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RUSSIA'S FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY IN MODERN CONDITIONS

The propaganda of unfriendly countries often tries to present Russia's foreign policy as a struggle against Western democracy. Probably, one could agree with this, but with one correction: Western democracy by its genesis and nature is a slave-holding democracy. Back in Ancient Greece, democracy was exclusively for its own, for citizens, and slaves were considered to be talking tools, practically animals, to which no humane and civilised principles applied.

The founding fathers of the American state, who wrote such a humane Constitution, were also slave owners. This Constitution, of course, did not apply to slaves.

With the development of Western society, the number of those admitted to the "democratic table" gradually expanded. In the 20th century, virtually all citizens living in Western countries, including women, were given the right to vote. Nevertheless, there has always been, and still is today, the belief that humanistic principles can be left out of the rest of the world. We remember the brutal execution of muzzle-bound Sipayans in India at a time when the Liberal Party was in power in Britain and the newspapers were full of stories about the importance of humanist values.²

In 2023, at the Russia-Africa Forum in St Petersburg, Vladimir Putin named Patrice Lumumba the first among the leaders of the black continent's national liberation movement. Lumumba was a democratically elected head of government who was brutally tortured and murdered under the watch of Belgian officers. This was after the Declaration of Human Rights had been adopted and the Congo had gained formal independence. At the same time, the West was being told of the sacred mission of the US and its allies to bring humanism and freedom to all countries.

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² *Исаев А. К.* Россия – лидер антиколониальной революции // *Единая Россия* : [website]. URL: <https://er.ru/activity/news/rossiya-lider-antikolonialnoj-revoljucii-statya-andreya-isaeva> (accessed: 07.05.2024).

In the 20th century, the colonial system that had existed for several centuries, which allowed to rob, enslave and physically destroy the population of colonies, was replaced by the system of neo-colonialism, when formally a state remains independent, but is under the strict financial and political control of Western countries.

The struggle against neo-colonialism was actually led by the Soviet Union. One can have a different attitude to the personality of Nikita Khrushchev, but his famous speech on 12 October 1960 at the UN General Assembly served as a real manifesto of the anti-colonial struggle.

It seemed that after the collapse of the USSR, neo-colonialism should experience a revival. The US established itself as the world's sole hegemon and openly began to proclaim its leadership as an official ideology.

But here's the problem: Russia began to leave this system, firmly adopting a course of national sovereign policy and support for allied countries, regardless of the will of the West. Therefore, a military clash with Ukraine was imposed on us, with all Western countries on the side of the Banderite regime.³

However, the system of colonialism is hopelessly outdated. If in the past centuries its existence could be explained by the colossal gap in cultural and technological development between the metropolis and the colonies, whose population often did not even know that there was any other way of life than their own, then now in the information society, when any person, located anywhere in the world, can work in any company and get information about everything that is happening on our planet, the system of colonialism is becoming a brake on the development of mankind. At the same time, the West cannot abandon it. Like the Roman Empire, it has grown a colossal layer of "Roman poor" – tens of millions of people who do not produce any real product, but live much better than labourers in the "third world". This layer plays a significant role in the political system of the West, it is the electorate and does not intend to change its habits. The U. S. and its allies are waging a war, trying to preserve this layer and this neo-colonial system as a whole. And our country, as the Russia-Africa forum in July and recent events abroad have shown, is becoming the leader of a powerful anti-colonial revolution.⁴

In fact, humanity is facing the choice of one of two ways of further development.

The first way is neo-colonialism promoted by the G7. I would like to point out that the G7 does not include countries representing the so-called Third World, which is es-

³ *Исаев А. К.* *Op. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

essentially a council of masters, headed by the supreme master – the United States of America, and together they seek to establish dictatorship over the entire planet. The model of the world order proposed by them boils down to the fact that there is only one correct socio-political order – the one that exists in the USA and Western Europe, and this order can be forcibly imposed on any country with this or that degree of rigidity, if the West deems it necessary.

Another way is to create a multipolar world, a world where all countries are equal and treat each other with respect, seek consensus in solving various problems, and do not dictate to anyone how to live. This is precisely the path offered by BRICS, which is an equal union of countries with different political systems, cultures, religions, ideologies and traditions. In this union, no one imposes anything on anyone: China does not demand that South Africa build Chinese-style socialism, Brazil does not oppose China's party system, and so on.

Let me remind you that BRICS was founded in 2006. Initially it included Brazil, Russia, India and China, and then South Africa joined. And since then, BRICS has evolved from a purely economic consultative association into one of the major international political organisations, comparable in influence to the G7.

It is obvious that the pandemic, the confrontation between Russia and the West, and the new round of globalisation have changed the world, and it will never return to the state it was in before 2020. But what the new world order will be is not yet clear.

The war that is going on now in the world economy, in the sphere of ideology and on the battlefields in different parts of the world, primarily in Ukraine, is directly related to the choice of a new world order.

The victory of our opponents will mean that humanity will remain in neo-colonial chains for a long time, and most states will be delayed in their development for decades or even centuries, suffering and death will increase in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, while their resources will be exploited more and more by the growing economies of the Seven.

If we win, the world will be organised according to the model on which BRICS is working today. We see that there are more and more supporters of this model. It is planned that in 2024 the organisation will unite 46% of the world's population, and the combined GDP of the BRICS countries will reach 37% of the global GDP. Moreover, this is only the first stage. The expansion of the organisation will definitely continue.

The BRICS heads of state also advocated the use of national currencies in international trade and financial transactions between the BRICS countries. In fact, they are storming the main bastion of the G7 – the US dollar. The less the dollar is in international trade and in the gold and foreign exchange reserves of various countries, the fewer opportunities the G7 will have to exercise its economic power over the world and solve its internal socio-economic problems at the expense of other countries.

The discussion within the BRICS about whether to introduce a single currency for the organisation or to focus for the time being on the creation of a single payment system within which countries will trade in their own currencies is not a discussion about de-dollarisation as such, but only about its pace. Obviously, both involve de-dollarisa-

tion, but the introduction of a new monetary unit will of course bring down the dollar faster, as some 60 countries that are now BRICS-oriented will also start to switch to the new currency, which is extremely stable and reliable. However, there is one important circumstance that cannot be ignored: today, some BRICS countries keep a significant part of their foreign exchange reserves in dollars and are holders of U. S. debt obligations, so they do not want the dollar to fall quickly. Nevertheless, they are also interested in its gradual displacement, i. e. dedollarisation is an inviolable goal for them, as it is for us.

I am confident that sooner or later we will win the current war together on all fronts: military, economic and ideological, and humanity will follow the path proposed by the BRICS countries.

Speaking about domestic policy, of course, the President's Addresses to the Federal Assembly are of paramount importance.

In 2023, priority attention was given to the tasks related to the Strategic Defence Forces, but the country's development goals formulated in peacetime have not changed. Moreover, Vladimir Putin has set a number of new social tasks.

Firstly, it is the creation of a state fund to help veterans of the SVO and families of fallen fighters. We see that many people returning from the front or having lost a breadwinner there need psychological support, medical care, assistance in solving everyday problems. For each of these issues, they appealed to different authorities. The Fund allowed citizens to receive assistance in a "one-stop-shop" mode. And while now it is working for the participants of the armed forces and families of the deceased, in the future, according to the President, its activities may be extended to other veterans of combat operations.

Secondly, an important task is to raise the minimum wage at a rate that outpaces inflation. Often we see the public focus on increasing benefits and pensions, but both are directly dependent on wages. It should also be remembered that the higher the wages of employees, the more opportunities the budget has to eliminate social problems, because income tax is the main source of financing the budgetary sphere. Thus, the fulfilment of the task set by the President on the minimum wage will not only increase wages, but also solve a whole range of other social issues.

Thirdly, Vladimir Putin said that in recent years we have adopted many measures aimed at supporting families with children. But we realise that, apart from the universal maternity capital, these measures were mainly aimed at supporting low-income citizens. In his Address, the head of state proposed a mechanism for expanding tax deductions. This is a direct material support for families, regardless of their income level.¹

The President dwelt separately on social assistance to people working in the defence industry. We are used to the fact that the defence industry complex acts as an economic engine for many industries: through defence orders various civilian enterprises are loaded, the latest developments in the "defence industry" are picked up by other industries. Vladimir Putin actually proposed to make the defence industry a driving force for the creation of new social

¹ *Исаев А. К. Социальный аспект Послания Президента 2023 года // без формата : [website]. URL: <https://groznyi.bezformata.com/listnews/sotcial-niy-aspekt-poslaniya-prezidenta/114804620/> (accessed: 07.05.2024).*

technologies. We are talking about the creation of special social packages for workers in the industry and the construction of rental housing for them at the expense of state subsidies. I would like to note that the lack of social support for people going to work in another region and their lack of rental housing in the new place have always been serious deterrents to internal labour migration. The construction of rental housing and the introduction of social packages, first in the defence industry and then in other sectors, will help solve the problems of qualified specialists moving from one region to another.

Finally, in his Address, the President essentially presented the concept of a new industrial policy, which involves not only economic measures, such as industrial mortgages, but also social changes, including a restructuring of the education system, including a phased abandonment of the Bologna system and the restoration of the best elements of Soviet higher education, taking into account the experience of recent decades.¹

The 2024 Address also focused on social policy, including poverty reduction, support for fertility and families with children, education and healthcare.

First of all, the President announced the launch of a new national project “Family” aimed at supporting motherhood and childhood. By the end of 2030, it is planned to allocate 75 billion rubles to help the subjects of the Federation, where the birth rate is below the national average. Also, the family mortgage programme and the maternity capital programme will be extended until at least 2030, and tax deductions for the second, third and subsequent children will be increased. All the legislative decisions necessary for this will be adopted by us as a matter of priority. In addition, United Russia will monitor measures to support families with children in the regions.²

As a result, by 2030, the poverty rate among large families should more than halve and the overall poverty rate should fall below seven per cent, including by expanding the availability of the social contract system, which allows people to start a business or learn a new profession: 100 billion rubles will be allocated for it.

In addition, the President proposed to launch a new comprehensive programme to protect maternal health and the health of children and adolescents, including reproductive health. This programme involves expanding the network of women’s clinics, modernising perinatal centres, children’s polyclinics and hospitals. We will provide full funding for this programme. In total, more than one trillion rubles will be allocated for the construction, repair and provision of healthcare facilities with medical equipment by 2030.

On the initiative of the President, a programme of major repairs of kindergartens will start next year. Many of them were built back in Soviet times and are in need of serious modernisation. Also, about 18.5 thousand school buildings are to be overhauled by 2030. Overall, more than 400 billion rubles will be allocated for the renovation of kindergartens and schools. In addition, we will set aside the necessary funds in the federal budget to build at least 150 new

schools and more than 100 kindergartens in those cities where the problem of overcrowding of educational institutions is particularly acute. Here, too, we will need to exercise parliamentary control over the quality of work and the efficiency with which budget money is spent.³

I would like to add that from 1 September a federal additional payment of 5,000 rubles a month will be introduced for educational advisers to principals at schools and colleges, and from 1 March the federal additional payment for classroom management and group supervision will be doubled: it will reach 10,000 rubles a month. And by 2026, a new model of wages for public sector employees should be prepared, aimed at eliminating the unfair disparity in salaries from region to region.

In his Address, the President instructed the government to work with the regions to implement a programme to repair and equip secondary vocational education institutions, including the dormitories of technical schools and colleges, which have long been in need of renovation. For our part, we will allocate 120 billion rubles from the federal budget over six years for this purpose. We will also allocate an additional 126 billion rubles by 2030 to overhaul 800 hostels of higher education institutions and universities. Moreover, 400 billion rubles will be allocated to expand the programme for the construction of university campuses and campuses: as a result, not 25 campuses will be built by 2030, as previously planned, but at least 40. The programme for the creation of engineering schools on the basis of universities will also be expanded: 30 such schools are already functioning, 20 will be launched this year, and the President proposes to open another 50 by 2030. These centres will not only train high-class specialists, but also offer original technical solutions in industry, agriculture, construction, transport, and social sphere. We will also allocate over 9 billion rubles to upgrade the infrastructure of pedagogical universities.

All these measures will contribute to ensuring the educational, scientific and technological sovereignty of our country.⁴

The President has also set the task of ensuring sustainable growth of wages and social benefits. One of the main tools to achieve this goal is to increase the minimum wage. Let me remind you that from 2018 to the present, the minimum wage has almost doubled to 19242 rubles. By 2030, we will have to almost double it again – to 35,000 rubles.

Another important topic that the President touched on in his Address to the Federal Assembly is long-term care for the disabled and elderly. At first, the system of long-term care was launched in 34 pilot regions, by the end of last year it had begun to work in all constituent entities of the Federation, and now the President has set the task of increasing its financing and accessibility so that by 2030 100 percent of citizens in need of such care will be provided with it.⁵

The President drew particular attention to the problem of a severe shortage of specialists in a number of industries. We have been tackling this problem for over a year now as part of the party project “My Career with United Russia”.

¹ Исаев А. К. Социальный аспект Послания Президента 2023 года.

² Исаев А. К. К 2030 году уровень бедности среди многодетных семей должен снизиться более чем в два раза // Фракция «Единая Россия» в Государственной Думе : [website]. URL: <https://er-gosduma.ru/news/andrey-isaev-k-2030-godu-uroven-bednosti-sredi-mnogodetnykh-semey-dolzhen-snizitsya-bolee-chem-v-dva/> (accessed: 07.05.2024).

³ Исаев А. К. К 2030 году уровень бедности среди многодетных семей должен снизиться более чем в два раза.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The project was launched on 1 September 2022. Until 2023, it was implemented in pilot mode in five regions – Lipetsk, Ryazan, Kaluga Regions, Kamchatka Territory and the Republic of Udmurtia.

As part of this project, special career centres were set up on the basis of the party's regional executive committees, where people who had undergone preliminary training helped visitors to register on the Jobs of Russia portal and gain access to the services of employment centres.¹

The project also included mass events in various formats: for example, job fairs where employers could talk to potential job seekers.

As for high school students and graduates, within the framework of the project they could visit enterprises in their regions, get acquainted with labour conditions and learn about in-demand professions.

A separate area is the employment of socially vulnerable categories of citizens. We selected employers who are ready to create the necessary conditions for employees with special needs.

Since the beginning of 2023, on the initiative of Dmitry Medvedev, the party project "My Career with United Russia" has become a nationwide project.

Last year, more than 6,000 events were organised within the framework of the project on the party's platforms, and about 1.5 million people took part in them. Approximately 100,000 people received help in finding a job. More than half of the regions showed results that exceeded expectations. The project has become the most effective among all federal party projects.

I would like to point out that we have a sub-project aimed at helping women find jobs. At the same time, we are actively co-operating with the United Russia Young Guard on vocational guidance and job placement for young people.

It is necessary to emphasise the employment activities for participants of the SMO and their family members. Here we are actively co-operating with the Defenders of the Fatherland Foundation.

Assistance to heroes returning from the front who are defending our country and to relatives of those who are currently in the combat zone is one of our top priorities.

For example, we help the wives of businessmen who have gone to the front to acquire the necessary knowledge to continue their husbands' business. Or we help those women housewives who lost their breadwinners during the special operation and are now in dire need of an income to find a job.

In 2024, we plan to separately address the issue of assistance to those defenders who were seriously injured at the front and have limited employment opportunities.

The format of "Mentoring" has also been introduced.

Mentoring involves assigning people who want to find a job or build a career to party leaders of any level, who become their career mentors. The role of a mentor is to help in shaping the trajectory of career development, drawing up an individual training plan, providing recommendations for employment.

The specifics of the mentor's functions depend on the sphere of activity of the citizen who applied. For ex-

ample, if a citizen works in the field of sports, a mentor can assist in organising training, competitions and opening sections. For recipients of social support measures, assistance is provided and control over the fulfilment of the terms of a social contract, grant agreement, etc. is ensured.

In 2023, as part of the My Career with United Russia project, we launched Mentoring in several regions at once, and this format has shown excellent results. For example, in the Astrakhan region, with the support of United Russia party deputies, the employment service authorities implemented the Business Mum and Daddy Entrepreneur projects. Based on the results of competitions within the framework of these projects, members of the expert jury (supporters and members of the United Russia party) became mentors for the participants. They provide them with comprehensive assistance aimed at establishing and developing their businesses, obtaining support measures, applying for favourable loans, etc.

This area will be actively developed within the framework of the project in 2024.

At present, there is a particular need for qualified personnel at defence industry enterprises, given their increased workload in the context of the special military operation and external sanctions pressure.

As part of the My Career with United Russia project, it is planned to conclude agreements with representatives of industry unions to improve the quality of technical education and the number of graduates from specialised educational institutions.

Finally, as part of our project, a pilot "Return to Profession" programme will be developed in cooperation with industry unions. The programme will be aimed at returning to enterprises citizens whose education and work experience meet the criteria stated by employers, but whose qualifications have been lost as a result of a long break in seniority.

We have very ambitious plans. We expect that in 2024 our project will cover at least 700 thousand people.

We are also implementing the Professionalism project, which has made it possible to update educational programmes for a whole range of industries.

In addition, Vladimir Putin announced the launch of a new national project "Personnel", which should strengthen the link between all levels of education from school to university, and called on heads of enterprises to invite schoolchildren more actively to get acquainted with the production process.

I should add that in the autumn session of 2023, we adopted a new law on employment. According to this document, employment services should provide services not only to citizens registered as unemployed, but also to those who are in search of a more suitable job. Special support is envisaged for people at risk of dismissal, pre-retirees, veterans of the SVO and their families, disabled people, and young people. Also, since 1 February, the unemployment benefit has been indexed annually. Previously, it was increased irregularly, as opportunity and need arose.

In the spring session of 2024, United Russia began considering companion laws to the employment law. They should bring the Labour Code, the Tax Code and other legislative acts in line with the new norms. In addition, work continues on a draft law on the specifics of regulating platform employment.

¹ Ситуация в мире и актуальные задачи социального партнерства в России // ФНИП : [website]. URL: https://fnpr.ru/upload/iblock/757/0bmqcnj3chz66t7xuc39wz35sw1luo6t/Isaev_AK_Situatsiya_v_mire_i_aktualnie_zadachi_1605.pdf (accessed: 07.05.2024).

I would also like to remind you that we have adopted a law which, from 1 July 2024, will abolish commission fees when paying for housing and communal services through banks. The law had a difficult fate. We introduced it back in the VII convocation, for almost four years there were difficult consultations with representatives of the banking community, and finally, thanks to the support of the President, the law was adopted. In the course of consultations with banks, we agreed that the final list of categories of citizens from whom banks will not charge commission for payment of housing and utility bills will be established by the government. But it is already known for sure that all Russian pensioners will be exempt from the fee.

We have also introduced an amendment to the legislation that gives medical organisations the right to use the balance of compulsory health insurance funds received

for medical care to purchase equipment, carry out current repairs, and rent accommodation for specialists. The heads of many medical institutions have been waiting for this decision.

The priority for us remained support for the participants of the SMO, their relatives and friends.

We provided for priority enrolment of special operation participants and their children in colleges and technical schools. We also passed a law on the termination of obligations under surety contracts for participants in special operations who died in a combat zone, died from a wound or became group I disabled. Finally, guarantees were provided for family members of former law enforcement officers to receive housing payments in the event of their death during a special military operation.¹

And we will certainly continue our work to support the participants in the SMO.

¹ Турчак А. «Единая Россия» в осеннюю сессию приняла ключевые законодательные решения // Без формата : [website]. URL: <https://moskva.bezformata.com/listnews/turchak-edinaya-rossiya-v-osennyuyu/125414888/> (accessed: 07.05.2024).