

Deep Russia: **DIPLOMATIC DEMARCHE**

What Russians discussed on "VKontakte" and on "Telegram" from 21 to 27 September

Period	21 - 27 September 2026
Platforms	VKontakte, Telegram (regional communities)



Key Findings

On 23 September 2026, after a meeting with Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Marco Rubio confirmed Putin's invitation to the G20. His rationale rested on the opportunities this would give Putin to talk with Trump and other leaders, and he expressed hope that the invitation would be accepted. On the same day, Peskov thanked the United States and announced that the matter would be worked through via diplomatic channels.

In parallel, a possible negotiating format involving Ukraine was discussed. Trump again proposed to Zelensky talks with Putin in Moscow. Another related line concerned a limited truce on energy and grain shipments. Marco Rubio spoke of both sides' interest and of the difficulty of reaching an agreement and ending the war. On the same day, Lavrov stated at the United Nations Security Council that Russia would not halt combat operations for the duration of the talks.

Putin's invitation to the G20 was discussed in more than **30** regions.

In comments about **Putin's possible visit** there are many doubts that he will go at all. People joke about the "bunker", a possible arrest, an unwillingness to take risks or to meet Zelensky on neutral ground. Part of the audience explains a refusal to travel by security concerns, while perceiving the invitation itself as proof that one cannot speak of Putin's complete international isolation.

Reactions to the talks are mixed. Supporters of the Kremlin's approach insisted on a meeting in Moscow and on the fulfillment of Russian demands, questioned Zelensky's legitimacy and supported the continuation of combat operations and strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Their opponents linked the refusal of a direct meeting to the dragging out of the war and called for an end to the loss of life. The desire for peace is often combined with accusations against Ukraine and the West.

What the different positions had in common was distrust of leaders' promises. Part of the audience perceived possible meetings and statements of readiness to negotiate as PR or yet more talk without consequences.

The week after the elections set a common frame for discussing the fuel crisis, price rises, new laws, everyday problems and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attacks. Part of the audience linked the negative news to the start of a "tightening of the screws" after the voting ended. The comments repeated the feeling that the authorities' need to please voters had passed, and that now payments could be raised and pressure increased.

1. DIPLOMATIC DEMARCHE

Putin's invitation to the G20 in the media

At the meeting with Zelensky in New York (22 September), [Trump allowed for a new contact with Putin](#), but gave no definite answer as to whether this would happen at the G20 leaders' summit scheduled for 14–15 December 2026 in Miami, at the Trump National Doral venue.

On 23 September 2026, after a meeting with Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Marco Rubio [confirmed Putin's invitation to the G20](#). His rationale rested on the opportunities this would give Putin to talk with Trump and other leaders, and he expressed hope that the invitation would be accepted. At the same time, Rubio said that a separate new Putin–Trump summit had not been discussed; a possible contact in December depends on whether Putin comes.

On the same day, [Peskov thanked the United States](#) and announced that the matter would be worked through via diplomatic channels. On 24 September he described as [premature any talk of a Putin–Trump meeting](#) on the sidelines of the G20. On 27 September Peskov again stated that [there is no decision yet on Putin's personal participation](#), although Russia will take part in the work of the "Twenty".

In parallel, a possible [negotiating format involving Ukraine](#) was discussed. On 24 September Zelensky called the G20 a potential opportunity for a trilateral Ukraine–US–Russia meeting that delivers a result, provided there is a corresponding agreement. On 25 September Bloomberg, citing sources, reported that [Trump again proposed to Zelensky talks with Putin in Moscow](#), and Zelensky refused.

Another related line concerned a [limited truce](#) on energy and grain shipments. Marco Rubio spoke of both sides' interest and of the difficulty of reaching an agreement and ending the war. On the same day, Lavrov stated at the United Nations Security Council that [Russia will not halt combat operations](#) for the duration of the talks.

Reactions in the regions

Putin's invitation to the G20 was discussed in more than **30** regions.

In comments about **Putin's possible visit** there are many doubts that he will go at all. People joke about the "bunker", a possible arrest, an unwillingness to take risks or to meet Zelensky on neutral ground. At the same time, part of the audience explains a refusal to travel by security concerns, while perceiving the invitation itself as proof that one cannot speak of Putin's complete international isolation.

Samara

"No way in hell is putin going to the G-20 summit. He's a coward, and besides, nobody has canceled the Hague court's decision on putin's arrest." — September 12 at 17:45, ♥11

Tatarstan

"No Miamis, let him come to Moscow with a bow, or to Nizhnekamsk" — September 13 at 11:01, ♥8

Samara

"Cool! That's the same as inviting our guy to Kyiv)" — September 12 at 16:26, ♥75

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Novosibirsk Oblast

"They're already meeting him halfway just to talk things over and end the war, and he keeps calling them to come to the Kremlin 🍷 Why doesn't he come to Kyiv himself then? 🤔" — September 12 at 16:54, ♥25

"Pavel, the winner going to the losers - are you in your right mind 🤔" — September 12 at 17:00, ♥8

"Ivan, what kind of winner is he? A disgraced and humiliated 'great geostrategist' who has been taking Kyiv for the fifth year now. I'm in my right mind all right. The questions are for you, you vatnik lowlife 🤔🤔🤔" — September 12 at 17:01, ♥32

Samara

"Well of course, why end it. Grandpa would be bored living without the war, and this way there's at least some kind of hustle..." — September 26 at 6:39, ♥63

Samara

"The Kremlin constantly stokes a sense of emergency and imposes a siege mentality on the population. For Putin, escalation has become the main means of holding on to power." — September 26 at 21:41, ♥24

What the different positions had in common was distrust of political leaders' promises. Part of the audience perceived possible meetings and statements of readiness to negotiate as PR or yet more talk without consequences.

Samara

*"He already promised that settlement over there within a month) then within three)" —
September 22 at 18:30, ♥17*

"Roman, just like our grandpa keeps promising to win" — September 22 at 20:09, ♥10

Omsk

"I strongly doubt that putin wants the war to end. 'Just imagine - the special military operation ends, what will we do then?' (putin)." — September 23 at 9:03, ♥8

2. The week in Russian regional "VKontakte" and "Telegram"

Top discussions on Telegram and VKontakte

1. After the elections: housing, utility bills and new levies

After the elections, discussion of future expenses grew noticeably. Taxes, the technology levy, utility tariffs and changes to the family mortgage converged into a single topic. Compared with the previous week, there were almost eight times more such posts.

In the comments, all this news was linked to the end of the elections and, as a consequence, to the growth of future expenses. People argued about how affordable housing would remain for families with one or two children, whether utility bills correspond to real incomes, and whether business would pass additional costs on to buyers through higher prices.

Perm

"The elections had barely finished and there's already a tax 🤔🤔🤔🤔, oh what a hoot"
— September 21 at 16:41, ♥84

At the same time, regional public groups, in their discussions, often mixed up decisions already adopted, drafts and merely possible future changes. This created the impression that all the listed payments had already been introduced, although this is not the case.

A similar confusion arose around the so-called "drone tax" — the possibility for enterprises to take into account, for taxation purposes, expenses on protection against Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and on restoring damaged facilities. The audience feared that **the costs of business would in the end be passed on to buyers anyway** through higher prices.

Belgorod

"Can't say it in words, can't even put it in swear words" — September 21 at 22:00, ♥152

Novosibirsk Oblast

"Excuse me, but what have we been paying taxes for all these years? Isn't protecting citizens among the duties of a state governed by the rule of law? They already get their salaries from the budget anyway... Plus the revenues from selling the PEOPLE'S wealth - gas, oil and other mineral resources..." — September 23 at 5:57, ♥29

2. Increase in housing and communal services tariffs

A new surge in the discussion of tariffs was triggered by two news items at once. The first concerned the projected indexation of utility tariffs by 11% from July 2027. The second

concerned a proposal to take into account the costs of protecting power grids against Unmanned Aerial Vehicles when calculating tariffs.

Perm

"Russians' wages are not being raised enough. Because of many years of restraint, wages should be 140% higher, while for utility services provided with insufficient quality they are overcharged 1.27 trillion ₺" — September 27 at 10:18, ♥84

In the comments, the tariff increase was most often linked to the end of the elections and perceived as yet another blow to the family budget. People wrote in the spirit of "you voted, now pay" and reproached those who supported "United Russia". Especially frequent were jokes that bigger bills should be issued specifically to voters of the party of power. People also asked why bills are growing faster than salaries and pensions, where the money already paid goes, and why the quality of utility services does not improve in the process. Separate outrage was caused by the possibility of shifting onto consumers the costs of protecting power grids against Unmanned Aerial Vehicles as well.

Krasnoyarsk Krai

"Thank you, dear United Russia ... I never expected anything good from you anyway" — September 22 at 6:01, ♥26

Dagestan

"The garbage isn't collected, you can't get through to the water utility, the sewers get clogged, the water is constantly cut off - what should we pay them for if they already aren't fulfilling their obligations?" — September 26 at 12:24, ♥17

The start of the heating season sparked arguments because of the very different situation in buildings. Some are already freezing, using heaters and asking for the heat to be supplied sooner, while others consider the launch premature because of the warm weather and do not want to pay for overheated apartments. Both sides are united by dissatisfaction with the utility services. People complain about high bills, prolonged hot water outages after summer repairs and unclear timelines for restoring services.

3. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle attacks and air raid alerts

There were reports of night attacks, explosions, air defense activity and air raid alerts. In the comments, the most discussed questions were whether sirens are switched on in time, where to take shelter during an attack, how well protected industrial facilities are, and what assistance is received by those whose property was damaged. Most of the discussions fell on Tatarstan, Krasnodar Krai and Rostov Oblast.

Samara

"How are you sleeping tonight, those who voted for United Russia? Joyfully and comfortably?" — September 22 at 3:59, ♥102

Voronezh Oblast

"If she could, she'd vote for united Russia one more time)" — September 25 at 15:49, ♥19

One of the most noticeable reactions this week again linked the attacks to the elections. After the voting ended, commenters wrote that "the elections are over and the sirens have started again", and addressed part of their grievances to those who voted for "United Russia". Much outrage was caused by the payments to those affected. People compared the assistance offered with the real cost of damaged apartments and cars and demanded that losses be compensated in full. There was also a proposal to equate payments to the families of civilians killed with those received by the families of fallen servicemen.

Perm

"War does not resolve past grievances — it simply creates new ones. The sooner this cycle of violence is stopped, the fewer people will pay for someone else's decisions." —

September 25 at 8:35, ♥80

The comments also asked why drones cannot be intercepted earlier, how well protected industrial facilities are, and why strikes recur after official reports of successful air defense work. Separately, the authorities were reproached for the fact that, in users' view, some of the consequences of the attacks are not reported immediately or in full. At the same time, people thanked the air defense servicemen and criticized officials for the organization of protection. Much less often did one hear the simple wish for all this to finally end.

Bashkortostan

"Is this a tragedy or a point of pride for the report?" — September 23 at 11:48, ♥14
"Ddd, the ones shot down are pride, the ones that got through are tragedy" — September 23 at 12:34, ♥12

"Marina, pride is living in peace" — September 23 at 12:57, ♥34

4. The fuel crisis and queues at filling stations

The fuel crisis remains a noticeable everyday problem, but the situation differs greatly depending on the region. People discuss the availability of petrol, prices, queues and restrictions at filling stations. Many perceived the return of disruptions after the elections as a sign that before the voting the problem had only been temporarily contained. In parallel, people argue about the causes of the shortage. Some link it to the strikes on oil refineries, others believe that the queues are created by drivers themselves, who buy up fuel in reserve. The rise in prices, which people compare with their incomes, is perceived especially acutely.

Methodology

What this project is. Systematic monitoring of sentiment in Russian regions — with a focus on critical and negative posts as an indicator of what irritates, frightens or outrages people. The conclusions rest on two parallel sources from monitoring regional VKontakte groups and Telegram.

VKontakte and Telegram. Automated data collection in regional Russian communities on VKontakte (536 groups) and Telegram (428 channels) — regional news channels, local public groups, oblast media, local "chat bots" with audiences ranging from several thousand to hundreds of thousands of subscribers. Coverage — all Russian regions and the occupied territories of Ukraine. Observations by regional analysts were additionally used.

Quotes in the report text are given verbatim.