

Threats and Possibilities of Modernization in Russia

Nataliya Velikaya

Abstract

Regarding modern society as society of risks we suppose that quantity of social threats have been growing up in the context of globalization. Many of those threats need to be identified and interpreted. The paper is based on the data of multidisciplinary project "Cognitive mechanism of socio-cultural threats" which includes All-Russia Survey (n-1600 respondents, 2019), expert interviews (n-36, 2019), content-analysis of mass media of 2012, 2015, 2019 and on All-Russian Monitoring of Public Opinion (1993-2019) of Russian Academy of Sciences. We define social threat as potential breaking of normative order in the sphere of social connection, values, public and private relations, which consider by individual or group as danger, which corrupt reproduction of social and cultural way of life. Thinking about methodology of research, we proposed not to create the actual list of threats, but clusterization of threats on the base of situative, instrumental and functional character. In this logic we point out three groups of threats which help us to describe wide spectrum of imaginations and anxieties: security threats, wellbeing threats, identity threats. We analyze dynamic of attitudes to different actual threats during last 30 years and offer rate of threats among different groups of society. Using different data gives us opportunities to see mismatch between some point in public opinion and mass media which tend to be more and more propagandistic during last period. F.e. people regard as more actual wellbeing threats which are connected with their everyday life and with worsening economical or political situation. Mass media on opposite create other landscape of threats as migration, losing national identity, losing sovereignty, conflicts with western countries ext. We also sort out the most actual threats broadcasting in political discourse, represented by official power, system parliamentary oppositional parties and non-system political organizations as well.

Keywords: *Threats, Risks, Public opinion, Public discourse*

In contemporary highly technological society the perspectives of security and stable development are connected with threats and risks present in the sociocultural sphere just as much as with threats of military or anthropogenic nature. Indeed, fuzzification or loss of national, civic and ethnic identity, changes in the value system leading to a particular type of reproductive behavior, changes in social structure, diffusion of extremist ideologies and consolidation of consumer attitude towards the environment can be gravely detrimental to society and its future. We can say that the present time, defined by a number of sociologists as a risk society (Beck, 2010), is a fueler for new threats that need to be identified and interpreted. That said, the process of globalization changes both the nature of risks and threats for an individual and the society (Giddens, 2004) and the ability of social actors to confront those threats.

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We share P. Sztompka's concept of cultural trauma according to which social changes intrinsically carry risks and threats regardless of their content, because any more or less significant changes in social life are connected with destruction of the system of values and reference points, rethinking and reassessing of social norms, which is, in itself, the reason of trauma and destabilization of the public organism (Sztompka, 2001).

In this regard, the later post-Soviet society remains quite vulnerable in terms of transforming processes and changes in the sociocultural environment. This fact is accompanied by swings in the social well-being of the population, where actualization of different types of threats is based not only on objective social circumstances and facts, but also on subjective perception of any given phenomenon associated with historical and social memory in the form of trauma.

It can be said that the relatively long period of ignoring the problems of cultural development in Russia has yielded to the attempts of developing a cultural policy that can ensure reproduction of cultural values and cultural capital. We believe that this change in large measure has been caused by real threats to the preservation of the national, civil and cultural identity of the Russian population due to a number of circumstances, national as well as global.

The idea of developing Russia, and the search of optimal development strategies for the country has become not only direction of national scientific research, but also a topic of political discourse. More than ever, in the modern period of Russian history the authorities are faced with the need to form and maintain a common civic identity. However, this new identity is being built mainly on the basis of the "Soviet" identity. It is accompanied by attempts to freeze the political regime (Velikaya, 2019). This controversial situation is complemented by the new consciousness of the fact that nowadays Russia has lost its leadership in many areas.

It is not by chance that the arguments about modernization of Russia, so popular in the late 90s and the early zeros, expressed in President D. Medvedev's political course and reflected in his first presidential message and in the program article "Go, Russia!" (Medvedev, 2008) gave place to the ideology of "new patriotism" and popularization of the concept of "Russia's special path". This change can be partly explained by the fact that initially the theory of modernization was closely connected with the ideas of democratic transition that said that it was necessary and viable for the developing countries to adopt the advanced Western countries' models of economic and political development. Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (Calhoun 2006), the two best-known founders of this school, as well as their followers, linked modernization processes with democratic transformations and improvement of political system on the basis of expansion of political and civil participation (Lerner, 1958; Smelser, 1959; Apter, 1968; Levy, 1966). Due to the third wave of modernization and collapse of the global socialist system, this aspect of modernization prevailed in scientific and political discourse. Thus, the third wave of modernization theories is a summation of theories about late-, high-, or post-modernism. They are more neutral and do not link the development with the "Western modernization". Their goals are more likely to identify contradictions in the process of modernization and its influence on individuals in modern societies. As suggested by A. Giddens, modern societies are characterized by space-time distancing and informal, cyber mechanisms of social interaction (English as a bridge language, use of the Internet and social networks), because they are based not on direct interactions of individuals, but on lengthening and stretching of space on the basis of mass- and interactive media (Giddens, 1991). The problems that accompany modern societies in the globalized age are a confused identity, superficial cultural homogenization, which leads to fuzzification of national identity.

We shall proceed from modern approaches to modernization in the global economy, sociology and political science that see modernization as a process aimed at diversification and amplification of the social system that provides a highly competitive environment both in economy and in politics on the one hand, and sustainable society on the other. Today, Russia is faced with the task of

adapting to the post-industrial segment of the global economic system corresponding to a society based on the knowledge-driven economy where the main potential is intellectual scientific capital and the possibility of its investment in real sectors of the economy, as well as environmental modernization and creation of conditions for an effective development of the human capital.

The first documents in this area are the “Main Provisions of the State Strategy of the Russian Federation on the Environment and Sustainable Development” (February, 1994) and “The Concept of the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development” (April, 1996). That said, the strategy of sustainable development was never accompanied by the adoption of relevant political decisions, and the directions of economic and environmental policies provoke a lot of objections in connection with the low economic growth rates. The crisis of 2014-2016 demonstrated the instability of the emerging commodity-heavy model of development in Russia. Presently, many problems connected with the development of human potential¹ are aggravated in Russia, which may have irreversible consequences in the future.

Russia's further active inclusion in the discourse on the UN sustainable development goals adopted for all countries of the world for 2016-2030 (Agenda..., 2015) demonstrates, at least verbally, Russia's orientation towards further modernization of its system. In its most generic form, the modernization project presently offered by the authorities fits into the following scheme: shift away from the resource-based economy to an innovative and high-tech one, creation of specific innovative zones that can become engine rooms of economical modernization, replacement of the outdated technical park, provision of scientific breakthroughs in upcoming sectors, then, to a lesser extent, search for and transition to the new energy technologies, and finally, political modernization (Bobylev, Grigoryev, 2019).

The formulation of new sustainable development strategies involves assessment of the existing objective risks and threats which can significantly slow down the conduction of innovative efforts, as well as analysis of public moods and opportunities of society and various social groups to become part of social transformations.

The identification of threats in the sociocultural sphere is a serious methodological task due to complexity and fuzziness of the sociocultural environment, and also because of the subjective nature of a wide range of threats that jeopardize individuals and society.

That said, a risk is something associated with a possibility of both favorable and unfavorable, or even tragic, outcome, and is always connected with a loss or decrease of certainty, while a threat is a real possibility of destructive changes of objects, subjects and conditions considered important and valuable by the society.

We define a social threat as a potential violation of the normal order in the field of social relations, value structures, public and private relations seen by an individual or a group as a danger that throws into question the reproduction of a given socio-cultural structure. In other words, we consider the most typical concepts about phenomena which, from the point of view of sociocultural entities (people, institutions, ideas), pose a potential danger or a threat to structures of a social order that are significant for them (hierarchies, values, norms).

Social threats can be such due to their subject (i.e. threats to personal security), as well as to their consequences (i.e. increase of criminal activities, falling birth rates), and can also be considered as internal and external ones. Therefore, any attempt of classification results in an incomplete list or heterogeneous criteria.

For this very reason, different sociological studies use different approaches to operationalize threats as well as to make an estimated list of threats for a respondent to work with.

A more efficient approach in this situation does not seem to be a compilation of an up-to-date list of exhaustive threats, but rather their conditional thematisation of a situational-instrumental and functional nature - it would help to accomplish a number of project tasks.

Our main focus is on the most common concepts of threats in different temporal contexts and social strata (or groups of people), mechanisms of formation, understanding and translation of threats in the public space and culture.

For contemporary Russia, it is possible to name three large conditional groups of threats, in the “gaps” between the sources and possible consequences of which one can try to identify a wide range of ideas and experiences associated with the phenomenon in question - security threats, threats to well-being, threats to identity.

Security threats that can be caused by wars, revolutions, crises, terrorism, crime, involvement in arms race, instability of the geopolitical situation, internal instability of a country, bad ecology, lack of quality medical care, abusive exercise of power, abuse of new information technologies, imperfection of legislative sphere, invasion of personal privacy etc.

Possible Impacts and Consequences: Threats to national security, threats of violence against a person (including informational violence), threats to health, threats of restriction of individual rights and freedoms, threats of aggravation of social conflicts - from work- to political ones, depopulation etc.

Threats to well-being are formed on the basis of different forms of inequality, on the global as well as on the national scale. We can name as such the gap between the so-called information capitalism and the rest of the world; technological apartheid; Russia's economic backwardness; catching-up development and late modernization; orientation of the country towards primary commodities; outdated technology; underfunding of science; uneven structure of science; loss of competitive ability of the country; shift in balance of stability and innovation; delay in answering new technological challenges; external economic pressure; criminalization of the economy and soaring corruption; bureaucratization; deformations and imbalances in the system of social relations (unfair distribution of goods, social and cultural inequality) etc.

Possible impacts and consequences: fall of living standards and conditions; lowering of comfort and stability level; unemployment; loss of previous social identity; loss of housing; bond breaking; political alienation, increasing suspicion and mistrust; increased social control over a person; restriction of the rights and freedoms of an individual; growth of political and social extremism; growth of aggression and intolerance, antisocial behavior, intolerance in interpersonal communication etc.

Threats to Identity are based on the contradiction between the global and the local, “engaged” use of information technologies (manipulation of public opinion, dissemination of intentionally false information, memorial wars, falsification of history); decrease in information literacy, general intellectual and cultural level of society; decline in the status and significance of the humanities; spread of free practice of sexual orientations etc.

Possible impacts and consequences: difficulties with self-definition; growth of nationalist, ethnic, religious movements; deformation and loss of personality; deformations of cultural and historical memory; destruction, erosion/loss of values, loss of habitual life- and value orientation; deformation of traditional patterns of behavior; destruction of the traditional family and crisis of sexual identity; archaization, primitivization; information overload; unauthorized use of information; “digital inequality” etc.

The problem of sociocultural threats existing in the public mind is considered within the framework of monitoring in the broadest context. This implies consideration of the entire spectrum of social threats that are reflected by society and perceived as real or potential risks and dangers for the wellbeing and development of society.

As in most studies conducted by leading sociological centers of the country, the Institute of Socio-Political Research monitoring “How do you live Russia?” operationalizes threats by means of such category as fear and anxiety. It helps to estimate the level of importance and significance of different kinds of threats throughout a long time span, and reveal their dynamics (see Table 1).

And here is the rating of the most significant threats according to the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences’s Monitoring. (see Table 2).

Let us consider the dynamics of how the Russian society perceives the relevance of certain threats within the groups identified earlier in accordance with our approach (threats to well-being, threats to security, threats to identity).

At the first stage of the formation of the Russian State in the post-Soviet transition period, the greatest concerns were caused by the economic problems. This, of course, was related to the intrinsic conditions of the economic crisis of the early 90s. The downfall of planned economy, the collapse of the market for goods and services, the reduction in production - all these factors accompanied by a catastrophic drop in income could not but affect the social well-being of the population and provoke the reproduction of the fears associated with real threats to the economic and social system in the public mind.

During the entire monitoring period the first place among the most bothering problems had been occupied by the anxiety regarding a possible rise of the cost of living, which is directly related to the threat to well-being. In different years, this alternative was chosen by 45 to 70% of respondents (see Chart 1).

High food prices, inflation, high cost of living in general and rising prices for housing and communal services - here are the factors causing anxiety for the vast majority of inhabitants of the Russian country who found themselves in an unfamiliar and unfavorable economic situation, faced with real problems of deterioration of the quality of their families’ lives.

An analysis of the respondents’ anxiety data shows that the downward dynamics of such indicators as the high cost of living, unemployment and rising food prices, which had been observed from the beginning of the zeros, has come to naught, and since 2013 this dynamics has been showing signs of uprise which reflects the social economic situation in the country associated with a slowdown of economic growth and falling living standards. On the other hand, the chart confirms a decrease in anxiety in terms of the indicator “salary- and pension benefits arrears” (see Chart 2).

That said, the top-ranking indicator throughout the entire monitoring period has been the high cost of living, while the second and third place were taken by the increase in tariffs for housing services and utilities and the increase in food prices, which are connected to the first one.

These indicators are quite high in 2019 which calls us to take a view at some of the essential socio-economic indicators that determine the social well-being of the people. One of these essential indicators is the cost of living - many social benefits are calculated on its basis. In 2019 it amounted to 10.753 rubles.

As estimated by the Federal State Statistics Service, in recent years the number of people living below the poverty line, i.e. those whose income is below the subsistence level, has increased significantly. Their number increased from 14.5 million at the end of 2017 to 20 million in 2019, which is about 13.6% of the population. And this is official statistics, which estimates the capabilities of the consumer basket quite optimistically.

If we consider the median salary in the Russian Federation (28 345 rubles), we will see that it amounts to 72.0% of an average salary. To date, the share of corporate employees with salaries below the subsistence level is about 7.3%. Every fifth employee earns less than 15.000 rubles a month (2018).

It is clear that against the background of rapid commercialization of healthcare system, education and culture, such incomes do not allow all citizens of the country to fully enjoy the most

Table 1 : Question: “What problems are the first to worry you?” (Russian Federation, % of respondents)

	High Cost of Living	Arbitrariness of officials	Increase in tariffs for housing services & utilities	Increase in food prices	Division of the society into the rich & the poor	Ecological environment	Unemployment	Fear of the future	Moral and cultural decadence	Personal and nearest and dearest's safety	Deprivation of pensioners in society	Terrorism	Industrial closure	Crime	Alcohol addiction	Drug addiction	High inflation	Aggravation of inter-ethnic conflicts	Economic sanctions against Russia	Salary- and pension benefits arrears	Deterioration of relations with the USA and Europe	Global Economic crisis
1992, VII	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	44	-	-	-	26	-	-	-	-
1993, XI	70	-	-	-	22	26	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	51	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
1994, II	58	-	-	-	20	34	24	-	-	-	-	-	32	50	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
1995, I	60	-	-	-	17	31	21	-	-	-	-	-	30	43	-	-	-	10	-	-	-	-
1995, XI	56	-	-	-	13	21	14	-	-	-	-	3	19	32	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
2001, XII	66	32	-	-	33	33	31	-	32	-	-	27	28	51	17	42	-	21	-	19	-	-
2002, XII	67	27	-	-	33	32	29	-	27	-	-	29	19	49	17	26	-	15	-	21	-	-
2003, X	60	29	44	-	23	33	25	-	25	31	-	31	16	44	18	32	-	8	-	11	-	-
2005, IX	60	29	46	-	23	29	22	-	26	33	-	26	14	32	20	29	-	10	-	9	-	-
2006, I	55	31	43	-	27	31	25	-	25	28	-	24	13	36	20	30	-	11	-	9	-	-
2006, VI	62	32	45	-	30	36	27	-	30	32	-	20	14	40	23	31	-	11	-	9	-	-
2007, I	58	32	46	-	27	37	22	-	29	29	-	17	14	36	25	31	-	11	-	7	-	-
2007, VII	50	29	39	-	26	42	21	-	33	28	-	21	10	41	28	34	-	10	-	7	-	-
2008, II	57	31	48	-	27	38	18	-	27	26	-	15	13	36	27	30	-	8	-	7	-	-
2008, VI	58	29	42	40	22	38	16	-	27	27	-	12	8	32	22	27	25	9	-	5	-	-
2008, XI	58	28	35	36	22	32	23	-	29	24	-	16	12	32	19	26	26	10	-	7	-	-
2009, VI	50	28	36	34	20	31	32	-	26	22	-	9	15	28	22	22	19	9	-	11	-	16
2009, XII	48	33	31	32	19	32	25	-	31	25	-	17	14	34	25	26	14	9	-	7	-	14
2010, VI	51	31	38	29	20	32	26	-	26	25	-	24	14	33	22	23	13	8	-	7	-	9
2010, XII	53	35	43	39	18	33	29	-	27	27	-	15	11	30	20	22	11	9	-	7	-	7
2011, VI	56	33	36	31	27	33	29	-	24	25	-	18	14	29	24	23	16	10	-	7	-	4
2011, XI	56	33	42	31	22	25	28	-	24	22	-	14	13	33	23	24	11	10	-	7	-	7
2012, IV	49	41	40	30	25	31	27	-	27	24	-	14	14	33	23	25	10	11	-	7	-	4
2012, XII	51	44	43	29	24	24	24	-	26	24	-	13	14	31	22	22	11	12	-	9	-	6
2013, VI	50	37	45	31	27	28	25	-	29	19	-	14	12	30	22	19	12	13	-	7	-	4
2013, XII	46	37	38	26	26	23	22	-	28	25	-	22	13	33	24	23	11	15	-	9	-	6
2014, VI	45	31	38	27	22	23	20	17	22	23	12	19	11	24	21	19	10	17	-	6	-	6
2014, XII	50	29	35	27	24	20	21	18	23	23	12	12	11	22	16	19	13	15	-	7	13	7
2015, VI	55	33	30	32	22	20	27	14	21	23	13	8	12	17	17	17	13	13	11	6	10	6
2015, XII	58	33	31	34	24	22	28	19	19	26	13	23	13	19	13	13	14	14	10	8	8	8
2016, VI	59	32	31	29	28	19	30	21	19	26	14	16	12	18	15	15	13	11	8	8	7	7
2016, XII	60	36	34	28	28	17	30	20	19	23	17	16	12	20	15	12	11	11	8	7	6	6
2017, V	65	41	34	33	29	20	27	20	21	19	14	25	11	22	16	11	10	8	7	7	7	3
2017, V	65	41	34	33	29	20	27	20	21	19	14	25	11	22	16	11	10	8	7	7	7	3
2018, V	62	35	26	24	32	31	23	20	17	18	16	16	12	15	15	11	10	12	19	6	17	6
2018, XII	54	33	32	26	29	30	25	25	20	21	20	16	12	14	15	9	12	11	12	9	9	4
2019, VI	57	35	35	33	32	31	22	20	20	19	19	16	15	14	13	11	9	9	8	7	7	4
Total	56	33	38	31	25	29	25	19	25	25	15	118	114	330	220	223	213	111	10	99	9	7

Note: (-) – no such position in the instrumentarium; the total exceeds 100% because the respondents could choose several answers.
Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Table 2

Rating of Threats based on the average yearly values (2001-2019)

	Fears and Anxieties	Aggregate % for all years
1	High cost of living	56
2	Increase in tariffs for housing services and utilities	38
3	Arbitrariness of officials	33
4	Increase in food prices	31 (from 24 to 40)
5	Crime	30
6	Ecological environment	29
7	Division of society into the rich in the poor	25
8	Cultural decadence	25
9	Unemployment	25
10	Personal and nearest and dearest's safety	25
11	Drug addiction	23
12	Alcohol addiction	20
13	Fear of the future	19
14	Terrorism	18
15	Deprivation of pensioners in the society	15
16	Industrial closure	14
17	High inflation	13
18	Aggravation of inter-ethnic relations	11
19	Economical sanctions against Russia	10
20	Salary- and pension benefits arrears	9
21	Deterioration of relations with the USA and Europe	9
22	Global economical crisis	7

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

important social guarantees. The majority of experts acknowledge that in course of reforms the potential of Russia's social capital has decreased. Its quality is an order of magnitude lower than it was 20 years ago.

If we take a look at the people's self-assessment of their monetary income (see Chart 3), we will see that the group of respondents who consider themselves to be "resource-constrained" is steadily growing. Also, the growth of the "poor" is accompanied by a decrease in the share of "resource-constrained", which indicates that people are constantly shifting between these two categories. (Chart 3).

Let us also consider the wealthy group that had lived a certain growth in the first decade of the 21st century, which then turned to stagnation, and after 2012, the share of this group decreased.

If we look at objective figures, the income polarization of the society has become threatening and continues to grow, despite the fact that the government claims that the economy has stabilized and is even growing.

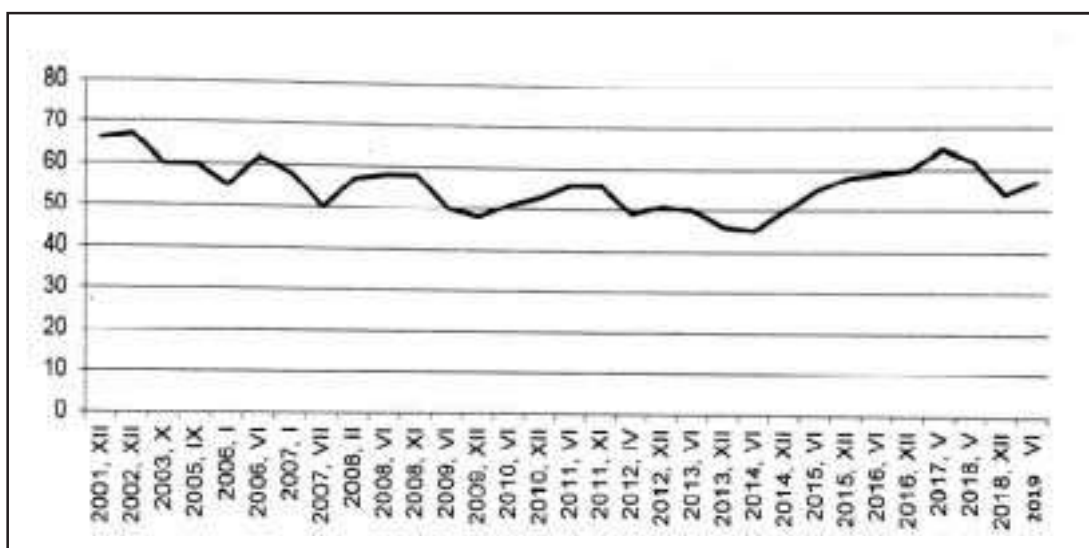
The presence of a huge and non-decreasing mass of poor citizens who constitute the majority of the population allows us to talk about stagnating poverty. Many Russian researchers have written about it in recent years. But the measures recently taken by the state have not solved the problem and seem rather ornamental. Any increase in scholarships and retirement benefits is instantly consumed by inflation, and the growth of public sector salaries is artificially slowed down. As a matter of fact, even in favorable market conditions, the average retirement benefit in the Russian Federation had not exceeded the cost of living up until recent years.

To find themselves in the most difficult situation are not only the people with disabilities and pensioners, but also working citizens who constitute the so-called groups of «the working poor». They enter into the category that we call the economically active part of the population. Since 2009, the minimum wage has come close to the cost of living. It has grown from 2.300 to 4.330 rubles a month, while the national average cost of living is 5.198 rubles.

There is no need to speak in detail about the fact that the cost of living in Russia is underestimated and is based on the monetary evaluation of the consumer basket and mandatory payments and fees, i.e. based on long-outdated criteria. The composition of the consumer basket causes perplexion. From time to time journalists make reports with an attempt to purchase a daily or a weekly diet with the sum of the consumer basket or wonder why it is proposed to use the public transport as follows: 2 trips on weekdays, 1 trip on weekends (apparently, one should make the return trip on foot), or why the retired should not travel more often than once every five days.

As we have already mentioned above, the cost of living in Russia amounts today to 10.753 rubles². Let us remind that the entire civilized world, or at least the countries with comparable GDP per capita, use a system of minimum social standards, which implies expenses not only for housing and communal services, but also for treatment, education, leisure, books, theaters, museums, etc. If during the years preceding the crisis the number of the poor (i.e. those whose income is below the subsistence level) had been gradually decreasing, then during the crisis the reverse process

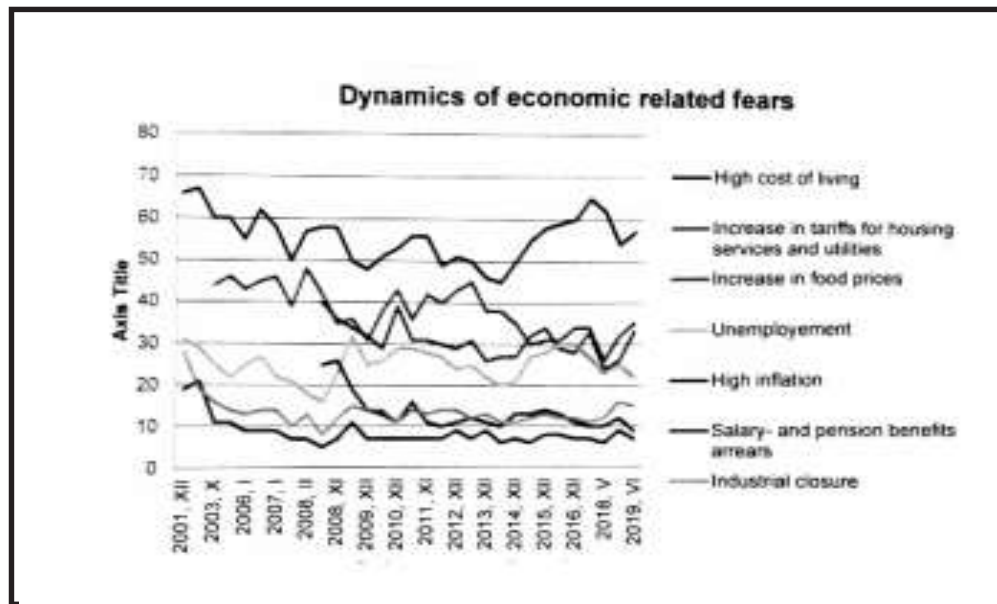
Chart 1: High Cost of Living



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

took place. According to the Federal State Statistic Service's estimates (i.e. based on the cost of living), the number of the poor amounts to more than 20 million people.

Chart 2: Dynamics of Economic related fears



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

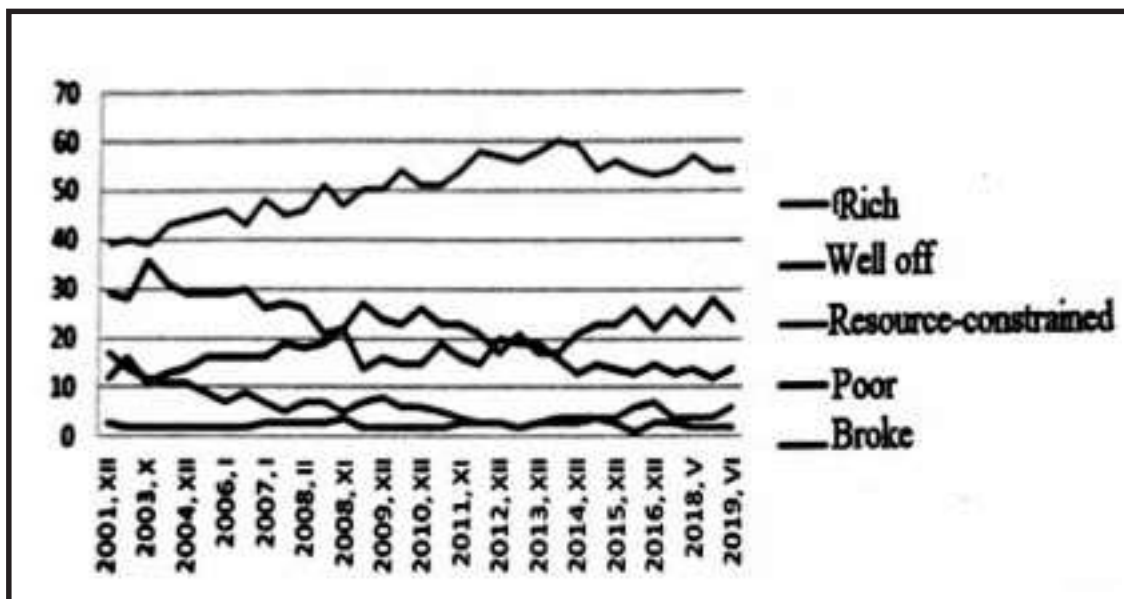
It is clear that the real poverty rate is much higher. More than half of the poor - 59.4% - are working citizens. Every fifth employee earns less than 15,000 rubles per month (2018). Given the level of inflation and rising prices for many services, this increase does not reduce poverty. Our level of salaries is 8-10 times behind economically developed countries. Moreover, the focus on the minimum salary inhibits the development of the labor market.

It can be said that for Russia one of the most acute problems for the past 30 years has been income differentiation which came as a result of shock liberalization. Despite the fact that the poverty rate calculated according to the national methodology has decreased by about 2 times, the high-income segments of the population were the ones to benefit the most from economic growth. This is confirmed by the growth of the Gini index. After the transition to a market mechanism of economic regulation it amounted to 0.498. The society became highly stratified: appeared such classes as the rich and the poor, which is reflected in the actualization of the corresponding anxiety in the late 90s. Later, the Gini index went slightly down (in 2010 it was 0.414) and the data from the early 2018 claims it was 0.417³.

The average salary of 10% of the most highly-paid employees was 14.1 times higher than that of 10% of the low-paid workers.

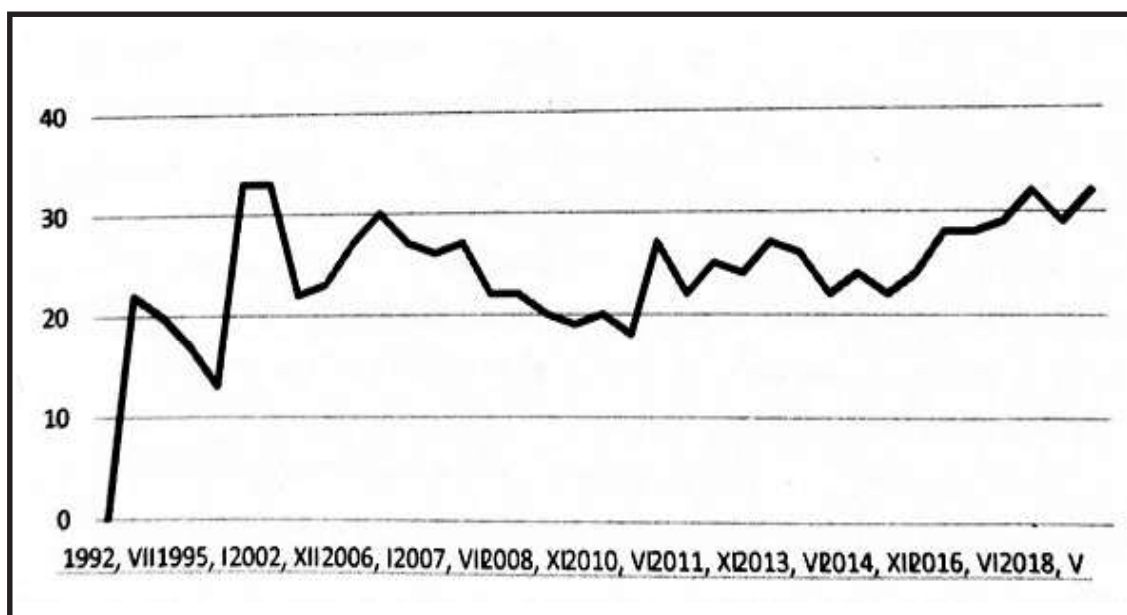
At the same time, the estimated ratio of the average income of the richest 10% to the poorest 10% (R/P 10% ratio) in Russia amounts to 16 times⁴. And, from the perspective of independent experts, the decile ratio in Russia exceeds 20 times. The growth of social inequality

Chart 3: People's Self-assessment of their Financial Situation



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 4: Division of Society into the Rich and the Poor



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

affects the public opinion, that traditionally considers the stratification of the society as a threat, which began to grow over the recent years (See Chart 4).

Furthermore, the data from other researches using a different list of possible threats and risks also shows a significant concern regarding the degradation of the social security system. This comes in addition to the above-mentioned decline in pensioners' incomes, and a poor healthcare system, the absence of the possibility to receive medical care, the lack of efficient support for people with disabilities, retired citizens, multi-child families, the absence of the possibility to improve one's housing conditions etc. With the inclusion in the list of alternatives of the positions associated with the degradation of the social sphere, these problems occupy the second place after the group of threats connected with the deterioration of the families' financial situation (see Table 3).

Table 3
Which recent events and processes in Russia make you most anxious?
(select max 5 options)

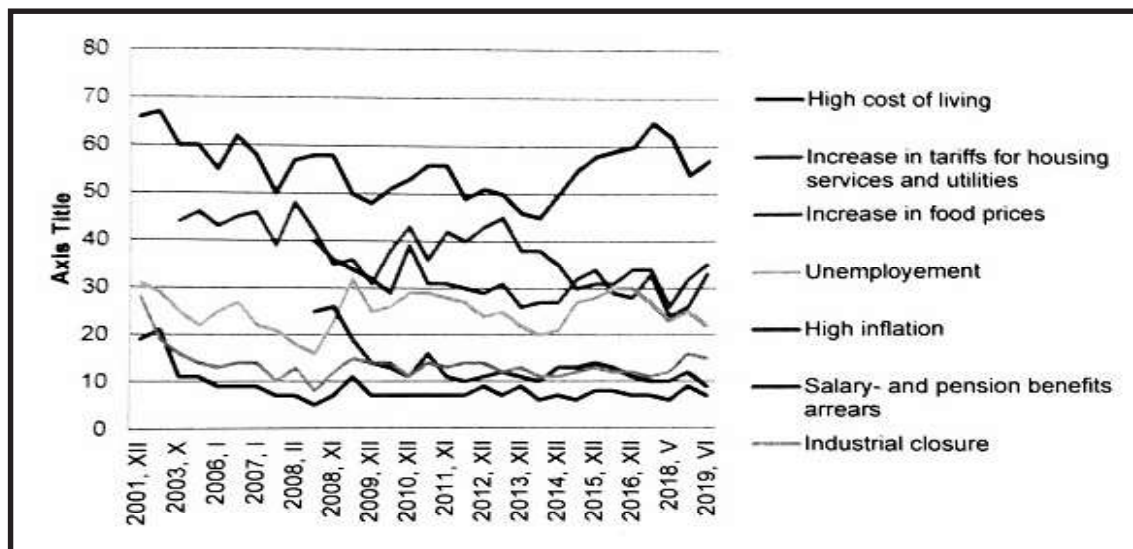
Sociocultural Threats	%
Goods- and services price increase	55,6
Fall of living standards for a significant part of population	48,5
Crisis of housing and utilities services, inability to improve housing conditions	47,1
Retirement-age increase	38,6
Lack of possibility to receive qualified medical aid	28,1
Reduction of access to free education	25,1
Unemployment	21,4
High level of corruption, strangle of bureaucracy	21,1
Drug- and alcohol addiction	18,4
Demographic crisis in Russia, population decrease	13,4
Environmental deterioration	13,4
Migratory influx, decrease of indigenous population	11,7
Moral decadence	9,9
Increase in crime	7,1
Restriction of political rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech	6,6
Possibility of terrorist attacks	5,4
Cooling in relations between Russia and the Western world	4,3
Preservation of tension	3,8
Loss of national culture	3,4
Spread of political and religious extremism	1,3
Total	100,0
Other	1,5
Cannot say	0,9

Source: Faculty of Sociology, RSUH, research “Sociocultural threats and risk”, 2019⁵ (see Table 2)

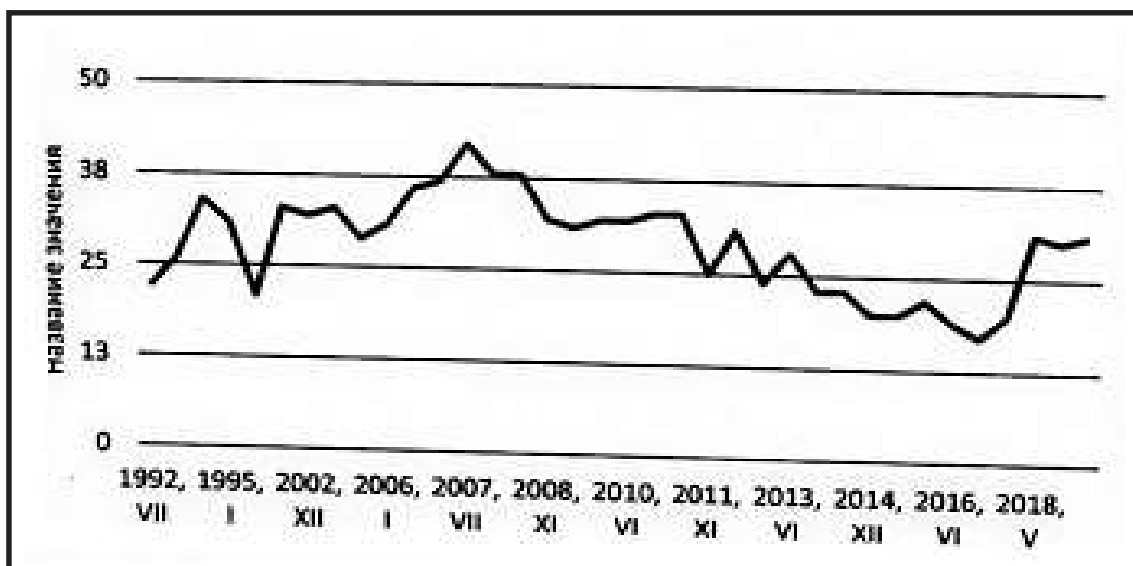
Problems of national and social security

As for the group of fears associated with security threats, it seems logical enough to divide them into threats of an internal nature, also determined by lifestyle and social practices, and security threats determined by global natural, socio-economic and socio-political processes.

If, for instance, anxieties regarding crime, alcoholism and drug addiction showed a downward trend, then fears regarding terrorism become actual at certain points of the time series, which are also largely determined by the line of current events and the agenda set by the media.

Chart 5: Dynamics of life and Safety related Fears

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 6: Dynamics of Environment related anxiety

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Let us not forget that for many years crime had occupied a leading position in the group of fears connected with security, but after 2014 it gave place to a rather broad definition “personal and nearest-and-dearest’s safety” which suggests that the danger is seen as a probability of suffering not only from the criminals, but also from other sources of danger that pose threat to safety. (Chart 5).

Certain groups of threats in the modern society are connected to the ecological risks. In the zeros, despite a relative economical pick-up and delivery of a range of international accords in the sphere of ecological safety, the ecological modernization was never activated. The investments in the capital stock, directed to the protection of the environment and rational use of natural resources, were erratic and insufficient (Veber 2015). At the moment, the civil society remains the main newsmaker in the subject of the ecology in Russia.

According to the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences’s Monitoring, the significance of these threats once again tends to grow in the past 3 years. It makes one remember the numerous scandals about construction of waste recycling plants, transferal of garbage dumps, placement of chemical- and nuclear waste dumps in different subjects of the Russian Federation that have caused significant civic protest.

Speaking of external threats to the security and integrity of the country, their value does not exceed 20%, which confirms the idea that in a stable society (with no military operations or presence of real conflicts) people consider threats to their own well-being and security as the most significant.

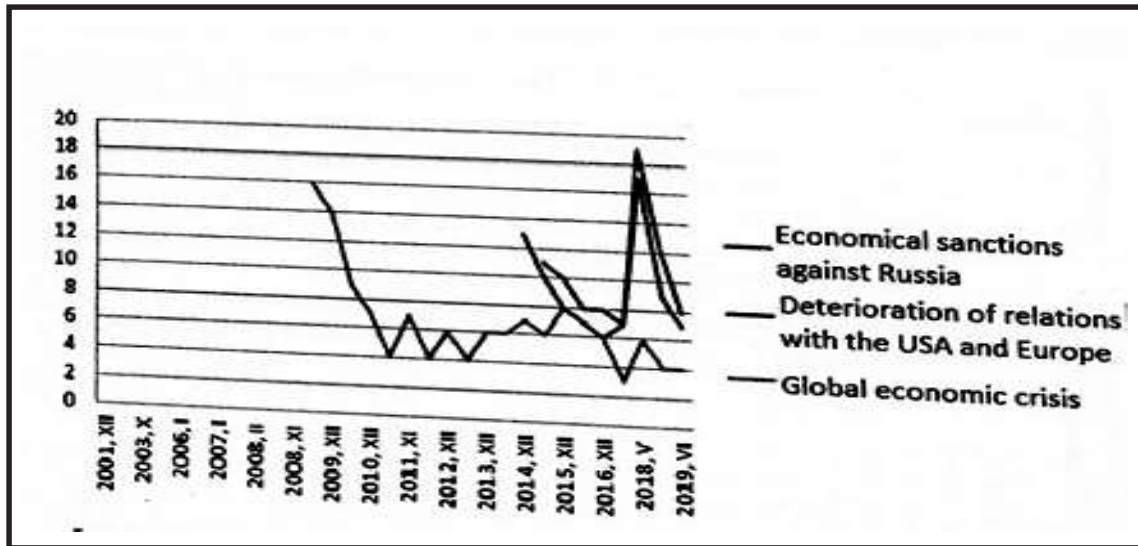
It is obvious that the significance of these factors has grown after the annexation of Crimea and the ensuing deterioration in relations with European countries and imposition of economic sanctions, which affected both the inflation rate and personal incomes, and was also reflected in the agenda of domestic mass-media. It could not but have an impact on public opinion.

That said, the experts see this kind of threats as very negative, considering Russia’s reducing perspectives in the globalizing processes. It is evident that even if it is not an isolation course chosen by the Russian government, then these are isolation conditions imposed from outside. And it is a grave risk that can become a threat to the Russian society.

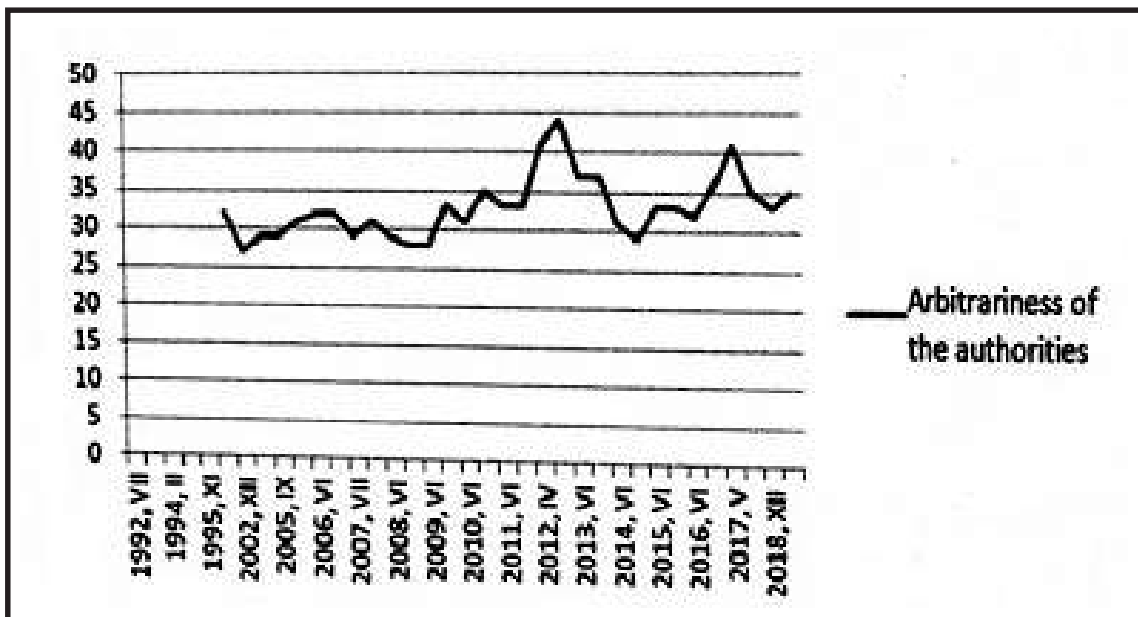
Despite the favorable market conditions for natural resources and the active exploitation of production fields, there were almost no investments in the development of the industrial sector and in the stimulation of innovative industries. Russia’s backward economy in its current form does not have a significant internal resource for growth. Despite the task of doubling GDP before 2010, during the first decade of the 21st century the country’s economy grew by 59.2%, while China, Kazakhstan and Belarus over the same decade showed GDP growth of 262.1%, 221% and 202.7% respectively. Even if the outflow of capital from Russia over the past ten years is decreasing, it still does not reach the dimensions predicted by the Ministry of Finance. The investment climate is not getting better, the growth of political and economic risks is mainly associated with an inefficient tax system, the lack of competition in the markets and an extremely elevated level of corruption as well as with the singularities of the political regime. Let us add that in this sense people consider the high level of corruption and arbitrariness of the authorities as a rather serious threat to social development. (Chart 8).

According to our research dedicated specifically to sociocultural threats, high level of corruption and arbitrariness of the authorities are quite relevant for every fifth respondent (See above Chart 2). Moreover, the choice of this option is connected with the choice of «restriction of political rights and freedoms» by 6.6% of respondents.

It is logical that citizens do not appreciate the efforts of the state in terms of implementing economic policy and believe that the current policy meets the interests of the majority of the population only to a small extent (See Chart 9).

Chart 7: External Threats to Economic well-being

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 8: Arbitrariness of the Authorities

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

According to the estimates of the HSE Centre of Development, the economic growth slowed down. It was accompanied by decrease of investments and cooling-off in consumer demand (Mironov, Kuznetsov, 2019), which permits to expect further downgrade of the government.

Threats to Identity

Threats to identity are determined to the maximum extent by the sociocultural processes of the modern society. In this context, sociocultural discourse calls attention, firstly, to the problems of preserving civic, state and ethnic identity, ethnic and religious affiliation, ethnocultural differentiation and ethnocultural segregation that leads to formation of ethnic enclaves that create micro-territories of stagnant poverty. Secondly, the fuzzification of national identity is often associated with the borrowing and adaptation of the values and social practices of other cultures, which is expressed in such concepts as westernization, MacDonaldization etc.

The efforts of the state to form an identity common to all Russian citizens and to overcome ethnic nationalism have been rather efficient, even though they were not always of a purely humanitarian nature. We agree with a number of scholars who believe that this macro-identity is formed naturally (albeit with an additional effort of the elites) as a loyalty to the state and its institutions, and that this identity has a strong component of historical memory. However, ethnic identity continues to remain relevant, which is also manifested in the high ethnic and ethno-territorial identity of the Russians. It must be emphasized that the ethnic identity does not always promote or ensure national-civil consolidation. Moreover, there is still a request for the so-called «ethnic certainty». In 2015 there was a wide discussion in the media and in the government about the necessity and possibility of returning the “nationality” graph to the passport of a citizen of the Russian Federation. This bill was submitted to the State Duma, and although it aimed to protect small nations from identity loss, many regarded it as discriminating.

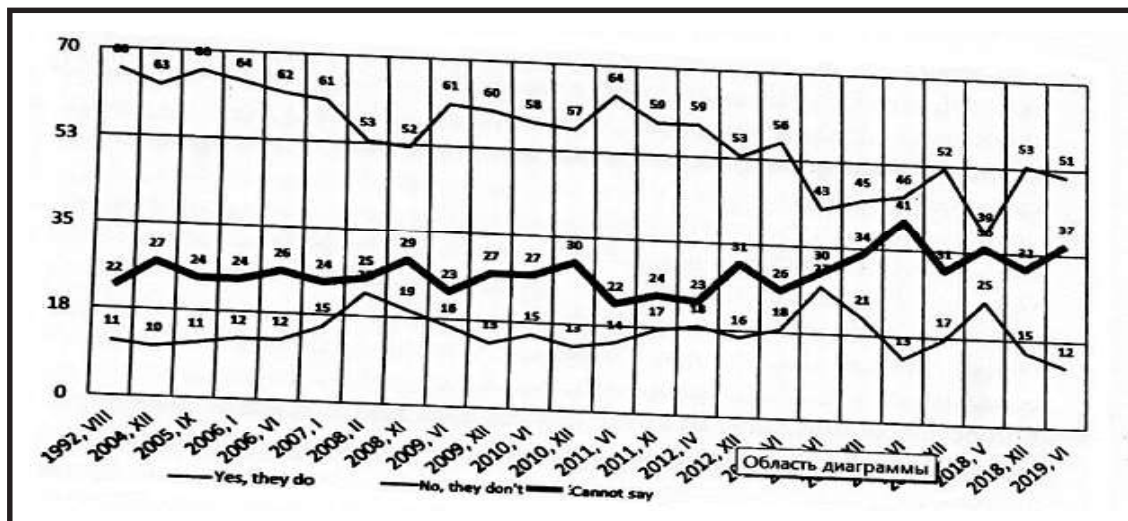
Global experience shows that democracy, especially budding one, does not always cope with the rise of ethnophobia. Moreover, the events that take place in a number of European countries allow us to say that conflicts based on ethnic hostility, extremism and similar can relegate other social problems to the background, and that such agenda also changes the political framework, adding to it right-wing and nationalist parties.

The influx of a large number of people belonging to other cultures considerably worries those who live in Russia and is perceived as a significant threat to national security in a large number of contexts. Even without these migration flows, Russia is a very vulnerable community in terms of sustainability, where regional, territorial, ethnic, religious and state-civil self-identification of its citizens have to communicate and interact. In the 90s the majority of Russian residents considered the regional and ethnic components of identity as the most important, while the state-civil, nation-forming component was seen as less significant. In the early 2000s the priority of an all-Russian identity began to take shape. Obviously, for migrants living in a borderline-marginal life situation, ethnic national self-identification is dominant, and that inevitably provokes numerous contradictions with the indigenous people often degenerating into conflicts.

That is why, according to the respondents, in a rather wide range of socio-political risks and threats there are always contradictions and hostility between different ethnics (see Chart 10).

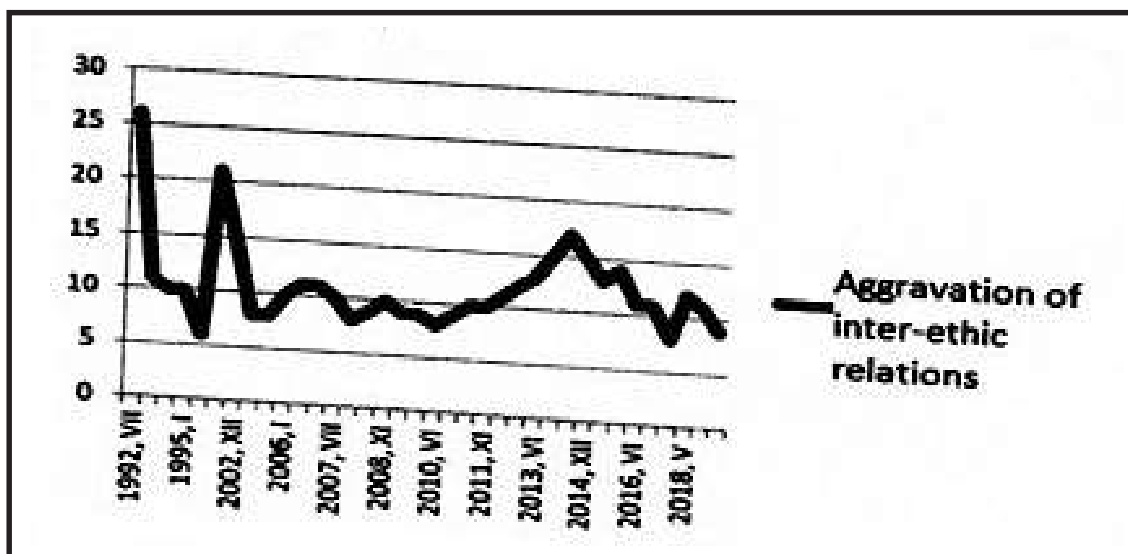
Even though contradictions of a merely economic nature («between the poor and the rich» (79%) and «between lower and upper classes» (71%) are traditionally the most sensible matter, the contradictions and hostility expressed by «people of different nationalities» are relevant for 41% of respondents, «between believers of different religions» for 36% of respondents (according to the all-Russian sample). Obviously, the problem is more relevant in the regions with fast-growing migration.

Chart 9: The respondents' opinion on whether or not the conducted economic reforms meet the interests of the majority of Russian citizens (Russian Federation, % of respondents)



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 10: Aggravation of inter-ethnic relations



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

That said, it is true that over the past two years, assessments regarding the existence of significant contradictions «between people of different nationalities», «between people of different religions», «believers and non-believers» have stabilized to a certain degree. (See chart 11)

In current sociocultural studies religion and confession are seen as one of the factors of ethnic and cultural identity. Religion in Russia, as in most developed countries, is no longer an ultimate source of absolute values. Since the 1990s there is a significant growth of number of people who assume to practice a religion. Despite that, religion does not determine their consciousness and behavior in everyday life. It is no coincidence that presently the researchers of religiosity speak rather of a post-secular society, where the growth of confessional diversity does not lead to a consensus searching, but to attempts to defend and maintain one's identity and to become somehow integrated into various social and political practices, which is not extrinsic to a secular society (see Chart 12).

The full dynamics of self-identification of the respondents' religious affiliation is shown in Chart 11. The distribution of answers remained in line with the trend that has taken shape in recent years: the number of non-believers is reduced (to 16%), the number of those who consider themselves to be Orthodox (66%) is growing, but the number of those who practice Islam remains practically the same and ranges from 4 to 7% in the total sample. Moreover, the significance of the contradictions between believers and non-believers is estimated to be much lesser than the significance of contradictions between people of different nationalities.

It can be said that in recent years there have been rather heated conflicts and clashes between indigenous people and migrants. Let us not forget about the events in Krasnoarmeysk (Saratov Region, 2007), Kondopoga (Karelia, 2006), Khotkovo (Moscow Region, 2010), Moscow Region (2018) and Yakutia (2019). The authorities usually begin to mediate such conflicts with a delay due to the lack of social tension monitoring and efficient mechanisms for managing such situations.

As previously stated, another group of threats to identity is connected with the cultural sphere itself. And here it can be said that the Russian identity as opposed to the Russian Federation identity basically determines itself not through ethnic self-determination, but through «blood», «language» and «culture». That is exactly why the problems in the cultural sphere are considered by our citizens as threats to identity.

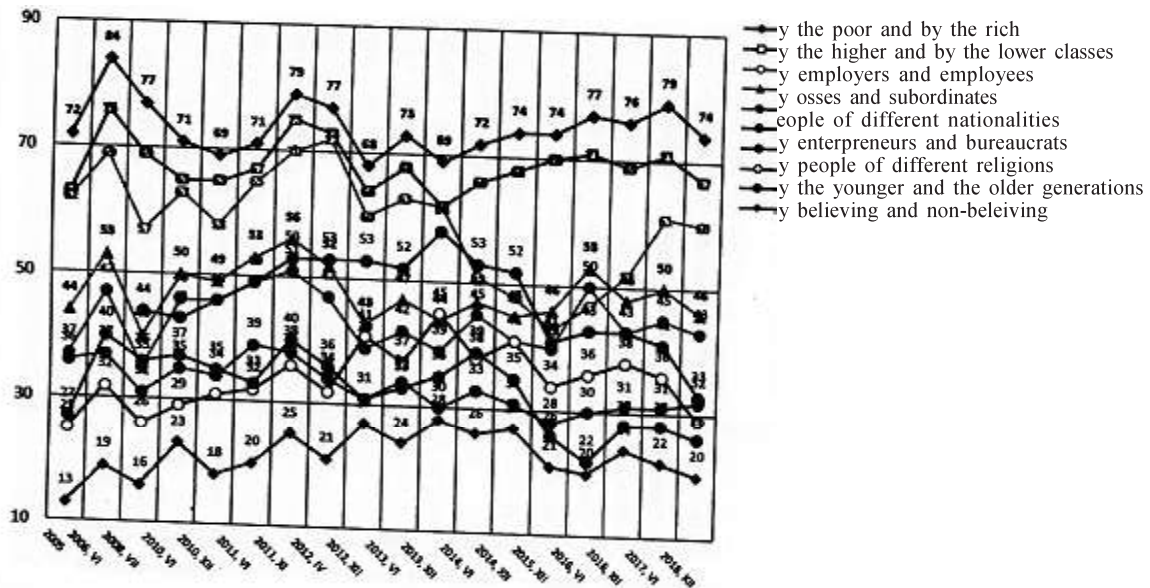
More than a half of the respondents believe that the culture of Russia is degrading, losing its national identity, propagating hedonism, violence and success at all costs (see Table 4).

These indicators are associated with such marker as active instillment of the Western lifestyle at the expense of the national culture: more than 41% of respondents believe that such phenomena are highly typical for the Russian society. The degradation of the local language (46%), the destruction of cultural monuments (37%), and the low availability of cultural institutions (29%) are perceived with a certain degree of anxiety.

One should also take note of the fact that the problems of cultural development have been almost ousted out of political discourse, and the approach that considers the cultural sphere of society as secondary continues to dominate the management of cultural processes. It has led to consolidation of the residual principle of financing culture and to the degradation of the cultural sphere, primarily in risk zones - first of all, in small and medium-sized cities of Russia and in rural areas.

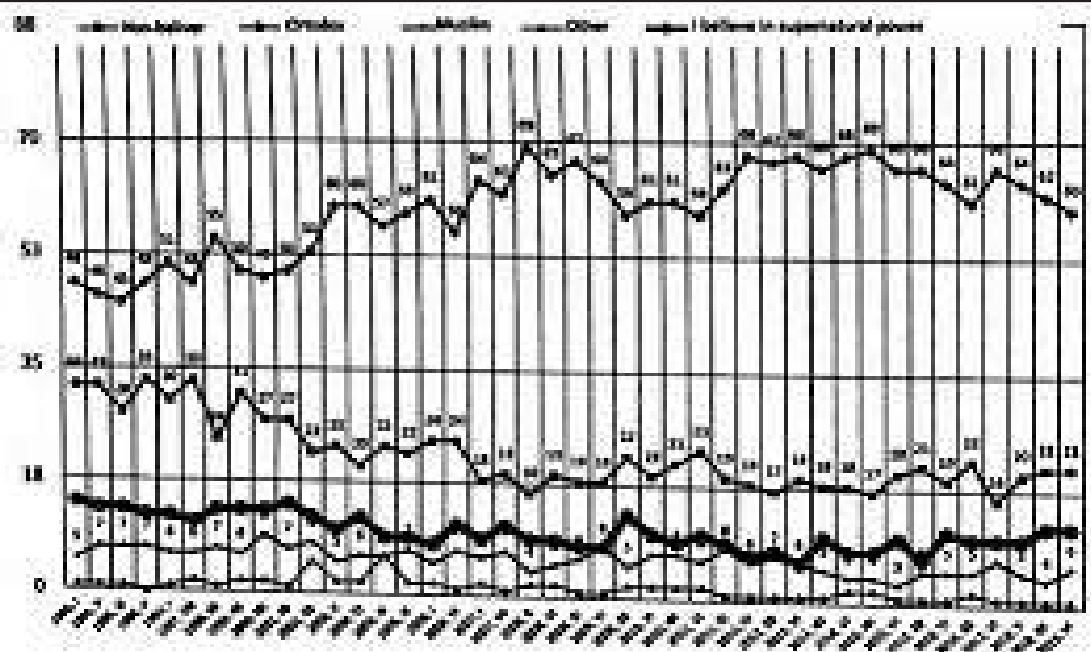
Speaking of the singularities of the perception of threats by various socio-demographic groups, we can say that there is a certain age difference. Here is what the situation looks like if we mark two enlarged groups, conditionally called young (under 30) and mature people (over 30) (See table 4).

Chart 11: Dynamics of Economic related fears

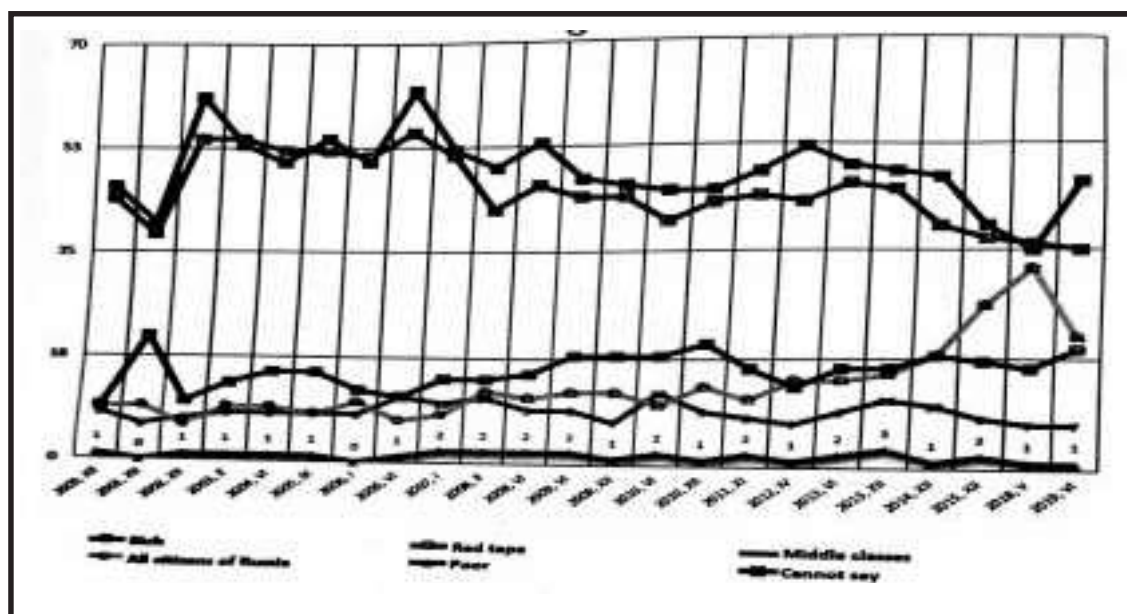


Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 12: Dynamics of Economic related fears



Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

Chart 12: Dynamics of Economic related fears

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political Studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

There is a completely predictable gap in the assessment of such indicators as unemployment, arbitrariness of the authorities, fear of the future, deterioration of relations with Western countries, environmental conditions. They cause more concern among young people, while the high cost of living, the increase in tariffs and the deprivation of pensioners in society worry mostly the elders.

The answers in terms of the stratification of society into the rich and the poor, higher food prices, economic sanctions against Russia, terrorism, drug addiction and alcoholism were quite similar for people of different ages (see table 5).

The analysis of the dynamics since 2001 allows us to rank the significance of different factors for different age groups in 2001, 2008, 2018.

Thus, in the age group up to 30 years, the first place, as in other age group, was occupied by the high cost of living. In the beginning of the zeros, the second place was occupied by crime, the third - by drug addiction, and then - by unemployment and economic situation. In 2008, after the law-enforcement authorities made significant efforts to stabilize the situation in society and combat criminogenic factors, the crime category came down to the 5th place, and in 2018, it generally did not reach the top five significant threat-factors.

In 2008 and in 2018 the environmental situation took the second place between the threats considered important by young people, while unemployment (35.2%) occupied the third place in 2018, which perfectly illustrates the objective data on a slowdown in economic growth and growing problems in the economic sphere. Against the background of numerous corruption scandals and anti-corruption investigations, the emergence (or awareness) of such threat as the arbitrariness of officials in 2018 (the fourth place) and the division of society into the rich and the poor did not come

as a surprise. It confirms the fact that young people more and more often see the modern society as unjust.

Table 4
Which statements regarding the problems in the cultural development of our country formed in the past 25 years do you agree with?

Statement	Response	Percentage
The Russian culture has degraded in the past 25 years, all its best achievements are left in the past	I rather agree	51,7
	I rather disagree	48,3
The Russian culture is losing its national identity under the pressure of the Western mass culture	I rather agree	58,2
	I rather disagree	41,8
Now we have two cultures - one for the rich, another for the poor	I rather agree	58,6
	I rather disagree	41,4
Modern art and culture promulgate selfishness, hedonism, success at any costs, violence, sex and vulgarity	I rather agree	62,1
	I rather disagree	37,9

Source: Faculty of Sociology, RSUH, research «Sociocultural threats and risk», 2019⁶ (see Table 2)⁷ ..

The group of 30-39 years old, which mainly includes working people who have families and children, presents a different view of social phenomena that cause concern. The first place is taken by the high cost of living, the second, in 2001, 2008 and 2018 respectively, was occupied by drug addiction, increase in food prices and the arbitrariness of the authorities, the third place - by the environmental situation and an increase in prices for housing and communal services, and the fourth - by the arbitrariness of the authorities, inflation, security. The fifth place is taken by the division of society into the rich and poor and increase in tariffs.

The group of 40-49 years old continues to see the threats to well-being as most significant. For people of this group the forefront is occupied by the high cost of living, high food prices and prices for housing and communal services, crime and the arbitrariness of officials.

The older age groups (pre-retirement and retirement age), in addition to the anxiety regarding the «high cost of living», common to all Russians, worry about the «deprivation of pensioners in society», and also about crime (2001, 2008) and division of society into the rich and the poor (2001, 2018).

Education constitutes another important basis for differentiation. This factor shows significant differences in terms of «environmental situation» and «moral and cultural decadence». Among the respondents with higher and incomplete higher education, these threats are always present in the top five, in other groups they are present either just once or completely absent. Moreover, the unemployment, in contrast to groups with secondary or incomplete secondary education, is not among the top five most relevant threats for the respondents with higher and incomplete higher education (see Table 5).

Table 5: Risks (Problems) and Age group

Problems/RISKS	Young people (under 30)	Over 30
High cost of living	55	64
Arbitrariness of the authorities, corruption	41	33
Ecological environment	34	30
Division of the society into the rich and the poor	32	32
Unemployment	27	22
Fear of the future	25	19
Increase in food prices	23	24
Personal and nearest and dearest's safety	22	17
Deterioration of relations with the USA and Europe	22	16
Moral decadence	22	16
Economical sanctions against Russia	20	19
Drug addiction	16	10
Increase in tariffs for housing services and utilities	16	29
Terrorism	16	17
Alcohol addiction	15	15
Aggravation of international relations	15	11
Crime	13	15
High inflation	10	10
Industrial closure	9	13
Salary- and pension benefits arrears	6	6
Global economic crisis	6	6
Deprivation of pensioners in the society	4	20

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

The place of residence has a significant impact on the assessment of risks and threats. It is quite natural that, because the place of residence is connected with education, the environmental situation is always included in the top five and shows a tendency to increase. The concern about the high crime rate, rising food- and housing services prices is even more significant.

Obviously, these threats are insignificant for residents of rural areas who have personal subsidiary plots. For people of this group such threats as unemployment and growth of social inequality are more relevant.

One should not forget that low incomes have firmly established themselves as concomitant to residence in rural areas. The vast majority of the poor live in the rural communities (1 out of 4 rural residents).

Table 6: Poverty

	Total	City	Rural area
Poverty - absolute	13.0	8.2	26.7
Poverty - relative (per capita income 60% lower than the medium distribution income)	21.3	14.7	40.5

Source: Federal State Statistic Service

However, we shall once again point up that for all socio-demographic groups, threats to well-being reflected in such indicators as «high cost of living», «increase in prices» and «increase in housing and communal services tariffs» remain the most relevant.

The dynamics of perception of various threats throughout the entire period of the study also calls attention. One can see that over the past 15 years fears regarding threats associated with deviant behavior (alcohol addiction, drug addiction, unemployment) have decreased significantly.

With a steadily high level of threat to well-being, in recent years there has been a slight increase in anxiety caused by high cost of living. The relevance of increase in food prices and increase in housing and communal tariffs practically does not decrease, which, of course, has a negative impact on the general assessment of the actions of the authorities.

The fear of the future, the threat of arbitrariness of officials and division of society into the rich and the poor, on the contrary, have intensified.

This helps to understand a rather skeptical assessments of the actions of the Russian authorities. The society firmly believes that the state is a strange hostile institution with its own goals, and that the interests of citizens and people are not its priority (Chart13).

Correlation analysis helps to show how some types of threats are conjugated with others. Thus, an increase in the high cost of living indicator is accompanied by an increase in anxiety about division of society into the rich and the poor and fears of the future. At the same time, it reduces concerns about the increase in crime, drug addiction and alcohol addiction.

The increase in the indicator of fear of the future is accompanied by an increase in anxiety about the environmental situation and the division of society into the rich and the poor.

A high level of fears connected to a decline in the level of culture in society is associated with high rates regarding the presence of alcohol addiction, drug addiction and crime in the society. Let us consider the rating of dominant anxieties at different time points defined in the objectives of the research project - 1998, 2003, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2019.

In this table were included only the indicators chosen by at least 20% of respondents (Table 7).

Thus, the respondents see threats related to well-being, manifested in the lack of funds to ensure an acceptable standard of living, as the most significant. Threats of this range are among

the top ten relevant threats - high cost of living, unemployment, increase in food and housing prices.

The security-related threats occupy the second place - high level of crime, arbitrariness of the authorities and environmental situation.

The threats to the sociocultural order, associated with the level of consensus of the society and with problems of justice, occupy the third place - division of society into the rich and the poor, moral and cultural decadence.

Table 7: The Rating of Dominant Anxiety

Dominant Anxiety	2003	2008	2012	2015	2019
High cost of living	1	1	1	1	1
Increase in tariffs for housing	-	2	3	4	2
Arbitrariness of the authorities	-	7	2	2	2
Increase in food prices	2	3		3	3
Crime	2	5	4	-	-
Ecological environment	-	4	5		5
Division of the society into the rich and the poor	-	-	-	7	4
Moral and cultural decadence	-	-	7	-	7
Unemployment			6	5	6
Personal and nearest and dearest's safety	-	-	-	6	-
Drug addiction	3	6	-	-	-
Alcohol addiction	-	-	-	-	-
Fear of the future	-	-	-	-	7
Terrorism	4	-	-	-	-

Source: Centre of Strategic Social and Political studies. Institute of Socio-Political Research of Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS).

The presence of a wide range of threats that lower the socio-psychological well-being of the population is a serious barrier to the modernization of Russian society and state. Traditions and tendencies of domestic development show that in Russia the government has always acted as the main initiator and subject of reforms. Right now, decades after the democratic transition, there is a potential possibility to involve civil society in the process of development of the most important political decisions, which will legitimize the reforms, expand the range of modernization subjects and provide support to the reforms on behalf of the Russian citizens.

It is necessary not only to rethink the results of the reforms of the zeros, but also to elaborate a program that will transfer Russia to the innovative track of development and help it enter the group of dynamically developing countries.

In this context, it makes sense to consider modernization as «a political project that has an ideological dimension, and not a product of a «natural» development of the system» (Diskin, 2010), which will enable the activation of «new social groups» adapted to the market economy and capable of intense economic activity.

Involving people in modernization processes and making the project of modernization clear to every citizen of the country means getting additional chances to make the people not just the main ally, but an active and conscious participant of modernization processes. It will not be easy to overcome the apathy, mistrust in the authorities and disappointment in the ongoing reforms. It is no exaggeration to say that people need a powerful ideological and spiritual impulse that will once again inspire the faith in its historical strength. But this ideological impulse should not be based on utopia, improbable projects, or appeal to successes and victories of the past, but on a real assessment of the capabilities of our country and society.

End Notes

¹ Chelovek i innovatsii. Doklad o chelovecheskom razvitii v RF (2016) [A man and the innovations. A report about the development of people in the Russian Federation] - Analytical centre for the Government of the Russian Federation. p. 11 // <http://ac.gov.ru/files/publication/a/19663.pdf>

² The decree of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of July 2, 2019 № 461-í «On establishing the subsistence level per capita for the main socio-demographic groups of the population as a whole for the Russian Federation for the I quarter of 2019"// Online resource. Informational and legal portal GARANT/ <http://www.garant.ru/hotlaw/federal/1283954/>

³ THE WORLD BANK's official site. Access mode <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?end=2015&locations=RU&start=2000&view=chart>

⁴ The Federal State Statistic Service's official site. Access mode http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/urov/urov_32kv.htm

⁵ Chelovek i innovatsii. Doklad o chelovecheskom razvitii v RF (2016) [A man and the innovations. A report about the development of people in the Russian Federation] - Analytical centre for the Government of the Russian Federation. p. 11 // <http://ac.gov.ru/files/publication/a/19663.pdf>

⁶ Faculty of Sociology, RSUH, research «Sociocultural threats and risk», 2019

⁷ The research was funded by the RFS project '17-78-30029 «Cognitive mechanisms and discursive strategies of overcoming sociocultural threats in the historical dynamics: a multidisciplinary research».

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