construction company, organized the illegal construction of a health complex on the territory of the residence of the governor of the Chelyabinsk Region for a total amount of more than 50 million rubles.

July 23 – S. Brusakov, former head of the Kerch administration, was charged with abuse of official authority. He was taken into custody in connection with a crime related to the disposal of municipal land.

July 22 – head of the Ministry of Transport of the Novgorod Region, K. Kuranov, was arrested for large-scale bribes. He could face up to 15 years in prison. No other details of his arrest are given.

July 20 – I. Smetanyuk, deputy director of FGUP GVSU No. 4, was arrested for abuse of official authority in the execution of a state defense order. The charge against Smetanyuk is based on a crime provided for in Part 2 of Article 285.4 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which is related to a violation of the rules for fulfilling a state defense order, which eventually led to serious consequences. However, the exact priority details of this case remain undisclosed at the moment.

July 20 – three new defendants – former head of the Capital Construction Department of the region, A. Soshnikov, and two of his subordinates: L. Streletskaia and A. Reshetko – were charged with especially large embezzlement in organizing the construction of fortifications in the Belgorod Region on the border with Ukraine.

July 18 – S. Shultsev, deputy chair of the Government of the Novgorod Region, was arrested in connection with a particularly large bribe. The details of the case and the amount of the bribe, which the deputy chair of the government of the Novgorod Region is accused of receiving, were not disclosed.

July 11 – S. Grebennikov, ex-director of the Russian Association of Electronic Communications, was arrested. He is accused of treason. Grebennikov is a defendant in the case under the article on the issuance of information constituting a state secret to a foreign state or organization, or the provision of any assistance to foreign representatives in activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation.

¹³ Source: RT in Russian. The latest news about the arrests. Available at: <https://russian.rt.com/tag/zaderzhanie?ysclid=mdkzlnnsn147444962>. Materials from TASS, RIA-Novosti, RBC, Kommersant, Vesti.ru, Lenta.ru news agencies were also used.

End of Insert 1

July 7 – colonel-general V. Strigunov, former first deputy head of the Russian Guard, was detained as part of an investigation into abuse of power. The damage caused by Strigunov's actions exceeded 2 billion rubles. He is also charged with accepting a bribe in the amount of more than 66 million rubles.

July 3 – in the Chelyabinsk Region, Colonel A. Skulditsky, head of the Ural Training Rescue Center of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia, was detained on charges of abuse of official authority and using subordinates in the construction of a personal summer residence. In the period from 2022 to March 2024, Skulditsky used the labor of his subordinates (military personnel under contract) to carry out construction and installation works on his personal property.

July 3 – N. Radkova, deputy head of the Russian Hydrometeorological Service, was arrested in a particularly large-scale fraud case. Details of the case are not given.

June 30 – D. Rubinov, former top manager of the Central Bank of Russia, was arrested on charges of large-scale fraud. According to the investigation, the former top manager organized a criminal group in 2020, whose members disguised themselves as police officers and abducted the wife and two-year-old child of businessman Maxim Pivovarov. The criminal scheme was worked out to put pressure on the entrepreneur in order to seize assets worth 6 billion rubles.

June 28 – former assistant to the prime minister of Tatarstan I. Latypov was arrested. UBEP operatives tracked Latypov down after the arrest of an ensign at one of the military facilities in Kazan. He promised to return the mobilized man from the SMO zone, and took 2 million rubles from his relatives to resolve the issue. He handed the money over to another serviceman. He admitted his guilt and said that he had been transferred to Kazan for a bribe of 3 million rubles, and this was done with the help of Latypov. On June 27, he was supposed to receive the last tranche – 800 thousand rubles. When Latypov took the money, he was immediately detained.

June 27 – head of the Ministry of Transport of the Kherson Region, A. Balyshv, was detained in a bribery case. Together with him, the head of the Regional Road Management Department, S. Zhuravlev, was detained. Their case is related to receiving a large bribe from a company engaged in the construction and restoration of roads. It was noted that the officials received several million rubles for the patronage of the company.

June 27 – O. Milyut, a deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg of the 7th convocation, was detained as part of a criminal case on receiving a particularly large bribe, which has been launched against the head of the Kolpino district administration, Y. Logvinenko, and the head of the Kolpino local administration, D. Kokhno. According to the investigation, the defendants received at least 14.2 million rubles in bribes from December 2024 to June of this year.

June 22 – vice-governor of the Belgorod Region, Rustem Zainullin, was detained by a court decision as part of a fraud investigation. According to investigators, Zainullin stole at least 32 million rubles as part of a group using his official position, of which he personally received up to 4 million rubles. The funds were allocated for the construction of fortifications on the border of the Belgorod Region and Ukraine.

June 11 – former deputy minister of transport of Russia V. Tokarev was sentenced to eight years in prison in the case of embezzlement. According to the investigation, from 2016 to 2018, Tokarev, as the first deputy general director of LLC "Spetstransstroy", involved in illegal activities a number of persons from the management of this enterprise, as well as LLC "Glavstroyinvest" and other affiliated organizations for the purpose of embezzlement on an especially large scale. According to the newspaper Kommersant, the amount of damage exceeds 720 million rubles.

June 10 – first deputy governor of the Vladimir Region, A. Remiga, was arrested in the case of receiving a particularly large bribe. The details of the criminal case and the amount of the bribe are not specified.

The facts presented in Insert 1 indicate the systemic nature of corruption at all levels of government, and we note that this was revealed not after the start of the SMO, but much earlier. For example, A.I. Fursov wrote about this back in 2008. In 2017, V.A. Fadeev drew attention to the fact that large-scale criminal cases related to government corruption, broadcast in the media, are accompanied by “thousands of less high-profile cases” that few people know about...

We have been covering this topic (perhaps starting with one of the most high-profile criminal cases in Russia – against the current minister of economic development A. Ulyukayev¹⁴) on the pages of the Editorial column for many years¹⁵: we have cited official statistics of criminal cases, expert opinions, and specific facts about the actions of law enforcement agencies ...

A. Fursov: “Corruption has been progressing throughout the post-Soviet period and has already acquired a systemic character. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Russian Federation, according to Transparency International, ranks 127th in terms of corruption (there are 174 countries in the list; for comparison: Brazil – 70th place, China – 71st, India – 74th; meaning that the closer to the first place, the lower the degree of corruption). According to the Indem Foundation, the amount of corrupt money in Russia exceeds the budget by 2.5–2.7 times; according to experts, in the last year or two, the standard size of a bribe in the Russian Federation has increased 13 times, and the volume of the corruption market has increased nine times.

The government has been delivering pinpoint strikes (during Putin’s presidency, according to V.S. Ovchinsky, 15 governors, heads of republics and chairmen of regional governments, 22 vice-governors, 15 mayors, 9 vice-mayors of territorial, regional and republican centers, 2 speakers of city dumas were accused and convicted or brought as witnesses); however, of course, this cannot systematically solve the problem: ‘snipers’ are not suitable where ‘katyushas’ are needed”¹⁶.

V. Fadeev: “The criminal cases of big officials are in plain sight, they are reported by the federal media. **But there are thousands of less high-profile cases.** For example, the famous case of Gaizer, head of the Komi Republic. In September 2015, he was arrested and charged with organizing a criminal community. **Along with him, 14 more people were arrested, almost the entire top of the republic.** Everyone knows about this case. It’s in plain sight. But few people outside the republic know about other anti-corruption cases in Komi: **in 2015, 108 people were arrested in such cases, 113 last year, and 36 people were arrested in the 1st quarter of this year.** But this is a very small region in terms of population...”¹⁷

¹⁴ The minister of economic development A. Ulyukayev was arrested red-handed on November 14, 2016 while accepting a 2 million USD bribe from the management of the Rosneft oil company. He was sentenced to eight years in prison and released on May 12, 2022 (the court issued a decision on parole on April 27, 2022). **Ulyukayev became the first Russian federal minister to be detained in the line of duty.** Available at: <https://tass.ru/info/14513983?ysclid=me-2keel0yk422004906>.

¹⁵ See for example:

Ilyin V.A. (2017). Significance of the thesis “cadres decide everything” as applied to modern Russia. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 10(3), 9–31; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2018). “...And most importantly, there will be no destitute people in Russia”. “Capitalism for the few” – a key problem of national security. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 11(2), 9–23; Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2020). Russian statehood in the face of the “corruption of the elites” threat. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 13(6), 24–53.

¹⁶ Fursov A. The Russian Federation at the beginning of the 21st century. Experience of system-historical assessment Available at: <https://gtmarket.ru/library/articles/5238>

¹⁷ Fadeev V.A. ORT TV channel news from April 9, 2017. Available at: <https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2017-04-09/21:00#10>

Excerpt from the report of the analytical center of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Central Committee's department for election campaigns "On cases against regional governors of the Russian Federation in 2000-2025: 29 criminal governors": "Since 2000, according to Russian media, criminal cases have been initiated **against 27 current or former governors**. Almost everyone except S. Furgal (LDPR) and N. Belykh (self-nominated candidate) represented the United Russia party..."¹⁸

S. Obukhov (head of the Analytical Department of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, member of the Presidium of the Central Committee): "**We observe the results of the management of the bourgeois-oligarchic system, in which the beneficiaries are conditionally 100 thousand families of the managerial elite... All these criminal cases are a clear signal of the crisis of the management model**"¹⁹.

However, judging by the facts (presented in *Insert 1*) that continue during the SMO, this problem is only gaining relevance. Especially after the start of the special military operation, when the price of managerial mistakes, abuse of official authority and imitation of the fulfillment of direct instructions from the head of state sharply increased.

Thus, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, in the first half of 2025, compared with the same period in 2022, the share of corruption-related crimes in the total number of crimes committed in Russia as a whole increased from 1.9% to 2.9% (or from 19 to 27 thousand cases), of which crimes related to bribery increased from 40 to 61% (or from 7.5 to 16 thousand; *Tab. 1*).

Table 1. Dynamics of corruption-related crimes in Russia

Indicator	January – June 2012 г.		January – June 2018		January – June 2022		January – June 2025		Dynamics (+/-), January – June 2025 to January – June 2022	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
Total number of crimes	1168045	100	992966	100	1003645	100	940519	100	-63126	0
corruption-related crimes*	34049	2.9	18696	1.9	18696	1.9	27124	2.9	+8428	+1
of them: related to bribery	6874	20.1	7519	40.2	7519	40.2	16480	60.8	+8961	+21

* Appears in the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs since 2012.
Source: monthly reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation "The state of crime in Russia". Official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/reports/1/>

"The beginning of the SMO clearly showed the scale of the betrayal of the bureaucratic, cultural, media and business elite. **Among the bribe takers and corrupt officials are generals of the Ministry of Defense, former deputy prime ministers and governors, ministers and heads of state corporations, deputies and cultural figures.** Many, citing their anti-war position, fled to the coveted West.... But quite a few 'elitists' from the fifth column, who hate the president and his campaign, despise the patriotic upsurge in society, **continue to actively work in government structures, in the media, in the field of culture, actually on the side of the enemy**"²⁰.

¹⁸ On cases against the governors of the regions of the Russian Federation in 2000–2025: 29 criminal governors. Available at: <https://kprf.ru/politindx/236322.html>

¹⁹ Garmonenko D. The Communists have prepared a propaganda surprise for the party of power. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/2025-08-13/3_9315_kprf.html

²⁰ Batchikov S. The time of the best. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/27211?ysclid=megpbnxvos897001134>

Thus, it is obvious that there exist large, complex problems in the public administration system related to the moral character of a significant part of the ruling elites. This is evidenced by the real facts of corruption in power, statistical data, and opinions of many experts. But what is the reason for this?

The second article, published in June 2025, was devoted to the search for an answer to the above question²¹. Its subtitle, **“The constitutional ban on state ideology means a ban on revising the ideological tenets of liberalism”**²², explains the reason for the existence of the flaw of the entire post-Soviet system of public administration, which consists in the presence of a significant number of people “imbued” with liberal ideals and values of the “consumer society”, for which the main thing is **“profit, and human rights are just an ideological background that hides the true essence of capitalism”**²³.

As many experts point out, this flaw in the public administration system is caused by **the country’s lack of its own ideology and lack of understanding of what kind of state we are building**, which was fixed in the 1993 Constitution and which automatically consolidated the main outcome of the collapse of the USSR as a result of the defeat in the Cold War at the end of the 20th century – Russia’s “semi-colonial” position in relation to the Collective West; with all the ensuing consequences, starting, first of all, with the “semi-colonial” state of “minds”.

It is no coincidence that it was the Soviet elites – Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other “werewolves in power” (as Zh.T. Toshchenko, RAS Corres-

Yu. Afonin: “Human society always has one ideology or another... Otherwise, society simply could not exist and function. Why? Because ideology is, by and large, an understanding of how society should be organized, how people should behave in it. And also the rationale: why should it be this way and not otherwise...”

You can write in the Constitution that there is no state ideology in the country. This is exactly what was done in the Russian Basic Law of 1993. But this rule has never actually been implemented. In reality, there was a state ideology, and it was openly imposed on society through the state media, through the education system. And this was precisely the ideology of liberalism...”²⁴

ponding Member, calls them) – played a key role in the collapse of the greatest world power of the 20th century – the Soviet Union²⁵. And their very appearance was the culmination of a long process that began after the death of Joseph Stalin, when his era was replaced by the “Khrushchev thaw”, which destroyed the ideological foundations of the USSR, allowed (and even indulged in) the fact that the ruling elites gradually began to form closer ties with the West, share its values and ideals, and eventually were able to deeply imbue themselves with the idea that the Soviet “empire” should come to an end and started to promote this idea within the country, in their practical activities...

²¹ Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2025). “The constitutional ban on state ideology means a ban on revising the ideological tenets of liberalism”: What the 30-year absence of a state ideology leads to. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 18(3), 9–39.

²² Radikov I.V. (2019). The search for ideological guidelines in post-Soviet Russia. *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo lingvisticheskogo universiteta. Obshchestvennye nauki*, 1(834), p. 57.

²³ Aleksandrov A. So what is more important in liberalism, the person or the profit? Available at: <https://newsland.com/post/2227978-tak-chto-vazhnee-v-liberalizme-chelovek-ili-vsio-taki-pribyl?ysclid=me5s1qq9zi391992910>

²⁴ Does Russia need a state ideology? Available at: <https://msk.kprf.ru/2023/05/25/237731/?ysclid=mdsmiomcpd574535253>

²⁵ In a series of interviews published in the book “Werewolves in Power”, Zh.T. Toshchenko mentions the following surnames: M. Gorbachev, B. Yeltsin, A. Yakovlev, E. Shevarnadze, L. Kravchuk, E. Gaidar, A. Sobchak, G. Burbulis, B. Nemtsov, A. Kozyrev*, G. Popov, O. Kalugin, A. Chubais, B. Berezovsky, R. Abramovich, M. Khodorkovsky*, M. Fridman, K. Borovoy*, D. Volkogonov, V. Korotich, A. Tsipko, N. Svanidze, I. Ponomarev*.

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

Some “werewolves in power”²⁶ and their characteristic:

M. Gorbachev – “low cultural level, unscrupulousness, and primitivism of thinking led to the fact that he betrayed the ideals to which he swore in his youth and which he seemed to serve”;

B. Yeltsin – “betrayed the cause he served, rising to high party and government posts. He betrayed and sided with those for whom our Homeland was an “evil empire”;

N. Yakovlev – “his ambivalence was undeniable, and over time it only grew... there were and still are the most serious reasons to consider him a mole, that is, an enemy agent”;

B. Berezovsky – “his arrogance knew no bounds, and hardly anyone could surpass him in this... He stole on a gigantic scale. And he didn’t just steal, but often also demonstrated his impunity”;

A. Kozyrev* – “the most shameful foreign minister in the history of the country ... he is ready to do anything for the sake of profit”.

“First, in order to justify the overthrow of the Soviet system, the word ‘collapsed’ is used in relation to the USSR. They say that the Soviet Union was originally doomed to such an end, since its existence was an adventure conceived by Lenin and the Bolsheviks....

Second, the undertakers of the USSR and their overt and hidden lackeys are very fond of this argument: they say that the Soviet people did not defend the USSR and agreed to its liquidation and the establishment of the CIS. But these statements completely ignore the fact that until the last days the Soviet people clearly expressed their position – the USSR must exist!

Third, there was a covert and latent deception of the people – manipulation of their consciousness. And the majority of people reacted based on historical experience. After all, there has been a change of leadership in the country from time to time. And each time, the new leader promised changes...

All of the above allows us to conclude that no objective circumstances led to that geopolitical catastrophe. Here, a huge and decisive role was played by the subjective factor – people who, by virtue of their position, consciously or thoughtlessly did everything to ensure that the Soviet country ceased to exist”²⁷.

On the other hand, a correct understanding of the “diagnosis” is the first step on the path to healing, and therefore the expression “A constitutional ban on state ideology means a ban on revising the ideological tenets of liberalism” contains the answer to the question “What should we do?”.

The third article is devoted to the analysis of expert opinions on this subject, the quintessence of which is reflected in the subtitle “Great nations are not built without great, guiding ideas, and having lost them, they collapse with a thunderous crash”²⁸.

Obviously, we are talking about the essence and the very possibility of adopting a state ideology in the country. Against the background of the challenges and tasks of national development that Russia faces today, after the beginning of the SMO, this issue is becoming more and more acute (*Insert 2*).

Is the very idea of adopting a state ideology in Russia a “distortion of the spirit and letter of the Constitution”²⁹, according to K. Remchukov, editor-in-chief of *Nezavisimaya gazeta* newspaper?

²⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T., Kozhemyako V.S. (2025). Werewolves in power: They killed the Soviet country. Moscow: Rodina. 244 p.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025. P. 11.

²⁹ Remchukov K. The Constitution on ideological diversity as freedom of thought and speech. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2025-07-27/2_9302_red.html

* Included in the register of foreign agents.

Or, if we do not have an ideology, will we face the “inevitable decay and then degradation of the people and the country”³⁰, according to S. Karaganov, for instance?

Perhaps the key point in this discussion is the fact that “the term ‘state ideology’ has a negative connotation in modern Russian (political) language”³¹, which is caused by the experience of the Soviet past. In this sense, we agree with K. Remchukov that “the establishment of the principle of ideological diversity in the Constitution is **one of the most important democratic achievements of the peoples of Russia**”³².

Indeed, as the President has repeatedly stressed, “there is no Soviet Union, there is no return to the past. And Russia doesn’t need it anymore”³⁵. **However, we should note that this is also understood by those who today advocate the need to create a state ideology in the country.** Therefore, we are not talking about changing the Constitution, nor about radical methods of imposing ideology, nor even about its binding and directive nature for society.

With only one exception, a potential ideology should be mandatory “for those who seek to join the cohort of leaders of the Russian state”³⁶.

1. “Now, of course, **we don’t necessarily need to repeal Article 13 of the Constitution**, which prohibits state ideology. But I think the article is easy enough to bypass. For example, we can say that we are not offering ideology, but the Russian dream. That’s it”³³.

2. **“It is clear that in the modern world and in modern, relatively free and pluralistic Russia, it is impossible to impose uniform binding ideological principles on everyone, as it was in the USSR.** The imposed Marxist-Leninist unanimity and the lack of religion were among the key reasons for the intellectual emasculation of the ruling stratum of the USSR, which led to its defeat...

3. **“Ideology may not necessarily be called ideology, in which case it will live under the guise of other concepts. Historically, this is often the case”³⁴.**

“The Constitution states: “No ideology can be established as state or compulsory”. **But this does not mean that there cannot be a SUPPORTED ideology. At least an ideology supported by the ruling party. The party not only can, it MUST have its own ideology, otherwise it is not a party, but a hobby club...** No one prohibits or can prohibit the promotion and even the imposition of the moral and ethical “Code of the Russian” from kindergarten or school, the very living idea-dream of Russia, which people can and are called upon to strive for from a young age. **Once again, the Code should not be binding on everyone, but mandatory for those who seek to join the cohort of leaders of the Russian state”³⁷.**

³⁰ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025. P. 7.

³¹ Ibidem. P. 12.

³² Remchukov K. The Constitution on ideological diversity as freedom of thought and speech. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2025-07-27/2_9302_red.html

³³ Hitting Ukraine with nuclear weapons would be a mistake. It is necessary to do so in relation to the West (interview with S. Karaganov). Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/655229>

³⁴ Ideology of Victory as a national project (integral report of the Izborsk Club). Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/21816#vvedenie>

³⁵ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the ceremony of signing the agreements on the admission of the DPR, LPR, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions to Russia. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69465>

³⁶ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025. P. 17.

³⁷ Ibidem.

Insert 2

Opposing views on the possibility of creating a state ideology in Russia

FOR	AGAINST
I. S.A. Karaganov (Doctor of Sciences (History), political scientist, economist): “We need a leading ideology, supported by the state and rooted through education and upbringing, but not by direct orders, but offered and imposed through textbooks, discussions, images, literature and art. If it does not exist, there will inevitably be a decline, and then a degradation of the people and the country... At the current civilizational turning point that the world is going through, we need such a guiding thread more than ever. Modern civilization is beginning to directly threaten not only the physical, but also the moral and spiritual destruction of humanity... The image of the world in which we would like to live, the living idea – the dream of Russia, the state ideology put forward and promoted, is necessary for everyone, from the President to the farmer, worker, engineer, officer, scientist, entrepreneur, civil servant, to understand what we want to be and what we want our country to be. Without an idea leading to a better future, states (especially such as Russia) do not develop, they rot... The presence of a common ideological platform, a national idea is one of the most important ascertaining signs of a sovereign state – and we do not want and cannot be anything else. Its absence is a sign of insufficient sovereignty”³⁸.	I. K. V. Remchukov (Candidate of Sciences (Economics), economist, journalist, public and political activist, editor-in-chief of <i>Nezavisimaya gazeta</i> newspaper): “In recent years, many politicians and other public figures have called for actions aimed at distorting the spirit and letter of the Russian Constitution... Various man-made codes, charters, and mission options have been proposed states based on a utopian view of human nature, from which they try to make an ideal adept of someone’s fantastic, and therefore unrealizable views and values. An attempt at the regulatory and legislative level to consolidate utopian ideas about the standard of state-approved attitudes of behavior and aspirations of young people often looks like pushing the state ideology prohibited in our Constitution. These attacks on the foundations of Russia’s state system must be firmly suppressed by the state... Undermining these foundations is a direct path to anarchy, chaos and turmoil, and a disastrous weakening of Russian statehood”³⁹. 2. V.I. Matvienko (chair of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation): “If you mean a single national political ideology to which everyone must obey, then I am against such an ideology being fixed in the Constitution. After all, the Constitution does not prohibit ideology, it stands for diversity. And it seems to me that our updated constitution also contains ideology. We are a sovereign, independent state. It contains both patriotism and social guarantees for citizens, and it states that the rights and freedoms of citizens are above all. That we are a multinational state and all our peoples are equal, regardless of nationality or religion... And all this together is our ideology ...”⁴¹

³⁸ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025.

³⁹ Remchukov K. The Constitution on ideological diversity as freedom of thought and speech. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2025-07-27/2_9302_red.html

⁴⁰ The head of the Ministry of Justice believes that the issue of banning state ideology in the Constitution of the Russian Federation will have to be addressed. Available at: <https://tass.ru/politika/17724475?ysclid=me00a7p7yq806794474>

⁴¹ Valentina Matvienko: There should be no easy way to amend the Constitution. Available at: <https://tass.ru/interviews/19510547?ysclid=me00hrb0df286644502>

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FOR	AGAINST
3. Zh. T. Toshchenko (Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences (Philosophy), Professor, Honorary Doctor of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences): "An analysis of the possibilities of ideological attitudes for consolidating Russian society shows that the social contract is under threat in the absence of a state ideology... The real situation requires the formulation of a strategic goal for the development of Russia, its expression in the state-social ideology with a clear designation of the means and methods of achieving it"⁴². 4. T.V. Voevodina (entrepreneur, publicist, regular contributor to <i>Literaturnaya gazeta</i> newspaper, <i>Zavtra</i> newspaper, and others): "In order to realize this colossal project – liberation from colonial dependence and the acquisition of true sovereignty – it is necessary to create and introduce into the minds of the broad masses of the people an appropriate belief system... The beliefs of a modern person, which truly guide them through life, today have the form of ideology, not religion. In fact, these are very similar concepts: ideology is a secular religion... Therefore, if we want to achieve independence, we vitally need a national, national ideology-religion. That is, a belief system that should guide the people in their daily behavior"⁴⁴. 5. A.V. Shchipkov (Doctor of Sciences (Politics), Rector of the Russian Orthodox University of St. John the Theologian): "Russia is entering an era of great changes, and the demand for ideology will undoubtedly increase. Change is impossible without the support of the social majority, and ideology gives this majority an image of the future, that is, a common historical perspective"⁴⁶.	3. V.V. Fedorov (Candidate of Sciences (Pedagogy), general director of VCIOM): "If the dominant ideology acquires the status of a state ideology, then this is the first step towards its collapse... Almost any ideology at the very beginning is an ideology 'for all that is good, against all that is bad'. But as soon as an ideology becomes a state ideology, it very quickly turns into 'for all that is bad, against all that is good'. Indeed, patriotism has become the dominant ideology, and it is foolish to deny the obvious. But if we want to kill patriotism as the dominant ideology, let's make it a state one. And after a while, people will start spitting at the word 'patriotism'"⁴³. 4. Patriarch Kirill (Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia since February 1, 2009): "In response to a question from a number of public forces who certainly want to have some kind of national idea, I can only repeat again: we already have it. What better way, if you will, to motivate a person to work creatively for the benefit of society, than sincere love and devotion to the Motherland? Those who truly love the country, their people and culture do not need any ideology, they do not need to invent and invent anything"⁴⁵. 5. V.V. Vyzhutovich (journalist, writer, political commentator for <i>Rossiyskaya gazeta</i> newspaper): "Article 13 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation gives an unequivocally negative answer to this question: ... No ideology can be established as a state one". Therefore, any discussion about whether Russia needs a state ideology or not can be safely considered unconstitutional and not waste intellectual energy on them"⁴⁷.

⁴² Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). Social contract in modern Russia: Has a balance of interests been achieved? Sotsis, 2, p. 6.

⁴³ It is dangerous to declare any ideology as a state ideology (interview with V. Fedorov). Available at: <https://rg.ru/2015/08/13/fedorov.html?ysclid=mdsj5juw6q514245006>

⁴⁴ Voevodina T. State ideology as a secular religion of a common cause: The 1930s and present days. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/gosudarstvennaya_ideologiya_kak_svetskaya_religiya_obshego_dela_30-e_godi_i_nashi_dni?ysclid=mdsid2hujd826109390

⁴⁵ Speech at the plenary session of the 25th World Russian People's Council "The Present and the Future of the Russian World", November 28, 2023. Available at: <https://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6080946.html?ysclid=me5mqy0r2i416772444>

⁴⁶ Shchipkov A. (2022). We need an ideology. Available at: <https://litrossia.su/2022/01/28/nam-nuzhna-ideologiya/>

⁴⁷ It is dangerous to declare any ideology as a state ideology (interview with V. Fedorov). Available at: <https://rg.ru/2015/08/13/fedorov.html?ysclid=mdsj5juw6q514245006>

For society, this is not an ideology imposed by “direct orders”, but rather a national idea, introduced from childhood “through textbooks, discussions, images, literature and art... Citizens need moral and patriotic guidelines”, S. Karaganov writes, “if not mandatory, then recommendatory”.

Vladimir Putin (1999): “I am against the restoration of state, official ideology in Russia in any form. There should be no forced civil consent in a democratic Russia. Any public consent here can only be voluntary. But that is why it is so important to achieve it on such fundamental issues as goals, values, and development milestones, which are desirable and attractive to the vast majority of Russians...”⁴⁸

Vladimir Putin (2024): “We had a dominant ideology... But the presence of a dominant ideology did not save the Soviet Union from collapse... Of course, there should be a unifying idea for a multinational country... we need unifying ideas. And of course, such a unifying idea – and today’s events show this – can be patriotism in the best, direct, rather than “patrioteer”, sense of the word”⁴⁹.

Thus, the expert opinion on potential Russian ideology today, taking into account the past 30th anniversary of the “liberal fog”, is as close as possible to the position of Vladimir Putin, who from the very beginning of his presidential term drew a clear distinction between the concepts of “ideology” and “national idea” and currently adheres to the same position.

And in this context, the state ideology (whatever you want to call it: “National Idea”⁵⁰, “Dream Idea”⁵¹, “Future Image”⁵², “Russian Dream”⁵³, etc.) is not just necessary, but natural, like air. **After all, everything is really simple: the state always has one ideology or another, and the Russian Federation had one before 2022. But now it has collapsed, and that means it needs to be changed. If we do not change it ourselves, someone else will take over this niche again (as it was 30 years ago).**

“Let’s make this clear: the Russian Federation had a state ideology, but it collapsed... If the ideology that was imposed on us 30 years ago cannot bring anything good to Russia, of course, it must be changed. We need a new ideology for the country’s development...”⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Putin V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html?ysclid=me5onavwba647813458

⁴⁹ Vladimir Putin’s speech at the plenary session of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 7, 2024. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/74234>

⁵⁰ Putin V. Russia at the turn of the millennium. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millennium.html?ysclid=me5onavwba647813458

⁵¹ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025.

⁵² Averyanov V. Three projects of the future. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/23815>

⁵³ Prokhanov A. “What is the Russian idea, the ideology of the Russian State?” About the seven codes of the Russian Dream. Available at: https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/2024/05/02/v_chem_russkaya_ideya_ideologiya_gosudarstva_rossiiskogo?ysclid=mdu1zra8jo820647480

⁵⁴ Does Russia need a state ideology? Available at: <https://msk.kprf.ru/2023/05/25/237731/?ysclid=mdsmiomcpd574535253>

The question of what this ideology should be is much more important and difficult. For example, the philosopher A. Dugin writes: “If we want to have an ideology, we will have to make a serious intellectual effort”⁵⁵.

After analyzing many expert opinions, we note the following: we believe that RAS Corresponding Member Zh.T. Toshchenko gave the most comprehensive, systematic answer to this question: he considers ideology not just as a kind of “Code of Honor” for the ruling elites, but in a deeper and broader context as a necessary condition for a new Social Contract.

“An analysis of the possibilities of ideological attitudes for consolidating Russian society shows that the **Social Contract is under threat in the absence of a state ideology...** The real situation requires the **formulation of a strategic goal for the development of Russia, expressed in a state-social ideology with a clear definition of the means and methods of achieving it**”⁵⁶.

Indeed, it is difficult to argue with experts that since the beginning of the SMO Russia has never come so close to forming a new Social Contract in its recent history (since the collapse of the USSR).⁵⁸

Today, for our country, this is not just a natural development of the state, the starting point of which can be called 2000, the year of the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s presidential term. **This is largely**

“A social contract is not a document. It is an independent social phenomenon, which is characterized by a special structure. **This is a basic, but at the same time special state of the relationship between the government and the people, which is expressed in the philosophy of common destiny** – the explicit (open) and latent **mutually coordinated achievement of goals, means and methods** of their implementation in the implementation of socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural transformations”⁵⁷.

“The implementation of the SMO, active and contradictory processes of socio-cultural turbulence within Russia and in neighboring countries **require adjustments to the existing social contract**”⁵⁸.

“As a result of the global transformation of the geopolitical system in 2022, the problem of a fundamental revision of the social contract arose... The shifts that have begun mark a radical change in the country’s governance regime from a dependent (colonial) to an independent (sovereign) one... **There is already a need to form a qualitatively different social contract between the supreme power of Russia in the person of its president (and at the same time the leader of the nation!) and the population**”⁵⁹.

a forced necessity dictated by the scenario of events in the foreign political arena.

⁵⁵ Russia needs a new ideology. Available at: https://tsargrad.tv/articles/aleksandr-dugin-rossii-nuzhna-novaja-ideologija_33821?ysclid=mdu21xugp2899113212

⁵⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). Social contract in modern Russia: Has a balance of interests been achieved? Sotsis, 2, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibidem. P. 5.

⁵⁸ Nemirovsky V.G. (2025). Social contract in modern Russia: Reality or illusion? Reflections of a sociologist on a monograph by Zh.T. Toshchenko “The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation”. Uroven’ zhizni naseleniya regionov Rossii, 21(2), p. 303.

⁵⁹ Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. Journal of Institutional Studies, 14 (3), 74–90.

But in order for a Social Contract to take place in principle, it is necessary that it meets a number of criteria, which, according to Zh.T. Toshchenko, “**form the basis of a social contract**”⁶⁰ (Fig. 1).

The first and main one is the goal.

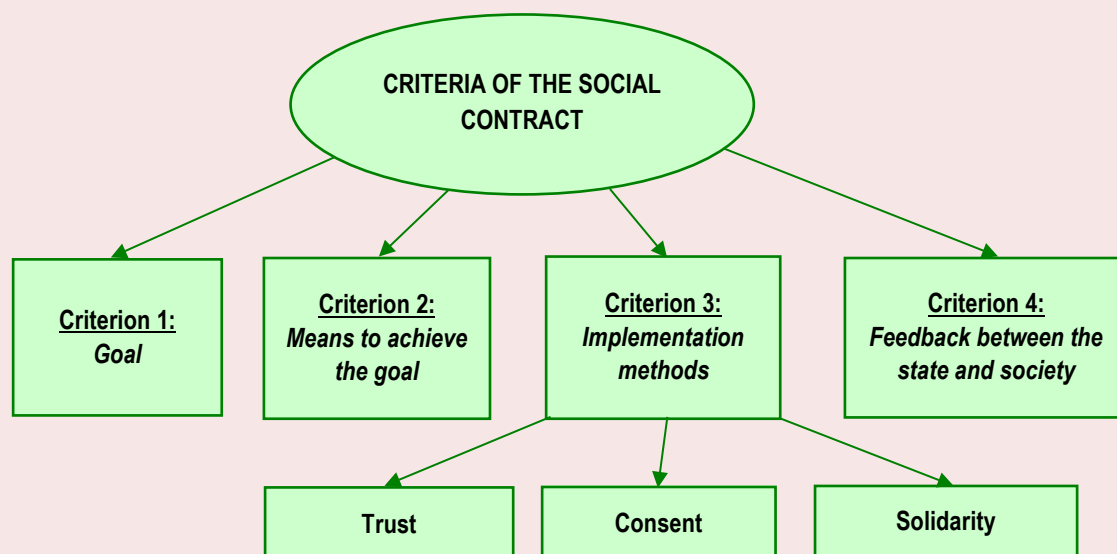
Many experts agree that currently the purpose of the Social Contract has not been formulated by the President of the Russian Federation. Neither, in fact, has been the ideology itself. Sovereignty, patriotism, social justice, etc. are necessary conditions for its realization, but these concepts do not give a definite “**idea of reality, of history, of the place of a particular person in it and his obligations toward others**”. Therefore,

as Zh.T. Toshchenko rightly notes, “it is still unclear to many Russians what kind of State and society they are building”.

“The goal reflects the aspirations and orientations of the people ... The goal is perceived by people as achievable, even in a problematic situation...”

At the same time, the state has a high responsibility to formulate a strategy for the development of the country that would satisfy the people not only in reality, **but also would allow them to see a future life**”⁶¹.

Figure 1. Criteria of a Social Contract



Source: Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 71.

⁶⁰ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 89.

⁶¹ Ibidem. P. 72.

Zh.T. Toshchenko: **“As for modern Russia, the alignment of the goals of the state and the people largely shows uncertainty. It is still unclear to many Russians what kind of state and society they are building.** The social state proclaimed in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, whose policy is aimed at creating conditions that ensure a decent life and free human development (Article 7.1), designates a certain general attitude that is not sufficiently specified before it is understood and implemented in current socio-economic, socio-political and everyday life”.

A. Shchipkov: “When talking about ideology, such obviously necessary concepts as sovereignty, statehood, patriotism, social justice, and a strong family are mentioned first of all. This series can be continued and refined. **All this is necessary, but it is not an ideology, but the conditions for it**”⁶².

S. Khudiev: “People sometimes consider ‘ideology’ as a set of moral ideals, such as solidarity, freedom or patriotism, or something related to national identity, such as ‘being proud of one’s history’. **But this is not an ideology. Ideology presupposes a common set of ideas about reality, about history, about the place of a particular person in it and their obligations toward others....**”⁶³

In other words, based on the assessments of many experts, we can state that the first and main criterion of a Social Contract in Russia simply does not exist yet.

As for the **second criterion of a Social Contract** – **“means to achieve the goal”** – its condition (which is expressed through the situation in the *“economy; especially in terms of employment and the level of people’s welfare”*⁶⁴) is also difficult to call satisfactory.

As Yu. Afonin writes, “it is possible to proclaim social justice, but it will be an empty phrase if most of the country’s property remains in the hands of several hundred oligarchic families”⁶⁵.

Indeed, the Forbes list of the richest people on the planet continues to be replenished with Russian billionaires. In 2025, “the number of Russians in the ranking of the wealthiest people increased by 21 people and reached 146 people”⁶⁶; **moreover, during the period of the SMO, each of them increased the amount of their annual income by 1.5–2 times (Tab. 2).**

According to the Federal State Statistics Service, the poverty rate of the population in Russia continues to decrease slowly but surely (Fig. 2). This trend began in 2018, and over the period from 2018 to 2024, the proportion of people with incomes below the subsistence level decreased almost twofold (from 13 to 7%, or from 19 to 11 million people).

However, first of all, we should mention that the goal set by the President in the May 2018 Decree is **“to halve the poverty rate in the Russian Federation”**⁶⁷ (from 12.7% in 2018 to 6.4% by 2024) – has not yet been achieved. Second, even with the positive dynamics of poverty reduction observed since 2018, we agree with experts that the condition of

⁶² Shchipkov A. (2022). We need an ideology. Available at: <https://litrussia.su/2022/01/28/nam-nuzhna-ideologiya/>

⁶³ Khudiev S. Why ideology cannot be invented. Available at: <https://vz.ru/opinions/2023/12/6/1242716.html?ysclid=mdsklqfx1w139858272>

⁶⁴ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 78.

⁶⁵ Does Russia need a state ideology? Available at: <https://msk.kprf.ru/2023/05/25/237731/?ysclid=mdsmiomcpd574535253>

⁶⁶ The number of billionaires in Russia has increased: In 2025, the Forbes ranking includes 146 richest, including 15 newcomers. Available at: <https://refinanc.ru/journal/v-rossii-uvelichilos-chislo-milliardirov-v-2025-godu-v-reytinge-forbes-146-bogateyshikh-iz-nikh-15-n/?ysclid=mdr7ihss7x799933064>

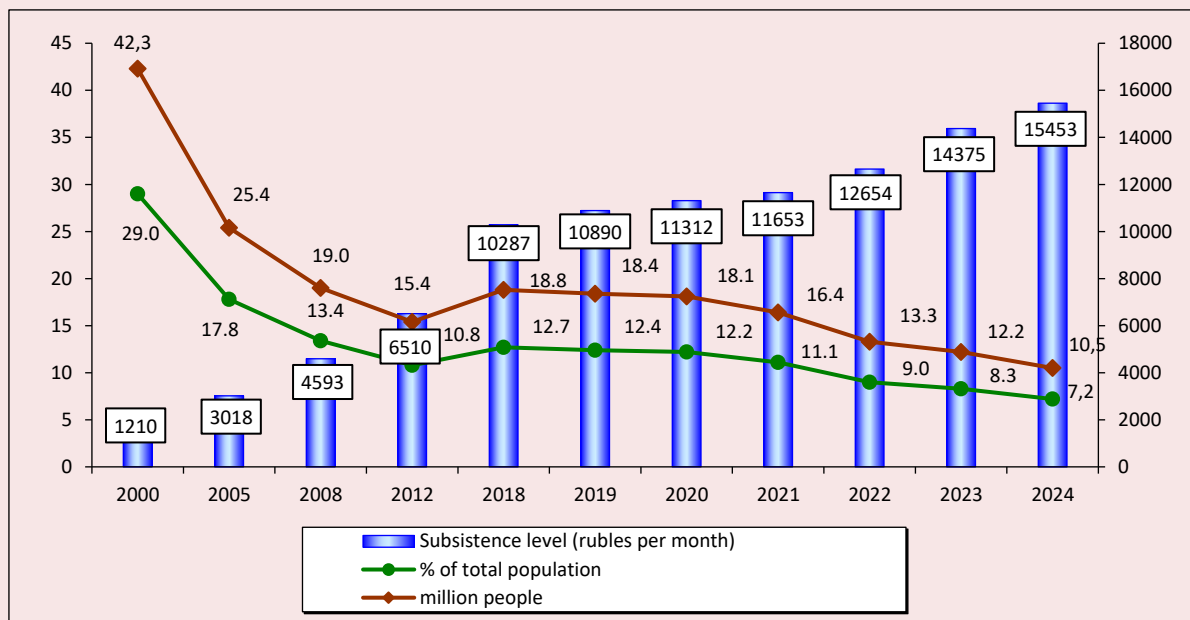
⁶⁷ On national goals and strategic objectives for the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024: Presidential Decree 204, dated May 7, 2018.

Table 2. Dynamics of the wealth of the 10 richest Russian billionaires in the Forbes ranking for the period of the SMO, million USD

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Dynamics (+/-), 2025 to 2022	
					million USD	times
V. Alekperov (Chairman of the Public Council of the "Our Future" Foundation)	10500	20500	28600	28700	18200	2.7
A. Mordashov (CEO of Severgroup Holding)	13200	20900	25500	28600	15400	2.2
L. Mikhelson (Chairman of the Management Board of PJSC Novatek)	14000	21600	27400	28400	14400	2.0
V. Lisin (Chairman of the Management Board of the National Sporting Federation)	18400	22100	26600	26500	8100	1.4
V. Potanin (President of Interros Holding, President of MMC Norilsk Nickel)	17300	23700	23700	24200	6900	1.4
G. Timchenko (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kontinental Hockey League)	11300	18500	23400	23200	11900	2.1
A. Melnichenko (private investor)	11100	25200	21100	17400	6300	1.6
P. Durov (founder of Telegram)	15100	11500	15500	17100	2000	1.1
A. Usmanov (founder and main shareholder of USM)	11500	14400	13400	16700	5200	1.5
S. Kerimov (Member of the Federation Council)	4400	10500	10700	16400	12000	3.7

Source: Forbes rating. Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/milliardery/535280-146-milliardero-rossii-rejting-forbes-2025?ysclid=mdr7gt9gh4931870029>

Figure 2. Population with money incomes below the poverty line / subsistence level



Source: Rosstat.

the Russian economy is “**not as successful as the objective needs of social development require**. Russia is still facing the urgent issue of a **fundamental change in economic policy** and the associated **social unity of the people, without which a social contract cannot exist**”⁶⁸.

So, according to Rosstat, in 2024, **62% of Russians had an average per capita money income of less than 60 thousand rubles per month** (Tab. 3). Of this, a third or a quarter (according to various estimates⁶⁹) is “eaten up” by the minimum “consumer basket”⁷⁰.

Table 3. Distribution of the population by the amount of per capita money income

Population group by income level	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2024 to...	
								2018	2022
% from total population									
Under 27 thousand rubles	54.7	51.4	49.8	44.5	34.5	29.5	22.9	-32	-12
From 27 to 45 thousand rubles	23.6	24.5	25.2	25.9	27.2	26.2	24.4	+1	-3
From 45 to 60 thousand rubles	9.3	10.1	10.5	11.6	13.8	14.4	15	+6	+1
Under 60 thousand rubles	87.6	86	85.5	82	75.5	70.1	62.3	-25	-13
From 60 to 100 thousand rubles	9.0	10.0	10.4	12.4	16.2	18.5	21.5	+13	+5
Over 100 thousand rubles	3.4	4	4.1	5.6	8.3	11.4	16.2	+13	+8
For reference: the number of permanent residents of the Russian Federation per year on average (million people)	147.8	147.9	147.7	147.2	146.7	146.3	146.1	-2	-1
million people*									
Under 27 thousand rubles	80.9	76.0	73.6	65.5	50.6	43.2	33.5	-47	-17
From 27 to 45 thousand rubles	34.9	36.2	37.2	38.1	39.9	38.3	35.7	+1	-4
From 45 to 60 thousand rubles	13.7	14.9	15.5	17.1	20.2	21.1	21.9	+8	+2
Under 60 thousand rubles	129.5	127.2	126.3	120.7	110.8	102.6	91.0	-38	-20
From 60 to 100 thousand rubles	13.3	14.8	15.4	18.3	23.8	27.1	31.4	+18	+8
Over 100 thousand rubles	5.0	5.9	6.1	8.2	12.2	16.7	23.7	+19	+11
*Own calculation on the basis of official data from Rosstat on the number of permanent residents of Russia on average per year (Official statistics. Demographics. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/12781).									
“Distribution of the population by the amount of per capita money income characterizes the differentiation of the population by the level of material wealth and represents indicators of the number (or shares) of the permanent population, grouped in specified intervals by the level of per capita money income” (source: Russian Statistical Yearbook. 2024: Statistics collection. Rosstat. 2024. P. 177).									

⁶⁸ Toshchenko Zh. T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 78.

⁶⁹ Since 2021, the size of the “consumer basket” has not been officially calculated. However:

1) “If the cost of the consumer basket had been calculated so far, in 2025 it would have been 15,498 rubles” (source: Consumer basket: What it includes, how much it is and why it is needed. Available at: <https://t-j.ru/basket-of-goods/#six>);

2) “The cost of the consumer basket in 2025 on average in Russia. For the able-bodied population: 19,329 rubles per month. For pensioners: 15,250 rubles. For children: 17,201 rubles” (source: <https://m.ok.ru/profile/584301282504/statuses/157737201055176>).

⁷⁰ A consumer basket is “the minimum set of food, services, and non-food items that a person needs to ensure their vital activity and maintain their health throughout the year”. It consists of three parts: food, non-food products and services (for more information, see the source: Solovyov V. What is a consumer basket? Available at: <https://t-j.ru/basket-of-goods/#one>).

“The remaining” 20–30 thousand rubles is the approximate cost of two nights in a Russian hotel⁷¹ or a minimum cost of a holiday in a Russian resort for a family of three (and not at all of 5–6) people (that is, parents and one child)⁷² for one week.

And this, we note, applies only to those people who have incomes in the amount of 45–60 thousand rubles per month. In fact, among those 62% of Russians who have incomes of up to 60 thousand rubles, **23% (or 33.5 million people) have an average per capita money income of less than 27 thousand rubles.**

These data confirm other figures from Rosstat, which show the distribution of money income among 20 percent of the population. **In general, the situation has not changed since 1999 and looks even worse than in 1992: almost half of all money incomes in the country (46–47%; in 1992 – 38%) are owned by a small “stratum” of the richest people (Tab. 4).**

And the special military operation, which has been going on for more than three years, has not made any changes to these statistics. On the contrary, in 2022, 20% of the country’s wealthiest

citizens had 45.8% of the total money income, in 2023 – 46.4%, in 2024 – 46.7%.

We should note that the data provided by Rosstat that the income level of the majority of Russians does not exceed 60 thousand rubles fully explain why, with a poverty rate of 7–8% (according to statistics⁷³) **a significantly larger number of people classify themselves as “poor”.** For example, in the Vologda Region (according to VolRC RAS) their proportion is 45–48% (Fig. 3).

At the same time, the main problems of concern to the population were and still are “inflation”, “low standard of living, poverty” and “stratification into poor and rich”. So, on average for 2018–2024 (Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term) compared with the period 2000–2003 (his first presidential term):

- ✓ the share of people concerned about inflation increased by 16 percentage points (from 45 to 61%);
- ✓ the problem of low living standards, poverty – by 8 percentage points (from 45 to 53%);
- ✓ stratification into “poor” and “rich” – by 2 percentage points (from 30 to 32%; Fig. 4, Insert 3).

Table 4. Distribution of total money income by quintile group in the Russian Federation, %

Population group	1992	1999	2007	2012	2018	2022	2023	2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2024 to...	
									1992	2022
First (with the lowest incomes)	6.0	6.0	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.6	5.5	5.4	-1	0
Second	11.6	10.5	9.8	9.8	10	10.4	10.2	10.1	-2	0
Third	17.6	14.8	14.8	14.9	15	15.4	15.2	15.1	-3	0
Fourth	26.5	21.1	22.5	22.5	22.6	22.8	22.7	22.7	-4	0
Fifth (with the highest incomes)	38.3	47.6	47.8	47.6	47.1	45.8	46.4	46.7	+8	+1

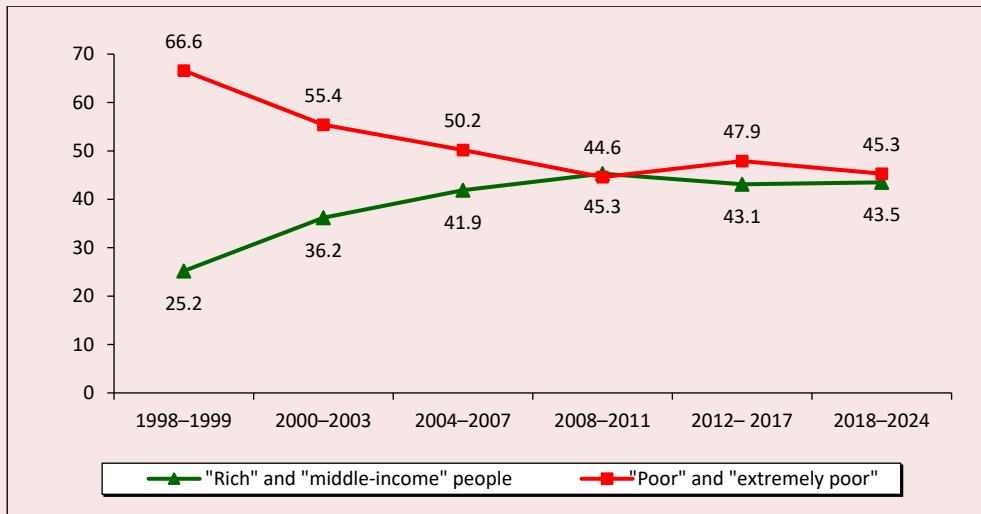
Source: Rosstat data.

⁷¹ The Russian Union of Travel Industry recorded an increase in prices for summer holidays in Russia. The average cost of staying in Russian hotels in 2025 reached 12,021 rubles per day, said Ilya Umansky, president of the Russian Union of Travel Industry (RUTI), speaking at a press conference “Russian Union of Travel Industry: Trends and forecasts for the summer 2025 season” in TASS. According to him, this amount is 12.4% higher than last year (source: RUTI has recorded an increase in prices for summer holidays in Russia. Available at: <https://news.ru/society/v-rst-zafiksirovali-rost-cen-na-letnij-otdyh-v-rossii>).

⁷² In 2025, the cost of summer holidays in Russian resorts with sandy beaches for a family of three will start from 26,950 rubles per week, the press service of the National Tour Operator Aleant (a member of the Russian Union of Travel Industry) told the Prime agency. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20250626/kurort-2025473650.html>

⁷³ 7.2% is the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level in the whole country (according to Rosstat data for 2024); 8.1% is the share of the population with incomes below the subsistence level in the Vologda Region (source: Territorial Body of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Vologda Region, data for 2024).

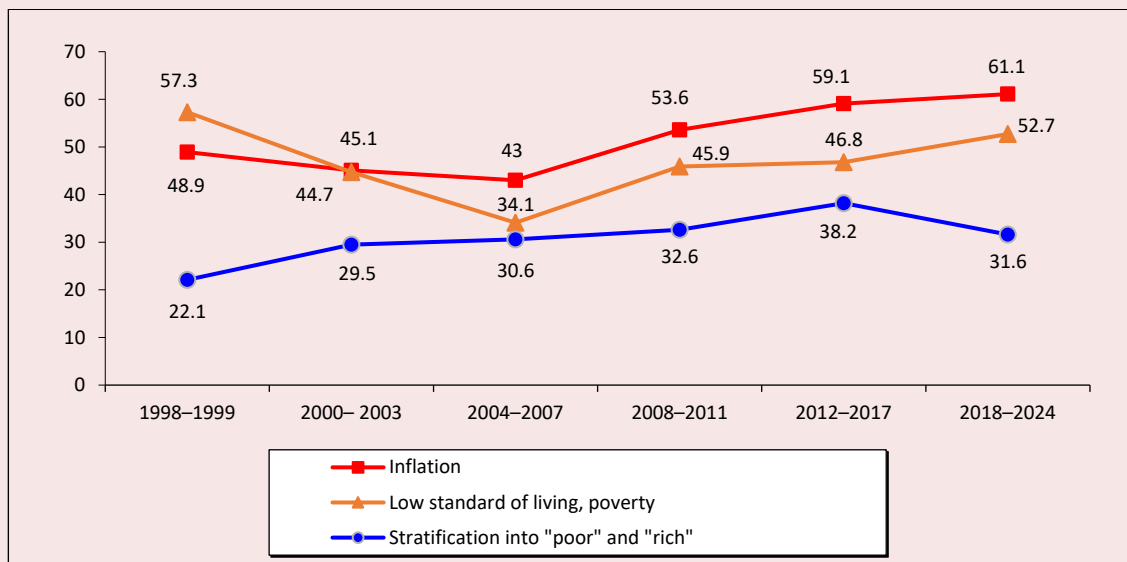
Figure 3. Dynamics of social self-identification*, % of respondents



* Wording of the question “Which category do you belong to, in your opinion?” (responses: “rich”, “middle-income people”, “poor”, “extremely poor”).

Source: VoIRC RAS data.

Figure 4. The most pressing issues of concern to the population, % of respondents



Source: VoIRC RAS data.

More detailed information is provided in *inserts 3–4*.

Insert 3

“What problems of modern life do you consider the most acute for Russia as a whole?”, % of respondents

Issue	1998–1999	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2018–2024	2018–2024 to 2000–2003
Inflation	48.9	45.1	43.0	53.6	59.1	61.1	+16
Low standard of living, poverty	57.3	44.7	34.1	45.9	46.8	52.7	+8
Stratification of the population into “poor” and “rich”	22.1	29.5	30.6	32.6	38.2	31.6	+2
Housing provision, low housing affordability	11.0	18.7	25.5	27.9	26.6	24.3	+6
Political instability	19.2	12.4	8.1	7.7	15.5	22.3	+10
Economic instability, shutdown of enterprises	42.4	23.2	15.5	19.8	19.2	20.8	-2
Social insecurity of citizens	32.6	32.2	27.1	23.3	21.9	20.3	-12
Unavailability of healthcare, poor quality of medical services	12.0	17.8	20.4	14.9	15.7	19.0	+1
High crime rate, insecurity from criminals, hooliganism, etc.	31.7	39.3	32.0	27.7	20.5	18.3	-21
Corruption, bribery	14.2	16.3	18.7	18.7	17.7	17.0	+1
Low life expectancy, population decline	no data	no data	16.0	14.1	9.8	15.5	+1**
Dismissal of staff, unemployment	43.6	29.8	23.8	26.4	13.5	14.1	-16
Rise of alcoholism	14.0	28.1	35.6	28.0	21.3	14.0	-14
Poor ecology, environmental pollution	7.9	14.1	15.7	14.6	12.7	13.6	-1
Unfair taxation	8.2	7.7	6.9	6.9	10.6	13.1	+5
Lack of spirituality, rampant immorality	11.3	16.1	15.5	11.2	10.8	12.9	-3
Incompetence of the authorities	14.9	9.5	8.3	6.2	6.2	7.6	-2
Unavailability of educational services, poor quality of education	4.8	7.4	7.9	4.7	6.2	7.3	0
Delays in payment of salaries, pensions, scholarships	37.2	10.0	5.0	6.2	6.2	5.8	-4
Ethnic harassment, ethnic strife	5.1	8.3	8.4	4.2	4.1	4.9	-3
TOTAL: Total number of negative changes / absence of changes / positive changes							9 / 1 / 10

Source: VoIRC RAS data. Ranked according to the average annual data for 2018–2024.

The most acute problems for the country, according to residents of the Vologda Region, are “inflation”, “low standard of living, poverty” and “stratification of the population into poor and rich”. For the period 2000–2003 (average annual data for the first presidential term of Vladimir Putin) to 2018–2024. (on average, during Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term), the share of people concerned about inflation increased by 16 percentage points (from 45 to 61%), the problem of poverty – by 8 percentage points (from 45 to 53%), and the problem of income stratification – by 2 percentage points (from 30 to 32%).

Insert 4

“What problems of modern life do you consider the most acute for Russia as a whole?” (the most pressing problems in the context of the main socio-demographic categories of the population; VoIRC RAS data), % of respondents

Population group	Inflation		Low standard of living, poverty			Stratification into “rich” and “poor”			
	2000—2003	2018—2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2018—2024 to 2000—2003	2000—2003	2018—2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2018—2024 to 2000—2003	2000—2003	2018—2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2018—2024 to 2000—2003
Gender									
Men	43.4	60.4	+17	43.7	52.8	+9	28.3	31.5	+3
Women	46.3	61.7	+15	45.4	52.6	+7	30.3	31.7	+1
Age									
Under 30	40.1	60.1	+20	38.9	52.9	+14	23.2	29.9	+7
30—55	46.3	61.1	+15	47.0	52.7	+6	30.5	30.4	0
Over 55	48.2	61.4	+13	46.2	52.6	+6	34.2	33.8	0
Education									
Secondary and incomplete secondary	45.9	64.7	+19	44.8	51.9	+7	27.8	33.3	+5
Secondary vocational	47.0	60.2	+13	45.2	52.7	+8	30.9	30.5	0
Higher and incomplete higher	41.7	58.4	+17	44.0	53.4	+9	30.0	31.2	+1
Income groups									
Bottom 20%	48.7	62.2	+14	48.8	55.2	+6	27.5	30.6	+3
Middle 60%	46.3	61.4	+15	47.3	53.7	+6	32.2	30.3	-2
Top 20%	40.2	57.4	+17	37.4	48.5	+11	28.1	33.4	+5
Territories									
Vologda	47.1	58.4	+11	45.8	61.3	+15	31.0	33.5	+2
Cherepovets	44.9	56.1	+11	42.4	43.9	+2	28.0	36.4	+8
Districts	44.3	65.5	+21	45.4	52.8	+7	29.5	27.7	-2
Region	45.1	61.1	+16	44.7	52.7	+8	29.4	31.6	+2
TOTAL: Total number of negative changes / absence of changes / positive changes									
14 / 0 / 0				13 / 1 / 0			6 / 8 / 0		

For the period from 2000–2003 (on average, during Vladimir Putin’s first presidential term) through 2018–2024 (fourth presidential term), the proportion of people concerned about inflation and low living standards increased in all major socio-demographic groups, especially among people under the age of 30 (with regard to inflation – by 20 percentage points, from 40 up to 60%; regarding poverty – by 14 percentage points, from 39 to 53%).

The urgency of the problem of stratification of the population into poor and rich has become more often noted by representatives of 6 of the 14 main socio-demographic groups. Meanwhile, no positive changes were observed in any of the analyzed groups. Negative changes also occurred primarily among people under the age of 30 (by 7 percentage points, from 23 to 30%).

Similar negative trends are observed in almost all major socio-demographic groups (*Insert 4*). Moreover, we note that we are talking not only about socially vulnerable groups (for example, pensioners or people who, according to self-estimates of their own incomes, fall into the category of bottom 20%), **but primarily about the assessments of young people**. So, on average, for the period from the first to the fourth presidential term of Vladimir Putin:

- ✓ the share of those who are concerned about inflation has increased especially among people under the age of 30 (by 20 percentage points, from 40 to 60%) and residents of districts (by 21 percentage points, from 44 to 65%);

- ✓ the problem of poverty – among residents of Vologda (by 15 percentage points, from 46 to 61%) and among people under the age of 30 (by 14 percentage points, from 39 to 53%);

- ✓ the problem of population stratification among people under the age of 30 (by 7 percentage points, from 23 to 30%) and residents of Cherepovets (by 8 percentage points, from 28 to 36%).

Thus, the data provided by official statistics and sociological surveys of the population speak for themselves and suggest quite legitimate questions – can a new Social Contract take place while there still exist the same key problems that have been troubling Russian society for many years: low living standards, poverty, extreme inequality ...? What is the Image of Russia's Future in relatively peaceful conditions; after the end of the SMO or even after a potential more global conflict with NATO...?

Vladimir Putin: “Russia needs a peace option in Ukraine that would ensure its **stable development and peace**”⁷⁴.

These questions remain unanswered so far, and today the real situation regarding inequality and poverty continues to conflict in many ways with publicly declared government priorities for social justice and a welfare state.

This suggests that the second criterion of a Social Contract – the “means to achieve the goal” (as well as the goal itself) – is still not in a state that would allow us to count on the real achievement of a “common destiny” for society and the State.

According to experts and as the real historical experience of our country shows, “**the people should believe that there is Truth behind ideology. The addressee of an ideology must wholeheartedly believe in it as a truth** worthy of their absolute devotion”⁷⁵. If this is not the case, then there is no Social Contract.

Zh.T. Toshchenko: “Speaking about welfare as an indicator of the stability of a social contract, let’s pay attention to the need to specify it, and not just some statements about the well-being of the people. **In Russia, attempts to overcome the low level of people’s welfare remain unresolved**”⁷⁶.

“In the 1920s – 1960s, our Soviet state... was cemented by the belief that we were building and bringing to the world a new, just way of life – communism... **Is it because of the communist faith, or rather, the belief that we affirm and defend the supreme truth, universal justice? The Soviet people withstood the most difficult trials, war, and devastation...**

⁷⁴ Vladimir Putin’s meeting with the mothers and wives of SMO military service members at the Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation on March 6, 2025. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/91/events/76418>

⁷⁵ Khudiev S. Why ideology cannot be invented. Available at: <https://vz.ru/opinions/2023/12/6/1242716.html?ysclid=mdsk1qfx1w139858272>

⁷⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 79.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and his subsequent 'cancellation' were a huge trauma to the national organism. A spiritual trauma. The front-line soldiers who went on the attack with the name of Stalin felt insulted, and the youth questioned the very basics and largely came to the conclusion: **everyone is lying... As a result of the 'cancellation' of Stalin and the general feeling of being deceived and disappointed, the people gave up on all these lofty matters, on the slogans and resolutions of the Party and wanted to live a small private life ...**"⁷⁷

The third criterion of a Social Contract – the methods of its implementation – is "the most important structural element"... They are designed to ensure, through their application and use, that the social contract is effective, which allows the State, represented by the political authorities, to know that the people or only a part of them support and approve of the policy being pursued"⁷⁸.

Zh.T. Toshchenko identifies three such methods:

1) trust ("the basis for the existence of all social and political institutions, their representatives, especially those who head state organizations and institutions");

2) consent ("presupposes a variable attitude not toward such a phenomenon as the State in general, but toward its specific actions and acts");

3) solidarity ("a form of social cohesion and interconnectedness of individuals and social groups, which is based on common interests, goals and standards").

Here are some relevant data reflecting the status of each of these methods. According to the results of sociological surveys and assessments by many experts, Russian society demonstrates a high level

of trust and agreement with regard to the President himself, **but not with regard to the system of public administration he created.**

For example, when United Russia wins parliamentary elections or acting governors appointed by the head of state prevail over other candidates during local election campaigns, many experts say in unison that this is a credit of trust not so much to them as to Vladimir Putin personally.

For example:

1. S. Neverov (on the victory of the United Russia party in the 2012 regional election): "The vote that took place yesterday, in fact, throughout the country, which yesterday affected almost all our municipal bodies, local governments, is a real expression of support for the course of President Vladimir Putin"⁷⁹.

2. "The main reason for the success of the United Russia political party in the Duma election was the support of Russian President Vladimir Putin. This was stated by Konstantin Kostin, chair of the Board of the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society during the round table "Single Voting Day – 2021: Results and trends"⁸⁰.

3. K. Kostin, chair of the Board of the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, on the 2022 regional election: "The **patriotic consensus** that has emerged as a result of the special military operation and Russia's opposition to Western sanctions is the **main factor in this campaign...** The main recipients of this electoral bonus are the governors, who were either appointed by the current president or supported by him when he was nominated for a new term, and the United Russia party, Putin's party"⁸¹.

⁷⁷ Voevodina T. Perestroika: 40 years later. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/perestrojka_40_let_spustya

⁷⁸ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 80.

⁷⁹ Political analysts believe that the victory of United Russia in the elections indicates trust in Putin's policy. Available at: https://www.itv.ru/news/2012-10-15/85781-politologi_schitayut_chno_pobeda_edinoj_rossii_na_vyborah_govorit_o_doverii_politike_putina?ysclid=mdy2tsyay1818477296

⁸⁰ Experts named the reasons for the success of United Russia in the State Duma elections. Available at: <http://civilfund.ru/article/43413?ysclid=mdy2ywaiz6651583483>

⁸¹ Round table "Single Voting Day – 2022: Specifics, trends and forecast of results". Available at: <http://civilfund.ru/event/146>

“There is no deep state in Russia, it is all in plain sight, but there is a deep people. The elite shines on the glossy surface, and over the centuries it has been actively (to its credit) involving the people in some of its activities – party meetings, wars, elections, and economic experiments. **People participate in the events, but they are somewhat detached, they do not show themselves on the surface, living a completely different life in their own depths...**

In essence, the society trusts only the top state official... In the new system, all institutions are subordinated to the main task – trusting communication and interaction of the supreme ruler with citizens. The various branches of government converge on the personality of the leader, being considered a value not in themselves, but only to the extent that they provide a connection with him”⁸².

This specificity of the attitude of Russian society toward the President and the state has largely socio-cultural grounds, which are quite clearly outlined in V. Surkov’s concept of the “long state”, all institutions in it ‘are subordinated to the main task – trusting communication and interaction of the President with citizens’.

At the same time, the entire system of public administration built by Vladimir Putin during his presidential term reveals a lot of reasons to discredit the trust of citizens, and many experts ask a logical question: **why hasn’t a “well-established mechanism of disciplinary responsibility based on clear criteria” been created in it or in the party in power? Is there no “mandatory and unavoidable personal responsibility for sabotage or poor-quality execution of management decisions”?**

“There is a complete lack of personal responsibility for non-fulfillment or inadequate execution of government decisions, for functional inconsistencies, for mistakes, and even more so for deliberate sabotage... Most often, an official who has made serious mistakes simply moves to another position and remains in the administration system. And even more often, he/she stays in the same place and continues to engage in the same destructive activities as before.

It is necessary to introduce mandatory and inescapable personal responsibility for sabotage or poor-quality execution of managerial decisions, for ineffective activities of the head in a designated area, and this should be a well-established mechanism of disciplinary responsibility based on clear criteria. This is simply a necessary element of any management... **in the current extreme and extraordinary conditions of the country’s existence, it is already a matter of life and death, and the absence of this mechanism is suicidal, and from the point of view of state interests, it is criminal...**”⁸³

According to VCIOM, as of July 2025, the RF President’s approval rating is 74.7%. The share of positive assessments of the activities of the Government of the Russian Federation is 49.5%; the State Duma is 43.9%, and the Federation Council – 43.7%.

The majority of Russians approve of the activities of “traditional” public institutions – the army (75.7%), the Russian Orthodox Church (61.4%), and law enforcement agencies (52.3%). However, the approval rate for the activities of other public institutions is less than half: the media – 44.9%; the Public Chamber – 34.5%; the judicial system – 38.7%; trade unions – 30.1%; political parties – 37.2%⁸⁴.

⁸² Surkov V. Putin’s Long State. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2019-02-11/5_7503_surkov.html?ysclid=mdmy6wh711299959713

⁸³ Kobyakov A. (member of the Izborsk Club). Interview to Business Online, June 23, 2023. Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/598151?ysclid=mdvxn8n9lj173110347>

⁸⁴ Ratings. VCIOM official website. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/ratings>

These features of the attitude of the population toward the President and the system of public administration he created quite logically explain the condition of “trust” and “consent” as methods of implementing a Social Contract: **if we can talk about trust and consent, it is only in relation to the head of state himself** (*Insert 5*):

✓ the share of those who trust the President of the Russian Federation is 55% (the level of trust in all other state and public institutions is from 30 to 47%, that is, less than half of the population trusts them);

✓ the share of those approving the activities of the head of state is 59% (of all other authorities – 40% or less).

The same applies to political parties: it is possible to say that the United Russia party is supported by the majority of Russians only in the electoral context, that is, in comparison with other political forces. **However, this principle “does not work” when it comes to forming a Social Contract.**

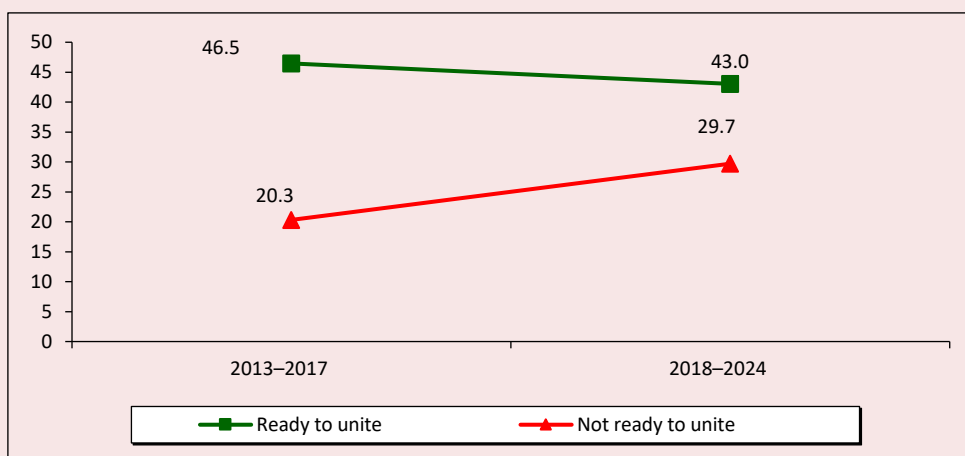
In fact, the level of support for the party in power ranges from 35 to 39%, according to VCIOM,

on average in the country and around 40–43%, according to VolRC RAS, according to the results of research conducted in the Vologda Region (*Insert 6*).

Thus, the situation regarding “trust” and “consent” – the first two methods of implementing a Social Contract, which “work” only in relation to the President, but not the entire system of public administration, can hardly be called satisfactory. At least in the context of presenting an Image of the Future of Russia, in which public trust in government has a stable, systemic character, and does not depend on one person.

With regard to the third method, “solidarity”, which “presupposes the willingness of people to interact”⁸⁵, the results of sociological measurements show that, on average, during Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term, compared with his third presidential term, the proportion of people who are not ready to unite for the sake of some kind of joint action, the realization of common goals, increased by 10 percentage points (from 20 to 30%; *Fig. 5*).

Figure 5. “There are people who are ready to unite with other people for any joint actions if their ideas and interests coincide, and there are people who are not ready to unite. Who would you consider yourself to be – the first or the second?”, % of respondents



The question is asked once a year, since 2011, the question was not asked in 2012.

Source: VolRC RAS data.

⁸⁵ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 84.

Insert 5

Trust in state and non-governmental institutions, % of respondents

Institutions*	1996–1999	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2018–2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2018–2024 to 2000–2003
President of the Russian Federation	26.5	58.2	58.6	56.0	55.3	55.1	-3
Church	37.9	42.6	44.3	47.8	44.7	47.2	+5
Prosecutor's Office	18.2	28.9	31.9	36.8	39.5	46.1	+17
Government of the Russian Federation	18.5	39.3	39.3	51.7	45.5	45.1	+6
FSB	12.6	32.6	33.4	37.5	38.5	44.4	+12
Police	14.1	26.0	27.0	33.6	37.2	44.4	+18
Army	34.2	33.8	27.8	35.0	39.6	43.3	+9
Court	19.8	30.9	33.9	37.4	39.1	43.0	+12
Leadership of the region	14.2	28.6	35.3	40.3	36.6	37.7	+9
Federation Council	13.4	27.9	31.7	39.3	37.4	35.8	+8
Local self-government bodies	–	–	29.5	35.9	32.9	35.7	+6**
State Duma	14.8	22.5	27.6	35.3	33.1	32.4	+10
Trade unions	20.2	26.0	27.6	31.0	27.4	32.2	+6
Media	15.4	29.1	29.1	30.5	28.0	30.9	+2
Non-governmental organizations	–	–	22.2	27.5	25.5	29.3	+7**
Directors, heads of enterprises	5.2	20.1	23.8	24.5	23.0	25.4	+5
Banking and business circles	8.5	13.9	20.5	22.2	19.4	23.1	+9
Political parties, movements	6.8	12.9	17.2	23.1	19.5	23.0	+10
TOTAL: Total number of negative changes / absence of changes / positive changes							1 / 0 / 17

* Excluding the "Public Chamber of the Russian Federation", the "Public Chamber of the Vologda Region" (included in the survey since 2010) and "scientific organizations" (since 2018).
** The comparison of the average for 2018–2024 and the indicators of V.V. Putin's second presidential term (2004–2007) is given. These answer options have been included in the survey since 2006.
Source: VoIRC RAS data. Ranked according to the average annual data for 2018–2024.

Approval of the activities of public authorities, % of respondents

Органы власти	1996–1999	2000–2003	2004–2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2018–2024	Dynamics (+/-), 2018–2024 to 2000–2003
President of the Russian Federation	11.1	65.9	68.9	65.0	62.6	58.7	-7
Governor of the region	36.5	49.2	52.1	49.2	40.5	40.9	-8
Heads of local administration	30.1	38.7	40.3	42.4	38.3	39.7	+1
Government of the Russian Federation	23.8	42.6	46.6	51.0	43.9	39.2	-3
Federation Council	16.6	29.2	37.5	40.7	36.7	34.1	+5
State Duma of the Russian Federation	14.8	25.3	34.6	38.1	34.2	33.1	+8
Legislative Assembly of the region	19.9	29.0	36.3	35.6	32.7	31.6	+3
Representative body of local self-government	18.7	26.6	34.3	35.1	28.9	29.8	+3
TOTAL: Total number of negative changes / absence of changes / positive changes							3 / 0 / 5

Wording of the question "How do you assess the current activities of...?" (the combined responses are "fully approve" and "mostly approve").
Source: VoIRC RAS. Ranked according to the average annual data for 2018–2024.

Insert 6

**Which of the following parties would you most likely vote for if election to the Russian State Duma were held next Sunday?
(one answer; VCIOM data on the national average), % of respondents**

Respond option	Average annual data								Dynamics (+/-), January – June 2025 to...	
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	янв. – июнь 2025	2018	2022
United Russia	42.5	33.6	32.5	29.3	39.0	39.0	39.0	35.3	-7	-4
Communist Party	13.2	15.4	13.6	15.1	11.4	10.2	9.3	9.9	-3	-2
LDPR	10.0	12.3	11.5	9.3	8.2	9.1	9.3	10.9	+1	+3
Just Russia – Patriots for the Truth	5.0	6.0	6.1	7.0	5.8	5.2	3.7	4.0	-1	-2
New People*	–	–	–	7.6	4.9	4.5	6.5	6.4	–	+2
Non-parliamentary parties	7.4	10.0	11.8	12.4	9.6	9.7	9.8	10.2	+3	+1
Other**	21.9	22.7	24.5	24.1	21.1	22.3	22.4	23.2	+1	+2

* The New People party has been a member of the parliamentary parties since 2021.

** The "Other" answer option includes the answers: "I will come and ruin the ballot", "I'm not sure", "I would not participate in the elections".

Source: VCIOM. Rating of political parties / <https://wciom.ru/ratings/reiting-politicheskikh-partii/>

Methodology: telephone survey representing the adult population of Russia according to the main socio-demographic parameters.

Sample size is 1,600 respondents in at least 80 regions of the Russian Federation.

Which party expresses your interests? (one answer; VolIRC RAS data for the Vologda Region), % of respondents

Respond option	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Feb. – June 2025	Dynamics (+/-), Feb. – June 2025 to...	
									2018	2022
United Russia	37.9	33.8	31.5	31.7	35.2	39.5	42.9	40.7	+3	+6
Communist Party	9.6	9.1	9.5	9.3	7.3	7.0	7.1	8.0	-2	+1
LDPR	9.2	8.8	8.4	9.9	10.1	9.6	8.9	8.6	-1	-2
Just Russia – Patriots for the Truth	2.9	3.4	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.4	3.5	3.3	0	-2
New People*	–	–	–	2.3	1.5	1.9	2.0	2.6	–	+1
Other**	40.4	45.0	45.8	44.1	41.0	37.7	35.7	36.7	-4	-4

* The New People party has been a member of the parliamentary parties since 2021.

** The respond option "Other" includes the answers: "Other", "None", "I'm not sure".

Source: VolIRC RAS data. Methodology: survey based on the place of residence of the respondents. Surveys are conducted six times a year in Vologda, Cherepovets and 8 municipal districts and okrugs of the Vologda Region. Sample size is 1,500 people aged 18 and older.

Of course, we should note that the proportion of people who are ready to interact remains higher (43%), **but their share is decreasing (by 4 percentage points, from 47 to 43%), and most importantly— it is still not the majority of citizens.**

Thus, if we summarize some interim results of the analysis of the situation regarding the criteria of a Social Contract in Russia, we see that **at least three of them (“goal”, “means of achieving the goal” and “methods of implementing the Social Contract”)** have different problems, but each has not yet been brought to a level that would allow us to count on the real achievement of the **“philosophy of common destiny” between the state and society; on the opportunity to really turn the page of history. Even if an official state ideology is developed and adopted in Russia** (whatever name and form it may have).

The fourth criterion of the Social Contract is **“feedback between the state and society”**.

As Zh.T. Toshchenko writes, it “gets a full and complete embodiment in the case when such a criterion of a social contract as the **involvement of the people in the management of the affairs of society and the state** is realized. Moreover ... in addition to direct participation in the work of governing bodies, in our opinion, it is worth talking about **the possibility of influencing decision-**

making... It is the **awareness of involvement** and engagement in the management process that makes people themselves more responsible in their social and working lives...”⁸⁶

Long-term monitoring studies conducted by VoIRC RAS show that this criterion of a Social Contract in Russia remains in a stable and, unfortunately, in a negative condition. It is clear that people do not believe they can influence the state of affairs in the city, region or at the national level. **Only 5–9% of the population thinks otherwise (on average for 2018–2024; Tab. 5).**

We will also cite data from sociological surveys that reflect, perhaps, the quintessence of the state of all criteria of a Social Contract (Tab. 6). On average, during Vladimir Putin’s fourth presidential term (2018–2024), compared with his first presidential term (2000–2003):

- ✓ the proportion of those who believe that “the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer” has not changed and still stands at 54%;
- ✓ the proportion of those who believe that “people in power don’t care about ordinary people” increased by 7 percentage points (from 40 to 47%);
- ✓ the share of those who “do not feel like a participant in the events taking place in the country” has also increased and amounts to 37% (by 3 percentage points, from 34 to 37%).

Table 5. “Do you think you can personally influence the state of affairs today...?”
(response option is “yes”), % of respondents

Area of life	2013–2017	2018–2024	2018–2024 to 2011–2017
In my family	79.8	84.6	+5
At work	41.5	42.2	+1
In the house, in the yard	34.3	35.3	+1
In the city, in the neighborhood	8.1	8.8	+1
In the region	4.0	5.3	+1
In the country	3.6	5.4	+2
TOTAL: Total number of negative changes / absence of changes / positive changes			0 / 0 / 6
The question is asked once a year since 2011. The question was not asked in 2012. Source: VoIRC RAS data.			

⁸⁶ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 87.

Table 6. Please read the following opinions about life in our society and mark those with which you agree, % of respondents

Respond option	Average annual data for presidential terms					Dynamics (+/-), 2018–2024 to 2000–2003
	2000– 2003	2004– 2007	2008– 2011	2012– 2017	2018– 2024	
The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer	53.9	37.8	45.6	47.0	53.5	0
People in power don't care about ordinary people	39.7	38.8	41.2	44.1	47.4	+7
I don't feel like a participant in the events taking place in the country	34.0	26.7	33.8	32.5	36.8	+3
The main thing for the central government in Moscow is to solve its problems at the expense of the regions and republics of Russia	25.5	22.9	21.7	27.9	33.1	+8
Now everyone who can and wants to work is able to ensure their financial well-being	28.7	26.9	29.8	28.5	29.3	+1
The authorities take care of the lives of ordinary people	4.5	6.0	7.2	5.2	8.2	+4
The Center pursues a policy in the interests of the regions	4.0	3.2	5.8	4.6	7.3	+3
Each of us can influence events in the country	5.6	5.6	4.6	6.8	6.2	+1
Source: VolRC RAS data. Ranked according to the average annual data for 2018–2024.						

It only remains to add that in the structure of respondents' judgments about life in the country, the assessments listed above were and remain the most common throughout Vladimir Putin's presidential terms.

Thus, we get a general picture (based on long-term statistical data, expert assessments and opinions of citizens themselves, recorded by sociological surveys), indicating that the state of all

criteria of a Social Contract does not yet allow us to talk about the possibility of its real achievement, at least without a correct assessment (primarily on the part of the President), conclusions and corrections of the situation that has developed today as a result of the country's 30-year stay in a "liberal fog"...⁸⁷

And this essentially correlates with the conclusions of Zh.T. Toshchenko, who points out the "deformation of the existing Social Contract":

"There is a discrepancy between what the state considers important and necessary for its existence, and how people think about this importance and necessity. In other words, **in reality there are disagreements between the state and a part of the people**. This means that the state, represented by the political authorities, will not only have to comprehend this discrepancy, be aware of it, but also minimize it, not bring the situation to social tension, conflict, and even a possible social explosion"⁸⁷.

"In modern Russian reality, the Social Contract has significant reserves for its improvement in terms of coordinating development goals, means of achieving them, ideological support, regular feedback, and, finally, the effective participation of all social communities and groups in managing the affairs of society and the state. **In modern Russian reality, the Social Contract has significant reserves for its improvement in terms of coordinating development goals, means of achieving them, ideological support, regular feedback, and, finally, the effective participation of all social communities and groups in managing the affairs of society and the state.**

⁸⁷ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). The fate of the social contract in Russia: The evolution of ideas and the lessons of implementation: Monograph. Moscow: FCTAS RAS. P. 612.

However, at present, solutions to specific state and public problems in a significant number of cases lead to deformed processes and phenomena that do not always embody the equal unity of the people and political power, which leads to various forms of tension reflecting the deformation of the existing Social Contract”⁸⁸.

The situation in the country, which has developed as a result of the constitutional ban on state ideology, and in fact, the establishment of a liberal ideology of the “consumer society”, prevents the formation of a new Social Contract; creates conditions when, even if the official state ideology is adopted, it will face inconsistencies in its content with reality.

For “ordinary” people, for the majority of Russians, it simply will not be the Truth and therefore will not have the effect that Zh.T. Toshchenko calls the “**philosophy of the common destiny**” of the state and the people – “**mutually coordinated achievement of goals, means and methods of their implementation**”⁸⁹.

Nevertheless, this only reinforces the urgency of developing and adopting ideology in Russia **in exactly the form in which experts propose to do it today: compulsory “for those who seek to join the cohort of leaders of the Russian state”**⁹⁰.

After all, today many experts are formulating very specific outlines of the Image of the Future of Russia, which correspond to the needs of the population and could well become the basis of a new Social Contract ... **but who will solve all these tasks?**

“Putin expressed confidence that SMO members will be able to take their rightful place in Russia’s managerial elite, where they are planned to be incorporated through various projects and programs. Of course, this vector is absolutely correct. But so far one important question has remained unanswered: **‘How can such an incorporation of patriotic-minded cadres be carried out into the dominant stratum that has been created for decades, a significant part of which is damaged by ultra-liberal ideas, as well as corruption and other vices?’**”⁹¹

“A revised Social Contract includes the following requirements: a new ideology; defining the economic system of the country; ensuring professional social elevators and personal responsibility; integrating the Bank of Russia into the general system of government; de-bureaucratization of the economy; combating extreme forms of inequality; ending uncontrolled immigration; introducing responsibility for political sabotage. The ideology of Russian Civilization is the supporting structure of a new Social Contract”⁹².

⁸⁸ Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). Social contract in modern Russia: Has a balance of interests been achieved? Sotsis, 2, p. 12.

⁸⁹ Ibidem. P. 5.

⁹⁰ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025. P. 17.

⁹¹ Kassin O. On the “political oncology” of the modern “elite” and its treatment measures. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/o_politicheskoy_onkologii_sovremennoj_eliti_i_merakh_eyo_lecheniya?ysclid=mdx0037c62281119492

⁹² Balatsky E.V., Ekimova N.A. (2022). Social contract in Russia: Before and after 2022. Journal of Institutional Studies, 14 (3), p. 74.

Therefore, without a qualitative reorientation of the entire public administration system and its personnel toward publicly stated conditions for the implementation of ideology (statehood, sovereignty, patriotism, traditional values, social justice, etc.), it is extremely difficult to achieve compliance with the country's situation with the criteria of a new Social Contract. **This means that we will not have the Social Contract itself; we will not reach a new stage of historical development; we will not “turn over the page” of a “semi-colonial” Russia to build a sovereign Russia.**

“You can issue decrees about traditional values, write books about heroes, show movies about faith and self-sacrifice, hold festivals and forums about preserving historical memory, but if there is a public enthusiasm for overconsumption, wealth and luxury, then children will be lost and wars will be lost”⁹³.

Even taking into account the fact that the state continues to pursue a very important and necessary active domestic policy to strengthen traditional values in society, social protection of the general

population, support for SMO participants, etc. (Insert 7).

In conclusion, we note that in the discussion about whether Russia needs an ideology or not, whether a “big country” needs a “Big Idea”, we agree more with the position of S. Karaganov and the team of experts whose opinion he generally expresses⁹⁴. It is difficult to disagree with the fact that “great nations are not built without great, guiding ideas, and having lost them, they collapse with a thunderous crash”⁹⁵.

But in order for a Big Idea to captivate the masses, so that it can give people a clear and precise Image of the Future of the country and their personal lives in this country, and not become another “dead project” that contradicts reality and thus undermines trust between society and government, **this Big Idea should not just be formulated. The society should be shown the realism of its implementation** in real practical steps to achieve social justice, overcome inequality, and ensuring personal responsibility of officials, which implies the inevitability of punishment for deliberate abuse of their official position. A. Shkolnikov writes: “If the society sees that the movement toward strategic goals is underway, it begins to support the proposed solutions, trusting the leaders...”⁹⁶

⁹³ N. Mikhalkov's program “Besogon”: “Laziness as an engine of progress” (episode aired August 1, 2025). Available at: <https://besogontv.ru/videos/len-kak-dvigatel-progressa/>

⁹⁴ Yu.V. Popkov, N.S. Mikhalkov, E.V. Panina, K.G. Shakhnazarov, A.G. Dugin, F.A. Lukyanov, P.N. Malyutin, and others. All of them are mentioned in S. Karaganov's report “A living idea-dream of Russia” as people on whose opinions he relied in his conclusions.

⁹⁵ Karaganov S. (2025). A living idea-dream of Russia. The Code of the Russian in the 21st century: Report within the framework of the project “The Russian Idea-Dream and the Code of the Russian in the 21st Century” under the auspices of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy and the Faculty of World Economics and World Politics of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. July 2025.

⁹⁶ Shkolnikov A. Conciliarity of defining strategic goals and objectives. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/sobornost_opredeleniya_strategicheskikh_tcelej_i_zadach?ysclid=mdy5h0cmdr763258073

The monitoring of regulatory legal acts (laws, decrees) signed by the RF President in the period from June 22 to August 18, 2025⁹⁷

MEASURES TO SUPPORT SMO PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS, TO DEVELOP THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, MEASURES RELATED TO MOBILIZATION, ORGANIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW, INCREASE IN THE ANTI-TERRORIST PROTECTION OF FACILITIES June 24 – Federal Law 162 “On Countering the Legalization (Laundering) of Proceeds from Crime and the Financing of Terrorism”. The interdepartmental coordinating body responsible for countering the financing of terrorism and extremist activities is authorized to make a decision on freezing (blocking) funds or other property of an organization or individual involved in sabotage activities (including the financing of sabotage). July 7 – Federal Law 196 “On Amendments to Articles 3 and 4 of the Federal Law on Veterans”. A law has been signed extending the status of a combat veteran to members of the SMO who have performed tasks in the territories of the DPR, LPR, Kherson and Zaporozhye regions since their admission to the Russian Federation. July 7 – Federal Law 204 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. Powers of attorney and wills of citizens staying in volunteer formations are equivalent to notarized ones if they are certified by the commanders of military units. July 7 – Federal Law 212 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. It provides for granting stateless persons the right to conclude a contract for military service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and military formations. July 23 – Federal Law 230 “On Amendments to Article 333 of Part Two of the Tax Code of the Russian Federation”. Participants of the SMO and their family members are exempt from paying the state fee when submitting applications to the court for the establishment of facts of legal significance, for the recognition of a citizen as missing or for declaring a citizen deceased.	MEASURES TO PROTECT INFORMATION SECURITY, REGULATE THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN AGENTS, AND UPBRING AND EDUCATE THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS June 24 – Federal Law 156 “On the Creation of a multifunctional information Exchange service and on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. The law on the creation of a national messenger. The messenger’s functionality includes: signing documents using electronic signatures of various degrees of protection; interaction of participants in educational relations; provision by citizens of the Russian Federation of information contained in documents certifying the identity of a citizen of the Russian Federation, if necessary, confirmation of age, confirmation of entitlement to benefits, etc. June 24 – Federal Law 168 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. The law on the protection of the Russian language has been signed. The law is aimed at limiting the use of foreign words in public space. June 24 – Federal Law 171 “On Amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation”. Administrative liability has been tightened for failure to comply with the legal requirements of an official of the Ministry of Justice or its territorial body, as well as for obstructing the performance of his official duties. The fine for the absence of labeling of materials of foreign agents – organizations has been increased (from 10 to 30 thousand rubles). When committing offenses abroad, foreign agents can be held administratively liable in absentia for non-compliance with the requirements for their activities. Officials of the Ministry of Justice may conduct an administrative investigation in case of violation of the procedure for the activities of a foreign agent.
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⁹⁷ The insert is a continuation of the monitoring of the most important regulatory legal acts signed by the President of the Russian Federation, which we have been conducting since June 2022 (the first issue of the monitoring is presented in the article: Ilyin V.A., Morev M.V. (2022). A difficult road after the Rubicon. Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast, 15(3), 9–41).

June 24 – Federal Law 173 “On Amendments to Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation” Criminal liability is established for actions aimed at inciting hatred or enmity, as well as humiliating the dignity of a person or group of persons on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude to religion, as well as membership in any social group, committed in public. July 11 – Decree 474 “On Approval of the Fundamentals of the State Language Policy of the Russian Federation”. The fundamentals of the state language policy of Russia have been established. The law provides for the introduction of a unified methodology for teaching Russian language and literature in the implementation of basic general education programs; the creation of a single line of textbooks and teaching aids in Russian language, literature and literary reading; professional development of government and municipal employees in additional professional programs that improve the level of proficiency in the Russian language; a comprehensive system for assessing the level of linguistic adaptation of foreigners arriving in Russia; alphabets of the languages of the peoples of Russia based on Cyrillic; a single line of textbooks on the official languages of the republics of Russia and a single methodology for teaching them; a single testing system for Russian as a foreign language. July 23 – Federal Law 215 “On Amendments to Articles 4 and 16 of the Law of the Russian Federation ‘On Mass Media’ and Articles 1 and 9 of the Federal Law ‘On Countering Extremist Activities’”. The definition of an “extremist organization” is being clarified, which also recognizes an extremist community on the basis of a criminal conviction that has entered into force against a person for creating such a community, leading it or participating in it. The activities of such a community will be subject to a ban. The community is included in the list of organizations recognized as extremist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation. Amendments have also been made to clarify responsibility for organizing and participating in the activities of an extremist organization (Federal Law 216) and clarified responsibility for violating the requirements for the dissemination of information about extremist and terrorist organizations (Federal Law 217). July 23 – Federal Law 247 “On Amendments to Article 2434 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation”. Criminal liability is established for desecration of military graves, as well as monuments, steles, obelisks, other memorial structures or objects perpetuating the memory of those who died in defense of the Fatherland or its interests or dedicated to the days of military glory of Russia.	MEASURES TO PROVIDE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THE GENERAL POPULATION, STRENGTHEN THE COUNTRY’S ECONOMY, INCLUDING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA June 24 – Federal Law 176 “On Amendments to Article 187 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation”. Criminal liability has been established for transferring an electronic means of payment and (or) access to it to another person for illegal transactions, as well as for illegal transactions using such a means of payment at the direction of another person and (or) in his interests. July 23 – Federal Law 249 “On Amendments to the Federal Law on State Benefits for Citizens with Children”. Starting from September 1, 2025, the amount of maternity benefits for women studying full-time has been increased to the minimum subsistence level for the able-bodied population established in the subject of the Russian Federation at their place of residence.
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In this sense, ideology, which is obligatory for the ruling elites, seems to be a perfectly reasonable tactical step in the implementation of a more global strategic task – the formation of a new Social Contract in Russia... It is not just about the wording and not only about the “intellectual efforts” (as A. Dugin writes) of representatives of the expert community, but **above all about the efforts of political will on the part of the President and the ruling party.**

“Nowadays, it is necessary to realize that it will not be possible to immediately replace the entire political, economic and cultural social stratum that has dominated Russia since the end of the twentieth century... **At the first stage, it is important to place the current dominant social stratum and the entire so-called ‘old elite’ within the strict framework of new ideological and moral realities, tightly controlling this process**”⁹⁹.

“There is a large-scale and very difficult work ahead. It is obvious that the replacement of key leaders in ministries, departments and in the field should be carried out carefully, gradually, without shocks and disruptions to their functioning... It is necessary to continue the painstaking work to tighten responsibility for embezzlement and corruption, to ensure the inevitability of penalties and to close all loopholes for tax evasion and capital withdrawal...

The problem of elite renewal and the ways to solve it are clear. It’s solely up to the president’s political will to bring what he started to an end”⁹⁸.

We should note that the head of state does not have much time to solve this most difficult task – to complete the process of internal transformation of the country (first of all, the public administration system and its personnel).

Because even with the achievement of long-term agreements on the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict (which, in particular, is indicated by regular contacts between Russia and the United States since the beginning of 2025, including the meeting of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump on August 15), there are too many signs¹⁰⁰ that the Collective West may make another attempt to encroach on sovereignty and the territorial borders of the Russian Federation. **At the moment when Vladimir Putin will “hand over” the country to his successor**¹⁰¹.

⁹⁸ Batchikov S. The time of the best. Available at: <https://izborsk-club.ru/27211?ysclid=megpbxnvos897001134>

⁹⁹ Kassin O. On the “political oncology” of the modern “elite” and its treatment measures. Available at: https://zavtra.ru/blogs/o_politicheskoy_onkologii_sovremennoj_eliti_i_merakh_eyo_lecheniya?ysclid=mdx0037c62281119492

¹⁰⁰ See for example:

1. “All the efforts of this Euro-Atlantic community are focused on preparing for a new war. And Germany, together with France and the UK, is at the head of this” (Sergey Lavrov’s speech at the Antalya Diplomatic Forum on April 12, 2025. Available at: www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/minister_speeches/2008763/?ysclid=me5q765lxz256468564).

2. “The publications of a number of European think tanks say that short-term sanctions against the Russian Federation have already exhausted most of their resources. **Therefore, their effectiveness should shift toward a structural, long-term weakening of Russia’s capabilities in the international arena.** Sanctions are becoming part of a policy to limit Russian capabilities in the energy, mining, and nuclear industries... **This is now not just a punishment in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, but a tool for restructuring the geopolitical balance in favor of the EU and deterring Russia for years to come**” (source: On the evolution of the EU’s approach to anti-Russian sanctions. Available at: https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2025-07-17/2_9296_red.html).

¹⁰¹ According to the current Constitution of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin may nominate his candidacy for the presidential election in 2030, that is, theoretically, we are talking about a maximum of 2036, which by historical standards is not such a long time.

“The West’s strategy toward Russia, after an unsuccessful attempt to inflict a strategic defeat, is to **exhaust it economically and psychologically in the war, to undermine our society, to undermine faith in the country’s leadership and its policies, causing new turmoil.** The opponent proceeds from the fact that its efforts must **reach a climax during the transfer of supreme power**”¹⁰².

This means that by this time the country should be ready for everything; it should be ready internally – to have a well-functioning mechanism for self-reproduction of personnel in the public administration system (and not in the “manual control” mode); to have a common and clear understanding of the present and future between society and government (what Zh.T. Toshchenko calls the “philosophy of the common destiny” of the state and the people); **to have a single Russia**, rather than two, three or four Russias¹⁰³, at least at the moment when the conditions for ensuring national security and protecting national sovereignty require it.

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¹⁰² Trenin D. The Age of wars: The Third World War has already begun, but not everyone understands this. Profil. July 12, 2025.

¹⁰³ See for example:

1. “Colleagues from the company “Minchenko Consulting” have proposed an interesting typology reflecting the changes in our society against the background of the SMO. **According to their version, we have not one Russia, but four Russias. The first is fighting in the war. The second has left. The third is in the capital city. The fourth is ‘deep’**” (source: VCIOM CEO Valery Fedorov in an interview with Rossiyskaya gazeta newspaper spoke about “four Russias” and the trends of 2023. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2023/01/11/chetyre-rossii-ishchut-sebia.html?ysclid=me5kkog1zm688143615>).

2. “The Ukrainian enemy and the Collective West supporting it are working hard to destroy the existing concept of ‘two Russias’: the one that is ‘getting its kicks’ and the one that is ‘fighting in the war’... **The current ‘tactical program’ of the country, according to which some are fighting, and in the Russian regions people live as before**, has its advantages. If tactics change, then ‘a very moody part of the population’, accustomed to rolling in luxury, ‘may get angry’... **Our response to this can be only one thing – transformation of our country into a unified and popularly supported concept of a fighting Russia, which is intensively preparing for future, even bigger troubles**” (source: Kurginyan S. Ukraine expects to collapse the doctrine of a Russia that is ‘getting its kicks’ and a Russia that is ‘fighting in the war’. Available at: <https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/caa70312https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/caa70312?ysclid=m204snstfk186009988>

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