# The Socio-Economic and Demographic Factors of Online Activity among Right-Wing Radicals

Mikhail Myagkov, Evgeniy V. Shchekotin*, Vyacheslav L. Goiko, Vitaliy V. Kashpur &

Ekaterina A. Aksenova

## Abstract:

This paper presents the results of a study on socio-economic and demographic factors that affect the intensity of right-wing radicals' activity in the framework of the Russian-based social network VKontakte. Right-wing radical ideas expressed within the VKontakte network are most actively supported by the population of the regional centres (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar Krai) and areas around these centres, which are defined as the semi-periphery in the core-periphery model. The intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals is mostly influenced by demographic factors, including the average age of the population, the net migration rate coefficient; however, it is not affected by the indicators of economic well-being. The authors hypothesise that support for right-wing radical ideology on social media is determined not by the objective characteristics of the social and economic well-being of the population, but by subjective emotional factors (irritation, feelings of social injustice).

**Keywords**: social networks, right-wing extremism, Right-Wing Online Activity Index, right-wing activity factors, core-periphery model

## Introduction

Radical right-wing ideas have been riding a new wave of popularity for the last decade (Rooduijn, 2015). This trend is typical for all Western countries, where various types of right-wing populists are gaining more and more political weight (Wodak, 2015). The processes observed in Russia can also be called a 'right turn' due to the fact that since the 2010s, the rhetoric of right-wing populists has been actively exploited in the environment of the Russian ruling establishment (Baunov, 2010). The traditional core topics of the discourse of the Russian 'old right-wing' radicals, i.e. supporters of imperial nationalism, have become an element of the current official ideology. These topics include protection of the so-called 'traditional values', support of the Orthodox Church, the problem of illegal immigration, etc. In a context of complicated international relations, the Russian authorities do not conceal their sympathy for right-wing politicians from European countries (Shekhovtsov, 2018).

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship between right-wing sentiments of the Russian population and certain factors that characterise the objective conditions of the everyday life of the population. In other words, we intend to reveal whether support for right-wing radical ideas is linked to particular objective circumstances that are associated with the living conditions of the people. The factors under study include indicators that enable us to make inferences about the social and economic well-being of the population. These indicators are predominantly related to the level of socio-economic development of a particular local government unit or constituent entity (subject) of the Russian Federation or region. In modern Russia, we observe a considerable level of inequality among certain regions in terms of socio-economic development. This is due to the large geographical, economic and cultural-historical diversity of the country.

---

* E-mail address of the corresponding author: evgvik1978@mail.ru

Achieving the stated research objective is a rather complex task due to certain reasons. For example, in the case of Russia, it is difficult to quantify the right-wing radical sentiments in the society. Quantitative analysis of right-wing radicals is most often associated with the study of political parties that are characterised as 'right-wing' in the current political system (Knigge, 1998). Today in the Russian political system, there are no legal organisations that could be considered right-wing radical movements and that would be eligible for participation in elections (in contrast to the period 1990–2000). A certain understanding of the level of right-wing radical sentiments can be obtained from annual sociological surveys (e.g. surveys conducted by the Levada Centre (Pipiya, 2017). Another source of information is the database on acts of violence and vandalism, which is managed by the non-profit organisation SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis, which is engaged in research on nationalism and racism in Russia.

For the purpose of our study, we use information obtained from social networks. Compared to other data sources, social networks have one important advantage, viz. they make it possible to analyse a large number of users. This approach enables us to assess the spread of right-wing radical sentiments across the Russian Federation.

In the course of the study, the following research questions are answered:

*1. What are the tools for the adequate estimation of the number of right-wing ideology followers in contemporary Russia?*
Giving due consideration to the causes and channels of the proliferation of right-wing ideas, we presume that the estimation of right-wing ideology followers can be performed through the identification and analysis of the communication content of the right on social networks. This tool can enable us to obtain a fairly large amount of data that is sufficient to make an inference about the distribution of the right across subjects of the Russian Federation. To mitigate possible distortions in calculated indicators, which are normally associated with unequal access to the internet in various parts of Russia, a Right-Wing Online Activity Index was designed.

*2. Are there any objective factors that affect the distribution of right-wing sentiments across subjects of the Russian federation?*
It is necessary to understand what effect (namely the degree of effect) do the objective characteristics of people's living conditions (e.g. welfare, migratory processes, etc.) have on the popularity of right-wing ideology. For this purpose, we analyse the effect of 22 socio-economic and demographic factors on the intensity of the online activity of the right.

## Right-wing radicals in modern Russia

In fact, it is not easy to define right-wing radical ideology because there is no established terminology that describes this type of ideology in modern political discourse. In his attempt to determine the range of political parties that can be included in this category, Norris (2005) employs about fifteen lexical items ranging from 'far' or 'extreme right' to 'libertarian', and this list can be continued. Quite often, the fact that a movement is regarded as belonging to radical right-wing extremists is determined by circumstances and can be argued (Mudde, 2007). A remarkable example of this is the famous right-wing populist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) that adopted extreme nationalistic slogans in the early 1990s. Consequently, the party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky was considered one of the most prominent 'fascist' Russian politicians of that time (Shenfield, 2001). However, nowadays, this party is integrated into the existing political system, has representatives in the highest legislative bodies, and supports the Russian political regime. Therefore, despite the fact that LDPR representatives occasionally use right-wing populist slogans (in particular, with reference to migrants), they cannot be considered right-wing radicals.

It should also be noted that radical right-wing movements are changing and becoming more diverse. With this in mind, a minimum of two generations of right-wing radicals can be distinguished: 'old' (traditional) and 'new' (post-industrial) (Ignazi, 1995), whose ideologies and values differ

correspondingly. Regarding the spread of radical right-wing ideology, the following two major theories are distinguished: grievance theory and opportunity theory (Koopmans, Statham, Giugni & Passy, 2005). The first one deals with a connection between the rise of right-wing radicalism and objective circumstances in the life of the population (i.e. radicalism resulting from deterioration of living conditions (viz. economic decline, unemployment, etc.). The opportunity theory, on the other hand, does not link radicalisation to the population's grievances, but sees the nature of the political system, where the elite initiates and controls the activity of right-wing radicals, as the cause of this radicalisation.

Most studies are based on diverse versions of the grievance theory and revolve around the effects of objective macrostructural factors, including the anomie/social breakdown thesis, the relative deprivation thesis, the modernisation losers thesis, and the ethnic competition thesis (Rydgren, 2007). At the same time, the opportunity theory links the emergence of right-wing radicals to populist xenophobia and political discontent. For the purpose of determining a theoretical framework, we define right-wing radicalism as a system of beliefs based on the following: (a) the indisputable value of traditional institutions and forms of social organisation (viz. government, church, and nation), as well as identification of the personal uniqueness of those who belong to these institutions; (b) the importance of preserving and defending these institutions against threats posed by the modernisation processes of contemporary society (Minkenberg, 2000).

Studying right-wing radicalism in Russia has a number of features. For example, in academic literature, electoral support for radical right-wing movements is often used to estimate the intensity of society's radical sentiments. In modern Russia, there is not a party or a movement that openly upholds radical right-wing ideas. This is what distinguishes the current situation from that of the 1990s and even the early 2000s. Russia has a thirty-year old history of radical right-wing movements, the first of which was the national patriotic front *Pamyat* (Memory). It emerged in the late 1980s and openly exploited nationalistic and anti-Semitic slogans. In the 1990s, right-wing radicals played an important part in the social and political life of Russia, e.g. the Russian National Unity by Alexander Barkashov (Simonsen, 1996) as well as a number of other less sizable movements (Verkhovsky & Pribylovsky, 1996; Sokolov, 1999). They undertook official political activity and participated in elections. In the 2000s, radical right-wing movements became marginalised rather quickly and disappeared from the legal political arena. In this regard, M. Sokolov even writes about the end of Russian radical nationalism (Sokolov, 2009).

In the early 2000s, a new wave of nationalism emerged and actively developed with such distinctive features as aggressive racism and neo-Nazism (Verkhovsky, 2007). This wave significantly differed from the 'imperial' right-wing movements of the 1990s. The popularity of the skinhead subculture increased. However, the new wave began to decline in the early 2010s; the main organisations of the new right-wing were defeated and banned (e.g. Slavic Union, Russian National Unity, Russian All-National Union, Movement Against Illegal Immigration [DPNI], etc.). Simultaneously, the discourse of power increasingly attracted imperial nationalism as an ideological resource (Pain, 2016; Laine, 2017). In this regard, nationalist forces in Russia experienced a split in the 2010s. One part, which had an imperial tenor, began to support actions of the Russian authorities during the protest movement of 2011–2013 (Snow Revolution), and then during the events in Crimea and Ukraine in 2014. Some of the right-wing radicals supported the actions of the Russian government in Ukraine; the other part, on the contrary, was strongly opposed to these actions (Verkhovsky, 2016; Rotmistrov & Popova, 2016). These anti-government opposition groups consistently approximated the so-called 'non-systemic opposition' in the 2010s, until they metamorphosed into national-democrats (natsdem) (Laruelle, 2012, 2017; Kolstø, 2014; Horvath, 2015).

## The problem of assessing the online activity of right-wing radicals

For a quantitative assessment of the spread of right-wing radicalism, we utilise data on the behaviour of individuals on social media. It should also be noted that actions performed on social media do not mean that an individual intends to undertake the same actions offline. However, our

study of online activity reveals certain trends in sentiments of the society and a hidden capacity for grievances, which cannot be assessed by means of government election results in the context of strict regulation of the official political domain. On the whole, we support the thesis that current offline processes are becoming more and more intense in the online environment (van Dijk, 2006).

Over the last decade, researchers have repeatedly addressed the problem of racism, nationalism and xenophobia in the context of the Russian Internet. A range of interesting studies related to this issue have been published (Etling et al., 2010; Volkov, 2011; Koshkin, 2011; Pain, 2013, 2014; Grinko, 2014; Nikiporets-Takigawa & Pain, 2016). However, all these studies have a qualitative nature and are aimed at analysing discourse and discursive practices in the communities of right-wing radicals.

For the purpose of estimating the right-wing online activity, a Right-Wing Online Activity Index has been designed for constituent entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation. In fact, there were several attempts to design an aggregate indicator for the assessment of the degree of intensity of right-wing extremism. The most well known manifestation of those attempts is the Demand for Right-Wing Extremism Index (DEREX), which has been published since 2003 (Demand for Right-Wing Extremism Index, 2016). The index is based on the study of social attitudes and values in European countries and Israel. It consists of the following four main categories, reflecting commitment to right-wing radical values: (a) prejudice and welfare chauvinism; (b) anti-establishment attitudes; (c) right-wing value orientation; (d) the degree of distrust, fear, and pessimism. The results of the European Social Survey (ESS) are used as data for the calculation of DEREX.

Another manifestation of attempts to use indices for the study of extremism is the Extremist Media Index, proposed by Holbrook (2015). Holbrook employs the index to grade ideological media material conveying extremist sentiments. The system of grading, devised for this index comprises two phases. First, titles or texts are coded according to a set of definitions that are intended to describe notionally 'moderate', 'fringe', and 'extreme' content. Second, the 'extreme' titles are coded in more detail in order to reveal ways in which violence is endorsed.

We propose a fundamentally different approach to designing an aggregate index. We rely on the assumption that participation in an online community communicating the ideas of right-wing radicals evidentiates the fact of explicit or implicit support of these ideas. Participation in a discussion of content posted in such groups, as well as an open demonstration of consent to right-wing radical ideas (e.g. reposting content of these groups) is an indicator sufficient for the accurate identification of right-wing ideology supporters.

As regards factors affecting right-wing extremism, the present-day research tradition involves distinguishing the following main groups of factors: socio-economic and demographic. The first group includes unemployment rate (Van Dyke & Soule, 2002), level of income and education (Pedahzur & Canetti-Nisim, 2004), type of employment, and character of labour (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006). Besides, this group comprises the degree of electoral support for right-wing parties and the crime rate related to right-wing radicals (Falk & Zweimüller, 2005). The demographic factors comprise (a) the ethnic composition of the population (viz. the proportion of white and coloured ethnic groups); (b) changes in non-white ethnic groups, etc. (Van Dyke & Soule, 2002); (c) migration (viz. the number of migrants, public perception of migrants and minorities, the number of refugees in the country, etc.) (Knabe, Rätzel & Thomsen, 2013), and (d) the age composition of the population (viz. the number of young people, primarily, men) (Falk & Zweimüller, 2005).

## Methodology and data processing

### Index calculation

We processed statistical data, collected from the largest Russian social networking site *VKontakte*. The data showed that the number and distribution of right-wing radicals across the territory of the

Russian Federation is very uneven. With this in mind, we examined the correlation of the intensity of right-wing sentiments and socio-economic conditions that could influence the growth of the sentiments.

The proposed Regional Right-Wing Online Activity Index can be displayed by means of the following equation:

$$Index = A + S \qquad (1)$$

where $A$ is activity within right-wing communities (the term 'activity' refers to likes, reposts, and comments from participants on the wall of the Internet community).

$$A = C / V \qquad (2)$$

where $C = likes + reposts + comments$ and $V$ stands for the total number of VKontakte users in a subject of the Russian Federation.

For the purpose of estimation of general activity, only the activity of original commenters (i.e. people who left one or more likes / reposts / comments) was taken into account. It was monitored only in selected right-wing communities. The activity was rated within the range [0... 10]. The weighted coefficients were the same for all the forms of activity (viz. reposts, comments, and likes) and were equal 1.

S represents a static component that describes the ratio of the number of participants within the monitored right-wing communities and the total number of VKontakte users in a particular subject of the Russian Federation. For example, for Tula Oblast, the number of participants, who are members of the community *Natsional'nyy soyuz Rossii* (National Union of Russia), was taken into account because about 2,200 individuals out of more than 14,300 members of this group are residents of one subject, viz., Tula Oblast (about 25% of the participants reported the fact of living in that area in their profiles). In other words, this is a predominantly local group. From this perspective, in order to avoid data distortion, the members of the community registered as Tula Oblast residents were not taken into account for the calculation of the Regional Right-Wing Online Activity Index.

$$S = P / V \qquad (3)$$

where P is the number of right-wing communities' members found in a subject of the Russian Federation and V stands for the total number of VKontakte users in this subject.

In order to determine the number of VKontakte users in each subject, a geographical analysis of users' profiles was performed. In September of 2016, when the index was calculated, the social network *VKontakte* was constituted of 380 million registered users. One thousand five hundred accounts were randomly selected out of every million of users, i.e. 570,000 user profiles were analysed. Subsequently, the obtained data were extrapolated to these 380 million accounts. The static component was also rated within the range [0. . . 10].

Thus, the Right-Wing Online Activity Index can take values ranging from 0 to 20. The index shows the degree of activity within right-wing communities in a given constituent entity (subject) of the Russian Federation. A subject-based modification of this index was also calculated for the period of August 1, 2016, to August 31, 2016.

**Data for the calculation of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index**

After the selection of particular right-wing content, linguistic markers for the corresponding sentiments and attitudes were determined. The resulting collection of language means comprised words, phrases, abbreviations, and numerical symbols associated with such phenomena as ideological orientation and the right radical identity; denigration of national dignity, including the use of profanity and negative names for ethnic groups; derision of nationally important historical events and characters; calls for acts of violence (murders, beatings, and deportation of persons of a particular race, ethnicity, and religion), including calls for a violent overthrow of the constitutional order. It should be noted that we analysed only Russian/Slavic ethnonationalism. We did not consider other types of local ethnonationalism (e.g. right radicalism, which can exist

among 'non-Russians', including Slavic nations).

Further, the identified linguistic markers were used as tags for an automatic search of right-wing online communities on the social network *VKontakte* with the help of the specialised system of social media monitoring and analysis *InfoWatch Kribrum*. The search for right-wing communities was conducted from May 15, 2016, to July 15, 2016. *VKontakte* is the most popular social network in Russia. Forty percent of residents regularly communicate via this social network (as of December 2016). At the same time, among users of the social network, the share of young people aged 18–24 is 77% and of those aged 25–39 years is 60% (Communication in social networks, 2017). Hence, based on the analysis of *VKontakte* users, it is possible to obtain data on almost the whole of the Russian youth.

The study data included 'friendly' links of members of right-wing online communities as well as information on the place of residence, gender, and age obtained from personal profiles of members of those communities.

A semi-automatic search based on predetermined selection criteria enabled us to reveal the following:
- 314 right-wing communities, which post relevant content;
- 53 communities with the number of participants ranging from 532 to 73,514 people), which generate right-wing content on a regular basis.

In order to determine the subject of study, a representative sample of three thousand community members was used as a criterion. The total number of communities corresponding to the criterion and generating right-wing content amounted to 11 (Table 1).

The data on the gender composition of VKontakte right-wing online communities showed a significant prevalence of males. Only 21% of the overall number of participants were females. The share of women in most communities ranged from 15% to 30%. An analysis of the age range of the participants revealed that followers of right-wing online communities were predominantly young people (18-29 years old), who constituted a share of 61%.

**Socio-economic and demographic factors affecting the intensity of right-wing online activity**

The socio-economic and demographic factors having an impact on right-wing online activity were studied based on statistical information describing parameters of the socio-economic indicators in the regional context (Regiony Rossii, 2016); the size of the ethnic Russian component of the population in a particular subject (All-Russian Population Census, 2010); the level of development of the quaternary sector of economy in a particular subject of the Russian Federation (the number of personal computers per capita, number of applications for inventions filed in a subject) (Federal Service for Intellectual Property, 2016) (Table 2). The impact of these factors on the intensity of right-wing online activity on the social network VKontakte was estimated with the Pearson correlation coefficient.

**The Right-Wing Online Activity Index by constituent entities of the Russian Federation**

The distribution of index values revealed a significant discrepancy between ethnic subjects (republics, autonomous okrugs, and autonomous oblast) and other subjects (oblasts, krais, and cities of federal significance) of the Russian Federation as related to the intensity of right-wing online activity. For ethnic subjects, the value of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index is low; whereas, for other subjects of Russia, the value of the index is considerably high. Subjects with a higher value of the index are concentrated in the European part of Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Southern regional clusters) (Table 3).

The obtained model of the distribution of the right-radical online activity is in accord with the 'core-periphery' model, well known in economic geography (Raagmaa, 2003; Hryniewicz, 2014).

This model was developed by Friedmann (1966) in the 1960s, using the example of one country. Wallerstein (1974) and other supporters of world systems analysis elaborated this approach later with regard to global processes. In general, this model can be described as follows: the specifics of industrial society cause a disparity between the core (i.e. the political, economic and technological centre) and the periphery (the remaining territory). The periphery is divided into the near-core and the far periphery in relation to the core. The centre has an active modernising effect on the near-core periphery, but this impact practically does not reach the far periphery. On the global scale of analysis, the near-core periphery is designated 'semi-periphery'. The core-periphery model is employed not only to analyse the economic development of regions, countries, and their role in the process of division of labour; but also to describe the distribution of political relationships, social forms of capital, discourse analysis, etc. (Zarycki, 2007).

In the case of Russia, this approach is being developed by Zubarevich (2013), who distinguishes four groups of regions in Russia with regard to socio-economic development and names them the 'four Russias'. The 'first' Russia is a land of large metropolitan cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. The 'second' Russia is a land of medium-sized industrial cities with a population varying from 20–30 thousand to 250 thousand. The 'third Russia' is a land of towns, villages and settlements, populated by up to 20 thousand people. Finally, the 'fourth' Russia is composed of ethnonational republics of the North Caucasus and southern Siberia.

The obtained data indicate that the online activity of right-wing radicals is barely registered in the 'fourth' Russia. It should also be noted that the relatively low online activity is observed in ethnonational entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation that are socio-economically developed, e.g. the Tatarstan Republic and the Bashkortostan Republic. With this in mind, we considered the following two types of subjects:

1.  ethnonational subjects (Group A), which include republics, autonomous okrugs and autonomous oblasts (a total of 27 subjects). For this group, the mean value of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index is 4.5.
2.  other subjects (Group B), which include krais, oblasts, and cities of federal significance, where there is no pronounced ethnonational core (58 subjects). For this group, the mean value of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index is 9.1, which is twice as high as in the Group A indicator.

The online activity of right-wing radicals is highest in the subjects that can be referred to as 'first' Russia and in those subjects of the 'second' Russia that are geographically close to the first one. For the convenience of analysis, subjects from Group B with a significantly higher (more than 10) value of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index (compared to the mean value of the index of the group) were grouped with the subjects located nearby into the following two regional clusters:

1.  The Moscow cluster, which is composed of Moscow, Moscow Oblast, Tula Oblast, Kaluga Oblast, Smolensk Oblast, Vladimir Oblast, Ryazan Oblast, and Orel Oblast (the mean value of the index in this cluster is 12.3);
2.  The South cluster, which includes Krasnodar Krai, Stavropol Krai, Rostov Oblast, Voronezh Oblast, Belgorod Oblast (the mean value of the index in the cluster is 12.33).

Several other subjects also have a high index but they were not grouped into clusters. These subjects are St. Petersburg (12.77) and Leningrad Oblast (11.49), Primorsky Krai (12.05), Penza Oblast (10.85), and Magadan Oblast (10.24).

We revealed a certain pattern in the distribution of the index value within clusters. The core of a cluster is normally a subject that leads in terms of socio-economic indicators, and where the value of the index is fairly high. Subjects that are located around the core (near-core periphery) and have a lower level of socio-economic development compared to the core subject show higher index values (in some cases considerably higher).

## An analysis of factors for the online activity of right-wing radicals

Analysing the factors that determine the level of socio-economic development of subjects constituting Group B and significantly correlated with the intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals, we revealed two patterns: 1) a direct dependence of the level of socio-economic development of subjects and the intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals on the factors that determine the demographic processes in a particular subject of the Russian Federation (i.e. the median age of the population and migration growth rate); 2) an inverse dependence of the level of socio-economic development of subjects and the intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals on factors determining the social and economic well-being of a subject (i.e. unemployment, differentiation and distribution of the monetary income of the population, and the total number of crimes) (Table 4). Further, we focused on the consideration of the patterns identified for the subjects of Group B, because the intensity of the right-wing radical activity on social media is much lower in the ethnonational subjects of Group A. Obviously, other types of extremist sentiments associated with local ethnic nationalism, Islamism, separatism, etc., are more relevant for this group of subjects.

The obtained results accurately indicate that the intensity right-wing radicals' activity on social networks is determined by the level of social and economic well-being of a particular subject of the Russian Federation. Analysis of data on the median age of the population enabled us to estimate the total number of young working-age people in a subject in general, as well as to assess the attractiveness of the standards of living in a subject for this group of the population. We found that the median age of the population is higher in subjects with a high intensity of radical right-wing online activity, which means that the proportion of young people in these subjects is smaller. The most skilled and ambitious young people leave semi-periphery subjects for centres such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, etc. In general, in subjects, where the Right-Wing Online Activity Index is high, similar demographic processes are observed, viz. a negative value of the coefficient of natural population growth, high demographic burden with a clear skew towards elderly population, and a relatively small number of children and young people (Regiony Rossii, 2016).

The process of migration of young and active people from some subjects is accompanied by another process, which is manifested in the direct dependence of the online activity of right-wing radicals on the migration growth rate, and the inverse dependence of the online activity of right-wing radicals on the unemployment rate (i.e. the lower the unemployment rate is, the higher the online activity of right-wing radicals). Hence, it is possible to make an inference that, in the context of the overall aging of the population, unemployment remains relatively low in these subjects. It is obvious that jobs are held by labour migrants. The shortage of workers is compensated for by internal and external migration. Often migrants come from ethnonational republics, where the share of young people is traditionally high and jobs are few (e.g. from the post-Soviet republics of Transcaucasia and Central Asia). This explanatory model is clearly illustrated by the Moscow Cluster. The largest value of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index is registered in the subjects of the semi-periphery (Moscow Oblast, Tula Oblast, etc.), directly adjacent to Moscow, which serves as the core. The median age in the Moscow Oblast is 40.06, which is higher than the average value of the indicator for Russia. At the same time, the migration growth rate per 10,000 people equals 141, which is the largest value across the subjects of the Russian Federation; whereas the coefficient of natural population growth is close to zero (in 2015, it was 0.1; and earlier it had remained negative for many years) (Regiony Rossii, 2016).

Thus, we identified two migration pathways. One of them is directed from the semi-periphery to the centre (core subjects); the other connects the remaining part of Russia and the post-Soviet states (being the starting point) to the semi-periphery (being the destination). It seems that the considered structure of migration flows contributes to an increase in the right-wing radical online activity among young and middle-aged people, who are permanent residents of the semi-periphery. As a rule, these young and middle-aged people are well educated. The registered correlation between the share of the population with higher education and the intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals equals (r =.35).

Under conditions of ongoing labour migration, permanent residents, on the one hand, encounter a large number of non-residents; and on the other hand, they compare their level of well-being with the social and economic conditions of life in the nearby core regions. Consequently, this population begins to support right-wing radical ideas. Here, it should be noted that in the 1990s a number of semi-peripheral subjects of the Russian Federation belonged to the so-called 'red belt', i.e. subjects, where the Communist Party of the Russian Federation enjoyed great popularity in elections. Our model was confirmed by the analysis of data on foreign workers, which also revealed a direct relationship between the number of foreign workers and the intensity of radical online right-wing activity; although this relationship is considerably weaker compared to the case of migratory growth (viz. for the number of foreigners with a work permit r=.23, for the number of foreigners with a licence authorising professional activity r=.29) (Table 4). It should be noted that we considered only official statistics on the number of labour migrants. In fact, unofficial labour migration flows can be much higher.

As regards the other identified factors that affect the online activity of right-wing radicals, they demonstrated an unexpected inverse relationship between the Right-Wing Online Activity Index and the level of crime in a particular subject (including both the total number of crimes and especially grave crimes). This means that the safer the overall crime-related situation in a subject is, the higher the intensity of the online activity of right-wing radicals. We also saw a marked inverse relationship between the indicator 'differentiation and distribution of income of the population' and the Right-Wing Online Activity Index. Surprisingly, we did not find any substantial dependence of the online activity of right-wing radicals on economic factors (e.g. the gross regional product per capita, per capita income of the population, etc.), except for the Consumer Price Index; the relationship is insignificant but noticeable (r =. 28). Hence, we can suppose that right-wing radical sentiments on social media are not affected by the overall economic welfare; however, right-wing radical sentiments are sensitive to changes in consumer prices, which characterises the inflation rates experienced by the population.

Addressing the state of the right-wing radical online activity in ethnonational subjects (i.e. Group A subjects comprising ethnonational republics, autonomous okrugs, and autonomous oblast), it is important to emphasise that the significant demographic factors affecting the right-wing radical online activity in these subjects include the share of Russians in the population, the share of urban population, the number of people with secondary education, and the median age of the population (Table 5). In ethnonational subjects, the determining factors are the share of ethnic Russians, who often feel that their rights are more subject to violation compared to the rights of the titular nation, and urbanisation, due to the fact that urban residents in these subjects use the internet more actively. Interestingly, in these subjects, we also found a direct relationship between the median age of the population and right-wing radical sentiments on social media; so the proposed above explanatory model is not applicable in this case. However, we believe that in this case some statistical distortion occurs due to the fact that in some ethnonational subjects, the median age is low, and the value of the index is also low. In general, this dependence does not seem significant. It should also be noted that we excluded the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol from the analysis, since these subjects should be considered separately due to their controversial status.

When we compared our results with the results of Western studies of right-wing movements, a number of correspondences were identified. For example, the relationship between negative attitudes towards migrants and a tendency to vote for right-wing and nationalist parties is proven in studies on electoral behaviour in Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and Norway) (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006) and in Great Britain (Kappe, 2015). In the case of the United States, the relationship between the size of the non-white population and the number of patriotic/militia organisations is shown (van Dyke & Soule, 2002). These studies substantiate the fact that the number of people of different ethnic and racial groups within the population of a particular region has a stimulating effect on the growth of right-wing radical sentiments in both online and offline formats. As regards Russia, the proportion of non-Slavic ethnic groups in the population has the capacity to stimulate right-wing radical activities.

## Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt was made to assess the objective circumstances and factors that stipulate an increase in the sympathy for right-wing radical ideas in Russian society. For this purpose, we analysed the activity of users of the social networking site VKontakte. The focus was on members of online communities containing right-radical content. In order to enhance the accuracy of measuring online activity in these communities, a special aggregated indicator (the Right-Wing Online Activity Index) was designed. The obtained results appeared to be fairly surprising. For example, the intensity of online activity of right-wing radicals in 'semi-peripheral' subjects of the Russian Federation, i.e. the periphery in proximity with major economic and political centres, is unexpectedly higher than in the large centres of federal significance such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.

In the course of the study, we saw that indicators of social and economic well-being do not have a significant effect on the intensity of right-wing-radical online activity, so they are essential for the purpose of analysis. On the contrary, the influence of the federal centres (e.g. Moscow, St. Petersburg) or regional centres (e.g. Krasnodar Krai, etc.) cannot be ignored. We presume that 'emotional irritation' acts as a driver of the right-wing radicals' activity on social networks. This irritation is often caused by internal and external migrants, who often come from different cultural backgrounds and historically lead a different way of life, as well as by the gap between the higher standard of living in the nearby centre (core subject) and the lower standard of living in the subject (or city) of residence, etc. Compared to life in centres (core subjects), which are currently at the stage of post-industrial development, in a semi-periphery area, life is perceived by people as unfavourable and ignominious. This also stimulates a feeling of discontent and irritation. However, the real situation in these subjects is far from being catastrophic. This circumstance perfectly explains the current situation in relation to hate crimes. On the one hand, a trend is observed towards a reduction in the number of assaults involving nationalists (Sova.Database, 2017). Simultaneously, sentencing on the charges of spreading propaganda of extremism is increasing (Sova.Database, 2017; Judicial statistics, 2017). A large share of convictions for publishing extremist materials is connected with the internet and the social network VKontakte (Yudina, 2018). Thus, the right-wing radical activity is increasingly moving from the streets to social media. At the same time, social media - by nature - can enhance extremist sentiments and stimulate the radicalism of users (about the echo-chamber effect see Jamieson and Cappella (2010), Sunstein (2007), Boutyline and Willer (2016)).

## Annex

**Table 1:** List of extremist communities

| Tags | Community | Total number of members |
|---|---|---|
| (borot'sya\|srazhat'sya) & ("s hachami"\|"s churkami"\|"s hachikami"\|"s kavkazcami"\|"s negrami"\|"s zhidami"\|"s predateli"), "brat' svobodu", "valilovo», (vystupat' protiv\|napadenie) &(hohly\|hach\|churka\|hachik\|kavkazec\|negr\|zhid\|tvar'\|musul'mane\|islam), «vyazalovo», (davit'\|valit'\|zatykat'\|nenavidet'\|protestuj\|soprotivlyajsya\|sdohni\|doloj\|kaznit'\|ubivat'\|rasstrelivat'\|unichtozhit'\|unichtozhat'\|prezirat') & (tvar'\|predatel'\|banderlog\|hunta\|banderovec\|hohly\|hach\|churka\|hachik\|kavkazec\|negr\|zhid), (zachistit'\|ochistit') & (predatel'\|banderlog\|hunta\|banderovec\|hohly\|hach\|churka\|hachik\|kavkazec\|negr\|zhid\|tvar'), «lyuli», «mesivo», (prizyvat'\|razzhigat') & (nenavist'\|ubijstvo\|repressiya\|prevoskhodstvo\|revolyuciya\|terrorizm), «razrushat'», «reznya», «sudilishche» «hvatit molchat'», «hvatit prisluzhivat'», «putinskaya mraz'», «pyataya kolonna», «rashizm», «revolyuciya», «kremlevskoe koryto», «krovavaya tyur'ma» | Ostanovim genotsid Rusov (Stop the Genocide of Russians) | 5,845 |
| | Komitet "Natsiya i svoboda" (Committee *Nation and Freedom*) | 5,181 |
| | Natsional'nyy soyuz Rossii (Russian National Union) | 14,260 |
| | Pravaya druzhina (The Right Squad) | 13,839 |
| | Pravaya politika (The Right Politics) | 3,043 |
| | Russkiy Sektor - Natsional'naya Sluzhba Novostey (Russian Sector - National News Service) | 7,745 |
| | Prizrak rossiyskogo maydana (The Phantom of the Russian Maidan) | 16,557 |
| | Russkiy natsionalist (Russian Nationalist) | 73,514 |
| | Slavyanskoye vozrozhdeniye - Rossiya (Slavic Revival – Russia) | 15,190 |
| | Slavyanskiy natsionalist (Slavic Nationalist) | 48,907 |
| | Russkoyazychnyy Banderovets (Russian-speaking Banderovets) | 10,394 |

*Source:* Own calculation based on data search system InfoWatch Kribrum

**Table 2:** Factors affecting online extremist activity - model developed by the authors

| Type of factors | Factors | Variables | | Level of factors |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Socio-economic | Income level | Gross regional product (GRP) | | National |
| | | Consumer price index (CPI) | | |
| | | Average nominal monthly wages | | |
| | | Real income dynamics | | |
| | | Per capita income of the population | | |
| | | Differentiation and distribution of income of the population | | |
| | Unemployment | Unemployment rate (as reported in population surveys) | | |
| | | Unemployment rate (as reported by the Federal Service for Labour and Employment) | | |
| | Education level | Share of the population with secondary education | | Local |
| | | Share of the population with higher education | | |
| | Type of employment and character of labour | Level of development of the quaternary sector of economy in the subject Number of applications for inventions filed in the subject | Number of personal computers in the population | Global |
| | | | Number of applications for inventions filed in the subject | |
| | Crime rate | Total number of crimes | | Local |
| | | Number of grave and especially grave crimes | | |
| Demographic | Ethnic composition of the population | Share of ethnic Russians in the subject | | Local |
| | Migration processes | Proportion of urban and rural population | | |
| | | Net migration rate | Number of foreign citizens with a work permit | Global |
| | | | Number of foreign citizens with a licence authorising professional activity | |
| | | | Net migration rate coefficient | |
| | Age-gender composition of the population | Median age of the population | | Local |
| | | Male-female ratio | | |
| | | Number of grave and especially grave crimes | | |

**Table 3**: Distribution of values of the Right-Wing Online Activity Index, by constituent entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation

| Constituent entity (subject) of the Russian Federation | Identified members of extremist communities (in number of people) | Extremist Activity Index |
|---|---|---|
| Adygea Republic (Adygea) | 138 | 6.46 |
| Altai Republic | 53 | 3.85 |
| Altai Krai | 866 | 6.05 |
| Amur Oblast | 210 | 7.67 |
| Arkhangelsk Oblast | 798 | 6.74 |
| Astrakhan Oblast | 582 | 8.74 |
| Bashkortostan Republic | 1,415 | 3.35 |
| Belgorod Oblast | 1,172 | 10.46 |
| Bryansk Oblast | 854 | 9.67 |
| Buryatia Republic | 205 | 2.70 |
| Vladimir Oblast | 903 | 10.73 |
| Volgograd Oblast | 2,175 | 8.98 |
| Vologda Oblast | 1,006 | 8.78 |
| Voronezh Oblast | 1,995 | 12.53 |
| Dagestan Republic | 104 | 1.15 |
| Jewish Autonomous Oblast | 19 | 3.70 |
| Zabaykalsky Krai | 311 | 6.33 |
| Ivanovo Oblast | 642 | 9.10 |
| Ingushetia Republic | 10 | 0.95 |
| Irkutsk Oblast | 1,021 | 5.75 |
| Kabardino-Balkar Republic | 61 | 2.25 |
| Kaliningrad Oblast | 916 | 7.41 |
| Kalmykia Republic | 24 | 1.02 |
| Kaluga Oblast | 826 | 12.91 |
| Kamchatka Krai | 20 | 5.23 |
| Karachay-Cherkess Republic | 43 | 4.52 |
| Karelia Republic | 441 | 8.47 |
| Kemerovo Oblast | 1,955 | 8.72 |
| Kirov Oblast | 854 | 8.55 |
| Komi Republic | 528 | 11.43 |
| Kostroma Oblast | 404 | 8.16 |
| Krasnodar Krai | 5,483 | 12.71 |
| Krasnoyarsk Krai | 2,091 | 7.02 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kurgan Oblast | 332 | 6.09 |
| Kursk Oblast | 740 | 9.69 |
| Leningrad Oblast | 778 | 11.49 |
| Lipetsk Oblast | 783 | 9.24 |
| Magadan Oblast | 79 | 10.24 |
| Mari El Republic | 263 | 5.36 |
| Mordovia Republic | 499 | 9.60 |
| Moscow | 22,396 | 10.61 |
| Moscow Oblast | 4,312 | 15.60 |
| Murmansk Oblast | 722 | 6.94 |
| Nenets Autonomous Okrug | 22 | 7.15 |
| Nizhny Novgorod Oblast | 2,310 | 7.73 |
| Novgorod Oblast | 173 | 8.46 |
| Novosibirsk Oblast | 1,979 | 7.09 |
| Omsk Oblast | 1,159 | 7.18 |
| Orenburg Oblast | 933 | 6.45 |
| Oryol Oblast | 654 | 12.52 |
| Penza Oblast | 954 | 10.85 |
| Perm Krai | 1,606 | 6.16 |
| Primorsky Krai | 944 | 12.05 |
| Pskov Oblast | 457 | 8.72 |
| Rostov Oblast | 4,212 | 13.55 |
| Ryazan Oblast | 757 | 10.81 |
| Samara Oblast | 2,874 | 9.18 |
| Saint Petersburg | 11,641 | 12.77 |
| Saratov Oblast | 1,484 | 8.47 |
| Sakha Republic (Yakutia) | 185 | 2.79 |
| Sakhalin Oblast | 137 | 4.56 |
| Sverdlovsk Oblast | 2,859 | 9.57 |
| North Ossetia-Alania Republic | 70 | 2.51 |
| Smolensk Oblast | 653 | 10.82 |
| Stavropol Krai | 1,651 | 12.46 |
| Tambov Oblast | 505 | 7.62 |
| Tatarstan Republic (Tatarstan) | 1,341 | 3.86 |
| Tver Oblast | 925 | 8.55 |
| Tomsk Oblast | 567 | 9.86 |
| Tula Oblast | 1,279 | 14.31 |
| Tuva Republic | 35 | 1.11 |
| Tyumen Oblast | 849 | 5.51 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Udmurt Republic | 598 | 4.64 |
| Ulyanovsk Oblast | 632 | 6.63 |
| Khabarovsk Krai | 736 | 7.82 |
| Khakassia Republic | 194 | 5.35 |
| Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug (Yugra) | 942 | 6.05 |
| Chelyabinsk Oblast | 2,180 | 7.28 |
| Chechen Republic | 95 | 3.02 |
| Chuvash Republic (Chuvashia) | 369 | 3.48 |
| Chukotka Autonomous Okrug | 12 | 4.36 |
| Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug | 305 | 7.65 |
| Yaroslavl Oblast | 1,107 | 9.19 |
| Republic of Crimea | 561 | 11.06 |
| Sevastopol | 216 | 10.73 |

*Source:* Own calculation based on data presented in Table 1

**Table 4:** Correlation between factors and the Right-Wing Online Activity Index in constituent entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation without an ethnic core (all subjects, except for the ethnic subjects)

| Factor | Correlation coefficient |
|---|---|
| Gross regional product per capita | -0.192698331 |
| Real income dynamics | -0.008835861 |
| Per capita income of the population | 0.041983825 |
| Average nominal monthly wages | -0.081520266 |
| Consumer price index (CPI) | 0.276683988 |
| Differentiation and distribution of income of the population | -0.464183261 |
| Unemployment(based on population surveys) | -0.473085134 |
| Unemployment(as reported by the Federal Service for Labour and Employment) | -0.378178762 |
| Population with secondary education | -0.233078828 |
| Population with higher education | 0.353789122 |
| Applications for inventions filed in the subject | 0.16642113 |
| Number of households with a computer | -0.216644348 |
| Share of ethnic Russians in total number of population | 0.275968991 |
| Number of foreigners with a work permit | 0.229893344 |
| Number of foreigners with a licence authorising professional activity | 0.289822961 |
| Net migration rate coefficient | 0.517929961 |
| Share of urban population | 3.32904E-05 |
| Male-female ratio | 0.32731249 |
| Median age of the population | 0.487102765 |
| Total number of crimes | -0.472380354 |
| Number of grave and especially grave crimes | -0.267292038 |

**Note:** $p < 0.05$

*Source:* Own calculation based on data presented in Table 3 and data from Federal State Statistics Service (2016), All-Russian Population Census 2010 (2010) and Federal Service for Intellectual Property (2016)

**Table 5:** Correlation between factors and the Right-Wing Online Activity Index for ethnic constituent entities (subjects) of the Russian Federation

| Factor | Correlation coefficient |
|---|---|
| Gross regional product per capita | 0.378438558 |
| Real income dynamics | -0.300145041 |
| Per capita income of the population | 0.375772354 |
| Average nominal monthly wages | 0.351354799 |
| Consumer price index (CPI) | -0.134375854 |
| Differentiation and distribution of income of the population | -0.433158563 |
| Unemployment rate (based on population surveys) | -0.511981477 |
| Unemployment rate (as reported by the Federal Service for Labour and Employment) | -0.35266416 |
| Population with secondary education | 0.554626834 |
| Population with higher education | 0.127095773 |
| Applications for inventions filed in the subject | -0.132607669 |
| Number of households with a computer | 0.440864246 |
| Share of ethnic Russians in the total number of the population | 0.591147787 |
| Number of foreigners with a work permit | 0.289586357 |
| Number of foreigners with a licence authorising professional activity | 0.178305702 |
| Net migration rate coefficient | -0.01387796 |
| Share of urban population | 0.560834507 |
| Male-female ratio | 0.001231802 |
| Median age of the population | 0.492551922 |
| Total number of crimes | 0.373972831 |
| Number of grave and especially grave crimes | 0.08082078 |

**Note:** $p < 0.05$

*Source:* Own calculation based on data presented in Table 3 and data from Federal State Statistics Service (2016), All-Russian Population Census 2010 (2010) and Federal Service for Intellectual Property (2016)

# References

All-Russian Population Census 2010 (2010). Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm

Arzheimer, K., & Carter E. (2006). Political opportunity structures and right-wing extremist party success. *European Journal of Political Research, 4*5(3), 419–443.

Baunov, A. (2017, October 10). Is Putin losing control of Russia's conservative nationalists? What the Matilda controversy reveals about his rule. *Foreign Affairs.* Retrieved from https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2017-10-10/putin-losing-control-russias-conservative-nationalists

Betz, H.-G. (1994). *Radical right-wing populism in Western Europe.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan

Blee, K. M., & Creasap K. A. (2010). Conservative and right-wing movements. *Annual Review of Sociology, 36*, 269-286.

Boutyline, A., & Willer, R. (2016). The social structure of political echo chambers: variation in ideological homophily in online networks. *Political Psychology, 38*, 551-569.

Communication in social networks (2017). *Levada-Center*. Retrieved from http://www.levada.ru/cp/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Sotsseti.pdf

Demand for Right-Wing Extremism Index. (2016). Retrieved from http://derexindex.eu/About_DEREX

Etling, B., Alexanyan, K., Kelly, J., Faris, R., Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2010). *Public discourse in the Russian blogosphere: mapping RuNet politics and mobilization*. Retrieved from https://cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2010/Public_Discourse_Russian_Blogosphere

Falk, A., & Zweimüller, J. (2005). Unemployment and right-wing extremist crime. *IZA Discussion Paper, 1540 (March)*, 1-29. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10419/21316

Federal Service for Intellectual Property (2016). *Annual report 2015 (Application)*. Retrieved from http://www.rupto.ru/about/reports/2015pril

Federal State Statistics Service (2016). Regiony Rossii. Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/%20doc_2015/region/reg-pok15.pdf

Friedmann, J. (1966). *Regional development policy: a case study of Venezuela*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press.

Holbrook, D. (2015). Designing and applying an 'Extremist Media Index'. *Perspectives on Terrorism, 9*(5), 57-68.

Hryniewicz, J. T. (2014). Core-periphery – an old theory in new times. *European Political Science, 13* (3), 235–250.

Grinko, I. (2014). Social portrait of network racism in the Runet (according to social network data). In A. Verkhovsky (Ed.), *Russia is not Ukraine: modern accents of nationalism* (pp. 62-72). Moscow, Sova Center.

Ignazi, P. (1995). The re-emergence of the extreme right in Europe. *Reihe Politikwissenschaft, Institut für Höhere Studien, 21*, 1-15.

Jamieson, K. H., & Cappella, J. N. (2010). E*cho chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the conservative media establishment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Judicial statistics (2017). Retrieved from http://www.cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&pg=0

Kappe, R. (2015, September). *The political psychology of UKIP: Personality factors, authoritarianism and support for right-wing populist parties in Britain*. Paper presented at Annual conference of the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties (EPOP) specialist group, Cardiff University. Retrieved from http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/epop2015/files/2016/02/The-Political-Psychology-of-Support-for-UKIP-%E2%80%93-Roland-Kappe.pdf

Knabe, A., Rätzel S., & Thomsen S. L. (2013). Right-wing extremism and the well-being of immigrants. *Kyklos, 66* (4), 567-590.

Knigge, P. (1998). The ecological correlates of right-wing extremism in Western Europe. *European Journal of Polical Research, 34*, 249-279.

Kolstø, P. (2014). Russia's nationalists flirt with democracy. *Journal of Democracy, 25*(3), 120-134.

Koopmans, R., Statham, P, Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship: immigration and cultural diversity in Europe*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Koshkin, P. (2011, December 18). Nationalism online. *Levada-Center*. Retrieved from https://www.levada.ru/2011/12/18/natsionalizm-online/

Laine, V. (2017). Contemporary Russian nationalisms: the state, nationalist movements, and the shared space in between. *Nationalities Papers, 45*(2), 222-237.

Laruelle, M. (2012). 'Natsdem' the new wave of anti-Putin nationalists. *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo, 223*, 62-67.

Laruelle, M. (2017). Is nationalism a force for change in Russia? *Dædalus, 146*(2), 89-100.

Minkenberg, M. (2000). The renewal of the radical right: between modernity and anti-modernity. *Government and Opposition, 35*(2), 170-188.

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nikiporets-Takigawa, G., & Pain, E. (Eds.). (2016). *Internet and ideological movements in Russia.* Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie.

Norris, P. (2005). *Radical right: voters and parties in the electoral market.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pain, E., Prostakov, S., Fedyunin, S., Mokhov, S., & Polyakov, E. (2013). Reflection of ethnopolitical processes in the Runet. *Politicheskaya Nauka, 1*, 133-160.

Pain, E. (2014). Reflection of modern Russian nationalism in the Runet. In A. Verkhovsky (Ed.), *Russia is not Ukraine: Modern accents of nationalism* (pp. 8-32). Moscow: Sova Center.

Pain, E. (2016). The imperial syndrome and its influence on Russian nationalism. In P. Kolstø & H. Blakkisrud (Eds.). *The new Russian nationalism. Imperialism, ethnicity and authoritarianism 2000–15* (pp. 46-74). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Pipiya, E. (2017). Xenophobia in 2017. *Levada-Center.* Retrieved from https://www.levada.ru/2017/08/23/16486/

Pedahzur, A., & Canetti-Nisim, D. (2004). Support for right-wing extremist ideology: socio-economic indicators and socio-psychological mechanisms of social identification, *Comparative Sociology, 3*(1), 1-36.

Population of the Russian Federation by sex and age as of January 1, 2017. (2017). Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b17_111/Main.htm

Raagmaa, G. (2003, August). *Centre–periphery model explaining the regional development of the informational and transitional society.* Presentation at 43rd Congress of The European Regional Science Association (ERSA) in Jyväskylä, Finland. Retrieved from https://www.jyu.fi/ersa2003/cdrom/papers/503.pdf

Rooduijn, M. (2015). The rise of the populist radical right in Western Europe. *European View, 14*, 3-11.

Rotmistrov, A., & Popova, P. (2016). How the Russian nationalist movement is splintered by Ukrainian Maidan? Identifying ideological determinants by means of empirical data & mixed methods. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes, 6*, 1-13.

Rydgren, J. (2007). The sociology of the radical right. *Annual Review of Sociology, 33*, 241-262.

Shekhovtsov, A. (2018). *Russia and the Western far right. Tango noir.* London, New York: Routledge.

Shenfield, S. D. (2001). *Russian fascism: traditions, tendencies, movements.* New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Simonsen, S. G. (1996). Aleksandr Barkashov and Russian National Unity: blackshirt friends of the nation. *Nationalities Papers, 24*(4), 625–639.

Sokolov, M. (1999). Printsipy segmentirovaniya auditoria i ideologicheskii repertuar radikalnogo natsionalisticheskogo dvizheniya [The principles of segmentation of the political public and the ideological repertoire of the nationalist movement]. *Teleskop: Sankt-Peterburgskii zhurnal sotsiologicheskikh i marketingovykh issledovanii, 6*, 10-18.

Sokolov, M. (2009). The end of Russian radical nationalism? *Forum for Anthropology and Culture, 5*, 161-176.

Sova.Database. (2017). Retrieved from http://www.sova-center.ru/database

Sunstein, C. R. (2007). *Republic.com 2.0.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Van Dijk, J. (2006). *The network society. Social aspects of new media.* London: SAGE Publications.

Van Dyke, N., & Soule, S. A. (2002). Structural social change and the mobilizing effect of threat: explaining levels of patriot and militia organizing in the United States. S*ocial Problems, 49*(4), 497-520.

Verkhovsky A., & Pribylovsky V. (1996). *Natsional-patrioticheskiye organizatsii v Rossii: Istoriya, ideologiya, ekstremistskiye tendentsii [National-patriotic organizations in Russia. History, ideology and extremist tendencies].* Moscow: Institut eksperimental'noy sotsiologii.

Verkhovsky, A. (2007). Ideynaya evolyutsiya russkogo natsionalizma: 1990-e i 2000-e gody [The ideological evolution of Russian nationalism: 1990-e and 2000-ies]. In A. Verkhovsky (Ed.), *Verkhi i nizy russkogo natsionalizma [The Upper and Lower Echelons of Russian Nationalism]* (pp. 6–32). Moscow: SOVA Center for Information and Analysis.

Verkhovsky, A. (2016). Radical nationalists from the start of Medvedev's presidency to the war in Donbas: True till death? In P. Kolstø & H. Blakkisrud (Eds.). *The new Russian nationalism. imperialism, ethnicity and authoritarianism 2000–15* (pp. 75-103). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Volkov, D. (2011). Civil and nationalist mobilization in Russia. *Levada-Center.* Retrieved from https://www.levada.ru/2011/07/13/grazhdanskaya-i-natsionalisticheskaya-mobilizatsiya-v-rossii/

Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system: capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century.* New York: Academic Press.

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: what right-wing populist discourses mean.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Yudina, N. (2018). Xenophobia in figures: hate crime in Russia and efforts to counteract it in 2017. *SOVA Center*. Retrieved from http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2018/02/d38830/

Zarycki, T. (2007). An interdisciplinary model of centre-periphery relations: a theoretical proposition. R*egional and Local Studies, Special Issue*, 110-130.

Zubarevich, N. (2013). Four russias: human potential and social differentiation of Russian regions and cities. In M. Lipman & N. Petrov (Eds.), *Russia 2025: scenarios for the Russian future* (pp. 67-85). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Mikhail Myagkov** is a data scientist. He is the head of research in the Laboratory of Big Data in Social Sciences and Laboratory of Experimental Methods in Cognitive and Social Sciences of Tomsk State University, leading researcher at the Institute of Education, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, and professor at the Institute for Cognitive and Decision Sciences and Department of Political Science, University of Oregon. His research interests include game theory, big data in the social, educational and economic context, statistical methods, and comparative politics experimental design.

**Evgeniy V. Shchekotin** is a sociologist, a research fellow in the Laboratory of Big Data in Social Sciences of Tomsk State University and a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Novosibirsk State University of Economics and Management. His research interests include wellbeing studies, quality of life, social development and social media.

**Vyacheslav L. Goiko** is data scientist and head at the laboratory of Big Data in Social Sciences. His general research interests include data mining and machine learning algorithms. He specialises in statistical analysis and programming. His current work focuses on the building programming tools that automate processes of data collection and text analysis.

**Vitaliy V. Kashpur** is a sociologist and head of the Department of Sociology at Tomsk State University. His research interests include studies of right-wing turn and radical right communities, studies of online philanthropy, and big data analysis in social science.

**Ekaterina A. Aksenova** is the head of analytics at the Kribrum JSC, Moscow, Russia. The Kribrum provides the software for data collection on social networks.

## Acknowledgements