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## **The Political Values of the State and Private Sectors of the Russian Middle Class**

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### **Abstract**

This article provides an analysis of the political values of the Russian middle class. In contrast to those scholars who have viewed the middle classes as bastions of liberal democracy, we demonstrate that most members support the regime, and favor statist over liberal values. However, the study also demonstrates that the middle class is not a homogeneous and cohesive body. A crucial divide here is between those members who depend on the state for their livelihood and those who work in the private sectors of the economy, and there are also important generational differences. The study also compares the values of the middle class with those of the general population.

## Introduction

This article provides an analysis of the political values the Russian middle class over the period 2014-18.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to those scholars who have viewed the middle classes as bastions of liberal democracy<sup>2</sup>, our study demonstrates, that in the current Russian climate, most members of the middle class support the regime, and favor statist over liberal values. Over the period of our study there has been a narrowing of the differences between the members of the middle class and the other population. However, the study also demonstrates that the middle class is not a homogeneous and cohesive body. One of the crucial divides here, is between those members who depend on the state for their livelihood and those who work in the private sectors of the economy, and there are also important generational differences. Younger members, particularly below the age of 30, in all sectors of the middle class, and in the general population, express more support for liberal than statist values.

Our findings also show, that over the period of our study, there were important shifts in the political values of the general population, which are also reflected in the attitudes of the middle class. Russians started to place a greater stress on reform as opposed to stability, and the prioritization of citizens' welfare issues, over Russia's standing in the international arena.

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: This work utilizes the results of a research project implemented as part of the Basic Research Program of the National Research University, Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE), Moscow, Russian Federation. The authors would like to thank the Institute of Sociology, Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IS FCTAS RAS), for the opportunity to use data from the Russian National Monitoring Surveys, which were carried out with financial support from the Russian Science Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy". *American Political Science Review*, 52: 1; Barrington Moore Jr. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Allen Lane/ Penguin.

There were also higher levels of passive support for democracy and the protest potential of the population (although mostly passive) also rose.

However, within the middle class, the concept of reform had a different meaning for members of the state and private sectors. Members of the private sector expressed a greater desire for more radical changes, and the creation of a new ‘social contract’ between the state and the population.

### **Defining the Middle Class**

There is little scholarly consensus on what criteria should be used when ascertaining who belongs to the middle class, and the widely different approaches used to define it have resulted in huge disparities in its estimated size, which vary between its virtual nonexistence<sup>3</sup> and over 60% in the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup> Economists tend to focus on income and consumption. This approach is based on the idea of the middle class as the main consumer of goods and services, and thus its key criteria are the same as those used to measure a country’s standard of living. Some scholars use absolute measures, such as the level of income. Thus, for example, Banerjee and Duflo define the middle class in developing countries as those citizens earning just \$2-\$10 US dollars per person per day (PPPs),<sup>5</sup> whilst a recent study by the World Bank defines middle class households as those with a per capita consumption equal or higher than \$10/day.<sup>6</sup> Application of the World Bank’s definition to Russia currently defines well over

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<sup>3</sup> Ovsey Shkaratan. 2005. “Gosudarstvennaya sotsial’naya politika i strategii povedeniia srednikh sloev” [State social policy and behavior strategies of middle strata], *Higher School of Economics Working Paper*.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. 2014. *Russia Economic Report* No. 31 (March 2014): 32.

<sup>5</sup> Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo. 2008. “What is middle class about the middle classes around the world”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 22: 2: 3–28.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank. 2014. *Russia Economic Report*, No. 31 (March 2014): 42.

a majority of the population as belonging to the middle class. Due to fundamental changes in the incomes of the population which have occurred over the last 15 years, the middle class, according to these calculations, grew from 27% in 2000 to 60% in 2010.<sup>7</sup> More recent data shows that the expansion of the middle class (according to the World Bank's definition) continued in 2014–15, and it now comprises about 90% of the population<sup>8</sup> – a fact that makes the use of such middle-class income ranges largely redundant at the current stage of Russia's economic development.

Other researchers have proposed relative measures, where the middle class is defined as the share of people “in the middle” of the income distribution, calculated according to their position in one of the income percentiles (e.g., the 3 quintile, 2-4 quintiles, 3-9 deciles, etc.), or the relation of their income to the median income in the country. Thus, for Thurow, people are middle class if their income falls between 75% and 125% of the median income in a given society.<sup>9</sup> According to this methodology, this includes about 35% of the Russian population, whilst a further 20% comprise members of the “upper middle class” (with incomes 125%-200% of the median income).<sup>10</sup> However, the standard of living for these groups in Russia are quite modest, as the median income in the country is fairly low.

It should be stressed that the problem of income earned through the informal economy and illegal sources, make it very difficult to ascertain an accurate picture of household income distribution in many countries. Income based approaches, also fail to capture low income

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Svetlana Mareeva and Yulia Lezhnina. 2019. “Income Stratification in Russia: What do Different Approaches Demonstrate?”. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 11:2. Available at: <http://publications.tlu.ee/index.php/stss/article/view/593>.

<sup>9</sup> Thurow. 2009. “Who's in the Middle”. *Economist*, 12 February: 2.

<sup>10</sup> Mareeva and Lezhnina, “Income Stratification in Russia: What do Different Approaches Demonstrate?”.

citizens who, according to other criteria such as education and occupation, would clearly qualify for middle class membership. Moreover, defining the middle class by income alone also fails to explain how such a diverse group of individuals can develop “a shared class identity, class consciousness or class culture.”<sup>11</sup> Income based approaches define “middle stratum” rather than “middle classes”, and are therefore more applicable to an analysis of patterns of consumption and living standards, than the study of norms, values, and behavioral patterns.

In contrast, sociologists most often adopt a Neo-Weberian analysis, which entails a set of multi-dimensional stratification indicators. According to this perspective, in order to qualify as middle class, an individual has to meet a number of criteria (those traditionally include level of education, socio-professional status, self-identification, and level of income). All the attributes that are used as measures of class identification in this approach, seek to capture the essential, distinguishing characteristics of it as a social class. Within the class structure, the lower class has no resources that are in demand by the market, the working class offers to the economy its simple capacity for physical labor, which is homogenous and easily replaceable, and the middle class possesses human capital which generates income on the labor markets. Therefore, its key characteristics are socio-professional status (with a stress on the divisions between “employers and employees”, as well as between “manual and non-manual labor”) and the level of education. In Russia these two criteria are often complemented by the criterion of wealth, as income and salary inequality in the country are partially related to non-market factors, and thus, their size may depend not on education or social and professional position, but on the industry in which people work, or the region where they reside. Sometimes, these criteria are also complemented by self-identification, in order for the middle class to be

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<sup>11</sup> Chunling Li. 2010. “Characterising China’s middle class: heterogeneous composition and multiple identities”.

In Li Cheng, ed., *China’s Emerging Middle Class*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press: 142.

characterized by the shared sense of its social position and self-consciousness, which are prerequisites for the formation of common class interests.<sup>12</sup>

One of the first large-scale studies of the middle class in post-communist Russia by Maleva and Ovcharova, employs a “composite index”, which includes three criteria: 1) income and property, 2) education and occupation, and 3) self-identification. If a person (or household) meets all three criteria, he or she is considered to be a member of the “core” of the middle class; a person who meets two criteria belongs to the “semi-core”; and a person who meets only one criterion is considered to be part of the “marginal” or “wider” middle class.<sup>13</sup> According to a 2013 survey conducted in Russia, by Maleva, Burdyak and Tyndik, that follows the same approach, the percentage of middle class households based on income and property was 32.6%, on socio-professional criteria, 22.6%, and self-identification, 31.2%. The core of the middle class comprised just 8.1% and the semi-core 21.9%.<sup>14</sup>

Major surveys of the middle class in Russia have also been carried out by researchers at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences.<sup>15</sup> They employ similar

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<sup>12</sup> Self-identification is sometimes used as a single criteria for identifying subjective middle class - see, for example, Ludmila Khakhulina. 2008. “Sub’ektivnyj srednij klass: sociologicheskij analiz” [“Subjective middle class: sociological analysis”]. *Uroven' zhizni naselenija regionov Rossii*, 11-12: 115-119.

<sup>13</sup> Tatiana Maleva and Liliya Ovcharova. 2008. “Rossiiskie srednie klassy nakanune i na pike ekonomicheskovo rosta” [Russian middle classes before and at the peak of economic growth]. In Andrey Shastitko, Svetlana Avdasheva, Maksim Ovchinnikov, Tatiana Maleva and Liliya Ovcharova, eds., *Rossiiskie Srednie Klassy Nakanune i na Pike Ekonomicheskovo Rosta*. Moscow, Econ-Inform: 20, 66-70.

<sup>14</sup> Tatiana Maleva, Aleksandra Burdyak, Alla Tyndik. 2015. “Srednie klassy na razlichnyh etapakh zhiznennogo puti” [“The middle classes at different stages of life course”]. *Journal of the New Economic Association*, 3: 27: 116.

<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Gorshkov and Natalya Tikhonova, eds. 2016. *Srednij klass v sovremennoi Rossii. Opit mnogoletnikh issledovanii* [Middle class in contemporary Russia: experience of long-term research]. Moscow: Ves’ Mir.

criteria as Maleva and Ovcharova to define the middle class: 1) income and property, 2) occupation, 3) education and 4) self-identification. Those who fulfil all four criteria belong to the core of the middle class. However, by including those citizens with secondary specialist education (rather than restricting the criteria to higher education), they calculated that members of the middle class comprised 44% of the population in 2015. They also define a stable core of the Russian middle class whose members fulfil all four criteria, but which include only the highest-ranking employees, with higher education and computer skills (leading managers, leading entrepreneurs, and high-level specialists). In addition, they also identify what they call the periphery of the middle class which is made up of citizens who also meet the four criteria, but whose positions are much weaker and less stable, due to their socio-professional and educational composition (non-manual routine workers, non-manual workers in trade and services with secondary specialist education, etc.). This group comprised 26% of the population in 2015.<sup>16</sup>

In our study, we adopt a neo-Weberian perspective, which defines the middle class according to the following three criteria,

1) *Occupational status*: non-manual workers, excluding non-qualified workers in services and trade – since previous studies have shown that those are closer to the working class with respect to their position, behavioral patterns and attitudes;<sup>17</sup> for the unemployed, the definition is based on 2 criteria, excluding socio-professional status;<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.: 23.

<sup>17</sup> Svetlana Mareeva. 2015. “Professional’nye gruppy v usloviyakh krizisa i ikh reaktsiya na novye zhiznennye realii” [Professional groups in times of crisis and their reaction to new life realities]. In Mikhail Gorshkov and Natalya Tikhonova, eds. *Rossiiskoe Obshchestvo i Vyzovy Vremeni. Kniga Vtoraja*. Moscow, Ves” Mir.

<sup>18</sup> The distinction between employees and employers is not used in the definition due to the fact that mass surveys do not include the top 3-5% of the population, and all working representatives of mass surveys are



- 2) *Educational level*: incomplete higher and higher education;
- 3) *Income*: no less than median for the country as a whole. We use income criterion in its relative form, defining its threshold not at the absolute level, but at the median of income distribution. This partly solves the problem of underrepresentation of informal earnings which cannot be fully measured in mass surveys.

Our definition of the middle class does not include subjective criteria such as self-identification. While we agree that the subjective approach is very important, especially when it comes to measuring levels of socio-psychological well-being and the potential for social unrest, we find that a mix of objective and subjective approaches confuses the situation rather than clarifies it. Subjective stratification and subjective social class / strata defined according to this framework, are phenomena of a fundamentally different nature, than objective class / strata,<sup>19</sup> and they are based on, and influenced by, a different set of factors, and they produce different outcomes.

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employees or entrepreneurs / self-employed. Middle class representatives occupy middle status positions in hierarchies of power and prestige, and empirical analysis show that these positions correspond to the occupations we use in our definition (see Nataliya Tikhonova. 2020. *Srednij klass v fokuse jekonomicheskogo i sociologicheskogo podhodov: granicy i vnutrennjaja struktura (na primere Rossii)* [The middle class in the focus of economic and sociological approaches: borders and internal structure (on the example of Russia)]. *Mir Rossii*. (forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> Nataliya Tikhonova. 2018. "Model' sub'ektivnoj stratifikacii rossijskogo obshhestva i ee dinamika" [The model of subjective stratification of Russian society and its dynamics]. *Vestnik obshhestvennogo mnenija. Dannye. Analiz. Diskussii*. 126:1-2: 17-29; Ekaterina Slobodenyuk. 2016. Faktory absolyutnoi i sub'ektivnoi bednosti v sovremennoi Rossii [Factors of absolute and subjective poverty in modern Russia]. *Vestnik obshhestvennogo mnenija. Dannye. Analiz. Diskussii*: 3-4: 82-92; Svetlana Mareeva. 2018. Zony sub'ektivnogo blagopoluchiya i neblagopoluchiya v rossiiskom obshchestve [Zones of subjective well-being and ill-being in Russian society]. *Vestnik Rossiiskogo universiteta družby narodov. Seriya: Sotsiologiya*: 18: 4: 695-707.

The empirical data for the study is drawn primarily from the 7th and 9th waves of the Monitoring Surveys, carried out by the Institute of Sociology, Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences - "IS FCTAS RAS Monitoring." These waves were conducted in October 2017 and October 2018. Each sample included 4000 individuals (members of the population age 18 and older, residing in all regions of Russia, in both urban and rural areas; it is representative of the economic-territorial regions, and among them - by socio-professional group, age and type of settlement). We also use the data from two 2014 surveys by IS FCTAS RAS (carried out in the spring, n=1600, and fall, n=4000, both with the same representative sampling structure).

According to our survey analysis, the middle class (those who fulfilled all three criteria) made up 22% of population in 2014, 24% in the fall of 2017 and 25% in the fall of 2018. There are variations in the socio-demographic and socio-economic composition of the defined social groups. Thus, for example, the representation of the youngest members of the population in the employed members of the middle class, was lower than among the general population, not included in middle class (referred to as "other population" in Appendix A), while the share of those in the most economically active age cohort (30-59) was higher. The middle class employed in the state sector had a smaller share of males (only 38% compared to 48% in state sector and 50% among other population). State-employed members of the middle class were relatively more often found in megapolises (Moscow and Saint-Petersburg); in contrast to the middle class, members of the other population made up relatively larger shares of the rural population. The socio-professional composition also differed among the different sectors of the middle class – in the private sector, the share of managers, entrepreneurs and self-employed was relatively higher, while in the state sector almost 90% were represented by professionals with higher education (see Appendix A).

We would expect that these variations are likely to shape the features of middle class values and political attitudes (e.g., we will show that age is a very important factor in this respect). It is precisely the interplay of these different characteristics that define its specificity as a special social subject, holding certain political values. Therefore, the goal of our analysis is not to disentangle and compare the effect of different factors on the norms and values of its representatives, but to explore whether the middle class as a social group, is similar or different to the other groups of the population in its political attitudes, and whether it has the potential to be an agent of democratization, and is homogeneous in its values.

### **Modernization, the Middle Class and Democracy**

A large number of academic studies have linked the rise of the middle class to the development of democracy. As Bellin notes, the linkage can be traced back to Aristotle, “who argued that the larger the middle class, the more likely the chances of effective, cooperative, self-government.”<sup>20</sup> More recently, seminal works by Moore and Lipset have stressed the vital role of the middle class in bringing about and sustaining democracy - as epitomized in Moore’s famous declaration: “No bourgeois, no democracy.”<sup>21</sup>

As Diamond notes, “after a country attains a middling level of development and national income, inequality tends to fall, reducing the social distance and political polarization between classes.”<sup>22</sup> As people acquire more income and information, “they become more

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<sup>20</sup> Eva Bellin. 2010. “The Dog that didn’t Bark: The Political Complacency of the Emerging Middle Class (With Illustrations from The Middle East)”. In Julian Go, ed., *Political Power and Social Theory*. Volume 21. Emerald Group Publishing Limited: 125.

<sup>21</sup> Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy”; Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

<sup>22</sup> Larry Diamond. 2008. *The Spirit of Democracy*. Henry Holt: 99.

politically aware and confident, more inclined to participate in politics, to think for themselves, and thus to break free of traditional patron-client ties.”<sup>23</sup> Gradually they move from supporting materialist values (with a stress on economic security) and espouse what Inglehart terms post-materialist values.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, according to Lipset, “Increased wealth also affects the political role of the middle class through changing the shape of the stratification structure so that it shifts from an elongated pyramid with a large lower-class base, to a diamond with a growing middle class.”<sup>25</sup> The creation of a large middle class also “plays a mitigating role in moderating conflict, since it is able to reward the moderate and democratic parties and penalize extremist groups.”<sup>26</sup> Middle class citizens, in authoritarian regimes, it is argued, play an important role in pushing for democratic reforms and once established they protect and promote democratic values.<sup>27</sup>

However, history shows us that middle class support for democracy is not universal. Rueschemeyer et. al. argue that, whilst the middle class has at times supported democracy, it has “also opposed the extension of political inclusion to the working classes, and formed alliances with the landed upper classes to oppose democratic extension.”<sup>28</sup> There are a number of important studies which have illustrated the middle class’s support for fascism in Germany in the interwar period, and the factors behind it (including social crisis, destabilization and

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ronald Inglehart. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization, Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Evgeniy Gontmakher and Cameron Ross. 2015. “The Middle Class and Democratization in Russia”. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 67: 2 (March): 269-284.

<sup>28</sup> Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne H. Stephens and John D. Stephens. 1992. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. University of Chicago Press: 17.

cultural disorientation experienced by educated professionals).<sup>29</sup> The middle class has also supported the instigation of authoritarian regimes in Brazil, Argentina and other Latin American countries in the 1970s.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, they have propped up authoritarian regimes.<sup>31</sup> In China, the highly state-dependent middle class, “seems to be even less democratically oriented than other classes.”<sup>32</sup>

In Russia, more stress has been generally placed on other functions of the middle class than on its role as political actor. During different periods of Russia’s post-communist history, the middle class has successively been viewed as; a social base for reforms, a barometer of the efficiency of liberal reforms, as the most adapted socio-economic group, and as a potential modernization actor.<sup>33</sup>

The role of the middle class as a promoter of democracy came to the fore after the wave of mass protests against the regime in 2011-13. However, analyzing if it was the middle class that led the protest movement, runs once again into the methodological problem of how that class is defined. Whilst some scholars argue that the protestors were largely made up of

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Konrad Hugo Jarausch. 1990. *The Unfree Professions: German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers, 1900-1950*. Oxford University Press; Michael Kater. 1985. *The Nazi Party: A Social Profile of Members and Leaders 1919-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>30</sup> Jie Chen. 2013. *A Middle Class without Democracy*. Oxford, OUP: 8.

<sup>31</sup> Jie Chen. 2010. “Attitudes toward democracy and the political behaviour of China’s Middle Class”. In Chunling Li, ed., *China’s Emerging Middle Class*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press: 336.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.: 339.

<sup>33</sup> Elena Avraamova, Tatiana Maleva. 2014. “Evolyutsiya rossiiskovo srednevo klassa: missii i metodologiya” [“Evolution of Russian middle class: missions and methodology”]. *Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost’*, 4: 5-17.

members of the marginal middle class,<sup>34</sup> other studies have demonstrated that there was a high degree of social differentiation among the participants of the protest demonstrations, and their self-identification was not uniformly middle class. Therefore, they argue, it would be an exaggeration to label the protests as predominantly middle-class.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, we can detect a number of similarities between the protest movement in Russia and the new social movements that emerged in Western countries in the late-1960s, and which were initiated by members of the “new” middle class or its professional subgroups (in contrast to earlier social movements which were largely made up of members of the lower classes, as well as workers and farmers). These new social movements spearheaded new demands on the state, and they brought to the fore new, typically middle-class problems, such as freedom of expression and identity politics.<sup>36</sup>

### *One or many middle classes?*

One of the reasons why middle-class support for democracy is not universal is the fact that it is not homogeneous. It is important to stress that the middle class is made up of different groups of citizens with varying positions, interests and attitudes. Li outlines the following four social

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<sup>34</sup> Cameron Ross. 2015. “Middle Class Support for Democracy and Political Protests in Russia.” In Cameron Ross, ed., *Systemic and Non-Systemic Opposition in the Russian Federation: Civil Society Awakens*. Ashgate: 77-96; Denis Volkov. 2015. “The Protest Movement in Russia 2011-2013: Sources, Dynamics and Structures.” In Cameron Ross, ed., *Systemic and Non-Systemic Opposition in the Russian Federation: Civil Society Awakens*. Ashgate: 35-50.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander Bikbov. 2012. “The methodology of studying “spontaneous” street activism: Russian protests and street camps.” *Laboratorium*. 4:2:275-284; Alexey Levinsion. 2012. “Eto ne srednii klass – Eto vse” [“This is not middle class – This is everyone”], *Vedomosti* 3045 (February 21).

<sup>36</sup> Artem Magun. 2014. “Protestnoe dvizhenie 2011-2012 godov v Rossii: novyj populizm srednevo klassa” [“Protest movement of 2011-2012 in Russia: new populism of middle class”], *Stasis* 2:1:192-226.

groups within the Chinese middle class: 1) private entrepreneurs (*the capitalist class*), 2) professionals, managers and government officials (*the new middle class*), 3) small employers, small business owners, and the self-employed (*the old middle class*) and 4) low-wage white collar and other workers (*the marginal middle class*).<sup>37</sup> For Ekiert, the presence of different segments of the middle class, which rely on different forms of capital (cultural, economic, social, and political) has fractured middle class identity and solidarity and made it much more difficult for members of the middle class to act in concert.<sup>38</sup> According to Koo, “Marxist scholars explain this lack of autonomous class ideology and politics among the middle classes in terms of their unique locations in the class structure... Using Wright’s terms, they are in a “contradictory class location,” within which opposite class interests are simultaneously represented.”<sup>39</sup> Due to its contradictory class location, “the middle class is assumed to be unable to maintain a consistent political ideology but continuously vacillates between the two poles according to shifting political conjunctures.”<sup>40</sup>

Russian researchers have also pointed to the lack of homogeneity in the middle class and emphasized the need to consider its separate subgroups, either in the context of incorporated professional groups (professionals – semi-professionals – routine non-manual workers) or in terms of its concentric structure (core - periphery). In addition, middle class studies in Russia usually focus on the “new” middle class, that is those who receive returns on their human

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<sup>37</sup> Li. “Characterising China’s middle class: heterogeneous composition and multiple identities:” 143.

<sup>38</sup> Grzegorz Ekiert. 2010. “The End of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe: The Last Middle-class Revolution?” In Julian Go., ed., *Political Power and Social Theory*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited. Volume 21: 108.

<sup>39</sup> Hagen Koo. 1991. ”Middle Classes, Democratization, and Class Formation: The Case of South Korea.” *Theory and Society* 20: 4: 492-493.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

capital – skills and qualifications. As for the “old” middle class, its share in the Russian social structure is rather small, since the development of small business activity and entrepreneurship in Russia lags considerably behind countries in Western and Eastern Europe, as well as the BRIC countries.

*The Middle Class and the State in Russia*

Chen makes the important point, that the impact of modernization will be very different “in early industrializing countries such as the United Kingdom and late industrialisers such as Germany, and late-late industrialisers such as Russia.”<sup>41</sup> In particular, he argues that the state played a much more active role “in creating and shaping the middle classes in the late-developing world than it did in the early-industrialized countries.”<sup>42</sup> This is certainly the case in Russia where a substantial component of the middle class grew out of the former Soviet economic and political elites (“nomenklatura”).<sup>43</sup> As Remington notes, “access to income and material status for the predominant share of those who by objective stipulative criteria can be treated as middle class continues to depend on their position in hierarchies of power.”<sup>44</sup>

The state-dependent nature of the Russian middle class has been well documented. According to Gorshkov and Tikhonova, in 2014, 68% of the members of the core of the middle class worked for the state and only 13% worked in the private sector.<sup>45</sup> According to our analysis, 46% of the members of the defined middle class and 21% of other members of the

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<sup>41</sup> Jie Chen. 2013. *A Middle Class without Democracy*. Oxford, OUP: 152.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Gontmakher and Ross, “The Middle Class and Democratisation in Russia.”

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Remington. 2011. “The Russian Middle Class as Policy Objective.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 27: 2: 37.

<sup>45</sup> Gorshkov and Tikhonova, eds., *Srednii klass v sovremennoi Rossii. Opit mnogoletnikh issledovani* [Middle class in contemporary Russia: experience of long-term research].



general population were employed in the state sector in 2018, and 26% and 47% respectively, were employed in the private sector (see Table 1). There was a similar situation in 2014 – 47% of the middle class were employed in the state sector, compared to just 23% among other members of the general population. This reflects the fact that the structural positions pertaining to the middle class (demanding human capital and providing sufficient rents on it) in the economic system of new Russia have been formed primarily in the state sector. This is similar to the situation in China, but it differentiates Russia from Western Europe.

Table 1: Concentration of Middle Class (MC) in the State Sector (2018, %)

	MC	Other Population
State	46	21
Private	26	47
Currently not employed	28	32

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

In Russia, we would expect there to be differences in the interests and values of those members of the middle class who are dependent on the state for their livelihood, and those who work in the private sector. As Rosenfeld has demonstrated in her study of the mass protests of 2011-13, “professionals employed in the public sector, were significantly less likely than the private-sector middle class to mobilize” and moreover, “state dependence reduced the likelihood of protest by more than 25% among the middle class and 50% among the non-middle class”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, she found that state sector protesters were less likely to express grievances in the politicized language of rights and freedoms than their private sector counterparts. They were also more likely to value stable development and the standard of living over political liberty and regime change. For members of the state-dependent middle-class

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<sup>46</sup> Bryn Rosenfeld. 2017. “Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia”. *American Political Science Review* 111: 4 (November 2017): 638.

groups, protest was not about democratic transformation, but securing a better deal from the regime.<sup>47</sup>

Our study also shows that there are important differences in the values of members of the state and private sectors of the middle class, however, these differences are not very large. They have also been overshadowed by growing demands from all parts of society, to solve the pressing socio-economic problems afflicting Russian society.

### **Political Values of the Russian Population and the Middle Class**

When members of the Russian population are asked the question, “Do you think Russia needs democracy?” - the results consistently show high levels of support, which for example, ranged from 56% to 67% over the period 2005-15.<sup>48</sup> According to our analysis of IS RAS FCTAS data for 2018, 49% of the population had positive connotations with the term “democracy”, and 42% were neutral.

But what do Russians mean by democracy? The results of numerous polls demonstrate that a majority of citizens associate democracy much more with the provision of social justice, economic security, and public order than the classic tenets of liberal democracy.<sup>49</sup> There is a general level of “passive support” for liberal democracy amongst the population – whilst democracy is considered to be a necessary element in the political system, it is not seen as the most important and essential aspect of its development. In the current socio-economic conditions Russians are more concerned with other issues, more directly related to their

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Levada Centre Survey, 13 November 2015, At <https://www.levada.ru/en/2015/11/13/political-regime/>, accessed October 27, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see the Levada Survey, 5 March 2016, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2016/04/05/stabilization-vs-democracy/>, accessed October 27, 2019.

everyday life – those connected with the role of the state in securing the well-being of citizens and providing social justice. Against this setting, political issues, including democracy, fade into background.

Moreover, the idea of Russia as a dominant power on the international arena has for some time had strong levels of support (according to 2016 data by the Russian Public Opinion Research Centre - VTsIOM, 38% supported the idea of Russia striving to be a superpower in the world and 40% agreed that Russia should aspire to be one of the 10-15 most politically influential countries<sup>50</sup>), and international affairs were more important for the general population than domestic politics at this time.

However, an important shift in public opinion began to take shape during the period of our study. When citizens were given a choice between Russia being a superpower or paying more attention to the welfare of its citizens, in 2014 67% of the respondents strongly preferred the first option, with just 37% choosing citizens' welfare as more important. However, by the Fall of 2018, this proportion had switched to 49% vs. 51%, tipping the balance towards the importance of solving domestic social problems. Moreover, there were growing demands for reform that we will address below.

Turning to support for democracy, we find that it was far behind support for issues of a socio-economic nature. Although, according to the IS FCTAS RAS data in 2014-2018, the share of citizens who supported the idea that, Russia needed to follow democratic norms and respect human rights, grew from 14% to 20%, it was still outnumbered by support for other issues, such as a developed economy, a high level of state welfare, powerful armed forces, and a high level of culture, and a “national spirit”. Thus, while there is passive support for the ideals of democracy as a concept, and this is increasing, the actual demand for democracy is much less pronounced than

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<sup>50</sup> VTsIOM Survey, 10 June 2016, At <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115728>, accessed October 27,

the earlier high levels of support for Russia to become a superpower in the 2010s, and currently it is lower than the demands to solve the country's socio-economic problems.

But how do the values of the general population differ from those of the middle class? Below we turn to an examination of this question.

### *The Values of the State and Private Sectors of the Middle Class*

Our surveys show that members of the middle class also favor material security over political freedoms, but there are important variations between the members of the state and private sectors. As can be seen in Table 2, when citizens were asked, in a survey conducted in 2018, to choose between a list of future scenarios for the country (where they were allowed to choose more than one answer), members of the state and private sectors of the middle class both chose as their top option “social justice”, as did members of the other population, a choice that has been universal for all citizens in recent years.<sup>51</sup> The levels of support for social justice increased in 2014-2018, from 46% to 55% among the members of the state-sector of the middle class, and from 41% to 59% among those in the private sector, making them the most active supporters of this category.

Table 2 also shows that support for human rights, democracy and freedom of self-expression also increased: from 32% to 41% for members of the state sector, and from 29% to 42% for members of the private sector.

These developments in the attitudes of the middle class closely followed the trends in the general population. Here, the share of supporters of “social justice” increased from 47% to 59%, and the percentage of those who supported the option, “human rights, democracy, and

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<sup>51</sup> Svetlana Mareeva. 'Sotsial'nie neravenstva i sotsialnaya struktura sovremennoi Rossii v vospriyatii naseleniya' [Social inequities and the social structure of modern Russia as perceived by the population]. *Vestnik Instituta Sotziologii*: 9:3, 2018, 101-120.

freedom of self-expression” rose from 27% to 37%, making it more popular than the idea of Russia regaining its great power status.

Table 2: Which of the Following Ideas for the Future Development of Russia Do You Prefer?

(2018, %; more than one answer permitted; working population)

	MC - state	MC - private	Other population
Social justice	55	59	58
Human rights, democracy, freedom of self-expression	41	42	36
The return of Russia to great power status	35	30	30
Return to national traditions and time-tested moral values	28	23	27
A strong power that is able to provide order	26	23	25
A free market, private property, minimum state intervention in the economy	19	21	15
Converging with the West	14	22	12
Russia primarily for the Russians	11	10	13

Source: Nationwide survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

### *Is Russia a Democracy?*

Turning to questions of middle class attitudes towards the classification of the regime, as can be seen in Table 3, less than half of the members of all sectors of the middle class, consider Russia to be a democracy. However, there are important variations between the groups.

Table 3: Do you think modern Russia can be called a democratic country? (2017, %; working population)

	MC state	MC private	Other population
Certainly is + rather is	47	41	44
Rather no + certainly no	32	43	33
<b><i>Index = those who gave a positive response minus those who gave a negative response</i></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>11</b>
n/a	21	15	23
Of those who gave a certain answer:			
Certainly is + rather is	59	49	57

Rather no + certainly no	41	51	43
<b><i>Index = those who gave a positive response minus those who gave a negative response</i></b>	<b>18</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>14</b>

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2017.

There are more middle class respondents in the state sector, who consider Russia to be a democracy (47%), than those who responded negatively (32%), giving an overall Index of 15%. In contrast, for members of the private sector, the opposite situation pertains, with slightly more people (43%) giving a negative assessment than a positive one (41%), with an index of -2. The rest of the population also gave a more positive than negative assessment, with an Index of 11%. When we look at those respondents who gave a certain answer, we see that 59% of those who agreed that Russia could be considered a democracy belonged to the state sector, whilst the figure for the private sector was ten points lower, at 49%. Here, it is important to note that some of the variations between social groups may be due to the different understanding of the concept of democracy among the population.

### *Support and Trust in Political Institutions*

The fading out of the post-Crimean euphoria along with the adoption of unpopular policies, such as the pension reform of October 2018, which raised the pension age for both men and women, have resulted in greater levels of citizen dissatisfaction with the political system in general (see Table 4). Trust in the President has fallen, as have the levels of trust in the government, the Duma, and especially political parties, which have sunk even lower. Thus, for example, the highest negative score of -57% was given to the category, trust in parties, by members of the private sector of the middle class in 2018. These results show that the middle class like the general population has a very low estimation of the work of the key political institutions of the country with the exception of the Presidency, but even here the levels of trust have fallen sharply in recent years.

Table 4 also shows that members of the private sector of the middle class expressed lower levels of trust for each political institution than the members from the state sector (both in 2018 and 2017 - regardless of whether there were higher or lower levels of trust in these institutions from the other population). The Index of Trust for the President (which is calculated as the level of trust minus the number of answers, “do not trust”) was +31% for members of the state sector and +25% for members of the private sector in 2018 (and + 61% and +46% in 2017).

Table 4: Trust in Political Institutions (2018, %; working population)

	MC - state	MC - private	Other Population
<u>President</u>			
Trust	60	53	54
Do not trust	29	28	29
N/a	11	19	17
<b><i>Index of Trust</i></b>	<b>+31</b>	<b>+25</b>	<b>+25</b>
<i>For comparison: Index of Trust in fall 2017</i>	+61	+46	+53
<u>Government</u>			
Trust	37	32	28
Do not trust	49	54	54
N/a	14	14	18
<b><i>Index of Trust</i></b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>-22</b>	<b>-26</b>
<i>For comparison: Index of Trust in fall 2017</i>	+6	-14	0
<u>State Duma</u>			
Trust	25	21	19
Do not trust	53	64	61
N/a	22	15	20
<b><i>Index of Trust</i></b>	<b>-28</b>	<b>-43</b>	<b>-42</b>
<i>For comparison: Index of Trust in fall 2017</i>	-16	-28	-21
<u>Political Parties</u>			
Trust	19	9	14
Do not trust	63	66	62
N/a	18	25	24
<b><i>Index of Trust</i></b>	<b>-44</b>	<b>-57</b>	<b>-48</b>
<i>For comparison: Index of Trust in fall 2017</i>	-39	-49	-38

Source: Nationwide Monitoring Surveys carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2017 and 2018.

### *Change versus Stability*

Survey data over the period 2014-2018 show that demands for reform amongst members of the general population began to take precedence over support for stability. There are several reasons for this development. Firstly, as we noted above, Russians started to give as much priority to welfare issues as they did to Russia's standing in the international arena (51% and 49%), and this led to an increase in calls for social and economic reforms. In this respect, members of the state and private middle class also showed important differences: whilst the state middle class still gave higher priority to strong state power and military forces (56% vs. 44% prioritizing welfare), amongst members of the private middle class, the welfare choice clearly dominates (42% vs. 58%). Secondly, the economic crisis that started in 2014 has led to a general understanding, that stability can quickly turn into economic stagnation.<sup>52</sup>

Over the period 2012-2014, the share of Russian citizens who were oriented towards stability was around 70%, with about 30% articulating demands for change. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the share of those who were reform-oriented reached a maximum of 56% in Spring 2017, before falling back in 2018 to equal the number of those who prefer stability.

Turning to an examination of the middle class, if we look at the Index of Support for Reform presented in Table 5, we see that it is currently around zero for both the private and the state sectors. In contrast, in 2014 it was much lower, -52% for the state sector and -40% for the private sector.

Thus, our data shows that the demands for reform have been forming in all sections of the population, including both sectors of middle class and there has also been a narrowing of

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<sup>52</sup> Vladimir Petukhov. 2018. *Dynamika social'nyh nastroenij rossijan i formirovanie zaprosa na peremeny* [Dynamic of Social Sentiment of Russians and Formation of the Request for Changes]. *Sociologicheskie issledovanija* 11: 40-53.



the differences between them. Moreover, the surge for change that occurred in 2017 among the private sector of the middle class, declined in 2018.

Table 5: Which do you prefer: Reform or Stability? (2014-2018, %; working population)

	MC - state			MC - private		
	2014	2017	2018	2014	2017	2018
Reform of the economy and politics	24	50	49	30	58	51
Stability is more important than reform	76	50	51	70	42	49
<i>Index</i>	-52	0	-2	-40	16	2

Source: Nationwide Monitoring surveys carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2014-2018.

We should also stress the point that, the reasons for supporting reform differ amongst the members of the state and private middle class. Table 6 shows that, the state sector middle class places more emphasis on individual opportunities, while the private middle class support more radical reforms, that require the development of a new ‘social contract’ between the population and the state – the creation of new “rules of the game”, and a renewed economic course.

Table 6: What do you mean by reforms? (2018, %; working population)

	MC - state	MC - private	Other Population
New rules that regulate society	28	33	33
New economic course	50	56	49
New social policy	43	43	41
New opportunities for individual self-realization	17	10	13
New people in power structures	31	29	30

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

### **Political Protests**

In the wake of what was perceived to be highly fraudulent elections for the State Duma in

December 2011, mass protests swept through the Russian capital and engulfed scores of cities and regions. It has been estimated that between 70 and 120 thousand protestors took part in the largest demonstrations which took place in Moscow on the 10th and 24th of December 2011, the 4th of February, and the 5th and 10th of March 2012.<sup>53</sup> The regime has gradually been able to regain the political initiative. By adopting a mixture of policies which have employed both the carrot and the stick, the Kremlin has been able to pacify most of the members of the opposition.

In 2018, support for the protest activities have in some respects, come close to the situation in 2012: 7% of respondents affirmed that they were ready to participate in them themselves. At the same time, the mobilization potential of the population in 2018 was lower – 45% were indifferent to the protest activities (as compared to 33% in 2012), and the share of those who showed approval without participation, was also lower (36% in 2018 and 46% in 2012) (see Table 7).

Table 7: How do you personally feel about people taking part in protest actions, demonstrations etc.? (2012-2018, %)

	2012	2013	2016	2017	2018
With approval, participate in them ourselves	7	4	4	4	7
With approval, although do not participate in them ourselves	46	35	30	29	36
With disapproval	14	14	16	18	12
Indifferent	33	47	51	49	45

Source: Nationwide Monitoring surveys carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2012-2018.

As for the middle class, a much higher percentage of the state sector middle class

<sup>53</sup> Lilia Shevtsova. 2012. “Implosion, Atrophy or Revolution?”. *Journal of Democracy* 23: 3: 20.

expressed their disapproval of the protests than other groups in 2016 and 2017. However, by 2018 the situation has changed for all the groups – both active and passive support for protest activities have increased. The state middle class showed the most polarization – they had the largest share of those who were ready to participate in protests themselves, along with the largest share of those who disapproved, though this share has gone down noticeably since 2016. The State middle class also had a larger share of indifferent citizens than the private middle class, which, by the end of 2018 had the highest levels of passive support for the protests – 45% approved, though did not participate themselves (see Table 8).

Table 8: How do you personally feel about people taking part in protest actions, demonstrations etc.? (2018, %, working population)

	MC - state		MC - private		Other Population	
	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
With approval, participate in them ourselves	4	11	5	6	3	6
With approval, although do not participate in them ourselves	29	34	31	45	30	38
With disapproval	23	16	15	10	14	11
Indifferent	44	39	49	29	53	45

Source: Nationwide Monitoring surveys carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2016 and 2018.

In line with our earlier discussion, that showed that Russian citizens are more concerned about economic security than civil liberties, there was greater support for those protests which were organized to defend economic and social rights than those organized to fight for political freedoms (Table 9). However, compared to the results found by Rosenfeld, discussed above,<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Rosenfeld “Reevaluating the Middle-Class Protest Paradigm: A Case-Control Study of Democratic Protest Coalitions in Russia”.

our more recent surveys demonstrate, that the differences between the state and private sectors are not very high. The most noticeable dynamics in 2016-2018 concerned the members of the private-sector middle class, whose representatives became more receptive to the idea of protesting to protect their social and economic rights, thus once again demonstrating their higher levels of adaptability to the current situation, as well as their greater mobilization potential.

Table 9: “If in the near future in your city, rural area there will be mass protests, political meeting, are you ready to take part in them?” (% of those who chose “definitely” and “probably”) (2016-2018, %; working population)

	MC - state		MC - private		Other Population	
	2016	2018	2016	2018	2016	2018
Meetings and demonstrations in defense of democratic rights and freedoms (freedom of speech, of assembly, of procession and so on)	18	17	16	19	18	21
Rallies and demonstrations in defense of economic and social rights of citizens	27	28	23	32	30	34

Source: Nationwide Monitoring surveys carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2016 and 2018.

### **Statist vs. Liberal Values**

While in the 2000s, overcoming the ideological splits of the nineties and the formation of value synthesis was part of the overall strategy of the Putin regime, by the middle of the 2010s, ideological "neutrality" had been replaced by a new orientation in Russia's domestic and foreign policies towards the inculcation of neo-conservative values, and the "conservative majority" was viewed as the social base of its support. As the economy has faltered, the regime has sought to regain legitimacy by promoting ideas of patriotism and there has been a new stress on the importance of Russia's unique moral and spiritual values. Such a turn towards

social conservative values gives rise to a number of questions, and the most important of these are, whether this majority actually exists in reality, and whether it really is a bearer of conservative / traditional values

Studies of the general political orientations of modern Russian society, and the characteristics of the conservative and liberal groups existing within it,<sup>55</sup> demonstrate the ambiguity of the very concept of "conservative majority" as applied to the Russian population. Moreover, the problems of a "conservative majority" and an "active minority" are part of the broader research field of cultural dynamics and socio-cultural modernization. The scholars who work on the problems of cultural dynamics in Russian society have employed different methodologies for measuring it,<sup>56</sup> but universally they show that the processes of cultural dynamics that are taking place in the country, are increasing differentiation and pluralization, and that norms and values are becoming more heterogeneous. However, these results refer mostly to the values that guide people's everyday life rather than their political values which, as we shall demonstrate, are more homogeneous.

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<sup>55</sup> Vladimir Petukhov. 2011. "Tsennostnaya palitra sovremennogo rossiiskogo obshhestva: «ideologicheskaya kasha» ili poisk novyh smyslov?" ["The value palette of modern Russian society: "ideological mess" or the search for new meanings?"]. *Monitoring obshhestvennogo mneniya: ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye peremeny* 1:101:6-22; Leontiy Byzov. 2014. "Novoe konservativnoe bol'shinstvo kak social'no-politicheskij fenomen" ["The new conservative majority as a socio-political phenomenon"]. *Mir Rossii* 23: 4: 6-34.

<sup>56</sup> Nadezhda Lebedeva and Alexandr Tatarko. 2012. "Values of Russians: the Dynamics and Relations towards Economic Attitudes". Working Paper by Higher School of Economics. Series SOC "Sociology"; Vladimir Magun and Maksim Rudnev. 2012. "Basic Values of Russians and Other Europeans". *Problems of Economic Transition* 54: 10: 31-64; Natalia Tikhonova. 2012. "Osobennosti "rossiiskih modernistov" i perspektivy kul'turnoi dinamiki Rossii" ["Features of "Russian modernists" and the prospect of cultural dynamics of Russia"], articles 1 and 2. *Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost'* 2: 38-52 and 3: 5-21.

As can be seen from the Table 10, the different subgroups of the middle class have different attitudes towards the country's future development. Although there is support for the proposition that "Russia should become a democratic state", overall there is a general tendency towards dominance of statist values in the state middle class, while for the private middle class a split between statist and liberal values can be seen. Thus, for example, 70% of the state sector and 57% of the private sector middle class chose the option which called for a strengthening of the state's power over the economy, whilst just 30% and 43% respectively, chose the option which called for less intervention of the state in the economy; 68% and 61% gave support to the current government despite its shortcomings. At the same time, when we turn to the issue of censorship of the media, whilst a majority of the members of the state-based middle class supported this, the private-based middle class was split in half in this aspect; the same was true for the choice between "reviving national traditions" and "moving forward," and between strengthening the "vertical of power", or "decentralization". Thus, while there is a general dominance of statist orientations among the Russian population, there is a greater divergence of attitudes within the private middle class.

Table 10: Which statement in each pair do you agree with? (2018, %, working population)

	MC - state	MC - private	Other Population
Strengthening centralized power, vertical of power	60	53	56
Decentralization of power, the expansion of the rights of regional and municipal authorities	40	47	44
Russia needs to revive national traditions and values	53	49	53
Russia should move forward, towards a modern way of life	47	51	47
Even considering all its shortcomings, the current government in Russia still deserves support	68	61	60
The current government should be replaced at all costs	32	39	40

Strengthening state control over the economy, the development of state planning	70	57	69
Refusal of state intervention in the economy, development of the free market	30	43	31
It is necessary to introduce moral censorship over the media and art in order to combat the propaganda of immorality	66	50	61
Mass media and art should be completely free from censorship	34	50	39

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

Differences in the statist-sovereign or liberal orientation of Russians are more clearly visible when measured by an Index constructed on their support for the alternative positions provided in Table 11. The index identifies two polar groups, which we label the “liberal” and “statist.” To define the “statist” orientation, the shares of respondents who chose the first statements in three or more (60% of the total), or four or more of the pairs (80% of the total), were identified. The same process was carried out to calculate the “liberal” orientation, based on the number of choices for the second statements.

Table 11: Share of those who consistently choose liberal / statist values (2018, %, working population)

	MC – state (%)	MC – private (%)	Other Population (%)
<b>Liberal</b>			
3 and more out of 5	29	44	33
4 and more out of 5	15	25	16
<b>Statist</b>			
3 and more out of 5	71	56	67
4 and more out of 5	47	38	39

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

As Table 11 demonstrates, less than 30% of the members of state middle class and less than half of the private-based middle class chose 3 or more of the liberal values, and 15% and 25%

respectively selected 4 out of 5. As regards the statist values, they are much more pronounced in the state middle class – 71% chose at least 3 statist statements out of 5 (compared to 56% among private sector middle class). There is also a clear inclination towards statist values amongst members of the general population. For the private middle class, this inclination is less pronounced, though statist values still predominate.

### **Variations in the Values of Different Age Cohorts of the Middle Class<sup>57</sup>**

A number of studies have demonstrated important variations in the values of citizens who belong to different age cohorts. There is a consensus in the literature that younger citizens are generally more supportive of liberal values. Thus, for example, a survey carried out by scholars in the Russian Institute of Sociology demonstrates clear differences in the values of Russian youth under the age of 30, and older citizens.<sup>58</sup> When citizens were asked to choose between the following statements: a) “Russia needs a strong hand to maintain order in the country”, or b) “Political freedoms and democracy is something that cannot be waived under any circumstances”, the highest support for “option b” came from 18-30 year olds (43%) and the percentage supporting this proposition fell as there was an increase in the age of the respondents, with the lowest support coming from those aged over 60 (22%). These variations in the values of the youth are important, as according to Aron, citizens aged between 20 and 30 years of age, make up the single largest age cohort in the country, approximately a quarter

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<sup>57</sup> We would also expect there to be regional variations and other potential variations based on ethnicity but the size of our sample, do not allow us to examine these factors.

<sup>58</sup> Irina Trofimova. 2017. “Politicheskie Orientatsii Sovremennoi Rossiiskoi Molodezhi” [“Political Orientations of Modern Russian Youth”]. In Mikhail Gorshkov, ed., *Rossiia Reformiruyushchayasya Ezhegodnik, Vypusk 15*. Moscow, Novyi Khronograf: 311.



of the population, and it is this group which “will dominate the political landscape for the next 40 years.”<sup>59</sup>

When we examine the values of the different age cohorts amongst the middle class, we see a similar picture to that found amongst the population at large. As can be seen in Table 12, a majority of the members of the middle-class support reform over stability (52%), but there are significant differences between the age cohorts, with by far the highest support for reform coming from those under age 30 (58%).

Table 12: Which do you prefer: Reform or Stability? (2018, %, working and non-working members of MC)

	Under 30	30-59	60 and older	MC in general
Reform of the economy and politics	58	51	49	52
Stability is more important than changes	42	49	51	48

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

Table 13 demonstrates that in general, statist-sovereign values are more dominant amongst the older groups, whilst the values of the youth are more liberal-oriented. Thus, for example, support for “Russian national traditions, moral and religious values”, has the following sequence which rises with age: 43%-54%-59%, whilst for the statement, “It is necessary to strengthen the state’s influence on the economy, politics and social processes”, we see a similar pattern – 55%-68%-73%. The proposition, “It is necessary to introduce moral censorship over the media and art in order to combat the propaganda of immorality”, has less support amongst the youth with the sequence – 49%-63%-72%. Still, even the middle-class

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<sup>59</sup> Leon Aron. 2012. “Russia’s Protesters: The People, Ideals, and Prospects”. *Russian Outlook* (American Enterprise Public Institute), Summer,: 3-4.

youth cannot be considered to be liberal – with survey data placing them in between statist and liberal values, even if more liberal, in comparison to the other age groups. Moreover, there is one noticeable exception – middle class youth, give even more support to the current Russian government, than the other age groups.

Table 13: Which statement in each pair do you agree with? (2018, %, working and non-working members of MC)

	Under 30	30-59	60 and older	MC in general
Strengthening centralized power, vertical of power	56	56	57	56
Decentralization of power, the expansion of the rights of regional and municipal authorities	44	44	43	44
Russia needs to revive national traditions and values	43	54	59	52
Russia should move forward, towards a modern way of life	57	46	41	48
Even considering all its shortcomings, the current government in Russia still deserves support	69	64	61	65
The current government should be replaced at all costs	31	36	39	35
Strengthening state control over the economy, the development of state planning	55	68	73	65
Refusal of state intervention in the economy, development of the free market	45	32	27	35
It is necessary to introduce moral censorship over the media and art in order to combat the propaganda of immorality	49	63	72	61
Mass media and art should be completely free from censorship	51	37	28	39

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

The consistent choice of liberal or statist values highlights the fact that the younger members of the middle class are more liberally-oriented, but at the same time, as Table 14 demonstrates, even here statist attitudes still predominate.

Table 14: Share of those who consistently choose liberal / statist values among different age groups in middle class (2018, %, working and non-working members of middle class)

	Under 30	30-59	60 and older
<b>Liberal</b>			
3 and more out of 5	43	32	34
4 and more out of 5	25	18	16
<b>Statist</b>			
3 and more out of 5	57	68	66
4 and more out of 5	38	44	52

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

However, these variations based on age are true not only for the middle class, but also for the other members of the general population. In fact, the differences based on age in this respect seem to be more prominent than those based on class. For example, support for the rejection of state intervention in the economy and the development of a free market, among the middle class age groups, has the following sequence of results: 45%-32%-27%, and among members of the other population – 42%-28%-21%. Support for moving forward, towards a modern way of life, in contrast to reviving national traditions and values, among the middle class age groups produced the following sequence of results: 57%-46%-41%, while for the other population it was 60%-44%-33%. Thus, the youth from all social groups are more liberally oriented, while for the older age groups class affiliation begins to play a greater differentiating role.

## **Conclusion**

The period of 2014-2018 in Russia was characterized by important shifts in the population's attitudes. Changes in the political values of the middle class have followed the same trends as the population in general. Both groups are united in their concerns over the decline in the

standard of living, as well as the universal demand for social justice that has increased in recent years, and both have prioritized reform over stability

However, the middle class is not homogeneous and there are many important divisions within it. As our study has shown, members of the private sector of the middle class are more divided in their values than members of the state sector. Overall, they have less trust in political institutions than members of the state sector, and they seek more radical reforms that will require the development of a new 'social contract' between the population and the state.

In addition, younger members of the middle class, and particularly those below the age of 30, express the most support for liberal values - however, this is also true for the youngest members of the other social groups. In general, generational differences seem to be more prominent in respect to political values than class. The youth from all social groups are more liberally oriented, while for the older age groups, class affiliation starts to play a greater differentiating role.

In conclusion, our research demonstrates that it is not correct to argue that members of the middle class will give universal support to democracy and liberal values. Situated in a contradictory class location, "variability, inconsistency, and fluidity has been the hallmark of middle class politics" (Koo 1991, p. 493), and in many countries, the middle class has propped up authoritarian regimes when its interests have been threatened. As has been demonstrated in this study, the Russian middle class which is dominated by members of the state, largely supports the regime, and most of its members hold statist values. However, our study also shows that there are variations in the support for liberal and statist values across the different sectors of the middle class, and there are also variations within the middle class groups themselves, which are sharpest among those members employed in the private sector.

**Appendix A**

Composition of middle class and other population (2018, %, working population)

Socio-demographic composition	MC - State	MC - Private	Other population
Age			
Under 30	16	21	24
30-59	80	76	73
60 and older	4	3	3
Gender			
Male	38	48	50
Female	62	52	50
Settlement type			
Megapolis	18	13	9
Regional center	32	35	23
Other urban	41	32	41
Rural	9	20	27
Education			
Higher or incomplete higher	100	100	13
Lower than higher education	0	0	87
Socio-professional status			
Manager of all levels, self-employed	9	28	4
Professional with higher education	87	67	7
Routine non-manual worker with no higher education required	4	5	16
Routine worker in sales and services	0	0	21
Manual worker	0	0	52
Sector			
State	100	0	30
Private	0	100	70

Source: Nationwide Monitoring survey carried out by the IS FCTAS RAS in 2018.

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